

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2001

**HIGHER STILL: (i) UPDATED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
(ii) GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CORE SKILLS
AND SCOTTISH GROUP AWARDS**

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of the Education Committee an updated Higher Still Implementation Strategy and to seek approval of guidelines for the management of Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards in the senior school curriculum.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes and endorses the contents of the updated Higher Still Implementation Strategy [Appendix 1]
- (b) notes and endorses the terms of the guidelines documents in relation to Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards [Appendix 2]

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Arrangements for the introduction of Higher Still were previously considered at the following meetings of the Education Committee:

- 21 January 1997 (Article 11 refers)
- 25 August 1998 (Article 12 refers)
- 22 August 2000 (Article 1 refers)
- 21 November 2000 (Article 9 refers)

2.2 The work of the Higher Still Strategy Group and the implementation of the Higher Still/National Qualifications programme in Angus secondary schools has been guided by an Angus Higher Still Implementation Strategy developed in the light of the consultation needs analysis exercises whose outcomes were considered in some depth by the Education Committee at its meeting on 21 January 1997.

2.3 It has been felt necessary to update the strategy to take account of organisational changes within the Educational Development Service and within the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The amendments to the Strategy document also take account of changed timescales and changes in resource allocation.

2.4 Paragraph 3.4 of the Higher Still Strategy recommends the provision to schools of guidelines in respect of Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards. It should be noted that the provision of these guidelines is not in any way a response to the difficulties relating to assessment and certification in the 2000 SQA diet. The production of the guidelines reflects a longstanding commitment enshrined within the implementation strategy and it is felt appropriate to issue these at this time in order to support schools in their continuing development of the senior school curriculum.

3 Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards

3.1 Core Skills are seen as an integral component of the new National Qualifications framework. The promotion of Core Skills within the Higher Still curriculum has been welcomed by industry

and the tertiary education sector. Attainment in Core Skills is profiled in each SQA candidate's certificate [members should note that SQA proposals to revise this certificate are the subject of a separate report to the Education Committee]. The five Core Skills which are promoted by the Higher Still Programme are:

- Communication
- Information Technology
- Numeracy
- Problem Solving
- Working with Others

3.2 The Scottish Group Awards are designed to demonstrate that a candidate has undertaken a coherent programme of study and that she/he has reached a certain level of knowledge and has attained specific Core Skills competences. Scottish Group Awards may also indicate that the candidate has a particular ability in specialist subject areas, eg in Science, Technology or the Arts.

3.3 The draft guidelines documents in Appendix 2 to this report are designed to support schools by:

- clarifying procedures to deliver Core Skills and to enter pupils for Scottish Group Awards
- assisting senior management teams to develop effective strategies to implement provision in respect of Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards
- identifying materials and good practice
- offering information about support and advice available locally and nationally

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications for human rights which arise directly from the contents of this report.

5 CONCLUSION

While the issue of the updated Implementation Strategy and Core Skills and Scottish Group Awards guidelines will not in any way respond to the major deficiencies which have been the subject of recent national enquiries into the 2000 SQA diet, the advice which they provide will be of significant value to Angus schools in their continuing development of the senior school curriculum.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

NL/AR