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Welcome!

Centre for Bioscience update February 2008

Contents

1. Teaching Award scheme launched
2. Engaging students: what's the problem?
3. Bioscience Representatives (Reps) Network
4. Bulletin 23 now available
5. Reminder of forthcoming Centre events
6. News from the Bioscience Learning and Teaching Community
7. Events from the HE Learning and Teaching Community
8. Funding opportunities

Centre News

Teaching Award scheme launched

The Centre for Bioscience has launched a Teaching Awards scheme to further recognise outstanding practice in learning and teaching in the biosciences.

These awards provide an opportunity for bioscience academics to receive national recognition for their outstanding learning and teaching practices. They are open to all UK bioscience academics who work in higher education or who teach higher education in a further education establishment.

Further details and the online application form can be found at
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/funding/recognition/award.aspx

Engaging students: what's the problem?

Problem solving skills are highly valued by academics and employers. Unfortunately, research supervisors and industrialists frequently indicate many of our graduates have very poor problem solving abilities. Bioscience courses are increasingly taught in a climate of reduced funding per student, increased student numbers and burgeoning subject content. We are faced with the very considerable challenge of developing students' problem solving skills in this difficult environment.

As a Centre we're keen to develop our work in this area and would be interested to hear from individuals who incorporate problem solving within their teaching activities. We would like to cast the net widely and consider the promotion and development of creative, analytical and critical approaches to problem solving in their own right. If you're doing something you think may be of interest then please let **Steve Maw** know (s.j.maw@leeds.ac.uk)

Bioscience Representatives (Reps) Network

You will hopefully be aware we have a network of Bioscience Representatives based in departments around the UK, who inform and support the work of the Centre. This network is invaluable to us and we would like more people to be involved. Following a review of the role, we are in the process of identifying new Reps for Departments who don't have a person in place.

To find out if your department currently has a Rep, please go to www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/repabout.aspx#list

If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of being part of the Reps Network, perhaps with a view to undertaking the role, please go to www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/reps.aspx

Please contact us (heabioscience@leeds.ac.uk or Tel 0113 343 3001) if your department doesn't have a Rep and you are interested in becoming the Rep.

Bulletin 23 now available

Bulletin Number 23 is now on its way to you. Articles in this issue include a report on students' feedback on first year practicals in the biosciences; positive examples of transition into HE and a student-view of enquiry based learning.

Bulletins are disseminated to all Centre contacts and also via the Reps network (see above). If you have a colleague you think would be interested in receiving a regular copy of the Bulletin (and indeed these electronic updates) please encourage them to join the Centre for Bioscience network. It's free! www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/joinreg.aspx

Reminder of forthcoming Centre events

Opportunities to discuss aspects of learning and teaching with like-minded colleagues from across the UK

- **Transition Issues for Bioscientists**, Thursday 13th March 2008, East Anglia
- **Preventing and Designing Out Plagiarism**, Tuesday 8th April 2008, Leicester

Further details and free online registration at:
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/events/bioevents.aspx

Missed an earlier event? Access our *event reports* at
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/events/reportlist.aspx

[News from the bioscience learning and teaching community](#)

Developing a shared biomaths resource

Most teachers in bioscience and other sciences are finding students have limited skills in basic numeracy and understanding of numerical analyses and interpretation. In addition, their problem-solving skills are often weak.

Biomathtutor (www.ebst.co.uk/biomaths/intro.html) is a pilot shared resource being used by many university departments, which focuses on maths and problem-solving in a biological context. Producing such rich e-learning materials is time-consuming and expensive. If the bioscience community collaborated in creating and sharing brief quantitative scenarios this would significantly reduce the burden.

Ideally such scenarios can be reused in a range of learning and assessment situations (e.g. supporting formative and/or summative assessments) to meet local requirements. A simple example of a numerical scenario may be viewed at tinyurl.com/22ykq8. You may already have such scenarios within multi-part problem-solving questions, possibly with associated visual elements, e.g. diagrams, tables/graphs summarising data, photographs or micrographs, etc.

The aim is to identify mechanisms for sharing these materials so minimal effort is required for them to be reused in different virtual environments. Please share your experience with quantitative problems via the following questionnaire: tinyurl.com/yqrcxp

Please contact **Vivien Sieber** (vivien.sieber@medsci.ox.ac.uk) or **Vicki Tariq** (vtariq@uclan.ac.uk) with expressions of interest, including subject areas/topics for development or if you have any brief quantitative problem-solving scenarios which would lend themselves to adaptation.

[Events from the HE Learning and Teaching Community](#)

Learning and Teaching in the Sciences – the use of Problem Based Approaches in undergraduate science degrees

This event will take place at the **University of Leicester on Tuesday 20th May 2008** from 13.30–17.30 (with wine reception to follow).

The day will include presentations on the use of Context and Problem Based Learning (CBL and PBL) in science practicals and on the application and benefits of problem solving activities. There will also be a ‘hands-on’ PBL workshop which will be of particular benefit to those new to these techniques. The approaches discussed should be of relevance to practitioners across the physical, medical and biological sciences and there will be much to learn and share for both newcomers and experts alike.

Further details: www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/slc/events/lts2008

[Funding opportunities](#)

E-learning research call

The Academy is pleased to announce its 2008 e-learning research call and funding to a maximum of £30,000 per project for up to 6 successful projects. This year’s call themes are:

- Using technology to support the learning contract between employers, students and higher education institutions
- Using technology to support student transition into higher education
- Using technology to support assessment and the delivery of student feedback

For further information and an expression of interest form (to be submitted by **noon on Wednesday 19th March**) please see

www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/elearning/elro

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Funding

The Academy’s Education for Sustainable Development Project invites applications for up to £2500 for small-scale projects to develop work in one or more of the following areas:

- Exploring the links between employability and sustainability in the curriculum and the potential for innovation and development in this area

- Linking sustainability with careers advice and student volunteering
- Critiquing, developing and exploring the notion and substance of sustainability literacy skills and how these are best embedded in the curriculum
- Supporting student outreach programmes and integrating off-campus activity into programmes

Application deadline: **Wednesday 23rd April**. Full details at www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd

Royal Society Partnership Grants

If you are involved in outreach activities with schools in your area or are interested in developing better contact with local schools the Royal Society's partnerships grants may help support new links. The scheme offers up to **£3000** to support teachers, scientists and engineers in working together to inspire young people. Previous projects have allowed teachers to increase their scientific knowledge and given scientists and engineers the chance to develop their communication skills and engage with enquiring young minds. Perhaps most importantly, these projects give school students a taste of science and engineering today, and their relevance for society.

The next closing date is **November 7th 2008**. For more information see www.royalsociety.org/partnership

With best wishes from all at the Centre for Bioscience,
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