

Welcome to *LTS News*

Welcome to the first edition of *LTS News*, an e-newsletter produced and distributed by the Education Section focusing on Learning and Teaching Support and Good Practice in the University of Cambridge. *LTS News* will be a bi-monthly update on LTS news and events in the University and each issue will focus on a particular learning and teaching topic.

The first issue examines *ON-LINE STUDENT FEEDBACK*.

REPORT OF THE GOOD PRACTICE LUNCH

On-line Student Feedback

The second Good Practice Lunch was held on July 22 2005 at CARET and was well attended. The topic for discussion was **On-line Student Feedback**.

Good Practice Lunch participants were introduced to some of the systems of on-line student feedback designed and operated by individual Departments and Faculties. These systems have been developed locally to suit the needs of the individual institution.

One example was the feedback system used by the Computing Laboratory where an on-line questionnaire has been in place since 1995. The Laboratory also operates an on-line instant feedback facility which relays urgent messages to key members of staff.

Lunch participants heard about the on-line feedback questionnaires designed by the Clinical and Biomedical Computing Unit as part of their web-based learning and teaching environment (ERWeb) for students taking clinical attachments as part of the medical course.

In general discussion about the use of on-line methods of student feedback several key points were noted.

For those administering questionnaires, on-line methods of feedback are easier to analyse and summarise, saving time on collection of data and chasing respondents.

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NEW MEMBER OF THE EDUCATION SECTION

In August the Education Section welcomed Heather McNamara as a **n e w** Administrative Officer.



Heather comes to Cambridge from the University of Auckland and

will be editing *LTS News* and maintaining the LTS CamCommunity website.

Heather would love to receive any suggestions for content or general comments on *LTS News*. Her email is hjm42@admin.cam.ac.uk.

THE FULL REPORT OF THE LUNCH CAN BE FOUND ON THE EDUCATION SECTION WEBSITE AT:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/gps/lunch/lunch2.html>, OR ON THE LTS CAMCOMMUNITY WEBSITE.

NEXT LTS LUNCH

The next LTS Lunch will be on **Monday, 5 December 2005**.

The topic for discussion will be "**Peer Review of Teaching**". Further details about the Lunch are available on the LTS CamCommunity website, the Education Section website, or from Heather McNamara.

Please contact Heather in the Education Section if you would like to contribute in any way.

Sharing Good Practice in Teaching and Learning **ONLINE**

LTS CAMCOMMUNITY: <http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk/dotlrn/clubs/sharing-good-practice/>

The Education Section has launched a **Learning and Teaching Support (LTS) CamCommunity** website.

CamCommunities is an online forum tool designed by CARET to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas, resources and information.

The LTS CamCommunity is the new 'first destination' for all news, resources and information about good practice in learning and teaching at the University of Cambridge.

The site will be used to publish *LTS News* as an e-newsletter and will also include a discussion forum and a 'document bank' for the sharing of resources.

Regular sectoral updates and news relating to good practice across the University will be included in the 'News' part of the site.

The LTS CamCommunity site is open to all members of the University Community. If you would like to join, and you are not already a CamCommunities member you may self-register with your email address and a password of your choice at: <http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk/>.

Once you have done this send an email to Heather requesting to be added to the membership list, or join the community from the 'Membership' page. ■

On-line Student Feedback

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On-line questionnaires may help to change the negative perception held by some students about paper-based surveys. Students may see paper-based course questionnaires as labour-intensive and largely irrelevant. This is often because student cohorts asked to give feedback do not receive the results of that feedback, or see any action resulting from their comments.

On-line student feedback systems offer an accessible and immediate format for giving students feedback on their feedback, helping to 'close the loop' and ensure that students can see the results of their suggestions.

On-line surveys are also often faster to complete than paper-based surveys and can be done in the privacy of a student's home or workspace, and at a time that suits them.

The on-line method is perceived by many students to be relatively painless and easy to complete.

There is some evidence, however, to suggest that on-line methods have a lower response rate than lecture-based, paper surveys.

Response rates can be buoyed by simple incentives for completing the survey, or asking students to complete feedback before releasing online results. Students are also more likely to provide feedback if they understand how it will be used.

Participants were briefed about CARET's Ostrakon/CamTOES on-line student feedback tool which may help to increase the number of Faculties and Departments considering moving to a system of on-line student feedback. ■

TQI AND THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

The national Teaching Quality Information (TQI) website (www.tqi.ac.uk) was officially launched in late September, together with the results of the National Student Survey (NSS).

The TQI site makes qualitative and quantitative data on universities available on-line. It is intended to help students compare institutions and subjects and allow them to make an 'informed choice' about where to study.

The NSS results comprise part of the information available about universities on the site. However, NSS data for Cambridge, along with data for two other universities (Oxford and Warwick), are not available on the site because the required response rates were not reached.

Contrary to what has been reported in some media the University did not 'boycott' the survey. The Cambridge response rate was just under 20%, compared with a national response rate of 60%. All Cambridge students were contacted by email about the survey, but many chose not to respond.

The University was unable to supply the survey organizers with student telephone numbers as these are not held centrally. ■

IN THE NEXT EDITION...

We look at providing local support to examiners.

WEB LINKS

LTS CamCommunity: <http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk>.
Education Section website: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/>
CARET: <http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/>

Teaching Quality Information website: <http://tqi.ac.uk>
Higher Education Academy website: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>

LTS NEWS CAN BE FOUND AS A PDF FILE ON THE EDUCATION SECTION WEBSITE, AT: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/gps/>, AND ON THE LTS CAMCOMMUNITY SITE AT: <http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk>.

OSTRAKON/CamTOES - On-line Student Feedback Tool

CARET (the Centre for Advanced Research in Educational Technology) has recently launched an on-line student feedback tool called CamTOES (Cambridge Teaching Online Evaluation System), based on the Ostrakon software system.

Student feedback is an important factor in the design, implementation, and review of University courses. The feedback received from students is also an important aspect of quality control.

CARET was interested in developing a University-wide tool for the efficient collection and analysis of feedback from students. They asked Faculties and Departments across the University about the ways in which they collected student feedback.

CARET found that a variety of on-line and paper-based methods were used in the University, and that several Departments were already using the Ostrakon/CamTOES system. CARET received positive feedback from these Departments on the efficiency and accessibility of the CamTOES tool.

CARET has now licensed the facility for University-wide use and it is available to any Department or Faculty, free of charge.

One advantage of CamTOES is that it allows

customisation of questionnaire forms to suit the individual Department (or course). This means that users will be able to include Department-wide questions and course-specific questions.

All students on a course list are sent an email containing links to the on-line questionnaire where they can provide their feedback anonymously. The system is able to track which students have responded, and send out reminder emails.

On receiving the completed questionnaires CamTOES will analyse the results and create a professionally-presented report including graphical representation of data, or Faculties can access the raw data for their own calculations. The system can save survey administrators a great deal of the time normally spent summarising responses.

Departments and Faculties have been sent information about the Ostrakon/CamTOES feedback tool. CARET will be running a training course for anyone interested in early November.

To find out more about the Ostrakon/CamTOES on-line feedback system contact [Harriet Truscott](mailto:Harriet.Truscott@caret.cam.ac.uk) at CARET or send an email to: ostrakon-help@caret.cam.ac.uk. ■

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