



Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-9

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CUSU and the University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-9:

Introduction:

The challenges that face teaching, and providing for pedagogy in a research intensive University, were the chosen themes of Professor Alison Richard, the Vice Chancellor, in her annual address to Senate House at the beginning of Michaelmas in 2006. She acknowledged the tension that can exist between teaching and research but reminded her audience how they complemented one and other: "At its very best, teaching invigorates research," she said. She did however call for a better investment in undergraduate teaching, and a change in attitude to promote its centrality.

The Vice-Chancellor's aspirations complement the launch of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2006-9¹ (ULTS). The strategy aims to make a sustained improvement to learning and teaching in order to guarantee Cambridge as a leader in teaching excellence alongside research excellence. Much of the University's strategy complements previous and current CUSU policy and efforts to improve the learning experience of students.

How CUSU's ongoing efforts, in particular the work of the CUSU Academic Affairs Officer, Education Officer and Faculty-Liaison Officer, College Academic Affairs Officers and Student Faculty Board Members, will interact with the University Strategy is explained in this document. It aims to provide a framework from which CUSU can develop its campaigning work and its interaction with the University on common issues identified by both parties. This document is not designed to be a wholly separate strategy document. Indeed, there are a number of issues on which CUSU may look to further over the coming 18 months that are not mentioned in this document. However, it was not the aim of the document to provide views that may conflict with the University LTS. Instead, this document is designed to accompany and complement the University's, outlining the position from which CUSU will be looking to approach a number of the issues the University has raised.

The intention is to review this document at the end of the 2007/8 academic year and for an appendix to be written outlining the work undertaken within the CUSU LTS framework, similar to the progress report written for the ULTS².

¹ The University Learning and Teaching Strategy is available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/strategy/>

² The University Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan Progress Report at September 2007 is available at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/strategy/actionplan/update2007.pdf>

Mission Statement:

Any attempts to improve learning and teaching within the University should ask us to question the status quo. Successive years of CUSU Council have passed policy mandating officers of CUSU to lobby the University for improvements and changes in many facets of learning and teaching. While widely regarded globally as a 'centre of teaching excellence', both the University and its students must continually examine current practices, adapting and changing to meet the needs and requirements of an ever changing student population in terms of both educational and social background. The formation of a University Learning and Teaching Strategy is in part an acknowledgement of this, but it would be foolish and complacent to think this to be a solution in itself.

A document that asks us to question whether what we currently do is less than optimal is at times uncomfortable. It asks us to question whether we can improve what we do, but equally in doing so can propose changes that we may be sceptical of or even resistant to. Yet obtaining a fully considered and accurate picture of just how good current learning and teaching practices are within the University cannot be fully effective if we are not willing to undertake such reflective measures.

The policies passed by CUSU Council indicate that there are perceived shortcomings in current practices and methods and these themselves should push both CUSU and the University to look hard at what we do. In taking some of the world's most gifted and able students, Cambridge goes on to produce a high number of world-class graduates. The question is what are the full reasons behind this and what price is paid in reaching this end product. In an increasingly research based assessment structure for funding and rankings, learning and teaching can often be viewed as the poorer cousin and become undervalued.

We must ask whether the standard and quality of teaching is consistent across colleges and faculties. Where it is good we should promote and share best practices, and where it is less so, we should strive to improve and better it.

Also, there is question of whether the current system allows students to reach their goals without an unnecessary arduous struggle. With large amounts of both resources and time being dedicated to individual student support and welfare, is the price students pay in obtaining a degree from our University sometimes too high?

A broad range of change and better support is needed for students and teachers. The University must continue to investigate if the teaching and courses are geared towards the contemporary student, as a disparity grows between how students learn at A-Level and what is expected of them in Cambridge. In some instances better support will be required for students to make a smoother transition from school to Cambridge, and to this end study

skills support in Colleges and the University should be made more readily available. In other instances it will require a reconsideration of teaching and assessment methods, which may be rich in tradition but can be elitist and archaic. The learning and assessment experience should be evaluated with a view to making it more relevant while remaining as rigorous as before.

Teachers must be supported to allow them to devote their intellect to teaching. Improving the quality and uptake of supervisor training is essential. It will require a broader provision of subject specific, and in some cases *paper specific* training. It is imperative that a culture is nurtured where excellence in teaching is valued and rewarded alongside excellence in research.

There are obvious student responsibilities in improving teaching and learning. Students should value the privileges afforded to them as students of Cambridge University by providing useful feedback when asked and fulfilling their roles as student representatives in Colleges and Faculties. The University has a responsibility to support student representatives and should direct resources accordingly to do so.

