NEW MSc IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT
Department gains Royal partner to increase number of sustainability professionals

The Department for Continuing Education, in association with the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, has developed a new MSc programme in Sustainable Urban Development, to be launched in 2010. On 19 May, Dr John Hood, Vice Chancellor, and Professor Jonathan Michie, Director of Continuing Education, were received at Clarence House for the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation.

This exciting new part-time programme is aimed at early-career professionals from the development, sustainability, architectural, engineering, surveying and planning worlds. It will provide an analytical and integrated study of urban sustainability, urban design and the management of urban development, which should result in an improved understanding of cities, the causes and consequences of urban growth and decline, and alternative approaches to their future development. For more information: http://cpd.conted.ox.ac.uk/msud.

NEW COURSES IN VACCINOLOGY FUNDED

£45,000 of development funding will enable the development of three modules on aspects of human and animal vaccinology, including vaccine development, clinical trials and biomanufacturing. The funding, won by the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Centre, together with the Jenner Institute and the Institute of Animal Health, comes from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council’s (BBSRC’s) Modular Training for Industry scheme, with co-funding from the Medical Research Council (MRC).

FULBRIGHT DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR WILL FOCUS ON RALEGH, POLITICAL PRISONER

Dr Anna Beer, University Lecturer in Literature, has been named a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar. Her speciality is early modern literature, with an emphasis on the relationship between writing and politics, and her Fulbright research will focus on producing the first scholarly edition of Sir Walter Ralegh’s “A Dialogue Between a Counsellor of State and a Justice of the Peace”, which he wrote as a political prisoner, and which argues for the need for freedom of speech and the protection of parliamentary powers. Dr. Beer’s research will be conducted at the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

This project is part of a wider transatlantic initiative, the Ralegh Research Circle, which aims to facilitate the publication of Ralegh’s works (with emphasis on digital formats), and most particularly those works pertaining to his exploits in the Atlantic world. Public scholarship forms a significant portion of Anna’s work at the Department, and her Fulbright project will carry this forward.

Anna is the author of the highly acclaimed biography of the Elizabethan courtier, Bess Throckmorton, Lady Ralegh. In 2008 she published John Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer and Patriot. Both these biographies, written for a wide audience, draw on original research.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1916 T.S. Elliot delivered a series of six lectures on French Modern Literature under the auspices of the “Oxford Legacy for the Extension of Teaching Beyond the Limits of the University”, as the Department for Continuing Education was known in those days. The course was run in Ilkley in West Yorkshire.
THE VIRGIN MARY AS INTERCESSOR

The medieval cult of the Virgin is almost the story of the Middle Ages itself; gaining insight into it is an essential step towards an understanding of the period. A new book by Dr Cathy Oakes, Ora Pro Nobis: The Virgin Mary as Intercessor in Medieval Art and Devotion, traces the development of the Virgin’s role as intercessor from the twelfth century onwards from a devotional, liturgical and theological viewpoint. It is an iconographic study which looks at six types of images of intercession. Whilst the subject relates to Western European culture as a whole, the book deliberately focuses on English Marian devotion as a case study, an area often overlooked by art historians, but one which yields fascinating insights into the subject. For further information, contact: cathy.oakes@conted.ox.ac.uk.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS DIG THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Engaging the community in new investigations into the landscape, built environment, and social and industrial history of East Oxford is the focus of a new initiative, based within the Department for Continuing Education, and working in partnership with other parts of the University and beyond. The project aims to extend the University’s role in teaching and research, involving local people in actively researching and understanding the archaeology of their own area.

East Oxford (east of the Cherwell encompassing St Clements, Cowley, Iffley, Rose Hill, Littlemore and Blackbird Leys) has a fascinating history and landscape, with surviving traces of prehistoric activity, Roman pottery industry, Viking settlement, medieval communities, and civil war defences, culminating in the familiar townscape of more recent times. It is the city’s most populous and diverse area, yet is overshadowed in traditional histories of Oxford by the centre and the University. Excellent opportunities exist for new investigations in green spaces, gardens and parks, and townscapes, using geophysics, test pitting, building survey and excavation, coupled with research on maps, documents and photographs.

