

## SCAA

Since the last issue of this journal, the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the School Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC) have merged to form the new School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), which is to advise on both the curriculum and its assessment, and hopes to marry these two perspectives closely together.

The new Authority is based at SEAC's old offices in Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3JB.

### ■ The revision of design & technology

As readers will be very well aware, design & technology has been under review for some time. The last issue of *Design & Technology Teaching* went over the history of the revision so far. Since then, NCC has produced a set of recommendations, which were sent to the Secretary of State at the end of September, and published soon after. Some of the press coverage referred to NCC's final report on technology, which created some confusion — it is certainly NCC's final report, but there is some way to go before the D&T Order is finalised.

Schools have been sent a summary leaflet (Technology: An update from SCAA), outlining the conclusions of the NCC recommendations, summarising the timescale for development, and inviting readers to send for copies of the report itself. There was much debate about whether to send every school a copy of the report direct, but to avoid information overload on schools, the leaflet was prepared instead. Copies of both the report and the leaflet are still available from SCAA's order line. The address and phone number are given at the foot of the page.

NCC's revised recommendations were built firmly on the foundations of the Secretary of State's December 1992 proposals. These were basically well-received by schools, as the consultation report (May 1993) showed. However, consultation identified continuing problems of manageability, and investigations into the way that teachers used them revealed some difficulties with the complicated structure.

The publication of Sir Ron Dearing's interim report also had a profound effect on the recommendations: the content was slimmed further, essential elements identified, and the remaining requirements were made less prescriptive. The resulting recommendations attempt to set out only those elements of D&T which really should be made statutory, allowing accompanying guidance to flesh out this skeleton with examples that teachers can choose to use or not.

### ■ NCC's recommendations:

- NCC supported the definition put forward in the December 1992 proposals, changing it slightly to read:  
*Technology is the creative application of knowledge, skills and understanding to design and make good quality products.*
- NCC also supported the proposal for two attainment targets, Designing and Making, with a weighting for assessment purposes of 40:60.
- It identified three major kinds of design & technology activity. Under its recommendations, pupils would be taught:
  - to design and make products of good quality;
  - knowledge, skills and understanding that can be used for designing and making, including knowledge of materials and control, and knowledge of particular designing and making skills;
  - to investigate, disassemble and evaluate already existing products and applications to find out how they work. This area takes on new importance under NCC's recommendations, since looking at products and applications helps pupils make better products themselves.
- NCC slimmed the requirements by:
  - reducing content to the essential core of knowledge, skills and understanding;
  - reducing the number of design and make tasks required of the pupils;
  - removing material which is already required in science.
- The December 1992 proposals included a core programme of study (PoS) covering Designing and Making, five supporting PoS, and lists of General and Particular Requirements. NCC kept the Designing and Making PoS, redesigning it to make it easier to use, and organised everything else into a single Key Stage PoS. The new structure is easier to understand, and has allowed a very simple format to be used for presentation.
- After careful consideration of the various arguments about the place of food, NCC



recommended the use of food as a material at Key Stages 1 and 2, and as an optional material at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, under the core and extension framework, pupils would be able to choose further specialist courses focusing on food.

- NCC recast the content of the proposals in a less prescriptive form at all key stages. At KS3 in particular, it introduced considerable choice in the range of materials used for designing and making.
- At Key Stage 4, a framework for courses was developed on a core plus extension model, which allows for both a full course in design & technology, and a range of specialised courses, e.g. focusing on electronics or food.

The possibilities for free-standing short courses were considered in great detail. NCC recommended that SCAA should explore the feasibility of developing a new kind of independent short course which would reduce the emphasis on *making* and give greater weight to pupils learning *about* technology through studying technological products, processes and applications.

### ■ Consultation on NCC's recommendations

Since the recommendations were published, SCAA has been running a small-scale consultation on them. Officers have worked with randomly chosen groups of teachers in different regions and with people and organisations representing different subject perspectives and interest groups. Many LEAs have compiled responses and offered help, and many individual teachers have written in with comments and advice. All this material is being sorted, coded and collated, in readiness for the next stage of the work.

From this point on, the revision of D&T will run in parallel with the expected overall revision of the rest of the National Curriculum subjects under the final Dearing Report, due in early January. While work in D&T will continue on Key Stage 4, and on amending the recommendations in line with the autumn consultation, D&T will also be involved in the work on the whole curriculum and its assessment, and will share the timetable for the development work.

This timetable means that revision will continue through to the end of March, and will

be followed by the publication of the proposals for all the subjects, and a three month consultation period. Amendments will then be made in the light of teachers' and others' responses, Orders laid before Parliament around the end of 1994, and the new Orders distributed to schools in early 1995, in time for implementation of D&T in September 1995 for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and September 1996 for Key Stage 4.

It is worth pointing out that, while comments on the current NCC recommendations are still coming in, and are very welcome, there will be another chance to comment on the D&T, (and on IT, see below) next summer.

### ■ IT

NCC recommended that D&T and IT should be separated in the curriculum, although they did not suggest a mechanism, and in particular, that assessment results from the two should not be aggregated when reporting on pupils' progress. It is just a little too early to discuss in detail how the separation might be carried out in practice, since, at the time of writing, Sir Ron's report has not been published, but a separate working group has been set up as part of the Dearing revision in the Spring Term to consider IT in its own right.

### ■ Materials from SCAA currently in schools

Since the setting up of SCAA, several publications have been sent out to schools. Here is a brief list:

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| KS1 | Design and Technology: Working with the current Order (1993-4) |
| KS2 | Design and Technology: Working with the current Order (1993-4) |
| KS3 | Design and Technology: Optional Tasks (1994)                   |
| KS3 | Information Technology: Optional Test Questions (1994)         |

Technology: An update from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority

If you have not received the right publications for your school, or would like a copy of the NCC's Report (entitled *Technology Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets: Recommendations of the NCC*, September 1993) please contact the SCAA Order line: SCAA Publications, PO Box 590, London SE5 7EG. Tel: 071-701 6064.