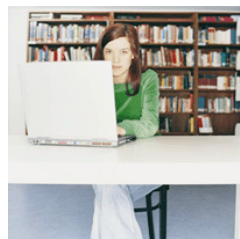




Revised COWL Project Pedagogic Tools Report

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Introduction

This Report has been revised based on discussion at the COWL Board Meeting on 15th June 2009. At that meeting members of the Project Board expressed concern about the growing complexity of the project and the problems of rolling out un-tested provision via online media. Following debate, the COWL project was scaled down to focus on individualised writing tuition, which is a pedagogic approach that has been tested at CAW since 2004. This decision was made to fulfil the Project's aim of extending CAW's existing provision to distance learners.

The present Report takes the general principles outlined in the *Pedagogic Approaches Report* and identifies how these can be applied to the COWL Project using specific tools. It is divided into two parts to reflect the main aspects of the COWL Project, which are:

- Welcoming students to COWL and directing them to appropriate writing resources/learning activities
- Providing tools for online individualised feedback

This Report draws upon the pedagogic categories used in the Learning Activities Reference Model (Falconer, Conole, Jeffery and Douglas 2006:15–28). In addition, self-determination theory informs this Report because it provides a useful structure for engaging and motivating student writers (Deci and Ryan 2002). The choice of tools for the COWL Project is influenced by the following general principles:

1. To promote accessibility for students
2. To exploit technologies and equipment students are already using
3. To minimise the technical learning required for students and staff to use each tool
4. To reduce the resources required to set up and run each tool



The tables on the following pages, and the text accompanying them, replicate the decision-making process that the project team conducted during the pedagogic tools workpackage. These steps were:

- 1) Group the activities listed in the previous report into clusters of activities that employ the same approach
- 2) For each cluster identify the pedagogic and pragmatic elements involved in this approach
- 3) Identify the affordances that would be required by any tool employed in COWL adopting these approaches
- 4) Identify the platform that has the features that most closely meet these affordances



Part 1

Welcoming Students to COWL and Identifying Resources

Table 1. Tools for Filtering and Resources

CAW Learning Activity	Pedagogic Rationale	Pragmatic Rationale	Features in COWL	Probable Tools
<p>1.1 Online 'filtering' of students to identify type/s of learning activity required</p>	<p>Self-determination theory</p> <p>Encourage students to be more independent academic writers</p>	<p>Direct students to relevant resources in COWL</p> <p>Limit usage of highly intensive resources</p> <p>Provide a platform for other learning activities</p> <p>Make explicit the knowledge and expertise of CAW Admin Team</p>	<p>Integrate diagnostic questions with writing resources/links to other OWLs</p> <p>Searchable?</p>	<p>Moodle</p> <p>Accutrack</p>
<p>1.2 Writing resources available online</p> <p>(incorporating 3.5 FAQs and 3.6 CU Harvard Reference Style)</p>	<p>Assimilative learning</p> <p>Encourage students to explore and adopt writing strategies</p>	<p>Direct students to most appropriate resources according to their personal requirements</p> <p>Minimise time spent creating resources for COWL</p> <p>Disseminate expertise of CAW Writing Tutors</p> <p>Support distance learners</p>	<p>Integrate with diagnostic questions</p> <p>Use various formats (text, audio, video)</p> <p>Capture existing CAW activity, expertise, and resources</p> <p>Searchable?</p>	<p>Moodle for text and integration</p> <p>CURVE for storage</p> <p>Echo 360 for capturing CAW activities on video</p> <p>Wimba Classroom for capturing online workshops</p> <p>Wikis for capturing Kibbitzers/FAQs</p> <p>Podcasting for audio</p>



1.1 Online filtering of students to identify type/s of learning activity required

Analysis

The aim of the COWL filtering system is to ask students a series of questions to identify the CAW provision that is most appropriate for them at a given time. This form of selection can be performed automatically via an online diagnostic tool, and it could be based on a series of questions within a branching format to address the requirements of individual students. For example, students could be asked to identify where they are in the process of producing an assignment, and if they are at the revising stage they may be invited to consider key aspects of this process. The objective of this facility is to meet students' needs in an efficient way and reduce demand on CAW's resources. Although this facility will be automated, it represents an opportunity for students to reflect upon their learning to date and identify their positions as writers and learners.

Possible tools

Coventry University is introducing Moodle as a virtual learning environment. This may be the most appropriate platform to integrate with existing systems.

Critique

Moodle is new to most Coventry University staff, so designing the diagnostic facility (especially a branching questionnaire) will require the relevant members of the COWL Project Team to learn new design skills. Choosing the questions may rely upon trial and error since much of the current practice at CAW involves tacit knowledge. This filtering system could be a welcoming portal through which students can access the wider resources of the COWL Project. On the other hand, the online medium could be a barrier to some students, so effort will be required to avoid creating a frustrating experience, especially if students are faced with the same set of questions each time. Some thought needs to be given to how to students might short cut the filtering system on subsequent visits to COWL.



1.2 Writing resources (incorporating 3.5 FAQs and 3.6 the CU Harvard Reference Style)

Analysis

The provision of writing resources for students is a simple assimilative approach that requires learners to read, watch and/or listen, and apply in their own contexts. The value of this approach for learners is that the material can provide ‘just-in-time’ answers to specific questions, or present a broad introduction to a topic with which they are unfamiliar. Some elements of CAW’s provision, such as the CU Harvard Reference Style could easily be integrated to support student writers. Links could be introduced to existing OWLS and external resources.

