The National Curriculum (NC) in England and Wales was one of the measures incorporated within the Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988). The NC was implemented by all maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales in a rolling programme beginning in September 1989. Up until that point there had been very little government intervention into the curriculum taught in state schools in England and Wales. Individual schools could determine the structure and content of the curriculum with the only exception of religious education which was made a compulsory subject by the 1944 Education Act.

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) was wide-ranging in its scope with far-reaching implications for the future of state education. In addition to the NC, the ERA introduced local management of schools, open enrolment, the publication of pupils' results in public examinations; and it also established entirely new types of school funded directly by central government. As student teachers you are affected most immediately and directly by the clause of the ERA that relates to the NC. If you are placed in a state-maintained school you have to ensure that your schemes of work and the lessons you teach meet the requirements of the NC and enable the pupils to make progress in line with national expectations.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- define some important terms associated with the NC for England and Wales, including Key Stages, Programmes of Study, knowledge, skills and understanding, breadth of study, Attainment Targets, levels of achievement;
- explain the nature, scope and content of the NC as a whole;
- discuss the part played by the NC in the whole school curriculum experienced by pupils in maintained schools in England and Wales;
- understand the place of your subject specialism within the NC framework;
- identify the competences/standards for your course which relate to your knowledge and understanding of the school curriculum.

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

Concern about the decline in the standard of education in England and Wales in comparison with that of other countries was at the root of the decision to introduce a national curriculum for use in all maintained schools in England and Wales. A number of working groups were established to...
develop the NC. The first working group set up by the government was the Task Group for Assessment and Testing (TGAT) which made recommendations in 1988 for a complex system of teacher assessment and national tests. TGAT’s recommendations were the starting point for the discussions of the working groups established for each of the NC subjects. The NC was, therefore, and still is, assessment-driven. This position runs counter to the assertion made by TGAT that ‘assessment should be the servant and not the master of the curriculum’ (DES/WO, 1988).

The TGAT report recommended that pupils’ progress in all NC subjects should be formally assessed at four points in their school career. This assessment should take place at the end of the four Key Stages. The relation of Key Stage and year group to age is shown in Table 7.3.1.

**Table 7.3.1** The four Key Stages of the National Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5–7</td>
<td>1–2 (Y1–Y2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7–11</td>
<td>3–6 (Y3–Y6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11–14</td>
<td>7–9 (Y7–Y9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14–16</td>
<td>10–11 (Y10–Y11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pupils were to be assessed at the end of each Key Stage in relation to Attainment Targets (ATs) for each of the subjects, and progress would be measured against Statements of Attainment (SoS) – the level statements. TGAT recommended that there should be a ten-level scale against which pupils’ achievement in the NC subjects would be measured, and suggested the range of levels that would normally be covered by each Key Stage. The expected range of performance, by levels, at the Key Stages is illustrated in Table 7.3.2.

**Table 7.3.2** Expectations of pupil performance in the National Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stage</th>
<th>Range of levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4–10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While TGAT was at work and following the publication of the TGAT report, working groups of subject experts, including teachers, were set up for each of the NC subjects. The subject working parties were given the brief to determine the subject content of the NC, called the Programme of Study (PoS), appropriate for each of the Key Stages, the Attainment Targets for the subject, and the Statements of Attainment within each Attainment Target; the SoS linked progression in learning to level; see Table 7.3.2. The subject working parties worked to different timescales, as it had been decided to introduce the NC into schools as a rolling programme, which meant there were no opportunities for cross-subject discussion to ensure comparability and coherence. There were nine subjects in the NC for primary schools and ten subjects for secondary schools:
• English (Welsh in schools where Welsh was the first language)
• mathematics
• science
• art
• geography
• history
• a modern foreign language (compulsory in secondary schools only)
• music
• physical education (PE)
• technology

English, mathematics and science were designated as core subjects and were the first subjects to be developed, and their programmes were implemented with pupils from certain year groups on a rolling programme from September 1989; the other non-core subjects were implemented in phases from 1990 onwards. Thus the National Curriculum for England and Wales with its associated terminology was born. The separate subject Orders included the aspects of the discipline that subject experts considered to be vital to the development of children’s understanding of their subject.

