



JISC Final Report

| Project Information | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Project Acronym | UKAN-SKILLS | | |
| Project Title | UKAN-SKILLS | | |
| Start Date | 1 st December 2007 | End Date | 31 st March 2009 |
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| Project Web URL | http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/ | | |
| Programme Name (and number) | Users & Innovation Programme (JISC Circular 02/07) | | |
| Programme Manager | Lawrie Phipps | | |

| Document Name | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Document Title | Final version of Project Report | | |
| Reporting Period | | | |
| Author(s) & project role | Paul Mayes, Project Director | | |
| Date | 18 th March 2009 | Filename | Finalreport_ukan-skill.pdf |
| URL | | | |
| Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Project and JISC internal | | <input type="checkbox"/> General dissemination |

| Document History | | |
|------------------|------|----------|
| Version | Date | Comments |
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Version: Final
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Acknowledgements


This Project was funded as part of the JISC Capital 02/07 Next Generation Technologies programme. It also benefitted from being part of the innovative JISC Emerge community which supplied a lot of useful information and some important contacts. We also received constant support from Lawrie Phipps of JISC and we relied on the tremendous forbearance of many University of Teesside Library & Information Services colleagues. The final core Project Team line-up was:



Paul Mayes - Project Leader - University of Teesside Library & Information Services
Sue Myer – University of Teesside L&IS
Denise Turner – University of Teesside L&IS
Jane Aiken - Academic programme partner facilitator – Darlington College
Kay Foster - University of Teesside School of Social Sciences & Law
Nicola Ward - Academic programme partner facilitator - Leeds Thomas Danby College
Angela Myers - Academic programme partner facilitator - Redcar & Cleveland College

with specialist partner support from:


Dave Cormier- Edactive Technologies, Prince Edward Island, Canada
Janet A Hale - curriculummapping101.com, Tucson, USA
Simon Ball – Senior Advisor, JISC TechDis
Xu Qing – Wuhan Polytechnic University, China
Michael Vallance – Future University, Hakodate, Japan
John Pallister – Wolsingham School and Community College, Weardale
Kirstin McKechnie - University of Teesside L&IS
Fran Porritt - University of Teesside L&IS
Alison Reed - University of Teesside L&IS
Amanda Clarkson – University of Teesside School of Social Sciences & Law
Ewan Ingleby - University of Teesside School of Social Sciences & Law
Bonnie Stewart – Edactive Technologies, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Executive Summary

This JISC Capital Project ran from December 2007 to March 2009. It built on previous grant work both within the Tees Valley (centred on University of Teesside Library & Information Services) and at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada (UPEI). The main aim of the Project was to produce demonstration versions of online 'skills development maps' for a range of different approaches to skills development. To do this, the Project Team engaged in 'dialogues' with academic staff in programmes in local FE colleges. The Project collaborated with Janet A. Hale of curriculummapping101.com and Rubicon International to use Rubicon's Atlas online curriculum mapping software to host the skills development maps (as well as demonstrating such software to a British audience). Janet wrote special  [background paper](#) on 21st Century curriculum mapping. Sample 'skills activity points' on the maps were linked to easily accessible and copyright-free learning objects contained in a new demonstration repository (<http://ukanskills.org/>) developed by Dave Cormier of Edactive Technologies, Canada. Project focus groups and other user engagement activities indicated user enthusiasm for other potential developments including:

- look at how best to identify and prioritise skills required by stakeholders such as employers, professional bodies and progression academic programmes. Sure Start staff have kindly participated in this work (based round a web-hosted  [skills checklist](#) identified in a previous HEA/JISC Project).
- A colour-coded method  [link](#) for categorising students' critical thinking in their academic writing. The software to support the use of the colour-coding (called "Crittter") is being crowdsourced through Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Background

University of Teesside Library & Information Services (L&IS) had from 2001 onwards led a number of smaller grant-funded collaborative projects in the Tees Valley centred round supporting skills development and using communities of practice. An  [HEA / JISC Project](#) in 2006 in partnership with Redcar & Cleveland College showed very strong academic staff interest in simple methods to help staff coordinate (or map) skills development across multi-modular courses as well as similar interest in linking skills activities/events to copyright free resources in a repository. An initial project outline was submitted to JISC in its call for membership of the innovative Emerge community. The submission was successful and a number of face-to-face and online Emerge discussions matched our Tees Valley ideas with those of Dave Cormier at University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. A full bid was submitted for the JISC Capital 02/07 Next Generation Technologies programme which was successful.

