

## Diploma Courses in Design

### A case for integrated Design Departments in Secondary Education.

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Two broad types of courses leading to Diplomas in Art and Design are envisaged in the future. The first is the familiar self-motivated, experimentally orientated course that has evolved from the recommendations embodied in the first report of the National Advisory Council for Art Education in 1962, and the second, more professionally orientated design course suggested in the recent report of the Joint Committee of the National Advisory Council for Art Education and the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design. The latter is intended to provide an education for students intending a career as a professional designer serving the needs of the community and meeting the requirements of modern marketing methods and industrial production techniques.

Departments of Design in Art Colleges and Polytechnics intending to set up such professional design courses will be looking, within the permitted minimum educational requirements, for broadly educated well informed young people with aesthetic sensibility and social responsibility in equal measure.

The minimum general education requirements for admission to Diploma Courses are to be retained at five G.C.E. passes at 'O' level (or approved equivalent) but specific requirements for other qualifications may be adopted for individual courses. The Diploma Courses that have been approved for the past eight years will continue to recruit from Foundation Courses at 18+ while the new 'professional' design courses will have the option to select entrants from the sixth form or equivalent.

In consequence some adjustments have to be made to Foundation Courses and the Joint Council's Report calls for them to be reviewed and some form of recognition granted to courses which receive the approval of the reviewing body.

If Design Departments of Art Colleges and Polytechnics are to be encouraged to look to sixth forms for their recruitment and not fall back on Foundation Courses, some of which are under their control, it would seem that now is the appropriate time for some rethinking of sixth form studies. We think it not unreasonable to assume some teachers in secondary schools responsible for the direction of post G.C.E. 'O' level (and C.S.E.) studies will welcome the opportunity presented by the recommendations in *The Structure of Art and Design Education* to devise their own foundation courses which would provide a sound basis from which interested sixth form students could apply for places on professional design courses.

Organisers of sixth form studies might well consider a co-ordinated approach to 'A' level work and encourage students in their final two years in secondary education to

select grouped specialist subjects which are seen to be complementary to each other. These may be grouped academic and vocational subjects or alternatively grouped science and arts subjects in various combinations, the important thing being that they are truly complementary and mutually supporting in their educational aims. Some such groupings might be English Literature, Mathematics or Physics plus Technical Drawing and Metal and Woodworking experience, or English Literature, History or Geography plus Commercial Subjects and Craftwork in mixed media. There must be many more combinations suited to individual student needs which would provide vocationally orientated students with a broad academic base from which to choose a worthwhile professional course in higher education.

Colleges of Further Education, Sixth Form Colleges and Schools large enough to provide a wide range of sixth form studies are likely to have a broad spread of subjects, specialist staff and facilities to be able to produce the sort of educational climate in which such "grouped subject" studies develop and flourish. A special plea can be made for continuation of the moves towards fusion of the Crafts staff with the staff of the Technical Workshops and Technical Drawing Studies into an integrated Design Department, in this way their combined resources can be made available in a comprehensive way to students who are in the main not based in that area. The Design Department should see itself as not only providing imaginative practical supporting work to academic studies in other departments but originating project work from within, so that students based in that area can seek reciprocal help from academic staff from other departments. In this way the intellectual level of more vocationally orientated studies may be raised to the mutual advantage of all.

Students leaving schools at 18 after such a comprehensive course of sixth form study should find themselves equipped both mentally and technically to consider offering themselves as candidates for places on professional degree and diploma level courses currently being pioneered by the newly designated Polytechnics. These courses for intending professional designers will be of 4 years duration full time study, with a considerably industrial "sandwich" experience built into their curriculum and will be viable alternatives to Council for National Academic Awards Degree Courses structured in a similar manner.

Students who have not taken formal Art studies beyond 'O' level and feel that they have developed, in addition to an interest in materials and technical processes, an increasing aesthetic awareness need not be deterred from making an application for a professional design course because it is readily recognised that creative mechanical and constructional ability and an ability to express ideas and aspirations orally have a greater relevance than a natural aptitude for drawing and painting for a career of this kind.