REFLECTIONS

Personal Development Planning

About *Reflections*

Welcome to the seventh issue of *Reflections*, the newsletter which focuses on teaching, learning and assessment in Queen's and more generally in higher education. *Reflections* is published once a semester by the **Centre for Educational Development** and provides a forum for discussing learning and teaching initiatives in Queen's. We aim to balance articles from the various support units within Queen's with contributions from academic staff and guest writers.

Our cover article by Janet Strivens from the University of Liverpool and the Centre for Recording Achievement provides an insight into current and future developments in PDP across the UK and there is also commentary on new initiatives in Queen's in this area. The achievements of the Centres for Excellence in Higher Education (CETLs) are highlighted and the writers indicate how innovative practice developed in the Centres may be of interest to staff in other discipline areas. The Queen's Teaching Award winners for 2008 are featured, as is Queen's latest National Teaching Fellowship winner, Professor Brian Whalley.

In addition, we are very pleased to present a selection of articles sent in by academic staff members, which highlight new and effective practice in teaching and learning in a variety of subject areas.

Contributing to the next *Reflections*

We are delighted that we have a record number of articles sent in by Queen's staff in this issue. We would very much welcome contributions for our next issue of Reflections to be published in Spring 2009. Contributions can take several forms:

* Articles on an aspect of teaching and learning or student support (generally 500–750 words);

* Shorter "newsflash" items, e.g. reporting on a recent event or advertising a new venture or up-coming event (100–200 words);

* Brief synopses of recent interesting articles on teaching and learning from the educational literature (100–200 words);

* Letters or responses to previous articles or to recent developments in H.E.

Contributions can be submitted via e-mail to Linda Carey, (l.carey@qub.ac.uk) Centre for Educational Development.

Linda Carey
Editor of *Reflections*

Janet Strivens
Senior Associate Director
of the Centre for Recording
Achievement

As more young people than ever before are entering UK higher education it has become increasingly apparent that an effective personal tutoring system can make a crucial difference to the outcome of that experience.

Janet Strivens

Whatever their area of study we want our students to become confident, critical, questioning adults who see problems as opportunities to find new solutions rather than as barriers to action. To become such adults they need to engage with their studies, make new knowledge their own and develop and practise new skills. It isn't meant to be easy but we know that motivation improves when students form relationships with both their tutors and peers: relationships which give them a sense of common identity and purpose. In a mass system, the personal tutor is a deliberate mechanism to counter that sense of insignificance many students feel which is so destructive of motivation and confidence.

Many academics value one-to-one interaction with students. Some find great satisfaction in supporting a student's academic development but don't want to go beyond this: some are equally comfortable hearing about more personal matters, helping students learn how to cope with anything from financial problems to bereavement.

In either role, tutors are likely to have experienced a sense of frustration at the changing HE environment, the growing pressures on their time, the difficulties in even recognising students from the large classes before the module ends and another group is formed. It's easy to stop even trying to get to know students. Most will muddle through and those having real problems will either drop out quickly or maybe seek help from central support. Retention may be an institutional problem but its immediate impact on individual academics may not be seen as negative.

In this environment, introducing an initiative like personal development planning (PDP) runs a real risk of increasing that sense of frustration. Few quarrel

with its aims: to help students become more independent learners, to support them in learning to plan and manage their learning, identify their personal goals and learn how to pursue them effectively, to develop their confidence, competence and general life skills. The main issues are two:
do academics have the time to do this effectively and (if time can be found) do they have the skills?

The issue of time must be taken seriously. Personal development tutoring is intended to be pro-active and work for all students, so that it becomes a regular habit to stop, think and plan. To support this there is no substitute for one-to-one meetings, however brief, but this tutor time is a precious resource.

Current research indicates a very wide-spread perception, even among PDP "champions", that the introduction of PDP has increased staff workloads. Where personal tutoring has survived within a mass HE system it has tended to become more and more reactive, available in practice only to those students who are confident, assertive or desperate enough to ask for help.

Tutors must have time made available for them to meet with all their tutees, within a well-planned and clear framework where each meeting has a purpose. Students too need to know what is expected of them in preparation and should be encouraged to see themselves as responsible agents in their own development.

So if the time is found, do academics have the necessary skills? It depends on how the role is defined. If the personal tutor is there to listen, to provide a framework within which the student can pause, focus and plan, and beyond this, to encourage the student to seek specialist help if needed, then my answer is yes.

Some training will help and tutors must themselves be adequately supported but the institution should make it clear that they are not expected to be counsellors, careers advisers or even learning development experts. They are there to provide a sympathetic space in which these young adults can learn to set out their own projects and monitor their own progress. Could anything be more important?

The introduction of a structured Personal Tutoring scheme in Queen's

Linda Ryles, CED

Supporting student attainment is a high priority for the University. By introducing a structured and organised approach to Personal Tutoring, the institution hopes to see improvement in its current drop-out and graduate employment rates and, as Janet Strivens states above, the Personal Tutor is a key player in any strategy that aims to ease transition and raise motivation.

As part of the new Employability and Skills Policy (2008–2011), all undergraduate students who entered Queen's in September 2008 were allocated a Personal Tutor and received a complimentary copy of the Palgrave Macmillan 'Study Skills Handbook'. This is a highly regarded text that provides user-friendly, practical help to enable students to develop and enhance skills that are valuable not only for study, but also for future employability and successful engagement with wider society.

Schools are now implementing a structured scheme which ensures that specific activities are provided for, that Personal Tutors are themselves properly supported and that reflects the requirements of relevant professional bodies and existing good practice. The main responsibilities of a Personal Tutor are:

- To promote reflection upon and support for students' general academic development while they are on their course;
- To promote other services, activities and experiences related to the careers and personal development of their students (these activities include 'Degree Plus')

The key attributes of Personal Tutors are that they listen, are non-judgemental, do not make students' choices or decisions for them and that they are effective in referring students to other sources of support within the University.

In an effort to support Schools to roll out the scheme, a Guide for Personal Tutors was developed by a sub-group made up of 50% academic/50% academic support staff and co-ordinated by the Centre for Educational Development. It explains the rationale behind the scheme, outlines the main features, offers exemplar agendas for meetings and approaches to record keeping, clarifies the roles of Personal Tutor and Adviser of Studies and provides information on identifying students who are potentially 'at risk' and how to refer students to relevant specialist support. The framework developed was benchmarked against best practice in comparator institutions.

Schools were invited to select dates in September and October 2008 when academic staff taking on the role of Personal Tutor could attend briefing sessions. The Centre for Educational Development provided training for colleagues in the Educational and Skills Development Division on the use of the PDP e-folio and the Personal Tutoring Scheme to enable them to co-facilitate School-based briefings, led in most cases by Directors of Education or Senior Personal Tutors.

To date, four School-led sessions supported by CED have been held and a further 16 briefings were co-facilitated by Educational and Skills Division staff for 10 other Schools. Packs containing handouts, the Guide, a summary of the Employability and Skills Policy, Degree Plus information, guidance from the Counselling Service and a copy of the Student Charter were provided for all those who attended. In addition to this centrally co-ordinated staff development, some Schools requested copies of the Guide so that they could circulate them to colleagues and/or organise their own briefings.

A Guest Speaker event was held on 17 September when further expert advice and guidance was provided by Stella Cottrell, the author of 'The Study Skills Handbook' and by Janet Strivens, Senior Associate Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) where she is involved in supporting the implementation of Personal Development Planning in universities across the UK. Feedback on this event and the briefings has been positive.

Degree Plus: Giving Students the Edge

Dr David Foster
Deputy Head of Careers, Employability and Skills

Why do we need Degree Plus?

It is well recognised that the 21st century graduate needs a considerable portfolio of academic qualifications and experiences sitting alongside a range of employability skills to gain graduate employment.

In addition, parents of prospective students show a keen interest in career outcomes from higher education and students themselves recognise a need to develop skills which will enhance their employability and help with the transition from their first degree to the next step in their career.

What is Degree Plus?

Open to undergraduate students entering Queen's in September 2008, Degree Plus is an innovative and flexible system for accrediting learning arising from experiences and activities not accredited through the undergraduate programme.

Degree Plus is a strand of the new Employability and Skills Policy which was formally launched on Tuesday 14 October 2008 and which is student driven.

Each student will develop a pathway to the Degree Plus Award through one of three routes:

- an exempting route
- a top-up-to-plus route
- a combined experience route

Within each route students choose from a growing list of approved Degree Plus options. All that is asked of students is that Degree Plus is completed by March in their final year of undergraduate study.

How is Degree Plus Organised and Managed?

Degree Plus is managed and facilitated by staff at Careers, Employability and Skills. In addition a Degree Plus Advisory Group is being developed from membership of the initial Degree Plus Working Group who developed the Degree Plus Award and related systems.

Ultimately, staff involved in managing and delivering Degree Plus report to the Employability and Skills Implementation Group. It is anticipated that a Degree Plus Panel will be established to assess applications for the Degree Plus Award from students following the combined experience route.

How does a Student Register for Degree Plus and find out more?

