

## OULDI-JISC Project

### Narrative 27

Nichola Hayes is an educational designer in the Course Design and Development Unit (CDDU) at her university. She primarily supports the design and delivery of the distance learning courses offered by the College of Social Sciences which includes eight departments.

One of the challenges that the academics in the College of Social Sciences face in course design and delivery is how to improve student experience through innovations, given the constraints they face in distance delivery. Another challenge they face is to make sure that the pedagogical, technological and administrative/support models are designed and developed in parallel to ensure the scalability, maintainability and sustainability of their distance courses.

Nichola took part in a OULDI/Carpe Diem learning design workshop from 11-12 April 2012. She worked together with another colleague, from the Academic Practice Unit of the university, to develop a module called Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), which will be delivered as part of the new Masters programme in Learning Innovation from September 2012. They were given opportunities to explore a range of tools including the OULDI Course Features, Course Map, and Activity Profile, and the Carpe Diem Storyboard and OER Resource Audit.

One of Nichola's expectations for taking part in the workshop was to explore new tools and methods in learning design to challenge her own thinking and CDDU's current practice and approaches in course design and development. This expectation was met by participating in the workshop. Nichola felt that all the tools introduced in the workshop were useful. She could see herself using all of them in her work in the future. She summarised her experience as follows:

*"I wanted to have my thinking challenged with regard to course design and development and I definitely left reflecting and questioning our unit's current approach and have some good tools and approaches to pilot with course design teams."*

Nichola found the Course Features an interesting and engaging activity, and Linoit one of the most useful tools. She described her experience in doing the Course Features activity in Linoit as 'liberating', 'free' and 'creative'. She enjoyed the creativity of this activity because it steered away from the traditional learning design approach in which the development of learning outcomes is always the starting point. She described her feeling as follows:

*"I think it's a way of freeing your mind and putting all the ideas of all the people in the course team down somewhere, not having to be so prescriptive. It was just a much freer and [more] creative experience than getting the learning outcomes and*

*writing them as active verbs, and getting in at a granular level. It was quite sort of a liberating thing to just have everybody move components around and say, 'Do you know I really like all these features. I'd like to do some problem-based learning. I'd like to do peer-review.'*

The workshop enabled Nichola to think about how she might use these tools to enhance CDDU's current practice. For example, Nichola sees the value of the Course Features as an ice-breaking activity during early meetings with academic course teams where they try to make sense of the ideas and concerns that they have about their course. She also wants to use the Linoit tool for their post-it scoping activity during the early stages of the course design process.

The Storyboard and Activity Profile tools were also found very useful by Nichola, especially when used together, as she explained:

*"I liked the storyboard and the Activity Profile if used in parallel, as you can start to structure elements of your course and use the activity profile to check that the emphasis is in the right areas."*

Being able to visualise the learning design was powerful. The Activity Profile tool enabled Nichola and her team to immediately map the types of learning activities that they designed against the learning theories that they want to apply, and prompted the team to go back to rethink and revise their initial design. Nichola described her experience when using the Activity Profile as follows:

*"I really like the profile because it suddenly shows you in its beautiful graphical context that actually you might have thought you've developed a very socio-constructivism model, but when you see the bar graph, and you see you've got absolutely no communication! You actually think, 'Oh, hang on!' And you could go back and revisit the storyboard and think where we went wrong in these course elements because we do want it to be social-constructivism. So let's go back and how we might rework some of the activities."*

Nichola can see herself using the Storyboard and Activity Profile tools in her work as both tools also lend themselves well to the CDDU's current practice.

The examples below (Figure 1 and 2) demonstrate the ways in which Nichola and her team used the Storyboard and Activity Profile tools to provide alternative representations of their course provision.

