

News story: National Reference Test 2018

Today, 18 September 2017, Ofqual has announced that the next, annual National Reference Test will be held between 19 February and 2 March 2018. Our test supplier, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), is contacting about 350 schools that have been selected to take part in this year's test to make arrangements.

Commenting on the first annual test held in February and March 2017, Sally Collier, Ofqual's Chief Regulator said:

Thank you again to all the 341 schools and nearly 18,000 GCSE students who took part in the first test, earlier this year. We have completed the analysis of this year's test and we are very satisfied with the quality of the information that it has provided. Nearly all schools that had been asked to take part did so and this was a major contributor to the quality of the information we obtained. I would ask all schools that are contacted for the test in 2018 to take part. Thank you in advance for your support.

Each year a sample of GCSE students will take the same test so it will show, over time, if there is any change in how students perform at a national level. Results from the test will only be used to measure changes in performance nationally. There will be no results for individual students or schools.

We would expect to see an improvement in early National Reference Test results as student and teacher familiarity with the new English language and maths GCSEs increases. This, alongside the need to compare the performance of student cohorts over several years, means that we expect it will be 2019 at the earliest before exam boards will start to use the information from the National Reference Test when they award GCSEs.

For more information about the test, please visit the [National Reference Test document collection](#).

For more information about the National Foundation for Educational Research please visit [the NFER website](#).

Press release: PM statement: 20th anniversary of Welsh devolution

It has been 20 years since Wales made the historic decision to create its National Assembly and, in that time, we have seen some significant changes to the way in which Wales is governed.

I am pleased that my government has made an important contribution to Wales's devolution journey. We enacted the Wales Act earlier this year which delivers a new devolution settlement for Wales, further powers to the Assembly and the Welsh Government and making clearer their areas of responsibility. We have also agreed a fiscal framework with the Welsh Government that secures fair levels of funding for Wales for the longer term and paves the way for the Assembly to take responsibility for Welsh Rates of Income Tax in two years' time.

The Welsh economy has also acquired an international reputation for excellence. I took the CEO of Aston Martin to Japan with me where the company signed a £500 million deal which will help safeguard jobs in Wales and open new possibilities for future deals with Japan.

We also saw the signing of the Cardiff City Region Deal and Swansea Bay Region City Deal bringing in millions of pounds of investment and creating thousands of jobs, helping provide real opportunities for growth and prosperity in Wales.

We have also announced the abolition of Severn tolls which is a vital investment artery into Wales which will boost the economy of South Wales by around £100 million a year.

We are now engaged in another historic mission which will see the UK leave the European Union and start the process of bringing a range of new powers back from Brussels to UK shores.

I have been clear that throughout this process we will negotiate as one United Kingdom, taking due account of the specific interests of every nation and region of the UK.□

I will continue to engage with the devolved administrations as we seek a deal that secures the specific interests of the people and governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as those of all parts of England.

Wales will always have a voice at the negotiating table.

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Turkey

2012 – 2016 Dublin, Her Majesty's Ambassador 2011 Tehran, Her Majesty's Ambassador 2008 – 2009 Washington, Deputy Head of Mission 2006 – 2007 Colombo, High Commissioner and non-Resident High Commissioner to the Republic of Maldives 2003 – 2006 FCO, Director Europe (bilateral relations and resources) 2002 – 2003 FCO, Director of Iraq Policy Unit 1998 – 2002 Brussels, UK Permanent Representation to the EU, Counsellor for External relations 1996 – 1998 FCO, Assistant Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary 1993 – 1995 Lisbon, Head of Political section 1990 – 1992 FCO, Desk Officer for EU regional policy and Gibraltar, Europe Directorate 1988 – 1989 FCO, Head of Section, Central Africa Department 1985 – 1988 Ankara, Third then Second Secretary Chancery 1984 Full time language training (Turkish) 1982 – 1983 FCO Assistant Desk Officer, Southern Africa Department 1982 Joined FCO

Press release: Ice cream director out in the cold for accounting records failure

Robert Scappaticci, who acted as a director of Gerards Ice Cream Co Ltd, has been disqualified for six years and six months for failing to ensure that the company maintained or preserved adequate accounting records.

The company, which also included fast food outlets, went into Voluntary Liquidation on 15 September 2014 with an estimated deficiency of £373,839. However, six months prior to liquidation, the ownership of a chip shop was transferred to a third party. Without adequate accounting records it was not possible to verify the terms of sale or the extent to which the chip shop business may have been an asset in the liquidation.

As a result, it is possible that a number of creditors were denied money owed to them.

The disqualification undertaking given by Scappaticci on 2 June 2017 prevents him from directly or indirectly becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company for the duration of the term.

