

## NCC Update

In November 1991 Kenneth Clarke, the then Secretary of State for Education, requested the National Curriculum Council to consider the case for revising the Technology Order. Discussions with educationalists and evidence from HMI revealed considerable problems in the implementation of the Order.

On 2nd June 1992, following NCC advice, the Secretary of State launched a review of the Technology Order.

Information Technology (AT5) was not part of the review.

The review was carried out by a small team of HMI with representation from NCC and, following their report, the Secretary of State published his proposals for a new Technology Order in December 1992. The suggested framework consisted of two attainment targets, Designing and Making, and programmes of study divided into core and supplementary elements linked with specific material areas. A three month period of statutory consultation followed, involving schools, teacher organisations and many other bodies concerned with technology in education. However, the announcement by the Secretary of State on 7th April of a full review of the National Curriculum and Assessment framework, to be conducted by Sir Ron Dearing, has overtaken events. The key issues for the Dearing Review are as follows:

- What is the scope for slimming down the curriculum itself?
- What is the future of the 10 level scale for graduating children's attainments?
- How can the testing arrangements themselves be simplified?
- How can central administration of the National Curriculum and Assessment arrangements be improved?

These overarching considerations will clearly have consequences for the new Technology Order as it lines up with the rest of the curriculum. The

Secretary of State has agreed that the proposals emerging from Council in the Autumn will be sufficiently different to merit a further round of consultation. As a consequence, he has agreed that the timetable that was envisaged last December for the implementation of the new Technology Order at Key Stages 1-3 in 1994, and at Key Stage 4 in 1995, should be delayed by a year in each case. He has also pointed out that schools will have to continue to teach the existing curriculum for Technology in the meantime, although it has been agreed that the statutory tests and tasks in Technology at the end of Key Stage 3 in the Summer of 1994 will not be compulsory (see SEAC update). Instead, Council will publish a set of examples of long tasks in technology, in a wider range of materials than this year, that might serve as a basis for teacher assessment in the interim.

NCC has also published a report on the consultation. The report spells out what still needs to be done and points out that there is substantial further work needed if we are to arrive at a curriculum that is rigorous and manageable at each key stage. Council therefore asked the Secretary of State for an extension of time until 30th September. This will allow further reflection on the consultation responses, and enable the emerging conclusions of the Dearing Review to be taken into account.

During the consultation, responses were received from 1298 primary schools, 797 secondary schools and 100 special schools. Of these:

- 80% agreed on two ATs;
- 65% agreed on 40-60 weighting for AT1:AT2;
- 90% agreed that the KS 1,2,3 proposals are clearer;
- 80% agreed that the KS 4 proposals are clearer;
- but 51% considered that the proposals did not specify the range, depth and level sufficiently clearly;
- 75% agreed that the proposals are manageable;
- but 79% considered that the demand on pupils is not reduced and 63% considered that the demand on teachers is not reduced.

Moreover:

- 59% of secondary schools felt that the proposals did not provide a reasonable balance between a broad grounding for all pupils and the flexibility for pupils to pursue developing interests and aptitudes;
- 48% said that the approach to KS 4 as a whole needs re-thinking;
- 70% said that the assessment and reporting of pupils' IT capability should be completely separate from Design and Technology.

At the beginning of August, Sir Ron Dearing's Interim report, *The National Curriculum and its*

*Assessment*, was published (copies are available from SEAC). A final report will be published at the end of the year, allowing time for a wider consultation on major issues identified in the Interim Report. In the meantime preliminary work should begin in slimming down the curriculum as a whole and reducing the statements of attainment.

Although Information Technology was not part of the Initial review of the Technology Order, the Dearing Report notes that the Council will report separately on the issue of IT in the curriculum in September.

Sir Ron Dearing has recommended a timetable for the review of the curriculum which is laid out in his interim report. This allows time for further consultation to be carried out by the newly formed School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in the Autumn. Officers from NCC and SEAC are preparing for this next phase and look forward to working for SCAA from 1st October.

### Update from SEAC

The following is a summary of the assessment situation, as reported at the DATA annual conference by Neil MacLaren, Professional Officer for Technology at SEAC.

#### KS 1

No requirement for teacher assessment in Technology next year. However, the requirement to report has not been lifted. In other words, a general statement of progress, not specifically linked to the 10-level scale, is appropriate.

The first round of statutory reporting occurred last year. It was found that fewer than 10% of schools used the available non-statutory SATs. The situation this year is, however, completely different, with the tasks becoming much more popular, often in an adapted form.

#### KS 2

Next year, there will be a national pilot for the core subjects only. There will be no requirement to assess technology.

#### KS 3

There are no statutory tests or tasks next year, nor is there any requirement to carry out Teacher Assessments. Optional tasks are being produced to help teachers carry out their own assessments.

#### KS 4

This is going ahead as planned, with a whole variety of GCSEs and a variety of combinations of short courses. For the first time, RSA and City and Guilds are also offering GCSEs. All new GCSEs will be scrutinised by SEAC in their first year of examination. A mandatory code of practice has been developed over GCSEs, specifying amongst other things the role of exam boards in coursework setting.