

## Post-event report: QUEST ASM-OSC

### General impressions:

Informal feedback from participants after the meeting has been very positive. All agreed that the conference brought a varied community of scientists together to present excellent science, and the end result was an effective showcase of UK Earth System science. Many people would have liked more time for discussions. The timetable was too full to allow for more plenary debate, but it was clear that ad hoc discussions took place in the lobby and coffee areas throughout the meeting. QUEST's informally defined objectives for the conference were to:

- demonstrate progress in scientific research across all QUEST topic areas;
- give the UK Earth System science community an opportunity to get together;
- nurture international links and user relationships;
- run smoothly enough to give the two review bodies (IAB and MTE) a good impression of Core Team functionality; and
- have fun.

The conference planning team consensus, supported by responses on the feedback forms and informal comments received, is that all those objectives were well met.

174 participants took part, including 107 QUEST scientists present for the ASM and OSC. In addition to the DESIRE project partners and the Earth System Atlas team, there were 33 non-UK participants, including 6 funded by the British Embassies in Bern and Copenhagen. Interest from QUEST's user community was also high, with 11 participants from the policy arena, and several science journalists including from Nature and New Scientist. A few additional people registered but did not attend, but this was a small proportion (5% of non-QUEST participants).

### Interactions and science opportunities

Although this meeting was intending to focus on UK community interactions, there was a significant Swiss and Danish presence, supported by the respective Embassies in Bern and Copenhagen. The Science & Technology attachés of the two embassies are seeking stronger interaction with the UK science community and have some ongoing financial resources available for co-sponsoring events in the next 1-2 years. Thorsten Kiefer of the PAGES IPO also attended. Sarah will maintain contact and investigate possible follow-up activities.

### QUEST Follow-on activities

In the Theme 1 meeting on Thursday, projects agreed a proposal by John Pyle to develop Pinatubo 'case study' runs to explore the interoperability of UKCA, JULES and PFT.

Theme 2 - *fuller notes are available online*. Various operational issues were discussed, including a coordinated Theme 2 website process (Martin Johnson). Longer term palaeodata management issues will be discussed in the Theme 2 data group for wider recommendations to be drawn up for QUEST/NERC. A possible working group on ice sheet reconstructions was also discussed.

In the wrap-up ITeam meeting on Thursday, there was some discussion about the exact terms of reference for the ITeam itself, and also a wider discussion about tracking and managing QUEST's external relationships, including international representation and engagement with the media. The ITeam meeting minutes will address these issues.

### **Feedback**

As for other QUEST events, feedback forms were provided to participants. Very few were returned this year (12%), which - added to the warmly positive informal comments we received at departure time - we take as an indication that we provided a good meeting this time round.

Key points in the feedback received (also echoing the informal comments) were:

- future venues should have good pubs in their vicinity
- future venues could be in prettier surroundings, rather than on urban ring roads
- sessions with several short talks are effective for this kind of integrative event (but...)
- ...more discussion time should be allowed
- more information about the project and theme meetings should be available ahead of the meeting
- these meetings work best when the project teams are very well represented
- time should be allowed for side events - possibly some flexible time included in the main timetable

### **Operations and logistics (learning for next time)**

The planning process for the conference ran comparatively smoothly this year, largely attributable to short weekly planning meetings and clear task allocation. Julie's visit to the hotel was also important, informing the practical logistics planning ahead of the meeting itself and allowing for improved communications with the hotel staff. Regular update emails and a well-maintained website were also important in keeping the pre-event planning demands manageable.

As in the 2006 ASM, some things needed to be planned by project PIs/coordinators - project meetings and Theme meetings in particular. It is hard to propose more ways of improving pre-event communication between the PIs and the conference planning team, short of personal visits, but without effective communication the challenge remains that project teams may be uncertain about what is required of them. The balance between Core Team and PI control of the programme may still need attention.

Conference packs for meetings of this scale need to be sent to the printshop several days ahead of the event. Additional costs were incurred because of last minute changes to the programme and printshop delays. In future, clear deadlines will be stated (for abstract submission and programme planning), and any last minute alterations to the programme will simply be announced at the conference itself or circulated as an addendum to the conference pack.

Cat, Pru, Julie and Sarah arrived at the hotel on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>, to compile the conference packs, set up the presentation area and registration desk, and welcome conference guests, especially the IAB. This was also a useful opportunity to check the venue and make sure that all the necessary rooms and services were available.

The venue itself was functional and fit for purpose, but its location and chain-hotel feel were not universally liked by participants. Being able to offer the college dining experience was good. Wherever the next OSC is held, something similar should be considered, especially if it is attractive to non-UK participants.

This OSC was made organisationally a little more complicated by the fact that QUEST was simultaneously subject to two review processes. The QUEST IAB met with Colin early on Monday, and held further more informal meetings through the week. The MTE panel was organised independently by NERC, but accommodation and meal bookings for panel members and other NERC guests were made through Julie. All events ran smoothly.