

Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum for ICT

RM plc's Response to the Teacher Training Agency's Call for Consultation

April 1998



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Introduction

1. This document has been prepared by RM plc in response to the draft of the **Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum for the use of Information and Communications Technology in Subject Teaching** circulated for consultation by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). RM also participated in one of the TTA's consultation meetings and this response echoes and amplifies the comments made by RM at this session.
2. RM plc is the leading supplier of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) products and services to UK schools. More UK schools choose RM's ICT products and services than those of any other supplier. This puts RM in a good position to comment on the use of ICT in UK schools.
3. ICT has a significant role to play in improving standards in education. Two technologies in particular – the Internet and Integrated Learning Systems (ILS) – have the potential to transform the way teaching and learning takes place in classrooms. However, the potential of ICT is not being fully realised and this is principally due to teachers lacking both the confidence and competence needed to make ICT work effectively in their classrooms. Improving teacher skills is the key to exploiting the potential of ICT.
4. RM welcomes the proposal of an ICT National Curriculum for initial teacher training as a way of achieving ICT confidence and competence in newly qualified teachers. RM urges that the Curriculum should be approved and in place for teachers qualifying in 1999.

5. The Curriculum (as revised as a result of this consultation) would seem to be an appropriate basis for the training of serving teachers. RM will comment further in this area prior to the 24th April 1998 deadline.

Structure of the Curriculum Document

6. The separation of the document into *Effective Teaching and Assessment Methods* and *Trainees Knowledge* is helpful in clarifying two distinct areas that need consideration.
7. The document as a whole assumes a relatively sophisticated level of ICT understanding. It is probable that some ITT establishments, and many schools involved in training teachers, will not have the experience required to construct a programme of study to deliver this Curriculum. Some explanation of **why** and exemplification of **how** would be helpful for these establishments.

Coverage and Manageability

8. All of the areas covered in the proposed Curriculum are relevant and appropriate. There are also four areas that RM believes are omitted from the Curriculum – these are detailed below.

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9. **Integrated Learning Systems (ILS)**

- ILS products have a significant contribution to make to improving educational standards and are widely used in UK schools. The increasing acceptance of ILS means that newly qualified teachers will encounter these kinds of products in their early years of teaching. The Curriculum should explicitly include ILS products and provide an appreciation of their capabilities and the issues involved in using them.

10. **Assessment** - ICT products are increasingly being used as assessment tools. These uses range from computer administered baseline assessment, through diagnostic tools for teachers to national value added measures. This area is developing rapidly and newly qualified teachers will be exposed to these sorts of tools. The Curriculum should prepare teachers for using ICT tools for assessing other subjects.

11. **Teachers personal use of ICT for productivity and professional development** - When compared with other white-collar professionals, teachers personal use of ICT is under-developed. The so-called personal productivity benefits (creating documents and spreadsheets, researching information resources) are highly applicable to teachers. In particular, ICT is a highly effective tool for planning and assessment. This area is touched upon in the Curriculum, however it should be given greater stress.

12. **Understanding of how ICT is used by professionals and academics in subject teachers areas of specialism** - There are well established professional and academic uses of ICT in most subject areas. Subject specialists should have an understanding of these uses and an appreciation of how they can be interpreted in the classroom.

Level of Detail

13. As mentioned in paragraph 7, the Curriculum could be improved by including explanation of **why** and exemplification of **how** ICT should be used. This exemplification is perhaps best included as commentary on, rather than part of, the Curriculum itself.

Effective Teaching and Assessment Methods

14. As mentioned in paragraphs 9 and 10, the Curriculum should cover the use of ILS and computer-aided assessment tools.

ICT Knowledge, Understanding and Competence

15. As mentioned in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12, the Curriculum should cover understanding of ILS, the use of computer-aided assessment tools, the personal use of ICT by teachers and understanding professional and academic uses of ICT.

16. The Curriculum concentrates, rightly in RM's view, on pedagogy and the use of ICT for teaching. However, it does state *Trainees must demonstrate that they can use a range of ICT resources, at the level of general users (rather than as network or systems manager)*. The definition of *general user* is subjective and, as such, open to mis-interpretation. The Curriculum should be clearer in differentiating between what is expected of teachers and what should be in the domain of technicians and/or ICT suppliers.

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The Usefulness of the Audit Tool

17. With the additions to coverage mentioned elsewhere in this document, the Audit Tool will offer real benefit.
18. The exemplification given in the audit tool is helpful. However, it should be stressed that these examples are not the only ways of demonstrating a specific competence. Further, performing the task set out in the example does not, in itself, demonstrate real understanding of the competence.

Exemplification

19. As mentioned in paragraphs 7, 13 and 18, exemplification is extremely valuable. It is especially valuable in an area such as ICT where there is no commonly held view of what the Curriculum should include. The Curriculum should include further exemplification, particularly in Section A.
20. There is a danger that exemplification could replace genuine understanding with a simple ability to perform an example task. The Curriculum should explicitly warn about this danger.
21. Exemplification should not be product specific. ICT moves very rapidly and teachers need to achieve generic competences rather than specific product skills.

Summary and Recommendations

22. The Curriculum should take into account the emerging technologies of Integrated Learning Systems (ILS) and computer-aided assessment.
23. The Curriculum should include a requirement for subject teachers to understand the professional and academic uses of ICT in their specialist subject areas.
24. The Curriculum should place more stress on preparing teachers to use ICT for their own personal productivity and professional development.
25. There should be a clearer distinction between the pedagogical skills expected of teachers and technical skills that should be in the domain of technicians and/or suppliers.
26. Further exemplification would be valuable, however it should be in the form of notes to the Curriculum rather than part of the Curriculum itself.