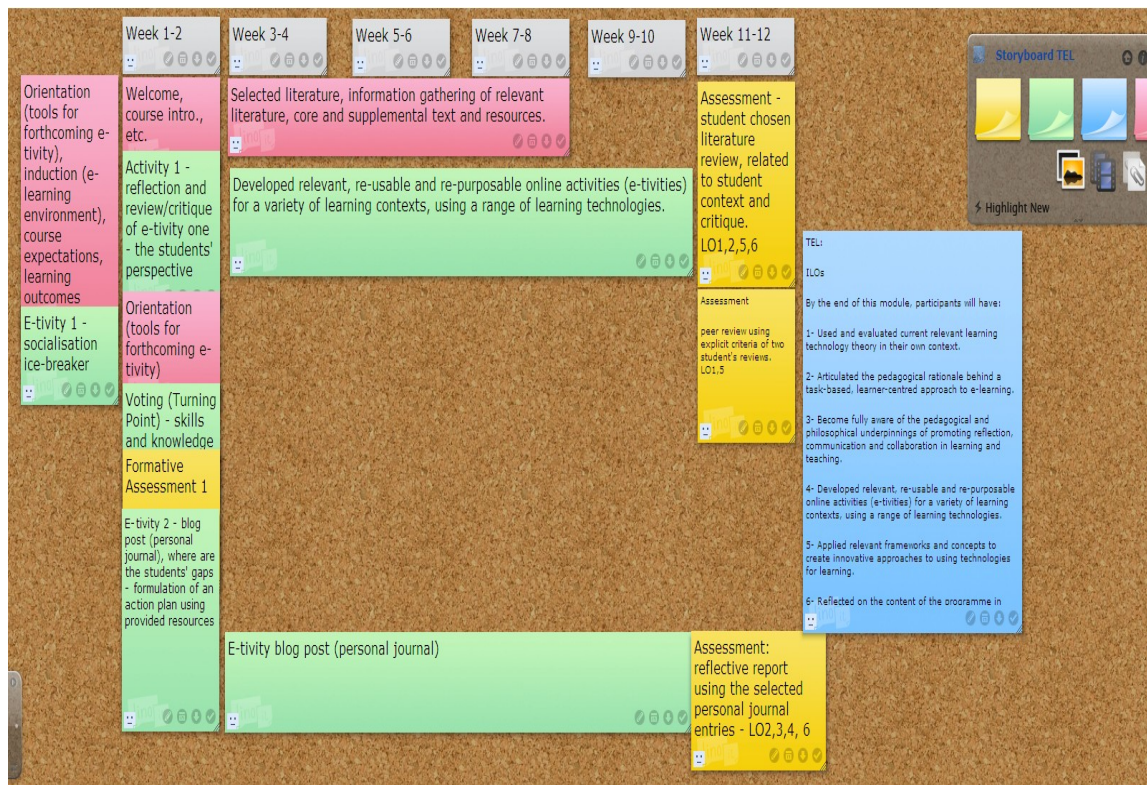


Figure 1: Storyboard

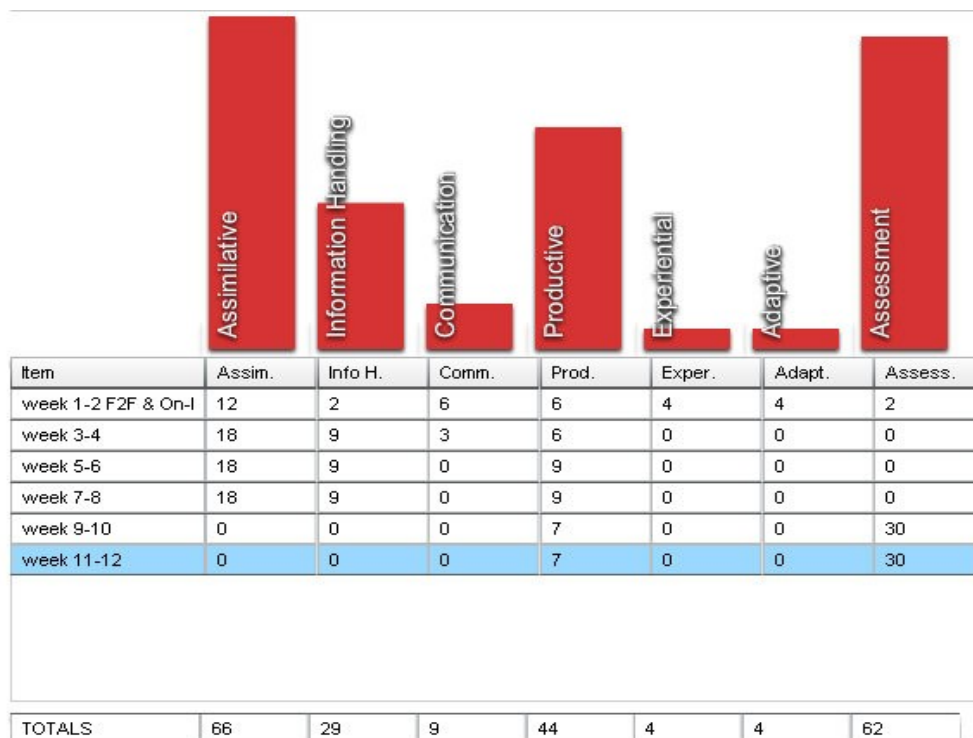


Figure 2: Activity Profile

The OER Resource Audit tool was also found to be very useful. The tool enabled Nichola to think about the materials that are already available which she could reuse and repurpose

instead of developing them from scratch, as she stated, 'You don't want to spend precious time reinventing the wheel.' The tool also enabled her to identify the gaps in the materials which the team needs to allocate time and resource to develop.

One thing that Nichola liked about these tools was that they could be combined or uncoupled flexibly in different ways and presented in different sequences depending on where a course team is in the design process. Nichola developed her own thinking about how she might re-sequence these tools in her practice. For example, she would like to start with the Course Features as an ice-breaking activity, then do the Storyboard and Activity Profile in parallel to map out the pedagogical model, then use the Course Map to establish the support, resource and guidance needed, and finish up with the OER Resource Audit to identify the gaps in the content.

Some of the tools and representations still need to be improved. Nichola explained her frustrations when using the Course Map tool and provided suggestions on how to improve it:

*"The Excel format of the Course Map was hard to use, the categorisation of the headings were not in plain English and caused confusion and the circle in the middle hides the text in some of the cells."*

*"The Course Map I would change in terms of its overall presentation and change the second column to roles and responsibilities."*

Her other comments relate to how the workshop can be improved as whole, as in its current form, the tools and activities were felt to be more like separate components and not quite seen as mashed together as a whole, as described by Nichola:

*"The activities were very disparate and lacked contextualisation, supporting resources, background, aims, objectives and outcomes."*

