

# New Academic

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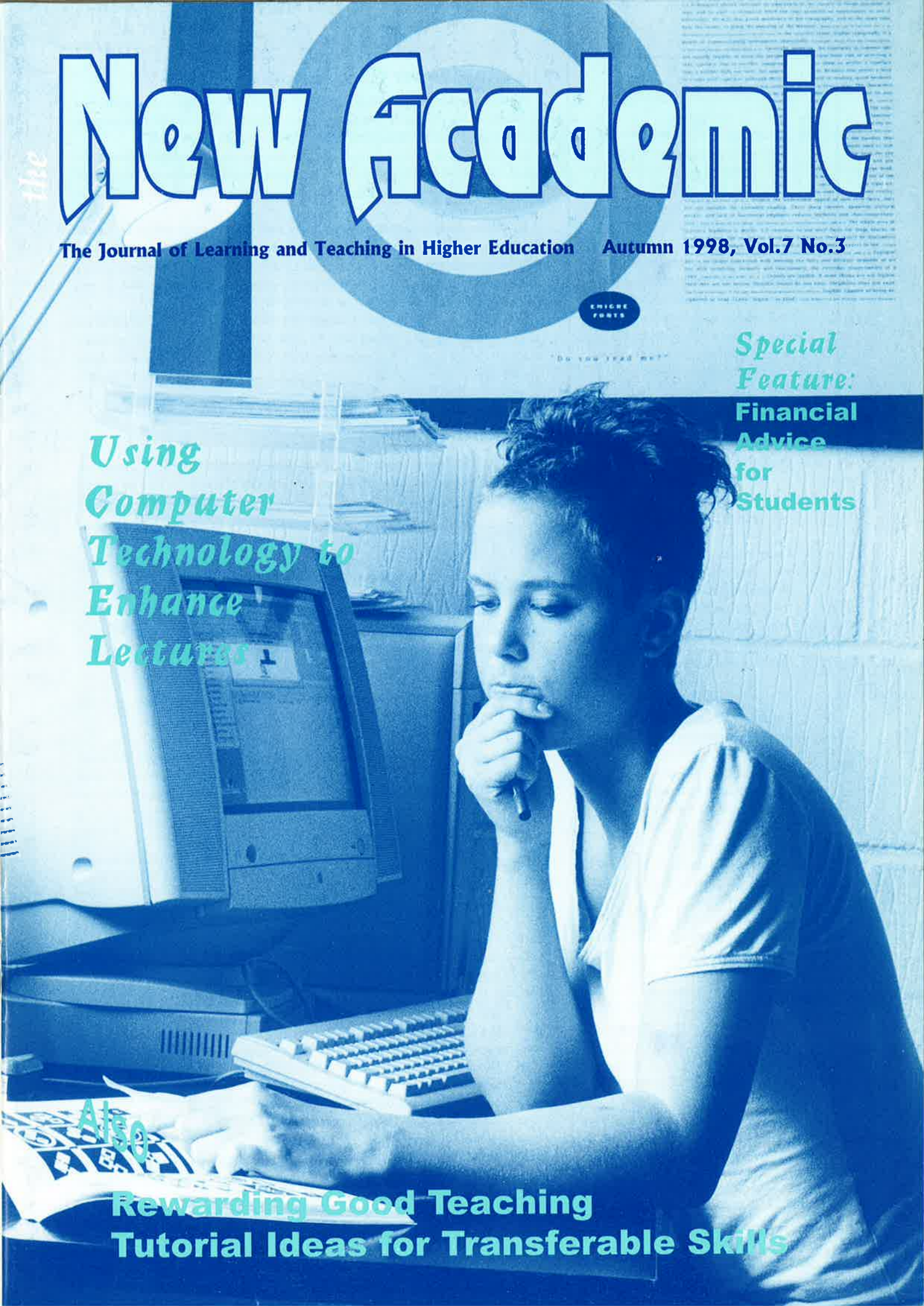
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Technology to  
Enhance  
Lectures**

**Also  
Rewarding Good Teaching  
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SEDA is a professional association committed to improving all aspects of learning, teaching and training in Higher Education through staff and educational development.

SEDA provides and supports activities, including: national and international support groups and networks; conferences; publications - practical papers, books, a refereed journal, a magazine for teachers in HE; support and accreditation for professional development; research; liaison with other organisations.

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## Information for Contributors

We welcome all material 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 two copies, typewritten on single side of A4, double-spaced, and will not be considered in any other form. 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. All submissions should be sent direct to Ivan Moore, Editor-in-Chief, at Ulster University (address on p.1).

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 reviewed by at least two people, and expert advice sought where appropriate. If you wish prompt acknowledgement, please enclose stamped addressed envelope: return postage is essential if you wish your script to be returned in the event of non-acceptance. To speed production once your paper has been accepted, you will be asked to send finalised material on floppy disk.

### 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, as in the following examples:

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

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

### Illustrations

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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.

### Forum

Contributions to debates are always welcome, and may be of any length up to 800 words (maximum): the shorter, the more likely space will be found. Forum commentary may be on any topic relevant to teachers in HE. All contributions may be subject to editing. Send to Ivan Moore or direct to the Editor.

### Acronyms used in *The New Academic*:

APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council
CAL	Computer Assisted Learning
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EHE	Enterprise in Higher Education
FSEDA	Fellow of SEDA
HE	Higher Education
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HND	Higher National Diploma
IT	Information Technology
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
SEEC	South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer
SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
UFC	Universities Funding Council

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Photographers:

Otmar Dresel (cover)

Bob Pomfret (p.8)

### FROM THE EDITORS

**WE** very often suggest that ideas in articles we publish might be applied to other subject areas.

Have you ever been inspired by an article in *The New Academic*?

Have you tried to adapt other people's ideas to your own subject area?

Did it work?

Or was it a disaster?

We would like to hear from you about your experiences.

Details on how to submit articles can be found on the inside front cover.

# EDITORIAL

## LECTURING SKILLS - THE MODERN WAY

Lecturing skills have always been of importance in the academic world, even if those of us who took our degrees before the era of SEDA and journals like *The New Academic* were often painfully aware that lecturers in HE did not always take their importance quite as seriously as their students might have wished! Today, though, with an ever increasing student population and ever larger classes, teachers are certainly aware that it is valuable to develop real skills in presenting their material in the lecture theatre.

We are pleased to be able to bring readers of this journal one more in what has become a long series on developing the art of lecturing: this time, **Nancy Hunt** describes how to use modern computer soft-ware to transform your lectures.

Nancy Hunt has the advantage of working in a university (Lincoln University in New Zealand) which has a computer network of its own, a powerful software package installed and available to all lecturers, not to mention the added benefit of colleagues who also use the same program and to whom the novice can turn for advice. How many of us shy away from having to master yet more modern technology?

Hunt recognizes there is a learning curve involved, but emphasises the benefits from what seem to be amazingly powerful and useful packages. Her detailed account of how she goes about creating a lecture, the examples she provides of good practice (see slides on pages 5, 6 & 7), and the students' reactions to lectures

embellished this way all add up to a persuasive picture. The Editors really should have shares in Microsoft Corp!

## REWARDING EXCELLENT TEACHING

For those of our readers who work very hard to improve their teaching skills (which is probably nearly all of you), we bring some rewarding news from a group at University of Lincolnshire & Humberside. **Mike Cook, Derek Cottrell, Roger Lewis, Bill Miller and Jane Thompson** describe how their university developed a system to reward excellent teachers.

They were members of a working group set up by the Academic Board to propose arrangements to define, then measure and reward excellence in teaching.

Here we give their definition:

*Excellent teaching is teaching which helps students to achieve high quality learning.*

Not much controversy there... As to the rest of their work - how excellence was to be measured, and how rewarded, and what happened to their recommendations - turn to pages 9 to 11 to find out!

## STUDENT FINANCES

A rather different kind of article is provided by psychologist **Chris Slade** of Nottingham Trent University. She not only applies her psychological expertise to helping us understand just why students are inclined to squander their loans and meagre grants in the pub, she also uses her background in commerce and banking to provide

some pages of excellent advice for anyone who has too little income and too much to do with it. This advice probably applies to more than students!

On the centre two pages of this term's issue, we provide a section of financial advice that tutors may wish to photocopy for their students. And they may wish to keep a copy for themselves, just in case...

## IDEAS FOR TUTORIALS

Finally, some ideas for First Year tutorials from **Mark Griffiths**. As the author acknowledges, many of these ideas are used in various forms by many people, but all are designed to develop important transferable skills.

Griffiths concentrates on general student issues (e.g. study), writing skills, presentation, summarising and dissemination, using published work in this and other journals as a jumping-off point. All his ideas are simple to use - and all are sound and useful. So if you haven't come across them before, or if these particular versions sound rather good, pages 14 and 15 are for you.

## REVIEWS ETC.

Lots of book reviews this time - thanks to Reviews Editor **Lesley MacDonald**. And we have managed to squeeze in one Forum contribution, from Mike Hayes, a prolific contributor to our pages in the past, but now alas retired.

Good reading!

*Elizabeth Mapstone*

# ENHANCING LECTURES THE MODERN WAY

**Nancy Hunt** describes how you can use the best of today's computer software to transform your lectures from what she calls "theatre of transcription" into an active learning experience for your students.

If we were to walk into the typical classroom of any institution of higher learning, we would likely see a room full of students quietly taking notes as their professor stands at the front of the room engaging in a 50-minute monologue of factual information stopping only to scribble a few words or a diagram on the chalkboard or overhead transparency. It could be said that this more a theatre of transcription than an optimal setting for learning.

While many educators call for the adoption of teaching strategies which require active participation from the learner, the dominant method of instructional delivery in institutions of HE remains, and probably will remain for the immediate future, the lecture. We are challenged, then, to transform the lecture theatre into a place which engages students in a more meaningful learning experience. Many of today's lecturers are turning to computers and presentation software to assist them create an enriched learning environment.

