

English Subject Centre

Newsletter

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Director's Foreword

Ben Knights, Director, English Subject Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London



The activities of Subject Centres develop in dialogue with the communities they serve. Even those things that we ourselves initiate rapidly change shape and direction once exposed to the ideas and experience of teachers in the field. This newsletter itself bears

witness to the range of activities with which the English Subject Centre is involved, and acts in some ways as a snapshot (or a section through) current pre-occupations. Several core themes are represented here, encompassing student journeys into and out of the space we teachers temporarily share with them, the experiences students bring with them, and the hopes and ambitions they form. Topics which travel under the flags of transition and employability are therefore very much in the foreground. At the same time, to understand the meaning of our own interventions we have also to acknowledge how oblique and unpredictable are the ways in which as a community we touch students' lives. So another theme here, as for the Centre generally, is the need for a scholarship of teaching at once rigorous and suggestive: the development of genres and registers in which to reflect upon, write about, and then develop what we do.

This is a newsletter and some items of news are in order. The Higher Education Academy (into which the former LTSN and ILTHE have merged) is now active, and will be formally launched around the time this Newsletter reaches you. Paul Ramsden – known to many as the author of the popular *Learning to Teach in Higher Education* (revised edition, Routledge 2003) – returned from Australia to become Chief Executive in August. He wants the Academy to develop a forthright and independent voice on HE policy. It will resist compulsory regulation or pressures towards conforming to competency-based standards. Although the formal review of the Subject Centre network is not yet complete, it is understood that its conclusions are likely to be positive. Yet, in the short term, it is worth noting that the network still only has a contractual existence until December 2005. This represents something of a contrast with the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

(CETLs) whose five year funding will be announced early in the new year. As many of you will be well aware, 106 teams made it into the second round, and submitted their final bids in late October. It is likely that from 70 – 80 awards will be made. Several of the proposed CETLs involve English departments, and the Centre has been engaged on working with the bidding teams on their revised proposals. We wish our colleagues success, and look forward to working with the Centres when they achieve their funding.

Within this fluid institutional context the Subject Centre occupies an increasingly vital catalytic role. We are not here to help bring about an educational utopia by cascading the melioristic procedures of Quality Enhancement. We may at times need to speak back to the funders and policy makers in the terms which our very subject matter presses on the attention of teachers. If our subject can be said to be 'about' anything, it is 'about' the risks and ambiguities of the processes of learning, the need to confront worthy abstractions with the obduracy of the concrete instance. But as a Centre our relation to our community cannot be solely passive or reactive. We may also need to confront our own community with some serious, even fundamental, questions. To ask, for example, whether the communities of HE English are really prepared for the age of 'variable' fees; whether our trusted repertoire of teaching and assessment methods (refreshed as it is from various sources) is any longer adequate; to insist upon the implications of the choices made as the English community juggles its multiple and potentially contradictory obligations. How, in short, we as a community can continue to act responsibly towards knowledge (the care and maintenance of our diverse subject matters); towards students and their legitimate expectations; towards each other as colleagues; or towards a longer term vision of what we could be doing. Through all these run the tensions (felt more strongly in some departments than others) between the RAE and the commitment to teaching as those tensions are lived out in the professional lives of departments and individuals. As, once again, this Newsletter bears witness, the Centre will continue to struggle against a destructive split between research and teaching. While exciting, the tasks ahead are enormous. We shall need all the goodwill and support which our subject community is willing to lend us.

Events Calendar 2004-2005

Brief details of each of the English Subject Centre's forthcoming events are given below. If you would like further details, please see www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/events or e-mail esc@rhul.ac.uk. All events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.

Training Conference for New Lecturers in English

December 3-4, 2004: Birmingham University. Cost: £45

This event will combine short contextual and orientation talks by leading members of the profession with practical work in groups. It is intended for lecturers in the English disciplines (literature, language, writing) who are in their first or second year of full-time teaching. It proposes to supplement local PgCHE courses which are inevitably of a generic nature, by offering the opportunity to reflect on the demands of subject teaching.

English: the First Year Experience

January 28, 2005: Bristol University

This event will focus on the first year undergraduate and consider ways of designing curricula and improving the student experience. It will be of interest to anyone involved in curriculum design at Level One, and also to those concerned with recruitment and retention issues.

Teaching Victorian Fiction

February 4, 2005: Woburn House, Tavistock Square, London

Teaching Victorian Fiction is a one-day event bringing together teachers, writers and researchers to discuss different strategies of engaging with Victorian fiction (novels and short stories) in the seminar room. Alongside discussion of practical approaches – theoretical, contextual and thematic – the day will focus on some of the contexts in which Victorian fiction is taught and its place in the curriculum. Participants will also be invited to consider some of the issues, difficulties and solutions to module design. This will include the challenges involved in squeezing long novels (Henry James' famous 'baggy monsters') into the limited teaching time of the modern semester.

Teaching Holocaust Writing and Film

February 18-19, 2005: Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. Cost: £25 (£15 for postgraduate students)

The English Subject Centre with the Centre for Research in Holocaust and Twentieth Century History at Royal Holloway is organising this one-day workshop. For details, see Robert Eaglestone's article on page 35.

Thinking Outside the Box: English, Film and New Media

March 18, 2005: University of Hull

Film and TV adaptations are a well-established tool in the teaching of English literature and drama, and can stimulate interest in, and understanding of, written texts. Audio-visual media also provide the teacher with new ways of approaching meaning, structure and context. Most teachers of English literature now use internet resources in their teaching, and many use virtual learning environments and/or interactive whiteboard technology. The aim of this one-day event is to bring together practitioners who are interested in the use of film and 'new media' in teaching. The programme will include the demonstration of new initiatives, a discussion of issues involved in the use of electronic media and film in learning, teaching and assessment, and a practical workshop session exploring possibilities.

Networking Day for Heads of Department

April 21, 2005: Oxford Brookes University

Following a successful networking day in April 2004, we are providing another opportunity in 2005 for Heads of Department to meet and discuss issues of common concern. The event is scheduled immediately prior to the CCUE AGM at St Anne's College Oxford.

Writing about Pedagogical Research

May 13, 2005: Royal Holloway, University of London

This event will be of interest to anyone embarking on pedagogical research or wishing to improve their skills in this area.

Articles

Teaching to Learn



Ros King, Senior Lecturer in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London, argues that undergraduates can learn by teaching in schools. On p. 4, Carolyn Lindsay gives a school teacher's perspective.

As I sit down to write this, I have just read a piece in the paper about a BBC report on the future of *Panorama*. Moving the fifty-year-old, erstwhile flagship current affairs programme back to a Monday night prime time slot – up against *Coronation Street* – would, the report argues, require rather softer-looking presenters and less difficult subject matter. Accompanied by a cartoon by Austin with the caption ‘*Panorama* with Jeremy Paxman and Sooty’, it quotes the report as arguing that the programme suffers from the four Ds, ‘too distant, demanding, difficult and didactic’, and that ‘To address this, *Panorama* should move from an image of distant informer to that of active agent. It should move from a remote, pedestal position of “lecturer” to a “touch it, reach it, feel it guide”. It should enable people to feel and experience the truth, not simply observe or “learn” it.’ This language begs a number of questions which, added to the unvoiced assumption that lecturers are unredeemably boring, says not a lot for the writer’s experience of education. As we face the uncertainty of the next RAE, however, and simultaneously wonder whether, in the face of criticism of its effects from many quarters, including the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, some other mechanism will be introduced to reconcile our core funded but Cinderella activity, ‘teaching’, with the incompletely funded but kudos-bringing activity, ‘research’, there can be no better time to be asking what it is we do when we teach, what it is we need to do (both as individuals and as groups at all ages and levels) in order to learn, and how we might promote learning in others. For teaching and promoting learning are not necessarily the same thing, while research and learning surely are.

This paper is the latest in a series of outcomes from a research project funded by HEFCE’s Teaching and Learning fund into an undergraduate course I have been teaching at Queen Mary, University of London since 1993.² *Shakespeare in the Classroom* involves students working together in small groups, teaching a Shakespeare play to years 6, 7, or 8 in local inner city schools. The first part of the course comprises five weeks of lectures, seminars and workshops in college, in which students are taught the chosen play at their level and introduced to ways of teaching it to younger people. Then the undergraduates spend about one and a half hours per week for six or seven weeks in school, teaching their class, with a regular trouble-shooting session back in college in which they share successes and problems. The process culminates with each class of children giving a ten-minute presentation of what they have achieved to other classes in the school. The undergraduates reflect on their experience throughout the course in a learning journal, and later write an assessed 3000 word essay (60% of the final mark), which situates that experience within a wider and more theoretical context. The learning journal is unassessed but fulfils the invaluable task of ensuring that students write regularly for the course from its very beginning in a personal but also analytical and problem-solving way. It also gets the immediate (and often considerable) emotional joys and frustrations of the work placement off their chests, helping them to use the experience productively in their essays. There is also a group mark (40%) for the classroom work, which is documented by a file containing lesson plans and photocopied samples of the children’s work.

1 ‘BBC plans radical rethink of *Panorama*’, *The Guardian*, 27.9.2004.

2 Published research outputs include ‘Personal Experience and Academic Theory: The Use of the Learning Journal’, *English in Education*, 36.3 (2002), 20-7; ‘Targets make our kids go from bard to worse’, *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 7.11.2003; ‘Teaching Shakespeare: Indoctrination or Creativity?’, in *Shifting the Scene: Shakespeare in European Culture*, edited by Ladina Bezzola Lambert and Balz Engler (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 205-16. I gratefully acknowledge the work of my research assistant, Lilah Heilbronn, particularly in designing and setting up the website: www.english.qmul.ac.uk/ShakesinClass/HomePage.html.

The final presentation is probably one of the most important parts of the experience for the school students. It is important to realise that although we are ostensibly dealing with a play and the presentation may involve acting bits of it, this is not just a performance in the theatrical sense of that all-encompassing term, but part of the process of learning. In order to get this far, the children, helped by the undergraduates, need to reflect on what they have learnt and decide how to present this learning to others – effectively becoming teachers themselves. It is a transformation that they find empowering. One undergraduate who had a placement in a particularly challenging school which at that stage, several years ago, had very poor standards of literacy, initially wrote quite angrily in his learning journal that he thought 'we should be helping the students learn how to read and write before they encountered material that college students found trouble with'. Later, he realised that he had 'learned to trust the boys and let them teach each other, and this was most significantly accomplished by acting ... These boys have come a long way since October ... I have seen it, and by the smiles on their faces after their presentation they saw it as well. Their performance gave them courage and an ability to show what they [had] learned. They took pride in something they initially considered a waste of time'.

Multiple Intelligences

The theoretical approach underpinning this course draws heavily on the work of the American psychologist Howard Gardner and what he calls 'multiple intelligences'. Having observed the effects on his patients of massive damage to selected parts of the brain through stroke or trauma, Gardner suggested that intelligence, far from being a single quality of mind measurable by IQ, is manifested in seven distinct ways. Being intelligent in one of these areas does not mean that one is equally intelligent in them all. Gardner's seven 'multiple intelligences' are: Linguistic; Logical-mathematical; Musical; Bodily-kinaesthetic; Spatial; Interpersonal; Intrapersonal.³

One important implication of the concept of multiple intelligences is that we probably all learn in different ways. When I first started teaching Shakespeare in the Classroom, most of the class, when given a standard learning preferences test, registered a preference for learning aurally (for instance listening to lectures) or visually (reading books).⁴ These are the learning preferences that are most likely to equip people to survive in a traditional academic system. More recently I have found that students are more likely to answer those same questions in ways that show that, at least in part, they learn kinaesthetically, that is by needing to move about or use their bodies in some way while studying. My samples are too small to be statistically valid, although one possible explanation is that, since I started teaching the course, the department has acquired a drama section and consequently a large number of students who have a need to get up and perform. But the suggestion that by increasing the numbers going to university we are not lowering standards but allowing students with different types of intelligence simply to be recognised as intelligent is attractive. As is the idea that whole intellectual domains (in the sciences particularly) could be opened up to people who have historically been put off by conventional pedagogical approaches to those subjects. It should certainly encourage us to rethink our teaching. Teaching styles that are sufficiently flexible to allow students with fundamentally different learning styles to flourish equally are yet to permeate far into any level of education.

Learning versus 'Teaching and Learning'

A focus on learning rather than on the ubiquitous but dichotomised mantra 'teaching and learning' marks an important shift of emphasis. First, and most importantly in the present climate in higher education, it enables one to see one's teaching as a seamless continuum with one's own learning or subject-specific research. It also encourages a more empathetic and imaginative approach to others, since participants become partners in a shared project rather than deliverers or consumers of material. It thus fosters a dynamic process in which each individual

³ *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (London: Fontana, 1983). Gardner has since tentatively added a further three potential intelligences (naturalist, spiritual and existential) although these are perhaps less persuasive (*Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999)).

⁴ 'VARK: A Guide to Learning Styles', <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>. See also IT Works! on page 48.

relates their own experience as a learner to their role as a facilitator of learning in others. That dynamic, arising as it does from an awareness and understanding of multiple viewpoints (the undergraduate's own, that of others in their group, of individual children in their class and of their class's usual teacher; not to mention my expectations and course guidelines) inevitably fosters critical thinking. Students display a passionate interest and involvement not just in the practicalities but also in the philosophy and ethics of what they are doing. The weekly seminar discussions in college during the weeks of teaching practice are invariably noisy, vibrant, argumentative, and frequently laughter-filled with all students fully engaged. This free-thinking, critical and thoughtful process is then compounded when in their final written piece they have to relate their teaching experience to their independent reading of theoretical work on topics such as the value of the arts in education, or creativity and problem solving in the learning process.

Students actually want to be stretched and engaged. While being taught is frequently a chore, learning is a pleasurable activity for all of us – otherwise none of us would have got out of our cradles. Active engagement is a good indication that deep learning is taking place and there is indeed evidence to suggest that students on 'student-focused' courses that are designed around the development of concepts acquire deeper knowledge than those on courses that are 'teacher focused'.⁵ A good definition of a teacher-focused course is one, 'in which the teacher is concerned primarily with the organization, presentation and testing of content and their own teaching behaviour, with the goal that students acquire information'.⁶ The unwanted, and perhaps unintentional, effect of the last ten years of education reforms is that students come into higher education with an over-dependence on guidelines and attainment targets while our accountability as teachers at all levels is measured primarily through assessment of teacher-focused activity.

It is my experience that students learn best when they're asked to think about how whatever subject they're doing relates to them both personally and in the world – that is,

by responding to the questions 'what can I now do?' 'how can I work out what I think?' and 'why does it matter?'. These are all questions that relate to process and to concept, rather than to fact. The student can therefore more easily see that they have a role to play in their own learning. Involving students in teaching each other is just one way of making this 'in the world' activity blazingly visible.

The traditional teacher-focused lecture and seminar course, whether punctuated by continuous assessment assignments or culminating in a final examination, follows a constant pattern. *Shakespeare in the Classroom* has a rather different shape. A lot of material has to be packed into the preliminary weeks of the course. The students have to learn to understand the play at their own level; there are workshop and other pedagogical techniques to be imparted and practised; and essential logistical and safety requirements to be considered. This is accomplished in a combination of lectures, workshops and discussions. The delivery of information is inevitably teacher focused, but the combination of the learning journal and intense awareness that they will soon be responsible for teaching others ensures active engagement and urgent discussions within their groups. As the weeks progress, there is a gradual shift as the undergraduates, working together, and largely undirected, adapt what they have been taught, reflect on their learning, and plan their own lessons. Once their teaching practice begins, the dynamic of the course changes. My role becomes more that of adviser; counselling the students on the classes I observe, and chairing the lively weekly discussions in which they offer each other advice on the problems they are facing.

The fact that the undergraduates are not teachers, and not even PGCE student teachers, means that they have a relationship with the school students more like that of mentor or even elder sibling than authority figure. For their part, the school students invariably become aware that they have some responsibility for the undergraduates' learning. A partnership grows up between them, which owes something to this relative status and something to the community-building nature of the drama and other creative techniques that the undergraduates are using. The novelty of

5 K. Trigwell, M. Prosser, and F. Waterhouse, 'Relations Between Teachers' Approaches to Teaching and Students' Approaches to Learning', *Higher Education* 37 (1999), 57–70.

6 Graham Gibbs and Martin Coffey, 'The Impact of Training of University Teachers on their Teaching Skills, their Approach to Teaching and the Approach to Learning of their Students', *Learning in Higher Education* 5.1 (2004), 87–100.

the experience and the consciousness of the responsibilities that each group bears towards the other; often has the effect of shaking individuals out of previous habits of learning (or perhaps more accurately, non-learning), and a significant number from both groups achieve results that can confound the expectations of their teachers. An equally important part of the process is the effect on the teachers (including me) of watching this inter-student dynamic. It offers the opportunity to reflect on our practice and to consider the nature of learning – in itself, of course, a learning experience of particular value to teachers. The undergraduates are encouraged to be both critical and self-critical. Their openly expressed and observant arguments about the problems of education are thought provoking and certainly more useful to me as a teacher than those anonymously completed questionnaires about teaching delivery. I try to share the undergraduates' written work with the schoolteachers and a current part of the project is to ask them too to write down and evaluate their experience of the course.

