



**Media release**

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**For immediate release**

**UK Mathematical Societies' support for new Maths A-level**

The UK's learned and professional societies for mathematics today underlined their support for a new A-level aimed at students who want to be able to apply mathematical methods rather than focus on mathematical theory.

The London Mathematical Society (LMS) and the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA) do not support a report published today by a group of academics who criticised the proposed *Use of Mathematics* A-level. Instead, the societies believe the new A-level would create new opportunities enabling more students to carry on with their mathematical studies beyond the age of 16 by offering a route which reflects their interests and abilities.

Professor Alice Rogers, Vice President of the LMS, said, "This report overlooks those pupils who could benefit from carrying on with mathematics after GCSE, but who would struggle with A-level. The LMS and IMA believe that it is better to provide a separate qualification rather than risk diluting A-level to accommodate these pupils.

"Many of those who cannot cope with Maths A-level will be able to get A-levels in other subjects. It seems unfortunate if such people are to be excluded from gaining an A-level which extends their mathematics."

England allows pupils to drop the study of mathematics after GCSE, which is unusually early compared to the rest of the world. An A-level such as the proposed *Use of Mathematics* seems the best way to ensure that as many as possible continue some study of mathematics.

Professor Nigel Steele, Honorary Secretary of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, said that whilst there is a danger that some students might choose the A-level as 'easy option' or that some schools stop offering the traditional Mathematics A-level, these risks can be countered.

He explained, "Schools and colleges which provide *Use of Mathematics* A-level should be closely monitored, with uptake gradual, to ensure that the intake is from a group of learners who would not normally have chosen to study mathematics beyond GCSE, and that it does not draw pupils who would normally have taken A-Level Mathematics."

Both societies urged that pupils must be given appropriate information, advice and guidance so that they choose carefully between A-Level *Mathematics* and *Use of Mathematics* with full knowledge of the suitability of each qualification for progression routes to Higher Education and employment. They said it is vital that pupils capable of A-level mathematics do not choose *Use of Mathematics* and that schools and colleges do not decide to simplify their teaching by offering only *Use of Mathematics*.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is running a consultation on the proposals for the new A-level, closing on 13 July 2009.

## Notes for Editors

1. The **London Mathematical Society (LMS)** is the UK's learned society for mathematics. Founded in 1865 for the promotion and extension of mathematical knowledge, the Society is concerned with all branches of mathematics and its applications. It is an independent and self-financing charity, with a membership of over 2600 drawn from all parts of the UK and overseas. Its principal activities are the organisation of meetings and conferences, the publication of periodicals and books, the provision of financial support for mathematical activities, and the contribution to public debates on issues related to mathematics research and education. It works collaboratively with other mathematical bodies worldwide. It is the UK adhering body to the International Mathematical Union.

2. The **Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA)** is the learned and professional society for mathematics. It promotes mathematics research, education and careers, and the use of mathematics in business, industry and commerce. Amongst its activities the IMA produces academic journals, organises conferences, and engages with government. Founded in 1964, the Institute has 5,000 members. Forty percent of members are employed in education (schools through to universities), and the other 60% work in commercial, industrial and governmental organisations. In 1990 the Institute was incorporated by Royal Charter and was subsequently granted the right to award Chartered Mathematician designation.

3. The LMS and IMA are members of the **Council for the Mathematical Sciences**, which also comprises the Royal Statistical Society, the Edinburgh Mathematical Society and the Operational Research Society.

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