# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Oideachas

### Fiosrú ar Mharcáil an Scrúdaithe Ceimice Ard Leibhéal

*Foilsithe ar a 12.00 meán Iae Dé Céadaoin 2 Feabhra 2011*

**An tAire Oideachais (Ms Ruane)**: Ba mhaith liom a chur in iúl do bhaill an Tionóil toradh an fhiosraithe um theip an phróisis mharcála Chomhairle Churaclaim, Scrúdúcháin agus Measúnaithe (CCEA). Baineann sé leis an pháipéar scrúdaithe ceimice leibhéal A2 a rinneadh i samhradh 2010.

Tháinig CCEA ar an eolas ar 20 Lúnasa 2010 gur tugadh marcanna míchearta sa chuid ilroghnach den pháipéar scrúdaithe A2 Ceimice. Fuair 151 dalta ó thuaisceart na hÉireann gráid níos ísle ná mar a bhí tuillte acu mar gheall air seo.

Cé gur thug CCEA faoin scéal láithreach le gráid chearta a eisiúint agus lena chinntiú nach raibh dalta ar bith faoi mhíbhuntáiste, d'iarr mé ar an Oifig um Rialú Cáilíochtaí agus Scrúdúcháin (Ofqual) – rialtóir neamhspleách cháilíochtaí, scrúdúcháin agus measúnachtaí i Sasana agus rialtóir na ngairmcháilíochtaí i dtuaisceart na hÉireann – d'iarr mé fiosrú seachtrach iomlán a dhéanamh. Bhí dhá chéim ag baint leis an fhiosrú.

B'ionann Céim 1 agus fiosrú láithreach a raibh mar chuspóir aige fáil amach cad é go díreach a tharla, cén fáth ar tharla an teip seo, cad é mar a fuarthas é, cén dóigh ar cuireadh na comhlachtaí ábhartha ar an eolas faoi, cé mhéad iarrthóir a bhí i gceist agus ina dhiaidh sin, tuairisc agus moltaí a dhéanamh don Roinn ar bhearta a chur i bhfeidhm.

## Education

### Chemistry A Level Marking Investigation

*Published at 12:00 noon on Wednesday 2 February 2011*

**The Minister of Education (Ms Ruane)**: I wish to advise Assembly members of the outcome of the investigation of the failure in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) marking process in relation to a summer 2010 A2 level chemistry paper.

On 20 August 2010 CCEA became aware that incorrect marks had been awarded in the multiple choice section of an A2 Chemistry paper. This resulted in 151 students from the north of Ireland receiving lower grades than they should have.

Whilst immediate action was taken by CCEA to issue correct grades and ensure that no student was disadvantaged, in view of this serious marking failure I appointed the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) – the independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and of vocational qualifications in the North of Ireland – to undertake a full external investigation. The investigation was undertaken in two stages.

Stage 1 was an immediate investigation to identify and record what went wrong, how the failure occurred, how it was discovered, how it was communicated to all relevant bodies, how many candidates were affected, with a report and recommendations for immediate action to the Department.

Cuireadh tuarascáil Chéim 1 i gcrích ag deireadh Mí Mheán Fómhair 2010, agus socraíodh gur tharla meancóg mharcála an scrúdaithe Ard Leibhéal Ceimice CCEA mar gheall ar chomhcheangal easpaí sna córais phróiseála, sna socruithe rialaithe cáilíochta, mar gheall ar earráid dhaonna agus réimse thosca rannpháirteacha eile.

The Stage 1 report was completed at the end of September 2010, and concluded that the marking error in the CCEA A level Chemistry examination occurred due a combination of deficiencies in CCEA's processing systems, quality control arrangements, human error and a range of other contributory factors.

Rinneadh 12 mholadh sa tuairisc, agus bhí aird phráinneach le thabhairt ar chuid mhór acu le hullmhú a dhéanamh do shraith scrúduithe an gheimhridh. Dhírigh sé isteach ar cheisteanna um oiriúnacht don fheidhm a bhaineann le bogearra Optical Mark Reader (OMR); dhírigh sé ar shlándáil an bhunachair OMR (le heaspa feidhme den rian iniúchta curtha san áireamh leis), ar leorgacht na nósanna rialúcháin dearbhaithe atá ann faoi láthair; ar struchtúr agus imdháileadh na bhfreagrachtaí laistigh den rann a phróiseálann leatháin na bhfreagraí; dhírigh sé ar cén dóigh a ndéantar measúnú ar na ceisteanna ilroghnacha le linn an phróisis mharcála; agus ar na comhghnásanna um chumarsáid a dhéantar idir na húdaráis rialúcháin.

