



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Summer 2020 Examinations:
Council for the Curriculum, Examinations
and Assessment

22 April 2020

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Education

Summer 2020 Examinations: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

22 April 2020

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Chris Lyttle (Chairperson)
Ms Karen Mullan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Maurice Bradley
Mr Robbie Butler
Mr William Humphrey
Ms Catherine Kelly
Mr Daniel McCrossan
Mr Justin McNulty
Mr Robin Newton

Witnesses:

Mr Justin Edwards	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Ms Sharon King	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): I welcome Justin Edwards, chief executive of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and Sharon King, head of regulation.

Mr Justin Edwards (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment): Thank you very much, Chairperson. *[Inaudible.]*

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Justin, your line is not great. Can you confirm that you are with us?

Mr Edwards: Yes. Is that clear enough now?

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): That is better. I ask you to speak as loudly and clearly as you can for the benefit of the teleconferencing facilities.

By way of welcome, I recognise that, since the coronavirus restrictions have been applied, a number of critical issues have come to the fore and have been considered by the Education Committee. Those include: vulnerable children, childcare, special schools, substitute teachers and, of course, formal examinations, particularly for GCSE and A-level pupils. It is safe to say that we, along with students, teachers, schools and parents, welcomed the clarity provided by the Minister last week on the question of examinations, but there are some questions outstanding that we would like to ask you today.

The Committee, therefore, is very glad to welcome you to today's session, and we invite you to make a short presentation of up to 10 minutes.

Mr Edwards: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. If I am unclear at any time, please interrupt me and I will try to make adjustments and speak more loudly.

I thank the Committee for the invitation. In order to outline where we are with the AS, GCSE and A-level qualifications this summer, as mentioned by the Chairman, I have provided a paper, which is a student, teacher and parent information and guidance paper. We can elaborate on any component parts of that document as we go along. The Committee will be aware that, on 19 March, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, announced that the summer 2020 examination series would be cancelled. That was to assist in the fight against the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As part of that, it was announced that grades would be based on a range of evidence and data. Subsequent to that, Minister Weir made a presentation to the House to outline how we would approach that in each of the qualification types.

I want to say, "Thank you very much" to students, teachers, parents and schools for their patience as we work through this complex issue. As far as I am aware, and according to the records that I have seen, the cancellation of exams is unique and unprecedented, requiring us to think about all the matters and arrangements that would have to take place in order to allow learners to progress in their education or through to employment or other pathways. It is an extremely complex challenge being done in rapid time with the CCEA team working with the Department of Education and, latterly, the Minister.

It is worth pointing out to the Committee that Northern Ireland operates an open qualifications market. For GCSE, AS and A-level qualifications, that means that students can take their qualifications with CCEA, and the vast majority of learners in Northern Ireland do that. However, they can also use examinations from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR), Pearson and Eduqas, which is part of the Welsh Joint Examinations Committee (WJEC). There are some cases where learners will take A-level components with WJEC, but it does not provide GCSE qualifications in Northern Ireland.

As such, we have a hybrid model of qualifications offered by the awarding bodies that operate in Northern Ireland. We have had to work closely with fellow regulators, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales, in order to ensure consistency or similarity, where possible, between the awarding and qualifications types. That has been a particular challenge, because devolved policy decisions on examinations in the three jurisdictions had previously been taken and had to be taken into consideration in approaching how examinations would operate in Northern Ireland. Ofqual has announced how it will award qualifications in England in summer 2020. Qualifications Wales has also made an announcement in that regard. I understand that Ofqual has searchable information on the GOV.UK website, and the relevant Welsh information for learners who are taking qualifications that are regulated by those bodies can be found at qualificationswales.org.

Everything else in my statement, therefore, refers to CCEA qualifications and how they will operate in Northern Ireland. As I said, the vast majority of learners in Northern Ireland take GCSE qualifications with CCEA; about 97% of the entries in Northern Ireland, based on 2019 statistics, will be with CCEA. About 87% of A levels taken in Northern Ireland will be with CCEA. I would like to outline, at the high level, the different approaches to GCSE, AS and A-level qualifications at this point.

We anticipate that a calculated grade for A-level qualifications will be awarded on the normal date for the award of the qualification, which will be 13 August this year. That date was always set as the normal issue of results date for A-level qualifications in conjunction with the other awarding bodies across the UK. On that date, students will receive a grade that will be reached by the combined use of statistics for their previous performance along with teacher judgement. That teacher judgement will be a combination of what we are terming centre-assessed grades — the grade that the school or college believes that the learner would most likely achieve had they taken the examination — and a rank order of learners in the subject area. With that in place, we believe that the grades awarded will allow students to progress into further or higher study or on to their chosen pathway. The grade that is awarded will be a certified grade at that point on 13 August.

It is fair to say that matters are a little more complex for AS students. With A levels, we will be able to use prior AS performance information. AS contributes about 40% of the overall mark — or is 40% of the overall mark — to the A-level outcome. With AS, however, the prior achievement data would be reliant on GCSE mean scores and other datasets. That being the case, an AS grade will be awarded on the issue of results for that component but will not carry forward into the full A-level award.

If a student wishes to progress into the A-level award in the next academic year, they will have a choice of whether to sit the A-level units, and we will calculate the AS component parts on the basis of

how they perform in those A-level units using a statistical method. Alternatively, they can choose to sit the AS and A2 examinations combined. The choice of whether to participate in that examination is up to the learner. Whichever route they choose, we will give them their highest grade. We will give them a calculated AS component, but if they do better in the examination, having chosen to take the AS exams, we will award the higher of the two grades.

While that is a complex solution, it is our view that it at least provides grades for those learners, particularly in year 13, and those in year 14, who need AS outcomes and who have chosen to sit AS examinations so that they can progress to some higher education qualifications but also to inform their choices, as they often move between four AS qualifications and three A levels as they transition between year 13 and year 14.