Although a genuine understanding of the UIDM idea was essential for a credible bid, the Project Team found UIDM (or latterly user engagement) principles and tools to be very useful both during the project planning phase and later implementations.

The earlier work with partners (especially Redcar & Cleveland College) had ensured we had a good level of awareness of JISC processes and resources (eg the JISC awareness quiz developed by Alison Reed for used at partner staff development sessions).


Aims and Objectives

The Project responded to user engagement in its very fullest sense from early on in the life of the Project and thus there were a lot of changes to the original objectives (although these had been based on some early focus group etc work before the bid) as well as a large number of new workstreams during the project. At our last major face-to-face Project meeting in early December 2008, the following four categorisation labels were agreed for the workstreams

1. Dead end (idea turned out to unpopular with users, concept did not work in practice, etc) [END]
2. Possibly worth investigating by someone else (interesting idea but not one we felt we had or will have the time or expertise to follow-up) [INTERESTING]
3. Service or content is worth maintaining in the condition it is in at the end of the official Project period or in updated form with user feedback [MAINTAIN]
4. Continue to develop services, content, etc will definitely continue to developed by members of the Project Team [DEVELOP] It should be noted that the University of Teesside in its sustainability statement in the bid document guaranteed maintenance and development for at least 5 years after the end of the Project. Also the University was very supportive in terms of real matched funding both during the Project and in the future.


These labels will be attached to the various Outputs and Results later in this report (again based on user feedback)

Methodology

The original main aim of the Project was to produce demonstration versions of online 'skills development maps' for a range of different approaches to skills development. The link <http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/firstdiagram.jpg> shows a picture of the whiteboard content from the first focus group back in September 2007. A later focus group produced a clearer 'map'  [whiteboard map](#) that became a starting point for dialogues with academic programme (or course) teams in colleges linked to the University of Teesside. We had discussions with six possible academic programmes in colleges and the University of Teesside during early 2008 before agreeing in September 2008 to concentrate on two particular academic programmes: the Fd in Journalism at Darlington College and the Fd in Complementary Therapies at Leeds Thomas Danby College. These two programmes were the most able to rapidly supply real programme material for input to maps. Two important sample skills were identified in focus groups with academic staff in November 2007 : critical thinking and academic writing (although consensus on the definitions of these two skills was rare).

The Project bid envisaged considerable two-way discussion with users and this was very much the eventual case. The majority of this was through focus groups and online forums but was underpinned by user acceptance/perception measures (generally a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 representing 'unlikely to be very useful' and 7 representing 'likely to be highly useful'. Positive was determined to be scores 5 – 7). Use enthusiasm (formalised as acceptance) was followed a lot during the Project leading to a range of new workstreams being adopted. New possibilities emerged right up into 2009.

Our original intention had been to produce in-house the demonstration versions of maps through the Project web site (with the demonstration versions being usable templates for the future). However, in the meanwhile our wider community of practice had introduced us to 'online' curriculum mapping. The article "Electronic curriculum mapping: what are they and why would we want one?" by Dr J Kerlake and Dr J McKendree of Hull York Medical School was the key discussion document for two Project user engagement events in March 2008. The events were very positive indeed about using online curriculum mapping (in the USA model that complex curriculum planning needs sophisticated software rather than a generalised British approach of a few MS Word boxes with a few learning outcomes). The online mapping was at that stage seen only as a vehicle for our skills maps but subsequently each audience that has seen online mapping has wanted to know more and thus we expanded the Project workstream to include dissemination of information on what is generally a fairly unknown technology in the UK.

