



ABC LD Toolkit 2019 Part 1 (of 3) Erasmus + ABC to VLE Project

Introduction to the ABC learning design workshop Version 1

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Resources available from <http://abc-ld.org>

Terminology:

This document uses UCL specific language that may differ from terminology used at your own institution. Where a 'programme' is mentioned, this depicts an entire programme of study (e.g. Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science). The term 'module' refers to a unit of study within the overall programme (e.g. CHEM1001). UCL usually run an ABC workshop for a programme, consisting of 5+ teaching teams who will each (re)design a module within that programme.

The term 'course' is used either to denote a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course, or it is used where the unit of study is not explicit, so it may describe the design process used for programmes, modules and CPD courses interchangeably.

An 'online course' refers to the online components of a course (module, programme or CPD course) that are developed within an institution's Virtual Learning Environment or Learning Management System.

You may wish to find and replace these terms with your own local terms, to aid understanding.

-Jessica Gramp, Inclusive Web Ltd

1. Why ABC learning design?

How can we engage and enable our time-pressured academics to design rich blended and online courses? Most leading universities nowadays have aspirational strategies to develop future-looking, digitally rich, flexible courses attuned to students' expectations for engaging, professionally related learning experiences. Yet we know only a few of our pioneering academics currently have the design skills, technology knowledge and above all *time* to remodel their programmes to the creative standards the future of education demands. Deep institutional change must by definition engage mainstream academics but current methods of learning design consultancy and 'away-day' workshops are support-intensive and time consuming, therefore poorly scalable. This contradiction frustrates educational ambition at all policy levels.

Recognising the need for a radical rethink, in 2013 Clive Young and Natasa Perovic of the Digital Education team at University College London (UCL) pioneered a 'light touch' alternative team-based approach. 'ABC' is the result, a high-energy hands-on workshop. In just 90 minutes teaching teams work together to create a visual 'storyboard'. The storyboard is made up of pre-printed cards representing the type and sequence of learning activities (both online and offline) required to meet the module or programme learning outcomes. Assessment methods, cross-programme themes and institutional policies can all be integrated into the process. The key to this approach is pace, engagement and collaboration. ABC has been found particularly useful for new programmes or those changing to an online or more blended format. The approach generates high levels of engagement, creative informed dialogue and group reflection about curriculum design among even time-poor academics.

The intentionally paper-based process itself is as significant as the outcomes.

Storyboarding is an established technique from film-making to illustrate a narrative as a sequence of scenes. The ABC version provides a storyboard overview of the learner experience visualising the course module's structure, therefore making it immediately discussable by the team. The storyboard's sequences comprise learner activities, classified into six type cards using a simple and easy-to-learn taxonomy based on the highly respected 'Conversational Framework' created by UCL's Prof Diana Laurillard (2012). Example activities are provided, but teams are able and encouraged to add their own activities to the cards. The creative hands-on, analogue format of the workshop together with the presence of colleagues and support staff always stimulates a wide-ranging discussion. This generally includes the purpose of the course module or programme, teaching methods, alternative technologies, new assessment methods and above all the student experience. The storyboard approach also reinforces the notion that the design is a purposeful, discussable and transparent narrative describing the student experience over time.

Extensive testing at UCL (as part of the HEFCE project) and other institutions has shown high levels of transferability, academic enthusiasm and satisfaction. The workshops seem

to have immediate impact in terms of stimulating a level of collaborative ‘educational design thinking’ in a range of academic contexts. This first version of this set of guides was funded by HEFCE to help other institutions adopt and adapt the ABC method to support educational change in their context. Their publication is now co-funded by Erasmus+.

2. ABC in the institutional context



University College London

Context is critical to ABC. We know its successful adoption depends on alignment to the specific requirements of the new institution. In these toolkit guides we focus on the ‘classic’ format of the workshops, therefore a quick review of the UCL environment may help to explain how it developed in the specific way it did.

University College London (UCL) is a renowned research focused and multidisciplinary university with over 38,000 students and 6000 academic and research staff. One of its key strategic aims as expressed in the current Education Strategy (UCL, 2015) is to be a global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience. These ambitions to enhance curriculum quality are represented especially by the Connected Curriculum initiative (Fung, 2014) and are reinforced by the use of data from external benchmarks such as the UK National Student Survey (HEFCE, 2016a). Top down interventions are augmented by widespread grassroots interest and activity in blended learning and technology enhanced flexible modes of study.

UCL’s Digital Education team, together with our Arena academic development centre, work closely with academics to review and develop new curricula. The university’s Arena suite of

courses for probationer and established teachers is also now well established. This prepares participants to apply for a UCL Arena Fellowship and hence a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).

