



Teaching Matters

Teaching and Learning Development Office

Issue 5, May 2001

What we do

The Teaching and Learning Development Office supports 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, and our website.
- Co-ordinate student study support across the School. Work in this area has developed recently with Jill Ramsay taking on the role of the School's Adviser to Students with Disabilities and with the appointment of Jean Jameson as Dyslexia Support Tutor.

For further details, see the TLDO website:
<http://teaching.lse.ac.uk>

Contact

Dr Liz Barnett - Teaching and Learning Development Officer, room H417c,
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Jill Ramsay - Teaching and Learning Development Administrator/ Adviser to Students with Disabilities, room H417, email: j.ramsay@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6624

Jean Jameson – Dyslexia Support Tutor, room H417b,
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Dr Peter Levin – Consultant in Teaching Methods, room H417b, email: p.levin@lse.ac.uk, ext. 7346

We are very pleased to have **Sue Haines** join the TLDO team to support Jill as the TLDA job continues to grow.

Forthcoming events

Teaching "socials"

The Teaching and Learning Development Office is arranging two receptions towards the end of this term – one for part-time teachers, the other for full-time staff who have joined the School in the past two years. We hope people will take this opportunity for meeting up with colleagues across the School – plus hope it will be a productive occasion for providing feedback to the TLDO on what we should be planning for the future.

Part-time teachers - 15 June	12.30pm – 2.00pm
Full-time staff - 27 June	12.30pm – 2.00pm

Part-time teacher training

13 & 14 June – specifically for part-time teachers in the Government department.

4 & 5 July – open to part-time teachers from all non-quantitative subjects.

WebCT Showcases (see back page for full details)

Two demonstrations of courses which are now supported using an on-line learning environment.

Showcase (1) – MSc course in Government: National and Ethnic Conflict Regulation
Thursday 14 June 1.00pm – 2.00pm
Presenters: Professor Brendan O'Leary & Shelley Deane

Showcase (2) – MSc Global Media and Communications
Monday 18 June 1.00pm – 2.00pm
Presenters: Dr Terhi Rantanen & Cornel Sandvoss

Join the ILT (see back page for full details)

Associate Membership
Wednesday 23 May 2.00pm – 5.00pm

Full Membership
Tuesday 5 June 2.00pm – 5.00pm

Dyslexia Information Day

For students and interested staff. Room A42
Wednesday 20 June 10.00am – 4.00pm

New Lecturer Induction

Provisionally arranged for week beginning 17 September 2001. Contact TLDO for further information.

QAA Congratulations

This is the second issue of Teaching Matters in the current academic year. Usually, it would appear after Christmas. However, the TLDO was rather embroiled in QAA reviews at the time - hence the delay. Just for the record, all eight departments/institutes (Government, International Relations, DESTIN, European Institute, Economics, Philosophy, Industrial Relations and Interdisciplinary Institute for Management) which went through the review process between October 2000 and February 2001 achieved EXCELLENT results, with scores of 22+, ending with a spectacular 24/24 for Industrial Relations and the IIM.

The review process was not so well received - as evidenced by the recent decision of Academic Board, which subsequently got front page coverage in the Times Higher Education Supplement (23/03/01), to explore ways of disengaging with QAA. At more or less the same moment, the DfEE also indicated that there may be major changes afoot for the QAA's work, which would suggest at least a "lighter touch", if not a light touch. It is very much a case of "watch this space" for the coming months. If interested, contact Simeon Underwood for an update.

Assessment

One issue which did cause problems for departments in the QAA review and is an issue that students frequently raise on various occasions, is the thorny problem of the quantity, quality and consistency of feedback on course work and final assessments (be they exams, dissertations, or other forms of assessment). Students often express concerns about their lack of understanding as to what is expected of them when preparing these different types of assessed work. They are also often concerned about the very different ways in which their work can be marked - even within a department - and the apparent lack of consistency between different markers. Plus they often note the wide divergence in the quality and quantity of comments provided by different tutors. Both ASC and GSC are addressing these issues. In addition, the TLDO has collected a variety of feedback sheets which departments are using to provide feedback to students on both course work and formal assessment, as well as examples of the marking guides used to grade student work. Over the summer term these will be brought together, along with evidence from the higher education literature and experience elsewhere, to provide some basic guidance to departments on approaches to marking and providing feedback on student work. Any department seeking urgent advice on this matter is asked to contact the TLDO directly.

