THIS ISSUE INCLUDES ....

WHO IS THE NEW ACADEMIC?

- You are interested in learning, and in ways of helping students to learn your subject.
- You are interested in the activities of your colleagues, in how they teach and assess their students.
- You ask questions about assessment and about course design.
- You attend the occasional workshop on teaching and learning topics.
- You're willing to spend time reading and thinking about learning and teaching and course design and assessment.

What's new about *The New Academic*?

You now have your own magazine. That's new!

Assessment - Double Feature
... launched by Graham Gibbs, debunking some cherished beliefs

EIGHT MYTHS ABOUT ASSESSMENT

by *Graham Gibbs*

1. ASSESSMENT ENABLES EMPLOYERS TO SELECT GRADUATES

When employers interview graduates they often ask whether they worked in groups, wrote anything other than academic essays, gave oral presentations, ever had to set their own objectives and work independently on large projects or do creative problem-solving. Graduates are judged on their presentation of self, articulacy, quick-wittedness and work experience. It is true that students with thirds stand less chance of getting to the interview stage than students with two-ones, but this is largely because employers have no other evidence to go on. If we are assessing students primarily to provide employers with useful information then we are making a bad job of it.

2. ASSESSMENT IS TRUSTWORTHY

Evidence about the sheer unreliability of most of our assessment methods is overwhelming. In some studies differences between markers, even differences in the quality of students' handwriting, account for more variation in marks than do differences between students. There is evidence that women gain fewer top marks than men and that this difference disappears with anonymous marking. The effort which goes into distinguishing 54% from 55% is futile. Strict rules about degree classification based on adding such scores (if you average 69% it can't be a first) are ludicrous. I have seen assessment questions concerning statistical error estimation marked with complete disregard for the principles sought in students' answers. Statistics students who simply added scores generated from different scales, with different statistical

EDITORIAL

25 YEARS ON

The New Academic fills a gap that has been evident since the publication of the Hale Report on University Teaching in the mid 60s. There was much amiss, Hale declared, in the attention given to teaching and learning in Higher Education. A decade later, Donald Bligh argued convincingly that old warhorses like the traditional lecture were relatively ineffective in promoting learning. Since then, the Polytechnics with their proclaimed focus on teaching, and more recently, the PCFC-sponsored Warnock Committee on Teaching Quality, the CVCP Academic Audit Unit in the University sector, and the advent of appraisal as a requirement in both sectors, have all contributed to a softening of the academic arteries. The old attitude that teaching and learning were incidental to the mainstream of academic life has perforce changed.

So *The New Academic* has arrived propitiously to provide a national forum for all academic teachers who see the benefits not only for students, but themselves, of addressing the problems of teaching and learning with the same rigour and imagination they may apply to their scholarship. But is that enough in terms of the changes we see happening?

For change to be systemic rather than just cosmetic it must occur simultaneously on at least three levels: the individual, the departmental and the institutional. Individual lecturers must be more open about the processes of teaching and learning; talk about it, read about it and solicit, accept and act upon feedback from students. Departmentally, a supportive appraisal system and a well-resourced staff development programme have to be established. Institutionally, there needs to be visible support from the top, the provision of incentives and opportunities to develop new methods (and that includes a thorough-going training course for new staff) as well as improved communication about what is happening. It has also to be said that at the national level, apart from all the pressures currently being applied through government channels, two further incentives are already being offered. One is the Enterprise in Higher Education initiative which is presently sponsoring the freedom to change in over 60 HE institutions with up to £1m each over 5 years. The article on page 7 puts the EHE project in perspective. The other is the accreditation scheme for in-house training proposed by SCED (see page 19 of this issue).

We hope the ultimate beneficiaries of all this activity, namely the students, will not find it all vitiated by the pressures on academic space and workload occasioned by the demand for higher SSRs. That is why the grant from the PCFC to provide training support (described on page 20) to match the challenges they are imposing on Polytechnics and Colleges is a very welcome one. The hope that quality will be maintained in the face of so much change and stress may not be an over-optimistic one; but it will need very careful monitoring.

THE NEW ACADEMIC AND SCED

As most readers will know, The Standing Conference on Educational Development (SCED) has been active in promoting good practice in higher education for the last 15 years. Two years ago, we decided to go forward with the publishing of a national magazine. It was not easy to carve out either the necessary time or the cash to proceed with the venture as fast as we should have liked. Much of the development work in producing a pilot edition was done by George Marsh, and we would like to express our immense gratitude to him. At the moment, the idea is that the editorship will change for each issue. David Baume will edit the Spring issue, and Sally Brown the Summer one. The policy on editorship may change once the future of *The New Academic* is assured when we may appoint a professional editor. We look forward to a thriving future for the magazine and a positive (but never uncritical!) response from a continually growing readership.

properties, as we do in aggregating grades, would deserve to fail their degrees.

3. ASSESSMENT PREDICTS FUTURE PERFORMANCE

A-level results are very poor predictors of degree results and degree results are very poor predictors of success in any aspect of adult performance - even postgraduate study! In certain professional areas there is a negative correlation between degree classification and success, i.e. those who get poor degrees do best in their jobs.

4. ASSESSMENT CERTIFIES COMPETENCE

The MOT driving test is designed to certify competence to drive a car safely. The driving examiner has a list of about 20 items which the candidate must pass. It would not be satisfactory to allow people to pass if they could manage

the hill start but went through red lights, stayed on the road for 40% of the time, or knew 40% of the road signs.

Engineering students are customarily submitted to larger curricula and longer teaching hours than other students on the grounds that there are a wide range of things which engineers simply have to know or their bridges will fall down. Every engineering course that I have seen, however, has an assessment system which is incapable of certifying competence. Students take tests which cover a proportion of the course. They choose to answer a proportion of the questions and gain their

"Stop rocking the boat! You are not allowed to fail more than a third of students under any circumstances ... "

engineering degree for achieving 40% of the marks. It is possible to score 40% without getting a single calculation correct - and bridges do fall down!

5. ASSESSMENT INDICATES WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT

Someone with a Ph.D. in chemistry could take an undergraduate chemistry exam and gain a high grade without learning anything new at all. To measure what has been learnt we have to use tests sensitive to changes in knowledge - before and after taking the course.

In the Open University a research study following the progress of a group of new science students got them to take the Foundation Course final exam at the same time as the previous year's students i.e. before they started the course. While the average exam scores of the two groups (those who had taken the course and those who had not started yet) were different, they were not very different. The overlap in the distributions of scores was considerable, with the best of the students who had not yet taken the course scoring above the average of those who had finished the course. The Open University puts a great deal of effort into producing statistically reliable tests and yet they still have trouble identifying the effects of an entire one year course. It seems likely that most of higher education uses tests which are even more insensitive to measuring what has been learnt.

6. ASSESSMENT MAINTAINS STANDARDS

I have seen eager new lecturers devise rational objective measures to test the achievement of course aims, only to find that too many students fail or too many get high marks. Such lecturers are told to stop rocking the boat. You are not allowed to fail more than a third of students under any circumstances, and not allowed to claim exceptional success. Marks must fall within the normal distribution of degree classifications regardless of what has been achieved. If necessary, students will be forced to re-sit an easier paper or their marks will be statistically massaged until the distribution is about right. I have seen courses taught in new ways achieve dramatically improved results, acknowledged by external examiners, only to have the marks moderated down to conform with 'standards' elsewhere. And incompetent lecturers are never shown up - exam boards ensure that no embarrassing outbreak of failures ever occurs!

7. ASSESSMENT IMPROVES LEARNING

Golf pros do not sit on the eighteenth green signing score cards if they want to improve golfers' swings. Assessing the product rather than the process does not provide the right information for helping students to develop their skills, nor does it select those with great potential amongst them. In our laboratories we aim to improve laboratory practice, but it is almost universally the case that students are assessed

on written reports. A student may have taken three times as long as the rest, set fire to the bench, fiddled the results and be incapable of undertaking the procedure without the help of a technician, and yet produce a lab report with a good-looking set of results. The lecturer has little choice but to give a high mark for the product. All the learning opportunities are missed. Students cover up the very mistakes they might learn from. To improve students' laboratory practice, the lecturer would have to assess what they were doing right and wrong while they were doing it.

8. ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS IMPROVING

The rhetoric in this piece is not new. I wrote a similar article ten years ago. The reason I have raised these issues again is that I believe that assessment in higher education is getting rapidly worse, largely as a consequence of resource pressures. In the past the stupidities of assessment have been somewhat ameliorated by personal contact between teacher and student and thus by informal assessment - lecturers keeping half an eye on the process. Assessment provided opportunities for giving the kind of feedback which enhances learning.

But now feedback and informal assessment in tutorials are disappearing. All that is left is the formal allocation of marks. It is stupid, destructive and misleading. In times of resource constraint we ought to be spending our precious time on something more intelligent and useful. ◊

Graham Gibbs is Director of the Oxford Centre for Staff Development and author of several works, including 53 Interesting Ways to Assess Your Students.

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

by *David Boud*

1. ASSESSMENT SHOULD HELP STUDENTS TO BECOME SELF-DETERMINING

One of the great common goals of higher education is that students should become autonomous learners who can take responsibility for their own learning. An educated adult graduate is expected to be able to solve problems, plan independently, carry out a programme, monitor work and judge whether it is good enough or not. But degree assessment is unilateral. Staff decide on the aims and objectives. Staff decide on the assessment tasks. Staff decide on the criteria for judgement and the final outcomes of the process. As John Heron has reminded us, "An educational process that is so determined by others cannot seriously intend to have as its outcome a person who is truly self-determining."

My view is that self-assessment is fundamental to all aspects of learning. Learning is an active endeavour and it is only the learner who can implement decisions about his or her own development; all other forms of assessment are therefore subordinate to it. This does not mean that learners should assess themselves independently of others, only that if other forms of assessment are used they must take account of the primacy of learners' decisions. Assessments by peers, staff, expert practitioners and so on are essential in assisting learners to form sound judgements. But the assumption that learners are unable to make sound judgements undermines their capacity to do so.

Self-assessment must be an integral part of the learning activities and not an appendage or afterthought. That self-assessment is necessary for learning is not in question; what is controversial is its use for grading purposes. Degree classification will always be directed by staff. Self-assessment in isolation is probably not a fruitful path to follow, but when moderated and used as an element of collaborative assessment its potential is great.

There is a point of discontinuity in academic study: in the sharp transition from taught undergraduate course to autonomous research student. A number of students who have been very successful in their undergraduate studies fail to make this transition, and Hudson showed in his work on the undergraduate record of Fellows of the Royal Society that it is not the high-flying undergraduates who are most successful in independent research. A self-determining researcher is not encouraged to flourish by an authoritarian, unilateral assessment system.

2. ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE LIKE REAL RESEARCH OR REAL WORK

An academic producing a scientific paper works on an idea, and after reading the work of others and perhaps experimenting, writes a first draft. This is shown to colleagues or research students, who might offer comments. Additional calculations or analysis may be

undertaken. The paper is further refined and then sent to colleagues in other institutions who are working in similar areas. After modifying the paper in the light of

> ## "... The assumption that learners are unable to make sound judgements undermines their capacity to do so"

the feedback from these colleagues, the scientist sends it to a journal editor, who farms it out to a number of referees. After further rewriting the paper is published.

This process of self-assessment and peer review - with cycles of feedback and reworking until a satisfactory piece of work is produced - is very different from the process by which we normally assess the work of students in undergraduate courses. But it is a very healthy indication of the way we might proceed. It is the kind of drafting process which is used on some courses in the writing of degree projects and of dissertations - seen by many as the most valuable part of an undergraduate education. And it is the drafting process the new National Curriculum is promoting in schools. Students in future will expect to be able to learn like real academics do.

Assessment tasks can be designed to reflect the real decision-making processes of professionals in any given domain of knowledge. Knowledge is situated. Recent research on cognition shows that it is inseparable from the context and culture in which it is used. Learning abstracted from situations in which it is used is limited, and does not get applied. Assessment tasks which are a product only of the culture of undergraduate teaching are a poor preparation for using knowledge in a real context.

The learning of discipline knowledge should be focused on problems rather than on the structure of the discipline. For example, in medical practice the solution of most problems occurs through the application of knowledge from many different sciences which have been considered discretely: Anatomy, Pharmacology, Physiology, Medical Technology. When the integration of knowledge is being assessed, and when an awareness on the part of the student about what he or she does and does not know is central, new forms of assessment are required. Progress should be on the basis of demonstrated competence, and reliability.

3. ASSESSMENT SHOULD FOCUS ON "DEEP LEARNING" PROCESSES

The picture painted by research is bleak: despite the good intentions of staff, the assessment policy of many departments undermines deep approaches to learning. Assessment tasks are set which emphasise a reproduction of lectures at the expense of critical thinking and independent activity. The most profoundly depressing research has demonstrated that successful performance in degree examinations does not even indicate that students have a good grasp of the very concepts which staff members believed the examinations to be testing.

Staff are tempted to assess tasks which can be easily marked and this leads to an over-emphasis on memory and lower-level skills. Reflective practices suffer. For example, log-books and journals record reflection. By their very nature these documents are personal and idiosyncratic. They exist as a forum for criticising and modifying one's own thinking. When they are actively used they are often untidy and record rejected cul-de-sacs as well as ideas which developed successfully. Students would not dare expose their thinking in this way in the climate that prevails in most departments now. But when they feel autonomous, when they engage in solving real problems as the professionals do, and when they are encouraged in deep critical thinking instead of the manipulation of formulae on the surface, they see the value of showing how their reflection developed through drafts and know that this represents important learning. ◊

Professor David Boud of the University of New South Wales is the author of Problem-based Learning in Education for the Professions *and* Implementing Student Self Assessment.

> In the next issue Graham Gibbs attacks the dreaded Student Essay as "the ignorant writing the unreadable for the uninterested," launching a debate on the place of academic writing, varieties of writing and the principles of good student writing...

> ### Innovative Assessment and Higher Education
> 7-9 January 1992
> University College of North Wales
> Contact: Brian Bourne, Tel 0248 351151
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Cutting Remark

Can I suggest that a further change to teaching and assessment methods to enable more students to be taught at little extra cost which the Committee of Vice chancellors and Principals might like to consider ... is to contract out the setting of examination papers to the makers of *Trivial Pursuit*.
Letter by Colin Mason to The Higher, November 8.

The page the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (sorry, *The Higher*) never gave you. Lecturers record their experiences of teaching and insights into the learning process. *The New Academic* welcomes articles for future issues

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

Brenda Wilson's university says, "Go forth and teach, without the help of anyone on earth."

Shortly after taking up my current post-doctoral research contract, I was asked to do a brief spell of teaching. It was a traumatic experience.

We train others, yet nothing but the most rudimentary training is available to us, it seems. It is astounding. My efforts to seek training and raise the issue informally with my colleagues were regarded as bizarre: what did I want to bother with it for? I was a contract research worker, but, even if I did move into a lectureship, it was professional suicide to be a devoted teacher. I felt perverse and isolated.

I was invited to display indifference to teaching. The university culture pressured me to see students as empty vessels to be filled, to ignore that they had unique personalities and aspirations. I had to internalise the contradiction of the high status of research and low value placed on teaching and suffer the role-conflict - a kind of moral schizophrenia - that resulted.

To resolve this conflict there are many cultural modes of self-preservation on offer. Most of these involve trivialising or demoting teaching in relation to research. If we construct ourselves as experts we inevitably construct students as non-experts. Learning can then become a needlessly sterile process of filling passive recipients with a syllabus-full of our knowledge, measured according to the pre-set gauges of the examinations.

Whole realms of ideas and the means of exploring them are closed off. This narrowness of scope excludes any sense of the exhilaration and sheer fun of discovery from the educational enterprise.

Whatever personal solution the lecturer chooses is not really the issue. These cultural conventions are the means of evading questions of personal and professional ethics, allowing the tensions to remain private - a personal problematic instead of a public issue of teaching.

Students who were pursuing their only chance of a degree were subjected to my unstructured experiments in teaching. I felt compelled to proceed in this chaotic fashion, in isolation, with no professional guidance. It was a disturbingly shaking experience for me, and based on a questionable sense of moral responsibility to the students.

The fact that we whistle in the dark rather than search for the light switch is assisted by a curious cultural taboo in higher education against applying our research skills and critical thinking in a self-reflexive way. I might still be whistling in the dark, but for the emergence of the Innovations in Learning Group.

