

## PROVIDING LOCAL SUPPORT TO EXAMINERS

### Report of the LTS Lunch



The first LTS Lunch for the new academical year was held on Monday, October 17 at CARET. Over 30 people attended the lunch, which was run as a discussion session. The topic was **Providing Local Support to Examiners**.

Participants were asked to reflect on how support for the examination process operated in their Department or Faculty and who provided support for Examiners. Lunch attendees discussed how that support related to the policies and guidelines provided by local and central bodies.

In some Faculties and Departments (for example Chemical Engineering, Physics, and Materials Science and Metallurgy) Examiners undertook a large amount of the administrative work. In other areas of the University Examiners received considerable administrative support from Faculty or Departmental staff.

Several lunch participants noted the growing administrative workload related to assessment. In most cases this workload fell to Faculty and Departmental support staff. It was noted that in the Faculties of Law and Oriental Studies the administrative burden created by student data requests for Examiners' comments had become so great that students were now being charged for this information.

To ensure continuity from year to year some Faculties and Departments have designated Continuity Officers who

attend Examiners' Meetings to ensure links with previous years' procedures are maintained. Elsewhere in the University a succession system is operated where the Deputy Chair of Examiners takes over when the Chair finishes his/her stint. Several Departments produce local guidebooks to ensure the continuity of advice given to Examiners.

Communication was identified as a key issue in the provision of local support for Examiners. The importance of communication from the centre on issues related to assessment (for example, advice on writing on examination scripts and the retention of examinations data; guidance on examination paper security) was emphasised. Communication between Faculties and Departments (for example between different Boards of Examiners in collating marks for shared papers) was also discussed. ■

**The full report of the Lunch can be found on the LTS Forum or on the Education Section website at:**  
<http://www.admin.ac.uk/offices/education/lts/lunch/>.

⇒ LOCAL SUPPORT FOR EXAMINERS DISCUSSED  
FURTHER ON PG TWO...

DISCUSSION THREADS ON PROVIDING LOCAL SUPPORT TO  
EXAMINERS HAVE BEEN POSTED ON THE LTS FORUM.

ADD YOUR OWN COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS TO CONTINUE THIS  
IMPORTANT DISCUSSION.

## NEXT LTS LUNCH

The next LTS Lunch will be on **Monday, 20 February 2006**. The topic for discussion will be **Plagiarism**.

Further details about the Lunch will be made available on the LTS Forum 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.

**L** The LTS Lunches provide an opportunity for  
**T** participants to raise issues relevant to them  
**S** on a particular learning and teaching topic,  
and to hear about practice in other parts of the  
University. The LTS Forum can extend and  
further the discussion initiated by the LTS  
Lunches.

**F** The Forum is a useful and potentially powerful  
**O** tool – but only if it has *wide and representative*  
**R** *membership* and can facilitate serious debate.

**U** We would encourage everyone to become a  
**M** member of the LTS Forum and 'sign-in' to the  
site regularly for news on LTS activities and  
events.

We welcome contributions to the Forum about  
LTS Lunch discussions, or comments on any  
learning and teaching issue of interest to you.



**NEW** on the LTS Forum...

Since the last edition of *LTS News* we have made a number of changes to the LTS Forum website, including:

- 'LTS In Practice' — available in the **Document Bank**. An outline of the development and implementation of the Strategy to identify and disseminate Good Practice at Cambridge.
- 'Development Opportunities' page — upcoming Staff Development courses, news from CARET.
- Discussion Threads on 'Providing Local Support to Examiners' and, soon: 'Peer Review of Teaching'. See the **Lunches and Forums** page.

We welcome any suggestions as to the form or content of the site. Email me at [hjm42@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hjm42@admin.cam.ac.uk).

# LOCAL SUPPORT FOR EXAMINERS

The LTS Good Practice Lunch highlighted several important aspects of the provision of local support to examiners, particularly the issues facing administrators in ensuring effective support.

Those with the responsibility of providing administrative support to examiners face a difficult, time-consuming, and often frustrating task.

