

SUCCESSFUL FDTL4 PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

The projects funded under phase 4 of the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) were announced recently. FDTL is to support projects with the aim of stimulating developments in teaching and learning that are disseminated across the higher education sector.

For the first time projects have the opportunity to work with LTSN Subject Centres in developing their dissemination strategies and draw on the expertise and networks we have built up over our first two years of operation.

Below are brief project outlines and contact details of a number of projects that will be working with LTSN Bioscience. More detailed articles about individual projects will follow in future issues.

PASS: PROJECT TO ASSIST STUDENT LEARNING

- » Project designed to cater for varying backgrounds of cell biology knowledge for entrants into the biology programme
- » The project is to provide less able students with self-study packs and supporting workshops and seminars to allow them to obtain sufficient grounding in the subject matter, allowing them to study the cell biology module content with maximum benefit
- » The incidental benefit of these study packs will enhance the students' ability for independent learning ■

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IMPROVING THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN SCIENCE

The project aims to improve the cost effectiveness of formative assessment to improve student progression and retention in science courses, including Biosciences, by evaluating the impact of existing formative practices on student learning behaviour, progression and retention in courses from the Open University and Sheffield Hallam University; developing, implementing and evaluating the impact on students of new approaches to providing students with feedback, and establishing a set of principles for the effective operation of formative assessment. ■

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PROFILE: A FLEXIBLE, GENERIC SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THE ASSESSMENT FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT OF WORK-BASED LEARNING WITHIN NON-VOCATIONAL BIOSCIENCE SANDWICH DEGREES

A generic, web-based system called PROFILE defines work-based learning in a way that forms a foundation for assessing placements for academic credit. The system will monitor, support and assess student placement experience on-line. Initially it will be developed for Bioscience placements but by the end of the project it will be available for all HE Institutions. We would also like to involve end-users in the development of PROFILE. ■

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JISC-FUNDED LIFESIGN PROJECT HAS MADE A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH WITH THE BBC

Two major series, *The Private Life of Plants*, presented by Sir David Attenborough and *The Human Body*, presented by Robert Winston are now available on-line. Other programmes from the BBC are *Horizon's* "Is GM Safe?" and the fascinating "Professor Bonner and the Slime Moulds". The programmes are available in their entirety but the viewer also has the option to select a specific segment they wish to view.

All programmes are available free to UK higher and further education institutions. (see <http://www.lifesign.ac.uk/>).

SUPPORTING AND ASSESSING STUDENTS' PROGRESS AND ACQUISITION OF WORK-RELATED SKILLS IN THE PLACEMENT ENVIRONMENT USING A WEB-BASED INTERFACE

This project will develop and disseminate good practice in supporting and assessing students' acquisition of work-related skills in a placement environment, using the Food and Human Nutrition BSc degree programme as a model. We will be developing a web-based interface using the Blackboard Managed Learning Environment (MLE), to provide appropriate support at all stages of the placement process; through seeking and obtaining placements, maintaining contact during the placement year itself, and in collation and preparation of assessment materials for City & Guilds qualifications. ■

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EFFECTIVE FEED-BACK, ENHANCED LEARNING: THE EFEL PROJECT

The project aims to develop and enhance assessment procedures. Good practice within the partnership and associated institutions will be audited. Generic grade criteria and task-specific criteria will be developed to ensure more consistent marking. Time-effective strategies will be developed that give students prompt, clearly structured feedback related to those criteria. Students will be helped to interpret criteria and feedback more effectively so that they may set targets for, and enhance, their learning. ■

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DISSEMINATION OF FORMATIVE CONFIDENCE-BASED EXERCISES

The aim is to reward students for reliable confidence judgements about their answers to questions. This assists reflective study and formative assessment and (in a recent trial) has been shown to improve the reliability of summative assessment (with potential savings in exam effort). The project will disseminate the UCL scheme for biomedical subjects and numeracy (elsewhere and to new disciplines), and establish pooled Computer-Aided Assessment (CAA) resources. ■

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OLAAF: ON-LINE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

The OLAAF project will develop and disseminate a set of generic criteria and practices for embedding effective computer-based assessment and feedback within a range of pedagogical approaches. We will establish an OLAAF Interest Group to involve the wider HE community in the project. ■

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PRACTICALS FOR THE BIOSCIENCES — COMING SOON TO A WEB SITE NEAR YOU!

The Centre is developing an on-line resource of tried and tested bioscience practical exercises and associated learning resources (student handouts, etc.) contributed from UK Higher Education.

This *Practical Work Compendium* (to be made available in autumn 2002) will span the broad range of bioscience disciplines and will provide a mechanism for sharing expertise and identifying and developing good practice with bioscience colleagues around the UK. It will also act as a useful reference point for new staff and those developing new practicals or modules.

Contributions welcome; please consider sharing one or more of your practicals. Your input will help make this a useful resource for the bioscience HE community. Details of practicals may be completed and accompanying electronic documents can be easily uploaded using our on-line form: <http://bio.ltsn.ac.uk/imagebank/uploads/compendium/insertpage.asp>.

Practicals submitted will be clearly attributed to their originator(s) who will retain copyright, but agree to their use for educational purposes.

Latest details can be found on the project homepage: <http://bio.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/bioscience/compendium/> and any questions may be directed to compendium@ltsnbio.leeds.ac.uk.