new man at the top
Meet the new VC

something to celebrate!
Research assessment results

eyes on the future
New face at the Tamar Science Park

a sure bet
Researching the social impact of gambling
In this issue of UPfront, we celebrate an excellent OFSTED report (page 14), the University’s best ever RAE results (page 9) and the appointment of Professor Roland Levinsky to succeed Professor John Bull as Vice-Chancellor in September (page 3).

The Higher Education Council for England’s annual survey, Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK, covering all publicly funded higher education institutions, was published just before Christmas — and once again, the University of Plymouth outperformed national benchmarks in the key indicators relating to the student experience.

December also saw a topping out ceremony for the Portland Square development, and the Plymouth graduation ceremonies. All in all, it was anything but a quiet end to the year 2001!

There is much to look forward to in 2002 — including:
- the official opening of new teaching and performance facilities in Exmouth
- the development of teaching and research facilities for the Peninsula Medical School and Institute of Health Studies at the Tamar Science Park
- further work on an estates strategy
- a formal launch for the Institute of Neuroscience
- the arrival of the first cohort of undergraduate medical students.

UPfront will continue to cover news and feature stories from around the University. If you have a story to tell, come along to the next editorial meeting: Tuesday 5 February at 2 pm in the Hamoaze room (Babbage).

Corinne Farrell
Editor

Cover photo of Professor Roland Levinsky by Nicola Levinsky.
Professor Roland Levinsky has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Plymouth. He will succeed Professor John Bull, who is retiring in September and has held the post since 1989.

Professor Levinsky trained as a doctor and now stands as a world-leader in the field of immunodeficiency diseases. He joins Plymouth from University College London (UCL), where he is currently Vice-Provost for Biomedicine and Head of the Graduate School. In this capacity, he chairs a HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) steering committee to establish good practice guidelines in postgraduate education.

Before being appointed Vice-Provost in 1999, Professor Levinsky was Dean of the Institute for Child Health (ICH), London. Here, he turned around the fortunes of a declining establishment to create a world-class research and teaching institution. Under his leadership, ICH improved its research grade in the national Research Assessment Exercise from a 2 to a 5* in the latest report, published in December. (A 5* represents the highest possible award, and indicates research activity of outstanding international repute).

Professor Levinsky told UPfront:
I was attracted to Plymouth because of its stated vision of becoming a top international university by 2020.
Two new powerpoint templates are now available to all staff. The templates have been designed to help make presentations easier to create and present a standard, corporate image across and outside the University.

The templates are available with a white or blue background. They can be downloaded from the training drive on the University network: S:\university templates\.

Also saved in this location is a word document, instruction-ppt.doc, which gives you a step-by-step guide on where to save the files on your PC, so that they appear as one of your own templates.

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Teachers from Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset skipped classes recently – with very good reason! Along with Connexions careers advisors and members of University staff, they attended the University’s annual higher education conference, which focussed on topical issues including widening participation to HE. The morning featured presentations from Head of Academic Partnerships and Liaison, Dr Ian Tunbridge, Dr Judy Searle from the Peninsula Medical School and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Bull.

A choice of workshops provided a forum for lively discussion and debate about overcoming barriers to widening participation, the new post-16 qualifications and career tactics for the 21st century.

Feedback from delegates has been extremely positive and will inform the planning of next year’s event.

The ‘Real Bugs’ roadshow is gearing up for another ten shows, thanks to further funding of £2,000 from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. The imaginative shows, which use Jacolly Puppet Theatre’s intricate creations to teach children about insects and other invertebrates, will take place during National Science Week, which begins on 8 March.

Staff and students at Seale-Hayne are celebrating outstanding success in the most recent independent assessment of teaching quality within the Faculty of Land, Food and Leisure.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the government’s independent assessor of teaching quality in higher education, has awarded 23 points out of a maximum 24 to the University’s undergraduate courses in hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism.

This result puts the University among the country’s leading providers of undergraduate courses in these subject areas. The courses run at the faculty and at partner colleges including Plymouth College of Further Education, South Devon College, Bicton College, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, Duchy College and Cornwall College.

Modern learning centres with comprehensive resources, excellent pastoral support for students, and an up-to-date curriculum supported by the research and scholarship of the staff were identified by the QAA as particular strengths. Student achievement and added value were also highlighted. In addition, the QAA recognised that students study in a friendly, safe and supportive community.

