

snapshot

A look at the latest news from around the world

Skills for chemists launched on the web



Students are able to try out practical experiments before they reach the lab

Learning maths and chemistry on the web is made easier through electronic learning programmes

The RSC-Pfizer educational project, Discover Chemistry, saw the launch of two e-learning programmes in September.

The first, Discover Maths for Chemists, has been developed to help first-year chemistry undergraduates deal with the mathematical concepts that they will encounter on their course.

Academics from a range of UK universities have identified the best and most relevant tools from over 600 existing web resources. Discover Maths for Chemists links to these and allows google-style searching of chemical or mathematical terms. It is free to use and covers abilities from A-level upwards.

September also saw the launch of the second phase of Discover LabSkills. LabSkills is a practical chemistry e-learning tool and teaching resource developed by Learning Science Ltd in

collaboration with the University of Bristol.

Last year, through Discover LabSkills, all 600 PGCE chemistry trainee teachers were given the opportunity to access AS LabSkills. In phase two of Discover LabSkills, a CD of the new, combined AS/A2 version of LabSkills is available for one year to the new cohort of PGCE chemistry trainees. All UK schools will also be given access to a web version of the resource for a three-month period.

Lorna Thomson, who manages the Discover Chemistry projects, believes these tools will really help both teachers and students. "Discover Chemistry is working to ensure that the fantastic educational resources that already exist are benefitting the people who need them."

www.rsc.org/discover

IN BRIEF

SCIENCE AND THE PARLIAMENT 2009

The Royal Society of Chemistry will be hosting its annual Science and the Parliament event on **Wednesday 11 November 2009** in Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh.

The theme of this year's event will be the relationship between science and health, and will discuss a broad range of ways in which scientific developments contribute to better health.

The event aims to bring together MSPs, civil servants, and a wide range of people from the scientific community in Scotland, to inform decision makers of some of the important scientific endeavours that are taking place.

Visit the website for further details of the proceedings and to register for the event.

www.scienceandthe-parliament.co.uk

A new society for biosciences

The Institute of Biology (IoB) and the Biosciences Federation (BSF) are integrating to become one unified voice for UK biology, with the formation of the Society of Biology. The new society will take on the roles of the IoB and BSF from 1 October 2009, and all members of BSF and IoB will be members of the Society of Biology.

The Institute of Biology is a professional body for UK biologists, with 12,000 members.

The Biosciences Federation is an organisation that acts as a voice to government and civil service through using its member organisations, of which the IoB is one. The BSF has 45 member societies and organisations, with areas of work ranging across the spectrum of the biosciences.

Dame Nancy Rothwell will be the first President of the Society of Biology, William Marshall has been appointed as the Honorary Treasurer and David Coates as Honorary Secretary.

Richard Dyer OBE, the recently retired Chief Executive of BSF, is confident that the realignment will benefit biology enormously: "[The integration] has only occurred because of the strength and influence that the BSF acquired in recent years. This position, of course, derived entirely from the strength of the Member Organisations. And the Member Organisations will have a central role to play in building the Society of Biology."

A detailed explanation can be found on a dedicated website on the unification of the two organisations. www.newbio.info