

Professional Development Programme

Making the Most of Final Year Projects

Tuesday 13th January, 2004

Cardiff University

Over 35 delegates congregated in the splendid setting of the committee rooms of the Glamorgan Building. The event was the second in a series of events in collaboration with our [Special Interest Group on Final Year Projects](#). The order of the day broadly followed the chronology of a project and so started with presentations on why we do projects, student expectations and the thorny issue of allocation before moving on to student preparation, good supervision, assessment and post-submission activities. The theme of the day was making the most of projects from both a staff and student point of view. Following the welcome and introduction by LTSN Bioscience's director - Prof Ed Wood the following sessions took place.

- [Why offer Final Year Projects?](#) Prof Ed Wood
- [I didn't anticipate doing that!](#) Dr Janice Harland
- [Overview of Project Allocation](#) Dr Richard Cowie
- [Preparing students for their final year project: nature or nurture](#) Dr E Mark Williams
- [Overview of Assessment Practice](#) Dr Richard Cowie
- [Portfolios as a means of assessment](#) Dr John Wright
- [Journal of Undergraduate Research](#) Dr Jac Potter

Keynote presentation: [Why offer Final Year Projects?](#)
Prof Ed Wood, Director LTSN Bioscience

Ed set the scene for the day by outlining the purposes of practical work and how final year projects represent the culmination of this training. He then raised a number of questions and observations to help focus thoughts for the remainder of the day.

[View Ed's 'Why offer Final Year Projects' slides](#)

[I Didn't Anticipate Doing That!](#)
Dr Janice Harland, Liverpool John Moores University

Janice and colleagues recently undertook a survey to investigate staff and student expectations of project work. Interestingly staff do not think students want a challenging project, yet students say they do! Janice then spoke on what both students and staff mean by 'challenging'.

[View Janice's 'I Didn't Anticipate Doing That!' slides](#)

[Overview of Project Allocation](#)
Dr Richard Cowie, Co-ordinator of the Final Year Projects Special Interest Group

In July 2003 a questionnaire was sent out to university Bioscience departments asking for information on their policies and procedures regarding final year projects. Richard has subsequently analysed the data and he gave an overview of project allocation procedures as identified by the survey.

[View Richard's 'Overview of Project Allocation' slides](#)

Preparing students for their final year project: nature or nurture
Dr E Mark Williams, University of Glamorgan

Mark discussed the nature (or 'embedded') approach where scientists develop their own research skills as they progress through the degree course compared with the nurture approach. Here in this formal approach qualitative and quantitative research methods are timetabled into the curriculum as lectures, tutorials and workshops. Whereas the nature approach may favour the innately curious, Mark discussed how his students require the nurture approach to thrive.

[View Mark's 'Preparing students for their final year project' slides](#)

Overview of Assessment Practice
Dr Richard Cowie, Co-ordinator of the Final Year Projects Special Interest Group

Following on from his earlier presentation in the morning Richard went on to describe the results from his survey relating to assessment procedures adopted for final year projects. Almost all departments assess projects principally through a written report but over 3/4 also include another form of assessment.

[View Richard's 'Overview of Project Assessment' slides](#)

Portfolios as a means of assessment
Dr John Wright, University of East London

John described how the School of Health and Bioscience, UEL have used assessed portfolios to encourage students to adopt good record keeping habits and provide an unsanitised day to day account of project progress.

[View John's 'Portfolios as a means of assessment' slides](#)

Journal of Undergraduate Research
Dr Jac Potter, University College Chester

Jac described 'Origin' a very successful journal of undergraduate research. Submission is voluntary and open to all Chester students who have completed novel research in the discipline. Those students that do successfully submit an article value the experience of the publication process, gain a confidence boost and find it a valuable asset in interviews

[View Jac's 'Journal of Undergraduate Research' slides](#)