THE INTENTIONS OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The NC for England and Wales was established by the 1988 Education Reform Act and defines the minimum educational entitlement for pupils of compulsory school age. The NC applies to all pupils aged 5–16 in maintained schools. It does not apply in independent schools (i.e. private, fee-paying schools) although those schools may choose to follow it.

The 1988 ERA was reinforced by the Education Act, 1997, which required that all state schools should provide pupils with a curriculum that:

• is balanced and broadly based;
• promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development;
• prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
• includes, in addition to the NC, religious education and, for secondary pupils, sex education.

It is clear, therefore, that it was not the government’s intention that the NC should constitute the whole curriculum for schools; rather it is a framework that schools can use to ensure that they provide a minimum curriculum entitlement for all their pupils. Every school is encouraged to create a whole school curriculum which reflects its particular needs and circumstances and that best achieves the school’s aims and contributes to its ethos.

The content of each NC subject is defined in a statutory Order. Each Order consists of:

• common requirements which relate to access to the curriculum for all pupils, pupils’ use of language, pupils’ access to information technology and the Curriculum Cymreig (in Wales);
• the Programme of Study which sets out the minimum knowledge, understanding and skills for each subject at each Key Stage;
• Attainment Targets which define the expected standards of pupils; see the QCA website: www.qca.org.uk/gen5–14.htm 07/11/00

In essence the NC provided a secondary school curriculum that was very similar in number of subjects and in specified content to what had been provided for 11–14 year-olds in grammar and
comprehensive schools for most of the twentieth century. However, it intended to provide a
greater breadth of study than hitherto to the last two years of compulsory secondary schooling
when pupils traditionally prepare for public examinations. The 1988 ERA introduced a pro-
grame of national assessment at the age of 14 (Year 9). From the outset there were concerns, in
particular from headteachers and teacher associations, that there was content overload in the NC
and that there would be insufficient timetable time to provide full coverage of the Programmes of
Study in core and non-core subjects, never mind supplement the NC with other desirable
curricular activities. However, it was the introduction of the programme of national testing
associated with the NC which provoked the industrial action that led to the first review of the
NC. Full-scale assessments in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science had been
developed and piloted and were to be taken by all Year 9 pupils from 1993 onwards; national
assessment had already been introduced at the end of Year 3 (7-year-olds) from 1991. The
assessments were nationally produced but were to be administered and assessed by teachers. The
results of the tests and the teachers’ own assessments of their pupils were to be included on a
national database. Teachers already overwhelmed by the demands of teaching the new
Programmes of Study refused to take on the additional workload entailed in the setting and
marking of assessments.

THE DEARING REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Following the boycott by teachers of the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1993, the government
appointed Lord Dearing (at that time Sir Ron Dearing) to:

• reduce the overall statutory content of the NC;
• review the ten-level scale originally recommended by TGAT;
• simplify the national tests;
• improve the administrative arrangements for the NC and its assessment.

When the Dearing committee produced its interim report for national consultation in 1994 the
NC was still at a very early stage in its implementation. For instance, no pupils had yet studied the
Key Stage 4 programme of study; there had been no national testing in any of the non-core
subjects. The final Dearing proposals provided pragmatic solutions to what was perceived by
primary and secondary teachers alike to be an unmanageable curriculum (Dearing, 1994). The
recommendations were generally welcomed by schools and a revised set of NC Orders was
completed and published for distribution to schools in January 1995. The revised Orders in all
subjects for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 had to be taught from September 1995, and the Key Stage 4 NC
was to be implemented from September 1996.