Students can register on-line at www.qub.ac.uk/degreeplus. At registration, students select an introductory session to attend which will explain Degree Plus systems and procedures and help each student develop a personal Degree Plus Action Plan which will be managed by the student.

Do you have a project or activity suited to Degree Plus?

The Degree Plus Working Group is constantly looking to add activities to the range of options currently available to students. If you would like to submit an activity for inclusion in the Degree Plus menu of approved activities please contact David Foster at d.foster@qub.ac.uk for a Degree Plus Activity Form.

Further Information

For further information on Degree Plus, please contact:
Dr David Foster
Careers, Employability and Skills
Student Guidance Centre
Tel: 028 9097 2829

Queen's Teaching Awards 2008

Five Queen's Teaching Awards were awarded in 2008. The Awards featured are a mix of teams and individuals, new and experienced staff, innovative and more traditional approaches. Congratulations to the winners as follows:

Staff teaching for less than five years

Dr Mike Crone, School of Management

This award is made to a committed teacher who has redesigned his module to provide opportunities for active learning, with a real-world focus. The panel was impressed by his systematic module map which enabled students to clearly understand the structure of the module and his "constructive alignment" of assessment and learning outcomes. A particular strength was noted in his development of case studies to make a bridge between theories and concepts and real management dilemmas and practice.

Mr John Paul Hermon, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering

This award is made to an enthusiastic teacher who has effectively redesigned aspects of the curriculum in order to produce graduates who are competent in all phases of product development. The panel was impressed by his approach based on a careful analysis of students' learning styles as a basis for group work and his systematic use of peer assessment.

The Teaching Awards panel was chaired by Professor Ken Brown, who has led the Teaching Awards panel over the past two years. Professor Phil Race from the University of Leeds was the external assessor and a number of academic and academic-related staff from across the University completed the panel.

Two awards were presented in the category of Experienced Teaching Staff, three awards presented to Staff teaching for less than five years while no applications were received for the final category of Learning Support Staff.

The next round of Teaching Awards will be advertised in late January 2009. An advertisement will included in the Queen's Roundup and information loaded onto the CED website.

A briefing session is organised for Friday 13 March 2009 in the OSCR, giving advice on completing the application form and the application process. **The closing date for receipt of applications is Wednesday 22 April 2009.**

Ms Johanne Barry and Mrs Sharon Haughey, School of Pharmacy

This award is made to an enthusiastic team which has taken a student centred approach to developing a new module. The panel commended their use of diversity of teaching methods and resources, for example e-learning programmes, lectures, workshops in physical examination skills and consultations skills and patient case note assignments. Their willingness to respond to student feedback in reviewing their approach to assessment was noted as a particular strength.

Experienced Teaching Staff

Dr David Bell and team, School of Medicine and Dentistry

Left-Right: Rev Derek Johnston; Dr Mark Harbinson (front); Dr David Bell (back); Dr Moyna Bill; Rev Caroline McAfee; Dr Vivienne Crawford; Father Gary Toman; Rev Dr Harold Cunningham.

This award is made to an extended multi-disciplinary team, seeking to inspire students in imaginative ways to dimensions which could contribute significantly to their broad future practises as doctors. The team was commended for their use of reflective learning journals which stimulated students to think more deeply about a holistic approach to patient care. The panel was particularly impressed by the team's openness in addressing with medical students sensitive issues, particularly death, with compassion and dignity.

Mrs P Morrow and team, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Left-Right: Mrs Hazel Cuene-Grandidier, Mrs Phil Morrow, Dr Moira Stewart, Ms Doris Corkin, Dr Marian Traynor

This award is made for a highly committed inter-professional team approach to teaching Nursing and Medical students. The team uses SimBaby as a method of providing practical real work experience in a controlled environment. The team is commended for encouraging students to develop self awareness, critical thinking skills and the ability to be reflective across professions.

Teaching Awards 2009

Professor Ken Brown
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students

No one working in Higher Education today can be unaware of the growing public and government interest in student recruitment, engagement and retention.

Improving recruitment and retention is a high priority for Queen's. A number of new policies aimed at improving retention were approved during the last academic year and are currently being implemented. First responses to two of these – the new Induction week programme and a systematised approach to individual personal tutors, have been very positive.

However, having recruited students successfully, it is important that we provide them with the best possible experience. What goes on in the laboratory, the tutorial and the lecture theatre, therefore, is of vital importance.

Approaches to learning constantly need to be reviewed and refreshed if we are to be successful in developing the learning capabilities of students who are technologically very aware and often more comfortable with the visual than the spoken or written.

It is this process of review that the Teaching Awards scheme is designed to foster and over the last couple of years I have been impressed not only by the ingenuity and adaptability of colleagues in encouraging student learning, but also by the enhanced quality of the student experience that has ensued.

Some ideas have been very simple while others have exploited new technologies or facilities, but all, whether or not they have secured rewards, have illustrated the commitment of colleagues at Queen's to providing a high class educational experience. The scheme is designed not only to acknowledge innovative and successful teachers but also to encourage the dissemination and sharing of best practice.

Teaching evaluations confirm that there are many colleagues delivering programmes in Queen's at a very high level. If you have not yet put yourself forward for an award why not do so this year?

By doing so you will enhance the University's reputation as an institution committed to providing students with a first class educational experience, you will make your ideas available to colleagues and – who knows – you might just win an award.

Some reflections on education and teaching

Professor Brian Whalley
School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology

My recent award of a **National Teaching Fellowship** perhaps needs to be placed in context of my professional development. I have been researching and teaching (as well as a fair bit of admin) for more years than I like to recount. Like most academics, then as now, I was primarily interested in research. Not that attention wasn't given to teaching – far from it.

It has been said that it takes 20 years to become a good (school) teacher and I think this is true of university lecturers too. It has certainly taken me some time to become what, I hope, is rather more than a 'sage on the stage'. Field classes in particular were, and still are, excellent ways to meet students and learn with them. But then things changed, as they do, with increasing numbers of students and higher staff loadings. However, there were ideas, and people, around to help cope with these pressures.

The Enterprise Unit at QUB under Angela Wilcox (now at Leeds University) was a start in thinking more creatively about teaching and the visits of inspiring luminaries like John Cowan from the OU/Heriot-Watt were spurs to think more seriously about educating, rather than just lecturing.

Nowadays we have the Centre for Educational Development at QUB and I would like to thank them for their contributions to my 'education for education'; in discussions, provision of bringing educational practitioners to Queen's and organising teaching-related meetings. Not least, in moulding my QUB Teaching Award to an NTF application that worked. CED is an important (though I have to say, under-resourced) unit that really does provide educational development. We have PDP for our undergraduates; those wishing to develop their educating skills might profitably go to CED workshops for their own CPD.

By the time I took up Directorship of Geosciences (as it was then) the Quality Assurance Agency was on the scene and teaching processes became scrutinised. ('We safeguard and help to improve the academic standards and quality of higher education in the UK.')

For departments involved in these visitations it was as if Tomás de Torquemada had been resurrected! Being involved in the first University Subject Review wasn't as severe but it was nevertheless interesting to be asked, 'how do you know that ….?' Nevertheless, being inventive in student-centred educational matters became an interest in its own right, especially using ICT.

I was involved in e-learning from its early days and I remember setting up a network of Apple 'toasters' in a Grange-over-Sands hotel with Julian Orford and showing students how they could
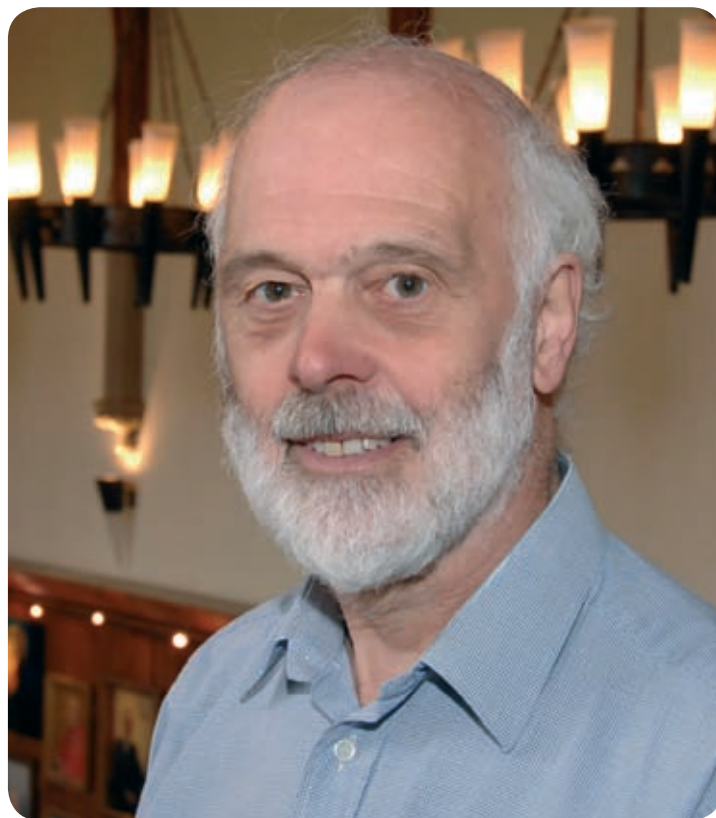
Professor Brian Whalley

process field data just after collection. Pressing a key to do an Excel calculation from a mass of data was quite an eye opener for students.