We are delighted with the outcome of the assessment, says Professor Rod Blackshaw, Dean of the faculty. It is a testament to the success our students achieve and the hard work and commitment of our staff. It recognises that our courses are relevant to the world of work and provide an excellent educational experience.
“The world-class reputation of higher education depends on its ability to recruit and retain good quality staff…” - so said the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), when it announced additional funding for universities to develop human resources (HR) strategies.

Plymouth will receive around £5 million over three years — specifically to spend on initiatives to support and develop staff. In the current year, HEFCE has awarded the University £1.027 million to strengthen its personnel function and work up its emerging HR strategy.

In drawing up the framework for an HR strategy, personnel managers held 18 focus groups and four open meetings with staff and trade unions. It was clear from this exercise that people valued their colleagues, students, job satisfaction and the flexibility and security of their working environment. But they also felt that there was room for improvement in:

- management skills
- communication
- reward
- physical environment
- workload
- training

These comments, in tandem with national priorities, and the University’s mission and strategic plan, acted as the drivers to set priorities for the HR strategy.

Radical overhaul

The first phase of the strategy is to make sure that we have in place a personnel infrastructure that will deliver change. According to the Director of Personnel and Development, Roland Buckley, traditionally, personnel departments are seen as being reactive, but we want to change that. The allocation of ring-fenced funding has allowed us to completely re-shape the department, to provide a much better, customer-focused service. We want not only to respond to issues and queries, but to set the agenda for recruitment and retention, training and development, and HR planning. Some of the roles we’re taking on are completely new to the University.

We have created a larger, dynamic team to take forward an ambitious work programme. It is much more than just a change of name on the door.

Donna Nelson heads a specialist recruitment advisory team.

Looking forward

With a full team in place from the start of this year, Personnel and Development staff can start to consult more widely on the HR strategy, and agree targets and dates to deliver the ambitious objectives, including:

- introducing more flexible contracts, career pathways, succession planning and renewing employment packages
- introducing strategies to reduce workload and developing a policy on work-life balance
- producing a management development strategy and defining competency frameworks for all management roles
- ensuring staff can be released for training and development
- allocating resources for staff development in partner colleges
- developing standard job evaluation procedures across the University to ensure equal pay for work of equal value
- identifying and removing barriers to individual progress
- linking workforce planning to the University’s strategic plan
- rewarding excellence and managing poor performance.

As Roland Buckley pointed out — it’s an ambitious agenda. But it is absolutely essential if the University is to meet its aspiration of becoming world-class.

For more information about the new staffing arrangements in Personnel and Development, or for more detail on the HR strategy, contact Alison Johns on ext 2173, or Roland Buckley ext 2160.
The South West Regional Access Centre (SWRAC) is to change its name to Disability ASSIST Services. Building on its reputation established under SWRAC, the new name will reflect the core elements of the service being offered: assessment, study, support, inclusive strategies and training (ASSIST).

It is envisaged that the name change will encourage individuals to call upon the service when they need it. The service will also be involved in the development of policies within the University that enable disabled students and staff to meet their personal and professional potential.

For more information, contact Sarah Warn on ext 2289.
Dr Stephen Huggett, Reader in Mathematical Physics, has been elected Meetings and Membership Secretary of the London Mathematical Society. The appointment is excellent news for both the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and the University as a whole. Professor Phil Dyke, Head of the Department, said, “No-one from a new university has ever come close to achieving something as prestigious as this in mathematics.”

Around 1,500 academic mathematicians are members of the Society, which publishes influential journals and books and holds regular meetings, conferences and symposia. Dr Huggett’s new role will be a pivotal one. His particular responsibilities include the organisation of the Society’s mathematical meetings and the management of its various grant schemes, such as those for conferences and in support of joint research activities between different universities.

As General Manager of the Tamar Science Park, Paul Giles is a man with eyes set on the future. The Science Park, which is a joint venture between the University, Plymouth City Council and PROSPER, has already proved a huge success. Having opened in 1998, it soon outgrew its original buildings, and a second phase was opened last July by the Minister for Science and Innovation, Lord Sainsbury.

His role at PEP was to develop commercial interests from innovative projects in the Faculty of Technology — a job not dissimilar to elements of his work at the Science Park. Before joining the University, he had an established career in general and project management — initially within industry, then for the Royal Navy, and latterly as a consultant, with clients including the Ministry of Defence.

Paul’s aim is to manage expansion of the Science Park to create a campus environment, which provides a vibrant and dynamic place of work for innovators in science and research.

