

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref:
Ein cyf/Our ref: LA/00883/13

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

10 April 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 21 March informing me of a petition received from A level students calling on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to continue to support the provision of January examinations at GCSE, AS and A level.

In Wales, we conducted a wide-ranging Review of Qualifications for 14-19 year olds. The Review consulted extensively with stakeholders including GCSE and A level students. The final report and recommendations of the Review's independent Board was published on 28 November 2012 and the Deputy Minister for Skills accepted all 42 of the recommendations on 29 January 2013.

For GCSE, the current situation is that January assessment opportunities continue to be permitted in Wales for those centres that choose to follow modular GCSE specifications. Going forward, the Review Board recommended that "the Welsh Government should continue to allow unitised GCSEs, and January as well as June assessment opportunities, with a limit of one resit per unit and the higher mark counting" [Recommendation 24].

In terms of AS and A levels, the Review recommended that Wales should "maintain the same A levels as England and Northern Ireland where possible, but allow variation where necessary to meet the needs of learners in Wales" [Recommendation 25]. It also recommended that the Welsh Government should "recognise the range of views expressed by stakeholders about the continued use of units within AS and A2 and January assessment opportunities".

In light of the fact that evidence from the Review of Qualifications in Wales was inconclusive on this issue (the consultation did not ask a question specifically on January assessments), I asked my officials to undertake further consultation with stakeholders on the specific issue of January assessments. A six week online survey took place between 3 December 2012 and 14 January 2013.


Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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I am currently reviewing the evidence in relation to the future of the January AS and A level January assessment opportunities in Wales and will be making an announcement shortly. I can assure you that I am aware of strong arguments both in favour and against retaining the January AS and A levels assessment opportunities, and that my decision on this issue will, as always, be made with the best interests of Welsh learners in mind.

Yours sincerely,


Leighton Andrews AC / AM
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Minister for Education and Skills