

University of Cambridge: Case study final report: November 2011

13 Things for Curriculum Design

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Abstract

The 13Things Programme explored the use of and gathered feedback on various curriculum design tools, including OULDI tools, to lecturers at the University of Cambridge in order to determine the transferability of the OU methodology.

The 13 Things Programme introduced lecturers to this set of tools and encouraged them to spend half an hour experimenting and then blogging their experiences. Besides blogging about the individual tools and methods, participants were also encouraged to attend workshops. The feedback on these OULDI tools, as well as the experiences from individual users can be found in this report.

The results of this programme show that the 13 Things participants preferred tools that give them clear benefits, are easy to start using, are practical and of high quality. Not all tools met these needs but some were well received.

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1. Introduction

The Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies (CARET) got involved because of various reasons. We often advise faculty on the use of technology tools. From working with various lecturers on many projects in the past, we've started building up ideas and perhaps also some assumptions on how lecturers think towards tools and how they work with them. Involvement in this project aimed to challenge these ideas.

We also wanted to reduce any insularity or prevent that we would miss out on tools that hadn't been created in Cambridge, and that could still be of use to our institution.

As CARET works together with various departments and many lecturers, we thought we were in a good position to introduce teachers to recent tools. Overall, we wanted to understand whether, how, why, where and when it's appropriate to introduce these tools.

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2. Context

The teaching and learning context at Cambridge University is significantly different to that of the OU and other pilot partners; small group teaching still remains the cornerstone of Cambridge teaching provision.

2.1 The University

Cambridge University is a leading research University consisting of approximately 18,000 students and 6,000 staff. The University is collegiate: it comprises a federation of independent colleges. Teaching is shared between departments, responsible for large group teaching, course development, and the setting and marking of examinations, and colleges, responsible for small group teaching, much course guidance, and pastoral concerns. CARET is charged with piloting innovative technologies within the University, including those related to teaching and learning. Innovations are adopted through convincing individuals, committees, and organisations of their worth within their own activities. It is rare that use of a technique can be mandated, and such runs the risk of being seen as an attack on the essential federal nature of the University. CARET is a part of Cambridge University Library.

2.2 Case study focus

We wished to survey community tools to aid the development of teaching and learning in order to determine their likely uptake within the University and to ascertain where and when the introduction of such tools to lecturers might be appropriate and stand a good chance of adoption. Therefore our success criteria would be:

1. To discover tools which we believe would be useful in guiding University teaching
2. Which are also "saleable" to them,
3. Which it would be possible for us to support and maintain.

2.3 Institutional barriers, challenges and enablers

The need to sell tools to each person individually can lead to slow adoption rates and frustration on behalf of those advocating a tool. However, the fact of adoption and the lack of obligation make such uptake an excellent indicator of perceived worth by teachers, and feedback is untainted by any cosy, tacit "emperors new clothes" effect.

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4. Overview of interventions and activity within the project

The 13 Things programme aimed to explore how the different OULDI tools would work within the University of Cambridge setting, getting feedback on the individual tools, but also giving our set of participants the opportunity to explore various Curriculum Design Tools and methods. In the end, we did get extremely useful feedback and insights on Cloudworks, Course Map, Pedagogy Profile and Compendium LD, but also on other interesting (of which many JISC-related) Curriculum Design tools worth mentioning. For the complete analysis write-up of all the Things we introduced through the programme, we'd like to refer to '10. Appendices' in this report.

4.1 Intervention 1: Cloudworks

Each of the interventions, including Cloudworks³, was introduced and digested in the same way.

First the '13 Things' programme team wrote a blogpost describing the tool and what was expected from the participants in their blog posts (the 'four general questions' of the methodology).

Most of the participants posted reflections and feedback about Cloudworks. Additionally, participants (including those who failed to blog) raised issues and provided feedback about Cloudworks during the second workshop.