We re bringing high quality jobs to Plymouth, says Paul, and we re proving that the South West can grow its own medical, research and scientific companies. I sit on a working party to develop a masterplan for the Derriford area of the city. We are, for example, talking to the RDA about the possibility of extending the Science Park on land at the new International Business Park, which was formerly the Seaton Barracks site. I see three main themes for the future: medical — building on existing links between the Peninsula Medical School, the University and the NHS - web-based software development and a marine theme, again because of the University’s strengths, history and location. It s a very exciting time to be at the Science Park — there’s so much going on, and the University has a real opportunity to influence the regeneration of Plymouth.
The University of Plymouth has a unique claim to fame: it boasts the UK’s only fully independent gambling research centre: the Centre for Research into the Social Impact of Gambling, to give it its full name. Based within the Faculty of Human Sciences, the centre was established by Dr Sue Fisher, who spent thirteen years collaborating with leading academics around the world to build an independent research centre of international repute.

The centre is now led by Dr Steven Miles. He and Australian colleague, Dr Martin Young, recently raised the profile of the centre with politicians, when they presented their response to The Gambling Review to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Gambling Review, commissioned by the Home Office, was the first major review of gambling regulation in the UK. It has placed research into the social impact of gambling squarely on the funding agenda - and sits well with the work already being done by Dr Miles and Dr Young.

The gambling research centre aims to:

- advance understanding and contribute to a body of knowledge on the consumption of gambling, its social impact and implications
- act as an international centre for the acquisition and dissemination of information on the social impact of gambling
- establish a dialogue with government and industry to better inform private and public policy.

Drs Miles and Young have recently contributed to the Houses of Parliament’s internal magazine, *House*, and we can expect to hear more from them as the government continues to tackle the social implications of gambling.

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Many of the recommendations of researchers at Seale-Hayne are to be incorporated into a new agri-environment scheme for the Channel Island of Jersey.

The recommendations emerged from a research project recently completed by Dr Rob Parkinson and Dr Mick Fuller, who were commissioned by the States of Jersey Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to investigate the sources of nitrates and phosphates in streams draining into the Val de la Mare reservoir on Jersey.

Nitrates and phosphates are naturally occurring nutrients found in water that has drained through soils. There are concerns that increased levels of these nutrients can lead to poor water quality, affecting plant life and fish. Concerns that high nitrate levels in drinking water can affect human health has led the European Community to set limits on nitrates in drinking water. On Jersey, nitrate levels continue to be close to or above the European Community drinking water limit.

The aim of the four-year project was to identify the nitrate and phosphate contribution from typical sources, including agricultural land, houses that are not on mains drainage, woodlands and even rainfall, and to assess how arable farming practices can be changed to reduce the amount of nitrates in streams and reservoirs.

The Val de la Mare reservoir and catchment area was chosen for detailed study, as nitrate levels in the reservoir have been high for a number of years, and the land is representative of the types of farming found across the island. Studies showed that even with proposed reduction of nitrate and phosphate applications to farmland on Jersey, it will take a number of years before any changes in water quality will be seen. Modifying farming practices to reduce fertilizer inputs, restrict time for manure application and grow cover crops will all help to reduce nutrient losses.

Drs Parkinson and Fuller have given a number of presentations to interested groups on Jersey following the completion of this research, notably the Water Resources Committee which advises the Jersey States on water pollution law.
The University of Plymouth has confirmed its leading position amongst the so-called new universities for research as well as teaching. The 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was published in December 2001 and Plymouth achieved its best ever performance.

The RAE is a rigorous independent assessment of the quality of research in universities and colleges throughout the UK and was last carried out in 1996. 173 higher education institutions from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales took part in the exercise, submitting research activity on behalf of around 50,000 researchers. The University of Plymouth submitted research from 24 subject areas representing the work of more than 220 academic staff — of whom 50% were deemed to demonstrate international excellence.

Each research portfolio was assessed by specialist panels of experts, and awarded a grade, ranging from 1 to 5 and 5*.

Subjects awarded a 5 demonstrate national excellence across the research spectrum, with international excellence in up to half of their research activity. The University of Plymouth was awarded a 5 for psychology, computer science and art history — as was the Local Government Election Centre.

A further seven subjects were awarded a 4 - demonstrating national excellence across the research portfolio, and already showing signs of international excellence: civil, electrical, marine and mechanical engineering, environmental sciences, geography, social policy and administration, and sociology. None of the subjects submitted by Plymouth received less than a 3(b) — which is regarded as attaining national excellence in more than half of the research activity submitted.

Plymouth has a very strong tradition of excellence in applied, vocational subjects. Its latest growth areas of nursing and hospital-based clinical subjects confirm this tradition and provide a firm foundation for the Peninsula Medical School. Agriculture and related research is also thriving, in spite of the impact of foot and mouth on the region last year.