We have a joint responsibility to improve teaching and learning in Cambridge. The CUSU LTS aims to align student efforts with those of the University, to nurture an environment of better cooperation between students and academics in partnership, justifying the greater resources Cambridge receives with evidence of truly excellent teaching, and allowing the realisation of the possibility that students will be able to develop their intellect to its full potential. This goal will make Cambridge truly worthy of its reputation as 'a centre of teaching excellence'.

Summary of Strategy:

The CUSU strategy accompanies selected parts of the University's Strategy and articulates CUSU's role in it, which is often complementary in aim but divergent in approach.

List of Abbreviations:

College AAOs: College JCR/MCR Academic Affairs Officers

CUSU AAO: CUSU Academic Affairs Officer

CUSU EO: CUSU Education Officer

CUSU FLO: CUSU Faculty Liaison Officer

FBMs: Faculty Board Members

General Board EC: General Board's Education Committee

LLP: The Learning Landscape Project

Senior Tutors' EC: Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education

TfLN: Teaching for Learning Network

Strategic Aim	(Ongoing) Action	Appropriate bodies and student representatives
1. CUSU Strategic Aim One: Improving Learning Opportunities for Students		
1.1 Preparing to Learn in Cambridge		
1.1.1 Provision and coordination of skills courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. College responsibility b. University responsibility c. CUSU responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and lobby for the increased provision of skills courses across the University and Colleges. ▪ CUSU to continue making exam skills provision and updating skills support on the CUSU website for the immediate future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO ▪ CUSU FLO through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior Tutors' EC ▪ General Board EC ▪ College AAOs ▪ Student FBMs ▪ PSPG
1.2 Provision of Stimulating Programmes		
1.2.1 Examine whether the Tripos structure remains fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examine flexibility of the Tripos system, availability of subjects and whether the system is suited to the contemporary Cambridge student. ▪ Participate in discussions on the Bologna Process & the Burgess Report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Board EC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College AAOs ▪ Student FBMs

Strategic Aim	(Ongoing) Action	Appropriate bodies and student representatives
<p>1.2.2 Examine whether teaching methods appropriately underpin the programmes offered, and enable students the best opportunities to learn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and facilitate the work of the LLP to build a rounded and up-to-date database of how contemporary Cambridge students learn and are best taught. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO ▪ CUSU FLO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LLP Steering Group.
<p>1.3 Excellent Learning Resources</p>		
<p>1.3.1 Ensuring that learning resources, in particular e-learning resources, are appropriate for the education provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and facilitate the work of the LLP. ▪ Lobby for the use of applications and tools (e.g. CamTools, PDP) in Faculties. ▪ Lobby for the development and availability of online Lecture notes and resources where insufficient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO ▪ CUSU FLO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LLP Steering Group ▪ Student FBMs
<p>1.4 Appropriate Assessment</p>		
<p>1.4.1 Explore further how to encourage effective feedback on summative assessment bearing in mind the full range of feedback mechanisms available in Faculties, Departments and Colleges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To encourage Faculties to adhere to the recommendations from the General Board Education Committee of giving a break down of marks received for each question taken and making model answers available where appropriate. ▪ To encourage making use of formative assessment such as mock exams a standard practice across Colleges where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU FLO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student FBMs on Faculty Boards and Student Staff Consultative Committees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College AAOs

Strategic Aim	(Ongoing) Action	Appropriate bodies and student representatives
1.4.2 Reviewing the appropriateness of assessment methods bearing in mind the full range of assessment methods available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigating the suitability of current methods of assessment in the University. ▪ Investigating the current policies regarding resits and special circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior Tutors' EC ▪ General Board EC ▪ College AAOs
1.4.3 Exploring better ways of alerting students to the dangers of plagiarism and provide guidance and support to enable students to avoid plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage plagiarism to be taught out of the system and a mature use of Plagiarism Detection Equipment (PDE). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU FLO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plagiarism Steering Grp ▪ General Board EC ▪ Student FBMs
1.5 Feedback and representation.		
1.5.1 Improving feedback mechanisms and student representation of Academic Affairs in Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illustrate and disseminate better feedback and representation mechanisms across Colleges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior Tutors' EC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU EO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College AAOs
1.5.2 Improving feedback mechanisms and ensuring effective student representation in Faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illustrate and disseminate better feedback mechanisms across Faculties and Departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO ▪ CUSU FLO <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student FBMs
2. CUSU Strategic Aim Two: Recognition, Support and Reward for Teachers		
2.1 Support and Training		
2.1.1 Improving quality and uptake of Supervisor Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraging the better uptake and quality of training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO with GU <p>through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior Tutors' EC ▪ Student FBMs

