

Report on and evaluation of the Centre for Distance Education short course designed and delivered for Open University China staff

September 2021 to January 2022.

From the Director of the Centre of Distance Education at the University of London,

My sincere congratulations goes to all parties who were involved in this first year of the short course. The colleagues at OU China who moved forward with this initiative; the team at the Centre for Distance Education who worked throughout to design, build, adapt and deliver; the OU China tutor team who provided the backbone of the learning experiences; and the dedicated and engaged participants. It has been an honour for CDE to be involved in this project and we look forward to further engagement with the exceptional Open University of China.

This is a tale of success!

Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper

Director of Academic Practice in Distance Education

Director of the Centre for Distance Education

March 2022

Executive summary,

The agreed aim and scope of the staff development course for Open University teachers and course designers is to develop their expertise and practice of distance teaching pedagogy, online learning design, learning assessment, and programme development.

This report provides an overview of achieved outcomes from the short course and reports on detailed evaluation the course from the perspectives of significant stakeholders: course participants, OU China tutors, CDE Fellows.

We conclude that based on the final evaluation surveys completed by OUC course participants, OUC tutors and CDE Fellows who developed topics and taught on the course:

- The course worked, and is overall very successful in terms of both participant and tutor outcomes, and in relation to feedback form participants and OUC tutors
- The OUC participants are overall happy with the course content and the tuition provided by OUC tutors and CDE Fellows. They are very satisfied with the learning they have attained and with the learning experience.
- The OUC tutors are overall happy with the experience of tutoring on the course; and have learned from the course alongside their students and in collaboration with CDE Fellows.
- We have gathered strong evidence of the short course impact on practice and planning for enhanced practice
- Peer learning within and in preparation for tutor group meetings is particularly valued

We identify some issues that need to be addressed for future delivery of the short course:

- Challenges of language barriers
- Participants need more time to study the course and to do the learning activities
- Participants are keen to see more case studies illustrating the application of theory into practice
- The workload for both tutors and participants is high (8-10+ hours per week participants and 10- 12 hours per week tutors). In addition, they are studying/tutoring in their personal time.

Section 1 Course Overview and short course outcomes

1.1 Short course background

This professional development short course was specifically developed for teachers and curriculum designers at Open University China. Commissioned by OU China and following extensive course design engagement between OUC and CDE, the finalised outline for the short course consisted of 12 topics delivered over a period of four months, commencing in September 2021. The course is a fully online course, delivered in English via the University of London virtual learning environment (VLE), with weekly local tutor groups meetings held in person or in a platform of their choosing. Tutor groups also had the option to conduct their tutorial meetings in Chinese or bilingually. Bi-weekly CDE led webinars for the entire cohort contributed to the provision as did specific structured discussion forum activities aligned with topics.

The aim of the course is to support participants to develop their expertise and practice of distance teaching pedagogy, online learning design, learning assessment, and programme development.

Objectives for the short course, agreed with Open University China included providing:

- practical experience of the design, delivery and assessment of effective online provision
- deepened understanding of effective and efficient pedagogies
- a platform for collaboration that will support ongoing professional development

Designed with a focus on active learning and reflection on professional practice, the participants on the short course were introduced to these approaches through the course learning materials and in the wide variety of learning activities. Participants are encouraged throughout the short course to reflect on their experience as learners on the course and to then actively consider the implications for their role as educators. Participant-to-participant peer engagement through discussion and tutor groups interaction is core to the design.

Commencing the short course in 2021-22 there were 249 participants, based in 13 tutor groups, each led and taught by a local tutor who are themselves members of the academic or curriculum development staff teams at OU China. There were OU China 15 tutors in total. A pre-course needs analysis, conducted to inform the course design, identified diversity in participants' disciplinary subject area, their roles within OU China, and the length and nature of their teaching experience (including wide variation in participants' experience of teaching and learning online). The OU China tutors also informed us that although all participants have English Language competence sufficient to engage with the course, there is considerable variation in their English language proficiency and confidence levels. The initial needs analysis and consideration of English language competency informed the design of the topics and we used feedback from OU China tutors and senior OU China colleagues to make adjustments to the short course as the weeks progressed.

1.2 Course Outcomes

1.2.1 OU China Participants

At the conclusion of the short course, in January 2022, a total 245 of 249 participants successfully completed the short course. Four participants did not meet the 80% criteria participation criteria for successful completion due to heavy workloads and personal family commitments.

