

## Activities and Reports

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### The English Degree and Graduate Careers: Report Out Now

The English Subject Centre's major report about graduate employment and the employment of English graduates in particular is now available on the English Subject Centre's website (see under 'Outcomes' at: <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/gradcareer.htm>).

We commissioned the report from Professor John Brennan of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information at the Open University. For the first time it provides English departments with information about the employment patterns and prospects of their graduates and suggests ways in which these might be enhanced.

The report uses data gathered on English graduates three to four years after graduating, and therefore gives a more rounded picture than the national First Destination Survey data which is collected six months after graduation. It shows that English graduates take about four years to 'find their feet' on the career ladder, and that they do well in finding a job relevant to their qualification level compared to graduates in English-related fields or History. Although English graduates do not appear to do well financially, with an average income below that of Humanities and Language graduates, and below the average for all graduates, this is explained in part by the fact that a large proportion of English graduates are employed in the public sector.

With regard to job satisfaction, the report suggests that English graduates have the same level of satisfaction with their employment situation as other Humanities and Language graduates. In both groups, 46% reported fairly high levels of satisfaction.

The report also examines how the skills of the English graduate are profiled by departments, by the English Benchmarking Statement, and by graduates themselves. These are compared to other disciplines to give some indication of the 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' of the English graduate.

The report brings together brief descriptions of recent and current work in the area of graduate careers and employability, identifying those of particular relevance to English.

Printed copies of the report will be distributed to all departments shortly.

Further information: **Jane Gawthrop** (*see contacts*)

### Postgraduate Training and Research Methods

The English Subject Centre has commissioned Sadie Williams, of the University of Lancaster, to conduct some research into the field of postgraduate training and research methods in English Departments.

We initiated this project as a number of influential organisations have declared an interest in encouraging, or indeed, requiring, change in this area of practice. The HEFCE Review of Research (September 2000, 00/37) for example, notes evidence 'that current postgraduate training and career development is in many ways failing to meet the needs of research students' and proceeds to recommend that research training be subject to an assessment process linked to the RAE. The AHRB has recently suggested that consideration might be given to extending research methods training across all three years of the doctoral experience, also noting that some academic areas are producing doctorates in excess of the number of academic posts available, and that subsequently, there is a requirement to give a much

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higher profile to students' research skills and expertise through training to enable them to secure alternative employment at an appropriate level. The UK Council for Graduate Education has made related points in its Research Training for Humanities Postgraduate Students (2000) and the British Academy has also recently submitted a report. There have been suggestions, from various bodies, about research skills training being supplied by 'nodal' regional centres.

This high level of debate predicates change and the English Subject Centre is therefore producing further information on the needs of research students, on what is currently being supplied, and what supervisors, students, and others believe to be desirable.

The Centre established a number of partner institutions for the research from an appropriate range of institutions, and we are very grateful for their co-operation. The research is being written up, and will appear shortly in our Report Series. Copies will be sent to all English Departments, and the report will also be available on our website.

Further information: **Philip Martin** (*see contacts*)

## Contacts:

Director: **Professor Philip Martin**  
([p.martin@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:p.martin@rhul.ac.uk))

Manager: **Jane Gawthrope**  
([jane.gawthrope@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:jane.gawthrope@rhul.ac.uk))

Administrator: **Mrs Carol Eckersley**  
([c.Eckersley@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:c.Eckersley@rhul.ac.uk))

Administrative Assistant: **Petrina Farrington**  
([petrina.farrington@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:petrina.farrington@rhul.ac.uk))

Project Officer (Academic Liaison and Research):  
**Dr Siobhán Holland** ([siobhan.holland@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:siobhan.holland@rhul.ac.uk))

Project Officer (C&IT): currently vacant

Website Developer and Learning Technology  
Officer: **Brett Lucas** ([brett.lucas@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:brett.lucas@rhul.ac.uk))

The English Subject Centre

Royal Holloway, University of London,  
Egham TW20 0EX

T. 01784 443221 F. 01784 470684  
[esc@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:esc@rhul.ac.uk) [www.english.ltsn.ac.uk](http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk)

## The Visual World of Chaucer

Dr Lesley Coote and the English Subject Centre have won a joint bid for the JISC-funded FILTER project to develop an image-based e-learning resource entitled 'Key skills with Chaucer'.

The aim of the 'Key Skills with Chaucer' website is to link text with image to provide access to the visual world of Chaucer's audience. Dr Coote says, "It offers an initial insight into the mental processes of Chaucer and his audience, as well as giving modern students some idea of the world which the writer is describing. This should enable them to engage more fully with the Canterbury Tales, and with medieval texts, writers and audiences as a whole. At the same time, the educational element of the package will enable them to extend their own key skills capabilities."



