

Lab skills of new undergraduates: research workshops

Invitation to take part in a review aimed at securing a central and sustained role for high-quality practical work in secondary school science.

Aimed at Undergraduate Admissions Tutors in science subject areas, First Year Laboratory Teachers and other interested individuals.

[The Gatsby Charitable Foundation](#) has a deep and long-standing interest in the quality of science education in the UK, and considers practical work to be a fundamental part of teaching and learning in the sciences.

The Foundation is currently investigating the standard of laboratory skills possessed by students with science A-Levels (or equivalent) embarking on undergraduate science courses. A small-scale study into the views of undergraduate teachers by [Laura Grant Associates](#) in May 2011 revealed widely held perceptions about a deficit in lab skills of new undergraduates, and a decline in these skills perceived by many.

As part of a wider review the Gatsby Charitable Foundation has now commissioned further research aimed at understanding how science A levels (or equivalents) can better prepare young people for undergraduate courses in the sciences in terms of practical work. Policymakers and awarding bodies have made clear their intention to respond more to the needs of Higher Education and the Foundation is confident that the outputs from this research will be of significant interest to them as they redevelop post-16 science qualifications.

You are warmly invited to contribute your views at a workshop near you.

Workshop outline

A series of workshops around the UK will invite participants to discuss this issue further and identify the specific needs of the different scientific disciplines. The aim of the work is to understand how science A levels (or equivalent) can better prepare young people for undergraduate courses in the sciences in terms of practical work. The workshop will explore the following questions:

- What practicals are undertaken in first year? Which are common across departments?
- What key skills/competencies do first years need to come equipped with to succeed? Do these differ between subjects, types of universities and students from different countries within the UK and beyond?
- Which of these skills are first years well equipped with, and which do they lack? Are certain skill levels improving or declining? To what extent is there consensus among undergraduate teachers about trends?
- What are the implications for university departments?

Workshop	Venue	Subject Area Focus (inc. associated applied courses)	Dates
Manchester	University of Manchester	Chemistry-Physics	Tue 5 Jul
Edinburgh	Royal Society of Edinburgh	Biology-Medicine-Vet Med	Wed 6 Jul
London	Institute of Physics	Biology - Chemistry	Thu 7 Jul
Bristol	University of Bristol	Biology-Chemistry	Fri 8 Jul
London	Institute of Physics	Physics-Engineering	Wed 13 Jul
Birmingham	B'ham Uni Guild of Students	Physics - Engineering	Thu 14 Jul

Registration

(You may reserve places for more than one contributor from your University, but we ask that no more than two participants attend from the same Department.)

Contact:

Rachel Mason

M: 0776 039 5585

parryandmason@gmail.com