An examination of the feedback we received from participants surprised us. Unfortunately, Cloudworks was poorly received by our participants, particularly on first encountering it. In 'The Mongoose Librarian' (TML) one of our participants opined "fundamentally I can't get a handle on what I'm looking at. Is it a resource store? A forum? A social networking site? I can see that the answer may be '(d) All of the above', but a clearer steer on function and navigation would be great".

Several people acknowledged the tool might contain some useful resources, but found them fragmentary, hard to find and of uncertain quality. On the plus side the participant blogging as 'N Page' (NP) rated the curriculum design toolbox "handy", but participant '13things Blog Trial' (13BT) said "lots of interesting snippets but felt very bitty on first visit". 'mrj10' added "possibly some useful ideas, but difficult to know where to find them because there is a lot of jargon", and because anyone can add material "there is no consistent terminology [and it is] difficult to judge its quality".

"Reflections on Science Education and Communication" (RSEC) "found cloudworks deeply frustrating", saying "I searched for 'Mathematical Biology' which is one of my current interests. There were lots of links but not enough information to know whether to bother clicking on each one ... There might be useful stuff in there but I think I'm better off searching with Google". TML provides as good a summary as any: "I can see that there's tons

³

<http://cloudworks.ac.uk/>

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of potentially useful stuff in here, but I can't make out how to find and get to it."

Similarly, the idea of a community of learning designers was welcome but didn't materialise for participants. TML says "I love the idea of an online community of LD practitioners, but I can't work out an easy way to communicate with them." NP "found a few sections relating to information literacy (which I've been working with recently), but lots of clouds with no responses. Not the most inspiring start." mrj10 noted "Most posts don't seem to get any response." Reflections on Science Education and Communication says "My [...] worry is that you could spend time putting stuff on here only to find no one ever looks at it again and you'd have no way of knowing whether or not anyone has taken any notice of it."

Positively 13BT, returning later, was however interested to see developments on some of their followed clouds. Engaging with other users may simply be the reward of investing time in participating on active clouds.

RSEC makes a diagnosis: "What we need is quality rather than quantity. Often with projects like this there appears to be a requirement to demonstrate that it's being used which means populating it with as much stuff as possible. The downside of that is that there is no regard to the quality of the input."

Our 13 Things team was surprised by the lack of positive feedback, but find this invaluable in avoiding making costly mistakes. It seems that the shotgun approach to content makes the public version of Cloudworks less than usable for time-poor academics - it was only the relatively intensively curated Curriculum Design Toolbox that received any positive feedback.

13BT offers suggestions: "I think within [an] institution [one] would get fuller and more frank discussion in a less public forum". NP is skeptical about this: "I'm not convinced it would be used enough, but maybe?" RSEC and NP both wonder what advantage CloudWorks would have over Cambridge's VLE CamTools, or our online forums service. 'mrj10' believes that we risk the system "becoming an unstructured repository of material, much of which would not be used by anybody and that would get out of date, unless there was an active community of people who saw it as valuable in their work", and even then is "not sure how generic Cambridge course design is and hence how much demand there would be for common resources."

Elsewhere our participants show that they entertain the possibility of participating in a community of learning designers. Were we to use Cloudworks as a vehicle for such participation, the advice we received from our teachers would strongly indicate the need for a localised instance which was actively curated. If we tried to support such an instance with CloudEngine, we'd need to customise it and probably organise training and introductory sessions. Unless we could heavily influence tool development, comments about clarity of intent and navigation would suggest that considerable local customisation, - and the associated maintenance burden that entails, - would be required for extensive adoption.

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4.2 Intervention 2: Course Map

As with Cloudworks, our 13 Things team posted a blog entry with a description of CourseMap and tasks to undertake using it, allowing participants to investigate at their own pace and in the context of their own work. Not all participants were able to post about the tool, but during the workshop it became clear that those who didn't post about it tried the tool and had strong opinions about it.

In general, the reaction seemed to be more positive for this tool than for Cloudworks but with opinion clearly split among our respondents.

