TRAINING TOMORROW’S SURGEONS

The Department’s Continuing Professional Development Centre, in conjunction with Oxford University’s Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, has developed a new graduate taught MSc in Surgical Science and Practice, beginning October 2011. The MSc is a part-time programme, designed to be completed in two to three years by full-time surgical trainees.

The programme addresses vital areas of postgraduate surgical training, and provides broad-based training that will allow participants to develop their careers in a number of different directions.

Six modules cover surgical technology (including hands-on experience with leading-edge surgical technology such as the Da Vinci robot), leadership and management skills, teamwork and patient safety, clinical research methods, quality improvement, and medical education.

Each module includes access to online resources as well as one week intensive teaching in Oxford. In addition, participants will produce a research dissertation based on a work-related project. For more information see: www.conted.ox.ac.uk/ssp2011

MAPPING OXFORDSHIRE’S PAST

A comprehensive map of the past provides an excellent starting point for future exploration.

An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire, published in November 2010, presents the history of Oxfordshire in a way never previously available. Through concise and expert texts, accompanied by over 100 specially drawn maps, it captures current knowledge of the archaeology, landscape, buildings and history of the county. The Atlas contains the work of over 40 contributors, including local history academics Drs Mark Smith, Adrienne Rosen and Elizabeth Gemmill. All in all, twenty of the Department’s academic staff, tutors and past and present students in local history have contributed to the Atlas.

Prehistoric Oxfordshire, Early Modern Shops and Shopkeepers, The Civil War, Rivers and Canals in the 18th and 19th Centuries, and Industrial Oxfordshire: these are just a few of over 70 topics explored.

The Atlas is published by the Oxfordshire Record Society. You can read more about it (and find out how to buy a copy) in the research section of our website at http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/localhistory.php. You can also use our website to explore the Department’s many offerings in local history, from one day classes to Oxford qualifications: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/localhistorycourses.

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Department Director Jonathan Michie seeks student participation in focus groups.

‘Much is still unclear about the government’s funding plans for continuing education, but the next few years will be challenging.

‘Oxford University’s Department for Continuing Education began over 130 years ago for the purpose of extending Oxford’s scholarship to those who would not otherwise have access to it. Over a century later, and with more than 700 courses on offer, our mission remains the same.

‘However, the challenges presented by changes in funding for education are likely to be as serious as any the Department has faced in its long history.

‘We are seeking students to participate in a series of focus groups which will help guide future decisions in areas such as course development, fees and student services. If you are willing to participate, please contact our communications manager, Gail Anderson, via email at: gail.anderson@conted.ox.ac.uk.’
CREATING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

The Department recently welcomed the first cohort of students on the MSc in Sustainable Urban Development, our new part-time programme which brings together cutting-edge research and practice in sustainable urbanism.

The students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences: architects, urban planners, engineers, financiers and consultants.

One such student is Patrick Arnell, who has recently returned home to work in Canada after a wandering career that took him to Spain, the United Arab Emirates and Libya. Patrick is an environmental scientist for a large Calgary-based international consultancy firm focusing on the oil and gas sectors.

He was drawn to the MSc to leverage his expertise in environmental science in an urban context. Patrick said that he ‘hopes to get a solid understanding of the concepts of sustainable urban development and the drivers that are enabling cities to be more sustainable’.

On a personal level, Patrick is hoping to contribute to the sustainability of Calgary by setting up a local food production cooperative, although he also has aspirations for a political career, having run in the 2006 Canadian federal election.

Anne Marie Sowder, another student on the course, is a project manager at a medium-sized construction management firm in New York City. Her company builds museums, universities, parks, residences, and commercial spaces in and around the city. She is particularly interested in the integration of sustainability into the design and building processes and in convincing project owners and developers to spend the extra up-front costs to make cities and buildings more durable, usable, and healthy.

When asked what she was most looking forward to on the MSc, Anne Marie said ‘I really want to re-focus my professional life on sustainability, meet other professionals in the field and discuss the latest developments’.

The next module of the MSc takes place in February at the east London offices of our programme partners, The Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment. For more information on the MSc in Sustainable Urban Development, see: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/msud.
AN ALUMNUS’ LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Departmental alumnus Tony Harris worked for over twenty years as a technologist and entrepreneur before opting for a change: he completed our Foundation Certificate in English Language and Literature – and then went on to read English at the University of Oxford’s Regent’s Park College, where he recently graduated with a 2:1.

Tony has written an article offering advice to prospective students who are contemplating a similar life-change. See it in the Oxford University Student Union’s magazine Diversity, p. 230. A PDF is available on the Student Union website at: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/ousudiversity.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MIGUEL SIMÃO

Miguel Simão lives in Portugal. He completed our Diploma in Computing in 2009 and is currently enrolled on our Advanced Diploma in Data and Systems Analysis. More recently he commuted from near Lisbon to attend one of our weekly classes.

