

Teaching and Learning Development Office

LSE Teaching Matters

Issue 2 September 1999

The Teaching and Learning Development Office

What we do

We support individuals and departments wishing to develop the quality of teaching and learning in the School. In practical terms, we:

- Co-ordinate an in-house programme of events and the initial teaching induction for both full-time and part-time staff.
- Offer one-to-one educational consultancy tailored to your particular needs and interests, including teaching observation.
- Alert staff to external events, providing funding as appropriate.
- Support departments facing internal and external teaching quality assessment.
- Keep the School up-to-date on developments in teaching and learning in HE nationally and internationally – through departmental links, the Teaching Matters news sheet, our website (<http://teaching.lse.ac.uk>) and Outlook public folders (Departments/Teaching and Learning Development Office)
- Co-ordinate student study support across the School.

Who we are

Teaching and Learning Development Officer: Dr Liz Barnett email: l.barnett@lse.ac.uk ext: 6623

Teaching and Learning Development Administrator: Jill Ramsay email: j.ramsay@lse.ac.uk ext: 6624

Where we are

NB: We have moved (again!). We are now in Connaught House H417. With extra space, and a more central location, we would like to encourage people to visit - and see the selection of resources available for loan. Also see our new web site: <http://teaching.lse.ac.uk>

Teaching Initiatives in the School

Developing a School-wide Learning and Teaching Strategy

A working group has been set up, to develop a School Learning and Teaching Strategy. Chaired by Pro-Director Professor Judith Rees the group is preparing a draft for consideration across the School. Once the strategy is agreed, there are various HEFCE funding opportunities for learning and teaching initiatives which will be available to us. The development of the strategy will involve consultation across the School - further information will be circulated within the next few months.

Improvements to teaching spaces

A new member of staff, Adam Gale, has joined the Teaching Support Unit. Adam has specialist experience in computer presentation work, and will be able to support and advise staff wanting to use computers in their teaching sessions. Networked PCs have been installed in five teaching rooms with data projection facilities, and there are two new portable data projectors, so that staff wishing to use computers in other teaching spaces may do so.

A number of teaching spaces have been refurbished, and 10 rooms have been equipped with an additional projector screen - so that OHPs and white/black boards can be used easily in the same session. Some smaller rooms have had furniture reorganised, to make it easier to run sessions including group work, and round table discussion formats.

Now staff can add colour to their teaching - using the new high quality colour copier in reprographics to produce acetates from PowerPoint. NB: Do check how colour works - contrast and effect on the big screen can be very different to how it looks on your PC monitor.

For further information, or to give suggestions about how teaching spaces can be improved further, contact Craig Hickson: ext. 6382 email: Craig.Hickson@lse.ac.uk

Quality Assurance Agency visits

Some programmes in the Department of Social Psychology will be assessed by the QAA in the week starting 8 November, and will shortly be followed by a combined assessment of the Departments of Mathematics and Statistics in the week starting Monday 29 November. A number of other departments are gearing up for QAA visits in 2000/2001. Any staff who wish to find out more about the process please contact the Teaching and Learning Development Office. There will be some staff development events associated with the assessment preparation process scheduled later in the year.

On-line student feedback

In the Lent term last year, the Teaching Quality Assurance Office ran a pilot study to look at the viability of moving to on-line student feedback, instead of our present cumbersome paper-based exercise. Three departments took part - Government, Philosophy and Statistics. Over 1000 questionnaires were included in the pilot - with half distributed electronically, and the remainder through the traditional paper-based system. The on-line experiment was a technical success - 95% of the students had opened the email linking them to the questionnaire within a few days of circulation. However, completion and return of the on-line version proved problematic, with a response rate of 23% compared with 60% for the paper version. Students who completed a follow-up survey were enthusiastic about the idea and issues to do with security and confidentiality did not prove problematic. The experiment will continue this year, to see whether response rate can be improved by the use of incentives, and to see how easily the current system can be scaled up to deal with larger numbers of respondents. For further information, or to make constructive suggestions, contact the Teaching Quality Assurance Officer, Dr Eamon Wright email: e.wright@lse.ac.uk

