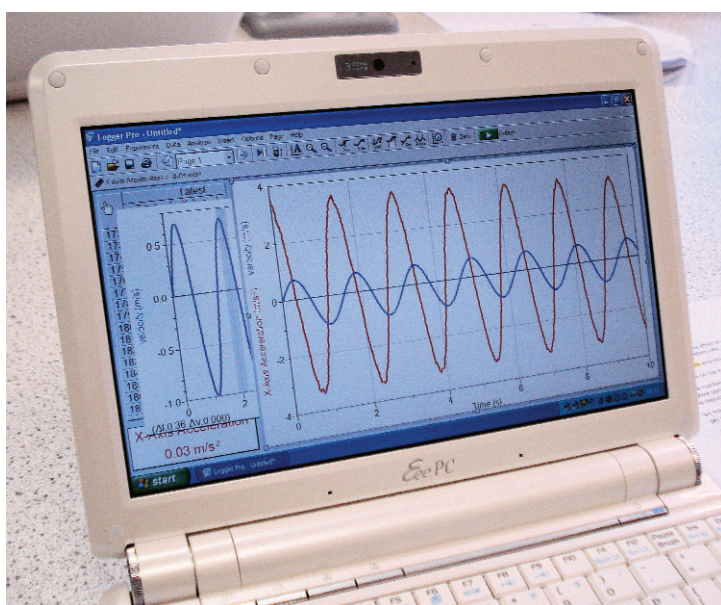




“The best things in life are free,” sang the Beatles. Though they were unlikely to be precognitively referring to the latest summer schools in biology, chemistry and physics, the words are highly appropriate. Thanks to a partnership between SSERC and the National Science Learning Centre, each of these residential courses incorporated an “RCUK Day”. The Research Councils UK have funding to bring teachers and researchers together, funding that provides a £200 bursary for every teacher who attends such a day. The bursary is payable to the teacher’s school and in the case of the summer schools, was more than enough to offset the cost of attendance.

First off, around the end of study leave, were the physicists with the IoP Scotland’s Physics Teacher Summer School. Taking place at the Carnegie Conference Centre and SSERC’s premises in Dunfermline, this event featured a Motion Capture and Analysis day, introducing teachers to wireless motion sensors, video analysis and Edinburgh University Informatics Department’s incredible “speckled computing” devices.



Next up, towards the end of term, came the biologists. Their RCUK Day was run in partnership with the Wellcome Centre for Cell Biology at Edinburgh University. Teachers learned about the inner life of a cell, were introduced to fluorescence imaging and worked in the Centre’s optical instrumentation laboratory.

Later the same week, chemistry teachers got together at Edinburgh University for their summer school. The SSERC chemistry team has carried out a great deal of work on Grätzel Cells, a type of solar cell that uses dyes extracted from plants. For the chemistry RCUK Day, this was tied to research being carried out at Edinburgh University.



All told, fifty five science teachers took part in the summer schools. In addition to the RCUK sessions, their days and evenings were filled with a diverse range of other activities—moon sketching, bat spotting and making biodiesel being just a few examples.

We started with a quote from a song and perhaps we should end with one too. When asked about future courses, one person’s comment on their evaluation form echoed the chorus of Billy Idol’s punk classic *Rebel Yell* in simply asking for “More! More! More!” Indeed, there will be more. Look out for four SSERC-run single day RCUK courses in session 2009-2010.