The main purpose of the RAE is to enable the higher education funding bodies to distribute public funds for research selectively on the basis of quality — so a good performance was essential for the University, as Professor Les Ebdon, Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Academic Development), explains: As a new University, Plymouth does not have a long history of receiving research funding. But we have taken the small amount of money available to us and made exceptionally good use of it. The return on investment from this University is truly outstanding. We believed we would do well in this assessment — and we now want to use these results to attract new research funding. We have already demonstrated teaching excellence in various government audits; now we are proving that we are amongst the best research institutions too. I offer my congratulations and thanks to all the staff whose commitment and dedication has led to this tremendous result for the University.
Mid-December saw the unofficial opening of the new teaching and performance building at Exmouth. To mark the occasion a ribbon was cut by Professor Mike Newby, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Education. He invited staff and students to view the new facilities, which include a lecture theatre, new performance space, seminar rooms and reception area. A wonderful atmosphere was created by theatre and performance students singing from the gallery and performing dance routines in the theatre, with a trio playing in the reception area. The building was beautifully decorated by Nicola Raffan and, to add to the celebration, mince pies and wine were enjoyed by all!

Staff and students agree that the building is a great asset to both the University and the community of Exmouth and are looking forward to making full use of the facilities in the coming year.

The campus ‘rolled out the red carpet’ when HRH The Princess Royal visited in November. In her capacity as Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers, the Princess addressed an audience of around 300 invited guests at the annual HSBC/Seale-Hayne farm management lecture – her topic was ‘UK farming in a global context’.

A recent ceremony celebrated a milestone in the construction of the new £23 million building at Portland Square. The topping out ceremony marked the completion of the highest point of the building, which will house part of the Peninsula Medical School, the Institute of Health Studies and related science, technology and human sciences.

The event provided an opportunity for representatives from the University, the main contractor, Bovis Lend Lease, and the sub-contractors to celebrate reaching a landmark in the construction process. We are fully committed to delivering a high quality, energy-efficient and cost-effective building to the staff and students of the University, said Chris Harding, Regional Director of Bovis Lend Lease, who presented the Chair of the Board of Governors, Victor Parsons, with an engraved silver trowel to mark the occasion.
Health and safety in the workplace is an issue that affects the University community as a whole, including staff, students, contractors and visitors. UPfront talked to David Morton, the University’s Safety Officer, to find out more about this crucial area of work.

David, who originates from Motherwell, just outside Glasgow, has spent most of his life in England. Before coming to the University three years ago, he worked as health and safety advisor at an NHS trust in London, prior to which he was in the Royal Navy.

The University is a huge organisation - how is health and safety managed?

In August 2000, the University introduced a new health and safety policy, following a comprehensive review. The new policy covers all aspects of health and safety and promotes a safe working environment in which everyone has responsibility for their actions. As Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resource Development), Professor Peter Evans is responsible for the implementation of the policy, and he chairs the Univeristy Safety Committee. Deans and third-level managers are designated safety managers — they are responsible for the introduction and compliance of safety policy within their areas.

How would you define your role?

As Safety Officer, I’m responsible for the development and co-ordination of the University Safety Management System. I disseminate information about safety regulations and organise and implement training programmes. I also monitor, audit and review safety procedures.

What are your main achievements since starting the job?

I would say the updating and implementation of the safety policy, the introduction of an effective auditing system that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of particular areas, and the introduction of an effective training programme that covers staff and students.

What are your top priorities now?

The priorities are diverse and ongoing. The main ones are: the development and implementation of faculty/departmental safety policies; the monitoring of the annual safety inspections, and the further development of the training programme for staff and students.

How important is training to your strategic objectives for health and safety?

Training is a crucial component of the University’s Safety Management System. If we are going to add quality to our safety procedures, then assessors have to be competent - training is essential to achieving that aim.

The Peninsula Medical School opens in the autumn. Are there any specific safety issues that have to be addressed for this new area?

Yes. There are a number of key issues that mean updating the University’s Safety Management System. These include: a comprehensive health and safety management structure for the School, including a written safety policy; organisational responsibility for safety within the School; health and safety protocols within medical laboratories; and interaction with relevant NHS trusts on health and safety responsibilities.

Are students interested in health and safety issues?

Due to their busy academic and social lives, it’s sometimes difficult to gauge their interest! However, a number of faculties and departments have induction programmes that cover health and safety issues. Students attend lectures on health and safety and the feedback from them is encouraging.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

Trying to persuade sensible people to be responsible for their own safety and that of others.