Digitized University of London certificates of successful completion of the course were awarded to 245 participants and to all tutors.

In addition, each successful short course participant gained up to five bespoke digital badges by completing tracked activities and coursework, delivered across the virtual learning environment. The participant digital badges awarded are:

- technology for learning
- learning outcomes
- designing for learning in online and distance education
- curriculum and learning design
- assessment and feedback

1.2.2 OU China Tutors

All tutors gained the certificate of successful completion of the course as they directly engaged with the course learning through their role as tutor and in preparing for their work with the participant group. Tutors additionally received a certificate certifying their work as a tutor on the short course. And finally tutors received two bespoke digital badges in recognition of their work as tutors both synchronously and asynchronously:

- Effective support for synchronous learning
- Effective support for asynchronous learning.

1.2.3 CDE Participant Award

In discussion with the OUC tutors, the Centre for Distance Education identified a special award for one participant from each of the 13 tutor groups. The Director of CDE and the OUC tutors agreed a set of criteria for identification of the participant in each tutor group. The participant was nominated by their OUC tutor and confirmed by CDE. The award was given to the participant in each group, who had demonstrated accelerating their professional development through engagement, collaboration and innovation with the short course and in their practice.

Recipients of the individual participant award received an additional University of London Centre for Distance Education certificate of achievement, a further bespoke digital badge, and their details will be added to the CDE Awards page (<https://london.ac.uk/centre-for-distance-education/what-we-do/awards-and-funding>)

The CDE Participant Award winners 2021-22 are:

- Mengchen Li
- Li Zhou
- Xiaoyu Yan
- Tingbai Jia
- Wang Li
- Ji Yanan
- Fan Xiaoli
- Tao Jia
- Hongli Zhang
- Feng Li
- Jing Li
- Xu Hang
- Huang Zhenzhong

1.2.4 Credit transfer to University of London Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education course

To facilities further training and onwards opportunities, OUC participants and tutors who have successfully completed the short course are eligible to apply for credit transfer (Recognition of prior Learning) to study for the University of London online Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGC LTHE): <https://london.ac.uk/courses/learning-teaching>

Credit transfer is equivalent to 30 credits of this 60-credit course permitting direct entry to the second module (30 credits).

1.2.5 Summary of short course outcomes

The short course was successful in ensuring that the vast majority of the participants were able to engage with and benefit for the experience of the course. Using set activities to support motivation and to provide positive reinforcement through the digital badges was a successful strategy. Participants gained official University of London certification of their achievement through certificates and the CDE participant Award. Tutors similarly gained digital badges and certificates that recognised both their engagement with the short course and their role as a tutor.

Section 2 Review of the short course

In this section, we provide an evidence led review of the short course which draws on feedback from key stakeholders: OUC participants on the short course; OUC tutors; CDE Fellows involved in the design and delivery of the short course. We consider the organisational model for the course and then the course content separately, but acknowledge some overlap between these areas of short course design.

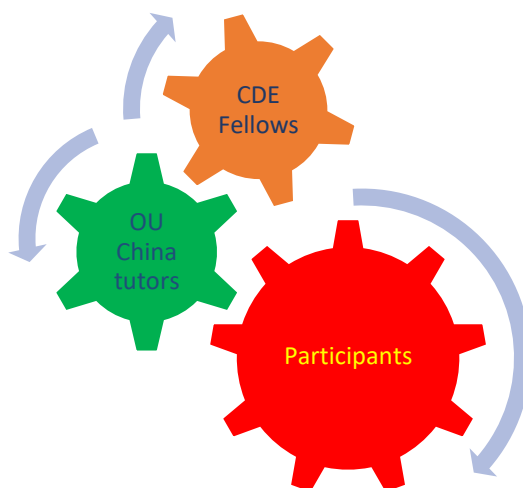
2.1 Review of the Organisational Model

Cognisant of the intercultural and bi-lingual context for the short course, the bespoke organisational model was developed to address the unique design challenges of this course as an online, at a distance transnational provision, needing to meet the needs of a wide variety of subject disciplinary and job roles and at relatively large scale. The objectives of this organisational design were to support the flow of communication between the CDE Fellows, the OUC tutors and the participants and to provide for capacity to make adjustments to the course in real time in response to feedback from colleagues at OUC. This agility at programme level is very unusual in distance education.