A summary of the changes arising from the Dearing Review

Key Stages 1–3

The aim of the review was to free up 20 per cent of curriculum time to give schools the freedom
to determine what should be taught in that time, the equivalent of one day a week. This
necessitated reduction in the content of all of the subject Orders. However, the reduction was
most severe in the Programmes of Study of the non-core subjects. New NC subject working
groups were set up to review their curriculum, and again very little liaison took place between groups. There were clear implications for the coherence of the NC as a whole when cuts were made in a piecemeal fashion to what should be taught. One subject Order was changed more fundamentally. It was decided to separate Information Technology (IT) from the Design and Technology subject Order. The Dearing Review, therefore, in effect spawned an additional subject (IT) in the NC, which from 1996 was to form part of the core entitlement of pupils throughout all four Key Stages. This development was designed to promote an IT-literate society in the future.

**Key Stage 4**

Secondary schools and teacher associations had been particularly vociferous in their criticism of the original NC proposals for Key Stage 4. Pupils following the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and its predecessors had traditionally chosen to study and sit examinations in seven to nine subjects. The NC proposals now required the study of a minimum of eleven. After much deliberation a number of subjects were made optional at Key Stage 4. This decision provoked much opposition from the subject associations representing the subjects concerned who saw the status of their subjects being diminished as a consequence.

From 1996, 14–16 year-old pupils would have to study and take a full GCSE award in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Additionally, pupils would be required to study one modern foreign language and design technology (as the subject was to be known) and take at least a GCSE short course (or its equivalent) in those subjects. They also had to be taught, but not examined at GCSE, physical education, religious education, personal, social and health education (PSHE), sex education and IT. History, geography, art and music were relegated to optional status.

In the event, a minority of pupils did not study a modern foreign language or a course in design technology at Key Stage 4 during the period in which the Dearing proposals were in force. Certain schools decided to retain a curriculum which they felt best suited the needs of their pupils; and, in the opinion of the teachers, this did not include a modern foreign language (MFL) and/or design technology.

**Assessment**

The impact of the Dearing revisions was greatest in the area of assessment. This effect is not surprising as both the national tests and teacher assessment had been the object of the most severe criticisms. The whole system proposed by TGAT was reconsidered and simplified. In many subjects the number of Attainment Targets (AT) was substantially reduced, the greatest reductions being in mathematics (16 reduced to 4) and science (17 reduced to 4). Within each AT, Statements of Attainment were replaced by Level Descriptions. The original ten-level scale for use across all four Key Stages was reduced to eight levels (with the addition of an ‘exceptional performance’ category) to be applied only to Key Stages 1–3. Pupils’ attainment at Key Stage 4 was to be assessed and reported through public examinations at 16+ (GCSE, GNVQ or, in a small number of cases, NVQ). For discussion of vocational qualifications (VQs) see Unit 6.2.

When Dearing was asked to review the NC, national tests had been developed and implemented only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 (1991 for Key Stages 2 and 3). Key Stage 3 national assessments had been developed and were boycotted by most secondary schools in 1993. National tests had actually been developed and piloted in
some of the non-core subjects. However, the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1994) recommended that national assessments in the core subjects at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 were to take the form of ‘pen and pencil tests’ rather than the more open-ended tasks used at both Key Stages 1 and 3 up to that point. The tests would be externally assessed and not marked by teachers as originally intended and no plans were made to extend national testing to the non-core subjects. However, the very controversial decision made by the government to publish the results of NC assessments for pupils aged 11 (Key Stage 2) and aged 14 (Key Stage 3) was upheld by Dearing, and it was decided that additional information on the effectiveness of schools would also be made available publicly from 1997. From that date secondary school teachers were required to assess the attainment of all their pupils in relation to the Attainment Target(s) at the end of Key Stage 3 (age 14) in all NC subjects. These data were be collected from all schools and published.

The changes recommended by the Dearing Report were consulted upon and subsequently revised and implemented by schools with a minimum of protest from teachers. The government had made an undertaking that there would be a moratorium on changes to the NC for a period of five years, until the year 2000. However, the momentum for change proved to be too great. Even before educationalists and other interested parties had time to consider the impact of the Dearing ‘scissors and paste’ review on the coherence and scope of the school curriculum and the extent to which it could claim to meet the aims enshrined in the 1988 ERA to provide pupils from the ages of 5 to 16 with a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’, other national initiatives made such an evaluation impossible.

