



Teaching Matters

Teaching and Learning Centre

TLAC REVIEW SPECIAL

Issue 15, September 2004

In this issue

In the 2003-04 academic year an internal review team reviewed seven of the School's teaching departments/institutes on behalf of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. The review team's reports conventionally end with a list of recommendations for the department and for bodies within the School. But the exercise also brings to light much interesting and innovative practice – the stuff of commendation rather than recommendation.

This issue of Teaching Matters draws out a number of examples of interesting practice that caught our attention in this year's reviews. It has been compiled by Liz Barnett (TLC) and Simeon Underwood (TQARO). In case any departments reviewed feel left out, there has been no systematic attempt to ensure representation. Nor is there any agenda here, hidden or otherwise, other than celebrating good practice. If we haven't picked up on interesting examples of departmental practice that may well be of interest to other departments, please contact Liz Barnett so they can be included in forthcoming issues.

Contacts

Dr Liz Barnett, Director, Teaching and Learning Centre, room H417, ext 6623, email l.barnett@lse.ac.uk

Simeon Underwood, Senior Assistant Registrar, Teaching Quality Assurance and Review Office, room H300, ext 6253, email s.underwood@lse.ac.uk

Curriculum reform and development of new courses and programmes

All the departments reviewed this year have been reviewing and developing their curricula. In some cases this has included the launch of new programmes, in others, more modest changes. Change has been prompted not only by research and disciplinary developments but also by student

demand and advice from practitioners and other external advisors.

Anthropology has developed two new MSc programmes: MSc in Anthropology of Learning and Cognition which ran for the first time in 2002/3 and in Law, Anthropology and Society which will be offered for the first time in 2004/5 and will be taught jointly with Law. The Department continues to update its undergraduate curriculum through development of new options. New titles include Anthropology and Human Rights, the Anthropology of Civil Society and State and Citizenship.

In Economics, the MPhil/PhD in Economics has been replaced by the new MRes/PhD, designed primarily to take students graduating at BSc level directly into research training. An extended essay requirement has been included in the MSc Econometrics and Mathematical Economics programme; and the two-year MScs in Global Market Economics and Public Financial Policy have been restructured to take account of the varied economics backgrounds of the students. The undergraduate degrees have been modified to bring the mathematics and statistics content in line with its requirement for A level mathematics on entry from 2003/4.

Economic History has expanded numbers on its joint programmes with Economics. At the postgraduate level, the department has added new courses to its MSc in Global History. The Department has also noted research development benefits from the programme, including several staff becoming actively involved in an international Global Economics History Network. The Department has also made several changes to its MSc Economic History programme, separating out the MSc (research) as a distinct programme, and adapting the core programme to match that of the new Global History programme, with a shorter thesis, less emphasis on quantitative methods, and additional research-led options.

Industrial Relations has modernised and renamed its MSc degrees. This has included better integration of core courses and the development

of new international and comparative options. At the undergraduate level, courses have also been renamed to give greater emphasis to the management career aspirations of students and to the shifting focus of employment relations and human resource management towards the organisational level. The Department is also significantly expanding its short course provision, including a summer school, discussions to launch some executive education with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and practitioner seminars and conferences.

In IIM, the CEMS (Community of European Language Schools) Masters Programme has been developed to include a week long seminar before the start of the Michaelmas Term and work in groups to complete a business project while the students are at their exchange school.

OR has undertaken some developments to its MSc course, including new options, and the introduction of a consultancy skills sessions in one of the core courses.

The Language Centre has revised its language degree options, and increased them to enable students to take a language option in each of the three years of their undergraduate degree. It has massively increased the number and range of both English for Academic Purposes provision and modern foreign language certificate courses and added extra languages including Greek and Norwegian.

Teaching and learning strategy

The Economic History Department has a clearly articulated teaching and learning strategy, which is characterised as an “apprenticeship model”. Students are seen in the role of “apprentice Economic Historians”. The key characteristics of the Department’s approach include:

- reference to practitioner research from the first year;
- active encouragement to students to consider the potential relevance of “off topic” information, to see how different elements of their courses might link and build on each other;
- encouragement for students to make use of such material when they address questions provided by tutors;
- increasing expectation over the three years that students will start to pose their own interesting questions - with this forming the foundation for third year study;
- the expectation that by the third year, all students will be accessing primary sources, archival resource and primary data, much of

which they will have found for themselves, rather than having it provided through reading lists.

Case-based teaching, group work and applied projects

IIM makes considerable use of case studies in its teaching. Two members of staff have benefited from the Teaching Development Fund to prepare case studies. These projects have also provided interesting work for current and former students who have helped with case study preparation/production.

