

# Menti answers (SIREM conference 31-08-2022)

There were a lot of interesting comments and questions from the audience in the [Mentimeter](#) activities. I have listed the main ones here, from the 33 submitted. The exercise was a good illustration of how much more audience interaction we can achieve with such a digital tool, in comparison with the conventional Q&A, which generated just 2 questions, as is quite usual.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful engagement. To continue the conversation, please email me at [d.laurillard@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:d.laurillard@ucl.ac.uk).

## Session 1

### 1 **Not having the digital skills necessary for functional programming to educational needs**

Yes, this can be a problem for both teachers and students. But digital skills have developed a lot in recent years as new technology becomes part of our lives. However, we know that students may have digital skills, but may not need to know how to use them for learning (just as they have reading skills, but need guidance on how to read for learning). This is where your teaching skills will be important, even if you are still developing your digital skills (to be honest, we all are – the technologies keep changing!).

### 2 **Some types are smoother with small groups**

Yes, very true, which is why for each learning activity the Learning Designer allows you to set the group size.

For example Collaboration can be done most easily in small groups, where students are asked to agree on the output they make. But Collaboration could also refer to a process like science, where individuals share their ideas for the benefit of others. For teachers, the sharing process can be carried out via learning designs rather than journal papers.

On the other hand Practice is often best done by individuals working alone at their own pace, being allowed to take the time they need, as far as possible. Group projects can also engage students in Practice of course. Discussion often happens in a whole class, but for > 8 participants it is 'vicarious' discussion for the rest.

### 3 **The main problem for me is to align this model with the ministerial indications, above all about the quality assurance and the assessment practices**

The framework of 6 learning types can be used with any overarching requirement to teach in a particular way. The Production type embraces any form of assignment or assessment, so that will fit. Whatever pedagogy a government imposes can be expressed through different sequences and combinations of the other 5 types. The framework simply expresses the detail of a pedagogy that would be specified in more general terms by a ministry.

### 4 **The real problem is that in order to reach rich learning levels it would be necessary to have a lot of time to devote to each topic**

This is an unchangeable fact, but we can still discover and share ways of enriching the learner's experience of what time we do have for a topic. There is necessarily a trade-off between time and topic across any curriculum.

**5 Time management, especially working with big groups**

The Learning Designer tool explicitly requires the teacher-designer to think through how much time to give to each learning activity in sequence. I typically find that I overshoot the time I've allowed for the session – it adds up all the times I have set and shows me the total Designed time in comparison with the Intended learning time. Maybe I decide that is what is needed and keep it, or maybe I change something – it's the teacher's choice. This is the best way to plan the teaching. Then, after running the session, I go back to the design and decide how it could be improved. The teacher has always had to work within this balance. There is no escape from it.

**6 When you use these types of tools (I do it very often) I would like to provide feedback to all those who contribute but this can take a lot of time. I end up reading or commenting some of them but I'm afraid that ALL would appreciate to be quoted.**

Yes, it does take time, as I'm doing this now on a long train journey! I don't always do it. It is not always feasible for the teacher to do it for all students for all topics. But consider the example of the Vicarious Master Class, and the value of demonstrating detailed feedback to a few 'typical' students, so that all the others may recognise some of their own difficulties in those you select. That is one way for the teacher to conjure more time to enrich the experience of more students. Maybe you only react to 6 students each time, but over several weeks you can include a different 6 each time. Just clarify for them why you are doing it this way.

**7 The management of the peer to peer interaction**

You cannot be there as they do it, but you can provide the guidance for how they should work through the process with each other, and provide a rubric to guide their work and their reviews.

It would be good to have a 5 minute class discussion of how they experienced the process, to learn whether there are ways you can improve it, and to 'sell' them the idea of doing it.

**8 Technical problems and difficulties for some students to use digital technologies.**

These will always be with us, sadly. In recent years both teachers and students have gained a lot of digital literacy as the technology becomes a larger part of our lives, and that has helped a lot. But they still need our guidance and support, if the university cannot provide a central support facility for them.

**9 To prepare all the materials beforehand and to manage all the feedback.**

Yes, that does take a lot of time, but I showed how it can balance out over time in comparison with conventional teaching, if we plan for that (slides 57, 58). If we do not always create our own resources but also borrow from other teachers as we share and collaborate, that can also help.

**10 Difficulties linked to a mistrust of technologies**

Mistrust is a different issue from lack of skill. It is a legitimate concern for all of us. But this is a technical issue which the university should take responsibility for. We all need to feel safe

and secure when we use the technology. There is little the teacher can do to reassure students, except to help them learn how to evaluate the authenticity of a source.

**11 The management of the interactions**

This is the essence of learning design in distance sessions just as it is in class presence sessions. We have to learn and develop our ways of doing this. It is part of the point of sharing learning designs.

**12 Ensure coherence at the macro-design level**

I did not discuss this, but it is something teachers certainly need help with, and there is little help even for conventional methods. The next release of the Learning Designer tool will enable the teacher to create a series of tabs, one for each session in a course, and also check the relationships between course-level and session-level intended outcomes and assessments, and the Constructive Alignment between outcomes, activities, and assessment for each session.