Despite my interest in e-learning I am not keen on the phrase 'blended learning'. Blending educational experiences is what we should be doing in any case, involving 'e-things' or not. This is similar to Angela Wilcox pointing out that geographers were already delivering 'good practice' by involving students in educational activities in labs and field as much as, and probably rather better than, 'pile 'em high and lecture 'em long' in large rooms. To this end I am pleased that Queen's has enabled a flexible teaching space in the PFC and I hope that more will follow in the new O'Reilly Library.

A National Teaching Fellowship is a personal award but I hope that the foregoing shows that it couldn't be achieved without contributions from all sorts of people, including students themselves. There is a fellowship of education, at Queen's and across the country, and it is a privilege to be part of this and to develop educational practice and ideas. There is much good practice and many interesting educational ideas in Queen's. I hope that more educators, not just lecturers, will put in for QUB Teaching Awards and perhaps then for a National Fellowship.

New Developments in Computer Assisted Assessment (CAA)

A pilot process is underway to explore the use of the Computer Assisted Assessment package QuestionMark Perception

The pilot group consists of individual users from the following Schools:

Biological Sciences

Education

Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology

Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences

Nursing and Midwifery

Pharmacy

Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work.

The pilot process will include small and large scale (up to 200 students) tests, both formal and informal and it is planned to make the software available to all staff in the academic year 2009–10.

A June 2007 consultation with the lecturers using CAA confirmed that they would welcome the provision of a wider range of question types than the three offered in Queen's Online, including the facility to include image and matching questions.

Following a demonstration of the Questionmark Perception CAA tool to academic staff, a decision to purchase the software was made in response to their positive feedback on the additional question types provided including:

- Drag-and-Drop (which allows participants to move up to 10 images into position)
- Fill-in-the-blank (participant entry can be checked against a list of acceptable answers including misspelled words)
- Hotspot (the option to click on an area of a picture to indicate the answer)
- Knowledge Matrix (several multiple choice questions presented together, with their responses cross related)
- Likert scale
- Matching (one list to another)
- Multiple choice (up to 40 possible answers)
- Multiple response (participants can choose one or more of the responses offered)
- Numeric questions (the option to fill in an exact number or a number within a specified range)
- Pull-Down List (also known as a selection question, this allows a series of answers from a pull-down list to be matched to a series of statements)
- Ranking (the option to rank in order)
- Select-a-blank (a series of options for filling in a blank can be selected from a drop down list)
- True/False
- Word response (this text match is for a key word or short phrase)
- Yes/No
- Survey Matrix (allowing multiple rows of likert scale questions in a table)

Potential users were also impressed by the QuestionMark facility to aid the secure delivery of online exams and class tests. In recent years Nursing, Law and Geography have joined Computer Science in using this form of formal assessment effectively with large first year classes.

For further information, please contact:

Mrs Gill Kelly, CED - ext 6595, g.m.kelly@qub.ac.uk
Mr Paddy Brannigan, Information Services (Teaching and Learning) - ext 5438, p.brannigan@qub.ac.uk
Mr David Robinson, Information Services (Teaching and Learning) - ext 5515, david.robinson@qub.ac.uk

Supporting first year student learning in laboratory practicals

Dr Brian Green (Lecturer in Nutritional Biochemistry and Physiology),
Dr Karen King (Senior Teaching Fellow)
Mrs Nicola McAteer (University tutor)
Institute of Agri-Food and Land Use (IAFLU) and Centre of Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning (CEAIL),
School of Biological Sciences.

Practical and laboratory based work are an essential component of any BSc degree program (Hofstein & Lunetta 1982). They should aim to enhance learning of theoretical aspects and enthuse students about practical experimentation. How many things in life can we say we learned better from carrying out the actual task rather than reading a book or listening to a lecture? We don't learn to drive without spending many hours behind the wheel with an instructor by our side.

All this may seem very obvious, but increasingly first year students arrive at University with little practical laboratory experience, few practical skills and a reduced enthusiasm for laboratory classes. Many students approach laboratory classes with trepidation and often the relevance of the exercise is not realised until the class has been completed and the report submitted.

Enhancing laboratory skills is a key objective of Queen's Biosciences Centre of Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning (CEAIL) and within the Food Quality, Safety and Nutrition (FQSN, BSc Hons) degree pathway three members of staff, Dr Karen King, Dr Brian Green and Mrs Nicola McAteer, are pro-active in removing the barriers perceived by students, supporting them through the challenging parts, and enabling them to seize the incredible learning opportunities offered by the practical class (Hofstein & Lunetta 1982).

A pre-requisite for successful learning is that students must either want to learn, or need to learn (Race, 2005). In some practical classes this can be straightforward since the methods practised in the class can be used in later professional life. However, it is more difficult to convince students of the value of 'seeing what happens when theory is put into practice'. This is where support is required.

In the first year of the degree programme, we have co-ordinated all practicals in 2 full modules, Fundamental Nutrition and Composition of Foods, and a half module in Food Molecules and Macromolecules, such that students progressively gain relative independence and confidence in practical laboratory classes.

The support we offer includes:

- Pre-laboratory tutorials
- Pre-laboratory questionnaire
- Active staff and demonstrator engagement in practical labs
- Instructional videos on the lab equipment/lab procedure
- Report write up sequencing
- Self assessment of practical reports
- Peer assessment of practical reports.
- Referencing and plagiarism training through TurnitinUK

Pre-laboratory tutorials

For each laboratory class Level 1 FQSN students are required to attend a pre-lab tutorial class where the wider context and relevance of the practical is discussed. Students are guided through the practical indicating how they should approach the work and organise themselves during the laboratory class. Worked examples and calculations help alleviate any perceived difficulties and greatly aid assignment write-up (Macmillan and Mclean, 2005).

We are finding that these sessions allay fears, reduce misunderstanding and improve the quality of student reports. The students tend to focus more on the really important things when in the laboratory, e.g. practising using equipment and techniques, developing accurate observation skills, and developing skills in recording data.

Pre-laboratory questionnaire

Students are required to complete a pre-laboratory questionnaire that asks simple questions such as "What 2 items do you need to bring with you to the practical class?" or "What is an Iodine Value?". The questionnaire is not assessed but students must have a completed, checked and signed copy with them before they can commence laboratory work. This helps to focus the student on the specific practical session.

Active staff and demonstrator engagement in practical laboratorys

During the laboratory class all staff and demonstrators are well briefed with the aim to provide students with clear instructions. Demonstrators and staff must be active during the laboratory sessions, discussing and checking with the students constantly. This builds up a rapport between the staff and students and encourages students to ask questions about the practical procedures and the theoretical aspects.

Groups are observed to ensure all students get a fair share of time using equipment. Students are encouraged not to be content just watching others – but to have a go themselves.

At times the students will be reminded of what they should be doing at a particular time to ensure they complete the practical on time. The practical sessions are clearly seen as a learning event for students, not a test to see if they can follow the instructions in the practical manual.

Instructional videos on the laboratory equipment/ laboratory procedure

Instructional videos, some embedded into PowerPoint presentations, allow the students to observe what the equipment looks like, how equipment is correctly used, what procedures must be followed, and how data is accurately recorded. These are used in the pre-laboratory sessions and are also available through QOL. Further development of such support is planned through the CEAIL in Biosciences. The aim of this support is to help reduce the 'fear factor' experienced by students using laboratory equipment for the first time.

Report write up sequencing

The practical reports are formulated to give students practice applying and interpreting their own data and to improve their report writing skills. There is a sequenced progression of the amount to be handed in for each report during the first semester, such that students only submit a full report for the final 2 practical labs of the semester. This has enabled students to understand more clearly what is required in each of the report sections of Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusion.

Self assessment of practical reports

All students must submit a self assessment cover sheet with each practical report. The sheet describes the assessment criteria and mark allocation for the specific report and students are required to mark themselves using the criteria. The aim is to enable students, by comparison of their self assessment and the examiner's assessment to understand the assessment criteria more clearly.

Referencing and plagiarism training through TurnitinUK

All student reports (including graphs) must be composed in an entirely electronic format for submission to Queen's Online and 'TurnitinUK'. The use of TurnitinUK is as a training support for students, rather than a policing tool for staff, and students are allowed to submit their work up to 3 times to the software. We have found that this has been instrumental in showing students what they should reference in their reports.

Peer assessment of practical reports

Following submission to QOL, student reports are printed and made anonymous using a coding system. At the next tutorial class the reports are distributed and students peer-mark each other's work using a well defined mark scheme (Rust, 2002). We have found that peer marking leads to considerable discussion among the students about how they interpreted and presented their findings. The new 'Flexible Teaching Space' in the Peter Froggatt Centre lends itself very well to this exercise.

Students have responded very positively to this range of support, clearly identifying their role in supporting learning.