Since 2014, all taught modules now at UCL must provide an accompanying online course in Moodle our virtual learning environment (VLE), and, UCL's Virtual Learning Environment. The UCL E-Learning Baseline, which describes the minimum and aspirational (Baseline +) features of online learning provision for each of these modules, has now been mandated. Despite being previously voluntary, the minimum is reasonably well established and includes sections on accessibility, online course structure, orientation, communication and assessment. Lecture capture, again voluntary, has proved very popular across with students and we are moving to an opt-out policy in the near future. The recordings are delivered through Moodle.

Digital resources, activities, communications and assessment can now be considered an integral component of the UCL student experience. In a 2016 survey, 46% of UCL students considered e-learning an essential component of their learning activity, up from 33% three years ago, with a notable swing away from administrative and supplementary use towards integrated and fully online modes. Online methods are associated with many of UCL's key educational aspirations; enhanced assessment and feedback methods; building a connected student experience; and active, research-based learning providing opportunities for collaboration and enabling students to be producers (Fung 2016).

That said, in terms of curriculum design, change has mostly been incremental with gradual improvements, especially in e-assessment. It could even be argued, however, that technology has been used to support traditional models of teaching, often based on a 'knowledge acquisition' model in which there is a focus on 'content', where students acquire knowledge of a subject area vicariously from experts. While Moodle and Lecturecast are hugely valued by our students in terms of information access, it has long been recognised that while educational technology could enable more participatory and active learning approaches, UCL lacked a transformative educational model and process to drive it. Introduced in 2015, The Connected Curriculum provides this missing transformational context and impetus, but also allowed UCL to re-frame existing content-based approaches as a dynamic component of a richer connected learning environment.

The Connected Curriculum presents an engaging and transformative model of research-based education (RBL), closely integrated within the UCL academic community. While it is a unique formulation, its underlying ethos of active, inquiry-led and socially situated learning, relates closely to many of the principles that underpin digital education both at UCL and in the wider domain. The Connected Curriculum has become an important driver to enable UCL's strategic ambition to "become a world leader in the use of technology, to enhance the student experience and the quality of learning" (UCL 2014).

3. The origins of ABC

The Digital Education team at UCL has many years of experience in supporting academics through the process of educational redesign. Although our expertise is in digital methods for teaching and learning, we always try to ground interventions on solid pedagogical principles. However, we recognise that enhancing conventional face-to-face approaches to teaching towards more blended, online and distance-learning formats is a dauntingly challenging task for academics and learning technologists alike (e.g. Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Ellis & Goodyear, 2009). As we know, classroom and online environments are equally complex, subtle and hard to define, so transferring from one mode into the other is fraught with pitfalls, especially for faculty with little experience of online course formats.

This was brought to sharp relief for us in 2013, when the Digital Education team were asked to support the development of an ambitious new paramedical undergraduate programme. Although the outcome was very successful, we realised we did not really have a structured approach to learning design. This meant that the discussions were often reactive, unfocused and somewhat frustrating for all sides.

In this dilemma we recognised Beetham's (2012) general critique of curriculum design in higher education in that "practice and process had often been local, ad hoc, unexamined, and unresponsive to changing demands". As Nicol (2012) also acknowledged "Curriculum design in higher education is not a formal activity and there is little support, formal or informal, provided in most higher education institutions to help academics become better at designing learning activities, modules and courses". However, Beetham (2012) had cautioned "although change was seen as necessary, it was difficult to bring about in complex and devolved institutions".

We therefore began to look for a lightweight, streamlined process that would result in well-designed courses, modules and programmes, aligned to institutional mandates, but also based on sound educational principles. We realised that time was the critical factor for large-scale faculty engagement. While 'away-day' intensive formats such as Carpe Diem (Salmon and Wright 2014) were known to be effective, we felt it was unrealistic to expect faculty and support teams, at least initially, to commit more than a few hours to the design process. For a process to be adopted at UCL, it would have to show time efficiency for curriculum teams and other stakeholders.

Providentially, UK higher education has extensively researched in just this area. Over four years, the JISC Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design Programme (JISC 2012) evaluated a range of institutional change methods. It was noted that "particularly successful were face-to-face workshops where curriculum teams could work intensively on a module or programme of study, developing graphical representations of the curriculum such as timelines and storyboards" (Beetham 2012).

