

wise dealt with as if they were French civil servants.) News of this scheme advertised on Lyon's research network apparently brought 18 university people from elsewhere in the European Communities and the European Free Trade Area to an enthusiastic meeting on 7 June. Further developments are awaited.

■ **Liberalization.** To guard against the danger that the *normaliens* will be over-narrowly educated, there is a scheme to mix students from the University of Lyon in with them. But there are no plans to follow, for example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in introducing liberal studies of some kind to the curriculum.

■ **Research.** In the long run, the success of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon will hang on the reputation it acquires in research. There are almost 150 researchers already at work, two-thirds of them on the payrolls of either CNRS or INSERM. It is a guiding principle that there should be strong links between the school and the national research organization, with the result that two of the university's six laboratories are joint CNRS-Lyon institutes while the others are less formally linked to CNRS. Aubert is entirely content to think of using laboratories at Grenoble as well as Lyon both as research partners for Lyon's academics and as places at which the *école's* students can follow their *magistère* programmes.

Much thought seems to have gone into the formulation of research programmes which, while having roots in traditional research, are conceptually innovative. For example, the people in *informatique* are concerned with the logic of parallel computers, the physics department with instabilities and order-disorder transitions in liquids.

So has the move indeed confirmed that it is possible to live, and to remain intellectually alive, outside Paris? Almost all the academics at Lyon have moved from Paris, although not from the old campus at Saint Cloud. Interestingly, three people (for this purpose a random sample in that their qualifications were that they speak English) had all used the opportunity of the move to Lyon to change the emphasis of their research. One common goal seems to be the creation of a distinctive line of enquiry, capable of catching national and international attention.

Those who have made the move are youngish people (and Aubert is proud of the average age of the faculty at Lyon). The reason is straightforward: as one explained, "the older people would not move". But even some of those who have done so acknowledge that there are ways in which "Paris is better". What they mean is that the extramural aspects of life in Lyon are not as varied as in the capital. That is perhaps something else on which Aubert should be working. □

What's in a number?

TELL the average academic in Chicago, Manchester, Tokyo (and probably anywhere else outside France) that you teach at the University of Paris and he is likely to say "Ah!, the Sorbonne", perhaps adding that it is "the oldest university in the world, isn't it?". In fact, the Sorbonne ceased to exist in 1790 and was given to the University of Paris in 1808.

In troubled 1968, that was divided into 13 campuses or, more precisely, what is now the Académie de Paris comprises 13 universities — each one numbered. But the numbers have verbal equivalents. A researcher in physics might, for example, give his address as "Paris XI", but say he works at "Orsay". And the rector would call himself "*Professeur en Sorbonne*", not at Université de Paris I.

The confusion is even greater than it first appears. While three campuses might still call themselves "the Sorbonne", being on the original campus in the Latin Quarter, Paris I is known as "Tolbiac", Paris III as "Censier" and only Paris IV, the old faculty of letters and arts, still calls itself "Sorbonne". Meanwhile, the Université Pierre et Marie Curie is always known as Paris VI, while Paris VIII, set up as an experimental university after May 1968, is called "Vincennes", after its original location in the eastern suburbs, but is now at St Denis in the north.

Foreign academics would, however, be right in thinking that the University of Paris is, with Bologna, older than other European universities. It began as a theological school attached to the cathedral of Notre Dame. As the number of tutors

MAGISTERES

Gaining distinction by degrees

IF universities can do little to select the students they teach, they can at least seek to distinguish between those who leave with degrees. That is one function of the *magistère* programme, originally conceived by Jean-Pierre Chevènement in the early 1980s as a way of redressing the balance between the *grandes écoles* and the regular universities.

The result is a highly selective beefed-up diploma for university students called the *magistère*. First introduced in 1985 in 70 selected university departments, in a wide range of disciplines, the *magistère* is meant to prepare students for research or industrial careers no less promising than those of engineers from the *grandes écoles*.

Students enter the *magistère* after the first cycle (first two years) of university education, but must have a special mention

in their diploma (DEUG). Because the *magistère* degree is not national, but awarded by the university, students almost always carry on their regular studies.

The Sorbonne appeared in 1253, as a theological school founded by Robert de

PARIS UNIVERSITY BY NUMBERS

Paris I	Pantheon-Sorbonne	"Tolbiac"
Paris II	(economic law, social sciences)	"Assas"
Paris III	Sorbonne Nouvelle	"Censier"
Paris IV	Sorbonne	—
Paris V	Rene Descartes	—
Paris VI	Pierre et Marie Curie	—
Paris VII	—	"Jussieu"
Paris VIII	Vincennes at Saint-Denis	—
Paris IX	Dauphine	—
Paris X	Nanterre	—
Paris XI	Paris-Sud	"Orsay"
Paris XII	Paris Val de Marne	"Creteil"
Paris XIII	—	"Villetaneuse"

Sorbon, and had a stormy history. It was opposed to the establishment of Jesuit orders in France and sided with the English against Joan of Arc. The Sorbonne was closed by Convention in 1790.

Once integrated into the University of Paris, the "Sorbonne" refused to accept the teaching of new disciplines. Consequently, new universities were founded to teach sciences, humanities and the social sciences. Only after 1968 did universities throughout France become truly multi-disciplinary. Today, in the first major reforms since the 1970s, eight new universities are planned, four in the Paris area.

With the growth of the university system as a whole, the numbers game has spread. In Montpellier, for example, there are "Montpellier I", "II" and "III", the first (teaching arts, literature and the humanities) also known as "Université de Paul Valéry".

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In the first year, students carry out supervised research at a state laboratory, one half day each week. In the second, they are working full-time in a research laboratory and, in France, are given priority for grants under the European Commission's Erasmus and Comett programmes to study abroad. Students from the Joseph Fourier University at Lyon last year went to the University of Sussex and others to Philips in Eindhoven, for example.

The ministry of education has no plans to expand the scheme at present; much will no doubt depend on an evaluation of the scheme completed by Dr Guy Aubert.

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