Whilst this list of support may seem extensive, it has been built up over a period of 3 years, adding additional support each year once previous support becomes embedded. More support will continue to be added, for example further support on referencing is being added this year, with the introduction of a scan of all submitted coursework and its return to the student if not correctly referenced with the option to correct and resubmit without penalty, within 48 hours.

Practical classes provide significant opportunities for learning and developing skills, but if not approached correctly they can be counterproductive and negative student experiences will reduce student attainment and retention. The need to ensure students in their first year have a positive, interesting and stimulating learning experience in practical laboratory classes is essential for the future of all sciences, the development of an enquiring mind and the understanding of, and enthusiasm for, practical experimental work.

Comments from Module Evaluations forms completed by students undertaking Fundamental Nutrition, Composition of Foods and Food Molecules and Macromolecules.

What were the most satisfactory aspects of the module?

- Explanation of practical and reports, therefore knew what was involved and expected.

- The labs were very interesting and encouraged my interest in the subject.

- Explanation of practicals before practicals.

- The practical classes. The handouts of lessons. Tutorials.

- Practical classes quite enjoyable and interesting.

- Presentation of information. Teaching methods.

- I liked the peer assessment – allowed me to understand in more detail the marks I lost and the grade I deserved.

- Tutorial questions encouraged understanding unlike during lecture where you get a pile of confusing info all at once.

- I really enjoyed the content of this module. I found practicals relevant and interesting. Made me confident that I am in right course.

- Practicals interesting. Module material interesting – had not learnt about most of it before.

References

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The Philosophy Olympiads

Professor David Evans, Emeritus Professor of Logic and Metaphysics

Not long ago the study of Philosophy in Britain and Ireland was still almost exclusively a third-level, university preserve. More recently there has been a growth of interest at secondary-school level; and this has been encouraged by the leading philosophical associations. In continental Europe philosophy in schools has been pursued much more extensively; and one institution which these schools enjoy and take seriously, and which is unknown in our jurisdictions, is the Philosophy Olympiads.

This is a competition in which pupils write an essay on a philosophical theme under time-limited conditions. It operates in the first instance at national level; and then the best one or two pupils from each country go forward to the International Philosophy Olympiads. At this final stage the competition is organised under the auspices of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP); and it is through this organisation that I have come into contact with the Olympiads.

The pupils, accompanied by a teacher from their school, travel to a central venue for the competition. In recent years it has been held in Tokyo, Philadelphia, Cosenza (Italy), Antalya (Turkey) and Iaşi (Romania). The essay topics are chosen by representatives from FISP, who also judge the submissions; predominantly they take the form of quotations from illustrious past philosophers, for further comment by the competitors. One important requirement is that each pupil writes his or her essay in English, French or German and that the language chosen must be other than the writer's native language.

From my experience of the competition I can say that the best essays exhibit a high level of competence in philosophical knowledge and argument. The writers understand the material on which they are commenting, and their own commentary is presented in an interesting, sophisticated and often witty way. They are clearly well prepared for the exercise; and they enter into it with great earnestness. At the same time they enjoy the social side of the experience – travel to an exotic destination, meeting pupils from other countries, and being for a few days the focus of considerable local interest. Like the more familiar athletics Olympic contest, the participants relish the role of standard-bearer for their nation's philosophical honour, they strive to win, but they also enjoy the international experience of competition; unlike the Olympic Games, there are no drugs and no deals!

I am convinced that the whole exercise gives a great boost to the study of philosophy in schools in the participating countries. Preparation for the exercise stretches the pupils' motivation to pursue philosophy, and success rewards and reinforces that motivation. In their beginnings 20 or so years ago the Philosophy Olympiads were concentrated in eastern Europe; but recently they have expanded to include Germany, Italy, USA, Argentina, Japan and other countries in Europe and Latin America. The UK and Ireland have had no connection with this organisation; but it would be to everyone's advantage if this could change. The initiative for such a development must come primarily from schoolteachers. In the hope that this piece reaches them, I urge them to act!

CETLs (NI) at Queen's –
Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Dr Sarah Marshall, CED

The three Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs, NI) at Queen's are now in their third year of developing innovative and exciting learning experiences for students – and staff. More information about each of the CETLs can be found on their respective websites.

CEAIL (NI) www.qub.ac.uk/ceail

The Centre for Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning has two projects, based initially in Engineering and Biosciences:

Engineering

Learning through live design and manufacturing projects, students are given opportunities to develop skills and knowledge to prepare them for the engineering situations they will encounter in the workplace. Some specific developments have been the new first-year module 'Introduction to Engineering', which provides a transferable model for the integration of skills and social development, and a new approach to teaching Mathematics to Engineering students.

Biosciences

An extensive new work placement programme and enhanced tutorial, laboratory and fieldwork activity provide students with a range of generic and subject specific skills valued by employers. For example, resources are being developed to support the organisation, management and integration of placement learning, including guidance for designing assessed work placement modules. This work will have particular relevance for other non-vocational disciplines seeking to incorporate work placement in their degree programmes.

CECPA (NI) www.qub.ac.uk/cecpa

The Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts has introduced innovative approaches to teaching and learning through an eclectic range of interdisciplinary projects, performances and workshops, and the introduction of MA pathways in Interdisciplinary Arts. The main participating subjects are Creative Writing, Drama & Performance, Film, Music, Sonic Art and Anthropology, and extensive use is made of practising, professional artists from the UK and beyond.

The work of the Centre is extending beyond its original subject areas, for example, through the first year programme 'Areyoucomingouttoplay', which provides creative opportunities for students from any discipline, and is part of Degree Plus.

Next year, CECPA (NI) will be developing a new intensive performer training programme, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland.

CEIPE (NI) www.qub.ac.uk/ceipe

The Centre for Excellence in Interprofessional Education has developed research-informed interprofessional programmes, initially in Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry and Pharmacy, which enhance students' teamwork and communication skills and promote collaborative practice, with the ultimate aim of improving patient care. Areas of interprofessional education have included infant feeding, prescribing, arts and medicine, healthy urban planning and a range of scenarios using adult and baby simulated patients.

The Centre has also developed the Study and Learning Preferences Inventory (SALPI) (see page 13), which is now available to all students at Queen's. Another area of CEIPE's work has been the recording of nearly 100 hours of teaching in various settings; through the analysis of these recordings, a new method of video analysis is being developed.

Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (NI)
Engaging with Excellence CETL(NI) Dissemination Day

Keynote Speaker: Professor Ray Land, University of Strathclyde

Workshops and presentations from the three CETLs at Queen's

Date: 21 April 2009

Time: 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Venue: Canada Room/Council Chamber

Registration via Queens Online

Queen's has three nationally recognised Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL, NI):

Centre for Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning
Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts
Centre for Excellence in Interprofessional Education

Contact Details:
Project Manager: Dr Michelle Spence, email: michelle.spence@qub.ac.uk
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Centre for Educational Development, QUB, 6 Malone Road

tel: 028 9097 6570   email ced@qub.ac.uk   web: www.qub.ac.uk/cetl

CETL (NI) at Queen's
News and Events

Assessing Student Learning in Work Placements

22 January 2009 in the Canada Room

Hosted by CEAIL (NI) on behalf of the HE Academy Centre for Bioscience

Details at:
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/events

Performer Training

The CETL(NI) in Creative and Performing Arts plans to set up a one-year intensive performer training to begin January 2010. The Centre is running a trial of this course which is currently scheduled to run mid April to mid July 2009. Although there will be fees attached to the one-year course, this trial is offered free of charge.
For more information contact:
a.newell@qub.ac.uk

Further Adventures

Look out for public showcases of interdisciplinary MA work in February and March next year. More information at www.qub.ac.uk/cecpa

Studying and Learning Preferences Inventory (SALPI)

Dr John Johnston, Educational Consultant, CEIPE (NI)

An element of on-going research in the Centre for Excellence in Interprofessional Education (CEIPE) has been the development of the Studying and Learning Preferences Inventory (SALPI). SALPI profiles a student's disposition and existing preferences regarding studying and learning.

Completion of the forty-item questionnaire by a student enables the creation of his or her profile as a learner across eight critical facets of studying and learning:

- Anxiety
- Time Management
- Selecting Main Ideas
- Self Testing
- Information Processing
- Motivation
- Concentration
- Test Strategies

An on-line version of the instrument has been developed together with some interpretation notes and suggestions for self-help exercises. The instrument is currently available via the Professional Development Planning (PDP) e-folio.

Those completing the questionnaire obtain a profile of their learning and study strategies which they can print off or email to their student account. This profile together with the on-line interpretation notes can help a student to understand their strengths and, where appropriate, to identify ways in which they might further develop their effectiveness as learners.

Just over 1100 first year students completed SALPI in September/October 2007 during sessions on PDP conducted by Eimear Gallagher (Educational and Skills Development). Early evidence is that in some cases, students bring their profile for discussion during initial meetings with their tutors.

Tutorial or other small group sessions make for a potentially highly productive setting for students to complete the instrument. In one such setting recently, a group of 5 first year students, having agreed appropriate ground rules regarding sharing and discussion of profiles, completed the instrument.

Having obtained their profiles, they accessed the relevant interpretation notes and, where appropriate, suggestions for self-help. For four of these five respondents, the scores across the eight elements of studying and learning were consistent and high, indicating a positive disposition and studying and learning behaviours likely to be effective.


