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R'n'Tease

Betty-Ann Bristow

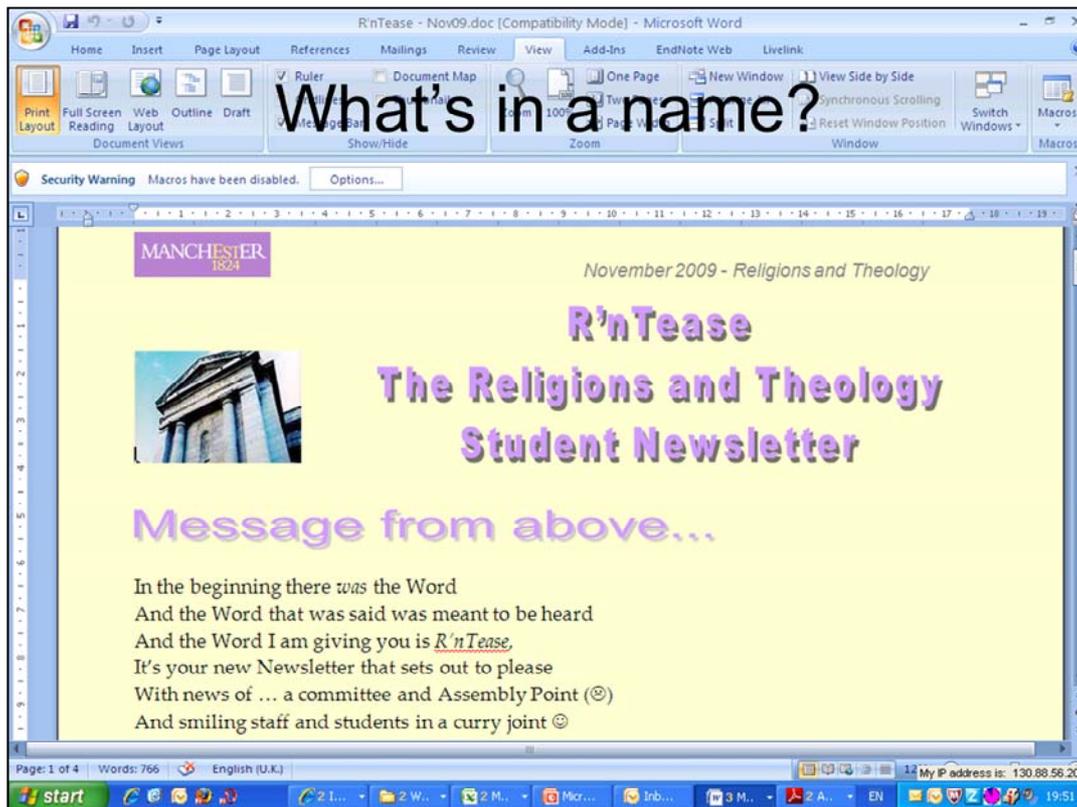
**Taught Programmes Administrator
& Staff Co-ordinator**

**Religions & Theology
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures**





- To talk about the Religions and Theology newsletter, I must first say how the newsletter had the opportunity to come about. I became involved in Peer Mentoring just under two years ago, and if I'm being honest peer support has become integral to my role as administrator, and is an increasing priority within the Subject Area.
- I hold regular meetings with the Student Co-ordinator, and a member of staff from the Students as Partners office (in the Teaching and Learning Office) and it was at one of these meetings that the newsletter started to come to life.
- We were talking about how to increase communication within the Subject Area, with a focus on advertising Peer Mentoring and Level 1 socials. I suggested that something similar to the School staff newsletter could be useful, and we took it to the Head of Subject Area.



- The Head of Subject Area was really supportive of the idea, and in a meeting with him, the Student Co-ordinator and I, we came up with ideas about how to set the newsletter up and how it could benefit all students; not just Level 1 students.
- For student support to work properly, to its full potential, everyone needs to be on board – including students, administrative staff, and importantly academic members of staff.
- The newsletter provides a visible staff and student presence within the subject area each month.
- The best way for people to feel part of something is to be directly involved. In light of this, I invited the Head of Subject Area for R&T to name the newsletter – yes, the Head of Subject Area chose the title “R’nTease”. The students love it, and the staff are keen to get involved.



