

LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences (LTSN-GEES)

Annual Report 2002 / 2003

Contents	Page No.
1: Narrative Account of Activity	
Executive Summary	2
Strategic Level Considerations	3
Operational Level Report	5
Areas of Activity Relating to Key Sectoral Developments & Agendas	13
Evaluation	17
Appendices	
A: Senior Advisors' Reports	21
B: External Evaluator's Report	27

Section 1: Narrative Accounts of Activity

Strategic Level Report

Executive Summary

Brian Chalkley (Director)

The LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences (LTSN-GEES) has enjoyed a busy and productive year promoting high quality learning and teaching in the GEES disciplines. The details of our programme of activities and services are set out later in this report, but the highlights of 2002/3 have included: five national conferences (three with partner organisations), twenty-one departmental workshops, a two day residential event for new GEES lecturers and continuing support for eleven small-scale teaching and learning projects. We have also published a further four issues of our journal PLANET which now has a print run of some 2,500 copies, which are distributed nationally and internationally.

Many of the above ingredients are now familiar and established parts of the LTSN-GEES annual programme. However, 2002/3 has also seen the introduction, development or completion of a number of other initiatives which have added to our range of activities and services. For example, in June we held our first two-day residential conference which attracted over eighty delegates. Our programme of work on pedagogic research, which has involved over fifty GEES academics, has made good progress. This project has considerably enhanced our disciplines' capacity to undertake pedagogic research and is producing a range of publications (with the first already accepted by the Journal of Geography in Higher Education). In addition, we have launched the LTSN-GEES on-line Resource Database which now has over 400 entries. The first three of the learning and teaching guides for Earth and Environmental Science are soon to be published and we are collaborating with three new disabilities projects funded by HEFCE for which we will provide dissemination services. We have begun to fund three new small-scale projects focused on the theme of Learning & Teaching at the Taught Postgraduate Level. We have also run a two day training event to enlarge the pool of facilitators for our departmental workshop programme and raised our international profile through our role in the European HERODOT programme on HE geography across the E.U., and through collaboration with various colleagues in Europe, the USA and Australia. In addition, a later section of this report sets out the particular contributions we have made in the government's priority areas of Widening Participation and Employability.

2002/3 has seen a welcome strengthening of our links with other Subject Centres. Collaborative national events were organised with LTSN Bioscience (and the Real World FDTL Project) and with Economics LTSN. The new Area Studies Network has strengthened our links to LTSN Languages, Linguistics and Areas Studies. We have also played an active part in the Generic Centre's projects on Linking Teaching and Research and Supporting New Staff Courses.

This level of activity has not been achieved at the expense of quality. LTSN-GEES continues to insist on high standards in all areas of our work, as is evidenced for example, in delegates' responses to our national conferences and departmental workshops. In addition to positive evaluations of our events and publications, Professor Silver's research on impact has begun to reveal how LTSN-GEES is making a difference in the way that GEES departments and individuals design curricula and undertake their teaching and learning.

While celebrating our successes, we would, of course, acknowledge areas where progress has been slower than we would have liked. Although, steps have been taken to raise our profile in Scotland

and Wales, this issue of geographical 'reach' still needs further attention. The GEES contribution to education for sustainability also requires further development.

Despite some disappointments and delays therefore, (and the inevitable constraints imposed by our budget!), 2002/3 has been overall a highly productive year. Our success is due principally to the expertise and sheer hard work of the Plymouth team and our three subject-based Senior Advisors. However, we are also very grateful to our Steering Group, to the LTSN Executive and Generic Centre at York, our host institution (the University of Plymouth), to the GEES professional bodies, to Professor Silver (our external evaluator), and to all those GEES academics and others who have assisted and supported our work over the last twelve months.

In the light of the HE White Paper, Centres of Excellence and the new Academy, it seems likely that LTSN-GEES will in future be operating within a somewhat different national context. This will no doubt bring both challenges and opportunities. However, we are determined to build on our successes and to ensure that the GEES disciplines maintain their leading reputation for educational quality and innovation.

Strategic Level Considerations

Helen King (Manager)

During the last twelve months, there have been no major developments in the immediate subject-based environment in which LTSN-GEES operates but some changes continue to take place within our disciplinary HE communities. Recruitment into the disciplines seems to be mixed: in some cases, pre-92 institutions have expanded their numbers (partly through modifying their entry requirements) with the result that some new institutions and colleges are struggling to fill their places. The effects of these changes have included departmental mergers, closures, course cuts and staff cuts. Other cutbacks have occurred through non-replacement of staff who leave or retire. It is likely that this type of restructuring will continue with changing student interests and changes in the political arena, and the subject providers will need to show considerable adaptability and innovation in course development to attract students and cater for changes in the market. Such adaptability is particularly noticeable with respect to the growth of postgraduate level courses in the disciplines. (Further information on changes in the environment for each of the three disciplines separately can be found in Appendix A).

Although LTSN-GEES cannot offer direct solutions to these environmental issues, we need to be very aware of and sensitive to them when working with our communities. We recognise that the new HE White Paper and, to a lesser extent, the Cooke Report, will both have implications, for example, with respect to professional development, the training of external examiners, and the teaching / research relationship, which our communities will want to discuss and address.

We have not encountered any new barriers to success: those that do exist relate mainly to the familiar difficulties encountered in the UK higher education environment, for example insufficient rewards for good teaching, and the primacy of the RAE. Moreover, within the GEES disciplines, although the problems of falling student recruitment and departmental mergers can, on occasion, bring some opportunities, they do not always create an encouraging context for our work on innovation in learning and teaching.

We believe our Strategic Aims are still appropriate and provide a useful framework for planning. Good progress is being made towards longer-term outcomes and we are now beginning to think more strategically about longer-term provision of our activities and services and moving well beyond the short-term 'project' mindset. For example, we ran a training event for new departmental

workshop facilitators in order both to enhance our current programme of events and to help underpin our longer-term engagement with the GEES communities.

Our broad strategies, including communication (dissemination) and evaluation continue to be effective and appropriate. We have recently conducted a review of our internal communication systems, and have identified a few areas in which we might enhance efficiency. Our evaluation strategy will be updated in line with the common Subject Centre framework to be developed by the LTSN this summer. Both formal needs analyses and general anecdotal feedback suggest that our mix of activities and services remains appropriate and welcomed. However, we are not complacent about our provision and continue to seek out new ideas and to share practice with other Subject Centres and relevant groups in order to ensure that our dissemination mechanisms are effective and up-to-date. For example, we are interested in exploring the idea of Special Interest Groups as a mechanism for developing new community networks.

We still have a slight concern about the level of knowledge we have about general and discipline-specific issues in Wales and Scotland and are taking steps to address this. The Steering Group is looking to re-introduce Welsh and Scottish representatives (previous members who represented HoDs and professional bodies were replaced when their positions changed). We are also considering the use of our network of workshop facilitators to help provide information on discipline-based issues in the regions. We are planning to hold a major conference / symposium in Wales in 2003-2004, and will be looking to support the Scottish enhancement agenda in the areas of assessment and responding to students' needs.

The nature of the climate in which we work is such that new areas and themes are continually arising. However, we have a sufficient element of flexibility to be able to respond to new agendas and priorities. Additionally, through our Senior Advisors and other contacts, we continue to maintain a broad view and have been able to be pro-active with respect to new national issues as well as responsive to the communities' needs. Looking ahead, however, there are concerns that the Government's proposed Centres of Excellence could place major demands on our resources, particularly in the area of dissemination. Appropriate additional funding would be required to meet these needs.

Operational Level Report

Helen King (Manager)

Introduction

The following information sets out our activities and operational structure for the period 1st August 2002 – 31st July 2003. By way of a brief overview, the narrative report is preceded by two lists: 1) our ‘keystone’ activities and 2) all the themes under which we have provided activities and services to our disciplines.

‘Keystone’ Activities

A core of activities were identified at the Subject Centre bidding stage and, over the last three years our internal and external evaluations and needs analyses have indicated that these continue to be appropriate and effective. We have felt it useful, therefore, to identify these as ‘keystone’ activities, and a detailed rationale for these is given in the Strategic Plan. Through these activities, and through additional activities funded from elsewhere (e.g. Generic Centre projects) we are able to offer support to the priority themes and issues affecting the GEES disciplines. The seven keystone activities are:

- Departmental Workshops
- The work of our Discipline-based Senior Advisors
- National Conferences
- PLANET (our journal)
- Residential Workshop for New and Recently Appointed Lecturers
- Resource Database
- Small-scale Projects

In order to provide our activities and services, the annual budget is distributed roughly as follows:

Staff (Plymouth team and Senior Advisors):	~50%
Activities & Services (see below):	~35%
Travel (internal & external events):	~5%
Equipment and consumables:	~5%
External evaluator & consultants:	~3%
Contingency:	~2%

Experience over the last three years suggests that this distribution is appropriate for the efficient and effective delivery of our activities and services.

List of all Themes Addressed by LTSN-GEES

The following list includes all the themes under which we regularly provide activities and services to our disciplines (through events, publications, the Resource Database etc.). Those sub-themes highlighted in *italics* are areas which particularly need further consideration in 2003-2004.