The Project Team studied or contacted several US software suppliers or experts. Our internal user acceptance ratings quickly identified Janet A Hale of curriculummapping101.com as the best consultant partner. Many Skype sessions followed and by May 2008 we had signed a license to use Rubicon Inc's Atlas curriculum mapping system. Rubicon confirmed that we were the only British HE organisation using the software. To aid our engagement with users here, Janet produced a specially written  [background paper](#). From August 2008 our two pilot Fds at Darlington and Leeds Thomas Danby started to input real programme material into a demonstration mapping location at Rubicon.

Our user engagement methodology supported two further new workstreams on critical thinking categorisation and skills prioritisation described below in Implementation.

Implementation

The process of a dialogue with academic staff on skills mapping was piloted in April 2008 at Darlington College (with Jane Aiken as facilitator and important input from Mark Parry Programme Leader for Journalism). The 'final' dialogue checklist from the pilot was:

1. identification of the skills needs of progression routes from the programme or of stakeholders (including professional bodies and employers)
2. prioritisation levels of these skills needs
3. clarification of the general 'approach' to skills development (eg through PDP, embedded, skills module, etc)
4. decision on the need for some means of assessment or evidencing of the skills (issue of actual marks being a motivator or emphasising the importance of the skills)
5. if appropriate from (4) then a decision on the actual means of assessment or evidencing of the skills
6. should there be some advocacy of the importance of the priority skills? When? How?
7. consideration of action and activity points in the map such as:
 - practising the use of the skills within the subject work of the programme
 - reinforcing activities that follow-up initial advocacy or practising of skills
 - availability of some type(s) of advice (rather than feedback) on skills (eg within PDP, skills help services / staff, online FAQs, etc)
8. feedback to students after assessment on skills performance and further development
9. use of resources (both learning objects from a repository and external national resources) to support the various points in the skills development map

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As said above, in September 2008 two particular academic programmes (first the Fd in Journalism at Darlington College led by Mark Parry and facilitated by Jane Aiken and secondly the Fd in Complementary Therapies at Leeds Thomas Danby College led by Nicola Ward) were chosen to work intensively with Janet A Hale and Rubicon. Screen shots from a demonstration version of how the Atlas system can highlight skills activities / outcomes (and broader awareness-raising of the broader use of Atlas in a UK HE environment) are linked from Output #1 below.


During a number of presentations / discussions with HE staff during 2008 the issue was often raised with Project Team of the usefulness of curriculum mapping for 14 – 19 students and how this would impact on the students when they progressed to HE. Being part of the Emerge community informed us 10 months into the Project of the innovative work in the 14 – 19 sector of John Pallister of Wolsingham School and Community College in Weardale and we were pleased to agree a late partnership with him in December 2008 whereby he would provide for our Project some thinking from a school perspective influenced by the current 11 – 19 push on Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and Functional Skills. Also it was agreed that he would put forward some suggestions/models that would enable/encourage schools + to use on-line skills mapping as they revise their curriculum to integrate PLTs/Functional Skills/14-19 Diploma and as they update their PDP processes. There are more details of this within Output #2 below.

One theme reoccurred a number of times in staff focus groups that had not been anticipated the Project objectives: the possible influence of perceived 'national learning styles' on student skills development. Although a huge and complex subject needing a large project itself, UKAN-SKILLS has agreed with users to provide two national case-studies for use within awareness training. One has been written by Dr. Michael Vallance (Future University, Hakodate, Japan) and Dr. Phillip A Towndrow (National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) from an institutional perspective and the other by Xu Qing (Wuhan Polytechnic University, China) from the perspective of Chinese students studying in the UK. Links to their reports are given in Output #3 below.

