

Chapter 7: The First Development Plan

In keeping with its general policy of being prepared for any foreseeable outcome, the SOED did not wait until even the broad outline of Higher Still had been agreed before it began its preparations for implementing whatever was eventually decided. In fact, planning and detailed costings were already well advanced by July 1993 — nine months before the publication of *Higher Still*.

It was estimated that the total cost of the Development Programme over the six years from 1993/94 to 1998/99 would be £11.306 million. Because of the amount of money involved, consideration was given to putting the contract out to tender; but it was agreed that the whole exercise was too complex and unwieldy and would take too long to set up. It was therefore decided that the SOED would assume overall control, but it would work in close partnership with all the key agencies such as the SEB, SCOTVEC, the SCCC, the Scottish Further Education Unit, education authorities, FE colleges, teacher training colleges and other higher education institutions. SOED's leadership role would be strategic — directing the Programme, setting the goals and objectives, matching resources to objectives, allocating and co-ordinating development tasks, monitoring and evaluating progress and, of course, acting as the link to the Ministers.

The SOED had also been in overall control of the Standard Grade Development Programme and the Revision of the Highers and CSYS, but there was a big difference between that and the Higher Still Development Programme in the approach that was adopted. In the previous Programmes, the SEB had had to undertake the servicing of numerous Joint Working Parties (JWPs), the publishing of the draft proposals and the analysis of responses, while at the same time continuing to handle the normal administration for the existing examinations. Although the SEB had successfully carried out this almost impossible task, a task made even worse by the teacher boycott (see *The Higher Tradition, Part VII*), it was recognised that such an approach was not advisable for the more complex exercise of completely restructuring all the courses and qualifications offered by the SEB and SCOTVEC. There was also another important consideration. The lead role could not be given to either one of these bodies without arousing suspicions that that body's award system was to be favoured over the other's.

An elaborate structure was therefore established which sought to involve as many interested bodies as possible, while still leaving SOED officials in key positions to ensure that proposals followed the desired direction. Whereas the Steering Group which had masterminded the Standard Grade Development Plan had been very small and had consisted of only HM Inspectors of Schools and officers from the SEB, the CCC and COSLA, the Strategy Group which was set up on 21 June 1994 to oversee the Higher Still Development Programme had seventeen members.

Three Task Groups, of roughly similar size and composition, were charged with producing papers and proposals for the Strategy Group, dealing respectively with Curriculum and Assessment, Staff Development, and Information and Publicity. Management responsibility between meetings rested with the Development Unit Executive Group (DUEG), which consisted of five Scottish Office staff and the Chief Development Officer of the Higher Still Development Unit, which was established at the end of July 1994 to service the Strategy Group, the Task Groups, the Specialist Development Team, the Development Officers and the Advisory Groups, and to issue all the documentation which these groups prepared for publication.

First of all, letters were issued to interested bodies asking for nominations for the main steering committees. The SSTA and the NAS/UWT decided with some misgivings to submit nominations, but none of their nominees was appointed to the Strategy Group. The EIS decided it would be inconsistent to nominate people while it was boycotting developments. When the composition of the Strategy Group was announced on 21 June 1994, it contained the name of only one classroom teacher. The sixteen other members consisted of the Senior Chief Inspector, Nisbet Gallacher, who was to chair the Group, two Directors of Education, the Chief Executives of the SEB, SCOTVEC and the SCCC, three headteachers and one depute headteacher, three representatives from Higher/Further Education, one representative from Industry, one parent and the Chairperson of the Conservative Party Education Policy Advisory Committee. There was also strong representation from the SOED in the form of senior civil servants and a Chief Inspector of Schools.

The remit of the Strategy Group was to plan a strategy for implementing the aims of Higher Still, to provide leadership in respect of both the management of the Development Programme and key educational issues, and to monitor and evaluate the progress of the Plan towards achieving its aims. It would also direct the work of three Task Groups which were charged with producing papers and proposals for the Strategy Group.

