

UNIVERSITY *of York*

FORUM

Enhancing learning and teaching

Issue 33 | Autumn 2013



50th Anniversary Special Issue

**Reflections on 50 years
of Learning and
Teaching at York**

**Announcement of
2014 Learning and
Teaching Conference**

News, training and funding opportunities

FORUM

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Sharon Meredith on
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Editorial



This is a special edition of *Forum* magazine for the 50th anniversary of our University.

On this unique occasion, the written contributions are inspired by two main themes. Firstly, the legacy left by our very first Vice-Chancellor, Lord James of Rusholme. Secondly, taking a trip down memory lane – memories and anecdotes of people who, at different times and in different positions, have made unique contributions to the University.

In the first article, David Foster, former University Registrar, reminds us of the most important pillars the University is built upon, reflecting on Lord James' legacy.

John Robinson, our current Pro Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, reminds us of one of the main characteristics that contributes to making York such a unique place and proposes a new vision for York pedagogy.

Tony Ward, Leader of the Engineering Management Research Group, reflects on his desire to introduce engineers to management and shares with us some of his unique experiences at York over the last twenty years.

Mike Wickens, Professor of Economics and Specialist Adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, points out how at York teaching and research often progress jointly and benefit from positive mutual externalities.

Sue Grace, Academic Training Officer, reflects on her experiences as a teacher and discusses how the idea of training academics to improve their teaching skills has changed over time.

In a very emotional article, John Hutton, former Head of the Economics Department and one of the founding staff at York, reminisces about teaching and learning at York.

Finally, Neil Flynn, former MSc in Finance student and currently portfolio manager for a leading international investment firm in Shanghai, gives us the point of view of approaching the job market as a York graduate.

We hope that this anniversary issue will be inspiring for generations to come.

Paola Zerilli
Editor

Funding Opportunities

Rapid Response Grants of up to £3,000 are available to support small-scale, short-term projects, initiatives or purchases to enhance the quality of learning and teaching by addressing a

clearly identified need or issue.

Further details and application forms can be found at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/funding-and-resources/funding>

UNIVERSITY *of* York

& LEARNING
TEACHING
CONFERENCE
2014

Thinking outside the module box

Wednesday 18th June 2014

Students apply for a place on, study for and receive, degrees; they experience their studies as a process, with a beginning, middle and end. Programme planning should therefore form the bedrock of what a university aims to achieve in terms of student learning.

The 2014 Teaching and Learning Conference will be a chance for colleagues to discuss programme level issues, to see the bigger picture and to discuss exactly what it is that we want our students to achieve through their engagement with our programmes of learning.

The Learning and Teaching Conference theme is being announced now, at the beginning of the academic year, to give you time to plan how you can contribute to the event.

If you are interested in exploring programme design issues during the coming year, with a view to possible submission of a conference poster or workshop abstract in January (though without a definite commitment at this stage), please register your interest here: www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/conference



A FORUM workshop in Autumn term week 2 will provide a first opportunity to explore these issues: to learn about and discuss the external factors in the UK HE sector which make consideration of programme design increasingly important, with input from John Robinson (PVC for Learning, Teaching and Information) on how we might respond to these external drivers here in York.

Further information about this workshop is available at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/sharing-practice/workshops>

The James legacy

David Foster, former University Registrar

Much has already been written in this 50th anniversary year about the University's short history, and about its current standing, nationally and internationally, in the world of higher education. Reflecting on some of this record of truly outstanding achievement, I recall a visit in the mid-1980s to a US university with which York had a link at the time. My host had gathered together a group of students, including some who had spent a year at York and some who were thinking of applying for the following year, the idea being that I would give a short talk and then answer questions. But first, he invited a young woman who had just returned from York to share her thoughts with the others. Momentarily, I held my breath – she also paused, probably for effect – but then she said that it had simply been the best year of her life and proceeded to explain why.

The experience which the University had provided for this student had its roots in the vision of the founders, nowhere better articulated than in the words of Eric James (Lord James of Rusholme),

the first Vice-Chancellor, in his address to the University Court in November 1964, "A university," he said, "consists not primarily of buildings, but of men and women, both staff and students. Its quality is not necessarily determined by the amount of money at its disposal, but by the way that it envisages its task of transmitting and discovering knowledge. Its success is to be measured by its contribution to wisdom." This philosophy is one which the University has never lost sight of, despite the fact that for many years, it was relatively underfunded in relation to many other institutions, an anomalous situation which continued until the 1990s. In delivering this vision, Eric James and his colleagues wanted to ensure that the highest priority was given to good teaching, located in a small number of strong departments with an emphasis on small group teaching and in a collegiate environment. Vindication of this approach came some years later in the 1990s when the external quality assessment of teaching was introduced. By the time that all the subjects on

offer at York had been assessed, and the inevitable league tables associated with this kind of exercise had arrived, York found itself at the top alongside the University of Cambridge. Of the University's many achievements in its first 50 years, this ranks as one of the most impressive and one which would have given Eric James great pleasure.

