

To: The Telegraph Newspaper

28 January 2013

PRESERVE AS LEVEL IN ITS CURRENT FORM

SIR - We write as the Admissions Forum of the University of Cambridge in support of AS Level in its current form, that is, a public examination sat at the end of the first year of Sixth Form study that contributes to a full A Level qualification.

Public examinations at the end of Year 12 provide students and their advisers with an objective and meaningful measure of how well the transition from GCSE to Sixth Form study has been made. These results indicate progress and enable students to make informed decisions about which subjects to focus on in Year 13 and beyond.

Because these results are received shortly before university applications are made, they give young people, their teachers and families a transparent and understandable means to gauge how high they should pitch their university ambitions. Good results give students from all backgrounds the confidence to compete for a place at highly selective universities, including our own. They both reduce reliance upon grade predictions and also enable schools and colleges appropriately to hold the line in the face of pressure to raise predicted grades unrealistically.

Our research shows us that AS marks achieved at the end of Year 12 are the best single indicator of a student's success at Cambridge. Set alongside the full range of indicators which we consider, they enable us properly and fairly to assess applications. Neither GCSEs nor admissions tests come close to matching the effectiveness of Year 12 AS marks in this regard. If Year 12 examinations disappear, university entry will become less fair.

We note that OFQUAL's report on its recent consultation states, "All stakeholder groups strongly supported retaining the AS qualification and its relationship with A2."

We urge the Government to retain public examinations at the end of Year 12.

Yours,

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Dr M Sewell Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges and Selwyn College

Dr P Fara Associate Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee with responsibility for admissions, and Clare College.

and:

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