LSE goes global

There has been much talk recently about global education and virtual universities. Some such "institutions" are already appearing. The School

has started to explore options for keeping up to date with these developments, in an arrangement with UNext - a new business which is setting out to "create powerful learning communities that marry the world's most respected academic scholars and institutions with the global reach and interactive capabilities of the Internet." See the Unext web site for further information: <http://Unext.com>

Student support issues

Electronic course packs

The APRC Review of the Library in February 1999 identified the development of electronic course packs as one area in which extra School resources should be provided. Library staff are exploring the best methods of making available electronic versions of course packs which are currently produced as hardcopy. They would like to identify a small number of courses with which to pilot the scheme from January 2000.

As well as the implications for copyright clearance, there are issues still to be resolved such as the shift of potential printing costs to users. Other current LSE Library projects are also aiming to provide better integration of course materials, reading lists and other resources in a Web-based "Personal Information Environment" for students. Please contact Beverly Brittan (Library) if you are interested in setting up an electronic course pack for one of your courses.

New web sites for new students

There are a number of developments aimed at improving support to students when they first arrive at the School. See: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newarrivals/> on the School web site. A further site which is under development, aims to help students settle into their studies through the first year. There will be a series of lectures and follow-up classes for new students on study skills, starting in October and continuing through the year. Contact the Teaching and Learning Development Office for details.

Refit for the Language Centre

The Language Centre has had a total refit this summer, and is ready to introduce a number of new initiatives to provide enhanced support to

overseas students seeking help with their English, as well as improving provision for modern foreign languages. The Centre is keen to work collaboratively with departments - contact Nick Byrne, the new Director, for further information.

The Students Union focuses on the Student Academic Experience

The new Union General Secretary, Jonathan Black, and Education and Welfare Officer, Becky Little, are making the Academic Experience this year's priority campaign. Through partnership with other interested parties they aim to ensure that students get the best value for money from their time at LSE. The five point action plan includes:

- ensuring excellent quality at every level, with a special focus on undergraduate classes;
- enhancing student support through a student "mentoring" or "buddy" system via departments;
- constructing a development programme to equip students with "life" skills to complement their degree;
- developing a new proposal for delayed exams in September and streamlining the procedure for electing student departmental representatives.

The campaign will begin with a student survey.

Developing students' team-working skills

Employers consistently put a lack of teamwork skills high on the list of shortcomings of British graduates entering the job market today. A recent workshop organised by the Research Councils and the Graduate School Programme also highlighted this as an important area to consider in postgraduate training, not only for future employability, but also to help research students get the most from working with others in the research setting. In the coming year, two pilot projects (in Information Systems and Social Policy) will explore how team-working skills can be integrated into Masters courses. Contact Peter Levin p.levin@lse.ac.uk, H417, for further information.

Dyslexia video

Estimates suggest that 5-10% of university students are dyslexic. If you already know you are working with a dyslexic student, have concerns that some of your students may be

dyslexic, or are otherwise interested, then come to an open showing of the new School dyslexia video on November 17 2.15-2.45pm Old Theatre, or contact the Teaching and Learning Development Office to borrow a copy. The video includes comment from LSE students, as well as practical pointers to both students and staff on supporting study for dyslexic students. Also, contact the Adviser to Disabled Students, Dr Sheila Newman ext. 7849.