The University of Ulster's (2012) Viewpoints project met our criteria. Their curriculum design team had pioneered a storyboarding approach, using a course 'canvas', along with sets of

cards that could be selected, sequenced, annotated, and used as discussion prompts in the outline design of a course 'timeline'. Viewpoints had developed a number of card sets based on, for example, principles from the Re-Engineering Assessment Practices (REAP) project (REAP 2010) and the SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model (SCONUL 1999; Goldstein 2015). Nicol (2012) had thoroughly evaluated the project and found it had encouraged reflection and creativity, helping "identify solutions to curriculum design challenges and to maintain an educational rather than a content focus, a learning rather than a teaching focus".

4. How does ABC work?



ABC workshops focus on collaboration and discussion

The ABC curriculum design method (Perovic and Young 2015) built on the Viewpoints principles and was developed in 2014 as a ninety-minute, hands-on, rapid-development workshop for UCL module and programme teams. The name itself has significance, as it references Arena, UCL's popular faculty development programme, blended learning and the Connected Curriculum, mentioned above as UCL's major strategic educational initiative.

The Connected Curriculum itself is represented with six dimensions of learning through research and enquiry and is usually articulated as a series of student activities that "close the divide between teaching and research" (Arthur 2014) and "integrate research into every stage of an undergraduate degree, moving from research-led to research-based teaching".

To align with the Connected Curriculum and its foundation of activity-based learning, a new card-set was developed based on Diana Laurillard's (2012) notion of six 'learning types', derived from her theory-based Conversational Framework. The six learning types are acquisition (or read/watch/listen), inquiry, practice, production, discussion and collaboration. These types form the ABC six-card set. In addition, new workshop documentation was created and the Viewpoints workshop sequence was adapted.

At least two or three members of the team involved in the programme or module development attend an ABC workshop. It is required that they bring the module specifications (or programme overview) with learning outcomes to the workshop.

The ABC Learning Design workshop

The ABC workshop is organised in a very structured and time-conscious manner. Most of the 90 minutes is spent on group activity, but it starts with a brief presentation introducing the toolkit elements and their pedagogical background.

The first task for the teams developing either a module or a programme is to agree on a tweet size description (strapline, unique selling point, value proposition etc.) of the module/programme and write it on the workshop graph sheet. Team leaders also report this back to the facilitators. The purpose of this step is for the teaching team to agree on the overall aim of the module being discussed.

The participants then draw the rough "shape" of their programme (as they envisage it initially) as represented by learning types on a spider graph (e.g. how much practice, or collaboration) and the envisaged blend of face-to-face and online learning. Next, the team plan the distribution of each learning type by sequencing the postcard-sized cards along the timeline of the module, represented by a large A1 sized paper 'canvas'. Often, activity sequences are repeated and the module is usually represented by two or three patterns of activity.

Arena Blended Connected (ABC) curriculum design workshop

Programme *Arena digital*
 Module name *use of videos in teaching*
 new module *module review*
 Academics *Anna Moore, Jon Grabol*
 ELE workshop facilitators *CY, NP*
 Workshop date *5th June 2015*

Module summary (tweet size description of your module):

All you need to know about use of videos in 21st century teaching

[Follow](#)

RETWEETS

Learning types activities graph

How do you envisage your module will look on the graph above? (in red - at the beginning of the workshop)
 Your module activity graph at the end of the workshop (in blue)