Some of the issues discussed at the lunch are further explored here, with additional input from administrators around the University.

## Increased workloads

An issue that faces many administrators is the availability of resources and time to provide the highest level of support to examiners possible. In some areas of the University Chairs of Examiners are carrying out more administrative tasks because of limited human resources.

Also, some Faculties and Departments are experiencing rising numbers of exam queries. The Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages has this year implemented a £5 charge for providing students with copies of Examiners' note-sheets for each of their papers as the administration involved is so time-consuming.

One administrator suggested that it is important that students and their advisers know the circumstances in

which students have a right to appeal, and have a full understanding of the seriousness of making an appeal.

## Continuity

Continuity of information and procedures from year to year is crucial for the efficient operation of examinations systems.

The Computer Laboratory has a designated Examinations Administrator and Continuity Officer who maintains a detailed diary of the tasks to be done and advises Examiners of their timetable.

The Continuity Officer also keeps a file of policy discussions and past decisions on unusual cases, something which is difficult for Chairmen to do. The Officer acts as Secretary for all Examiners' meetings, ensuring oversight of the process from year to year.

Several Faculties and Departments operate a rota system for Chairs of Examiners. At least one of the four Chairs of Examiners in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages has always served the previous year, ensuring continuity in this way. The Faculty of Music is hoping to move to a system where Chairs of Examiners are shadowed by a fellow Examiner who would then take over as Chairman the following year.

Faculty or examinations administrators (with input from Chairs) are generally responsible for the updating of local

guidebooks for examiners, ensuring continuity of information from year to year. Several administrators noted the workload involved in this annual task, and the importance that the information is 100% accurate.

## Communication

It is apparent that both local and central policies need to be communicated clearly to Boards of Examiners.

The guidance provided by the Board of Examinations and the Education Section is recognised as comprehensive, although one administrator felt that Examiners tended to rely more on local guidance.

Examiners should be reminded from time to time of the existence of central guidance, and where to access this important information. •

>>> **DISAGREE? AGREE?**

**We want to hear about it on the**

**LTS FORUM...**

## CARET UPDATE

CARET offers a range of services to support learning and teaching. These include:

- **On-line environments for teaching, learning and research, provided free to any university member and backed up with user support.**
- **The on-line student feedback tool (formerly known as CamTOES), now available for the whole University. It is designed to improve the process of gathering feedback from students on lectures, practicals and group teaching.**
- **The production of digital content for courses and the development of web-based educational tools.**
- **High-quality video recording of events such as academic or public lectures, or workshops, and guidance on the use of video for teaching and learning.**
- **Education specialists who may be consulted by anyone planning, conducting or evaluating innovations in teaching.**

CARET is always happy to discuss informally any project that might benefit from their input.

## EXAMINATIONS INFORMATION ON-LINE

### LOCAL GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS

Examples of local guidelines for Examiners from the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Natural Sciences Tripos are available on the LTS Forum Document Bank at:

[http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk/dotlrn/clubs/sharing-good-practice/one-community?page\\_num=2](http://sage.caret.cam.ac.uk/dotlrn/clubs/sharing-good-practice/one-community?page_num=2)

### CENTRAL GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS

Board of Examinations - Examiners' Guide

[http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/examiners/examiners\\_guide.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/exams/examiners/examiners_guide.pdf)

Board of Graduate Studies - Information and Forms for Examiners

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/gradstud/examiners/>

Education Section - University Policy and Guidance Documents on Examiners and Assessment

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/exams/>

### EXAMINATIONS DATA RETENTION POLICIES ON THE WEB

Computer Laboratory

<http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/UoCCL/teaching/exams/dataretention.html>

Faculty of Law [http://www.law.cam.ac.uk/current\\_docs.php](http://www.law.cam.ac.uk/current_docs.php)

⇒ 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>.

### LTS NEWS

Education Section

Academic Division

4 Parson's Court

University of Cambridge

Editor: **Heather McNamara**

Tel: **01223 332583**

Email: **hjm42@admin.cam.ac.uk**