Your job carries a great deal of responsibility. Can you recall some lighter moments?

There have been a few! I remember a contractor laying a non-slip surface — we later found that it that turned into an ice rink during freezing weather! Then there was the taxi driver who careered into an electricity distribution box and wondered why all the lights had gone out!

Looking ahead, what does the long term hold for health and safety within the University?

The long-term strategy will be to seek quality accreditation through a nationally recognised organisation; to develop monitoring procedures in conjunction with Health and Welfare; and to implement and further develop the University’s emergency procedures. We will also continue to consult with other universities on good safety practice.

The health and safety policy is available on the website — just go to information for staff and click on safety in the menu, then select University safety policy. David can be contacted on ext 2171, or via email at d.morton@plymouth.ac.uk.
UPfront spoke to the University’s Web Editor, Michael Marker, to get the lowdown on the extranet site and those involved in its development.

What is the University’s extranet site?
The extranet site is the University’s website aimed at an external audience. The address is www.plymouth.ac.uk.

Where do I find information for current staff and students of the University?
Information aimed at this audience is maintained on the older, orange site and will eventually be replaced by an intranet. The orange site can be accessed from the homepage using the internal staff and students link.

Who is responsible for the extranet site?
The Extranet Web Project Board is responsible for the development of the site, with the web team undertaking the technical development and maintenance. Editorial responsibility for the site falls under the Web Editorial Committee and the Web Editor. Thirty-five departmental and a further six faculty web co-ordinators maintain the site’s content. They manage the existing content and the publication of additional pages, overseeing the pages written by a large number of staff (ie page authors) across the University. There are also approximately 100 academic staff responsible for authoring course pages.

Who sits on the Extranet Web Project Board and how often does it meet?
The Board has 38 members and is chaired by Bob Sharpe, Director of Information and Learning Services. It oversees the development of the University’s website, meeting on a monthly basis to develop plans for the site. Minutes of meetings and associated discussion papers are available online at www.plymouth.ac.uk/webproj.

Who leads the web team?
The team is managed by the Web Service Manager, Mandy Goss, and is the operational arm for technical maintenance and development of the site.

What is the role of the Web Editorial Committee?
Reporting to the Web Project Board, the Web Editorial Committee has 15 members from across the University and is chaired by John Griffiths, Director of Marketing and Public Relations. It is responsible for ensuring that the website design, editorial style, content and navigation are appropriate to the needs of our target audiences and in keeping with the University’s mission, values and strategic direction. Further information about the work of the committee, meeting agendas and minutes are available online at www.plymouth.ac.uk/editorial.

I would like to publish information on the extranet – who do I contact?
You will need to contact the web co-ordinator for your faculty, department or division. They will be able to help you in most aspects of developing your pages. You can contact me at m.marker@plymouth.ac.uk if you are unsure who your co-ordinator is.

Are there any specific language or style guidelines to which I need to adhere?
Yes — the Web Editorial Committee has developed style guidelines for the extranet site as a way of maintaining consistency and a unified feel to the site. These can be found at www.plymouth.ac.uk/editorial, listed under other project documents.

Who do I contact if I spot an error on the site?
Any errors should be reported to me - or you can use the feedback form at www.plymouth.ac.uk/editorial.

Who do I contact if I have a new idea or suggestion for the website?
Use the feedback form on the Web Project site (www.plymouth.ac.uk/webproj) if you would like to make any comments or suggestions for the development of the site.

Where do I go if I need help?
If you need help with publishing pages or using the website’s content management system (CMS), you should contact your web co-ordinator or a member of the web team. As Web Editor, I can be contacted if you would like any help with writing for the web and guidance on style.

Are there any training courses available?
Together with the web team, I have developed a half-day training course about publishing information on the extranet. Details will be published in the forthcoming programme of staff development events.

If you have a query that isn’t covered here, Michael can be contacted on ext 2986, or via email at m.marker@plymouth.ac.uk.
The December award ceremonies saw hundreds of proud families and friends flocking to Plymouth Pavilions to see the graduates receive their awards.

In his speech the Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Bull, estimated that he has given over 60,000 handshakes at graduation ceremonies since his appointment in 1989!

This year’s honorary graduates, who all received a doctorate of science, were:

- preacher, writer and broadcaster, Dr Sheila Cassidy
- prolific environmental campaigner, Elizabeth Sigmund
- former President of the European Commission and British Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir Crispin Tickell
- Chair of the Devon Educational Trust and former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) of the University, Dr Mike Gillett
- Chair of the Food Standards Agency and internationally renowned scientist Sir John Krebs.