**CURRICULUM 2000**

The curriculum that you are teaching is not the one arising from the implementation of the Dearing Report but a yet later version introduced in September 2000 as a result of a review commissioned by the Labour government elected in 1997 (DfEE/QCA, 1999a). The NC had been one of the flagship policies of the outgoing Conservative government. The ‘New Labour’ government had been elected on a manifesto pledge of ‘education, education, education’ and it had the reforming zeal of a party that had been out of power for nearly two decades. Very early in his period of office as Secretary of State for Education and Employment (SoS), David Blunkett made a commitment that the standards in literacy and numeracy of primary-aged pupils would rise very significantly. He said that, by 2002, a target of 80 per cent of Year 6 pupils should achieve at least NC level 4 in English and 75 per cent of Year 6 pupils should achieve level 4 in mathematics in their national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The then Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, said that he would resign if these targets for these two basic skills were not reached, and this meant an increase of over 20 per cent in pupils’ performance in both subjects.

A national literacy (NLS) and numeracy strategy (NNS) had been introduced into primary schools to support teachers in their work in the basic skills. These strategies were originally developed and piloted by working groups set up by the outgoing Conservative government, but the strategies were adopted and developed by the Labour government. The NLS and NNS went further than any government curriculum initiative. Not only did both strategies prescribe what was to be taught to pupils but they specified also the amount of time to be spent and the teaching approaches to be adopted. The NLS was introduced nationally in September 1998 and the NNS the following year. The strategies were not mandatory in maintained schools, but individual schools were set specific targets for achievement at Key Stage 2 and only a small minority of
schools were sufficiently confident that they could achieve their target by continuing to use their established methods of teaching the basic skills.

To assist primary schools in achieving these challenging targets in literacy and numeracy the non-core subjects suffered a further loss of status between 1998 and 2000. As a result of pressure from primary schools and teacher associations, the government suspended the Programmes of Study in all the non-core subjects, including PE and design technology, to allow the curriculum in primary schools to be sharply focused on literacy and numeracy. This meant that although primary schools must continue to teach the six non-core subjects, what they taught and how much time was spent on these subjects were at the discretion of the headteachers and their governing bodies. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), which had been established in 1997 to advise the government on matters of curriculum and assessment, published guidance entitled ‘Maintaining breadth and balance at Key Stages 1 and 2’ which was issued to all primary schools (QCA, 1998). However, there was no structure in place to ensure that primary schools implemented the guidance and fulfilled the statutory requirement to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. The message was clear: the core subjects were considered to be of greater importance than the non-core. The impact of these developments for you as student teachers in secondary schools is that during 1998–2000 pupils transferring to Key Stage 3 may have done little work in six of the ten subjects. Their knowledge and progress in those subjects may have been affected and they may not have reached the NC levels expected of them.

It could be argued that the proposals of the Dearing Report created three divisions of subjects. The first division comprises the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These subjects are taught at all four Key Stages and are assessed by national tests at Key Stages 1–3, and they are the basis for the league tables for primary schools. Subjects in the second division are compulsory at all four Key Stages but do not have end of Key Stage national tests. These subjects include physical education, design technology, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and religious education (although not an NC subject). The remaining subjects – music, art, geography and history – appear to have been relegated to the third division as they are only compulsory at Key Stages 1–3 and have no associated national tests. The initiatives of the Labour government since 1997 have underlined the differences between the status of core and non-core subjects. However, the picture is not so simple.

Many non-core subjects continue to be popular subjects with pupils at both GCSE and AS/A level, due in part to the flexibility of the NC at Key Stage 4. In 1998 secondary schools were reminded that they could modify the Key Stage 4 curriculum to meet the needs of pupils who might gain more from work experience and other vocational opportunities than from continued study of some of the compulsory core subjects. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have to continue with examination courses in English and mathematics but schools can apply for some pupils to take vocational studies. This alternative curriculum is achieved by removing the requirement of pupils to sit examinations in up to two of the remaining compulsory courses in science, modern foreign languages (MFL) or design technology.

