

BBC DIGITAL CURRICULUM SERVICE PROPOSAL

A Response from the Educational Broadcasting Council for Scotland (EBCS)

EBCS is pleased to respond to the Proposal. Council comprises senior educationalists from across Scotland and is supported by Secondary, Primary and Gaelic Programme Committees which offer it detailed advice about specific BBC Scotland programme proposals. EBCS is independent of BBC, and as part of BBC's Accountability mechanism, it advises BBC Scotland on educational policy and strategy and gives formal advice on programme proposals. It provides the forum where BBC Factual & Learning is accountable to the Scottish Education system. EBCS has discussed learning and teaching in the Digital Age, and BBC's plan outlined in *A Digital Curriculum: Have your say*, at each of its meetings in the past two years and has identified a number of issues which are central to its thinking:

- The unique nature of Scottish Education with its own National Priorities should be recognised in a pedagogical and learning context and this should be reflected in BBC's provision of 5-14 and National Qualifications resources.
- BBC should not simply look at knowledge and understanding but broaden its horizons to skills development and the process of learning. Additionally, it should recognise current developments in teaching and address different learning styles, thinking skills and ability levels.
- Key partners in Scottish Education should be involved with BBC Scotland in taking forward the Digital Agenda in Scotland - central to these are Local Authorities, who have a key role in the management of education and Scottish Executive Education Department. A particular dimension of this partnership is resourcing staff development needs.
- EBCS has an expectation that BBC will deliver learning material for the Scottish Curriculum to the standard of the trusted brand that it is.

These issues are treated within the Application and EBCS is therefore pleased to generally endorse it. However we have made some comments on specifics. For ease of reference, we have structured the response to correspond to that of the Proposal.

Executive Summary

EBCS endorses the potential of ICT to support learning and teaching and believes that there is a demand for BBC material to extend its provision beyond radio, television and online currently provided. Evidence suggests that this technology motivates a broad range of pupils and so addresses social inclusion and will therefore raise attainment. Quality digital curriculum learning resources free at the point of use should be provided. It is our experience that the commercial sector does not address the needs of the Scottish curriculum adequately and although we recognise that the BBC will only meet part of the Scottish demand, it is critical that this is provided.

Since *Curriculum Online* does not apply to Scotland, it is important that BBC remains aware of this and addresses needs here through Scottish structures - Scottish Executive/National Grid for Learning Scotland/Local Authorities/Learning and Teaching Scotland.

The Digital Curriculum Service

The structure, constituent elements and planned flexibility of the Virtual Learning Environment, which places teachers at the centre of the delivery and planning process while offering innovative potential for independent learning, is welcome - as is the commitment to meet the needs of the curricula of all 4 Nations. However, there are significant differences in both content and approach between 5-14/National Qualifications in Scotland and the National Curriculum in England. The very nature of this proposal - for learning material directed at the student with less teacher intervention than is customary in schools broadcasts - means that these differences must be addressed in the structure and content of the material.

There are significant omissions from the subjects listed in 3.2. Most notably, Gaelic and Modern Studies (a major element in the delivery of Citizenship material in Scottish Secondary Schools). Gaelic lies at the core of Scottish Culture and History. It is part of the Scottish Executive's National Priorities and Local Authorities actively support the language, particularly through Gaelic Medium Education. Council feels that both of these subject areas should be included in BBC plans and provision should be made for Gaelic versions of core material.

The service proposed does address the Scottish National Priorities in Education but Council would suggest that in the area of "Learning for Life", BBC might consider the provision of materials for Enterprise Education.

EBCS commends BBC's plans to meet the needs of teachers and pupils by providing interactive learning resources (3.3) which take into account current educational trends eg. the place of skills-based learning and the needs of individuals with different learning styles. It also notes and endorses the limits of BBC provision at 50% of Learning Outcomes per subject and is encouraged by its aim to avoid overlap with commercial provision whilst providing choice.

We believe that the area of support for the service is vital to its success. Of particular importance is the area of Continuous Professional Development (3.4.3). Council recommends that BBC enters into partnership with Scottish Local Authorities who are currently developing their plans for CPD in the light of the McCrone agreement on Scottish Teachers' Pay and Conditions. The issue of partnership is relevant to all of the areas of support eg. a call centre, and we would suggest that this be explored on a number of fronts during discussions on CPD.

Distribution

The flexible distribution plan is appropriate, particularly in light of the variety of access mechanisms across Scotland. Again, we would recommend that BBC initiates discussions with the Scottish Executive and Local Authorities as they seek to implement their own distribution solutions in the proposal for the Scottish Schools Digital Network.

Digital Curriculum in the Wider Marketplace

The Scottish Executive has not proposed the funding of electronic learning credits for schools. However, no matter the funding mechanism, EBCS believes that BBC has a pivotal role to play in providing learners and teachers in Scotland with appropriate, quality materials which specifically target 5-14 and National Qualifications. Its plans to cover 50% of Learning Outcomes would, we believe, act not only to satisfy schools' demand (lack of good learning resources is constantly cited by teachers as a reason for the underuse of hardware) but would build the market for commercial providers by introducing teachers and pupils to the idea of online learning provided by a leading supplier of learning resources which has a reputation for quality and reliability. The BBC's plans to ensure that it has a positive impact on the market are commendable and are to the benefit of learners and teachers. We note that PricewaterhouseCoopers supports this view.

In conclusion, EBCS feels that the BBC's role in the provision of its Digital Curriculum Service will: bring significant added value to the process of learning and teaching; recognise the unique place of the Scottish Curriculum in terms of content and effective partnerships; advantage the individual learner; and contribute to community and National well-being.