A focus group meeting with college and University staff in May 2008 showed very positive interest in further investigation on how some simple mapping or Web 2.0 method might help academic staff (as providers) clarify the type and number of priority skills that employers/stakeholders would prefer in an academic programme. This had been one of the main parts of the original University of Anytown overall concept map. In September 2008 there was a half-day exchange of experience with Workforce Development Coordinators for Early Years from 5 local councils (organised by Amanda Clarkson) which agreed to pilot use the 2006 HEA/JISC Skills Checklist in terms of priorities 1, 2 or 3. Subsequent user acceptance evaluation of this pilot has led the 5 Coordinators to kindly further consider:

1. refining their reasons for the usefulness of the whole idea of a prioritisation template/process
2. deciding whether a skills checklist is the best tool for skills identification and prioritisation
3. deciding whether it is feasible in a practical vocational situation for stakeholders/facilitators/ employers and providers to have a discussion/agreement on the number of priority skills that can realistically be developed / evidenced /assessed during the programme and the number of other skills to be advocated / developed during the programme

It was agreed that the issues are nebulous but very important. The situation in March 2009 is described in Output #4 below

Two important sample skills had been identified in focus groups with academic staff in November 2007 : critical thinking and academic writing (although consensus on the definitions of these two skills was predictably rare). A ranking exercise showed these two skills to be perceived by staff to be both the most important 'learning' skills and the hardest to 'teach'. A literature search revealed that critical thinking was less fully researched and thus and it was decided in May 2008 that it would benefit the wider HE/FE community to look at a variety of possible techniques for critical thinking. The technique most favoured by a focus group was a colour coding system developed by Kay Foster (listed as Output #6 below) for categorising students' critical thinking in their academic writing. A working document is shown at  [link](#). This is being piloted by Kay Foster and Amanda Clarkson from a feedback/enhancement point-of-view using specially commissioned student scripts. However, the

process might be used by students for peer learning as well being used by academic staff. This piloting uses highlight pens but academic staff have shown positive user engagement for a software application (either standalone or Web2.0) that will mark-up MS Office or equivalents. This software application (code-named "Crittter") is being crowdsourced/crowdtasked through Amazon Mechanical Turk (<https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>) after failed attempts by the team of young Aimhigher-funded virtual interns to simplify the slow MS Word highlighting palette process. All staff who have been involved in writing the HIT (human intelligence task) to be advertised on Mechanical Turk (and two of the project Team staff who had crowdtasked with Cambrian House in the past) were very positive about the potential in UK HE/FE for a clearing house/brokerage location. The March situation is shown in Output #x below. Naturally the Project Team was concerned about possible accessibility issues in using colour-coding and the Team were very pleased to be able to secure support and advice from Simon Ball of TechDis (and extract of his advice to the Project is shown in a link from Output #5 below).

The broader usefulness of curriculum mapping of skills was positively adopted early in the life of the Project by academic colleagues in the School of Social Sciences & Law at the University of Teesside. The research so far on this by Dr. Ewan Ingleby has looked at a detailed evaluation of the impact of mapping by 60 students on the Early Years Sector Endorsed foundation degree. The student reaction has been very positive. Output #6 below gives a link to a conference paper by Ewan and confirms the need for future development.

The innovative concept of the availability of the Emerge community for possible bidding teams in advance of JISC ITT 02/07 led to the University of Teesside core of the Project Team linking up with colleagues from the University of Prince Edward Island. By this time, early focus groups at Redcar & Cleveland College on the basic aspects of skills mapping had established the usefulness of readily available learning/teaching material to support skills activities. An especially clear example was for a highly modular foundation degree with a large number of part-time lecturers new to HE who showed enthusiasm for embedded skill development but had concerns about finding tailored material to support activities. Thus UPEI's world-class experience of repositories of learning objects was a natural fit to allow the production of a demonstration repository of skills material cleared for use by the sort of part-time or temporary staff identified in the early focus groups (listed as Output #7 below). The repository (at <http://ukanskills.org/>) has been developed by Dave Cormier based on user engagement feedback from academic staff in the Tees Valley. In February 2009 there was a pilot evaluation of the repository by HE in FE academic staff at Redcar & Cleveland College based round the following questions that has arisen in earlier user engagement.

