

Students of the Arts to take enterprise courses

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The winds of change seem to be blowing through the corridors of higher education once again. And not before time. But overdue though it may be, we must nevertheless welcome the recent moves made by the Manpower Services Commission to equip our students better for the outside world.

Together with the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment, the MSC has hammered out its most detailed proposals yet on how to inject some commercial and entrepreneurial attitudes into all areas of higher education: courses, lecturers and students alike. This will affect arts as well as science students, who will be able to learn business, management and enterprise skills as part of their courses, starting in the autumn of 1988.

The aim, according to Geoffrey Holland, the MSC's director, is that "every person seeking a higher qualification (at first or subsequent degree level) should be able to acquire key management/business competences and develop associated aptitudes". Students would undertake "project-based work in the real economy", such as a piece of market research, and would be assessed jointly by employers and colleges. The scheme is entitled the Enterprise Plan.

Holland says that the suggestions outlined in his paper are not really new. For many institutions have already started out along the road to an Enterprise Plan. What is new, he stresses, is "a national programme which will draw these individual initiatives together and allow institutions to establish the best practice and learn from each other". He adds, "The essence of the programme therefore must be flexibility and the opportunity for each institution to prepare its own Enterprise Plan in its own way and to develop its thinking through its own experience and the observation of others".

How did all this enthusiasm for enterprise come about, one may ask? The genesis of the proposal goes back to spring 1987, when an informal meeting took place between the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment and a number of senior representatives of higher education. The subject under discussion was how the work of higher education might link more closely with that of small firms and enterprise. As the meeting went on it became clear that the focus of attention really should have been, "How, in an enterprise economy, do we develop more *enterprising graduates*?" (The italics are Mr Holland's, not mine).

They recognised that it would be hard work to introduce an Enterprise Plan across



GEOFFREY HOLLAND —
Director Manpower Services
Commission

Geoffrey Holland was appointed Director of the MSC in October 1981. He is a Second Permanent Secretary.

Mr Holland chaired the Youth Task Group which resulted in the design of the Youth Training Scheme. He played a leading part in the design of the Community Programme and has been involved in the development of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), the Adult Training Strategy, and has been actively involved in the development of the Restart Programme. He is on the board of the Open College.

His first MSC post was as Director of Planning and Intelligence in the Training Services. In 1976 he became head of the MSC's Planning and Policy Branch and chaired the MSC's Working Party on Young People and Work.

Mr Holland was Director of Special Programmes with responsibility for the implementation of the Youth Opportunities Programme and the Community Enterprise Programme.

all courses in each institution, but they felt it was vital to set ambitious objectives. Without ambition, little of real value would come to fruition. They chose to introduce an Enterprise Plan over a period of five years, with each participating institution. Their logic appeared sound: if such a project were not launched, there was a real danger that it would be "to the eventual disadvantage of both graduates and the economy".

Another equally important point, Mr Holland feels, is the need for institutions to integrate the development of enterprise skills and aptitudes into the mainstream learning activities of their students. Enterprise skills and aptitudes are not acquired through a series of 'bolt-on' modules, he adds, but they are the product of the whole institution's approach to learning. "Enterprising graduates emerge from an enterprising system of education. From this belief stems the expectation that institutions will need to concentrate more on staff development than on devising new items of curriculum".

These are all splendid sentiments, indeed they echo Cue's own views over a number of years. But where will the funds come from or the right guiding influences to ensure that such a scheme gets off the ground and achieves tangible, worthwhile results?

I quote Geoffrey Holland. He recognises "that the programme will require substantial resourcing if the necessary developmental work is to be undertaken. Over a five-year period the MSC should therefore be prepared to contribute perhaps up to £1m per higher education institute, dependent upon the scale of development activity proposed. However, the importance of external finance from industry and commerce cannot be understated".

He goes on, "Once the main developmental work has been completed, the programme will need to be administered and there will be a continuing need to update and enhance the knowledge and skills of the staff involved. Industry and commerce will need to be involved and committed to the programme's continued existence and development after its initial five-year period." To ensure viability, once MSC funding is withdrawn, Holland proposes that industry and commerce should contribute from the very start, with their contribution growing to the point where they eventually have "a major financial stake in the programme". This would effectively ensure that they, as interested parties, would keep a lively and close involvement in the scheme. A good