13BT says of this (and the Pedagogy Profile Widget which follows) "Of the tools so far I think these are the ones I am most likely to revisit as I review courses this year". They "are very simple to play with" and "act as prompts that are useful in ensuring a thorough overview of a course", producing gains "without massive input of time to master the tools". RSEC also considers it useful. As "a checklist, 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 ... it is very useful, [encouraging one to re-examine any assumption that] the old method of lectures, examples classes, supervisions with essays and the three-hour exam is the only way to do things." As a "very visual method [of representation] which does allow ready comparison" the course map is valuable when "working with a group of people so you can all see almost at a glance, what is where, when and how ... [although] some people may find the visual approach alienating."

This was immediately borne out by 'mrj10': "For me a map is a representation of a domain that helps you to trace a route. The Course Map seems more like a list of headings that might be relevant to curriculum design". Socratic Investigations (SI) didn't like the idea of a thematic breakdown at all: "it tacitly invites students to approach their course of studies as a digitally compartmentalised entity, rather than as a place for serious, 'organic' thinking ... I see no reason to abandon the prose-style of a more traditional Course Outline."

In terms of its suitability for Cambridge course designers, RSEC says "Course Map is assuming that you're starting from scratch ... I make small changes each year within a large number of constraints ... this would be frustrating because there are so many points in there I would not be able to do anything about".

The headings used are not even the handbook-style headings 'mrj10' usually uses: topics, staff, assessment, teaching and learning approach. "The map ... seems to be focused much more on the 'how' of the course, rather than the 'what' (which is as much, if not more, of a challenge in course design for me)." The headings "do not immediately strike me as necessarily the right headings or the only ones that might be considered ... many of the categories in the course map do not seem particularly relevant e.g. how will students be supported physically and online, how will students communicate and collaborate?" Reflections on Science Education and Communication says "there are things I would include that are missing (e.g. duration and timescales)".

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For us, the take-away points from Course Map is that opinions can be split about overview/checklist tools. As long as the tool is simple and accessible users can assess its potential benefits and decide quickly whether to take it or leave it; no time needs be wasted.

4.3 Intervention 3: Pedagogy Profile

As with the other tools, an explanation of the Pedagogy Profile tool and the four general questions of the methodology was shared through the main '13 Things blog', with some participants replying through their own blogs, and further participants sharing their insights through the workshops.

In general, Pedagogy Profile elicited more positive reactions than it did for Cloudworks, yet reactions were quite varied.

As with Course Map, 13BT found this tool easy to use and that it stimulated thinking, even if one is skeptical about the underlying categorisations: "Of the tools so far I think these are the ones I am most likely to revisit as I review courses this year". "[They] are very simple to play with [and] act as prompts that are useful in ensuring a thorough overview of a course, [producing gains] without massive input of time to master the tools". SI, however, found this tool unnecessarily elaborate, adding "[I find] sophistication and complexity there where I would rather seek simplicity and flexibility."

Other respondents struggled with the categories. "Why these categories?" 'mrj10' wanted to know. "It is indicated that these are based on a learning activity taxonomy developed at the OU, but I would like to have known more about the theory behind them ... There would seem to be an implicit assumption that a 'good' course involves all elements, but I don't see why this should necessarily be the case." SI interpreted them as "a system of pre-emptive responses to students' doubts concerning assessment criteria ... [serving] to mask, rather than reveal, the real Art of Assessment ... I would find it more helpful to ask: is the student really thinking?"

What to do with the information was another problem. 'mrj10' asked "Even if the categories are necessary and sufficient (and a 'good' course should include all of them) what is the right balance between them? ... it is unclear why certain profiles might be considered better than others." Without knowing, and being persuaded by, the arguments behind the tool "it is difficult to see it as more than a box-ticking exercise."

4.4 Intervention 4: Compendium LD

We introduced Compendium LD in the same manner as the other tools. Fewer participants posted to their blog about Compendium LD, but others explained their engagement with the tool at the workshop.

'SI' seemed to be disappointed, being repelled by the idea of flow-charting learning: "the type of courses I would ever teach are aimed at helping students escape the confines of flow-charts, questioning the belief that thought is a labyrinth ... I would change the charts by

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replacing them altogether with something that does not feed students a ‘visualisation’ of the course, but that encourages students to think their own way to the course objective.”

