

# Teaching Matters

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An early-spring welcome to Teaching Matters, the newsletter for LSE's teaching staff produced by the Teaching and Learning Centre. In this edition we've got two special features, one on the research led teaching conference hosted at LSE in December and another on the funding available for teaching and learning development. There are also reports about the different ways in which students are being encouraged to develop core communications skills and one department's approach to programme and course level review.

## Funding for teaching and learning development

**Whether you want to redesign your curriculum, try a new approach to student orientation, commission a facilitator for a departmental event or attend some external training, the Teaching and Learning Centre has funds that could help**

The Teaching and Learning Centre administers funding for a wide range of activities. Its core fund, the Teaching and Learning Development Fund, has a total this year of £36,000 available to support projects aimed at developing innovation in teaching and learning at all levels, from undergraduate through to PhD programmes. In addition, there are Pre-Major Review Grants, External Programmes Fee Support, a Departmental Training and Development Fund, and a Heads of Departments

Fund. These last two can be used by Heads of Departments to develop their own skills in academic/research leadership and departmental strategy development (including team awaydays) focused on both teaching and research.

Find out more at the 'Funding for teaching and learning development' page on our website ([www.lse.ac.uk/tlc](http://www.lse.ac.uk/tlc)). And read on to find out how some departments have benefited from these funds in recent years.

### A fieldtrip to a Norfolk pilgrimage site for Anthropology students

Walsingham, an important Anglo-Catholic shrine centre in north Norfolk, is a site to which Dr Fenella Cannell



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHLOE EVANS

► had long wanted to take students on her Anthropology of Christianity course. Rich in religious significance – the site contains a Roman Catholic shrine (the Slipper Chapel) as well as the Anglican one, and is the centre of many claimed miracles – a visit there would give students the opportunity to investigate at first hand the experience and meaning of contemporary Christian pilgrimage.

Funding was provided from the Teaching and Learning Development Fund to enable 30 students to travel to and from Walsingham and to stay overnight at the pilgrims' accommodation on

the site of the Anglican shrine.

The visit was planned for late February 2010, and all of Dr Cannell's Anthropology of Christianity students attended – a broad mix themselves of Roman Catholics, traditional Anglicans, Greek Orthodox and Moslem, as well as atheist and agnostic. Background preparation included a special lecture by Professor Simon Coleman of the University of Sussex, who is currently conducting his own anthropological research at Walsingham, the planning of tasks such as photography and effective note-taking, and guidance on ethical standards in interviewing.

Field reports and interview transcripts, as well as photographs from the weekend, are available at the Anthropology Department's Walsingham Fieldtrip webpage. As the reports show, this was an immensely rewarding experience for the students and indeed for Dr Cannell, whose family also made the visit: 'I enjoyed having a more personal period of time to spend with my students, and felt that I was able to share with them the sort of transformative and challenging experience which teaching in a high-level university should ideally be.'

## First year Criminology students get their own guide to academic learning

Dr Coretta Phillips and Dr Anne Brunton in the Social Policy Department wanted to produce a user-friendly guide for students making the transition from A-level learning to undergraduate studies, with particular emphasis on the analysis and use of criminological sources. The aim was to equip students with the skills to read widely and critically, and to guide them towards preparing coherent and insightful arguments using supporting evidence and the appropriate conceptual or theoretical frameworks.

In its launch year (2009/10), the guide was introduced to students early in the Michaelmas Term, before their first assignment and first essay were due, and a 'refresher' session was delivered towards the end of Lent Term where any difficulties in using it could be addressed. Thereafter, the guide was made available on Moodle and for general use among relevant departments. Since launch, the guide has been informally assessed by the 2010/11 cohort of students and supplemented with a peer marking essay exercise in the Lent Term and a mock examination in the Summer Term.

Funding was provided through the Teaching and Learning Development Fund to cover a PhD student's time to draft the guide, and to consult with Dr Phillips and Dr Brunton in producing the final version.