The Curriculum and Assessment Group was chaired by Frank Pignatelli, Director of Education for Strathclyde Region. It had eighteen members, including representatives from the SEB, SCOTVEC, the SCCC, SFEU, college principals, education authorities, institutions of further and higher education, parents, employers, Guidance interests and two Chief Inspectors. It had a huge remit which included overseeing the development of curriculum guidelines and various framework documents covering three main areas: core skills; modules, courses and National Certificate awards; and assessment, certification and quality assurance. It was also expected to advise on draft descriptors for courses and modules and on responses to documents which were issued for consultation, and to prepare revised papers and proposals for the Strategy Group, as well as liaising with the Staff Development Group in overseeing the production of support materials designed to help staff at various levels to implement decisions on curriculum and assessment. Advising on the creation of a new Level F in the 5-14 arrangements and how it could be assimilated into the curriculum of the upper primary and lower secondary stages was yet another task, together with overseeing any necessary development work.

The Staff Development Task Group was chaired by Bart McGettrick, Principal of St Andrew's College of Education. It had fourteen members, including representatives from education authorities, headteachers, college principals, colleges of education, the SEB, SCOTVEC, SFEU and the GTC, plus two Chief Inspectors. Its main responsibility was to prepare an overall plan for the staff development and support of everyone involved in the delivery of Higher Still. That included the specification and development of courses, workshops and materials, and also monitoring and evaluating progress.

The Chairman of the Information and Publicity Task Group was James Anderson, Director of Education in Orkney. It had 20 members, including the Depute Senior Chief Inspector and representatives of parents, employers and higher education interests, as well as the SEB, SCOTVEC, education authorities and FE colleges. Its task was to work out a strategy which would ensure that various important groups, especially teachers, lecturers, parents, education authorities, employers and institutions of further and higher education, were kept fully informed of developments.

Items were usually placed first of all before the Strategy Group for a decision in principle to be taken. They were then passed to the appropriate Task Group for detailed discussion prior to being brought back to the Strategy Group for final consideration and decision.

The four Groups wasted no time in getting down to their tasks. They began with joint meetings in Glasgow on 30 and 31 August 1994, and each group had met several times before the end of the year. Between meetings, management responsibility rested with the Development Unit Executive Group (DUEG) which was made up entirely of SOED staff (3 civil servants and two Chief Inspectors). They would later be joined by the Chief Development Officer who was to be appointed to take charge of the day-to-day operational management of the Development Unit.

The following tasks were identified for Phase 1 of the Development Plan which would run up to the autumn of 1995:

1. Develop the framework of modules and courses, and revise the specifications for National Certificate awards.
2. Revise the curriculum guidelines for S5 and S6.
3. Establish the core skills framework.
4. Test arrangements for implementation in schools and colleges.
5. Develop guidelines on arrangements for the transitional period.
6. Develop harmonised procedures for assessment, moderation and quality assurance.
7. Provide staff development for "developers", i.e. those who would have the task of providing staff development for teachers in general.
8. Develop an information and publicity strategy.
9. Start writing course documents.
10. Develop Level F for the 5-14 national tests and ensure a satisfactory interface between 5-14 assessments and Standard Grade.

The aim was to have the above sufficiently fleshed out by late summer 1995 for substantive discussions to take place about implementation on the ground and for extensive staff development to be started. The Plan was activated in stages.

Before any of these meetings could take place, however, a base had to be found for the Development Unit and starter papers had to be produced. The Unit could not be located within the SOED itself, as it would have been technically unacceptable for development money to be handed directly to a government department. There appeared to be three possible choices: the offices of the SEB, SCOTVEC and the SCCC. The last of these was chosen so that there could be no suggestion that one of the existing examining bodies was being favoured over the other. It was made clear, however, that this arrangement was for administrative purposes only, and the SCCC had no place in the decision-making function which rested with the Strategy Group. The Unit was established within the campus of Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh rather than in the SCCC's new headquarters in Dundee. The Unit became operational as from 25 July 1994, with a seconded civil servant acting as Administrative Officer and leading the Unit pending the appointment of the Chief Development Officer.

