

**BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAREERS COMMITTEE**

Throughout 2011 the BES education committee and staff were contributing to the review of the national curriculum, at the end of December the Department for Education published a report that clarified many of the discussions and work undertaken to date. The following is a summary of the key findings and recommendations to the Department for Education; this report was written by the expert panel following a dialogue with stakeholders and a call for evidence.

The BES has contributed to this work in a number of ways

- Submission to the call for evidence through the Society of Biology and SCORE[?], contributing to the drafting of the SCORE response.
- Working with the Society of Biology curriculum development group in preparing a statement on what a 16 year old biologist would look like in terms of knowledge and skills
- The BES education officer was invited to join an informal DfE subject advisory group commenting on source documents* related to primary science and secondary biology and using these documents to support the further development of the programme of study. This work is ongoing

[?]*SCORE represents the Society of Biology, Royal Society of Chemistry, Institute of Physics, Association for Science Education and the Royal Society.*

^{*}*as stated in the recent report, these source documents included all content as specified by a number of high performing countries[#].*

[#]*High performing countries here are those countries that are ranked highest in the PISA and TIMSS tests. The DfE cited the falling rank of England within PISA in particular as a trigger for an extensive curriculum review. There have been significant debates regarding the validity of PISA a measure of standards.*

Recommendations by the expert panel:

A delay on the introduction of a new national curriculum: When the review of the national curriculum was launched in 2010, it was expected that the new curriculum would be implemented in September 2013. This has now been postponed to September 2014 to allow further dialogue and consultation to take place. Some changes are significant and will require time for teachers to prepare.

Sustainability: In reference to the aims of the national curriculum, ***the school curriculum should contribute to environmental “stewardship”*** (this reflects that other high performing jurisdictions tend to include explicit and high level reference to sustainability within the aims of their own curricula). This new addition does not necessarily increase the ecological knowledge that might be delivered through science but does help the BES and other similar organisations to promote young peoples engagement with the natural environment and is to be welcomed.

Breadth of study at GCSE: England narrows its compulsory curriculum earlier than other high performing countries. Some science is compulsory to the age of 16 and it is proposed that Geography, History, MFL, D&T and “Arts” are added to this list. The report states that not everyone would have to take a GCSE in all these subjects but then goes on to recognise that not having a GCSE assessment would be demotivating. Assuming most students did take GCSE then they would all have english, maths, 2 science, history, geography, MFL, D&T and Art as a compulsory requirement (adding to 9 GCSE’s).

There is a strong case made within the report that GCSE’s should be taken over a period of 3 years instead of the current 2 years. This additional year would come from condensing the previous key stage from 3 to 2 years. This already happens in practice in many schools and has been initiated as result of disaffection of students prior to GCSE. However there are assessment reforms taking place that would end modular assessment of GCSE and replace it with a terminal assessment. The implications of this still need to be ironed out