While a reasonable argument, a potential response would be to suggest that Compendium LD is about flow-charting teaching at quite a course-grained level, not an attempt to annex the mystery at the heart of learning.

‘mrj10’ on the other hand began as an enthusiast, but was stymied by a lack of user-friendliness: “I have used Cognitive Mapping Software before and have used a variety of Open Source software tools with complex interfaces, so I was potentially quite favourably disposed towards the idea of Compendium LD ... Compendium LD, however, proved considerably more difficult to understand than anything else I have tried to use recently. Maybe I didn’t put enough effort in to really get to grips with it, but a basic test of software usability, as far as I am concerned, is whether you can get enough of a sense of how to use it from just trying things out to want to carry on. With Compendium LD it was a struggle to get past square one. I did look at a few of the online tutorials, but did not feel I understood things any better having watched them. I also downloaded the 2 page user guide, but there was too much information on the principles to be able to work out how to use it. It was not that I did not have a potential activity to test it on, as I had just received a request from a student for an outline of a class that I will be teaching maybe next week and had put some effort into planning this out, but I could not easily see a way to translate this into Compendium LD.”

‘mrj10’ generously concludes “I suspect this could be a very powerful tool in the right hands”. To achieve such competence, however, would likely require formal training, Compendium LD demanding not just unusual dexterity in operating its user interface but also a command of its underlying concepts of curriculum design.

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5. Case study narratives

5.1 mrj10

'Mrj10' is a senior lecturer who's extremely busy all the time. Most of his time he spends on doing his research, the remainder spent lecturing at two departments; at the Judge Business School and the Engineering Department. With such a busy life, we're very happy he could find some time to take part in our project!

In terms of his technical comfort level and background, mrj10 would always try to use the learning platforms and other online tools that peers or departments require him to get involved with, but outside of work would only use email.

In terms of his experience with curricula, he has "devised quite a few curricula over the years", but he admits he "generally made them up as I went along and have not explored how the process might be supported by technology so am interested in an opportunity to reflect on this".

It soon became clear that, even as a senior and experienced lecturer, he was often confused about what was expected from him when delivering courses, or when setting up curricula. "What I would like to see, in an educational context, is more attention to deciding what information needs to be got over and finding the most efficient and clear way to present it."

'Mrj10' gave us some useful insights on how he thinks support should be for curriculum design should be supported:

- i. Subject-specific information on student skills and knowledge base: understanding the evolving profile of course entrants so as to adapt appropriately, responding to the evolving expectations employers have of course graduates;
- ii. Subject-specific repository of curricula from comparable courses and institutions: provide sense of how other people are approaching the subject and what is considered best practice;
- iii. Repository of curricula for Cambridge courses: discover and build on related courses that students taking a new course might have already studied.

It was clear throughout his participation that 'mrj10' is very busy and therefore doesn't always have the time to invest in trying out new tools and techniques, although he naturally and clearly wants his teaching to be of a high quality. As a result, he will be most attracted to that which obviously offers clear benefit, with minimal new learning. Tools such as Cloudworks and Compendium LD seem to be useful to him at first, but interest wanes when he finds he has to expend too much time using them before he benefits from their use.

Another issue is trust and theoretical underpinning. For Pedagogy Profile, for example, it is not clear where the 'categories' come from; he wants to know what theories underly them