The teaching to learn technique that I am advocating here is a natural extension of my work as a researcher into the nature and mode of operation of English renaissance drama. Cognition is at the heart of both. Learning happens when we try to make sense of things that are not straightforward, that 'cannot be resolved with a high degree of certainty', about which 'experts may disagree', and that are in short 'ill-structured'. A Shakespeare play is a highly structured artefact that simulates, but never exactly imitates, 'ill-structured',⁷ conflicted reality. It is organised as a learning trajectory for its audience, but it never tells you what to think. There is generally no narrator. In some cases in Shakespeare where there is such a character (for example the prologues of *Henry V* or *Romeo and Juliet*) he is notoriously unreliable. There is invariably, too, a gap between what any given character knows about the progress of the story in which he is involved and what the play's structure (both visual and aural) has enabled us to know. Meaning therefore resides for the audience in reflective analysis of the material presented, and may be specifically coloured for individual readers or audience members by prior knowledge or life experience. But the academic study of 'Shakespeare'

should be more actively engaged than is possible for an audience member or private reader. It properly involves 'doing' Shakespeare: writing creatively as well as analytically; acting out as well as reading; thinking visually as well as linguistically; arguing and disputing, but never ever being asked to tick a box. Trying to recruit another partner school to the *Shakespeare in the Classroom* programme two years ago, however, I was met by a Head of English with the words 'I hope you are not going to be doing any of that drama nonsense'. Here was a committed teacher in a position of some authority who felt so beleaguered by testing and attainment targets that she could not see Shakespeare as anything except some kind of exercise to be got through. And in the previous edition of this Newsletter, Bethan Marshall wrote that there has been a 'shift whereby English is becoming like maths teaching'.⁸ This would be singularly unfortunate. Traditional maths teaching has been so unsuccessful in getting students to pursue their studies in maths even to A-level let alone university that the 'overwhelming majority of respondents' to Adrian Smith's recent report into maths education 'no longer regard current mathematics curricula, assessment and qualifications as fit for purpose'. His suggested solutions to this disastrous state of affairs include having a 'forum for joined up thinking' about mathematical teaching and learning from primary to higher education; getting undergraduates out into schools 'to obtain some classroom teaching experience'; developing a 'subject specific pedagogy' by 'appreciating how pupils learn mathematics, the role of questioning and response, and the potential obstacles to learning that students are likely to face'; and, perhaps most significantly, trying to effect 'a shift of emphasis towards the processes of 'doing mathematics' and away from 'learning outcomes''.⁹ I am proud to say that Professor Smith is Principal of my own college, and these measures would actually combine to make maths more like English. But only if we, as researchers at the forefront of learning in our discipline, resist the imposition of attainment targets, and explore – and explain to others, both within and outside the discipline, what it is about 'doing' English that enables us and our students to learn.

7 P. King and K. Kitchener; *Developing Reflective Judgement* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1994), cited in Jennifer Moon, *Learning Journals* (London: Kogan Page, 1999), 21.

8 'English in Schools: Death by Drowning?' *English Subject Centre Newsletter* 6 (February 2004), 30.

9 *Making Mathematics Count* (London: HMSO, 2004), 6, 130, 132, 112.



Carolyn Lindsay, Year 6 class teacher and Science, Design and Technology Co-ordinator at St Elizabeth's RC Primary School, describes the effect of undergraduate English students in the classroom.

Shakespeare and *King Lear* have been a key part of the Year 6 Curriculum since we entered the partnership with Queen Mary English Department some six years ago. We were immediately overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and imagination of the students in their presentation of the text to 11 year olds.

The project allows children to access Shakespeare through a range of exciting experiences, incorporating a whole range of creative activities. Children find the experience empowering. They are introduced to the language and stories before they have had a chance to develop any preconceptions or prejudices. Knowing that Shakespeare wrote plays a long time ago and perhaps the title of one or two which have been recently filmed is the extent of most children's knowledge – *King Lear* is invariably an unknown quantity, so when children are introduced to key points in the story and the very vivid characters they are soon able to relate to them. Children are encouraged to keep a journal to reflect on their reactions to experience. These are private, but some children have chosen to share them and their insights are interesting:

Really, it's about the sort of things that go on in our lives, only it's got Kings and Dukes and stuff. The people are just like us only they talk in a different way. When you know what some of the old words mean it's just like now. The people in King Lear get upset and do stupid things.

Children have become so involved in the stories that during holidays they ask parents to take them to see a Shakespeare play; often they will comment to staff about having seen an advert for a Shakespeare production or heard about one on TV. An important aspect of this is the degree to which the

boys are enthused, as the development of boys' literacy is of national concern. The students also offer a powerful role model for girls and ethnic minority pupils, encouraging them to aspire to higher education.

The students' approach to the text is consciously aimed at using a multi-disciplined approach, thus supporting visual, kinaesthetic and auditory learners in their accessing of the play. Children of varying linguistic abilities, including those with Special Needs and English as a Second Language, were able to participate fully, often taking a lead in the activities, thus building their self-esteem and confidence. Children are encouraged to use their ideas in developing responses to the text, so painting, music composition, mime, 'stand-up' or rap can be part of the final production. This freedom of approach and breadth of expression allowed teachers to stand back and observe children in a new light, seeing how they coped with a range of situations and an amazing range of original ideas. The level of enthusiasm and motivation is invariably inspiring. This motivation and independence has a knock on effect throughout the year and across the curriculum, as children who have been able to bring so much of themselves to the project are keen to approach other topics in a similar way. Exploring the complexities of character, emotion and relationships in *Lear* will often lead to children approaching a history topic in a similar way, for example using the role of women in *Lear* as a model for exploring the role of women in Tudor or ancient Greek society. By experiencing Shakespeare's skill in manipulating his audience, children begin to explore this skill in the planning of their own writing.

By the time we reach the final presentation, to which parents and the rest of the school are invited, one of the most striking aspects is the degree to which each child's self-esteem has been enhanced through the experience of working with the students, with whom they develop a special relationship. The pupils are fully involved in the planning of the presentation and are involved in lengthy and detailed discussion of each aspect of their work.

As for us as teachers in the school, we have learnt to be more open in what we expect of children. *Lear* not being an obvious choice worked very well and this has made us more receptive to other seemingly unlikely material. The project has made us aware that children can have much deeper and fuller insights than we were inclined to expect and it has given us the confidence to experiment.

‘Second Year-icity’

Sally Bushell, Lecturer in English at Lancaster University, assesses the differences between second and third year students.



The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of ‘second year-icity’ in the teaching of English literature to undergraduates. We need to ask whether there is a fundamental difference in the abilities, skills and receptivity of second year students from those of the third year, and, consequently, whether there should be significant differences in the methods used to teach and assess them. Such an exploration implicitly raises a question of wider importance as to whether second and third year performance ought to be rewarded equally or whether there should be more weight given to third year performance. In the academic year 2002-2003 I was able to make direct comparison of second and third year students taking essentially the same course (*British Romanticism 1770-1832*).¹ As convenor of both courses I designed and taught both simultaneously.

For the second year course, all students must have taken the first year course. It is a core course chosen from a limited range of period papers and attracts approximately 100 students. The third year course was run as an optional course for students in the final year of their degree scheme. It competed with popular half-unit short courses and attracted between 30 and 45 students. The second year course was taught through a one-hour lecture and one-hour seminar in each week. The third year course was taught through a two-hour combined lecture-seminar each week. This meant that I taught the entire course to the third year students, whilst the second years attended lectures given by other members of the department as well as myself. Another person was also teaching some of the seminars. Assessment for both

courses was in the form of two coursework essays and a final examination. The two courses shared the same major objectives and learning outcomes but differed in the means by which those objectives were reached. To illustrate the ways in which differentiation can occur within the teaching of second and third year students I have chosen two specific examples. The first example is from teaching within the weekly seminar; the second is a comparison of the first coursework essay set for both year groups. In this way content, teaching and assessment methods can be evaluated and compared.

In the first week of the second term the opportunity is taken to jump out of the progression through various Romantic authors and texts and to think about methods and approaches to those texts. The aim is to make students more self-consciously aware of what they are doing, of how they are reading and of their own methodology. All second years take a compulsory course in *Theory and Practice of Criticism*. I wanted to make an explicit link to that course and help students to see the ways in which theory can be applied to, and connect with, other courses. The lecture was given by the convenor of the theory course who addressed this quite broadly by thinking about a number of core Romantic concerns: awareness of the limitations of language; the construction and deconstruction of identity and Romantic ideas of the self; familiarity and strangeness. In the seminar which followed, a single theory was then applied to a text. We read a piece from Freud discussing the concept of *Screen Memory* and ideas about how the mind works and as a warm up exercise I asked students to recount to each other (in pairs) their own earliest memory. We then turned to Wordsworth’s *Spots of Time* passages in the two-part *Prelude*. After hearing it read aloud, students worked in pairs on each of these passages, thinking about why the passage might have been memorable to the poet, the relationship between adult and child memory and between the present of the writer and the recreated past. We then finally returned to the Freud passage to reconsider it. Students raised issues such as anachronism – Wordsworth came first so could we apply Freud retrospectively? They decided that Wordsworth did not directly map onto Freud – that he often seemed self-

¹ This situation occurred because the third year course was re-located as a second year course. Thus, for the first year of introduction, it was necessary to teach it to both years.

consciously aware of his own 'screens', whereas in Freud's model the memory only recalls the screen and not the deeper trauma which it hides. One student made the perceptive point that in the three passages we had looked at the first two occurred before Wordsworth was eight years old and the third when he was thirteen and that, according to Freud's model, this would make a difference in the continuity of the memory.

In teaching the equivalent session to third year students I was able to use the full two-hour session to structure the teaching in more of a 'workshop' format which I felt would suit it. Where the second year students were encouraged to make connections to the theory course which was (for them) running alongside Romanticism, the third year students had completed this course the previous year. I could therefore assume some broad understanding of theory and come at it in a more sophisticated way.

For the first forty-five minutes students were given an overview of critical shifts and trends in the twentieth century, explaining how these emerged in relation to Romanticism. I also provided students with samples from different critical texts illustrating these approaches which we read and discussed together. This was quite hard work for the first half of the session.

After a short break, students were divided into three groups and allowed to choose one of the approaches I had talked through to pursue. The three chosen were: psychoanalysis (Freud) applied to Wordsworth's *Spots of Time* passages (the same material as that given to the second years, although with a second critical extract problematising Freud); reader-response applied to the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; new historicism applied to a Shelley sonnet and a Keats' poem. For the next forty-five minutes or so students worked together. They had a secondary text, a second piece responding to or critiquing that text, and the primary material (the poem). Clear instructions were given on the sheet and each member of the group was required to feed back at the end and to share their findings with the class as a whole.

In the second year session there was a relatively simple objective in terms of connecting courses in the students' minds and making them see how ideas in one course

could be applied in the context of another. I felt that the session worked and that it had begun to challenge the students' sense of what they were doing and to raise some questions for them. In the third year session I was able to assume a more established knowledge base and to use a more comparative approach. I felt that this was a far more comprehensive session on the whole than the second year one, and yet that it would not have worked with students at that level. This was a case then of a marked difference between second and third year levels, created by the context for learning. Third year students had a wider context that I could build upon. They enjoyed revisiting ideas with particular reference to this course. Second year students were still grappling with the very idea of theory and would not have had the skills or confidence to perform the tasks set for the third years.

My second example of 'Second Year-icity' concerns the design of course assessment. The aim of the first coursework essay for the second year students was to provide them with a fairly safe structure within which they nonetheless had to undertake independent work. Students were asked to make use of the course anthology² to consider one of three themes in Romanticism and then to choose two texts that they would consider under that theme and make their comparison. The purpose of the exercise was to show skills of close analysis and attention to elements such as form, tone, rhythm and metre, language, and these were skills which had been explicitly taught throughout the term. A 'safety net' was provided by the fact that the anthology they were using also provided thematic combinations of texts within it so that if they wanted to play safe, (by choosing two of the choices made by the editor), they could.

The aim of the first essay for the third year students was also to make independent use of the anthology but in a more sophisticated way. The basis for selection was thus not a core theme of Romanticism (as it was for the second years) but the concept of the canon, with students told to select one canonical and one non-canonical writer and to write an essay addressing issues of canonicity. They were required to choose at least one writer who had not been taught on the course, and for whom more independent research skills were likely to be needed.

2 Duncan Wu, *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

Both of these tasks worked reasonably well, although on the whole the third year piece seemed to be more successful. Perhaps as a first assignment for the second years the exercise gave them too much freedom and, although it was a simpler task than that set for the third years, the skills required (in terms of selecting and pairing suitable texts and thinking about the basis for comparison) were much the same. Some difficulties occurred when marking the coursework where students had either chosen a piece which was too substantial for them to undertake close analysis upon or had become lost in the wide scope of the themes, so that their essays had no real structure and direction. The focus on two texts *should* have reduced this difficulty but did not always do so. The third years approached the question in a number of different ways. Some chose very interesting combinations (e.g. Blake and Joanna Southcott) or used texts not in the anthology. Some related quite broadly to the theme of the canon (e.g. looking at Wordsworth alongside his sister) whilst others made the focus quite strongly the issue of the canon itself, using poems mainly to illustrate particular attitudes or positions. There were no real problems with lack of focus. Again, however, although the third year task was more successful, it would have been much too challenging for the second years. Indeed the success of the exercise reflected the increased freedom and intellectual confidence of the third years, where the problems with the task for the second years reflected a correspondent lack of such confidence (and need for a more controlled and prescribed structure).

As these two examples show, the two courses cover similar ground, but do so in markedly different ways for the two year groups. The second year course was necessarily shaped by an awareness that students at this point in their academic careers still need quite a lot of support. They are not fully confident either in terms of responding to material within seminars or in assessment situations and so a much stronger support structure has to be in place here. By contrast, in both the teaching and assessments for the third year students they were able to

be given far more 'space' and responsibility for their own learning. This also coloured work done within class, where they could be set up and left to organise themselves, and have their own independent debates. Third year students on the whole also seemed to need feedback far less, whereas second year seminar work had to be very closely tied to feedback to ensure that students kept focussed on the task and engaged fully, and with energy. Third year students seem to do this far more naturally.

What are the implications here for the teaching and learning of second and third year students of English literature? Various studies of education assert for us the importance of prior understanding for student responses to learning and of the context they bring to it. Brookfield reminds us that our own autobiographies affect our learning and teaching and that this is equally true for the students themselves.³ In an article on autonomous learning, Joy Higgs stresses that "the learner's attitudes and performances were strongly influenced by their experience of past independent learning activities".⁴ More worryingly, Prosser and Trigwell, in their discussion of student perception, point out that...

*students with well-developed prior understanding are likely to be aware of those aspects of the context affording a deep approach, to adopt a deep approach and to have well-developed understanding at the end of the subject. On the other hand, students with less well-developed prior understanding are more likely to be aware of those aspects affording a surface approach, to adopt a surface approach and to have a poorly developed understanding.*⁵

Prosser and Trigwell's work suggests that within the same class given by the same teacher, two students may be having radically different learning experiences: one 'deep' – active, making connections, drawing conclusions – and one 'surface' – passive, relying on memory, minimising task.⁶ It is not then, just a question of how well the teacher is teaching, but also of how ready the student is to receive that teaching.

3 S. Brookfield, *Becoming A Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1995), 31-35.

4 'Planning Learning Experiences to Promote Autonomous Learning', in *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, edited by David Boud (London: Kogan Page, 1988), 43.

5 Michael Prosser and Keith Trigwell, *Understanding Learning and Teaching: The Experience in Higher Education* (Open University Press, 1999), 74.

When we consider such issues in terms of the difference between second and third year teaching it would seem that one of the major elements involved in the second year is that of raising the students' awareness of their own learning activities. In my own experience, I have set up within a second year group a 'deep' learning task and watched them convert this back into 'surface' learning. In the third year, by contrast, the majority of students are activated, dynamic, and want to perform the deep learning task. They very rapidly perceive what is asked of them and set about this – in fact, at times they 'go deep' even when this is not required (for example by reading very closely and intensely a passage which I really want them to skim and comment upon more rapidly). The initial response of the lecturer is to feel frustrated at the resistance of the second years, but this is unfair to them. Instead, it is necessary to intervene to redefine the task and set them back to it again, pointing out why the students are being asked to work in this way and raising their awareness of their own participation.