Widening Participation

Recruitment / fair access
Retention
SENDA
Maths skills
Student diversity

Employability

Key skills / Employability skills
Career management for students
PDPs

Curriculum Design & Pedagogy

Learning outcomes & assessment
Problem-based Learning
Fieldwork
Practical work
Large group teaching
Small group teaching
Widening participation
Integrated curriculum design
Education for Sustainable Development
E-learning
Taught Postgraduates
Foundation degrees / HE in FE

Professional Development & Scholarship

Supporting new staff
Supporting experienced staff (CPD)
Pedagogic research (doing & promoting)
Linking teaching & research
External examiners
Scottish Quality Enhancement

Level of Engagement

LTSN-GEES continues to lead and/or contribute to a wide range of activities and services focused on supporting GEES academic staff and departments across higher education in the UK. Particular attention is being given to the principal national agendas, such as employability and widening participation, while at the same time continuing to meet the specific needs of the GEES communities. Our latest needs analysis conducted at the end of April 2002 showed that all of our activities are of value to the communities (though, not surprisingly, different individuals highlighted different activities), and that the priority themes we have identified also match their common concerns. The continued demand for our activities and services suggests that the planned mix is appropriate.

Our overall programme of activities for 2002-2003 has proceeded generally according to schedule. Our activities are costing roughly what we expected. As we now have the benefit of three years of experience, budgeting is becoming slightly easier and more predictable. As detailed later, our activities have been very successful and have reached a wide range of departments and institutions:

- Since January 2000, approximately 830 different people have engaged with LTSN-GEES (including departmental contacts, event participants, projects, workshop facilitators, publication authors etc).
- Around 220 of these individuals were not from UK HE GEES departments (including careers services, educational development units, other Subject Centres, employers, overseas academics etc); this indicates the wide interest in our activities.
- The individuals described above represent 174 out of the 174 GEES departments listed on our database: 100%

In addition, to the above engagement with individuals, since August 2000, 55 different departments (including two in FE) have received a departmental workshop (run by a range of facilitators from across the three disciplines). Furthermore, through our Senior Advisors, Steering Group, Heads of Department Committees, professional bodies and ad hoc / informal departmental visits, awareness of LTSN GEES and its activities continues to be maintained and raised.

Overview of activities

Our work across the GEES disciplines is significantly enhanced through support from the three **Discipline-Based Senior Advisors**. The Senior Advisors are based in their own institutions (away from the central hub at the University of Plymouth) and provide activities for their communities including workshops, projects, and outreach visits, as well as providing invaluable support to the main LTSN-GEES activity planning and delivery. Further details of their work are provided within their individual reports (see Appendix A).

During 2002-2003, we have been fortunate to benefit from the services of various **External Consultants**. These have included expert authors for PLANET, specialist facilitators for specific events, experts on C&IT issues and on external evaluation (detailed later). In addition, this year we have also extended our team to include a new, trained cohort of GEES departmental workshop facilitators. Consequently, LTSN-GEES now has over 50 individuals directly supporting, at various levels, the provision of our activities and services.

Text-based information has been provided through various publications both on-line and in hard copy. The quarterly **GEES Digest** has been circulated electronically to our departmental contacts and three discipline-based email discussion lists, and has also been made available on our web-site.

This brief newsletter provides highlights of the preceding three month's activities and a forward-looking diary of LTSN-GEES events. This digest has also been summarised in short bi-monthly articles / '**press releases**' sent to the magazines of the three professional bodies associated with LTSN-GEES (RGS-IBG: 'Geobyte', Geological Society: 'Geoscientist', Institution of Environmental Science: 'Environmental Scientist').

Three issues of our magazine, **PLANET** have been produced: the 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)' special edition was circulated in December 2002 and included papers from the conference at Moscow State University co-convened by LTSN-GEES in the summer. The 5th standard issue of **PLANET** was circulated at the end of January and contained many varied articles on learning and teaching from members of the GEES communities, as well as news on LTSN-GEES recent and forthcoming activities and services. It was agreed to combine the numbering systems of the special and standard issues and, hence, the 10th **PLANET** (a standard issue) was published in June. The other special edition budgeted for this year is currently in production and is based on the proceedings of our residential conference on 'Teaching and Research' held at the end of June. **PLANET** currently has a circulation of over 2500, including five sent to each UK HE GEES department and many individual subscriptions some from overseas. **PLANET** is also made available for free download from our web-site.

Other publications currently in progress include the development of **Learning and Teaching Guides for Earth Science, Environmental Science & Environmental Studies**, funded by the LTSN Development Fund. Three of these guides (Learning Outcomes & Assessment; Fieldwork; Practical & Laboratory Work), are progressing well and draft versions have already been made available on the web-site for review. The final versions are due to be formally peer-reviewed over the Summer. The other two guides (Learning & Teaching with C&IT; Skills Guide for Students) have been delayed due to various extenuating circumstances amongst the authors. These are being re-commissioned in the Autumn.

An external author has been commissioned to design and write the first of our '**Briefings**' which will be on numeracy skills. It was decided that these should be written on an ad hoc basis in response to key issues which had not been extensively addressed in our other activities, rather than contriving documents to meet the quarterly time scale.

As a result of the appointment of a Resource Co-ordinator (Dr Yolande Knight) in March 2002, one of the major activities this year has been the development and launch of the LTSN-GEES **Resource Database**. The technical side of the Database was developed and continues to be maintained by a project team based at the University of Leeds, and the population of the Database is co-ordinated by Yolande with the support of our C&IT Manager (Mike Sanders), and an external consultant (Dr Phil Gravestock). To date, the Database contains links, descriptions and peer review of over 400 resources, including examples of good practice, case studies, learning and teaching articles and publications, software, and web-sites. It also provides links to abstracts contained within the Good Practice Database (developed from the pre-existing Geography Discipline Network database). This latter collection is maintained by Phil Gravestock and has been considerably extended to include Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Over the last three years, LTSN-GEES has been working closely with the relevant RDN Hubs (PSIGate, SOSIG, and GeSource) to ensure that the Resource Database is interoperable with and complementary to their discipline-based information. This work has recently been supplemented through the provision of funding from JISC to support interoperability between the RDN and LTSN (detailed later). It is our intention that the development of the Resource Database be seen as an ongoing process which involves members of the GEES communities through the enquiry service,

events, projects, publications and other activities. The Database was formally launched at the residential conference in the Summer 2003.

Usage of the **enquiry service** remains steady at a modest level (we receive around one to two enquiries per week on average). It is well publicised but does not seem to be considered as one of our main activities by the communities.

Our main event of the year was our first **residential conference** held on 30th June / 1st July at the Royal Court Hotel in Coventry on the theme of 'Teaching and Research'. The first day focused on linking teaching and research, and the second day on pedagogic research. Flexibility was also allowed in the timetable to ensure opportunities for discussing the new agendas arising from the 'Future of Higher Education' White Paper. The conference recruited well: over 60 paying delegates attended with a further 25 guest speakers and presenters.

We ran a collaborative symposium between LTSN-GEES, LTSN-LLAS and the Royal Geographical Society (RGS-IBG) in April at the Geological Society in London. This event, on '**Overseas Fieldwork in HE**' was organised as part of our contribution to the LTSN LLAS Area Studies Network. The conference was extremely successful, attracting nearly 50 delegates from various disciplines in addition to GEES, including visual arts, languages, anthropology, biological sciences, and planning.

In January, we ran a **De-briefing Workshop for the Pedagogic Research Programme**. As well having an opportunity to share findings between the five sub-projects, the workshop also enabled the participants to reflect back on their experiences and to discuss possible ways forward.

We have also been involved with two successful national events organised principally by other projects and Subject Centres: the Real World project's **employability swap-shop**, run in association with LTSN Bioscience, and Economics LTSN's workshop on '**Meeting the 50% target**'.

Our residential **workshop for new and recently appointed lecturers** ran successfully in May with 21 participants. As this is the fourth time that we have run such an event, the pool of new lecturers seems to be diminishing. Hence, we took the opportunity to open up the event to postgraduates who were 'aspiring' lecturers. The programme was slightly adjusted accordingly and this mix of participants provided a new and interesting dimension to the event. It is noted that several other Subject Centres are now also providing such events, and it is hoped that all of these types of activities might be formally recognised by institutions as a valid complement / supplement to their generic new staff courses.

In November 2002 we ran a two-day staff development event for new facilitators to support our programme of **departmental workshops**. The purpose of the event was to provide training and to widen the pool of GEES staff able to deliver our departmental workshop programme. The first day operated as a workshop on 'How to Run Workshops' for our new cohort of facilitators: this was run by Prof Chris Rust from the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development. The second day involved both the new and our more experienced workshop facilitators. The main aim of this day was to develop the specific workshop topics, their outline timetables and resources. This workshop development was continued after the event through the provision of dedicated web-pages providing resources and information from / to the workshop facilitators.

This strategic approach to the development of our departmental workshop programme has expanded our cohort of facilitators to well over 30, and will allow the provision of tailored professional development events for an increasing proportion of GEES departments in the UK. Twenty one

departmental workshops too place this year including two in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland and one in Wales. The topics covered include independent learning, student transition & retention, e-learning, work-based learning, and learning outcomes & assessment. Our departmental workshop programme remains one of the most important and effective aspects of our provision. Internal and external evaluations, and regular needs analyses have indicated that providing professional and curriculum development activities within a department is the most effective method for engaging the GEES communities and for enhancing our impact on learning and teaching in the disciplines.

This year we have continued overseeing the eleven **small-scale projects** funded in 2001-2002, and have just selected three projects to be funded from September 2003. The projects are funded under a single theme of **Learning and Teaching at the Taught Postgraduate Level**. This theme was chosen as it represents a growth area in the disciplines and one for which there is currently little learning and teaching support or resources. In order to assist the overseeing and management of this programme of funding, representatives of each of the projects will be required to attend an introductory workshop to develop their plans and share ideas. Additionally, they will also be required to attend a de-briefing workshop at the end of their funding to support the completion and dissemination of their work. This model was developed from that used in our pedagogic research programme and from discussion with other Subject Centres.

The LTSN-GEES **web-site** is maintained as a highly accessible (Lynx inspected, W3C CSS and HTML 4.01 approved) window on the Subject Centre. It provides detailed information on our main activities, including conference programmes and venue details, large and small-scale projects information, links to other relevant bodies and associations, and information on learning and teaching resources including our own Resource Database.

