



# PHEE

A forum for Academic Leaders in  
Electrical Engineering and Allied Technologies

NEWSLETTER No. 16

October 2008

## From the Chairman

Probably the biggest news that we'll be discussing at the next PHEE Conference is the outcome of 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. The UoA24 sub-panel, chaired by Professor Steve Williamson of Manchester, has finished its work and the results will be published on 18th December, although we won't know the financial consequences until the HEFCE funding announcement appears in March. I suspect that, as in the past, much of the reputational consequences will depend on the way in which the league tables are constructed. The "profiling" approach of RAE2008 permits many options, such as an Olympics-style medals table (ordered by percentage of 4-star), a GPA (grade point average – 100% 4-star would be 4.0), a non-linear weighting which guesses at the financial consequences with any of the options possibly weighted by the number FTE. This will ensure endless debate in the sector. In any event, the Committee hopes that you will all want to attend the PHEE Conference in January (see the information attached), to hear Steve Williamson explain how the panel went about its business and to discuss the outcome and its consequences for our department. HEFCE has announced that the next assessment will be in the form of the REF (Research Excellence Framework), driven primarily by metrics and a pilot is in progress. However, the start date has already been deferred, the meaningfulness of bibliometrics measures is being increasingly questioned and it's anyone's guess as to what form the next research assessment will take.

As usual, there are issues which affect our discipline and the institutions we work in and your Committee has debated and, in some instances, taken an active role in publicizing a PHEE perspective. Perhaps the most significant is the publication of a study on the teaching costs in engineering departments jointly undertaken by the EPC (Engineering Professors Council) and the ETB. The finding demonstrated systemic underfunding and that realistic higher levels of funding, more than just making up the deficit, are needed if UK HE is to deliver the engineers needed to respond to the challenges for new technology and social and environmental needs on a global basis. The full text of the report and details of the study are at on the EPC site: <http://www.epc.ac.uk/publications/meetings/presentations.php?id=26> or at [http://www.etchb.co.uk/research/2007\\_programmes.cfm](http://www.etchb.co.uk/research/2007_programmes.cfm). After a decade of relative prosperity, the UK higher education scene faces a period of uncertainty because of the economic and funding situation, the unexpectedly high level of pay increases in the latest round and the doubts over the future of our final-salary pensions schemes. Be assured that PHEE will be monitoring the situation and responding where it seems to be in the best interests of our discipline.

You will notice the change in our heading and may be aware of discussions about the future of PHEE. You will find the Committee's discussion document on our website at <http://www.phee.org/newsletters.html>. Your input to the discussion will, as always, be most welcome. Perhaps the most significant point is the response to concerns that the name "Professors and Heads of Electrical Engineering" has in the past discouraged the participation of many academic leaders and we should be actively trying to change the impression that PHEE is only for those who are

professors and heads of department. Like many organisations, it is proposed that "PHEE" becomes simply a brand for "A Forum for Academic Leaders in Electrical Engineering and Allied Technologies".

After three years as Chairman, it is time to hand over the reins. My successor is Professor Stephanie Haywood of the University of Hull. We all wish her every success and satisfaction.

As ever, I encourage you to come to the PHEE Conference in January (and bring your colleagues). There is a stimulating program including the topics which are on all our minds right now. Wishing you all a successful 2008/9 academic session.

Professor Roger D. Pollard, FREng  
*Chairman*

### **Annual Conference 2009**

The next Annual Conference will be held on **Wednesday 7th January 2009** at the IET, Savoy Place, London the focus being on the challenges we face in the coming year.

The new academic year brings with it some key issues:

- The funding of teaching and research in Electrical Engineering
- The future of Electrical Engineering in the U.K.
- Employer engagement.

All of these topics will feature in the event and your committee is seeking to secure knowledgeable and eminent speakers to inform you and provoke lively debate. Our traditional format will include adequate time for discussions. Tea, coffee, lunch and copies of presentations are included. As ever the success of the conference depends on your active participation, so please make a note in your diary now. Registration and booking details are enclosed; please pass copies to your colleagues.

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**PHEE Website:** [www.phee.org](http://www.phee.org)

The PHEE website continues to evolve. It includes all previous newsletters and information on previous conferences including copies of most of the presentations. If you have any comments on the new design or suggestions for additional features, do please forward them to me or to one of the committee.

Details of the January 2009 conference together with the registration forms are available on the website.

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Committee membership for the current session is:

Mr Dan Canty (IET)	Prof John Senior (Hertfordshire)
Prof Andy Downton (Essex)	Prof Roy Perryman (East London)
Prof Roger Green (Warwick)	Prof Ken Hurst (Manchester Met)
Prof Stephanie Haywood (Hull)	Prof Alistair J Sambell (Northumbria)
Prof Emmanuel Ifeakor (Plymouth)	Dr Michael Shaw (Liverpool John Moores)
Prof Dik Morling (Westminster)	Prof John F Watson (Robert Gordon)
Prof Roy Perryman (East London)	Dr Sean Wellington (Southampton Solent)
Prof Roger Pollard FRENG (Leeds) ( <i>Chair</i> )	Prof Moofiq Al-Tai (Staffordshire)
Rev Stuart Poole ( <i>Treasurer</i> )	
Dr Lee Jones (Glamorgan) ( <i>Secretary</i> ) - email: <a href="mailto:dljones@glam.ac.uk">dljones@glam.ac.uk</a>	

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