In 1998 the stage was set for the review of the NC that led to the NC Orders currently in use in schools. This end-of-the-century review provided opportunities to modify the curriculum in the light of evaluation of how well the current Orders were working in practice, and to ensure the overall coherence and appropriateness of the NC for the twenty-first century. The SoS took account of the wishes of the teaching profession for curriculum continuity rather than change and identified the purpose of the review as to ensure stability. This purpose was achieved by keeping change to a minimum but creating a more flexible NC which was less prescriptive and, most importantly, ‘would be at the heart of our policies to raise standards’ (QCA/DfEE, 1999).
The extent and nature of the changes made to individual subject Orders for 2000 varied from subject to subject. Monitoring of the 1995 Orders, carried out by QCA (and its predecessor, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, SCAA), had revealed greater satisfaction and fewer concerns from teachers about some subjects than others. The opportunity was taken to align the Key Stage 1 and 2 Programmes of Study in English and mathematics with the national frameworks for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, leading to significant restructuring of the Orders for English and mathematics. The content of the Programme of Study for the non-core subjects underwent further slimming at Key Stages 1 and 2 to enable primary teachers to maintain the emphasis on basic skills and to focus on achieving the government’s assessment targets for them in 2002. During the consultation process on the review, the proposals for some subjects provoked considerable media interest and the campaigns mounted by some journalists in newspapers, radio and TV made a significant impact on the content of the final version of the Orders concerned, particularly those subjects that touched closely the concept of national identity. For instance, there was sustained interest from groups outside the education profession about the authors recommended by government for study by pupils in English and about the examples of people and events that pupils might be taught about in history. The role of team games within the physical education curriculum also provoked debate in the media.

THE PLACE OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM WITHIN THE WHOLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The Curriculum 2000 review was the first occasion that discussion focused on the school curriculum as a whole and the place of the NC within it. Conferences attended by representatives from a large number of schools, subject associations and teacher associations and others with an interest in this debate were held to discuss the aims, values and priorities of the whole curriculum. The outcomes of these conferences in part set the agenda of the meetings of subject task groups established to make recommendations to the individual subject Orders. Consequently a number of whole school issues were identified for consideration and development to ensure that the NC would meet the needs of adults living in a rapidly changing world. In this context a new subject, Citizenship, was added to the curriculum. Citizenship was to be a non-statutory area of the primary school curriculum and was incorporated into the non-statutory guidelines for PSHE included within the framework of the NC. Citizenship was to become a compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and an entirely new subject Order was developed for these two Key Stages. Its introduction into schools was delayed until September 2002 to enable schools to restructure the curriculum and prepare resources.

Appreciation was also given in the review to the fact that freedom of access to information via the internet meant that the readership for education publications had extended beyond teachers and other professionals. Each subject Order begins with a double-page spread that contains examples of pupils’ work in the subject, quotations provided by leading academics, industrialists and personalities from the media, and a statement summarising the importance of the subject. The structure and language of the Orders were scrutinised to ensure that they were clearer and more accessible, both to those who had to put the Orders into practice and to parents and governors. A consistent structure was introduced for the Orders at all Key Stages in all subjects. This consistency was intended to be helpful, particularly to teachers in primary schools, who have to teach all subjects; and it facilitates making comparisons of the content and perceived demand of different subjects at any one Key Stage.
An attempt was made to distinguish more clearly those parts of the NC Orders that are statutory and those aspects that are non-statutory and included as guidance to teachers in their planning. It had become apparent to the QCA, from their monitoring and consultations with teachers, that there was a tendency to assume that everything contained in the 1995 subject Orders had to be taught, leading to an overly prescriptive approach being taken to the curriculum.

You need to study the Order for your specialist subject(s) carefully. Those aspects that are in black typeface are statutory; those in grey are non-statutory examples or guidance. This design feature is clear enough in the published versions of the Orders but less clear when the Orders are downloaded from the internet. The non-statutory elements include the examples in the text and the marginal notes (DfEE/QCA, 1999a).