A key feature of MSc programmes in OR is the Summer Project. These projects provide students with an ideal opportunity to apply their course material to live practical issues in a wide variety of organisational settings. Organisation of the project is a major challenge for the Department, but capitalises on its extensive network of practitioners, and a dedicated member of staff to match students to clients. The final project report has three components: the client report, the academic dissertation and a reflective commentary.

In Industrial Relations, several lecturers make use of syndicate groups in their teaching, and also encourage or require students to undertake preparatory work for class in study groups. Over recent months, the Department has been improving its physical appearance, with a newly designed administrative office, welcoming to staff and students. The department has also just revitalised its departmental student study space, in keeping with departmental teaching, such that it becomes a conducive environment for team and collaborative working.



Bridging element for a joint programme

Several departments run joint programmes. These programmes can face difficulties of effective integration between the distinctive disciplinary elements. Anthropology has successfully addressed this difficulty in its joint programme with DESTIN by:

1. organising a 'link' seminar which runs throughout the Michaelmas and Lent terms;
2. providing additional tutorial supervision from a development anthropologist, which includes specialised guidance for reading and dissertation work;
3. assigning a member of staff in each of the two departments to be responsible for liaison.

Workload allocation for large intake courses

The Economics Department takes account of course size in determining lecturer workload. Lecturers responsible for the very large undergraduate courses are given a double allocation in the departmental work allocation model for running these courses. This is in recognition not only of the potentially stressful nature of lecturing to very large classes, but also the additional responsibility of managing a large team of class teachers effectively.

Use of technology in teaching

Over the last three years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of courses using WebCT as part of their course delivery and student learning support provision. It is therefore not surprising that several of the departmental statements included reference to development in this area. In addition, many of the student sessions indicated student appreciation of such developments. At the minimal level of "resource provision" WebCT was often seen as providing quick and easy access to key course resources, and providing a clear structure to courses and programmes. As the following examples demonstrate, some staff are now going beyond this baseline provision and using WebCT in more exciting and experimental ways.

The Language Centre has been actively involved in outreach projects supported by technology. The programme with Archbishop Michael Ramsay Technology College in Camberwell has proved so successful that it was used as the model for a HEFCE funded project Innovation Exchange that will encourage university language faculties and centres to set up links with schools using IT. In the

LSE project, a group of first year LSE students was matched with a group of year 12 students doing AVCE in Business French. LSE students acted as mentors and met up with AMRTC students on a twice-termly basis. Initial contact was made by a video swap, and web cams will be used in the future. Another venture arising from this project is the Society, Arts and Language in a Virtual Learning Environment project. A virtual artist in residence scheme was set up using the framework of WebCT to put a French artist, Michel Herreria, who specialises in politicised animation and integrating language and the visual, in touch with students.



Anthropology has made major advances in the use of technology to enhance its teaching. This has been stimulated by a substantial grant from JISC NSF for a project being undertaken with the University of Columbia, New York. This year the students have benefited from a number of experimental teaching approaches that aim to give them more insight into ethnography fieldwork. A more detailed article on this project will be appearing in the next issue of Teaching Matters.



The Economics Department notes considerable benefits to be gained from using a number of innovative elements of WebCT for teaching large courses. The first experiments were undertaken by Drs Margaret Bray and Jonathan Leape on

EC201. Their work received national recognition and very positive feedback from students. Their approach includes weekly problem sets, which students respond to on-line so that class teachers can see how they have done prior to class. These are supported with face-to-face teaching, on-line worked examples, and further input (on-line) where necessary from the lecturers. The EC201 approach is now being extended to the 2004 Introductory September course for MSc students, and possibly to EC102 (Economics B) in the coming year. The September course should provide very interesting evidence on the use of diagnostic tools, and tailored teaching to address particular problems that students face.

Broadening the assessment mix

A common theme from the old-style QAA reviews was the lack of variety of LSE assessment methods, and the School's strong adherence to closed examinations. Whilst the current round of reviews has not indicated a major move to more diverse assessment there are nonetheless some interesting examples.

Operational Research uses a diverse range of assessment methods in addition to sit down exams. These include computer-based projects, essays, the "client-centred" project and critiques of published papers.

IIM includes use of group case study presentations as one element of assessment in an MSc course. The Department has developed clear guidelines for the assessment, which is appreciated by students, though they are keen to see their work being given higher weighting. Students see the case study assessment as a useful opportunity to gauge their skills development.