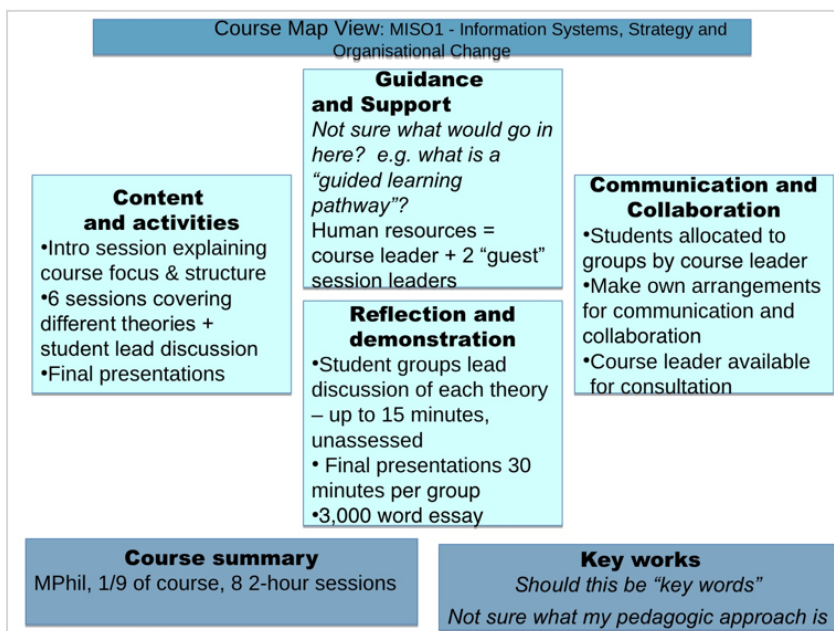
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(i.e. Where do these come from; how do I know they're relevant to me?). Also 'lack of polish' will put him down in using certain tools.

'Mrj10' found some tools difficult to use and contrasted this with the state of the art in public, commercial and open-source software.

It seemed that his needs and expectations weren't completely met when engaging with these tools and the programme; what he really seems to need is 'best practices' and clear guidance of how to decide what content one should put in a course or module.

While 'Mrj10' reacted positively to a number of these tools given certain changes, he is, however, unlikely to use them again in their current form.



Mrj10's version of a Course Map,

5.2 Socratic Investigations

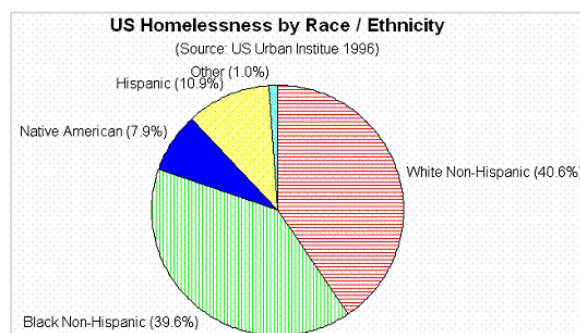
'Socratic Investigations' (SI) is a PhD student at the Faculty of Divinity. Primarily a researcher, his teaching activities are currently limited to small group teaching. He has been asked to start lecturing next year and so is eager to learn more about Curriculum Design in order to prepare. He studies Divinity which he determines requires one to question everything in life, including teaching and educational technologies.

In terms of his technical comfort level and background, SI will only use email and the 'University Imposed' systems as a result of other people choosing to use them. Outside of work he doesn't use systems like Facebook and so on; he is satisfied using only email.

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Although SI has not yet set up a new curriculum, he anticipates he will shortly be involved with such and, in any case, considers it to be an important topic for all those involved in education. SI does have experience supervising students, and so already has some ideas, expectations, and developed opinions regarding curriculum design.

SI has a vexed relationship with online tools for teaching and "sees no use in digitalisation", particularly when it addresses the structuring of thought. With a strong distrust of metaphors which suggest reductive, functional, structural, economic or ideological perspectives, none of the tools engaged significant interest. He sought, but failed to find "quality over quantity" and "organic" teaching. However SI offered a number of interesting suggestions of incremental improvements, for example for Pedagogy Profile he writes "perhaps a coloured pie-shaped graph could be used instead. Something resembling this:



We are grateful that SI remained passionately engaged with our process and generously offered his heartfelt perspective. It is remarkable that he chose to remain engaged despite his essential and fundamental misgivings as to the worth of the field of endeavour, and which provided us with a valuable alternative perspective.