You need to be clear which content is **statutory** and which is non-statutory by reference to the Orders and your school’s scheme of work. The enhanced flexibility inherent in Curriculum 2000 may be lost if these distinctions are not appreciated. In Table 7.3.3 there is an overview of the changes made to the NC for 2000; Table 7.3.4 outlines the structure of the Orders for each of the subjects. You may find further help in the subject books accompanying this text in the series ‘Learning to Teach (subject) in the Secondary School’. You can find out more about the impact of the school curriculum on schools through Task 7.3.1; and more about the effectiveness of the cross-curricular dimensions by addressing Task 7.3.2.

### Task 7.3.1

**EVALUATING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

1. Interview several members of staff in your school experience school to find out:
   - the impact of the NC on the school curriculum;
   - their views about the content of the NC;
   - their opinions about its strengths and weaknesses.

   Develop a short questionnaire (5–8 questions) for use at interview. We suggest you discuss your plans with your tutor and take advice about whom to approach. Suitable staff to interview might include:
   - your subject mentor;
   - the teacher with responsibility for the Key Stage 3 curriculum;
   - a teacher with experience of teaching your subject before the introduction of the NC;
   - a teacher of a different area of the curriculum from your own.

2. Arrange a time to interview each of these teachers, using the questionnaire to structure the interview. Keep notes of the responses, particularly those relating to the impact of the NC on the achievements of the pupils.

3. Analyse the responses and write a 200-word summary for inclusion in your teaching file.

4. At the end of your first term in school, when you have planned and taught some lessons with Years 7–9, review your written summary and revise it to take account of your views.

