

6 April 2009

**TO ALL OCR NATIONALS TEACHERS**

Dear Colleague

There has been a great deal of communication directly with OCR and on our teacher e-community websites about a recent Ofsted report on the teaching of ICT called 'The Importance of ICT'. The report contains a number of criticisms of what it terms 'vocational qualifications' in IT. Subsequent coverage in the TES claimed that an unnamed source had stated that concerns in the report were mainly levelled at our OCR Nationals in ICT.

We were heartened by the outrage expressed by many teachers and would like to thank them for taking the trouble to express their concerns at the apparent maligning of a qualification which has become a byword for excellence in providing learners with a challenging, applied approach to ICT. Teachers said the report's findings simply didn't chime with their own experiences.

I contacted Ofsted to express our concerns and they were most helpful in agreeing to a meeting to discuss the report. This meeting took place last week and we took the opportunity to make plain our concerns. We pointed out that the report covers a period 2005-2008 during which, for the majority of the period, OCR Nationals were not an established qualification. We were concerned that delivery issues were wrongly linked to issues of qualification design and we were scrupulous in pointing out that many of the examples simply could not be applied to OCR Nationals (the suggestion for example, that certain vocational qualifications typically attract the same number of league table points as 4 GCSEs). We were also keen to get across the wealth of evidence we have of teachers using Nationals as a tool for providing best practice in ICT. We wondered if there was a prejudice in favour of GCSE – a position which did not seem to be born out in the evidence provided.

Ofsted was able to confirm that it did not give the TES the names of any examination boards. Ofsted also made it clear to us that the report is careful not to name boards or schools. It draws on evidence from a broad sample of practice across many schools, which included observations on the delivery of a wide range of different qualifications.

We were grateful for this clarification and will continue to undertake our own monitoring and evaluation of all our 14-19 ICT qualifications. This is particularly critical over the coming months as we develop a new IT GCSE, and as we begin the development of a new generation of OCR Nationals in line with the introduction of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework. These redevelopments will involve some of the most in-depth research and widespread consultations OCR has ever undertaken and we look forward to working with many of you to make some of our best qualifications even better.

Once again, thank you for the ongoing commitment and real passion that you have shown.

Best wishes

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Steer', written in a cursive style.

Paul Steer  
Director  
Stakeholder Relations