

Subject:

KEY STAGE 4 FLEXIBILITY INITIATIVE – PHASE 6

Circular Number:
2005/2

Date of Issue:
9 February 2005

Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided post-primary schools and special schools with secondary departments;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Institutions of Further Education;
- Training Organisations; and
- Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular invites applications from schools wishing to discontinue part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum in favour of a 2 year work-related programme commencing September 2005.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

Mrs Jean Coulter
Curriculum and Qualifications Branch
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
BANGOR
Co Down
BT19 7PR

Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Advice
Information for schools

Related Documents:
Letter of 5 April 2000
(Phase 1)
Letter of 11 December 2000
(Phase 2)
Circular 2002/3 (Phase 3)
Circular 2003/4(Phase 4)

Superseded Documents:
Circular 2004/2
(Phase 5)

Expiry Date:
Closing date for applications
is 6 May 2005

DE Website:
This circular is available on
<http://www.deni.gov.uk>

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Introduction

1. Arrangements for flexibility within the Key Stage 4 Curriculum will continue for the cohort of pupils commencing in September 2005. It is envisaged that the necessary legislation to implement the Revised Curriculum for Key Stage 4 will be in place by September 2006 but in practice the new curriculum will be phased in over a number of years.
2. The pilot for the Initiative was introduced in September 2000 and post-primary schools were invited to participate in a two-year initiative for pupils in Year 11 and Year 12, with the aim of increasing flexibility and introducing work-related learning in the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
3. The arrangements and conditions relating to the initiative are set out below. Please note that the Department's written approval is required before a school may avail of these arrangements, regardless of whether approval has been given for an earlier phase of the initiative.
4. **Applications, on the appropriate form, must be received in the Department by 6 May 2005**, and should include details of the work related programme proposed and the Area of Study in the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to be disappplied. A checklist of information required by the Department is enclosed (at Appendix A) to assist with the completion of applications.
5. The Department will be prepared to consider first-time applications in Phase 6 in respect of pupils in Year 12, where it can be demonstrated that the programme has been designed to facilitate progress into further education or training post-16.
6. Schools participating in the initiative are reminded that pupils, and their parents where possible, should be involved in the development of these programmes, and that every effort should be made to relate any work experience to courses of further education or other training undertaken.
7. The application form should be sent to the Department marked for the attention of Mrs Jean Coulter, Curriculum and Qualifications Branch, copied to the Head of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of your local Education and Library Board, and in the case of Catholic maintained schools, copied to CCMS. The Department will process applications as quickly as possible.
8. If you require any further information please contact Jean Coulter on 91 279406.

Arrangements for Key Stage 4 Flexibility - Phase 6

9. The Department is prepared to discontinue elements of the statutory curriculum requirements as indicated below, to allow schools to explore more creative and imaginative approaches to the curriculum at KS4.

10. The arrangements are as follows:

- a) They apply to cohorts of pupils commencing Year 11 in September 2005, and are in relation only to schools (grammar and non-grammar) wishing to include or expand provision of **work-related learning** for their KS4 cohort.
- b) Schools will be able to discontinue elements of the statutory curriculum, in relation to any pupil or group of pupils, any Area of Study (AoS) and any programme of study or any subject, other than Religious Education (which, although compulsory, is not a part of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum).
- c) Schools will be required to design appropriate 2 year learning programmes for each pupil (or aggregated group of pupils) which must be discussed and agreed with each pupil in the context of a careers interview, where the pupil is able to make an informed choice with, as far as possible, his/her parents before the end of this school year.
- d) Learning programmes will be expected to demonstrate provision of reasonable breadth and balance of experience, cohesion and clear progression routes post-16.
- e) Schools' proposed programmes should be prepared in collaboration with their Education and Library Board (see paragraph 14 below), and will be subject to the Department's prior approval in every case: this will enable the Department to ensure that in each case the programme which is being offered to pupils is appropriate when the statutory provisions are discontinued.
- f) Where the learning programme proposed includes a work placement(s), the school will need to confirm in its proposal that the agreement of the firm(s) concerned has been secured, and that the arrangements meet their Education and Library Board's requirements for such placements. The proposal should also describe the nature of the work experience/training which it is proposed that the pupils will receive in their workplace, and how this fits into the overall learning programme for the pupil(s) concerned. Local Business Education Partnerships (BEPs) may be able to provide useful contacts to facilitate such placements.
- g) Although AoS requirements will not apply (and therefore no subject other than RE would be mandatory), the Department will expect to see a clear focus on the Key Skills of Communication, Application of Number and ICT in the programme for every pupil, for example through GCSE English and Mathematics, or through the Key Skills qualification at Levels 1 or 2, or indeed through any of a range of courses currently available which lead to qualifications appropriate to pupils of differing abilities.
- h) All programmes must lead to a recognised and approved qualification. Should a school wish to offer a course that does not appear in the Department's circular 2004/8 listing approved qualifications, the school should highlight the course within their application to enable the Department to consider it for inclusion in the next circular – this may include courses of less than one year's duration. The 2005 qualifications circular will issue in April.
- i) Courses together with any work experience involved must comprise no more than 40% of an individual pupil's total time for the 2 years (although this may involve clustered periods of attendance in the Training Organisation/workplace).

