

# Research at FutureLearn

Understanding new  
features

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## **Our way - 15 mins presentation**

An overview of the approach we took to build a new feature at FutureLearn.

## **Your way - 15 mins discussion**

The methodologies you use and how FutureLearn / FLAN supports you.

# (an example of) Our way

User need

Design  
sprint

Prototypes

Pilots

Planning  
ahead

Variety of  
approaches

# User need

**New things need a purpose**  
Who and what?

# Purpose: for partners and learners

FutureLearn has moved from MOOCs to credentials and professional courses. Impacts our partners and learners:

- Cohort sizes change
- Enrolments span multiple courses
- Increased levels of support
- Richness of interaction and activity



# Design sprint

**A rapid way to get stuff done**  
Meta group work

# Design sprint

Six people, five days, empty diaries.

- Day 1 - Understanding
- Day 2 - Defining direction & sketching ideas
- Day 3 - Sketching & voting
- Day 4 - Storyboard
- Day 5 - Prototype and test

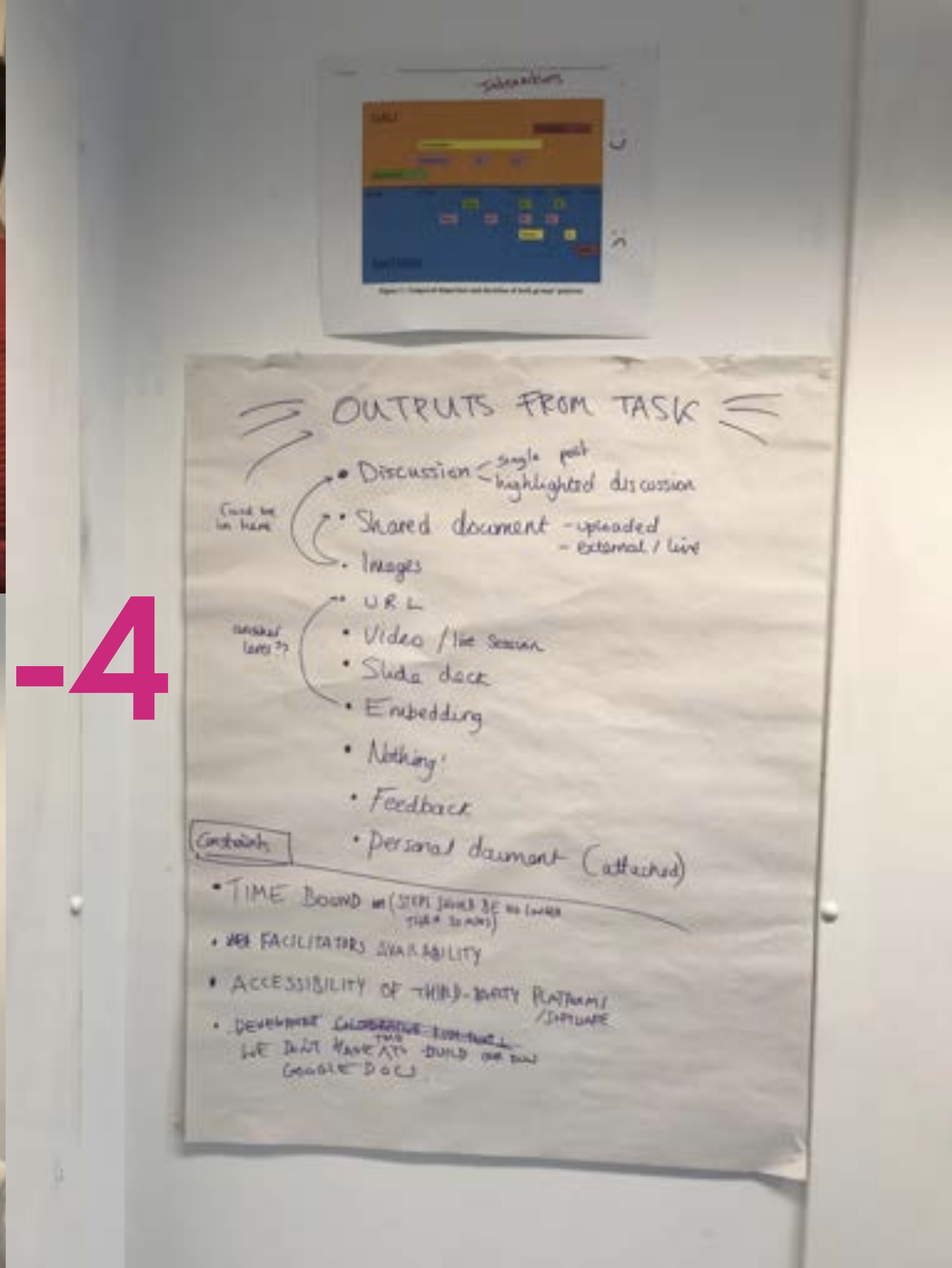
Follow-up session / sprint review

## Principles for groups

1. Driven by social learning
2. Integrated into the experience
3. Purpose is clear
4. Contributions count



# Days 1-4





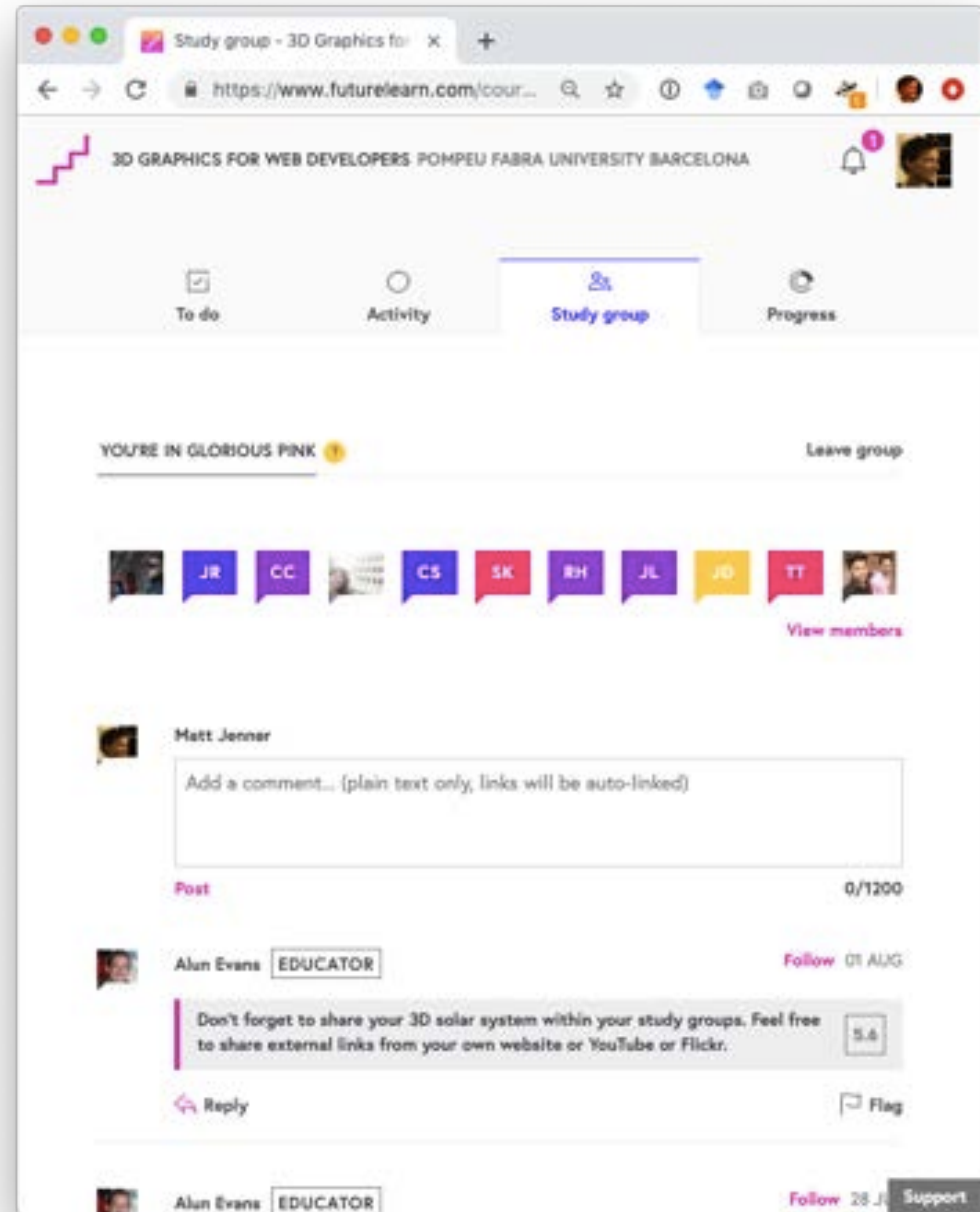
# Understanding

Get ourselves up to speed and finding inspiration

- Related functionality 🤖
- Literature review 📖
- Sharing perspectives ❤️
- Finding inspiration ✨
- Personal reflection 🤔

# Study groups

- Released in 2016
- Built on user research
- Testing ideas
- Insight generated



"utterances, texts and diagrams that are **produced during collaboration** are designed by the participants to display their understanding. That is the **basis for successful collaboration**"

