

# News story: GC team delivers successful annual postgraduate training course

## **Introduction**

The Government Chemist Team organised and delivered, on behalf of the Association of Public Analysts Educational Trust, the annual week-long course 'Analysis and Examination of Foods' at the University of Reading. The course is fully residential and ran between Monday 3rd and Friday 7th April 2017.

This course covers the analysis and examination of food by chemistry, molecular biology, microscopy, microbiology and mycology. It aims, in a two year cycle, to support the syllabus for the Mastership in Chemical Analysis (MChemA) which is the statutory qualification required to practice as a Public Analyst. Hence, as well as food, it addresses drinking water, feedingstuffs, fertilisers, and the underpinning legislation controlling this wide subject matter.

It is the only dedicated formal teaching available to MChemA candidates and is pitched at postgraduate level. It needs to fulfil the following aims:

- provide the novice an opportunity to get to grips with the subject matter of the syllabus
- enable the experienced analyst to discuss finer points of practice with experts
- provide a valuable opportunity for scientists to update their current experience and perhaps consider further study.

The course has been held for many years at the University of Reading. Daytime and evening lectures, interactive sessions and overnight accommodation were in the Cedars Conference Centre. Practical sessions on microscopy, microbiology and mycology were held in laboratories in the Food Biosciences Department.

## **Who attended the course**

Thirteen delegates, all experienced scientists attended the course. While most were from UK Public Analyst Laboratories, there were also two scientists from Gibraltar and one from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. All delegate feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

Very good lecturers, entertaining, relevant and informative

Always an eye-opener and thoroughly enjoyable

Improved my confidence with a microscope

Brilliant way of learning, very informative, enjoyable and well planned

Interesting for understanding the wider implications of our work

## **Summary of the course material**

The 'Analysis and Examination of Foods' course offers a highly effective learning experience with a good mix of lectures, laboratory practical sessions and interactive exercises delivered by a wide range of experts, not usually available together elsewhere. The topics are up to date, covering safety (chemical and microbiological), authenticity, analysis and the law of food, water, feeding-stuffs and fertilisers.

The course has RSC 'approved training' status and is aligned with the MChemA syllabus. The sessions are delivered in the classroom and include practical training in microscopy and microbiology. There are also interactive exercises including 'expert witness' role play mentored by experienced court-going scientists.

The course started with Dr David Owens on practical mycology – fungal classification and identification. Professor Anne-Marie Minihiane presented a fascinating insight into nutrition: research, labelling and impact on our personal lives.

Public Analysts need to interpret and communicate their results, often to a court of law. Dr Duncan Campbell MChemA carefully taught delegates best practice in doing so, with regard to forensic probity, brevity and transparency.

Dionisis Theodosios of Eurofins taught a session on the regulation of pesticides residues in food, and analysis with much emphasis on modern techniques and interpretation of results. Jon Griffin MChemA and Kevin Wardle MChemA led the delegates through the law, analytical procedures and exercises in appraising commercial products and results of analysis.

Hazel Gowland, an experienced patient advocate and published researcher, led delegates through the impact of food allergies on patients' lives and allergen risk management. Dr Walker outlined the immunological basis of

allergy and the latest analytical methods for food allergen detection.

In the wake of the horse meat scandal and the Elliott Review, food authenticity, food fraud and food crime continue to have a high salience. Thus four sessions were devoted to these topics. Giles Chapman Strategic Intelligence Manager, National Food Crime Unit, NFCU, Food Standards Agency gave an insightful overview of the operation of the NFCU. Nigel Payne MChemA, Chair of the Authenticity Methods Working Group, covered the authenticity, contaminant and residues aspects of meat and fish. Dr Sophie Rollinson surveyed the history, current approaches and future challenges of the Defra Food Authenticity Programme and Dr Gavin Nixon delivered a thorough and systematic review of advanced DNA and Spectral Imaging techniques for food authenticity.

Gavin Nixon, GC team, delivering a session

A major part of this year's course was microscopic identification of food components and contaminant material. A comprehensive theory session and practical training ensured delegates were comfortable using the microscope, made use of appropriate mounting media and recognised key structural features. The systematic examination of blind mixtures gave the more experienced a foretaste of the MChemA exam 'Part C' scenario questions. The practical sessions were led by Jane White MChemA with teaching from Sue Sherry in Plant Anatomy. This was enhanced by a lecture on consumer complaints from Alastair Low MChemA who presented numerous examples in an interactive session and also assisted as an instructor in the practical sessions.

