



University of Brighton

To ALL PHEE Members

Dr Ray Thomas, PHEE Secretary

NEWSLETTER No. 7

October 2000

PHEE and EPC

As members will already know PHEE is a sectoral group of EPC. However, it is only recently that EPC has decided that all sectoral group chairmen should become ex-officio members of its committee. This is due in no small measure to the efforts of Ed Powner, our previous chairman, who has lobbied long and hard for such recognition. Our current chairman Carson Stewart attended the first such EPC meeting on 16 May which focused on ways to formalise links with its European counterparts. Carson hopes that PHEE's future contribution to EPC will be increasingly fruitful.

PHEE Annual Conference 2001

This session the conference will be held on **Monday 15 January 2001** at our usual venue, IEE headquarters Savoy Place. The registration fee has been set at £85 per head to include lunch, coffee and tea. Our conference is now well established and the committee looks forward to welcoming you all again in the New Year.

With the current RAE all over bar the shouting (!) the committee thought it timely to look at some of the other issues and challenges which lie ahead. Taking a lead from EPC the morning session of the conference will have a 'European theme'. As formal co-operation programmes have grown (e.g. Socrates and Framework) so has the level of understanding of European pedagogy and research organisation. Organisations such as SEFI and FEANI have similarly developed in influence and there is now much to consider concerning possible convergence of academic programmes and what we can learn from colleagues outside the UK.

It has not gone unnoticed that the IEE has recently undergone a major internal re-structuring and re-organisation. The committee feels that the impact of these changes is unclear and so the second session of the conference will focus on the impact of the changes as seen from a variety of differing viewpoints. One of the strong points of the Annual Conference is the sharing of ideas and views and the open and robust debate that occurs, and so the final session seeks to expand on last year's innovative Open Forum. It is hoped that this year's forum will include topics of current interest or concern to PHEE members and everyone is invited to forward their suggestions to the committee. Potential topics include: what can PHEE do for you; last minute appraisal of your RA5 & 6's; development of EE distance learning packages; how many EE department does the UK need this century? We look forward to receiving your suggestions – the committee is keen to develop PHEE activities as directed by its members. (Please forward your suggestions to Dr Ray Thomas, PHEE Secretary, School of Electrical Engineering, University of Brighton, Cockcroft Building, Moulsecoomb, Brighton BN2 4GJ, or e-mail r.thomas@brighton.ac.uk, by 31 October 2000.)

Highlights of 2000

At the sectoral group meeting held within the EPC conference last Easter attention was focused on 'benchmarking'. PHEE members expressed concern as to the breadth of studies across the totality of UK EE courses and the subsequent effectiveness of an EE benchmark. In particular, the value of a 'threshold'

level statement was queried, as was its real meaning within EE. Additionally, it was thought useful to link the generic ability statements to an engineering design methodology.

Bad weather during the Course Leaders conference did not prevent delegates enjoying their ride on the London Eye, the highlight of the social programme. Full marks to Dik Morling and his team at Westminster for an excellent technical programme. Topics included; output standard, industrialist views on graduate skills, the British Council approach to marketing EE abroad, changes to the schools curriculum, and remote teaching and learning. Overall an excellent event but somewhat surprisingly attendance was down on previous years!

PHEE Easter Conference 2001

PHEE holds two conferences each year, the Annual January Conference and an Easter Conference. The Annual event in London is designed for Professors and Heads and focuses on strategic issues, while the Easter event is hosted by a different University each year and, traditionally referred to as the Course Leaders conference, relates to the development and well-being of undergraduate courses. The latter event, however, does not seem to be as well received by the wider community of PHEE members and their colleagues. Hence, from this year, the committee has decided to change the emphasis of the conference and hopefully broaden its appeal. Although retaining a focus on undergraduate programmes, the conference should be of interest to anyone involved in the development of electrical/electronic/computing/IT degree pathways whether operating as Heads, programmes leaders, course co-ordinators, subject leaders, or undergraduate tutors, as well as those colleagues operating as traditional course leaders. The committee would urge all members to nominate at least one colleague from their School or Department to attend.

Our host on 4-5th April 2001 will be Prof Bob Williams and his colleagues at Glamorgan. Details will be circulated nearer the event but a full technical and social programme is currently being developed. Please note the dates and pass them to appropriate colleagues.

Communications

Your PHEE committee is always aware of the need to act on behalf of its members, however it often feels there is a lack of feedback on how well it is achieving this aim. To that end it is hoped in the near future to have improved e-mail facilities to allow even more direct contact. Our brief e-mail opinion poll in 1999 on the restricted use of the Masters title for either undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications (using the limited email addressed on our database) proved remarkably effective eliciting some 60% returns.

On another aspect of communications, would members like PHEE to set up a list of available External Examiners (to complement the IEE of course!)? Comments welcome.

PHEE Committee

If you have any further comments on this issue, or indeed on any other topic, please contact myself or one of the PHEE committee members. Committee membership for the current session is:

Dr Donard de Cogan (East Anglia)
Prof Emmanuel Ifeachor (Plymouth)
Rev Stuart Poole (*Treasurer*)
Prof John Senior (Hertfordshire)
Prof Garth Swanson (King's College London)
Prof Bernard Weiss (Surrey)
Prof Phil Witting (Glamorgan)

Prof Paddy Farrell (Lancaster)
Prof David Lidgate (Napier)
Prof Ed Powner (Sussex)
Prof Carson Stewart (Queens Belfast)
Dr Ray Thomas (Brighton)
Prof Don Whitehead (Hull)