- The newsletter is an excellent way of showing how the academic members of staff are approachable, and do get involved in events. The pictures are fantastic for having almost a physical presence, and they encourage students who perhaps would not usually get involved, to attend R&T socials.

- The pictures and coverage of socials again encourages students and staff to hold more events. In a way, the fact that there is a monthly newsletter means that something *needs* to go on in R&T each month!

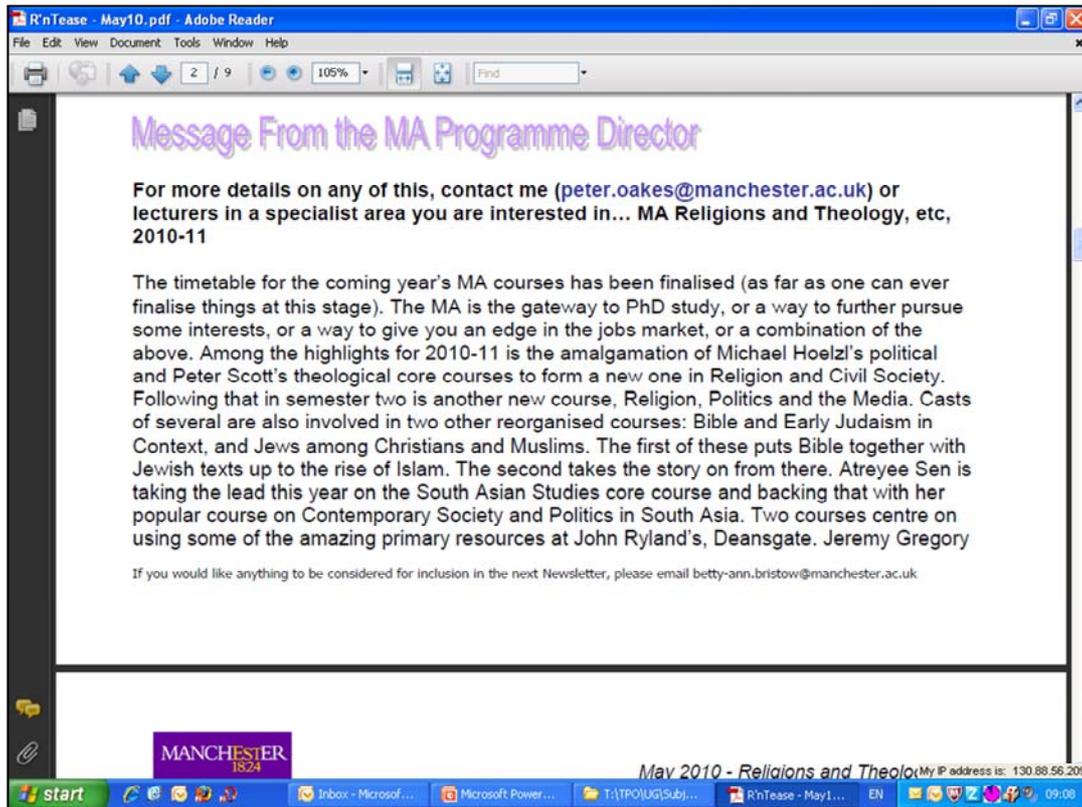
- After the first couple of editions, the students raised the R'nTease at an SSLC, saying that the newsletter (and I quote) "gave the students an increasing sense of community within the Subject Area". At the most recent SSLC, the newsletter was raised again.

- A Level 3 student emailed me to say, after the second edition of the R'nTease, "I had a look at the newsletter and thought it was brilliant- we should have more! Put it this way, I didn't even know who (the Head of Subject Area) was until this year; it will definitely help the department feel a bit more like a community."