The report made 12 recommendations, many of them for immediate attention in preparation for the winter examination series and with a particular focus on addressing concerns about the fitness for purpose of the current Optical Mark Reader (OMR) software; security of the OMR database (including the lack of any audit trail function), the adequacy of existing control and assurance procedures; the structure and allocation of responsibilities within the section responsible for processing OMR answer sheets; how multiple choice components are considered during the awarding process; and protocols in communicating within and between regulatory authorities.

Leis an eolas a fuarthas i gCéim 1, Leanadh le hathbhreithniú mionshonraithe ar nósanna oibre agus cleachta inmheánacha an Fhorais Cháiliúcháin CCEA, Díríodh isteach ar chórais agus ar nósanna oibre chomh maith le díriú ar bhainisteoireacht, ar rialúchán, ar dhearbhú cáilíochta agus ar ghéilliúntas. Bhí sé ina phríomhaidhm ag an chéim seo na laigí a aithint agus moltaí a dhéanamh ar bhearta a dhéanamh lena chinntiú nach dtarlódh teipeanna dá leithéid sin arís.

Informed by the findings of Stage 1, Stage 2 was a more detailed review of processes and practices within CCEA Awarding Body focusing on systems and processes as well as management, control, quality assurance and compliance. The main aim of this Stage was to identify any weaknesses and make recommendations on measures to be taken to ensure that similar failures do not recur.

Fuarthas tuarascáil Chéim 2 ó Ofqual i Mí na Samhna 2010 agus socraíodh go bhfuil córais agus nósanna oibre ag CCEA a bhfuil bunús maith leo, agus a bhfuil oiriúnacht don fheidhm i gcoitinne leo. Rinneadh naoi moladh áfach, a raibh mar aidhm acu teip san am atá le teacht a laghdú. Cuireadh san áireamh leis seo mar a leanas:

The Stage 2 report was received from Ofqual in November 2010 and concluded that CCEA has well documented systems and procedures which are generally fit for purpose. However it made nine recommendations intended to help minimise the possibility of future failures. These included:

- Athbhreithniú ar nósanna oibre lena chinntiú go bhfuil siad oiriúnach don fheidhm agus go soláthraítear sainmhíniú soiléir ar róil agus freagrachtaí na foirne maidir leis an phróiseas scrúdúcháin;
- a review of procedures to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and provide a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the examinations process;

- Athbhreithniú ar na próisis a bhfuil sé mar chuspóir acu imscrúdú a dhéanamh arc é acu a chloíonn na hacmhainní atá dírithe ar an obair seo leis na nósanna oibre agus leis na riachtanais rialaithe nó nach gcloíonn;
- Measúnú riosca uileghabhálach a dhéanamh maidir le seachadadh thorthaí na GCSEanna nua i samhradh 2011 - go mbeidh na torthaí sin cuí agus cothrom agus seachadta faoin am sonraithe; agus
- Athbhreithniú ar na socruithe rialúcháin maidir le feidhm CCEA mar fhoras cáiliúcháin.

Is é ar dhírigh mé air, agus na tuairiscí seo faighte agam, ná gníomhaíocht dhian thráthúil ó CCEA a chinntiú mar fhreagairt ar na torthaí taighde agus ar na moltaí atá iontu. D'iarr mé plean gníomhartha mionsonraithe a fhorbairt mar sin de leis na moltaí atá sna tuairiscí Ofqual a chur i bhfeidhm agus feabhsúcháin a sheachadadh le cinntiú go ritheann scrúduithe todhchaí go rianúil. Tá mé sásta anois gurb ann don phlean cuí.

Níl ann ach céim sa treo ceart an plean ceart a bheith againn ar ndóigh. Is é an fíordhúshlán ná a chinntiú go gcuirtear na gníomhuithe agus na hidirghabhálacha atá ann i bhfeidhm mar is ceart. Is dúshlán é sin is mian liom go mbeadh CCEA agus a Chomhairle dáiríre faoi. Caithfidh siad a chinntiú go bhfuil dlúthmhonatóireacht á déanamh ar gach gníomh. Le fírinne, ní mór dóibh dul níos faide ná é sin, ag cinntiú dóibh go gcoinnítear gach gné de phróiseas na scrúduithe faoi athbhreithniú agus go bhfuil feabhsú leanúnach sna próisis sin. Leoga, fáiltím roimh an dul chun cinn atá déanta cheana féin maidir leis na nósanna imeachta a dhaingniú roimh shraith scrúduithe an gheimhridh atá idir lámha faoi láthair.