*'It made clear what kinds of essays are expected in this department in terms of structure and argument.'*

*'Answered all my questions, saving me time from either emailing or seeing tutors to ask common questions.'*

## An inaugural conference for Rerum Causae

When the editors of the established LSE Philosophy Society journal Rerum Causae set about planning the 2010 edition, they hit upon the idea of holding a conference at which the papers scheduled for publication – written by both undergraduate and Masters students – could be presented, followed by responses from academics and questions from the audience.

Funding was secured from the Teaching and Learning Development Fund, the LSE Annual Fund, the LSE Students' Union and the Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, and the inaugural conference was held on 12 February 2010.

An innovative component was that each presentation was directly commented on by a faculty member who had prepared her or his own approach to the topic. Thus, Dr Rory Smead, Dr Miklos Redei, Dr Jason Alexander, Dr Alex Voorhoeve, Dr Katie Steele and Professor Luc Bovens responded to, respectively, presentations by Tom Holaday, Matthew Pines, Susanne Burri, James Matharu, Keren Bester and Remco Heesen. Professor Donald Gillies, who was at LSE between 1966 and 1970 doing a PhD under the supervision of Imre Lakatos, provided a keynote address on 'Causality in Medicine: The Case of Smoking and Heart Disease' as well as a preface for the journal later in the year.

This rich mix of BSc and MSc students, faculty and alumni, and the confrontational format of the event, provoked interesting debates during conference sessions and lively discussions during the breaks. After the conference, all speakers revised their papers and the journal, published in July 2010, includes all but one of them.

*Funding feature continues page 7 ►*



# Research led teaching

A conference for Russell Group institutions hosted at LSE

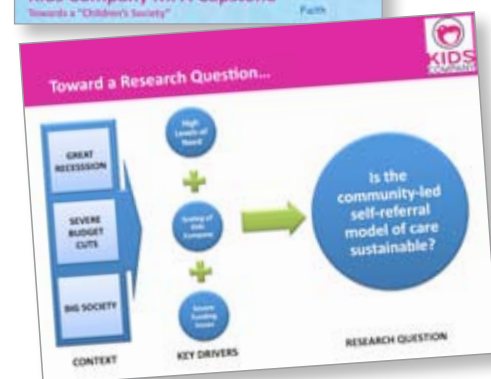
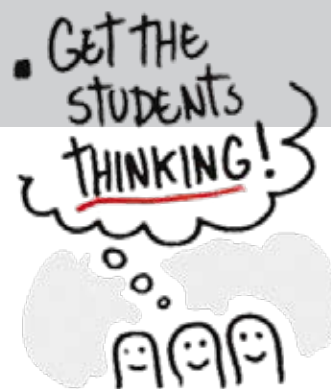
Much has been written about research led teaching over recent years, and reports abound. The purpose of this half-day conference, hosted at LSE's New Academic Building in December 2010, was to provide Russell Group partners with a forum to explore how research led teaching is implemented in practice across the disciplines, raise issues of collective interest and explore how this aspect of what makes the Russell Group's approach to higher education distinctive might be articulated.

Participants were invited from all Russell Group institutions and in total 32 people attended from 10 institutions (Birmingham, Edinburgh, Imperial, Liverpool, LSE, Newcastle, Nottingham, Queen's, Sheffield, Warwick). There was also a 'visual scribe', David Vignolli of the Ludic Group, whose illustrations of the presentations are reproduced here.

Two background papers were provided for participants: *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*, by the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, and *Developing undergraduate research and inquiry*, by Mick Healey and Alan Jenkins.

Participants also received a flyer about a student journal being launched this month by LSE's Economics Department and, during the presentation on LSE100, two brochures about that course. Please email the LSE Teaching and Learning Centre (tlc@lse.ac.uk) if you would like hard copies of any of these.

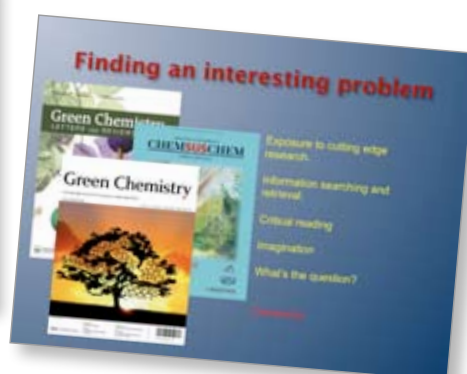
The format for the conference was kept simple: it took the form of a series of case studies of research led teaching in action in the sciences, humanities and social sciences, based on experiences at Imperial College and LSE. Questions were invited after each presentation and at the end of the afternoon.



