

LTSN BIOSCIENCE

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The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) Centre for Bioscience is one of 24 Subject Centres, funded by the four UK higher education funding bodies, to promote and support high quality learning, teaching and assessment in UK higher education.

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2004 – A YEAR OF PROGRESSION

WELCOME TO THE NEW look *Bulletin* and all good wishes for 2004. We at the LTSN Centre for Bioscience expect 2004 to be a year of progression. 2003, our third year of existence, was in some ways a year of consolidation, in which many of our activities have started to yield results and in which we feel we have become increasingly useful as a resource to our community. The "brand" of LTSN across the country (or actually countries) is now well established. In 2004 we will become incorporated into the Academy and there will inevitably be some change in the "branding", and we will be feeling our way and in some respects finding a new role. The Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning will also start to come into being and it will be interesting to see how they work and how they will interact with the LTSN.

The LTSN Centre for Bioscience has, over the last month, run its own internal review of its activities. The aim has been to evaluate and prioritise our activities and use the resources that we have to best advantage. This will mean that some activities will change and some may even be dropped — details will appear later — but we have put a lot of effort into some things with rather little gain or appreciation by the community. In contrast, some of our activities, especially those that involve face to face contact with our constituents, have been very fruitful and highly appreciated. The LTSN Centre for Bioscience recently held a well-attended, one-day event at the University of Manchester in which project work was discussed. The stimulus for this event was the Special Interest Group on Final Year projects led by Richard Cowie. Bioscience is a practical subject, and the training of future, employable bioscientists should include some practical experience in the laboratory or in the

field. The QAA Benchmark statements for both Bioscience and Agriculture, forestry, agricultural sciences, food sciences and consumer sciences, state this and also recommend very strongly that the training should include some real experience of bioscience research in the form of a research project. It perhaps gives an indication of how strongly people feel about Final Year Projects that not only was the meeting well attended but also that participants were prepared to come to Manchester from as far afield as Ulster, Dundee and Plymouth. Such events give people the opportunity to discuss topics, meet others with similar issues and concerns and form networks across the community — one of our major aims.

The range of our activities is illustrated by the contents of this issue of the *Bulletin*. As well as the usual selection of articles on learning and teaching projects we have the second in our series from our country consultants, in this case Brian Rushton from Northern Ireland, a report from an LTSN Bioscience departmental visit, comments on our events and potted highlights about what is on our website. We also note that the end of 2003 also saw the "publication" of the second volume of our web journal, the BEE-j (please have a look at this on our website if you have not already done so, and consider publishing). We are proud to be able to offer this totally free, peer-reviewed publication to all. It is interesting that on 2 January 2004 the *THES* carried an excellent article on open access journals by Geoff Watts, entitled "Crusaders for a truly free flow of ideas", in which he rehearses the issues involved in this worldwide endeavour to free up publication for all.

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