Commenting on the disqualification, Robert Clarke, Group Leader of Insolvent Investigations at The Insolvency Service, said:

In this particular case, the director transferred a valuable

company asset, without ensuring the company operated in a transparent way by providing sufficient records to explain the transfer. As a result, innocent creditors may have lost out.

This disqualification should serve as a reminder to other company directors tempted to operate in a similar way, that the Insolvency Service will rigorously pursue enforcement action and seek to remove them from the market place.

Notes to editors

Scappaticci's date of birth is 20 September 1974 and he resides in Didsbury, Manchester.

Gerards Ice Cream Co Ltd (CR0 No. 03710255) was incorporated on 9 February 1999 and traded from William Street, Ardwick, Manchester. The company traded as an Ice Cream manufacturer and wholesaler whilst also retailing both ice cream and fast food from various sites in Manchester.

Scappaticci's Undertaking was accepted by the Secretary of State on 05 June 2017 and his period of disqualification will commence on 26 June 2017

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Press release: Ministers bang the drum for British tech in Nordic countries and Asia

- Culture Secretary backs UK digital economy at leading Nordic tech hubs
- Digital Minister takes cyber trade mission to tap huge markets in Singapore and promote UK fintech sector in Tokyo

Karen Bradley will travel to Finland and Sweden where she will set out the Government's commitment to growing the UK's digital economy which is already worth more than £118 billion a year and employs more than 1.4 million people.

Matt Hancock will be leading a trade mission of UK cyber firms to Singapore and follow the Prime Minister's recent trip to Japan with another ministerial visit to the country to deepen ties and build new trade connections.

Both will promote the benefits of investing in the UK and the benefits of collaboration with UK companies. They will set out that the UK remains a strong place for investment with particular strengths across the tech sector, including in AI, govtech, gaming and cyber security, and that the 2017 Tech Nation report placed the figure for tech investment in the UK at £6.8bn.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Karen Bradley said:

Britain has become an undisputed European hub for tech investment, with twice as much investment in tech as any other European country, and plans set out in our recent Digital Strategy will help make sure this continues. I'll be in Finland and Sweden to showcase and promote the UK's booming digital economy and outline how deeper collaboration with our world-leading companies can benefit both regions.

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

The UK is a world leader in cyber security and our industry is thriving with exports worth nearly £1.5 billion last year. I'm determined to help the next generation of firms grow as we build a truly global Britain and hope to make real progress by leading a delegation including some of the nation's most innovative businesses.

Tech firm growth in the UK is spread right across the country, with more than two thirds of UK investment in the sector outside London last year. The

ministers will say that since 2001 new technologies have created 3.5m new jobs in the UK and London has more people working in fintech than any other city in the world – standing at 44,000 in 2016.

The Nordic region is the fastest growing start-up region in Europe, so the Secretary of State will:

- meet investors and companies at two of the region's leading tech hubs: Helsinki's Start-up Sauna, which includes Leadfeeder, a start-up with partners in the UK, and Stockholm's Sup46, which produced Skype and Spotify and brought a delegation to London Tech Week in June this year.
- visit established telecoms company Ericsson where she will promote further cooperation in next generation mobile technology, 5G. The UK is at the forefront of testing and trialing the technology and Swedish firm Ericsson is currently collaborating on one of the Government's £16 5G test networks at King's College in London, announced earlier this year.
- highlight the UK's expertise as she visits Finland's Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats and Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency. This follows a recent Swedish delegation visiting the UK's world-leading National Cyber Security Centre.

The UK is a world leader in cyber security and committed to working with like-minded partners to target and defend against threats. The cyber security sector in Britain has grown from an estimated £2.8bn in 2011 to £22 billion in 2015. The UK's cyber security workforce has increased by 160 per cent since 2011.

Digital Minister Matt Hancock will:

- lead a UK cyber security delegation, including companies such as Deep Secure, Digital Shadows, Immersive Labs and NNC Group, to Singapore International Cyber Week at the GovWare Conference. In the same week DiT and InnovateUK will also lead other trade missions to the TechInnovation event.
- open the Singapore International Cyber Week to engage an audience of international ministers on the UK's priorities and showcase the UK as a world leader in digital, tech and cyber innovation.
- visit Japan to celebrate the work of the UK's hugely successful video games industry on a visit to Sega, the nation's leadership in digital innovation as he visits Sony, and promote the country's fintech, AI, robotics and 5G sectors.

The Government's recent Digital Strategy followed the Government's Industrial Strategy which aims to create an economy that helps Britain secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

The Industrial Strategy is about finding and seizing the opportunities to work more productively to create the conditions that boost earning power for everyone throughout the UK – its people, places and companies.

The ministers will also make the point the UK is an excellent place to visit and receives more than 1 million visits from Sweden and Finland combined to the every year and more than 400,000 from Japan and Singapore.

Notes to editors

Media enquiries – accredited journalists only: DCMS News and Communications team – 020 7211 2210