A Ten-Year Vision for Continuing Education

By Professor Jonathan Michie, Director

On my arrival as Director in April, I wrote to all members of the Department for Continuing Education asking for their views on our new vision for the next ten years, what they would like to see me do – and perhaps most important of all, what they would not want me to do! This was followed by a welcome meeting with the whole Department and a series of smaller meetings that allowed detailed discussions of how synergies could be exploited firstly across the Department and secondly between what the Department does and the activities of the University as a whole – currently and potentially. An informal academic forum allowed more ‘blue skies’ thinking.

The response and level of engagement has been overwhelmingly positive. There is a tremendous appetite to create a new future that will build on the Department’s proud traditions and heritage to strengthen what we do, thereby enabling the University of Oxford to have an even greater impact on the world than would otherwise be possible.

I also wrote to the Vice-Chancellor outlining plans to ensure that the Department’s new strategy fully engages all members of the Department and reflects the aspirations of the University. I’m delighted to be able to report that Dr John Hood agreed to support our strategy development over the next six months from his own discretionary funds, rather than having to use the Department’s reserves. This demonstrates great confidence in the Department’s future.

The University’s recent review of the Department gave enthusiastic support to the direction that the Department had signalled – strengthening our research culture, activities and outputs; further developing our postgraduate offerings; continuing our innovative and entrepreneurial approach to e-learning; building on our successful international partnerships; and widening our collaboration with other departments and schools across the University. These represent mutually reinforcing areas of activity that will allow a clear focus for the Department. They are also precisely what the University requires in order to achieve its objectives of greater engagement regionally, nationally and globally with the University’s alumni, with the corporate and public sectors, and with civil society more generally. Further investment in our web capabilities together with a revitalisation for the 21st century of our face-to-face lifelong learning programmes will enhance our ability to communicate the scholarship of the University of Oxford to far wider global audiences than have ever before been reached. The imminent appointment of the Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science creates an ideal opportunity to promote such dissemination activities.

My first month included useful discussions, primarily on new research initiatives, with colleagues from the Departments of Education, Economics, Geography, Politics and International Relations, and International Development, the Said Business School and the Centre for the

High-Speed Digital Engineering Week

23-27 June 2008

Led by Dr Howard Johnson, author of ‘High-Speed Digital Design - a Handbook of Black Magic’, the University of Oxford’s High-Speed Digital Engineering week offers a number of courses by five of the world’s leading digital design experts.

‘I can’t think of any place else in the world an engineer could go to get direct access to this amount of high-speed digital engineering knowledge and experience. This event is unique in the world of electronics design,’ said Dr Johnson. With a choice of nine courses and discounts for delegates booking onto multiple courses, this week is a must for anyone working within digital engineering.

For further information please visit our website:
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New Online Courses

Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning (TALL) is the Department’s e-learning course development and research unit. The TALL team is currently working on the development of a number of new courses for the Department’s online short course programme. A new course ‘Getting Started with Creative Writing’ was launched in Trinity Term; new archaeology, local history and English literature courses will launch in Michaelmas term 2008; and work is underway to develop further new online courses in English literature, art history, creative writing, history and philosophy for launch in 2009. Further details of all the online courses offered by the Department are available from:
http://onlinecourses.conted.ox.ac.uk/
New Programme with the University of Notre Dame

International Programmes has been asked to provide a short course in the early summer for members of Notre Dame’s Executive MBA programme. The four-day course will be held at Merton College for a group of 50-60 participants and will provide insights into the global economy. This follows the success of a pilot programme for the University of Notre Dame (USA) last autumn.

Saving the Victorians

The revolution in attitudes to Victorian and Edwardian architecture during the last 50 years was explored in a weekend school from 9-11 May. The event, Saving the Victorians, was held in association with the Victorian Society to celebrate its 50th birthday. The 15 speakers included Ian Dungavell, the Director of the Victorian Society, and John Gummer MP, former Secretary of State for the Environment.

In 1958, ‘Gothic’ and ‘Victorian’ were widely used as terms of abuse. Fifty years on, 19th-century architecture is better understood and liked, and is widely imitated. Its complexity and variety have been studied and industrial, public and commercial buildings are appreciated alongside churches and country houses.

The weekend assessed the impact of professionalism on the development of design, planning, structure and materials used by the Victorians, and the importance of Victorian conservation and restoration skills.

Fifty years of scholarship, led by the Victorian Society, has taught us to read and appreciate the Victorian and Edwardian built environment, which continues to shape much of the landscape of Britain. The weekend provided a unique opportunity to understand the radical nature of this change in attitude.

BBSRC Funding for New Course Developments

The CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Centre recently won funding (£80,000) from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), through the Modular Training for Industry Programme, to pump-prime the development of new courses for three of its programmes.

The BBSRC is supporting the development of three modules for the new MSc in Experimental Therapeutics. Additionally, the BBSRC is supporting the development of a new module for the Bioinformatics Programme entitled ‘Advanced Microarrays and Functional Genomics’. A further cross-disciplinary module entitled ‘Data and Metadata (‘Semantic’) Technologies for Bioinformatics’ that bridges the Bioinformatics and Software Engineering Programmes is also being supported, as is a new module in the Nanotechnology Programme in biomedical nanotechnology.
International Programme in Evidence-Based Health Care

CPD’s re-styled part-time, modular MSc in Evidence-Based Health Care launches in October 2008. The Programme is run in close collaboration with the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (Department of Primary Health Care). Drawing on the skills and experience of world-renowned clinicians and researchers in evidence-based practice, it will lead the way in the field.