*"There was a different way I probably would have wanted them to be presented to me, so it's a more natural course of design progression."*

Another suggestion from Nichola for improving the workshop as a whole is that future workshops should allow the course teams to revisit the, learner context, demographic, administrative, financial, resource constraints that they have at certain stages of the design process.

Learning outcomes were considered very important by Nichola; however they did not have a strong presence in the tools and activities. For that reason, Nichola would like to bring it back to the design process by making it a separate activity, perhaps after doing the Course Features and before doing the Storyboard and Activity Profile.

Timing and pacing are other issues that require some consideration and careful planning. For example, Nichola felt that the course teams need to be given enough time in between the

activities to allow them to discuss, reflect and develop properly before they move onto the next tool; however, the gap in between should not be too long so that they give it up. Some of the activities, such as the Course Features and learning outcomes, can be used as preliminary activities that the course team can do before they come to the workshop, as suggested by Nichola.

On the whole, Nichola felt very positive about what she achieved from the workshop. She felt that she took away with her lots of ideas, thinking and reflections which she can take forward and implement in her own practice. She concluded her experience by saying:

*“I will think about how the tools can be added to the ones we currently have such as the course design game we use in the early planning stages. I will think about using some of the tools in isolation where appropriate and will share everything I have learnt with my colleagues.”*

Nichola and her team proposed a new process for developing future modules by taking into account some the suggestions provided above.