Built around the image collection will be a series of learning packages based on the groups of characters in the Tales. In addition there will be areas of the site giving practical guidance on using the dataset to make presentations, produce handouts and write essays. These packages are aimed at students using the materials to make their own presentations, and will also encourage lecturers to customise the images for their own purposes.

An integral part of the resource will be an image database (tentatively named 'ImageLink') hosted by the English Subject Centre. This will provide a rich resource for lecturers and students working to create their own image-based materials.

Further information: **Brett Lucas** (*see contacts*)

Links: Filter Project: <http://www.filter.ac.uk>

## New Media and English the C&IT Roadshow at Senate House London, October 9th

This was the Subject Centre's final roadshow in a series of five regional events profiling C&IT initiatives in the English subject community. Randy Metcalf from the Humbul Humanities hub showed us how we could use MyHumbul to create a custom made set of links to the latest resources in our subject area with just a few mouse clicks. (Humbul's principal service is to facilitate access to online resources in the humanities.) James Ross (London Metropolitan) demonstrated innovative software to enhance key skills for entry level students including note-taking and essay writing skills. Andrew Thompson (University of Wales College, Newport) demonstrated a package used to support the teaching of 'Forms of Poetry'. David Lindley (Leeds) showed the innovative software used to help teach secretary hand and Stuart Lee (Oxford) discussed the experiences and philosophies underlying his third year 'E-Literature' course. The day was punctuated by lively debate on many of the issues and was a great opportunity to gain inspiration.

Links:

All C&IT Resources can be accessed at:  
<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/learninglink>

Humbul RSS feeds: <http://www.humbul.ac.uk/help/rss.html>

## The C&IT Project Final report out now

The C&IT Roadshows and the Learning Link database form two of the key outcomes of our year-long C&IT Project, which has just concluded. The third objective was to produce a report describing and analysing C&IT developments and their application within English studies. This report, prepared by Dr Michael Hanrahan, is now available on our website under 'outcomes' at:  
<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/it/index.htm>

The report is a description of the current state of C&IT in relation to English teaching in the UK and is therefore relevant to anyone interested in the development of the subject as a whole. As well as providing full descriptions of the 'Learning Link' database and the C&IT Roadshows, the report points to the factors which are encouraging and discouraging the application of C&IT, and makes a series of recommendations for future developments.

## Good Practice Guide Widening Access and Participation

The English Subject Centre has published its guide to good practice in terms of access and widening participation (AWP). The guide draws on detailed interviews with lecturers in three English departments as well as student interviews and it provides a snapshot of developments related to AWP in our subject community. The guide provides practical suggestions which help to identify the issues involved in recruiting and providing support for students who have not traditionally taken up, or had the opportunity to take up, study in higher education. While the guide takes into account national policy and differing institutional practices, it focuses on the subject-specific repercussions of AWP because this initiative impacts on, and is implemented primarily by, departmental staff.

For some English departments, access is a concern because of the targets set for institutions that have recruited substantially from the independent school sector. For others, access issues have been on the agenda for a long time. Geographical location, recruitment patterns and college or 'ex-poly' status have combined to make access issues a fact of life. While these differences exist, most departments are likely to review their policies for AWP as they relate to either class, ethnicity, gender or disability. The guide pays particular attention to the changes departments will need to make in order to comply with the SENDA legislation on disability and Higher Education.

The guide investigates the ways in which changes in the composition of the student body relate to, or affect, orientation practices, information provided for students prior to and after admission, and curriculum development at first year level and beyond. It aims to provoke debate about what constitutes good practice in this area and we hope to develop a bank of case studies to draw attention to various examples in diverse contexts. We particularly welcome case studies from departments of English Literature, Language and Creative Writing in Wales and Scotland.

Copies of the Good Practice Guide will be circulated to departments shortly and are available for downloading from: <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/access/index.htm>

Further information: **Siobhán Holland** (*see contacts*)

### Apology

The English Subject Centre extends its apologies to Dr Martin Coyle, Chair of English at Cardiff University, for a typographical error on the cover of its September Newsletter. The title of his contribution appeared incorrectly as 'Marketing and Ghosts' rather than 'Marking and Ghosts'.

## Creative Writing: The State of the Art

### The Glamorgan Symposium, 20/21 September 2002

The English Subject Centre hosted its third symposium on Creative Writing at the University of Glamorgan in September. The event, which was co-organised with the Creative Writing team at Glamorgan, invited delegates to review a draft version of the English Subject Centre's Guide to Good Practice in Creative Writing. The guide reflects on what constitutes good practice in the teaching of Creative Writing in Higher Education.