On the other hand one student's results showed her to score substantially lower on Anxiety and Time Management than she did in the other six aspects of studying and learning addressed by SALPI. She shared this information with the group and added, "That's exactly me!"

This evoked an enthusiastic and illuminating discussion of the profiles in which the student concerned was helped to see that, rather than being separate facets of her approach to studying and learning, these were in fact linked.

Her less-effective time management strategies and behaviours could be causing her to experience heightened anxiety as a learner. Following discussion, she left the session armed with her profile and a resolve to identify and implement more effective time-management strategies.

The diagnosis and consideration of student learning and study strategies generated by this instrument and supported by discussion in tutorial or other settings could have enormous potential for improving learning and teaching, not only in IPE areas, but throughout the University.

More about the work of CEIPE(NI) at www.qub.ac.uk/ceipe.
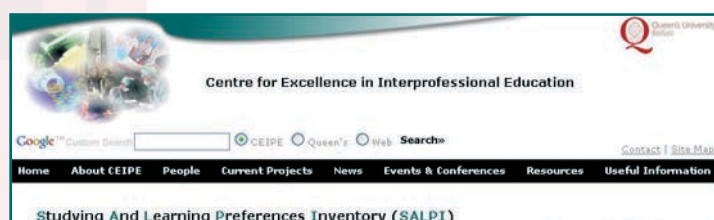
Introduction to Engineering – a model for curriculum reform

Dr Charles McCartan, CEAIL (NI)
Dr Sarah Marshall, (CED)

By using a definitive, but simple, change management process, the School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering has designed, developed and implemented a new introductory course for first year students. This course embodies the principles of the international CDIO* initiative, in which Queen's plays a leading role. This process started with an external agency, the UK Centre for Materials Education (UKCME), successfully analysing and sharing information from individual, in-depth interviews which they carried out with relevant teaching staff from the School.

This process gave staff a voice and provided a platform for further collaboration in relation to developing the course, giving the staff involved early ownership of the ensuing course and, as such, potentially eased the resulting addition to their teaching workload. It was evident that these staff members were very comfortable with this process and therefore provided a wealth of useful material relating to their teaching – the outcome may have been different without the involvement of an external agency.

The interviews identified three key areas that formed the basis of the change management process: the departmental strengths, the issues relating to the development of the introductory course and a suggestion for a possible way forward that included a five phase plan. The process then culminated in the formation of a committee to implement this five phase plan.

THE FIVE-PHASE PLAN

Phase 1 – Review own practice

Examine aspects of practice that have evolved in one's own subject areas (or through collaboration with one or two academic staff from other areas) which promote active, collaborative student learning. This study should identify the aims for these activities, the lessons learned from putting them in place, the issues relating to assessment and, crucially, the impact on student learning.

Phase 2 – Explore potential

Explore the potential of each activity as a possible 'candidate' for inclusion into the new course, identifying where and how the activity could be modified, and incorporating input from other subject areas or disciplines.

*CDIO – Conceive, Design, Operate, Implement. (http://www.cdio.org)

Dr Charles McCartan, CEAIL (NI)

Phase 3 – Identify practical implications

Identify the potential implications of incorporating such activities in terms of resources, facilities and staff time.

Phase 4 – Develop the 'wrap-around'

Determine what other input would be required to implement the new course, in addition to the agreed activities, in terms of preparation, appropriate theory and review, to enable the students to gain knowledge and understanding from each activity.

Phase 5 – Establish sequence

Consider how the activities would be sequenced within the new course to maximise learning potential.

In addition to identifying and prioritising key learning objectives for the course, the interviews also identified perceptions concerning the students' learning culture and how the introductory course could help develop a more mature approach to learning appropriate for third level education. The table below summarises these potential shifts in the characteristics of the students' learning culture.

Perceived changes in the characteristics of the learning culture for the introductory course

From	To
Learning as individuals	Learning with others
Competition (between students)	Collaboration (between students)
'Pupil' at school being told/spoon-fed	Adult learner being challenged/stretched
Strong drive to get the right answer, with mode of assessment operating to promote this	Opportunities to make and learn from mistakes, with mode of assessment operating to reward this
Curriculum content that is compartmentalised	Curriculum content that is integrated
Artificially contrived practical exercises (recipe-book approach)	'Real-life' situations
Theory dominating learning	Theory 'by stealth'
Theory perceived as a chore to learn, and so abandoned when problem-solving	Theory is trusted, and so is seen as a necessary tool in problem-solving (as a short-cut to problem-solving)
Students are diffident	Students taking responsibility and caring about outcomes
Mind-set orientated in the present	Mind-set future orientated
Problem-seeking	Problem-solving

In total it took nine months to plan and prepare the introductory course: four months for the interviews, analysis and preparation of the plan, and five months to execute it. The course is now in its third year, having been modified according to its evaluation strategy.

Although the 'change management process' described was specific to the design, development and implementation of a particular new engineering course, the process could be adapted for any subject area considering major curriculum reform.

Based on: McCartan, CD, Cunningham, G, Buchanan, FJ and McAfee, M (2008). "Application of a Generic Curriculum Change Management Process to Motivate and Excite Students", Engineering Education: Journal of the Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre, Volume 3, Issue 2.

The Apprentice Writer's Tale –

a student perspective on group work

Ms Samantha McCaffrey
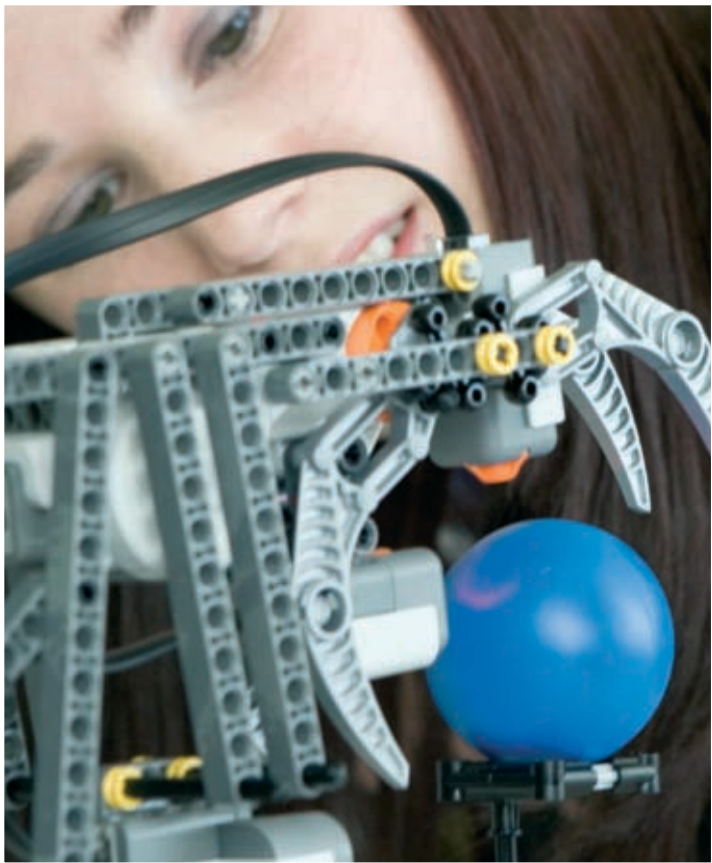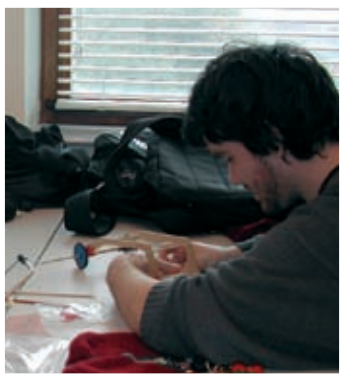
Samantha, a Creative Writing student, was part of the trial cohort for the Interdisciplinary Arts MA pathways, developed by the Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts at Queen's (www.qub.ac.uk/cecpa/macourse.html). The trial project included several intensive, task-focused, practice-based weekend 'Adventures', spread across a five-month period.

Students are often resistent to working in groups and, while we can observe their behaviour and reactions, it is rare that we have the opportunity to hear about their innermost thoughts and feelings about group working. In this extract from 'The Apprentice Writer's Tale', Samatha reflects very frankly, in her own words, on some of the challenges faced by a student working as part of a group.

"I realise that sometimes I need physical space and silence and to work alone. I find sometimes managing a group dynamic and other people's voices very difficult, especially with new things. I suppose I have learned a bit more about how I work as a person. I was conscious that maybe different types of creativity, acting and performance for example, work really well with that group dynamic, but I struggled.

Maybe it's because, with my writing, I'm an incubator, so things don't come suddenly. Ideas often come to me when I'm walking, when I'm quiet. I don't like the idea of sitting down to write, to order. That's kind of depressing; there's too much world out there. I'm a person that needs to be quiet, and that means alone, and it means creating space to let that incubation happen.