Among those graduating were five students recently recruited by the Centre for Applied Microbiology Research (CAMR, Porton Down), Britain’s leading centre for applied microbiology research in infectious diseases. Pictured (left to right) are: Liz Nute, Joanne Carney, Nikki D’Arcy, Denise Halliwell and Steven Welch.

Dr Richard Titball (right), is the first Plymouth graduate to receive a DSc, the highest degree awarded to graduates. The award is made in recognition of Richard’s considerable achievements in developing our fundamental understanding of bacterial diseases. Joining in the celebration was Richard’s former tutor, Dr Colin Munn (left), of the Department of Biological Sciences.
The University Careers Service is to launch Gradsouthwest, an exciting region-wide service designed to help students and graduates secure employment in the South West. Uniting Plymouth with the other 11 higher education careers services in the region, Gradsouthwest comprises two elements which will be launched separately:

- An on-line CV-matching service for student and graduate opportunities in the South West. (To be launched at Easter this year.)

- An information website for students and graduates seeking work in the region, including vacancy sources, advice about local employment schemes and guidance on taking a proactive approach to job hunting. (To be launched in early February.)

The Careers Service will be encouraging students and graduates to register in order to browse job vacancies and receive details of jobs that match their interests.

Having secured £200,000 from the Regional Development Agency for the first two years of the service, the aim is to give students and graduates an effective link with employers, and vice-versa.

“Gradsouthwest will give our students and graduates access to more jobs in the South West than ever before,” said Head of Careers, Marc Lintern.

Rolle School of Education is celebrating excellent OFSTED reports on its PGCE (Secondary) course. The highest possible grades were given for the training of new teachers in mathematics and art and design, and for students’ understanding in music. These are the best results ever achieved by the University and extremely good news for Rolle.

OFSTED carried out inspections at 13 ‘partnership schools’ in Devon, where students undertake their teaching practice. Their reports, monitored by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) and carried out every three years, stated that ‘very good relationships exist across the partnership as a whole and a number of mentors are involved in delivering aspects of the training within the University’. They considered the quality of contributions made by these mentors to be ‘outstanding’.

In their assessment, OFSTED described the PGCE (Secondary) course as ‘extremely well thought out to provide progression and continuity throughout the year’ and reported that ‘the teaching within the University, including general professional studies, is a model of very good practice’.

“We are absolutely delighted,” said Alan McLean, PGCE (Secondary) Programme Director. “It is good to have external confirmation that everything we do is ‘good’ and that much is ‘very good’ or ‘outstanding’. We have a very close partnership with schools – they put a huge amount into the course and we can all be very proud of what we have achieved.”
There was an excellent response to the request for nominations for the education category of this year’s Plymouth City Women of Achievement Awards. Indeed education received the largest number of nominations from across the city, resulting in greater competition in this category. Each nominee is considered across a range of measures, which take account not only of her significant contribution within education but also any challenges she has overcome and the degree to which her achievements have impacted positively on the reputation and development of Plymouth.

“education received the largest number of nominations from across the city”

Recent research carried out by Equal Opportunities Development has shown that the glass ceiling effect is evident in both administration and academic posts and that women are under-represented at senior levels within the University. It is good practice to provide training and encouragement for under-represented groups and so we considered it appropriate to support this initiative to acknowledge the achievement of women. We are, therefore, delighted to have received such a positive response from across the University and give particular thanks to the heads and deans who took the time to make nominations.

Our list of nominees included Beryl Badger, Business School; Lyn Bryant, Sociology; Avril Butler, Social Policy and Social Work; Vanessa Fitzgerald, Academic Partnerships; Christine King, Biological Sciences; Christine Mushens, Science; Mary Squire, School of Computing. The city has since selected Vanessa as one of the three finalists in the education category. The awards ceremony will take place on 22 February.

Ann Jeffries
Head of Equal Opportunities Development
Dr John McLachlan, fetal development expert and Director of Phase I of the Peninsula Medical School, has kept Pregnancy and Birth’s readers well informed about the various stages of pregnancy, thanks to his series in the magazine.

Since the tragic events of 11 September, the media as a whole has been seeking experts on all aspects of international relations. Channel 4’s Big Breakfast invited Dr Neil Cooper from the Department of Politics, who specialises in the arms trade and post-conflict demilitarisation, on to the show. Along with colleagues Dr Alex Cunliffe and Claire Heristchi, Dr Cooper also featured in the Guernsey Press & Star, following a lecture for Year 11 and A-level students that covered the relationship between Islam and the West.