Note: ensure that you re-read your statement before attending any job interviews.
Table 7.3.3  Summary of changes introduced into the National Curriculum beginning 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Curriculum component</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Key issues include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>Explicit statement of values, aims and purposes</td>
<td>A definition of the school curriculum (p. 10), values and purposes relating to the individual, the family, the diversity of society and the environment (p. 10). This statement reiterates the aims from the ERA, 1988 and establishes the NC as a constantly evolving and developing framework intended to establish an entitlement curriculum, establish standards, promote continuity and coherence, promote public understanding (pp. 12–13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the NC at Key Stages 3 and 4</td>
<td>General and subject-specific Key Stage requirements, timescale for implementation and scope for disapplication</td>
<td>Outlines the government view that pupils: • should have two hours a week of physical education including extra-curricular activities; • should be taught food and textiles in design and technology at KS3; • may be taught either foundation or higher PoS at KS4 in mathematics; • may be taught single science, double science or three separate sciences at KS4. Outlines opportunities for schools to disapply aspects of the NC in MFL, design and technology and science at KS4 to meet specified needs of pupils (p. 17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Key terms and the interrelationship of the General Teaching Requirements and the Programmes of Study and the purpose and scope of the Attainment Targets</td>
<td>Explains how the level descriptions should be used to provide pupils’ attainment levels at the end of KS3. States that level descriptions are not designed for use in assessing individual pieces of work. Outlines: • how the subject Orders should be used to assist in planning schemes of work; • requirements to report annually to parents on pupils’ progress; • additional information available to support target setting for pupils whose performance is below age-related expectations. Summarises the range of approved qualifications available to pupils of secondary school age (p. 19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other requirements</td>
<td>Compulsory curriculum elements additional to the National Curriculum</td>
<td>Explains the requirement to provide: • religious education, the scope for parents to withdraw children from RE lessons, and the nature of the agreed syllabuses; • sex education, the need to ‘encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life’ (QCA/DfEE, 1999, p. 20), the scope for parents to withdraw children from all or part of the programme; • a programme of careers education in secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning across the NC</strong></td>
<td>The requirement to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC), PSHE and a range of skills across all aspects of the NC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The requirement to promote other aspects of the school curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Outlines a range of thinking skills including information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking and evaluation skills. These skills enable pupils to develop their metacognitive skills, their ability to ‘learn how’ as well as ‘learn what’. Discusses the need to prepare pupils for adult life by developing their financial capability, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills and undertaking work-related learning, and suggests where opportunities to do this occur in the curriculum. Identifies the need to enable pupils to understand their responsibilities for protecting the planet for the enjoyment of the citizens of the global community in the future is outlined within Education for sustainable development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General teaching requirements</strong></td>
<td>Inclusion: providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of language across the curriculum</strong></td>
<td>This section is statutory and is much enhanced in importance and scope compared with the access statements in the 1995 Orders. The section outlines three principles for ensuring that the curriculum is more inclusive of the needs of the diversity of pupils educated in maintained schools across the country. It identifies the need to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• set suitable learning challenges;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• respond to pupils’ diverse learning needs;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describes and exemplifies ways of achieving these goals. Subject-specific examples are included in the free-standing single subject Orders but not in the primary and secondary school handbooks.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of information and communications technology across the curriculum</strong></td>
<td>A statutory requirement outlined in a statement of what teachers must do in the context of teaching their own subject to develop the pupils’ language skills and their use of standard English.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A statutory requirement for the development of secondary school pupils’ use of the range of ICT tools across all aspects of the curriculum.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Numbers refer to page numbers in the *Handbook for Secondary Teachers* (DfEE/QCA, 1999a)
Table 7.3.4 The structure of the subject Orders in the National Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme of Study for each Key Stage in which the subject is a compulsory part of the curriculum</td>
<td>Statutory</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills and understanding</td>
<td>What has to be taught by teachers and developed by pupils over the Key Stage&lt;br&gt;The contexts, areas of study, pupil experiences and activities through which the knowledge, skills and understanding are to be taught and developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainment Target(s) (found in fold-out section at the end of the subject Order(s))</td>
<td>Statutory</td>
<td>Statements of the knowledge, skills and understanding that individual pupils of different abilities are expected to attain by the end of each Key Stage, divided into eight level descriptions with an additional description of what constitutes exceptional performance in that subject</td>
<td>The vast majority of pupils at Key Stage 3 should be working within Levels 3–7. When statutorily assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils will be expected to achieve Level 5 or 6 in the subject. For those subjects with a Key Stage 4 programme of study attainment at the end of the Key Stage will be assessed through GCSE, or another recognised national qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the Key Stage description</td>
<td>non-statutory</td>
<td>A summary of what the pupils will learn over the Key Stage</td>
<td>This statement explains links between the two elements in the Programme of Study and provides an overview of the range of experiences the pupils should receive in the subject over the Key Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-specific marginal notes</td>
<td>non-statutory</td>
<td>Key information and definitions of terms used in the Programme of Study</td>
<td>The notes amplify certain points and terms that have a particular meaning when used in the Programme of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT opportunities (located in the margins)</td>
<td>non-statutory</td>
<td>Suggestions for the use of ICT within the Programme of Study for the Key Stage</td>
<td>Explains that pupils’ ICT skills should be developed across all subjects in the curriculum and what they should be made aware of where ICT is particularly useful in individual subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links with other subjects in the curriculum</td>
<td>non-statutory</td>
<td>Identifies where aspects of the knowledge, skills and understanding in one subject build on learning in another subject in the curriculum</td>
<td>This is a tool for effective cross-curricular planning. You need to be aware of links from your subject to others and also from other subjects to your own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inclusion

Issues were raised at the time of both the 1994 review (Dearing, 1994) and the most recent review (1998–9) about whether the NC met the needs of all the pupils for whom it was intended including those with special educational needs, disabilities, English as an additional language and pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The 1998–9 review took place in the wake of the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent publication of the McPherson report into the handling of the police inquiry. Concurrently there were growing concerns about the under-achievement of boys and pupils from certain minority ethnic groups; see Unit 4.4 for details. Widespread consultation and discussion resulted in the development of guidance called *Inclusion: providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils* (DfEE/QCA, 1999d, p. 32). This guidance summarises current thinking and good practice in inclusive education. For further discussion of ‘inclusion’ see Unit 4.6 on inclusion and special educational needs.