There are two types of students doing GCSEs. Some students will receive a full qualification. The units that they complete this year will contribute towards a full certified outcome at GCSE level. We will award them a grade, again using the information that we are able to get from the school or college in the form of centre-assessed grades or centre-ranked orders. That will enable us to award, on the issue of the results date, GCSE qualifications as previously planned. However, for students who are sitting units or modules — component parts that will not result in a full qualification outcome — we will not award grades at the unit level. Those students will have to take examinations in their normal examination timetable, as we anticipate run-in, which, at the moment, will be in November of this year, or in January or March of next year and through to the summer. We recognise that there are challenges with that, but we felt that it provided the best and most robust opportunity for the unit outcomes for those students. By awarding full qualification grades, we are allowing GCSE learners to be certified and to progress to their next mode of study, be that further education or A levels.

It is worth talking a bit more about how we will arrive at, or have scores to arrive at, centre-assessed grades and rank ordering. The centre-assessed grade is a new approach; it was introduced here as part of the contingency arrangements so that we can overcome this unprecedented circumstance. The arrangement uses the professional judgement of teachers, based on the objective evidence that they hold in their centre, which is the school or college. We recognise that that is an ask of our teaching workforce, but indications from teaching unions or teacher heads support the fact that teachers have the professional capability, experience and training to do this fairly, based on the information that they have. We recognise that schools and colleges will have different sets of information — they approach the run-up to examinations in different manners — so, while we are providing overarching guidance on the types of information that they may use, they can call upon a vast arrangement of objective evidence in order to reach their judgements.

Likewise, with rank orders, we are asking teachers to rank students in the subject order, where one is the highest, and working down through the subject groups across classes and providing that to us so that we can use it as part of our information. Again, they would use the same objective evidence that they would be using in the centre-assessment grade in order to come to their decision. Those decisions, and the operation of those decisions, will be new for schools. Schools have started to undertake that work already. We anticipate that schools will enter the information to CCEA in a very tight time window from 29 May. From 29 May, we will capture all that data, match it and combine it with the statistical information and models that we have finalised. We will then be able to produce the grade outcomes.

It is worth mentioning what may happen beyond the grade outcomes from those qualifications. First, there will be an appeals process. We are finalising the appeals process; CCEA is taking that work forward. We plan to consult the public on our approach to the appeals process. It will take us time to refine it, because it will be a different type of appeal from what has previously been used against examination grades.

It is also worth pointing out that there will not be an additional autumn examination series for CCEA qualifications. The opportunities with which learners will be provided will be within the normal timetable series for examinations in November of this year and in January, March and summer of 2021. Learners will have the opportunity to sit exams again during those normal timetable operations. Therefore if learners are dissatisfied with their grade in GCSE maths or English, for example, and have followed the appeals process, they will have the opportunity to resit in January 2021. Learners in Northern Ireland can do that because we offer modular sits, and we have a different timetable structure from that operating in other jurisdictions. As for students and their contribution to this process, there is no requirement for students to complete any additional work at this time. We have suspended internal assessment — often referred to as controlled assessment — and we do not anticipate or require schools to set additional mock examinations or homework tasks for learners. We

are asking schools to use the information that they had up to the point of the Minister's announcement on 19 March to reach their objective assessments. As I said, schools hold a broad and wide range of information.

We are working through the models, conclusion of the models and the appeals process. We will also be releasing further technical information to schools about the submission of the centre-assessed grades and rank order. There are frequently asked questions and guidance documents for students, teachers, parents and schools available on our website at ccea.org.uk.

Mr Chairman, that concludes my opening statement, and I am happy to take any questions. As I said, my colleague Sharon King, who is the head of regulation, is also on the line.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. Thanks very much, indeed, Justin. I will kick us off. We have a lot to get through today, so I would really appreciate it if we all keep our questions to questions.

Does the final framework selected by the Education Minister match the recommendations made by CCEA, and, if not, in what way did it differ?

Mr Edwards: The full recommendations were provided to the Department with the considerations and options. We provided the Minister with preferred options in that range, recognising that there was no perfect solution in this scenario. The best solution is to sit examinations, and that simply is not available. Any other solution was trying to reduce the impact or risk to students on their educational progression. The approach that the Minister announced, at the Assembly briefing last week, was in line with the preferred options that we provided to the Department of Education.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Why not reschedule GCSEs and A levels to August, for example?

Mr Edwards: Delaying the award of qualifications and operating an examination series in the autumn — September or October — was one of the considerations that we looked at. That would have delayed learners' progression to higher education, further education courses or into sixth form. That would have been a particular challenge for learners, had they been out of line with the approach taken in England or Wales. It was very clear, from the commencement of our considerations, that England and Wales were not in favour of pursuing a delay to, for example, university entry. From my conversations with universities and understanding of the feedback from admissions, I do not believe that any delay to that progression should be applied. A later sitting would not have been in line with them and, potentially, could put Northern Ireland candidates at a disadvantage.

In considering alternative examination series at a later date, even if grading could be put in place in that option, there are challenges to student timetables, school timetables and being able to function examiners. There were a couple of key unknowns: for example, the effect of COVID-19 on later sittings and the availability of examiners, assessors and invigilators. However, we kept the potential for that option open in that we kept the summer examination questions, papers and other items available should the Minister have chosen that option.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Why not reschedule AS-level examinations to autumn?

Mr Edwards: We considered rescheduling the AS level without grading in the August position. That was highlighted as one of other available options at the time. However, it became clear that there were cohorts of learners that use AS grades, as I said, in transference between years 13 and 14 but also in transference to other courses, sometimes within the UCAS scope and sometimes outwith. Now and then, AS level is used as a grading factor when two candidates have matched grades on an A-level component. Again, we did not want AS students to go without grades, which would put them at a disadvantage for progression if that data was going to be used. It was difficult to quantify how big that component would have been, but, certainly, we just wanted to provide every opportunity, even to a small group of learners, to support their progression.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. Why, then, can an AS score not be calculated and counted towards an A2-level grade? That is the biggest question that I am receiving at this time from parents and pupils, who have worked hard throughout year 13 towards their AS-level mark at the end of the year. They are asking why a score cannot be calculated for their AS level that would count towards their A2 level next year.

Mr Edwards: I can understand that concern from learners. However, in both the AS and GCSE components, we are in line with and have a similar approach to both England and Wales in offering to be able to categorise learners in grade and grade outcome. However, the dataset for the statistical controls, in combination with the teacher judgement, at the AS component, as I mentioned, will be relying on other scores. Whereas, in A2, we are able to use the AS score, which is an exam component that is already set and has a high degree of validity and reliability with it, we cannot do that at the AS level. We are able to gauge the grade, which includes a broad spectrum of learner ability inside each grade pot or area, if you like, but the refinement down to unit-level outcomes and, therefore, a unit-level score and overall mark is just not possible with the models that we are considering at the moment. That is why we cannot award a mark to those AS students, and it is one of the challenges that we have in taking that forward into the overall A2 award.

In all the options that we considered, we considered, of course, fairness, minimising uncertainty, and the burden on learners, schools and the wider system, but we also considered the future impact, because, beyond the impact of COVID-19 on examinations this summer, we want to try to return the examinations to as consistent a pattern as possible, reintroducing the examination components. When we have a modular system that goes between years, actually getting modules and modular marks stabilised back on examinations is very important to the overall considerations.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. There are supplementary questions there. I will refrain from asking them, and, hopefully, they will be probed further by other members. What is a Z-score?

Mr Edwards: The Z-score is a statistical methodology. It is one of the methodologies that would be introduced into the statistical combination procedures. The Z-score has been used historically for estimating what we term "missing marks". When a candidate is absent from an examination or examination component, we use the Z-score to calculate their mark. It is a statistical model. That model is used not just by CCEA but by all the awarding bodies that offer those qualifications. It has been used very reliably for a number of years.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. Will previous centre — school or college — overall performance be used towards the calculated grade?

Mr Edwards: For the calculated grade, we will work at the subject level in centres, but we will also look at overarching centre performance and consistency between centres on grade distribution and subject distribution. The simple answer to your question is yes.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. Some pupils may have been scheduled to take resits during this period of cancelled examinations. Will any fees that have been paid to sit those resits be returned?

Mr Edwards: At the moment, we are working through the fees bases and fee for examinations, and how we will look at that in terms of grading. It is worth mentioning that, where those resit components would have led to a full qualification outcome, they will still be treated in the same way as awarding on first-time sits. So, for A-level students who would have had a resit component, maybe at the AS, in our modelling, we will consider the resit element of the AS in order to reach the overarching grade for the A2. That was in our options that we presented to the Minister and was always part of our consideration. For stand-alone students who would have been taking the AS as an entry, regardless of whether that was their first or second sit, they would be treated in the overall awarding for AS in the same method as those who were sitting it the first time. At the moment, we are still working through the fees base, but certainly there is the position that those who are entered and fall under that full qualification outcome will receive a grade.

Ms Mullan: Thank you, Justin, for that very detailed overview and the information that you have provided so far to the Committee. It has been very useful. As the Chair said, we have received quite a number of communications from students and parents, and I expect that to continue. Clear and concise communication to parents and students will be key in all this. Has the document that you have provided us with been sent to parents and students yet?

Mr Edwards: In our communication to centres, we have encouraged them to use that document and to provide it to students, teachers and parents. There is a more detailed document, as well, to what we term "the head of centre" — normally the principal — which has even further information, so that principals and schools can answer further questions for learners. It is on our website, ccea.org.uk, under COVID-19, and I encourage students, teachers and parents to read it. We will also be doing

short videos and blogs, again trying to answer more questions as they come through and to provide as much clarity as we can.

Ms Mullan: Justin, are you considering opening a helpline?

Mr Edwards: The helpline that we are currently operating is for schools, because we believe that schools are the best provider in order to answer questions for the learners. They will know the individual learner's circumstances and be able to answer that.

Ms Mullan: That is brilliant. That is good for us to know. I have been referring students back to their school.

The line broke up a bit when you were giving your briefing, so I apologise if you covered any of this. Can you give us a further outline of the standardised nature of the continuous assessments that go on in our post-primary schools that allow us to proceed with predicted grades?

Mr Edwards: Did you say in the primary school assessment arrangements?

Ms Mullan: No, the post-primary. You chatted about the statistical data and what is assessed. As I said, I might have missed some of this as the line was breaking up. Can you give a brief outline of the standardised nature of continuous assessment that goes on in our schools?

Mr Edwards: On the matter of reaching the centre-assessed grades, we have outlined to schools a range of information that they might use to reach that standardised approach. We have talked about the record of students' performance throughout their study, and schools will maintain that in progress review data, or classwork or bookwork, or participation in performance examples, such as in music, drama and PE. We have also encouraged them to look at performance in controlled assessments or at coursework that may have already been completed as part of that journey towards their overall qualification outcomes. Information about previous grades achieved can be used, and coursework or controlled assessment that has been completed in other assessments, maybe prior attainment to this. So, for A2 learners, that would be how they did in AS prior attainment. For A-level students who took AS levels in 2019, we are encouraging schools to use that information. For GCSE students, we are asking for prior attainment in units already completed. We are also asking for other relevant data. We know that schools will also use entry and baseline in assessment components from different providers, and schools can use that as part of the objective evidence. There is a broad range of evidence, and we expect teachers at subject level to come together to formulate both the grade and the rank order of the subject level.

Ms Mullan: Great. That is very detailed. There is quite a lot there. Thank you.

I have been contacted with this question: what consideration has been made for the awarding of grades to those pupils who have not been attending a normal school setting, approved under the terms of exceptional teaching arrangements?

Mr Edwards: We refer to those as "private candidates" in our briefing to schools, and we recognise that there is a group of such pupils. We are working to ascertain more data from the Education Authority. We will also be trying to ascertain more information from schools. However, at this stage, if centres have accepted entry from private candidates, and the head of centre is confident that the centres have information on them, we are asking the head of centre, with their staff, again to take forward the centre-based achievement assessment and also the rank order judgement for private candidates.

At this time, we are, along with the other regulators, also exploring alternative options for cases in which those students do not have an existing relationship with the centre, and in which the head of centre does not have any data on the existing relationship. We will probably have to do that with individual heads of centre and individual candidates. We believe that there are small quantities of such cases at the moment, but we have to take a three-jurisdiction approach to ensure that we have consistency.