It seems to me that studying English literature successfully demands a range of quite abstract skills which are, correspondingly, very difficult to 'teach'. These might include qualities such as: perceptiveness; sensitivity to nuances of text (language, tone, mood); scepticism (the ability to hold more than one position simultaneously); openness in dialogue; assimilation of new ideas and a willingness to share them; readiness to engage. These qualities exist alongside more basic 'skills' required for understanding such as: being a good reader; being able to articulate ideas in speech and on paper; having a historical awareness and knowledge base; recognising poetic and literary devices; applying theoretical ideas. These two levels of skill, one more grounded and one more abstract, co-exist and vitally interact. Perhaps primary to the learning process though, is the *willingness to engage* and a recognition of what engagement entails. In the second year, I would suggest, teaching is necessarily concerned with making students realise what the act of

'interpretation' fully involves, what the discipline is actually about, and what their function as 'literary critic' might be. In the third year students have, to varying degrees, grasped these essentials. Thus, although the same two levels of skill continue to be used and to develop across the two years, the students' own awareness of this, and their ease with it by the third year, means that they can move far more rapidly into 'deeper' learning activities. It also means that teaching can become increasingly democratic and autonomous because there is a shared understanding of the aim of the session.

In general, then it would seem that for English 'second year-icity' is an important factor within the classroom. It affects students in a number of ways, and it must feed into the kind of work undertaken with them. At a base level, students have developed simply by becoming one year older. But there is a lot more than this at work here. They are themselves building upon their own second year knowledge, skills, approaches and attitudes in a range of ways in the classroom. Above all they have become more confident of themselves and they know how they want to learn.

The implications in terms of assessment are clear. At Lancaster (where second and third year performance is currently equally rewarded) there is a strong argument in favour of rewarding 'exit velocity' within the university. The simplest solution would be to change the weighting of the Part I and Part II examination so that instead of being 50%/50% it was at least 40%/60%. This would I think provide a much more positive sense of continuing development for the students since the model of assessment would make it explicit that the department expects and believes in an improved third year performance. The degree scheme as a whole should allow for this development and should give students the chance to show, at the end of a course of study, how much they have gained from it.

It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it: An Analysis of the Language of Educational Development

Shân Wareing's first degree was in English Language and Literature (Oxford), followed by an MLitt in Linguistics for Teaching English Language and Literature (Strathclyde) and a PhD in sociolinguistics ('Gender, Speech Styles and the Assessment of Discussion'). After five years teaching English Language and Linguistics at what is now Roehampton University, her interest in teaching methods and student learning took her into educational development. She has led Educational Development Units at Roehampton University, at University of Wales, Newport, and most recently at Royal Holloway, where she has been Director of the Educational Development Centre for four years. A version of this paper was first published in *Educational Developments* 5.2 (June 2004), 9-11.

Most of the time, the fact that the discourse academics use with their professional peers is opaque or unpalatable to colleagues from different disciplines is a matter of little consequence. Indeed, it may bring pleasure, reinforcing the sense of a community which recognises and values the speaker and distinguishing them from other groups in the staff canteen and at committee meetings. This is however not the case for the discourse of the academic community of educational developers. Educational development has a distinct role and set of responsibilities in higher education, which include the requirement to communicate across disciplines and to (the verb you select here will depend on your perspective) inform/support/convince/persuade/lead/cajole/manipulate colleagues and influence their behaviour.

It is clear from the most casual analysis of the sector that there is a mismatch between the evident goals of educational development (to switch people on to learning and teaching) and the effect of its discourse (to switch them off). This article is a brief account of my investigations into this phenomenon to date. The paper was first presented as a workshop at the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) conference (Cardiff March 2004) and later published in *Educational Developments*, SEDA's magazine. I include this information to indicate that the first anticipated audience was the educational development community, and the function of the paper was therefore to start a debate within the community about the way this group, of which I am a member, uses language. As an English Subject Centre publication the function is slightly different. Perhaps it will provide an insight into an alien but neighbouring tribe,

with some of the schadenfreude of reality TV; perhaps it will bring the satisfaction of recognition, clarifying and reinforcing existing responses.

Anyway, on with the paper. Tired of my well-meant attempts to engage colleagues in scholarly and reflective discussion on the topic of student learning being rebuffed with comments about the jargon in educational development, I realised that a habit of knee-jerk defensiveness and entrenchment was not the most constructive response. I decided to investigate a little further the style of language associated with educational development. To do so, I presented a small group of Royal Holloway volunteers with two texts, one text an extract from a university learning and teaching strategy, the other an extract from an article published in the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education's journal *Active Learning in Higher Education*. I asked the readers to mark words and phrases which they didn't understand, found confusing, or didn't like. I also asked them whether they considered the texts typical of an educational development text.

I used texts rather than spoken language for practicality, with the usual caveats about differences between written and spoken language.¹ The eleven readers came from science, arts and humanities departments, and included a postgraduate student, newly appointed and more established lecturing staff, a professor, and two members of support staff. I chose texts whose anticipated audience could be assumed to include those in an academic community with an interest in learning and teaching, a description that covered my readers. (I'll consider later whether institutional learning and teaching strategies are supposed to be read by the academic community).

¹ See D.Biber, *Variation across Speech and Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 1988); R. Hughes, *English in Speech and Writing* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Their responses suggested what many of us must know from experience, that language which is widely used in the texts associated with educational development does not communicate well with the academic community. The texts used expressions that were not understood, and a discourse that was disliked. I was surprised at the number of phrases identified as incomprehensible. If expressions which are commonplace in the discourse of educational development are not consistently understood in the academic community, then there can be no exchange of information, or at least, no exchange of the information which it was the writer's intention to communicate. I had anticipated that the discourse would be disliked but I was still surprised at how many linguistic elements were triggers for an adverse reaction, and at the strength of the reaction. The discourse's being disliked may be a more serious matter than its not being understood. Readers respond to a discourse they dislike by ceasing to read, or by projecting their animosity to the discourse onto the concepts and intention of the writing. Educational development texts may be actively building barriers between their authors and the community that it is their job to influence.

From the readers' comments, the aspects of the texts that they identified as difficult to understand, or as features they disliked, were:

- 1) The use of specialist terms without appropriate explanation; e.g. *experiential learning*; *reflective activities*, *learning strategies*; *reusable learning resources*.
- 2) Abstraction; in this case this refers to descriptions of learning and teaching as processes and products in which teachers and students aren't mentioned. For example, 'checklists and questioning approaches [...] can foster mere compliance with externally set demands rather than genuine self-questioning and appraisal'; 'new developments and staff training will be introduced to support the adoption of new web tools to support e-Learning and the creation and capture of content to allow re-use within a virtual learning environment'. Arguably, abstraction is a requirement for the discussion of complex phenomena, and is a characteristic of academic

language. However, this doesn't mean that people who teach like to read about teaching and learning as abstract processes from which their existence has been obliterated.

- 3) The discourse of marketing and managerialism; for example, terms such as *new knowledge economy*, *stakeholders*, *monitoring learning*, and descriptions of learning and teaching as processes and products. The discourse associated with educational development is partly disliked because it locates higher education in an environment driven by the concerns of management and marketing (i.e. an emphasis on profit, on efficiency, on results identified because they can be measured rather than because they are valued). Even if there are no explicit indicators of this discourse in a text, there may be what are interpreted as indirect markers, such as a focus on processes and results, abstracted from the direct experiences of teachers and students, (see (2) above).
- 4) Implicit assumptions not shared by the readers. Texts depend on shared implicit assumptions for coherence. Where these are not shared, the text seems illogical or incoherent to the reader.²
- 5) Habitual collocations, referred to by one of my respondents as 'formulae' and by another as 'mantras'; that is, words that are often used together, so that a writer will use one automatically if they have already used the other. Examples include *checks and balances*, *robust mechanisms*, *skills framework*, *knowledge economy*, *content capture and maintaining excellence*.
- 6) Low editorial standards; these included long sentences, poor grammar and punctuation, lack of coherence between subheadings, lack of relationship between sub-headings and the main text, ambiguity, and what might be termed 'poor rhetoric', where the features of language which can be used for emphasis (such as repetition) are used randomly, with no care given to the aesthetic dimension of the writing.

The readers made some general notes on the texts, and wrote responses to specific questions. A sample is reproduced below.

2 As explored in terms of cross-gender misunderstandings in C. Christie, *Gender and Language: Towards a Feminist Pragmatics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

How well did the texts communicate?

'The journal article does not make me want to read other articles... The [Learning and Teaching Strategy] was very difficult to follow – uses all the usual jargon often not defined.'

'They need to be read carefully in order for their message to come across. The style is quite dense with long sentences and paragraphs. The language of business and management is used – this depersonalises the experience... The over-mystification of the language might stem from the need to valorise the discipline.'

'Neither of these texts communicates particularly well; although I suspect the business-driven vocabulary is designed to foster clarity, it would not win any awards from the 'Plain English' campaign. The [learning and teaching strategy] document reads as though it was composed by Microsoft Auto-summarise, and the article hits an uneasy balance between pseudo-scientific and pseudo-social-scientific formulae.'

'Texts that address the issues of communication and skills transfer may need to introduce new concepts to academic professionals but in order to do so such research articles must adhere to the highest standard of written English. If research articles in Educational Development are published which fall so significantly below our editorial standards this only serves to confirm the existing prejudice among many academics that such work is necessarily second rate. This is clearly not the case.'

'The [Learning and Teaching Strategy] is full of mantras and management speak. The use of market language (human resources, delivery, resources etc) is especially flagrant here.'

Did the texts conform to your expectations of educational development texts?

'Yes it conforms with my expectations. It tries to complicate where simplification is possible and cloak in 'professional jargon' where not essential. It confirms my prejudices about an unnecessarily 'academic' approach to a practical issue.'

'[The Teaching and Learning Strategy was] ...pure corporate university speak which we all do in our

College documentation – a shared (if stylistically and ideologically repellent) discourse.'

Are there terms you don't understand?

collaborative learning
transformative learning
metalearning
metacognitive knowledge
accredited skills and enterprise modules
skills activities

Are there terms you understand but don't like?

low staff-student ratios
a brief evaluative personal statement
develop evaluation practice
support the development of the Skills framework

extend our repertoire of teaching approaches and the effectiveness and efficiency with which we interact with... our students

Students find some types of reflection more difficult than others

articulates
must be driven by pedagogical considerations
intensify students' preparation
a tightening of focus
capture of content
skills framework
presentational skills
our skills provision
e-strategy
single generic course
robust mechanisms
evaluation tools

Are there sentences or phrases which are confusing?

It can be retrieved consciously by the learner during efforts to apply an appropriate strategy, or it can be activated unintentionally and automatically by retrieval cues in the task situation [Comment: "UGH!"]

Are there sentences or phrases which make you feel irritated or angry?

curricula enrichment
contemporary approaches to assessment and accreditation
reflection is highlighted as one of four key learning processes

They warn against the ritualistic use of checklists and questioning approaches that can foster mere compliance with externally set demands rather than genuine self-questioning and appraisal.

Such concerns take on a particular force where it is the professional context and educational programme for professionals, within which reflection is being promoted.

By adulthood, people typically are able reliably to predict whether they know something

Providing our undergraduate and postgraduate students with the opportunity to follow accredited skills and enterprise modules which enable them to develop their

academic and career potential, to enhance their skills across a range of disciplines and to ensure that the University continues to provide sought after and well qualified graduates who become leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs required to drive the new knowledge economy.

The University's mission [Comment: 'anything which describes itself as or associates itself with a mission statement would encourage me to disengage, as I would expect it to be largely empty rhetoric and platitudes – perhaps unfair; but I think a typical academic response']

My colleagues viewed these texts as having been written without the intention to communicate with them as readers; they did not consider themselves to be the intended audience. My interpretation of their reactions is that the texts represented an attempt to diminish their experience, their contribution to the sector and their worldview.

The experience of asking colleagues to consider these texts was salutary. If this is the way the wider academic community feels about educational development texts, then the texts are failing to communicate, and in fact, are driving a wedge between educational developers and the academic community. Instead of progressively informing colleagues of the values and evidence of educational development, and encouraging engagement with its principles, I and my colleagues may be having the opposite effect each time we speak, or press 'print'.

A defence might be built on a claim that these texts were not typical educational development texts, clearing the community of educational development of the worst of these charges. The learning and teaching strategy may have been the output of some corporate committee with its focus on the requirements of the funding council, which no educational developer ever went near. The journal article was from the first issue of *Active Learning*, and perhaps as such not representative of later papers. However, even making this allowance, educational development is not absolved. My readers were almost entirely in consensus that the texts were representative of educational development texts. No one said, 'Wait a moment, educational development texts are much more accessible and 'simpatico' than this'. Thus even if the argument that these texts were in

some respects a-typical were upheld, my respondents nevertheless associated these texts with educational development, and thus their critiques of the discourse stands.

One reader did not think the learning and teaching strategy was a typical educational development text, but a 'management-strategy-jargon thing', and educational developers may agree. But I don't think this clears us of blame either. Shouldn't learning and teaching strategies be perceived as educational development texts and reflect those values? Shouldn't they be documents which include the academic community as a significant intended readership? After all, who does the teaching in our universities? Shouldn't learning and teaching strategies be documents that academic staff want to read? Shouldn't departments want to discuss them? What's gone wrong if this isn't the case? Even if the funding council requires documents written in the discourse of corporate management, the learning and teaching strategy should be important enough to be circulated in a revised version for internal communication and discussion.

It is my view that communication is a core element of educational development. The evidence of this small study has reinforced my intuition that our communication practices are problematic. Indeed, texts of which I was previously tolerant (because I understood them and because the ideology was acceptable or invisible to me) I now find troubling. Are there different ways of writing, and indeed talking, about educational development which we should cultivate and promote? Certainly since beginning this exploratory process, I am more critical of texts that I

encounter in the course of my work, and more aware of the need to examine my own language as I prepare materials and papers for circulation amongst colleagues.

Communication is not a transparent process; there is not a one-to-one relationship between words and concepts as there would be if each time you used a word it directed the listener or reader unambiguously to the concept you had in mind. No one in literary studies or linguistics doubts this. Language is inherently ambiguous and, once written or uttered, communicates information other than that intended. It is far from easy to discover from readers and listeners what has been understood from our attempts at communication. Furthermore, words and phrases cannot escape the connotations of their previous use and previous users. Their effect on the reader relates to the identity and politics of the speakers and writers who have used them in the past.³

Academic disciplines have their own codes as we well know, codes designed to enable communication concerned with abstract concepts, allowing a level of precision in the discussion of shared concepts, and permitting the indication of fine grades of attitude towards the relative strength of a claim. Academic codes also identify speakers and writers, allowing insiders to detect the exact branch of a discipline or school of thought within which the speaker locates themselves. Finally, codes have a gatekeeper function, intentionally or unintentionally keeping the uninitiated out.⁴

The educational development community is currently engaged in a debate about whether educational development is a discipline in its own right.⁵ The arguments for a discipline of educational development include the existence of an extensive and growing literature, of peer-reviewed journals, of networks of people engaged in conferences and seminars, and of the learning and teaching programmes throughout the UK, validated within academic

frameworks and developed and delivered by educational developers. The arguments against stress that educational developers come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, and do not necessarily share methodological approaches, or refer to the same texts as intrinsic to their practice. This debate still has its course to run. However, the argument 'for' might unfortunately include the perception by those in the wider academic community that our use of language is both distinctive (i.e. allowing readers to say 'that looks like an educational development text') and opaque. This surely is a feature of an academic discipline which educational developers do not wish to share (at least not in texts such as the ones discussed here, which are apparently aimed at the community of academic staff, rather than at the specialist community of educational developers). Our role is arguably different from that of staff in other academic disciplines; it is not just to talk to one another, but to talk across disciplines to all staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning. As members of a discipline in the process of defining itself, perhaps we educational developers need particularly to consider our own communication practices.

What is the significance of this moment of angst in one member of the educational development community for readers of this article, people with an interest in teaching English in higher education? Perhaps this discussion of the discourse of educational development underlines the difficulties all individuals inevitably and regularly experience, in relation to defining and locating themselves, expressing affiliations and differences of opinion, and talking about things which interest them and matter to them without invoking alien values. For staff whose primary affiliation is to their academic discipline, but who wish to discuss student learning and curriculum design, there may be particular difficulties in finding a discourse which is not contaminated, or which communicates pedagogical ideas and research effectively. Perhaps this paper can contribute to such a debate.

3 As discussed in D. Birch, 'Working Effects with Words: Whose Words?: Stylistics and Reader Intertextuality' in *The Stylistics Reader* edited by Jean Jacques Weber (London: Arnold, 1996).

4 See T. Becher and P. Trowler, *Academic Tribes and Territories* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education, 2001 (2nd edition)), 104-130.

5 Randal Macdonald, 'Educational Development: Research, Evaluation and Changing Practice in Higher Education', in *Academic and Educational Development*, edited by Randal Macdonald and James Wisdom (London: Kogan Page, 2002); 'Developing a Scholarship of Academic Development', in *The Scholarship of Academic Development*, edited by Heather Eggins and Randal Macdonald (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education, 2003); L. Stefani, (2002) 'What is staff and educational development?' in *A Guide to Staff and Educational Development* edited by Peter Kahn and David Baume (London: Kogan Page, 2002).