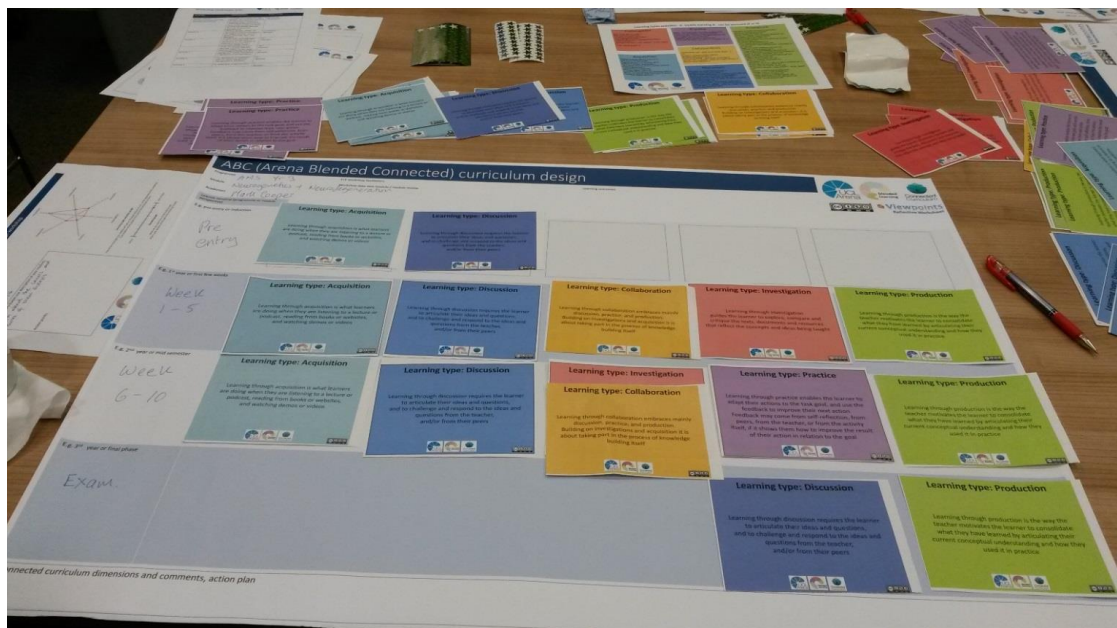
online ————— face to face

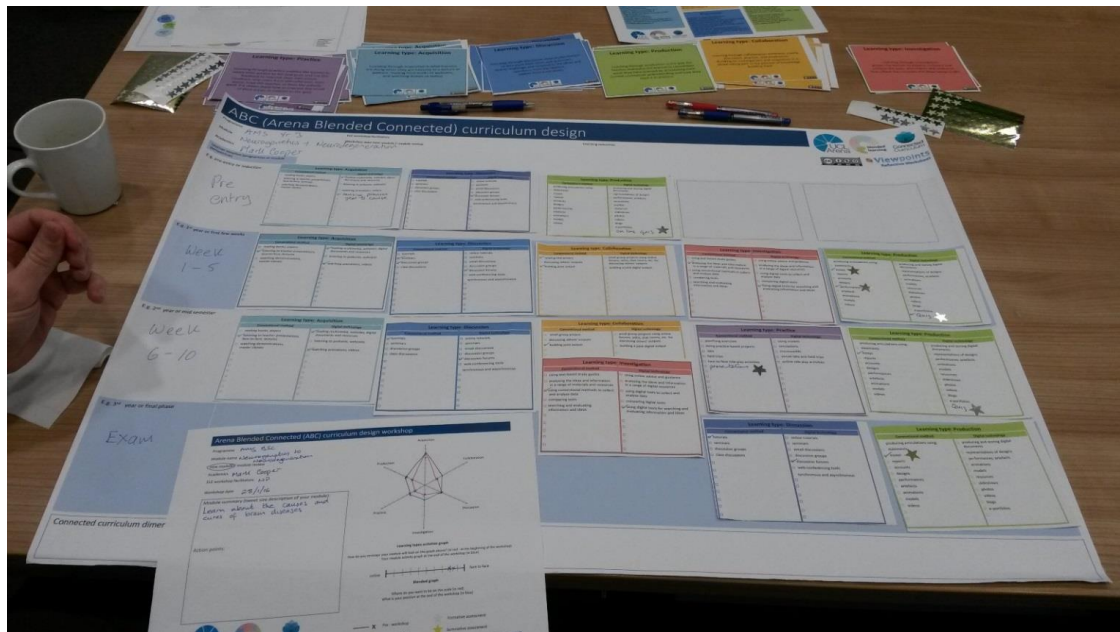
Blended graph

Where do you want to be on the scale (in red)
 What is your position at the end of the workshop (in blue)

Tweeting and drawing the module 'shape'.

With this outline agreed by the group, participants turn over the cards. On the back of each card is a list of online and conventional activities associated with each learning type and the team can pick (by ticking) from this list or write in their own. The type and range of learner activities soon becomes clear and the cards often suggest new approaches. The aim of this process is not to advocate any 'ideal' mix, but to stimulate a structured conversation among the team.





Two stages of ABC designs

Once learning activities are selected and agreed, participants then look for opportunities for formative and summative assessment. These are represented by affixing silver (formative) and gold (summative) adhesive stars to the activities. By this point, module/programme development team have an overview and the details of the learning and assessment activities on the module/programme.

Now they can go back to the graphs from the beginning of the workshop and adjust the shape of the module/programme on the learning types and the blend graph and discuss any changes. The new shape is drawn in a different coloured pen to indicate any changes.

The final stage is to photograph the new storyboard. The storyboard can then be used to develop detailed student documentation, describe student 'journeys' or outline a module in our virtual learning environment, Moodle.

