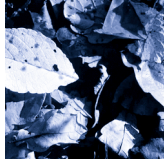

manual competence, however, not all practical classes are equally suitable for this approach. The learning outcomes of the chosen practical classes, being of a numerical nature were comparatively easy to assess. However, a practical class where the main learning outcome of which is the cloning of a gene or the identification of a microbiological specimen cannot be easily assessed in the same way. Careful design of the practical classes and their assessment according to the learning outcomes is therefore important.

* *Link between practical classes and theory* — lectures/workshops and practical classes must be closely interlinked. A careful curriculum design and detailed plan of work is very important.

* *Differential learning* — we observed a widespread range of manual competency. It is therefore important to address this issue and to provide support for weaker students. This can be done by closer supervision of those students or by giving extra help in the use of equipment.

The practicals discussed in this report are available from the Practical Compendium on the LTSN Bioscience website (*http://bio.ltsn.ac.uk/compendium/*).

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'DIS-TRIBUTE'

A PROJECT TO IMPROVE PROVISION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS IN LAND-BASED EDUCATION

THIS HEFCE-FUNDED project is being undertaken by Writtle College in Essex. The overall aim of the project is to enhance the accessibility of land-based curricula by identifying, and, where possible removing, barriers to participation.

In addition to common accessibility issues, land-based curricula raise other hurdles associated with outdoor practicals and work with animals, and machinery. Conversely, they offer opportunities, such as simulated and real work experience, specialist learning resources, and experience of provision for those with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

The main project outcome is to provide a set of discipline-specific learning and teaching practitioner guides to be used as a resource by staff to address disability issues in vocational curricula in both FE and HE. Academic staff, educational developers and disability specialists will be involved in the production of the guides and the aim is to use existing networks such as the Land Based Colleges Consortium and LTSN Bioscience to aid the dissemination of material. Additionally a range of assistive technologies will be evaluated for land-based curricula using advice from disability specialists and practitioners across the sector.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

* raising the awareness of issues relating to students with disabilities, ensuring compliance with QAA Codes of Practice, SENDA 2001 and other relevant legislation;

* developing greater sensitivity to disability issues amongst staff and students, engendering confidence in relating to and supporting individuals with a range of disabilities;

* developing a comprehensive set of institutional level policies relating to students with disabilities which are co-ordinated with institutional strategies for widening participation, learning and teaching and Equal Opportunities, and which are particularly appropriate to land-based education;

* outlining and delivering (at Writtle) a programme of staff development designed to embed the policies across the whole institution;

* exploring, developing and sharing best practice of particular relevance to institutions offering FE and HE programmes in the land-based sector.

In relation to the latter objective one of the project members is currently trying to make contact with disability representatives in land based colleges or universities with land based departments. The aim is to establish a baseline in terms of the number of land based students with disabilities and the nature of these disabilities. If you can provide such information for your institution then the project team would like to hear from you (please contact Jonathon Price at *jbpl@writtle.ac.uk*). The project is still in its first phase with a finish date of September 2005.

RELATED WEBSITES

The UK Centre for Legal Education which provides a useful overview of the SENDA Act (2001) *http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/directions/issue4/senda.html*

The JISC TechDis group who focus on technologies to improve provision for disabled staff and students in HE *http://www.techdis.ac.uk/*

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