Twenty delegates headed to the south coast to attend the event which covered various aspects of supporting students, particularly during their first year. The day covered the important issues of numeracy and student induction, there were workshops on feedback to students, and feedback from students and the day culminated in a presentation on peer-assisted learning.

Sum-things Don't Add Up: Tackling the Numerical Skills Deficit
Vicki Tariq, University of Central Lancashire

Vicki started the day with a timely talk introducing the issue of student numeracy. She highlighted the dichotomy between the ever-increasing GCSE and A-Level grades attained by students and concerns over the reduction in content and level of a pass mark in these examinations. These concerns are supported by data that Vicki has collected over the last 10 years. Vicki highlighted some of the strategies that institutions have adopted to cope with reduced and more diverse levels of numeracy in bioscience students. Those with an interest in this area may wish to join the Biomaths discussion list at www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/biomaths-ed.html

Vicki published an article on Numeracy, Mathematical Literacy and the Life Sciences in MSOR Connections May 2004 Vol 4 No 2, a quarterly newsletter from the Maths, Stats & OR Network - part of the Higher Education Academy.
http://ltsn.mathstore.ac.uk/newsletter/may2004/pdf/numeracy.pdf

Good Practice in Induction
Tony Cook, University of Ulster and the STAR project

Tony gave an excellent presentation outlining the findings from the STAR (Student Transition and Retention) project. Tony talked through a model of retention before presenting data on why students leave a course early. He also asked attendees to define what they thought induction meant and gave them the opportunity to assess student induction at their own institution by working through the STAR induction audit (www.ulster.ac.uk/star/resources/induction_audit.doc).

Workshop 1 - Effective Feedback, Enhanced Learning
Colin Hughes, Nottingham Trent University and the EFEL project

Colin introduced the project and the topic of feedback. He highlighted the current problems such as the failure to apply consistently grade descriptors and marking criteria and lack of timely feedback and the problems associated with large classes. The project has produced Task-Specific Criteria Assessment Sheets (TSCAs) and Colin presented data on the effectiveness of their use.

Workshop 2 - Enhancing student learning through the use of formative student feedback
Dr Steve Maw, LTSN Bioscience

Steve gave an introduction to this LTSN-funded project which investigated various methods of gathering feedback from students. Delegates were given an overview of formative evaluation before being asked to split into groups and discuss a selection of case studies resulting from the project.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL): experienced students facilitating interactive study sessions
Hugh Fleming, University of Bournemouth

Hugh gave a balanced presentation on PAL, a scheme for learning support and enhancement that enables students to work co-operatively under the guidance of students in the year above. He showed results from student experience surveys into the scheme and outlined some of the benefits as well as the difficulties with the scheme.