Dr Alex Kersting and Rachael New MChemA talked delegates through the process of taking the MChemA exam and how to study for this exacting qualification and the Chief Examiner Jon Griffin MChemA was on hand to outline what the examiners are looking for in a good candidate.

Taking advantage of the expertise of the delegates themselves, a mini-symposium was held allowing delegates to learn from each other. Dr Angella Wing-Hoi Yuen described the work of the Hong Kong Government laboratory, Alison Aitken discussed Shiga toxin producing E.coli, Punil Sanatcumar outlined the analysis of PCBs and dioxins, Nikki Molloy gave insights into the preparation of material for proficiency testing schemes and Ratna Dewiyanti spoke entertainingly on the science behind home cooking. Natalie Hernandez and Xenia Duarte discussed medical microbiology and haematology in a busy hospital lab in Gibraltar, Chris Payne and Peter Bowdery described integrated public analyst and police forensic science services and David Finlay and Diane Bryning outlined protection of animal feed supply chain and sustainable entrepreneurial recycling respectively. This mini-symposium worked well to share knowledge and experiences and build professional relationships.

## **Acknowledgments**

The APA Educational Trust is grateful to the Food Standards Agency and the Analytical Chemistry Trust Fund for financial support and to the Government

Chemist team for organising and running the event. Grateful thanks are extended to the speakers and practical session demonstrators for the care and effort they put in to preparing and delivering their material, and to the technical and administrative staff of the University of Reading for their kind assistance in making the course run smoothly.

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## [News story: Government Chemist hosts international food allergy meeting](#)

The Government Chemist hosted a meeting of the University of Manchester Food Allergy Network, MFAN, at LGC on 11 April 2017. The meeting attracted 27 delegates from very relevant organisations in the allergen research and management areas. Chaired by Professor Clare Mills, MFAN coordinates research on the risk management of food allergens with input from the analytical and food industry, academics, regulators and retailers. Attendees from the UK, Europe and Australia were joined electronically by researchers from the University of Nebraska and the US Food and Drug Administration.

The group discussed international research carried out to assess the performance of immunoassay and mass spectrometry techniques in detecting and measuring food allergens. Allergenic compounds can provoke life threatening reactions even when present in food at very low levels. Therefore it is very important to establish whether allergens can be detected accurately and reliably. This work is vital to protect the health of consumers with allergies, improve food labelling and reduce food recalls that impact on the balance sheets and reputations of food companies.

MFAN meeting attendees at work

The group agreed on findings that will be published in scientific peer-reviewed literature later in 2017 and decided on the priorities of a programme of future innovative work.

Dr Michael Walker, Nominated Officer, Government Chemist team, commented on the value of this meeting:

Allergen risk management is both scientifically challenging and important from many different perspectives. By facilitating this international event organised by Prof Clare Mills the Government Chemist is supporting progress in allergen measurement research and therefore better placed to respond to current and future allergen related referee cases.

For any enquiries, contact the Government Chemist team.

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## [News story: Government shareholding in Lloyds Banking Group](#)

Lloyds Banking Group has been fully returned to private ownership.

The trading plan announced in October 2016 has ended following the final sale of the government's shares in Lloyds Banking Group (Lloyds). As a result, Lloyds have informed the market this morning (17 May 2017) that the government is no longer a shareholder in the bank.

The government acquired a 43% shareholding in Lloyds in 2009 following a £20.3 billion intervention in the bank. Shares were sold through accelerated bookbuilds (ABBs) in September 2013 and March 2014. ABBs involve selling a large block of shares to institutional investors overnight.

Additional shares were sold through two trading plans which ran from December 2014 to June 2016, and from October 2016 to May 2017. A trading plan involves drip-feeding shares into the market on a daily basis, over an extended period of time. In addition, the government has also received dividend payments in relation to its shareholding.

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## [Speech: "These sessions do not reflect Kosovo as it is, but Kosovo as it was."](#)

Thank you Mr President and thank you Special Representative Tanin for your briefing.