York's strengths

In July 1981, every university in the UK received a letter from the University Grants Committee (UGC) informing them of the amounts by which their funding was to be cut. In some cases, the cuts were draconian and one institution lost almost half its recurrent grant. As usual, the media produced league tables from which it emerged that York, although it was to suffer a cut like everyone else, was the fourth least affected (in the company of Oxford, Cambridge and Bath). This led to speculation over time about our relative good fortune. No exact reasons could be adduced but it was clear that the principles to which the University had adhered from the start had stood it in good stead: for example, it had a small number of strong viable departments, it had strong academic leadership and there was strong demand from well-qualified applicants for admission. Furthermore, it was not over-dependent on income from overseas student fees, the research base was strong and it had husbanded its funds with great care, only expanding when it was satisfied that the business case was robust, as in the creation of Archaeology, Electronics and Psychology, and in only creating posts when there was an absolute need to do so. It was only in the late 1980s for example that a full-time, professionally qualified Director of HR was appointed and a HR Department established (the first permanent full-time staff development post was created around the same time), long after such posts were commonplace elsewhere. In the late 1990s, another institution of similar size, wondering how York had emerged at the top of the teaching quality league table, came to find out how we did things. They departed still



In the last fifty years every single member of our family's been at York...but i'm the first to graduate



unclear how we managed with a team of one full-time and one part-time administrative staff, compared with their team of five.

In July 1973, the University's Chancellor, Lord Clark, paid tribute to Eric James on his retirement, likening his creation of the University of York to the city of Urbino, in Clark's view the first perfect social unit of the Renaissance. He emphasized the smallness of the University, with only 2200 students, itself a reflection of Eric's view that the place should be modest in size (in the quinquennial estimates which universities in those days had to produce for the UGC, concern had been expressed that going above 3000 students might cause irreparable damage to the college system). Avoiding too rapid expansion clearly did the University no harm but the University of 2013 is of a size, and subject range, which Eric and his colleagues would never have envisaged. Would they be pleased? I think they undoubtedly would, not just because of the huge success which it has enjoyed in its 50 years or its enviable standing in the international arena or its significance to the City of York but because it has remained by and large true to those principles which have been the bedrock over 50 years.

In a valedictory interview with The Manchester Guardian on his retirement, Eric attributed the University's success to three factors – appointing the best staff, recruiting able students and looking after them. A fellow vice-chancellor (of a large, prestigious university) in a letter to Eric in 1973 told him that York, in his opinion, was the best of all the new universities, adding that under Eric's leadership, it had acquired a reputation of commitment to teaching to which few others could aspire. He left a priceless legacy, well summed up in the words of one of the first students (the class of 1963) who said that the University has never looked back from those early days and “has developed into one of the top universities in the world.”

“A university consists not primarily of buildings, but of men and women, both staff and students. Its quality is not necessarily determined by the amount of money at its disposal, but by the way that it envisages its task of transmitting and discovering knowledge. Its success is to be measured by its contribution to wisdom.

ERIC JAMES

David Foster joined the Registrars' Department in early 1965 as the most junior member of the administrative staff.



From 1986 to 2003, he was the Registrar and Secretary. He retains strong links with the University, most notably through the Department of Theatre, Film and Television and the Environment Department, and with Alcuin College.

Lord James of Rusholme, 1st Vice-Chancellor of the University of York

John Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Information

Lord James described York pedagogy in *The Start of a New University* (1966): “A good deal of the teaching is tutorial in character, based on a weekly or at most fortnightly contact between a teacher and a small group of students (ie not more than four)... At the same time, the value of the other methods of teaching are recognised, and both lectures and, still more, seminars of ten or fourteen students are being used. It is often said that tutorial teaching is extravagant. This is not so if the programme of formal lectures is made a good deal lighter than in many universities...”

Tutorials, lectures and seminars – along with labs, the same methods we use today, though not always in the same proportions as in 1966. Electronic media have expanded learning resources and ways to communicate, but the basic modes of University teaching remain much as fifty years ago.

This is surprising given all the external influences. Since 2000 we have seen the introduction of fees for home undergraduates, high growth in taught Masters provision and the establishment and increasing influence of the National Student Survey. In the past two years there’s been change in research degrees through the rise of Centres for Doctoral Training, introduction of the Key Information Set (KIS), the rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and yet higher student fees.

Not that these things should necessarily affect the way we teach.

York peda



“...independence of mind developed through a critical approach which challenges assumptions and engages with on-going research. York graduates are life-long learners...”



If we were to react to KIS’s publication of contact hours by replacing tutorials with lectures, we could lose something important – Lord James’ “fundamental element in the academic pattern.” But there are, perhaps, better reasons to reassess our pedagogy.

For example there is good evidence from HE research that all of the following increase educational gain from a University programme:

1. students working harder,
2. students having clearer expectations of their programme,
3. programmes having higher expectations of their students,
4. frequent feedback on student work.

gogy



We need to consider how to do these things better. I have an initial proposal – a pedagogy that puts student work at the centre. Here, in summary, are its steps of programme design:

Ascent

We already have a description of York graduates in the Learning and Teaching strategy. They have:

“...independence of mind developed through a critical approach which challenges assumptions and engages with on-going research. York graduates are life-long learners...”

Our product is learners; we might even say, scholars. Each programme of study has its own more detailed description of a graduate, so its final objective is clear.

We must plan our students' ascent to that objective. This means ordering competencies, particularly learning skills, so that the things students do early accelerate their ability to learn later. The intermediate expectations at



each progression point are the rungs of the ladder students have to ascend. For most undergraduate programmes there are six rungs; for each we should describe how the climb from the previous rung gets students closer to the finish.