Language learning by definition requires varied assessment procedures. In the last review of the Centre, it was starting to experiment with language portfolios. These have now become a standard part of MFL degree option assessment. The Centre is now exploring ways of getting students to build their portfolios on-line, thus improving ease of access to portfolio materials for external examiners.

Student study support

Once again, the TLAC reviews have highlighted wide variations in the ways that different departments provide support to students beyond formal classroom sessions. Given recent changes to the Codes of Practice on Teaching and Learning for both undergraduates and taught

Masters, this is an area the reviews will continue to monitor with interest. There are a variety of models evolving, from continued emphasis on personal tutoring, through to different ways of supporting groups of students who need further assistance.

Anthropology continues to provide high quality tutorial support to students at both Undergraduate and Masters levels.

In Operational Research the Departmental Tutor plays a key role in identifying students who are facing difficulties with their studies in the first year, meeting with each student to discuss his/her progress at the end of the Michaelmas and Summer Terms.

Several students commented on the personal and supportive nature of teaching provided by the Language Centre, which may in turn provide important pastoral and social support for students struggling not only with their English but also with cultural adaptation to LSE, London and the UK.

The Language Centre has set up highly productive collaborative arrangements with several departments in order to make its English for Academic Purposes provision as relevant as possible to student needs. In the OR review, LC involvement in induction was noted as an aspect of provision that students appreciate. The Centre has a proactive relationship with students in Information Systems, contacting any students identified as having potential English language problems on the basis of an early diagnostic essay. A similar approach is working with Social Psychology. In the Language Centre review, students on the LLM were particularly vociferous in their commendations about the specialist Law language support provided. The Language Centre is also developing a video "lecture bank" in collaboration with some departments, building up its resources for subject specialist listening and comprehension skills.

The Economic History Department has made special efforts to understand the needs of students with disabilities. This was led by the departmental manager, who attended several of the disability awareness sessions offered by TLC and then arranged for a special session for the Department.

The Economic History Department uses a PhD student who has recently completed the Department's MSc to act as an MSc "student advisor" in the first month of the academic year. Students respond to this very positively, finding the adviser easy to approach, with useful insight

and understanding of the programme from a student perspective.

Industrial Relations ensures that on its undergraduate courses, students from the Department are put into the same class for small group sessions, in order to build a sense of cohesion amongst the cohort.

The Economics Department provides additional office hours to undergraduates in the run-up to exams. These “revision” sessions are run by a group of the best class teachers, selected on the basis of TQARO survey scores and other student feedback.

In Industrial Relations, recognition of problems around essay writing and around one core course amongst a particular group of students led one tutor to offer regular “question and answer” sessions, open to all. Large numbers (including, but not exclusively made up of, those seen to be experiencing difficulties) turned up to these sessions. The sessions helped with student confidence and appear to have kept the number of resits to a minimum.

IIM offers MSc and undergraduate students a presentation skills course. This optional course is very popular with students and regularly oversubscribed. In part due to the positive feedback from this course, TLC has organised a central version run by the same trainer.

Careers development and student employability

Following on from student support, several departments have been looking for ways to strengthen career development provision and to capitalise on the newly revitalised LSE Careers Service, which is keen to work directly with them to integrate careers development into programmes.

IIM has introduced specialist careers advice for its MSc students. The LSE Careers Service has contracted an adviser to IIM for one morning per week. He runs a drop-in surgery as well as organising talks and presentations of topics such as work permits and interview skills.

The Economics Department is setting up its own alumni network. To start the ball rolling, it undertook its own survey of MSc graduates. Of the 229 respondents who gave employment details, 18% were engaged in PhD studies, 12% in academic positions, 24% in the public sector and 46% in private sector organisations. They include posts as economists in banking, financial

services, consultancy, public bodies and NGOs. Since undertaking the survey, the network has been opened to older alumni, many of whom are in influential positions in these fields.

PhD programmes and PhD student support

The School is placing considerable emphasis on the need to improve PhD submission and completion rates. TQARO and TLC are both actively involved in research and development work in this area. Such work can usefully build on existing examples of good practice within departments, such as those outlined below.

The Economic History Department has a rigorous approach to PhD student upgrade. At the end of their first year, students are expected to present their thesis ideas in a seminar, which is well attended by academic faculty and fellow students from all years. Their work is then considered by members of a Graduate Review Committee. This comprises five members of the Department, with one “lead” reader. Each upgrade paper is read by two committee members, one of whom is “lead reader” and the other available for comment if there are particular queries or problems. Students have a live “viva” with three committee members, one of whom is “neutral”, having not read the work. If the supervisor is one of the readers then he/she withdraws for part of the review meeting to enable the student to raise any comments on their experience to date more freely. This live viva approach acts as a useful early indication of the nature of the viva (an assessment approach not necessarily familiar to all students). The Department takes tough decisions on upgrade at this stage, and clearly sets out requirements for students who have not reached the required standard at that stage. At the other end of the PhD process, the Department has an impressive record. Of 28 PhD students who have completed since 2000, 18 have succeeded in securing academic posts.