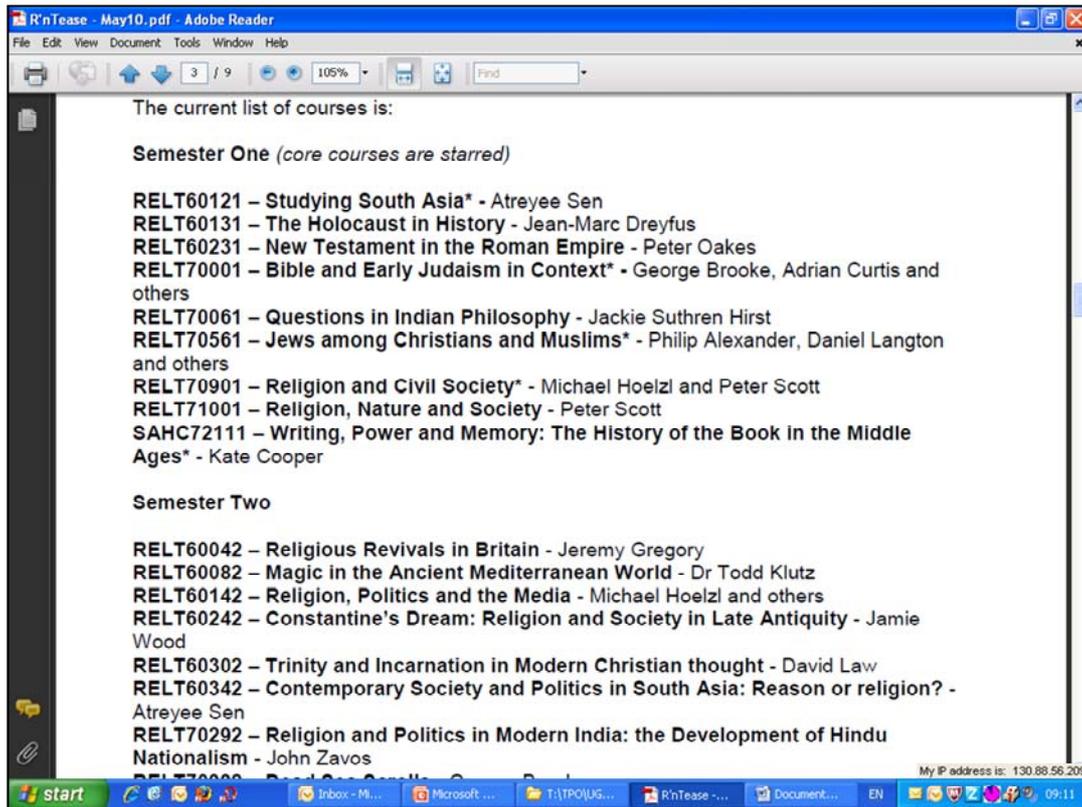
Postgraduate Students



Communication was the primary reason for starting the newsletter, and the newsletter is an easy, accessible way to advertise our postgraduate courses to the Level 3 students.