As well as serving the GEES communities, we are keen to share practice, ideas and resources with other disciplines. This has been achieved mainly through **liaison with other Subject Centres**, in particular through LTSN events and projects, such as the Generic Centre projects on Employability, Widening Participation, CPD Resources, and Linking Teaching and Research. In addition, this year, we are involved in supporting a network for Area Studies funded through LTSN Languages, Linguistics & Area Studies under the LTSN Development Fund tranche 2, and involving several other Subject Centres.

On a day to day basis we also share intelligence across the network, particularly with our most cognate Subject Centres (e.g. Bioscience, CEBE, and Physical Sciences), and with those geographically more accessible (e.g. Economics LTSN based at Bristol). This liaison includes general sharing of ideas and practice as well as discussion on particular themes and issues. For example, Mike Sanders has been exploring the pedagogic implications of using VLEs through discussions with key players both generic and in the disciplines. This study was followed up at the LTSN annual conference where we shared ideas with other Subject Centres. In addition, this year we supported events run by LTSN Bioscience, and Economics LTSN (as described above) and also participated in a valuable joint away day with Economics.

We continue to liaise closely with our relevant **professional bodies and subject associations** who are also all represented on our Steering Group. For example, we provide regular updates on LTSN-GEES at the Committee of Heads of University Geoscience Departments (CHUGD) committee meetings and contributed substantially to the Committee of Heads of Environmental Sciences (CHES, particularly through our Environmental Science Senior Advisor). We have also run joint events with the RGS-IBG, and ensure a regular presence in their magazine as well as those of the Geological Society and the Institution of Environmental Science.

LTSN-GEES is one of five Subject Centres working with LTSN Languages, Linguistics & Area Studies on an **Areas Studies Network**. It is expected that members of the GEES communities will draw on the new Area Studies Network as an additional source of resources, information and events. Although they will probably do this via LTSN-GEES, rather than accessing the Network directly through LTSN LLA, they have been encouraged to join the Area Studies discussion list and to look at the main web-site. In April 2003, we ran a successful symposium on Overseas Fieldwork as described above.

The concept of a **Knowledge Network** was developed to allow two-way 'intelligence gathering' between LTSN-GEES and targeted groups in our communities. In this respect, the idea of a pilot event for **Programme Directors** has been explored. There have been expressions of interest from a small number of individuals and discussions have been held to ascertain key themes and issues. The need for and provision of this event will be explored further next year.

The '**Enhancement of Fieldwork through Pedagogic Research**' project, funded by the LTSN Development Fund tranche 1, hosted its end-of-programme event on 9th January. Over 30 individuals from the GEES communities have been involved in cross-disciplinary / cross-institutional research projects and have all produced some extremely interesting findings. It is intended that papers from these projects will be published in relevant disciplinary and generic journals as well as being disseminated through LTSN-GEES. Another project, which complements this pedagogic research programme, is the Generic Centre '**Linking Teaching and Research**' scheme. LTSN-GEES is one of several Subject Centres which have been involved in collecting case studies from the disciplines. These two projects provided the basis for the LTSN-GEES residential conference in June 2003 which had the theme 'Teaching and Research'.

Work on our **Employability Project** began in February 2003 with the appointment of Dr Sharon Gedye to LTSN-GEES. This appointment was made possible by the award of a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) to Professor Brian Chalkley, on enhancing geography graduate employability. Many synergies exist between the LTSN and NTF projects, enabling them to run in tandem to achieve their aims. Initial progress made includes submission of a research paper to JGHE, the completion of two questionnaires to survey the expectations of undergraduates and the experience of graduates in respect to employability, the setting up of an employability interest group, and literature and resource acquisition and review. Numerous conferences and workshops on employability have also been attended, in part to begin the process of assembling examples of good practice in delivering employability through teaching practice and curriculum innovation. These foundation activities will develop into visible dissemination to our GEES subject communities towards the beginning of 2004, through the production of a staff development guide on employability and a series of workshops, seminars and conference presentations.

LTSN-GEES is actively involved in the Generic Centre project on **Supporting New Academic Staff**. The aim of this project is to provide discipline-based resources and support for the generic new lecturers' courses now found in almost all HE institutions. The discipline-based aspect of this project is of particular interest as it complements our residential workshop for new and recently appointed lecturers which has been running for three years. Additionally, our connections with the project leader, Sue Burkill (Head of Educational Development at the University of Plymouth) have enhanced our involvement in this project which originally grew out of discussions between Sue and our Resource Co-ordinator, Yolande Knight.

LTSN-GEES continues to maintain and develop links with **external projects and initiatives**. We have supported relevant funding bids submitted by members of the GEES community, these include three successful proposals to the HEFCE 'Improving Provision for Disabled Students' programme; a successful European-wide bid to develop a thematic network for geography education

(HERODOT); and a current proposal to the European Tempus fund to support education for sustainability in Russia. We contributed to the launch conference of HERODOT in London and will play a significant part in its further development, especially in the field of academic professional development. Other international liaisons have included work with the International Network for Learning & Teaching in Geography (INLT); liaison with the National Association of Geoscience Teachers; invited attendance at a USA-based workshop on Geoscience learning research; contributions to two major international conferences (the fourth International Geoscience Education conference in Canada, and the HERDSA conference in New Zealand); articles in PLANET from international colleagues; participation from colleagues from the USA, Australia and Ireland at our residential conference; and membership of the editorial board of the international magazine CAL_laborate. In addition, Steve Gaskin has been asked to provide a keynote presentation on LTSN-GEES at the annual national conference of geographers in New Zealand.

Closer to home we have provided dissemination services for several other projects including the JISC-funded 'e-MapScholar', and the FDTL-funded 'Real World' and 'Student Progression and Transfer' projects. We also work closely with other relevant organisations including the editorial board of the Journal for Geography in Higher Education (JGHE), and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). We have also endeavoured to build on and enhance our good relationship with the LTSN Executive and Generic Centre through participation in working groups, projects and events.

We are mindful of the considerable contribution to our running costs provided by the **University of Plymouth** and, hence, whilst the vast majority of our activities are directed at GEES throughout UK HE, we do endeavour to also support local activities wherever possible. This year these activities included support to the institution's course for new academic staff, contribution to a workshop for learning and teaching projects, presentations on widening participation, employability and SENDA, and a departmental workshops for the Institute of Marine Studies and the Department of Environmental Sciences.

Organisational Structure

During 2002-2003 our staffing structure has continued to work well. LTSN-GEES benefits enormously from its experienced team with a wide and complementary range of specialities and expertise. The subject-based Senior Advisors continue to provide invaluable support both to the central LTSN-GEES activities and to their individual communities. The Steering Group has also continued to play a valuable role in the development and enhancement of LTSN-GEES' activities. The Group includes representatives from each of the relevant professional bodies and Head of Department committees, thereby providing a useful overview of the GEES communities' views and needs.

We are keen that our three discipline-communities feel that they have ownership of LTSN-GEES and have, therefore, continued to develop the collaborative ethos initiated during the original Subject Centre bidding process. Recently, as well as offering many activities across the three disciplines (such as national conferences, opportunities for collaborative projects, and joint-authoring of learning and teaching guides), we have also extended our team to include a new cohort of departmental workshop facilitators as described above.

The balance amongst the core staff based at Plymouth is very good, with each having their own remit but with many opportunities for working and 'brainstorming' together. We feel that it is of paramount importance that each member of staff feels valued as part of the LTSN-GEES team, both for their own personal and professional benefit and to optimise the quality of our activities and services. As part of this ethos, we believe that staff development is crucial. This is undertaken through a formal appraisal process and through the provision of opportunities for personal &

professional development (e.g. through participation in relevant committees, attendance at courses and conferences, and through undertaking accredited award schemes such as the SEDA Fellowship and AUA programmes). This applies mainly to the full-time, Plymouth-based staff but the Senior Advisors are also supported in terms of attending relevant courses or conferences as appropriate.

Contribution to Key Sectoral Developments and Agendas

Activities Relating to Widening Participation (including retention)

This year has mainly been spent identifying key issues in the disciplines and seeking out relevant resources and information. We now have over 30 WP-related entries in our Resource Database and will be adding to them next year with further case studies and examples of practice developed through a WP learning and teaching guide. A briefing paper on supporting numeracy skills for a diverse student intake is currently being written, and articles on WP have appeared in PLANET. Additionally, we have contributed presentations on widening participation to local and national events including the HELP conference and University of Plymouth workshops; and facilitated a workshop at the 'Achieving 50%' conference run jointly with Economics LTSN. In addition, the CHES annual conference focused on research, recruitment and retention, and four of our departmental workshops have a WP-related theme (e.g. SENDA, student transition and retention). In addition, we are also involved in the Generic Centre discussion group on widening participation.

Activities Relating to Employability

Progress to Date

As described above, our Employability Project work largely began in February 2003 with the appointment of Dr Sharon Gedye to LTSN-GEES. This appointment was made possible due to the award of a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) to Professor Brian Chalkley, on enhancing geography graduate employability. Many synergies exist between the LTSN and NTF projects, enabling them to run in tandem to achieve their aims.

Initial progress made includes the completion of two questionnaires to survey the expectations of undergraduates and the experience of graduates in respect to employability, and literature and resource acquisition and review. An employability interest group has been set up to advise the project, consisting of senior academics in the three disciplines with expertise in various employability-related areas. A paper on graduate employability has been submitted to JGHE; a workshop on employability was run at our new lecturers' workshop; and two of our departmental workshops are on employability-related themes (work-based learning). We now have a considerable number of entries in our Resource Database on employability-related themes including 30 on work-based learning, 58 on key skills, 7 on PDPs and 46 on general employability. In addition, as part of our support for our host institution, Prof Chalkley is chair of the University of Plymouth Working Party on Employability.

