

Monday, 10 November 2014

Re: PE01530 - Guidance on how creationism is presented in schools

I am writing on behalf of the Society of Biology, the single unified body for biology across the UK, as such we cover biological sciences and the teaching of biology in schools and universities. Our vision is to be recognised as the body responsible for supporting biologists and presenting their views in both public funding and policy debates and discussions of professional, procedural and societal matters. The Society actively supports developments in schools across the UK; in Scotland this has been particularly as a core member of the Learned Societies' Group on Scottish Science Education¹. We are therefore writing to convey our view on the proposal to offer Scottish schools guidance on the teaching of evolution and creationism in the science curriculum.

As the voice of biology we advocate that biological evolution (together with the geological and astrophysical evidence on the history of the earth and universe) forms a core component of the biological sciences and as such should be taught in biology lessons, alongside the importance of an evidence-based approach to understanding our world. In contrast, creationism, intelligent design and similar ideas are not based on scientific evidence and therefore should not be taught in the context of a science class or presented as scientific theory.

We recognise that questions regarding creationism and intelligent design may arise in the classroom, for example as a result of individual faith and beliefs or media coverage. When such topics arise in a science class there are opportunities to explain or explore why creationism and intelligent design are not scientific theories.

We encourage the Scottish Government to follow the strategy taken in other nations of the United Kingdom to provide clear guidance to schools and the teaching community stating explicitly that creationism and intelligent design are not considered to be scientific theories based on tested hypotheses, and therefore should not be taught in science lessons. Furthermore we urge the Scottish Government to provide teachers with appropriate training opportunities to develop the skills to answer controversial questions posed in science lessons in a clear and sensitive manner.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mark Downs FSB
CEO

¹ http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/1076_LearnedSocietiesGrouponScottishScienceEducation.html