:

- (1) Would such a publicly accessible and free repository be useful?
- (2) Would you as an academic member of staff be prepared to put your material in if it meant lecturers in other colleges could make use of it?
- (3) Do you like the features/functions of our demonstration repository? [this question backed by user acceptance/perception measure on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 representing 'unlikely to be very useful' and 7 representing 'likely to be highly useful'.
- (4) Are there any extra features/functions that would be useful?
- (5) Would any particular form of the material (eg intended for print, audio/mp3 , video etc) be more important than others in your particular teaching circumstances?
- (6) Would a 'clearinghouse' feature of the repository be useful (eg where a lecturer could post a request for material or even for cooperation or help ...or offer help for that matter)

There are links to the sample material in the repository from the demonstration curriculum mapping units being developed with Janet Hale. Output #7 includes mention of the University of Teesside's wish to sustain and develop the repository as a continuing and expanding resource for HE/FE in the region as well as wider.

The UIDM / user engagement model allowed a common and politically neutral approach across the Project partners, both in overall 'strategy development' and on practical 'tools'. The Project was fortunate in being able to draw on a set of short toolkit papers written by Fran Porritt in response to the merging needs of the Project. An example (the heavily used paper for focus groups) is linked within output #8 below. One tool that created a lot of interest among our sample academics was the Delphi Method. Responding to this user enthusiasm, Kirstin McKechnie (in addition to searching for

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best practice material for the repository) carried out an MA dissertation on using the Delphi Method to examine academic staff views on critical thinking. Her final report is linked within output #8.

Sue Myer and Denise Turner (as well as underpinning the Project in many ways as members of the Project Team) also responded to engagement with their 'library' users with an extra Project workstream. This looked at enabling critical thinking in Google generation learners in higher education through developing a new learning object. The object and its positive evaluation with University of Teesside students are included in Output #9 below.

Outputs and Results (end March 2009)

The Project Team has led or supported a wide variety and relatively large number of workstreams that had positive user perceptions of usefulness. This means that this Outputs and Results section does not necessarily involve a longish list of deliverables rather than an engaging narrative. The categories [END], [INTERESTING], [MAINTAIN] and [DEVELOP] are used.

Output #1

The simple [whiteboard map](#) for the sample University of Anytown has been found to be a useful starting point for staff development sessions with academic staff [MAINTAIN]. Similarly the 9 point list of dialogue questions shown above in Implementation has proved a good basis for discussion and reflection [MAINTAIN].

The partnership with Janet A. Hale of curriculummapping101.com has seen probably the biggest new development from the original project plan. The Rubicon-hosted Atlas software has necessitated a registration / password entry. Presentations by the Project Team during the development of the Project have been able to demonstrate the many 'live' possibilities of curriculum mapping not just for mapping skills. Janet will be visiting the University of Teesside on 7th May 2009 and this will lead to a filmed 'masterclass' that will be made available through the Project website. Available now is a comprehensive Slideshare site [<http://www.slideshare.net/paulmayes/atlas-screenshots-created-by-janet-hale>] produced by Janet showing the skills mapping process for real foundation degree material from two college partners (the Fd in Journalism at Darlington College and the Fd in Complementary Therapies at Leeds Thomas Danby College).

Feedback from academic staff to processes for skills mapping and to 'online' curriculum mapping has been consistently very positive. Development on both areas will be continued after the end of the Project [DEVELOP]

Output #2

Participation in the JISC Emerge community of practice led to contact between the Project Team and John Pallister of Wolsingham School and Community College. It was obvious that his thoughts on Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and Functional Skills closely mirrored the development debate we had had with Janet Hale. John's background paper [<http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/jpallister.pdf>] for the Project will form the basis for a new project (entitled PACIFIC) supported by non-JISC funding. John will work jointly with Janet A. Hale and the University of Teesside to investigate the potential online curriculum mapping to support the progression of 14 – 19 students on to higher education. The project will, initially, focus on generating web-based curriculum maps for the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and Functional Skills that underpin the new 14-19 curriculum. The project will use these web-based mappings to explore potential applications and engage professional dialogue. The mappings will be developed and made available using Atlas. Depending upon the outcomes of the initial investigations, the project would move its focus towards an investigation of the role that access to web-based curriculum mapping might play in a learner's personal learning environment [DEVELOP].

