

14-19 Specialised Diplomas

Evidence from the Royal Society of Chemistry to the Education and Skills Committee

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a network of over 43,000 members worldwide and an internationally acclaimed publishing business, our activities span education and training, conferences and science policy, and the promotion of the chemical sciences to the public.

The issues raised in the inquiry would be of concern should the development of a Science diploma be agreed. We would be particularly concerned that those currently charged with developing diplomas may not have sufficient experience of curriculum development and we strongly recommend that the developers be required to consult with recognised curriculum developers in the field as part of their remit.

In March 2006 we wrote to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools outlining our views on a diploma for Science. Attached is a copy of the letter.

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Dear Lord Adonis

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a worldwide network of members and an international publishing business, our activities span education, conferences, science policy and the promotion of chemistry to the public.

We are disappointed to note that the recently published Education and Inspections Bill does not include a Diploma in Science amongst the specialised Diploma lines. We believe this to be a major omission as science is so crucial to the UK economy and to our industry.

A Diploma in Science should offer students a high quality vocational and technical career pathway and also provide a route into further and higher education science courses. It would not only raise the profile of science careers in the minds of young people, but would ensure that individuals taking the diploma were equipped with the skills and expertise that industry needs.

In particular we feel there is demand for such a qualification in many areas, including: laboratory support in pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry; technicians in schools and universities; analytical technicians in manufacturing industry; and in the National Health Service to support analytical and pathology services.

The existing Science and Applied Science courses would form units within the Diploma but do not, in themselves, provide the strong message promoting science based careers that we would like to see.

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We hope that the Government will reconsider the need for a Science Diploma, include it in the bill and seek to introduce this in the second tranche of diplomas. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to its development.

Yours sincerely

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