Numerous conferences and workshops on employability have also been attended, in part to begin the process of assembling examples of good practice in delivering employability through teaching practice and curriculum innovation. These foundation activities will develop into visible dissemination to our GEES subject communities towards the beginning of 2004, through the production of a staff development guide on employability and a series of workshops, seminars and conference presentations.

Our Senior Advisors have been key figures as they all have considerable expertise and experience in various aspects of employability (including key skills, careers education, and PDPs). We have benefited from the assistance of our professional bodies and of Prof Pauline Kneale (an Employability Specialist and NTF award holder) who is a member of our Steering Group. We have also benefited from the expertise of the Plymouth University Careers Service with whom we work closely.

Promoting and building on existing good practices

Some work has already been done in the disciplines, mainly in the area of key skills. These were undertaken through previous DfEE-funded networks (Geography Discipline Network and the Earth Science Personal & Career Development Network), and FDTL projects (Geography Discipline Network, Earth Science Staff Development project, Science Education Enhancement and Development project, Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project). This work has been promoted and disseminated through our Resource Database, PLANET and departmental workshops. In addition, LTSN-GEES is working closely with two National Teaching Fellowship holders (Brian Chalkley and Pauline Kneale) whose projects are on employability themes in the GEES disciplines.

Using data (e.g. labour market information, alumni follow-up)

As described above, relevant existing data is being collated and new information generated, including staff and student surveys.

Working with key stakeholders (e.g. employers, careers advisers)

We are working closely with our local careers advisers, and have liaised with other key stakeholders through participation at Generic Centre employability workshops, CRAC conferences, and other events. We have regular contact with the National Co-ordination Team on Employability (ESECT) and are co-convening a regional event with them in Plymouth in September 2003.

Sharing project outcomes within a) your discipline/s and b) the LTSN.

The outcomes to date have been shared with other Subject Centres and the Generic Centre through the employability workshops. As described above, many items have been added to the Resource Database. The majority of the outcomes will be more visible in 2003-2004 when the GEES guide on employability is produced and national, regional and departmental events convened.

All activity in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

We have endeavoured to ensure that participation for all parts of the UK in our general activities has been enabled. All our events, publications and other activities are available for all GEES academics across the UK. We currently have a representative from Northern Ireland on our Steering Group and are seeking to re-introduce representation from Scotland and Wales after the previous members moved on.

Scotland

- We have contacts in each of the GEES departments (21 in total) in Scotland who regularly receive our information and publications.
- Two Scottish departments have received workshops this year: School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, and Department of Geography & Environment, University of Aberdeen.
- Two of our new cohort of trained workshop facilitators are from Scotland: Kehinde Oduyemi, University of Abertay Dundee, and Sheena Wurthmann, Glasgow Caledonian University
- We are currently overseeing two small-scale projects based in Scotland (both at Glasgow Caledonian).
- One department is involved in our pedagogic research programme.
- We have representation from Scotland on our Employability Interest Group.

Wales

- We have contacts in each of the GEES departments (11 in total) who regularly receive our information and publications.
- One department has received a workshop this year: Department of Geography, University of Wales, Swansea.
- We have representation from Wales on our Employability Interest Group.
- Plans are underway to hold our main 2004 residential conference at a venue in Glamorgan.

Northern Ireland

- We have contacts in each of the GEES departments (3 in total) who regularly receive our information and publications.
- One department has received a workshop this year: Department of Geography, Queens University Belfast
- Two of our new cohort of trained workshop facilitators are from Northern Ireland: Brian Whalley, Queens University Belfast, and Sarah Maguire, University of Ulster at Coleraine
- One department is involved in our pedagogic research programme.
- We are currently overseeing one small-scale project based in Northern Ireland.
- We have representation from Northern Ireland on our Steering Group.

Progress made with your partner RDN hub(s) and use of RDN/LTSN development funds.

Funding has been made available for work with SOSIG and GeSource. In addition, we are also working with PSIGate. Progress is going well and in accordance with the project plans. The majority of the funding is allocated to the team who provide technical support to our Resource Database and the remainder covers travel, subsistence and other costs associated with the management of the project.

Partner Sites / Institutions (formally contracted)

A formal agreement has been made with the three discipline-based Senior Advisors and their institutions (listed below). The Senior Advisors are funded for one day a week for LTSN GEES. However, it is with the individuals that the contract is made, not the institutions, so that, should they move on to new posts elsewhere, they would take their Senior Advisor role with them as appropriate. Our Senior Advisors are:

Geography:

Mick Healey - Geography & Environmental Management Research Unit - University of Gloucestershire

Earth Science:

Neil Thomas - School of Earth Sciences & Geography - Kingston University

Environmental Science:

Jennifer Blumhof - Department of Environmental Sciences - University of Hertfordshire

Funded Mini-projects

Writing Geology: understanding and improving the science communication skills of Earth Science students.

Simeon Yates, Communication Studies, Sheffield Hallam University

Postgraduateness of Vocational Masters Courses: an evaluation of good practice in the development of postgraduate taught environmental courses.

Lindsey McEwen, GEMRU, University of Gloucestershire

Professional Practice of Earth Scientists in Industry

Norman Moles, School of the Environment, University of Brighton

Contact the LTSN-GEES Manager, Dr Helen King (h.king@plymouth.ac.uk) for more information.

Evaluation

This year, our local evaluation has had three dimensions:

- External evaluation: Prof Harold Silver has conducted a small pilot research project on the impact of our activities on the GEES communities;
- Internal evaluation: various activities have been looked at through event evaluation forms and a small research project;
- Internal communication review: a small group of University of Plymouth Business Students have acted as external consultants to review our team-communication systems.

External Evaluation of Activities

An overview of Prof Silver's findings are given below, the full report is provided in Appendix B.

Although based on a relatively small sample of departments, this report has provided some rich information which complements the other, internally gathered data. The confidence-building aspect of the **New Lecturers' Workshop** was emphasised and the event also provided an introduction to LTSN-GEES as a 'future ally'.

Comments on the **departmental workshop** programme suggested that it was well attended and aroused much interest. Curriculum changes often occurred, though it was clear that the decision to request a workshop was generally based on an initial intention to make changes. The value of an external facilitator was particularly emphasised. The precise impact of a workshop depended more on local circumstances than on the workshop itself.

PLANET and the **web-site** were referred to by interviewees as a valued source of information on learning and teaching: Prof Silver stated that 'it is worth noting that PLANET was the only place where many interviewees ever read anything to do with teaching and learning.'

Impact within **geography** was to some extent different from that within **earth and environmental sciences** due to the longer history of work to support learning and teaching by the Geography Discipline Network (GDN). However, it was clear that this longer-term momentum of work in geography is being matched by the development of work in the other two disciplines: 'There was qualitatively no discernible difference in responses and impact that could be ascribed separately to the three disciplines.'

Interviews with **heads of educational development units** raised particular merits of LTSN-GEES. They tended to see its influence as parallel or complementary to that of their own units.

It was suggested that the variety of activities and interactions between departments and LTSN-GEES (including individual team members of LTSN-GEES wearing other hats) might have an effect on departments in many different ways and that 'people take away small bits and build on them'; with small changes 'trigger[ing] larger movements'. Staff at all level of seniority commented that LTSN-GEES was "fighting for us", "championing teaching", suggesting that our efforts to win hearts and minds and ensure ownership seem to be working. Interviewees were often anxious to move the discussion away from direct description of impact to the wider role of LTSN-GEES being there as an **accessible part of their professional lives**. As one lecturer stated: "I would lament the loss of the Subject Centre....it would reduce the quality of my working life."

The whole range of LTSN-GEES activities were often seen as contributing substantially to **continuing professional development**. Apart from tangible, immediate impacts, most impact is probably through the accumulation of small inputs (from the team and its events, PLANET, the

web-site, the Senior Advisors, support for projects, responses to invitations to request workshops, enquires to the Centre...). The fact that LTSN-GEES was regularly referred to as being accessible, a potential ally, and proactive, often reflected this awareness of a continuing momentum

Internal Evaluation of Activities

Our internal evaluation this year was based on seven sources of data:

1. Conferences, Departmental Workshops and New Lecturers' Workshops 2003, evaluation overview: Steve Gaskin, June 2003
2. LTSN-GEES Level of Engagement Database: Helen King, latest update June 2003
3. Report on Survey of LTSN-GEES Departmental Contacts: Judith Gill, September 2002
4. Departmental Workshops 2000-2001, post-event questionnaires: Helen King, June 2003
5. New Lecturers' Workshops 2000-2002, post-event questionnaires: Helen King, June 2003
6. Learning to Do Pedagogic Research: The Participants' Perspective: Helen King, April 2003
7. Learning to Do Pedagogic Research: The Management Team Perspective: John Bradbeer, March 2003

Further details of the Level of Engagement data are given at the beginning of this Operational Level report. The main outcomes of the "Learning to do Pedagogic Research" work has been reported at various conferences including SEDA / SRHE, HERDSA and our own residential event, and it is to be written up shortly for the International Journal of Academic Development. The responses to the departmental workshops and new lecturers workshops post-event questionnaires were followed by Prof Harold Silver in his work on impact.

1) The overall findings of these evaluations suggest that the content and structure of our events continue to be relevant and appropriate. In general, there is a consistency of positive evaluation where the individual or department specifically chooses a workshop topic, (e.g. through the departmental workshop programme or in a parallel session at the New Lecturers Workshop). Where there is a lower element of choice (e.g. plenary sessions) then evaluation is more variable. However, this variability is generally in relation to the immediate usefulness of the session to the individual rather than in the quality of the facilitator or content. All our event evaluations indicate that the quality of the content and speakers / facilitators is high.

