



The Forum brought together Centre for Bioscience Representatives to share ideas and discuss learning and teaching issues, and gave the Centre an opportunity to say 'thank you' to a number of Reps' for their support.

As always the programme included plenty of opportunities for informal discussion with colleagues with a shared enthusiasm for learning and teaching. An important element of the Forum is the sharing of practice through the swapshop sessions and this year was no exception, with a wide range of interesting and informative snippets.

For the first time this year (and in response to feedback from several of last year's attendees) we included a session aimed at new Reps.

## Thursday 11th September

### Session for new Reps

Jackie Wilson, David Adams, Anne Tierney, Damian Parry Jackie and David spoke about the role of a Bioscience Rep, highlighting the Centres expectations of Reps and what Reps can expect in return. Anne and Damian then gave their perspective on being a Rep, they highlighted:

- learning about other's experiences and variations across the UK HE learning and teaching experiences;
- being a part of the Centre of learning and teaching ethos;
- having a title with a national body behind you; and
- being able to bring together teaching only practitioners as well as recruiting some of the more research focused with an interest in teaching and learning.



The status of learning and teaching (and staff recognition and promotion for teaching) was a topic which came up several times in discussions, and the Centre will consider how best to take forward this issue on behalf of the wider bioscience learning and teaching community.

### Welcome and introduction to the forum

David Adams, Director, Centre for Bioscience

David welcomed all attendees to the Forum, introduced Centre staff and spoke about the aims of the Forum.



### Introductions and icebreaker discussion

Facilitated by Julian Park, University of Reading and Centre for Bioscience

Julian's icebreaker activity encouraged delegates to think about some of their teaching activities, such as assessment, and discuss them in groups and pairs with the other delegates.

### **Centre update** (Centre staff)

This year the update started with a quiz, led by Steve. Using a clicker or PRS (Personal Response system) delegates responded to 15 questions about the work and activities of the Centre. Following the quiz, Centre staff discussed the areas surrounding the questions including funding, publications and resources, events and the Centre website.



### **Bioscience Reps Fund discussion**

Facilitated by David Adams, Director, Centre for Bioscience

The fund discussion gave Reps a chance to discuss and share ideas and outline proposals for the Centre's new Reps fund. Up to £15,000 is available to Reps to fund projects (or a single project) which could respond to individual disciplines (how might subject-specific issues be better addressed across the wide range (at least 26) of disciplines supported by the Centre?) or increase individual and departmental engagement with the Centre (how can we encourage academics and organisations, who have not interacted significantly with the Centre, to work more closely with us?).

### **Themed session: Engaging students in active learning (invited presentations)**

Session Chair: Jackie Wilson

#### **Mentoring scientific minds through group research projects**, Momna Hejmadi, University of Bath

Final year projects can be costly to run, both in terms of resources and staff time. Momna described an alternative type of final year project used within the University of Bath. Working in pairs, with a £200 budget, students have to devise and design their own project. Students work as part of a larger team and have opportunities to collaborate and share resources, as may happen within a "real-world" situation in a research lab. Students are assisted by dedicated PhD students, who are funded for an extra year in order that they can spend time working closely with students.

#### **Using a Problem-Based Learning Environment to Engage Students**, Catherine Hack, (Aine McKillop and Jacqueline O'Connor) University of Ulster

Kay outlined problem-based and cooperative learning before going on to describe several experiences of using PBL, with postgraduate students learning at a distance and final year undergraduate students. She concluded PBL provides a suitable environment for engaging students, and the key to success is the identification of 'good' problems.

#### **Made to measure; using on-line resources to tailor teaching to an individual cohort**, Katherine Linehan, University of Sheffield

Students are not a homogenous group, learning in different ways and starting university with a variety of different backgrounds in terms of their subject knowledge. Katherine described how, using an online test, she could evaluate students prior knowledge of a subject and their learning preference and subsequently tailor lectures, both in terms of the materials covered and the method of delivery, to suit students.





The day's sessions were followed by a wine reception and dinner!

## Friday 12th September

### Swapshop 1: short informal presentations offered by Reps

Session chair - Sheryl Meskin

**Life as a 1st year Bioscientist: Introducing the student experience project**, Jon Scott, Paul Green, Geetha Narayanan & Annette Cashmore, School of Biological Sciences & GENIE CETL, University of Leicester

Jon discussed a 3 year video diary project which aims to look at the experience of bioscience students from prior to starting university all the way through to the completion of their degree. Students were able to discuss and reflect on anything that had impacted on them during the week and were very positive that academic staff were taking an interest in their lives.

**Developing essay writing skills in undergraduates**, Nick Freestone, Kingston University  
Nick described how he used various activities to support students with their essay writing, including introducing the essay topic using a workshop format, working with students to find and assess references and resources and formatively assessing essay drafts.

**The Use of Motivational Interviewing in the Support of Underperforming Students**, Chris Baldwin, Newcastle University

Chris described the process of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and spoke about how it had been used with students. MI is a technique where the responsibility for change is left with the individual, so the motivation for change is elicited from the student and not imposed. He illustrated his talk with a number of case studies of students who had been through the MI process.

**Involving students with science community projects**, Kay Yeoman, UEA

Kay discussed a module in Science Communication at UEA in which students developed an event to encourage public engagement with science. Students designed interactive exhibits based on various aspects of human biology including aging and forensic science, which were used in a public event organised by the students. Students developed a range of skills including communication and group working skills.



## Swapshop 2: short informal presentations offered by Reps

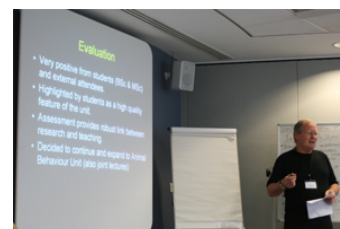
Session chair - Steve Maw

### **Personal Learning Environments, Personal Development Planning and Lifelong Learning**, Alan Cann, University of Leicester

Alan introduced attendees to the educational advantages of encouraging students to develop their own personal learning, research and networking personal learning, research and networking space. He argued this will equip them with sustainable space, and lifelong learning skills that can persist beyond their university careers and the confines of institutional learning management systems.

### **Research Days: connecting research with teaching**, Alan Fielding, Manchester Metropolitan University

Alan discussed how research seminars had been introduced within his department to improve links between research and teaching. Students attended talks and wrote short abstracts for each seminar and one of the seminars would then form the basis for an exam question.



### **How undergraduate interns tackle staff development roles**, Anne Tierney, University of Glasgow

Anne spoke about a project in which student interns worked to develop resources and materials for students and staff about EBL.



### **Publishing undergraduate research: what's on the [Bioscience] Horizon?** Julian Park, University of Reading and Centre for Bioscience

Bioscience Horizons, launched this year, publishes undergraduate research. Julian described the processes by which departments were encouraged to submit papers, the peer review and selection process.

### **E-learning update: news from ALT-C and ALPS**, Terry McAndrew, University of Leeds and Centre for Bioscience

Terry highlighted some of the new developments and technologies discussed at ALT-C and the ALPS CETL dissemination event which might be of interest to bioscience learning and teaching staff, including learning objects on using a microscope and a diabetes simulation, and using mobile technologies.

### **Reflections on the Forum and closing remarks**

Carol Wakeford and Brian Martin

Carol and Brian ended the forum with their personal reflections on the activities and discussions over the two days.

They spoke about how the presentations and discussions at the forum gave different perspectives on familiar topics and emphasised how teaching staff sharing with each other could help develop teaching and also facilitate student development.