Subject Centres for Learning and Teaching

HEFCE is funding 24 subject centres around the UK. Their main aims include:

- collation of information on all aspects of teaching,

- learning and assessment;
- provision of staff development opportunities;
- provision of advisory services to practitioners and departments;
- liaison with relevant professional bodies and subject associations;
- advice on the implementation of communication and information technologies in learning and teaching;
- dissemination of developments in learning and teaching.

For a full list of the centres, link to:

<http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/centres/centres/default.asp>

Key centres relevant to LSE are:

Economics, University of Bristol

Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Plymouth

History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Glasgow

Information and Computer Science, University of Ulster
Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, University of Southampton

Law, University of Warwick

Maths, Statistics and OR, University of Birmingham

Philosophical and Religious Studies, University of Leeds

Psychology, University of York

Sociology, Anthropology and Politics, University of Birmingham

Social Policy and Social Work, University of Southampton

National Teaching Fellowship Scheme

In January, the TLDO contacted convenors and TLDO contacts to alert them to the HEFCE-funded National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. Departmental contacts were asked to explore whether their departments wished to make any nominations. Successful Fellows receive £50,000 to spend on educational development projects in their department/subject area. Each institution can nominate one person, with a total of 20 Fellowships awarded each year. This year Nick Byrne, Director of the Language Centre, was put forward as the School's nominee. His nomination received firm support from colleagues across the School and the unanimous backing of his own staff. He is already through the first round. The outcome of the second round and the award will be known in July.

Web-based teaching projects

This year, courses in Government, Anthropology and Media@LSE ran experimental courses using a web-based learning environment, WebCT. They follow on from the pioneering work of Dr James Backhouse in Information Systems, who started using WebCT last year. Each course was supported by a small grant from the LSE Teaching Development Fund, used to employ PhD students to act as research assistants working with the academics running the

courses, and doing much of the detailed "production" work involved in building on-line resources. They also received quality technical support from a dedicated team of ITS and Library staff, the Learning and Teaching Technology Group, who trained the research assistants, the students, and ensured that the tutors worked out different ways of exploiting this new environment to add value to their courses. The use of WebCT has enabled students to access the rich selection of internet and electronic library resources associated with their studies, as well as tutor-supplied materials (eg: lecture notes, PowerPoint slide sets). Bulletin boards have been used to increase opportunities for students to pose questions direct to lecturers, and to promote greater student-to-student interaction. Some students have developed their own web design skills, making web presentations in the place of traditional seminar presentations. In the following term, they should start to appreciate the value of this on-line environment for revision purposes, as they can do quick subject searches of on-line discussions, tutor materials, their personal notes, and other resources embedded in the sites.

A number of other tutors are starting to explore WebCT, with pilot projects getting started in Economic History, Law, Geography, Industrial Relations, International Relations and Sociology. There will be two sessions in June (see Events). Anyone interested in finding out more is encouraged to contact the TLDO.

Mathematics experiments with MAPLE

WebCT provides a wide range of interesting options for those working in the discursive subjects. However, when it comes to quantitative subjects, the "interactive" component is not as useful - numbers and formulae are much harder to manipulate electronically. For staff working in this area, a TDF-funded project in Mathematics may provide more interesting and useful examples.

Learning Russian through a multimedia website

Another TDF-funded web project that has gone "live" this year is a specialist site for Russian language students (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/language/Ruslang/>). This project was developed by Olga Sobolev of the Language Centre, in conjunction with colleagues at Sussex University. The site combines text, pictures, audio and video recordings, and grammar tests. Olga set her group of students an assignment to work on the site over the Christmas break. They all managed the assignment, and noted how much they enjoyed working in this way outside term time. It gave them a new approach to study, which provided an excellent supplement to their studies.

The Language Centre is already exploring ways of taking this work further, possibly combining some of the ideas with WebCT, to develop subject specific help files for students from different departments.

Staff Counsellor

The School now has a Staff Counsellor, Monica Larkin, who can be contacted at m.larkin@lse.ac.uk, or ext. 6216. This service is for personal and/or work related problems.

Student Learning Support

Adviser to Students with Disabilities

Jill Ramsay, Teaching and Learning Development Administrator, took on a new role at the start of 2001 and is now also the Adviser to Students with Disabilities.

There are around 200 students at LSE who have told the School that they have a disability. Of these, the majority have dyslexia or "unseen" conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy. A small number have mobility difficulties, visual or auditory impairment or mental health problems.