Optional national schemes of work

Another initiative from the government welcomed by teachers was the publication of Schemes of Work (SoW) at Key Stage 3 in all NC subjects, including Citizenship and religious education (DfEE/QCA, 2000). This publication followed a similar initiative for primary teachers of Schemes of Work for Key Stages 1 and 2 in all NC subjects. Primary teachers had been requesting this sort of guidance and support since 1989. These SoW are optional and exemplify how the NC programmes of study for 2000 can be translated into medium-term teaching plans to meet the needs of the majority of pupils in a class. The SoW suggest how to modify the plans for pupils making slower or faster progress than expected. It was intended that schools would draw on the published schemes and modify them to meet the particular needs of their pupils rather than adopt them wholesale.

Task 7.3.2

**IMPLEMENTING THE CROSS-CURRICULAR DIMENSIONS OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

1. Find out how your school experience school is implementing one (or more) of the following NC requirements:
   - ICT across the curriculum (see Table 7.3.3, general teaching requirements);
   - language across the curriculum (see Table 7.3.3, learning across the NC);
   - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension (see Table 7.3.3, rationale for the NC and learning across the NC);
   - the six key skills (see Table 7.3.3, learning across the NC).

Select a topic on which to focus. This task can be tackled by talking to a member of staff and reading policy documents. We suggest you talk to your tutor about whom to approach and what you intend to do, and why. A deputy headteacher or other teacher with responsibility for the school curriculum might be a suitable interviewee. Arrange a time to talk to the teacher and
agree how long you have for the interview. Collect as much information as you can, including copies of any policy documents. Read and review the information you have collected before the interview.

2 Talk to your subject mentor about the way in which the cross-curricular dimension you chose is put into practice in lessons in your subject.

3 Discuss with student teachers placed in other schools how their schools implement the cross-curricular aspects of the NC and the extent to which the approach taken is successful in practice. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

5 Focus your lesson observations for one week on the opportunities that arise in those lessons to promote the cross-curricular dimension you chose.

6 Plan and teach a lesson in which one of your learning objectives relates to the cross-curricular dimension. Evaluate how well you achieved that objective.

SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

This unit has outlined the development of the National Curriculum for England and Wales since 1988. The period 1988–2000 saw many changes to the school curriculum and the work of teachers. Assessment has been a major area of development and discussion; further information on assessment is given in Units 6.1 and 6.2.

A further review of the NC is not planned. However, the proposals outlined recently by central government to reorganise secondary education may carry curriculum implications (Wintour, 2000, 2001). Individual subjects are to be reviewed in a rolling programme. Any revisions of curricula are intended to take account of subject monitoring and the need to update content. In 1999 the government indicated its awareness of the need to update the science curriculum and there will be a call for change to other Programmes of Study that no longer reflect current trends in the teaching and learning of the subject. The majority of teachers working in maintained schools today perceive the NC as having more benefits than drawbacks. This perception is very different from that held by teachers at the time of the introduction of the first ever government-initiated school curriculum in 1988.

You have the opportunity over your course of initial teacher education to test and evaluate the current National Curriculum, referred to as ‘Curriculum 2000’. You should link your study of this topic to the competences/standards for your course.

FURTHER READING


This handbook is the compendium of all the NC subject Orders and guidance provided to teachers and managers in schools.
Department for Education and Employment and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (DfEE/QCA) (2000) *A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 3* (in your subject), London: DfEE/QCA. The schemes of work are available for all NC subjects (and also for religious education) at Key Stages 1 and 2 and Key Stage 3. Each scheme provides examples of how the NC requirements can be taught to pupils of a wide range of abilities.


Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Department for Education and Employment (QCA/DfEE, 1999) *The Review of the National Curriculum in England. The Secretary of State’s Proposals*, London: QCA. The consultation version of the NC was sent into schools to seek teachers’ opinions on the proposed changes. The document provides a rationale for the approach taken and enables you to see what changes were made before the Orders were published.