Strategic Aim	(Ongoing) Action	Appropriate bodies and student representatives
<p>2.1.2 Promoting Pedagogic Support within the University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>CUSU to continue to push for greater pedagogic support, through the Review of Learning and Teaching Support and in other relevant committees.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO through: ▪ Review of Learning & Teaching Support ▪ General Board EC
<p>2.1.3 Supporting innovation and dissemination of good teaching practice as a means to engage more experienced teachers Case study: Department of Plant Sciences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the building of TfLN activities and other proven good teaching practices into a sustainable pedagogy support structure within the University. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO through: ▪ Review of Learning & Teaching Support ▪ General Board EC
<p>2.2 Reward and Recognition</p>		
<p>2.2.1 Explore appropriate structures to ensure recognition of and reward for teaching excellence and an expectation on all established academic staff to take part in learning and teaching activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To support institutional changes which value and reward excellence in teaching, such as those proposed in Chemistry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CUSU AAO through: ▪ General Board EC.

The Strategy:

1. Strategic Aim One: Improving Learning Opportunities for Students

1.1 Preparing to learn in Cambridge

1.1.1 Provision and co-ordination of skills courses

The stated aim 4.1.1(a) of the ULTS is 'preparing students to learn in Cambridge through the provision and co-ordination of skills courses'.

(a) What are Colleges doing?

Colleges are increasingly taking responsibility for study skills support. This can take different forms, such as the availability of a Literary Fellow (shared by Newnham and Selwyn) or weekly drop in study skills sessions with a Senior Tutor (Sidney Sussex). This year Freshers from St. John's College were given three days extra residence before the beginning of Freshers' week for an induction course and study skills sessions. There is however a disparity between the level of provision across Colleges and a need for a high standard across all colleges.

Among the reasons which make support necessary is the increased gap between A-Level preparation and the demands of a Cambridge Tripos. Students are coming from a variety of educational backgrounds which are often at odds with the Cambridge style of teaching and learning.

Ongoing action: *CUSU is continuing to work with College JCRs and through the Senior Tutors' Education Committee to encourage an increase and consistency of high quality study skills support at a College level. CUSU and Senior Tutors' Education Committee are building up a database of college provision of study skills for dissemination in Colleges, in order to make them aware of good practice within the University.*

(b) What is the University doing?

It was reported that "in more recent years teachers and supervisors have become concerned that increasing numbers of undergraduates arrive in Cambridge with less well developed learning and communication skills particularly in terms of essay writing".

In response, as part of its strategy, the University set up a Transition Skills (TranSkills) Project for 2 years from January 2008, to look at study skills including maths and essay writing skills.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU to support such initiatives and to encourage their proliferation. CUSU Academic Affairs Officer to sit on the Pedagogic Support Providers Group (PSPG) which will manage the project.*

(c) What is CUSU doing?

Every year CUSU organises Revision and Exams Skills talks and seminars. In previous years, termly study skills sessions were organised. We have developed, promoted and regularly updated a *camexams.com* website for information on exams and revision. No other Students' Union however takes on such a level of responsibility and cost. While the talks are useful, they are not very well attended and they and the website cannot substitute for a developed study skills support system in the University and Colleges. In May 2007 this concern was brought before the Senior Tutors' Education Committee. The Committee were sympathetic and took on our recommendation to compose a categorical account of study skills support in Colleges, with a view to encouraging their dissemination across Colleges. The Committee was also receptive to the idea that in three years time CUSU will not need to organise talks and sessions to compensate for a lack of provision in some Colleges.

Ongoing Action: *To continue making central exam/revision skill provision for the time being, while at the same time continuing our efforts through JCRs and the Senior Tutors' Education Committee to make Colleges take appropriate responsibility as providers of study skill support.*

1.2 Provision of Stimulating Programmes

1.2.1 Investigate whether Tripos structure remains fit for purpose.

Aim 4.1.2 (a) of the ULTS seeks to examine whether the current Tripos structure remains fit for purpose currently. The University plans to achieve this through a mixture of College, Faculty and Departmental surveys, as well as discussions with Senior Tutors and the appropriate Senior Tutors' Committees. Cambridge prides itself on the flexibility of the Tripos system, as well as the high standards of the courses and degrees awarded. CUSU often however encounters cases that shed doubt as to the flexibility of the Tripos system for undergraduates. In conjunction with the Learning Landscape Project findings, CUSU aims to effectively contribute to the debate, noting the implications that the Burgess Report and the Bologna Process may have in future on the Tripos system and structure.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU will continue to support the work of the LLP in researching views on the Tripos system. CUSU will also aim to collate evidence as to the current workings of the Tripos system, including cases where the flexibility of the system is called into question.*

1.2.2 Investigate whether teaching methods appropriately underpin the programmes offered, and enable students the best opportunities to learn.