Teams are strongly encouraged to write an action plan to decide who will do what. The action plan can include further input from the Digital Education support team, additional resources to be gathered, identification of copyright issues etc. The evaluation of the HEFCE project in 2017-18 showed this to be a particularly important aspect of the workshop.

A photo can be taken of the plan (storyboard and supporting materials), so teams can refer to this during the development of their course. The A1 storyboard can be rolled up with all the materials within and secured with an elastic band, so teams can take this with them for future reference.



Module leads feedback to the whole group

Nowadays at UCL, we try to run ABCs for whole programmes, with the core and main optional module teams invited to work together. The workshop is then extended by thirty minutes to a two-hour session. This enables the programme leader to provide guidance to the whole programme team on issues to address together. This may include a focus on the Connected Curriculum, diversity assessment, issues raised by students, changes in professional qualifications and so on. At the end of workshops for a single programme sessions, module leads explain their designs briefly to the rest of the cohort, providing opportunities to explore progression, through-lines of activity, and implementation of specific strategies throughout the programme. This adds considerable value to the workshop and provides a unique overview of the student experience across the programme.

5. Evaluation of ABC

5.1 Initial Piloting and feedback 2015-2016

The ABC method was piloted throughout 2015 and early 2016 in 23 sessions representing over 55 UCL module teams and some 180 faculty members. A range of disciplines were represented, from medical sciences, engineering, education and social sciences.

An ABC workshop and resources variant for continuing professional development (CPD) courses was requested and produced. This includes a basic resource cost exercise. The aim is to generate a discussion on the need to balance cost and activity design, rather than produce a detailed costing model. Activities are given a resource indicator (one to three “stars”) depending on the time, cost or human investment needed to produce. Thus videos and animations are three-star (expensive), quizzes two-star and forum-based activities one or two-star depending on the moderator support envisaged. All UCL-funded CPD courses are now required to attend an ABC workshop to begin to design their courses.

The promotion of the ABC workshop in UCL is via presentations at UCL conferences and faculty education days, through UCL’s Arena academic development centre and Teaching CPD programmes and colleagues and, increasingly, by personal recommendation. The ABC curriculum design facilitators are usually invited by a programme lead to facilitate a workshop for module teams.

ABC workshop participants were asked to give feedback on camera and almost without exception, participants found the experience positive, engaging and valuable. A number of key points arose from their comments.

As the JISC project had found, the moderated workshop setting provides teams with “a neutral, supportive and non-threatening context for sharing ideas, away from the pressure of formal approval events and also minimising markers of staff roles and status” (Beetham 2014). Indeed, we found the level of pedagogic sophistication expressed to be remarkably high.

The format of the workshop and presence of colleagues and support staff clearly stimulated wide ranging discussions of the purpose of the module or programme, teaching methods, alternative technologies and assessment methods and above all the student experience. The storyboard approach reinforces the notion that the design is a narrative describing the student experience over time.

Participants felt this would help communicate the dynamics and purposes of the module activities to students. Generally, participants appreciated the opportunity for reflection on teaching, as one put it, “a rare commodity since we are all so pressed for time”. Representative feedback comments are listed below.

‘We haven’t had such level of detailed discussion as a team. I think the structure and the materials are facilitated well.’

‘I think it was good to take a step back from the content and look at the varied type of activity.’

‘It is a good way of focusing on creating the balance within a course.’

'It makes you think about: OK, we are going to use this technique, but where, how, for what and how does it fit with everything else? And this is the way into that, I think.'

'It helped us formulate in our own mind the course structure. Yes, very useful'.

'It was an eye opener. I found it really useful to think about categorising how the learning objectives will be delivered and assessed, and examining the variety of ways that these can be achieved. It made me think more deeply about what skills the students can develop by making them responsible for their learning journey and not simply the content that needs to be delivered to them'.

Three areas, around technology alternatives, novel modes of assessment and links across modules, reoccurred spontaneously, with little prompting from the moderators.

'Made me more conscious of a formative assessment, which really did not occur to me before.'

'It reminds you of all different formats that you can use, rather than sticking to the same old same old.'

'This has been extremely useful. Not only that we start to think about individual modules and how we can use electronic resources, but it makes us think about the degree together, rather than as separate modules'.

Again, as predicted by JISC, and recognizing this as an “ironic outcome of a technology-based programme”, the face-to-face nature of these discussions was a key part of the engagement with and success of the process. Exactly as Viewpoints had found, there was a real haptic and democratic value in “sharing physical resources that could be selected, handled, annotated and (re)situated by users allowed a collective solution to emerge in real time/space” (Beetham 2012).