Illustrative quotes regarding the correspondent's anxiety over the use of these tools in his teaching include:

"The value of the tool is supposed to be assigned, not merely by the virtue of its user, but by the number of users or the degree to which the tool succeeds in connecting the greatest number of users (likewise, the 'meaning' of the tool is supposed to be determined by the 'power'--impact, relevance, etc.--of the audience, rather than by the 'quality' or inherent worth of the audience)."

"Cloudworks would be helpful to me as a platform for raising and discussing antidotes to the failure of contemporary education 'systems' to educate (lit. to lead upward, not forward) Socratically--and thus to illuminate our common problems--rather than instruct ideologically, i.e. to lead us away from what is common in the service of special agendas (no matter how 'universalised')."

"Genuine learning resists digitalising/marketing devices, just as an honest course of learning discourages the habit of approaching subjects of learning piecemeal as merchandise."

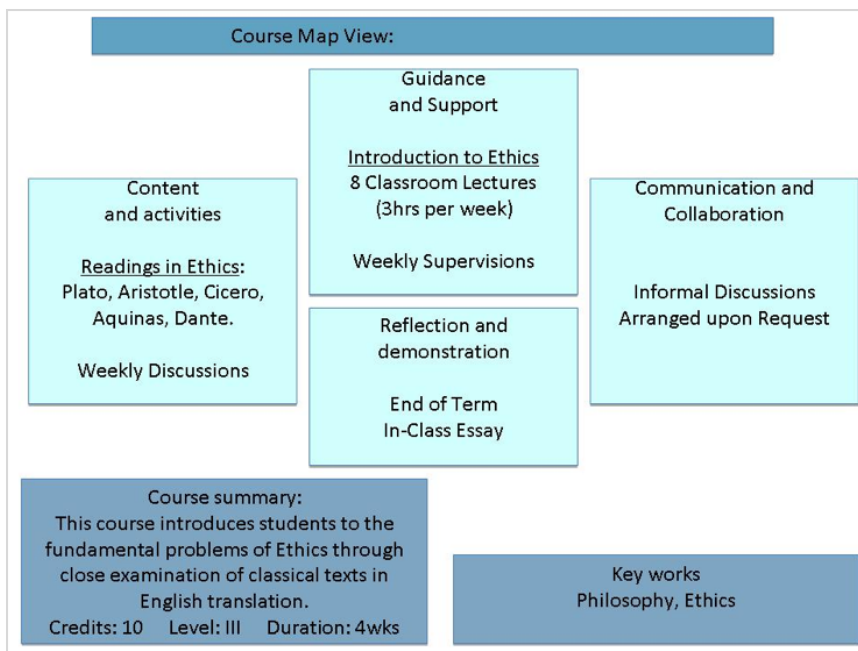
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“a system of pre-emptive responses to students' doubts concerning assessment criteria ... [serving] to mask, rather than reveal, the real Art of Assessment ... I would find it more helpful to ask: is the student really thinking?”

“the type of courses I would ever teach are aimed at helping students escape the confines of flow-charts, questioning the belief that thought is a labyrinth ... I would change the charts by replacing them altogether with something that does not feed students a ‘visualisation’ of the course, but that encourages students to think their own way to the course objective.”

“If I were teaching children with severe learning disabilities (LAS, autism, etc.) [Compendium LD] might come in handy. Probably, many technology/computer students will find themselves at home with the charts.”

We do not anticipate he will take forward use of these tools.



Socratic Investigations' version of a Course Map

5.3 Reflections on Science Education and Communication

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.

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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 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

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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.

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6. Critical analysis

The way our institution works comes down to 'the institution is the faculties, and the faculties are the individuals'. This means that adoption by individuals is the way to letting faculties adopt the tools as well, and eventually by the institution. Though, it has to be said that not all people carry the same weight and this has to be taken into account. When individuals come to us, we can advocate the tools when appropriate.

Overall we can say that the opinions on the tools were not too bad. Participants were happy about certain tools or at least aspects of them, and some said they were already planning to use Pedagogy Profile and Course Map on their own when looking at curricula in the future.