The stated aim 4.1.2 (b) of the ULTS is to 'investigate whether teaching methods appropriately underpin the programmes offered, and enable students the best opportunities to learn'.

From January 2007 as part of the University's Strategy, four researchers were commissioned to 'map' and 'draw a landscape' of the current teaching and learning models across the University. The CUSU Academic Affairs Officer, Education Officer and Faculty Liaison Officer and the Graduate Union Academic Affairs Officer sit on the Project's Steering Group. The Project is expansive in its goal of mapping the range of ways students learn in Cambridge, whether it is through supervisions, chats with friends or internet sites, and is conducting research accordingly. The project will run for three years and in time will build a considerable data base of the different ways students learn and are taught.

The findings of this project will serve as a rounded and up to date appreciation of how contemporary Cambridge Undergraduates and Graduates learn. With such information CUSU will have a resource to draw upon in our efforts to encourage innovative and effective teaching and learning fit for the contemporary Cambridge students.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU will continue to support the work of the LLP and report on its progress.*

1.3 Excellent Learning Resources

1.3.1 Ensuring that learning resources, in particular e-learning resources, are appropriate for the teaching provided

The ULTS stated aim 4.1.4 (b) under 'Excellent Learning Resources' is to ensure that learning resources and in particular e-learning resources, are appropriate for the teaching provided.

Participation on the LLP steering group will help determine the various useful media through which contemporary Cambridge students learn. At the same time CUSU continues to lobby for improvements in online resources, such as the availability of lecture notes³, where appropriate. Students miss lectures from time to time for different reasons, whether it is due to illness or Saturday

³ In recent years successive CUSU Academic Affairs Officers have campaigned for a greater availability of online resources. Most recently, from March to April 2007, the CUSU Welfare Officer and AAO worked through the Joint Committee on Disability (JCD) and the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) to request that more Faculties make lecture notes available online under their obligations to the Disability Discrimination Act. The GBEC however ruled that to make such availability was an 'unreasonable adjustment' and therefore Faculties were not obliged to make it.

lectures due to religious reasons, and can benefit from online lecture notes. Students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) can also benefit from an access to online lecture notes. Departments such as Geography and Plant Sciences have a pioneering approach to online resources and it is hoped that other Faculties follow suit. In its guidelines for good practice the University recommends that lecture notes are made available online where possible. The University has also invested in the development of CamTools⁴, which is online software to be shared by students and teachers that allows for the easy uploading of lecture notes, a Wiki function for students working on projects together and many other useful functions.

Ongoing action: *To continue supporting the LLP's research through participation on the Steering group, while at the same time working through Student FBMs, Student Staff Consultative Committees, and the General Board's Education Committee to lobby for the use of applications and tools such as CamTools and the availability of lecture notes where appropriate.*

1.4 Appropriate Assessment

1.4.1 Explore further how to encourage effective feedback on summative assessment bearing in mind the full range of feedback mechanisms available in Faculties, Departments and Colleges

The stated aim 4.1.5 (b) of the ULTS under 'Appropriate Assessment' is to 'explore further how to encourage effective feedback on summative assessment bearing in mind the full range of feedback mechanisms available in Faculties, Departments and Colleges'.

A motion passed at an open meeting in November 2006 mandated the CUSU Academic Affairs Officer to lobby the University to make examination scripts available to students in a bid to improve feedback and transparency in the examination process. A CUSU position paper was produced to accompany a University paper about the practice and presented to the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC).

The majority of the Board were opposed to the return of scripts, for reasons of exposing examiners to in their view, an unnecessary, unwarranted and potentially damaging level of transparency. The Board did however agree and recommend that Faculties should make their robust examining procedures (double marking, practices of Board of Examiners and External Examiners) clearer to students, and that providing a breakdown of marks received for each question taken and model answers (where appropriate) would be useful.

