



19 July 2002

Rt. Hon Tessa Jowell MP
Secretary of State
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Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Dear Secretary of State,

BBC Digital Curriculum - Consultation

The Open University welcomes the BBC digital curriculum service proposal.

This proposal should dramatically expand the quality of services available to children and schools and the market for ICT carried resources. Not only will the BBC investment stimulate the market but it should set a high standard of effective design and quality assurance process for the production of these materials. We think it would be valuable if external commissioning took place in the context of transferring good practice to the commercial sector. In operating on such a large scale, and in spending 50% of the content funds with external suppliers, the BBC should be able directly to affect the market and encourage high standards.

We are pleased to see that the BBC has committed itself to providing the service to as wide an audience as possible by all available means, including audiences with special educational needs or accessibility issues, and with nation specific content.

We think that there is room for more information on plans for improvement of design and continual evaluation, including the involvement of the education profession (input to initial design and development and feedback). We would also welcome a further trial that did not suffer from the constraints outlined in the trial evaluation report. However, an innovation of this kind cannot be expected to do much better in its first trial, and despite the relatively disappointing results for mathematics, the evidence indicates it is worth continuing.

The publishing of forward commissioning plans as proposed will be of great help to those suppliers seeking to provide materials, and also to education professionals planning curriculum developments in schools.

The University is looking at this proposal alongside its own Teaching on Line and other developments and I expect the various complementary elements to work together to offer teachers and pupils far greater opportunities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Geoff Peters'.

Professor Geoff Peters
Pro Vice Chancellor (Strategy, Planning & Partnerships)