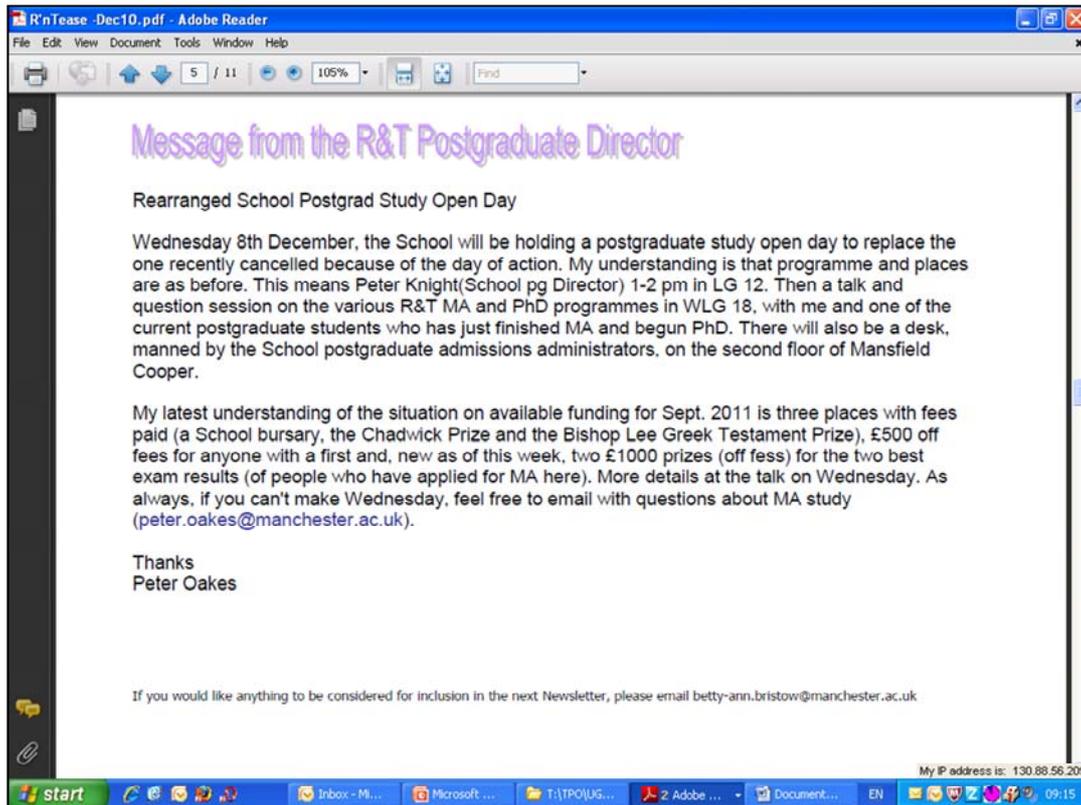


The Postgraduate Director for R&T used the May edition of the R'nTease to advertise the MA to third year students.