**Stahl, G., Koschmann, T.D. and Suthers, D.D., 2006.**

**Computer-supported collaborative learning. na.Vancouver**

...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

"Social interaction of the individual's experiences, despite their past performance, and encouragement to act within and upon themselves and their peers are vital. Students in the learning actively engage in dialogue, view each other as brought but to extend understanding, who are personally aware and mutually reflective of their experiences and emotions, as well as of each other's values and assumptions."

"...collaborative learning processes are highly characterized as the shared within information and the interactions that are established among the participants. The focus of attention that goes within each grade can enhance their knowledge, convergence processes, and the other elements to be included."

The broader that... of...  
...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

Handwritten yellow sticky note with illegible text.

**Collaborative**  
...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

**Cooperative**  
...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

1. ...  
2. ...  
3. ...  
4. ...

...the most learning as well as that of their peers when the emphasis shifts from students being passive recipients of knowledge to higher level of learning is thought to occur.

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Image © Copyright  
Handwritten yellow sticky notes at the bottom left.

# Prototypes

**Build fast, iterate in realtime**

Making useful buttons

# Prototype and test

- Tested ideas internally on colleagues
- Feedback from Diana Laurillard, FutureLearn's Academic Advisor
- Presented to the company
- Built a prototype
- **Qualitative input**



# Pilots

**Building a Minimal Lovable Product**

Give us richer data

EP Small groups story mapping

FutureLearn | Team | Share | Profile

### INFORMATION

About this board

Photos from story mapping session

+ Add another card

### Learning Manager

- Assign course runs to groups
- Alocate group members (learners)
- Assign facilitators to groups (mentors)
- Ensure learners can only be in one group across a course run

+ Add another card

### Course Creator - setup steps

- Add task to workspace step
- Setup reflection step with reflection instructions
- Setup group showcase step
- Display due date to educators creating/editing showcase step

+ Add another card

### Facilitation

- View overview of groups with a link to facilitate each group workspace
- View all group activity (posts, contributions, likes) (repurpose study groups tech!)
- @ group in comments on showcase
- Restricting facilitator access to assigned groups only

+ Add another card

### Stats dashboard

Download group activity datasets

+ Add another card



# Testing the new feature

1.1 YOU'VE COMPLETED 1 STEP IN WEEK 1


## How to be happy and healthy


Submitted to showcase on 25 Jan 2019 at 12:00 (GMT)

Living a healthy lifestyle is often cited as one of the best ways we can all be happy, and live longer. There are many small changes we can make individually that will have a positive impact on our lives.

Work together to make a comprehensive set of principles which anyone can follow. You'll want to make them inclusive and adaptable by anyone, so try not to make them too specific or focused. Think big!