Mary Pirie was appointed Chief Development Officer of the Unit on a three-year fixed contract at the end of July 1994. Her previous experience included class teaching and service as National Adviser for TVEI. At the time of her appointment to the Development Unit, she was a Quality

Assurance Officer in Lothian Region with the specific task of training senior staff to manage change. Although she was able to carry out some intermittent work for the Unit between July and the end of the year, she did not take up her full-time appointment until the beginning of 1995. At that stage the Administrative Officer became the Unit's Co-ordinator. A Staff Development Officer was appointed, also on a three-year fixed contract, to co-ordinate developments in the field. These three, with some clerical staff, were the only full-time appointments in the Unit at this stage. (A full-time Publicity Officer was appointed later.) Their task was to service the Strategy Group, the Task Groups, the Specialist Development Team, the Development Officers and their Advisory Groups, as well as issuing various publications to ensure that everyone was made aware of progress.

Preparatory work was not delayed by these negotiations and appointments. Even before the Higher Still Development Unit was established, a Specialist Officer Team had been set up consisting of seven officers — two from the SEB, two from SCOTVEC, two from the SCCC and one from the Scottish Further Education Unit. The initial task of this Team was to write the starter papers which would help the Strategy Group to get the whole operation off the ground. Each of these officers was seconded for two or three days per week to address generic curricular and assessment issues and to develop a unified framework of courses and assessment arrangements from which the Strategy Group and Task Groups could develop guidelines that would ensure that Development Officers all worked in a reasonably consistent way when preparing proposals for individual subjects. This sort of work in the preparation of Standard Grade had been largely absorbed into the normal responsibilities of the SEB. Not so on this occasion. On the grounds that they would require to employ very senior staff to undertake the work of the absentees, first SCOTVEC, and then the SEB, demanded the full consultancy rates that they would normally charge for the services of these officers. In this, they were merely following the SOED's own advice, subsequent to their Financial Reviews, that they should charge full consultancy rates for any contracted work. These secondments faced the Development Programme with its first financial problem, since the SOED had budgeted for less costly replacements! The matter was amicably resolved, however, and the seven officers, known as the Higher Still Development Officer Team, began work on the first phase of development work in the early summer of 1994, each seconded for two or three days per week. Some HMIs were also involved in this preliminary work.

Towards the end of June 1994, education authorities were asked to submit the names of teachers who might be considered for secondment as Development Officers whose task would be to provide specialist advice at subject level. The education authorities gave warning that they would refuse to release teachers for this work unless the SOED paid for supply teachers to cover their timetables. This really set the cat among the pigeons because it had been assumed that there would be the same level of co-operation as had existed in the development of Standard Grade and the revision of Higher Grade. Times had changed, however. This sort of resistance and the opposition of the teaching unions were symptomatic of the mood of suspicion which was common at this time. The local authorities felt they were being squeezed financially by central government, and teachers felt they were under pressure from what seemed like a never-ending stream of curricular changes and a range of other government initiatives, such as the publication of league tables of examination results and staff appraisal, which they criticised for concentrating on the shortcomings of schools and their staffs rather than on their considerable achievements in recent years. The most recent of these had been the publication in March 1994 of a report by the Advisory Council on Educational and Training Targets (ASCETT), which said that, by the year 2000, the educational service should aim to increase the number of pupils who gained at least 5

Standard Grades (or their equivalent SVQ Level II) from 80% to 85% of an age cohort, and those with 3 Highers (or SVQ Level III) from 50% to 70%. The Secretary of State had described these as "*challenging but achievable.*"

Paying for supply teachers to cover for all of those absent on Higher Still activities would have cost 2 million per annum and, since the budget had been set, something else would have had to be jettisoned from the Programme. Making such a concession would also have had ramifications far beyond the immediate issue. Not only was it likely that similar requests would be made for those serving on committees of the SCCC and other Scottish bodies set up by the Scottish Office, but the decision could also have had a knock-on effect on bodies set up by other government departments throughout the UK. On the other hand, assurances had been given that the first eighteen months of the Programme would not affect classroom teachers. That would clearly not be so if teachers had to cover for absent colleagues. The problem stemmed from the Government's emphasis on market forces, and it was clear that the issue would soon become even more acute when budgets were devolved to schools because staffing costs were far less marginal at school level than at authority level.