6.1 Success criteria 1: tools that are useful

Tools that seem to be most useful to our lecturers, are tools that have proven to be of high quality (i.e. no spelling mistakes, an easy-to-understand design of the tool, nice design etc), tools where the learning curve was low (i.e. needing as little time as possible in order to understand and start using it), and tools which seemed easy to customise to Cambridge needs without losing its main functionalities. There are a fair few tools that responded to these criteria in a positive way and that we can introduce when the circumstances come up, such as Course Map, Pedagogy Profile, Viewpoints, Open Syllabus.

6.2 Success criteria 2: tools that are saleable

As mentioned in 6.1, tools that have proven to surface quality and usability are important in order to be saleable to our lecturers. The same tools respond to this: Course Map, Pedagogy Profile, Viewpoints, Open Syllabus.

6.3 Success criteria 3: tools that are maintainable

In general, the tools we assessed during the programme appear to be easy to maintain as none really require local installs. They're tools that can either be downloaded and accessed through your desktop, or you can easily access them through Cloudworks.

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7. Conclusions

The thoughtful reflections of 13 Things' participants support some extremely useful conclusions and educated hypotheses about what kinds of tools are helpful for curriculum designers. The conclusions below are based on analysis of all the 13 Things that we offered through the programme, but are applicable when the analysis is restricted to the OULDI tools alone.

Clear benefits and ease of learning

Time-pressured academics are happy to investigate and experiment with new possibilities, but only if it is easy for them to make a cost-benefit calculation. For example, course visualisation tools split opinion, but because they were easy for a teacher to understand and judge whether it may still be worth offering them.

Practicality

Our participants confirmed that all of the tools presented were motivated by interesting ideas. Those that failed the test of being valuable to teachers did so only on grounds of being inaccessibly confusing, unsubstantiated, immature, or populated with material of variable quality. 'Usability' and 'user needs' were commonly raised as issues and these should probably be taken more into account when developing applications.

Curated, high-quality teaching resources with a high relevance quotient

Collections, whether of teaching and learning techniques (like Cloudworks) or materials, or even case studies (like the LTS database), need to be up-to-date, well publicised and carefully selected, otherwise there's the risk that lecturers might not 'trust' them or will get a bad first impression means they never return.

Cambridge specific issues

Cambridge's teaching approach often varies from sector norms, and curriculum design tools developed externally usually need tailoring to fit, so those which are highly customisable fare better here.

Consistency and accessibility of course information

Easy to find and compare course information such as existing curricula and timetables isn't only useful for students, it saves time for curriculum designers. Often even this minimal requirement seems to be unmet.

Peer support

Many participants said the most useful thing about 13 Things was the opportunity to meet up and discuss teaching and share experiences with each other.

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8. Plan for sustainability

As mentioned before, we went into the project to challenge some ideas we had on how our lecturers worked and thought about tools. Hence we would aim to seek genuine opinions of the people involved in the project.

When opening up ourselves to honest feedback, one needs to be prepared to the fact that certain people might not react in a positive way at all. Fortunately, reactions were actually a lot better than that.

There were a couple of participants (of which someone actually more influential than most lecturers), who are going to use the tools in the future. An advantage of the 13 Things programme is that it would need little input from CARET, as sustainability is a major aspect of the programme: the participants have always been responsible for their own actions from the start and they've been offered a whole range to choose from. Thus, the chance they will pick up at least a couple of them, is most existing.

Also, the 13 Things programme made use of a blog where each of the tools has a detailed guiding description on how to get started using them. We don't only aim to have reached the participants who took part during those 7 weeks; the blog will always be there and anyone who gets directed to it can explore the series of tools as well.

We should also point out that CARET and the University Library have a role to advise people on the use of tools, and we will continue to do so where appropriate. This means it's obvious we will also try to advise people on using any of these 13 Things tools where appropriate.

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9. References

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12. Blog of participant 9:

Lynn's place (2011), available at <http://loudsneeze.blogspot.com/> (accessed at various dates: March 2011 – November 2011)

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10. Appendices

1. Processed data of the 13 Things – By Amyas Phillips