Highly-motivated practitioners from the UK and abroad are enthusiastic about the Programme and are already applying for the MSc or specific modules; some may later progress to the DPhil. Attracted by the Programme’s flexibility, quality and capacity for specialist training, health professionals are seeking to benefit from the blend of theory and practical knowledge the Programme offers, and to apply these to both individual patient and health policy decisions.

For further information please visit: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/ebhc

Application deadline for MSc in EBHC : 26 July 2008

Collaboration with St Antony’s College

International Programmes (IP) is delighted to report that IP and St Antony’s College have agreed to work together from summer 2008. The first programme will be a two-week residential course in August 2008 for Junior Diplomats from Turkey. The academic director of the programme will be Alan Hunt, Director of the Foreign Service Programme.

Additionally, work has already started on the design of a two-week International Politics summer school to be held annually from August 2009. It will be directed by Dr Paul Chaisty and it is hoped that other Fellows from St Antony’s will be available to teach on this programme. The administration of the programme will be handled by IP.

John Milton: Poet, Patriot and Pamphleteer

Anna Beer (University Lecturer in Literature at OUDCE) saw her new biography of John Milton published in January 2008. There was extensive review coverage in the national press, and over the year Anna will be giving a number of talks at literary festivals and other events, publicising the book and the work of the Department. (Her very first talk was to the Friends of Lifelong Learning at Rewley House!) The series of events culminates in a celebration of Milton’s life and work at the Barbican Centre in December – exactly 400 years after the poet’s birth, and in precisely the area of London he studied, lived and worked.

Anna has spent the last four years working on the book, attempting to bring both the poet and his period to vivid life. She has gained praise from the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, who wrote: ‘It’s a crucial part of the biographer’s job to lead readers back through the life to the work. Beer does this very steadily and very well, and thereby gives Milton the anniversary present he deserves’ whilst Philip Pullman described Anna’s book as ‘a beautifully clear account of a richly complex life … Fascinatingly vivid … It’s the best narrative I’ve read of the life of our greatest public poet’. The paperback edition appears in November.

NERC Funds Online Education and Training Programme in Regional Climate Prediction

The CPD Centre and the TALL unit are delighted to be involved in a new project to create an online learning programme and community for sharing knowledge and practice in regional climate prediction models and data.

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)-funded knowledge transfer project (£203,000), entitled ‘REgional Climate International: PRoviding Online Climatological Applied Training and Education (RECIPROCATE)’ involves a partnership between Continuing Education’s TALL unit and CPD Centre; the Department of Physics; the UK’s Met Office; and an international consortium of stakeholders.

Online Collaboration in MUVEs

Led by David White, Co-Manager of TALL, the JISC-funded Open Habitat project is conducting a number of pilots to evaluate the use of the MUVE (Multi-User Virtual Environment), Second Life, for teaching art and design and philosophy students. The project will explore how the functionality of being able to collaboratively design and build structures in a 3D environment and the sense of presence or ‘being there’ that comes across when working in MUVEs affects collaborative group work. The Open Habitat project commenced on 1 January 2008 and will last for 15 months. Further information is available from: http://www.openhabitat.org/
Graduate Theological Foundation

Dr Robin Gibbons, Departmental Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies, who was inducted as Professorial Fellow of the GTF, University of Notre Dame (USA) last year, was invited to give the Graduation Address this year.

His topic was ‘Towards a Spirituality of the Environment’, and outlined the need for religious traditions to ‘recover’ their commitment to care and compassionate concern, including ‘stewardship’ of the Earth and living things. The address is part of Dr Gibbons’ ongoing work in the area of eco-theology.

Burford - Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town

David Clark, Departmental Lecturer in Architectural History, co-authored with Antonia Catchpole and Robert Peberdy a paperback book ‘Burford - buildings and people in a Cotswold town’. Published by the Victoria County History in the England’s Past for Everyone series funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the book covers the development of the medieval town, its plan and its buildings, and its subsequent development. David was responsible for the architectural chapters, and was also the ‘volunteer leader’ for work on the building history and photography carried out by members of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record, local residents and OUDCE students.

David was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London on 22 May 2008.

MSt in Psychodynamic Studies

The integrated four-year programme in Psychodynamic Studies is a part-time training route to the profession of psychodynamic counselling. The programme has been running successfully for some years and has recently received professional accreditation from the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), which means that graduates will be able to apply to the UKCP via the programme. Graduates are also eligible for individual accreditation through the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Graduates will, therefore, be eligible for membership of either, or both, professional associations for psychological counselling in the UK, which is important at a time when Government is moving towards legislating for the registration of psychological therapies.

Leadership Programmes for China

In 2008 Leadership Programmes for China will be delivering the fourth Advanced Leadership Development Programme (ALDP), following the success of the November 2007 course. The ALDP is designed for rising stars in Chinese national and provincial government and is sponsored by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and the Chinese Organisation Department. The programme is run jointly with Cambridge.

This summer, Leadership Programmes for China also plans to run public policy programmes for senior officials from Qingdao and Shanghai, higher education programmes for presidents and vice-presidents of universities and colleges from all over China, as well as some EMBA programmes for executives from south and west China.

News in Brief

Angela Davis, who received her DPhil in Local History in 2007, has been awarded a prestigious Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at the Centre for the History of Medicine at Warwick University.

Dr David Grylls, University Lecturer in Literature, gave the keynote address, on ‘Gissing and Prostitution’, at the Third International George Gissing Conference at Lille 3 University in March.

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