Slides illustrating Gerard Mullaly's MPA Capstone project



Slides from Tom Welton's presentation



The conference was opened by **Janet Hartley** (Pro-Director, Teaching and Learning, LSE) who welcomed everyone and summarised the purpose and aims of the event.

**Julia Buckingham** (Pro-Rector, Education and Academic Services, Imperial) then chaired the opening session, at which examples of research led teaching in the sciences were presented.

After giving an overview of the evolution of synthetic biology, **Richard Kitney** (Professor of BioMedical Systems Engineering and Director of Graduate School, Imperial) spoke about the 'research pipeline' operating in his department, that enables a flow of interest and enthusiasm between the undergraduate and postgraduate populations. For undergraduates, this interest in research is triggered largely by two things:



- a final year course, taken by 15 to 30 students from Bioengineering, Biology and Chemistry, and
- the iGEM competition, which involves around 14 weeks of intensive project work followed by a trip to MIT and at which Imperial has fielded successful teams for the last few years.

Around 80% of undergraduates doing one or both of these stay on to do an MRes, and around 70% of them continue to PhD level.

Asked about how easy it would be to make what sounded like quite an elite model more generic, Professor Kitney talked about the basic ingredients of interest and enthusiasm which, with the right approach, can be generated anywhere. Imperial does outreach work with schools and encourages undergraduate students to see themselves as members of an exciting 'club', alongside research students and faculty, of 'new biology' pioneers.

**Tom Welton** (Professor of Sustainable Chemistry and Head of Chemistry Department, Imperial) started by saying that if he'd been asked in his second (undergraduate) year whether he wanted to do a PhD he'd definitely have said no: he was able to complete work largely with reference to three books and lab work was 'safe' and uninspiring. What he did in his final year, and has now built into his third year undergraduate programme, is to get students, in small groups, to find an interesting problem and undertake a research project to find an answer to it. The research project develops a wide range of skills at each stage of the process – articulating ideas, constructing experiments, changing hypotheses, giving presentations, for example – and the net result is that students take ownership of a research question and start to feel like one of the graduate or even faculty community. (This is helped too by most of Imperial's science courses now being BSc/ MSc integrated, so there's a relatively seamless move towards more research-led learning.)

The teacher role throughout is one of supervision and mentoring (students are supported also with a PhD mentor) as well as assessment – this last being one of the most challenging aspects because of the collaborative nature of the project work, but addressed through a rigorous approach to (internal) shared marking, where any discrepancy above 5% prompts discussion, and above 10% remarking and an external-examination system applied to all projects.

In response to a question about resource issues, Professor Welton explained that



students choose their subject from a list of research interests that faculty put forward; not all get their first choice, but the department tries to match interests as closely as possible. He was also asked about how well the collaborative aspect worked for the students. While acknowledging that some students are obviously more suited to it than others, he said that they all learn and benefit from it.

The second session profiled a case study of research led teaching in the humanities. **Dominic Lieven** (Professor of Russian History and Head of International History Department, LSE) began by saying he'd been asked to talk as if the audience was a third year undergraduate/MA class, so was assuming some pre-existing, if only general, knowledge about his subject, the 1812-1814 war between France and Russia. He said that in his lectures his primary aim was not to convey information. The spoken word (and therefore lecturing) is not well-equipped for that, but it is good for getting ideas to take root and for sparking interest and enthusiasm, so that listeners can go away and gather information – do research – afterwards.

Among the many interest-sparking ideas put forward was that the war was won by Russia mainly because they out-thought the French – a blowing apart of the Russian brawn vs Western brain myth.

The key is to get students to go back beyond the historiography to original sources and to examine/triangulate them.



And to ignore academic fashions ...

*Asked about how easy it is to engage students in accessing primary sources if they can't read or speak other languages, Professor Lieven said that the key was to get the imagination going – blow their usual assumptions away – so that they're open to new ideas and approaches. They can then usually be guided to sources they can access. He also spoke about the benefits of informal conversation with and among students, especially if there's an international mix, with different perspectives and assumptions around the table.*

**Clare Hemmings** (Head of Gender Institute, LSE) introduced the third session, a panel of staff and students from various LSE departments who presented case studies of research led teaching in the social sciences.