This article is in three parts: first, an introduction to the capabilities of

presentation software and the instructional advantages of adopting these tools, then a discussion of how academic staff at one New Zealand university employ these technologies in their instruction, and finally, advice for creating and delivering computer-based presentations.

## PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

Presentation software was originally designed and marketed for the creation of professional looking business presentations. There are a number of software packages available on the market; but the three most commonly used are: PowerPoint (Microsoft Corporation), Persuasion (Adobe Systems, Inc.), and Astound! (Astound, Inc.).

Each is available for both Macintosh and Windows and has a number of useful features, including:

- \* basic word-processing, with spell-check capability
- \* simple drawing tools
- \* a collection of clip art
- \* slide templates or background



*Nancy Hunt, Coordinator of Information Technology and Learning, and Senior Lecturer in Communication, Education Centre, Lincoln University Canterbury, New Zealand*

masters, designed by professional graphic artists

- \* capability of importing or cutting and pasting digitised images, text, sound, and video

- \* simple animation capabilities through text builds, transitions between slides, and successive layering of objects

- \* speaker support in the form of notes pages and rehearsal timings

- \* multiple presentation platforms, including computer-based data projection, black and white or colour overhead transparencies, 35 mm photographic slides, and (through HTML conversion or Netscape /Explorer plug-ins) WWW pages.

## INSTRUCTIONAL ADVANTAGES

The use of presentation software in

educational settings will not ensure a quality learning experience; however, it does offer a means of producing professional-looking presentations with text, graphics, animation, and even sound and video elements. Coupled with presentation skill and content and pedagogical knowledge, these packages can be powerful classroom tools.

While it is true that there is a learning curve involved in applying any new technology, there are some very distinct advantages for incorporating computer-based presentations in instructional delivery. A well-done presentation helps the instructor project a professional image. Students react positively when they can see that their lecturers have taken the time to think through the best way to organise their content and taken care to present it in an easy to understand manner.

Creation of the lectures can be very quick to do. Starting from the outline mode a lecturer can quickly organise the topics to be addressed, then pick an appropriate background and pull in the appropriate graphic elements as needed. These packages greatly facilitate the re-use of materials for lectures can be quickly updated (or embellished) from one semester to another. Individual slides from one lecture can be easily copied into a separate presentation.

Pedagogical advantages are numerous. The lecturer has yet another option to vary the form of instructional delivery with which to present, clarify, and illustrate key concepts. The ability to combine text with graphics, video, and even sound can be used to address a fuller range of learning styles. Finally, a well-designed presentation engages students helps them focus their attention.

## STUDENT REACTIONS

Forman (1996) compared his students' ratings of his teaching

effectiveness before and after he adopted presentation technology in his classroom.

Beginning in the 1994-95 academic year, he began using Persuasion and a large screen television to replace the overhead transparencies he had previously used. By adopting this technology, he found that the emphasis of his class preparation shifted from having organised lecture notes to having "organised, graphically interesting and easy to follow presentations" (p. 488).

Comparing his student ratings from the two semesters prior to using Persuasion with ratings received from the two semesters after its introduction,

Forman found statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) and positive differences in his students' opinions of his originality, creativity, willingness to experiment, and iconoclastic (as opposed to ritualistic) tendencies. He also reported finding that his students' perceptions of him as being a warm and caring teacher, personally concerned about them, did not change.

Interviews with 69 students at Lincoln University, a small New Zealand tertiary institution, revealed an overwhelming positive response toward the use of computer presentations (Hunt, 1996). In response to the question "Do you like for your lecturers to teach with PowerPoint?" 72% said

### Why students like lectures with PowerPoint

*	Points are clearer, easier to understand	15
*	Easier to read	14
*	More interesting, enlivens lecture	9
*	The visual display supports the lecture	6
*	Helps with notetaking	6
*	Lecturer puts notes on the network	5
*	Good way to show graphics	4
*	Efficient use of class time	3
*	Shows the lecturer is organised/focused	2
*	Condenses main points while the lecturer "rambles on"	2

*Student Responses (N = 41)*  
**Table 1**

### Why students do not like lectures with PowerPoint

*	Lecturers change screens too quickly	5
*	Set up time	4
*	Lighting problems	3
*	Computers don't work	2
*	Lecturers "play" with the technology	2
*	Rigid, impersonal lectures	2
*	Colours and images distract from content	2
*	Repetitive	2
*	Points too simple--"corny, like playschool"	2
*	Images too small	1

*Student Responses (N = 14)*  
**Table 2**

"yes", 14% said "no," and 14% were "not sure." Those who were "not sure" had seen too few PowerPoint lectures to form an opinion. When asked why they liked their lecturers to use PowerPoint, students reported that the lectures are easier to follow, easier to read, and generally more engaging (see Table 1). Those who responded negatively to the use of PowerPoint primarily complained of lecturers moving among screens too quickly or environmental features such as the room being too dark or equipment problems (see Table 2).

## PRESENTATION TECHNOLOGY AT ONE UNIVERSITY

Lincoln University is the smallest of the seven universities within New Zealand's tertiary education system. Its approximately 4000 students are enrolled in a broad range of courses leading to diplomas, degrees, and postgraduate studies which have international recognition. Instructional technology facilities at Lincoln include a completely networked computing infrastructure, eight large lecture theatres with permanent computer and video projection capabilities, and three mobile carts each with a portable computer and data projection for smaller lecture rooms. These facilities allow faculty members to design lectures in

their offices or home, place materials on one of the faculty servers, and then access and project their files from any classroom on campus. They can also make their files available to students via network share directories.

PowerPoint is the presentation package of choice, since it is installed on the network and freely accessible to all faculty. No study has determined the percentage of lectures delivered with computer-projection, but the permanently installed equipment is heavily used and approximately 40% of all audiovisual equipment requests are for the portable computer and data projector stations.

At the very simplest level, faculty use PowerPoint to project textual outlines of their lecture, definitions of key concepts, and perhaps a few charts or graphical representations. As they become more comfortable with the technology, they may begin to include digitised photographic images and simple animations. Some examples follow.

## OPENING THE LECTURE

Three important steps in setting the stage for learning are motivating the learner, recalling prior knowledge, and stating the lesson's objectives.

Rather than having the first slides introduce new content, it is a very

simple matter to open with a recap of key concepts from the previous day and an overview of the topics to be addressed (and projected goals for student learning) in the current lecture. Still, this recap and lecture overview could be a rather dry and boring lesson introduction. It's a good idea occasionally to wow one's students with a more dramatic opening.

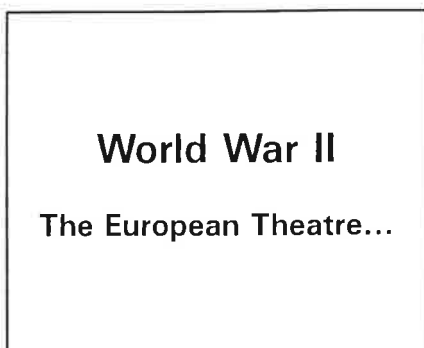
One of our marketing professors introduces competitive marketing practices by having students imagine they are World War II generals working out battle strategies for winning the war in Europe. She asks them their objectives, what they need to know about their opponents, etc. She then translates their answers into the world of market research and retailing. (See Figure 1 below.)

## EXPLAINING COMPLEX IDEAS

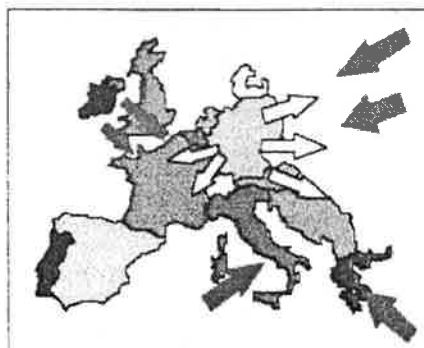
Lecturers make use of successive slides to build graphic explanations of concepts and complex inter-relationships. A professor of animal science explains the movement of animals during breeding seasons by projecting a series of slides with two different colored blobs which represent male and female ferrets. In the opening slides the males and females are randomly interspersed. As the females

Figure 1: Setting the Stage for Learning

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

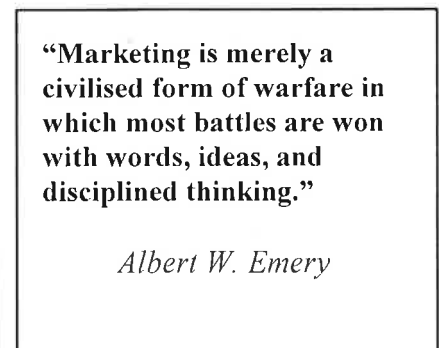
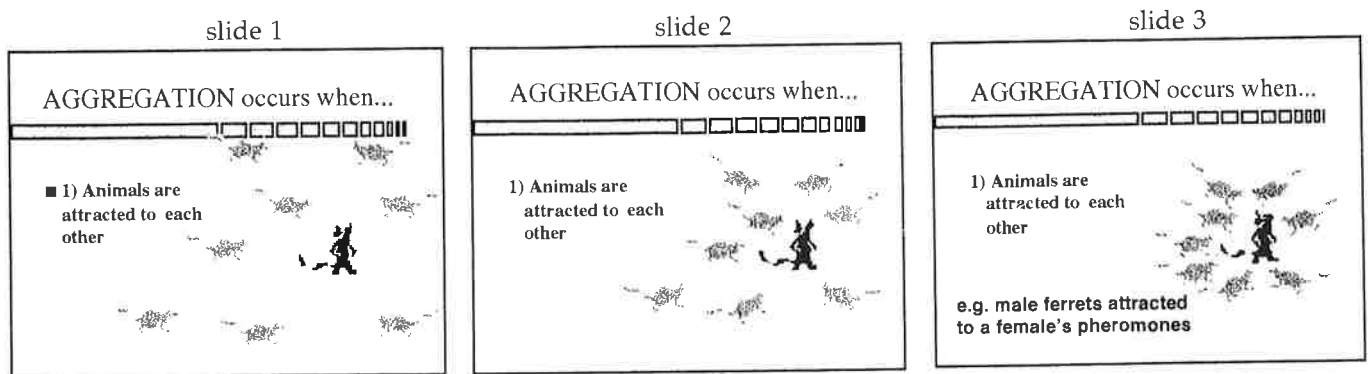


Figure 2: Animated objects



excrete pheromones, the males begin moving about until they are clustered around the breeding females. A very memorable presentation! (See Figure 2)

Several professors take advantage of successive layering of slides to explain complex mathematical models in a step-by-step fashion. Students can focus on each component and see how they inter-relate better in this manner than if they are presented with the full model in one graphic image. (See Figure 3.)

