

NATE comments on Interim report of working group on 14-19 reform

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NATE members have attended presentations by Mike Tomlinson, and NATE council has been addressed by Liz Whittome from QCA. NATE management committee, having read the report and received the views of members, is pleased to submit the following comments:

We find much to welcome in the proposed reforms, particularly those relating to curriculum relevance and internal assessment. Our reservations centre on the proposed model of communication and English and how far this will motivate and challenge learners in ways set out in the report (paragraph 6, 'the case for reform'.)

In common with many bodies over the past few years, NATE has argued for more responsive and relevant assessment. Many NATE members have considerable experience in teacher assessment and moderation. The proposals on Chartered Examiner Status (paragraph 201) and particularly those on Centre Approval are similar to those NATE has advocated in the past. We would welcome involvement in further work of the group as outlined in paragraphs 205-6.

Loosening the constriction of external tests would improve access to the full National Curriculum and thereby motivate and reward those learners who are not well served by current arrangements.

Good practice in the learning of English pre-14 shows that literacy standards are being raised by engaging pupils in a broad range of ICT, media and paper-based texts. It is as important then as it will be later that learning is enjoyable, purposeful and deep. We believe that it is only by developing the interpersonal and analytical skills mentioned in paragraph 6 that learners will be best prepared for the personal and social challenges they will face in the 21st century – and beyond. Whichever 14-19 pathway is chosen, learners will need to use language creatively and critically. We consider the following three components to be essential to any programme:

- 1 Critical literacy – the ability to 'read' the cultural, ICT and media sphere
- 2 Creative literacy – the ability to articulate the self in a range of spoken and written genres, including ICT and drama
- 3 Cultural literacy – an awareness of the larger world of culture, including literatures

Our experience of the demotivating effect of learning key skills, post-16, makes us concerned about the division between 'functional' (paragraph 45) and 'theoretical and conceptual' (paragraph 58). We are concerned that a serious divide in English provision between 'core' and 'main learning' is being proposed without adequate detail as to the implications for the content and delivery of the subject. We would welcome proposals which envisage holistic rather than atomised teaching and assessment of core and main learning.

We would be interested to discuss how the shared language elements of communication and ICT might best be planned for and assessed through both the extended project and work of the course.