

## HIGH PRINCIPALS

**SCIENTISTS** at the University of Central Lancashire (Uclan) are outraged at plans to lump them with acupuncturists and herbalists in the latest expansion of the range of courses on offer.

From September, Uclan will offer a BSc in acupuncture and MScs in both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. While some studies have found acupuncture to be “better than placebo” for pain, there are wide differences between the traditional explanations for its effectiveness and the scientific reasons for why it might work.

The degrees are offered in conjunction with the Northern College of Acupuncture, which explains acupuncture thus: “Our energy becomes stuck or depleted and we become ill. Acupuncture works directly with the body’s *qi* to strengthen vitality and unravel the obstructions which cause ill health.” Um, very scientific.

Mike Eslea, a senior lecturer in psychology, says that what rankles especially is that graduates of the courses will end up with a validated science degree. In an open letter to the vice-chancellor, Dr Eslea wrote: “Having these courses is damaging, and it makes us a laughing stock in the scientific community.”

Uclan’s reputation for science has been shaky since it started to offer an e-learning-based MSc in homeopathy. “Our hopes of being taken seriously as a research institution are being severely damaged by our association with such quackery,” adds Dr Eslea, “but now we are adding yet more bogus therapy to our portfolio. What’s next, astrology?”