



## **Public Consultation on Digital Curriculum**

The BBC carried out a public consultation on its plans for a digital curriculum for six weeks from 11 September to 20 October 2000. The BBC produced a consultation booklet describing its initial proposal and worked with an external company, Southbank Consulting, to create a questionnaire to explore the opinions of respondents. Southbank collated and analysed the responses.

Information about the consultation was broadcast in trails on television during the consultation period. The consultation booklet (with questionnaire) was available on the BBC's public website and on request by post. It was also sent to around 600 individuals or organisations known to have a particular interest in education and/or broadcasting, and to MPs and peers with a known interest. A Welsh language version and a simple English version were available.

A summary leaflet was sent to every primary school in the UK and the full booklet to every secondary school. The consultation was delayed by one week from the date planned initially in order to avoid burdening schools at the very start of term. During the consultation period, BBC staff attended five education conferences for head teachers organised by the DfEE in different parts of the country and handed out the consultation booklet to everyone who attended.

A total of 1,336 responses was received. Forty per cent of respondents said they were replying on behalf of an organisation, mostly schools or other organisations involved in education. In the light of the specialist nature of the subject matter and in comparison with responses to other BBC consultation exercises, the BBC believes this is a reasonable response rate.

Respondents were asked to give information about themselves - both the usual demographic data – age, ethnic origin, region etc but also information relevant to the subject of this particular consultation.

The analysis of responses shows that 60% of respondents were men, 40% of respondents were answering on behalf of an organisation, 45% of respondents had children of school age, 55% of respondents were aged between 35 and 54. The split of respondents by geographic location (ie 87% responded from England) and by ethnic origin (ie 92% identified themselves as 'white') was approximately in line with the population distribution.

Respondents were given the chance to express a view on the proposed service. As well as asking what people thought of different aspects of the proposed service, the questionnaire asked them whether this was a service the BBC should be providing. Ninety-one per cent of respondents thought that the proposed Digital Curriculum was a service that the BBC should introduce, and this percentage was slightly higher among those responding on behalf of an organisation.

In drafting the booklet, the BBC realised that it was describing a service that many readers would find hard to imagine, and attempted to make its description as concrete as possible. Respondents were invited to comment on how successful this was and to ask further questions about the service. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents thought it was very or quite easy to understand.

The questionnaire also asked about the application, educational value and relevance of the proposed service – questions designed to be significant to teachers, others in education-related fields and (to a lesser extent) parents who, it was supposed, might take a special interest in this service. Each question was designed to elicit views on a particular topic. Overall, respondents welcomed a careful balance between traditional and new digital learning methods, and saw the digital curriculum as valuable at all school stages, but more so for older children. Nearly half of those who replied took the opportunity also to ask the BBC specific questions about its plans.

The BBC made it clear to anyone who asked that it would continue to welcome views and consult people informally after the end of the formal 6-week consultation period. In particular, it agreed to a request from the Voice of the Listener and Viewer to extend the consultation period in order to allow VLV to organise a public meeting before completing its response to the BBC.

After the end of the consultation period, the BBC published a brief summary of the results on its website. It also wrote a detailed commentary which answered questions or points frequently raised by respondents and requiring further clarification, based on the state of development of its plans at that point in time. This was published on the website and sent to any respondent who had submitted an address.

A full report of the consultation exercise is attached. The original September 2000 consultation document is available on the BBC's website:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/consult/pdfs/english\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/consult/pdfs/english_booklet.pdf)

**May 2002**