The guide aims to make available to departments that are introducing or expanding their provision of Creative Writing some of the expertise developed by colleagues and departments with long experience of delivering these programmes. It also introduces colleagues to discussions that are fostered by organisations such as the National Association of Writers in Education which has been involved in drafting the guide.

The event began on the Friday evening with readings by Sheenagh Pugh, Michelene Wandor, Robert Sheppard, Scott Thurston and Chris Meredith, all of whom teach Creative Writing in HE. On the Saturday, delegates questioned some of the members of the focus group involved in the preparation of the good practice guide, and elements of the discussion begun here influenced debate throughout the day. Then Rob Middlehurst (Glamorgan) provided a timely reminder about the ways in which ideas about what constitutes 'good practice' can become reified and immune from criticism and modification. In his presentation on 'Dodging Dogma' he examined the problems caused when students are

uncritically advised to 'show, don't tell', and reminded delegates to be aware of the ways in which their advice constrained as well as enabled students' experiments with writing.

In the afternoon, delegates heard about two of the departmental projects on Creative Writing being funded by the English Subject Centre. Rob Sheppard and Scott Thurston, (Edge Hill) summarised the interim results of their survey which had invited tutors to comment on the function of 'supplementary discourses' in the learning and teaching of Creative Writing. The term refers to those pieces of writing students submit for assessment alongside, and in commentary, on their creative work. Steve May (Bath Spa), introduced the voices of students into the debate when he reported on the extensive interviews he has carried out with students in different institutions who are studying Creative Writing. In the final session, former students commented on their own experiences as creative writing students and the effect of their studies on their subsequent careers and practice.

We plan to continue our programme of events on Creative Writing in 2003 and will disseminate the results of the Subject Centre's departmental projects in the near future. Copies of the Good Practice Guide will be circulated to departments in the next few weeks and the guide will be available for downloading from:

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/creativewrit.htm>

Further information: **Siobhán Holland** (*see contacts*)

### Call for materials

The English Subject Centre receives many requests for assistance in compiling documentation such as aims and outcomes statements, skills matrices and assessment criteria. Often enquirers simply seek examples compiled at other institutions. In these cases we can direct them to websites where we know they exist, but this is often a hit and miss affair as such documents are difficult to track down by systematic searches.

We are keen to make examples available on the English Subject Centre website to improve access, or to provide a direct link to a document on an institutional website. We already have a few examples available; see

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/topic/progspec.htm> for programme specifications for instance. Specifically, we would like to facilitate access to:

- Programme specifications
- Aims and outcomes statements
- Skills matrices or statements
- Plagiarism policies
- Assessment criteria
- Departmental or faculty learning and teaching strategies

If you already have one or more of these documents available on your website and would be prepared for us to provide a link to it, or could supply us with the text for us to load onto our own site, then we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Please e-mail: [brett.lucas@rbul.ac.uk](mailto:brett.lucas@rbul.ac.uk)

# News and Information

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## Staff Changes at the English Subject Centre

We bid farewell to Dr Michael Hanrahan, Project Officer C&IT, who has left the Subject Centre to return with his partner to the United States (and imminent fatherhood). His rare combination of subject scholarship and IT expertise means that he will be missed both within the Subject Centre, the Centre for Computing in the Humanities where he was based, and the wider community. We are in the process of recruiting a replacement to continue our work in supporting the use of C&IT in English.

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Brett Lucas, formerly an Assistant on the C&IT project, is assuming wider responsibilities as Website Developer and Learning Technology Officer. Brett will be developing guides and resources to assist English staff in using software tools, and is currently working on a collaborative project with Lesley Coote at Hull University to develop an image database of Chaucer photographs.

Those of you calling or e-mailing the Centre may well be in contact with Petrina Farrington, our Administrative Assistant, who has joined us to help Carol Eckersley run the Centre's office.

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## Ten steps to make your path easier!

The English Subject Centre's new website is the easiest way to gain access to a wealth of resources and information to help you with your teaching. The six main areas of the site provide an accessible window into a variety of quality resources. To get you started here is a 10 step guide to some of the resources available....

### • Step 1: Guide to the website

Start with a quick overview of how the site works. The navigation makes the site easy to use and this page will show you how the site works and where the information is located. <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/aboutus/newweb.htm>

### • Step 2: Publications

We publish two bulletins and newsletters every year packed with articles about learning and teaching, book reviews and the issues facing the subject today. You can browse these publications online or download them from this page. You will also find copies of our reports to download and links to other LTSN publications. <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/publications/index.htm>

### • Step 3: Assessment

Resources which present some of the main issues for lecturers when considering assessment including: how to communicate about assessment, the various modes of assessment, and links to papers on the subject. <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/topic/assessment/index.htm>

### • Step 4: Messageboard

An opportunity to share teaching ideas and experiences with colleagues, debate key issues in the subject area...or just vent your spleen! We have gone interactive and now provide a discussion area where you may join and contribute. <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/discussion/forum/default.asp>

### • Step 5: English Department List

A quick way to search for any HE English department website in the United Kingdom.

