Niall MacKay

Electoral Statement:

Three years ago I was elected to the Council of the ILTHE on a platform of radical reform. By the end of its life, and with the help of those of us with similar views, the ILT was beginning to become a true members' organization, reflecting their values and their pride in good teaching, and promoting these to government, funding bodies and institutions. The HEA, whilst no longer so clearly an association of its professional members, gives us new opportunities for progress.

First, the inclusion of the subject centres allows us to promote discipline-specific (rather than generic) academic-practice courses for new lecturers. In academic as well as in vocational subjects, the drive should be towards subject centres working with learned and professional societies to produce courses of genuine utility, which do not place an unnecessary burden on hard-pressed staff. Further, generic educational theory must be subject to the same standards of evidence and scholarship as apply in wider research. It is not acceptable that new teachers in HE should be required to become familiar with, as an LSDA report puts it, 'fashionable platitudes which... result in the modish but vacuous notion of a content-free curriculum, all learning styles and little or no subject knowledge' (Coffield *et al.*, 2004).

Second, the emerging issue of continuing professional development must not be allowed to create new burdens. Rather the HEA should work to ensure that simple excellence in classroom teaching, scholarship and pastoral and student-support roles are valued and rewarded. Such messages need to be championed when a TQEF report can speak of the '...problem of an individual repeatedly being rewarded or promoted simply for being good in the classroom' (Gibbs and Habeshaw, 2002). Most of us would not, I suspect, recognize this as one of the salient problems facing HE.

More broadly, the HEA must become a lobbying body, representing to funding and other bodies the values of, and problems faced by, HE teaching professionals. In the constantly-changing array of organizations which stand between the front line and government, we must continue to have one which speaks above all for the practitioners.

Biography:

I am a mathematical physicist, a lecturer at the University of York, having previously worked at the universities of Cambridge, Durham, Kyoto and Sheffield. Alongside my research, I do a wide range of departmental teaching and administration (including acting as Admissions Tutor and as HEA/LTSN subject-centre representative for my department). I am a supervisor on York's Certificate in Academic Practice and an elected member of the university Senate, and a member of the Education Committee of the London Mathematical Society (the national body for academic mathematicians), as well as continuing to serve on the interim Accreditation Committee of the HEA (which oversees academic induction courses nationally).