‘With or Without? Is there any History in this class?’

In a paper originally delivered at the English Subject Centre conference ‘The Condition of the Subject’ in July 2003, [Philip Martin](#), Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at De Montfort University and former Director of the English Subject Centre, reassesses the place of historicism in teaching.



In the classroom should we read literature with or without history?

My exploration of this question begins with an outline of what I assume to be a typical, or at least, a common, classroom dilemma. A literary text – or a series of such texts if we are thinking about a whole module – is to be introduced to a group of students. In planning the class, or the module, the tutor recognises the precondition of some historical knowledge to enable better understanding of the object of study. The nature of this knowledge need not be particularly exotic or recondite, and may be more or less crucial to the text in hand. I may want to explain some aspects of Romantic ideas of liberty by referring to the French revolution (less crucial) or to explain Pope's political disillusion by referring to the collapse of the Tories (more crucial, perhaps because of precise textual reference to politics or political figures). I cannot assume – in either case – that the students will have any prior historical knowledge, to the extent that there may be no established notion of an historical chronology which would, for instance, contain the awareness that the French revolution predates the Napoleonic wars. So the dilemma is this: I know the historical information has to be put in, but how do I know it makes sense, or is any more than a bewildering cipher in the students' minds? Simply referring to the French revolution (if you have absolutely no knowledge of what this might mean) will not help very much. And in addition, even supposing that all the students

know nothing or very little about it, a disquisition on the French revolution may have a strong alienation effect in devaluing the students' prior, and ahistorical, reading of the text. A contextual reading, a contextual pedagogy, continually bears this liability to take the text out of the students' hands and place it in the irrefutable grasp of an imposingly authentic better knowledge: history, the factual tyrant governing literature's fictions.

Now of course there are complex and sophisticated arguments surrounding the nature of historical knowledge, which at an advanced stage, can be introduced to place literary discourse and historical discourse in a parallel or equivalent relation, but I am not discussing working at those levels. I know something about quantum physics, but Newtonian physics provide a more reassuring and enabling understanding of why I don't float around (gravity); I know about grand narratives and metanarratives, but a broad historical awareness strongly informs my sense of why it is that Dickens can't be considered in any useful sense as an eighteenth century novelist. A great deal of literature teaching is structured through a curriculum heavily dependent on notions of historical periodisation, and it's that notion of periodisation, and the historical assumptions within it – namely that history in some way incorporates literature, and that this incorporation is not negotiable – that I want to explore.

For the common paradigm implies something about the nature and relative status of two fields of knowledge – the literary and the historical. Because the historical is here being realised as a chronology (that is, a sequence of events that is arranged in such a way as to imply relations of consistency or conformity or linearity on the one hand, and causation explaining change on the other), then the notion of the conditional only works in one axis – literature is conditional on history. Even while most of us would want to contest this relation of status, it is confirmed – tacitly yet powerfully – at the broad level of the periodised curriculum, or – equally strongly perhaps – by the procedures of contextual readings.

These matters need to be taken apart. Contextual readings usually begin at the level of explication, which is to say that they are commonly introduced to make sense of what might otherwise be a puzzling or even nonsensical text – in its most local manifestation such explication can be lexical, or a matter of explaining contemporary allusions, but they can quickly expand to cover such matters as register, mode, content and so on. Periodisation may well embrace a curriculum intent on demonstrating differences between texts, but it consistently implies a greater hegemony of enclosure – historical periods in some way enclose and declare textual sameness: Victorian literature may be no more than a convenient way of putting together a bunch of texts but we should not underestimate the pervasive and insidious effects of the collective term.

Historicists like myself therefore work continually with this paradox: historical understanding is ideally the means of making texts more cogent by explaining them and enhancing meaning rather than leaving it trapped and unavailable, but in practice there is always the risk of the act of liberation backfiring – in other words meaning becomes trapped by the enthralling power of history. And this is continually reinforced by the heightened status of context in literary studies – in book series, in the new A/S and A2 syllabi, in the baleful litany of learning outcomes. This material context of our own work – the apparatus in which it is housed – has a massive effect. As a consequence, we might find ourselves, however uneasily, rewarding student work which is over-governed – or overdetermined – by this mantra for context. The problem, quite simply, is that ‘context’ in practice (and not in theory) might be immune from critical inspection. And thus literary texts, or indeed all texts, run the risk of being read as indicators of history’s truth or hegemony, as reflections of a backdrop that in this process becomes a foreground.

If we wish to continue to work historically and at the same time prevent this happening – and the place at which it most commonly happens I guess is somewhere in the middle orders of student ability – we have to promote far more actively the notion of texts as active agents in history themselves. The case has been concisely argued by

William Galperin in his recent book on Jane Austen:

... historical readings invariably make Austen's writings answerable to a given context instead of appreciating the degree to which the novels are just as much a context in themselves where matters of history, ranging from the literary to the social to the very reality on which the narratives dilate, work to complicated, if antithetical ends.¹

To force this a little further we might say that texts contain their own contexts to a meaningful extent, and that the interchange between these elements is in some way, a history in process. This is not a convenient retreat to the notion of the literary as an autonomous field of knowledge, but an acknowledgement that texts are both forms and forces of historical agency (they have active effects in the realm of cultural meaning), that authors are the source of this agency, and more, that texts are in themselves primary historical documents – of a particularly rich and complex kind. This is to invert the old argument about the laundry bill as literary text of course: my point is that the literary text is just as historically authentic, and more so, than the laundry bill.

So in a way my answer to the question – ‘with or without: is there any history in this class?’ is yes, in all cases necessarily so, but how we use or construct this history is crucial. I want to explore this a little further before challenging this assumption through the (faintly preposterous) notion of the ahistorical text.

If I am teaching Milton this involves a fair amount of history that I will want to make available to the students. I need them to know about the social structure of seventeenth-century England to the extent that if reference is made to the struggle between King and parliament, or to Puritanism, then it does not draw a blank – it makes sense. And the reason I want to do this is not because I want them then to anaesthetise *Paradise Lost* by pinning it against the crude historical narrative, but to recognise Milton’s texts as active makers of history by hearing Milton’s voice as one which is both politically and religiously motivated, and by understanding each text thereby as a form of agency in which the ‘literary’ and the ‘historical’ are in fact ineluctably intertwined. Milton’s choice of the heroic form, and the allusions or quotations

¹ William H. Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

within it can be explained by a vocation which is political, religious and literary in proportions which cannot be measured because the divisions between them are in fact illusory. The presumption of *Paradise Lost* then, is precisely the presumption of a religious politics which validates the individual voice as one communing with the word of God without mediation. Now to deny this knowledge to the students, is to deny them the bridge which enables them to understand Milton as historically 'other'; to leave them therefore, with the befuddling notion that Milton's poetic form is perversely adopted to make it as unavailable as possible, or that it is a mystery that is beyond explanation. But the only way to understand this knowledge is to work it out from within the poem: Milton does not present the reading paradigm through which all literature of the seventeenth century can be understood – history is intrinsic to the text, not extrinsically operated from the outside.

But, it may be argued, and quite correctly so, Milton is a special case (in fact the corollary of my argument is that all 'history' is since we are looking at specific – or special – historical material in each and every text). So let's look at an example of a text which – for the purpose of argument – might be considered ahistorical in the dimension of reading (clearly not in the dimension of production, since that is impossible). My example comes from the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt:

What menythe thys? When I lye alone,
I tosse, I turne, I syghe, I grone;
My bedd me semys as hard as stone:
What menythe thys?

I syghe, I playne continually;
The clothes that on my bedd do ly
Always methinks they lye awry:
What meny thys?

In slumbers oft for fere I quake;
Ffor hete and cold I burne and shake;
Ffor lake of slepe my hede dothe ake:
What meny this?

A mornynge then when I do rysse

I torne vnto my wonted gysse;
All day after muse and devysse
What meny thys?

And yff perchance by me there passe
She vnto whome I sue for grace,
The cold blood forsakythe my face:
What meny thys?

But yff I sytte nere her by
With lowd voice my harte dothe cry,
And yet my mowthe ys dome and dry:
What meny thys?

To aske ffor helpe no hart I have,
My tong dothe fayle what I shuld crave,
Yet inwardly I Rage and Rave:
What meny thys?

Thus have I passyd many a yere
And many a day, tho nowght apere;
But most of that that most I fere:
What meny this?²

Working through my model, history's primary intervention might be at the level of explication. So what needs explaining here? Well, at the first cut, nothing. I can imagine that students will have questions to ask about the conventions of Tudor spelling, for I have chosen this poem in part because it so obviously comes to us dressed in the arcane cloth of history, but beyond that, there is little material here through which we could plot a course of contextual enquiry. Perhaps, if the biography were reliable, we might be able to pin this poem to a liaison which has some political intrigue about it (common enough in Wyatt after all), but it is unlikely that this would contribute anything specific to the poem even while the poem might add something to the biography. And, yes, it would be possible to explain something of the text's mode by reference to the traditions of the poetry of complaint in Tudor times. But for the most part, this is scarcely necessary. At the level of explication, and indeed, further classroom discussion, the poem's mode and statement are remarkably unproblematic. Even the figures of speech ('as

hard as stone') are familiar and in this instance, still in currency. More, the sensations the poem describes – insomnia, feeling out of sorts, the sense that nothing is right, puzzlement, fear, speechlessness, inner anger – and so on – would not be out of place in a contemporary poem or piece about frustrated desire, or simply dissatisfaction.

This is a lyric poem. Its primary concern is sensation; its continuous rhetorical turn is to hint at the causes of these sensations, without ever precisely identifying them, by enquiring after their cause. To a very limited extent, its mode and its idiom are 'historical' – but not in any meaningful way, only in an antithetical sense, in that they are not of this time. Intrinsically, there is very little that is historically resonant about the text. This is not to say that this poem must be taught without history, but to suggest that it might be.

My point is that we are increasingly free to think about the historicity of texts if we begin not with history, but with the text itself. Some texts – most obviously the social realist novel – absolutely demand contextual study by deliberately making claims about their relation to very particular social conditions. Others – a poem by Thomas Wyatt, or a poem by Wallace Stevens – might not at all. And it might be possible to place all texts on a spectrum ranging from such lyric poetry at one end to the novel of social realism at the other (although I think this would be pretty pointless). When we deal in History with our students, it seems to me there is not a single approach that derives from an extra-textual position, but a multiplicity of approaches. And to ask the question – 'With or Without?' – is not so much to enquire into an ideological or theoretical position, but to ask, with the students, a genuine open question about an appropriate or meaningful approach to the text in hand.



New Writing Anthology

The British Council's *New Writing* anthology is a showcase of work by both emerging and established authors from the UK and Commonwealth. Each volume introduces some of the best new writing in prose, poetry, fiction and non-fiction to wide audiences in the UK and overseas. *New Writing's* roll of honour includes Malcolm Bradbury, A. S. Byatt, Doris Lessing and Ben Okri. What's more, *New Writing* remains one of the few opportunities in the UK for unknown writers to be published by leading fiction publishers.

Celebrating a dozen years of anthology publishing, the British Council has created a website (www.britishcouncil.org/newwriting) featuring extracts from *New Writing* 12 for readers and teachers, which explores new writing thematically.

For further information on British Council activities, contact the Management Assistant of the Film and Literature Department, Vibeke Burke, at vibeke.burke@britishcouncil.org or on (020) 7389 3197.

Development of a Work Project Module for an MA in English

Martin Willis, Lecturer in English, University of Glamorgan.

(This article is an edited version of a report on a mini-project funded by the English Subject Centre. A full text of the report is available on the English Subject Centre website <http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/deptprojects/profphd.htm>).

This project was conducted primarily by the author, with data also provided by Dr Jill Terry of University College Worcester. The project research was conducted over the course of the last academic year (October 2003 – July 2004). The project's aim was to create a template for a module allowing students studying for an MA in English to produce an independently conceived project based on and in their place of work. We also planned to produce a series of guidelines for the creation of such a module across the university sector. The students involved in the project were mainly part-time students following a full-time career as teachers in secondary and further education. Inevitably, therefore, this report focuses on the teaching profession and the classroom as a workplace. Its conclusion offers some consideration of other careers and workplaces.

Our interest in developing a Work Project Module arose initially from informal conversations with the student cohort on two MA courses: the University of Glamorgan's MA in Literature, Culture and Society and University College Worcester's joint History/English MA in Nineteenth-Century Studies. In both institutions the student cohort is predominantly part-time. Students study over a period of two or more years, taking classes in the evenings whilst pursuing a full-time career. A significant number were working in secondary and further education – as schoolteachers, heads of school departments, lecturers in Sixth Form Colleges and in Colleges of Further Education – and were continually seeking to find connections between their studies at MA level and their own classroom practice.¹

To discuss the issues at stake we used questionnaires, focus groups and consultations and undertook research in relevant scholarly journals. During the focus group stage of the project the authors consulted not only with the MA students but also with practising teachers in a number of schools in Worcestershire and South Wales. This

consultation stage was designed to elicit responses from within the workplaces that were to be the likely targets of the Work Project Module.

From the questionnaires, focus groups and consultations a number of key issues emerged:

I. Benefits

Many respondents were interested in the relevance of the module to their work. The head of an English department at a South Wales comprehensive argued that 'a Masters in Education is probably more beneficial if you wish to progress to senior management level' and that it is difficult to prove the value of an English MA other than 'to extend...subject knowledge.' This same respondent did, however, said that the module would have value if 'related directly to issues at work' and might aid 'professional development' if its outcomes could be used as evidence for promotion. Other respondents were more interested in direct applications to the classroom, highlighting the potential to 'bring new works of literature...to the classroom' and to 'incorporate literary theories into A-level teaching', thereby 'better [preparing]... students for higher education.' These respondents were as concerned to improve their own teaching practice and their students' experience of English at school as they were to enhance their own prospects for advancement. Overall, respondents felt the module would give them some time to consider how best to link their MA with their teaching. As one pointed out, 'at least this would be proper allocated time and not just another series of lost weekends thinking about your teaching.'

Respondents were less certain about how the module might benefit their MA. Two respondents saw it as an opportunity to take the 'content' from earlier taught modules to 'see how it would work in the classroom.' Obviously, this has implications for where a Work Project Module might be placed within an MA course.

¹ Evidence suggests that teachers are returning to study English in greater numbers, often in an effort to update their subject knowledge in the light of alterations to the National Curriculum. A conscious link is thus being created between studying English at MA level and teaching English within the school syllabus.

2. 'Postgraduateness'

The focus groups were asked to discuss what they felt would be particularly 'postgraduate' about the module and how they might show that work on the module attained this level. There was ready agreement about the perceived differences in postgraduate study from undergraduate study. The majority of the respondents saw their MA work to date as 'self-directed' and 'independent'. There was, they argued, 'increased expectation of personal involvement in class seminars and tutorials' and a 'reliance on yourself rather than on others.' They also believed that they were expected to be 'more original in argument' and 'to challenge received opinions.' Several noted that this was more a progression from undergraduate level than a 'leap' to a new level. The importance of 'reflective research' was stressed by several respondents who found that postgraduate work demanded that they 'adjust their thinking' as they take account of their own work and that of others. Equally important was an increased stress on 'theory'.

These views are reinforced by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which lists 'personal responsibility' and 'the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development' as key characteristics of Masters level degrees. The NQF also highlights the importance of conceptual understandings that enable students both to 'evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship' and 'evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them.' Indeed the NQF highly values the 'systematic understanding of knowledge ... of [the] academic discipline' as well as the ability to 'demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level.' The module should ensure, therefore, that these skills and qualities are key markers in its criteria and are appropriately tested in assessment.

3. 'Englishness'

One concern was about the maintenance of the focus on English. In much work-based learning this is not an issue, as most courses fall within vocational subjects. For English the link is more indirect. Among respondents, using the materials from an earlier module to create 'extended coursework' or a 'unit of study' for A-level students

emerged as a common method in maintaining an English focus. Other respondents intended to use literary theory, either to explore a single theoretical perspective in the classroom ('gender issues' a favourite here) or to consider how theory might best be introduced to their own students.

A significant proportion suggested that there were potential problems in becoming too 'educational' in such a project. One student was concerned that it would be easy to return unconsciously to PGCE content and learning methods. Other respondents wondered whether their 'English lecturers' would have any experience of 'educational issues and methods'.

Clearly, the module would have to position itself clearly as an English module. The template would have to stress the appropriateness of project choices as well as make certain that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria were sufficiently focused around of English to militate against slippage into other disciplines or methods (especially education in this case).