Work

A student doing a full-time programme should be studying 40 hours per week. In most cases, more time will be outside contact hours than inside. Student-work-centred programme design pays great attention to what students are spending that time on, with a reasonable argument for why that activity is the most robust, effective and efficient way to step them up to the next rung. It is not enough to characterise non-contact time as ‘in the library’ or ‘private study’. We must devise engaging and absorbing work that will advance students' intellectual grasp and facility with the subject.

Appointments

Appointments are all those scheduled encounters when people have to be in the same place at the same time. The main ones are still supervisions, tutorials, seminars, lab sessions and lectures. We often call appointments “contact hours”. Only after the student work has been mapped out should we design the appointments, whose purpose and placement should be appropriate to the rung they are on. With the ascent planned so that strong study skills are developed early, students will become expert users of documents (as defined very broadly below), so lectures may be relatively few. Instead, tutorials will feature, because a programme based on

student work is going to include many opportunities for formative feedback propelling that work.

Resources

Specifying the appointments allocates our key resource: people. We also must identify and allocate other resources based on student work. Study spaces will be high on the list, because students spend more time learning outside of appointments than in them. Other key resources range from lab equipment to musical instruments. Some may have use restricted to appointments (eg lab sessions), but many will be available 24/7.

Documents

Documents are resources too, but so important that their creation and collation deserves a design step of its own. From traditional course texts, course notes and programme handbooks, to videos of lectures and interactive online simulations, documents must be planned, prepared and perfected. Online documents can be read anywhere any time so it is vital we design them well.

I hope to have many opportunities to discuss York pedagogy with the academic community during 2013-14.

John has been Professor of Electronics at York since 2000, and was Head of Department from 2007-11. In addition to his Pro-Vice-Chancellor's role, John is Director of the Higher York Creative Technology Centre. Before coming to York, John held an Industrial Research Chair at Memorial University of Newfoundland as well as working in industry in Canada.



50 years of Learning and Teaching at York



Ramblings of an engineering management lecturer

My first day at York was 1 January 1993, not a good day to start a new job – the University was closed. Joking aside, I came to York after spending 18 years as a practising engineer in industry, mainly in management positions in the UK and for a short period in the US. I came with the desire to introduce our engineers to management, something much needed but sadly lacking in graduates. This has been the main element of my day job ever since.

For me, one of the important characteristics of an engineer is the ability to understand systems. Systems are everywhere, mechanical, electrical, electronic and even managerial – those involving warm bodies, us, human beings. A characteristic of humans is that we are sometimes variable, unpredictable, do odd things occasionally, prone to mistakes, have moods – although usually, and thankfully, not all at the same time and often need incentivizing (intrinsically hopefully but often extrinsically as well). To make the warm body system requires a good understanding of the bodies in the system. As with any system, thinking it (the system) can be optimised by dipping in and optimising its parts separately is, at best, hopeful.

My research interests are in engineering education and I have come to realise that the great exponents of some of the teaching and learning theories I have grown to like and use are also examples of this, dare I say, problem. The theories associated with experiential learning, student motivation, assessment and feedback, critical reflection all seem to be studied and debated in isolation, as islands of research. In reality they all relate to the same thing – the warm body doing the learning, an integral part of the system. To optimize the education process is ... well what? What does the optimum system look like? Is there one? If there is, it will be in the arena of the system where all the theories collide and act on the entity doing the learning not in the optimisation of any one part.

Alongside my desire to teach I have developed a real desire to help students in whatever way I can. This led me, nearly 12 years ago, to take on the role of Provost of Alcuin, the first College. Well,

Tony Ward, Senior Lecturer in Engineering Management, Department of Electronics, Leader of the Engineering Management Research Group



alphabetically, and as you approach from the North, and as you descend vertically from a height, and many more of my, now widely recognised as really bad, jokes. This desire for helping students is both the yardstick (or should it be metre stick?) and driver of all I do, my teaching, research and pastoral activities. This has remained relatively unchanged despite many changes since 1993.

So, what changes have I seen over the past two decades (and now I feel old all of a sudden)? There have been so many, but I will touch on just two:

Firstly, despite what the government says, the ability of students in mathematics has dropped, and has been dropping progressively over the past few decades. We can see this quantitatively through tests such as the PIP test and qualitatively through the comments made in lectures relating to mathematical operations. We are not seeing our output standards fall; our professional institution helps see to that. Add into that a staggering rate of change in technologies related to our technical discipline and the result? The toothpaste tube called the curriculum is constantly being squeezed. A challenge for our teaching subject matter but also for our teaching methods with VLEs; in-class video recording; readily available plagiarism checkers; audio feedback; electronic submission of assignments, marks entry and transcripts all fuelling another dimension of change