5.2 HEFCE Evaluation 2018

Following our successful bid to the HEFCE Catalyst Fund (HEFCE 2016b), which aimed to drive innovation in the higher education sector, Digital Education and Arena worked together on the UCL Action for Curriculum Enhancement (ACE) over 18 months. The project brought together our commitment in the UCL Education Strategy 2016-21, the development and implementation of the Connected Curriculum and the ABC learning design process. A full “ACE Evaluation Report” (2018) is published on the UCL ABC web site.

The HEFCE funding enabled us to look at the effectiveness and potential impact of ABC in partnership with colleagues from UCL's Arena (educational development) team. We deliberately linked the evaluation to UCL's Connected Curriculum (CC) educational approach, considering that engagement with the learning design process was closely linked to institutional strategies and initiatives. We also extended the evaluation to explore uptake at other UK universities. Data was gathered in an online survey, focus groups, and interviews. It was not feasible, as initially hoped, to investigate the student experience or the direct

impact of ACE on students, as the modules and programmes that staff were developing had not been running long enough to generate data on student outcomes. Nor did we have baseline (pre-intervention) data. However, we were able to explore the perceptions of UCL staff and UK educational developers from several institutions in relation to enhancement. Interviewees were motivated to choose ABC because of their positive impression of the workshop: “I saw a video online and saw people having fun, well they were smiling anyway and that looked good ... and I thought ‘ah, nice and structured’”.

In the survey of ABC participants, 90% of respondents agreed that their experience of the session they attended was positive, 54% expressing strong agreement. 71% agreed that the workshop enabled them to enhance the curriculum. Interestingly only 18% thought more preparation before ABC would be useful (e.g. videos outlining the workshop and examples of student learning activities/assessment tasks). Many felt that preparation might be too time-consuming so ‘might put people off’. Interviewees valued the stimulus to design active student learning; the scope for productive interaction, where possible with the opportunity for different module teams to work together, so modules became part of a holistic programme; inclusivity, in terms of adapting to the needs of course designers with different levels of experience; the well-designed resources, which enabled the visualisation of modules; good, supportive session facilitators and high-quality presentations; the feeling of progress being made; and enjoyment, excitement and engaged participants.

The paper-based approach of ABC was generally liked. Interviewees commented:

‘I thought it worked really well, particularly actually having the paper, to move those bits of paper around to have a visual representation of the module I think was really, really helpful, as opposed to just sitting with a word document or just sitting round a table and discussing, but actually being able to visualise the module ... was really, really helpful’.

‘The set up with the big posters and the post-it notes and the different colours were great, really, really helpful and people took pictures of it...’.

Many interviewees commented on the ‘buzz’ in the room and enjoyment of the ABC workshops, for example:

‘it’s just a fun workshop so it’s colourful, it’s paper based, you’re moving things around and you’re feeling things, people are excited, if there are tutors and there are many of those who actually have a fear of technology type things, well they don’t have to worry about it in a workshop like this, ... it’s alive, you can see it; people are talking and it’s great to see that...’.

However, the 90-minute format has its limitations. 64% of respondent on the survey agreed that it would be helpful to have follow up support after the workshop, such as online resources, specific feedback on the developing curriculum and more sessions for the same teams. One respondent recommended ‘a concrete list of actions generated from the

workshop’ with facilitators providing feedback on it. One learning technologist who participated observed ‘you’re going to have to have some kind of proper follow up that’s part of a consistent process, or ... nothing happens from the workshop, which is a real shame because there’s a lot of potential there and excitement’. On the other hand interviewees recognised that it would be challenging to find the time for a follow-up group session, although a ‘revisit of the initial plans a few weeks in might be a nice thing to try’ but ‘the issue of staff having time to all commit to being in one place for a whole afternoon is a big one’.

The parallel sessions related to the CC strategy were also very well received, and participants identified opportunities to align the two frameworks. 86% of respondents agreed that their experience of the session they attended was positive and 65% that sessions were useful to them in their role designing curricula. 66% agreed that sessions enabled them to enhance curricula. The opportunities to network learn from others were highly valued by participants on both interventions. The workshops were a good opportunity to learn from others, sharing practice. One participant on the CC sessions wanted to ‘hear other people’s practices, because I wanted to get new ideas and to have some new practices which I could incorporate in our courses or modules. The time limitations of both modes of engagement were highlighted.