4. Assessment

When asked to consider what kinds of assessment would seem appropriate for the module the respondents were quick to discard certain forms. The examination was deemed particularly unsuitable as it left you with no 'ownership of what you are doing.' The traditional essay was initially considered as 'too inflexible' or unable to provide 'usefulness'. Respondents generally agreed that assessment should be 'flexible', 'different from taught module assessment', 'relevant to work', 'self-directed', 'capable of measuring progress' and 'able to be shared by others.' The extended essay supplemented by research materials and the reflective portfolio of work were viewed as potentially fulfilling these criteria. The portfolio was felt to be flexible enough to allow for different types of project. The portfolio would include 'self evaluation documents' and 'pieces of writing that reflect upon the project as a whole.' It would also include the relevant research materials clearly organised and categorised and allow the student to make best use of them in the classroom at a later date. The 'useability' of portfolio assessment gained it credit. One member of a focus group pointed out that a classroom teaching portfolio was required 'for progression through a career threshold.' Many respondents saw the

extended essay as more 'fitting' for an English module. For the respondents the essay would have to include research materials, 'perhaps as extra materials at the end', so as to make it useable in the classroom.

The possibility of an oral presentation was accepted by the focus groups with some enthusiasm, primarily because many of the respondents felt it played to their strengths. Some felt that it should not necessarily be assessed. Their trepidation appeared to arise from a lack of completion, from 'having to do a presentation on something that's not finished.' Others argued that the benefit of the oral presentation would be 'hearing what others are doing'.

It is clear that the assessment of a Work Project Module needs to fulfil specific criteria: it must be useable within the workplace, it must be flexible enough not to restrict different types of project and it must include a significant proportion of written, reflective criticism as would be found in the traditional English essay. An oral presentation (perhaps as an unassessed formative assessment) followed by the submission of a project essay (the summative assessment) is a useful assessment diet in providing the criteria articulated by the respondents. The oral presentation allows for a sharing of research ideas as well as giving the student an opportunity to reflect upon their progress through the project. Questions from lecturers and other students could further enhance this reflective process. The summative project essay maintains the English subject's preferred assessment method, demands the skills required of postgraduate English courses, is flexible and predominantly self-directed while also being useful within the workplace when supplemented by ordered research materials.

5. Support Mechanisms

Support from the university and the employer was an emotive issue for many respondents. Several were concerned that academic support would be limited. They highlighted the importance of 'a good bibliography' on module guides and the 'subject knowledge' of their lecturers as key factors in 'the best' taught modules on an English MA. Their fears were that subject knowledge was less relevant to a project based within the students' workplace and that there was 'unlikely to be any help with bibliographies or references' for a project of this nature. The (perhaps unusual) stress on bibliographical support

appeared to arise from the perception that there would be no 'teaching' on the module and that research support was therefore more crucial than it might be otherwise. Some respondents also queried the ability of their English lecturers to offer appropriate advice on the educational aspects of projects taking place within a school. They pointed out that with a PGCE qualification it may even be the case that they were better qualified in the field of education than the lecturer in charge of the module.

While there are a number of English lecturers with qualifications in education it cannot be expected that the module should only be offered by academics with this expertise. The module will, after all, be based within English courses and will comply with the criteria for the study of English at MA level. Educational expertise therefore should not be required for the successful completion of the module, although it may be of benefit to the student to have the support of a peer workplace colleague able to offer advice on educational issues. It should also be the case that the student's own expertise in the field of education (if possessed) can be put to good use in the project. Academic support on the module should also consist of the production of a bibliography (in consultation with the student) and the creation of clear criteria for the project.

Support from the workplace was keenly discussed. Opinion was divided over the involvement of students' line managers. Some felt it would be to their advantage to 'have the support of the boss' in case of requirements of time or resources during the research for the project. These respondents also believed that senior colleagues would be able to offer pastoral and intellectual support for the project. Others, however, were concerned that the involvement of line managers would 'undermine the independence of the project' and add to the pressure of completing a lengthy piece of work while 'under surveillance.' Peer involvement raised fewer issues; all respondents were happy to involve colleagues on their level but they also felt that such colleagues would be unable to provide them with 'practical support' (again time and resources) as they were not in a position to make management decisions. Nevertheless, all respondents felt strongly that support for the project within the workplace was essential at some level. All felt that they would benefit from colleague advice when implementing any parts of the

project in the classroom. In particular, issues surrounding 'resources', 'the national curriculum', 'the syllabus' and 'data protection' were seen to be worthy of consultation with colleagues.

It is clear from the respondents' answers that support in the workplace is essential to the success of a Work Project Module. However the difference between supportive advice and intervention is an issue that the module should address. A series of guidelines for employer support would enable the module to address these issues and also to be flexible in allowing the student to construct the appropriate balance between the workplace and the university.

After completing these first three stages of the project we turned to personal research for the remainder of our evidence, consulting a series of articles on work-based postgraduate study, transferable skills, portfolio assessment, 'action research', group work, general work-based learning, capability, and 'authenticity'. These scholarly materials were consulted only after the completion of the discussions described above in order to avoid the closing down of different and conflicting approaches to work-based learning.²

The module template on pages 26-7 attempts to address both the concerns of the respondents to this project and the suggestions and comments of scholars working within the area of work-based provision in higher education. It should prove a useful starting point for any English academic wishing to develop a work-related learning module within their own MA courses.³

Although this Work-related Project Module has been designed largely for those in the teaching professions and for MA courses, it could, with some alteration, also be applicable to other workplaces and to undergraduates. It is easier to deal with the latter first. For undergraduate students the key changes to the module template would have to take place in the learning outcomes (and be

traced through aims, objectives and assessments). The shift to undergraduate level would require some revision to the emphasis on self-direction and independence. Greater support, structure and definition of boundaries would need to be put in place, as well as some time set aside for consideration of research methods (perhaps through lectures and seminars). The National Qualifications Framework highlights the differences between undergraduate and postgraduate study and would be the best source for anyone reformulating the module for an undergraduate cohort.⁴

The central difficulty in broadening the module for other workplaces is maintaining the 'Englishness' of the projects undertaken. Many professional occupations other than teaching offer opportunities to do that: from librarianship and journalism to advertising and marketing. Others, however, would seem to be more problematic. How, for example, might an English graduate now working in the civil service (a not uncommon career path) hope to complete a Work-related Project Module? The answer is likely to include a more creative potential project conceived by the student in the first instance and thereafter a rigorous construction of criteria by the student and the module lecturer. However, literature's ability to imaginatively engage with society and culture in all its forms does not rule out potential projects that are oriented around, in this example at least, public policy or politics. Central to the success of the Work-related Project Module is not the type of literary study undertaken or the profession in which students are working but the combination of the two and the reflection on that combination. None of the learning outcomes privilege one kind of workplace or one version of literary study. The module template, indeed, enables a multitude of combinations of literatures and workplaces. The limitations are set only, and perhaps rightly, by student ability.

2 For a full survey of these scholarly materials, see the full text of this report on the English Subject Centre website.

3 A detailed commentary on the template is included in the full version of this report.

4 'The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – January 2001' (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/ewni2001/contents.htm>).

Title: **Work-Related Project / Work Project/ Work-Based Project**

Credit: As for other single modules on the MA course.

Content and Description

This module offers you the opportunity to undertake research related to your work. You will conceive, plan and implement a work-related project achievable within the twelve to fifteen weeks of a traditional taught module. You will be given support from the module lecturer in order to identify a suitable project and to decide upon methods of analysis related to the study of English.

The module is undertaken independently but you will take part in regular tutorials with the module lecturer as well as a series of organised group sessions with other students. There are three two-hour group sessions and a further four hours contact time with the module lecturer (10 hours in total). The remaining hours are spent working independently on the work-related project.

There are two pieces of assessment: an oral presentation worth 20% and a final submitted document (thesis or portfolio) worth 80%. These assessments – along with the related learning outcomes – are detailed below.

Aims and Objectives

The module aims to:

- (a) Investigate and come to understand the connections between the workplace and the academic discipline of English.
- (b) Develop a critical understanding of the issues involved in transferring the academic study of English to the workplace.
- (c) Develop a reflective practice in the study of English that aids future academic and professional development.

The module objectives are to:

- (a) Undertake significant postgraduate research in English in order to show its potential use in the workplace.
- (b) Complete an oral presentation and a thesis or portfolio reflecting upon the findings of this research using appropriately constructive and critical discourse.
- (c) Make an original contribution to the understanding of the connections between the postgraduate study of English and its application in the workplace.

Indicative Weekly Schedule

Week	Activity
1	Project discussion with module lecturer (1 hour)
2	Negotiation of criteria for project and assessment (1 hour)
3	Independent Study
4	Independent Study
5	First Group Session (2 hours)
6	Progress Meeting with module lecturer (1 hour)
7	Independent Study
8	Independent Study
9	Second Group Session (2 hours)
10	Oral Presentation
11	Feedback meeting with module lecturer (1 hour)
12	Third Group Session and final consultation with module lecturer (2 hours)

Assessment

1. Oral Presentation completed by week 10: 20% of mark
2. Thesis or Portfolio completed by week 14: 80% of mark

Assessment One

Give an oral presentation to the module lecturer and the student group that provides an overview and summary of your project to date, details some of its findings and offers preliminary conclusions. You should speak for 15 minutes and be prepared to answer questions. Any audio-visual aids will be accommodated. This assessment tests learning outcomes 2,3,4,7 and 8.

Assessment Two (A)

Present a written thesis of approx. 4000 words in length that details in full the research, planning, implementing, reflecting and replanning of the work-related project. Include all necessary documents in a series of appendices (not to be counted in word count or towards grade but as evidence of achievement of the project). This assessment tests learning outcomes 1,3,4,5,6,7,9 and 10.

OR

Assessment Two (B)

Present a portfolio of your work-related project documents that shows your successful achievement of the learning outcomes of the module through a series of reflective documents, peer, self and employer-reviewed assessment and an overarching piece of writing that considers the project as a whole. This assessment tests learning outcomes 1,3,4,5,6,7,9 and 10.

N.B. The criteria for Assessment Two will be negotiated between you and the module lecturer once the specific direction of the work-related project has been decided (usually week two). Whether you choose to do the thesis or the portfolio the criteria will be broadly similar and the final assessment will be tested against the listed learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module you will be able to show (through assessment) that you are able to:

1. Plan a work-related project capable of completion within a set time period.
2. Plan an oral presentation based on your research to be completed within a set time period.
3. Work in consultation with others (your employer, lecturer and fellow students) to continually assess your original planned project.
4. Conduct research within the English subject area that can be put to use in a work-related project.
5. Consider the implications within the English subject area of your work-related project.
6. Consider the implications within your workplace of your use of the discipline of English in your work-related project.
7. Reflect upon your work-related project in a meaningful way that enacts purposeful change and improvement.
8. Articulate the central ideas and findings of the work-related project to an audience clearly and succinctly using relevant media tools.
9. Present your findings in a final document (either thesis or portfolio) that reveals high-level planning, analysis, implementation and reflection on your work-related project.
10. Write in a sustained way to the standards expected at postgraduate level in English of presentation, bibliographic exactness, perfection of grammar and spelling, extensive academic vocabulary and sophisticated use of the English language.

Professionalising the PhD: A Career-Related Initiative in English Studies

Leon Litvack, Reader in Victorian Studies and Head of Undergraduate Teaching in the English Department at Queen's University Belfast, describes a mini-project funded by the English Subject Centre.

For anyone involved in the appointment of full-time university or college staff, it has become increasingly obvious that postgraduate education has become saturated with professional practices formerly confined to later phases of an academic career. Indeed skills training has become part of the stated agenda of the UK funding bodies: a joint statement on this topic has been published by the Research Councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB).¹ This document covers a host of areas, including research environment, skills and techniques, and management, as well as communication skills, networking, teamworking, personal effectiveness, and career management. It seeks to formalise many aspects of training which were traditionally acquired through the multi-faceted mentoring relationship between supervisor and supervisee. It also alerts universities to the fact that all students should be receiving 'appropriate and relevant preparation, training and support for their development, helping them both to complete a high-quality doctoral thesis and to develop a range of knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for their future employment'.² Adherence to these requirements will be viewed by universities as paramount, because compliance is linked to continued funding of doctoral students.

To its credit, the AHRB has allocated funds to institutions in order to achieve the desired results. From October 2004, universities will receive £450 per annum, for up to three years, for each doctoral award holder in the humanities; it is the responsibility of individual institutions to use this money to introduce appropriate skills training programmes. Various models are emerging, and it seems likely that institutions will not discriminate between funded and unfunded students in the provision of training. A key consideration will be the level at which such instruction is provided: some might opt for

'one size fits all' generic skills training for all doctoral students, regardless of their disciplines;³ others might devolve the programme to individual faculties, logical groupings of faculties (such as humanities and social sciences), or other appropriate smaller collectives; others might allow individual departments or schools to make the necessary provision; still others might adopt a mixed diet of generic, university-wide elements, complemented by some more subject-specific blocks.⁴ There are undoubtedly scenarios in which a generic or interdisciplinary approach would yield interesting results: for example, one could imagine how networking, teamworking, and some communication skills could be enhanced through contact with others outside one's subject area. Such elements of training must, however, be carefully handled, because the current crop of PhD students are surely busier than their predecessors, and are being required to professionalise earlier.⁵ Not only are they working to finish their dissertations within the three-year period of their awards (if they are fortunate enough to get funding); but also often teaching, attending conferences, making research trips, attending meetings, and engaging in other activities entirely appropriate to their stage of career. If they believe the training to be germane and well thought out, it will be welcomed; if, however, they see it as inapplicable or poorly conceived, it may well hamper progress on their projects. If there is to be training, it must be relevant and time-efficient, and should not in any way hamper one of the most critical elements of the PhD: making a substantial, original contribution to knowledge in a specific area.

The above observations are important in providing a context for *Professionalising the PhD in English* – the title of the doctoral training scheme now in place at Queen's University. The programme is not intended as a course in research training; that is embedded in the various successful

1 Joint Statement on Skills Training for Research Students (http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_93335.doc).

2 The AHRB's framework of research training requirements (http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_93944.doc).

3 In this scenario it will be interesting to see how the institution reassures the AHRB that it is sensitive to the needs and requirements of the arts and humanities.

4 The AHRB has also made £700,000 of funding available in 2004-5 for collaborative research training projects, undertaken by at least two institutions; see http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_93825.pdf.

5 See Gerald Graff, 'Two Cheers for Professionalizing Graduate Students', *PMLA* 115 (2000), 1192-93.

MAAs which the School of English runs annually,⁶ and enhanced during the differentiation period of the PhD. The programme is also not intended to supersede any element of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee: the privilege granted to the doctoral student, through devoting undivided attention, directed by a subject specialist, to a specific area of inquiry, is a unique, rewarding experience. The mentoring relationship can be the fountainhead of new ideas, for which both supervisor and supervisee share an enthusiasm. The dynamics of this association involve a careful balance of tutelage, friendship, emotional support, and professional commitment; if properly managed, the results are often of benefit to both. When, however, the doctoral student seeks to professionalise – rather than to engage in scholarly activity on which the dissertation and its by-products are based – his or her prospects can be greatly enhanced by drawing on wider experience, whether of other PhD students in English, or of full-time members of staff.

This series of developmental seminars, which make up a not-for-credit module offered across the three years (or four) of a PhD,⁷ is intended as training in career development, which has as its specific remit the preparation of doctoral candidates for the job market – both within and without English studies. In order to develop a curriculum, several existing models were examined in the autumn of 2003 – all in North America, because nothing of the kind existed in the UK for English studies. The research was greatly facilitated by the results of a survey undertaken by the MLA (Modern Language Association) Ad Hoc Committee on the Professionalization of PhDs, chaired by Professor Linda Hutcheon of the University of Toronto.⁸ This body gathered evidence from English departments across Canada and the United States, in order to develop an informed view of job prospects for postgraduates and

postdocs. Included in its remit was an investigation of the educational and professional value of various activities many graduate students pursue in order to enhance their credentials as job candidates.⁹ A study of the report was complemented by a visit to Toronto, for discussions with Professor Hutcheon, and Professor Russell Brown, the PhD placement officer responsible for the development of a doctoral course dedicated to career development: *ENG9500Y – Professional Skills*.¹⁰ The advice provided by these two senior academics was highly instructive: both believed that British candidates who come to North America in search of academic jobs are not sufficiently professional in their approach. Too much, they believe, is left to chance: British candidates are, in general, not trained in interviewing techniques; nor are their CVs and letters of application up to the perceived standard. They are not, in general, as competitive as their counterparts across the Atlantic. The current job market, however, dictates that in order to compete in both national and international arenas, UK doctoral students must view the job application process as something for which they can and must be trained.

At Queen's, *Professionalising the PhD* is offered in a staged manner, across the three years of the full-time degree (or part-time equivalent). Professional acculturation begins in the first year of the degree, during which students are offered two sessions. The first is an introductory seminar, in which these new inductees are told about the structure of the programme, and are given a chronological summary of the times at which it is appropriate to engage in selected professional activities. They are invited to start shaping their careers by considering, in small group discussion, a series of questions, including why they want to do PhDs, what training they are getting, how they will get to where they want to go, and what they need in terms of experience, tools, and contacts. They are also presented with statistics concerning

6 See the description of the Queen's MA 'Research Methods' modules for English: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/en/teaching/postgraduate/modernma.htm#CompModules>.

7 Or the part-time equivalent.

8 <http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/professionalization>.