In the BBC Adventure, we all got ideas, but what I found interesting was that we all had different ideas. And I knew they just weren't interested in my ideas. Everyone was being very nice and nodding politely, but you just knew, in the same way that you knew that none of their ideas were exciting me.

So actually, after two hours, I got to the point where I became practical, and said I just loved their ideas. At that first session we were wearing our nice-people's masks, and I could hear myself saying "could we just do something", then almost shouting, "now will we just do something", because although I wasn't enthusiastic to facilitate a group, I eventually thought "let's just make some decisions". So, forget me as a writer, it was also just as a person, "come on let's move". And I just think that's sometimes what happens.

You've got different people with different voices; different languages all going at once, like a giraffe and a gazelle, a lion maybe and an elephant. Or, not even that, but just that we all have completely different styles. And this had struck me even on the Creative Writing Masters. There are different types of writers, so one of my teachers is very academic. He's the type of person who has read three books on the train, and can quote from all over the place. He'll say "that's just like, RD Laing and Shakespeare and Keats" and he's a very different type of writer than I am. But I still seem to learn from him, but it just takes a while, if you know what I mean, and a lot of it goes over my head. The Trial Module was similar in that, in lots of the Adventures, I was being exposed to all these new people with different types of voices and then trying to find my own.

It was the same in our group at Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC) because I knew Conan didn't love the Bob Dylan I had brought, and Sarah had her lovely poem. I just didn't want to be pushing it, and then we were all being very nice. Also, I liked Sarah's poem, the poem about snow, and I loved it and I suppose I wanted to do it all. Conan had had an idea that was lovely as well. Then I remember Sarah saying that we couldn't do the three, and I thought, well, why can't we? Then I whispered to myself, "just going to let it go, it's fine." There were those two kinds of feelings, wanting to get heard in the group and then also liking the other ideas. It was really hard to know how to get through this as new people working together.

That's what I liked about the final session with John Fox. All of us were really much more comfortable with each other and I think that definitely struck me. I felt much less nervous, more settled. At the beginning that's just what it is, it's a beginning, and people are nervous. I do think you can be creative both as individuals and as groups and that both are valuable even within a collaborative process. "

Interviewing employers – a three-year pilot of a career development workshop

Dr Lyn Cree, Teaching Fellow, Centre for Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning, talks about a model for a career development workshop being used in Biosciences.

A primary aim of the Centre for Excellence in Active and Interactive Learning (CEAIL), and one which clearly supports the University's recently launched Employability and Skills Policy is to "improve student employability through the enhancement of generic and subject-specific skills". (CEAIL Operational Plan).

The Biosciences Project within the Centre has introduced a range of new teaching and learning approaches with a view to improving the match between students' skills, abilities and attitudes and the needs of employers. These developments are happening in the context of a student group who enter employment within a wide range of areas, including education, laboratory and other scientific work, management, IT and the healthcare professions.

Prior to the establishment of CEAIL, Biosciences students had not participated in the annual Applied Sciences Workshop run by Careers, Employability and Skills (CES); the employers attending this event had typically tended to represent careers favouring Chemistry, Physics and Engineering students.

In 2006, I collaborated with CES to run a pilot workshop for Level 2 Biological Sciences students. Approaches were made to a small number of employers deemed relevant for Biosciences students and 9 students (from Genetics and Biochemistry) worked in groups interviewing employer representatives from the Regional Genetics Laboratories (NI Regional Genetics Centre) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Fingerprint Bureau.

Working in groups, students interrogated the employers to find out details of their jobs and then each group presented its findings to all students and employers, allowing time for questions after each presentation. The employers were also available for individual consultation at the end of the workshop. On the whole, feedback was very positive with students indicating their aims in attending the workshop had been very well or fairly well met.

The workshop was run again in 2007, though this time independently of the Careers Service; 17 students attended. The selection of employers invited was decided in consultation with students, and the following organisations agreed to attend:

*   Forensic Science Northern Ireland
*   PSNI Senior Fingerprint Expert for the Fingerprint Bureau
*   Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland
*   NHS Clinical scientist in molecular genetics
*   Queen's University Belfast, School of Education PGCE Biology

In 2008, 14 students attended the workshop and, with the exception of the genetics representative the employer representative were altered to increase variety:

*   Genetics   NHS Clinical scientist in molecular genetics
*   Questor   Environmental Biotechnology Company
*   Almac   Almac provides world-class integrated research, development and manufacturing services
*   Warner Chilchot: A pharmaceutical company focuses on two core therapeutic areas: women's healthcare and dermatology

Student feedback continued to be positive, as indicated by some typical comments from participants in the 2007 and 2008 workshops:

"very good workshop which helped me to understand competition for jobs and how to make myself more suitable to employers." (2007)

"very interesting and helped me think about other career options." (2007)

"I think workshops like today are very helpful to prepare you for career choices but also make you aware of thinking and researching in Level 2." (2008)

"an insight into the role of a molecular geneticist." (2008)

The 3-year workshop pilot has proved to be very successful in making the students who took part more aware and informed of career options and it is the intention to continue this workshop for Biological Sciences students. Liaising with the Level 2 students will help ensure the appropriate employer representatives invited are suited to the student cohort in question.

In addition, following the workshop meetings with the Regional Genetics Centre, two honours projects were made available for 2007/2008 and a further two for 2008/2009. Two one-week work shadowing placements with a Belfast City Hospital genetics counsellor were undertaken in 2007-08 as a direct result of the workshops.

For more information on the work of CEAIL(NI), visit the website at www.qub.ac.uk/ceail

If I Were Jack

The story of the development of a video drama and interactive computer based tool for research within QUB

Crisis pregnancy amongst teenagers presents a considerable health problem as well as generating enormous emotional and social costs for adolescents and their families. Understandably, research to date has focused on the young women who become pregnant – but what about the young men who are involved? Recent research shows that the attitudes of male partners are very influential in how women make decisions about their pregnancies, yet little is known about the beliefs and feelings of teenage men in relation to their involvement in a crisis pregnancy.

In 2007 a research team from the School of Nursing and Midwifery Research Unit (Dr Maria Lohan, Dr Peter O'Halloran and Dr Fiona Alderdice, together with Dr Abbey Hyde (UCD)) succeeded in obtaining a grant from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency in Ireland to conduct a research project entitled Ready to Reproduce? Teenage men's attitudes and decision-making in relation to unintended pregnancy.

The challenge for the research team was to find a culturally acceptable way to tap into the thoughts and feelings of teenage men in relation to crisis pregnancy. Inspired by an earlier research project carried out in Flinders University (Australia), the team decided to develop a computer-based interactive questionnaire, embedded in a filmed mini-drama.

The drama follows a teenage man ("Jack") as he discovers his girlfriend is pregnant and deals with the reaction of family and friends. The programme is designed to be used by teenage boys in schools, each boy watching the action at his own computer, listening to the dialogue through headphones, following Jack as he faces the issues. At crucial stages in the story each boy must answer questions on how he thinks Jack would feel and act: "If I were Jack…" Finally, he must decide whether he supports the continuation of the pregnancy (keeping the baby or adoption), or supports the termination of the pregnancy; and whether he will continue the relationship with his girlfriend.

The development of the interactive computer based (ICB) programme involved making an Irish version of the original Australian film, so that the film authentically represents a scenario of a young Irish teenager who has discovered his girlfriend is pregnant. This meant adapting the original Australian script (with their permission) and re-shooting the film using Irish actors in an Irish setting. It also meant developing an interactive computer programme using Adobe Director.

The research team had very little prior experience in making a video or an ICB programme. However, we received lots of help and encouragement from the staff at Media Services. We enrolled the generous assistance of David Grant (Lecturer in Drama Studies) who scouted the main actors for us in Dublin theatre groups, prepared the actors for auditions, assisted in rehearsals and voice training and generally added an expert sheen to all of the performance aspects of the production.

So far, the research tool is working very well for us in the field. We were really impressed by the professionalism and artistry of the team based at QUB Media Services (fuelled on black coffee alone!). Preliminary results suggest the young men enjoy the contemporary feel to the production and are engrossed by the story and the medium. The results of the study will be become available in October 2009.

Dr Peter O'Halloran, Dr Maria Lohan

The success of Jack was due to detailed planning, organisation and commitment from a large team. If you are thinking about creating an interactive programme or video demonstration as part of your research, or learning and teaching, contact us at Media Services in advance of funding application. We will be able to advise on costs, timescales and how to achieve your objective. Don't be put off by limited funding. Media Services can work with you to produce a showcase project to demonstrate the benefits of educational media in your area. Be prepared to be involved in all stages of the production process, especially pre production.

Media Services combine educational technologists, video producers, graphic designers, photographers, audio visual staff and desktop publishers. Research, publicity and learning and teaching materials can be produced for the web, DVD or mobile learning.