### You're in the group Majestic Dog

 Re-order contributions

 Katie Coleman 14 JAN

A healthy diet consists of fruits, vegetables, cereals, milk, potatoes, pulses, etc. It is advised to eat little or no meat and much raw food (raw fruits and vegetables). Raw food gives the body lots of vitamins and minerals that protect him from disease.

[Edit](#) [Delete](#)

1.2 YOU'VE COMPLETED 1 STEP IN WEEK 1

## What did you learn?

Think back to the task you have just completed and consider the following when writing a personal reflection:

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Problems and solutions
- Achievements and happiness
- Skills developed or needed

Only you will see this reflection. The aim of this task is to help you think back to the work you've completed, how you participated in the task and to improve your collaboration skills.

It will never be shared with your group or with the wider cohort.

### Your reflection






I learned that everyone needs to pull their weight in-group work for it to succeed.

1.3 YOU'VE COMPLETED 1 STEP IN WEEK 1

## Review other groups

Submitted on 25 Jan 2019 at 12:00 (GMT)

Each group's health and happiness principles is shared below. In the discussion share your views. Compare how the other groups approached this task and share any differences you discover when comparing to your own group's principles.

| Group                                    | Members   |
|--|---|
| <b>Majestic Dog</b><br>3 Contributions   |  |
| <b>Awesome Badger</b><br>3 Contributions |  |
| <b>Epic Squirrel</b><br>4 Contributions  |  |
| <b>Terrific Cat</b><br>4 Contributions   |  |
| <b>Tragic Fox</b>                        |  |

# Research objectives

We want to know (summarised)

- Do we support our user needs?
- What works?
- What doesn't?
- What's missing?

# Research timeline (summarised)

April

- Proposal for research sent to ethics approval
- Course surveys set up and added

May

- Recruit educators for interviews.
- Send survey to learners using targeted email

June

- Recruit more learners, educators and facilitators for interviews.
- Conduct interviews with learners, educators and facilitators.
- Receive survey responses

July

- Analysis of quantitative data
- Analysis of survey responses
- Analysis of interviews
- Summarise overall findings

### Question page 1:

**The questions in this survey relate to the Group Task within the Learning Design Practice FutureLearn course. The Group Task was about tackling student engagement issues and it took place towards the end of Week 2 (steps 14 to 17).**

**1. Did you take part in the Group Task described above during Learning Design Practice? \***

- Yes *(directs to question page 2)*
- No *(directs to question page 3)*
- Unsure *(directs to question page 4)*

### Question page 2 (for those who took part in the group task):

**How much do you agree with the following statements?**

**2. Taking part in the Group Task supported my learning. \***

- Strongly Agree • Agree • Unsure • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Research  
Research

# Some quantitative data

Pilots give us the capacity to have an overview of:

Instances by partners shows

- Context (task, location, level of study)
- Group allocation (size, facilitation)