2) We have a named departmental contact in each of the 174 GEES HE departments, and individuals from 148 of these departments have also been involved with LTSN-GEES activities or used our services at least once in the past three years. There are 26 departments which have never engaged beyond the level of departmental contact and some which have not engaged for a couple of years. 30% of UK HE GEES departments have received at least one departmental workshop.

3) 75% of our departmental contacts were telephoned during the Summer of 2002. Several said that LTSN-GEES was doing a good job and that our materials were interesting and helpful. Some contacts did say that they wished they had more time to study in depth all the literature sent to them and one or two people felt that we sent rather a lot of material. Some contacts are Head of Department PAs and, although they were happy to circulate material, they couldn't provide evaluative feedback. The general impression was that the departmental contacts were happy to receive and distribute our materials and that we are providing useful information. Many said that they were keen to promote our work further within their institutions.

4) The post-event questionnaires were conducted over a year after the workshops in question. Individuals and departments were asked to describe any change in practice they undertook as a result of the event. Departments seemed to request workshops for a variety of reasons including raising awareness / reducing scepticism amongst staff and supporting locally-driven changes. In many cases, the department thought that change would probably have happened anyway but that the LTSN-GEES workshop provided examples of practice, a background understanding to get all staff

up-to-speed, some reassurance that what they were doing was OK but with ideas for enhancement, and perhaps some motivation! However, some departments did report *new* ideas as a direct result of the workshop. The workshops were seen as an opportunity to learn new ideas as well as to reflect on practice, and the provision of a facilitator external to the department was felt to be particularly useful.

5) The New Lecturers Workshops were generally found to be very useful and the respondents would all definitely recommend (or had recommended) the course to their colleagues. Those participants who were also doing an institutional, generic course found the workshop to be a useful complement whether they attended before, during or after. Most were keen to be involved in a follow up activity but concern was expressed about time constraints, an email discussion group was suggested as the preferred means of networking. Participants liked meeting colleagues in similar circumstances, sharing experiences, concerns and practical ideas. There was also emphasis on the enhancement to their confidence. They reported a variety of outcomes in terms of changing practice. Some didn't do anything different – it was either too early to try new ideas, or the workshop was reinforcement of what they were doing anyway. Many had made minor changes mainly with respect to engaging the students more through e.g. more interactive lectures, or more clearly articulated learning outcomes.

6 and 7) The LTSN tranche 1-funded programme on pedagogic research and fieldwork was evaluated through a small research project: 'Learning to do Pedagogic Research'. This evaluation had two stands: the management team perspective and the participants' perspective. The overall findings were that the programme successfully achieved its aim of enhancing the capacity of the participants to do pedagogic research, and that the management team's initial concerns about the management of such a large project with a dispersed network of researchers were not realised. Some participants felt that the initial phase of the programme was a little rushed and that the experimental design phase could have been better. However, given the short time-scale of the programme this may have been unavoidable but it is something to bear in mind for any similar ventures in the future. The two main features of the programme that helped in its success were its framework of experiential learning coupled with support from experienced educational researchers. There was a strong feeling of energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment from both the participants and the management team.

External Overview of Team-Communication System

In May / June 2003, a group of four students from the University of Plymouth Business School undertook a 'live consultancy' project focussed on the LTSN-GEES internal communications systems. The students studied our current communications both within the LTSN-GEES team at Plymouth and between this team and the Senior Advisors. The brief was to provide an overview of our current systems and to offer recommendations for enhancement. The students recognised that communication was a crucial part of our operations and that the systems we had in place were generally appropriate for our type of organisation and way of working. However, they suggested that there were some areas that might benefit from an increase in formality, particularly if we are looking towards developing a longer-term strategy.

Implications and Actions for LTSN-GEES

Overview

The general outcome of these evaluation exercises is affirmation that our variety of activities and services is appropriate for our discipline communities. The quality of these activities is high and, although we can't necessarily please all of the people all of the time, we are generally getting a high level of satisfaction. The impact of LTSN-GEES on individuals and departments seems to be two fold:

- 1) It supports them in changing / enhancing their learning and teaching practice, though the extent to which this happens is usually dependant on their local circumstances;
- 2) LTSN-GEES is seen as an integral part of their professional lives. They may not use us all the time but they are secure in the knowledge that we are there if they need us.

Actions

- Maintain the type and variety of our activities and services.
- There are still some departments that are not engaging with us (beyond the level of departmental contact). We need to contact these departments again in order to discuss their needs and how they might want us to support them.
- Pedagogic Research programme: we need to bear in minds different learning styles / needs when introducing / developing new projects.
- The model of pre- and post-programme workshops to get different project teams together (Pedagogic Research programme) worked well. This will be applied to our selection of small-scale projects in order to develop a good relationship between the project leaders and LTSN-GEES, to help the projects network and share ideas with each other, and to support them in project planning (previous projects have occasionally been over-ambitious leading them to under-achieve / lose motivation).
- Our communication systems are working well but minor changes need to be made to enhance them for longer-term sustainability. These changes include running a 'divisional job clarification' exercise at the next team away day, where we will discuss our strategies and aims and discuss how the individual's roles go to support these.

Appendix A

Senior Advisors' Reports

Senior Adviser for Geography

Prof Mick Healey (with support from Phil Gravestock)

Overview of Activities

- Keeping in contact with the geography community through:
 - Involvement in activities of LTSN-GEES, Geography Discipline Network, International Network for the Learning and Teaching of Geography in Higher Education (INLT), and membership of *JGHE* Editorial Board, RGS-IBG Council, RGS-IBG Education Committee, RGS-IBG Higher Education Research Group, and Higher Education Research Outreach European Network (HERODOT)
 - Answering telephone and email enquiries about geography in HE
- Keeping in contact with the broader education community through membership of Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHe) Accreditation Team, the Teaching and Research Group (chaired by Dr Roger Brown), and activities associated with the National Teaching Fellowship, the Society for Research in into Higher Education (SRHE), ILTHE, SEDA, LTSN Generic Centre, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Represent LTSN-GEES on FDTL Project Link (linking teaching with research and consultancy in the Built Environment)
- Promoting collation of good practice examples from UK and overseas to contribute to Resource Database
- Helping to raise the profile of the LTSN-GEES through participation and presentation at geography and educational events in UK and abroad.

Observations on the UK geography academic community

Recruitment into geography is mixed. Over the last two or three years the removal of the MASN led several old universities to expand their geography numbers. This, in part has led some new universities and colleges to struggle to fill their places. In the last 12 months this has not only affected new universities and colleges in the London area, where cost of living for students is a further deterrent, but has also spread across the country. For example, geography has ceased to be taught at Sunderland; four staff at Coventry took redundancy packages; and job losses have been threatened at Portsmouth. Other cutbacks are occurring through non-replacement of staff who leave or retire.

QAA Developmental Engagements are occurring in 2003 in a number of geography departments, including Brunel, Chester, Gloucestershire and Royal Holloway.

Developments in Teaching and Learning Geography HE Projects

A new European Network for Teaching geography in higher education (HERODOT) had its inaugural conference at the RGS-IBG in March with over 80 delegates (<http://www.herodot.net>). (I represented LTSN-GEES along with BC and SG).

The Geography Discipline Network (GDN), in association with LTSN-GEES, was awarded £147,000 for a three-year project starting January 2003 on 'Developing an inclusive curriculum for disabled students studying geography, earth and environmental sciences' (<http://www.glos.ac.uk/gdn>). (I am Director of the GDN).

The first Geography Faculty Development Alliance (GFDA) summer schools, of the National Science Foundation funded 5-year project led by Ken Foote, were held in Colorado in June 2002 (<http://www.colorado.edu/geography/gfda/gfda.html>). They were informed by LTSN-GEES' residential workshop for new lecturers. (I helped tutor the first summer school as an international adviser on the project).

A new joint UK-US JISC-NSF funded project has begun led by the Department of Geography, University of Southampton on 'Digital libraries in support of innovative approaches to teaching and learning in geography'. The partner institutions are the University of Leeds, University of California Santa Barbara and Pennsylvania State University (http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=project_tl_geography).

The NSF online Centre for Global Geography Education (CGGE), directed by Michael Solem (South West Texas), has begun the development of modules that teach international perspectives on world geographical problems. (I am a member of the Project Advisory Committee).

New Resources

Over a dozen case studies of linking teaching and research in geography departments around the world have been put on the LTSN-GEES project Web site.

Other Comments

Relatively more of my time this year has been spent supporting the LTSN-GEES centre, through running workshops, planning the residential conference, mentoring colleagues running LTSN-GEES workshops, discussing initiatives, advising on project funding, and representing the Centre at various conferences and meetings. I also direct the 'Linking teaching and research in GEES' project, jointly direct the LTSN-GEES 'Enhancing the quality of fieldwork' project and advise on the LTSN-GEES 'Learning and teaching guides for earth and environmental sciences' project. During 2003 I am the Senior Advisor representative on the LTSN-GEES Steering Committee.

In the last 12 months I have presented 14 educational conference papers and run 6 educational workshops in the UK and the US. These have enabled me to act as an ambassador for LTSN-GEES.

Senior Advisor for Earth Sciences

Dr Neil Thomas

Overview of activities

This has been a difficult year for Earth Sciences as a subject, with some departmental closures/mergers (see below) and a continued general decline in interest for 'traditional' Geology courses. However, the resilience of the Earth Science community has been evident throughout with departments adapting to cater for changing student needs (see below). The main focus of my activity this year has been to provide advice to departments, or individuals, on curriculum change issues, particularly in HE transition/widening participation, assessment, problem-based learning, interdisciplinarity and employability issues. I have also continued to support existing projects (funded by the Earth Science SA budget), some of which have brought personal success in the L&T arena for their leaders. I have kept close contact with the activities of the newly-established Earth Science Education Forum (ESEF) and All Party House of Commons Committee for Earth Sciences and have informed discussion of L&T issues between Heads of Department at national level.