### Economics

**Anders Jensen** (MRes student) spoke of how the comfortable and non-threatening environment of the weekly undergraduate research workshops in the department

had encouraged him to write papers that went on to win major international competitions. **Shamil Jobanputra** (third year undergraduate) endorsed this view of the workshops, and especially a longer Summer Research Workshop he had attended at the end of his first year, saying that it had not only helped him understand key econometric concepts and get a grounding in source location/summarising and data analysis, but also enabled him to meet others similarly enthusiastic to do research. **Michael Best** (PhD student teaching an undergraduate development economics course) talked about the piloting of an 'extension programme' which aims to get placements (currently taken up largely by US students) for LSE students.

### Government

**Edward Page** (Webb Professor of Public Policy) talked about a third year undergraduate Empirical Research in Government programme, run with a maximum of 15 students doing a 2-hour class each week (1 hour on theory and 1 hour on a research project), with the aim of writing a multi-authored publication. These have traditionally been commissioned by external organisations like the Law Society (asking what motivates lawyers to work in local government) or the NCVO (researching what support do local authorities give to local groups). **Anna Carter** (graduated 2010, currently working for a small research organisation) spoke of how her involvement in this programme had been useful in job interviews, where she'd been asked particularly about collaborative/team working, her experience of the start-to-finish (project design to communication of findings) nature of the project and her experience of ethical questions in research.

### MPA

**Joachim Wehner** (MPA Capstone Supervisor) explained that the two year MPA incorporated a year of training and upskilling, followed by a year of specialisation and application, a core element of which is the Capstone programme, where small groups of students (3-4 per group) undertake projects for external clients such as OECD, HM Treasury, Accenture, ActionAid. The projects last 5-6 months and are assessed by a combination of client (up to 20% for presentation), supervisor (up to 10% each for scoping/development and group working) and external (up to 60% for written project report). **Gerard Mullaly** (MPA student) presented his Capstone project. Working with Kids Company, the high-profile organisation for vulnerable children run by Camila Batmanghelidjh, the

project team had researched and analysed data to answer a fundamental question: Is the community-led self-referral model of organisation sustainable in an economic crisis?

### Gender Institute

**Emma Spruce** (MSc student) talked about the process by which research is integrated into a programme that is not obviously about research. The process involves small groups (4 students each) leading a seminar, for which the group chooses the topic, readings and methods of communication. Assessment is done through observation of the seminar (by an external examiner) and a marked essay.

*Professor Page took a question about how students' individual contributions could be fairly reflected in marks for collaborative projects. He said that the supervisor obviously played a key role in the policing of any 'free riding' and that two instruments were operated in the Empirical Research in Government programme: one that provided the opportunity to adjust an individual's mark up or down by a maximum of 10% to reflect a greater or lesser contribution, and a more extreme sanction of being dropped from the course and having to retake it the following year.*

*Emma Spruce added that she knew this was a problem for some students – that they could easily feel dragged down by a 'weak' performer in a group – but her own view was that the advantages to be gained from being able to say, at interviews for instance, that you've worked collaboratively on a project, and what you've learned from that process, outweighed the disadvantage of potentially losing a few percentage marks on a project.*

*Joachim Wehner and Professor Page then responded to a question about how they found and kept finding external clients for their programmes.*

The final presentation of the event showcased a very recent example of research led teaching in the social sciences.

**Jonathan Leape** (Director of LSE100, LSE) outlined the thinking behind LSE100, a compulsory course for all first year undergraduates from this term. It aims to

- deepen and broaden students' understanding of social scientific thinking, focusing on the core elements of evidence, explanation and theory, and
- strengthen the critical skills – in research, thinking, writing, presentation – that underpin the study and application of social sciences





through a series of six three-week modules delivered over two terms via lectures and small task-based classes. 'Big' questions are addressed – How should we manage climate change? Who should own ideas? Does culture matter? – by leading researchers, and the emphasis throughout is on research methods rather than content, with students expected to evaluate, interpret and analyse evidence, assess causality claims, access and manage information, construct critical and persuasive arguments orally and in writing.

