
The Day Break Programme

Vic Barnett, assisted by Joe Kyle and Bradley Payne, is setting up for the LTSN Maths, Stats and OR Network a series of half- or one-day in-service courses in learning and teaching for University Maths, Stats and OR staff. The First Phase of the programme of courses will be presented over the period February to July 2003 (with a Second Phase of different courses in September 2003 –July 2004).



The courses will

- be directed specifically to meet the interests and needs of lecturers in the different subjects (Mathematics, Statistics and OR)
- take place in different locations throughout the UK
- emphasise different themes: *Research into teaching*, *subject methodology*, and *teaching and learning principles and practice*.

To help in the choice of which courses to offer, in which location and at what times of the year etc., we have carried out an extensive questionnaire-based enquiry of all relevant departments, specific individuals and teaching resource centres in December. The enquiry was carried out by Bradley Payne using the intranet-administered web based questionnaire developed by Ewan Crawford.

The responses were most encouraging and proposals are now being drawn up for 5 or 6 courses to be offered on February to July 2003 at different locations.

Details of the First Phase courses will be circulated as soon as possible – when we have persuaded suitably

charismatic presenters to prepare and deliver the relevant material and found suitably attractive venues!

Watch this space (and your email) for more details!

Please note that it not too late to let us know your needs and interests if you have not done so, or to add to your earlier comments as the programme develops. You can contact Vic Barnett on vic.barnett@ntu.ac.uk or access the web-based questionnaire on

<http://ltsn.mathstore.gla.ac.uk/questionnaire/index.asp?quest=17>

Vic Barnett

Teaching Ideas

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One outcome of LTSN MSOR Network's staff development project is the **Teaching Ideas** area of Mathstore. This is immediately available to all lecturers, so why not have a look now. It is in its infancy and will only grow into a really useful resource if many of you contribute further items to it. More on that later. At present the contributions to Teaching Ideas are mainly from colleagues from the 25 UK Universities I have visited as part of the project and articles already published in *MSOR Connections*.

The design of Teaching Ideas

During my visits certain points came up over and over again and these we have tried to design into the structure of the site.

a) A branching structure: Potential users wanted an easy method for rapidly finding if the area contained something they were after. A branching tree structure was decided upon. As more items become available in a section they will be grouped together and additional sub-branches added. This is currently most obvious in Section 3.

b) Easy return to the top: Choosing Teaching Ideas from the side menu at any time gets you back to the top of the tree.

c) Flagging new items: Each item and branch that has an item(s) less than 60 days old is flagged up. The choice of 60 days is an initial value. If you think some other value would be better please let me know.

d) Brief articles: This is one that it is harder for us to control as it depends on authors. Many of my interviewees only wanted to read short items and

these should be easier to write. We would really like to see items that are only one or two screenfuls long, quite possibly with links to further material which the author would already have written earlier (student handouts, assessment briefing sheets, etc.) and a reader need only download if really interested.

- e) Editorial comments:** The title of an item may not be very illuminating – one line is not much. So an editorial introduction of a line or two has been provided. There are also editorial comments for most sections describing them.

The sections of Teaching Ideas

As well as trying to give some idea of what you will currently find in each section there are requests for further items that we would particularly like to see.

1. Teaching and Planning: A hopefully clear title. This section is not intended to be restricted to teaching and planning large sections of work. Have you found a good way to teach one of those concepts that students always trip over? Do you have a good way of introducing a topic which fires students' imagination and interest? How do you plan your lectures (I was never taught how to)? If you answer YES to these or similar questions why not spread the word. If you give one colleague an idea that they can pick up on to the benefit of their students it is improving MSOR teaching. Please not say you are too old or too young. If you have 30 years experience, share it around. If this is your first year lecturing you still remember the bits you found difficult and may have found a way round them.

2. Assessment & Testing: Many interviewees wanted contributions in this section but they are very slow in coming. They should be very easy to write, as most of what you want will already exist in computer readable form. If you have tried some way of assessment that has worked, tell us about it. It is surprising how one department's "old hat" method can be another's answer to a prayer. What is your solution to the coursework without plagiarism problem? Can you control the marking load? Just explain your aims and link to the student material.

3. Resources: Not new material here but things that already exist and can be disseminated more widely.

3.1 Modelling Starters: None received to date. Do you have a good modelling starter? If you would like to share it just send it to me indicating background necessary and level used at.

3.2 Project Ideas: We have a couple of compendiums there already but we are happy to receive more in ones and twos and will classify them. Normally each example will only indicate which University it came from and which level it was used at.

3.3 History of Maths: If you use the history of maths to illustrate your teaching tell us how. If you use the St. Andrew's site or others give us pointers to particularly good bits.

3.4 Learning and applying computer packages: Can you help a colleague learning a new package? Often the inbuilt tutorials of even an MSOR package are not very MSOR orientated. Do you have already some first year notes, such as the ones donated for MATLAB, which you could donate to Teaching Ideas? Do you use some package in an unusual and successful way? Let us know.

3.5 Hints and tips: Do you have questions like "How do I convert from Format X to Format Y"? These sort of questions, IT and non-IT, are what we hope to cover here. Please send in questions as well as actual "Hints & tips".

3.6 Helpful links: Do you know sites on the web that would be of interest to others? If two or more people suggest the same site we will put the link in this section. Please say briefly what the site does. Also if you know any books you can recommend on Teaching and Learning of MSOR in HE these will be added here.

4. Motivating school pupils: If we don't get more youngsters doing maths at "A" level the numbers reading maths and mathematically related subjects will only get worse. Organising activities is usually altruistic as the students you encourage go to university elsewhere but if every university, or cluster of universities, did something we would all benefit. Some ideas are written up here already but if you do something why not write it up.

5. Other ideas: Any young classification scheme misses some items it wants to catch. This is our catcher! So if you want to write about something to do with teaching MSOR that does not fit into one of the above categories there is still a place for it. If you are contemplating an item and don't want to spend time on it unless you know it is probably suitable then contact me.