In the end, a compromise solution was found which limited the immediate cost to no more than £150,000 per annum and prevented repercussions elsewhere. A distinction was drawn between specialist and general input. Cover costs would be provided, exceptionally for Higher Still, but only for classroom cover for those involved in development work required to further policy decisions already taken. There would be no payment, however, for those involved in consultation over strategic issues (e.g. matters discussed in the Strategy Group and the three Task Groups) and on administrative and other arrangements which were of mutual benefit to central government and local authorities. Serving on advisory groups, such as the SCCC, gave teachers and authorities an opportunity to influence the advice which would be given to Ministers. Those who declined to serve on these bodies would lose out on this opportunity and also on experience which would help their own personal development.

Negotiations over cover costs inevitably caused some delay in implementing the Programme. A further series of letters went out to education authorities on 7 October 1994 indicating the decision on cover costs, and individual authorities began to be sounded out on the possible release of named subject specialists to act as Development Officers within the Development Unit, between September 1994 and March 1995 in the first instance. Initially, over 50 were appointed and their secondments varied from as little as ten days in that period to as many as 80 days. By the end of 1995, over 100 Development Officers (DOs) were in post.

The way in which the Development Officers were used was explained by Chief Inspector Ron Tuck at a briefing session given on 5 October 1994 to the seven officers on the Development Team and to national HMI specialists. The task of the Development Officers in this first stage was to flesh out the framework papers which had been prepared for them by the Specialist Officer Groups (mainly SEB and SCOTVEC officers with some HMIs), i.e. they had to create new syllabuses out of existing SEB courses and SCOTVEC modules. Where overlap existed (e.g. between SCOTVEC Communication modules and SCE English examinations), they would have to harmonise the vocational and academic content without destroying the aims of either. To guide the DOs and to comment on their draft proposals, fifteen Specialist Advisory Groups (SAGs), involving some 500 teachers and advisers, were set up. [Although the EIS boycott of *Higher Still* did not prevent progress being made, it did reduce the pool of talented teachers available for development work such as this.] The SAGs were not intended to carry out any

development work themselves, although in the event some DOs were under so much pressure that the SAGs did help. Also involved was a Staff Inspector for the subject in question, whose task it was to manage the day-to-day work of the DO and also to assist the chairperson of the Specialist Advisory Group in preparing agendas and papers for the Group.

There were Specialist Advisory Groups for each of the following:

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| 1. English | 5. Technical Education | 8. Guidance |
| 2. Mathematics | 6. Computing | 9. Religious and Philosophical Studies |
| 3. Physical Education | 7. Personal and Social Education | 10. Learning Support and Special Educational Needs |
| 4. Business Education | | |

The following were described as Modal Specialist Advisory Groups. They had sub-groups dealing with the subjects or aspects of study listed in brackets:

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| 11. Science | (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Land and Sea-based Studies) |
| 12. Social Subjects | (History, Geography, Modern Studies and Classical Studies) |
| 13. Languages | (French, German, etc, together with Gaelic, Latin and Greek) |
| 14. Creative and Aesthetic Activities | (Art and Design, Drama and Dance, and Music) |
| 15. Home Economics | (Hospitality and Caring) |

Most SAGs were chaired by a headteacher and had up to ten other members, typically, an SEB officer or panel member, a SCOTVEC verifier or course panel member, a secondary teacher, a teacher from an independent school, representatives from colleges of education and higher education, a Staff Inspector or national specialist HMI, and, where appropriate, an FE lecturer and SCCC officer.

A Modal SAG would have six to eight members, comprising a Chairperson, the Staff Inspector, national specialist HMIs, and the chairpersons of the sub-groups. The task of Modal SAGs was to supervise the work of the sub-groups.