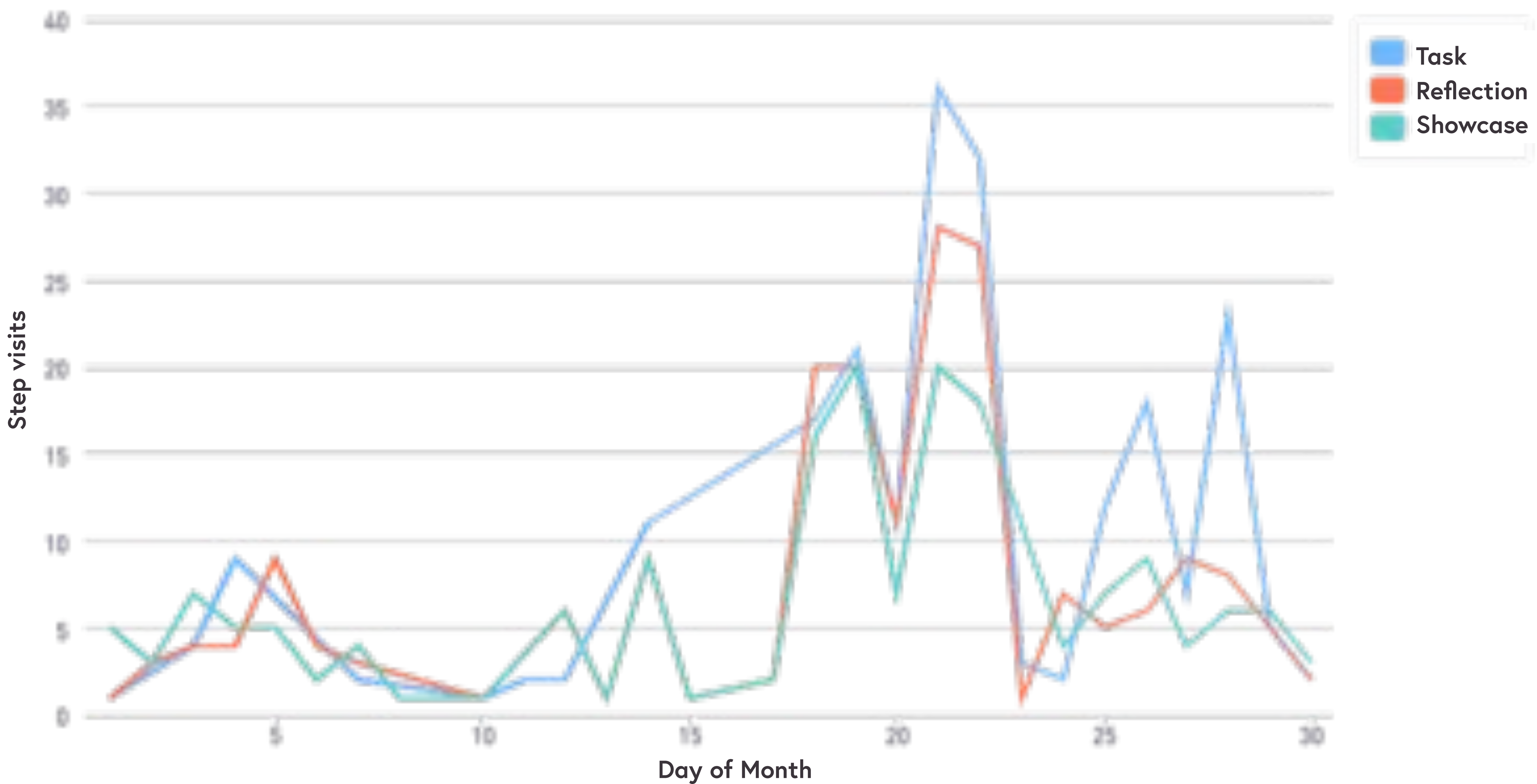
Information from Learners gives us:

- Participation records (comments, contributions, marking as complete)
- Showcase comments