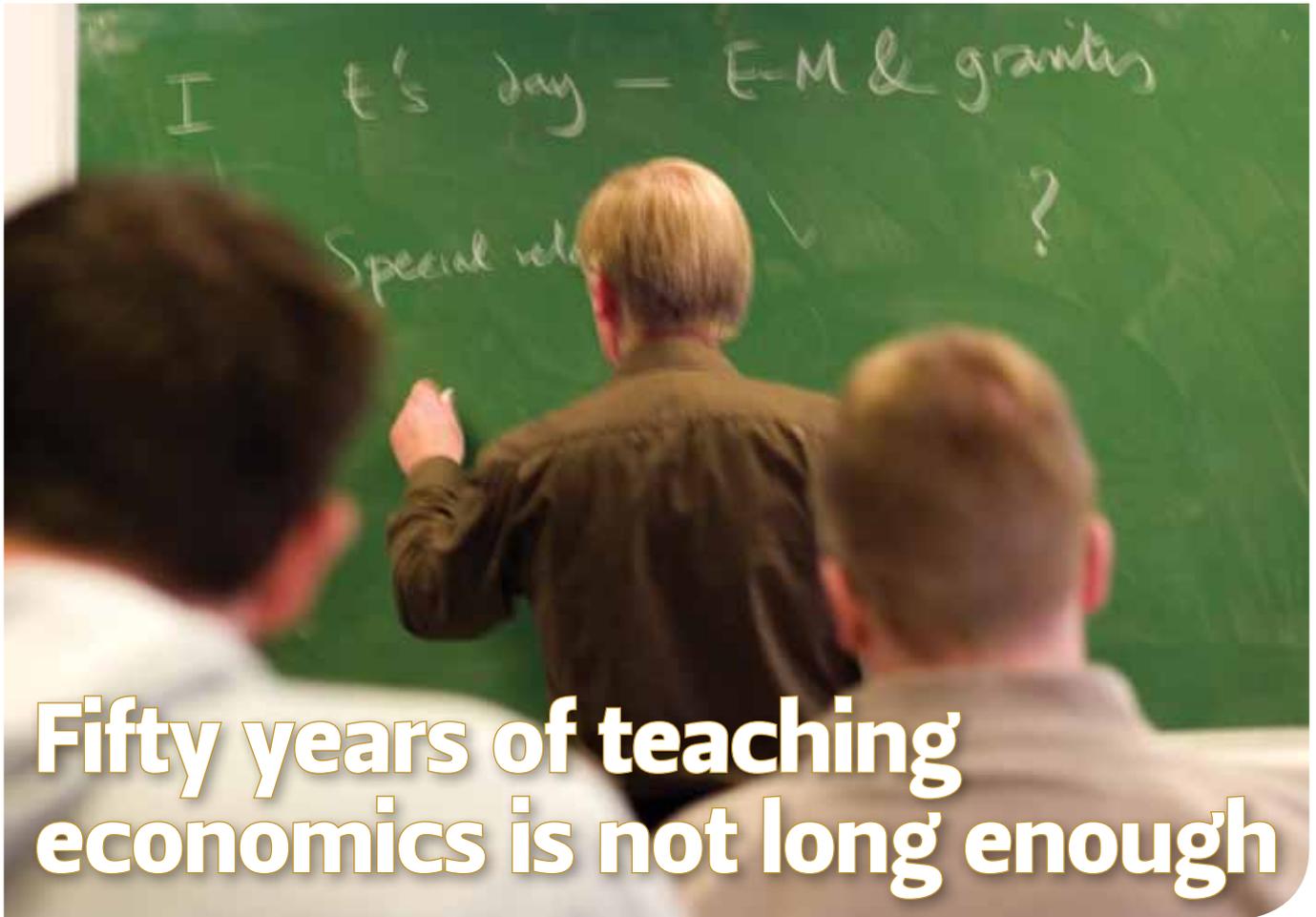
we need to deal with. This area is aligned to my research interests so I have an interest in the impact of these disruptive technologies on the teaching 'system'.

Secondly, the change in student demographics. Numbers of overseas students studying electronics are rising. Just as well, because the number of Electronics home students is falling and has been steadily for years. There has been a healthy rise in numbers of Chinese students from a few isolated students a decade ago to significant numbers today. What was noticeable when there were only a few students was that their ability to communicate in English improved through their studies, both in their written but especially in their verbal communications. What we see with significant numbers is at best a static ability, sometimes a declining ability in proficiency in English. To make our financial books balance we need international students. Without getting too political we need the government to recognise the economic value to UK plc of the education system and stop playing around with visas and quotas in isolation to the rest of the complex system they seem to think they can optimise by playing around with its parts.

I will end by sharing the two books that have made a big impression on me in the past. They are *The Goal* by Goldratt and Cox, a story about big systems and their optimisation and the ever present bottleneck, a component of a system that can never be eliminated, only moved around. *Freakonomics* by Levitt and Dubner is about incentivisation from some fascinating new angles. I guess the reasoning is fairly obvious.

Tony Ward graduated from Bristol University in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. He worked in the UK and the US in a range of engineering and management roles and, after 18 years in industry, started a technical training company before coming to York in 1993. He was the founding Director of the White Rose Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Enterprise. His research interests lie in engineering education and entrepreneurship.





Fifty years of teaching economics is not long enough

Mike Wickens, Professor of Economics and Government adviser, reflects on teaching economics

Teaching is one of the most satisfying aspects of being an academic. But I imagine that it can also be one of the most soul-destroying. Much depends on the reaction of the students and on the freedom to teach what interests us.

When I first started university teaching nearly fifty years ago I was most impressed by one of my colleagues who remarked that as academics we should be professional communicators. This was the more impressive as he was a first-rate researcher with what would now be classed as 4* publications.

Far from being at the cost of my own research, I have found that teaching has enhanced my research, and not just supervising PhD students. Teaching has given me the opportunity to talk about what interests me most and, by talking about it, deepen my own understanding of the subject. Students have often told me that they could tell by my enthusiasm when I was really interested in a topic, and this made them that much more interested in it too.

Another valuable early lesson for me was the benefit to students of courses in

which the value-added was high. I have taught at British universities that only admitted what would now be A* students and later I taught at a university with very much lower entry requirements. The latter had a first-rate research reputation while the former, although much more prestigious, did not. The students going to the former were bright when they entered and when they left, but they didn't learn nearly as much at university. As a result, I have always aimed to give courses that stretch students so that they learn a lot, but not to penalise them by pitching the final examination too high. It is the learning that is important, not the exam mark.