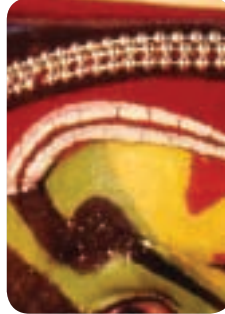**Amanda Sefton,** Educational Media Producer

New Exciting Network

Cultural Dynamics and Emotions Network (CDEN)

Dr Maruška Svašek, School of History and Anthropology

http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CulturalDynamicsandEmotionsNetwork/

On 28 October 2008, the Cultural Dynamics and Emotions Network (CDEN) held its first annual celebration at Queen's University Belfast. The Network was established in 2007 by two social science lecturers, **Maruška Svašek (School of History and Anthropology, QUB) and Kala Shreen (**MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai). Shreen was affiliated to Queen's as a Charles Wallace Fellow in the spring of 2007. After a successful guest workshop by her on Hindu Kolam art tradition in **Svašek's** Anthropology of Art Module, the two scholars decided to formalise their working relationship and set up a Network focussed on the study of emotions and culture. The School of History and Anthropology supported the initiative, financing the production of the CDEN website Cultural Dynamics and Emotions Network (CDEN) through a grant from its internationalisation fund (see http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CulturalDynamicsandEmotionsNetwork/).

CDEN aims to stimulate international, interdisciplinary research on emotions and facilitates the creation of transnational learning/teaching groups. Last semester, for example, students from Belfast and Chennai formed a group and worked together on a project researching images of love, which led to discussions about the universality/cultural particularity of discourses, practices and embodied experiences of emotions. The same students wrote self-reflexive stories of grief that formed the basis for comparative analysis. The material produced by the students is accessible on the CDEN website and can be found under 'resources'. All resources can be used by anyone visiting the website for further research and teaching and learning projects.

CDEN also works with Artists-in-Virtual-Residence whose work relates to the study of emotions, such as the US-based Ghanaian artist George Hughes (planned projects on emotions and the body, and violence) and the Canadian artist Kate Hollett (planned project on care). The Network also stimulates other forms of interdisciplinarity. Last year's events included, for example, a presentation/workshop by the Dutch palliative nurse Gonnie Jansen, who spoke about her narrative approach to palliative care to an audience including students and lecturers in Social Anthropology and Nursing.

The first annual celebration was devoted to 'Stereotyping in a global context', the theme of a current CDEN project. The participants included students from Queen's University, MOP Vaishnav College for Women, the University of Pondicherry and youth from Dublin. During the celebration, Svašek outlined the main aims of the stereotyping project. The second speaker was Thomas O'Connor, a Dublin based artist who works with young people on projects coordinated by Stoneybatter Youth Service. CDEN clearly broadens the teaching/learning experience of our students, connecting them to students and scholars elsewhere and by reaching outside the university.

The website:

- offers up-to-date information about the activities of CDEN
- serves as a platform for global interdisciplinary debate about cultural dynamics and emotions
- facilitate interaction and cooperation between students/lecturers/researchers in different parts of the world
- offers various resources, from film fragments through images and texts and to list of relevant references

Is 'Professional Recognition' for departments, schools and teams a valuable idea ?

Ms Sandra Griffiths
Honorary Senior Research Fellow, National Teaching Fellow, CED

In partnership with the sector and on its behalf, the Higher Education Academy has developed a number of forms of accreditation or recognition. A considerable number of Queen's staff have availed of the opportunity to become Fellows or Associate Fellows of the Academy.

What is not currently available is some form of recognition for Departments, Schools or groupings of staff like course teams in relation to their commitment to learning and teaching, their own professional support and development, and to the quality of the student learning experience. Might some form of recognition prove valuable? It could take a variety of forms, carry with it a logo or strapline for publicity or other purposes, and be interpreted in different ways in different institutions.

In May of this year Queen's was invited to be part of a pilot project aimed at simply exploring this idea. If the proposal had value, how might it be conceptualised? Would such an award or 'chartermark' be of value and something that staff and departments would be proud to have achieved? What criteria and procedures would an institution use to determine an 'award'? Should an award at departmental level help staff to gain individual professional recognition and how might this happen?

The following findings are based upon one to one interviews with 13 senior staff at Queen's University. Staff who contributed represented academic departments as well as those with a central role or institutional perspective.

The value of Professional Recognition for Departments, Schools and Teams

There was broad agreement and very considerable support for the concept of professional recognition for groups of staff. Such recognition was seen as beneficial for motivational purposes for staff, meaningful recognition for competent work, reward of excellence for group achievement and added value for students. A number of interviewees stressed the value in terms of publicity to a range of stakeholders and student recruitment, particularly in subject areas where there was a downturn in applicants.

A minority expressed some reservations regarding the engagement of staff in such a scheme since it was difficult to envisage what was in it for them. It was pointed out that academic staff often work as individuals, that module delivery was somewhat dependent on the leader and that it was sometimes difficult to encourage teams to apply for internal teaching awards.

How would the recognition be conceptualised?

Seven of the interviewees commented on existing forms of audit such as teaching quality assessment and professional body recognition. In this context they viewed the proposal as "recognition for difference from the mainstream" and enhancement leading to improvement in practice. This would have wider implications for other practitioners in Queen's and embedding in the subject area at sector level. There was a stress upon excellence, added value and the introduction of a new way of thinking and designing of curricula for everyone in that specific subject area.

One interviewee commented:

"If it is to mean anything not everyone should be able to get it. It has to reward unique, innovative curriculum design."

and another stated

"…..Something novel, not for the standard module but something distinctive that adds value "

Another interviewee emphasised that it should be for innovative work but wanted assurance of competence in the team's traditional, day to day practice.

In contrast two interviewees favoured recognising competence and thought it possibly divisive to have a kitemark if it only had narrow applicability for those who had undertaken innovative work. Their view was that it would be more inclusive if all teams thought they could achieve the recognition. This would enhance ownership of such a scheme and raise staff confidence and morale. Having said that, one of these individuals thought it was unlikely that a whole School could be put forward because of the emphasis on research and the fact that not all staff engaged equally with teaching in a proactive fashion.

Who is it for?

Some saw it as recognising a whole department; three for teams within a School and the majority considered that in theory it could be for either a School or teams within a School or Department.

When asked a question about how groups might be identified the respondents mentioned associating it with groups in a range of ways from fostering an interest with whole departments, through to encouraging innovative practice or teams working on a particular theme. The following suggestions were proffered:

- Staff who ran a taught Masters
- Year Group teachers
- Minority Subject teachers
- Inter/Multi disciplinary teams
- Module Teams
- Problem Based Learning team
- PDP Team Centrally
- Project based learning team
- All members of the Department
- Existing Teaching Award Holders in a School/ Department
- Innovative Course
- Team involved with CETL work
- Research-Informed teaching

The criteria by which an award might be made

It was agreed that criteria should be evidence based and use made of existing models of criteria for excellence such as the Teaching Award Scheme within the University. It was considered important that the Scheme should be efficient and not try to duplicate evidence that already existed in other University procedures. Most, however, saw the need for externally set and peer refereed criteria and thought that the Scheme should look mainly to The Higher Education Academy, though others within the University who had pedagogic expertise could contribute. An example of this would be staff coming through with certificates in university teaching. It was thought important by three of those interviewed that a central department within the University should be responsible for spearheading the initiative and keeping an overall record of achievement in teaching, such as the number of Associate Fellows and Fellows of the Academy. The final judgement should rest with the Academy.

Criteria that encompassed innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability were viewed as key and headings for paperwork should address:-

- A rationale for a need for change
- What obstacles had to be overcome?
- How did you prepare students for the new way of working?
- What is the evidence of success?
- How has the innovation been evaluated?

Three of those interviewed thought that currency of the recognition needed to be considered and favoured a kitemark which gave recognition for 5 years, 3 respondents thought 3 to 4 years and 2 thought that currency could not be guaranteed. When probed on such renewal there was a general feeling that this may be important in fostering continuous professional development but there were no suggestions as to how this might be undertaken, other than supplying a record of updating activities by members of the team.

All of the interviewees thought that the proposal should be related to the UK PSF but there was no view as to the way in which this might happen. Similarly there were no suggestions for terminology, at this stage, though all of the respondents were keen on a distinctive kitemark or logo which could be used for publicity purposes.

There was a unanimous view that the paperwork should be rigorous but not burdensome. Those coming from Departments rather than Schools were keen to point out that a theoretical approach or underpinning may be off putting to their staff.

Conclusion

Based on the interviews it would appear that there is very enthusiastic support for the concept. It was seen as a means of raising the profile of teaching and considered that staff would be proud to be given such recognition. All of those interviewed favoured a light touch in terms of paperwork and thought that external judgement was important for recognition of this nature. From discussions it seems that what was emerging was the need for recognition of teams, schools and departments in three ways:

- for competence
- for excellence
- for added value

There were no views on the how of the process in relation to whether such an award should help staff to gain individual recognition and the terminology for such recognition. There was agreement that, in principle, efficient use could be made of existing evidence or recognition. Some saw potential problems in deciding on the extent of the contribution by individual members of the team and the issue of currency. Most thought that these difficulties should not stand in the way of exploring the concept further.

Making the connections between theory and practice in the chemical industry

Dr Paul Nancarrow, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering

Chemical engineers play a key role in society by designing and managing large-scale industrial processes to convert raw materials of relatively low value into the products that sustain our everyday lives, such as medicines, plastic, fuel and food.