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/engdept/search.asp>

### • Step 6: The Directory of Experience and Expertise

Our online directory allows lecturers to identify and consult experienced colleagues to share ideas and knowledge about aspects of teaching and learning.

[http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/expertise/Experience\\_Search.asp](http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/expertise/Experience_Search.asp)

### • Step 7: Learning Link Database

Are you using or contemplating the use of C&IT in your teaching? Our Learning Link database of e-learning resources will enable you to see examples of HOW technology has been integrated into the English curriculum in innovative ways. There is also a growing area of tutorials, 'getting started' guides and case studies to assist you in making informed pedagogical choices.

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/learninglink/index.asp>

### • Step 8: Events Area

Keep up-to-date on our programme of events or browse our comprehensive selection of links to external conference, selected for the subject community.

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/events/index.htm>

### • Step 9: Departmental Projects

We are funding 17 departmental projects on diverse topics such as creative writing and online medieval texts. Descriptions of the projects and outcomes as they become available are given here.

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/deptprojects/index.htm>

### • Step 10: Feedback

In order to provide the kind of resources that you require we need to receive feedback...so after you have taken this short tour fill in our feedback form and let us know what you think!

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/aboutus/feedback/feedback.asp>

## Call for Papers

A three-day conference at Senate House,  
The University of London, July 17-19, 2003  
Plenary Speakers: **Jonathan Bate, Catherine Belsey,  
Ronald Carter, Ato Quayson, Elaine Showalter**

'English: The Condition of the Subject' will present a major opportunity to review current practice in English. Its prime aim is to reflect upon how English has been constituted in the classroom through the changes of the last ten years, how its manifestation in teaching lives alongside its manifestation in research, and what the future of English might be.

The conference will be organised through themes, and the prime theme will be the curriculum. So papers (or strands of papers) are invited on the topic of teaching particular curriculum areas.

### Questions asked at the conference will also include:

- What is the condition of English now, and how are its subjects (the curriculum, the students, lecturers and scholarship) constituted?
- How have the mechanisms governing our professional lives in the modern university, and the culture of professionalism itself, affected the subject?
- What is the English 'class' and how are we changing it or reinforcing it?
- Is English a subject without centre or margins? Where is the 'literary' to be located or reinvented?

### And the following broad topics will be under review:

- Interdisciplinary work, subject boundaries, context
- Global English
- Future of academic publishing
- Language and literature
- Theory: for and against
- Teaching creative writing
- The value and point of English

Papers are invited on any of these and related themes. There will also be Seminar Strands (comprising three seminars of six papers) co-ordinated by individual (or joint) Chairs to allow sustained discussion on particular themes. The organisers will be pleased to help with the co-ordination of seminar strands where appropriate.

If you wish to propose a paper or a seminar strand, please send an abstract (no more than 200 words for a paper and 350 words for a seminar strand) to the Subject Centre by 31st January 2003. All proposals should be addressed to the Director, **Professor Philip Martin** [p.martin@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:p.martin@rhul.ac.uk) at the address below, or see the conference website: [www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/intconf](http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/intconf)

## Progression in the Humanities 13th December 2002 Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge

This one-day conference and workshop is organised by the Philosophical and Religious Studies Subject Centre with support from the Subject Centres for English, History, Classics and Archaeology and Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. It will explore difficulties faced by lecturers, tutors and planners in the Humanities confronting the need for clear programme specifications for progress, especially at the following level transitions:

- 2 to 3 at undergraduate level, where students on honours courses in smaller modules are often taught together in single seminars and tutorial groups;
- 3 to first year postgraduate, where, again, pressures on resources have sometimes lead to classes being taught together.

The registration fee for the event is £15. If you would like to attend, please complete the online registration form available from:

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/events/future/index.htm> or request a form via email to: [esc@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:esc@rhul.ac.uk)

### Reminder: Survey of the English Curriculum and Teaching in UK Higher Education 2002

Questionnaires for this survey were sent out at the end of August. We still need more responses to provide a representative basis for the report. We can accept returns into early December so this is your last chance to be included in the survey (and receive your £30 book tokens!).

Further copies of the questionnaire are available on our website at the bottom of:

<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/projects/curriculum/index.htm>

or phone 01784 443221 or email [esc@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:esc@rhul.ac.uk) for a paper copy.