There was a complex system of checks and cross-checks (see diagram at end of chapter). The lead role in respect of all educational and professional matters was taken by Ron Tuck, the Chief Inspector for 14-18 developments, who chaired the Development Officer Group. Day-to-day operational management was the responsibility of the Chief Development Officer, Mary Pirie. She also chaired the Development Unit Management Group (DUMG), which consisted of Tuck, two of the seven officers in the Development Officer Team, the Staff Development Officer and the Unit Co-ordinator. On legal, financial and administrative matters the Chief Development Officer (CDO) reported directly to the Development Unit Administrative Group (DUAG) within SOED, chaired by Valerie Macniven. Other members of DUAG were Tuck, the CDO, the Chief Executive of the SCCC (or his nominee), two civil servants from Division 2B of SOED and one from Division 4. DUAG, in turn, reported directly to the Strategy Group.

The Development Unit's budget for 1994-95 was fixed at £1.874 million. It was set up with an initial float of £200,000. A further £2 million was earmarked for 1995-96.

The main tasks for 1994-95 were to develop the foundations of a unified system of courses and to produce guidelines on core skills, assessment and National Certificate awards. The Development Officers and Specialist Advisory Groups were asked to provide advice to the

Curriculum and Assessment Group by March 1995.

While the DOs were getting down to their tasks, two other exercises were being carried out. In the first of these, Examination Officers employed by the SEB carried out an initial audit of all SCE courses in S3-S4 to establish how far core skills were already taught in these. The second involved a study of how the changes proposed in *Higher Still* could be implemented in secondary schools. Between January and March 1995, four consultants prepared a number of case studies which identified issues that required to be addressed by schools, education authorities and the SOED — curriculum structures, staffing, timetabling, accommodation and resources. [When the Howie Report was being prepared in 1992-3, a feasibility study had been carried out by two consultants with broadly the same objectives.]

These four consultants first of all tested their procedures in four schools, including the schools in which the three headteachers on the Strategy Group served. Following these preliminary studies, they met to discuss the main issues which had arisen and then carried out case studies in a further twenty-four schools. The factors which were considered in the selection of this sample included size, location, staying-on rates and Standard Grade performance. The smallest school visited had a roll of 147, the largest 1,917; and the sample included at least one school in every education authority, as well as two independent schools and two schools for pupils with special educational needs. The consultants had to work to a tight timescale. Each of them had six schools on which to report. They spent three days in each school, wrote a preliminary draft report and then returned for a further one and a half days to discuss this with the senior staff before writing their final case study. Having completed all six studies, they then met as a group to discuss their findings. One of the four prepared a report on the whole exercise, and a summary of the findings was issued to education authorities and schools. All four had to complete their individual tasks in 40 days, and one of them was given a further ten days to write the main consolidated report.

In an attempt to keep everyone informed about progress, SOED had published a newsletter in May 1994 to reassure teachers that the first year of the Development Plan would have no impact on teachers in the classroom and, when the time came, there would be an opportunity for them all to contribute their views on the main implementation proposals. The intention was to help schools achieve what they were already trying to achieve, not to compel them to make revolutionary changes. The Development Unit issued another newsletter later in the year but, quite frankly, neither of these added much to the information which was already public knowledge. And even the two documents, whose publication the Education Minister proudly proclaimed on 30 January 1995 ("*The Higher Still Development Programme Plan*" and "*Higher Still: The Interim Period*") were little more than public relations exercises designed to reassure people that the reforms were on track, as was the "*The Introductory Information Pack*" of overhead transparencies published in February. They largely repeated the statements of intent already contained in *Higher Still* and listed the tasks that were being undertaken.

However, certain target dates were set: Curriculum Guidelines and the Core Skills Framework would be issued for consultation in the period April to June 1995; and the Framework of Units, Courses and National Certificates would be published on a consultative basis in August 1995, along with the results of the case studies in schools. This consultation would close at the end of October 1995, and the document would be revised in the light of comments received with a view to publication around January 1996. It was hoped that the drafting of all unit and course documents in the various subjects would be completed and issued for consultation early in 1996. Four months would be allowed for responses, and the final revised documents would be

published some time between June and September 1996, ready to be introduced in schools and colleges at the beginning of session 1997-98. Staff development would be offered first to headteachers, college principals and other senior managers, advising them on the implications of the new arrangements for curriculum management. No deadline was stated for this or for the next stage when Guidance staff would be involved. Principal teachers in schools and section heads in FE colleges would be offered staff development in 1996-97 to enable them to undertake preparations with a view to implementation within their departments in 1997-98. As far as class teachers were concerned, not much would happen before June 1996.