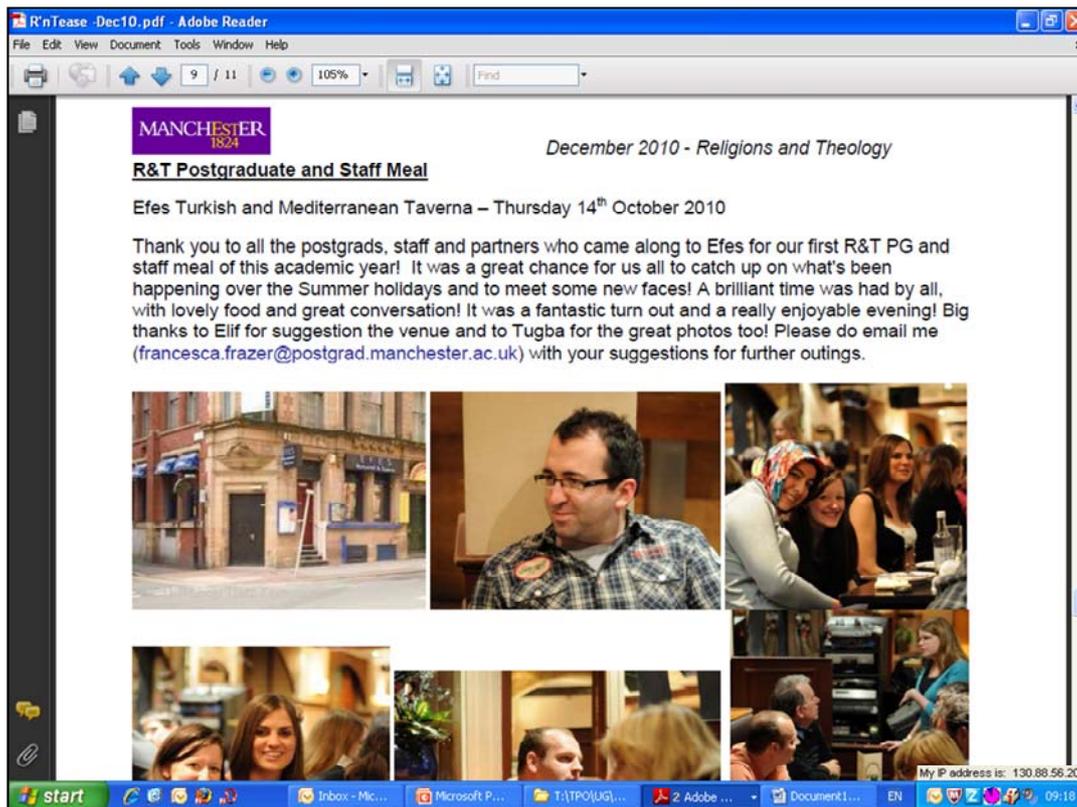


The Postgraduate Director was able to show the course units offered that year, to encourage students to think about what they were interested in, and show the range of units on offer in R&T.

This particular edition of the newsletter lead to two students contacting me separately to ask for more information about studying at postgraduate level within R&T, and both have gone on to take the MA with us.

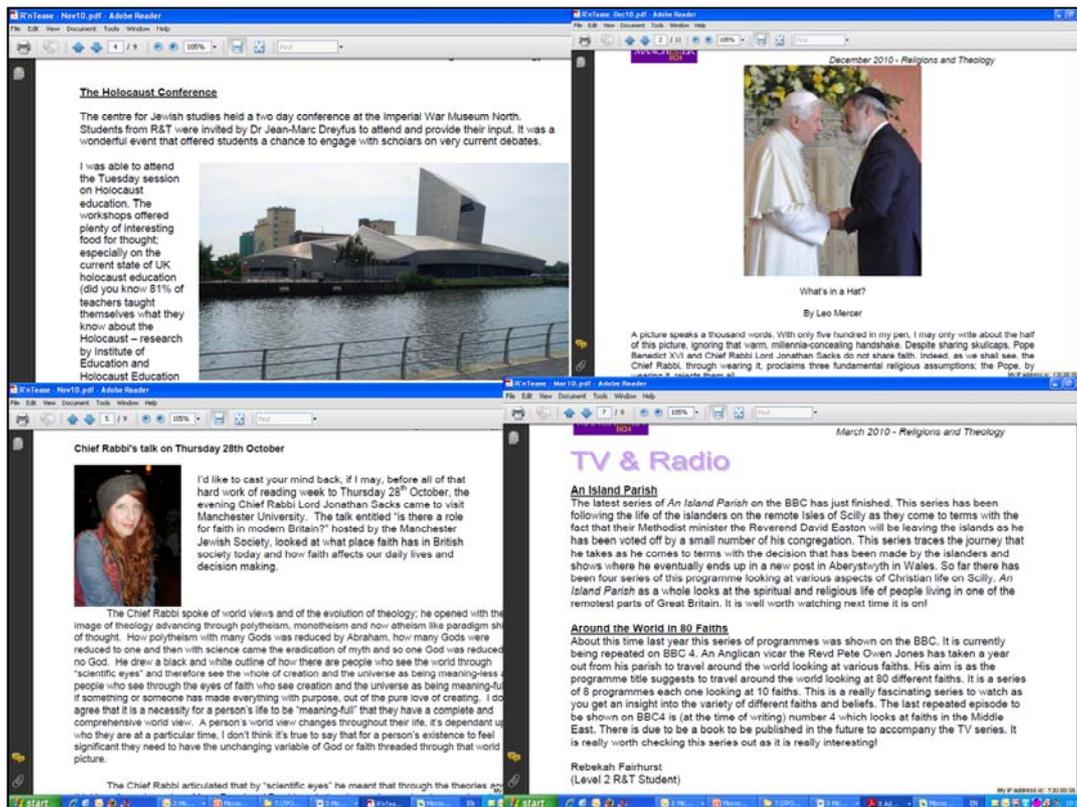


In the most recent edition, sent out last night, the Postgraduate Director has used the newsletter to remind students of the School Postgraduate Open Day.