Photographic quality images can be easily digitised and incorporated into computer-based presentations. A professor of natural resources alternates projections of topographical maps with photographs of the same land area. A psychology lecturer illustrates fluctuations in brain activity by projecting digitised CAT scans of people's brains at rest and work and allows students to compare graphic sketches of the brain with magnetic resonance images.

## PROVIDING SUPPORT MATERIALS

Many Lincoln lecturers use the campus network's share directories to provide lecture notes -- either in the form of straight text or PowerPoint presentations -- to their students. In deference to limitations of disc space

and the demands placed on lab printers when students want to have hard copies of these files, they strip the PowerPoint files to the bare essence (deleting the interim slides during builds and converting to black and white images) and instruct their students on how to print multiple slides per page.

When the lectures are available before class, students can annotate in the margins; when they are available after class students can use them to amend and ascertain the quality of their notetaking. One faculty member states that the greatest advantage to this strategy is that he now sees his students' faces. Whereas before they were face-down, frantically taking notes, they are now looking at him and taking a more active role in the discussions.

The technological infrastructure at Lincoln clearly facilitates, and even encourages classroom use of computer projection; but it is important to note that presentation software packages are also useful for creating visual aids and presenter notes which will not be used in a computerised lecture setting.

## CREATING A PRESENTATION

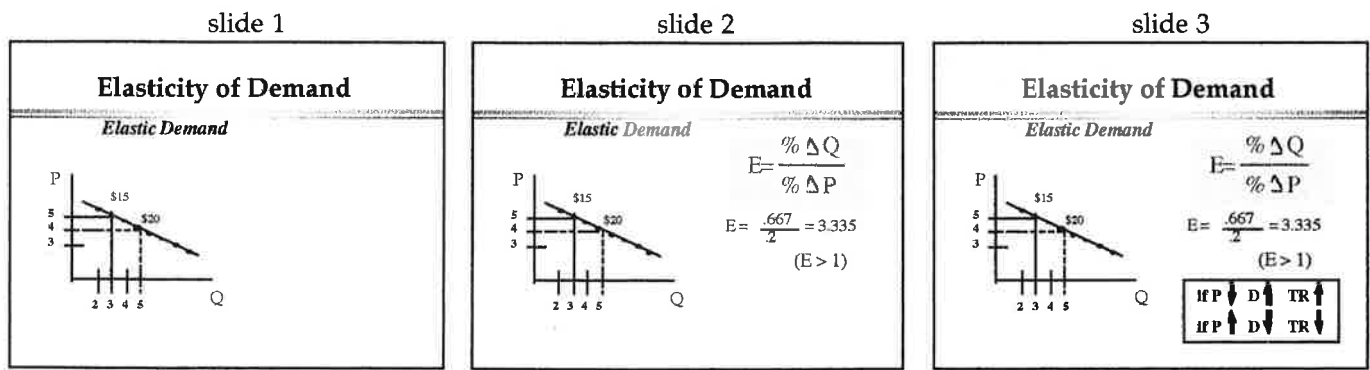
The first step to creating any lecture or presentation is to determine the objectives, what the audience is to gain, followed by a content outline and

locating appropriate media. I always begin my presentations by working in PowerPoint's outline view. Each major topic becomes the title of a new slide, while supporting points automatically become bulleted text. I then select a template appropriate for the content of the lecture and presentation mode (computer projection or black and white or coloured overhead transparencies), and place appropriate clip art or other digitised graphic, video, or sound elements on the individual slides. I then look at the work as a slide show, and when satisfied with the visual elements, turn to notes view to record statements or ideas I want to incorporate into the actual presentation. This final step actually becomes a cyclical revision process of reviewing the content outline, the visual elements, and planned spoken word.

The software has a relatively low learning curve. Working through the on-line tutorials or participating in a basic two- or three-hour workshop is sufficient for most new users. As with learning any new software package, novices are encouraged to keep their first efforts very simple -- perhaps just a few slides that might have otherwise been prepared with a wordprocessor. If unfamiliar with computer data projection, new users might also plan to deliver their first lectures via the standard overhead projector and use



Figure 3: Building complex screens



black and white or colour transparencies.

## SOME DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Unity of design elements creates a sense of continuity. Therefore, it is best to use a common background for all slides, restrict the number of fonts, and select colours and graphics which are consistent with the presentation's mood and theme.

Characteristics such as formality and informality can be expressed by appropriate font selection. Two major categories of fonts are serif and sans serif. Serif fonts include short cross strokes at the top or bottom of each character. These extra marks are said to help the reader visually connect the letters and thereby increase readability.

Some designers prefer the cleaner, more modern look of sans serif fonts for titles and then opt for serif fonts within the body of the text.

Times Roman is a serif font  
Univers is sans serif

It is important to restrict the number of fonts used in a presentation and to be conservative in varying the type styles (bold, italic, underline, etc.). Use **large, bold type** for presentations. This author's personal rule of thumb is never

going below 24 pts for bulleted text nor below 36 pts for titles. ONE SHOULD AVOID THE USE OF ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS. They are difficult to read. Instead, a presenter should emphasise text with larger size characters, alternate colour, or type style.

Text colour should be chosen on the basis of maximum contrast with the background. Good combinations for computer projection are white or yellow text on dark blue or green background and dark blue or black text on white or yellow background. Software is available which allows the user to stretch, distort, and rotate text. This can add interest, but can also reduce readability, so should be used sparingly.

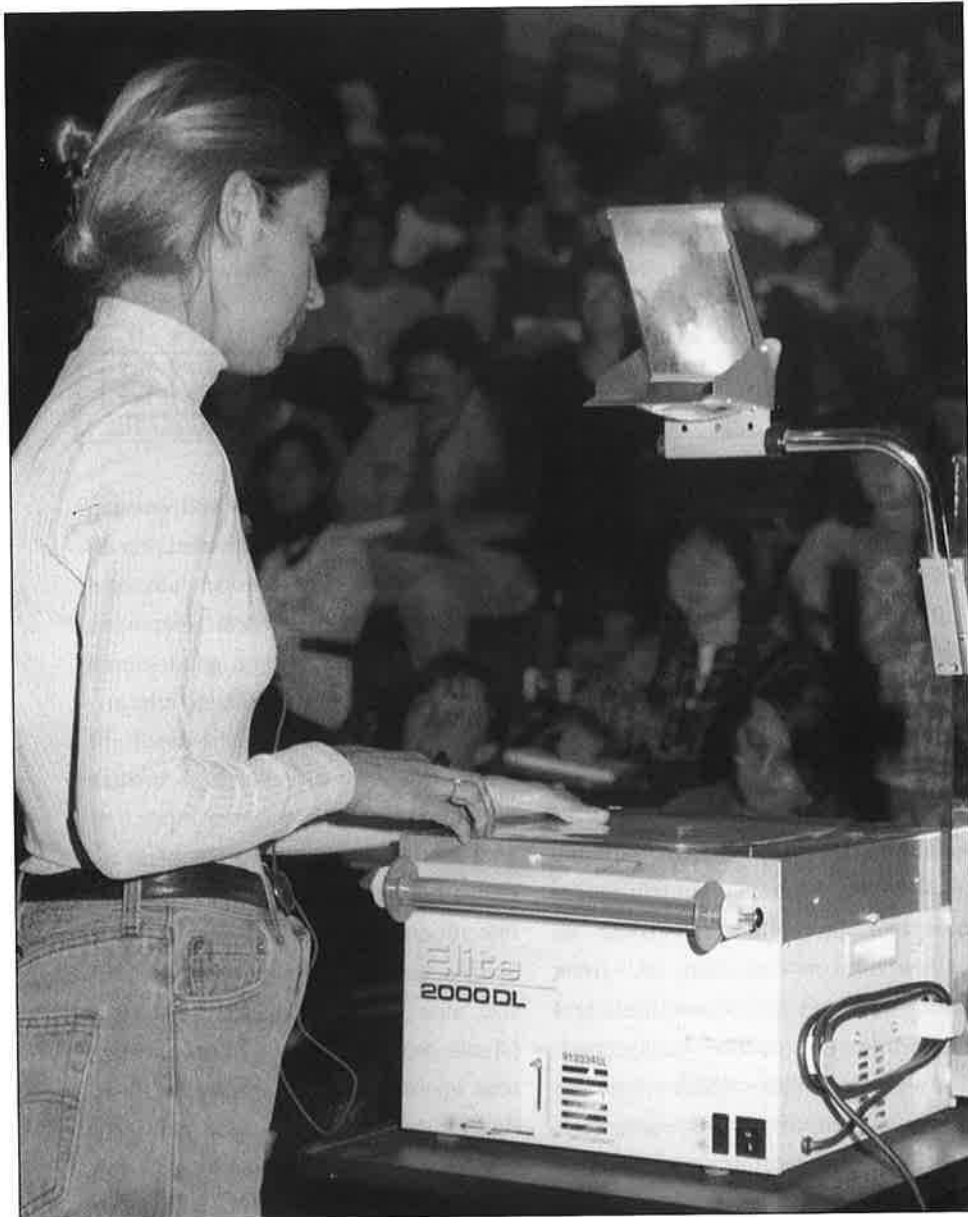
Well-planned use of graphics can attract the viewer's eye and enhance understanding of the message. Presentations can include original graphics, ready-made images, or scanned photographs or artwork. Creating images can be easily done within a number of applications. Attractive charts and graphs can be produced within spreadsheet programs, original drawings can be created with paint or draw software, and digital cameras and photo-enhancing software allow easy import of quality photographic images. Ready-made

images available within the software can be supplemented with additional clip art purchased on CD-Roms or obtained through public domain and shareware outlets. The Internet is a good source for locating free or low-cost clip art. (Be aware of potential copyright violations when capturing images directly from WWW pages.)

