
Teaching Abroad

Lecturer Exchange Scheme

As a contribution to international understanding of the problems of physics education and to the spread of good teaching practice in physics, the Council of the European Physical Society has agreed that an international Lecturer Exchange Scheme be set up under the aegis of the Society. The aim is to promote the practice of excellence in the teaching of physics, through the exchange of ideas, between one country and another.

Specifically, the scheme establishes the means whereby:

a) Lecturers of recognized teaching ability are offered the possibility of spending a period — one term to one year — in another country;

b) Institutions of higher education are encouraged to widen the experience of their staff by acting as host to visiting lecturers, and by providing the means for their own staff members to go abroad.

Background

The exchange between countries of scientists as visiting professors, guest scientists on lecture tours, etc. and students, as study abroad, is a well established aspect of the international character of science. It is, however, clear that the main purpose of such exchanges in the past has been cross-fertilization in research. A visiting professor may give some lectures to the students of his host institution, but he is rarely asked to give courses at the undergraduate level. The number of visiting professors who are invited for their renown as teachers is vanishingly small. The object of the Lecturer Exchange Scheme is to redress the balance and to give some prominence to excellence and innovation in university physics teaching.

The scheme is designed to take account of different conditions of law and administration which prevail in different countries. Where formal bilateral and multilateral exchange agreements already exist, EPS would work in the context of those agreements. The role of EPS is mainly that of a catalyst.

Who?

Demonstrators or heads of department, or anybody who engages regularly in teaching duties at university level may take part.

What is Involved?

Lecturers will be expected to take part to the fullest extent in the life of the host institution. They will offer a course of significance which may be an integral part of the undergraduate curriculum, but which is more likely to be of a specialized character and conducted in parallel with the undergraduate programme of the host institution. They will, in any case, expect to work in close contact with students.

It is recognized, that difficulties are presented both to the lecturer and to his host institution arising from the inevitable mismatches between traditions and practices. Examples include the degree to which students participate in exchanges with the teacher, patterns of assignments (home work), and the level of associated background knowledge. The EPS will seek to ensure that these issues are fully explored well in advance.

Financial Considerations

The visiting professor will normally be expected to arrange his own paid leave of absence from his home institution. At his host institution he will be provided with accommodation and receive a local allowance raised to the level appropriate to a colleague of similar rank in the host country. In other words, he will enjoy rights and privileges similar to those that have been

traditionally accorded to visiting research scholars.

Involvement

Lecturers, host universities, ministries of education, national physical societies and EPS all have essential roles to play in the Scheme. Cooperation between them is a central feature. The contribution of EPS takes the form of initiation and organization, exchange of information, briefing and coordination.

EPS will search actively for potential lecturers and host institutions, ensure that candidates of adequate stature are matched to suitable institutions, see that the host institution as well as the visiting lecturer are fully briefed and that the visiting lecturer is provided with suitable personal and professional contacts in the host country.

EPS will also coordinate through its Secretariat all applications from lecturers and institutions wishing to participate in the Scheme as well as recommendations as to potential participants. Within the EPS, the Scheme is supervised by the Advisory Committee on Physics Education which has designated a member to be responsible for the task.

When?

Some applications have already been received and further inquiries are invited. Recommendations as to potential participants are particularly solicited. It is expected that arrangements for the first visits under the Scheme may be completed in time for the beginning of the 1980/81 academic year. It is, however, not too early to begin planning for the year 1981/82.

EEC Grants for Joint Study Programmes

The European Communities are contributing to interchange of educational experience between institutions in the nine countries, by making grants for joint programmes. To be eligible for a grant, at least two EEC countries must be involved but the form of the cooperation can vary widely. Included in the scheme are students going abroad for part of their studies and the transfer of lecturers to teach a specific part of a course; yet again, the transfer may be one of ideas relating to the creation of common teaching programmes. A normal minimum period to which the joint enterprise relates is three months. Research is not precluded but the accent is on teaching.

Grants up to 4000 EUA are available to cover travel and subsistence expenses of those organizing joint programmes, or, for example, the cost of preparation and

translation of course material. In the 1980/81 year, for the first time those involved in the transfer, may receive travel or subsistence allowances of up to 10000 EUA.

Since its introduction in 1976, the scheme has met with an increasingly enthusiastic response and the number of applications is already outstripping the funds that so far have been made available. A growing tendency reported also is the extension of agreements that previously were bilateral to include one or more additional partners. The scheme covers a wide variety of disciplines so physicists seeking support for 1981/1982 are advised to think ahead and get their applications in good time to Alan Smith, Institute of Education, Université de Paris IX- Dauphine, 1 Pl. du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, 75 116 Paris.