9 The Committee also assessed the growing pressure on the research productivity, the effectiveness of teaching experiences of postgraduate students and postdocs, and judged whether or not current practices were desirable.

10 This course is taken in the third year of the PhD in Toronto. It should be noted that North American PhD programmes are structured differently to those offered in the UK: they are designed to be completed in a minimum of four years. During the first two years, in addition to working on the thesis, students are required to complete coursework, departmental examinations, an additional language requirement, and training in bibliography.

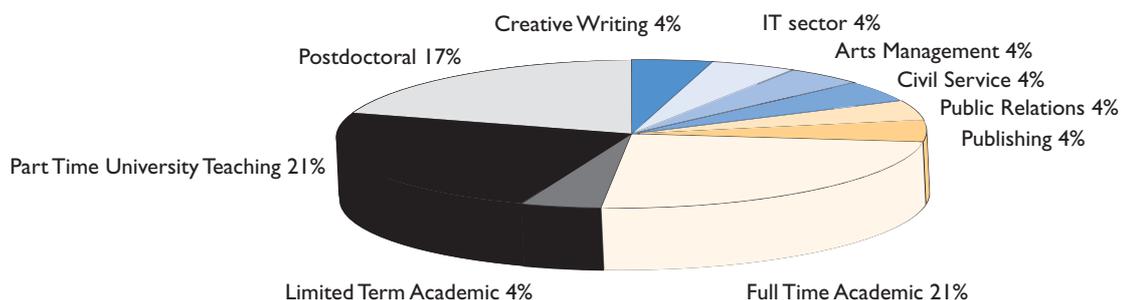
career destinations for those who have already completed PhDs at Queen's (Fig. 1), where just over 20 per cent of recent graduates have become full-time academics. It is emphasised that they should start putting together their CVs from the outset, and that they should begin thinking about a second-year undergraduate course in which they might participate as a teaching assistant, in their second year. It is also, however, emphasised that their priority must be the structuring and writing of their theses, with a view to differentiation at the end of the first year. The second session tells first-year PhDs about funding opportunities – both internal and external. Such information is important for planning research trips which students may wish to undertake, and conferences which they might like to attend.

Support for the module is offered by the author of this article (who acts as convenor). Registered students have access to online materials via a virtual learning environment, including handouts from seminars and links to useful websites. They also have access to an open online discussion forum, in which they can ask questions of each other, make observations, or discuss relevant issues with the leader of an individual seminar. Work on a PhD can sometimes be quite solitary; this facility allows students to become part of a community of like-minded individuals, who share concerns about their work, job prospects, and other relevant issues.

In the second year of the PhD, the number of seminars increases to five. Those who have differentiated undergo training as teaching assistants, so that they can participate in the large period-based survey modules which second-year undergraduates choose.¹¹ They receive training in small group teaching, marking, and feedback; they are also told what is expected of them professionally as members of a module team. Their teaching is monitored through a mentoring process, which includes class observation by a full-time member of staff. This carefully organised system offers support in case of difficulty, provides first-time teachers with feedback on their pedagogical practice, and encourages the development of classroom confidence. To complement instruction in pedagogy, these doctoral students receive training in presentation skills, thus building confidence and developing powers of communication; this element has as its goal participation in the School's research seminar, in which postgraduates are offered an opportunity to present 20-minute papers to interested members of the School, on work connected with the thesis topics.

It is clear that development of communication skills and participation in a research seminar are linked to an important professional activity: going to a conference and speaking about one's work. Students are explicitly prepared for this experience in a special session on 'conference culture', in which they are given pointers about how to

Fig 1: Career destinations for Queen's University English PhDs



¹¹The second-year undergraduate programme in English offers modules from Medieval to the twentieth century. To ensure exploration of this range, both Single honours and Major honours students are required to take at least one module in stage 2 that examines literature pre-1660 (*Discovering the Earliest Writings in English; Late Medieval Literature; or Renaissance Literature 1580-1660*). In addition, Single honours students are required to take at least one module that examines literature post-1660 (*Eighteenth-century and Romantic Literature; Victorianism to Modernism 1830-1930; Introduction to American Writing; or Irish Literature*). Students can develop the study of English language introduced in Stage 1 through modules in *Patterns of Spoken English; The English Language From Text to Context; and History of English*. It is believed that doctoral students working as teaching assistants are, in terms of developing in their own specialist research areas, best able to contribute to such 'survey' modules.

propose and present a paper, and are taught the conventions of an oral text. They are encouraged to use the conference as a way of raising their individual profiles, and as a springboard for future publications. The delicate issue of networking is also addressed. The session is also an appropriate opportunity to plant in their minds the idea of running a conference themselves, thus further enhancing their organisational skills. Conference activity forms an important part of the career of any academic; for postgraduates it is an important way of participating in academic debate, and 'showcasing' their own work.

While conferences might feature more prominently on the CVs of doctoral students than of full-time academics, a strong record of publication is something for which everyone professionally involved in English studies must strive. To this end, *Professionalising the PhD* includes a session on research culture and strategy, and another on publication. In the first one, the nature of scholarship is examined, and students are given practical information on how to develop a research profile. They are also given information on the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), and why employers are particularly interested in a candidate's potential to contribute to a department's submission at a high level. In the second session, students learn about the characteristics of work pitched at a scholarly community, and examine, with practical examples, the identifying features of a scholarly article, essay, and book review. They also learn about the process of getting an item accepted for publication. An important milestone in one's early publication career is the transforming of the thesis into a monograph; this topic, like all others, is informed by the personal experience of the academics leading the session. Students are also encouraged to think about having a forward plan for research – a crucial area investigated in job interviews.

By the end of the second year of the programme it can be seen how the various elements from the seminars fit together: the postgraduates are taught to make practical progress in a number of key areas of academic endeavour, with a view to having a significant body of experience by the time they complete their degrees. Introducing this information in the second year also helps to focus students' minds on the key question of whether or not to pursue an academic career. While most PhD students believe that they will get academic jobs, this is not borne out in reality. This fact must be presented to doctoral students early on, so that they realise that they have choice and flexibility in determining an eventual occupation; it also teaches them that things might not turn out the way they had imagined.

In the third year of *Professionalising the PhD* the number of sessions increases to eight; at this point the students must start to think seriously about employment prospects. Two sessions on 'The First Job' are offered. The first considers the duties, expectations, and limitations of an academic career; it also gives students an idea of what salary to expect, both within the UK system (for which there are still national scales), and in other countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia (for which general trends may be described). They are also asked to consider carefully the different shapes that career paths – whether academic or non-academic – may take. The second session offers advice about where to look for jobs, how to write an effective letter of application, and how to approach the criteria employed by selectors. For these sessions it is beneficial to draw on the widest possible experience: established academics and those new to the job have different – yet complementary – views on the process. Younger academics might just have come through the job search, while senior academics will have had experience of interviewing panels. It is also beneficial to draw on the experience of individuals who have applied for, or have knowledge of, jobs in different

12 For a survey of the criteria and expectations of American selection panels (undertaken for the academic years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001) see Walter Broughton and William Conlogue, 'What Search Committees Want', *Profession 2001* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2001), 39-51.

13 At Queen's the issues involved include quality control, year-to-year continuity, and budgetary restraints.

14 <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/english.pdf>.

15 <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm>.

national contexts: the procedures, criteria, and expectations of selection panels are markedly different in the UK and Ireland, when compared to, for example, continental Europe, North America, the Antipodes, or the Middle East and Far East.

By the third year of the PhD, the students' CVs should feature details which indicate that they have 'professionalised' in appropriate ways; the information should also be organised so as to be clear and easily evaluated by members of a selection panel, who sometimes scan over one hundred CVs in an attempt to shortlist for a position. To ensure that the documents achieve this end, the programme offers a workshop on preparation and presentation of CVs. Many students are initially hesitant to share this information with their peers or the leaders of the session; if, however, established academics are willing to share their own CVs, students will feel much more at ease about disclosing their own details. It is also helpful if students are encouraged to resubmit their CVs for further scrutiny after appropriate alterations.

Something else students need to know about is designing a course, because this is often one of the first things they will be asked to do when hired. If (as at Queen's) there is no possibility for PhD students to plan and deliver their own courses,¹³ they must still be familiar with the mechanics of designing a set of their own classes when they come to job interviews. This session introduces students to some of the basic elements (description, learning outcomes, set texts, weekly schedule, and assessment), and points them towards such key standards as the English benchmarking statement.¹⁴ Students are also encouraged to investigate the results of University Subject Review¹⁵ as a way of gleaning more information about a particular English department in the UK. With this information, complemented by published course materials, job candidates should be able to investigate the teaching that goes on at a given university, and will thus be able to think about their own particular contributions as newly appointed academics.

Whether or not these postgraduates pursue academic careers, they will almost certainly be required to undergo an interview in order to obtain gainful employment. It is therefore crucial to present them with opportunities to hone their skills in this area. By this stage of the programme

they will have had experience of delivering their material in a public forum, and will have made an attempt to develop their presentation skills; they should also have had other opportunities to defend their ideas, such as at differentiation, or if they have completed their PhDs, at the viva. The two sessions on job interviews are designed to prepare candidates as fully as possible for what can be a daunting experience. In the first, information is provided on the composition of job panels and the kinds of questions that are likely to be asked. Strategies may then be developed for providing answers to those questions. In the second session individuals are put through mock interviews, which are recorded onto DVD and then analysed; much can be revealed about the nature of the responses, body language, and other personal factors on which feedback may be provided. This session can have even greater impact if it precedes an actual job interview: questions may be tailored to suit the particular situation. Once again the collective experience of new and established academics may be combined to offer a candidate different kinds of feedback, with a view to improving performance.

The final two sessions of the programme address the 'What if...' scenario. They are addressed to individuals who, either by choice or circumstances, are unable to pursue an academic career. These sessions can be tailored to reflect employment patterns for graduates of a particular institution. Publishing is, perhaps, an obvious alternative in which the skills gained as a PhD student are to some extent transferable; there are, of course, others. Above all, it is important to alert PhD students to a range of possibilities, so that new opportunities can be created, and so that the pursuit of a non-academic career is never seen as failure.

Professionalising the PhD operated as a pilot project in 2003-4, with funding for travel and equipment kindly provided by the English Subject Centre. The response to the seminars, from both students and staff, was overwhelmingly positive. The School of English committed all full-time staff to the sessions; this sharing of responsibility – particularly between new and established staff – allowed for different experiences to feed into the programme. Because this was the first year of operation, there was no firm separation into the three levels proposed in the schedule (Fig 2): students in the final year of their degree could clearly benefit from information intended for their juniors. Because the

programme was – and intends to remain – optional, participation depended on the students' own perceived level of preparedness, as well as time commitments and other factors. There was a committed group who attended almost everything; but there were also those who came only once or twice. It is also clear that the sessions are of greatest benefit to doctoral students of English if they are facilitated by academics in their subject area. Many of the topics covered have particular nuances associated with English studies; if they were addressed in a generic context, they would lose their viability, and indeed their interest for our own students. The School of English is committed to sustaining this programme in the future; it has become an established part of the postgraduate curriculum in English at Queen's, and has been highlighted in promotional material

and academic plans; it also occupies a central position in the new 'Departmental Statement on Research Training Provision' that is being submitted to the AHRB with every application for doctoral funding. This professionalising initiative has appeared at a crucial juncture, when, in addition to the thesis that makes an original contribution to scholarly debate, the need for properly conceived professional training is essential, in a job market where the reliable, systematic acquisition of relevant skills has distinct advantages in the hiring process and beyond. If other English departments – and indeed units in other subject areas – are prepared to devote expertise and resources to the professionalising of PhDs, then all graduates will benefit, and will make enhanced contributions in their chosen pursuits.

Stage of PhD	Activity
Year 1	<p>Introductory seminar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all new doctoral students, which maps out their various activities over their three years, and introduces them to the elements of this training programme • Patterns of employment following completion of the PhD in English • Overview of the various dimensions of being a member of a professional community • Funding opportunities • Seminar on Queen's University Belfast and external funding (for travel to conferences, research trips, etc)
Year 2	<p>Teacher Assistant training course for those who have differentiated and are to become TAs in the School</p>
	<p>Skills development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation skills • Confidence building • Powers of communication <p>Students will have as their goal participation in the School's research seminar in their second year.</p>
	<p>Conference culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to propose and present a paper • Conventions of an oral text • How to run a conference; how to get funding; how to edit proceedings and find a publisher • Networking; Using the conference to raise individual profile and serve as springboard for publications

	<p>Research culture & strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of scholarship • Development of an individual research profile • Information on the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise)
	<p>Publication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to prepare and submit essays: the process and what to expect; Characteristics of work pitched at the scholarly community • Publication of PhD thesis • Moving from the conference presentation to the essay • Moving beyond the PhD; forward planning of research • What is a refereed journal and why does it matter? • Submitting to journal vs. edited collection; Book reviews; 'Notes' and short articles; Reference entries
Year 3+	<p>The first job I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duties, expectations & limitations; Salary scales & career prospects • Consideration of different shapes that career paths may take <p>The first job II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to look; How to apply; How to write a letter of application • Analysing selection criteria of selectors
	<p>Preparing a CV</p> <p>Workshop on preparation and presentation of students' own CVs</p>
	<p>Teaching & learning development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course design, delivery and evaluation • Quality assessment/assurance (QAA)
	<p>Job interview I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview techniques
	<p>Job interview II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mock interviews
	<p>Non-academic jobs I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing and the media as professions; Routes into the publishing and media communities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere • Nature of publishing and media jobs today
	<p>Non-academic jobs II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-academic jobs outside of the academy other than publishing: what they are and how to search for them • Contact with careers service • Job fairs

Fig. 2: Programme for *Professionalising the PhD*

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/en/teaching/postgraduate/phd-professional.htm>

News and Reports

Teaching Holocaust Writing and Film

Robert Eaglestone, Lecturer in English at Royal Holloway, University of London, writes about an English Subject Event on the 18th and 19th February, 2005.

I met one of my students in the corridor just before the seminar. She was in tears and, to explain, wordlessly and sobbing, pulled from her bag a historical account of the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto: background reading for the day's discussion. Another colleague recalls her seminar group's shock on hearing her suggest that what had so moved them in a particular Holocaust account was not events, per se, but the quality of the writing. Yet another colleague recalls the first heated and then shouting debate over the significance of historical inaccuracies in *Schindler's List*. Teaching Holocaust Writing and Film tends to be full of moments like these and the problems they raise. In disciplines which take affect and response seriously these raise serious pedagogic questions and problems.

The English Subject Centre's 2003 *Survey of the English Curriculum and Teaching in UK Higher Education* reveals a rapid growth in the teaching of Holocaust writing. Moreover, as a number of recent conferences held in London and Manchester have shown, the Holocaust plays a role in a range of modern language degrees and in film, cultural studies and media arts departments. However, there has – as yet – been no organised reflection on teaching the subject outside of History departments in the UK.

It isn't only issues of affect that make this area difficult. While the relation of history to literary pedagogy is always problematic (one colleague recalls a student's response to his lecture outlining Milton's Civil War context: 'what happened next?'), the Holocaust raises particular questions. The continuing historical debate over, for example, how much 'ordinary Germans' knew, or over Polish resistance and complicity, clearly impacts on many literary accounts. How much history do students need to know? (See Philip Martin's article on pages 18-21.) Is there – should there be – a canon of Holocaust texts and

films? How do well-established or even played-out critical debates (over authorial intention, say) look in relation to a survivor's desire to testify to what they experienced? How far do we take into account issues of translation since Holocaust literature is strikingly heterogeneous? What are the ethics of teaching this subject? And what about institutional issues? What 'department' does Holocaust studies belong to?

In the light of this, the English Subject Centre, Sue Vice, Nicola King and I, with the Centre for Research in Holocaust and Twentieth Century History, have organised a two-day conference (to be held at the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London on 18-19 February 2005) which will examine these and other issues. In addition to plenty of discussion and papers, there will be a 'graduate session' which will discuss questions of doctoral research, employment, teaching, publication and funding. The conference will also be attended by representatives of the Holocaust Education Trust and the Weiner Library.

Speakers include: Tim Cole; Robert Eaglestone; Rachel Falconer; Jane Kilby; Nicola King; Peter Lawson; Anthony Rowland; Ursula Tidd; Sue Vice; Anne Whithead.

Organisers: Sue Vice (Sheffield), Nicola King (West of England), Robert Eaglestone (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Expressions of interests and proposals for 20 minute papers to Robert Eaglestone, reaglestone@rhul.ac.uk.

Cost: £25 (£15 for postgraduate students)

To register go to:

www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/events/.

National Teaching Fellows

The winners of fifty new National Teaching Fellowships (worth £50,000 each) were announced in June. Here, two new Fellows with links to English outline their plans.