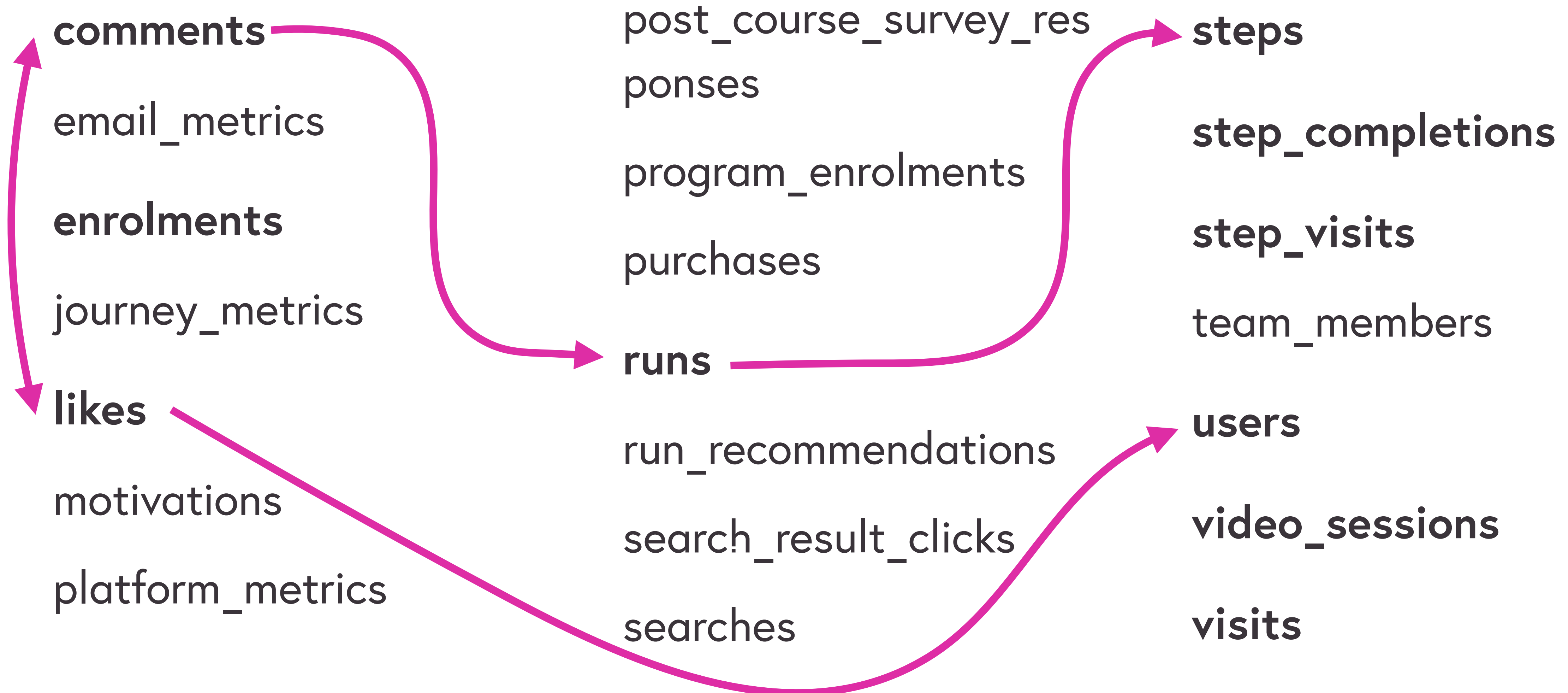
The screenshot shows the FutureLearn Course Creator interface. At the top, it says 'FutureLearn Course Creator' and 'Matt Jenner' with a 'Sign Out' button. Below that, it says 'Run: Small Groups Demo - 17 Dec 2018 / Small groups'. The main heading is 'Small group tasks'. The course title is 'How to be happy and healthy' with a due date of '22 Feb 2019 at 12:00 (UTC)'. The table below lists various groups with their respective mentors, learners, contributions, comments, and completion status.

| Group          | Mentors | Learners                                       | Contributions | Comments | Marked as complete |
|----------------|---------|--|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| Awesome Badger | MJ      | AM, [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar]               | 2             | 5        | 1 / 4              |
| Epic Squirrel  | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], YB                         | 5             | 1        | 1 / 3              |
| Majestic Dog   | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], AM, [Avatar], SM, [Avatar] | 3             | 9        | 2 / 6              |
| Terrific Cat   | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar], CF     | 4             | 2        | 2 / 5              |
| Tragic Fox     | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar], EP, [Avatar]     | 3             | 1        | 2 / 5              |
| Whirly Wombats | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar], BH, [Avatar], PL | 4             | 0        | 0 / 6              |
| Wicked Turtle  | MJ      | [Avatar], [Avatar], [Avatar]                   | 2             | 0        | 0 / 3              |

# All step visits for three group steps



# Quantitative data - tables





# Planning ahead

**Future versions**

Evidence-based roadmaps

EP Small groups story mapping

FutureLearn | Team | Profile | Search | 20 search results | Show Menu

#### Workspace

23 cards

- ✓** Learner: I can preview my group's contributions
- ✓** Learner: All contributions are submitted automatically on the due date
- ✓** Learner: I can no longer add contributions once the deadline has passed
- ✓** Learner: I can add contributions in rich-text
- ✓** Learner: I can add a link to my contribution
- ✓** Learner: I can add a table to my contribution
- ✓** Learner: I can add an image to my contribution
- + Add another card