Scanned images are obtained by digitising artwork, photographs or text into computer-readable code. These images can be edited to change their size, alter colours, enhance clarity, etc. (Again, note that just because one can scan an image does not give limitless rights to its use.)

## PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Accurately and effectively expressing one's message is the primary goal of any presentation, whether computer-assisted or not. The following suggestions for how best to use presentation software to convey one's message are derived from interviews and surveys of Lincoln students (Hunt, 1996) and surveys of attendees at technology-related professional gatherings). Following Grandgenett et al's (1995) lead, they are organised into categories related to the behaviour of the presenter, the structure of the presentation, the lecture environment,



and the equipment. Please note that most of the points made in these first two categories are generic to any lecture or presentation, whether they involve computer-projected images, overhead transparencies, chalkboard diagrams, or no visuals at all!

## Presenter

Allow and be available for interaction. It is important to greet and interact with the audience (be they conference attendees or students). Avoid delivering a 50 minute "canned" monologue by stopping at key points to ask questions, structure interaction

among the participants, or encourage others to speak. Be enthusiastic about the subject and try to move about the room--use of a cordless mike and remote mouse greatly facilitates such movement. (Lincoln students suggested that their lecturers should "dance" or "run up and down the aisle" -- sounds like an aerobic workout!)

Maintain eye contact. Talk to the students -- not the computer monitor or projection screen. Turning from them makes it difficult to hear and understand what is being said and can lead to inattention. Moving about the room helps to maintain contact with all

students, not just those in the first few rows.

## Presentation

Rely on the old adage "*tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.*"

Always **state clear objectives** for the lecture, sequence the presentation in a manner which allows for a logical flow of information, and conclude with a summary of the important points or what students should have gained from the lecture. Lincoln students stressed the need for multiple "real world" examples which support or clarify important concepts.

**Avoid information overload.** Limit the amount of information on the screen. Use a larger-sized font to display only key phrases. Some designers suggest not more than six lines of text and six words per line. (Omitting unnecessary verbiage also reduces the urge to simply read from the screen.) **Avoid** the use of **distracting elements** such as garish colour combinations and unnecessary graphics, video and sound.

When it is necessary to project a complex graphic image, present it in successive layers which build upon the previous components or use either PowerPoint's Freehand annotation tool (the "scribbler" available only in presentation mode) or a laser light pen to focus the audience's attention on the elements currently being discussed.

Consider varying endless slides of bulleted lists with graphics or charts which display the same information in a more imaginative, yet appropriate, way.

**Use good pacing.** The most commonly heard complaint among Lincoln students about presentation technique was the tendency to move from frame to frame too quickly. Again, using key textual points as prompts for

extemporaneous speech slows down the pace. Informing students that the slides will be distributed as handouts or available on a campus share directory prevents them from feeling that they must copy down every word.

Providing a brief pause between slides also gives students time to mentally process what has been said. Consider inserting a blank slide or visual cue at points where questions will be asked or class discussion encouraged.

## Environment

Don't make the room too dark. Improvements in projection technology are eliminating the need for a totally dark environment. It is important that a balance be found that allows the screen image to be clearly read while permitting enough light for students to take notes, see their lecturer, and thereby (hopefully) stay awake!

Fill the screen with the projected display. A common problem is having the projection equipment set up so close

to the screen that the image is too small for students in the back of the room to clearly see. In compact classrooms it may be necessary to rearrange the room to create a larger middle aisle in which the equipment is placed.

## Equipment

Be prepared for equipment failure. Arrive early enough to double-check equipment and "run through" the presentation. This practice run is particularly helpful if there are missing fonts, sound cards, etc. on the machine at hand. Should there be a "total breakdown" it is important to have a backup plan, such as standard overhead transparencies or paper-printed lecture notes. PowerPoint facilitates the creation of these materials and their use can preclude a ruined session.

A good lecture ultimately relies more on good pedagogical skill and a well structured lesson than on the availability of a roomful of hardware

and software. However, excellent teaching coupled with effective use of technology optimises the opportunity for learning.

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# STUDENT FINANCES: WHAT DO WE TELL THEM?

*Chris Slade* takes a detailed look at the financial problems students face while attending university. As a psychologist, she understands their often casual attitude to the realities of money, but brings her background in commerce and international banking to bear on sorting out some good advice.

You may wish to photocopy the 2 pages of practical suggestions labelled "For Students" - they follow over the page..



You may even wish to use them yourself!

## HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?

Try and honestly answer the following questions:

- Do you consider yourself to be in good financial health?
- Do you pay off your credit cards every month?
- If not, do you have the best credit card interest rate you could?
- Are you getting the best mortgage rate available?
- Do you pay all your bills monthly?
- Do you have the most effective tax code for your income?
- Are you getting the best available rates for house and car insurance?
- Do you know the best place to go to for a loan?

You are probably a professional, with an assured monthly salary, and many years' experience of paying household and food bills, but it is unlikely that you can confidently answer

'yes' to all these questions. Spare a thought then for how students cope with:

- limited understanding of banking and credit systems
- limited income paid in a lump sum at the beginning of the academic year
- little or no experience of handling their own finances
- shared bills
- peer pressure to socialise as never before
- the need to live off ever dwindling resources

Most students only look for help when it is too late, and few have the motivation or the ability to budget effectively. Students are, for the first time, faced with mounting debt as a result of student loans and the virtual abolition of student grants, as well as moral and financial obligations to a parent or parents for fees and subsistence. So why is it that the pubs and clubs of Nottingham and many other student cities, which have been quiet over the summer,

are now buzzing with students eager to spend their money?

The answer is fairly simple: most of us bury our heads in the sand when it comes to realistic budgeting. It is more important for students, especially first year undergraduates away from home for the first time, to go out and socialise, rather than worry about how much money they will have left by January. Coping with homesickness and living in a single room become priorities, and even if students do think about how much they are spending, the 'in for a penny in for a pound' attitude is common. One student told me:

*"I'm going to have a huge overdraft when I leave university, so I may as well enjoy myself: an extra fifty quid here or there is a drop in the ocean."*

### Maximum allowed for student loans

	Away from home	Living at home
Full year	£2735	£2325
Final year	£2265	£1970



## FACTS OF STUDENT LIFE

So how much do students have to live on? Not much. The facts are as follows:

### Student grant

Maximum of £810 depending on parental income. (Slightly more in London).

If parental income is too high, then parents are expected to provide this themselves. The rules are complex, but a broad guideline is, if joint parental income exceeds £40,000, then the student gets no grant. Grants will be phased out completely next academic year. Parents from 1998 also have to provide £1000 towards fees, if their income allows.

### Student loans

The maximum amounts that first year students can apply for are shown in the box (figures are slightly higher for London)

Students can only apply for the loan once: they can't decide to go for, for example, £2,000 and ask for a top-up later in the year. Nearly all therefore go for the maximum. They can opt to have it paid termly, but very few do this. By the beginning of the second year, students usually have such huge overdrafts they need to take the total loan to pay their bank debt.

### Hall fees

Hall fees vary from about £50 to £80 per week for self catering accommodation. A quick calculation shows that students have from nothing to about £24 per week to live on, once hall fees are deducted from their loans. In many cases, hall fees are not covered by the loan, and as most 1st year students opt to go into halls, they are reliant from day 1 on parental support, a bank overdraft, or their own earned income.

Most students therefore have to work part time, and this has knock-on effects not only on their academic performance, but on timetabling of classes. Staff are more sympathetic in the faculty where I work and try, where possible, to accommodate an alternative tutorial slot for a student who has to work, but this is not always possible. Students are also requesting their timetables earlier in the summer so they can arrange their paid work round their classes. Some would say that a full time degree course should be just that, and students don't have time to work, but this is an attitude that many now consider as a luxury of the past decade.

GPs have spoken of 'smelling the poverty' of third year students who have completely run out of money but are desperate to complete their degrees, so how do we stop those first year students flush with a cheque of over £2000 from turning into undernourished, frequently sick, cold and hungry third or fourth year students? Students need guidance and support from day 1 of their course.

## PROVIDING ADVICE

### Who should provide financial advice to the students?

The role of student support services is not primarily to control student finances, and although many have excellent access and hardship funds, the demand on these is becoming greater, and the problem of effective budgeting has often turned into seemingly unmanageable debt by the time a student seeks help from this source. The high street banks are keen to recruit student accounts, but their role is not perceived by many students as being financial advisors. If parents themselves do not take an active role in managing their children's finances, which in most cases is firmly resented

by the student, then the result is an 18 year-old faced with the largest cheque they have probably ever held, and lots of places in which to spend it.

My experience as an Admissions Tutor is that it is wrong to assume that someone else is going to tell students how to manage their money. For some, especially mature students, this may seem patronising and unnecessary; for a few it may mean the difference between graduating with honours and not graduating with dishonour.

### When should financial advice be given?

Many universities now have highly effective and well resourced student support services who are willing to come and talk at Open Days or induction. Financial advice at the Open Day is useful, mainly because parents often accompany prospective students to these events. The most frequently asked questions by parents relate to accommodation worries, especially where a first year place in halls is not guaranteed, but parents at Open Days are often more attentive than students, and are particularly attentive when money is mentioned.

Further advice aimed more directly at students can be given at induction, but the students often suffer from information overload at this time, so advice about how to handle money should probably be repeated when they receive their cheque - in fact it might be useful to include written advice in an envelope along with the cheque.