Output #3

Given the many varied areas of interest that the Project has encountered, it might be considered that an 'international perspective' was not of a high priority but (as said earlier in this Report) the possible

influence of perceived 'national learning styles' on student skills development was consistently raised by academic staff. Although a huge and complex subject needing a large ongoing project itself, UKAN-SKILLS agreed with users to provide two national case-studies as a basis for future online awareness training. One has been written by Michael Vallance (Future University, Hakodate, Japan) and Phillip A Towndrow (National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) from an institutional perspective [<http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/mappingasia.pdf>]. The other has been written by Xu Qing (Wuhan Polytechnic University, China) [<http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/xuqingpaper.pdf>] based on her work as an academic member of staff whilst observing Chinese students in the UK. Matched funding from the University of Teesside will support a future formal joint project with Xu Qing and Wuhan Polytechnic University [DEVELOP]

Output #4

The September 2008 half-day exchange of experience with Workforce Development Coordinators for Early Years from 5 local councils led to a basic pilot use of a previous Skills Checklist in terms of priorities 1, 2 or 3. Subsequent user acceptance evaluation of this basic pilot was very positive in terms of using better online communication between stakeholders/facilitators/ employers and providers. This is an important area of the overall concept of how a leader of an academic programme / course can use a total mapping of skills activities and even if it takes beyond the period of the Project, the following activities are anticipated:

1. refining reasons that explain the usefulness of the whole idea of a prioritisation template/process
2. clarifying whether a skills checklist is the best tool for skills identification and prioritisation
3. deciding whether it is feasible in a practical vocational situation for stakeholders/facilitators/ employers and providers to have a discussion/agreement on the number of priority skills that can realistically be developed / evidenced /assessed during the programme and the number of other skills to be advocated / developed during the programme

We are keen to develop online tools for the prioritisation of skills [DEVELOP]

There has also been positive user support for the HEA/JISC [skills checklist](#) to be developed further as an online tool [DEVELOP]

Output #5

The potential for techniques such as colour-coding to support academic staff in the development of skills like critical thinking was strongly endorsed by sample staff [DEVELOP]

A software tool or web-hosted service ("Critic") will be investigated [DEVELOP]

There are obvious accessibility issues when using visual techniques such as colour and the Project has greatly benefitted from advice from Simon Ball such as that shown in <http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/sball.pdf> [DEVELOP]

The use of Amazon Mechanical Turk will continue as part of the development of Critter and the experience of using it will be written up [DEVELOP]. Discussion within the Emerge community seems to indicate possible potential for a brokerage/crowdtasking service or site for higher education [INTERESTING]

Output #6

Ewan Ingleby's research so far on student reactions to the use of the mapping of skills is brought together in his paper for the 2008 IDPA Conference [<http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/inglebyIPDA.pdf>] His abstract says

"The research paper is based on the findings of researchers at the University of Teesside who have applied Hale's 'curriculum mapping' approach with a cohort of 'distance learners'. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of the students' perceptions of this approach to integrating study skills into programme modules and mapping their progress as opposed to seeing 'study skills' as either an

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'isolated' or 'long and thin' module. The research will complement other recent JISE publications such as Lucas; Ingleby and Hunt and Bryan and Carpenter".