‘About four years ago, I searched the web for online courses in programming. I aimed for the best—the University of Oxford—and found an online Diploma in Computing course. I applied, and was accepted on the course the following year.

‘I live with my wife and two kids in Évora, about 130 km from Lisbon. It’s a lovely old town with a history rich in Roman and Muslim influences. But there aren’t many choices for employment or for higher education for those who want to go ‘beyond the limits’.

‘The Diploma course was amazing. I received knowledge on almost everything in programming, including Java, JavaScript, PHP, MySQL, web design, relational databases, history of the web – all part-time over two years.

‘After finishing the Diploma in 2009, I wanted to go a bit further, and also spend more time in Oxford. I thought to myself, ‘you’ve only one life, why not look for something really interesting and challenging?’ So eight months ago I left my job as head of the accounting department of a well-known clothing company, and I now support myself as a trader – something I’d done as a hobby. This leaves time free to learn more programming.

‘I’d had a little experience in HTML with the Diploma course, and I wanted to improve my knowledge in a traditional classroom environment at Oxford. So I applied for the 10 week Web Design & Development course and bought the plane tickets.

‘I’m still on the learning curve of programming. My ultimate goal is Artificial Intelligence.’

Read Miguel’s complete story at: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/students/alumni/spotlights/computing.php and learn more about our programmes in computing: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/computingcourses.

£50,000 AWARD TO EXAMINE IMPACT OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The Department’s e-learning unit, TALL, has been awarded £50k to investigate the impact of Open Educational Resources (OERs) use on teaching and learning.

Open Educational Resources are digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research. They can include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

The project will review current literature and will survey, interview and run workshops with teaching staff across the UK Higher Education sector. Findings will be published in June 2011.

The funding comes from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Read more: http://tallblog.conted.ox.ac.uk/index.php/2010/12/16/.

CASCADE: TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM DELIVERY WITH TECHNOLOGY

The ‘Cascade’ project, so named because improvements in technology have a beneficial knock-on or ‘cascade’ effect on other services, has been responsible for many innovations. Improving the student experience through the use of technology has been the focus of this two-year project in the Department, and it has been responsible for the development of a number of new systems and processes.

Focussing on using technology to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in order to add value, the project has built a new online assignment-handling system; created templates to provide online course support through a Virtual Learning Environment; developed new online resources for staff and students; and contributed to recent improvements made to the Department’s website including the online enrolment and payment facilities.

The Cascade project officially concluded in December, but the focus of its work will continue as the Department seeks to meet the challenges posed by the recent changes in higher education. http://cascade.conted.ox.ac.uk/
MORE SUCCESS IN LOCAL HISTORY

November 2010 saw the graduation of yet another excellent cohort of students from the MSc in English Local History. Of the ten students graduating this year, six received distinctions for their work and five have gone on to doctoral research.

Caroline Withall, a graduate of the course, said 'Studying for the MSc was challenging and rewarding, not just for the opportunity to have the Oxford experience, but also for the diverse and interesting colleagues I met on the course. The wide range of people ensured lively academic debate but in a friendly, supportive atmosphere.

'I was not sure where the course would take me, but it re-ignited my interest in studying, leading me to conclude a career change to academia was both possible and desirable. I decided to pursue a DPhil extending the research I had already done for my MSc dissertation, and was lucky enough to receive full ESRC funding.

'I am now studying for a full time DPhil in Economic & Social History, researching child labour in the industrial revolution, focusing on port towns, a previously neglected area.'

Recently rated one of the top courses in the country, the MSc, directed by Dr Mark Smith, offers a rich range of options in all periods of local history. For more information, please see: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/mscelh

CREATIVE WRITING NEWS

New anthology of creative writing: The Department’s MSt in Creative Writing programme has published their first anthology. Initiate: An Oxford Anthology of New Writing showcases the uniquely individual voices of this highly successful programme. Work of graduating students stands alongside new work from writers of international reputation associated with the course. http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk/jsp/id/Initiate/9780956477606

AM Heath Prize: Creative writing graduate James Benmore is winner of the 2010 AM Heath Prize for fiction. This prize, offered by one of London’s most prestigious and long-established literary agencies, is awarded annually for the best piece of fiction written by a graduating student of the MSt. Victoria Hobbs, director of AM Heath, says, 'Publishing thrives on finding new talent and we are delighted to be associated with a creative writing course that is innovative, fresh and bursting with talent.'

IN MEMORIAM

The Department was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of tutor Nick Kneale who died in a car crash in December. Nick taught creative writing for 15 years in our weekly classes and day school programmes, and had recently joined the Diploma in Creative Writing course as a core tutor. He was 44 and leaves a wife and two children. Nick touched many lives and will be much missed. Department members extend condolences to Nick’s family.