These are seventeen members from a wide spectrum of disciplines. A powerful initial motivator in drawing the group together was our isolation as teachers. This was sometimes personal, sometimes a sense of being limited by the boundaries of disciplines. Maintaining (or declining to maintain) territories drains vital energies. Relationships with colleagues

> "I had to internalise the contradiction of the high status of research and low value placed on teaching and suffer the role-conflict - a kind of moral schizophrenia - that resulted."

can become poisoned, for some of us, by competitive discipline antagonisms. We started by making explicit the assumptions and values underpinning our teaching.

For all of us, I think, it has been an empowering experience to share our visions for teaching and learning. We no longer feel isolated. Through an enhanced sense of worth as teachers we have gained the confidence to let students adventure more freely in the subjects they study.

We have produced a short document to stimulate wider debate within the university . We are not sure what will result, but we hope that sharing our experience, as in this article, will encourage others not to suffer in silence and to 'come out' of the closet. ◊

Dr. Brenda Wilson is a researcher in the Department of Geography at a Northern University.

DANGEROUS ENTERPRISE?

by *Ann Tate*

The Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative was launched in 1987 by the Department of Employment. It was designed to "encourage the development of qualities of enterprise amongst those seeking higher education qualifications" (1) The broad aims of the initiative are that:

- every person seeking a higher education qualification should be able to develop competencies and aptitudes relevant to "enterprise"
- these competencies and aptitudes should be acquired at least in part through project based work designed to be undertaken in a real economic setting which should be jointly assessed by employers and the student's higher education institution. (2)

Whilst over 60 higher education institutions across the UK of varying size, structure and purpose have been awarded contracts by the TEED* to implement an Enterprise in Higher Education programme in their organisation, there remains much disquiet (and a certain amount of cynicism) amongst academic staff and students about the nature of the project and its compatibility with the academic ethos.

Whilst my own institution may not be entirely typical of the majority of HEIs in the current EHE Scheme, the initial responses of the staff in this University to EHE would seem to be representative of those I have encountered in discussions with other EHE Directors.

In general, academic staff concern stems from the word 'Enterprise', and, more especially from the ideological underpinnings which the concept has come to symbolise over the past 10 years. It is no coincidence that the EHE initiative was launched in the wake of the 1987 White Paper which emphasised the responsibility of higher education in relation to meeting the needs of the UK economy - particularly the need for a supply of specialist skills notably in science and technology. Moreover, in stressing the importance of relating the development of
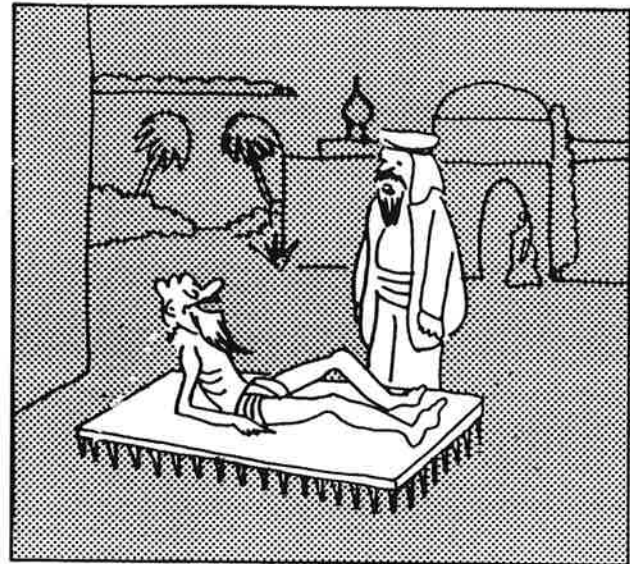
"I've just made this brilliant discovery . . ."

enterprise competencies in students to activities in the work place, the EHE initiative reinforced the need for a closer integration between higher education and employment in industry. In the eyes of some academics, such a closer integration can only serve to distort the traditional ethos and integrity of institutions of higher education. Whilst such fears about Enterprise in Higher Education may be deeply felt, I would wish to argue that they are misplaced, and that in fact EHE may be a liberalising force rather than a restrictive one within the institutions of higher education.

There is, it has to be admitted, a substantial overlap between "enterprise" and "business". In many areas of the UK, Enterprise zones and local enterprise centres have been developed in which enterprise is synonymous with business - particularly small business. Furthermore, in the general consciousness enterprising people are normally thought of as business entrepreneurs of the Richard Branson or Anita Roddick variety.
However, it has been clear from the initial rounds of the EHE contracts awarded, that a much broader meaning of enterprise was being adopted by the successful higher education institutions - a meaning

*The Training, Education and Enterprise Directorate of the Department of Employment

which equates enterprise with more broadly based competencies which underpin personal effectiveness in a wide variety of occupational, social and community settings. Such competencies - variously labelled personal and/or transferable skills - tended to emphasise such factors as the ability to communicate effectively through a variety of media; the ability to work in groups and teams; the ability to evaluate and assess one's own work; and the ability to continue to learn long after formal teaching has ended. Whilst each institution developed its own interpretation of what the appropriate repertoire of enterprise competencies might be in relation to the overall aims and ethos of the institution, the skills and abilities referred to above provide a common theme running throughout all such individual EHE schemes. This emphasis, (on personal and transferable skills), provides a useful vehicle for two seemingly contradictory developments i.e. the development of a more industry-responsive higher education system - and the development of a more student centred, liberal ethos within the higher education institutions themselves.

Meeting the needs of Industry

Whilst it is not possible to portray an accurate definition of the "needs" of industry in relation to graduate recruitment, we can discern some key ideas from recent comments by representative bodies in relation to the type of recruit likely to be most attractive to industry, and from the comments made by individual employers in their own recruitment literature. For example, the Council for Industry and Higher Education states "As employer's competition for good graduates has stiffened, and as salaries have risen, company recruiters have tried to pin down the qualities and abilities that make for success. A sample of such 'promising profiles'... sketches the aspiring manager in these terms:-

- academic achievement: demonstrated application and high standards of performance
- skills of analysis
- communication skills
- commitment
- practicality
- maturity
- decisiveness
- imagination and creativity
- capacity for hard work
- group skills. (3)

In a similar vein the CBI argues "the outcomes from all training and vocational education ... should include the following core elements:

values, and integrity; effective communication; applications of numeracy; applications of technology; understanding of work and the world; personal and interpersonal skills; problem-solving, and positive attitudes to change". (4)

Such general statements are echoed many times in individual companies' recruitment literature. For example, "we need a flexible, adaptable, self-motivated workforce, with a positive attitude towards lifelong learning" (5) and "What you need is a logical and enquiring mind, an interest in creating solutions to business problems; the ability to build effective working relationships and the ambition to succeed by delivering results" (6).

Even from this limited - yet representative - sample it is clear that the emphasis on personal and transferable skills which is at the heart of most EHE schemes in existence in the UK is precisely right for generating a "responsive" higher education system. How then does this square with the need to maintain academic integrity and a liberal ethos within the higher education institutions themselves?

Meeting the demands of academics

Whilst individual institutions of higher education have their own aims and objectives, they vary little on the general objectives of the CNAA which stress "the development of students' intellectual and imaginative powers; their understanding and judgement; their problem-solving skills; their ability to see relationships within what they have learned, and to perceive their field of study in a broader perspective" (7). In a more philosophical vein, it has been argued that "Any programme of studies worth the name of higher education must develop certain kinds of qualities in individuals which are worthwhile to the individuals themselves and to the community. Improved powers of insight, analysis, evaluation, communication, self-presentation and toleration ought to result from all higher education courses, simply by doing justice to their intrinsic educational aims" (8). Such laudable statements provide worthy objectives for any liberal academic institution to build its reputation upon. However, it has become highly questionable in recent years as to how far the methods generally employed to educate students within HE Institutions actually are able to meet these stated aims and objectives. In a highly critical discussion, Jenkins and Pepper (1987)

suggest that the aims of a liberal education are severely undermined by what they refer to as the "tyranny of content" ie an overemphasis on instilling into students the academic content of a particular discipline, leading to an overweening emphasis on lectures and staff-led seminars as the dominant method of teaching (9). They go on to argue that in order to realise the aims of a liberal education, higher education institutions need to develop methods of teaching and learning which are student, rather than teacher centred. A shift in emphasis of this nature involves a shift from importing knowledge (teacher-centred) to discovering it (student-centred). The changes in the nature of the curriculum and its delivery implied by Enterprise in Higher Education are precisely those which emphasis student centredness. The obvious centrality in EHE of group and teamwork methods, emphasising cooperation rather than competitive individualism, mentoring, creativity and innovation, together with attendant changes in the locus and form of assessment, militate fiercely against the dominance of the expert teacher over the student novice.

Enterprise in Higher Education can thus be used as a vehicle for liberalising higher education from the straitjacket into which much of it has been constrained in recent years, whilst at the same time doing much to prepare undergraduates to be effective performers in their chosen areas of employment. It is indeed an interesting paradox that the symbol of 1980's "Thatcherism" has sown the seeds of a force within higher education institutions that runs precisely against that tide.

References
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(9) Jenkins A & Pepper D. *Enhancing Employability and Educational Experience.* SCED Paper 27 1987.

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THE TRIBES OF ACADEME

An ethnographer's view of higher education

George Marsh meets Tony Becher

Tony Becher's research makes a devastating case against number-crunching managerialism in education. Managerialism, he told *The New Academic*, could do to the intellectual cultures what syphilis and prudery did to the Tahitians.

Professor Becher has interviewed 221 academics from a dozen disciplines, all of them in high prestige research departments in British and American Universities. He shows that subject disciplines are epistemologically different in ways which necessarily lead to great differences in measurable output: research physicists collaborate in teams and write frequent articles but very few books because research in Physics is cumulative and everyone knows where the frontier is; literary researchers work alone and write book-length studies because research in literature is free-standing and needs substantial contextualising. Physics departments recruit fewer students than literature departments, but attract far larger research grants.

Each discipline emerges from Tony Becher's study with a unique profile. But using the same "performance indicators" for them all is manifestly inappropriate - "even rougher and readier than using a three hour exam to measure a person's overall academic competence."

"A lot of experience goes to suggest that you should look at the activity itself and not at some surrogate indicator," says Tony Becher. "Because it is numerical, an indicator tends to be taken far more seriously than it deserves to be taken. Managers pluck measurable things out of the air and promote them into important features of reality. Most of the time they are just things that are handy to measure. Sometimes they reach absurdity - telephone costs as a proportion of the total budget, for example."

Research quality is properly judged by the process of peer review, he maintains, not by quantitative measurements. As for teaching, "There are groups of people very well qualified to assess teaching - students! Asking them seems to me infinitely preferable to analysing exam results or having a hidden camera."

The academic world is a "delicate ecology," vulnerable to interference from the number-crunchers and instrumentalists. "What disciplinary groups do is a product of their nature and their environment. Historians do what they do because that is an effective way of understanding History. Too forceful an imposition of the values of accountability and vocational relevance can only lead to intellectual subservience and thence to academic sterility".

One can see a curious modern phenomenon taking shape in the instrumentalist attacks on education of recent years: a hierarchy of imitation. In the name of copying efficient industrial practices, inappropriate forms of "accountability" are introduced to do violence to the system. The industrialists themselves don't do it; "it is more the politicians and civil servants who think they know what industrialists want." But the worst of all, for Tony Becher, are the internal imitators: "the co-opted senior academics who go into UFC or PCFC or a research council and then start acting like narrow-minded financial managers. For all you can see, they might never have been inside the set-up at all. These people really are the treasonable clerks, doing more damage than the politicians, who are not well informed enough to know what to do.

> "There are groups of people very well qualified to assess teaching - students! Asking them seems to me infinitely preferable to analysing exam results or having a hidden camera."

"Disciplines are like biological organisms, constantly changing and developing in relation to the competitive demands there are on the people pursuing them. Change is built into the nature of the system. One of the hunches I have is that academics are thought to be conservative because they have got more than enough change to contend

with in their disciplines and they don't want the rest of the framework mucked about with. They want some consistency within which to operate.

"One of the most curious paradoxes of academia is the apparent co-existence of radical chic with entrenched conservatism - not just in relation to management but towards intellectual upheavals in subject fields. Some people rush to follow the new fashion (like deconstruction) and others hold on like mad to their existing intellectual investments."

Another paradox is the co-existence of high standards of objectivity with "tribal" forms of behaviour. "There is a very definite tribalism in competition for resources. The suspicion and hostility is seen in an institutional setting. There are mutual antagonisms that come out in what people say about other disciplines. The stereotypes are pretty unpleasant, on the whole." In his book, *Academic Tribes and Territories*, Professor Becher quotes other academics' opinions on engineers, for example: "dull, conservative, conformist and mercenary; unintellectual, unacademic and not very clever; politically naive and uncultured - 'technocrats with no refinement.'" Academic lawyers are labelled by colleagues in other disciplines as, "arcane, alien, untrustworthy, immoral, narrow and arrogant," amongst other things.

"It is the academic equivalent of racism. The political hostility focuses on who is going to get the money. Or if one group recruit more students, there are anxious mutterings about lowering standards."

Tribal loyalty is reinforced by totems. Physicists have pictures of Einstein in their rooms, mathematicians have scribbled black-boards full of algebra and chemists have molecular models on their desks. Anthropologists put pictures of beautiful black people on their walls, with hanging carvings and weavings, whereas educationalists put up children's paintings and poems, and quotations of "good thoughts." Undergraduates are subtly inducted into the specific discourse that is acceptable in their subject, and "the whole business of getting a PhD is a recognisable rite of passage."

Each discipline grows a distinct culture. "I think you would know if you were blindfolded in an English department that it was different from the department of chemistry you had been in with your other blindfold on! It's the whole way the place ticks and the way that people interact with each other."

> ## "Academic tribalism is the academic equivalent of racism. The political hostility focuses on who is going to get the money."

But the phenomenon of jealousy and tribal snobbery between disciplines is part of one of the most pervasive features of academic life, the status hierarchy. "One of the striking features of academic life is that nearly everything is graded in more or less subtle ways. There is a constant process of implicit and explicit ranking of individuals. There is also a rough pecking order between specialisms." Within Biology, for example, Microbiology is seen as "harder" than Ecology. Within Economics and modern languages there are "hard" specialisms in such areas as Macroeconomics and Philology.

"To be able to argue categorically, to be able to give demonstrative proof and to make your judgements sharp gives you an edge. Hard knowledge is higher status than soft knowledge, and pure knowledge is higher status than applied."

Attempts to move a discipline up the status continuum towards a "harder" kind of knowledge give rise to amusing developments such as the scientisation of Geography in the move to the "New Geography" (following a similar process in the 1930s and 1940s scientisation of Psychology) and the jargonising and theorising of "soft" subjects like Literature and Sociology. "But you can't dress mutton up as lamb," so the subjects have reverted to their true epistemological colours.

Tony Becher sees the desire for prestige, in a finely graded status hierarchy, as the central motivating force of academia. "The main currency for the academic is not power, as it is for the politician, or wealth, as it is for the businessman, but reputation." He chose to study the high status end of the educational world, where researchers compete for refereed publication in journals and for grants, so perhaps he would get that impression. But was there also an element of self-portraiture? Generalisations about entities as large and various as "society" or "education" are apt to be projections. To define a great abstraction is to describe oneself.

"I was certainly conscious that there were people who obviously thought I was no good because my field was education. My perception of the status hierarchy in academia was the sharper for being at the bottom end of it. I would still want to maintain that the caste system is artificial."

Academia is essentially critical. "Higher education is suffused with questions of value." This judgemental world is double-edged. It can be unpleasant in personal terms. "People's self-respect and amour propre take knocks. It's a fairly tough kind of game." As we all know, not all academics can keep a sense of proportion. Some are so habitually judgemental that they are very difficult to work with, and probably (one suspects) intolerable as marriage partners!

The positive side is that, "The critical element keeps the whole thing from going into fantasy or mush." It is important in intellectual terms. "Everything that everybody says is liable to be criticised by somebody else. Unless you have that you probably do get a situation in which people are not careful enough about assessing the validity and quality of what's being said."

Excellence in teaching contributes almost nothing to one's reputation, according to the respondents in the research departments studied by Tony Becher. "I think teaching is going to have to have higher status in the future for the system to survive," he reflects. "The academic world will have to pay more attention to the teaching activity than some academics do at the moment." When you have got a less highly selective intake, he points out, you are not going to be able to pretend that everybody is a potential Cambridge undergraduate operating at a self-determining level, sniffing out the tacit understandings about acceptable discourse. The unwritten rules of each subject culture will have to be explicit and available.

The problem at the moment is that, "As we all know, you do not get Brownie points for teaching." Tony Becher sees signs of change in the moves towards "Quality Audits" and "Quality Assurance" schemes in the institutions, however. "At some stage, I would guess, PCFC and UFC would start giving extra cash to departments that were particularly good at teaching. People who at the moment give less time and thought than they ought to their teaching will be pushed into doing it because if you let the department down by running a rotten course, you are going to lose money.

"The effort going into teaching will have to be greater, but I hope this will not happen at the cost of divorcing teaching from research." Nor at the cost of assessing the quality of teaching by the number-crunching of the dreaded managerial performance indicators.

Tony Becher's vision of higher education, after a decade of ethnographic investigation of the cultures of academia, is of an ecology in which the excitement of working with knowledge and inspiring students is sustained by the growth of knowledge through research. The two are mutually interdependent. "You could have a much larger proportion of the population going into higher education without making the system any more stratified than it is at the moment, and perhaps less so. The logical thing would be not to differentiate between Polys and Universities, or between teaching and research Universities, rather than to differentiate more."

For Tony Becher, disciplines and their cultures are shaped by their epistemological imperatives. They grow organically from their own seeds and distinctive roots, each according to its species. If research is torn off from teaching in a mistaken drive for economy, or becomes limited to what is immediately useful to industry, and if teaching becomes accountable to narrow vocational demands from politicians and treacherous managers, then "the delicate mutual adjustment of interests" on which academic cultural systems depend will disintegrate. Perhaps our managerial masters should reflect on the fate of the Tahitians.◊

Tony Becher is Professor of Education at Sussex University and the author of Academic Tribes and Territories: intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines, *published by the Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University, 1989.*
George Marsh works at West Sussex College of Higher Education and is a part-time writer.

Each issue of The New Academic will review new developments in the teaching of a subject discipline at higher education level: "green" developments, multicultural and equal opportunities developments, the impact of computing, experiments in new teaching styles for large groups, small groups or different clients... This issue kicks off with contributions from well established writers in the field of geographical education. Future issues will review new developments in the teaching of the social sciences, engineering and literature. Offers to edit sections on other subjects will be welcomed.

THE GREENING OF GEOGRAPHY

John Bradbeer sets the trend for ecologically sensitive geography in the context of the historical development of University geography as a subject. Geography lost its way, but now?

Does geography now produce Greens not Blues? For many years it was a taunt that Oxbridge geographers were awarded blues not degrees. Behind this was a view that geography was neither a prestigious nor an intellectually demanding discipline. Geography's intellectual history does make this accusation of academic weakness at least understandable, if not excusable.

> **"The last twenty years have seen a renaissance in geography and a recognition of its importance in understanding environmental issues."**

Running like a thread through this intellectual history is a concern with the earth as the environment of humankind. Geography has not so much been recently greened, but rather has recovered much of its original sense of purpose. Those characteristics of geography, so long portrayed by its critics as weaknesses, have proved to be virtues. Geography has been green all along.

Geography emerged in its modern form during the mid nineteenth century. One of its principle tasks was to synthesise the growing body of information about the earth, its natural features and its peoples. At the outset geography espoused synthesis, not the analysis which was to be the methodology of the natural and social sciences. Geography's subject matter cut across the arts / science boundary. So geography was something of a misfit in the emerging university of the late nineteenth century and this is the origin of the discipline's inferiority complex. The great debate about environmental determinism at the turn of the century exacerbated the feeling.

Geographers studied both the natural environment and human societies and related the latter, at both the individual and the collective level, to the determining characteristics of the natural environment. At a practical level (similar environments did not produce similar races or cultures) and at a moral and philosophical level (especially the denial of effective human agency or free will) environmental determinism was rejected, in the end, and discredited.

Geography's response, and the orthodoxy for most of the first half of this century, was to emphasise synthesis via the region. In the region, people and environments interact in complex ways producing distinctive landscapes. Geography was to delimit and study regions, examining their unique interplay of people and environment. Through the region geography found its unity. Such a view of geography would be familiar to the many who studied it to O level until the mid 1960s.

During the period 1955-1970, Geography in higher education underwent a radical series of changes, often called the Quantitative Revolution.

In came the study of process rather than form. All environmental processes, whether manifest as rivers or as shopping trips, could be studied objectively using statistical methods to generate and test hypotheses. Geography's unity was now to be found in its "scientific method." Such changes rapidly became a new orthodoxy and were absorbed into O and A level syllabi. Geography may have found academic respectability in its borrowed scientific clothes, but the study of people-environment relations had been

marginalised at just the time when the environment became a public issue.

Not all geographers were convinced by the Quantitative Revolution and some soon recognised the serious limitations of a narrow scientific method when applied to the study of people and societies. The last twenty years have seen a renaissance in geography and a recognition of its importance in understanding environmental issues.

Geography's role in inter-relating the natural and the socio-cultural environments is now seen as a strength not a weakness. Geography does try to take a view which other disciplines neglect. Physical geography, while still concerned with specific environmental processes, also looks at interactions between them. Human geography has returned in part to the study of interactions between people, culture and economy which create places. Thus geography is in a unique position of being able to study the full range of society-environment inter-relationships. A lasting contribution of the Quantitative Revolution has been an awareness of data storage, access and processing. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have been developed and refined for these purposes and have proved their worth in preparing and supporting global environmental monitoring.

Geography has been a popular subject at school and in higher education. It has been in the school curriculum for a century and is now included in the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum for geography has given the environment and the study of society-environment interactions a special place. This reaffirms geography as a study of the earth as a whole, a complex of interrelated natural processes but also as the beautiful but fragile home of humankind. Geography is a bridge between C P Snow's two cultures. Its holistic vision is one more in keeping with the world's pressing needs. Geography has not so much gone green as recognised that green was its true colour all along. ◊

COMMUNICATING GEOGRAPHY

Peter Keene's students designed Trails and Clive Morphet's launched a magazine. Both lecturers emphasise writing for real purposes and real audiences, and both report remarkable changes in motivation...
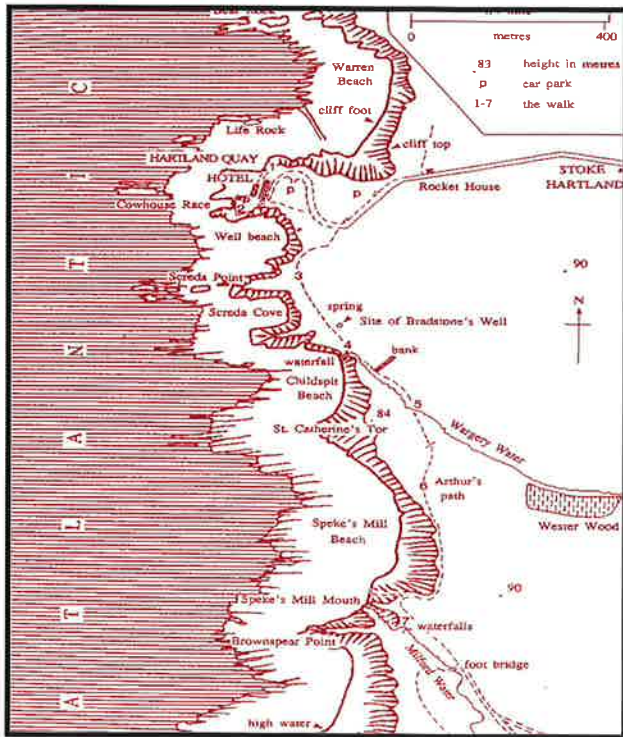
TRAILING CLOUDS OF GLORY

by Peter Keene

Field work used to be an excursion which the tutor led in Socratic style, coaxing students into the recognition of some fundamental environmental truth. The slow decline of this form of field teaching followed evidence that it does not provide the most effective learning milieu. Although the tutor could elaborate a sustained argument, students often received the instruction as descriptive. They did not experience at first hand the discovery of learning. A few pace-making students were fully involved. The majority simply acquiesced. The larger the group the greater the problem.

Small groups have become the order of day. They work at their own speed on problems, without the direct supervision of the tutor. The advantages of such "discovery" methods are that, with adequate preparation and follow-up, they provide a stimulating, rewarding educational experience.

In the absence of the tutor, however, weaker students often make elementary mistakes, spending time in fruitless endeavour, at a cost to their confidence and self-esteem. The student's perception of the problem throughout the exercise can be distorted by a mistake at the beginning of the day. We can provide a safety net in the form of notes to guide the student through the exercise. The notes do not interfere with the student's central decision-making role; they inform decisions. My recent research has been to develop structured supporting notes for a variety of audiences, including the interested non-specialist public. We have written "distance learning packages" for one-off visits, for non site-specific self-paced exercises (interpreting exposure of Pleistocene sediments, for example) and for longer exercises linking a series of specific sites which are called trails.

One role for trails is to focus on a theme. We take a sequence of sites which might otherwise have been viewed in isolation and introduce a coherent progression as the study unfolds: the evolution of architectural style over time; the relationship between vegetation and sand

dune or salt marsh evolution; or "Trailing clouds of glory" - the links between climatic change and landform behaviour.

Another role for trails is as an introduction to an area later to be studied in more depth. The aim is to achieve that sense of place which is a foundation for more precise site studies within an area.

We started out by writing support materials for students working in the field, but then we realised what a powerful teaching tool the whole process of constructing trails was. Students now design their own. There is a stimulating educational challenge in designing environmental interpretative literature suitable for a particular target audience. They write for the general public or next year's class. A great bonus here is the impressive jump in the quality of production of work - because students see it as being of value to an audience rather than gathering dust in some forgotten cupboard.

I have produced a "Student Trail Construction Kit" to guide students through the design of structured distance learning packages. The task starts, as all writing should, with identifying the target audience as precisely as possible and defining the audience's present state of knowledge. Then students have to ask themselves about how they focus on a theme and make the trail coherent and manageable.

Finally they are asked to assess whether their target audience will want entertainment and description or a more intellectually challenging interactive approach. With some advice on style, layout and presentation, that is the Trail Construction Kit.

Writing for a real purpose, for a known audience, motivates their own sense of enquiry and makes them strive for a publishable standard of written presentation of which they can feel proud. ◊

THE ACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO LECTURES

by Clive Morphet

Our BA course committee suspended formal classes for all three years of the degree. The plan was that students would research, write, edit, design, word-process and produce a geographical magazine aimed at A-level geographers in the schools of the region.

The Polytechnic "Enterprise" programme provided some funds for the computer software, paper and production costs. Staff prepared a framework which would give students starting points on projects which could be completed in the five-day period set aside in February 1990, and offered to act as consultants, but made it clear that the ultimate responsibility for research, writing, art-work and editing lay with the students. Students were invited to suggest their own articles, and a number did so. Separate groups were set up: an editorial group, a production group, an automated cartography group, a distribution group and groups for the research and writing projects.

The first two days were eerily quiet on campus, as the groups disappeared to do the research. Towards the end of the week the editorial rooms began to buzz in a most gratifying fashion. Processes of group interaction were vividly evident! Students who came in with handwritten copy were dispatched by their peers to enter it on to WORD - and went.

The costs of anarchy and the benefits of organisation became apparent to all. Students applied themselves carefully to the preparation of articles, many of them linked to the coursework they had been studying.

A group of students mastered MAPICS automated cartography software in a commendably short time. The powerful features of WORD 5 were exploited by the production group, who prepared copy for the laser printer. As the final article was laid out on the PC at around 6.30 pm on Friday 16th February a sizable group of students had assembled to mark its launch with an impromptu party.

Such was the spontaneous enthusiasm generated that any immediate attempt at an evaluation which suggested that the exercise could have been anything but a great success would have been invidious. Formal student feedback will be invited as part of normal course review at the year's end. But staff have learned lessons. They have learned with pleasure and surprise about the breadth of abilities of some of their students.

What is most pleasing is that the completed

magazine is alive with the vigour and abilities of our students. The range of articles stretches from cheerfully amusing pieces on the nightlife of Newcastle, and how to survive the first weeks of the first year when you arrive in town, a raw recruit, to impressively serious studies of water quality, forestry, heritage, quayside redevelopment, recycling and tourism in the North East.

The writing has caught the appropriate tone for the intended audience, in sixth forms, and copies went out to five hundred such institutions.

Reaching a real audience and receiving feedback is the payoff of the whole process for the students, completing the communication circle. We have realised how much more motivating it is to write for a real purpose than for a bored marker, and how much care students take with their style, grammar and the quality of presentation. ◊

TEACHING WITHOUT LECTURES

by Mick Healey

We threw out the traditional weekly lecture in our final year course on industrial geography last year. It was replaced with tutorial discussions of directed reading. The main reason for trying this was the belief that the students would find the course more interesting and enjoyable and would obtain a greater understanding of the course material.

The big problem with abandoning lectures is that students have to work harder: they have to do the reading instead of leaving it all to us. We designed the course to allow spare sessions for reading time, but nevertheless it made greater demands on them than other lecture courses do. Many students like this, but a small number complain of the load.

An important aim of the course was that students should take an active part in their learning and share what they learnt with each other. Many of the tutorial discussions took place in small groups of three or four students before the plenary group came together to review the topic.

To ensure that the key points of each topic were covered we ran many of the tutorials as discussions of essay plans, and we debriefed the contents of seminar presentations, commenting on their strengths and weaknesses.

Criteria were devised, in discussion with the groups, to describe an effective seminar. They were used as the basis for peer group assessment of each presentation. Following each seminar the two or three students responsible prepared a two page typed summary of the main issues, including relevant points from the discussion. These were copied and distributed to all group members, and also used for the tutor's assessments.

Not surprisingly, this kind of teaching did not suit everyone's tastes, though the general response was positive. Compared with other courses the students took, 55% said that their degree of interest in the course material was above average. 13% found it below average. 41% said their enjoyment was well above average or above average, whereas 19% put it below average. And 37% said they thought their degree of understanding of the course material was above average, with 15% holding the opposite view and rating it below average.

When asked in an open question what were the strongest points of the course, the encouragement to do background reading was mentioned 13 times, as was the emphasis on essay plans. The discussion was mentioned 11 times. On the other hand, the emphasis on student reading was rated a weak point 5 times, as was the lack of a concise set of lecture notes. When asked what improvements could be made to the course, 18 mentioned adding some lectures! This may, in part, reflect the belief of 83% of the students that they had to spend well above average or above average amounts of time to assimilate the course material.

The feedback has been very helpful and this year we are reintroducing a few lectures to reduce student loading, to provide a framework and to assist in the coverage of difficult topics. To preserve the strong points of the course, however, most of the module will still be taught through tutorials and seminars. The most heartening finding of the student evaluation was that all but one of the students would take the course again if they were rechoosing their final year modules. ◊

THE TECHNOLOGY REVIEW PAGE

Hardware, software, audio-visual aids, furniture...
The New Academic **will review the equipment you need for teaching.**

AND PCW SHALL SPEAK UNTO PC

Gunter Minnerup writes for those of you who have discovered that your PCW will not talk to the mainframe and won't even sniff an Apple.

Only a few years ago, most of us considered computers to be for men in white coats, moving gingerly between whirring tapes and flashing lights in air-conditioned rooms. Except for a dedicated minority tinkering with Sinclair ZXs or coming to grips with BBC Basic, personal computing was either unheard of, or rejected as something vaguely sinister and threatening. Now there is hardly a department without a suite of PCs, a networked cluster or even rows of dumb UNIX terminals, and even the last Luddites are thinking in terms of throwing away their Tippex and investing in a wordprocessor.

Computers may not have taken over the world, but the academic world has certainly taken to computing. A Mr. Alan Sugar, his company Amstrad, and their wordprocessors have been the chief beneficiaries of staffrooms succumbing to the call of the microchip. Lunchtime conversations are about Locoscript and internal memos appear in that distinctively squashed NLQ typescript all around us. However, once the letterhead templates have been designed and the tractor feed tamed, computing horizons inevitably broaden beyond personal correspondence and semi-automated exam papers.

Encouraged by your success with ramdisks and spellcheckers, you begin to take more than a passing interest in the fancy hardware found in the departmental computer room (funny how even the most severe budget cuts seem never to have affected the purchasing power of the systems manager...). You wonder if it could somehow be used in your own teaching and research, and if it would be possible to use some of the departmental software on your machine at home, or Locoscript on that UNIX network.

Then comes the bad news: your PCW turns out to be utterly incompatible with all the computers at

work. UNIX knows nothing of Locoscript. The PS/2 disk drives won't even take double-sided, double-density Amstrad disks, and the Apple Macintosh gives no sign of recognition either. It seems that the pioneers of staffroom computing, one step ahead of the Smith Corona crowd with their Personal Computer Wordprocessors, are punished for their enterprise. But if it is any consolation, much the same happened to the computer freaks of the first hour and their Acorn BBCs - very sturdy boxes still doing sterling service in primary schools, but totally incompatible with today's mainstream in academic computing.

If you are one of the thousands of lecturers caught in this dilemma, watch this space. It is dedicated to all those who either have already taken the first steps in personal computing, or are weighing up their options as they are about to do so. It is possible to make a PCW talk to an industry-standard PC, and software written for its archaic CP/M operating system can be put to productive use in higher education. On the other hand, there are better alternatives for those buying a new computer with compatibility and educational applications in mind, but a restricted budget. Over the next few issues, all these options will be reviewed in detail. ◊

Gunter Minnerup writes on Eastern European politics and lectures at the University of Birmingham.
He is the editor of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe. He also reviews for computer magazines.

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

Chris Rust reviews new technology for teaching.
Have you ever created a marvellous diagram on the board and thought, "I wish I could make a copy of that?" Are you involved in committees which could do with a set of notes for everyone to go away with? Do you run planning sessions where decisions are evolved through discussion and progressively recorded? Do you use brainstorming in your teaching? Do you try to collate group contributions on the board or an OHP?

There are times when plans evolve through discussion and could not have been prepared in advance. Members of the class or committee are all left with the problem of having to copy everything down from the board or OHP.

There is now a "copierboard" on the market which could help. Copierboards are electronic whiteboards with built-in copiers. Copies can be made instantly and continuously onto a roll of thermal paper. The boards come in various sizes and can be either fixed or mobile (on castors).

With most models you have the option of printing one or both sides of the screen, and the more expensive have additional facilities such as multiple screens, multiple copying, and the ability to print combinations of these screens onto the same page. Prices start at less than £1,000.

The major disadvantage is that even the mobile boards are, at best, restricted to use in rooms on one

corridor, because of their weight. An alternative is the portable image copier. This lightweight device acts like a camera, producing instant copies of anything on a black or white board. It includes a "scenery" selection which gives the additional facility of taking instant pictures of scenes or objects on FAX paper. ◊

Further information can be obtained from ECB (Electronic Copierboard) Ltd. 081-744-2121, or from Panasonic Business Systems, 0344-853528.

Chris Rust is Senior Lecturer at the Educational Methods Unit, Oxford Polytechnic

ACCREDITING LECTURERS

*by Carole Baume, Liz Beaty, Phyllis Creme, Chris Osborne,
Spencer Noakes, Jenni Wallace**

For many years staff developers like us have been arguing for more resources to be made available for the induction and development of new teaching staff. A recent paper by Chris Rust (SCED paper no 63) gives a gruesome account of how many new teachers feel — "thrown in at the deep end". How destructive this must be to their long term development and to the quality of the students' experience. Allowing new staff to sink or swim is the mark of uncaring institutions who do not take learning and development seriously for individuals or the organisation itself. Institutions of Higher Education should be least able to get away with such a view when these things are at the heart of their mission.

In January 1990 a group of staff developers met in London to discuss the issues surrounding Induction and Initial teacher training in Higher Education. The seminar was arranged by "Consortium/SCED" (the London and South East Region of the Standing Conference on Educational Development). The discussion demonstrated a wide variety of approaches to initial teacher training that existed from practically nothing to full blown certificate courses. We volunteered to be a working group taking a double brief:

1 To consider the needs of the beginning teacher in higher education and to express these as an initial training programme.
2 To design a method for the accreditation of programmes between institutions.

Our motivations for joining the group were various, ranging from wanting to make our certificated course (at Brighton) have wider currency than its Polytechnic validation confers, the wish to develop further current provision for new staff (at PNL), to the need for moral support while arguing for such provision. All of us wish to promote the emergence of professionalisation of teaching and we fancied the idea of working together to share our ideas.

We spent a great deal of time discussing what a teacher in HE should be able to do and found that we needed to distinguish between a basic survival kit for the first few weeks and an extended programme of development over the first year and to leave out aspects of development that were clearly for the more advanced and experienced teacher. We quickly rejected the idea of trying to design one course that would suit all institutional contexts and moved towards providing a template against which different provisions could be matched.

The outcome has now been reported back to the Consortium and SCED in the form of a set of Objectives and Values. Reflection on practice is seen as key to the development of competence as a teacher and is stated as both an objective and as a value underlying all other objectives. The aim is to develop the reflective practitioner. Rather than give a full description of the document which is still in consultation format an example will suffice to show its style.

Values include:

How students learn. All teaching, academic administration and pedagogic research should be informed by an active searching out of a better understanding of how students learn.

Objectives include:

- "The accredited teacher will have used a range of self, peer and student monitoring and evaluation techniques. This will involve:
- Monitoring their own teaching
- Evaluating their own teaching programmes
- Contributing to the evaluation of courses on which they teach."

The Accreditation scheme will ask institutions to demonstrate that their programme matches the scheme.

At the time of writing, the document has been endorsed by SCED nationally and is being circulated widely for consultation. The SCED executive team is currently designing the procedures for accreditation to take place and discussing these with CDP, PCFC, UCFC, HMI and other national bodies.

The final version of the scheme and its accreditation procedure will be published in a later edition of The New Academic and a fuller description of the work of the group will appear as a SCED paper early in 1992. If you would like to receive a copy of the draft consultation document please contact David Baume via the SCED administrator. ◊

**of Calibre Training, Brighton Polytechnic, Polytechnic of North London, Middlesex, City & Kingston Polytechnics respectively*

TEACHING MORE STUDENTS

The PCFC has launched a national project to develop methods for teaching more students. The project will involve delivering 100 training workshops to Polytechnics and Colleges during 1992.

The aim is to offer lecturers and course leaders support in facing the challenge of increased student numbers. The argument is that it will be difficult to maintain quality in learning if course design, teaching and assessment methods remain unchanged. To support change, the project will deliver 100 training workshops in Polytechnics and Colleges throughout England to 3,000 academic staff. The workshops will be delivered in each institution during 1992.

The workshops will be tailored to meet the needs of each institution, based on materials developed on the following topics:

1. Teaching more students: problems and strategic options
2. Lecturing to more students
3. Discussion with more students
4. Assessing more students
5. Independent learning with more students
6. Course design for teaching more students

The workshops will support lecturers by:

- identifying the nature of teaching and learning problems encountered with increasing student numbers
- offering a range of alternative strategies and methods, based on best practice, which can be used to address these problems
- illustrating and demonstrating these methods
- assisting lecturers to select the most appropriate methods for their contexts, and to plan their implementation
- providing resource material to support follow-up work

Six booklets and a video will be produced to support the workshops.

The project will be delivered by a team of experienced educational development consultants drawn from eight Polytechnics and Colleges and managed by the Oxford Centre for Staff Development under the direction of Graham Gibbs. ◊

A regular column of ideas for sharpening the practice of teaching in Higher Education. In this issue, we continue the theme of our Assessment feature.

ASK STUDENTS TO TELL YOU WHAT TO ASSESS

by Sue Habeshaw, Trevor Habeshaw and Graham Gibbs

Ask students what kind of feedback they want. They are more likely to receive the guidance they want, if they ask for it.

And in specifying it they are getting practice in self-assessment. They identify their strengths and weaknesses themselves, which is better for their self-respect. An additional benefit is that they are giving feedback to the teacher about her usual methods. A student may say: "Please try to give me constructive criticism and not just praise," or, "Please try to find a kinder way of telling me when I misunderstand things."

Ask them when they do a piece of assessed writing to add a note at the end specifying what kind of feedback they would like. They will probably need some encouragement the first time, and some examples of the kind of requests they might make.

Here are some examples of requests for feedback from students on an English literature course:

"Sue - could you give this the full treatment, pointing out spelling mistakes, grammatical errors etc. And Sue, just one thing - be kind."

"Dear Sue, Please ignore my spelling and typing errors as I think they are totally irrelevant to the arguments I am trying to put across..."

"Sue, could you let me know your opinion on my style, as well as the actual content. Don't worry about spelling unless its really awful!"

"The kind of feedback I would like is (a) to see whether you think it is disjointed, and (b) for you to show me how you go about doing this type of exercise."

These students clearly wanted different kinds of feedback. What suited one would have annoyed another.

Alternatively, to get the pooled ideas of the whole group on what feedback they value, set up a pyramid exercise. Pyramid exercises operate in four stages: first, students work on their own, then in pairs, then in fours, and finally as a whole group. You could say:

STAGE 1: I'd like you to spend five minutes looking through the comments on your marked essays from the course so far.

STAGE 2: Now, in pairs, give each other examples of good feedback and bad feedback. Take five minutes to talk about this.

STAGE 3: Now, in fours, draw up a list of guidelines for feedback which I can use as a checklist when I am marking your work. You have fifteen minutes for this.

STAGE 4: I'd like the scribe from each group to read out that group's list and I'll make a full list on the blackboard. We'll cut out duplicated items and discuss any which present problems. We are working towards a list which we can all agree to.

When we did this with a group of FE Teaching Certificate students at Bristol Polytechnic they came up with this checklist, which was very helpful for us in evaluating the quality of our written comments on the students' work:

- Where possible, give instantaneous feedback.
- Tie in the grade with the comment (i.e. not "Excellent: D").
- Balance positive with negative.
- Indicate how the student can improve.
- Follow up with oral feedback.
- Encourage students to evaluate themselves.
- Ask students what kind of feedback they want.
- Make the criteria clear when setting the work and relate the feedback to the criteria.
- Give affective feedback (e.g. "It's really frustrating reading your essay because it could have been good but..." or, "I enjoyed reading this...").
- Make further suggestions (e.g. for further reading or developing ideas).
- Distinguish between formative and summative assessments.
- Give periodic oral feedback on rough drafts. ◊

CUTTING REMARKS

Good teaching is becoming crucial, which is good news for students. We want far greater recognition of teaching quality in promotion; more resources for training lecturers in teach methods; and greater opportunities for academics to choose mixes of teaching and research at different stages of their careers.
Diana Warwick, Gen. Secretary, AUT in Education Guardian, 15 October

The Universities Funding Council presents a big obstacle to greater recognition of teaching quality. Government funding has been tied to excellence in research, not teaching, and so it is hardly surprising that universities promote good researchers above good teachers. They will begin to recognise good teaching as soon as they are rewarded for doing so; thus they must fight to ensure that funding for teaching supports rather than subverts any university's mission.
Diana Warwick, Gen. Secretary, AUT, ibid.

We must insist on a system of career advancement which recognises the value of teaching performance, assesses it fairly, and accords it equal status to research performance. And such a stance requires additional government support in areas like staff development and training.
Diana Warwick, Gen. Secretary, AUT, ibid.

At a time when appraisal systems are being established, enterprise training is being funded and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council has given quality of teaching such a high priority, institutions surely cannot fail so many new staff in this way.
Chris Rust in SCED Paper, Surviving the First Year

Support for new lecturers seems largely a matter of chance
Chris Rust in SCED Paper, Surviving the First Year

It is possible to manufacture a poor-quality Rolls-Royce or a high-quality Metro, or for a polytechnic that decided to become a university to offer high-quality undergraduate programmes, and for Oxbridge to offer poor quality to its different clientele.
Sir Frederick Crawford, Vice Chancellor of University of Aston, in Education Guardian, 15 October

You can have a fantastically good scheme academically, but the students have nowhere to live and nowhere to sit in the seminar.
David Triesman, NATFHE.

Many outside the walls of HE are amazed that, unlike school teachers, training of academic staff is not compulsory; they simply pass on what they have learned at the feet of similarly untrained staff.
James Meikle in Education Guardian, 15 October

Many school-leavers now have experienced group work and been assessed for articulation and communication; and they are used to being allowed to comment on their records, a rare privilege for students (in H.E.).
James Meikle in Education Guardian, 15 October

Most younger academics would probably welcome help with assessment and pedagogic skills, but the take-up of training courses is patchy.
James Meikle in Education Guardian, 15 October

The atmosphere in universities will change only when academics' teaching ability counts for as much as research prowess in the promotion stakes.
Pat Partington, Director of the Universities Staff Development and Training Unit, ibid.

We have to home in on heads of department and deans. They all want to manage finance, research teams and other people, but rarely will they say they want to manage teaching. No lecturer is going to invest in this activity if the culture of the department is not encouraging.
Pat Partington, Director of the Universities Staff Development and Training Unit, ibid.

It is surprising how disciplined professionals... tackle academic problems in a scatterbrained way that they would censure in their students.
Sir Frederick Crawford, Vice Chancellor of University of Aston, ibid.

... I do not wish to be a teacher. I am employed as a lecturer, and in my naivety I thought that my job was to "know" my field contribute to it by research and to lecture on my specialism. Students attend my lectures but the onus to learn is on them. It is not my job to teach them.
Dr V N Jackson, Newcastle University, in The Guardian, 29th October

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Problem-Based Learning
An experiential workshop run by
The Oxford Centre for Staff Development
on this new and radical approach in HE;
at Oriel College, Oxford 23-25 March 1992
Contact: Felix Lam, Tel 0865-819172
Fax 0865-819859

Appraisal -
Implications for Academic Staff
Development in H.E.
A SCED Conference in Derby
20-22 May 1992
Contact: Chris O'Hagan, Derbyshire College of HE, Derby DE3 1GB, Tel 0332 218121

THE STANDING CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SCED NEWS

The SCED Chair.

David Baume, in addition to chairing SCED, works half-time as Staff Development Manger for the Open Polytechnic and half-time with Calibre Training Ltd of St Albans, writing training materials, running courses and developing accreditation schemes.

David used to train engineers for work in the sub-sea end of oil and gas extraction and conduct research into diving communications. He has published many papers on underwater communications and on education, and written a radio play about North Sea divers.

The SCED Administrator.

Deep in the heart of Moseley, a "village" in South Birmingham that was once the home of Joseph Chamberlain but is now only famous for its rugby team, Jill Brookes runs her own business from home, offering administrative services to education.

Jill is employed part-time by SCED, so if she is not available please leave a message on the ansafone or send a fax. She will always get back to you as soon as possible. Her address: 69 Cotton Lane, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9SE Tel: 021-449 6313 Fax: 021-449 6314

SCED Membership.

By joining SCED you will be able to keep in touch with all the latest trends in educational development and to maintain contacts with like-minded colleagues nationwide. There are three categories of membership:

ASSOCIATE members receive notice of all SCED events and publications. They have no voting rights. Fee: £8 per annum.

INDIVIDUAL members receive in addition the choice of one free copy of any SCED paper and have one vote. Fee: £15 per annum.

CORPORATE members are allowed a 5% reduction in all SCED conference fees for up to five delegates from the institution and are entitled to five votes. Fee: £80 per annum.

Contact Jill Brookes, the administrator, to join.

SCED in print ...

SCED papers are highly regarded as readable and usable publications, full of ideas and materials which are immediately transferable to a variety of teaching contexts. Five or six new titles are added to the list every year. There are around 20 in print at the moment. The most popular is the *Induction Pack for New Lecturers*, which contains material on *Teaching Large Groups, Using AV Aids, Small Group Teaching and Assessment*. Other popular Papers include: *Reflections on Self and Peer Assessment; Putting Students First, Students at the Centre of Learning*, and *Surviving the First Year*.

....and now SCED Books!

An exciting new venture for SCED, is the production of SCED books. The first of these will be *500 Study Tips for Students*, by Phil Race, Polytechnic of North Wales. The book will be available later this year.

Conferences

SCED holds two major conferences a year, as well as supporting other affiliated events. These are aimed at anyone working in Higher Education interested in developing ways of improving teaching and learning, from the ordinary lecturer to senior management.

2001: Polyversity

This year at Exeter, the May 1991 conference was a full-scale simulation of what Higher Education may be like in the next decade. Entitled 2001: Polyversity, it was a trailblazing event, bringing together delegates from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of HE across the country.

There was extensive pre-conference briefing of delegates, which enabled them to role-play a version of the future with three very different institutions competing for the student vouchers to maintain their existence. The students, heroically played by real students from the drama department of Exeter University, soon learned the power they could wield. The experience was an eye opener for all present, who were able to explore the benefits and problems of a student-led agenda in Higher Education.

The event was much enhanced by being held in the beautiful environment of the Crossmead conference centre, and much negotiation and interaction took place on the lawns during one of the loveliest weeks of the Summer.

WE WANT TO SEE *YOUR* NEWS IN *THE NEW ACADEMIC*

If you or your organisation have done something newsworthy in the field of education or staff development let us know. If you have considered comments on Government plans, or some other event that has been in the news, we want to hear them. If you have produced any relevant publications or training material let us know. News items should be sent to: The New Academic Newsdesk, SCED, c/o Whiting & Birch, PO Box 872, London SE23 3HL. (Tel 081-699 0914/Fax: 081-699 3685)