Although the Education Minister announced at the same time that another £2 million would be available for the Development Plan in 1995-96, bringing the total for the two years to £4 million, these documents did little to reassure staffs, as was made clear at a seminar which the SOED held for Directors of Education on 3 February 1995. This was first of twenty seminars held in February-March to brief senior managers in authorities, colleges and schools in every local authority except Tayside, which had refused to co-operate in the Higher Still Programme, for senior staff of independent schools, and for the associations of Principals of colleges of further education and of teacher training institutions. The message which the Department was asked to take away from the Directors' seminar was that headteachers were beyond the stage of thinking about aims and development plans. What they craved to hear was concrete detail of how the Higher Still Programme was to affect them and their schools.

The next set of consultation pamphlets issued at the end of April 1995 ("*Staff Development and Support Plan*", "*Principles for the Post-16 Curriculum*" and "*Core Skills*") did not give the headteachers the answers they were looking for. Indeed, these documents may even have added to the frustrations of teachers in that they typified a burgeoning industry which had become all the vogue, namely, the production of glossy documents which were written in fine-sounding language but contributed little new thinking, describing how information was going to be given to teachers rather than giving details of what was going to happen.

The six-page "*Staff Development and Support Plan*", in the main, repeated the general promises of previous documents, but it did produce two pieces of reassurance as far as schools and colleges were concerned. There was a suggestion that there would be an analysis of pilot approaches to institutional needs, and Field Officers were to be appointed by June 1996 to work with teachers at local level, probably training two or three teachers from each school who would then become the staff development team for their own schools.

The ten-page "*Principles*" document might have been interesting to someone coming to educational thinking for the first time, but it was little more than a gloss of "*Higher Still*" and largely repeated the high-sounding curricular jargon with which teachers had been bombarded for the previous twenty years. It was described as a checklist to help schools evaluate the quality of their curricular provision but, being written at the cosmetic level of aims, it would not take teachers far forward in their planning. There was reassurance in the statement that the increased time allocation for *Higher Still* courses would enable teachers to escape from the cramming methods which had bedevilled the Higher Grade. Less reassuring for schools with small S5/6 rolls might have been the hint that pupils in these might have to be content with a fairly restricted curriculum.

This latter point had been raised by the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (COSHEP) in the statement which they issued after discussing "*Higher Still*" towards the end of

January 1995. Because they did not think that many schools would be able to offer the two-year Advanced Higher, they had decided that the Higher would remain the gold standard for entry to higher education, which meant that the fate of the Advanced Higher, like CSYS, would depend on the market-place decisions of individual faculties and admissions officers. Nor did they think that, initially at least, the introduction of the Advanced Higher would lead to a great increase in the number of exemptions for the whole or part of first year university courses. They did not see the Advanced Higher as a threat to the Scottish four-year Honours degree.

As was the case with the two other documents issued in April 1995, most of "*Core Skills*" was devoted to statements at the level of aims and objectives, repeating fairly obvious remarks about the value of core skills in a rapidly changing society and the importance of incorporating them in a range of teaching approaches. An audit of the content of Standard Grade courses had established that many of them were already making a contribution in this area, but the scope for certificating core skills through existing Standard Grade assessment arrangements had still to be established. It was confirmed that National Certificate group awards would definitely include the certification of core skills at all levels. Learning and study skills would not be certificated, and the five core skills (see Chapter 5) would be assessed naturally as they occurred. Opportunities to *develop* core skills would be available in a wide range of courses, but not all of these would present opportunities to have them *certificated*. All that could be said at this stage was that assessment for certification would be "*based on detailed descriptions of the nature, standards and range of attainment required for each core skill.*" A first effort at defining the descriptors for the Starter Stage and Stages 1-4 which provided for progression in the core skills was contained in an appendix. It was hoped that responses received during the period of consultation would help to clarify how to tackle this area of the curriculum which had been strongly recommended in previous reports as a very desirable educational aim, but which so far had not been assessed except as part of some SCOTVEC modules. In the event, there were only 142 responses to the "*Core Skills*" paper, and at the Strategy Group meeting held on 29 August 1995 concern was expressed that only a small number of school boards and only two employers had responded. One of the employer responses was from the CBI in Scotland, and it was hoped that that organisation had gathered at least a representative sample of employer views. Generally speaking, the principle had been described as laudable, but there were reservations over certificating them.