Let me join others in welcoming Ambassador Citaku and Minister Kuburović to the Council.

It's been less than three months since this Council met to discuss the situation in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period; one that doesn't warrant this Council's attention so soon after our last session.

This period of calm is welcome; a de-escalation in tension between Kosovo and Serbia, whether in this Chamber or in the region, is something I'm sure we'd all like to see sustained.

We particularly welcome the withdrawal of the proposal to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue to engage with communities in Kosovo and NATO partners on any such moves.

Despite the stability of the reporting period, we are concerned by the slow progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue. We all know that the future of Kosovo will be determined in Brussels, and not in this Chamber in New York. So it's vital that both sides re-engage and live up to their commitment to the Dialogue following elections in Serbia and forthcoming elections in Kosovo in June.

As Kosovo prepares to go to the polls, let me say that we look forward to free and fair elections and to a government that reflects the will of the people. Once formed, there is plenty to do; including continuing efforts on issues such as the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities. In that effort, they will have the UK's fullest support.

Mr President,

While not captured in the report from UNMIK, it's important to recognise in this Chamber the progress Kosovo has made internationally since we last met. Diplomatic relations were established with Brunei and Samoa, and Kosovo opened its first Embassy in Africa, in Senegal. And in a further sign of ever increasing international integration, Kosovo became the 181st member of the World Customs Union; a move that will bring economic benefits for all who call Kosovo home.

This is progress that we rarely hear about in this Council. Instead, every three months, we are transported back nearly twenty years to a time of ethnic division; a time of fluid lines on maps. But in truth, these lines have long since been set. These sessions do not reflect Kosovo as it is, but Kosovo as it was. So let me reiterate that it is long past time for the Council to decrease the frequency of these sessions.

And just as these sessions must adapt, so too must UNMIK, so that it better reflects the present situation. We recognise the important work that UNMIK has done over many years for the benefit of Kosovo, and we welcome its activism on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda during the reporting period. But it's time for the Mission to take a step back. As such, we are disappointed at moves to increase the budget of UNMIK this year, particularly after numerous calls in the past two sessions for a downscaling of the Mission, and especially given that additional funds are earmarked for projects that focus on issues on which EULEX is already engaged.

Mr President, given the pressures placed on the peacekeeping budget, and given Kosovo's continued move away from instability and insecurity, the United Kingdom thinks it is long past time for UNMIK to undergo some form of reconfiguration. We look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretariat in due course.

Thank you Mr President.

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# Press release: UK House Price Index (HPI) for March 2017

The March data shows an annual price increase of 4.1% which takes the average property value in the UK to £215,847. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.6% since February 2017. The monthly index figure for the UK was 113.2.

In England, the March data shows an annual price increase of 4.4% which takes the average property value to £232,530. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.6% since February 2017.

Wales shows an annual price increase of 4.3% which takes the average property value to £147,746. Monthly house prices have risen by 1.4% since February 2017.

London shows an annual price increase of 1.5% which takes the average property value to £471,742. Monthly house prices have fallen by 1.5% since February 2017.

UK [Property Transaction statistics](#) showed that in March 2017 the total number of seasonally adjusted property transactions completed in the UK with a value of £40,000 or above has remained at a similar level for the last 3 months. See [the economic statement](#).

Sales during January 2017, the most up-to-date HM Land Registry figures available, show that:

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Tuesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The April 2017 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on 13 June 2017. See [calendar of release dates](#).
2. Data for the UK HPI is provided by HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Valuation Office Agency.
3. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics and Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular, HM Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).

4. The first estimate for new build average price (April 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three-month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
5. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
6. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by HM Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.
7. The HM Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
8. Repossession data is based on the number of transactions lodged with HM Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
9. For England, this is shown as volumes of repossessions recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales, there is a headline figure for the number of repossessions recorded in Wales.
10. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession data prior to April 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossessions](#).
11. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open Government Licence.
12. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, HM Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.
13. With the largest transactional database of its kind detailing more than 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.



14. For further information about HM Land Registry visit [www.gov.uk/land-registry](http://www.gov.uk/land-registry).

15. Follow us on Twitter [@LandRegGov](https://twitter.com/LandRegGov) and find us on our [blog](#) [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)