While the theories used in chemical engineering are founded mainly upon science and mathematics, which can be adequately taught in the lecture theatre, qualified chemical engineers have to work in the real world of industrial plants. Therefore, students need to be able to relate what is learned in university to what is practiced in industry. This is of particular importance in the field of process safety management (PSM), where chemical engineers are responsible for ensuring the safety of plant employees and the general public in the local area.

As part of the Safety and Design Codes module, a group of Level 2 Chemical Engineering students from Queen's recently attended a workshop at the DuPont plant at Maydown, Derry. DuPont is the world's second largest chemical company and is recognised within the industry as a leader in PSM. Queen's has had a long and successful relationship with DuPont and, over the years, chemical engineers from DuPont have been invited to present a series of lectures on PSM at the University. However, for the past two years, DuPont has facilitated a PSM workshop at their Maydown plant for the students.

The workshop is an important part of the module which aims to provide the students with an awareness of the safe design and operation of chemical process plants. The module covers

Dr Paul Nancarrow

topics such as the design of pressure vessels to meet relevant safety standards, hazard analysis of chemical processes and safe working practices in chemical plants.

On visiting DuPont, the students get to tour the Kevlar® manufacturing plant and see how chemical engineering theory is applied in industry. They also get the opportunity to work with DuPont engineers on a real-life case study. This year the workshop was based on the BP Texas City Refinery explosion and fire which occurred in 2005. As part of the workshop, the students were asked to study various reports of the incident and determine the factors that contributed to the event, identify the PSM elements that failed and to evaluate the key learnings and observations to be taken from it.

Nineteen second-year Chemical Engineering students attended the workshop along with two lecturers from Queen's. The visit was organised by Dr Paul Nancarrow, Lecturer in the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Queen's, and facilitated by Tom Bollaert, Fahed Fallaha, and Colin McBride, from DuPont.

For many of the students, this is their first opportunity to visit a large scale chemical manufacturing facility. It allows the students to make the connections between the theory taught in class and reality of chemical engineering in industry, which is invaluable in reinforcing their learning experience. They get the chance to discuss with engineers about the day-to-day excitement and challenges of working in a large industrial plant and work with them on real life case studies.

This experience will certainly help our students to develop the skills required to become the chemical engineers of the future in an ever-changing chemical industry. We are extremely grateful to DuPont for their continued support in enhancing the learning of Chemical Engineering students at Queen's.

Some of the students, QUB lecturers and DuPont staff who attended the PSM workshop. From left to right: Dr Farid Aiouache (QUB Lecturer), Tom Bollaert (DuPont), Dr Paul Nancarrow (QUB Lecturer), Gavin Toner (DuPont), Marianne McKevitt, Ciaran Doyle, Sean Keltai, Christopher Andrews, Doris Ku, Colin McBride (DuPont), Fahed Fallaha (DuPont).

How do we ensure transfer of training for part-time, adult students?

Dr Tim London
School of Education

What is currently done quite effectively to maximize the ability of part-time students who work full time to learn and then apply this learning in their workplace is that there are strong connections between the work students are asked to do in their courses and their actual work lives . In a quick review of assessments for Master's students in the School of Education, case studies, papers designed as a combination of their personal experience joined with research, and reflections on their work experiences are common and useful ways of connecting courses to work. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) make it clear that these opportunities to build on students' prior knowledge and preconceptions are essential to new learning. During the course, this allows students to implement new ideas with the safety net of being able to approach their lecturer for clarifications as necessary. Also, because students can choose from a range of courses to fulfil the180 M Level points necessary to earn a Master's degree, it is likely that they will be interested and engaged in the learning process because they have chosen it (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). While these are two strong facets of current Master's programs, there are also structural weaknesses that can limit the amount of long term learning achieved by students.

Issue 1: Master's students receive approximately 30 hours of "seat time" with a lecturer but are largely left to their own devices when not in the classroom setting. Usually these 30 hours are also taught over the course of only a few days, creating a situation where the bulk of students' time related to thinking about and practising new concepts is done in relative isolation. This isolation from peers who have studied the same issues as well as the lecturer, makes it less likely that they will fully understand new ideas and apply them in their work setting even during the term of the course.

Issue 2: Most researchers who study effective training point out that a key to long term usage of new information is follow-up contact, ongoing support, and feedback once learners are back in the workplace (Zenger, Ulrich, & Smallwood, 2000; Halpern & Hakel, 2003; London & Smither, 1999; Broad & Newstrom, 1992).

Given the fact that contact between student and the University usually ceases after courses have been completed, there is little opportunity for students to receive this ongoing feedback while at work from either lecturers or peers.

Issue 3: Because students are given wide discretion as to which Master's level courses they will take to complete their degree, there is less likelihood of continuity throughout their program in terms of course content as well as peer groups who can provide formative feedback (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Moving forward, if these three issues are to be addressed – and addressed in realistic ways that do not place an undue burden on University staff – tapping into available technologies seems to be the most effective step to take. This can take place in many ways, all of which can provide enhanced connectivity between students and the University as well as extending the length of time of these connections beyond a student's graduation from Queen's University. The pieces are already in place, with Queen's Online offering the capability of discussion boards and e-mail searches.

Method 1: Enhancing Queen's Online to allow students to search for other students within and outside their courses to link with people in similar work situations or interests of study. This can allow them to create larger and more compatible networks informally than the University is currently able to do within the formal structure of modules. Linking these students together can then lead to student created message boards or e-mail listservs to communicate with each other.

Method 2: Following the same model as above, it would not produce an undue burden to allow alumni of Queen's University similar access to Queen's Online and the available message boards. This would provide them with ongoing connections to both the University as well as to former and current students who could serve as valuable sources of support and feedback.

Even with some of this technology in place already, these suggestions would certainly create more work: moderators of content would need to be put in place and site maintenance would need to be carried out. To me, the pay off for such additional structures in terms of transfer of learning to students would far outweigh these added costs. Not only would students gain more learning, but their workplace would see the immediate benefits in a range of areas, making it possible that there could be partnerships between Queen's University and business that could defray the cost of such measures even further. Research shows that students actively engaged in developing their own learning can learn more; it is crucial that Queen's University utilize existent technology to provide students with this opportunity.

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CED Conference

Event: **Assessment and Feedback: Making them work for you and your students**
Presenters: **Professor Chris Rust, Oxford Brooke University**
                Professor David Nicol, University of Strathclyde
Date :   **19 & 20 May 2009, Canada Room/Council Chamber**
Contact: **Alison Skillen, ext 6604, a.skillen@qub.ac.uk**

Guest Speaker Series 2008–2009

Event: **Developing independent and autonomous learning**

Presenter: Professor Mick Healey, University of Gloucestershire
Date and time: 19 February 2009, 9.30am – 12.00pm, OSCR

Event: **Engaging with Excellence – CETL Dissemination Day**

Presenter: Professor Ray Land, University of Strathclyde
Date and time: 21 April 2009, 10.00am–4.00 pm, Canada Room/Council Chamber

Event: **Beyond Questionnaires - getting feedback on your teaching**

Presenter: Professor Phil Race, Leeds Metropolitan University
Date and time: 14 May 2009, 9.00–11.30am, Senate Room

For details of the above events, please visit the CED website at:
http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/ProfessionalDevelopment/

Summary of CED Workshops | January – March 2009

JANUARY

27 Jan 2009	Evaluation of Teaching	10.00am – 1.00pm
28 Jan 2009	Detecting and Preventing Plagiarism	2.00pm – 5.00pm
28 Jan 2009	An Introduction to the Features of QOL for Learning and Teaching	2.00pm – 5.00pm
30 Jan 2009	Small Group Teaching	10.00am – 1.00pm

FEBRUARY

4 Feb 2009	Preparing and Giving Lectures – Part 1: Tips & Theory	2.00pm – 5.00 pm
5 Feb 2009	Teaching and Learning for Research Staff – Part 1	9.30am – 4.30pm
11 Feb 2009	Using the TurnitinUK Plagiarism Detection Software	2.00pm – 5.00pm
11 Feb 2009	Preparing and Giving Lectures – Part 2: Practical session in small groups	2.00pm – 5.00pm
13 Feb 2009	Teaching and Learning for Research Staff – Part 2	9.30am – 1.00pm
18 Feb 2009	Small Group Teaching	2.00pm – 5.00pm
19 Feb 2009	Applying for Professional Recognition as an Associate or Fellow/Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy	2.00pm – 4.45pm
25 Feb 2009	Teaching with Emotional Intelligence	2.00pm – 5.00pm
25 Feb 2009	Using Computer Assisted Assessment – Part 1	10.00am – 1.00pm
25 Feb 2009	Using Computer Assisted Assessment – Part 2	2.00pm – 5.00pm

MARCH

4 Mar 2009	Teaching Larger Classes	2.00pm – 5.00pm
11 Mar 2009	Writing Learning Outcomes and Module Design	2.00pm – 5.00pm
18 Mar 2009	Introduction to Assessment in Higher Education	2.00pm – 5.00pm
25 Mar 2009	Peer Observation of Teaching: a Practical Guide	2.00pm – 4.00pm

Please visit the CED website for further information on the courses and registration details