Universities now give teaching instruction to new staff. My experience of this, including at York, is that these courses do not take sufficient account of the peculiarities of each subject. Economics is a good example. It requires a combination of skills not found in other subjects: like the sciences, it uses mathematics, statistics and computing; in addition, a knowledge of history, politics and philosophy is required

especially when making policy or value judgements; finally, and the real skill, is to take a complicated real-world problem, formalise it mathematically, carry out the logical analysis and, most important, translate and explain the findings in words as though to a layman. This makes it very difficult for a non-economist to teach the teaching of economics. It also makes economics so fascinating.

To illustrate the issue of value added and the complexities of economics, many years ago at York, the head of department told me that he had been unable to find any staff willing to teach first-year macroeconomics. They claimed that it was below them. I was horrified by this and immediately volunteered. I took the view that it was most important to put the best teaching staff in the first year in order to enthuse students about economics. But, as a result of my experience at teaching at London Business School, rather than give them the usual rather dry first course in macroeconomics, I decided to adopt an entirely different approach. My aim was to enable them by the end of the course to read the Financial Times

with understanding while slipping in the various bits of theory that the second year course needed to build on. This involved interpreting key economic data, relating them to the theory and examining the implications for explaining economic events and assessing policy. In this way the students would be economically literate even if they didn't take another economics course.

One of the first things I did when I came to York twenty years ago was to modernise the MSc course in macroeconomics. In those days it was much easier to alter the content of a course and keep it up-to-date. This is essential in a subject like economics where the problems and techniques of analysis evolve rapidly. These days a committee of non-economists must be consulted. One of the changes I made was to include finance in the macroeconomics course which I regarded as an essential, but completely neglected, aspect of macroeconomics. The recent financial crisis has more than justified this. It then became clear that it was necessary to go further and introduce whole courses on finance in the MSc programme. I therefore proposed that we created MSc degrees in finance. Now, in

My main experience of changing technology involved the way I delivered lectures. Fifty years ago I wrote it all up on a blackboard which required an academic gown to keep off the chalk

terms of student numbers, these courses dominate the Department of Economics' post-graduate programme.

Over the years the technology has altered the way we do economics. Increased computing power has changed the way we analyse economic models and carry out statistical analyses. With computers in each lecture room, we can now illustrate arguments and methods online, and as students have their own computer they can practise in their rooms.

My main experience of changing technology involved the way I delivered

lectures. Fifty years ago I wrote it all up on a blackboard which required an academic gown to keep off the chalk – or, for some, to erase the board. Then white boards appeared. The absence of an eraser meant that one always had blackened hands. In both cases the students and the staff seemed to spend their time writing furiously. The lecturers had their backs to the students which didn't improve audibility or communication. Then overhead projectors appeared. Initially we wrote the lectures on these. We then wrote the lectures beforehand and rolled them out to the students. This was a crucial step as it enabled us to get through a lot more material. Nonetheless, it still required students to copy it all down. Then we moved to slides. My students very sensibly asked me to photocopy my lecture notes and distribute these, which I did. They then pointed out that these notes did not cover all that said as they were just the main points and asked me to add some commentary, which I did. Then a student told me that my lectures had been recorded and would be willing to transcribe them for distribution, which was very generous. At this point I realised that with some more effort on my part I could turn the whole course into a book, which I did, although it took more effort than I anticipated. The book is now a best-seller on macroeconomic theory read throughout the world and translated into four languages. All of this would not have happened without my students to whom I am extremely grateful.

I could go on and enthuse at much greater length, but I expect that you have already got the message that I love talking and thinking about economics. I am so fortunate to have been an academic and to have had the constant stimulation of talking to such clever young people.

Michael Wickens is Professor of Economics at York and Cardiff Business School. He is a former Managing Editor of *The Economic Journal*, Specialist Adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, former Chairman of H.M. Treasury Academic Panel, and has consulted for the IMF, Bank of England, The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the EC Commission. His current research interests are in macroeconomics, finance and macroeconometrics.



How could they carry out research back in the 60s, they didn't have the internet?

Continuity and change

Sue Grace, Academic Training Officer,
Professional and Organisational Development

Like many others, my first teaching at the University of York was during my time as a PhD student in the History Department. Despite years of teaching in further education, co-teaching with my (ever patient) PhD supervisor was nonetheless still extremely daunting. As we walked to co-teach one session I said, "I don't know much about the British in 19th century India." "No," she said comfortingly, "I don't really, it is a long time since I wrote my last article on it." Her level of knowledge was way beyond mine and that was not really what I had meant! But I very quickly learnt more about the British in India! I was very fortunate to experience such a supportive introduction to teaching in the University of York. In another university at about the same time I was thrown in at the deep end with little support. As an experienced teacher, used to 'A' level and FE marking meetings, I had asked about a standardizing meeting for marking. There was a look of horror and I felt as though I should have known what the difference between a 2.1 and a 'first' was from birth! The irony was that these very similar undergraduate classes were actually operating at quite different standards at the two universities. Even as an experienced teacher, it seemed to me essential to have some sort of mentoring and colleague support to find my way through the unspoken mysteries of seminars, lectures, marking, exam setting, and especially the personal crises of my students.