Departments visited

A limited departmental visit programme was conducted this year due to other work commitments and timetabling problems. Four departments were visited in person (Liverpool, Liverpool JMU, the Open University, Birmingham) but contact with fourteen others was continued via telephone discussions and e-mail communication.

Projects funded

Deliberately, only one project has been funded this year (curriculum change at Liverpool). The focus of project activity was to support outstanding projects, with two coming to completion (Durham, Liverpool JMU) and a further two nearing completion (Aberystwyth, Edinburgh).

Observations on the UK Earth Science academic community

Four departments have been subjected to mergers, closures, course cuts or staff cuts in the Earth Sciences area this year (Birmingham, Reading, Hertfordshire and Greenwich). All current information suggests that this type of restructuring may be a feature of coming years, with changing student interests (most notably a decline in interest for traditional Science-based courses) and political manoeuvrings. Earth Science subject providers will need to show considerable adaptability and innovation in course development to attract students and cater for the changing market. Pre-1992 Universities have continued to modify entry requirements, in general attracting students away from the post-1992 establishments. Course innovation in the pre-1992 sector has also affected post-1992 recruitment with several 'old' universities establishing similar courses to those run successfully at post-1992 universities. On the positive side, the new single honours Geology course at the University of Brighton has recruited successfully for 2003/4.

Useful resources

Notable resources have been developed, often through GEES-funded projects, in the following areas: field-mapping training, ICT in fieldwork, numeracy skills development and problem-based learning. Some of these resources are already available (e.g. Wren's Nest ICT field package, Liverpool JMU) and others will be ready for wider dissemination by the end of 2003.

Other L&T issues

An informal needs analysis has indicated that the two key current L&T issues concentrating the minds of the Earth Sciences community are employability and student recruitment/retention/progression. My planned activities for 2003-4 reflect this analysis.

Other comments

The majority of the 0.2 time devoted to LTSN-GEES this year has been taken up with preparation and management issues associated with central GEES events and projects. This, coupled with extra commitments at Kingston, has frustrated my efforts to reach the Earth Science community to the level I planned. I have another ongoing secondment (0.4 time) to the Faculty of Science at Kingston as its L&T Co-ordinator. This, coupled with no reduction in my teaching hours (equivalent of 325 hours!) in the School and tough new research targets has resulted in a very demanding year. Arrangements have already been made for the 2003-4 year to replace a significant amount of my teaching, which will ease the time pressures. I continue to gain satisfaction and enjoyment in serving the Earth Sciences community as its Senior Advisor and look forward to a successful 2003-4 year.

Senior Advisor for Environmental Sciences

Mrs Jennifer Blumhof with support from Chrissie James (at the RGS/IBG) and from Marianne Hall up to February 2003

Overview of activities

Environmental Sciences as a discipline has been experiencing the volatility much evident at present in HE. This has been exacerbated by the fall out from the RAE. As a consequence of this many activities have focused on networking support and sharing of expertise.

Conferences/Departmental visits/workshops

(not including LTSN GEES departmental workshops)

European Departments	= 2 (Brussels and Portugal)
UK Departments	= 7 (Hertfordshire, Birmingham, Plymouth, Manchester Metropolitan, Abertay, Brighton)
Conferences	= 6
Events	= 1
PBL (Presentations and workshops)	= 4
Teacher Training Workshops	= 1
Linking Teaching and Research	= 1

A detailed list is given below:

- September 02 Improving Student Learning Conference, Brussels. Presentation “Problem Based Learning using ES as a case study”
- November 6th 02 IES meeting discussing Audes
- November 14/15th 02 Training Teachers Workshop, University of Birmingham
- December 16.17th 02 SPAT Conference, University of Plymouth
- February 3rd 03 Interest sparked from a PLANET article, invited to run a Problem Based Learning workshop at Manchester Metropolitan University
- February 10th 03 ILT and LTSN Promotion Event at University of Hertfordshire
- March 5/6th 03 LTSN Annual Conference, inc. presentation of Linking Teaching and Research
- March 31st University of Hertfordshire Annual Learning and Teaching Conference – included advertising the work of the LTSN and LTSN-GEES (JB)
- April 16^h/ 17th 02 International Conference on Teaching and Learning in HE University of Aveiro Portugal. Presented a paper on Teaching New Teachers to teach Programme at UH- advertised LTSN-GEES and networking with Portuguese colleagues in ES- sent teaching material to them and linked with ES database.
- April 23rd/ 24th 03 University of Abertay Invited to meeting on Using PBL- used ES example/Planet and meeting on PDP- networking with Scottish Colleagues and making ES contacts
- April 27/29th 03 CHES Annual Conference and AGM. Two presentations Integrating Skills and Problem Based Learning and Fieldwork, promoted LTSN GEES, chaired session on the Pedagogic Research Project
- May 19/20th LTSN GEES New Teachers Workshop (workshops on Fieldwork and PBL)
- To come- the LTSN GEES Annual Conference in Coventry and on 8th July a University of Brighton GEES workshop on PBL.

Projects Funded

Out of those 7, three are specific pieces of research to further enhance the knowledge base of the discipline, one disseminates good practise ,one rewards high quality student work and two provide information to the academic community on key issues.

- August 02 John Connell Memorial Prize in collaboration with Casella, the Noise Abatement Society and the IES. Winner was announced Autumn 2002 and the prize is continuing into 2003
- Guides Project – continuing supporting the project
- Online External Examiners Database through CHES
- Dreamweaver Course for Chrissie to enable development of the CHES website to further disseminate information to the ESac
- Changes in the National Curriculum and how this is affecting Environmental Sciences in Further Education – research and report given at the CHES Learning and Teaching Sub Committee Nov 02 by Chrissie James
- Fieldwork Sites Database and Graduate Destinations survey, initial work done in the autumn by Chrissie, to be developed over the coming summer
- Collating information on the sustainable development agenda

Observations on the Environmental Science academic community (Esac)

Growth of postgraduate courses within the ES disciplines is most noticeable

Growth of collaboration between professional bodies within ES discipline (with the launch of the Society for the Environment encompassing IES, Casella, CHES) rising in prominence

Other roles of Senior Subject Advisor that links with LTSN-GEES work

Chair of CHES Learning & Teaching Committee

Honorary Secretary IES and Vice Chair of the IES Learning & Teaching Committee

LTSN GEES representative on the CHES Executive Committee

Academic Reviewer for QAA

Useful resources for the discipline

Linking Teaching and Research Project – 5 case studies from the discipline submitted by ESac on the GEES website

Guides Project continuing, drafts available on the GEES website

RAE: assisted in CHES response to HEFCE consultation, results available on CHES website

CHES list of Environmental Sciences courses currently on the website.

Ongoing work for Senior Subject Advisor and Chrissie James

Answering queries - for contacts

Dealing with LTSN-GEES queries

External examiners

CHES web site issues

Pedagogic research project work

Guides project

Linking teaching and research –case studies

IES/CHES interface

Fieldwork website

Graduate destinations project

Other Work of Chrissie James

Attended Herts for ES satellite meetings over 20 times in the period August 2002- May 2003. Is a source of discipline information, able to respond to queries from ESac.

Organised a forum with the HEFCE and ESac over the RAE, co-ordinated responses, attended Science and Technology Select Committee briefing on this at the House of Commons

Organised the CHES Annual Conference and AGM, presented fieldwork website, dealt with departmental contacts and feedback

Manage CHES website, purchase domain name and develop website as an information portal

Implement marketing strategies for CHES promotional material

Appendix B

LTSN-GEES evaluator's report 2002-3 'In search of impact'

Harold Silver, April 2003

1. Plans and activities

This has been my third year working as evaluator with LTSN-GEES. Last year I began testing out the possibility of conducting an 'impact study', and discussed the plan with the national executive or conference of the Heads of Department of the three subjects concerned, as well as with the LTSN-GEES team. The plan was then piloted as part of visits to three departments (one in each subject, in three different institutions – the **University of Liverpool, Queen Mary College, University of London, and University College Northampton**) and some of the evidence collected is incorporated in the present report. The total number of interviews conducted last year was 21 (including one group of four people).

There was discussion of the possibility that the LTSN-GEES study might form part of a wider LTSN study across the programme, but this did not materialise. I therefore went ahead with the LTSN-GEES study for 2002-3, the plan being endorsed by the Steering Group. The focus of the study was to be on a further sample of departments in a variety of institutions. Within the resources available this finally meant visits to two departments in each of three universities, plus telephone interviews. The process was to focus on follow-up interviews with a sample of staff who had attended any of the annual new lecturers workshops; the selection of departments also to include ones that had hosted LTSN-GEES workshops; and interviews with the Senior Advisors and the team at Plymouth. As last year, the intention was also to interview each institution's head of educational development. It was agreed that most of this activity would not take place until the spring term 2003, so as to allow as much time as possible for relevant LTSN-GEES activities to take place and to be reflected in the departments. My study has therefore been based on the following:

Visits to **Liverpool John Moores University**, School of Biology and Earth Sciences (including physical geography); School of Social Science (which includes human geography). **University of Sussex**, geography and environmental science (both of which have been re-formed as 'departments' in the university's restructuring). **University of Leicester**, departments of geography and geology. Interviews were in all cases with staff who had attended a new lecturers workshop or had arranged a departmental workshop, as well as an LTSN-GEES departmental contact or head of department. In small departments a discussion group was held with all or most of the department. Discussion encompassed aspects of the context.