Ms Mullan: Yes. People will be anxious that there are a small number of students who do not necessarily fit in some of the boxes, such as students with medical conditions and students who may have just recently not been attending school. It is really about the work that the school will be doing

alongside that to provide the information. Those students are concerned that they will be forgotten about in the process. It would therefore be good, as we go along, if we could get a bit more detail, and also if we could come back to you with a bit more detail, if that would help, Justin.

Mr Edwards: That would be helpful. For clarification, students who are well known to the centre but are not in school for some reason beyond their control — say, a medical condition — have historically been treated under what we term "special considerations". Obviously, special considerations cannot apply, but we are asking schools to reflect in their judgement how those students would have performed had they been able to take the examination outside of the COVID-19 contingency arrangements and to consider their personal circumstances. We will be encouraging students still to be assessed through centre-assessed grades and rank order judgements where teachers are able to do so, because it is the teachers who have an understanding of those students' conditions.

Ms Mullan: That is great. Finally, this issue has just come in. You mentioned it, but I have not yet had a chance to look at it. I have a query about the BTEC done through Pearson in England. Pearson has made its decision. Does it apply here?

Mr Edwards: A BTEC qualification is a type of vocational qualification that is often offered at level 3, which is A-level equivalency, or level 2, which is GCSE equivalency. At the moment, we are working with the Department for the Economy, which is the policy lead on the component, to invite the Minister for the Economy to make a statement on how she wishes to proceed and instruct us so that we can work with the range of awarding bodies, including Pearson, to provide the award. My colleague Sharon King, who is on the line, may want to provide more information on that to the Committee.

Ms Sharon King (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment): Thank you, Justin. As you can appreciate, the vocational area is complex and has a diverse range of qualifications. We have been working with DFE, the awarding organisations, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales on the matter. As soon as the Minister for the Economy makes the announcements on the arrangements for vocational qualifications, we will work towards ensuring that those arrangements are implemented without delay. We will ensure that the awarding organisations work towards the published deadline. The published deadline for BTECs, as Justin said, is 13 August and 20 August.

Ms Mullan: That is great, Sharon. Thank you very much. That is me, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Thanks, Karen.

Mr Newton: I thank Justin for his very comprehensive briefing. With your indulgence, Chair, I have three questions to ask, but they are short questions. First, Justin, in that sector of education where the pupils are tutored at home and do not attend school at all, have you had any relationship with them, given the situation, and if so, what? Secondly, and I know this from experience, is there any way of taking account of students who would normally cram late for an examination and would put in their work close to the deadline? Thirdly, you mentioned the appeals process and that you are not quite there in determining the full implementation of that yet, but when might you expect that? How might that be communicated to the students and parents? What type of response would you expect back to fulfil your needs in the appeals process? Those are my three questions, Justin.

Mr Edwards: Thank you very much. The first question relates back to private candidates, so it is those students who are working at home towards their qualifications or would be considered to be private entries into a school. Where the school has a relationship with them — for example, in considering their internal assessment under moderation or controlled assessment throughout the year, or staying in contact with that private candidate as they develop in their progress towards the overall outcomes — we are asking the centres to take that into a judgement and to provide, where they possibly can, a grade and a rank order for that private entry into the system. We recognise that there may be a small number of cases where that information does not exist at the centre level. At that point, we ask centres to bring that entry to our attention, and, as I said before, in that small number of cases, we will be exploring across the *[Inaudible]* alternative arrangements or how we might manage or deal with that. In his statement on Thursday, the Minister outlined that that will be a particular challenge for us when we reach that point, and I do not have the alternative arrangements available for the Committee now.

With regard to your second question, around those learners who prepare hard towards the end — I think that is the term — we have asked the centres to consider how learners would perform had the examinations gone ahead. From my conversations with teachers and school leaders around that, I

know that they have long histories and relationships with learners and have followed those learners not just through one year but, maybe, seven years of schooling, and they will have an understanding of the likely performance of those candidates. From their professional discussions, and by using the evidence available to them, I hope that they can factor that into their thinking as they come to the overarching outcomes and the rank orders. We will be looking at, as I said, prior attainments where you have A-level students. As 40% of the mark comes from AS, it will be a reliable indicator of how that learner performs, even if they leave their preparation to the last minute, because they are still going into an examination situation at that point, so it will give us a high degree of reliability with that data set.

On your point about the appeals process, and you are quite right that we are not quite there on the appeals process, it is my intention to come out with a consultation document in the next few weeks on how we see the appeals process proceeding. That is to provide opportunities at that point for schools, teachers, young people and their parents to provide feedback in our consideration of that appeals approach. We will then document that appeals approach and issue that out, via our website, in the approach that we will be taking post the awards. Given the nature of how we are approaching that examination series, there will be a narrowing of the range of areas that you can appeal because you cannot appeal on the basis of the exam component as no exam will have taken place. There are things that will not be available for consideration in that appeals process, but we will come out in the next few weeks, as soon as possible, with that public consultation and give people the opportunity to provide us with feedback.

Mr Newton: When an appeal is in process, will it be the student who makes the appeal directly to you?

Mr Edwards: No. Historically, and this is an element that we wish to retain, the student approached their school or college to make the appeal. That has always been the case. The school or college worked with the student and made the technical representation on behalf of the student. That has always been the case, across all the awarding bodies and the examination system. We wish to retain that. However, we will provide, on our website, the information about how the appeal process will be convened and how it will operate, so that students are clear when they are working with their examination centres.

Mr Newton: OK. That is fine. I am content.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Thanks. Daniel?

Mr McCrossan: Sorry, Chair, the line is a bit fuzzy, so I may have missed one or two wee things, but I caught the general gist. I do not know whether the fault is on my line.

Thank you for your presentation and for your understanding and appreciation that this is indeed a very complex fix — I would not call it a solution — to what is a very difficult situation. As Karen Mullan said, it will cause considerable anxiety and stress to parents. We are already hearing from parents about their concerns about how this will work and their view of it. At the end of the day, AS grades in practical subjects are based on continuous teacher assessment of coursework: art is awarded 100% of the marks, and music is awarded 60% of the marks. To rely totally on work done in Year 14 for the A2 grade will put massive pressure on those pupils. Surely practical subjects, such as PE, ICT, business studies, performing arts and others should be permitted to carry forward scores from AS to A2.