So when I was asked, many years later, to establish and run the new lecturer Postgraduate Certificate of (Higher

Education [(Y) PGCAP] for staff it was entirely because I remembered my own appreciation of the help I had received. With the idea of being supportive, I said yes. I saw that many PhD students and new staff did not necessarily receive the support that I had done – it was patchy to say the least. Soon I realised that, for some, this training was seen to be part of a seemingly ever-increasing bureaucratic state and as creeping control from the 'centre.' Yet, over the 10 years I was involved with PGCAP, many did indeed see it as supportive. It was simply not right that new PhD graduates should teach with little support – pursuing a PhD did not normally set one up for the complexities as life as a lecturer. Now it is almost unimaginable that members of any new profession should not have training as they enter their new profession – and indeed subsequent updating as do medics, pilots, solicitors etc. The challenge is how it can be done most effectively – and that is not always obvious. "Sitting at the feet of Nellie" as they say in Yorkshire is a good way to learn but lecturers in departments do not have much time to hand hold new staff. I was asked to write about changes in my time at the University of York – that new staff have to articulate, overtly, their educational principles, plans and activities around teaching is certainly one.

It is impossible to talk about changes in HE teaching during my career without placing them in the macro level changes in 20th/21st century higher education and that would take a book not 700 words! Debates about student-centred education; increasing litigation; far more record

keeping; ever-increasing debates over budget and new technologies all add to the increasing complexities of HE teaching and have escalated in my later years in the job. In my final two years I set up a Medical School postgraduate programme for busy medical professionals which was entirely on-line apart from four 'contact' days per year. Such courses are utterly different from any at the start of my career. That said, one of the main shifts came earlier with QAA audits and having to articulate 'outcomes'. Like many Arts academics I was initially extremely cynical about the need to express learning in terms of concrete verbs. However, I have to confess that this process really helped me to focus on a more carefully considered evaluation of what the students needed to learn and not what I fancied having as a nice discussion in a seminar!

Moving with the times

A major theme for historians is continuity and change – and in university education there is lots of both! Caring colleagues remain one of the most important continuities. As in many walks of life, much of what has really changed relates to external pressures, the pace of life generally and to increased expectations. E-mails might be one seemingly tiny illustration of this but they have changed the teaching relationship massively. In the early electronic days one tutee said to me, when challenged about a point in an essay, that he had e-mailed the original lecturer to ask him what he had said at 11.10 in his lecture the previous week so that he could cite him more accurately in the essay!! We have had to learn to manage and control our ways of working with such changing demands and, wherever possible, make them work for, and not against, us. That hasn't always seemed easy but it has often had its rewards.

Sue Grace taught in a range of educational institutions before completing a PhD in the history of crime. In 1998 she set up the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education for staff at York and continued to teach History in the Centre for Women's Studies throughout. In semi-retirement she has acted as an educational consultant and returned to her interest in crime by becoming a magistrate.



Memories of “teaching and learning” at York in the 70s: the setting up of independent subject-based degrees

John Hutton was one of the founding staff at York, teaching Economics to the first student intake in 1963. He has therefore seen considerable change and development at York and in higher education in general. Here are some of his memories.

Some of my most vivid memories of “teaching and learning” date from the mid-1970s, a period of unrest and uncertainty throughout the university world, not excluding York. When York opened its doors to students in 1963, we offered a very broad curriculum in the social sciences, with boards of studies instead of departments, and a multi-subject Part One of five terms, followed by a shorter period of specialisation. By the early 1970s, Part One had been reduced to four terms, subject departments had re-emerged, and more specialisation was the clear trend. Many students, however, were pressing for “integrated” courses, crossing traditional subject divisions, in some ways a return to the original concept. Buildings were occupied and exams boycotted.

Throughout that period, despite some stressful and exhausting conflicts, the passionate commitment to competing and contradictory concepts of education was striking. The outcome, ironically, was the opposite of what some idealists sought – the setting up of independent subject-based degrees, the end of the Social Science Board of Studies and of any

serious attempt to pursue a broad social science curriculum.

In those early days, because of the Part One system, staff got to know a wide range of both students and colleagues in other subjects. We also interviewed most candidates for student places, jointly with staff from other social staff departments, and when students duly turned up, their faces were already familiar to someone. Interviewing, at least in Economics, was abandoned long ago, as it was extremely time-consuming and we could not claim that its results were better than simple conditional offers by post.

A feature of Economics at York was, and is, the prominence of the graduate school, the brainchild of Professor Alan Peacock, who came to York from Edinburgh with several of us pioneers. He had been impressed by US graduate schools, as complementary to the broader US undergraduate degrees, and determined to set up something similar in York. One result has been the presence around the department, often for years, of a cosmopolitan group of postgraduate research students, who enliven the place in many ways, and also interact

well with undergraduates, academically and socially. Their base was the Stables, home for much of the early period of the research institute under the aegis of the inimitable Professor Jack Wiseman.

When I decided to retire in 2004, I found that I greatly missed the everyday contact with students of all sorts. Those we supervised often became friends, and I remain in touch with several. The ordinary business of holding a small tutorial group, then lecturing to perhaps 300 students, or perhaps discussing the details of PhD thesis chapters with the author, and dealing with numerous requests for information or help, is the bread and butter of academic life. It is what makes going to university a unique experience for students and one can only hope that cost and staff performance pressures do not change that too much.

