

SCAA Update

On May 9 as part of the Dearing review process, the draft Order for design & technology was published along with draft Orders for all other National Curriculum subjects. This publication signals the start of a period of full consultation which will end on the 29 July.

The Dearing review

The draft Order for design & technology is based on the recommendations of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) who, in turn, were advised by a number of subject advisory groups together with groups for each key stage and a group for special educational needs. The groups were in constant liaison to ensure consistency of approach between deciding on the subject content and balancing the demands of each key stage.

The subject advisory group for design & technology, which was largely made up of teachers of design & technology from each key stage, was asked to work from the National Curriculum Council's (NCC) recommendations for the programmes of study and attainment targets published in September 1993. Sir Ron Dearing, in his final report in December 1993, recommended that the NCC report had done much towards improving the current Order and that they formed a sound base from which to work.

In order to guide the work of the advisory groups, and to ensure the manageability of the curriculum as a whole, notional time allocations were given to each subject to guide them as to whether their proposals would be manageable in schools. All foundation subjects were given the same time allocation. However, the allocation of 45 hours for Key Stage 3 was reconsidered in the light of advice from the design & technology advisory group that the allocation was insufficient. It was extended to a notional 63 hours.

The design & technology advisory group were asked to identify the essential content for design & technology, to advise whether the requirements were manageable at each key stage, and to formulate descriptions of levels of attainment which describe progression from 5 to 16. They also offered advice on the place of food at Key Stage 3 and on a framework for courses at Key Stage 4.

The advisory group completed its work during March.

At the end of this period the SCAA reflected on the advice of the advisory groups and made recommendations to the Secretary of State. After considering the recommendations made by SCAA, the Secretary of State published the draft Orders.

The Draft Orders

The proposals have been simplified into a single programme of study for each key stage.

The draft Order follows the earlier recommendation made by the NCC that food should be an optional material at Key Stage 3 as a means of providing flexibility and choice. This issue will be looked at again in the light of the consultation responses.

At Key Stage 4, a framework has been devised which specifies the core requirements for all short courses at this key stage. In addition, short courses can be extended by the addition of content drawn from a compatible subject. It must now be decided whether the proposals provide the basis for the development of a range of courses.

Two attainment targets are proposed for designing and making and ten level descriptions are provided for each attainment target.

Consultation

There are a number of key issues which need to be considered during consultation.

Consultees will be asked if the content of the programmes of study for each key stage are clear, manageable and an aid to planning. Further views will be sought as to whether the level descriptions are sufficiently clear for the purpose of awarding teacher assessments at the end of each key stage.

The recommendation that food should remain optional at Key Stage 3 must also be considered along with the proposed requirements for Key Stage 4.

As the questionnaire has to cover all subjects in the review it is quite short. However, this does not prevent respondents from making fuller responses on issues of concern and on aspects which they would support.

In addition to responses made through the questionnaire, SCAA will be collecting the views of teachers and others through a series of consultation conferences. A number of conferences have been arranged on a regional basis which will cover both subject and key stage issues.

At the end of the consultation period, SCAA will report its findings to the Secretary of State. The new Order for design & technology will be despatched to schools in January 1995 for a starting date of September 1995 for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and September 1996 for Key Stage 4.