Mr Edwards: In the AS grade outcome, if a learner wishes to progress to A2 and have their AS coursework or material carried forward into the next year for submission in that A2 overarching component, they can. It will be as though they chose to sit the examination, but they have chosen to submit, in this case, their internal assessment component towards the overall contribution. It will allow them to take the work that has already been completed this year, if they so wish, and use that as part of their entry into the A2 overall outcome.

Mr McCrossan: Just to clarify that, they will carry it through, then?

Mr Edwards: They will carry the work forward. That work may need re-marked or re-moderated, but they will not lose the work that is done if they wish to re-submit that as part of their AS component in their A2 year.

Mr McCrossan: Obviously, this will not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Is it going to differ from subject to subject?

Mr Edwards: That is correct. There is subject-level advice that we are going to have to give to the centres for the 2021 summer series. We have been working with schools and colleges to advise them on that technical guidance, below the information that we provided to the Committee.

Mr McCrossan: It is important that that is shared immediately with schools, because there is quite a bit of confusion in relation to this. Obviously, it is quite complex and not straightforward at all. It is important to get that message to schools, because there is some confusion around that element of it. Thank you for your answer.

On a separate note, what exactly is "average centre performance"? Can you clarify how it is arrived at?

Mr Edwards: "Average centre performance" is one of the statistical models that we are able to use in reaching the overall grading outcome. The centre performance is derived over a number of years of data sets. We hold the data at a centre level, the school or college level. We are able to understand how that school or college performs over time. Obviously, schools or colleges can move up or down, so we have to introduce thresholds inside that. However, centres will have an average performance against one another, and we will look at that data set when they have submitted their teacher professional judgement, that centre-assessed grade, and the rank order.

Mr McCrossan: By using average centre performance to determine a child's GCSE grade, will children in non-selective schools be placed at a disadvantage, compared to children in grammar schools, for instance?

Mr Edwards: No, because the performance of the centre is relatively consistent over time. It still would be inside the ability of the model for any school, of any type, to move up or down, based on its performance and submissions. If you like, it is a controlling statistic for understanding where that centre would normally be positioned, and for us to clarify, or consider, in the awards that it has provided, whether there is consistency with that.

Mr McCrossan: What about the case of a parent who is concerned for a child who is exceptionally bright, for want of a better description? Will the child be put at a disadvantage as a result of this formula?

Mr Edwards: We will use statistics to ensure that the broad range of grades is being used in the centre-assessed judgements. That will ensure that centres consider use of the highest grades as well as the lowest. In evidence that we have seen, there is a potential tendency to not use the full range of grades. We will ensure that it is in use. An A* grade will still exist, and we expect centres to have a profile of learners. We believe that, where there is objective evidence to support them, they are able to submit for those grades. I do not see a point of disadvantage for those at the highest end of the spectrum or the lowest from using this combined statistic and future performance judgement model.

Mr McCrossan: You will acknowledge that it is an extremely complicated situation to determine grades? It is far from straightforward, and it is obviously going to raise considerable issues, on an individual basis, for each particular case. I understand that we are in exceptional circumstances and things are extremely difficult, but this is definitely going to pose some concern for quite a number of parents and their children, who, they will feel, have been disadvantaged by this.

Mr Edwards: There are many complexities in this process. We are relying on the objective judgement of teachers, who will understand those learners as they have progressed through their learning and will know whether they are high-attainment students of very high ability. They will probably have evidence of that. I am of the opinion that they will have evidence to support where those learners are in the overall outcome. They will be able to demonstrate from previous work, controlled assessment, coursework and homework where those high-attainment learners are. They often demonstrate performance throughout the year.

Mr McCrossan: Basically, if a parent, teacher or principal has a concern, this can be reviewed, can it?

Mr Edwards: The appeals process exists at the end of this. If a candidate, working with their centre, believes that there is basis for appeal — again, it goes back to the detail of that appeals process and

how they would bring that forward — there will be consideration to centres bringing forward individual judgements.

Mr McCrossan: OK. I have just a final question, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): A final one, thanks.

Mr McCrossan: Thank you for your answer so far. Will CCEA honour its contracts with examiners and pay them for the work that they were set to do over the period from May to July, now that the exams have been cancelled? What will happen in that instance? Were there contracts in place? Examiners rely on this source of income as well, and they will be affected.

Mr Edwards: Currently, we have three forms of people who are in consideration: examiners, markers and invigilators. We are considering how to approach that. We are aware of the range of schemes and opportunities available, but we have to make an assessment. We also have to do so in consideration with the approaches of other awarding bodies. We hope to have information out to those individuals as soon as possible. I am unable to provide a definitive answer now as to how we will approach that.

Mr McCrossan: Just to supplement that question: are there contracts in place? Would those not need to be honoured, on a legal basis?

Mr Edwards: We are working through those contracts or work commitments that are already in place. It is not a uniform position across those three types. We are working on what financial support packages will apply to people according to the opportunities afforded to them. As I said, we are just working through those issues at the moment. I do not have a definitive answer to provide you with today.

Mr McCrossan: Maybe you are aware that contracts with supply teachers on the Northern Ireland substitute teacher register (NISTR) will have to be honoured. Will that be the same in this case? As you can imagine, we have been contacted from all angles on all things, but this is also popping up its head now over recent days. These people will need some certainty, so I would appreciate it even if you could get back to me with an answer on that and update me accordingly when you have that information.

Mr Edwards: Yes, as soon as we have a decision on that we will provide an update, and we will certainly be providing an update to the range of people that we use on that. We do understand that the provision for supply teachers does not apply to this group of people. We sought clarification on that, so we are looking at the other financial supports and how they might work in regard to these service providers.

Mr McCrossan: What timescale do you envisage for that? Obviously, we need to reassure these people who are affected.

Mr Edwards: At the moment, we are working towards getting that information out before their elements of work package would have [*Inaudible*] or before their issue of payment would have normally taken place. For most of them, that would have been at the end of May, but we will try to bring that as far forward as we possibly can.

Mr McCrossan: That would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Justin, if there is so much data available to ensure accuracy of an individual pupil's grade, why factor centre performance in at all?