The project’s pilot phase started in late 2008 with a nine-month grant from the John Fell OUP Research Fund, which was awarded to David Griffiths as project leader. A project officer, Jane Harrison, was appointed, and has since been enlisting community groups, agencies, and individuals who are interested in being part of the next phase of the project. A major application for funds to support a three- to four-year community based programme with two staff posts is underway. Interested in volunteering? Further details may be found on the new project website: http://www.archeox.net.

ANONYMOUS WW2 POEM LIVES ON THROUGH MUSIC

Jonathan Darnborough’s cantata commemorating the outbreak of World War 2, Night Bombers, was given its first performance on Saturday 13 June 2009 at Malvern Priory. Scored for mezzo-soprano solo, chorus and organ, the work is a setting of an anonymous poem written during the latter part of the war. It was performed by the Malvern Festival Chorus, conducted by Iain Sloan, with Claire-Louise Lucas (mezzo-soprano).

MSC STUDENT AWARDED TRAINING BURSARY

Dr Mark Daniels, a student on the MSc in Experimental Therapeutics, has been awarded an MSc Training Bursary from Cancer Research UK. For full details of funding opportunities available to prospective students please see: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/funding.

STUDENTS: HAVE YOUR SAY IN THE STUDENT FORUM

The Department now has five student representatives: Maggie Henderson-Tew and Katarzyna Jakimowicz on the academic board, Elizabeth Newman and Sharon Franzoni on the Assessment and Teaching Committee and Lesley Carter on the Library Committee. They attend meetings and offer feedback to students, and they raise issues of general interest and solicit student comment via the online Student Forum.

All students are encouraged to take part in the Student Forum which, in addition to committee reports, has study skills advice, news of the Department, and an online Common Room where students can ‘chat’ and get to know each other across disciplines. You can visit the Student Forum by going to http://registry.conted.ox.ac.uk/ and either logging on with your personal details, or registering for a new account by following the instructions in the box on the right of the webpage.

If you are on an award-bearing course and would be interested in becoming a student rep, or if you have any questions about the Student Forum, please contact Registry: registry@conted.ox.ac.uk.
CREATIVE WRITING STUDENTS RECOGNISED

Paula Bardowell Stanic, who graduated from the MSt in Creative Writing in 2007, has won the Alfred Fagon Award for the best stage play by a playwright of African or Caribbean descent.

Another MSt student in Creative Writing, Dr Colm O'Shea, will have his poetry featured in a forthcoming major anthology, Voice Recognition: 21 Poets for the 21st Century.

AWARD CEREMONY

The Department's Annual Award Ceremony was held in the Sheldonian Theatre on 19 March. Vice Chancellor, Dr John Hood (pictured below), presided at the ceremony and presented certificates to 209 students in recognition of their successful completion of courses varying from Undergraduate Certificates to Postgraduate Diplomas.

The ceremony was also attended by more than 360 proud family members and friends of those receiving awards, 28 members of academic staff, and representatives from the Continuing Education Board, many of whom later joined students at a reception held in Rewley House.

£200K AWARD FOR CURRICULUM DELIVERY

£200,000 of funding has been awarded to the Department by the JISC e-Learning Capital programme. The purpose: the “Cascade” project, which aims to explore how technology can be used to enhance the delivery of curricula, and help the Department to meet the challenges posed by the Government’s Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQ) policy. Specific objectives of the project aim to: identify and implement technology interventions that help the Department achieve its aims and add value; develop models, toolkits and dissemination techniques that will maximise uptake and ensure that the interventions are embedded and sustained; and share the outputs of the project with the wider University and beyond.

The Cascade project commenced on 1 November 2008 and will last for two years. The project team, led by Dr Rebecca Lingwood, Director of CPD, and Sean Faughnan, Director of TALL, is currently undertaking an initial scoping exercise. The next stage of the project will involve wide consultation with stakeholders and an iterative cycle of development, implementation and evaluation of technology-enabled curriculum delivery models. Further information is available from: http://cascade.conted.ox.ac.uk/.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council has provided £250 million of funding for 44 new centres for doctoral training which will train over 2000 PhD students over the next five years. The University of Oxford has benefited by two newly-funded centres - Biomedical Engineering for Next Generation Healthcare Centre (led by Professor Alison Noble, Department of Engineering Science) and Systems Approaches to Biomedical Science Industrial Doctoral Centre (led by Professor Gavaghan, Computing Laboratory). The Department's Division of Continuing Professional Development is partner in both of these new Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs).

