

Over the past year many centres have been piloting GNVQs for the various awarding bodies, either at Level 2 or Level 3 in one of five subject areas:

- Art and Design;
- Business;
- Health and Social Care;
- Leisure and Tourism; and
- Manufacturing.

At Whitby Community College in North Yorkshire we have been involved in the pilot for Art and Design 2 and 3, Health and Social Care 2 and 3 and Leisure and Tourism 3. In particular, I have been responsible for the Health and Social Care 3.

### ■ Structure

The award of a GNVQ is based on the quality of the student's own work and the amount of extra effort and resourcefulness they have put into it, as shown by their portfolio of evidence, in respect of planning, information seeking and handling and, in the case of Level 3, also evaluation.

### ■ The Course

It is up to teachers to devise a programme for the students based upon the units. However, it is not necessary to simply teach each unit individually, indeed we are encouraged to devise exercises that use areas of several units together. However, this calls for careful paperwork since the student needs to be able to produce evidence that they have completed each unit.

The teacher delivering the units is less of a teacher and more of a facilitator since the students are encouraged to work for themselves, devise programmes of study and seek help from outside agencies to further their knowledge. This is something that should be considered from the outset since costs of visits need building into the budget. We have found outside agencies very helpful and always willing to co-operate. For instance, with the Health and Social Care course we have involved various departments at the local hospital, district nurses, school nurses, social workers, old peoples homes, day centres, sheltered housing, environmental health, playgroups, health promotion, etc. The list of suitable visits is restricted only by the local environment. In addition, students are

encouraged to spend one day a week on various work placements.

GNVQ is a completely new way of working for many teachers and therefore time needs to be made available at the start of the course and at intervals throughout for staff development. It is also easier if more than one teacher is involved in the delivery to help develop ideas, and regular team meetings are essential. It is also essential that students are given sufficient time for the course, in particular, regular tutorials to discuss progress should be part of the timetable. If the course is seen as equivalent to four GCSEs (Level 2) or two A-levels (Level 3) then an equivalent amount of time should be allocated to the course. At our particular school students are also encouraged to take additional GCSEs or another A-level to ensure a broad outlook.

During our piloting of the course we found the problem of time one of our largest headaches since we had not allowed sufficient time for the course and we have now worked to improve the allocation. Paperwork has also caused a few problems, however we are improving on this by developing paperwork that fulfils several requirements at once. However, we must always bear in mind that the verifier (GNVQ-speak for moderator/assessor) needs to see evidence that the student has completed all aspects of the range — although this may not be written, it could be video or taped evidence.

### ■ Student Reaction

Throughout the pilot we have found the student motivated by the different approach to work that GNVQ demands and we are finding many students now staying on in the sixth form who would not have wanted an A-level course, but who do enjoy the vocational element of GNVQ. However, the work is a big step from GCSE and we find an induction programme invaluable in developing in the students the skills required for them to be more responsible for their own learning.

As with many schools we have in the past had pupils on A-level courses who are not really suited to them and who will complete the course without attaining a grade. In the past these students have not visibly achieved anything. However, now, even if a student does not gain a complete GNVQ they are accredited with all the units that they have completed. This means that they can either use these units as qualifications towards a job, or further

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Anne Noble,  
Whitby Community  
College, North Yorkshire



education, or stay on at school to complete the units for the GNVQ. There is no set time-scale for completing the GNVQ so some students may even complete at night class in the future after beginning a job.

### ■ The Future

The interest in GNVQs from this year's intake into the sixth form has grown enormously as they have seen the work done with the pilot groups. In addition, as we have gone out into the community looking for help with delivery the interest has been overwhelming, with many of the people we went to for visits now enrolling on the courses. This year we have a very large group of mature students and we feel that we really are a community college now, serving many aspects of the community. These students also bring different perspectives with them and help our usual sixth form students, which to a large extent is part of the ethos of GNVQ. In fact this year GNVQ courses are so successful that our main restraint is the timetable and providing the staff to deliver the courses.

As head of a Home Economic department, I have been worried about the viability of the A-level Home Economics course, in particular with the advent of Design and Technology since the present A-level does not sit happily as an extension to this course. I am therefore delighted with the GNVQ Health and Social Care Level 3 which provides a sixth form course in a related field, but not dependent on previous work.

In addition, piloting this year is a course that I do see as a good extension of Design and Technology, and this is the GNVQ in Hospitality and Catering. This course does not require a catering kitchen, but can easily be completed in any Home Economics room, using placements in industry as necessary, and I look forward to introducing it in 1995 as a natural lead on from GCSE Design and Technology.

In conclusion, many new initiatives receive a lukewarm welcome and never really come to anything. AS-level courses have not been welcomed very warmly by students. However, this could not be said to be the case with GNVQ. We have been amazed at the response from the students and inundated with requests from other schools for information. Higher education has shown an active interest and compacts have been developed between our school and a local university and college. I can only conclude that GNVQs are here to stay and a way forward for many of our students.