In this way, the course can be seen as an example of research led teaching on a large scale – 1,250 students will take the course this year – and, importantly, of research led teaching at an early stage in the student's education.

Responding to a question about how long it had taken to set up such an impressive-sounding course, Dr Leape said that planning had started in 2008, with one year of preparation followed by a one year pilot. Several factors were key to its successful launch: support from the Director of LSE down, appointment of a team of dedicated people with a common aim and lots of energy, strong focus on effective management and team-building for the large teaching staff (including obtaining Investor in People status) and good employer support. Another question was asked about how universally enthusiastic student reception to the course was. Dr Leape said that, since so far it had been run only on a voluntary pilot basis, it was difficult to say, but that the extensive feedback received – from focus groups, surveys and exit interviews with those who dropped out – was very positive overall. Feedback on workload indicated that students were normally spending between one and two hours per week outside of classes. The comprehensive evaluation strategy will be carried forward into the compulsory course and the data will be analysed over the coming months and years.



The Conclusions: Where do we go from here? session was chaired by **Janet Hartley**. By way of summarising the conference, she said that whilst several sessions seemed to suggest the importance of 'charismatic' teachers and 'favoured' students to progress research led teaching, most had been reassuring in showing that 'mass application' was possible (LSE100). Students were living proof (award-winning work and jobs secured) of its benefits. She then invited questions and comments from participants.

- One participant said that the extent to which employers value research led teaching might be a useful selling point for the Russell Group.
- Another asked if the motivation of US competition might be harnessed to come up with UK equivalents – a possible opportunity for the Russell Group to take this forward.
- A final question was raised about whether it was possible to say that research led teaching in principle makes the Russell Group special. Professor Hartley responded, saying that it was possible, but only if it was articulated intelligently and accurately – say what it is, how it's done, how cross-disciplinary it can be, and what results it achieves.



## Economic History students visit Lotus car plant

Inspired by course convenor Dr Tim Leunig's experience of visiting car factories in Oxford as a graduate student, teachers on the EH240 undergraduate course (Business and Economic Performance since 1945: Britain in International Context) wanted to give students the opportunity to visit the Norfolk-based factory of Lotus, a production company arguably both one of the most innovative and archaic in Britain, to offer an insight into how a British manufacturer competes in a global market.

Funding from the Teaching and Learning Development Fund enabled Dr Paul Strong to arrange for 11 students to do both the general factory tour and an additional special tour with an engineer. The trip was further enhanced by a visit to Wymondham Sixth Form College, a state school located close to the car plant, to give a presentation on study and student life at LSE.

The trip gave the students the opportunity to see how a 'low volume, high ticket sales' business model operates and to observe Fordism and neo-Fordism in action. It also provided important insights into supply chain management and the impact of labour- and consumer-related changes on manufacturing. For alumna Rosalind



Groves the trip proved highly relevant to both her studies and her current job:

'The tour of the assembly plant and the background roar of the test track at Lotus was excellent. ... An understanding of general business models such as this is useful not only for one's studies but for when you are presented with a business case study at a Recruitment Assessment Centre, for example, or when working in a client team, as I am doing now.'

The visit to Lotus and Wymondham Sixth Form College has now become a regular and self-sustaining feature of the EH240 course.

## External training opportunity

Oxford Brookes University's Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development has launched its 2011 programme of courses, including a range of webinars and longer face-to-face training sessions. Visit [www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsltd/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsltd/) online for more information.

The Teaching and Learning Centre may be able to provide funding for individuals or teams to attend these events. Please check before signing up, as our External Programmes Fee Support funding operates on a first come first served basis.

## Undergraduate research programme pilot

The Teaching and Learning Centre will be co-ordinating a pilot undergraduate research programme this summer, aimed at developing research and team-building skills among students.

Plans are at an early stage, but the project is likely to include

- a workshop on core team and leadership skills,
- an Undergraduate Research Day at which team projects are presented, and
- support from senior academic staff to facilitate team entries to internal and/or external competitions.

