



Imaginative Curriculum Case Study

A Constructively Aligned Curriculum. Bob Farmer, University of Central England

The Staff and Student Development Department (SSDD) at the University of Central England is currently in the process of delivering a new module to academic staff with the title, Designing Academic Programmes in Higher Education. The module is one of three that we offer at Masters level in addition to a Post Graduate Certificate in Education for experienced staff as well as those who are new to teaching in HE. In designing the programme we have tried to create a module based on the twin principles of constructivism in learning and alignment in teaching.

Here are a few details, which you should read in conjunction with the grid 'Designing Academic Programmes in H.E.'

We started by closely matching the '**knowledge acquisition**' elements (the course content) to the learning objectives. This material is delivered in a Virtual Learning Environment by short video clips supported on-screen by synchronized Power Point slides. More importantly, however, this 'content' is closely aligned with the learning and teaching activities which we have called the '**knowledge processing**' components. You can see from the diagram that these elements have been further broken down into '**knowledge construction**' and '**knowledge analysis and synthesis**'. The former is an online conference while the latter is a formative portfolio of evidence and analysis constructed by the participants on a weekly basis and privately downloaded for tutor's comments and feedback. The module is summatively assessed by a reflective portfolio which, we hope, will become a distillation of the work undertaken as participants critically evaluate 'problem' courses and modules in their own departments before undertaking the final task of a speculative redesign. In other words, to use Leonor Prieto Navarro's excellent phrase, 'the assessment is embedded in the learning activities'.

One interesting aspect of the way that this module is delivered is that, apart from minor changes and upgrades, once the knowledge acquisition components (the video clips) have been constructed, the role of the tutors is solely concerned with giving feedback and supporting the learning. A second aspect, which may or may not prove to be an advantage, is the amount of knowledge and control the Virtual Learning Environment gives the tutor over the study habits of the learners.

Key to the Diagram

- **VLE:** Virtual Learning Environment
- **VL:** Video lectures include Power Point Slides and 'links' to useful resource material. None lasts longer than 20 minutes. Participants can access these at any time.
- **PRQs:** Personal Response Questions These are multiple choice questions/options that come at the end of a video sequence. Participants vote, electronically, for the option that they consider best represents their situation or their point of view. Votes are recorded and made public but PRQs offer no 'right' answers.
- **Conference Activity:** This is an asynchronous online discussion. PRQs are often used as a trigger for an exchange of views.
- **Uploaded Portfolio Entry:** This is evidence collected and analysed by participants and downloaded in private for (formative) feedback by the tutor.
- **Face to Face:** Over a 10 week period participants meet on three occasions. Once in order to become acquainted with the VLE and twice for the purpose of sharing their work, analysing case study material and learning through formative peer group assessment.


This is a new venture that is innovative in its design as well as in its method of delivery. Any comments from colleagues who are involved in a similar enterprise would therefore be most welcome.

DESIGNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES IN H.E.

WK	Starting Monday	FACE TO FACE	← VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT →				
			CONTENT STRUCTURE	CONFERENCE ACTIVITY – NON-ASSESSED	UPLOAD PORTFOLIO ENTRY – FORMATIVE AND PRIVATE		
		Knowledge Acquisition	Knowledge Processing				
			Knowledge Construction	Knowledge Analysis and Synthesis			
			PRQ				
1	7/10	Friday 11/10 10am-1pm (1) INTRODUCTION Scheme of work Assessment (2) HANDS ON VLE (3) ENROL-Fac Ed (4) FORM ALS					
2	14/10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – INTRODUCTION VL – Characteristics of UCE <i>Phil Walkling: Pro-Vice Chancellor</i> VL – Changing HE <i>Peter Knight: Vice Chancellor</i> – A MARKET LED APPROACH TO COURSE DESIGN VL – What is Marketing <i>Mark Richardson</i> VL – Market Environment <i>Mark</i> VL – Competitive Advantage <i>Mark</i> 	1 1 1	Discussion about the courses in your dept/school in relation to the characteristics of UCE and the ever-changing nature of H.E. Strengths/Weaknesses, Opportunities/Threats.	P1	Based upon the pressures for change in the HE sector and the mission of UCE prepare a SWOT analysis of the portfolio of courses in your dept/school.
3	21/10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – STRATEGIES & PLANS VL – Marketing Objectives and Strategies - <i>Mark</i> VL – Marketing Planning - <i>Mark</i> VL – Implementation - <i>Mark</i> 	1	Discussion about the choices you have for the development of new courses.	P2	Consider the strategic planning gap and identify your preferred strategic choice from market penetration to diversification. Prepare a short proposal for a new course/route/pathway or mode of delivery. This proposal should involve more than changes to one module.
4	28/10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ANALYSIS VL – Relationships - <i>Mark</i> VL – Market Research – <i>Simon Kirby</i> 		Discussion about market research and your own attempts to gather supporting evidence.	P3	Gather evidence to support your proposal. Make full use of secondary evidence and identify what primary evidence may need to be collected.