The Industrial Relations Department organised a European Doctoral Network conference this September. The motivation was to encourage current doctoral students, and recent post docs, to build up strong personal networks among the rising generation of scholars, and also to give them the opportunity of greater contact with established scholars across the EU. Up to twelve doctoral students who are nearing completion were invited to give plenary sessions based on a 4,000 - 6,000 word account of the most interesting findings of their research. The Department has been pleasantly surprised to discover how keen their own students are on this, and also to find

that visiting doctoral students and post docs from European institutions and at LSE are also very enthusiastic to attend.

Anthropology PhD students particularly appreciate the weekly PhD research seminar, at which students present their work and get feedback from peers.

Anthropology has strengthened the monitoring of its PhD students and is moving to termly rather than annual monitoring to ensure that any students who are facing difficulties are picked up quickly.

PhD students as teachers

The review of Economics brought into clear focus the key role played by PhD students in teaching at the LSE. The Department noted that in 2003/4 a team of 75 class teachers taught 98% of undergraduate classes. Whilst not all departments have such a high figure, virtually all of them employ PhD students to teach with the result that training and support remains a priority issue.

The Economics Department is developing an impressive record on uptake and impact of training for its postgraduate students who teach. For the past four years, the Department has run subject specialist class teacher training. Dr Margaret Bray, who also teaches on one of the large undergraduate courses, runs the programme, in conjunction with TLC. The course is well attended (where there was minimal uptake when class teachers were only offered the central course, which they found largely irrelevant). It incorporates specialist language tuition for those that require it, organised in conjunction with the Language Centre. During the Michaelmas Term, new class teachers are observed, and where problems are apparent, further training is provided. The Michaelmas and Lent surveys are carefully considered, and where necessary, new class teachers employed in some cases. Where class teachers need to be employed again, and their teaching is considered below average, a special programme is put in place, in conjunction with TLC. These various approaches to training and quality assessment have led to some pleasing results, with a drop from 14% to only 4% of class teachers achieving an overall rating average on the TQARO surveys of less than 3.

The Economics Department has for the past four years developed its use of “tutorial fellows”. These are salaried appointments designed to bridge the gap between class teachers and temporary lectures. They provide an interesting career development opportunity for PhD students nearing

completion, who have also demonstrated that they are excellent class teachers. During the review, in interviews with tutorial fellows, they themselves outlined the following benefits of this role:

- tutorial fellowships “provide you with a good grounding in basic economics”;
- they promote useful social interaction for PhD students;
- they act as useful CV building opportunities;
- they “improve your ability to explain ideas precisely and to a non-technical audience” and generally help to improve communication skills;
- they “enabled me to stop worrying about my presentations, and helped me present thesis ideas much more clearly”;

As “new” members of staff, tutorial fellows are invited to the central new staff induction training. Again, we are now looking at “customising” the training we offer, as these new staff already have considerable class teaching experience, and have for the most part been through the departmental training. The areas where they particularly need some support are lecturing and personal tutoring. The central provision will be adapted accordingly to meet these needs.

The use of teaching fellowships is also working well in Industrial Relations.

Economic History has developed its support for class teachers. There is a departmental mentor, who runs initial briefing sessions for class teachers, and provides support and back up if they face any difficulties, or if they are seen to be under-performing from the student perspective. The Department is starting to experiment with teaching observation, following the model used in Accounting and Finance. It also augments the central class teacher teaching prize, in order to offer more prizes to its (often excellent) class teachers.

IIM has developed a manual for class teachers to help with FAQs and School and IIM procedures.

Quality assurance and enhancement

The School's quality assurance strategy makes departments the locus of responsibility for this area. It does not attempt to prescribe how departments should arrange to monitor and review their courses and programmes. The result is that departmental arrangements are varied and tailored to individual departmental cultures as these examples show.

Industrial Relations is placing some emphasis on developing and demonstrating staff teaching expertise. The Convener and some other departmental members have joined the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and several PhD students who are also teaching for the Department are engaged on the HEA-accredited LSE Teacher Accreditation Programme.

OR has an Advisory Board that meets twice each year. Its role is to advise on the curriculum, to ensure that content is kept up to date and relevant. Board members include heads of analytic groups in government, private and public sector organisations, regulators and consultancy firms.