Peter Childs, Deputy Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Gloucestershire

My project's immediate focus is on trying to influence pre-University students' perceptions of the experience and benefits of studying English. I intend to draw on the views of staff and specialists in English studies, to collate different student accounts of their experience at a range of institutions, and then to use the ideas and information gained from these sources to produce on-line resources and learning materials to reach out to prospective English students. Such a website would help sixth-formers to gain from higher education students' and lecturers' knowledge and in particular it could help non-traditional University applicants envisage a realistic future in higher education with its attendant benefits in terms of employability, lifelong learning, and self-development (as well as the pre-twenty-first-century reasons for studying English, such as pleasure and enjoyment). The aim of the project is thus to present English in an attractive way to potential higher education students and to provide them with resources that tell them about studying the subject at university in terms of the experience and processes more than the content. Further down the line, I will disseminate the project's findings both within the English studies community and more widely.



Celia Hunt, Senior Lecturer in Continuing Education (Creative Writing) at the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sussex:

One of my main interests has been in the way creative writing – or more specifically creative writing that draws on autobiographical material – sometimes enables people not just to develop their writing skills, but also to develop themselves. In a standard creative writing course this developmental dimension of writing is not the main focus, and I wanted to see whether it would be possible to focus on it more directly in an educational setting. This is how the Centre for Continuing Education's Postgraduate Diploma in Creative Writing and Personal Development came into being in 1996. During that time I was also instrumental in setting up, with others, the Association for the Literary Arts in Personal Development – Lapidus – which is now an international organisation (www.lapidus.org.uk). The MA which evolved out of the Diploma is the only programme of its kind in Britain. It has proved highly successful in offering people the opportunity of both deepening and strengthening their creative writing through a deeper engagement with themselves, and of acquiring the skills to use creative writing in work with others in healthcare, therapy and education. Much of my thinking and writing over the last ten years has been devoted to exploring in a variety of ways the developmental and therapeutic nature of creative writing in an educational context. Over the next several years I shall be undertaking a research project on the way the different teaching and learning elements of the MA contribute to the learning process, with particular reference to understanding better how changes in participants' sense of themselves as learners and writers is effected. I shall also be organising an international conference on the use of creative writing as a learning tool in higher education, and editing a collection of papers arising out of it, so that models of good practice can be widely disseminated.

UCAS Figures on English, Media Studies and History

We are aware that interrogating the UCAS website for statistics is not the easiest or most enjoyable of tasks, so we have presented here some highlights relevant to English, using Media and History as comparators. A few notes of caution however:

- UCAS figures do not include postgraduates or part-timers
- The figures presented here do not include those on joint or combined programmes

- The basis for the subject categories was amended in 2002, so caution must be exercised in comparing figures with 2001 and earlier.

For these reasons, there are likely to be differences between figures presented in the UCAS data and those presented by HESA.

All Applicants and All Accepts by Subject and Gender 2001-2003. Source: UCAS

Notes:

- The total number of accepts for English was almost the same in 2003 and 2002, although Media Studies saw a rise of almost 14% (4735 in 2003; 4155 in 2002) and History saw a small fall.
- Women represent almost 73% of accepts for English in 2003 (50% for Media and 51% for History)
- English has the lowest percentage of accepts to applicants, although it is broadly similar to History. Media has more accepts than applicants.
- Figures not represented in the table indicate that 96% of English students are home students, 2% are from the EU and 2% from other overseas.

	Men		Women		Total		Total accepts as %age applicants
	Applicants	Accepts	Applicants	Accepts	Applicants	Accepts	
English							
2003	2690	2325	6919	6228	9609	8553	89.0
2002	2583	2291	6730	6252	9313	8543	91.7
2001	2382	2168	6493	5932	8875	8100	91.3
Media studies							
2003	1918	2386	2225	2349	4143	4735	114.3
2002	1669	1979	2177	2185	3846	4155	108.0
2001	1471	1738	1781	1729	3252	3467	106.6
History							
2003	4465	4131	4329	4271	8794	8402	95.5
2002	4223	4086	4440	4413	8663	8499	98.1
2001	3624	3261	3217	2997	6841	6258	91.5

Encouraging Student Enterprise in the Cultural and Heritage Sectors

Helen Cagney-Watts describes an English Subject Centre project funded by the DfES.

Government policy has identified that the development of a positive and interested attitude towards entrepreneurship and enterprise is a vital requirement for the future prosperity of the UK. The higher education sector has a key role to play in developing this approach with our undergraduates and postgraduates, as they consider and develop their future career paths. The *Encouraging Student Enterprise* project has been set up to work through the English Subject Centre to inspire and encourage English Studies students to explore the possibilities of working as freelancers and setting up their own business within the cultural/heritage sectors. Our work is recognised as having an important role to play nationally, and on 13 September we had the pleasure of attending the launch of the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship at The Treasury, London. The keynote speech was by Gordon Brown, who inspired us all with his assurance that Government funding would be forthcoming for investment into enterprise programmes.

Our research into the wide range of entrepreneurship and enterprise programmes that are available, has highlighted that there is a mismatch between the conventions of the economic model of training and the needs of staff and students within English Studies. The aim of the *Encouraging Student Enterprise* project, is to demonstrate alternative ways of approaching the concept of entrepreneurship through profiling the creative and innovative careers of graduates working within the cultural sectors. We will be producing an interactive DVD featuring these career case studies which will be available to all English departments within the higher education sector

The project has now built up a bank of case studies of freelancers running their own businesses which have direct

connections to English studies students. For example, we are featuring the work of a journalist who specialises in travel writing, a storyteller who works with children from schools in deprived areas to enhance their literacy skills, a playwright who is regularly commissioned for radio work, a marketing consultant whose portfolio includes producing community participation newsletters, a poet/children's writer, and a theatre director who develops work with Special Needs schools.

In addition to these fascinating case studies, we will also be featuring the careers of English graduates who have gone on to work as freelance consultants or set up their own business. Amongst those who will be profiled are a film festival director; a financial services consultant, a literary magazine editor; and a PR consultant.

We have already begun work on the production of the DVD. A graphic designer has been commissioned to develop a moodboard to enable us to design a visual narrative that reflects the full bodied nature of English Studies. We will be using the finished art work on the Enterprise pages of our website. We are working with a multi-media solutions company to film and edit the DVD to the highest possible technical specifications. Filming has commenced as a pilot featuring the career of an English graduate who went on to become chief executive of a northern-based film festival.

A rigorous evaluation framework has been set up in collaboration with other Subject Centres throughout the UK, all of whom are working on similar projects with their subject communities. We will be reporting on progress over the coming months, and the evaluation results will be available after March 2005 when this phase of the project comes to an end.



British Council Contemporary Writers Database

The Contemporary Writers Database (www.contemporarywriters.com)

is a searchable database of some of the UK and Commonwealth's most important living writers.

The constantly updated database contains profiles of hundreds of literary lives and careers, including critical reviews, photographs, biographies and lists of prizes and awards. Users can search by author; genre; nationality; gender; publisher; book title, date of publication and prize name and date. For British Council contact details, see advertisement on page 21.

JISC Regional Support Centres: New ICT Support for Higher Education Institutions

Sarah Sherman, Higher Education Adviser, JISC RSC for London, writes about a new service for Higher Education.

What are the Regional Support Centres?

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Regional Support Centres (RSCs) were established in 2000 initially to support the Further Education sector in the development of e-learning and the deployment of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The network of 13 RSCs operates across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as a national service responsive to local needs through a strong sense of local ownership. A core function of the RSCs is to promote and help sustain the range of services JISC provides.

Expanded role – supporting HE

At the start of the 2003-4 academic year, the RSCs were granted additional funding to support higher education in further education, small HE Colleges (as defined by HERO), specialist colleges and more recently the Adult and Community Learning sector.

Under the new HE remit, the RSCs now provide advice, guidance and support in the following areas:

Curriculum

- Providing advice and information for staff in the use of e-learning technologies and pedagogy.
- Providing or facilitating staff development to support e-learning capacity building.

Learning Resources

- Offering advice and information for staff in the provision of e-learning resources, especially the JISC Collections.

Technical

- Support JANET connection and institutional systems and networks.
- Facilitating the availability of cost effective technical training.

Strategy and Management

- Providing advice and guidance on strategic planning, for example e-learning strategy writing.
- Forums and events for senior managers to meet and share ideas and good practice.

We support the above through:

- Websites
- Publications/Newsletters/Emails
- Help Desk
- Forums – using JISCmail or face-to-face meetings
- Regional Events – a range of events, responding to staff development needs are arranged and publicised throughout the year. These events take the form of conferences, workshops, seminars, briefing and awareness-raising sessions.
- Bespoke Training courses. The RSCs offer in-house training which can form part of institutional staff development activities or be tailored to particular needs.

The Role of the RSC HE Adviser

Our responsibility includes visiting regional institutions, where we meet with Curriculum, Learning Resources and IT Network Managers to inform them about the role of the RSC, how we might be able to support them and also promote other JISC services. Many of the institutions we support are using traditional forms of teaching and have not had the opportunity to discover how new technologies can be embedded into the delivery of their curriculum, although they are keen and interested. A major part of our role is to organise a number of events and workshops, which raise awareness and demonstrate how practitioners can get the best use out of technology in learning and teaching. For example, the use of interactive whiteboards in teaching and wireless networking for mobile classrooms have been highlighted as areas where institutions would benefit from RSC advice and guidance.

Our forums and events provide a great opportunity for the FE and HE sectors to come together and discuss experiences and share good practice – something the RSCs are very good at!

Finding out about the RSC in your region

All the RSCs have a website that contains a wide range of information, links and details of events. You can access your local RSC website from here:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=rsclocation>

Contacting your local RSC

Each RSC has an e-Learning Advisor with responsibility for supporting HE in FE and HE Colleges. If you would like to find out more about your RSC and its role in supporting e-learning you should contact your local HE advisor.

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Scotland South & West	Charles Sweeney	cswee001@udcf.gla.ac.uk
Wales	Lis Parcell	e.j.parcell@swansa.ac.uk

CCUE Ordinary General Meeting

The next CCUE (Council for College and University English) Ordinary General Meeting will be held on Saturday 11th December at the Institute of English Studies, Senate House, University of London. The programme has been planned with an eye to the broad spectrum of concerns currently engaging English as a subject community. The morning's sessions are directed at the issues raised by the 'Widening Participation' agenda, both as they affect the perception of what an English team can or should be asked to do within a University or College, and in terms of the changing needs of our first year cohorts. Professor Bob Burgess, Vice Chancellor at the University of Leicester, will speak on 'The Implications of the Widening Participation agenda for the Humanities' and there will be a panel discussion on the Level One English curriculum. After lunch, Professor Kevin Sharpe (University of Warwick) will present a paper on 'Aesthetics, sex and politics in the England of Charles II' before the the Business Meeting gets under way.

Departments with membership of CCUE are invited to send both a senior and more junior colleague to the OGM. Full details, together with a registration form, are available on the English Subject Centre website at <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/Events/other/index.htm>.

This year's CCUE AGM will be held on 22nd-23rd April 2005 at St. Anne's College, Oxford.

Student Employability Profiles for English

Jane Gawthrop, English Subject Centre

For most students, employability on graduation and over the long term is a major priority. More and more higher education courses provide the means for students to develop their employability skills, to raise their own awareness of these skills and to increase their ability to articulate them. Such capabilities can be put into practice in personal development planning, work experience opportunities, job searching, interviews and similar situations and this is of real help when making major career and life changes.

The underlying assumption is that a student's life-long learning capability and employability can be enhanced through their higher education experience and that this can be achieved as part and parcel of academic study. The impact of the effects of widening participation in higher education, along with greater diversity in the ways in which students learn, provides a climate where increased numbers of students can and need to benefit from supported development of their employability skills.

The English Subject Centre has participated in a Higher Education Academy project to create student employability profiles to indicate the skills that typically can be developed through the study of English. The profile is available in the Resources area of the Subject Centre website, for use by staff, potential or current students. The latter group might draw on it as part of CV preparation or personal development planning. The template, which is supported by explanations and reflective questions, seeks to capture key behavioural indicators or criteria identified within the Subject Benchmark statement. It cross-references these with the competencies identified by members of the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) Employers Forum as being the attributes/qualities that are the key components they have observed in those individuals who can transform organisations and add value early in their careers.¹

English – Employability Skills

The employability skills that can be gained by studying English, as identified by the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement², are:

- Advanced literacy and communication skills and the ability to apply these skills in appropriate contexts including the ability to present sustained and persuasive written and oral arguments cogently and coherently.
- The capacity to analyse and critically examine diverse forms of discourse.
- The ability to adapt and transfer the critical methods of the discipline to a variety of working environments.
- The ability to acquire substantial quantities of complex information of diverse kinds in a structured and systematic way involving the use of the distinctive interpretative skills of the subject.
- Competence in planning and executing essays, reports and project work.
- The capacity for independent thought and judgement, and skills in critical reasoning.
- The ability to comprehend and develop intricate concepts in an open ended way which involves an understanding of aims and consequences.
- The ability to work with and in relation to others through the presentation of ideas and information and the collective negotiation of solutions.
- The ability to understand, interrogate and apply a variety of theoretical positions and weigh the importance of alternative perspectives.
- The ability to handle information and argument in a critical and self reflective manner.

Employers' Criteria

Employers have identified the attributes they seek in the graduates they recruit. The qualities or attributes used here have been identified and categorised by employer members of the Policy Forum of the Council for Industry and Higher Education:

- Cognitive Skills/Brainpower: The ability to identify and solve problems; work with information and

¹ Lee Harvey, *Graduates' Work* (CIHE, 2001)

² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/english.html>.

handle a mass of diverse data, assess risk and draw conclusions.

- **Generic Competencies:** High-level and transferable key skills such as the ability to work with others in a team, communicate, persuade and have interpersonal sensitivity.
- **Personal Capabilities:** The ability and desire to learn for oneself and improve one's self awareness and performance. To be a self starter (creativity, decisiveness, initiative) and to finish the job (flexibility, adaptability, tolerance to stress).

Technical Ability: For example, having the knowledge and experience of working with relevant modern laboratory equipment.

- **Business and / or Organisation Awareness:** An appreciation of how businesses operate through having had (preferably relevant) work experience.
- **Practical Elements – Vocational Courses:** Critical evaluation of the outcomes of professional practice; the ability to reflect and review one's own practice and participate in and review quality control processes and risk management.

The student profile can therefore be used as a tool to help an individual student identify examples of their own skills development. By reviewing the list of possible skills from the Benchmark Statement and then mapping these to the list of qualities and attributes typically sought by employers, the student is better equipped to demonstrate their skills in language helpful to employers.

Consultations with English in Education Lecturers

Ben Knights, Subject Centre Director, writes about recent meetings with an important section of the English HE community.

During the last year the Director of the English Subject Centre, Ben Knights, made contact with a large number of those who teach English on PGCEs. This contact resulted in some initial meetings. These notes have been included as an example of work in progress, and constitute an invitation to further correspondence. They summarise the findings of meetings held in spring 2004 at Durham Stockton Campus and at Bedford Square, London. There was warm support for this initiative by the Subject Centre, including a number of supportive e-mails from colleagues who could not attend the actual events.

Ben began by outlining the brief of the Learning and Teaching Support Network / Higher Education Academy and of the English Subject Centre, and sketching a context for these meetings. As part of its brief, the Subject Centre had identified what was widely acknowledged to be a serious rift between English as practised in schools and that studied in higher education. It was therefore seeking to support moves to improve dialogue between the communities of those who teach at secondary and tertiary levels. The Subject Centre was well aware that

other bodies and informal groups were at work in this terrain and was seeking to identify a complementary role. There was a further motive for holding these consultations: English Staff in Education departments – apart from constituting an important 'go between' group – were themselves part of the higher education English community and therefore should in their own right come within the Subject Centre's remit.

Widespread concern within English departments about student preparedness for university study, about low expectations of reading, and strategic learning habits constituted a subset of a larger problem about the differences between English in school and at university. The Subject Centre itself had a potentially important role in feeding back into English Departments knowledge about the school curriculum and assessment regime and the constraints under which secondary teachers operated. It should be in a position to facilitate cross-phase dialogue between teachers. To be able to do this effectively it needed to start with its own dialogue with teachers, and English in Education lecturers were obviously well placed to enable such communication.

Rich and wide-ranging discussions followed this initial scene-setting. Only those elements most directly relevant to the Subject Centre initiative are noted here. Participants were responsive both to the analysis of the situation and the historical forces that have produced it. They noted how much they valued this opportunity to meet, and engaged in a vigorous debate over ways of influencing the emerging shape of English. While some felt that Higher Education departments had given no clear picture of what English should be (and had in any case lost their historic link to the examining boards), in the view of others, English Departments were the last people to be entrusted with the future of the subject. Some argued that English in Education lecturers themselves had failed to seize the opportunity to shape the subject – though that opportunity might not be irrevocably lost. There was some evidence that as subject-specific questions moved up the policy agenda there might be an opportunity to articulate a vision for English, though that would itself require them to attain a shared view which at the moment was lacking. As so widely in education, there was much silence and much compliance. It was however possible that English in Education lecturers themselves might be able undertake small scale initiatives in initiating genuinely interested higher education English department staff into the day-to-day realities of life in schools. The dominant communications paradigm of English (based on a narrow linguistic model) meant that basic questions for English teachers (what should we read?) were going unanswered. With the limited exception of the AVAS curriculum, texts studied in school were untouched by curricula or debates within higher education. This situation went back well before the National Curriculum or Literacy Strategy, though was being exacerbated by the wholesale anthologisation of the curriculum, and the penetration of the assessment regime and learning objectives into all corners of the life of schools. (The liberating effects for Independent Schools of not being subject to SATS was ruefully remarked upon.) Given the shock immersion in strategies experienced by many English graduates entering their PGCE, they needed to be helped to hold on to their subject knowledge and a sense of its relevance.