Mr Edwards: When we considered all the options, we felt that it was best to use as broad a range of data sets as we had in order to reach a reasonable judgement for each qualification type. One of the questions could be: why not just award on a statistical basis? However, you would then be missing some of the points made by Committee members today on the objective information and the highly reliable set of judgements that they would bring into that solution as well. I think that centre grading ensures that we have consistency, because we are obviously ensuring that no cohort, or broad cohort, of students is overly advantaged or disadvantaged in this process, and we keep fairness throughout the system. Centre-averaged grades provide that opportunity to check that data.

Mr Butler: Justin, thank you. I have only one question; I think that the rest of the members have covered most of the issues that I had. I am just looking for clarity, and I do not know if I picked you up wrong in your answer to a question from Robin Newton about how the appeals system and mechanism will be managed. I have a concern. Having spoken with the Minister and the permanent secretary last week, I do believe that a lot of representation had been made and discussions had happened with the teachers' representative bodies, so teachers would be, in the round, content with what was proposed. This is quite a sea change in how grades are awarded, and the onus and responsibility will be thrust upon teachers. You said that the normal mechanism is pupil through the centre and then to CCEA. If I have picked it up right and that is still the case, I see a big issue there. If a big proportion of the awarded grade is down to teachers and centre assessment, even if it is post-performance or pre-performance, perhaps the grievance might actually be with the teacher's award. I am wondering how that would work in an appeals mechanism.

Mr Edwards: Thank you very much. There are three parts to which I would like to respond. First, in our guidance to centres, students and teachers, we are saying that, while the teachers are considering their professional judgements — the centre grades and the rank ordering — we have advised them not to provide that information to pupils. We have also advised that, should they be asked for that information while they are formulating that submission to CCEA, they do not need to provide it. I think that we need to give teacher professional judgement the protection that is needed so that they can come to that conclusion fairly, on the basis of their professional assessment and the evidence in front of them. Once that information is submitted, it is for us to consider it in combination. We have not consulted on the appeals process yet. One of the factors that we will have to consider is whether a challenge can be made on the basis of teacher professional judgement and the data provided by schools. The consultation provided by Ofqual in England has suggested that that will not be one of the factors in the judgement of the appeal. Whether that will be considered will be set out when we lay out our wider appeals process to the public very shortly. There are challenges involved in considering it in the appeals process. I recognise that the teaching unions would also have particular issues if it were to be included in the appeals process post the issue of results.

Mr Butler: I accept that. It is about teacher protection. I accept your point on the professionalism and ability of teachers to do this, and what has been put together is good in the round. In terms of that disconnect, however, sometimes issues arise between student and teacher or family and teacher. Those relationships are also important, and it is about detachment. Is it right that the process of the appeal is still the same? I know that Ofqual can decide that it is not going to be something that you can appeal on, but if someone were to challenge it, should the vehicle for that appeal not sit outside the school?

Mr Edwards: To provide reassurance, there are two other factors in the formation of the rank order to be considered. One is that, in a number of cases, the individual teacher will have to act with professional colleagues across class groups in order to reach the rank order. So, there will be challenge, if you like, or monitoring between teachers within the school in forming rank judgments. The other thing is that anything that is submitted from a school will have a head-of-centre approval. We are asking the principals to say that they are submitting that data on behalf of the centre. In achieving that, they will also be aware, as you say, of any disagreement at school level between parental and pupil groups and the professional staff, and will also have a role in understanding how that might be moderated or controlled. In the latter part of the appeals process, as I said, it is just one of the factors that we need to issue in our consultation and ask for feedback from the public about whether it should be included in the overall component or judgement of the appeals process.

Mr Butler: OK. Thank you, Justin.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much, Justin, for your presentation and the comprehensive way in which you have answered the questions so far. A couple of people have been in contact with my office about refunds for resits. Can you provide some clarity and certainty on that issue?

Mr Edwards: Yes, certainly. As I said, we are still working through the basis of considerations on fee charging. It is important that I identify that resits might be being taken in order to reach an overall GCSE, AS or A2 grade; ie, a full qualification grade. Even if it is a resit component, those learners will want to receive the grade as of the summer 2020 position. So my view is that these resit learners will have access to the same process as identified in the documentation that I have provided to the Committee today and the documentation on our website. We will still be working towards a grade where that resit would have led to a full qualification outcome. So, the need for refund is only on the basis that the learner is withdrawn or has withdrawn from entry to that particular component.

Mr Humphrey: Has that been communicated to the individuals or organisations that have been affected by this?

Mr Edwards: We are still working through the fee charges and components for entry. We will communicate that in our technical guidance to the centres once we have worked out all the components of fee charges. However, I come back to the point that, if they are entered for the examination and that examination would have received a full qualification outcome, that is going to be granted in the arrangements that we have. We will be able to give them a grade.

Mr Humphrey: OK. Chair, to be honest, most of the questions that I had have been addressed.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): I remind members to mute their telephones if it all possible when they are not asking questions, just to avoid the very entertaining background noise.

Ms C Kelly: Thank you, Justin and Sharon, for your very informative briefing this afternoon. I have just a couple of wee questions. How will the cancelling of exams affect young people who were to undertake an Irish language GCSE in year 10 or young people who were due to sit a maths GCSE module earlier? Will they receive predicted grades, or will they sit the exam at a later stage?

Mr Edwards: Thank you very much for your question. If the pupil's progression or journey involved being entered for their GCSE early and that would have led to a full qualification outcome, it is our intention that we will be able to provide an award against that entry. However, if they were only entered for unit components — partial components of their overarching qualification — they will fall into the category where we will not be able to provide a grade at this time, and those learners will have to sit the examination as part of the normal timetable in the next academic year. That normal timetable is, of course, predicated on COVID-19 contingencies not operating as they are and that we will be allowed to run those examinations. At this point, we are assuming that we will be able to run those examinations from November.

Ms C Kelly: Thank you. This is my last question. I am concerned about how predicted grades may impact on the future of vulnerable young people and those from less-advantaged backgrounds who have attended possibly more than one school in the past two years. I believe that we need to be very careful around that. How will teachers ascertain grades when there is little to no evidence of continual assessment?

