

## **Coldstream A and B**

### **Notes on some of the implications for sixth forms in the Report "The Structure of Art and Design Education".**

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Since their inception foundation courses have had an uneasy relationship with sixth forms. While on the one hand both groups have been competing for the same calibre of student, Art Colleges have often required students to have completed two years in the sixth form, but have been unable to offer any incentive for the student to stay at school until eighteen. On the contrary it has meant an extra year at least before he is qualified. If the Report is implemented it will remove this anomaly.

*"Four years in an art college course after a good general education of sixth form standard is and will remain for most students necessary in order to maintain the high standard which is looked for in the Dip.A.D.*

*"All Diploma courses should have a minimum age of entry of 18.*

*"The minimum general education requirements for admission to Diploma courses should be retained at five GCE passes at 'O' level (or an approved equivalent) but specific requirements for other qualifications may be adopted for individual courses. Exemption from the minimum requirements should continue to be permissible in cases of students of marked creative promise. Colleges are asked to keep this exceptional clause in mind".*

The two types of Dip.A.D. proposed, 'A' and 'B' are to recruit in different ways, the 'A' courses from 18+ foundation courses and the 'B' direct from sixth forms.

*"Four-year Diploma courses (Group B) may be preceded by a one-year foundation course but is expected they will frequently be entered direct from the sixth form or the equivalent."*

This seems to be a serious weakness in the Report.

Either entry to 'B' courses should be direct from sixth forms or their equivalent, or not. If the Report is implemented in its present form, the majority of recruitment for 'B' courses is likely to be from foundation courses—five years on a major award leading to only a degree equivalent qualification. What head of department would not prefer a student who has completed a sixth form course and a foundation year, to one who comes direct from a sixth form. Of course it must be possible occasionally for a student who has completed a foundation course to move in to the 'B' course; this should be an exception, under the present recommendations it might become the rule.

What sort of qualification will these 'A' and 'B' courses require, apart from the 5 'O' levels? Almost certainly a high level of ability in English, strong motivations, and the specific requirements mentioned. It is these latter requirements that are of most interest to the sixth form. The 'B' course will in most cases prefer students with at least one science subject at 'A' level preferably two, perhaps mathematics and physics for areas of design associated with engineering or computers, perhaps chemistry and physics for those areas concerned with materials technology, sociology and economics for those concerned with marketing.

There are indications in the Report that Art Colleges may be allowed to develop courses in more academic subjects, Art or Design History for instance, 'A' levels in German, French etc. History and English would be particularly relevant. What about the 'A' courses? It is to be hoped that in their sixth form, students will have the opportunity to develop their interest in the visual arts, music, drama and literature, but I do not think this will need formal academic certification. Those in Colleges of Art concerned with applicants will be, or should be capable of assessing their potential in this direction. The most important qualification will be motivation. The 'A' courses may or may not require the scientific 'A' levels but the Humanities generally will carry weight. I have never heard very much support for 'A' level Art, again a broad cultural background in the Arts would seem to be of greater relevance.

'A' level design could become important for both courses, and particularly for the Dip.A.D. 'B' if it gives a sound introduction to problem solving techniques.

Due to the popularity of Fine Art Courses the majority of staff in secondary art education are Fine Art trained, if not Fine Artists then they often have a craft background, this leads to neglect of design as a subject in schools. The result is a recurring circle, more students leave school intent on studying Fine Art. This is a problem which needs particular attention in schools, one that perhaps the graduates from the broader, existing Dip. A.D. course will help solve to. The new 'B' courses should appeal to a new group of students, broadening the basis of Art College recruitment, and offering opportunities to some of those who do not wish to accept as inevitable the dichotomy between the Arts and Sciences. The Art Colleges may be brought a little nearer to earth. They will have to develop an understanding of sixth form education, and perhaps for the first time be welcome to recruit them. To those of us involved in Polytechnics, the 'B' courses are particularly apt and offer very wide possibilities for either new or combined courses.