Although I am an administrator within the Taught Programmes Office, my immediate role is undergraduate administrator for R&T. However, notifications to undergraduate students about Postgraduate study is not the only mention of PG students in the R'nTease.

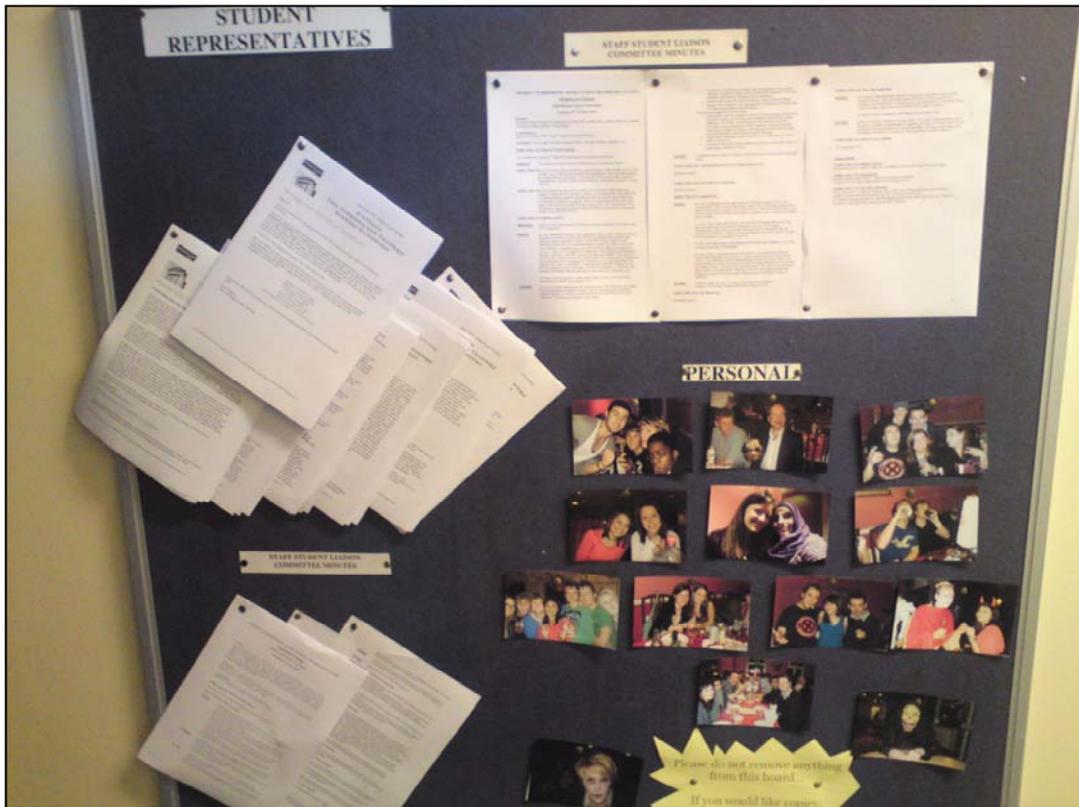
The PG students are invited to write for the newsletter about socials and events, and include pictures. This will not only encourage our undergraduate students to continue their studies with us, but offers something to the PG students themselves. I think the academic members of staff appreciate this section, too.



There is a lot going on in R&T, such as conferences, socials, and the Head of Subject Area this year – to engage Level 1 students – came up with a competition.

This year an academic member of staff within R&T has been looking into, and taking action on, the NSS. The newsletter has been used to inform students of the importance of the NSS, to encourage Level 3 students to take the survey (with proven success).