**13 University students don't want to be visible online. Usually they use their camera off. The number of the students in online classes limits the possibilities to perform some activities**

Visibility is difficult to get used to, and we need to have serious discussions with students, individually and in groups, to find out how best to enable their visibility. It is an important issue and we have not yet solved it.

As to the number of students limiting what we can do – this is true for both conventional and digital methods. We have to work with the best attributes of both methods, to achieve an optimal balance.

**14 The integration of ICT in some students produces a superficial attitude. Attention must be paid to negotiating the meaning of activities**

Good point. But I doubt that a superficial attitude is confined to the use of digital! I agree that we have to clarify for students our reasons for doing any activities they might object to.

**15 Aggregation with sense and continuity during the entire course**

Yes, very important – please see item 12.

**16 The difficulty for teacher to manage large classroom promoting different didactic strategies**

Management is difficult in large classes, which is why planning ahead in some detail is so important. This is where we can learn something from looking at what other teachers do in their learning designs. Please see also item 11.

**17 We are familiar with all these methods. Sometimes students complain about the increase of the workload....**

It depends on what they mean by 'increase'. If you are guiding them through their own individual learning this should help them do it better. It is only an increase if it goes beyond the expected time for studying your topic. Clarifying and discussing this with students is very important. They may not be aware of how much time they are meant to study. We do not always make this very clear to them.

**18 The difficulty to embed them in the teaching practice**

This is not difficult. They are all learning types that most teachers use already. They derive from studies of teaching and learning. When they try it out, most teachers find it quite easy to do. It can be time-consuming, but it's also quite fun, being interactive, creative, and productive. And you don't have to do it for every session. It's best to start with those you especially want to improve.

## Session 2

**1. I think it is worthwhile if you deliver the same course more than once, and/or more teachers collaborate.**

Yes, if you deliver it only once then the cost of good innovation with digital methods is often too high. There are many good small additions you can make to help students, but to optimise the balance between conventional and digital methods does take more time. For a single course it can still be worthwhile if there is a large cohort, say 100 rather than 30, so that the student fees cover the teaching cost.

**2. The time for planning and for evaluating the other teachers' planning**

Evaluating other teachers' planning is not a necessary part of moving to online. It is good practice, for all methods, to do some peer review occasionally, just to build a sense of community sharing among teachers all trying to do the best for their students.

**3. The possibility of having mixed didactics at the same time**

The mix of learning types is important for giving students more support in their learning. The Conversational Framework derives from a combination of many studies of learning, and from different learning theories. There is no inconsistency in combining them this way. This mix is a benefit for students, not a problem.

**4. One of the huge problems is the workload for the teachers... learning design requires time, competences, and energy**

But teachers always have to do learning design anyway. That is what every teacher is doing every time they plan their teaching, and their requirements of the students. The Learning Designer tool provides the assistance that helps them to think through what the best combination of learning activities for their students would be. Having done it once or twice, it may not be necessary to use it every time.

**5. It takes time and motivation to have all involved teachers to learn the model and the tool**

It is not a lot of time, as it is not very difficult to learn. We run half day workshops to get teachers started on redesigning a session they want to improve. The [Blended and Online Learning Design](#) course I mentioned takes about 3 hours to work through the main activities to learn what you can do with it. That is not very much to ask.

Motivation is a different issue. If teachers are not motivated by their students, then perhaps the institutional leadership has to create the culture of motivation for a new approach to teaching.

**6. Right evaluation of time necessary to do activities of production, discussion, collaboration, and investigation (as learning types)**

Estimating the time needed is very difficult, but again, it is something teachers always have to do in setting assignments, and readings, etc.

We know that students need different amounts of time to do the same learning task. All we can do is to estimate a reasonable amount of time, and let students know that they may need more time.

We have to help them manage the time they need that adds up to the total credit hours for the course. We know better than they do how much time they need, which they always underestimate.

**7. Involve students in asynchronous e-tivities**

Yes, making use of all the ideas that [Gilly Salmon](#) proposes is a good idea. Giving students guidance on how to do online learning is very important. Many of them do not know how to learn in a conventional context, so we should be guiding them on how to do both conventional and online learning.

**8. It is difficult to predict complex events that will take place in the future in such an analytical way. It would perhaps be possible in view of a new edition**

That is the nature of teaching. We are trying to plan for how we and the students will work together over the duration of a course – that has always been true. It is difficult, and we have to learn as we go. We can learn from them what helps them most. And yes, that is exactly what you are doing in planning a new course.

**9. In planning it is important to start thinking so that not only what to do (contents) but also the "mood" that welcomes and engages the student are perceived. So quality of the texts, exciting ways of delivering the mandate, alternative languages...**

This is a very nice way to think about how we engage with our students: what kind of mood we want to create in our interactions. It should be something like an excitement for learning: new ideas, concepts, skills, knowledge, perspectives, competences; and then giving them a sense of their self-efficacy in this, which they do not usually have, but can develop, with our help. The mood will be personal to every teacher, and there are many ways to create it, as you suggest. This is a very good idea.