Interviewees provided several examples of the positive impact of the ABC workshop on curriculum design and enhancement. This was definitely the case in relation to student participation in the design process. Students ‘contributed to the design of their own module’ and also enhanced it. The focus on different ways of learning was seen to heighten students’ awareness of the range of approaches. One participant also pinpointed enhancements in terms of students ‘working cooperatively’ and using Wikis, and less instances of students sitting passively listening to lectures. In general terms, the ABC workshop was seen to have a positive impact by one respondent, but as part of ‘a whole sweep of workshops and training events’ making it difficult to ‘disentangle and say “this workshop did that”’.

5.3 Evers (2018) and ABC ‘building blocks’

In parallel with the HEFCE project, Kristy Evers, a Masters student at UCL Institute of Education completed a qualitative evaluation of the impact of ABC with two case studies, published in 2018. This involved interviews and focus groups with a total of eight workshop participants. The interview and focus group transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis in N-Vivo. As with the HEFCE evaluation, her research found that the participants were overall very positive about the workshop, particularly about the (learner) framework, collaboration opportunities, reflection opportunities, interactive format of the workshop and the possibility to include student input in the design process. She found the workshop “likely changed participants’ attitudes around curriculum design” and suggested areas for further research. In particular she considered it worth looking into the impact the workshop in other institutions and countries and if and how their own institutional strategies are brought into the workshop. This is essentially the seed for the Erasmus+ project. In Evers

words; “Are the ABC Curriculum Design Workshop’s building blocks able to break barriers across the board?”.

5.4 ABC beyond UCL

The Erasmus+ project will provide an opportunity to evaluate ABC further, but the HEFCE project provided useful feedback from other universities who have already adopted it.

The first ABC workshop run at UCL on 9 March (a second one ran on 20 April) provided an opportunity to run a focus group with educational developers from three institutions in England and one in Scotland. All had selected ABC workshops as a catalyst for affecting strategic educational change in their universities. One university was ‘embarking on a really ambitious curriculum change programme... reviewing all of our undergraduate programmes by 2019 ... we needed something that was quick and easy to use’.

The majority of developers used ABC to integrate technology-enhanced learning into module design, either blended or wholly online. They worked alongside learning technologists running collaborative workshops and chose ABC because it ‘was learner-centred and ... easy for staff to work with in the time constraints’. The group made a range of positive comments about the ABC workshops. They found the ABC format effective: ‘I think it’s not just hands-on, but it helps people get to an end point very quickly rather than discussion going round and round for three hours ...’ and powerful because ‘it encourages that dialogue’. Another developer confirmed:

‘...for us it was incredibly positive’. ... ‘After 90 minutes we couldn’t stop the academics and I don’t think I’ve ever come across a workshop where they didn’t want us to stop’. ABC workshops also ‘enhanced [participants’] understanding of pedagogy ... because they’re using that same language’. Participants were also enabled to ‘identify what they’re doing ... and that visual impact at the end very much helps them’.

This group of ABC adopters were taking a more measured approach to adoption. One institution ran ABC workshops on a rolling ‘ongoing basis’ with central and school-based support. Developers described running ‘a refresher’ if needed and seeing module developers regularly – ‘they’re always in touch at some point’. At another institution, the action plan generated at the ABC workshop was shared. For instance, ‘one of our learning technologists definitely takes a copy ... and then will follow up ...’. The educational developers had also made purposeful efforts to embed educational strategies in their versions of the ABC workshops. ABC workshop users in one university confirmed the centrality of this approach to taking action for curriculum design: ‘At our institutional review, we will be citing ABC as one of the key designs shaping and guiding our work.’

Several of the developers were certain that staff had enhanced curriculum design as a result of participation in ABC workshops. One had seen ‘a shift to a more student-centred

approach'. Another had observed participants coming to the realisation that 'all the acquisition was happening in the same way' which triggered the introduction of a variety of learning activities. They concluded that ABC 'enhances in just so many different ways for different programmes and different groups, whatever's right for them.' Strongest of all was the impact on a master's course with 'very low numbers'. The decision was made to move the course online and 'they used the ABC as the design vehicle, and that's seen a tremendous impact, it's enhanced the programme enough that it's made it so much more attractive and accessible to people, that the numbers have quadrupled'.

On impact of any changes or innovations on the student experience and student outcomes, 'we need the courses to run a little bit longer to see actually what impact [ABC] has had'. It was recognised 'there's so many variables – who's teaching, and you know where it was running and whether the assessment changed from one year to another, and whether one student got a bad score which brought down the whole NSS ...'. Developers were nevertheless definite that in their view ABC workshops had contributed to a more positive student experience and better student outcomes. One commented:

'... We've moved from more passive to active learning, there are definitely more opportunities in the design that we've seen going from surface to deeper learning. So the design is enhanced to enable a richer learning experience'.