In addition, the existing Systems Biology Doctoral Training Centre, with which CPD is already collaborating, has successfully secured the renewal of its funding.

The CPD Centre will be providing taught postgraduate-level modules for the DTCs, which in some cases will also be offered to industry. Further information regarding EPSRC funding of DTCs can be found at this web address: http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/Content/News/NewCDT.htm.

INSIDER’S OXFORD

The sun came out, the magnolia blossomed and the 21 “Inside Oxford” participants, accommodated at Worcester College, relished a week-long chance to be Oxford insiders. This International Programmes offering is a wonderful showcase of departmental talent: Chris Day was the first to lecture (participants said it was worth coming for that alone), and through the week attendees had the chance to hear Kate Tiller, David Grylls, Cassy O'Brien among others. Malcolm Airs and two of Kellogg’s DPhil students, Helena Chance and Tony Buxton, led walks to hidden parts of the colleges and the University; the Provost of Worcester showed off his garden and provided drinks – as well as giving an amusing and enlightening lecture on the future of the University. At OUP, the Emeritus Bodley’s Librarian shared his excitement of some of the manuscripts he has handled. There was even time to vote for the Greatest English Novel at the Oxford Literary Festival. Interested in this course and others like it? Please visit http://international.conted.ox.ac.uk.
CHINA PARTY SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Leadership Programmes for China has just completed its first collaboration with the Party School of the Central Committee of CPC (Communist Party of China). Delegation leader Professor Hu Yan described the programme as excellent and looked forward to a higher level of contact between the respective institutions.

The programme, on sustainable development, took place in Oxford and London. It was funded by DEFRA and organised in conjunction with the Global Environmental Institute, a Beijing based NGO. The delegation was welcomed to Oxford on 16 February by the Director, Professor Jonathan Michie, and the closing ceremony was hosted at DEFRA HQ in London on 25 February by Jill Rutter, Director, Strategy and Sustainable Development, at DEFRA.

The participants were ten social science faculty members from the Party School and an environmental scientist from Tsinghua University. Our students are themselves developing a training curriculum around the themes of Environmental Policy, Climate Change, Energy Saving, Rural Development and Urban Smart Growth to be delivered from the autumn of this year to senior Chinese officials at mayoral and director general level. Speakers on the programme included Dr Dave Frame, Deputy Director of the University’s new Smith School, Professor Ian Goldin, Director, James Martin Institute, Professor David Banister, acting Director of the Environmental Change Institute and Dr Brenda Boardman, co-Director of the UK Energy Research Centre. The programme also included visits to the Carbon Trust and to Milton Keynes as well as a lively and well-received debate, “The Green Belt: To Build or Not to Build”, led by the leaders of Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils, councillors Bob Price and Keith Mitchell.

The feedback on the programme was positive and the portfolio looks forward to contributing further to the development of this new course and to a fruitful partnership with the premier institution for the training of public officials in China.

‘MOSAIC’ PROVES WHOLE BETTER THAN SUM OF PARTS

So much excellent information exists online, but too often it languishes for lack of an audience or larger context. What if one could take pre-existing content from multiple sources and repurpose it to create new online learning modules? And then make it freely available for further reuse and adaptation by other universities in the UK and beyond?

Enter the ‘Mosaic’ project—named for the art form that brings bits and pieces together to form a pleasing original work.

‘Ancestral voices: the earliest English literature’ is an online course developed by the ‘Mosaic’ project. It contains a rich variety of content sourced from museums, specialist databases, media organisations, academic project sites, university websites (UK and overseas), as well as material from reliable smaller organizations, and individual enthusiasts. Content quality is assured by a panel of academic experts from within Oxford University and outside. One senior academic specialising in the course content area praised the course as “a brilliant, original and inspiring resource.” ‘Ancestral voices’ went online in January 2009, and can be viewed at http://openmoodle.conted.ox.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=18.

The hands behind ‘Mosaic’ are the Department’s Technology Assisted Lifelong Learning team (TALL). The project was funded under the aptly-named ‘Reuse of Learning Content Programme’ of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). In addition to the ‘Ancestral Voices’ programme, TALL produced an induction module (introducing students to the concept of online learning), and a set of guidelines for authors. A case study was also produced, to disseminate lessons learned during the project. These materials (and more) may be viewed online at http://mosaic.conted.ox.ac.uk/wiki/Outputs.