At the same meeting of the Strategy Group it was reported that there had been 141 responses to the "*Principles*" paper. It had been "*broadly welcomed*", but there had been disappointment that it contained so little detail, and the consultation period had been criticised as too short. Responses had emphasised the great need for staff development, and some had claimed it was too vocationally focused, using a training rather than an educational model.

The level of response was more than a little disappointing, since twenty copies of these three documents had been sent directly to every secondary school, with an additional three copies for the School Board, and a liberal supply had gone also to all education authorities for issue to Directors, Advisers, etc.

When the Headteachers Association of Scotland met for its spring conference towards the middle of May 1995, it was clear that the headteachers were far from satisfied with the information which already had been published. The Senior Chief Inspector, supported by the chairmen of the Curriculum Assessment Task Group and of the Staff Development Group, had to appeal repeatedly to the headteachers to trust them until the autumn, when the proposals of the twenty-

seven specialist subjects groups would be published along with general curriculum guidance and the results of the various feasibility studies that were taking place. They would find that, although the new curriculum had been re-packaged into 40-hour units, 160 hour courses and group awards, its overall content would not be very different from the curriculum they already knew. Twelve regional Field Officers would also be available to support staffs at local level. The headteachers made it clear that, while they still supported the principles of *Higher Still*, the Scottish Office had to realise that schools were having to contend with a whole range of problems which were all happening simultaneously, such as delegated management, changes in the 5-14 programme, testing in S1-S2, cuts in funding in the run-up to reorganisation of local government, and staff unrest over the workload they were facing.

By the time the Higher Still Strategy Group met on 22 June, a decision had already been taken to stand down the Development Officers from June 1995 to January 1996 and to employ the Field Officers (at a cost of £3,000 per month) from roughly November 1995 onwards. At that meeting, it was reported that the twenty-eight specialist frameworks had been completed, and these would be published in the autumn. All existing SEB and SCOTVEC provision had been considered by the Specialist Groups and the Development Unit, and the final frameworks would have 184 courses and approximately 1,500 additional units which had been identified either as essential building blocks for National Certificates or for other clearly identified purposes. A large number of SCOTVEC modules, which were currently used in college-based programmes (as distinct from GSVQs and SVQs) had not been included in the Higher Still frameworks, at least for the time being, either because too few students took them or since they were too occupationally specific. (**Note 24**) A substantial rationalisation of current SEB and SCOTVEC provision had therefore been achieved. The next step would be to undertake the technical task of detailing the units and courses which were represented in the framework. The SEB and SCOTVEC had signalled strongly that this would be a very demanding task in the timescale which had been set, and this view was supported by pilot work already undertaken by the Development Unit. To write unit and course documents would require a high degree of technical expertise, and people with this expertise were in short supply, particularly because of the EIS boycott. The Strategy Group came to the conclusion that to try to adhere to the original timescale would prejudice quality and jeopardise the whole Programme.

This advice was passed on to Ministers, and on 2 August 1995 Michael Forsyth, who had become Secretary of State in a Government reshuffle in July, announced that there would be a one-year delay in implementing Higher Still. It would now begin in session 1998-99. Although he insisted that it would have been possible to achieve a 1997 start, he was concerned that forcing the pace would not only prejudice the quality of Higher Still materials but would also hinder the development of the 5-14 programme and of national testing in S1-S2. Secondary schools had said that it was asking too much of them to concentrate on two such major developments simultaneously. They would no longer have this excuse for delaying the introduction of testing in S1-S2.

The announcement of the one-year delay was well timed. It came only days before teachers returned for the new session and barely four weeks before a mountain of paper landed in the schools with the first detailed proposals for Higher Still.

Note 24: At that time, the SCOTVEC catalogue contained 3,600 modules.