There are four interrelated elements in the course that make up the organisational model:

- The course materials and learning activities; and the weekly topic- based discussion forums are on the University of London's Moodle VLE accessed remotely by the course participants.
- Participants attend a one- hour tutor group meeting with their OUC tutor for each topic (80% attendance rate required).
- Participants are invited to attend a bi-weekly webinar tutored by the CDE Fellows who have developed the topics currently being studied (typical attendance rate was 140 participants at each webinar, although some colleagues may have been viewing the same screen in a shared space)
- A weekly online meeting of OUC tutors and CDE Fellows to plan for teaching in the week ahead, to discuss the participants' experience and progress, and to discuss feedback from OUC tutors and their tutor groups.

Figure 1 Representation of the inter-relation between the OU China tutors, short course participants and the CDE team.



As Figure 1 illustrates, the organisational model is designed to support communication between CDE, the OUC and the participants. Additionally the model allows for a relatively large-scale cohort (of 250 participants) to have a small cohort experience in an economically deliverable model via tutors groups of approximately 20 participants. This model made use of a combination of asynchronous engagement with learning materials on the VLE, live CDE webinars with opportunities for direct interaction with the subject matter experts and structured synchronous small group tutorials. In this way, the model utilised good practice from flipped learning approaches.

Furthermore, through explicitly designed engagements in both synchronous and asynchronous elements of the course, there was a drive to engage peer learning: participant-to-participant. This ensured that local and subject disciplinary contextualisation was built-in through the tutor grouping and discussion activities.

Essential to the success of this delivery was the role of the OUC tutors who work directly with CDE Fellows, with the other OUC tutors, with OUC organisational colleagues, and with their own tutor group of participants. That the OUC tutors have native speaker level English competence was essential to the success of this transnational, intercultural and bi-lingual course. The OUC tutors' experience and expertise in supporting staff development in relation to learning, teaching and curriculum design was also key. OUC tutors were able to bridge the language and cultural differences as well as engage directly with contextualised aspects of effective staff development.

Course Team 2021-22

OU China Tutors	Centre for Distance Education Tutors
Jin Zhu	Dr Christina Howell-Richardson CDE
Ying Han	Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper CDE, UoL
Jing Yu	Professor Stephen Brown CDE
Wei Li	Professor Ayona Silva-Fletcher Royal Veterinary College
Xiaoqian Liu	Dr David Baume CDE
Tingting Zhao	Dr Clare Sansom Birkbeck, University of London
Yuehui Zhong	Dr Jonathan San Diego King's College, London
Yunzhi Shi	Dr Gwyneth Hughes UCL
Jun Xie	Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos CDE
Xiaobo Luo	Dr Matthew Phillpott CDE
Juan Luo	Dr Lynsie Chew UCL
Xiaozhu Wang	Dr Julie Voce City University, London
Wei Xiong	Professor Alan Parkinson UCL
Fengwei Cai	Professor Helen Xanthaki UCL
Ruo Du	Huw Morgan Jones UCL
Lena Chen OUC Link person	

2.2 Evaluation of the organisational model

We draw together here findings from stakeholder evaluation and feedback we gathered during the delivery and post delivery period. This is used to inform evidence informed improvement planning with specific recommendations for both CDE and OUC identified.

2.2.1 OUC Participant and OUC Tutor Feedback

Participant Final feedback survey responses – 213 responses

Element(s) was / were good / valuable to me							
	Course content / materials on the VLE	Videos	CDE webinars	Participation in the tutor group	Course process was good	Lots of good engagement in online discussion groups	Readings too difficult to be useful
Overall Positive response %	97	94	90	93	96	91	52
Strongly agree	160	135	128	154	138	117	54
Somewhat agree	47	66	63	44	67	76	57
Neutral	6	12	20	12	7	16	41
Somewhat disagree	0	0	2	3	1	4	48
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	13

Table 1 – Participant feedback organisational model - final survey 31-01-2022 (N= 213)

As we see in Table 1, high levels of agreement that the significant elements of the course design for participants were good and of value. The course itself helped achievement of the outcome in relation to experience of online course design. For example, course content on the VLE is rated as 97% good and valuable. Tutor group participant is considered valuable (93%) and valuable engagement with online discussions was confirmed (91%).

In relation to the usability of the selected readings, we do see a significantly lower level of satisfaction, with 52% of those who responded to the final survey noting that readings were too difficult to use. Developing our analysis of the issue of the usability of the, we note that OUC tutor feedback also identifies issues with the readings:

Participant language barriers were identified as a significant challenge to progression and maintaining pace with the course schedule by the OUC tutors. While all participants have English Language competence sufficient to engage with the course, there is considerable variation in their language proficiency and language competence. As also indicated in the participant survey, tutors note that reading full length peer reviewed journal articles from UK sources is challenging even for

confident English speakers if they are not familiar with this academic genre and are not educational subject specialists.