There was also a perception that student engagement had increased: 'we've had very positive feedback about student engagement ... student engagement has been cited a number of times'.

The general conclusion from this stage in the evaluation was that action for curriculum enhancement is more likely to be successful if the activities staff undertake to develop professionally, cohere clearly with institutional goals. Staff are often under pressure, with multiple demands on their time. Initiatives that appear unrelated to strategic aims may lead to innovation fatigue and may not be sustainable. At UCL, the Connected Curriculum is a core element of institutional strategy. UK educational developers were similarly influenced by institutional strategies; these acting as an incentive to run ABC workshops. Examples were curricular review, the development of online learning and student employability.

The hands-on, team-based format of the ABC workshops is motivating and enjoyable in itself and there is evidence of engagement and staff learning as a result. The problem at UCL lies in the lack of follow-up support, so participants may not implement the plans they have made during workshops. UK educational developers overcame this by integrating ABC workshops into a network of module development support.

Determining direct impact on the student experience is challenging before students had completed the relevant modules, but there was a sense that the range of learning activities foregrounded through the hands-on ABC module design process had a positive effect on student learning. Strong evidence of the impact of action for curriculum enhancement was

also supplied by the UK educational developers. They had adapted the ABC resources to harmonise with institutional strategies and had achieved successful outcomes as a result.

The specific recommendations arising from the HEFCE evaluation were as follows:

1. Involve staff in creative workshop activities and prioritise group discussion.
2. Ensure sessions are timely and prepare participants for sessions.
3. Follow up sessions.
4. Integrate curriculum enhancement with institutional strategies.

6. Erasmus + ABC to VLE



In early 2018 the UCL Digital Education was awarded two-year Erasmus+ funding to develop ABC with 12 European universities. The Erasmus

project builds a strategic partnership between UCL, six other universities from the League of European Research Universities (Amsterdam, Helsinki, Leuven, Milan and the Sorbonne, with Oxford as an associate) and six innovative universities from Belgium, Denmark, Croatia, Estonia, Ireland and Romania. The partnership will develop ABC as a downloadable toolkit that can be used globally by any institution in the sector. The partners involved in this project are:

- KU Leuven (Belgium)
- VIVES University of Applied Sciences (Belgium)
- University of Milan (Italy)
- The University Computing Centre in Zagreb (SRCE) (Croatia)
- University of Helsinki (Finland)
- Politehnica University of Timisoara (Romania)
- Tallinn University (Estonia)
- University College Absalon (Denmark)
- Sorbonne University (France)
- University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- Dublin City University (DCU) (Ireland)
- University College London (UCL) (UK)
- University of Oxford (UK - Associate partners)

The objectives of the project are to

1. Promote the concept of rapid curriculum design as an educational design thinking and educational change tool
2. Develop and test the workshop/toolkit design
3. Evaluate the intervention through in-depth longitudinal case studies
4. Engage teachers through supported workshop participation and evaluate impact
5. Develop pre-workshop, in-workshop, post workshop and virtual workshop support

6. Map rapid curriculum design to local policies and blended learning practices & local/cloud-based ICT tools (App Wheel)
7. Build an engaged and sustainable international support community

Although the live workshop methodology illustrated by UCL's ABC will be the initial focus, a common starting point to ensure collaboration, dialogue, project team building and rapid initial outcomes, the ethos of the project as it develops is to explore add-ons, re-designs and even alternatives to the live workshop format" Five outputs are expected from the project, with lead institution in italics.

- ABC to VLE Resource Pack and Guide *Leuven/Vives*
- Localisation guides for specific countries and specific learning technologies *Timisoara*
- 20 Case studies of local and external ABC to VLE workshops *Zagreb*
- ABC to VLE Handbook, including recommendations *UCL*
- ABC Institutional Policies and Support Frameworks *DCU*

To provide a common conceptual and experimental starting point all the partners will deliver versions of live dialogic workshops at an early stage of the work plan with local programme teams and subsequently track their effects and impacts through the life of the project, using agreed methodologies. UCL are planning transnational training workshops for Zagreb, Leuven, Timisoara and DCU before the end of 2018, all the other partners have already had 'train the trainers' sessions and are using ABC in some format.

Development of the other outputs is already underway at the time of writing. The ABC Learning Hub has been launched [<http://abc-ld.org/abctovle>] and this set of documents uploaded onto it as the first version of Resource Pack and Guide. The first set of case studies are being initiated and the development of country-specific localisation and technical guides are being developed.

Partners will also be required to open workshops for external participants from neighbouring institutions and academic communities.

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