

We are now trying to link together information about College members who may have special experience of work overseas. We would also like to know of members who are able to speak languages other than English.

The advisory group would be very grateful if College fellows, members and associates who are interested in international affairs would identify themselves to the group, particularly if they are fluent in any language other than English or have visited other countries in a professional capacity at the request of another country, or when expenses have been paid, or for consultancies. We would also like to know of College members who might be able to offer hospitality to overseas visitors coming to Britain in their own homes.

Finally, the group would be grateful to hear of suggestions about future priorities for the College in international affairs.

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Course organizers in general practice

Sir,

I was delighted to read the editorial outlining the difficulties encountered by course organizers (November *Journal*, p.493). As pointed out, it was largely in response to these difficulties that the Association of Course Organizers was created in January 1984 with four main aims: three educational and one political. While its political activities tend to get more publicity, it is worth stressing that the brunt of the work that is carried out is in fact educational. We have an annual training conference in Ripon and arrange various courses including a training course for course organizers. A comprehensive job description has been drawn up and the workload of a course organizer reviewed. We also produce a journal which is published every four months.

Through our journal and annual training conferences we have built up a core of knowledge and can now speak with some authority on relevant matters. Problems have been shared, difficulties explored and our different methods of working described, observed and reviewed. The future of the course organizer and indeed, of vocational training is still not clear, but the Association understands

these difficulties and now is in a position to be able to tackle them.

For those who are interested, the address of the *Journal of the Association of Course Organizers* is: The Editor, Postgraduate Medical School, Barrack Road, Exeter EX2 5DW.

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Sir,

In the timely editorial on the plight of course organizers of vocational training schemes (November *Journal*, p.493), a kind reference was made to me as 'J. Bahrami of Sheffield'. As much as I adore Sheffield, and all its undoubted attributes (after all it is still in Yorkshire), I hesitate to declare any kind of lasting, or indeed passing relationship with the city, apart from the fact that it generally happens to be on my way to London.

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Council and the Board of Examiners

Sir,

I do hope that all recent troubles within the College and the Yorkshire faculty will now have been satisfactorily resolved following the long discussions at the annual general meeting in November 1986.

Many members and fellows were deeply distressed to discover the antagonism which seems to have arisen over the years between Council and the Board of Examiners and which has led to recurrent problems, culminating in the recent difficulties.

In order to prevent this happening again, I would like to support the two suggestions that have been made by Keith Hodgkin as follows:

1. That the chief examiner have an *ex officio* place on College Council and that this should be a full voting place, not just as an observer.
2. That there should be a permanent liaison committee with representatives of College Council and the examiners so that both sides will in future be able to understand each others point of view.

I hope that these ideas might prevent any recurrence of the recent problems.

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Good practice allowance

Sir,

I was interested to read Dr P.J. Hobday's letter concerning the statement in the *Quality of Practice* bulletin that the South East Thames Faculty thought the good practice allowance was an excellent idea (November *Journal*, p.525). I note he feels this is a misleading statement.

The faculty was asked to provide a report on the Government green paper and the Cumberlege report document. At our College tutors' meeting in January 1986 we decided to ask each local College tutor in the faculty (East Sussex and Kent) to arrange meetings to provide comments. In addition, all members, fellows and associates were circulated with a letter informing them of these meetings and explaining the importance of attendance.

In fact meetings were held by just over half of the faculty College tutors. Reception of these meetings was mixed, with some having poor attendance and others being well supported. In addition, other College tutors sent around questionnaires locally. The faculty report was based on these comments, plus the comments of other members who wrote stating their feelings.

The faculty report starts by stating that 'The good practice allowance is felt to be a good idea. Practices showing initiatives should not be economically disadvantaged'. However, the second paragraph continues: 'Some reservations were expressed particularly that practical organization will be difficult because of the many factors involved. It was felt important that any allowance would not become similar to the consultant merit awards, and must not become an old boy network which could well divide the profession and create two standards of practice. Concern was voiced about the funding of such an allowance.'

If Dr Hobday would like copies of these faculty reports I would be delighted to arrange this.

RICHARD GRAY

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