Telephone interviews with individual members of staff at **University of Derby, Keele University, University of Manchester, Queen's University of Belfast, University of St. Andrews, University of Southampton** (again, mainly in connection with a new lecturers workshop or departmental workshop, and also exploring the context).

Interviews with two of the Senior Advisors (difficulties prevented the third interview) and a focus group discussion with the LTSN-GEES team.

In all six visits last year and this year I interviewed the institution's head of educational development or director of the postgraduate certificate for teaching and learning in higher

education. The total number of interviews this year was 45 (including three groups of five people each). One focus group had to be cancelled because I was ill. This year's interviews took place in February and March 2003, and the team discussion at Plymouth in December 2002. Everyone approached to help with arrangements for the visits or to be interviewed was extremely cooperative.

Questions covered (depending on the experience of the interviewee) included: how the event seemed to participants at the time, why it had been attended/organised; what (if any) decisions/outcomes had resulted in the short term; what longer term outcomes were planned or might take place; what (if any) other contacts with LTSN-GEES had taken or might take place; what contacts had taken place with Senior Advisers; whether *Planet* had been received and read (if so, with any outcomes); whether the web site had been consulted; how the GEES experience related (if at all) to in-house programmes in the institution or to activities of other professional bodies. The discussion with the team was intended to establish its perceptions of impact as a context for the study. The team make regular efforts to gauge the effectiveness of their activities, and part of these evaluation efforts provide them with insights into staff thinking and momentum generated by workshops and other involvement. Only recently have they been able to question whether and how participants' involvement has influenced teaching practices. Interviews with Senior Advisers explored their judgements of their own and wider LTSN-GEES relationships particularly with departments. Interviews were not taped, but extensive notes were taken on the spot. The size and nature of the sample and the related methodology did not admit of quantitative analysis of the data

2. 'Impact'

It was clear from a preliminary study of the literature – for example in industrial and environmental projects - that outcomes and impact (especially short-term) were extremely difficult to identify, except in situations permitting easy measurement (miles of tracks laid, number of patients seen, crops per acre...). The difficulties in the present study related to such matters as the small size of the sample, the often elusive nature of the outcomes, the reliance on opinion, the intervention of other influences... My presence as an 'independent' questioner probably weakened any tendency to try to 'please' the LTSN-GEES organisers, and many interviewees were willing to discuss both the importance of the centre as the origin of change and the presence of other influences. Impact, in the conditions of a university department, could be not only 'short-term' or 'long-term', but also delayed by unrelated factors or part of an amalgam of adaptations. It was often difficult to judge whether a continuing *intention* to implement was realistic, particularly in the case of relatively recently appointed staff who had attended a new lecturers workshop but felt constrained from changing their teaching by departmental cultures or institutional regulations.

Impact studies have been either absent or minimal in previous nationally funded higher education programmes and there is no systematic impact literature relating to higher education. The case for undertaking an impact study in these complex conditions nevertheless seemed strong, and in the event it proved to point both to important aspects of LTSN-GEES activities and to understandings that could follow from evaluations on a larger scale, using a wider range of methodologies. It was not possible in this study, for example, to combine interviews with questionnaires, to use focus groups extensively and to spend long enough in departments to attend relevant meetings, to examine documentation or to 'triangulate' judgments by also interviewing colleagues who had *not* been involved directly in LTSN-GEES events but who might have judgments about colleagues' involvement. It must be remembered that judgments reported here could be those of a single individual, a small group or a number of individuals within the same institution or spread across very different institutions.

Although the institutions and departments visited and where telephone interviews took place have been named here, in order to maintain the promised confidentiality detailed comments could not be

ascribed to particular individuals, departments or institutions. There are attempts below to discuss typologies, but the limited number of institutions and departments concerned has made this difficult. There is no attempt to establish differences (or similarities) of perception of impact amongst the three subjects, or on the basis of age and seniority, gender, nationality (some interviewees, for example, were on two- or three-year contracts or tenured appointments from overseas), or other possibly important characteristics.

3. New lecturers workshops

Relatively immediate outcomes were identified by some who had attended new lecturers workshops. One lecturer tried to make lectures more 'participative', another had radically altered tutorials to reduce the lecturer's role and encourage greater participation ('they used to be me teaching, now I engage students in discussion'). One lecturer introduced changes in the context of curriculum restructuring, simplifying his approach to 'catch student attention'. Someone working with him was impressed by his reflective approach. Another lecturer described how the workshop 'helped her to see the job' and pay more attention to students' worries. By far the most frequent comment on the impact of a workshop, however, was in terms of confidence building. There were important degrees of reassurance in being with 'people in the same situation'. The workshop 'increased my confidence through shared experience, hands-on tips', plus new ideas and strengthening existing ones. Most younger lecturers emphasised this increased confidence. One head of department described such workshops as 'reminders that teaching cannot be taken for granted, a form of consciousness raising'.

Confidence-building did not necessarily have short-term, tangible outcomes. Lecturers could refer to ideas gained as being still 'on the drawing board', perhaps pending more experience or responsibility. Some could refer to difficulties in introducing change, perhaps given the traditional culture of the department or university requirements (notably covering assessment). One described impact in terms of a store of good ideas: 'there may not be time to implement them, but the workshop gets you thinking'. When he was able to implement them, said one, LTSN-GEES would be 'a future ally'. Some others identified continued contact, however tenuous, with the centre itself or with other participants at the workshop as valuable, including as one part of a professional network. Although sceptical views were sometimes expressed by colleagues about a focus on teaching, some interviewees commented on the experience of the workshop being seen, for example by a head of department, as contributing something important in the long term to the department.

4. Departmental workshops

These were obviously well attended, aroused much interest, and pointed to possible outcomes of various kinds. Curriculum changes, including the production of new modules, were the most tangible results, though it is clear that the decision to bid for a workshop was generally based on an intention to make such changes. The original intention to do so was notably that of the head of department or someone responsible for teaching and learning in the department, partly in order to convince reluctant staff of the desirability of making the change. This was apparent, for example, in relation to problem-based learning or work-based learning and employability, a workshop on the latter of which persuaded the staff, and helped to shape a module and relationships with employers. Organisers tended to emphasise the value of such a workshop being run from outside, by LTSN-GEES as an independent body - with what one interviewee described as 'pedigree staff'. Whether or not a workshop resulted in immediate decisions and implementation could depend on circumstances, not on the workshop itself. Another workshop on work-based learning was intended to result in a new module, was received very positively, 'it gave us answers' to questions and pointed to important employer connections, but staff changes and other departmental factors had so

far prevented the adoption of the module. Outcomes therefore ranged from immediate effects, through ‘things happening’ to long-term aspirations.

A crucial point about these workshops is the fact that any impact related to the department, school, faculty or institution. This was particularly true where an LTSN-GEES workshop meshed in with acute institutional needs or policies – for example, where departments were being required to redefine their aims as learning outcomes, where disability issues and SENDA legislation were a major institutional concern, and where graduate employability was on the departmental or wider agenda. Departmental workshops in these cases were seen as of major importance, could attract personnel from outside the department (for example careers staff) and could have developmental echoes for the school or faculty, or for a whole institution. One university director of educational development, echoed in other institutions, said the following about such workshops (departmental or national):

‘They make life easier when we are trying to make developments in the university, when external compliance is needed. On the issue of disability, for example, negativity in the university is not as great as previously. They help us to plough fertile ground’.

LTSN-GEES was identified by some of these directors as being in the lead of the Subject Centres in tackling important emergent issues. In most instances, however, the impact and importance of its workshops were seen as inseparable from other influences helping to define intentions and attitudes.

5. Cumulative

The example of departmental workshops is not the only one that has to be seen in the context of other influences. References to the value of a particular issue of *Planet* (e.g. on problem-based learning or SENDA), or to a particular article (e.g. on C&IT, or on assessment and group work) might relate similarly to individual or departmental concerns, to inputs towards change from other directions, and therefore to a process of mutual reinforcement. Infrequently a lecturer might mention the use of *Planet*, or the LTSN-GEES web site or other activity as a result of advice to consult it from a tutor on the in-house postgraduate certificate in learning and teaching in higher education (PGCLTHE). One lecturer who had just finished the one such course said she had used the LTSN-GEES web site a good deal in connection with work for the course, and that she had located useful examples for the same purpose in *Planet*. It had therefore been possible to approach certificate assignments from the subject standpoint. This did not seem to be typical, and widely different relationships were perceived between experience of LTSN-GEES and in-house courses. The fact that in-house courses tended, in one lecturer’s description, to be taught with a ‘social science style’ could be viewed approvingly or disapprovingly, but were differentiated from the workshops’ more hands-on style seen as appropriate for the subjects covered by LTSN-GEES. The latter supplemented, for example, generic discussions of assessment with assessment in the particular disciplines. One Senior Adviser emphasised the role of LTSN-GEES as a form of continuing professional development. This was defined by some interviewees as supporting or contributing to CPD.

It is worth noting that *Planet* was the only place where many interviewees ever read anything to do with teaching and learning. In particular, new lecturers of whom the question was asked responded that they never read any literature to do with teaching and learning. If academics like these do not read about teaching and learning in books or journals devoted to these themes, ‘impact’ cannot widely come through these sources. *Planet* and the interactive initiatives discussed here therefore assume greater importance in relation to change, and enhance the significance of such impact as is identified in this study.