Science Students, it is expected, will therefore be afforded greater transparency and feedback if these recommendations are followed. Some Arts Faculties however are likely to frown upon the suggestion of having

⁴ See online at <https://camtools.caret.cam.ac.uk> for more information.

model answers by arguing that there is 'no such thing as a model answer'. To push Arts Faculties into recognising that a greater explanation could be offered on what, for example, amounts to a low 2.i or high 2.i or a 1st, Faculty Board members and students in Faculties will need to put pressure on their Faculties. Many students in their first and second year, and sometimes third, do not find that the present overly generic guidelines are adequate and from previous assessment in secondary schools, are used to a much clearer guidance accompanied by model answers. While this exact form of marking guidance may not be appropriate to the less rigid Cambridge Tripos (in comparison to the A-Level system), clearer guidance as to what students should be working towards and aiming to demonstrate in assessment is highly desirable.

The CUSU paper recognised that while the availability of scripts could allow for feedback, there were other better means to provide feedback such as through mock exams, which are a standard practice in some Colleges and disciplines. Bearing in mind the range of feedback mechanisms available in Cambridge, particularly through the supervision system, it would seem appropriate to pursue the object of receiving better feedback through these rather than through making examination scripts available, which is not only strongly opposed by examiners but highly resource intensive too.

Ongoing action: *CUSU to encourage Faculties, through Faculty Board members, to adhere to the General Board's Education Committee recommendations of giving a break down of marks received for each question taken and making model answers available where appropriate. CUSU to continue to work through College Academic Affairs Officers to inform colleges of good practice and to further campaign for and promote greater formative assessment to provide feedback opportunities (such as mock exams) where appropriate.*

1.4.2 Reviewing the appropriateness of assessment methods bearing in mind the full range of assessment methods available

The ULTS aim 4.1.5 is 'Appropriate Assessment'. CUSU notes however that the assessment methods used in Cambridge bear great resemblance to those that have been around for many years. CUSU recognises though that the type of students attending University is not the same as those students who attended historically in the past. This, along with an increasing financial investment on the part of the student, means that CUSU believes that it is necessary to investigate if Cambridge's old methods should remain unchanged.

Students' class mark is predominantly based on sitting 3 hour exams taken in a short space of time in their final year. At a time where other leading universities in the UK are using an increasingly wider range of assessment methods, including a significant amount of credit based work such as projects and presentations; it should be examined whether the 3 hour exam system provides a true reflection of the academic ability of a Cambridge student.

Faculties should investigate whether a greater range of academic ability and skills should be assessed, as well as addressing the incongruity between the skills developed in supervision work and those currently assessed. Further, the University must recognise the detriment caused to many students by basing their class solely on these small number of 3 hour papers at the end of their degree, with no ability to resit them. While there are resource issues involved, the University must recognise the high price we currently pay for the processes we have in place in terms of resources devoted to them across both Colleges and the University as a whole.

Ongoing action: *CUSU Academic Affairs Officer to continue to work and inform discussion with the Senior Tutors' Education Committee and General Board Education Committee in examining the appropriateness of current methods and possible scope for reviewing them. CUSU Academic Affairs Officer and CUSU Education Officer to work with College Academic Affairs Officers to collate student views and examples of cases that demonstrate flaws in the current method of assessment. CUSU Academic Affairs Officer to raise issue of 'bunched timetabling' with the Board of Examinations.*

1.4.3 Exploring better ways of alerting students to the dangers of plagiarism and provide guidance and support to enable students to avoid plagiarism

The stated aim 4.1.5 (c) of the ULTS under 'Appropriate Assessment' is to 'explore better ways of alerting students to the dangers of plagiarism and provide guidance and support to enable students to avoid plagiarism'.

The Board of Graduate Studies has well developed plagiarism policy, with clear guidelines in their graduate handbook, tutorial plans and disciplinary measures. The Board of Examinations have a less coordinated and developed approach. Progress however was made in May 2007 when the University organised a Plagiarism Awareness Day and launched an awareness website, after the CUSU Academic Affairs Officer made a request to the General Board's Education Committee in March 2007. A necessary development however is for referencing skills to be incorporated into the teaching courses in Faculties and Supervisions, and for the raising of awareness of the value of good academic techniques.

The use of plagiarism detection equipment known as 'Turnitin' must be monitored. It is imperative that it is only used in cases of suspected plagiarism when adequate consent is given by students. The equipment should be valued for its use as a tutorial tool in teaching students how to avoid plagiarism and learning how to overcome accidental plagiarism. During May 2007 the Board of Graduate Studies and Board of Examinations decided to and followed advice not to use the equipment after concerns were raised by CUSU. It is important that the General Board's expressed intention is pursued of teaching plagiarism out of the system rather than by punishing it out.