Many first year courses contain a general module which covers key, transferable, study and Computing skills. I know of one course where the computing skills tutor teaches the students how to use a spreadsheet by using it to model their financial plan for surviving the year!

# A PAGE FOR STUDENTS

## BANK ACCOUNTS

Don't open a bank account and put your cheque into it! It is too easy to take it out again.

Open a building society interest-bearing deposit account and put your grant cheque, your student loan, your earnings and other income there. You won't earn much interest, as most pay their interest annually, but for example, Clydesdale Bank offer an Instant Access Savings account with a current rate, (at 1/10/98), of 6.75% with a quarterly interest interval.

Estimate your monthly income for the whole year. Be conservative: don't assume you will earn large amounts of money in the summer holidays unless this is a sure thing. Arrange a monthly standing order into a current bank account, and don't take any more out unless it is a real emergency. Real emergencies do not include being the only one who can't afford to go out on Friday night, they do include having to go home unexpectedly because someone is ill. In most cases, student services will be sympathetic to real emergencies. It is better to have no money for the last week of every month than no money from March to June.

## BUDGET

Work out a realistic budget: your bank will help, but ensure it is one which accounts for socialising as well as essentials. The most effective measure of this is to keep a financial diary for the first month at university, to gauge how much you are really spending on snacks, cigarettes (if you smoke), and going out with friends, as well as rent, bills and food. This will allow you to adjust your spending if necessary before it gets out of hand.

## COMPUTERS

Don't buy a brand new computer as soon as you get your student loan. If you decide you really do need one, then buy one second hand from the local papers but wait: the second-hand deals are unbelievable, and you can get a total system with up-to-date software for less than half you would pay in the shops if you hunt around for ex-demo models. Even better, tell your benevolent grandparents you are saving up for a second hand computer for Christmas - you may get lucky.

## BOOKS

Don't rush out and buy all the books on your book lists the first week of term: wait and

1. Look at them first, either in the library or the bookshop

2. Talk to other students and ask which books really are the best

3. Put your phone number on the second and third year notice boards with book sale requests

4. Try and get your parents to contribute: if your parents are willing and able to help you financially, they are more likely to want to spend money on books than booze

5. Ask your teaching staff which books they think are best, and tell them you haven't got much to spend.

## CREDIT CARDS

If your parents are really worried about you, ask them to think about an emergency credit card with a low credit limit. If your parents have credit cards, they can easily apply for another with, for example, a £100 limit for emergencies. Students themselves often find it hard to get a credit card, but if the limit is reasonable, and you trust

### CREDIT CARDS

ISSUER	TEL:	CARDTYPE	RATE %	APR%	ANNUAL	INT.FREE PERIOD
Capital One Bank	0800 669000	Visa	0.565%	6.9%	Nil	54 days
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	0.64%	7.9%	Nil	56 days
Royal Bank of Scotl	0800161616	Mastercard	0.64%	7.9%	Nil	56 days

### STORE CARDS

STORE	% per month (Direct debit)	%APR (Direct debit)	% per month (Other form of payment)	%APR (other form of payment)
John Lewis	1.39%	18%	1.39%	18%
Brit. Homes Stores	1.95%	26%	2.15%	29%
Marks & Spencer	1.97%	26.3%	2.07%	27.85

## A SECOND PAGE OF FINANCIAL ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

These pages can be photocopied

yourself enough, the current competition from American banks such as MBNA International, Advanta (allied with RBS), and Capital One offer interest rates fixed as low as 7% in some cases for over 6 months. This in most cases is an introductory rate, but compares with rates of over 20% for most UK MasterCard and Visa cards, and a whopping 23-30% for store cards such as Burton, Top Shop and Dixons. So avoid store cards like the plague. Any student feeling low can walk into a high street store and walk out with £500 worth of goods. The problem is the interest rate on those goods: check any Sunday broadsheet newspaper 'Money section' for current interest rates. At the time of writing, (1/10/98) some of the rates are as follows:

### MOBILE PHONES

If your parents want you to have one, let them buy it, on the pre-pay scheme. Otherwise - don't. Use public phone boxes even if you own a mobile phone, which again should be for emergencies only. Fellow students have been known to borrow a friend's phone, not end the call properly, and leave the student with an hour's call at 33p a minute. Don't be tempted to sign up for 5 years for a 10% discount: go to the library, or use the Internet and find out the best deals around.

And, if you have one, please turn it off in lectures.

### PHOTOCOPYING COSTS

Include these in your budget, and share with other students where possible. Anxious first year students have been known to copy every reference they can lay their hands on:

remember that copying something is not a substitute for reading it.

### SHARED BILLS

These are the most unpredictable of your budget, especially if you are not in university accommodation. Ask your accommodation office for advice: where possible ask to see previous bills to gauge some idea of the costs. Try and avoid accommodation that has a standard phone without a call metre which logs the calls: even an itemised bill can cause bitter arguments between the best of friends. These come quarterly when the damage is often done. Where heating is electric be careful: bar heaters eat up money. In winter, eat hot food, wear an extra layer, and keep down the bills.

### INSURANCE

If you have a computer, stereo or anything of value, someone else will value it too. Insure it: either ask your parents if you can go on their household insurance, or contact the students' union. This is money well spent: theft is on the increase, and many



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non-university student houses are not as secure as they should be.

### CLOTHES

Try and get them as presents. If you do buy them, pay cash. People often manage to suspend reality in a clothes shop, and money doesn't seem real until you get outside and realise how much you have spent. Better still, avoid the shops that sell tempting items.

### KEEP RECORDS

Keep track of what you actually do spend your money on: a floppy disc with records of main bills and other expenditure will stop things going too far. Always get a receipt if you use a cashpoint machine, and make sure you keep a record of how much is actually in your account, once cheques and debits have gone through.

### ASK FOR HELP

#### BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

Go to student services if you think you are in trouble, and find out early what services they provide. For example, if you need legal advice, it is often free to students at a certain time of the week. Many people get themselves into financial trouble on far greater incomes than yours, and the services are free. Even the bank will be sympathetic if you can show where your money has gone. Remember there is not much more disheartening to an academic member of staff than to lose a student for 'financial reasons', and this is the primary reason for students dropping out of university.

Oh - and enjoy yourself at the pub. □

□

# TUTORIAL IDEAS FOR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



**Mark Griffiths describes some simple ideas that he uses in First Year Tutorials. All are designed to help students develop important transferable skills.**

This short article contains five ideas to help tutors with ideas for first year tutorials. I do not for one minute claim they are all entirely novel as many people use variations on my suggestions below. The ideas are suggested because they all involve modest preparation for the tutor and are geared specifically towards transferable skills.

Although these have only been tested out within my own discipline (psychology) they should be equally useful to most disciplines.

## GENERAL STUDENT ISSUES

One idea you might like to try very early on with your first year tutees is to get them to read and then discuss some of the very short articles that appeared in the special "Student Issue" of *The Psychologist* (Vol 7, Part 10) which first appeared in October 1994. I have found that many of these articles provide discussion points that will engage students.

The ones I have found particularly useful for stimulating debate are the articles on life as a postgraduate (Sarab Johal and Matt Burkes), and the psychology of successful study (James Hartley). The best thing about the articles is that they are all short, written in a student-friendly way and to some

extent are reference articles in their own right.

## WRITING SKILLS

One tutorial that I do every year is to explore writing skills. I give my students an article I wrote for *The New Academic* called "Productive writing in the education system" (Vol 3, pp29-30, 1993; also reprinted in *The Psychologist*, Vol 7, pp.460-462, 1994). I have received good feedback from both colleagues and students about its content. The article contains some discussion points that can be used either in a tutorial setting or form part of a "writing workshop". The aims of the article are to equip the reader with tips for managing the writing process and to dispel the "myths" of writing. The article gives some general tips on how to make writing more productive (for example, the practice of a brief, daily regime rather than the more common practice of binge writing). The article also attempts to dispel the writing myths that (i) writing is inherently difficult, (ii) good writing must be original, (iii) good writing must be perfect preferably in a single draft, (iv) good writing must be spontaneous, (v) good writing must proceed quickly, (vi) good writing is

delayed until the right mood with big blocks of uninterrupted time available, (vii) good writers are born not made and (viii) good writers do not share their writing until it is finished and perfect.

By reading and discussing the article your students will not become better writers overnight. However, it may hopefully equip them with some tips and discussion points that may help in facilitating better writing. I often tie in issues surrounding "essay writing" into this tutorial.

## PRESENTATIONAL SKILLS

Many institutions now use student presentations as part of their assessment system and it is very easy to run tutorials by getting students to give presentations on any subject of their choice within the discipline.

One innovation I started five years ago was video recording student presentations on a camcorder. In one tutorial (usually about mid way through their first term) I get all my students to give short five minute presentations on any discipline-related subject of choice.

This is usually very nerve wracking for students at the time but nearly all say they benefit in the end. The second half of the tutorial is spent replaying the video and getting the students to



comment constructively on each person's presentation. Not only is this a good way of examining various issues in verbal and non-verbal communication but it also helps students to improve their presentational skills.

The exercise can be repeated later in the year (or even the following year) and the difference between presentations can be assessed.

### SUMMARIZING AND DISSEMINATION SKILLS

Many tutors often ask students to select any journal paper of their choice and to come back the following week to discuss it with the rest of the group. This tutorial exercise is similar, but is potentially far more interesting for the student. It can be set very quickly at the end of a tutorial for the students to complete for the following week's session.

Students are asked to select any study of their choice and to write a summary of it in the style of a tabloid newspaper like *The Sun* or *The News of the World*.

Alternatively they can write it in the form of a press release. They have to come up with an appropriate punning headline and sum up the paper in 200 words. Students do not always find this easy, but it is a very good exercise for getting them to understand the main thrust of a study and it lets the tutor know whether they have really understood what they have read (i.e. simplification without distortion). The following week, each student is asked to talk about the study they read and to then read out their "scoop". The rest of the tutorial can then be spent talking about some (or all) of the issues raised. If the tutor wants to make it more focused they can select the same paper for all of the students to read.

### TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

This is an exercise geared specifically towards psychology students but could be adapted for other disciplines. I tend to do this exercise within the first couple of weeks.

The students' first task involves them spending 10-15 minutes writing down what they think they will learn or gain from doing degree. After the pre-designated time, they each read out their replies. Almost always the students' responses are content based (e.g. "I'll learn more about personality/cognitive psychology/abnormal behaviour etc.).

It is at this point I give them Nicky Hayes' short two page article "*The skills acquired in psychology degrees*" which appeared in a 1989 issue of *The Psychologist* (Vol 2, pp 238-239).

For the first time students realise that their degree will give them the transferable skills of literacy, numeracy, computer literacy, interpersonal awareness, environmental awareness, problem-solving skills, information finding skills, presentational skills, critical evaluation, research skills, measurement skills, pragmatism and higher order analysis. It is in this early tutorial that we discuss each of these skills and plan how we can incorporate them into the tutorial schedule.

I hope that some of the ideas in this article provide readers with a few new ideas for first year tutorials. All of them I have used more than once and all seem to have gone down well with my students (at least that's what they say in their evaluations!).

Any feedback readers who use any of these ideas would be most welcome.

*Dr Mark Griffiths is Lecturer in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University*

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# REWARDING EXCELLENT TEACHING



***Mike Cook, Bill Millar, Derek Cottrell, Jane Thompson and Roger Lewis describe how their university developed a system which rewards staff who concentrate on becoming excellent teachers.***

## HOW IT CAME ABOUT

The University of Lincolnshire and Humberside (ULH), like many other 'new' universities, has an avowed commitment to teaching and learning. It was able to use the EHE initiative to support educational innovation and to extend this with endowment funding from British Petroleum. Along with other HE institutions, ULH also has to face current difficulties in the sector, including competing claims on diminishing resources and the need to maintain staff morale. Though much had been achieved in developing new learning methods and technology, the results of two audits showed the need for further concerted activity.

First, a HEQC audit report commented that *'staff who have concentrated on achieving teaching excellence would appear to have no promotional route open to them'*. It pointed out that neither had the University *'developed definitions of excellence in teaching, as a prerequisite of an effective promotions policy'*, something the audit team found *'surprising given the University's stated aim to be a "teaching first institution"'*.

These findings were reinforced by an audit the University commissioned on its uses of technology for learning, led (unusually) by an industrial partner (BP): *'it is surprising that there are no measures in place to formally reward*

*successful and innovative teaching'*. The audit team (echoing similar sentiments expressed in the HEQC report) recommended that *'a specification of the salient features of effective teaching should be drawn up, criteria agreed for assessment and procedures put in place for making the awards'*.

As a result of these reports, the Academic Board set up a working group: its task was to propose arrangements for defining, measuring, and rewarding excellent teaching.

## THE WORKING GROUP

Members of the *'Excellence in teaching'* working group were carefully selected through a process of

consultation initiated by the directors of Human Resources and Learning

Members represented the necessary range of interests: two deans, two heads of department, three lecturers with a track record of interest in teaching and learning, and the academic staff development manager. Attention was given to selecting people who would not only be representative but also likely to take part energetically and make contributions of high quality. Convened by the Human Resources Department, the group also included the Director of that department, but she felt the chair should be from Learning Development, since the initiative largely stemmed from the technology audit, which Learning Development had organised.

### HOW THE GROUP WORKED

Readers of *The New Academic* may be interested not only in the topic the group was asked to consider but also in how the group set about its work. Some key points are summarised in this section.

Many working groups have a long life but with little observable result. This group set itself a limited time span of six months (October 1996 - March 1997) and specific outcomes.

Much work was undertaken outside the meetings, of which there were four.

A detailed timetable was agreed early on, and was strictly observed.

Intensive consultation took place via questionnaires (to all academic staff), requests to submit individual views, and (later) by encouraging academic groupings to discuss key issues that were emerging. Four newsletters were circulated to all staff at key stages in the project.

A report was written, early in the group's life, setting out documented best practice in the sector. This was

undertaken by the staff development manager, who drew not only on published work but also on telephone and personal contacts, and internet sources. This helped the group attack some of the thorny issues surrounding the definition, measurement, and reward of teaching excellence.

As part of the process, two events were arranged, and well-attended: a seminar run by David Gosling of the University of East London, and a lecture by Graham Gibbs (at the last minute Graham was unable to attend, but he subsequently sent in a specially-prepared paper).

### DEFINITION OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The following definition evolved by the group was drawn from the desk research. It focuses not on teacher performance but on student learning:

**Excellent teaching is teaching which helps students to achieve high quality learning.**

The definition was elaborated via seven related principles, which included:

- ◆ The goal of teaching is the maintenance of high quality student learning
- ◆ Excellent teaching seeks to motivate students to engage with their subjects and to think deeply about them
- ◆ Respect for students and peers and a willingness to learn from them is a characteristic of the excellent teacher.

The initial draft definition survived the consultation largely unscathed. Interestingly, no-one proposed a fundamentally different definition, for example one focusing more on the traditional ingredients of teacher performance. (Several colleagues did, however, say that it was one thing to

define excellent teaching but another to find the resources to allow it to occur.)

### CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING EXCELLENCE

Staff were asked how they thought excellence in teaching should be identified. The suggested sources were: students, the teacher's peers, 'experts' (for example colleagues who have undergone funding council training in quality assessment), self assessment, assessment by academic managers. Not surprisingly, many suggested various combinations of these sources.

The most favoured was feedback from academic peers; the least favoured was feedback from academic managers. Students were viewed equivocally, perhaps from a fear that they might be over-influenced by fluent, humorous presentation techniques (though research evidence does not seem to bear this out). Some respondents felt that student performance should be used - as measured, for example, by assessment results or subsequent employment - but the difficulties in this were acknowledged.

### REWARDS

Colleagues were asked how excellence should be rewarded. The alternatives suggested were:

- annual cash payments
- consolidated promotion
- temporary promotion
- chairs, readerships, fellowships
- special funding/sabbaticals
- intrinsic reward
- recognition of team performance.

Much the most favoured route was consolidated promotion. This was not particularly favoured by the working group itself, which felt that renewable temporary promotion had much to commend it, with the built-in incentive to recipients to continue performing

excellently. Nevertheless the group decided to recommend the option endorsed by the consultation process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The group made a number of recommendations relating to its remit. These included:

- ◆ Formal provision should be made for recognising and rewarding excellent teaching
- ◆ The primary reward should be consolidated promotion
- ◆ Tools developed by the group (definition, criteria, guidance notes for staff) should be used
- ◆ Onus on making a case should lie with the individual staff member.

These were subsequently accepted by Academic Board and put into operation from Easter 1997 - a remarkable time-scale for higher education. The group cannot claim all the credit for this as parallel work on accelerated promotion was underway elsewhere in the University; it did, though, undoubtedly help with both the acceptance of the new processes and their implementation.

## FURTHER ISSUES

During its consultation the group identified a number of issues, beyond its remit, on which it felt action should be taken. It recommended the following actions.

- ◆ Define the criteria for 'competent' teaching (several respondents to the questionnaire spoke of this as a more pressing issue than the definition of excellence)
- ◆ Establish an in-house qualification based on these criteria
- ◆ Produce guidance for the observation of teaching and arrange any necessary training, for example in giving feedback (a majority of questionnaire respondents felt that feedback on

teaching performance should be an institution-wide process rather than one limited to staff applying for promotion)

- ◆ Identify ways in which a revised academic appraisal process can contribute to the development of effective teaching
- ◆ Identify ways in which group, as well as individual, excellence in teaching can be developed

The group also recommended that ways should be found to strengthen the management of teaching. As one questionnaire respondent put it:

*"The paper discussed 'rewarding excellence' whereas I would place the emphasis equally on 'managing for excellence', i.e. to make the promotion of effective teaching and learning a central part of the role of the Dean and Head of Department."*

These issues have yet to be discussed by Academic Board.

## DID THE GROUP SUCCEED?

In operational terms, the group certainly achieved its objectives. It met its remit, kept to the timetable, established and carried out effective consultation arrangements, had its main recommendations accepted, and saw them implemented. It also seems to have worked as a stimulating and productive group experience: about half the members have chosen to stay together, to analyse the processes the

group used, to publish accounts of its work (such as this one, with shared authorship) and to carry out further research. These group members feel the processes used by the group depart from the HE norm and are worth making explicit.

Some issues inevitably remain. Many staff, for example, failed to respond to the initial questionnaire; there was also little evidence of forums established at departmental level to debate these issues. All this perhaps reflects the lack of energy and trust prevalent in HE: some staff obviously felt the exercise was some kind of window-dressing. We also have to await discussion of the additional recommendations. As Graham Gibbs' paper stressed, these are all necessary parts of a concerted attempt to give student learning the status it deserves in universities. □

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*The authors were all members of the 'Excellence in teaching' working group. They can be contacted at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside and would be happy to provide further information on the activities described in this article.*

## COMING SOON...

### Engineering Quality Tutorials

John McGrath explains how an engineering approach to tutorials can enhance teaching.

### Deconstructing Familiar Things

Stuart Hannabuss discusses a course on postmodernism.



## DIP FOR TIPS

### 500 Tips for Academic Librarians

Sally Brown, Bill Downey, Phil Race

Library Association, 1997, £19.95

ISBN 1-85604-229-6

This book provides many more than 500 brief, practical, but obvious 'tips' for academic librarians, from para-professionals to directors. Most of the tips are not original, many are common sense. However, the book can serve to remind academic librarians how best to serve their community and introduce new librarians to the field.

The book is divided into seven chapters, which cover broad and diverse categories of librarianship, such as 'managing matters' and 'supporting students'. Each chapter divides the broad categories into more specific headings, under which 15-20 tips appear. The tips are brief - usually one sentence - with a short paragraph elucidating each. The book's major shortcoming is its attempt to cover the entire gamut of educational librarianship in less than 200 pages.