Full details as the programme takes shape can be found on the 'Undergraduate research programme' page at [www.lse.ac.uk/tlc](http://www.lse.ac.uk/tlc)

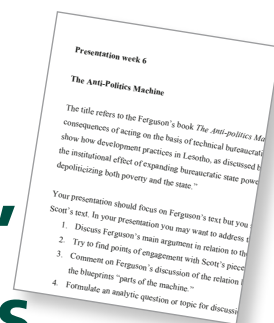
# Developing students' communications skills

## Two examples of how students are being helped to become good communicators

In one of the Economics Department's core undergraduate courses, Microeconomics Principles 1, students work through a graded set of written exercises, developed by Dr Margaret Bray in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Centre. These start with a paragraph based on reading from textbooks and move in stages to writing a longer essay that requires students to read and write about both complex academic and journalistic-style materials on an economics topic.

The Anthropology Department encourages development of good presenting skills in

some of its undergraduate classes such as the second year core course Political and Legal Anthropology. An optional session on presentation skills, delivered by lecturer Mathijs Pelkmans and a Teaching and Learning Centre staff member, is offered at the start of Michaelmas Term, and then one or two students each week give presentations throughout the year. Presentations are not automatically slotted in at the start of the session, but are introduced as appropriate to the topic and design of the session. Students receive a pre-presentation briefing on the topic and ideas on how to approach it from Dr Pelkmans, and are given verbal feedback during the session followed by an email soon after which addresses content, presentation approach and audience interaction.



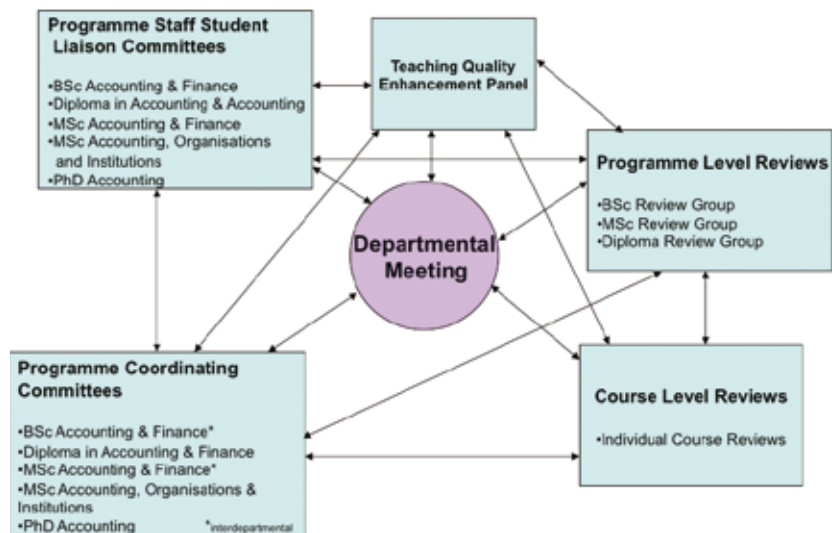
# Programme and course level review

## An Accounting Department case study

The Accounting Department has a robust approach to programme and course level review. The diagram here outlines its key features – with the central Teaching Quality Enhancement Panel acting as an important hub for feedback from programme and course level reviews, programme co-ordinating committees and Staff Student Liaison Committee.

The department has recently begun using the TQE group for another purpose – to collect information about the different feedback initiatives and practices used by its teachers. This is likely to be reflected back in information to staff, possibly via a departmental teaching Moodle site, and to students, who will be able to read about the department's feedback policy and channels on Moodle sites and in handbooks and course packs.

## Teaching Quality Related Committees 2010-11



We'll soon be publishing new guidance on giving feedback to presentations and exams, available at the 'Publications' section of [www.lse.ac.uk/tlc](http://www.lse.ac.uk/tlc) or on request from the Teaching and Learning Centre office ([tlc@lse.ac.uk](mailto:tlc@lse.ac.uk)).



**Registration is now open for Teaching Day on 24 May 2011**

Book your place and view the programme and abstracts at [www.lse.ac.uk/TeachingDay](http://www.lse.ac.uk/TeachingDay)

**Registration closes on 2 May 2011**