Mr Edwards: Again, we are asking the heads of centres, through teacher professional judgement, where they have objective evidence and are able to use that objective evidence, to rank order and award a grade to the student — that they do that inside the whole cohort of opinion. If no evidence exists for that student, it may be challenging for schools to provide a predicted grade or an entry. That would be the case for any student in any part of the cohort overall. At that point, it comes back to that issue of private candidates as well who do not have a relationship with the centre. If no objective evidence is available, it will be challenging for centres to provide a grade or rank order at that point, and it may result in us not being able to provide an overarching grade. That does not mean to say that the other conditions do not apply — that is, that student can still sit, at a later sitting, the qualification that exists in order to provide evidence — but, without any evidence, it is very challenging for any of us to make an assessment of where that learner is.

Mr McNulty: Thank you, Justin and Sharon. The words that you used, Justin, were "unique" and "unprecedented". I think that is certainly true. We are in completely uncharted waters. It is a bold model that you have put forward, and the way you have managed to devise it in such a short time deserves major credit, but our job here is to interrogate that model to hopefully ensure that it is as accurate as possible for the sake of the students who have put in an enormous amount of work along with their teachers and parents.

My questions may go back over some of the territory that you have already covered, but if you wish, please entertain me and please scoot over those quickly. First, AS-level grades will count as stand-alone qualifications. They will not contribute to a final A-level grade. What does that mean? Is it simply a qualification for a subject that the student opts to drop at A2 level?

Mr Edwards: We are providing a grade at AS and, if you like, disconnecting it from the A2, where it does not count towards that. That was one of the challenges that we had to grapple with — whether to award the AS or not award it and allow it in a latter sitting. We came to the conclusion that there were

two pathways for learner progression that we wanted to consider. The first is the one that you have outlined there, which is a learner progression from year 13 to 14, having a grade to inform their choices so they make accurate choices if they are moving from four ASs to three A levels. The second issue is whether a learner might use an AS to contribute towards their progression into HE and FE or use it to differentiate them at an HE selection process. For example, in clearing. They would have a grade for the AS component in order to do that, but it would not count towards the A2 grade in the subsequent year; it is disconnected as a stand-alone grade. In the subsequent year, the learner of the A2 component will either have their AS component calculated for them at that point or they can choose to sit the examination. The highest grade achieved from those two options will count towards the 40% component of their overall A2 at that point.

That scenario facilitated progression but also moved us back into protecting the future of the exam system and providing A-level grades based on the best information that we will have available in the 2021 summer series as well.

Mr McNulty: If a student opts to take A2-level exams in 2021, will those be based solely on 60% of the curriculum that year, which they covered in the seventh year, meaning that they will get the A2 award for 60% rather than 100% of the course? Or will the exam be based for the sixth year on 40% and for the seventh year on 60% of the curriculum? Give me clarity on that, please.

Mr Edwards: If they went forward next year, in 2021, and sat just the A2 component — the 60% component — we would calculate the 40% component using a statistical model, such as the Z-score, which was described earlier. They would still have 100%, but the AS component would be statistically calculated. If they do not wish to proceed with the statistical calculation, they can sit the full range of examinations, including the AS, and have 100% of their score based on that performance. Whichever they choose, the highest of the two approaches will count. If they choose to sit the AS exams and get a higher grade than they would have from a statistical calculation, we will count that grade towards the 100% of the outcome.

Mr McNulty: Thanks, Justin. How do heads of centres raise their queries with CCEA about proposals? Is there a specific email address that they can contact you on?

Mr Edwards: We have provided the centres with a telephone helpline, which we set up at the start of the process. I also wrote to all the heads of centres. If people phone that helpline with queries regarding the process or on working through it, we will be able to provide information and advice to them.

Mr McNulty: Has that helpline number been provided to all centres?

Mr Edwards: I sent the letter to all centres. It was issued at the commencement of the process with the phone number. If centres do not have that information, their examination officers will have the telephone numbers for CCEA examinations, as they do normally. At this point in the year, we are normally answering questions about examinations. They can use all the information that they already have available to them.

Mr McNulty: What format do you want the scores or grades sent in from centres to be in? Do you want a Word document or Excel spreadsheets, for instance?

Mr Edwards: We are building the IT solution in order to capture the grades. We will ask for the grades to be submitted from 29 May. Prior to that point, we will provide all the information to the schools on how they will submit through that IT system and the format in which that information will be entered. My teams are working on devising that guidance.

Mr McNulty: Do you have an update on the model for occupational studies?

Mr Edwards: We have provided the options for models for occupational studies to the Department of Education. It is considering those and believes that it is about to give advice. On instruction back to CCEA, we will issue advice and guidance to centres on occupational studies about how they will proceed in awarding those qualifications.

Mr McNulty: You mentioned the Z-scores, which were discussed and raised a number of times today, and they have been raised in the Chamber by the Minister. It is a statistical model used by all

awarding bodies. How fit for purpose is that model for this application? It is being asked to predict scores for every student as opposed to just the small cohort of students it would usually apply to; that is, those who have missed exams. How sure are you that that model is fit for purpose in this application?

Mr Edwards: This is a new approach to awarding qualifications. As we all mentioned, it is completely unprecedented and requires very complex solutions to a complex problem. We are working with all the educational statisticians across all the awarding bodies. We are working in combination with the other regulators, which have brought in, as have we, high-level expertise to verify, cross-check and ensure that we can maintain the standard with this model, year-on-year. It is about not just avoiding advantaging or disadvantaging this year but keeping the standard constant for future years for pupils in our schools. Quite simply, we are throwing the best minds at that model to make sure that it is as rigorous, reliable and capable as it possibly can be.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Can you make this your last question, Justin?

Mr McNulty: I have a couple more quick questions. How do centres and CCEA decide which units pupils will study and be examined on in year 12? As centres do different units in year 11 and units often have different weightings, will that be fair?

Mr Edwards: Chair, I did not quite get that question.

Mr McNulty: How do centres and CCEA decide which units pupils will study and be examined on in year 12? As centres do different units in year 11 and units often have different weightings, will that be fair?