Ongoing Action: *Through sitting on the University's Plagiarism Steering Group and Student Faculty Board Members the CUSU Academic Affairs Officer will encourage for plagiarism to be taught out of the system and a mature use of Plagiarism Detection Equipment.*

1.5 Feedback and Representation

1.5.1 Improving feedback mechanisms and student representation of Academic Affairs in Colleges

To improve teaching, students should have available and make use of comprehensive feedback mechanisms in their Colleges. These mechanisms should allow for both good practices and bad practices to be drawn to the attention of relevant College authorities. Students should be assured by and have appropriate knowledge of the consequences of their feedback. Some Colleges compel students to fill feedback forms in and make great efforts to ensure they do by, for example, allowing for them to be filled in electronically and sent by email.

Colleges and CUSU should encourage an active role for student representatives of Academic Affairs in Colleges. Some College Academic Affairs Officers are afforded fortnightly meetings with Senior Tutors or representation on College Teaching Committees. Other Officers however have less well defined roles and little opportunity to communicate on behalf of students to College authorities, thereby curtailing a potentially positive engagement between Colleges and their students over academic affairs.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU to work through Senior Tutors' Education Committee and College JCRs to ensure dissemination of good practice in order to promote better feedback and representation mechanisms across Colleges.*

1.5.2 Improving feedback mechanisms and ensuring effective student representation in Faculties

To improve teaching, students should have available and make use of comprehensive feedback mechanisms within their Faculties also. These mechanisms should allow for both good practices and bad practices to be drawn to the attention of relevant Faculty staff. Students should be assured by and have appropriate knowledge of the consequences of their feedback. While it is often common that Faculties will have feedback forms, the consequence of filling these forms in is often non-apparent. CUSU should encourage Faculties through the Student Faculty Board Members to be open regarding how they use the feedback and to "close the loop"; so that students feel their feedback is being acted upon. Equally as with Colleges, some Faculties make great efforts to ensure students fill in feedback forms, for example, allowing for them to be filled in electronically and sent by email.

The University and CUSU should encourage an active role for student representatives on Faculty Boards. Some Student Faculty Board Members play an active role within the Faculty and provide a resource to the faculty in terms of a bridge between the student body and the higher powers. Other Faculties however have less active Student Faculty Board Members, and also are less proactive in trying to encourage them to get involved. CUSU should promote in conjunction with the University examples of best practice, in order to ensure that Student Faculty Board members play an active role within their Faculties.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU to continue to run Student Faculty Board training in conjunction with the University. CUSU to promote the open discussion of feedback and actions taken as a result of feedback by Faculties to their Student Faculty Board Members, either at a Faculty Board level or in a Teaching Committee, in order to build and maintain student confidence in the value of feedback.*

2. Strategic Aim Two: Recognition, Support and Reward for Teachers

The ULTS stated aims of 4.2.2 under 'Recognition, Support and Reward' for teachers are to:

- (a) Establish Appropriate Structure and resources for Pedagogic Support Steering group for Pedagogic Support Office;
- (b) Coordinate efforts of central support providers better;
- (c) Improve dissemination of Good Practice.

2.1 Support and Training

2.1.1 Improving quality and uptake of Supervisor Training

CUSU has lobbied for an improvement in the quality and uptake of Supervisory training for a number of years. In 2004 the Academic Affairs Officer conducted a Quality of Supervision Survey (QoSS), which made a marked impression and was brought to the attention of Colleges and Faculties and undoubtedly contributed to the increased provision of centrally organised training for individuals and Faculties.

More recently at an open meeting in November 2006 the CUSU AAO was mandated to lobby for supervisory training to be made mandatory. In response the CUSU Academic Affairs Officer presented a paper to the Senior Tutors' Education Committee (STEC). Upon receiving the paper in May 2007 the STEC agreed to survey Supervisors in their first year to find how many are attending training. If the results indicate that first time supervisors are not attending training in certain Colleges and Faculties, and therefore are acting against the expressed expectation of the Senior Tutors' Education Committee that they should, then appropriate action will be taken.

Ongoing Action: *CUSU to continue to work with Senior Tutors' Education Committee and the Graduate Union to encourage the uptake of training for first time supervisors.*

2.1.2 Promoting Pedagogic Support within the University

On May 30th 2007, the General Board's Education Committee agreed to recommend to the General Board the establishing of a Pedagogic Support Officer who will better coordinate the efforts of central support and training providers (Staff Development, DRC etc.), improve the uptake of existing provision, and fund Faculty teaching initiatives and help Faculties make applications to external bodies for teaching funding. However, the proposal was not fully endorsed by the General Board. The General Board did in Academic Year 2007/8 establish a committee to Review the Learning and Teaching Support within the University.

