

Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
Bangor  
BT19 7PR

10 February 2017

Dear Principal

### **AVAILABILITY OF GCSE SCIENCE SPECIFICATIONS**

On 28 June 2016 the Minister for Education announced a number of changes affecting the GCSE offer to schools in Northern Ireland.

Whilst the main focus of his announcement was on grading issues, the Minister confirmed that GCSE Science specifications from English-based Awarding Organisations and Eduqas should not be offered here as marks for practical assessments did not contribute to the overall grades for the subjects.

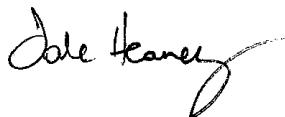
Following representations from the Awarding Organisations that their GCSE Science specifications have systems in place to ensure that candidates undertook practical work, the Minister commissioned advice from CCEA Regulation. In developing its advice, CCEA consulted with a range of key stakeholders, including, teachers and the Learned Bodies. The Minister also sought the views of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Following due consideration, the Minister has decided that the English-based Awarding Organisations and Eduqas should be allowed to offer their GCSE Science specifications in schools here. This means that decisions on which GCSE Science specifications to offer will rest with individual schools. This is in line with the open market policy that operates for all other GCSE subjects (with the exception of GCSE English Language where there is a requirement that the speaking and listening component must contribute to the overall grade for the subject).

**Consequently, from September 2017, schools will be able to offer GCSE Science specifications from AQA, Eduqas, OCR and Pearson. CCEA will also be introducing its revised GCSE Science specifications from that date and these will also be available to schools.**

Please ensure that the content of this letter is shared with your Examinations Officer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Heaney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**DALE HEANEY**  
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