The tips aim to provide advice for academic librarians with all ranges of experience and duties. Thus, many of the tips may prove irrelevant and therefore useless to librarians in various positions. In addition, many are obvious - such as 'do your best for people' (p 78) and 'don't be afraid to ask' (p 31). One can't argue with tips such as these, but one also hopes that academic librarians already consider these points every day. The tips are often nebulous, making them applicable to any academic library, whether a small college, large university, British or American; but the vagueness tends to make them ineffective. Because of the organisation of the book, some of the tips repeat each other, such as 'listen to the moans'

# BOOKS

(under 'liaising with academics') and 'listen to the complaint' (under 'dealing with complaints').

I recommend this book as one to occasionally dip into for a tip, and for a new librarian to peruse, but an academic librarian should practise most of this advice without needing a reminder.

Sigrid Kelsey

Louisiana State University

## FINISHING OFF?

### Beyond the First Degree: Graduate Education, Life Long Learning and Careers

edited by Robert G. Burgess

SRHE & Open University Press

(1997) £18.99

ISBN 0 33519976 3

Are graduate and continuing education little more than bridges between the pick'n'mix of undergraduate certification and the Finishing School for academic or professional credentialing? This collection of papers is convincing in its claim that behind this question lies a raging debate. Its publication now, in a volume edited by an internationally

renowned authority in the field of post-graduate HE, is both timely and welcome. Timely, because there are few more prominent topics in the transformed landscape of political and educational debate than those of 'Capability' and 'Employability'. Welcome, as a fitting addition to an established and rightly admired, provocative series from the SRHE.

The book's ten papers, grouped according to the three themes signalled in the title, represent the proceedings of the 1997 Annual Conference of the SRHE, deliberately assembled here to 'stimulate discussion and promote dialogue'. The constituency of distinguished authors is drawn from researchers, policy makers and practitioners, between them providing comparative review of provision and initiatives in Europe, North America and Australasia.

And they do offer sometimes startling insights and propositions. These span issues as diverse as threats to quality and standards resulting from pressures of workloads and publishing demands on supervisors of graduate students; tensions generated between macro and micro policy frames as a consequence of institutional variations and instrumentalist demands; through to emerging problems of under-employment (to be distinguished from unemployment) amongst recently completing postgraduates (of whom 500,000 more are expected to enter the UK workforce between 1991 and 2001).

Despite its many positive features, the book misses one or two tricks. Perhaps most significant is a lack of a critical, cogent chapter to pull together emerging concerns from these essentially hermetic chapters; one longs to eavesdrop on the discussions they no doubt prompted at the conference itself. Additionally, none of the authors offers

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*Books for Review should be sent to*

Lesley MacDonald,

Books Editor,

Staff Development and Training,

University of Durham,

Old Shire Hall, Durham,

DH1 3HP

any sustained discussion of matters of funding of graduate and continuing education; a surprising omission, when politicians and institutional principals seem so ready to argue that the individual ought to make direct personal investment in her or his recurrent educational future. The book's (generally admirable) Index gives only 23 dispersed and unconnected page listings to 'funding' at all. Finally, for a book so future-focused, the use of graphic forms of informational display are oddly old-fashioned and limited.

*John Dolan*  
University of Derby

## BETTER COMMUNICATION?

This is a review of three different resources for improving communication or writing, very different in approach and medium. Behind them lie fundamental differences in how we help people to learn to improve their communication. I am careful here to avoid the term 'teaching communication skills', because I am not clear whether the concept of skill is useful, or whether people's performance in communicating can be improved by teaching. It seems to me that the development of the core/ transferable/ personal skills discourse has taken place without adequate analysis of the key concepts. However, here is not the place to explore that issue in depth, but

with an open mind to consider what would help us/you/your students to communicate better.

## Effective Business Communication

*Richard Blundel*  
Prentice Hall, 1998 £15.95  
ISBN 0 13 742701 8

This book illustrates the traditional approach. A standard textbook, wordy but broken up with lots of pictures and diagrams. This reflects the standard advice within the book about how to communicate. The book is very clearly written to go alongside a course in the subject, although for whom I am not clear. The back cover claims that is suitable for both GNVQ students and NVQ 5 - 18 year olds and senior managers?

If I were to run a traditional course on the subject as a compulsory module for students, this would be a useful textbook. But I am unlikely to, and the main reason is that I can not imagine myself learning from such a course or this book. Much of it is too simple for the top end of the identified market, and unrealistic for the bottom end. In the introduction the author recognises the need to make it realistic, but his solution, case-studies, leaves me cold and I wouldn't expect it to do more for students.

It is a good, thorough, accessible text book of its type but is uninspiring.

## Effective Writing

*Maxim Training*  
CD-Rom, details from Maxim Training  
([www.maxim.co.uk](http://www.maxim.co.uk))

This is a new tech version, a CD-rom with video (the previous version did not have the video). It provides a much more effective solution to the realism problem, although many would criticise the choice of a middle-aged white man as the model. Although I did not identify with him, it still made it more relevant. The CD format made it

far more attractive and I enjoyed browsing the sections of content far more than any book in this sort of area. Perhaps soon the technology will enable you to choose the model, as you do in many CD-rom games.

Here the focus is much more on writing in context. You can see how much more effective the model is when he plans his communication, thinks about the audience etc. Communication is more an activity in context than a subject to be learnt in isolation, and much more attractive. Designed for the training market, this is an expensive option, but one I would imagine many students using more thoroughly than the text-book.

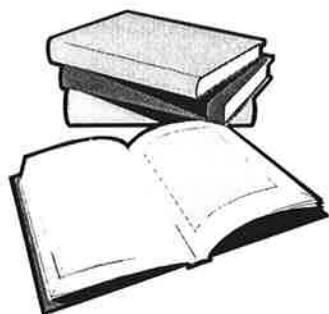
## The Power Process An NLP Approach to Writing

*Dixie Elise Hichman and Sid Jacobson*  
Anglo-American Book Company  
ISBN 1899836071 £12.99

This book is not aimed at students, or the training market, and maybe that is a significant difference. I am reading it and doing the exercises in it because I think they are helping me, in a way that I could not imagine either of the other examples doing.

This book applies some of the basic NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming) techniques to the writing process, although much of it would be applicable to other forms of communication. It is also a very good introduction to NLP.

The difference is that this approach places me as actor in the centre of the communication process, and makes me consider my role and goals for the communication, rather than focusing on external aspects. This of course would make it difficult to use in education, as one thing that students often find difficult to do is focus on themselves - they would much prefer the Blundel approach which keeps it all safely at



arm's length. This is a massive generalisation of course, but reflects my experience of the difficulty of teaching in a 'skills' context, and the fact that the psychological contract about the nature of education has not changed to take on board the current focus on personal development and skills.

Three very different approaches using different assumptions and media, and I clearly have my preference. These are three good examples of their type, and in reviewing them I can recommend them each in their different way. Together they raise the question again: what are we trying to do when we teach communication?

*David Andrew*  
University of North London

**GAMES STUDENTS CAN PLAY**  
**Using Games, Simulations and**  
**Interactive Case Studies -**  
**a practical guide**  
**for tertiary level teachers**

*Henry Ellington and Shirley Earl*  
SEDA Paper 101 (1998) £14.00  
ISBN 0-946815-94-1

Educationalists today are mindful that future employers are demanding students exit the education system with skills and knowledge above and beyond that of their chosen subject expertise. We in education are faced with the challenge of designing student learning experiences which foster the development and acquisition of a multiplicity of cognitive, affective, social and psycho-motor skills. This publication offers a range of solutions to some of these challenges by exploring the actual and potential use of games/simulations/case-studies to facilitate various aspects of learning.

The publication begins by outlining

the potential educational uses of games, simulations and case-studies, giving examples of where and how such strategies have been successfully accomplished. Perhaps what is most helpful is the comprehensive exploration of the educational strengths and weaknesses of using games/simulations/case-studies to facilitate student learning.

I found sections 4 and 5 particularly useful as they offer guidelines for either the modification of existing exercises or, for those brave enough to try it, the designing of new ones from scratch. Numerous examples are offered for illumination and, although many are based in subject areas in which I have no expertise, I nevertheless found them interesting and stimulating.

In order to maximise the potential of the booklet the authors have provided full documentation for three well-tryed exercises for use by the reader, all three of which have full copyright clearance. I found the first exercise would be suitable for use by my own students (student nurses), whilst the second would probably require some adaptation. The third (Power for Penang) however, is possibly too subject-specific and therefore unlikely to appeal to students from other disciplines. Nevertheless the concept, structure and format offer a basis for designing packages in other subject areas.

Whilst I have been an advocate of using games/simulations/case-studies for learning for a long time, I am conscious that little new work has been published in recent years, a state of affairs which is reflected in the extensive bibliography and references. Perhaps, therefore, this publication has been released at a most opportune moment, when we are seeking innovative ways to accomplish more effective learning with diminishing

resources.

If you have been searching for ways to improve and stimulate your teaching and to enhance your students' learning then this publication is well worth a read.

*Lyn Shipway*  
Anglia Polytechnic University

**SO YOU WANT TO BE A**  
**PROFESSOR EH?**

**The Academic Career**  
**Handbook**

*Lorraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes,*  
*Malcolm Tight*  
OU Press 1998  
ISBN 0 335 19828 7 (hb) £45  
0 335 19827 9 (pb) £14.99

This book gives a fairly wide-ranging briefing on what being an academic is really like, a range of 'how to do it' tips that should help a newcomer to the academic world to settle in (while making a few less elementary mistakes than the rest of us did), and some fairly helpful advice on how to progress in an academic career. Essentially the book provides the sort of information that most of us learned the hard way, through painful experience in our first couple of years as a lecturer.

