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# Recent activities and plans for the near future

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Since the last issue of *MSOR Connections* Network staff have made presentations at the inaugural LMS regional conference, a Maths Toolkit workshop (run jointly with LTSN Physical Sciences and Engineering), the annual HoDoMS conference and colloquia organised by the University of Wales. *Essential and Effective Education, the best E-words of all: E-vidence from a Statistician about E-learning* was the title of Neville Davies's presentation at Nottingham Trent's annual learning and teaching conference. An important new resource, *A New Way of Teaching Statistics to Engineers*, was launched at a meeting held at the RSS in London - see page 7 of this issue.

On Thursday 3 May a workshop entitled *Applied Regression Including Computing and Graphics* was held at the University of Glasgow with lead speaker Sanford Weisberg of the University of Minnesota. The workshop was considered a great success with 34 attendees, and will be more fully reported on in the next newsletter. For those who were unable to attend, Arc software and documentation is available on Sanford Weisberg's website at <http://www.stat.umn.edu/arc/index.html>

In the last issue we identified four key areas for development during the coming year. Here are updates on activities relating to those areas, which include bids submitted to a special LTSN learning and teaching fund in March. The bids are on our website at <http://ltsn.mathstore.ac.uk/bids/default.htm>, and the results of the bidding process will be available next month.

**Assessment** - a workshop on Matching Assessment to Learning will be held on 30 May in Birmingham (see diary for full details). Our assessment consultant Cliff Beevers is also leading an email debate on formative and summative aspects of mathematics assessment in relation to benchmarking, research, a national approach to diagnostic testing and the computer display of mathematics. If you are interested, you can join via the web page <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/mathcs-caa.html>

**School/University interface** - a briefing day on post 16 mathematics and statistics within Curriculum 2000 will be held on 11 June at the Institute of Education in London (see diary for full details). This is aimed mainly at admissions tutors, and will be followed up by the publication of an information pack.

**Staff development.** On the statistics side, material is being collated for an exhibition, and two pilot staff development workshops are planned. The material presented will be reviewed and prepared for a number of regional workshops in the following academic year. On the mathematics side, there will be an Induction Day for lecturers new to teaching in UK departments, to be held on 3 September in Birmingham (see diary for full details). A bid has been submitted to the LTSN for the production of new discipline-based staff development resources that will support and increase the effectiveness of teachers thus enhancing the learning experience of students.

**Service teaching** - a bid has been submitted to the LTSN for the production of teaching resource packs including real scenarios relating to taught topics. Joint work is being done to take forward the report *Measuring the Mathematics Problem*. We are working with LTSN Engineering and LTSN Materials to address the dissemination of good practice in diagnostic testing and student support, and with the IMA, LMS and HoDoMS on a national approach to diagnostic testing.

## ***Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning***

The aim of this major funding programme is to stimulate developments in learning and teaching and to secure wide take-up and implementation of good practice. Applications will be invited from HEFCE and DHFETE-funded university departments with "quality approved status and grade 4 in the aspect of provision for which funds are sought"; and from consortia led by such departments in collaboration with institutions with lower grades but where the project outcomes can actively be applied. We expect to carry full details in the next issue.

The Maths, Stats & OR Network has been allocated additional funding to support the preparation of MSOR bids and encourage cross-departmental collaboration, and has already been asked to advise HEFCE on the priority needs of the MSOR community. Our perception is that these are assessment, staff development, service teaching and the school/university interface, based on:

- preliminary findings of a project we have commissioned to carry out a detailed analysis of QAA reports;
- the views of members of our Executive Committee who were involved in the subject review process, one of whom helped to write the subject overview report;
- a needs analysis carried out with Heads of Departments through their annual conferences in 2000 and in 2001;
- a needs analysis based on a) a survey of departmental mathematics contacts and b) five regional meetings with statistics/OR contacts held last autumn;

The MSOR discipline will be in competition with 12 others for FDTL Phase 4 funding. Although up to £250,000 could be available to stimulate developments in teaching and learning in your department, bids must address the priorities of our discipline and be of the highest quality. We would encourage you to contact us if you are looking for bidding partners.