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**Response to the Department  
for Education and Skills'  
Proposal for a Single Council for  
Subject Associations, April 2007**

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## I. Overview

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Aspect supports the establishment of a single Council for Subject Associations (CfSA) set out in the *Proposal for a Single Council for Subject Associations* document, prepared by Jo Lawrence and Geoffrey Penzer of CMC Partnership, who are currently engaged by the DfES with the agreement of the Subject Associations Steering Group to take forward the work to establish a single CfSA. Aspect believes that this can be achieved broadly in line with the proposal.

We offer the following points regarding the proposal:

1. A clearer statement on what is meant by 'subject' at the beginning of the document would be useful. The way subjects are referred to in the document does not give a clear view of what is meant by a 'subject'. This Council will rightly cover areas of the curriculum, for example personal, social and health education, that are not subjects in the traditional sense and not yet statutorily required.
2. The emphasis in the document is mainly on the benefits for the subject associations. Since funding is being sought from the government and therefore the public purse to enable the CfSA to be established then a stronger reference should be made to the benefits for schools, teachers, the learning of children and those who work to support schools. That is, stating clearly, the public benefit of this Council.
3. In the remit of the CfSA it should be made very clear that it is not only to benefit and provide services to the member associations but ultimately provide leadership and support for those engaged in developing a relevant and worthwhile curriculum and those teaching children and young people to be effective learners. At the moment these two strands of the remit do not appear balanced. There is more emphasis on the CfSA's services to members.
4. Relationships to key organisations involved in curriculum development should be clearly set out, for example the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), to avoid confusion.
5. There is no reference to local authorities or the National Strategies and their role in ensuring children and young people have access to a relevant and challenging curriculum.
6. The fact that the CfSA has set out a timetable for being financially independent from the Department for Education and Skills in three years requires a robust analysis of the market to gauge more accurately the products that could be sold and the likely level of demand.

### Comments on specific sections of document

#### Section 2: Background

- 2.1 It would be relevant in this paragraph not only to refer to curriculum development but also to the contribution the subjects can make to the learning and well-being of children and young people. This then links to the work of the QCA on the curriculum for the future which incorporates the Every Child Matters' five outcomes and the developments in children's services. The curriculum

is not only a set of subjects but also the learning experiences provided for children and young people.

### **Section 3: Benefits**

- 3.1 In the first point it would be useful to insert the following 'recognition of the value and contribution of subjects to the curriculum, learning and well-being of children and young people'.

In the second point it would be useful to unpick what is meant by 'better' by emphasising that the CfSA would provide more coordinated and coherent interactions with government and other agencies.

In the third, fourth and fifth points there should be stronger references to the benefits that better cooperation, collaboration and capacity would bring to those working in and with schools to provide positive and relevant learning experiences for children and young people.

### **Section 4: Purpose**

- 4.1 In the point made on promoting membership it would be useful to state more clearly somewhere in the document what the benefits of membership are. There is the issue that some subject associations will provide more benefits to their members than others. Does the CfSA potentially have any role in supporting those subject associations that provide limited benefits for their members to enhance their provision?

As under benefits, a reference to providing more coordinated support would be useful.

In the third bullet point to focus the purpose more on benefits for schools, teachers, etc, it would be useful to add 'to benefit from each other's expertise in supporting the development of learning in the curriculum.'

It is not clear, as the document stands, what 'the professional standards' are.

### **Section 5: CfSA activities**

- 5.3 Is one of the roles of the CfSA to promote the value of being a member of a subject association?
- 5.4 The references to 'devolved administrations' is appropriate? There are no references to local authorities, the National Strategies and the General Teaching Council, who all play significant roles in curriculum and teacher development.

Some reference to links with schools, teachers and those supporting them would be useful.

Again in this section a reference to learning in the third point would be useful.

Clearly the QCA is a key organisation with which the CfSA will interface. There is little articulation at this stage of what the proposed relationship will be. To avoid confusion it will be important to convey this relationship clearly to all stakeholders and to the wider audience in schools and local authorities, etc.

There is no reference to the National Strategies which have a key influence on the curriculum.

- 5.6 Under the benefit objective it would be helpful to make reference to the benefits for schools, teachers, etc, by referring to the CfSA enabling a more coherent approach to curriculum development and the benefits for the learning and well-being of children and young people.

Does the CfSA have a quality assurance role?

### **Section 6: Membership**

We welcome the inclusive approach to membership while recognising that the management of the differences in interests, demands and influence may, at times, be challenging and require certain expertise.

- 6.7 The remit of the CfSA must be very clear from the beginning. The statement in the fourth point sets out a key remit which is to be of benefit to teachers and other professionals in improving the curriculum experiences for children and young people. This focus is not sufficiently clear throughout the document and would benefit from being strengthened.

### **Section 7: Corporate entity**

This is clear and setting up the CfSA as a company limited by guarantee appears appropriate.

### **Section 8: Organisation and governance**

- 8.1 It is not clear how the staffing will fit with the administration systems that the individual subject associations have in place and how duplication of services and the potential for internal competition, eg the production of materials or bidding for projects will be dealt with.

### **Section 9: Funding**

- 9.4 The approach to membership fees appears appropriate
- 9.9 The generation of income will be a challenge and the CfSA will need to give careful consideration to how its revenue-making activities fit into the market and what the market will be willing to buy. A robust market analysis would be useful at the appropriate time.
- 9.10 Careful consideration will have to be given to the development of materials. A range of other organisations, including the QCA already provide a range of materials, and individual subject associations provide for their own subject areas.

Given the focus on generating revenue it would be appropriate to ensure that one of the members of staff has some business management experience.

### **Section 10: Proposed implementation plan**

This is a challenging timeline within which to establish a clear remit, analyse the potential market for income, address any issues arising from this proposal and put in place the organisational structures.

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