2.2.2 Further points raised by the OUC tutors

Summary of other feedback form OUC tutors

- The tutors raised concerns about the course schedule and about their participants' workload in the mid-point review (November 2021).
- Participants and tutors study in their personal time at evenings and weekends. The course was designed to provide for 7 hours' study time per week. However, the OUC course participants need longer than 7 hours per week to study the course materials and to complete the activities due to language barriers and fragmentation in the available study time.
- As participants are working full time and have family and personal commitments lack of time to study impacted on the quality of their learning.
- The scheduling of the live webinars (at 09.00 UK time), and the time of the Friday CDE-OUC tutor meetings was considered inappropriate and inconvenient for the OUC tutors and the course participants.
- It was difficult to identify a suitable time (Chinese time) for all to be free from teaching and other duties, for the OUC tutor led sessions with participants.
- Taking together the issues of time poverty and language barriers, many of the participants avoided the VLE discussion forums (in which they needed to engage in English) and preferred to discuss among each other in WeChat in Chinese.

2.3 Evaluation of organisational model and areas for development

2.3.1 Strengths of the organisational model

The organisational model was designed to facilitate dialogue between the CDE Fellows and the OUC tutors and participants. This design has been successful in enabling the CDE to provide professional development to both the group of 14 OUC tutors and to the group of 249 participants. The OUC tutors and CDE Fellows developed a good working relationship, becoming an effective collaborative partnership for reciprocal learning and for course tuition.

The model has also enabled the CDE to introduce some level of agility in the programme, which is unusual in distance education programmes. For example, in response to tutor feedback there was a reduction in the level of text-based information in course materials from Topic 5. We were also able to offer participants more flexibility in their study time in a 2-week extension to the course during December and increased flexibility in assessment submission deadlines.

2.3.2 Areas for improvement of the organisational model

The primary point of concern, which arises throughout all forms of feedback and evaluation, is that participants have insufficient time to complete the course workload. This pressure on available study time is caused by several factors. While designed to take participants approximately 8 hours per week, the topics in fact took learners longer and external factors meant that some learners did not have 8 hours per week available for engagement. This caused participants distress and meant some deeper learning was not engaged with. The delivery pattern which included several weeks with no

specific content was intended to provide consolidation time, but was only partially successful. Extending the end of course date did help a number of participants to complete all required aspects of the course.

Within the course design, CDE needs to modify the weekly course schedule for meetings and activities and address the barriers to learning caused by use of the English language and by the increased cognitive load of engaging with English language theories and literature.

There is currently insufficient interaction between CDE Fellows and the course participants so that CDE Fellows can gauge the participants' learning and engage in discussion with them. Webinars are large scale events where micro interactions are not feasible. Use of polling tools has been successful but CDE interaction with participants in online discussions would help to close the gap in the communication loop between the CDE Fellows and the OUC participants.

To address the English language challenges the following focussed suggestions were elucidated in the CDE Fellows review and feedback:

- Use a different platform that allows good translation facilities. Zoom provides a translation service as a transcript after the meeting but the transcript is typically full of errors.
- OUC tutors record an overview and summary of each topic in Chinese to be posted on the VLE and WeChat
- Reduce the amount of text in course materials. Increase use of presentations + voice over + captions, visuals, charts, figures etc. to explain concepts and theories. Increase use of case studies to explain application of theory in practice.
- Participants and OU tutors identify threshold concepts, troublesome terminology or ideas and areas that require further clarification. This can be a FAQ's that is semi-moderated by an OUC participant and CDE Fellows respond.
- In response to OUC tutor guidance CDE Fellows write a glossary of difficult terms. OUC tutors and participants might also develop their own glossary in Chinese.
- OUC tutors, and volunteer participants if appropriate, lead some webinars in Chinese. The CDE Fellows will use translation tools (probably used in viewing the materials before the event) and CDE Fellows respond to the OUC colleagues and participants
- CDE Fellows can be aware to articulate clearly in Webinars. An Increased sense of the social presence of the OUC participants in the Webinars and more interaction between us would aid this. Increased social presence will come from cameras on, use of hands up to speak and significantly increased use of the Chat function