- j) The Inspectorate will monitor the arrangements. There will be valuable lessons in how successfully schools can organise and expand their provision, the impact on pupil motivation, and improving opportunity for young people.
11. For the purposes of these arrangements, 'work-related learning' will be defined as GNVQs Part One or units, or other broad age-appropriate vocational courses, which require learning in the workplace. This definition is extended to include the Vocational GCSEs offered for first teaching since September 2002 and the new CCEA qualifications available since September 2003. With the exception of GNVQ Part One in some vocational areas, **all work-related courses should be offered in partnership with a further education college or a training organisation, which** can provide a broad range of programmes for pupils to sample and allow them to use equipment, which is industry standard. *Study of additional modern languages, for example, or the 3 sciences instead of 'double award' science, will not be relevant for the purposes of these arrangements.* The focus will be solely on work-related learning: wider flexibility issues will be addressed in the implementation of the revised Curriculum.
 12. Schools are encouraged to give particular attention to the opportunities offered by the creative and expressive professions when they are designing programmes and considering placements and courses for their pupils.
 13. Initial experience of these arrangements has indicated that a significant majority of pupils involved have been boys. Schools should ensure that the arrangements are open to boys and girls equally; that participation is on the basis of choice by the pupil; and that suitable work placements, vocational courses or other training are available to suit the needs, aptitudes and interests of all the pupils to whom the arrangements will apply.
 14. Schools are reminded that under Article 83 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, it is the duty of their Education and Library Board to make arrangements for pupils to receive secondary education at an institution of further education. The Board concerned will consult with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools before any such arrangements are made for pupils attending a Catholic maintained school.
 15. Schools should ensure that all teachers who will be teaching any pupil or group of pupils to whom these arrangements apply are made aware of the nature of the work-related course(s) the pupil(s) will be following. This will enable the teachers to consider how best their own in-school courses of study can complement the work-related elements in order to maximise relevance and cohesion across the pupils' full educational programmes in Key Stage 4.
 16. The Department intends to regard schools' proposals under these arrangements as development work, and to approve flexibility on a school-by-school basis by way of a Departmental direction under Article 14 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

Child Protection

17. Schools must ensure that appropriate child protection arrangements are in place for pupils whilst not in attendance at the school and information on how this is to be achieved should be included with the application. Further guidance may be obtained from the designated Child Protection Officer in your Education and Library Board and/or CCMS.

Resources

18. Limited funding is available for schools participating in the Initiative. This funding is intended as a contribution towards a school's costs. It is not anticipated that this will cover all of the additional costs associated with this programme.
19. Funding for Phase 6 will be allocated on the basis of the number of pupils involved in the proposals approved for the 2005/06 school year. As in previous years the allocation of funds will also include existing pupils who received approval in Phase 5 and are progressing into the second year of their work-related programme in September 2005.
20. An allocation of funds will also be made available in the 2006/07 school year for Year 11 pupils who received approval in Phase 6 and have progressed into the second year of their work related programme in September 2006.
21. To be included in the funding allocation arrangements, schools must ensure that their applications are received **NOT LATER THAN FRIDAY 6 MAY 2005**. Applications after this date may be approved to participate in the initiative, but **WILL NOT** receive funding.

SHIRLEY McKEE

Curriculum and Qualifications Branch

CHECKLIST

APPENDIX A

Section 1 - All applications

- | | Yes |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 Have you specified which Area(s) of Study you wish to apply flexibility at Key Stage 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Are the pupils concerned covering a full course in the other Areas of Study? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Have you specified how many pupils will participate in the programme and what year they are in? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 4 Have the pupils been consulted about the content of the programme?
- 5 Have the pupils chosen to participate?
- 6 Have parents attended a careers interview or been consulted?
- 7 Does the programme demonstrate balance, cohesion and clear progression routes?
- 8 Does the proposed work-related course lead to a recognised and approved qualification?
- 9 Is there a clear focus on the Key Skills – Communication, Application of Number and ICT?
- 10 Has the programme been prepared in consultation with your ELB?
- 11 Have you planned how you will evaluate the programme?

Section 2 - Where programmes include work placement or FE/TO involvement

- | | Yes | n/a |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12 Have you specified the length of time on work placement, eg days per week, weeks per term, etc? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 Have you specified the length of time of FE/TO involvement, eg days per week, weeks per term, etc?
Please note if you have ticked 'Yes' for 12 and/or 13 above, the time involved must comprise no more than 40% of an individual pupil's total time for the 2 years. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 Have child protection arrangements been put in place?
The Department may at any time request a copy of the school's child protection policy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |