the New Academic

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SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

The Magazine of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

TEAM ASSESSMENT

Mark Lejk, *see page 10*

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Information for Contributors

The Editor welcomes all material which might be of interest to teachers in higher education: the purpose of *The New Academic* is to promote good practice in teaching and better understanding of the processes involved in learning in all areas of higher education.

Audience is drawn from educators in all fields and disciplines. You should therefore not assume specialised knowledge, but write clear, straightforward accounts in plain English. When describing projects, please give concrete detail. Papers accepted for publication may be subject to editing.

All material should be submitted in three copies, typewritten on single side of A4, double-spaced. Submission of a paper to *The New Academic* implies that it has not been published elsewhere *and* that it is not currently being considered for publication by any other editor or publisher.

Everyone involved with *The New Academic* works on it only part of the time, and so delays in dealing with submissions are inevitable. All papers will be read by at least two people, and expert advice sought where appropriate. If you wish prompt acknowledgement, please enclose stamped addressed envelope. To speed production, the Editor would appreciate receiving finalised material on floppy disk (PC or Acorn) in Wordperfect or ASCII, where possible.

Articles

These should be between 800 and 2000 words. References should be kept to a minimum: where necessary, author's name should be given with date in brackets in text, for example Thatcher (1992). Reference list should be in alphabetical order, in standard academic style: e.g.

Thatcher, M. (1992). How I turned back the tide, *Journal of Marine Studies*, **14**, 123-45.

Thatcher, M. (1992). **Lessons for Canute.** Portsmouth: Celebrity Press.

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All material to be sent to Book Reviews Editor, who will give guidance: 200 to 400 words. For presentation, please see Books section.

Conference reports

Reports on all conferences of relevance to teachers in higher education are welcome: 200 to 500 words, with concrete detail of interesting papers given.

News

Events, decisions, discoveries, people: items of interest to teachers in higher education should be sent to the Editor. Notional deadlines: Summer, 15 March; Autumn, 15 September; Spring, 15 January.

Acronyms used in *The New Academic*

- APEL — Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
- BTEC — Business and Technical Education Council
- CAT — Credit Accumulation and Transfer
- HE — Higher Education
- HEFC — Higher Education Funding Council
- HEQC — Higher Education Quality Council
- HND — Higher National Diploma
- SRHE — Society for Research in Higher Education
- THES — Times Higher Education Supplement

The list will be added to as appropriate.

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You've Got Me ... But Who's Got You?

As Lois Lane fell from the top of a high tower block, Superman swept up from the telephone box below and caught her in mid-air. *"It's alright m'am, I've got you." "You've got me ..!"* she screamed, *"..but who's got you?"*

Ivan Moore muses on Quality Assessment.

AS AN EDUCATIONAL Developer, I have become involved in supporting subjects in my own university as they respond to the HEFC's initiatives in Quality Assessment. The process has come in for much criticism by many academic staff from across the United Kingdom, whose feelings range from mistrust to downright cynicism.

This criticism falls into three main areas:

- the philosophy and rationale of the initiative;
- the mechanism for assessment;
- the central administration of the process.

As to the first, a huge sum of public money is given to universities and it is incumbent upon us to account for how it is spent. It is absolutely fit and proper that we should be accountable.

As to the third, the central administration is trying to deal with a major initiative. It is inevitable that there is room for improvement and we must hope that this will be both rapid and apparent to us all.

This article is about the second criticism. As I work with staff on producing their submissions and preparation for assessment visits, I find many analogies between the quality assessment exercise and the way we assess our students.

Most of us will defend our student assessments strongly at boards of examiners meetings. Many times we witness debates over a student who has an average of 69%. Is she a first class or 2.1 student? And staff will "die in a ditch" over their marks. But how rigorous really are their assessment profiles of their students?

And are they any better than the Quality Assessment exercise which we all love to criticize?

Here I compare the HEFC approach to assessment with our own practices under a selection of headings.

So what are the characteristics of a good programme of assessment? It is important that we understand the purpose of the assessment. It is equally important that the **students** understand the purpose of the assessment.

Good assessment practice should ensure both **validity** and **reliability** of the assessment. It is important to ensure that the assessment is linked with the **teaching and learning objectives** and desired **student outcomes**. Students should be aware of **what** is being assessed, **why** it is being assessed and **how** it is being assessed. They should be aware of their progress throughout the course of their studies.

Validity

Most of us have anecdotal evidence of disagreements between tutors when assessing the same piece of work, or, even worse, of situations when the external examiner disagreed with the marks for a student or even a whole class of students. This raises the question, "Is the assessment reliable?" But even more fundamental than that is the question, "Is the assessment valid?" Can you really be sure that you are assessing what you think you are assessing?

What does an unseen exam really assess, for example? It can only reliably assess the students' ability to:

- recall information;
- work independently under pressure;
- study and work to tight timescales;
- be able to predict what questions are going to be asked in the examination.

What it does not reliably assess is:

- the students' understanding of a subject;
- their ability to
    - apply their knowledge
    - analyse problems
    - synthesise solutions
    - appraise the work of others
    - evaluate their own work.

So how would you feel if the HEFC had decided to assess the quality of our subject teaching through a three-hour unseen examination?

Clear criteria

Good assessment should begin by setting clear criteria for the assessment. Students should know what is being assessed and how to achieve a good assessment. How many of us set clear assessment criteria and make them available to the students before the assessment? And how many of us make it clear to students what is required to achieve a certain standard? How might we influence students' performance **and learning** if we made these criteria transparent to them?

If we look at the HEFC documentation, we can see how they have gone to considerable lengths to provide us with assessment criteria and to give us advice on how to set out our documentation. In their most recent circular they have even gone to the trouble of providing us with a template for our submission.

Reliability

How reliable are our assessment procedures? Can you really be sure that if someone else marked your students' assignments they would come up with even roughly the same marks as you? What kind of staff development activity do you have in your department for ensuring the reliability of your marks?

I have come across examples of what I consider to be good practice in this area from several sources:

- ***"Double blind" marking*** - The scripts, or at least a sample of them, are marked by two tutors without either of them knowing what the other tutor's mark was.
- ***Moderation*** - A sample of scripts is marked by several tutors who subsequently meet to discuss their marks and hence agree on a standard.
- ***Team marking*** - A group of tutors agree on a mark for each student assignment.

In all cases, of course, it is important to meet beforehand to discuss the criteria and marking schemes for the assignments. This "front loading" is an invaluable exercise both in providing staff development and in ensuring reliability in the marking.

Can we learn anything about reliability from the HEFC approach? Certainly they provide staff development for their assessors, they assess in teams and they have moderation procedures. But can we be confident that two teams of assessors would come up with the same assessment for a subject in a particular university? Or at least, can we be as confident as we are in our own ability to find agreement on our students?

Aims and Objectives

I have considered validity, reliability and setting clear criteria as important aspects of good assessment practice. These are predicated upon the assumption that our assessment matches the aims and objectives of the course. Validity simply determines whether we are assessing what we think we are assessing. Another example of how things might "go wrong" is when we set an essay. As well as subject knowledge, understanding, analysis, evaluation and literature search skills, we are assessing the students' written communication skills. Whereas this is important for all graduates, is it necessary to assess this skill in every assignment we set? And can we develop other assignment models which do not assess the same skills again and again?

But more fundamental than this is the question "are we assessing the teaching and learning objectives of the course?" Do we set communication skills, teamworking, problem solving etc. as core skills in our courses? And if not, then why do we assess them? Or if so, then why do we not assess them?

How does the HEFC come out on this one? What are their objectives? What are they trying to assess? And are they assessing what they think they are assessing? Are they assessing a **product** or a **process?** Do they know the difference in this context? What do you think?

Variety

A good assessment programme will use a variety of appropriate assessment methods. It is rare to find one assessment technique which will assess all the learning objectives, competencies and student outcomes, and an assessment programme should be developed in which each method will reinforce, supplement or complement the others. Each method will add another piece to the jigsaw until the picture is clear. It is important to ensure that your programme does not discriminate unfairly against certain students and that it affords every opportunity for the students to demonstrate their achievements.

How does the HEFC assessment achieve this? The programme involves a written submission and **possibly** an assessment visit. During the visit there will be discussions with the assessors, observation of the teaching being assessed, interviews, oral question and answer sessions and literature reviews. The assessors will want to involve as many subject and support staff as is necessary to make a valid assessment. They will look for evidence from tutors, students, employers and other stakeholders as necessary. The assessment will therefore become a group exercise, which is valid as the teaching should be a group activity.

"I've assessed it and marked it myself..."

Formative assessment

So far, this discussion has considered only **summative** assessment. A key role of assessment is to inform the students of their progress and to indicate how they might improve or where they might direct their future efforts. Assessment is, of course, also very useful in informing the tutor. It can help you to determine where you might direct your teaching efforts, where you might best direct your teaching resources and how you might change your practices. This **formative** aspect to assessment is a very powerful tool in improving both your teaching and the students' learning. Changing your assessment methods is the most certain method of changing both the way you teach your students and the way your students learn. It is crucial, therefore, to feed back the results of your assessment to the students as comprehensively and as quickly as possible **- and in a manner which will encourage them to take account of the feedback.**

In the HEFC exercise, then, is three months a reasonable time delay between assessment and feedback? Is the feedback useful? And is it in a form that will encourage teachers to pay any real attention to it?

Self and peer assessment

Perhaps the most attractive aspect of the quality assessment, and certainly one aspect of assessment that I and many other Education Developers are working hard to encourage, is the process of **self and peer assessment of performance.** It is essential, if we are to encourage students to develop their knowledge and skills, that we develop an effective means of ensuring that they become self critical and evaluative of their own performance.

It is extremely useful to design assessment mechanisms which allow the student to assess their own performance and that of other students. This assures both the development of the higher level cognitive skills such as critical evaluation and self analysis, and the culture of self diagnosis and group support. In many cases student feedback of peer performance is much more critical than tutor feedback, and much better received. This would be impossible, of course, without clear criteria, advice and marking schemes, but any good assessment programme will have these already.

The HEFC exercise is excellent in this capacity. The whole assessment is built around assessment by ourselves and our peers. Feedback comes both from ourselves and from other staff who are engaged in the same activities as ourselves. If those assessed are to attain excellence, then this feature of the quality assessment is to be encouraged.

The main weakness of the exercise is failure to identify how those less than excellent are to achieve excellence and how assessors are to use feedback to inform their strategies, funding and forward planning so that HE moves in the right direction.

If HEFC is Superman, the question we should ask is "You've got me ... *but who's got you?"* ❐

Ivan Moore is on secondment as Academic Staff Development Officer, University of Ulster.

Teaching Quality

Dick Glover spends part of his time helping staff in HE develop their teaching methods, particularly when setting up group-based learning projects. Here he describes his view of what a Teaching Quality Assessment should be like.

I BRUSHED SHOULDERS with HEFCE Teaching Quality Assessment exercise recently (at both Leeds University and Queen's University, Belfast). I was surprised how vague the whole process apparently is, and how outcomes seem to depend on the interpretations of the local assessing team. I find it difficult not to react to such situations, and thought I may be able to produce quite quickly an outline of what a really effective assessment process might look like. Here it is, with apologies to those readers who see the first three paragraphs as very obvious - believe me, many don't!

I think that teaching is the wrong entry point to an examination of the effectiveness of higher education in its educational role. The place I would prefer to begin is to look at the needs of the learners.

If a department first considers its learners needs, then it will consider the role of the teaching staff in that light. Almost implicitly, a genuine consideration of learner needs will create a cycle of course review, course redesign, and assessment of learning effectiveness from both departmental and student perspectives.

A necessary stage in this process is to establish "Learning Objectives", and to debate the skill and facility with which the teachers help learners to achieve these. This is a *virtuous cycle.*

My first benchmark in looking for signs of quality in teaching would be to look for evidence that such a virtuous cycle exists. It will certainly exist everywhere in part, although its existence may not be recognised formally.

From this I suggest elements (in no particular order) in the development of an assessment process.

* Can we identify the "Learning Objectives"? Are they specific and measurable? Are they explained specifically to students in such a way that they will understand their own roles and responsibilities as learners.

* Are there systems in place to evaluate students' level of success in achieving these learning objectives? Are the results of evaluation qualitative or quantitative? If quantitative, can they be compared with other similar teaching departments elsewhere? *This is a key issue in the development of Credit Transfer systems too.*

* Are student assessment systems (exams, etc.) appropriate when examined in the light of student learning objectives? Do they encourage students to meet the stated learning objectives? Are they appropriate in the light of learning methods? (For instance, if some of a course is learnt through group project work, is the method of assessment appropriate? A traditional exam may not be.)

* How are the needs of learners (in terms of preferred learning styles) met through a variety of teaching (learning) strategies? Does the department have a variety of different styles of learning on offer?

* How are the needs of learners met (in terms of their varying start points, prior knowledge and skill)?

* How does the department manage its course reviews? Do learners have a voice directly or indirectly in the review process?

* How does a department deal with "less successful" learning? Does it have systems in place to encourage thorough review of course design which is responsive to measured shortcomings or adverse learner feedback?

* In what way does a department encourage and enable its teaching staff to improve and develop skills in ways which enhance student learning?

In a simple scenario, this might mean providing access to courses to develop presentational skills, if required.

In a more sophisticated situation, this might mean providing opportunity for staff to develop "facilitation" skills. This is especially likely when a department recognises that its subject is not so much "taught" in a passive way, but learnt in a more active way by students. In such scenarios, the teacher role changes quite dramatically, becoming less one of "knowledge presenter", and more one of "adviser and counsellor".

* Has the department considered ways of encouraging students towards "self-help" systems of learning (like peer support groups)?

You will note that these are all fairly open questions, and that assessment based on these questions is certainly qualitative rather than quantitative, at least to begin with. So the initial stages are participative, with many levels of learning for both assessor and assessed.

How different this assessment process might look when compared to the prevailing style of assessment of students within higher education! There is no exam, but there may be a "list of achievements". There may be a stated objective, not of the assessment process, rather of the development process within a department.

This all sounds very consistent with some of the fundamental philosophies of education:

- that it is a lifelong process;
- that as individuals we never stop learning and developing;
- that we should have as much access as possible to new learning opportunities.

Universities are, after all, "places of learning". ❐

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Academic Perjury

Mike Hayes examines quality assessments with a jaundiced eye. He sees peer review as a "judge and jury" system inviting academic perjury.

IT COULD BE ARGUED that HE establishments came late to the quality circus. This late arrival should not be equated with a previous lack of quality. There is ample evidence that high quality higher education has always been the concern of the professionals. It is just that now, and for a variety of reasons, the quality issue has become more visible.

Quality issues in HE are not enslaved by a Constitution and there is no common Book of Education Law that all academia must abide by. It is largely by common assent of the professionals, aided and abetted by some accessories of Government, that procedures for quality assurance and control have been documented and consistent practices been fairly uniformly embedded. It is a remarkable achievement that with such a short history of custom and practice, and such a high degree of internalisation, our educational quality systems should appear so robust, for generally that is what they are.

This "internalisation" manifests itself as peer review, a concept that already has a literature and an advocacy. The purpose of peer review is variously to approve, validate or accredit some part of the business of an educational establishment or the institution itself. However, peer review is not infallible. Universities which validate HE courses at other institutions are advised to seek advice from external experts and avoid the trap of "cosy validation". At the risk of heresy, others have voiced the fear that HE institutions may be franchising all or some parts of its course work to Further Education establishments which may "not be up to it".

"Judicial events"

Depite the doctrine of partnership, I have always considered peer review a *"judge and jury"* system. Regardless of the role in which I have been cast I have always treated it either anxiously or willingly as a *judicial event*, but with a difference!

In these events, the peers have ably and comfortably assumed the role of Chief Prosecutor, Jury and Judge while the Course or Institutional team perform a collective Counsel for the Defence and comprise an army of Witnesses for the Defence. Innocence has been transported as honesty which is transported as competence, and it is for the Course Team/Institution to prove its competence.

In keeping with the quality ethic, the event can be adjudged successful provided there is demonstrable compliance with documented quality statements, even if the outcome was negative, relative to the aspiration of the institution. Such perceived commonality with a judiciary fits well with recent pleas by the HE Quality Council for a more judgemental than developmental relationship of the validated with the validator.

It also allows an *entrée* to the concept of *academic perjury*.

It is my experience that validation of new course and review of existing course events are multi-staged. Internal quality assurance practices at School, Faculty or Institute level are used as developmental and judgemental opportunities, "getting it right by design" prior to the judicial process involving six to eight "just persons good and true" selected for the panel.

Criteria for selection of the panel in the main are drawn up so that "like may judge like" and to ensure that known "hanging judges" do not appear. This is not entirely incestuous because great effort is made to balance academia with representation from industry or the professions. Random selection it is not. "Design" of the panel is likely to build into the process self-interest, which may become expressed as bias and ultimately thought of as prejudice; but such characteristics are matched by those of the Course Director and team, the defendants, whose principal motive must be self-interest (even self-preservation) and whose case is promoted and defended in an unashamed aura of bias and prejudice.

The judgement, as in law, must be made on the basis of the information or evidence provided. Sadly this is another uncertain area and norm referencing and criterion referencing are adroitly interplayed. How can the panel discount the fact that the host institution already has six thousand undergraduates on thirty degree programmes?

Similarly, how can the panel discount the fact the proposal under scrutiny is an Honours Degree in Molecular Biology and the institution has neither an electron microscope nor an ultra-centrifuge but every good intention, but no hope, of acquiring them. Chances are that there is on the panel a distinguished molecular biologist from a commercially successful new university. Chances are that it doesn't have an EM either and their ultra-centrifuge is broken and awaiting costly repair, competing for funds with the campus library. However, his course was validated five years ago in a true spirit of partnership in validation. Whatever decisions he makes, and his duty is to his fellow panel members, can not be beyond reproach. To give the go-ahead in the full knowledge of inadequate resources is a form of academic perjury, but to reject the proposal on these grounds would lay him open to the accusation of double standards.

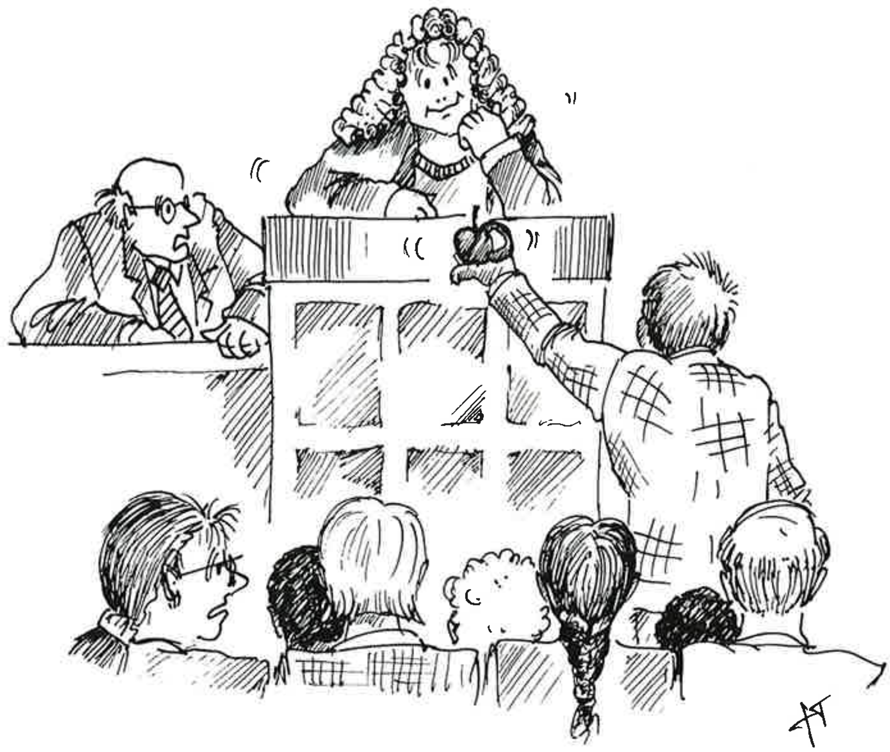
Neither is it straightforward for the defendants, who have all the inside knowledge - the postponed appointment of two further Senior Lecturers, priority of the leaking refectory roof over the overcrowded library, or the easily uncovered dilemma that Dr Bohr, present at validation to defend her module in Applied Chemistry, alone knows that if it is approved she cannot possibly tutor the module because she is already over-committed. If pressed, she will confirm that she is available to undertake such duties, but at the expense of a commitment made only last week to a different panel about a different course proposal! Academically robbing Peter to pay Paul is in the best interest of course approval but not of course delivery. Knowingly, secretly committing a less-able person to deputise is another form of academic perjury, the consequences of which may be two-edged; poorer service to the student and likely increased anxiety and stress in a deputy with a strong ethic of "fitness for purpose".

What criterion of impartiality?

All those attuned to "quality speak" will be familiar with the *fitness for purpose* adage and, as a distinguishing criterion of fitness for purpose, for jury or panel service, the ability to make impartial judgements must rank highly. As previously noted, validating bodies are urged to use external experts and to clarify thinking on how and when qualified impartial judgements are made. There is something paradoxical about this. That the externals are fit to judge and remain impartial may be both unquestioned and questioned.

At validation, the best an individual may do is to assess the "promise" being made by the Course Team that the proposal is "good enough" i.e. a minimalist achievement, to proceed to recruitment, delivery and assessment. Traditionally these are issues of transferred responsibility. There are guide-lines for this minimalist decision, viz the status and reputation of the institution, the "quality" of the course documentation and the dialectic rigour of the validation event. Confidence in the institutional quality assurance process will allow an easy transfer of responsibility for the future academic health of the course. It is improbable that any one individual has all the knowledge to make a proper judgement. It is assumed that the aggregate knowledge of the panel is sufficient.

Achieving panel competency is no mean feat and is considerably more cerebral an activity than is choosing jurors. *But* is the criterion of "impartiality" recorded? Can it even be measured? At this point the analogy of panel and jury falters a little. The law jury's decision is



based on retrospective events and they usually only condemn one or a few, but they too transfer responsibility for the future to a third party. The panel's decision is only partly based on retrospective events. It is based largely on assessment of a "promise" and the wrong decision may condemn many. But whether retrospective or prospective, the decision, when made by either juror or panel member, should be impartial. For validation and quenquennial parole procedures is there, can there be, a guarantee of absolute impartiality?

The vaunted externals are chosen for their expertise. This expertise may take the form of representing a professional body, properly anxious to maintain and preserve the standards of qualifying awards. Can they afford to make *impartial* judgements? At least they are product consumers, not competitors. The same may be said of any industrialists on the panel, but what do they contribute to the panel competency? They too are product consumers and not competitors and will hopefully judge the proposal as one matching employer needs. Is that impartial?

Finally, the external academics: they bring contemporary knowledge of the higher education process, specialist subject knowledge and knowledge of academic standards. But they are probably also competitors, being consumers of the same raw material. Is it a sign of immense strength or abject weakness, that in validation, as part of the quality assurance process, education and education institutions use possible competitors?

It is hard to imagine for example, a major car manufacturer inviting personnel from another major car manufacturer to vet the design and specification of a new prototype, or the electronics giants having independent external peer review as an integral function of their total quality management system, or editors of the dailies inviting other editors for a pre-publication perusal! The initial success of a motor car, a particular camcorder or the circulation figures of a newspaper are based on perceived quality.

Sustained success is based on real quality. There is a "dissemination of good practice" as the "pack" adopt or copy the innovations of the leader in order to stay competitive. To survive. The process is nothing if not developmental.

Embracing the market

For education establishments there is, or ought to be, choice. All institutions should be free to develop and take to market their own products without having the proposals vetted by an external influence. The purchaser will ultimately determine the success of the product. The rights of the purchaser should be adequately protected by independent authority.

There are various pitfalls to such freedom. It could lead to academic anarchy with a range of similarly named awards over a wide spectrum of academic standards. One can envisage a "Robin to Roller" panoply of courses linked to a "get what you paid for" cost basis. This raises the spectre of league tables of quality of degrees and perhaps the classification of different degrees as Firsts, Upper Seconds etc. on their perceived quality and place in the league table. The academic and employment worth of Third Class Honours of a third class degree from a third class institution is a matter for conjecture.

Alternatively, all education establishments should be required to engage in meaningful external independent peer review. This should be perceived and conducted in an ethos of development, the dissemination of good practice where altruism has a high profile.

Surely the time is past when a decision is simply "No" without providing necessary reasons why? In the interests of making the "good enough" better, is it not wise to say, "Yes, but please attend to this"? This developmental process may be "cosy", but it does not have to be sinister; it could just be maturation.

Finally, on the question of maturity, (not age, not longevity) the maturity of in-house quality systems that instil confidence internally. There is ample evidence that in many cases the validated have stronger and more distinctive quality assurance processes than the validators. The latter have a choice. They can ignore these processes or they can learn from them and benefit.

As E. Theodossin (THES, No. 1071, 1993) writes, "peer review where both sides can learn" and one may remain true to oneself. ❐

Dr Hayes is Head of Academic Unit, Cardiff Institute of Higher Education.

CATS at Work

Paul Oliver discusses the benefits and problems in promoting the accreditation of in-service courses.

ONE OF THE most interesting recent developments in HE has been the spread of CAT schemes. Long accepted as the norm in America, such schemes are now demonstrating in this country enormous advantages, especially for part-time and access students.

The principle of credit accumulation appears to have been easier to establish than that of transfer, but the general approach is revolutionising part-time study. Students can stop and re-start courses whenever they wish; they can develop their own individualised programmes, and they can "pay as they learn" - funding their studies as they learn incrementally.

Credit transfer will certainly become better established, notably through the possession of credit transcripts and also through the eventual centralisation of course tariffs. When credit equivalences or tariffs of courses are established on a widespread basis, it will become routine to gain credit for earlier certificated learning. All of these developments are rapidly becoming the norm rather than the exception.

The greatest potential for part-time students appears to be in the area of *accreditation*. This is the process of awarding credit for a particular increment of learning, and becomes especially significant if the learning is an in-service or in-company training programme. Many people undertake a wide variety of short training courses as part of their jobs, and although they have the benefit of updating skills, there is usually no long-term recognition for attendance at such courses. Few people retain a record of their professional updating, unless it is part of an appraisal scheme.

The advantage of accreditation is that short in-service courses can be given a credit-rating, provided that the learning corresponds to that which is accepted in HE. As an employee completes a succession of such courses, credits are accumulated towards a certificate, diploma or degree. The individual gains the immediate vocational advantage of attending the course, but also has the long-term satisfaction of working towards a higher qualification.

Academic level

Such a system can be called the **Accreditation of Continuous Professional Development,** and as universities implement such systems, enormous potential for part-time study will be created. Before looking at the advantages for access to HE, it may be useful to consider some of the educational issues which have to be clarified.

The first is the issue of establishing academic level. This process is not always straightforward within the academic system and is rendered more complex when accrediting a course from industry or commerce. The essential problem is to decide whether the learning outcomes of the course correspond to certificate, degree or higher degree levels in HE. The difficulty is compounded because the language of training courses is usually the language of a vocational, work-based context and therefore somewhat different in conceptual terms. Nevertheless a careful analysis of the outcomes of the training course, and comparison with those of the HE programme, should normally make a determination of level possible.

Credit rating

The second major issue in accreditation is that of determining the equivalence of training courses in terms of quantity of study. In CAT schemes, the amount of credit allocated to a module is a proportion of the amount of credit which corresponds to the work of a full-time student during one academic year.

Credit for a module is allocated when the student produces evidence that the learning outcomes have been achieved. This evidence may take the form of an academic assignment such as an essay or project report. In accrediting a training course, it may be difficult to relate the quantity of work achieved to that of a unit of credit in HE.

The training course may not usually involve the production of academic evidence, and it may be shorter than the work for an average module. However, it may require the demonstration of new skills. The key problem is to relate this kind of evidence to a typical piece of evidence in HE and to equate the evidence in terms of quantity of learning and therefore credit.

The fundamental problems are no different from those encountered when accrediting an increment of academic learning. In a training or vocational situation, where both the descriptive language and context are different, the difficulties may be greater, and mean that extensive explanation and discussion must take place between the vocational and educational sectors to ensure full understanding of the training course. It should then be possible to establish a credit rating.

Benefits to all

While it is not the purpose of this article to gloss over the difficulties of establishing a rational system of accreditation, it seems to me the benefits are of enormous value to both HE and employers. The university gains by building up a very wide network of clients who, whether enrolled or not, look to the university as the facilitating agency for their staff development. As an employee builds up credit towards a university award, there will come a point (usually at 50% of the total credit for a university award) at which the employee will become a part-time student of the university in order to complete the award. The university thus gains a wide range of committed part-time learners in a very wide range of subject disciplines.

A paradigm case is the accreditation of INSET courses for FE lecturers and school teachers. Both of these sectors of education are increasingly providing their own INSET courses rather than funding staff to attend external part-time degree or masters programmes. It is not only cheaper (in times of economic stringency) but also, it is argued, more relevant to the needs of the FE college or school. At the same time, teachers and lecturers often wish to enhance their academic qualifications.

Accreditation arrangements provide the solution by allowing teachers to accumulate credit for INSET courses which they would have attended in any case.

The general advantage for the university is that it establishes a wide network of contacts with employers, as well as a continuous flow of students who enrol in order to complete their the qualifications started through accredited courses. These networks of collaborating employers provide a fertile forum for the generation of joint research projects and teaching programmes. In short, the university establishes a very wide range of contacts, who in principle should all look to the university as the main source of academic inspiration and provision of higher level courses.

The advantages for the employer are numerous as well. There is first of all the kudos which derives from the association with the university. In-service courses become more attractive if they carry the imprimatur of a HE institution. The greatest significance though is for the individual employee, who is enabled to pursue a higher qualification, yet through the medium of a series of courses which he or she would have attended anyway. There is a fundamental issue of access here, for employees who may not normally be able to afford the time to pursue part-time study outside work. The implications of embarking on a three or four year part-time study programme may be completely daunting, yet if the first half of the qualification can be achieved through INSET, then it becomes a very different proposition. A final point upon which to reflect is that there are enormous advantages in terms of curriculum development and staff development within such programmes.

When trainers and academics work together, there is the opportunity to combine academic rigour with vocational relevance, and to produce educational programmes reflecting the best of both worlds. ❐

Dr Paul Oliver is Senior Lecturer, School of Education, The University of Huddersfield

Language Louts

As we expected, we are not alone in our concern that language is often abused by other writers!

Dr T.R. Griffiths of the School of Chemistry, University of Leeds, writes:

"An American author of a review described, in his introduction, his work as *'an insightful overview'*. Yuck!"

Richard Blundel of Harper Adams College, Newport, sent in a lovely long list of favourite hates:

* "*night time period*" and variants

* "*contextualisation*" in conjunction with "*modularisation*" and "*semesterisation*" (and "*bureaucratisation*")

*"*clientelism*" supposedly a political form like "*corporatism*"?

* "*deliverables*" in the context of a consultancy contract

* "*de-focus*" in business strategy jargon

* pairing "*epistemological*" and "*ontological*" for effect in abstruse sociological papers of little or no academic worth.

And finally, John Furnival of UCE, Birmingham, writes:

"Having been in the private sector 1969 to 1981, then FE, and HE since 1987, I notice that "buzz words" arrive a few years late in Education.

Examples from the mid 80s now appearing in HE include:

ballpark; backburner; performance review system; moving the goal posts; performance indicators; customer; line manager; senior management group mission; TQM."

Many thanks to all contributors.

Team Assessment, Win or Lose

Teamwork is an important part of the computing course at Sunderland University. ***Mark Lejk*** describes how he assesses students in his module "Structured Systems Analysis and Design", which has classes of around 250 students. His model could be applied to various disciplines.

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS and design is often undertaken in teams, especially for medium to large-scale projects and so teamwork is an aspect I wish to foster and assess in my module. We have a lot of experience of teamwork and team assessment within our School, but I have always been a little unhappy about the fairness of individual students' marks where these differ from the group mark. Several colleagues seem to share this unease and I suppose the general consensus is that the benefits of teamwork outweigh the problems with its assessment.

Methods we have tried to assess team-based assignments within our School include:

- each team member receives the same team mark;
- one team mark which is shared among the team members by the team members to reflect individual contributions;
- peer assessment of team members by other team members and the tutor allocates marks accordingly;
- splitting the assignment to include an element of individually assessed work as well as team-based work.

I have always preferred the first method as, in my subject, it is the team which wins or loses the contract and not the individual.

With 250 students, it is essential that any method adopted is clear and workable and involves minimal intervention from academic staff. I have developed a model for team assessment which I have tried out successfully in Semester 1 of this academic year. The assignment used counted for 25% of the assessment of the module, the remaining 75% being individual assessments and an examination. A number of the ideas involved were gleaned from staff development events which our University hosted throughout the last academic year. These events convinced me of the necessity of incorporating team-building activities as part of the work.

The model

For the sake of clarity, I have assumed a team size of 4 students and assignment duration of 4 weeks. These figures can vary according to the needs of the subject and the nature of the assessment. I would leave the method of team selection open as well. I suspect that random selection would find favour with most people but I have found self-selection and engineered selection appropriate under certain circumstances. Anyway, we shall assume teams of 4 students working over a 4-week period. The steps involved are as follows:

1 An assignment which is made up of a number of tasks (preferably divisible by 4), each of roughly the same difficulty.

2 A number of consecutive tutorial slots dedicated to the assignment (I used the first two weeks).

3 It is made clear to the students right from the start that there will be one team grade for this assignment - no individual marks.

4 The first tutorial involves team-building exercises, such as establishing ground rules for each team, establishing unclear areas and sorting these out with the module tutor, establishing team strengths and weaknesses (using, for example, the famous Belbin questionnaire). I supplied examples of these in the assignment itself.

5 The team may well decide to meet outside of class time and brief records of all the meetings must also be handed in.

6 By the start of the second tutorial, the team must have carried out the team building exercises and decided which individual is to do which task - you will see later that it doesn't really matter who does what.

7 By the end of week 3 of a four week assignment, all members of the team **must** have completed their task and distributed their solutions to the other members of the team.

8 The team then peer review each other's solutions and modify them through discussion so that they end up with a set of solutions they are all happy with. They must hand in the original solutions along with the final solutions and summarise the peer review process.

9 It must be emphasised that the tasks are not huge. They are the sorts of activities one might well give to students as an individual assignment. However, time must be allowed for the team building and management to take place effectively. The team aspect is as important as the final result.

10 Throughout, members of the team monitor their own performance.

Assessment

I structured the assessment into two parts:

Part 1 (Solutions to the tasks - 70%)
This contains the final products the team wishes to submit. The original individually attempted products must also be submitted with the name of the author clearly written on each. Only the final products are assessed.

Part 2 (Team-building, management and monitoring - 30%)
In this part the team must produce evidence to the assessor that the team-building, management and monitoring has been done and successfully so. The team can submit whatever evidence it wishes, but some suggestions are:

- individual results of the Belbin questionnaires and the outcomes of any resulting discussions;
- the ground rules which the team established for itself;
- details of discussions to clarify the assignment;
- project plans;
- individual work schedules;
- minutes of meetings undertaken;
- results of monitoring exercises;
- a resumé of the peer review process.

Team sanctions

Now and again, a member of a team is uncommitted, not only to the team but also perhaps to the course, and it happens that these students do not show up or do not participate fully in the assignment. To deal with such situations, I introduced the following procedures which were given to the students as part of the assignment:

"If it becomes apparent to members of the team that one or more of the team members is or are not pulling their weight for various reasons, they can approach the tutor and ask that this member is awarded a YELLOW CARD! If the tutor agrees, then the student is warned. It is possible for the team to ask the tutor to remove the yellow card later if there is sufficient improvement. If the team decides that the member does not deserve to have the yellow card removed, then a deduction of 20% will be made for this student from the final team mark.

"If there is no improvement in the behaviour of a yellow card holder, then the tutor can award a RED CARD. The student will then be excluded from the team and be awarded a mark of ZERO. The task(s) that were allocated to this student are then struck off the list and the rest of the team get on with the rest of the tasks."

I was a bit wary about introducing this mechanism as I felt that it might be rather negative, but when I explained it to the students there was a sense of relief that there was a mechanism at all. A number of the students had already had unpleasant experiences of team work and were immediately attracted to the simplicity of the method. As it happened, very few red and yellow cards were awarded.

Conclusion

The model worked well in my assignment. The work produced was of a higher quality than one would expect from individual assessments. Out of 62 teams, only four yellow or red cards were awarded. The tutor has to keep an eye on things - it is quite possible for a team member to be absent for genuine reasons and not be able to contact the team. The tutor must obviously make allowances for this.

The advantage of the model is that it does place emphasis on the team. It gives individuals a valid mechanism for improving the work of other individuals and to learn from their peers. It thus prevents the irritation caused by unwanted interference. ❐

Reference

Belbin, R. M. (1981). **Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail**. Heinemann.

Mark Lejk is with the School of Computing and Information Systems, University of Sunderland, Sunderland, SR2 7EE

Of Games and Gaming

Jon Curwin and ***John Furnival*** explain how to use business games as a learning tool.

WHAT IS A GAME? A simple definition is "to make decisions on the basis of available information, using a set of rules, where outcomes are subject to uncertainty". Gaming may be defined as a game that is a contest, a trial of strength or chance: a win-lose situation.

In attempting to understand business and other disciplines, the terms used in games and gaming become powerful concepts. We only need to reflect back on our own lives to recognise how pervasive playing games actually is. Games provide children with, perhaps, their most powerful learning experiences, bring the strong emotions of both tears and laughter. Learning by mistakes is seen as part of the game of life. In psychology, the concept of "the game" is used as a metaphor to explain behaviour (Berne, 1964).

In business we need to learn how to acknowledge success and accept failure. There are clearly opportunities to harness the energies of "the game" to enhance the learning experience. The typical game characteristics of a new or amended scenario - involvement, a new set of rules, the experience of winning or losing and strategies for doing better next time - all provide challenging ways to learn.

Even though business games can be difficult to arrange and deliver, they can provide personal development opportunities lacking in other activities. If students are to develop a full range of workplace skills without being in a workplace, then courses need to include scenarios that are complex, have uncertain outcomes and personally involve the participant. Indeed, students already in the workplace may need to extend their context-based competence to unfamiliar areas. In a recent survey, we found that engineers from a national organisation were able to demonstrate marketing competences after participating in the Marketing Game (Mason and Perrault, 1987) over three days and undertaking related exercises. This would not have been possible in their own workplace.

An example

Games can be very easy to use, efficient in terms of staff resources and yet achieve significant outcomes. Consider the situation where a group of managers need to weight the benefits of team effort against individual achievement. They could try the following game.

Deal a number of cards at random, say five, to each manager. The cards represent the time needed with Nurse Club, Dr. Diamond, Ms Heart and Mr. Spade. Suppose manager X gets

10♥ 2♣ 2♠ 4♠ 6♠

and manager Y gets

4♥ 7♦ 8♦ 4♣ 3♣

Translated in terms of the scenario,

Manager X needs:

10 minutes with Ms Heart
2 minutes with Nurse Club
12 minutes with Mr Spade
24 minutes in total

Manager Y needs

4 minutes with Ms Heart
15 minutes with Dr Diamond
7 minutes with Nurse Club
26 minutes total

Each Manager needs to see Ms Heart first and each manager would like to finish as quickly as possible. It is in the organisation's interest for the process to be completed quickly. But who should go first? If manager X were to go first, manager Y would have to wait 10 minutes and the process would take 36 minutes to complete. If manager Y were to go first, manager X would have to wait 4 minutes, and the process would take 28 minutes to complete. Letting manager Y go first, provides the best result for manager Y and the organisation, but is detrimental to the finish time for manager X and his or her resultant performance measurement.

We have found that this type of simple game works for different scenarios, different participants and in different settings. Having played the game, participants are only too willing to talk about the understandings they had to reach, the need for compromise and the fact that problems are complex and may not have perfect solutions. The cards can just as easily represent machines or other facilities and the participants could come from any decision making group.

Do games work?

Games are generally reported as being successful with little explanation of why and little discussion of the problems. But then the same goes for lectures and case studies. Surely some games go wrong!

Games, whether simple like the card game described above or more complex, like computer-based games, will have a novelty value if relatively new to the participants. We have found through a variety of feedback mechanisms (questionnaires, course committees, nominal group feedback techniques) that business games do motivate, do provide a basis for reflection and can be used very effectively for assessment. A game may begin with the same case, but each participant finishes with a unique set of experiences and data.

One of the problems with games is that gaming takes over. Participants can easily focus on results such as market share, profitability and winning. This preoccupation with immediate outcomes and outdoing opponents can restrict the examination of concepts behind the game and the capture of more meaningful learning. Games provide a means to examine learning and can help develop a learning to learn approach amongst the game participants.

Learning styles

Gaming can be integrated with other practical activities. On the Business Studies degree at the University of Central England, games are seen as an integrated part of the course through self-development units called "business workshop" units. To enhance the business skills at stage two of the degree, the workshop includes a methodology to evaluate learning and a business game to provide an immediate and intense learning opportunity to consider the impact of personal learning style.

Students begin by examining and comparing learning styles using an accepted learning styles questionnaire [1]. A fairly conventional competitive business game [2] is then used as a basis for group working. Groups will typically make decisions on price, advertising and other factors. Finally the set of activities is assessed on the basis of a presentation and a report.

The approach can be justified in terms of the Kolb experiential learning model (Kolb et al, 1974): students are encouraged to use the experiences of the different "years" of the business game to experience, reflect, conceptualise and prepare for the next experience. To ensure that both task and process are considered, the report describes the progress of the business whereas the presentation is concerned with the workings of the group. The emphasis on both task and process is intended to encourage reflection and capture the learning experience, which in fact takes the student back to the review of personal learning. Whether concerned with a relatively small card-based game or major computer-based business simulation, fundamental learning principles such as motivation, learning from doing, the opportunity to generate data for testing different approaches and concepts, rapid feedback and the necessity to capture and report back on learning still apply.

Context important

In our view, the learning context is important, so that briefing material and setting must be carefully considered and the requirement for participants to reflect on their experience an integrated part.

Providing this course context for games, and indeed gaming, takes the participant away from the "harvest the future" approach and the resultant "win the game" strategies.

Assessment is seen as formative, with requirements to report business performance, group process and individual learning. In the more advanced simulations, where groups take over different types of company and the rules (the market) are not necessarily fair, the participants are expected to set their own objectives and measure of success.

Analysis of questionnaires and other feedback indicate the usual benefits, such as building skills in financial analysis, developing business strategies, long term planning and appreciation of the interrelationships between business functions.

In addition to knowledge and judgement, the managers of the future may need to become more effective in their use of simulation methods as the risk and cost of poor quality decisions become more evident. Once participants can take a step beyond the game and see the simulation model in terms of its variables and parameters, they are in a position to question existing solutions more ably and discover the more creative solutions that can provide the answers of tomorrow. ❐

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Jon Curwin and John Furnival lecture at the University of Central England Business School in Birmingham.

BOOK REVIEWS

Editor: P. T. Knight

Games Teachers Play

The Simulation and Gaming Yearbook

Edited by Fred Percival, Sheila Lodge and Danny Saunders

Kogan Page 1993.

THIS MUST BE the only book for which I read the Foreword twice before dipping into the 47 chapters!

Morry Van Ments outlines how S and G relate to the need for personal transferable skills training, with the chapters in the book representing a broad sample of the thoughts and actions of those in the field. The feeling gained in sampling what is on offer is a tour around mental and physical worlds, with small details and grand views heavily intermingled. The exploration is well worth while, but for most of us, perhaps, we need a more substantial guide. How do the S and G experiments relate to the rapidly expanding developments in NVQs, competencies, capabilities and *Enterprise?*

With the prospect of another Yearbook for 1994, I hope that the insight provided by Morry Van Ments can be expanded to provide a tour guide through the experiments in Simulation and Gaming. Ideally, all course planning and review should establish justification for the teaching approaches used, and the reports in this Yearbook raise some fundamental and challenging questions for which we have yet to establish coherent models and a shared language.

The 1993 Yearbook is heavily biased towards "Business Games and Simulation" of one kind or another. The next yearbook might take a cue from sophisticated computer games which encourage children and adults to explore and learn in their own ways. Some, like "Monkey Island", offer novel pathways to solution funding, with a policy of no fatal errors and much incidental humour. There is much we can learn from such alien adventures in education, if we are open enough "outsiders".

Nevertheless, this book is much recommended. ❐

Graham Rawlinson,
Enterprise Team, University of Surrey

Help for the Human Tutor

A Handbook for Personal Tutors.

Sue Wheeler & Jan Birtle

SRHE and Open University Press 1993

IT WAS A SURPRISE to find that I liked this book because I have always felt inadequate as a personal tutor. So at first it sat on my desk as a silent rebuke to what I do not do well enough. What made it a useful book for me was that Wheeler and Birtle present this difficult job in a practical way which turns it into something manageable and worthwhile.

They recognise how complex this can be, requiring a tutor to be advisor, referee, in loco parentis, counsellor, advocate, careers advisor, teacher and disciplinarian. But they also argue for the pleasures of involvement with an institution beyond just teaching, and do lay down boundaries. Some staff might be relieved to have the role of personal tutor defined so clearly.

The authors write about counselling authoritatively, as one would expect from counsellors and lecturers of their experience. However, they do make counselling accessible to the non- practitioner without over-simplification or reduction to a series of listening techniques. They suggest simple rules for group meetings; and they offer easy examples of open-ended questioning within the context of academic life cycle. Tucked behind their practical advice is a definition of personal tutoring as a system which provides "an anchor" to student support services. This assumes a view of universities as communities, concerned with education as personal development rather than merely processing large numbers of students.

The joy of this book for me was that, fleetingly, it made it seem possible for humans to be personal tutors, rather than calling for "SuperDon". But making a personal tutor system work is not just about improving the knowledge-base of tutors or improving their understanding of how the role fits into an existing system. It is also about the value institutions place on staff-student relationships and students' personal development. In this sense the book is subversive, because it encourages people to take the personal tutor role seriously and to treat it as worthwhile. ❐

Moira Peelo
Study Counsellor, Student Counselling Service & Honorary Research Associate,
Applied Social Science,
University of Lancaster.

Practical Help

Producing Teaching Materials (2nd edition)

Henry Ellington and Phil Race

Kogan Page 1993, pb £12.95

HENRY ELLINGTON AND Phil Race acknowledge that much has changed in the last eight years and their revisions certainly brings *Producing Teaching Materials* up to date.

The coverage is ambitious. A fairly detailed discussion of instructional material in chapter one precedes a more general overview of all the main teaching materials - printed and duplicated, projected and non-projected, audio and video with an introduction to computer mediated instructional materials. The discussions range from spirit duplicators to laser printers; flannel boards to electronic flipcharts; OHP transparencies to slides; audio tape to video tape; and it gives two interesting case studies on computer-mediated materials.

The structure of the book is simple and works well; it considers when to use, how to use and how to produce teaching materials for mass audiences, individual students and groups. I suspect that even experienced teachers and trainers will find much in it. Less experienced colleagues will get most out of the book. Ellington and Race produce sound advice supported by numerous examples, illustrations, check-lists and practical tips. What is more, it is good to see readers being alerted to the copyright implications of the materials they may draw upon.

In a book attempting to cover so much ground the authors occasionally get the balance wrong. Perhaps the few pages on converting sound waves to magnetic impulses on audio tape and on how television signals are recorded could have been reduced to a reference. However, the overall value of the book far out weighs this minor point. ❐

Fred Lockwood
The Open University

Staying Open

Open Universities: A British Tradition?

Robert Bell and Malcolm Tight.

SRHE and Open University Press. 1993

THIS BOOK PROPOSES that measures to encourage widespread access to and participation in higher education have represented an important "British Tradition" over the past two centuries. The authors point especially to the University of London, the Royal University of Ireland, and the St Andrews Licentiate to illustrate and develop their thesis. They argue that the twentieth century has witnessed an overall decline in "open-ness" and the reversion of universities into "more exclusive and demanding organisations" (p. 144). They call, therefore, for the doors to be re-opened, based on "a fuller understanding of the line of well-tried open university traditions" (p. 158).

This is a provocative thesis with important implications for policy at a time of upheaval and change in higher education. It is based on detailed research on several institutions, and indeed the chapters on London, Dublin and St Andrew's are very interesting in their own right. Even so, there is a potential pitfall in such arguments, which this book does not entirely avoid, namely that nineteenth century aspirations tend to be idealised while more recent initiatives such as the Robbins Report and the Open University are downplayed. ❐

Gary McCulloch,
Lancaster University

For Old Hands and New

The Open Learning Handbook,

Phil Race

Kogan Page, £16.95

ARE YOU INTERESTED in how learners learn? In the role of questioning in teaching? In setting and marking assignments that promote learning? In helping learners learn more effectively? If so, then you may well find this book of value, even if you don't think of yourself as a provider of "open learning". It is written by a university teacher whose wide-ranging insights could help any teacher evaluate and perhaps improve their present practices.

But perhaps you are already involved in open, distance or flexible learning - eg. tutoring learners who are working from self-study packages. Or you may be looking for ways of building such approaches into your "traditional" courses. In these contexts, the book should be invaluable. Even as an "old hand", I find its stimulating and lively approach helps me gain a new purchase on so many basic questions: What is open learning? Why use it? What can it do best? How might we integrate it with existing approaches? How can we develop effective teaching and assessment materials? What is involved in tutoring or mentoring open learners?

Professor Race's book reflects the style and responsiveness of the many workshops he has run for teachers in higher education. As a result, it is user-friendly, intensely practical and full of sensible and realistic ideas one can begin applying straightaway. Over the next few years, we'll most of us be required to spend much more time demonstrating and improving the quality of our teaching and of our learners' learning. This handbook could be a useful companion in those tasks. ❐

Derek Rowntree
Institute of Educational Technology, Open University

Open Action

Preparing Materials for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning - an Action Guide for Teachers and Trainers

Derek Rowntree

Kogan Page, 1994 £12.95

AN ALTOGETHER excellent book. It's not like a textbook at all - almost every page looks different, with examples of open learning materials, checklists, action guides and above all, tasks.

The book assumes that you're going to write open learning materials, and takes you through the process in three stages: planning your materials, preparing for writing, and writing and re-writing. Each of these stages is broken down into a series of tasks, including "profile your learners", "consider existing materials", "sequence your ideas", "think graphics", and "write assessment material".

The scope and range of Professor Rowntree's long experience with the Open University is evident on every page, yet the book is not at all academic, but is punchy, friendly, challenging and direct - and there's even a photograph of the author, making the frequent "I" talking to "you" much more "real". Other books by Derek Rowntree go into "why use open learning?" and "what exactly is open learning?"; the present book simply gets on with helping people put together materials. I can think of no better starting place for anyone new to the field, and experienced open learning writers will find it every bit as valuable. ❐

Phil Race,
Educational Development, the University of Glamorgan

For Women Only?

Women's Education

Maggie Coats

Open University Press

MAGGIE COATS attempts in this book to do three different things. First, she outlines some of the current debates about the education of adult women in the post compulsory sector. Second, she outlines what good provision of women-only education might look like, including some original case studies taken from a research project on which she worked. Finally, she provides some pointers for the development of women only education.

Coats is an experienced teacher of women and her practical skills are evident in the book. The arguments in favour of women-only provision are powerfully expressed, though they do not draw as much on the debate about single sex schooling as they could have done, and the over-use of data about women in tabular form is at times rather distracting. The sections on the case studies are illuminating and very thoughtful, dealing with key issues like group dynamics, social class differences in student intake, "ownership of courses", the education / training boundary, assessment and progression. The ideas for developing courses for women are clearly set out and very helpful.

However, I am not at all certain for whom the book is intended. Those who already have experience of teaching adult women might learn something from the text but probably not a great deal. Those who have never run such courses are less likely to be starting now, given the present economic climate of education, may be put off by having to wade through theoretical debates which aren't either very contemporary or used very much in the remainder of the book, and may not find the women-only line very palatable.

The book is worth reading for its practical ideas however, some of which apply whether women-only provision is going to be used or whether women are to be taught in mixed settings. ❐

Rosemary Deem
Lancaster University

Helpful Strategies

Promoting Active Learning: Strategies for the College Classroom

Chet Meyers and Thomas B. Jones

Jossey Bass. 1993 £18.95

THIS BOOK is divided into three sections: the first explains and makes the case for active learning, the second covers four strategies and techniques, and the third deals with resources.

It is an easy read and eminently practical, with a range of advice from the basic - how to use an overhead projector, for example - to the quite complex, such as how to run games and simulations.

Although American in origin, that does not detract from its relevance to a British audience (although the section on teaching space, which suggests experimenting with different designs and layouts of tables and chairs, might cause a wry smile), and I would certainly recommend it to all staff relatively new to teaching in HE.

There are also parts of the book which should be of interest and possible use to even experienced staff, like the explanation of how to establish peer writing groups for individual student projects.

The book is also very thoroughly and widely referenced, resulting in a large and useful bibliography.

One minor criticism I have is that throughout the book there appear little boxes containing "teaching tips". I can see how this might have appeared a good idea, but the result is ideas that are in the main very basic, which are unlikely to be new to any experienced teacher, and which are described in such brevity that they are unlikely to either convince the sceptic of give sufficient detail for the novice. A useful book nevertheless. ❐

Chris Rust
Oxford Brookes University

COMMENT

Intemperate review

I FEEL CERTAIN that my voice will not be alone in protesting at the intemperate tone of the review by Graham Rawlinson of the 3rd Edition of the Handbook of Educational Technology, by Ellington, Percival and Race in the last edition of ***The New Academic***.

I think the criticisms in terms of the datedness of the material are unjustified and the specific comments on the photographs and the glossary are carping and nitpicking. The book is fully updated, the photographs and diagrams are recent, and both novices and old hands with educational technology can find much to benefit from the handbook.

The authors, individually and collectively, are highly regarded members of the educational development community and both they and their useful book deserve better of their reviewers than this! ❐

Sally Brown,
University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Should we burn our books?

IT HAPPENS to every industry. New ideas replace older ones and new production methods and production lines are installed to deliver the latest products. It is a matter of life and death, as any economist will tell you.

Scientific journals seem to be following the same principle. As new areas of science expand, the need to communicate the exciting new results finds expression in articles written in new and established journals, which fellow scientists subscribe to. It is the life-line of every science and time-honoured tradition, that "reading the journals" occupies many hours of a scientist's working week.

All University libraries boast a selection of journals, which are normally displayed for some time so that readers can read and consult them. At the end of the year all the copies are bound together in volumes, which then begin life as reference material for future generations of students and academics. Literature search for projects, new product registration, lecture notes, essay writing, etc., are activities which rely heavily on these "lines" of volumes.

Both undergraduate and postgraduate students are encouraged to consult journals as they represent the latest in current thinking. No thesis is acceptable without a "References" section, where work related to that described in the thesis, is acknowledged.

But walking through the journals section of many libraries, one is immediately aware of a new phenomenon. "Abandoned lines" of volumes of this or that journal stand on shelves, like redundant production lines of automobiles or washing machines. They are a sad reminder of how things can change from year to year.

Most cancellations happen because of financial constraints. It has now become an annual ritual to look through a list of the journals in the library and put a red line through the ones to be cancelled.

Consolation is offered in the knowledge that "up the road" there is another institution which might still subscribe to the journal one is interested in. Sure enough, the spectacle of academics on their push-bikes heading towards another centre of information, is common. Individual articles from discontinued journals can still, of course, be obtained through inter-library loans, if one is prepared to wait a few weeks. Let us also not forget the "on-line" information accessed through computers, provided one can get through the labyrinth of codes, cryptic words, user names, licenses, etc. The sad thing remains, that what was essential reading yesterday, can become redundant today.

And the question remains: What is to become of these abruptly interrupted lines, which occupy useful space in libraries? Industrial sites are normally cleared for re-development, production lines are re-equipped with new tools, ship-building cranes are pulled down or used as "tourist attractions". In the past, some countries have held "book burning" events as entertainment for their citizens.

I wonder if any of these options would be applicable to our redundant volumes of literature. ❐

Vasilios H. Pavlidis,
De Montfort University,
Leicester.

Comments are welcome and should be sent to the Editor. Brevity is an advantage, and contributions may be edited. Deadline for the next issue is 1st September.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Metacognition in Practice

Mike Davis describes how he tried to empower his students, using a letter in *The New Academic* as a starting point.

LAST SUMMER, I taught an English for Academic Purposes Course for intending post-graduate students from a wide variety of non-British backgrounds. This course is designed to prepare the students for what they will find in the lecture theatre, the seminar room and the tutorial.

Looking for material that was accessible and engaging I gave the students a copy of the letter from Jane Thompson and Vince Dispenza in the ***The New Academic*** (Summer 1993), telling them that it would be the basis of the seminar the following day.

Beginning with fifteen minutes to refresh their memories and discuss ideas and problems in pairs, I told them the seminar would begin at 9.45. At 9.45 I told them it was 9.45 and sat back.

There was an embarrassed silence which lasted about two minutes while the students continued to read and have hushed and brief conversations with their neighbours. Finally, Diego asked, *"So can we start the discussion?"* I silently indicated assent and he said, *"Well, Maksuda..."* This quiet invitation, based on the fact that Maksuda has been a vocal member of the seminar group and could be relied upon to produce detailed summaries of reading matter and lectures, released tension. On this occasion, however, she made only a brief comment and the discussion came slowly but steadily to life.

The seminar was an exemplification of the argument in the original letter. Because of the varied social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the students habitually focused on "here and now" interactions while at the same time sharing "out there" (linguistic) concerns that the course is designed to meet.

Issues of leadership were debated quite early on, particularly in the context of the role of the tutor, and opinions varied. Younes believed that while *"...the manager of the class is the tutor"*, he conceded that *"...the approach is to make the group manage their learning"*. Rahina agreed to some extent: *"...the teacher shares a responsibility to create the environment in which the students can learn and develop their abilities."* (my emphasis) *"Is it a method of teaching or a method of learning?"* Maksuda asked. Jun Min was more focused on the students: *"We need to identify what we don't know...to enable us to study more. Sometimes through talking we can get a lot of experience...through discussion we can unite our knowledge... we can absorb others' ideas."*

When attempting to find a conclusion, to seek an answer to the problems posed by the text, Younes believed that *"...we can get that conclusion from the boss of the class"*, indicating me. Adel looked for confirmation. I declined (non-verbally). *"Mike is also involved in this discussion,"* suggested Rahina. *"Silence is a form of communication,"* Diego said reminding them of an earlier seminar.

The students began to explore the learning experiences of children and the relevance of the discussion to school learning. Some of them recalled their own childhoods and described their past feelings of being fearful. *"Are we afraid of Mike?"* Maksuda asked. Everyone laughed.

A number of issues occur to me about this experience and the Thompson/Dispenza letter. The first is that teachers need quite openly to exercise some form of leadership, if only at the most executive level of operation. On this occasion, I set up the activity by giving the students the article and determining it as the subject of the seminar, and I set and marked the time boundaries - something which briefly concerned Younes, who asked the group, *"Could we manage to meet at 9.30? at 11.30?"*

The Thompson/Dispenza letter was concerned with empowerment, something I am committed to in my professional practice and in my research. For the first time in a classroom, however, I feel that I witnessed its early stages in group as opposed to individual terms, as the group struggled to place themselves at the centre of the learning task. And I emphasise "struggle" quite deliberately.

I spoke four times during the seminar: twice to enforce time boundaries, once, albeit briefly and factually in direct response to a question about time and once, when I couldn't resist it and I said *"Aren't you going to ask Akihiko what a discipline school is?"* The group quite sensibly ignored me: they were applying their knowledge, not pursuing mine.

I am reminded of the poem by Lao Tse who wrote:

> *The teacher is best*
> *when people barely knows he exists.*
> *Not so good when people obey and acclaim him.*
> *Worse when they despise him.*
> *"Fail to honour people, they fail to honour you."*
> *But of a good leader,*
> *who talks little,*
> *when his work is done*
> *his aim fulfilled,*
> *they will say:*
> *"We did this ourselves."* ❒

Mike Davis is with the Centre for Adult and Higher Education University of Manchester

Students taking part were:

Adel (Law, Iran), Akihiko (Law, Japan), Diego (Nutrition, Spain), Elana (Economics, Russia), Jun Min (Medicine, China), Maksuda (Primary Health Care, Bangladesh), May (Education, Thailand), Mohammed (Engineering, Qatar), Rahima (Primary Health Care, Bangladesh),Younes (Applied Mechanics, Libya)

DIARY

May 16-18, *SEDA: Assessment for Learning in Higher Education: responding to and initiating change.* Telford. Jill Brookes, SEDA. Fee: Res: from £225; Non-res. from £50/day.

May 19, *The Industrial Society: Appraisal in Further Education.* London. The Industrial Society, 48 Bryanstone Sq, London W1H 7LN; tel: 071 262 2401. Fee:£111.63 (Mem), £133.95(non).

May 19-20, *Research Supervision.* Centre for Higher Education Studies, 58/59 Gordon Sq, London WC1H 0NT; tel: 071 612 6383. Fee: £150.

May 20, *How to Give Exceptional Customer Service.* Oxford. CareerTrack. Fee: £99+VAT. Also: 23 May Birmingham; 23 May Cambridge; 24 May Solihull; 25 May Coventry; 26 May Leeds; 27 May York; 1 Jun Brighton; 6 Jun Bournemouth; 7 Jun Eastleigh; 8 Jun Reading; 9 Jun Henley-on-Thames.

May 23-25, *Managing Information: Markets, Money and Quality* (94212). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £185.

May 23-25, *First Time Supervisors: Basic Management Skills* (94214). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £185.

May 24, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Social Science.* Coventry. OCSD. Fee: £40.

May 26-27, *Profiling.* Coventry. OCSD. Fee: £275 (res), £200 (non-res).

June 2, *Management and Leadership Skills for Women.* Bristol. CareerTrack. Fee: £125+VAT. Also: 3 Jun Cardiff; 7 Jun Sheffield; 9 Jun Aberdeen; 10 Jun Edinburgh; 13 Jun Newcastle; 17 Jun Nottingham; 20 Jun Milton Keynes; 21 Jun Manchester; 22 Jun Harrow, London; 23 Jun Docklands, London.

June 2, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Education.* London. OCSD. Fee: £40.

June 2, *Implications for HE and Graduate Recruitment.* York. HEC. Fee: £113.97 (HEC), £123.37 (non-HEC).

June 6-8, *Marketing Library Services* (94231). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £185.

June 6-8, *Making Meetings Effective* (94235). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £235.

June 7, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Technology* Glasgow. OCSD. Fee: £40.

June 7, *Credit Rating Liberal Adult Education in the University Sector.* London. SEEC.

June 8-9, *Challenging Perceptions: Disability, Equality and the Arts.* Leicester. ATP. Fee: £135.

June 8-10, *Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation* (94232). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £185.

June 8-10, *Routes to Accreditation* (94236). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £185.

June 8-10, *Managing Trade Union Relations & Disputes* (94234). Staff Coll. Fee: £235

June 8-10, *Seybold Paris '94* : Conference / Exhibition / Workshops. Paris. Seybold Ltd., 26a Seaside, Eastbourne, E. Sussex, BN22 7QJ; tel: 0323 410561; fax: 0323 410279.

June 9, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Accountancy.* Bristol. OCSD. Fee: £40.

June 13, *The Management Effectiveness Seminar.* Belfast. CareerTrack. Fee: £125+VAT. Also: 20 Jun Liverpool; 23 Jun Swansea; 24 Jun Reading; 28 Jun Maidstone; 30 Jun London.

June 13-15, Pre-Seminar Event: SAARDHE Annual Congress: *"Higher Education: The State of the Art"* See entry June 15-18 below, Cape Town.

June 13-15, *Managing the Human Cost of Change* (94241) Staff College. Fee: £185

June 13-15, *Advanced Counselling Skills* (94244). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £235.

June 13-16, *TQM-7: The Total Quality Event.* Stratford-upon-Avon. Call Clare Martland or Judith Lion tel: 0730 266544, or fax: 0730 268865 for information.

June 14, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Built Environment.* Newcastle. OCSD. Fee: £40.

June 15-16, *Observing and Appraising Teaching.* Coventry. OCSD. Fee: £295 (res), £195 (non-res).

June 15-17, *Educational and Cultural Barriers to Open and Distance Learning - A European Conference.* Sheffield. Samantha Dixon, White Rose Conferences, Nightingale Court, 8 Nightingale Close, Moorgate, Rotherham, S60 2AB; tel: 0709 828181; fax: 0709 828732. Fee: £25 + VAT.

June 15-17, *Financial Management for FE* (94242). Blagdon. Staff Coll. Fee: £375.

June 15-18, *13th International Seminar on Staff and Educational Development*: Staff and Student Development in a Multicultural Setting. Cape Town, SA. Dr Chris de Winter, H+E Associates, 12a Church St., Stiffkey, Norfolk NR23 1QJ. Tel: 0328 830355; Fax: 0328 830339. Fee: £495 (res) regular - some reductions.

June 20, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Art & Design.* London. OCSD. Fee: £40.

June 20-22, *Using Job Evaluation to Decide Salaries* (94253) Staff College. Fee: £185.

June 21, *The Development of APEL in the European Context.* London. SEEC.

June 22-23, *Coping with Student Diversity.* Keele. OCSD. Fee: £250 (res), £200 (non-res).

June 22-23, *Marketing for Non-Marketing Managers.* Leicester. ATP. Fee: £165.

June 22-24, *Learning Difficulties and Disabilities* (94254). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

June 22-24, *Databases Marketing* (94252). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

June 22-25, *ACES: Comparative Issues in Access to Higher Education:* An International Conference (94/9). ACES, University of North London, 166/220 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DB; tel: 071 753 5114/5/6; fax: 071 753 5012.

June 23, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Business.* Warwick. See Oxford Centre 24 May. Fee: £40.

June 28, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Humanities.* Manchester. See Oxford Centre 24 May. Fee: £40.

June 29-July 1, *Governor Training* (94262). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

June 30, *Course Design for Resource Based Learning in Science.* Nottingham. OCSD. Fee: £40.

July 4, *Innovations in Science Teaching.* Nottingham. OCSD.

July 4-5, *Financial Information Systems Conference.* Sheffield. Abstracts to: Tony Aykroyd, Sheffield Hallam University, School of Financial Studies and Law, City Campus, Sheffield S1 1WB; email: J.A.Aykroyd @sheffield-hallam.ac.uk; tel: 0742 5333692, fax: 0742 533726. Enquiries to: Grace Roberts, Sheffield Hallam University, Campus Enterprises, Collegiate Crescent Campus, Sheffield S10 2BP; tel: 0742 532577; fax: 0742 532579; email: G.Roberts @sheffield-hallam.ac.uk .

July 6-7, *Marketing Through Print.* Leicester. ATP. Fee: £165.

July 6-8, *Handling Capability: Problems of Competency and Health.* (94273) Staff College. Fee: £185.

July 10-13, *20th International Conference on Improving Teaching.* Hong Kong. Director of Administration, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (CPHK), 83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong. tel: (852) 7889064; fax: (852) 7889051; email: ADJYIP@CPHKVX.BITNET

July 13-15, *Pricing, Costing and Budgeting* (94281). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

July 18-20, *Selling Education and Training* (94291). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

July 18-20, *Managing Access and APL* (94292). Blagdon. Staff coll. Fee: £185.

July 19-21, *Sixth International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education.* Hong Kong. See July 10-13 above.

Key

SEDA, Jill Brookes, The Administrator, Gala House, 3 Raglan Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham B5 7RA; tel: 021 446 6166; fax: 021 446 5991

ATP, Arts Training Programme, De Montfort University, FREEPOST, Scraptoft, Leicester, LE7 8PZ; tel: 0533 577804; 0533 577866

CareerTrack International, Drayton Rd, Newton Longville, Milton Keynes MK17 0DY; tel: 0908 366544/fax: 0908 368685

HEC, Higher Education for Capability, 20 Queen Square, Leeds, LS2 8AF; tel: 0532 347725; fax: 0532 442025.

OCSD, The Oxford Centre for Staff Development, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, OX3 0BP. Tel: 0865 750918; 0865 744437; email: OCSD@brookes.ac.uk.

SEEC, South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation & Transfer. SEEC Office, c/o Bedford College of HE, 37 Lansdowne Road, Bedford, MK40 2BZ; tel: 0234 213515; fax: 0234 214046

Staff Coll, Staff College, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG Tel: 0761 462503; Fax: 0761 463104

SEDA CONFERENCE

Enabling Student Learning: Structures, Guidance and Support

SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) Autumn Conference

Joint Chairs of the organising committee:

- Dr Kristine Mason O'Connor, Head of Professional Development, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education
- Dr Trevor Joscelyne, Head of Educational Development, University of North London

The conference will be of interest to:

- providers of learning support, including library and IT services;
- staff responsible for student services;
- academic staff responsible for modular programmes and degree pathways;
- educational and staff developers;
- senior managers responsible for student support.

28th and 29th November 1994

Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing

Workshop offers are invited on the following themes:

①. Management issues regarding student support and enablement, including the implementation of student charters.

②. Provision of educational guidance and academic counselling.

③. Learning resource structures, for example: study skills development, library and IT provision, models of induction, student peer support.

Please contact Jill Brookes, SEDA Administrator, Gala House, 3 Raglan Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B13 9SE if you are interested in providing a conference session or attending the conference as a delegate.

Aim of the Conference

To address the nature of guidance and support needed to enable students to:

- develop their own strong sense of direction;
- make appropriate decisions about the opportunities available to them;
- gain maximum benefit from their chosen programmes of study.