Possible tools

Writing resources can sit within CURVE (Coventry University’s Repository) and can be easily uploaded and searched within the repository. The requirement to capture ongoing activity determines the most appropriate tools as Wimba Classroom to capture online workshops, and Echo 360 for face-to-face workshops. These are already in use at Coventry University. Extra information not covered by the video workshops can be created using audio podcasts, which might be especially useful for dyslexic and visually-impaired students. Where text pages need to be collaboratively created (for example FAQs), wiki pages can be integrated into Moodle.

Critique

These resources can be integrated into the filtering system, so students can be directed towards the most useful resources as a result of the diagnostic tool. The resources should also be available via CURVE. This would meet the requirements of both deep processors who understand the subject sufficiently to search for the resources they need, and surface processors who need a grounding in the subject or a specific piece of information. The writing resources (particularly the FAQs) could function as a locus for developing knowledge synthesised from COWL kibitzers, for example reflections from tutors of particular issues faced by students during one-to-one tutorials. Since the FAQs section will grow as the COWL Project progresses,



the diagnostic facility could be expanded to identify which specific area of the FAQs the specific students need to locate. Feedback should be collected on an ongoing basis to respond to students' perceptions and changing needs.



Part 2

Tools for Individualised Feedback via COWL

Table 2. Tools for Individualised Feedback

CAW Learning Activity	Pedagogic Rationale	Pragmatic Rationale	Features in COWL	Probable Tools
2.1 Asynchronous individualised feedback online (incorporating 3.4 'Ask the Tutor')	Cognitivist apprenticeship Promote peer review	Minimise the demand on CAW's resources Support distance learners Disseminate expertise of CAW Writing Tutors	Manage via online submission Manage expectations and workload via a queuing system	Riffly plus enhancements linked to Moodle
2.2. Synchronous individualised feedback online (50 mins and 20 mins)	Cognitivist apprenticeship Encourage students' self-efficacy by teaching writing strategies	Support distance learners Disseminate expertise of CAW Writing Tutors	Facilitate collaborative working on text	Megameeting



2.1 Asynchronous individualised feedback online (incorporating 3.4 'Ask the Tutor')

Analysis

Individualised feedback on writing via COWL could be informed by cognitivist approach, whereby an expert takes a student through the steps required to organise previous knowledge and acquire new knowledge (Falconer *et al.* 2006:17, Hoadley 2007: 146). CAW writing tutors or discipline-based academics could scaffold students' learning by taking an extract of their work and demonstrating how this can be improved. Students could then apply the guidance to the remaining text as well as other writing projects. CAW's provision could become more sustainable and scalable by using peer review within modular contexts and by training discipline-based academics to give feedback to student writers.

Possible tools

Riffly plus enhancements, designed by Clive Teed and John Tutchings (eLU). This facility incorporates visual and audio feedback.

Critique

Undertaking to deliver feedback within a limited timeframe (for example five days) could create a problem and CAW writing tutors might become overloaded. Instead, an online submission system could record the number of assignments submitted and respond flexibly, informing students of a personalised delivery time depending on where they are in the queue. The number of submissions could also be reduced by directing students to online resources/using the COWL filtering system. It would also be invaluable to use peer review and teach students to give each other feedback via this facility. Colleagues in the disciplines at CU could also implement this tool in modular contexts. Feedback should be collected on an ongoing basis to respond to students' perceptions and changing needs.



2.2. Synchronous individualised feedback online (50 mins and 20 mins)

Analysis

This fulfils the same pedagogic purpose as asynchronous feedback, but it also provides opportunities for the convergence of ideas and understanding of concepts as students and tutors discuss assignments in real time (Dennis *et al.* 1998: 3).

Possible tools

Megameeting provides the required functionality, and does so without requiring the installation of additional software because it uses any Internet browser.

Megameeting enables both tutors and students to see and edit shared texts (which Skype would not). Megameeting is a simple interface that only requires tutors to create and host a meeting, to which students log in via a webpage.

Critique

Although the pedagogic rationale remains unchanged in the move to an online environment, tutors may need to learn new inter-personal skills to manage interactions via this platform. These requirements will need to be identified and developed during the Trial phase of the COWL Project. It might be useful to use peer review in some contexts, and colleagues in the disciplines could implement this tool in modular contexts. Feedback should be collected on an ongoing basis to respond to students' perceptions and changing needs.



Responses

At the COWL Project Board Meeting on 15th June specific tools were selected for each of the learning activities outlined in this Report. Members of the Project Board debated the following questions:

1. Are the proposed tools suitable for the COWL Project in your view?
2. Are there any additional tools you would like to suggest?
3. Do you have any concerns about the proposed tools?
4. Do you have any comments/questions about the Project or your role?

Based on their discussion, the following tools were selected as the main components of COWL:

- Filtering system and diagnostic element: Moodle (and Accutrack)
- Writing resources: CURVE (and audio visual enhancements as appropriate)
- Asynchronous feedback: Riffly plus enhancements
- Synchronous feedback: Megameeting



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