The research will continue after the end of the UKAN-SKILLS Project and will inform /be informed by other continuing developments from the Project. Professor Ken Jones (Editor of the JISE) has requested that the research is formulated into an academic journal article for a forthcoming issue of the JISE. The research is also being incorporated into the current programme rewrite of the University of Teesside's Early Years Sector Endorsed Fd. The strategy that has been applied to study skills is anticipated as forming an important strand of the new programme's support for students and their learning. The new EYSEFd is due to be approved in May 2009. [DEVELOP]

Output #7

User engagement as the Project developed meant a change in the role of the repository described in the original Project. The repository developed by Dave Cormier was important in supporting various workshops / discussions with sample academics and also demonstrated how links could be made to resources in a curriculum mapping system.[DEVELOP]

A pilot evaluation of attitudes to a repository began with HE in FE academic staff at Redcar & Cleveland College (based round a set of questions that had arisen in earlier user engagement). Sample positive comments from the first evaluations are shown at [link]. Improvements to JORUM during the Project will lead to a future comparison between continuing the repository or moving to a superior and sustained alternative [MAINTAIN / END]

Output #8

A sample toolkit document (for focus groups) is available at <http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/UIDMtoolkit.pdf>. Kirstin McKechnie's MA dissertation on using the Delphi Method to examine academic staff views on critical thinking is available at <http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/mckechnie.pdf>. The Project Team hope that the national Emerge User Engagement / UIDM archive will actively be maintained. University of Teesside will continue to develop its own user engagement material [DEVELOP]

Output #9

Denise Turner and Sue Myer's innovative work is described in a background paper [\[http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/berlinoverview.pdf\]](http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/berlinoverview.pdf) and Powerpoint [\[http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/berlinpowerpoint.pdf\]](http://lis.tees.ac.uk/ukan/berlinpowerpoint.pdf) for the Online Educa conference in December 2008. In the development of the learning object, the intention was to create a tool which was authentic, as close to the real-life experience of searching for information as possible. The aim was also to design a tool which was engaging for learners, even fun to use. Rating or voting was included as Generation Y learners are accustomed to sites such as YouTube or Amazon which ask for user votes. The object is available for wider use and adaptation at http://lis.tees.ac.uk/infoskills_gen/critical/exercise.cfm. The successful use of an iPod Touch also indicated another area for development. [DEVELOP]
Given the positive response of sample students to what they had learned using the object and the transferability of the concept to other skills or circumstances, this concept will be further developed in the future. Current development includes collaborating with Youth Studies staff to adapt the examples for their students: <http://lis.tees.ac.uk/infoskills/critical/exercise.cfm> and to create subject specific versions that will be part of an information skills site for all social sciences and law students (see pilot version at <http://sssl-staffweb.tees.ac.uk/U0021480/index.htm> with its Test Yourself link) [DEVELOP]

Outcomes

User engagement took the Project wider from the original two main objectives of skills mapping and a repository. The Atlas-based mapping has delivered much more sophisticated possible tool than what

had been considered possible in-house. The case studies we received from partners elsewhere in the post 14 education system and in other countries again pointed to the usefulness of a curriculum mapping approach (be it simple or sophisticated). The core objective of a sustainable repository of freely accessible material to support skills development was also achieved. The repository will be developed for at least 5 years provided no better alternative appears in that time.

Some innovative and practical products emerged eg the Critter approach to categorising student writing and a potential web-hosted tool for employers/academics to compare their understanding of skills priorities. These will be further developed.

The UIDM / user engagement model was very useful to the Project and the Project Team will continue to use the ideas and tools in the future. We hope that the national Emerge User Engagement / UIDM archive will actively be maintained.

The Project coped well with some sudden major changes to partnerships but the Team would further strengthen its risk analysis process in advance of any future grant bidding and has commissioned some risk analysis training material.

Conclusions

Our focus groups have shown that skills development is for many academic staff a worryingly complex area. A theory- or research-informed approach can be made interesting for staff but the Project received widespread enthusiasm for

- the need for support for academic course/programme planning, mapping, coordination, etc. in what are often pressurised situations
- practical checklists based on real use
- background discussion or overview material that staff could use within their institutions
- peer dialogue at a practical level
- available support material

Implications

We have categorised the various Outputs of the Project into [END], [INTERESTING], [MAINTAIN] and [DEVELOP]. We hope (as part of the HE community ourselves) that the areas marked as [INTERESTING] are being investigated elsewhere or will be picked up somewhere in future.