

LTSN Centre for Bioscience Scottish Launch

Over 40 delegates attended the official Scottish Launch of the LTSN Centre for Biosciences at the University of Abertay Dundee on 29th November. The event was judged a considerable success with strongly positive feedback from the delegates who left with both a clear view of the role of the Subject Centre and an "appreciation that LTSN Bioscience want to involve the community and learn from us".

The day began with the Co-Director, Professor Ian Hughes, outlining the Subject Centre's main goals and the range of activities and services the Centre provides or expects to provide for the Bioscience academic community. He stressed that to be a success the Centre needed two-way communication with the community.

The second presentation was on 'Bioscience Benchmarking – the story so far'. Professor Paul Brain, a member of the Biosciences Benchmarking Committee, presented the issues the committee has been considering in the early stages of the benchmarking process. For example, how to ensure that students are trained to maintain the currency of their knowledge after graduation in fast-changing areas and should the high public profile of biosciences necessitate providing students with training on how to deal with ethical, moral and exploitation issues? He also asked for advice on which areas of non-trivial fact all biologists should know. He stressed that the Committee is keen to be as 'transparent' as possible and that their intention is to do a job that "disadvantages no sector of the disparate biosciences community".

After lunch, workshops were provided on the themes of 'Assessment' and 'Supporting Learning and Teaching in Scottish Bioscience Departments'. In the Assessment workshop, Ian Hughes gave an introductory presentation on peer assessment and discussed the pros and cons of this assessment method, providing hard data to support his findings. Professor Cliff Beevers then introduced two initiatives based at Heriot-Watt University, namely SCROLLA¹ and SCHOLAR, both involved in researching computer-aided assessment. Finally, participants considered their own assessment objectives and outcomes in specific modules by completing an assessment audit.

In the workshop on 'Supporting Learning and Teaching in Scottish Bioscience Departments' the participants discussed a variety of issues in learning and teaching and how the Centre for Bioscience can support the Community. One comment received after the session was: "no longer feeling isolated – other people want to change!"

¹ SCROLLA www.calm.hw.ac.uk