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Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State

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Professor Nigel Thrift
Chair, ALCAB
By email: isabel.nisbet@alcab.org.uk

25 November 2014

Dear Professor Thrift

Thank you for your letter of 31 October, about the next steps for the A Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB).

I would like to convey my sincere appreciation for the significant contribution that ALCAB has made to the Government's reforms, developing A levels that compare favourably with the world's best education systems and equipping students to meet the demands of universities and employers. I am very grateful for the leadership that you and the Chief Executive have provided, and the expert advice of the three subject panels.

I understand that we will soon receive your final recommendations for mathematics, further mathematics, modern languages, ancient languages, and geography. I share your desire to see that ALCAB's intentions for these subjects are followed through into practice, generating significant rewards for students and others, not least universities.

Whilst I can understand your rationale for a 'ticking-over' position, I do not consider that the department should continue to provide grant funding to sustain that position. ALCAB will have successfully completed the work it was commissioned to do, and although the grant agreement also indicates a possible longer-term work programme, it also makes clear that this would depend on Ofqual's plans for a post-qualifications review process. Ofqual has clarified that this work will not begin until 2017, when the first A level examinations will be taken. It will, therefore, be some time before Ofqual will be ready to consider their plans for this work.

ALCAB's work has represented a major part of our commitment to working with universities on A level reform, and we will continue to pursue this commitment with some vigour. It is heartening to hear your positive comments about ALCAB's experience of strengthening the links between universities and awarding organisations, and this should help universities continue to reinforce their expectations of the knowledge and skills they want to see in new undergraduates.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely
Nicky

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