2.3.3 Recommendations for enhancement of the organisational model

In summary, **recommendations** arising from the review of the organisational model include:

For consideration by CDE

- Review of range of material per topic – can some of the content be reduced/repurposed?
- Review the suggested readings, looking to reduce language expectations and consider alternative approaches to engagement with the material
- Introduce regular discussion interactions between CDE Fellows and participants via asynchronous discussion channels
- Review the weekly time-table to look for better fit between conflicting diaries for CDE Fellows and OUC tutors
- Remove the discussion forum activities from the VLE and instead support in-Chinese prompted discussions on WeChat, this can be supported by providing tutors with a short check list of areas that will be useful in the discussion activities per topic and tutors can feedback to the CDE Fellows outcomes from the discussions

For consideration by OUC

- Can workload expectations be reduced for OUC tutors and for OUC participants to release time for study?
- Revision to the overall schedule to allow some further consolidation weeks
- Does greater attention to participant English language level need to be considered when recruiting participants?

3. Review of Course Content and Impact

Building on from the discussion of the organisation of the short course in section 2, we now turn to consideration the short course scope, content and importantly the impact of the short course. This sections starts with a brief summary of short course outline and the topics covered. We then move to consider feedback and evaluation of the content, the learning evidenced and finally the impact. We conclude the section with a summary review of the course content, its impact and implications for enhancement of the short course.

3.1 Short course outline

The programme covers the following areas:

- Designing units of study for effective alignment between outcomes, assessment and student activity
- Applying theories of learning in practice
- Designing successful student activities, supporting collaboration, learner diversity
- Assessment of, for and as learning: student, peer, tutor
- Resources and student information handling skill development
- The role of the tutor in online settings
- Quality assurance and enhancement

3.2 Course Topics and Schedule 2021-22

	Title	Dates	Bi-weekly Webinar
Topic 1	Introduction, contexts, and the student week	13 -17 September 2021	Tuesday 28 th September 9.00/16.00
Topic 2	Programme and module design	27- 30 September 2021	
Topic 3	Using what we know about student learning and theories of learning	11-15 October 2021	Wednesday 20 th October 9.00/16.00
Topic 4	Structuring learning	18-22 October 2021	
Topic 5	Designing individual learning activities and formative assessments.	25-29 October 2021	Wednesday 3 rd November 9.00/16.00
Topic 6	Designing collaborative activities and assessments	1-5 November 2021	
Topic 7	Tutor feedback	8-12 November 2021	Wednesday 24 th November 8.00/16.00
Topic 8	Locating resources to support learning, and student information capabilities	22-26 November 2021	
Topic 9	Technology to enhance learning	29 November-	

		3 December 2021	Wednesday 2nd December 8.00/16.00
Topic 10	Assessment	6-10 December 2021	
Topic 11	Tutor roles and tutor development, and developing as a teacher	3 – 7 January 2022	Wednesday 12 th January 8.00/16.00
Topic 12	Programme monitoring, evaluation and improvement	10- 14 January 2022	

Table 2 – Course schedule and topics 2021-22

3.3 Participant and tutor feedback on course content

3.3.1 OUC Participant feedback on course content

Participant Final feedback survey responses – 213 responses

Learning about this element was valuable						
	Students and learning	Feedback	Course design	Learning activities	Using theory	Student collaboration
Positive %	98	96	99	97	98	96
Strongly agree	155	153	155	155	154	149
Somewhat agree	54	52	55	52	54	56
Neutral	3	8	3	5	5	8
Somewhat disagree	1	0	0	1	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3- Participant feedback course content - final survey 31-01-2022 (N= 213)

In Table 3, we see some very pleasingly high scores in relation to sentiment about the value of the course elements. For example in relation to using theories in practice, we have 98% agreement in the value of using theories and 98% in students and learning. This provides a strong basis for confirmation that the course content was valuable and well received and supported a deepening understanding of effective and efficient approaches to online education. We will develop this discussion later on when we look at impact.

In the final survey for participants, which included open text response options as well as Likert-style questions, five elements of course improvement were identified. There was a request for more use of these approaches in particular:

- More use of case studies and examples to demonstrate the application of theory in practice and to demonstrate teaching approaches.
- More emphasis on the use of technologies in supporting learning.
- Topic 7 on OER's was excellent- more information on OER's and digital information literacies.
- More feedback from CDE tutors and more interaction with CDE tutors.
- More study time and increased flexibility in the schedule, which can help to facilitate deeper learning

3.3.2 OUC Tutor feedback on course content

Tutors reviewed the short course in relation to its effectiveness for the participants in their tutor group and for themselves as learners undertaking the short course. Representative responses are provided in Table 4.