Tá sé de cheart ag daltaí agus ag a gcuid múinteoirí bheith ag dréim go n-oibreoidh gach céim de phróiseas na scrúduithe mar is ceart – mar atá an obair a bhaineann le páipéir scrúduithe a shocrú; an lóistíocht a bhaineann le hiad a sheoladh chuig na hiarrthóirí agus iad a fháil ar ais arís; na próisis mharcála; agus na socruithe maidir le fios a chur ar na hiarrthóirí faoi na torthaí. Tá mé ag súil go mbeidh mé ábalta a dhearbhú dóibh gurb amhlaidh atá.

- a review of processes for checking adherence to procedures and regulatory requirements and resources dedicated to this work;
- a comprehensive risk assessment in relation to the delivery, on time, of fair and accurate results for the new GCSEs in summer 2011; and
- a review of governance arrangements in relation to the awarding body function of CCEA.

My focus, having received these reports, has been to ensure rigorous and timely action from CCEA in response to the findings and recommendations they contain. I therefore required the development of a detailed action plan designed to implement the recommendations in the Ofqual reports and deliver improvements to ensure that future examinations run smoothly. I am now satisfied that an appropriate plan is in place.

Having the right plan in place is of course only a step in the right direction. The real challenge is in ensuring that the actions and interventions it contains are fully implemented. That challenge is one that I expect CCEA and its Council to take seriously. They must ensure that there is close monitoring of every action. Indeed they must go further than that, ensuring that all aspects of the examinations process are kept under review and that there is continuous improvement in those processes. Indeed, I welcome the progress that has already been made in tightening up procedures in advance of the winter examination series that is currently underway.

Pupils and their teachers quite reasonably expect that every step of the examinations process – the work associated with setting examinations papers; the logistics of getting them to candidates and back again; the marking processes; and the arrangements for communicating results to candidates – will work properly. I expect to be able to assure them that this is indeed the case.

Mar gheall air sin, beidh mo Roinn ag déanamh dlúthmhonatóireachta ar an dul chun cinn, beidh cruinnithe míosúla á n-eagrú againn idir seo agus sraith scrúduithe an tsamhraidh. Is mian liom a chinntiú go bhfaighimid dearbhuithe rialta go bhfuil CCEA ag leanúint ar aghaidh leis na céimeanna riachtanacha a ghlacadh leis an réimse iomlán de ghníomhaíocht leasúcháin a chur i bhfeidhm a shainaithnítear sna tuairiscí.

For that reason, my Department will also be monitoring progress very closely, holding monthly meetings between now and the summer examination series. I want to ensure that we receive regular assurances that CCEA is continuing to take all necessary steps to implement the full range of remedial action identified in the reports.

Nuair a d'fhógair mé an fiosrú seachtrach i Mí Lúnasa seo chuaigh thart, thug mé tiomantas maidir leis na tuairiscí a sholáthair Ofqual a dhéanamh poiblí chomh luath agus a bhí mé in ann freagairt CCEA a dhéanamh poiblí chomh maith. Bhí a fhios agam gur mhaith leis na baill – mar aon le daltaí, tuismitheoirí agus múinteoirí – fios a bheith acu ní amháin faoi na laigí ach faoin dóigh a rabhthas ag dul i ngleic leo. Caithfidh mic léinn, tuismitheoirí, múinteoirí agus an pobal i gcoitinne muinín a bheith acu as ár gcóras scrúduithe.

When I announced the external investigation last August, I gave a commitment to making public the reports provided by Ofqual as soon as I was in a position also to make public the CCEA response. I knew that members – along with pupils, parents and teachers – would want to know not only what the failings were but also how they were being addressed. Students, parents, teachers and the wider community need to have confidence in our examinations system.

Is é sin an fáth a bhfuil mé ag déanamh na tuairiscí Ofqual poiblí inniu, mar aon leis an phlean gníomhaíochta a ceapadh leis an dóigh a bhfuil CCEA ag dul i ngleic le gach ceann de na moltaí a rinneadh. Tá tacar iomlán cáipéisí ar fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne Oideachais agus cuireadh cóipeanna díobh i leabharlann an Tionóil fosta.

That is why today I am making public both the Ofqual reports and the action plan designed to set out how CCEA is addressing each one of the recommendations made. The full set of documents is available on the Department of Education website and copies have also been placed in the Assembly library.

Athraíonn an fócas anois le cinntiú go bhfuil agus go mbeidh beart á dhéanamh le háirithiú nach féidir ateagmhas d'earráidí den chineál chéanna amach anseo. Is é sin an rud a mbíonn daltaí, múinteoirí agus tuismitheoirí ag dúil leis agus is é an rud a éilím, mar Aire.

The focus now shifts to ensuring that action has and is being taken to ensure that there can be no recurrence of similar errors in the future. That is what pupils, teachers and parents expect and it is what I, as Minister, demand.