

Lord Tarassenko CBE FREng FMedSci
President, Reuben College
Professor of Electrical Engineering



16th July 2025

The Lord Mair CBE
House of Lords Science & Technology Committee
Via e-mail

Dear Robert,

I thought it might be worthwhile highlighting a significant difference between the figures in the letter which you wrote as Chair of the Select Committee and those in the Maths Horizons Project's [full report](#).

Firstly, you used the figure of 30% to represent the number of students who do not pass GCSE maths even after resits. Our report used 'around 80%' as the number who do pass, based on the following government data for the last 3 years (source: [gov.uk data](#)):

This is the latest data

'Attainment by characteristics - ages 16 to 25' for GCSE and by age 19 in England between 2021/22 and 2023/24

Move and reorder table headers

		2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Attained Level 2 Maths	GCSE			
	Number	454,222	453,124	429,655
	Percentage	78.99%	80.80%	79.08%

Secondly, your letter reports expert concerns on GCSE Maths regulation meaning that 'we have to have around a third of people failing by design'. By contrast, our report identifies an upward trend in GCSE Maths standard pass rates from the mid-1990s to now, rising from around 50% (see page 7 of [GCSE Trends 1998-2016*](#)) to around 80% (as shown above) of students achieving a standard pass (previously a grade C, now a grade 4) by the end of schooling. Based on this data we have expressed much more optimism that improvement is not only possible with the GCSE, but also that significant improvement has already taken place and that the trajectory is a positive one.

Yours sincerely,

Lionel

Professor Lord Tarassenko CBE FREng FMedSci
Chair, [Maths Horizons](#)

David Monis Weston FCCT (AI Lead & Co-Lead)

*Note that the figures quoted in this report (around 45-48% during the 1990s) are based on results in those years at age 16, but the volumes of retakes at that time were significantly lower than now, so the figure for age19 will only be a little higher (albeit not available in a report), leading us to write 'around 50%' at age 19.