

# The Course Design Course

(CDC)

## Course Pilot Report

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## Final Report On The Progress And Outcomes Of The Pilot Course

Attached:

1. Copies of tutor attendance registers
2. Copies of tutor Diaries
3. Copies of Evaluation Forms
4. Simple Summary of Evaluation figures
5. Copy of NEOCN accreditation results

### The Group

The course ran at Segedunum Business Centre from March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2000 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2000. It recruited 26 students, (19 women, 7 men) of whom 17 completed the course. Of these, 14 submitted work for accreditation and it is expected that all of them will be accredited by the NEOCN. One did not submit any work at all, and another has been deferred to a later date. This completion rate is well above that established by the course quality outcomes, and though it may seem there was a high dropout rate (38%), the reasons for dropout are fairly clearly explained in almost all cases:

- 2 students went on long-term holiday to Bangladesh (and asked if I could *'tape record the sessions'*) but never returned.
- 1 student became seriously ill
- 1 student found the course too advanced
- 1 student moved on to C&G 7306, but wants to do the course later.
- 1 student moved to Chesterfield and completed the course remotely (and handed in very good work!)
- 2 *'were only visiting'* to see what the course was like
- 2 unknown reasons

### Attendance and Venue

Attendance was good, both in full group and tutorial sessions. Even so, room space was at a premium from the very start, and even though the Segedunum centre was a very good venue in terms of resources and positioning, there were times when I wished we had a larger room with softer chairs and better ventilation. It would not have been too unusual to get a large drop-out with such a very big group in a small room under normal circumstances, so it is particularly reassuring to know that in this case the group size was, at worst, a minor contributing factor (if at all, see the above).

Overall this group was happy, friendly and very cooperative throughout. Enjoyment of the course and group activity was high, and I detected a considerable degree of mutual assistance amongst the students.

## Recruitment

The group was recruited via:

- Word of Mouth
- Newspaper press release
- Posters displayed at various venues throughout the area
- Direct mailing to APTT members
- Announcement in the AE\_Curriculum\_UK Internet e-list

The latter two were useful in particular and recruited the bulk of the group. I was very surprised indeed with the enthusiasm of the response. The group itself would have been even larger, had it not been for some changing their booking at the last minute. Even so, it was a little too large for the venue; nevertheless, because this was a pilot I felt it important that tutors from all aspects of FE, AE, CE and HE get a chance to take part in order to spread the word about the APTT and its training throughout the post-compulsory system. This certainly seems to have happened. Generally speaking they all had one thing in common: they were all part-time, employed on an hourly or contractual basis and had no training at all in this area of study, nor any prospect of it in the near (or distant!) future.

## The Teaching

I had taught this subject on many occasions during the CLL course 'Community Education Studies' so the bulk of the material was familiar to me. Less so to Margaret, who had not been directly involved in the past. I must commend her on her ability to improvise and thoughtfully develop material as needed. Indeed, she produced some of her very best material during the course (I was particularly impressed by the material on aims and objectives). Overall we worked exceptionally well together with no friction and no overstepping bounds or duplication of material. This shows in the student's responses, which were positive throughout, and enjoyed by both of us (see diary entries).

## Student Responses and Evaluation

From the evaluative point of view this was one of the best courses we (and I) have ever taught. All of the students were in attendance for the valuation stage, and their feedback forms are attached. Almost all feedback was in the *Agree Moderately* to *Agree Strongly* range, and we were particularly pleased that the construction and practical teaching elements were 'high scorers'. The element on 'community need consciousness' was less effective (though still very pleasing) and this indicates that we need to concentrate more on the contextual research aspect of the course, rather than the course design (which we assumed, wrongly, would take up most time). Indeed, we do need to very much more strongly emphasise community/collective need during future runs in order to prevent the course simply becoming a mechanistic approach to course development. This shouldn't be a problem in future, since we will be free to concentrate more on the 'message' than the 'mechanics', having become acquainted with the material. One other problem detected was that new 'trainee' tutors need clear counselling before joining CDC in order to ensure they have relevant background or at least a little previous training.

One trainee tutor found the course a little 'overwhelming' in terms of level and detail. She intends to submit material anyway (!) but refrained from completing the evaluation form because of her 'lack of detailed background knowledge' in the areas listed.

I note that a student requests more examples of the course design template in use. Whilst this is an excellent suggestion, it does need copyright-free examples to be created. At present these don't exist in any great number. It may well be possible as the course goes on though, if students are willing to allow their work to be used as examples.

I also note the request for access to session handouts. One way this will be approached is to allow download of encrypted hand-outs from an Internet site (encrypted to prevent copyright theft) and for those without Internet access, a box for spare hand-outs should be located at the teaching venue where old copies can be left for absentees. This has worked well within other courses, but the Internet 'store room' is a new concept (one I feel could be of great value as time goes on).

## NEOCN Moderation and CLT Verification

Course moderation was very late because of the delays in NEOCN recognition of the course. In fact it didn't occur until after the teaching had formally ended. This was unsatisfactory and should be avoided where possible since it stops NEOCN being made aware of student personal needs (usually raised during initial moderator visit to the course). There was also some confusion as to whether the chosen NEOCN moderator would be able to continue with this course as she was distracted by other work. Thankfully none of this stopped final inspection of the work from happening, which resulted in a 100% agreement as to the quality of student achievement. Indeed, the moderator was highly impressed by the course designs and their overall presentation.

Verification on this course did not happen. There was no contact with a verifier and no arrangements made for any inspection of work by CLT. No written verification procedures have as yet been produced.

## Progression

Many of the students have voiced their wish to join C&G 7307, and to continue with other PLATO modules. I have consequently begun work on the final three modules for delivery over the next two terms and have begun negotiation with North Tyneside College with a view to APTT and NTC jointly delivering 7307 at Wallsend Peoples Centre (or at Segedunum). I am also requesting College support for the next runs of both CDC and the APL Course.

## Summary

As Wittgenstein once wrote 'Whatever can be said can be said clearly', and I think it's clear that this was a very highly successful course. There was very little that needed correcting, and those areas that can be improved will make an already good process even better. Overall then, a 'triumph' for all concerned.

*Bob Groves (21<sup>st</sup> August 2000)*