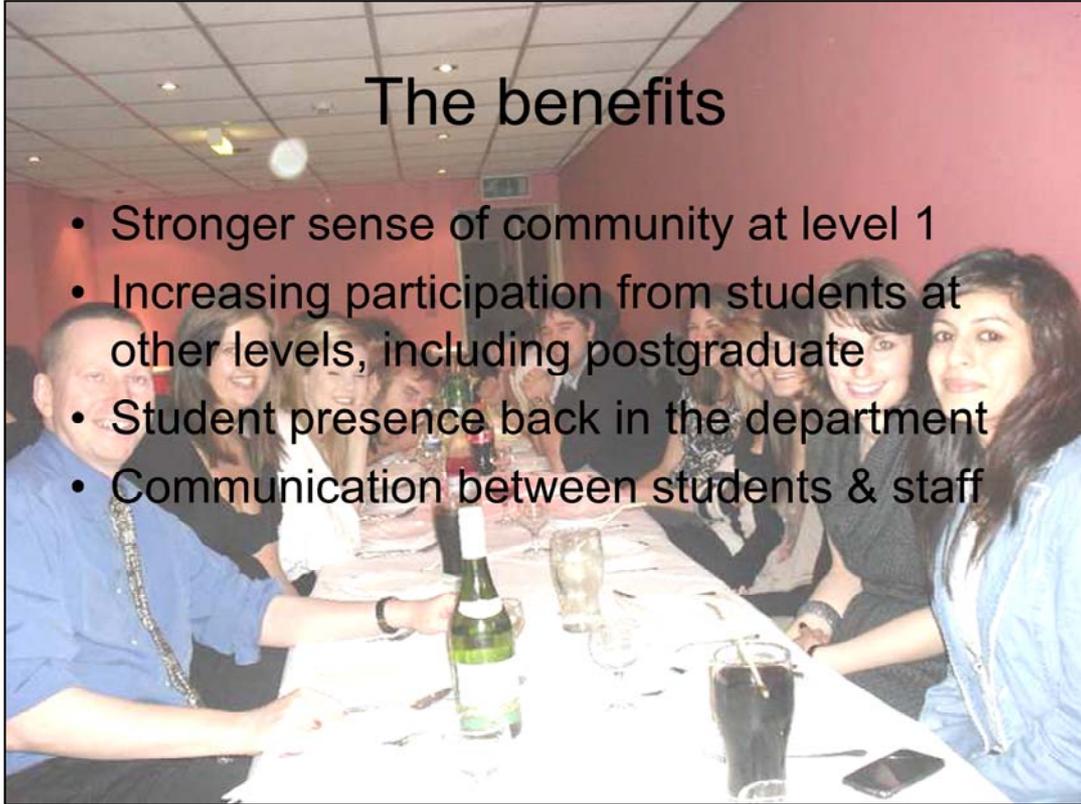
The newsletter can be used for lots of different things, and we are always open to including new things. Students write articles about events they've been to within the Subject Area, or of things which may be of interest to others in R&T.



- I have approached a few students in the last couple of months to see if they think it would be a good idea for a couple of students to take a more active role in producing the newsletter. Currently I request the information, encourage people to submit, and put the newsletter together. Going back to my belief that the best way for people to feel part of something is to be directly involved, I am hoping this will attract some students who want to be involved, but perhaps don't feel they have the time to be Peer Mentors or PASS Leaders and so on.
- Soon I hope to have access to the SAHC Student Intranet, where I will be able to post the newsletters. At the moment they are emailed to staff and students, and posted on the R&T notice board. Photographs from events covered in the newsletter, which may not be included in the newsletter themselves, are also put up on the board. This encourages students to go down the R&T corridor, and bump into academic members of staff and other students.
- The notice board in the picture also has information about the SSLC and student representatives. The newsletter is also used to advertise these, and how important it is for R&T to receive student feedback so they know what students are enjoying, and what could be improved upon. Through means such as these R&T have done things such as reintroduced some Subject Area meetings about course units (Open Forum).

The benefits

- Stronger sense of community at level 1
- Increasing participation from students at other levels, including postgraduate
- Student presence back in the department
- Communication between students & staff



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