The layout of the book, the way the chapters have been divided, and the use of 'boxes' to highlight and separate out blocks of material, make it relatively easy to locate information. However, I found the fairly large number of quotes in the body of the text sometimes disrupted its flow. In addition, some of the terminology may not be immediately understood by all readers, for example 'feminist pedagogy', 'epistemic assumptions' and 'gendered differences'.

The book contains much material



## ***A CASE OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING***

### **Flexible Learning in Action - Case Studies in Higher Education.**

*Edited by Rachel Hudson, Sian Maslin-Prothero and Lyn Oates*  
SEDA/Kogan Page (1997) £18.99  
ISBN 07494 2391 9

aimed specifically at, or strongly leaning towards, the female reader which, given the relatively low proportion of women in more senior academic grades, is probably appropriate. Some of its material is slightly more relevant to social sciences and humanities, than to physical or natural sciences, but I would have thought that most of the material is relevant to all disciplines.

Although amusing in places, the book is rarely light-hearted; it would probably have benefited from being more so. On occasion I also found myself interpreting as cynical its pragmatic advice on how to advance an academic career.

All in all though, this appears a well-researched, well-written book which could be usefully recommended to newly appointed lecturers, perhaps during induction courses. It would also be very useful reading for senior members of staff, such as heads of department, who can have an important role in the career development of their more colleagues. However, I suspect that the majority of established academics are likely to have a 'so what' reaction to it.

In conclusion, a useful book; 'wise is the man who learns from experience, and wiser still the man who learns from the experience of others'!

*Graham Clarke*  
University of Wales, Bangor

HE institutions across the world are under pressure to implement and increase aspects of flexible learning in their courses. Although there is a number of theoretical discussions of flexible or open learning available, there has been a shortage of examples of good practice, of what works and what does not work. This book is therefore timely. It presents thirty one different cases from the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States (although the majority are from the UK). The cases are usefully divided into four sections: flexibility for learners on campus; flexibility for work-based learners; flexible approaches to skills development (learning, study, technology, library etc. skills); and institutional strategies for supporting flexible learning.

In their introduction the editors discuss the different views of flexible learning described in the literature and outline four elements identified as key concepts underpinning flexible learning: access, control, responsibility and support. These elements are exemplified in the case studies. Each case study summarises the what, why and how of the approach, and the end result(s). Each case also has a brief reference section. It would have been useful if these had been collated at the end of the book into one reference section.

The strength of this book is at the same time its weakness. It is good to

have access to so many different case studies; however, the cases are all of necessity very short, and the reader is left with many questions still open and no one to answer them. The issues of flexible learning become clearer as one reads on and it is quite satisfying to find them also outlined by the editors in the conclusion of the book. This section could have been augmented with a more extensive reference back to each of the chapters.

The case studies cover a wide range of courses and institutions, across continents, and give a comprehensive overview of all the issues. This is an excellent practical reference book.

*Marjan Lousberg*  
Otago University, New Zealand

## ***RESOURCES FOR COURSES***

### **Resource-Based Learning**

*Edited by Sally Brown and Brenda Smith*

Kogan Page, Staff and Educational Development Series (1996)  
£18.99 Paperback  
ISBN 0 7494 1932 6

This is a very useful text which surveys a variety of approaches to resource-based learning in an accessible and often insightful way, by authors who clearly have had considerable experience in implementing what they are writing about. It provides an excellent coverage of the full range of media and means of delivery for resource-based learning, both low and high tech, text and computer based, and it provides discussions of strategies at all levels from the institutional down to implementation by individual staff. It does not attempt to review particular



packages, but rather provides guidance on how to incorporate resource-based learning into teaching and how to use it for supporting learning.

I do have a reservation about the style employed in this book and others in this series.

There are some academics who take a pride in saying things like "I've never used a bullet point in my life," where the words "bullet point" are said with the kind of sneer that Edith Evans made famous when referring to the handbag in which Ernest confessed he had been found.

I am not averse to using bullet points myself, particularly in presentations, but my concern is that their over-use can impoverish writing by providing a list of apparently equal assertions or prescriptions which disguise variations in value, truth or certainty and in a form

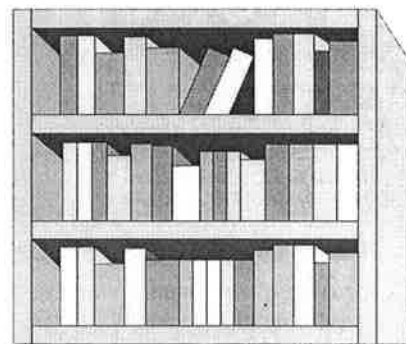
which seems to preclude qualification, comment or argument.

There are chapters in this book which, for this reviewer, fall into this trap, yet there is no denying that the bullet-point format allows an enormous number of practical points to be made briefly and accessibly.

There are, to be fair, also chapters written by authors who provide more joined-up argument, which enables them to be more critical and analytic.

There is comparatively little discussion of the theoretical base of the prescriptions provided by the authors and relatively few authors question the educational assumptions underpinning resource-based learning. If we accept that the purpose of the book (and the series) is to offer examples of what works in resource-based learning, it would be churlish to reprimand it for

*Ideas for your bookshelves...*



not doing what did not set out to do.

Despite an element of repetition which sometimes occurs through the book, I found it a very helpful text, which often prompted me to take up my pen to jot down notes of good ideas and sound principles.

*David Gosling*  
University of East London

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# FORUM

The page for readers' letters:  
contributions always welcome



There can be few in Higher Education who would not dispute the statement that for HE it did not require legislation to effect the practice of equality of opportunity. Indeed, there is a view that educating people is about improving people so as to engender an equality of opportunity. It is the *raison d'être* of HE. Legislation has however provided a welcome focusing of the effectiveness and efficiency of existing practices. There has been an emphasis on equal opportunity aspects, of advertising, recruitment, selection of students and of staff. Personal development strategies have brought welcome improvements in individual behaviour and sensitivities. Equality of opportunity in the curriculum is less well understood, but serious attempts have been made by many HE institutions to provide for those in academic deficit so that they may have every equal chance of success. Open Access centres and Drop-in arrangements for basic subjects like Maths, Statistics, IT, English and other languages undoubtedly help users achieve minimum standards and keep apace of their enrolment cohort.

Traditional methods of assessment, unseen time-constrained written examinations have always been conducted in passive pursuance of equal opp. ideals. They probably were not constructed for this purpose, but having all examinees in exactly the same environment, with identical pressures of time, choice or task, closes the door to risk of allegation of any unfair advantage. Project work, assignment and course work assessment is different. Without resorting to allegations against the individual of cheating, there remains

an issue of equal opportunity. Quite simply, for private work off campus, do all students have, or have access to an equally supportive environment? This applies to both full time and part-time study. Not all employers can, or are prepared to, afford resources for employees even though they may be the main sponsor. These situations are beyond the control of the college tutor, but it helps to be mindful of them.

The tutor does however have control over the *viva voce*. To many this is an anachronism. In simple practical terms, it is difficult to envisage how the *viva voce* can be sustained with so many more students in HE. In human resource terms, one-to-one assessment cannot be cost-effective for undergraduate and post-graduate courses. On the other hand, such assessment for research degrees has to be retained on academic grounds.

How does the *viva voce* fare in terms of equal opportunity? Putting to one side all issues of human behaviour regarding gender, race, age etc, does the academic content of the *viva voce* meet curricular ideals of equal opps? How many institutions have documented protocols of the purpose and conduct of a *viva voce*? Is the content, i.e. the questions, the probing, specifically tailored to the examinee or generically structured to an outcome? If the latter, why? If the former, what guarantee does the examinee or the system have that each opening question is pitched at the appropriate level so that follow-up questions and answers remain at a notionally correct academic level? If *viva voce* outcomes are expressed in pass/fail terms, on how

many occasions would the outcomes be reversed if candidate A had been asked candidate B's questions and vice versa? These are really serious issues for one examiner who meets all students. They are exacerbated when multiple examiners meet fractions of a cohort, the 'luck of the draw' effect of which has consequences even before the assessment begins.

Race (1995, 1996), Grant (1996) and Mathews (1996) all recently provided very useful treatises on the subject of assessment. With the possible exception of Race (1995), the subject of *viva voce* examinations has received minimal attention, but in that report there are certain warnings. In one section there is a bold claim that "Candidates may be examined fairly", but the agenda has to be set and adhered to. Otherwise it becomes "dangerously easy and unfair to students". But this is as close as the argument gets to equality of opportunity. In an age of increased student empowerment and more easily invoked appeals procedures, and unashamedly less than altruistic reasons, shouldn't those concerned at least reflect on their practice of the *viva voce*?

Mike Hayes.

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*Dr Mike Hayes was at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, when he sent us this contribution. He has since retired to a well-earned rest. We apologise to Dr Hayes for the inordinate delay in publishing this letter.*

# New SEDA Publications



## Facets of Mentoring in HE, Vol 2

Edited by Hazel Fullerton

ISBN 1 902435 00 1

This second volume shifts the focus from awareness of the value of mentoring to mentoring for other groups such as associate lecturers and to work-based learning and the need for mentoring of managers. The wide range of approaches are examined more closely and grouped into cognate roles. This volume also considers the emerging role of the 'distance mentor' and the opportunities offered by the Internet and computer mediated conferencing.

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# Conference Announcement



The SEDA Conference Committee is pleased to announce that its Spring '99 conference will be held jointly with the Society for Research into Higher Education.

The conference will take place from  
Wednesday 14th until Friday 16th April 1999.

The venue will be Stoke Rochford Hall in Lincolnshire  
and the theme will be exploring the links between  
educational development practice and research.

Further details will be distributed to the SEDA membership as  
they become available. Please contact the SEDA Office for  
more information or see our WWW pages.

<http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/confmenu.html>

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3rd Annual Conference for Staff and Educational Developers

**C**ontinuing **P**rofessional **D**evelopment  
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*For a full report following the above event in December please  
see the SEDA WWW site in early '99.*