There have, however, been some definite improvements in arrangements for teaching in more recent years. To have an academic appointment is no longer thought sufficient to be let loose teaching students with no one taking any interest in how the new lecturer is getting on. Training and mentoring new staff can be of great benefit for students and staff. I do, nevertheless, think that in the bad old days students had to be more self-reliant, without the provision of detailed notes for many lectures, and selected online material available almost instantly. And I still think that our chalk-and-talk methods of delivery had many virtues!



*I'd like to return an overdue book...
I took it out in October 1963*

John Hutton came to York from Edinburgh in 1962 as a Ford Foundation researcher with Professor Alan Peacock, the founder of economics at York and was appointed Assistant Lecturer in Economics in 1963. He became Head of Department in 2000 and retired in 2004. John's time at York has been interspersed with posts in HM Treasury as an Economic Adviser; with the International Monetary Fund as an adviser in the Fiscal Affairs Division, and in Australian National University in Canberra.



An invaluable experience on the road to success

Neil C Flynn, Wealth Manager at Globaleye

I had the pleasure of studying my MSc Finance in York in 2009/2010. After finishing my degree, I moved to London to become a hedge fund trader, and have since relocated to Shanghai to be an investment manager. Having lived in York for 20 years prior to studying at the university, I was well aware about life in the city. When applying for undergraduate courses, I never considered York because it was too close to home comforts for me. But when applying for my masters, my choice was made very easy. The Department of Economics was very highly rated, and as I was funding my own studies, it was very good value for money, especially considering the costs of similar courses at other top universities.

During my undergraduate degree, my professors had spent their entire careers in academia, which despite giving me a strong theoretical background in economics, I felt that it didn't give me the transferable skills and knowledge to take into industry. At York, my professors had a great mix of academic and professional experience. This included pioneers in econometrics, decades of investment banking experience, and a number of government advisory roles. The benefit of this is that I could gain extensive theoretical knowledge, invaluable career advice, and industry contacts all from one professor.

After Neil graduated from his BSc Economics with first class honours, he came to York to study MSc Finance. In September 2010, he accepted a job offer as a derivatives trader for a London based hedge fund, specialising in macroeconomic strategies. In March 2013, he moved in Shanghai to work as a portfolio manager for a leading international investment firm.



I remember you now... '63 you were a bit of a Campus 'heart throb'...

After my exams, I began my focus on searching for a job. Prior to searching the investment banking websites for positions, I browsed the university's own careers website. Within a few weeks, I'd signed my contract to begin work as a trader at a hedge fund. Equally, the university career fairs had many top firms, which helped me to shape the direction of my career.

From York to Shanghai

With its picturesque campus, and peaceful surroundings, it's somewhat ironic that York prepared me for the big city life and high finance industry in London and Shanghai. For me, the greatest aspect of university life in York is the diversity of students. My classmates came from all four corners of the globe, and have since become very good friends and business contacts. As the city is small and the campus is based in one location, it's very rare to not see people you know when out and about. This, in a sense, is York's benefit over larger cities because you build closer ties with your university friends. In fact, when I moved to London, I was joined by several good friends and classmates who had found jobs in a variety of companies, ranging from

investment banks to research houses. Likewise, when I came to Shanghai, my York network was even larger. The recent 50th anniversary celebration in Shanghai attracted over 100 former students, and the alumni association is active in arranging networking events for York graduates here.

For me, university life has a very simple concept: you get out of it what you put into it. This is true at every university across the world. At York, I found that the rewards from hard work were even greater than I had expected. I have friends who have stayed at the university to pursue a PhD and are well on their way to becoming very successful in academia. Likewise I have friends who are very successful in a wide range of blue chip firms across the world, something that is even more impressive given the unemployment woes when we graduated. From these two ends of the spectrum, we are connected by our experiences at York. We have attained the abilities and the skills for our careers, the confidence and the international knowledge to work far from our homes, and the reassurance of knowing that York has given us the best chance to be successful in whatever path we choose.

NEWS

MOOCs: Not here, not yet

If you were keeping half an eye on the HE press and the national broadsheets at the end of last year, you couldn't have missed the rumble about MOOCs (massive open online courses) that began in the US and is now 'sweeping' across UK universities and, depending on the viewpoint of the copy writer, either 'revolutionising' higher education (and sounding the death knell of the traditional university) or are being hyped out of all proportion. Happily there is also a good deal of intelligent deliberation in between if you skirt around the headlines and look for it.

Late last year, the University of York was invited to join FutureLearn, (an Open University-funded venture into the UK's first MOOC platform) but the SMG have decided not to accept the invitation and instead have adopted a wait-and-see approach. This is understandable for a number of reasons, not least because it is too early to attempt a meaningful analysis of the

impact of MOOCs but it is interesting to see that 17 other high-ranking UK universities decided to accept the invitation and were developing MOOCs for the July 2013 launch of the UK's very own MOOC platform.

So, is York's caution wise? The word limit here isn't big enough to do this debate justice but you can at least have the discussion with colleagues and your HoDs if you are interested in being part of the 'revolution', 'evolution' or 'bubble' (take your pick).

Jane Lund, SPSW

On behalf of the Distance Learning Forum

Useful introductory articles on MOOCs:

Cormier, D, 2012, *What is a connectivist MOOC?* (animation), available at www.connectivistmoocs.org/what-is-a-connectivist-mooc, accessed 23 April 2013

Educause, 2012, *What Campus leaders need to know about MOOCs*, available at <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB4005.pdf>, accessed 23 April 2013

Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards 2013

Congratulations to colleagues who have been awarded Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards this year.