The University has featured regularly in the Times Higher Education Supplement in recent weeks. In late November, the THES included an article about the research of Professor Steve Newstead and Karen Findlay into why examination performance should not be taken as a measure of teaching ability.

The THES also reported on the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the University and the Eden Project, and the pioneering work of the University in using a mixture of distance learning technologies to teach trainee surgeons in the workplace.

Cosmopolitan’s spin-off health and beauty magazine, Zest, included an article on Professor Michael Hyland’s research into the causes of, and best treatments for, chronic fatigue syndrome, also known as ME.

In a feature focusing on the ability of highly trained dogs to alert epilepsy sufferers to impending seizures, the Daily Express referred to the research of Dr Stephen Brown. Dr Brown, a neuro-psychiatrist at the University, has carried out research that shows seizure alert dogs can reduce the frequency of epileptic attacks by up to 40 per cent because their presence diminishes the stress that makes an attack more likely.

Described as a ‘real coup’ for the Peninsula Medical School, Professor Paul Bradley (left) has taken up the post of Professor of Clinical Skills.

Professor Bradley is responsible for developing the clinical teaching course. His appointment heralds a new approach to clinical teaching in the South West – he brings with him an international reputation for innovation. Professor Bradley established the Clinical Skills Centre at the University of Liverpool and was, most recently, Director of Clinical Skills Teaching at the University of Dundee.

Professor John Bligh, Associate Dean of the Peninsula Medical School, described the recruitment of Paul Bradley as: ‘a key step in the development of the School. Our graduates will be amongst the best in the country in terms of their clinical abilities. Having someone of Professor Bradley’s status is a real boost to this ambition. He has a reputation as an outstanding and imaginative teacher and uses teaching methods that really engage and stimulate students.’
Dr Peter White from the Department of Communication and Electronic Engineering has been named Student Counsellor of the Year by the Institute of Electronic Engineers.

The award recognises Peter’s achievement and dedication in counselling students on their studies and career plans as they work towards chartered status. The IEE received nominations from all over the world, but Peter’s outstanding commitment to supporting his students gave him the edge over the competition.

The day Peter collected his award was a double celebration for the department. At the same ceremony, Lee Ackrell, a first-class honours graduate in electronic engineering, was the outright winner of the IEE’s National Premiums Competition, having impressed the judges with the technical excellence of his final year project. By happy coincidence, the ceremony reunited Lee with his project supervisor…Peter White!

Plans for a prestigious, new NHS/University building in Plymouth are progressing well. The project will provide the Institute of Health Studies and the Peninsula Medical School with clinical skills laboratories as well as new, purpose-built teaching and research facilities, which will also be used by Plymouth Hospitals Trust. The new building will provide headquarters for the Peninsula Medical School – a joint venture between the universities of Exeter and Plymouth and the NHS.

The University’s procurement team had to start work last autumn to ensure a contractor can be appointed on time. This was well before a planning application had been submitted or approved.

Head of Procurement, Jenny Wilson, explains: “With projects of this size, we have to follow a lengthy and complex tender process, which includes advertising in the Official Journal of the European Communities. This means it can take months to appoint a contractor. We had to start the process early, so that the contractor will be ready to begin work as soon as the University has received all the relevant approvals. Ideally, we would like to have the building ready for use by the end of 2004, which gives us rather a tight timetable to work towards.”

A project board has been set up to oversee the new development. It is chaired by Professor Peter Evans, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Plymouth. Professor Evans is joined by colleagues from the Peninsula Medical School, the universities of Plymouth and Exeter and Plymouth Hospitals Trust.
5 february
Russia — Ten Years after
Communism, an inaugural lecture by
Professor Ludmila Selsezneva, the
UNESCO Chair of Culture, Peace &
Democracy at the Russian State
University, Moscow. The venue is
Lecture Theatre 6, Babbage
Building, Plymouth campus.
Speakers include Associate
Deans, Professor Rob Sneyd
and Professor John Bligh, Director
of Phase I, Dr John McLachlan, and
Professor of Clinical Skills, Paul
Bradey. (Those who cannot make this
date may attend the next briefing,
which takes place at the Royal
Cornwall Hospital on 14 March.)
Contact Elizabeth Parsons on 01752
764407/email: elizabeth.parsons@pms.
ac.uk for further details.

