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Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards

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Mr Peter Diggle
President, Royal Statistical Society
12 Errol Street
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16 November 2016

Dear Mr Diggle,

Thank you for your letter of 21 October, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding AQA's decision to withdraw from offering A level statistics. I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

We share your disappointment that AQA has taken this decision. The Department worked with awarding organisations, Ofqual and stakeholders, to develop content for AS level and A level statistics in February 2016, so that examination boards could develop new qualifications for teaching from September 2017. The option for AQA or another examination board to develop an A level or AS level specification in future remains open, however, and I would like to assure you that we are in discussion with other examination boards on this issue.

As you may be aware, the new mathematics A level includes a section on statistics, with a requirement to interpret at least one real, large data set. Students should be able to present and interpret data to familiarise themselves with the main features of the data, and the ways in which technology can help to explore the data. Other subjects also require students to take a more quantitative and mathematical approach. The geography and geology A levels, for example, require students to use statistical analysis to interpret data.

Students may also choose to study alternative statistics qualifications which are accepted by universities and included in the Department's performance tables. It is important to note that students currently studying A level statistics for examination in 2017 and 2018 will not be affected by AQA's decision.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,