

# **E-scape: Briefing paper for Secondary Phase Committee**

## **Fred Martin**

The e-scape project has been set up to explore approaches to controlled assessments at GCSE. This project began as a D&T project that had three key elements:

- Devising a structured approach to assessment in D&T
- Recording work using handheld technologies
- Marking using a 'comparative pairs' method (holistic, not against individual criteria)

The project under the leadership/management of the D&T team (Prof. Richard Kimbell at Goldsmiths, University of London) has now extended to geography and science using funding from Becta.

The job of leading the geography group has been given to me. Some of the funding is being used to buy my time, notionally two days each week. Funding is also available to the schools.

Initially, the brief has been to work with three schools (geography teachers) to develop some pilot assessments. These will be paper-based trials to be completed before the end of December 2007. After that, the resources will be developed to take advantage of PDAs. At present, it is not clear how this will work and how best use can be made of handheld technologies.

The trial controlled assessments involve:

- Steps that students will work through under controlled (timed and supervised) conditions
- Assessment ideas based on different aspects of decision taking in geography
- Attaching content to the steps, i.e. developing specific activities and content

The brief has been to focus on exploring how to implement 'good practice' in geography, rather than feel constrained by current exam board regulations.

There are several issues that we are currently attempting to address:

- What would make an appropriate set of steps and how rigidly these should be followed
- Achieving controlled conditions while retaining engagement of the students in activities that will engage and motivate them
- Devising opportunities for the students to show their own creativity, i.e. to move away from the approach that has become typical in GCSE coursework in which students are taught through a set of activities in ways that can border on the unprofessional
- How to integrate fieldwork and/or secondary data research when there are time constraints on the assessment
- How best use can be made of ICT and PDAs in particular, and how their use can be extended on a national basis

Assessment, although not immediately on our minds, is causing concerns. The holistic approach to assessment is bound to throw up issues of reliability.

If successful as a pilot with three schools, the project should extend with further work and more extensive trials.

**FM**