5	4/11	Friday 8/11 10am-3pm (1) ALS Peer assessment of Portfolio (P1,P2,P3) against criteria 1,2,6. (2) ONLINE CASE STUDY Mullock 1	– CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS VL – Curriculum Frameworks <i>David Green</i>	1-5	Discussion about course structures, modularity, and credit frameworks.	P4	Prepare outline structure diagram and associated rationale for speculative new course/route/pathway specifying aims, module outlines, credits and levels.	
6	11/11		– DEFINING THE CURRICULUM VL – Curriculum Models <i>Bob Farmer</i> VL – Learning Outcomes <i>Bob Farmer</i>	1-7	Discussion about aims and learning outcomes.	P5 (a)	Critique the aims of a problematical course in your dept/school together with the objectives/outcomes for at least one module.	P5 (b) Refine aims for new course (as described in P4) and objectives for at least one module.
7	18/11		– COURSE PHILOSOPHY VL – Course Philosophy <i>Bob Farmer</i>	1-3	Discussion about course philosophy.	P6 (a)	Prepare a short reflective statement in which you evaluate the course philosophy as you perceive it of a problematical course in your dept/school.	P6 (b) Refine your outline course structure as set out in P4 in the light of your reflections upon course philosophy.
8	25/11	Friday 29/11 10am-3pm (1) ALS Peer Assessment of portfolio (P4,5,6) against criteria 3,4, and 6 (2) NEW INPUT/ACTIVITY <i>Bob Farmer</i>	– MOTIVATION VL – Approaches to Learning <i>Bob Farmer</i> VL – Motivation <i>Bob Farmer</i>	1-4 1	Discussion about students' motivation and approaches to learning.	P7 (a)	Prepare a short statement that considers evidence collected from colleagues as to why students fail and drop-out.	P7 (b) Describe the features of your new course/route/pathway that help address the issues of retention, and what specific plans you have to deal with them?
9	2/12		– A DESIGN STRATEGY VL – Assessment Strategy <i>Bob Farmer</i> VL – Teaching, Learning and Assessment Frameworks <i>Bob Farmer</i>	2 1	Discussion about assessment learning and teaching methods and the design templates.	P8 (a)	Critique the learning activities and assessment methods of a problematical <u>module</u> of your choice.	P8 (b) Redefine the learning outcomes for one of your new <u>modules</u> and construct a template similar to that shown in the video. Use this to show a range of knowledge acquisition and knowledge process activities. Highlight items, as in the video, that you would consider to be suitable as formative and summative assessment activities.
10	9/12		– ACCOUNTING FOR STUDY HOURS VL – Accounting for study hours <i>David Green</i>	?	Discussion about study time and the problems of overload/assessment 'bunching'.	P9	Prepare a break-down that accounts for all of the study time one of your new modules over time. Liaise with colleagues to consolidate this across concurrent modules in that semester. Identify points of assessment overload and other impracticalities that might lead to surface learning or motivational problems. Propose solutions to any problems that you find.	

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SUMMATIVE PORTFOLIO
"HARD COPY"
3 FEBRUARY 2003
5000 Words making reference to real evidence