OR holds post-mortem meetings with MSc students at the end of the Michaelmas Term and again in September when the programme is completed. IIM also runs feedback sessions for MSc students.

Industrial Relations uses the results of the School teaching survey to identify those courses that students respond to particularly well, and actively encourages cross fertilisation of ideas, through both discussion and team teaching

Teaching prizes for Graduate Teaching Assistants

Several of the departments reviewed take part in the annual “teaching prize” scheme for Graduate Teaching Assistants promoted by the Teaching and Learning Centre. A number of departments augment the number of prizes and value of the prizes awarded, all of whom are included in the TLC Teaching Matters “awards” listing, and on the Teaching and Learning website. In addition, in Government, the Convener informs all colleagues of the prize-winners and encourages them to mention the awards when they write references.

Congratulations to the following 2003-04 GTA prize winners:

Economic History

David Chambers
Kerry Hickson

Economics

Dave Donaldson
Emmanuel Frot
Nektaria Karakatsani
Daphne Momferatou
Manuel Palazuelos-Martinez
Marco Schonborn

Geography & Environment

Jacob Jordaan

Government

Garrett Brown
Daniel Linsker
Heidi Matisonn

Industrial Relations

Iain Reid

Information Systems

Sarah Thatcher

Interdisciplinary Institute of Management

Ana Canhoto
Nilesh Dattani
Ludmila Striukova

International History

Svetozar Rajak

International Relations

Kirsten Ainley
Andreas Antoniadis
Alvaro Mendez

Language Centre

Natalia Bershadski
Anna Giuffria
Rafael Penas-Cruz

Law

Robert Craig
Arle Loughnan
Christopher Ruane
Charles Webb

Mathematics

Gillian Colkin
James Spelling
James Ward

Media and Communications

Ana Langer

Operational Research

Mohamed Reda Lebcir
Kristine Rasmussen

Philosophy

Vincent Guillin
Gary Jones
Leah McClimans

Social Policy

Babken Babajanian
 Maria Carmen Huerta
 Geraldine Mitchell-Smith
 Daniel Nieto Michel
 Michael Shiner

This programme is available in electronic format and, on request, in alternative formats. Please contact the TLC Administrator (tlc@lse.ac.uk).

Social Psychology

Cathrine Jansson
 Olivia Rogers
 Joseph Ungemah

Sociology

Matthias Benzer

Statistics

Meghann Mackenzie

Teaching Quality Assurance and Review Office Contacts

The TLAC reviews are run by TQARO. The officer responsible for them is Louisa Green, who took the administrative lead in six of the seven reviews this year (in her first year of employment at the School!). She was supported by Debbie Heath, who undertook most of the logistical work, and Caroline Wilson, who has put the statistical data used for the reviews into an altogether more authoritative footing. We are very grateful to all three of them for their efforts.
Simeon Underwood and Liz Barnett

Simeon Underwood

Senior Assistant Registrar, TQARO
 Room H300, Ext 6253,
 Email s.underwood@lse.ac.uk

Louisa Green

Assistant Registrar, TQARO
 Room H300, Ext 7762, Email l.j.green@lse.ac.uk

Deborah Heath

Administrative Assistant, TQARO
 Room H300, Ext 7805, Email d.heath@lse.ac.uk

Alison Taylor

Administrative Officer (Surveys), TQARO
 Room H300, Ext 6765, Email alison.taylor@lse.ac.uk

Teaching and Learning Centre Contacts

Dr Liz Barnett

Director, TLC
 Room H417c, Ext 6623, Email l.barnett@lse.ac.uk

Rebecca Trumble

Administrator, TLC
 Room H417, Ext 6624, Email r.j.trumble@lse.ac.uk

Dorota Glowacka

Administrative Assistant, TLC
 Room H417, Email tlc@lse.ac.uk

Dr Peter Levin

Educational Developer (Student Support) and
 Consultant in Teaching Methods
 Room H417b, Ext 7346, Email p.levin@lse.ac.uk
<http://learning.lse.ac.uk>

Neil McLean

Educational Developer / LSE Teacher Accreditation
 Programme Tutor
 Email n.d.mclean@lse.ac.uk

Dr Kate Exley

Visiting Adviser for Graduate Teaching Assistants /
 LSE Teacher Accreditation Programme Tutor
 Email k.a.exley@lse.ac.uk

Jean Jameson

Adviser to students with disabilities/dyslexia
 Room A40, Ext 6034, Email j.m.jameson@lse.ac.uk

Sue Haines

Disability Office Administrator
 Room A40, Ext 7767, Email s.haines@lse.ac.uk