

*In Tynwald*

*July 2014*

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT – item 9**

**Statement on 14-16 Qualification Reform**

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I am pleased to provide information today on the broad direction that the Island's schools will follow in relation to the wide ranging reforms of 14-16 qualifications.

Honourable members will be aware that, following a period of awareness raising and information-giving, a consultation was undertaken, which resulted in over 840 responses. The outcome of the consultation has already been reported. Whilst there was some acceptance of the possibility of our schools pursuing Scottish qualifications, there was little public support for adopting the reforms taking place in England. The most acceptable way forward to teachers, the general public, the Chamber of Commerce, to many of the members of this House who attended the briefing and to other groups was the International GCSE. The consultation also indicated a strong wish, from over 80% of respondents, that qualifications should be based on a variety of forms of assessment not solely end of course examinations.

Officers of the Department have now discussed the outcomes of the consultation with secondary headteachers and subject leaders across 14 key subject areas. The outcome that I can announce today is that, as the reforms take place over the next three years, the core of secondary school qualifications offered in Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) in the Isle of Man will move to the International GCSE offered by Cambridge International Examinations.

By 2017 we anticipate that 80% of our GCSE entries will be through the International GCSE. There are compelling educational reasons why our schools believe that in some specific subjects the IGCSE syllabuses are not the best way forward for our students and in all of these subjects schools will follow GCSEs offered by the Welsh Board, WJEC. Both the IGCSE and Welsh GCSEs will be graded A\*-G and so will be comparable.

In terms of assessment, the outcome of this pattern of entries will mean that 65% of our exam entries will be open to the inclusion of some coursework or practical work as part of the qualification. Coursework will usually contribute between 20 and 50% of the overall mark for any one subject. This

pattern of entries will also mean that 60% of our exam entries will offer a choice of core (foundation) and extended (higher) tiered exam papers. At the Department and in schools we share the belief, voiced through the consultation, that coursework should have a part to play in the qualifications of our young people.

I believe that this is a very exciting time for schools in the Isle of Man. Our schools will now be following the International GCSE in English, Maths, Sciences, Geography, History, Art, Music, PE and other subjects. It is an international qualification that has been running since 1988 and is owned by Cambridge University. Schools in more than 140 countries use the IGCSE and the overall number of entries is 500,000 per year. The IGCSE will still lead on to A levels with the traditional exam boards and university entrance will be unaffected. We look forward to the Island's schools interacting with a wider international environment and playing a full part in future developments of the IGCSE, which are stakeholder-led.

Officers at the DEC have explored the alternatives thoroughly. We have consulted as widely as possible and received a mandate through the consultation to move away from the English system if there are advantages in doing so. We have found a certain resonance with the idea that as an international business centre, it is appropriate for the Isle of Man to offer an international qualification at 16.

Most importantly, we believe that the IGCSE option offers the most balanced qualifications for the Island's young people. It will result in a benchmark for our students that will demonstrate the high expectations we have of them, whilst also offering the flexibility to teachers to allow young people opportunities to demonstrate their learning in appropriate ways. It will enable schools to continue to develop students who are responsible individuals who make purposeful contributions to society in the Isle of Man.