The current CUSU Academic Affairs Officer has been approached regarding sitting on this committee, though the membership of this committee is yet to be fully finalised.

Action: *CUSU to continue to push for greater pedagogic support, through the Review of Learning and Teaching Support and in other relevant committees.*

2.1.3 Supporting innovation and dissemination of good teaching practice as a means to engage more experienced teachers **Case study: Learning and Teaching in the Department of Plant Sciences**

The Department of Plant Sciences has a team of researchers devoted to the enhancement of teaching and learning. They have developed novel teaching programmes based on student and staff consultation and have written papers on their methods and findings.

In the process they consulted students about how they learn, both through written questionnaires and interviews. They shared the findings with academic staff, who together proceeded to develop new teaching methods and techniques. Such detailed feedback and group reflection compares favourably to how feedback is normally gathered and responded to. It results in teaching methods which take account of students' learning needs and wants, as well as the nature of the discipline and papers being taught.

The researchers form part of the **Teaching for Learning Network (TfLN)** which is funded by the Cambridge-MIT Institute. Currently at Cambridge Classics, Plant Sciences, Material Sciences and Engineering are involved in TfLN activities. In addition parallel programs are running in 6 Departments at MIT.

The Cambridge side of the TfLN are now in dialogue with Directors of Studies about how TfLN activities can be used to support supervisors in a discipline-specific way and they are also talking to Staff Development about their involvement. In the wider context they are initiating discussion with Higher Education Academy (HEA) subject centres.

The work of the researchers has the benefit of blurring the boundary which can separate teaching and learning. It promotes a culture where teaching can be valued alongside research.

Action: *Support the building of TfLN activities and other proven good teaching practices into a sustainable pedagogy support structure within the University.*

2.2. Reward

2.2.1 Explore appropriate remuneration and promotion structures to reward teaching excellence and expectation on all established academic staff to take part in learning and teaching activities

The stated aim of the ULTS 4.2.4 (a) under Reward is to 'Explore appropriate remuneration and promotion structures to reward teaching excellence and expectation on all established academic staff to take part in learning and teaching activities'.

Recent General Board Education Committee discussion has noted the need to translate into reality the statements of the Vice-Chancellor in her Michaelmas 2006 speech, where she expressed her desire for Cambridge to value teaching excellence alongside research excellence.

There are instances where this is taking place. In July 2007, eleven University of Cambridge lecturers were recognised for their excellence in teaching, at an award ceremony for the 2007 Pilkington Prizes. Each academic school nominates a member of academic or academic-related staff who has distinguished him or herself in teaching.

Awards however only scratch the surface in making a difference. More institutional changes are necessary to afford teaching excellence the financial status and security currently available for researchers. The Review Committee of the Chemistry Department recommended that the two existing Departmental Teaching Fellows should be established at the level of University Lecturer, where they can be afforded a higher status and security of tenure, with regard paid to opportunities for career progression. The University must financially support such initiatives.

A big barrier to such development is the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which allocate significant HEFCE funds according to the level of a University's research and overlooks teaching excellence. Cambridge should take the lead in establishing itself as an institution renowned for teaching excellence, even if this means forgoing some potential RAE income. If we do, others will follow.

Action: *To support institutional changes which value and reward excellence in teaching alongside excellence in research.*

Appendix 1:

