

Leighton Andrews AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Graham Stuart MP  
Chair  
Select Committee on Education  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

6 March 2013

*Dear Mr Stuart,*

I welcome the opportunity to give evidence to your committee on the subject of GCSE English Language next week. I have, of course, read the transcripts of evidence given to the committee in September, and I understand that the chief executive of Ofqual has now corrected some elements of the evidence which she gave to your committee in respect of WJEC.

Your committee will be aware that GCSEs and A-Levels are three-country qualifications. Indeed, the brands are owned jointly by the CCEA (the examinations body in Northern Ireland), Ofqual, and the Welsh Government. You may be interested to know that John O'Dowd, the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland, and I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education on 1<sup>st</sup> August last year asking for a meeting with him, but that he rejected this request, which is unfortunate. I will of course be happy to share with the committee concerns which the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland and I have discussed in relation to the operation of GCSEs and A-Levels as three-country qualifications.

The GCSE English Language grading last year has raised issues which go to the heart of GCSEs as three-country qualifications, including the use of KS2 indicators – not historically used in either Northern Ireland or Wales - as factors bearing on the setting of grades in GCSEs, and the question of achieving 'comparable outcomes', an objective discussed by regulators since 2008 in the context of protecting learners from inconsistent outcomes when exam specifications change, but which Ofqual now appears to see as a year-on-year device "to prevent what is sometimes called 'grade inflation' " (<http://www2.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-05-09-maintaining-standards-in-summer-2012.pdf> ).

I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday. I am copying this letter to the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland.

*Yours sincerely,  
Leighton Andrews*

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Minister for Education and Skills

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)*

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