#### Comments in workspace

8 cards

- ✓** Learner: Once deadline's gone, I can still comment
- + Add another card

#### Personal reflection

3 cards

- ✓** Learner: I can submit my personal reflection for feedback
- ✓** Learner: I can view feedback from educator on my personal reflection
- + Add another card

#### Showcase

8 cards

- ✓** Learner: I can only see other groups' work after the deadline passes
- ✓** Learner: I can like any group's work
- + Add another card

#### Notifications and emails

3 cards

- ✓** Learner: I get an email telling me "3 days until due date"
- ✓** Learner: I get an email telling me "1 day until due date - hurry up!"
- ✓** Learner: I am notified when someone liked my contribution
- + Add another card



https://future.com/.../EP-small-groups-story-mapping/menu-filter&filter-label/V2

# Variety of approaches

**We're guided but not formulaic**

This was just an overview of one project!



About the UX Research Toolkit



Welcome to the UX Research Toolkit

Task

What kinds of research projects and methods is the Toolkit for?

Task

- Task
Task
Task
Task
Task
Task

Guide to notes taking

Task

Example pathways

Example pathways through the Toolkit

Task

How do I make suggestions for improvement?

Task

How does FutureLearn benefit from the Toolkit?

Task

+ Add another card

A: Deciding to do research

2+ weeks

Typically 2+ weeks before testing. This section is about deciding what research you'll do and agreeing how you'll do it.

Task

- Task
Task

A1: Spotting and exploring opportunities to do UX research

Task

- Task
Task

A2: Checking for existing relevant insight

Task

- Task
Task

A3: Rapid evidence review (optional)

Task

- Task
Task

A4: Defining your research request and asking for UX researcher support

+ Add another card

B: Preparing for research

2 weeks

Typically 2 weeks before testing. Now you've agreed what you're going to do, this section is all about preparing to conduct the research.

Task

- Task
Task
Task

B1: Booking incentives and resourcing budget

Task

- Task
Task

B2: Starting the recruitment process

Task

- Task
Task

B3: Resourcing incentives and paying for resources

Task

- Task
Task

B4: Writing the discussion guide (e.g. for interviews, usability tests and Quantia research)

+ Add another card

C: Running sessions or tests

2-3 days

Typically 2 - 3 days (although can be spread out). This section is all about the dress rehearsal, trial 'lights, camera, action!'

Task

- Task
Task

C1: Promoting sessions to the company

Task

- Task
Task

C2: Preparing to have visitors to the office

Task

- Task
Task
Task

C3: Doing a practice run and refining your discussion guide

Task

- Task
Task

C4: Getting all your paperwork and assets ready

+ Add another card

D: Analysing and concluding

-3 days

- 3 days for really structured findings. This section is about summing up and deciding what to do based on your findings.

Task

- Task
Task

D1: Collating notes from sessions

Task

- Task
Task

D2: Analysing sessions (including Card Sorts and Tree Tests)

Task

- Task
Task

D3: Analysing and presenting to workshop

Task

- Task
Task

D4: Reviewing findings and drawing conclusions in a Meet-UP meeting

+ Add another card

E: Reporting and wrapping up

2+ days

2+ days for really structured findings. This section is about sharing what you've learnt, housekeeping and reflecting on the research process.

Task

- Task
Task

E1: Reporting and recording insight

Task

- Task
Task

E2: End-of-project housekeeping and sharing

Task

- Task
Task

E3: Reflecting

Task

- Task
Task

+ Add another card

# Different research activities

Requires different methods, and we have different roles at FutureLearn doing their own kinds of research.

Some examples:

- UX Research - Learner & Partner Archetypes
- Insights and Strategy - Course performance
- Learner Experience - Increase value for social learners

# Open discussion

What are your approaches?

Can FutureLearn / FLAN help?