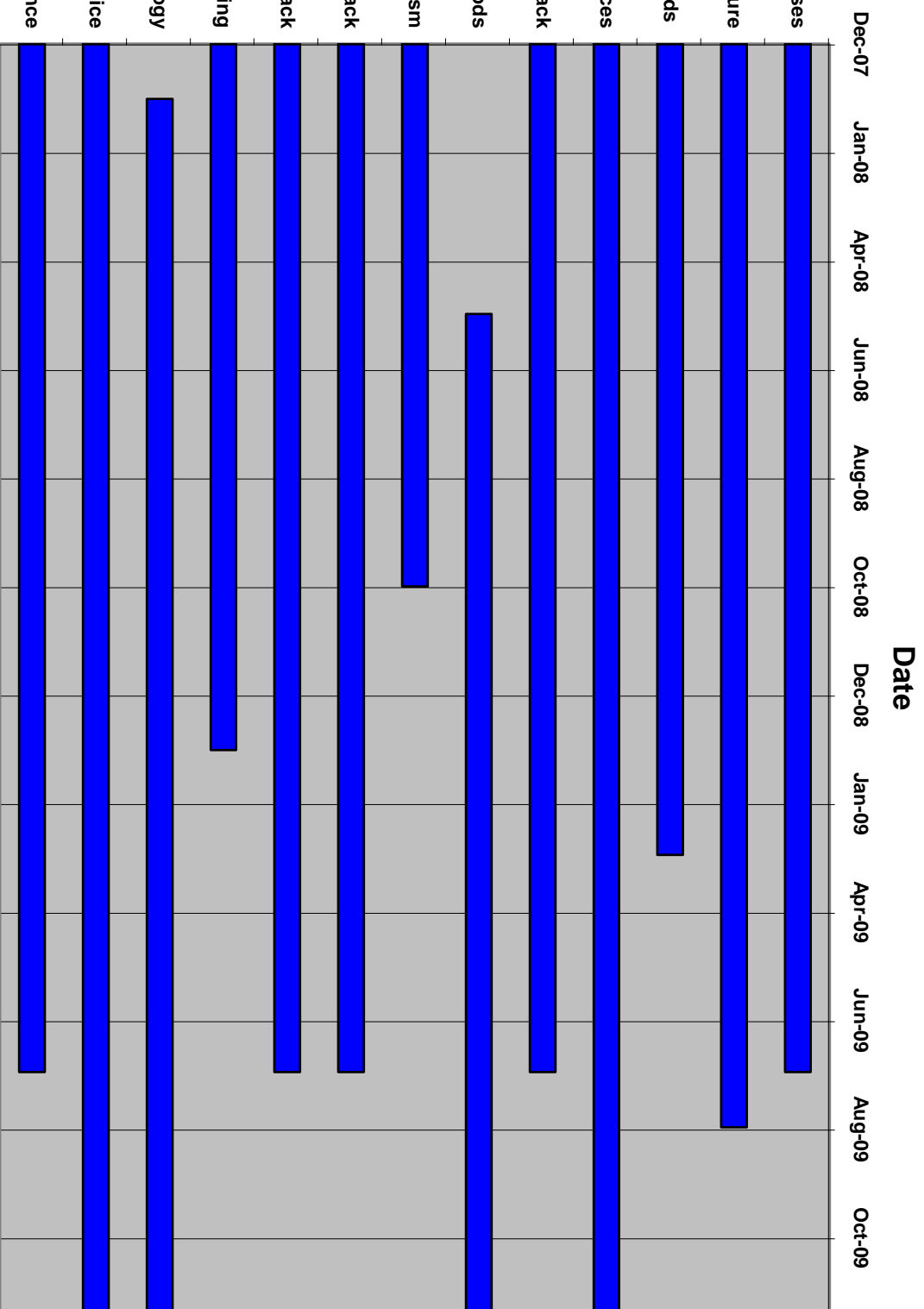
Current Status and Priority

Strategic Aim	Ongoing/Future	CUSU Resource Priority
1.1.1 Skills courses	Ongoing	High
1.2.1 Tripos structure	Ongoing	Medium
1.2.2 Teaching methods	Ongoing	Medium/Low
1.3.1 Learning resources	Ongoing (limited)	High
1.4.1 Assessment feedback	Ongoing	Medium/High
1.4.2 Assessment methods	Future	Medium
1.4.3 Plagiarism	Ongoing	High
1.5.1 Colleges feedback	Ongoing	High/Medium
1.5.2 Faculties feedback	Ongoing	High/Medium
2.1.1 Supervisor training	Ongoing	High/Medium
2.1.2 Pedagogic Support	Starting Jan 2008	Medium
2.1.3 Good teaching practice	Ongoing	Low/Medium
2.2.1 Recognition of teaching excellence	Ongoing	Medium/Low

Timeframe and Achievability

Strategic Aim	Timeframe	Achievable?
1.1.1 Skills courses	By July 2009	Yes
1.2.1 Tripos structure	Continuing	Possible
1.2.2 Teaching methods	Lifetime of LLP	Yes
1.3.1 Learning resources	Beyond 2009	Yes
1.4.1 Assessment feedback	By January 2009	Yes
1.4.2 Assessment methods	Longer Term Project	Possible
1.4.3 Plagiarism	By October 2008	Yes
1.5.1 Colleges feedback	Continuing	Yes
1.5.2 Faculties feedback	Continuing	Yes
2.1.1 Supervisor training	By January 2009	Yes
2.1.2 Pedagogic Support	Approx. 2 years	Yes
2.1.3 Good teaching practice	Continuing	Yes
2.2.1 Recognition of teaching excellence	By July 2009	Possible

Strategy Timeframe



Strategic Aim