Academic staff clearly play a key role in students' experiences of the School, both in creating an accessible curriculum and through their personal contact with students. Tutors can help by encouraging students to discuss any special needs, by making reasonable adjustments in teaching and by being aware of the School facilities available.

The "Information for Students with Disabilities" booklet is currently being updated and contains details of facilities around the School. The booklet will be circulated to all academic staff for information and will be sent out to prospective students. The information will also be on the web shortly at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/disability>.

The Advisory Group on Students with Disabilities, chaired by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, provides a forum to discuss disability issues at LSE. The meetings take place once a term and are attended by staff representatives from around the School and students. All students with a disability, special needs or dyslexia are welcome to attend.

Disability Awareness workshops will be organised in the near future. If you are interested in attending or would like to discuss any issues regarding disability please contact: Jill Ramsay, ext. 6624, email: j.ramsay@lse.ac.uk, room H417.

Provision for Dyslexic Students

The TLDO is extending the range of services provided for identified dyslexic students and for those students who think they may be dyslexic but have not yet been formally assessed.

Dyslexic students may present one or many of the following traits:

- a marked creative or verbal ability not reflected in written work
- inefficient reading skills (slow processing speed and/or comprehension)

- organisational difficulties - in essay structuring, time management, note taking, revision
- short-term memory deficit
- inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar

You can help by knowing more about dyslexia and other specific difficulties, by being sympathetic to requests for help and advice, by allowing students to tape lectures and classes, by giving annotated reading lists with good advance warning of deadlines and due dates and you can also help by suggesting students who continue to struggle, despite normal support, might like to talk to us.

We can offer individual and confidential advice about assessments, study skills and strategies, free photocopying facilities, longer loans from the library, IT support with specialist software and how to apply for special exam arrangements. Additional provision for dyslexic students will be planned following the results of a current survey. All interested staff and students are invited to attend a Dyslexia Information Day on 20 June.

Jean Jameson is the new dyslexia support tutor, based in room H417b in the Teaching and Learning Development Office. If you have any queries or would like more information, she can be contacted on 020 7955 6034, email j.m.jameson@lse.ac.uk.

One-to-one study advice sessions

This year, the TLDO has employed Dr Peter Levin (formerly of the Social Policy department) to run one-to-one study advice sessions for students half a day per week throughout term time. The idea was piloted in the summer term last year, and proved popular with students. This year, over 150 have met with Peter. Many students only need a single session, but a few come back for more. We anticipate that uptake will continue to be high in the period up to exams. If any tutors have students who they feel would benefit from more detailed study support/guidance than they are able to provide, please ask them to contact the Teaching and Learning Development Office, H417, email: j.ramsay@lse.ac.uk.

The half-hour sessions are available between 1.00pm and 6.00pm and are held in room H417b. The next dates open for bookings are:

Thursday 24 May ; Tuesday 29 May ; Monday 4 June
Monday 11 June; Monday 18 June

Events

WebCT showcases

Staff are invited to come to one or more of the WebCT showcases this term. The sessions will involve presentations by the academic working on the projects, with their research assistants, plus back-up from the Learning

and Teaching Technology Group. They will give staff who are interested in having a go an insight into what is involved, ideas on how to make the best of this developing environment, and some of the pitfalls to watch out for. Sceptics are also encouraged to come along - and find out how "new users" of the technology view it.

Showcase (1) – MSC course in Government: National Ethnic Conflict Regulation

Date: Thursday 14 June
Time: 1.00pm – 2.00pm
Venue: A141

Presenters: Professor Brendan O'Leary & Shelley Deane

Showcase (2) – MSc Global Media and Communications

Date: Monday 18 June
Time: 1.00pm – 2.00pm
Venue: A143

Presenters: Dr Tehri Rantanen & Cornel Sandvoss

Join the ILT

Two sessions are planned for the coming term to encourage staff who are interested in joining the Institute for Learning and Teaching. Both sessions will be run in a computer room, so that staff can complete the potentially tricky "Section B" part of their application with support from colleagues. With luck and hard work, by the end of the afternoon, you should be more or less ready to contact your referees, prior to posting off your application.

The first session is for part-time teachers, and other staff (eg: those who have been teaching for less than three years, and Library and IT Services staff who have only limited student learning support responsibilities) who wish to apply for Associate Membership. The second session is for full-time staff, wishing to apply through the fast-track route for established staff. Contact Jill Ramsay for further information.

Associate Membership

Date: Wednesday 23 May
Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Venue: S186

Full Membership

Date: Tuesday 5 June
Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Venue: S186