- Dr Steve Ashby, Lecturer, Archaeology
- Professor Mike Bentley, Deputy Head of Department, Physics
- Dr Amber Carpenter, Lecturer, Philosophy
- Dr Martin Cockett, Senior Lecturer, Chemistry
- Mathew Gilbert, PGWT, Electronics
- Emily Hellewell, PGWT, Archaeology
- Daniel Howdon, PGWT, Economics and Related Studies
- Dr Malin Holst, Research Associate, Archaeology
- Professor David Howard, Head of Department, Electronics
- Dr Louise Jones, Lecturer, Biology
- Professor Peter Lamarque, Philosophy
- Dr James Moir, Senior Lecturer, Biology
- Elaine Tham, PGWT, Psychology
- Dr Mike Thom, Teaching Fellow, Biology
- Dr Meesha Warmington, Teaching Fellow, Psychology
- Learning Enhancement Team (ASO) – Cecilia Lowe (Team Leader), Janet Barton, David Clarke, Ant Edwards, Adrian Lee, Chris Mellor, Madeleine Morgan, Tamlyn Ryan, Alice Wakely

E-Learning Development Team Training Sessions

Throughout the Autumn term, the E-Learning Development Team is offering the following training sessions, open to all staff.

- Getting Started with the VLE (17 dates)
- Media and Multimedia Primer
- Assessment and Feedback Primer
- Interaction and Student Contributions Primer

For further details on these sessions including dates, please see the Team's training schedule on the VLE – <http://goo.gl/4aplBi>

National Teaching Fellowship

Congratulations to Professor Dave Smith, Chemistry, who has been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy for excellence in higher education teaching and support for learning.

Dave is one of 55 Fellows selected from higher education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



Learning and Teaching Calendar of Events: Autumn Term 2013/2014

WEEK 2	
Wed 9 October, 12.30–2pm, H/G21	Why Programme Design Matters
WEEK 3	
Tue 15 October, 9.30–11am, ATB/037	Staff Turnitin Awareness
Wed 16 October, 2–5pm, RCH Lakehouse	Developing Your Research Career
WEEK 4	
Wed 23 October, 12.30–2pm, AEW/004	Blogs and Blogging in the Academic Environment
Wed 23 October, 2–5pm, H/G21	Effective Lecturing (Arts and Humanities)
WEEK 5	
Mon 28 October, 9–11am, H/G21	Marking Consistency and Fairness
Wed 30 October, 2–5pm, H/G21	Enhancing Small Group Teaching (Sciences and Social Sciences)
Thurs 31 October, 1–4pm, D/L/049	Creativity and Problem Solving
Fri 1 November, 10am–4pm, H/G09	Introduction to Teaching & Learning (interdisciplinary)
WEEK 6	
Mon 4 November, 12.30–2pm, H/G21	Dealing With Group Work
Wed 6 November, 2–5pm, H/G21	Enhancing Small Group Teaching (Arts and Humanities)
Thurs 7 November, 1–4pm, H/G17	Introduction to Pedagogic Research
WEEK 7	
Mon 11 November, 9am–5pm, H/G09	Marking and Feedback – all day workshop
Wed 13 November, 9–11am, H/G17	How to Complete Your PFA Portfolio
Wed 13 November, 2–5pm, H/G21	Impact and Public Engagement
Thurs 14 November, 9am–12 noon, H/G09	Evaluation and Quality Enhancement
WEEK 8	
Mon 18 November, 2–3.30pm, PL/006	Staff Turnitin Awareness
Mon 18 November, 12.30–2pm, H/G21	Learning and Teaching Encounters: Lectures
Wed 20 November, 9am–12 noon, H/G09	Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct
Wed 20 November, 2–5pm, H/G21	Developing Information Literacy in the Digital Age
Fri 22 November, 9am–12 noon, H/G17	Demonstrating in the Sciences
WEEK 10	
Thurs 5 December, 1–4pm, H/G09	Structuring and Designing Sessions
WEEK 11	
Mon 9 December, 9am–5pm, H/G09	Criticality – all day workshop
Mon 9 December, 2–4pm, Berrick Saul Tree House	Taught Masters SIG
Tues 10 December, 1–4pm, D/L/049	Effective Lecturing
Wed 11 December, 9am–12 noon, H/G17	Giving Feedback on Student Work

Key to the calendar

Events organised by the Learning and Teaching Forum. Open to all staff and PGWTs. For further information, see www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/sharing-practice/workshops; to register, contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk. If you are unable to attend an event but would like a copy of the materials, please let Janet know.

Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) sessions. Priority is given to staff enrolled on the programme, but other staff are invited to express an interest in attending any session and places will be confirmed a week or two before the event. For further information, see www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/academic-practice/pgcap/workshops.cfm

Preparing Future Academics sessions aimed at PGWTs. Priority is given to those enrolled on the programme, but others are invited to express an interest in attending any session and the places will be confirmed a week or two before the event. Please note that these workshops are subject to change. Check www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development for the latest information, or contact the Researcher Development Team: rdt@york.ac.uk

Freestanding workshops offered by learning support colleagues. Please contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk for further details or to book your place.

Academic Integrity: Staff Turnitin awareness sessions. Please contact adrian.lee@york.ac.uk for further details or to book your place on a session

Taught Masters Special Interest Group: for further information, see www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/sharing/sharing-practice/special-interest; to register contact janet.barton@york.ac.uk