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# Recent activities and plans for the near future

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We now have a range of publications as below. Samples have been sent to departmental contacts, and further copies can be ordered at any time. There is no charge for the leaflets or for individual copies of the others.

**Facts and Formulae leaflet:** Bulk copies available free of charge for distribution to students

**Algebra Refresher:** Bulk copies can be purchased for distribution to students. The current cost is £125 for 100 copies, payable in advance

**Learning and Teaching in Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research**

Occasional series ISSN 1476-1378. Individual copies available free of charge:

1/01 Post-sixteen mathematics within Curriculum 2000

2/01 Guidelines for Introducing Groupwork in Undergraduate Mathematics

3/01 Good Practice in the Provision of Mathematics Support Centres

**A FDTL Phase 4 briefing meeting** held jointly with Physics/Astronomy on 28 November was attended by 78 people from 42 institutions. Dissemination strategies have been endorsed for 16 bids in our disciplines, and we wish them well. The decisions on stage 1 will be announced on 20 March and there will be a seminar for the successful bidders on 25-6 March.

**A Maths Toolkit workshop** in Bristol in November addressed the growing problem of mathematical weakness amongst science undergraduates, and featured two speakers from mathematics departments and reports from three projects addressing the development of mathematical skills. There is a report at <http://dbweb.liv.ac.uk/ltsnpsc/workshop/reports/mathtoo3.htm>. The same day there was a workshop on **Teaching Statistics in Higher Education** at the RSS in London. The Queen's University of Belfast was the venue for a **Staff Development event** in December, closely followed by a Birmingham workshop on Maths Support for non-specialist students. There is a report on the **Maths Support workshop** elsewhere in this issue.

**Assessment Series** - published by the LTSN Generic Centre, this was launched at a conference in November. It consists of a pack of 12 booklets addressed to different groups of people - senior managers, heads of department, lecturers and students. The conference was attended by Cliff Beevers, Peter Holmes and Ken Houston on behalf of our Network, and the series has now been circulated to all departments with a covering letter inviting some action. To quote from the letter:

"We suggest that you organise a short series of, say, lunchtime seminars for all staff in your department on the themes of the booklets. You might ask different colleagues to read a booklet each and to lead a seminar. You should include seminars led by senior managers and heads of department and you should at some stage have a seminar for students. This will help disseminate the ideas and provoke discussion, always thinking, "how might this apply to us".

**Learning and Teaching Projects** - reports from the MathsTEAM and Staff Development projects appear elsewhere in this newsletter. As a result of our invitation to bid for learning and teaching projects in the last newsletter, we received six applications for Mathematics and four for Statistics/OR. To date we have commissioned the following three:

**Mathletics: Development of Online Objective tests in Mathematics**, led by Martin Greenhow. This project will upgrade and develop substantially the existing Mathletics suite, visit other universities to identify their needs for bespoke maths tests, embed tests in service mathematics modules in several institutions and host a workshop to disseminate its results, including a new CD-ROM.

**Use of Projects in Mathematics**, led by Stephen Hibberd and Laurence Nicholas, and building on the MathSkills Network. This project will identify good practice in developing project briefs, implementing individual and group projects, supporting students during projects and project assessment. Results will be disseminated via a workshop and report in our Occasional Series.

**Action Research** on diagnostic testing and student support, led by Douglas Quinney, Mike Barry and Richard Atkinson. This project comes out of one of last year's UMTC working groups, and will work closely with the MathsTEAM project to review current practice and develop further case studies.

**Analysis of Newsletter Questionnaires**

Thanks to the 284 people who sent back completed questionnaires. This helps us to keep our database up to date, as well as to monitor which features of the newsletter are of most relevance to our readers. 58% of replies came from mathematicians, 31% from statisticians, 9% operational researchers and 2% from other disciplines. Opposite you will find a chart showing the popularity of the different features.

**Forthcoming activities (see diary on back page)**

In Friday 15 March there will be a repeat of the successful **Maths Support workshop**, this time at Imperial College London. Speakers will include Peter Saunders, Phil Ramsden, Tony Croft, Duncan Lawson and Susan Starkings. In June the workshop will be run at Bell College, Hamilton, and we are also looking for a venue convenient for our Welsh colleagues. Please contact us if there is any chance of hosting it in your department.

On Thursday 11 April there will be a minisymposium on current developments in learning and teaching in mathematics within the **British (Applied) Mathematics Colloquium** at the University of Warwick. Speakers will include Chris Budd, Stephen Hibberd, Chris Sangwin and Mike Savage. We are looking for interesting

posters relating to this session. When you register for the conference, do consider submitting a poster showing current developments in your department

On Tuesday 30 April Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning is running an event on Personal Development Planning and the assessment of higher level skills as they relate to science and engineering. There is a note about this later in the newsletter. And on Wednesday 15 May there will be a workshop on **Assessment for a Purpose** at Sheffield Hallam University, where you can bring your own assessment tasks for development.

Further details of all these events will be posted in the web diary and circulated to departmental contacts. See [http://www.ltsn.gla.ac.uk/events\\_diary/index.asp](http://www.ltsn.gla.ac.uk/events_diary/index.asp)

**Analysis of Newsletter Questionnaires: Percentage (of 248 respondents) regularly reading Newsletter Features**