Outcomes

- There is a clear imperative to carry on dialogue with PGCE and other English in Education staff; to build

on the conversations that are already happening, and on the research on transition being carried out by Andrew Green for the Subject Centre, by Chris Hopkins at Sheffield Hallam and by Peter Childs at Gloucestershire.

- Those who took part in the meetings would themselves welcome being involved in a continuing dialogue with the Subject Centre.
- Further regional consultations between the Subject Centre and English in Education staff should take place, and the Nottingham area was mentioned as a fruitful possibility.
- English students who go into teacher training (or who are thinking of doing so) should be identified as themselves a 'transition' group worthy of Subject Centre attention.
- At Durham / Stockton a day event would be trialled involving PGCE students, their lecturers and school mentors, together with one or two sympathetic Higher Education English staff. (This event took place on November 3, and was dedicated to the theme of 'using your subject knowledge') One suggestion was that Teacher Training Agency funding might be available to support such an event. It was also noted that such an initiative could well find favour with OFSTED.
- The Subject Centre should research good practice among those English departments which still hold 6th form conferences, and explore the nature of their school links.
- The Subject Centre should advertise on its website and Bulletin its role in relation to English and Education staff, and liaise with the NATE (National Association for the Teaching of English) Initial Teacher Training committee and others about its mailing list.
- Ben was invited to and attended the NATE Initial Teacher Training committee meeting.
- If the Subject Centre through the Higher Education Academy does possess a voice in policy discussions, then it should seek to influence debates on English in schools, for example in the wake of the Tomlinson 14 – 18 recommendations.

Taught Postgraduate Provision at the New Universities

Emma Liggins, Lecturer in English at Edge Hill College of Higher Education, reports on an English Subject event held in the summer.

At a time when taught Masters programmes are multiplying in order to meet the rapidly growing number of postgraduate students, it is important to assess the challenges facing English departments in maintaining the health and quality of their postgraduate provision. The event I organised at Edge Hill College of Higher Education (4 June 2004) with the support of the English Subject Centre was focussed on the provision in the new university sector, where areas of concern such as recruitment and retention are often particularly pressing. Delegates from a range of institutions were able to share good practice and consider future directions for development and expansion.

The event also aimed to address the changing needs of the typical applicant, who is now more likely to be either an overseas student or a mature student only able to study part-time. Speaking about the marked rise in students opting for additional qualifications to the undergraduate degree, Howard Green, chairman of the UK Council of Graduate Education, remarked in a recent *Guardian* interview that, 'A lot of the growth has been among people returning to education later in life. Among postgraduate students, some 25-30% are in mid-career, and more than 40% are studying part-time. For the universities, the challenge is to understand more about professional development and about new groups whose needs are different from the traditional academic community'. Catering for these new groups is clearly a priority, as is recognising the changing demands in the market for postgraduate qualifications. A presentation from the Arts and Humanities Research Board's Postgraduate Division helped to identify aspects of the new funding system which particularly impacted on applicants to smaller or newer Higher Education Institutions. Of particular importance was the new availability of funding for part-time MA students and the need for institutions to offer a solid grounding in research training, to ensure that MA graduates stand a good chance of securing funding for PhDs.

Janet Speake, Associate Dean of Postgraduate Studies at Liverpool Hope, argued that interdisciplinary degrees were often more suited to the needs and resources of smaller

institutions, though there were organisational challenges in deciding who paid for and owned such programmes. Her case study of the newly validated MA in Humanities, which also offers the possibility for specialization, led to a discussion amongst delegates about the advantages and disadvantages of such broad programmes. Some felt this to be a return to an out-dated system which was now being phased out in their institutions, whilst others saw it as a useful way to maximise recruitment. Her presentation also flagged up the success of shared Research Methods modules across programmes and disciplines; the fact that this point was later reiterated by some of the other speakers suggests that this approach is increasingly seen as a viable method of using resources.

The following panel on 'Future Directions and Recent Developments' addressed issues around collaboration, vocationalism, and e-learning. Managing joint MA programmes across institutions, as Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford currently do, raised the same kind of administrative difficulties as interdisciplinary degrees, but was clearly resource-efficient, according to Angelica Michelis from MMU. Delegates shared their experiences of and concerns about on-line programmes and distance learning and their preferences for mixed-mode delivery. Many agreed with John Joughin, Course Leader of the new MA in Global Shakespeare at University of Central Lancashire, that e-learning worked most effectively as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, campus-based provision. In the wake of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's acknowledgement of the recent failure of the e-university, the question of whether e-learning is actually 'worth it' in relation to its attractiveness to potential applicants is even more resonant.

Other speakers compared current provision with their own experiences of studying for MAs before the 'audit culture', focussing particularly on curriculum issues and the market for individual programmes. Robert Sheppard highlighted the different issues involved in postgraduate study in Creative Writing, an area of English Studies which unusually started off at MA level, and spoke about the

importance of incorporating poetics into the MA in Writing Studies at Edge Hill. Richard Pearson described how the interdisciplinary MA in Nineteenth-Century Studies at University College, Worcester had become geared towards the part-time market. One strategy was to give students the option of completing the programme over 5 years, which generated discussion amongst delegates about the benefits of flexibility and its effect on completion rates.

The day's discussions suggest that interdisciplinarity increasingly seems to be the way forward for new universities. In order to maximise recruitment, programmes

should be made attractive to part-time and overseas students, often by evening delivery or flexibility surrounding deadlines. The jury was still out on e-learning, seen as a key element of future provision but not necessarily the best use of limited resources.

Note: some of the presentations from this event will shortly be available on the English Subject Centre website.

How to Meet New Colleagues and Influence People: The English Subject Centre Directory of Experience and Interests

Bumping into kindred spirits at conferences need not be the only method of finding colleagues in other institutions who share your teaching interests.

The Subject Centre's Directory of Experience and Interests (<http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/expertise/index.php?searchType=3>) provides lecturers with a powerful way to expand their network of contacts. Each entry in the database gives a colleague's name, contact details and specialisms, together with an autobiographical paragraph outlining experience and interests.

The database can be browsed by teaching area, subject area, literary author and colleague name. A free text search is also possible. Registering with the Directory will allow you to share your own concerns and ideas with colleagues elsewhere. The power of the database depends on having a viable number of registrants, so we would welcome your submission!

Mapping Access to Special Collections in the London Region

University College London Library Services is pleased to announce the launch of MASC25 (Mapping Access to Special Collections in the London Region: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lsl/masc25>), a consolidated online resource guide to printed special collections in university libraries in the M25 Consortium.

MASC25 provides access to the catalogues of any collection of printed works in the region that is considered to contain material of a rare or unique nature, or has been developed as a special resource in terms of depth or subject coverage. The database can be queried by keyword search (a freetext search of the title, description and note fields), by subject (a complete alphabetical list of the Library of Congress Subject Headings used in the database) and by institution (a browsable list of all collections held by libraries in the region).

For further information, contact Anna Jones, the MASC25 Project Officer (a.h.jones@ucl.ac.uk).

'You'll need to go to the departmental office for that, Sophie...'

Jane Gawthrope, Manager of the English Subject Centre, reports on a networking day for English department administrators held on 8 September 2004.

Who is the face of your department as far as students are concerned? The chances are it isn't the Head of Department (even if they can say who s/he is) or their tutor (with whom meetings may be infrequent or irregular or both), but the Administrator. Administrators, involved as they are with students 'from the cradle to the grave' (open days, admissions, assessment, final examinations, graduation and references), are key figures in the student experience. In acknowledgement of this role, the English Subject Centre organised a 'Networking Day' for Administrators in London in early September. Sixteen administrators from a variety of institutions took a break from their start-of-year rush to meet colleagues in similar roles and discuss common issues.

Several themes emerged from the day. From the round of introductions it was apparent that few administrators cover just English, but have a role in relation to several disciplines. Moreover, this discipline mix is in constant flux as a result of institutional reorganisation: most participants spoke of being about to experience, or having recently undergone, some sort of restructuring.

It was also clear that administrators are the conduit for information flowing in and out of the department, and therefore act both as 'translators' and managers of the tension communication may create. They make messages from the central administration palatable and comprehensible to academic colleagues and make central administration aware of circumstances and requirements in the department. They develop a complex network of contacts across estates, registry, personnel and finance departments in order to 'get things done' and smooth the passage of departmental initiatives. It often falls to the administrator to explain the complexities of the assessment regime to a disappointed student, and to have a box of tissues to hand when necessary.

Administrators are just as much at the 'sharp end' of dealing with the real-life outcomes of government, institutional and departmental policies as lecturers. This is especially the case in relation to increased student numbers, where administrators must try to find a lecture

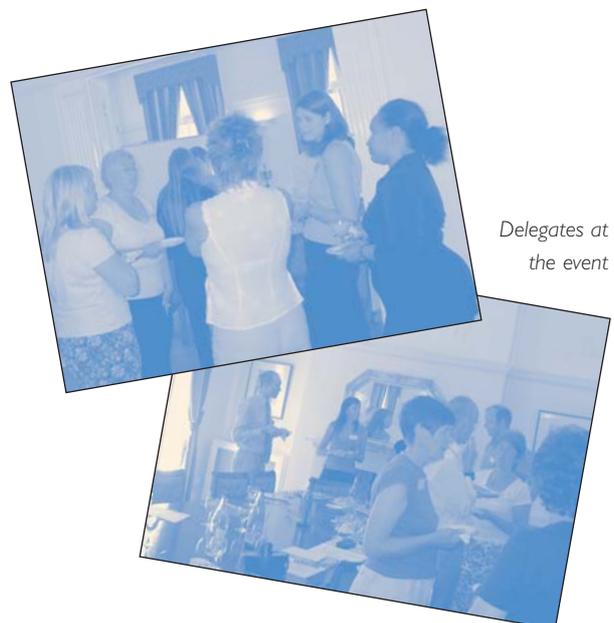
theatre that will accommodate the extra recruits without contravening safety regulations as well as coping with the individual requirements of those with a range of disabilities. Several participants voiced uncertainties about the level of discretion they exercised in theory compared to practice.

Administrators are often heavily involved in, if not responsible for, the content of departmental websites and virtual learning environments. The Networking Day included a presentation on websites highlighting good and bad design features and encouraging participants to consider the needs of different audiences: potential and current students, press, academics and others in Higher Education.

Feedback from the event suggested that participants enjoyed the opportunity to stand back and reflect on their role and discover that problems were not unique to them. One commented:

'One of the biggest challenges for English administrators...is the challenge of potential isolation. Meeting...colleagues reinforced the sense that many fellow professionals are aware of the same issues and face very similar challenges.'

It is likely that the English Subject Centre will repeat the event next year.



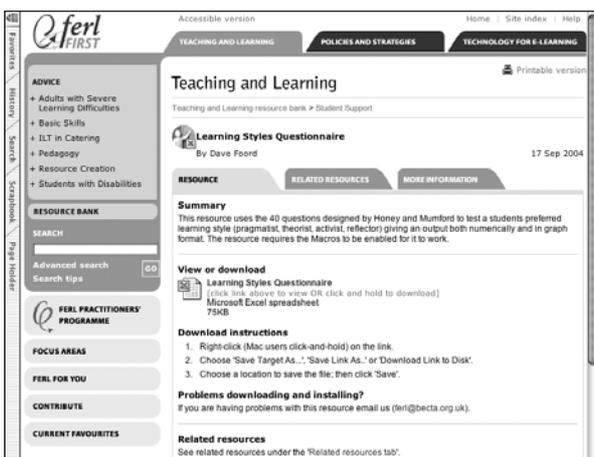
Delegates at the event

IT Works!

Brett Lucas, Learning Technology Officer and Website Developer at the English Subject Centre, gives his regular roundup of teaching-related developments in IT.

Learning Styles questionnaires

Research suggests that understanding what style of learner you are may help you to apply this style to new things, and develop coping strategies to compensate for weaknesses or capitalise on strengths. I tested my 'learning style' on a freely downloadable spreadsheet from the FERL website <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=8035>. I turned out to be a 'pragmatist' (no comment!). The 40 questions are based on work by Honey and Mumford (1997). (Just remember to enable 'macros' in your spreadsheet programme when opening the questionnaire.) For another questionnaire, based on a different set of learning styles (mentioned in Ros King's article on page 5), see <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>.



Academics and Blogging

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the use of blogs (web-logs see a short history of blogging at: <http://www.unc.edu/~zuiker/blogging101/index.html>) both for publicly-minded scholars and for use in teaching and reflection. Some of you may have noticed the article in the Guardian recently (www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,1310111,00.htm) and an interesting discussion about academics and blogging on Crooked Timber (www.crookedtimber.org/archives/001522.html). At the recent ALT (Association of Learning Technologists) conference there were also a few presentations on mobile blogging (updating blogs using SMS or pictures from mobile phones). Here's a useful link to get you started – www.moblogging.org/.

Greater Clarity in Copyright

With a *Creative Commons* license, you can keep your copyright but allow people to copy and distribute your work provided they give you credit. The license is currently

being rewritten for use in the UK and could be a significant move forwards for those interested in making their educational materials publicly available and reusable within a clear and simple legal framework. A complete suite of licenses is due for launch on November 1, 2004. You can read more about this initiative here: <http://creativecommons.org/projects/international/uk/>.

Streaming media tools

A couple of useful tools for those of you who use streaming media files (either audio or video) from the web in your course websites. *Freecorder* (www.freecorder.com) is a free program that enables you to record internet audio. Basically you can record anything that comes out of your PC speakers. The program saves the output as an MP3 file which you can upload, given the appropriate copyright clearance, to your webpages or VLE.

Have you ever wanted to get your students to watch a small segment of streaming video on the web but had to link to the entire clip? The *Virtual Snipmachine* is a web-based video editing tool that allows you to run the clip in a web interface and select the exact segment of the clip that you want your students to watch. The tool then generates a URL for that particular segment which you can insert into your course website...very nifty and no media files to upload!

Although the tool is in Dutch there is information and access to the Snipmachine available in English from: www.edusite.nl/webstroom/english/12112. You can try out the snipmachine using a Realplayer streaming video clip from the rich archive of the Caribbean Writers Summer Institute at the University of Miami (<http://scholar.library.miami.edu/cls/CWSIMainPage.php>).

Macromedia Breeze

Turning PowerPoint slides into professional looking interactive online learning materials is what *Breeze* is all about. This program, from the creators of *Dreamweaver*, comes in 3 modules: presentation, training and meetings. The presentation module actually runs within PowerPoint and enables you to record your voice, add interactive quizzes and surveys, video etc. Wizards guide you through the development process and your resulting masterpiece is published in Flash format for incorporation in your online system of choice. There is a 15 day trial available from the Macromedia website: www.macromedia.com/software/breeze/.

The English Subject Centre Report Series

Our Report Series is now well-established. Copies of all reports are available on our website at: www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/general/publications/reports and most are circulated in paper form to English Departments in the UK. Further copies are available on request, subject to availability. Send your request to: esc@rhul.ac.uk.

Published Reports:

Report no. 1, *Admission Trends in Undergraduate English: statistics and attitudes*, Sadie Williams, April 2002
ISBN 0 90219 443 7

Report no. 2, *The English Degree and Graduate Careers*, John Brennan and Ruth Williams, January 2003
ISBN 0 90219 463 1

Report no. 3, *Postgraduate Training in Research Methods: Current Practice and Future Needs in English*,
Sadie Williams, February 2003 ISBN 0 90219 4 68 2

Report no. 4, *Good Practice Guide: Access and Widening Participation*, Siobhán Holland, February 2003,
ISBN 0 90219 473 9

Report no. 5, *English and IT*, Michael Hanrahan, December 2002

Report no. 6, *Good Practice Guide: Creative Writing*, Siobhán Holland, February 2003,
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Report no. 9, *Good Practice Guide: Part-time teaching*, Siobhán Holland, August 2004, ISBN 0 902 19429 1

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The English Subject Centre Newsletter is produced twice a year and distributed widely through all institutions teaching English in Higher Education.

The newsletter's aims are:

- to provide information about resources, developments and innovations in teaching
 - to provide a discursive or reflective forum for teaching and learning issues
- to evaluate existing and new teaching materials, textbooks and IT packages

We welcome contributions.
Articles range from 300–3000 words in length.

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