Mr Edwards: The units that are used are the centre's choice, so we provide the units. Some schools choose to submit their learners later for some units at a subject level, and others provide an opportunity for submitting earlier. The judgement is left to the schools and the teachers because it allows the schools the flexibility to work with their student cohort at that particular time. Entries for subject examinations have already been made on our system. They were made prior to the COVID-19 issues, and we have that data already available from centres. We will be reviewing some of that entry data, but it already is in situ.

In respect of fairness, when a student takes the examination, it is managed year-on-year between the components to ensure that there is consistency. A student taking mathematics this summer should have a similar outcome to that if they were to sit mathematics in January. We call that comparative outcomes. It is a statistical model that ensures that we have a standard outcome year-on-year between modules or between examination series.

Mr McNulty: How fearful are you that this system of marking grades will widen the gap in educational attainment?

Mr Edwards: One of the fundamental principles in the design of what we have tried to do is ensure that it is fair, particularly at cohort level, and that we maintain the distribution of grades between years without, as I said, disadvantaging this year's cohort and without creating any disadvantage for future-year cohorts. Standards over time will be maintained.

Mr McNulty: I have one very quick one. Does the Department or CCEA —?

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Last one, yes?

Mr Newton: I have to sign off now, so I apologise to Justin and Sharon for leaving the meeting at this point.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Thanks, Robin. I will bring Justin McNulty back in, but please try to make it your last question.

Mr McNulty: This is my last question. Does the Department or the CCEA have the legal authority to prevent schools from offering qualifications other than A levels, such as the leaving cert? Could

schools in the North offer Republic of Ireland qualifications to students who do not wish to rely on student assessments in 2020?

Mr Edwards: My understanding is that examination policy is a devolved matter. It is therefore a matter for DE to instruct us on which qualifications to offer in Northern Ireland. At the moment, we are instructed to offer qualifications that are regulated under the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), which is available on the internet. Any qualification that has been accredited and authorised under that framework is then considered by the Department for funding and provision in our school system. The qualifications that are available on the RQF are the qualifications that schools use.

Mr McNulty: Thank you very much, Justin, for your very comprehensive answers; and thank you, Sharon.

Mr M Bradley: Thanks very much to Justin and Sharon for a very comprehensive presentation and answering a lot of queries. We are in uncharted waters, as we all know, but I have a few wee points. What additional curriculum support materials has CCEA supplied to schools to help pupils to complete their distance learning? I have a query about grades. If a school traditionally performs poorly, does that mean that its students' 2020 grades will be poor? Conversely, if a school traditionally performs very well, will its students perform very well again in 2020? On another point, I assume that there will be an appeals process and that a number of appeals will be lodged. If those appeals are successful, will the examinations board be fit to cope with an increased number of people wanting to sit exams in 2021?

Mr Edwards: CCEA launched a range of curriculum support materials for home learning on Monday. That is aimed at supporting parents and teachers with the curriculum support packages that we have available. Those are available under "Home Learning" on the ccea.org.uk website. You can also follow our Twitter feed, @CCEA_info, for more material on a range of curricular subjects. This is not just for GCSE and A-level students; it is also for foundation, primary and Key Stage 3 learners. We are working in conjunction with the Education Authority, through the Department of Education, to support schools. We are also working with other partners, such as the BBC, which is making materials freely available. I encourage anybody who is at home to access those materials and consider using them for their learning.

I will answer your third question on appeals and then come back to the one on centre treatment. If there is an issue and corrective action needs to be taken, the appeals process will have to deal with that corrective action and the grade outcomes. We will need to consult on this, but as with any appeals process, there will be the provision that grade adjustments can be made up or down on the basis of an understanding of the outcome of appeals. However, I go back to my earlier point that we will need to consult and ask for professional and public opinion on our approach to appeals.

There is the possibility of increased numbers going through the examination series in November, January and March and into summer 2021. We will minimise the broad impact on the public purse by operating within the exam timetable that would exist for learners anyway, but there will be an increase in the marking requirements. It is difficult to predict at this point the likely number of candidates who will choose to take up those opportunities to sit examinations. Over time, that information might become available to us, but I would not like to predict a number at this point.

On your point about the treatment of centres, the performance of centres does vary over time, but, as a whole, it does not vary to a great degree. It is unlikely that a school with significant poor performance will change radically outside broad centre averages with inside tolerance. However, as I said, we will need to consider those teacher professional judgements where centres believe that there was movement at a subject level inside the operation. We will look at a particular qualification — GCSE mathematics, for example — and consider the impact that that might have on the overall model. However, in my experience in this role, at the full cohort level, centres do not move to a great degree over time.

Mr M Bradley: Thank you very much, Justin, for those answers and for the very comprehensive answers that you have supplied all afternoon.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Justin, I have a very quick closing question. Comparability with Great Britain has been at the forefront of your work. With regard to comparability with Ireland, it is my understanding that the Irish Government are awarding 100% for language oral examinations and for music and home economics practical exams. Have you factored that into your work?

Mr Edwards: I understand that the State Examination Commission (SEC) has provided the full mark for certain components in its examination series. If an examination series, or a component, is heavily disrupted, this is a known procedure that has been used before. For example, if a school was disrupted because a significant event happened on its site and it was unable to proceed with a performance or examination, it would be normal for the awarding organisation to make provision for that missed component. I believe that that is the approach being taken by the SEC, but, for any more detail on that, you would have to take that up with the SEC.

With regard to North/South mobility, we have engaged with the Irish University Association to understand the model. We have positive feedback that as long as we have evidence of maintaining standards over time, it understands the unprecedented and difficult circumstances and accepts that a calculated grade is a reasonable outcome in order to provide awards to students to allow them to continue to consider entering higher education in the South.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Does that not mean that a student in the North who has completed language oral examinations or music and home economics practical examinations and received a percentage mark is at a disadvantage compared with a student in the South who has received 100% for the same examinations?

Mr Edwards: I do not believe that that would be the case. My understanding is that the SEC operates on a point-based normalised system, so the normalised distribution will still apply in the South. There would not be any advantage or disadvantage to either group of candidates.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): OK. We are under strict time restrictions and have to take evidence from the Department of Education now, Justin. Let me say a very sincere thank you for the time that you have given us today. I am sure that you will be glad to receive further written correspondence from us after the session. I am very grateful for your time.

Mr Edwards: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, and thank you to the Committee.