External Developments

Institute for Learning and Teaching

The ILT was launched earlier this year. The Institute aims to promote teaching excellence throughout HE. For the first two years, there is a "fast track" ILT membership route for established staff (including staff in areas such as library/information services, who make a significant contribution to student programmes). This involves completing an application form with supporting evidence, and support from two referees. Accreditors will look for "evidence of teaching and/or supporting learning in HE, an awareness of pedagogical issues, both generally and in your own discipline and your ability to choose, adapt and apply methods and approaches that are relevant to the context in which you work." Anyone interested in applying, who would like advice and support in putting their application together, please contact Liz Barnett (TLDO, LSE). The TLDO will also be seeking recognition for the in-house programme being developed, so that new staff, including part-time teachers, will be able to work towards ILT membership through a more formal programme.

Subject benchmarking

The Quality Assurance Agency is continuing with its programme to develop "subject benchmarking statements" for a wide range of social science subjects. Watch out for information from your various subject associations. The School is now actively involved in the benchmarking process, with a member of staff from Social Policy and one from Government involved in benchmarking groups. A draft for Geography was circulated earlier this summer. Others will be reaching consultation stage soon. If you want to see some "finished" versions, see the QAA web site for Law and History (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/hist.htm>). These are already being tested in various universities,

as part of the quality assessment process. For more information about the process, contact Liz Barnett.

BT Higher Education Awards

Each year, BT makes a number of awards totaling £500,000 for projects "designed to encourage the innovative application of new technologies in the HE sector". The School can submit one bid. Anyone interested should contact Liz Barnett for details.

Staff development options

Details of the central programme of events are being circulated separately. Please contact us if you do not receive a programme shortly.

Teacher accreditation

The LSE teacher accreditation programme is under development, and we will apply for ILT accreditation during the coming academic year. Staff will be encouraged to build on existing workshop and practical experience, will have on-line support and resources, have their teaching observed by colleagues, have access to tutorial support, and undertake practical assignments directly related to teaching at LSE.

Supporting part-time teachers

We will continue to run a number of introductory workshops for part-time teachers through the year. The first has already taken place. The second is 19/20 October, and more will be arranged subsequently. We are currently trying to arrange a special workshop for part-time tutors faced with teaching quantitative subjects (including mathematics, statistics and aspects of economics). In addition, part-time teachers are encouraged to work towards their "LSE Teaching Record" - involving the development of a portfolio of evidence including observation of teaching, review of student feedback and teaching development planning. A briefing session has been scheduled for Friday 22 October 12.50-1.50pm

Funding for external courses

This year, £8,000 has been set aside from the Academic Staff Development Budget to support individual members of academic staff wishing to attend external courses, workshops and other

training and development activities (there is a similar arrangement for non-academic staff - contact Chris Connelley ext 6256 for details). Applications must be supported by your convenor/supervisor, will be dealt with on a "first come, first served basis", and grant allocations agreed between the Teaching and Learning Development Officer and the Chair of TQAC. Grants will be limited to a maximum of £500 to any one person in an academic year, in support of fees only (other costs will need to be met by the individual/department). Once the fund is used up, it will not be possible to consider further applications until the following academic year. Staff will only be funded to undertake development activities directly related to their work in the School. For further details and application forms contact the Teaching and Learning Development Office.

Funding for departments preparing for QAA Subject Reviews

Additional funding has been set aside to support departments preparing for QAA subject review. This can include funding key members of staff to attend external events on preparing for review, and to enable departments to organise "dummy runs" - inviting a respected colleague from another institution to come and look at their programmes in some detail, prior to the review.

One-to-one support

The Teaching and Learning Development Office welcomes enquiries from individuals for one-to-one support. A number of staff across the School took up this option last year. Support can take a variety of forms - for example, discussions and meetings, advice on resource materials, teaching observation and feedback, and advice/support in putting people into contact with other internal and external advisors on different aspects of teaching and learning in HE.

Call for copy

This is the second issue of Teaching Matters. If you have suggestions on copy for future issues, please get in touch. It would be particularly useful to have information on new teaching developments happening in departments - so that we can spread good practice. One issue currently on the TQAC agenda is that of class size for small group teaching (classes and problem classes). If you have views, observations or ideas about how we can tackle

the issue of "growing" small groups please get in touch.