



Briefing Paper

The Centre for Bioscience and the Bioscience Reps Network: Working together

Background

In September 2006 the Centre for Bioscience presented a discussion paper on the Reps Network at the Reps Forum. The intention was to agree with Reps an updated, shared view, of the function of the Reps Network, and how the work of Reps could be better promoted and publicised within departments and across the bioscience learning and teaching network. Feedback indicated that Reps welcomed clarification of expectations of roles and responsibilities, and were eager for Heads of Department and superiors to be made aware of their status, and engagement and activity on behalf of their department. Following overwhelmingly positive feedback from this cross-section of the Reps community we now consider it appropriate to present an updated version to all our Bioscience Reps. The Centre views this very much as a working document and we therefore welcome further comment and suggestions for improvement from you.

Enhancing the Reps Network – Roles and Responsibilities

This paper sets out current and desirable future practices aimed at:

- *Clarifying the function of the Reps network (and the responsibilities of Centre staff and individual Reps)*
- *Improving two-way communication, cross-institutional communication and communication across the wider bioscience learning and teaching network*
- *Better recognising and rewarding the role of every Rep*

The Bioscience Representatives Network is a key element of the national bioscience learning and teaching network developed by the Centre. The Reps network was developed to:

- help the Centre stay in touch with changing practice in the large number of departments and institutions which it supports
- enable bioscience staff to inform us of emerging practice, and important issues in learning and teaching
- identify how we may be able to support staff in addressing their needs
- identify when changes in higher education policy may be indicated or desirable, and provide individuals/the bioscience community with a voice on policy
- provide the Centre with a means of communicating with staff who may be unaware of the Centre or have yet to register their details with us

In return, the Centre perceives that individual Reps should derive benefit in other areas of their work as a result of the networking opportunities and from being fully informed of Centre activities and national developments in bioscience learning and teaching (more later).

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Centre for Bioscience responsibilities/activities (New roles/activities appear in *italics*)

To raise the profile of Reps and the Reps Network, and in return for Reps' efforts the Centre will:

- *Seek to ensure that Heads of Department (or equivalents) and other senior staff in universities are aware of and understand the contributions of individual Reps (with your permission)*
- *Seek information from new contacts and existing contacts (who register with the Centre, for events or apply for funding) on the impact of publicity circulated via the Reps network, and inform individual Reps of such findings.*
- *Prioritise enquiries from Reps*
- *Review possible rewards for Reps*
- *Maintain a public list of Bioscience Reps and their departments and institutions on its web site*

So Reps are aware of our direct contact with colleagues in their institution the Centre will:

- *Publish a list of mailings and other instances of community-wide communication on its web site (linked to the Reps' section)*
- *Periodically send each Rep numbers and a list of names of the individuals from their institution/department that we are in contact with (where permission has been granted)*

To promote greater two-way communication and awareness the Centre will:

- *Periodically send Reps printed materials and ask for these to be distributed to colleagues (where possible targeting those individuals we are not in contact with)*
- *Supply printed materials for notice boards, and wherever possible supply additional materials and copies of publications upon request*
- *Keep all Reps informed of Centre activities via email and periodic mailings*
- *Develop a Bioscience Learning and Teaching Showcase on our website and invite Reps to share learning and teaching news, practice, issues from their department/unit*
- *Invite Reps to provide feedback on Centre activities and policy issues*
- *Explore the possibilities of providing a facility for Reps (and other Contacts) to update their details and provide us with other information or communicate with others via our web site.*
- *Arrange an annual get together (Forum) to which all Bioscience Representatives and key contacts will be invited. This will take place each September.*

Bioscience Representative's responsibilities/activities (New roles/activities appear in *italics*)

To raise the profile of Bioscience Reps and the Bioscience Reps Network individual Reps will:

- *Agree to their details being shared with their institutions (via the Centre/Higher Education Academy) and/or other Subject Centres in the Subject Network*
- *Agree to their name (and contact email or telephone no.) being published on the Centre's website (<http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/ltsnrep/deptconabout.htm#list>; list to be updated Oct 06, and regularly thereafter, as the need arises)*
- *Consider volunteering to coordinate their own events (on a regional basis and direct/lead on the annual Reps Forum)*
- *Consider applying to act as a Regional Coordinator[Ⓟ] for one of the two Pilot Regional Bioscience Reps Networks*

To promote greater two-way communication and awareness Reps will:

- Acquaint themselves with the work of the Centre and its staff (where these are not already familiar), and maintain an active interest in changes and developments at the Centre
- *Inform the Centre of (local) learning and teaching issues and resources*
- Deliver/forward Centre communications to colleagues in their bioscience unit, and in particular to new staff and other individuals who aren't registered with the Centre for Bioscience
- *Agree to become a member of the Centre's main jiscmail email list*
- *Agree to become a member of the Centre's Bioreps jiscmail list (to facilitate communication with the Centre and amongst the Reps network)*
- *Provide/direct Centre staff towards information and material for the Bioscience Learning and Teaching Showcase*
- Contact the Centre when they no longer wish to be a Rep and identify an eager replacement

Benefits of being a Bioscience Representative

Currently:

- Part of an identifiable sub-community of bioscience learning and teaching professionals
- Teaching informed and supported by full knowledge of Centre's activities and resources
- Annual opportunity to attend an invitation-only event which brings together the Centre's key contacts to be wined and dined, and to discuss bioscience learning and teaching in an informal setting
- Access to greater networking and collaboration opportunities (over and above those available to the Centre's 'regular' contacts)*
- The opportunity to learn about and influence Centre activities in advance and to initiate and lead-on Bioscience Rep Network activities

Following suggested new activities/responsibilities:

- Increased visibility and profile/recognition across the Bioscience Learning and Teaching Community: e.g. the Centre plans to expand the Reps content on its web site
- Increased recognition within institutions (via Centre's contact with HODs or equivalents)
- Improved communication with others with learning and teaching interests
- The Centre is exploring other possible rewards for Reps (e.g. pay registration fee for those Reps who have a paper accepted at the next Science Learning and Teaching Conference)
- In future, it is possible that there may be limited financial remuneration for a select group of Reps who act as regional coordinators^Φ

*Establishing a regional dimension to the Reps Network

The Centre has made a commitment (in its 2006/07 operational plan) to the piloting of two regional Reps networks. We envisage such regional networks will facilitate greater networking amongst Reps and create better, yet informal opportunities for the exchange of practice and ideas, and the identification of shared issues. Such groups (perhaps led by a Regional Coordinator) might also coordinate their own events (with support from the Centre) or meet periodically, either face to face or virtually, to discuss the work of the Centre and our activities or to issues affecting bioscience staff and students or policy matters, etc. Potentially such groups might also be able to bid for funding for self-directed activities provided these were in line with the aims of the Centre and the Reps Network.

^ΦThe role of Regional Coordinators has yet to be decided: It is likely the Centre would award the role to a small number of individuals, following an application or nomination process.