The LTSN-GEES activities discussed above, as well as its other kinds of workshops, support for developmental and pedagogical research projects and other activities were all visible to an extent within some departments, but a more detailed study would be needed to disentangle (if this were possible) its and other inputs and outcomes. Similarly, LTSN-GEES inputs themselves are not necessarily direct, but may be mediated through other organisations. Members of the team and the Senior Advisers were encountered by interviewees as contributors to other bodies (including professional bodies conferences and working parties and LTSN Generic Centre activities). In addition the Senior Advisers have connections with departments, though their activities and approaches may differ. They may fund and collaborate in activities; they may work closely with the national professional body or the organisation of heads of departments in their respective disciplines; they may run similar workshops for departments or more widely under other auspices; they write and are invited to give presentations; they are approached for advice and may point people to resources. They are part of the varied and cumulative, sometimes tangible often not, impact on departments, and both of the Advisers interviewed emphasised how these influences (including their own) might have an effect on departments in ‘a thousand small ways... people take away small bits and build on them’. Small changes, in this field as in others, may ‘trigger larger movement’.

6. Typologies

On the basis of this size of sample it was not possible clearly to differentiate between impact in departments of institutions categorised as ‘old’ or ‘new’ (post-1992). Similar approaches to the issues discussed above existed in both types of institution. Although the strength of the priority attached to research could account for some differences, the search for a balance between commitment to enhancement of teaching and to the promotion of research was not a monopoly of either type of institution.

The old/new typology became more important, however, when taken together with **departmental size**. A difficulty in this respect had to do with the very concept of ‘department’, since in one institution, for example, geography did not constitute a department (being divided between two schools), while in another a historical absence of departments had been replaced by the bringing together of geographers into a department for the first time. There was, however, a distinct type of large (approximately 25 staff) department, with a strong research commitment, in old universities. In such a department there could be less continuing contact between new lecturers (and probably others) and LTSN-GEES than in other departments. The reason was made explicit by a number of interviewees. The larger departments contained a wide range of experience and expertise; new lecturers with professional concerns were therefore more likely to consult colleagues in the department than to go outside. There was a greater sense of these large departments being ‘self-contained’. One senior member of staff used that vocabulary of his department, emphasising the range of age and experience in the department. A senior member of staff in another department emphasised the importance of size differently: ‘The department’s success in research terms depends on its being a large department. It has to have a good teaching programme for the sake of funding’. In both of these departments the younger staff interviewed saw the size of the department as a positive advantage, whether or not they had been able to implement any of the ideas derived from a new lecturers workshop. There was less interest in LTSN-GEES in such departments than in, say, a similar subject in a large school in a new university.

A typology based on **subject** could only be adumbrated on the basis of this sample. It was regularly clear that impact within geography was to some extent different from that within earth and environmental sciences given the longer history of work to support teaching and learning by the Geography Discipline Network (GDN). Indeed older geography interviewees were often unable to remember whether a particular workshop, event or activity belonged to GEES or had been before it,

under GDN auspices. It was equally clear that the longer momentum of work in this field by geography was being matched by the development of work in the other two disciplines. There was qualitatively no discernible difference in responses and impact that could be ascribed separately to the three disciplines. There were also, of course, differences between departments of the same subject in different institutions, mainly due to differences of departmental culture, programmes or personalities, just as there were differences between different subject departments in the same institution.

7. Perspectives

Given the way in which departments and individuals were selected for this study it was inevitable that these questions of impact would be discussed in a framework of familiarity with and largely positive attitudes towards LTSN-GEES. There were, naturally, gradations in these attitudes, and they would not necessarily be held by others in a department with little or no direct contact with the centre. We have seen that outcomes of departmental workshops were often ascribed to the influence of expert external facilitators, often within expectations relating to the department's existing concerns (SENDA, learning outcomes and assessment...). Attendance at a new lecturers workshop might result, infrequently, in a written report, sometimes in discussion at a departmental meeting, more often in informal conversation with colleagues. Distribution of *Planet*, notification of forthcoming events, contact with a Senior Adviser or the team at Plymouth, would most often be through the departmental contact person or head of department. Consideration of impact has to take account of these latter, to whose importance reference was often made by younger lecturers. With mixed views in a department about the balance of teaching, research and administration, these lecturers felt dependent on such senior figures for support in any efforts to make teaching or curriculum changes. One strong example was that of a young lecturer who had attended a new lecturers workshop and reported informally and positively to the head of department, who subsequently invited him to attend another LTSN-GEES workshop of a different kind. It was interesting that in some cases attendance at a new lecturers workshop was as a result of a recommendation from someone who had previously attended.

Such examples of the nature and importance of departmental culture or leadership were supplemented by perspectives on the role and purpose of GEES and its activities. Staff at all levels of seniority sometimes commented that GEES was 'fighting for us', 'championing teaching', legitimising activities, for instance in relation to GEES support for pedagogic research. An important feature of the latter was the funding of collaborative projects across institutions – something that was not normally possible through in-house development funding. Interviewees were often anxious to move discussion away from direct description of 'impact' to these wider roles, and therefore to their own awareness of GEES being 'there', 'accessible', part of the context of their professional lives. One lecturer vividly expressed what underpinned the perspectives of many others: 'I would lament the loss of the Subject Centre... it would reduce the quality of my working life'.

Not enough is known about the relationship, locally or nationally, between subject-specific and generic approaches to professional development. Interviews with heads of educational development or their director of the course on teaching and learning in higher education offered valuable insights into the work of LTSN and the Subject Centres generally, and in many cases to the particular merits of LTSN-GEES. They tended to see the latter's influence as parallel or complementary to that of their own units, and in one case to describe it as

'an emergent relationship, not competition. Subject centres are potentially wonderful because they represent the subject and their "tribal cultures"... Educational development is generic, but for it to be driven also within the subject is right and proper'.

Junior and senior academic staff did not share a uniform view of the merits of the two ‘drivers’. Although LTSN-GEES’s impact, as we have discussed, has to be seen as interconnected with other influences, including that of educational development within the institution, there was little evidence that staff interviewed saw much of a *relationship* between their experiences of the two drivers and their activities.

8. Limitations

The limitations of this study lie particularly in the sample, its selection, size and range. A small number of institutions had to be selected for visits, based on individuals known to have attended new lecturers workshops, and on departments known to have hosted workshops. Since the number of days available for visits was seriously limited, it was not possible to include institutions outside England, though individuals were interviewed by telephone in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The sample was then chosen to reflect a range of institutions, departments in all three disciplines and of different sizes. The sample was therefore in a sense self-selected, and an initial intention to hold focus group discussions including staff who had not attended GEES events was ruled out as a result of advice last year from national heads of department organisations. Departmental contact persons were sometimes able to suggest additional individuals to interview who had had contact with GEES, but avoided helping to sample ‘non-attenders’. Two discussions, however, included a majority of the departmental staff, including ‘non-attenders’, given that these departments had only five and eight members respectively. The largest number of staff interviewed in any one department visited was eight, the smallest number was three.

For a more substantial impact study of such a subject centre it would be necessary to include a larger number of institutions in a wider geographical range. Consideration would have to be given to supplementing the methodology used here with the use of a questionnaire (particularly to staff in institutions not visited), but not to replace these face-to-face and telephone contacts, which can point in unexpected directions and produce valuable discussion. Questionnaires currently used at or after GEES events are valuable evaluation tools but cannot focus on impact. A useful, brief questionnaire from the LTSN-GEES manager inviting comments some time after a departmental workshop did produce helpful responses, and fed into the selection process for the present study.

9. Highlights

- Attendance at an LTSN-GEES new lecturers workshop could result in immediate outcomes, but more likely longer-term intentions to change practice. The most common impact of attendance was described in terms of greater confidence.
- The outcomes of departmental workshops were largely ones of curriculum change (mainly new modules). Bidding for a workshop implied existing concerns in the department or institution (e.g. SENDA, work-based learning). Lack of impact or delay was the result of local factors (e.g. loss of staff intended to be responsible for implementation). The authority and expertise of an outside workshop presenter was crucial.
- The main evidence of impact related to the above types of workshop, but there was evidence of forms of impact from Planet and the web site, sometimes connected with other developments in the department or institution.
- On this scale of institutional/departmental sample it was not easy to make judgments about impact according to ‘old’ or ‘new’ universities or other institutions, by subject or by the experience and status of individuals. Large departments, notably with a strong research profile, tended to be more ‘self-contained’ and less likely to have sustained contact with LTSN-GEES.

- Impact as a ripple effect from staff returning from new lecturers workshops or other activities depended on departmental cultures, as represented particularly by the contact person and the head of department.
- Discussion of impact often led interviewees to comment positively on LTSN-GEES more generally as a force for the defence and enhancement of teaching, and on identifying issues of emergent importance for these disciplines.
- The Senior Advisers and their involvement both with LTSN-GEES and with other professional bodies could be important elements in bringing influence to bear on departments.
- There is an important interaction between LTSN-GEES (and subject centres generally) and educational development units and in-house programmes on teaching and learning in higher education, but too little is known about how the interaction works or might work. There was some evidence that initiatives by GEES in a department helped to legitimise, in the department and beyond it, aims and activities pursued within the institution (e.g. employability, pedagogical research). The whole range of LTSN-GEES activities were often seen as contributing substantially to continuing professional development.
- Apart from tangible, immediate impacts (e.g. a change in teaching approach, a new module) most impact is probably through the accumulation of small inputs (from the team and its events, Planet, the web site, the senior advisers, support for projects, responses to invitations to bid for workshops, enquiries to the centre...). The fact that LTSN-GEES was regularly referred to as being accessible, a potential ally, proactive, often reflected this awareness of a continuing momentum.

10. Policy implications

Much of the above discussion may have policy implications for the centre. The Steering Group and the team may wish to see this commentary in relation to future planning. There may be implications, for example, for relationships with different types of departments, or for the professional development in relation to other partners in the field. Many such issues raised in this report may be of direct interest to other subject centres and to the LTSN Generic Centre. There are implications also for future evaluation aims and procedures that will need to be considered.

Harold Silver
April 2003