OULDI project

Narrative 9

'Reflections on Science Education and Communication' (RSEC) is again a very busy senior lecturer with disparate responsibilities: she is the dean of a University of Cambridge's college, a research fellowship secretary, a supervisor, a study skills adviser and, significantly, a busy lecturer. We were very happy that she offered to take part in the programme. Understandably, time pressure meant she wasn't always able to blog about everything; however she provided additional valuable feedback on OULDI in workshops.

In terms of her technical comfort level and background, she is quite experienced and isn't afraid to try out new tools and technologies; is one of the heavier users of Cambridge's main learning platform, and also uses Twitter, blogs and other tools to support her career, as well as to support her life outside of work.

RSEC has extensive experience setting up curricula through heavy involvement in supervisions and teaching but remains very eager to continue learning and improving her teaching and expertise in setting up curricula. During the first meeting, she declared herself particularly interested in discovering "*how to vary the presentation to appeal to a variety of learning styles (I have a particular interest in specific learning difficulties) and to make it 'authentic' as much as possible. Also how to identify threshold concepts and misconceptions and ensure that they are addressed and assessed effectively.*"

RSEC was enthusiastic about a number of tools and is likely to revisit Course Map and Pedagogy Profile. As with other participants, issues of quality vs quantity and the precision and recall of searches were a significant barrier for use of Cloudworks. For all tools, the initial investment of time before initial results was a significant issue.

RSEC considered Course Map to be a very useful tool. She sees Course Map as helping in two areas:

First, Course Map can function as a checklist as "*a way of getting you to think about all of the aspects of learning for example communication, collaboration, group work, reflection and assessment types, content and method of delivery. As such it is very useful. In Cambridge I have found that there is often an assumption that the old method of lectures, examples classes, supervisions with essays and the three---hour exam is the only way to do things. The rest of the world has moved on and I'm not convinced that these old methods really are appropriate to the exclusion of other approaches.*"

Second, she writes: "*This is a very visual method which does allow ready comparison. It is often easier to use this approach when you are working with a group of people so you can all see almost at a glance, what is where, when and how.*" Although she recognises that this

visualisation can also be a "*drawback that, as with any particular learning style, some people may find the visual approach alienating.*"

When comparing Course Map with other representations that she uses currently for her courses, RSEC says she misses the aspect of '*duration*' though: "*I find that I generally work very sequentially since I want to build upon ideas and concepts using a variety of approaches. So I will work in chronological order but checking that the duration of each part of the course is sensible as well as thinking about the nature of the activity to develop a particular concept. I think what this Course Map is missing perhaps is this sense of duration of each element in the course design*".

RSEC believes this might be a helpful tool to use within Cambridge, and points out that she "*might revisit in the summer when planning for next year*". One qualification is that she that would only consider using Course Map when starting from scratch, feeling it might be hard to use it for existing courses: "*I think this Course Map is assuming that you're starting from scratch and for one course I'm thinking of I make small changes each year within a large number of constraints which may be timetabling and/or physical (Cambridge has a lot of lecture theatres but not that many large seminar classroom spaces with flexible furniture). So I guess in that case this would be frustrating because there are so many points in there I would not be able to do anything about. On the other hand, when starting from scratch it might prove more useful, particularly if you didn't have too many constraints.*"

RSEC also agreed with other participants' comments on Pedagogy Profile: it being an "*easy to use tool, which I'm very likely to revisit during the summer*", acknowledging that this is a tool that doesn't require too much effort and investigation, yet can give you quick and easy outcomes, which help you assess your courses.