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6 february
The Royal Navy Presentation Team
will be visiting the Department of
Politics. Their presentation will
commence at 9 am in Robbins Seminar
Room 1, followed by light refreshments
at 12 noon. Everyone is welcome.
Contact: Ann Thorne, ext 3275.

7 february
Concerts
7.30 pm: Plymouth Chamber
Music concert at the Sherwell
Centre. NB: This replaces the con-
cert by the Schilof String Quartet,
which has now disbanded. Emperor
String Quartet, Haydn Quartet in F,
Op 74 No 2; Martinu Quartet No 4;
Brahms Quartet in A minor, Op 51
No 2. Tickets: £13 (£8 concessions).
Contact: Alice Li on ext 3988.

5 - 9 march
7 pm: Guys and Dolls — the musi-
cal about gangsters and dancing girls
— will be performed by the Students
Union Musical Theatre Group in the
Davy Main Hall, Plymouth campus.
Tickets cost £6 (£4 concession for
students). Contact: Pete Woodham,
Chair of the SU Musical Theatre
Group, on 07971 681 456, for further
details.

7 march
Colleagues in Estates Services will
be seeing a lot less of technician
Clive Lovatt from now on. Since
undertaking a sponsored slim to
raise money for the British Heart
Foundation, Clive has lost more than
three stones — over a stone more
than he originally planned. Well done,
Clive.

5 march
Tickets for concerts in
the Sherwell Centre are
available from reception in
the Security Lodge,
Plymouth campus/Alice Li,
Marketing & Public
Relations Department, on
ext 3988. Alternatively, tick-
ets are available at the
door on the night.

3 march
A document entitled E-mail/Outlook — Etiquette and Good Practice has been
produced to complement the above and we encourage all users to adopt the
principles outlined. This is a working document and is likely to evolve as the
Exchange/Outlook rollout progresses and we all become more experienced in its
use. If you have any queries, comments or suggestions we d be pleased to hear
from you.

Professor Malcolm Hart, who is
retiring from his position as Pro Vice-
Chancellor (Research), has been
elected president of the European
Palaeontological Association for the
years 2002 - 04. His election took
place at the annual assembly of the
association, which was on the subject
of Palaeontology, Communication
and the Public, and was held at the
Naturalis, the National Museum of
Natural History, in Leiden, Holland.

The Reverend Priscilla White, a
chaplain at the University, has been
appointed as an advisor for women in
the ministry by the Bishop of Exeter.
In her new role Reverend White will
advise the Bishop of Plymouth on any
matters relating to women in the
ministry and share in their pastoral
care, advise on appointments and
work with parishes preparing for, or
considering, a female minister.

The maths masterclass that
forms part of the Mathematics
Enrichment Programme run by Jenny
Sharp of the Centre for Teaching
Mathematics travels far and wide.
A school in Tampere, Finland, was the
latest foreign venue and, despite the
class taking place on a Saturday,
teachers and pupils turned out in
force to find out more about this new
concept for 11 to 15 year-olds.

The new rules are available on the web at:
http://home.plymouth.ac.uk/services/computing/policies.htm
From the internal home page select:
Information about > publications > internal publications > IT policies
or
Information for > current students or staff > computing > policies

As well as the general rules for the use of computing facilities, additional rules
have been produced for the use of email and for Internet access. An
accompanying set of guidance notes and commentary has been provided for
each set of rules. In addition, guidance notes have been produced on the likely
penalties that will result from the various levels of infringement of the rules.
All users have a duty to use computing facilities responsibly and lawfully and to
adhere to the revised regulations. We particularly emphasise that you should not
allow anyone else to use your computer account and that your own use of the
computing facilities may take place only under the account name and password
allocated to you.

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Cor
James Crisp, a graphic designer at the University, will be exhibiting ‘digital works on canvas’ at the Sherwell Centre between 5 February and 7 March 2002.

James studied at Plymouth College of Art and Design before coming to work at the University. He describes his work as abstract imagery produced using modern digital techniques, but displayed on the traditional medium of canvas. All the works in the collection are created from a set of photographs taken at a fireworks display on Plymouth Hoe.

Academics in universities all over the world can register details of their teaching and research interests on a free database.

A-Mail Academic, a service established in Oxford 15 years ago, now boasts an experienced, multilingual team, skilled in data interpretation and management. Academics can benefit from access to news of books and journals in specified subject areas and can review what is on offer from a wide selection of academic publishers.

The database is controlled in house by A-Mail Academic and is only available to legitimate and responsible providers of academic information and services, all of which are carefully vetted by the company.

For further information, visit the website at www.amail-research.net.
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