What were the main good things about the course for members of your tutor group ?	What were the main good things about the course for you as a tutor?
<p><i>Representative Responses</i></p> <p>The curriculum is systematic and rich and focuses on student participation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To learn about the knowledge and key points of understanding online teaching and learning 2. To get the skills of designing an online teaching course. 3. To realize and promote professional development <p>It builds connections between members in our group.</p> <p>Peer learning, learning from each other and working as a team, urging each other to learn</p> <p>The main good things about the course are we learned how to design distance education courses.</p> <p>Well-designed tasks with step-by-step topics</p> <p>Members from different places, majors and courses can discuss frequently and deeply, and really helped each other a lot. Tutor group members learned a lot about education theories and broadened their horizons, not only about content but also how the CDE fellows organized the course and teaching process.</p>	<p><i>Representative Responses</i></p> <p>It gave full play to our role as a bridge between the CDE Fellows and our students, and exercised our communication, organization and ability while further learning the courses systematically.</p> <p>It deepens my understanding of learning design, especially when I need to answer the sorts of questions from the participants</p> <p>There is not only a high degree of theoretical explanation, but also practical teaching guidance.</p> <p>As a mentor the main benefit of this course is to understand how to analyse the characteristics of distance education students.</p> <p>I've learned how to design more diverse learning activities, especially co-operative and collaborative learning.</p> <p>There is not only a high degree of theoretical explanation, but also practical teaching guidance.</p> <p>Distance-teaching techniques and more understanding of online teaching and learning</p>

Table 4—Tutor’s feedback on what was valued in the course – final survey 31-01-2022

In Table 4, it is pleasing to see that tutors themselves gained from engaging with the short course - with the theme of theory informing practice and practical application coming through well. Peer learning (participant-to-participant) was an explicit aim of the organisational structure of the provision and was identified as being a successful outcome from the course.

3.4 Learning and impact

We turn now to consideration of feedback and evaluation of learning achieved as a result of the short course, and of the impact of the short course on participants’ practice. We particularly focus on implications for changes in practice.

3.4.1 Participant self-assessment of learning and impact

We were keen to see the ways in which participants, at the end of the short course, were using ideas gained through engagement with the course. To do this we considered three stages of implementation, as laid out in Table 5: already applying; planning to apply; and tentatively planning to apply

Using ideas from the course in your own practice			
	Already used ideas from the course	Definite Plans to use ideas	Tentative plans to use ideas
Positive %	89	87	92
Strongly agree	109	110	114
Somewhat agree	81	76	82
Neutral	21	27	15
Somewhat disagree	2	0	2
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Table 5 : Participant feedback practical application of course content - final survey 31-01-2022 (N= 213)

The results show a very strong link between ideas gained from the short course and practice. It is very heartening to see an 89% positive response to the application of ideas already being used in practice. And, we are encouraged to see that planning is underway for further implementation. Some examples of this help to illustrate the impact below.

Examples of ideas learned from the course from open text responses by participants:

- Talking with students as individuals
- Collaborative / group learning
- Game design

Examples of ideas already used in teaching from open text responses by participants:

- Improved learning outcomes
- I have designed more icebreaker activities to help building a better learning community
- designed more group work to give students more opportunities to use, apply and synthesise their learning

3.4.2 Tutor assessment of learning and impact on participants

Here we asked tutors to consider firstly the impact of the course on the planning undertaken by their tutor group members and then to provide insight into the impact of the course on the teaching practice of their tutor group participants.

Impact of the course on the planning done by members of your tutor group	Impact of the course on the teaching practice of members of your tutor group
<p><i>Representative Responses</i></p> <p>They have all made good plans for promoting their professional development.</p> <p>They have known what good learning design is, and they will design better online learning accordingly</p> <p>Combining theory and practice</p> <p>Designing individual learning activities and formative assessments.</p> <p>Using technology to enhance learning</p> <p>Reflection on their learning and their students learning</p>	<p><i>Representative Responses</i></p> <p>Some of my group members said they are now using the theory and methods into their designing of the online learning course.</p> <p>Two members reported they had applied some learning design techniques in their teaching practice, which worked well. Winning teaching prizes</p> <p>Through group cooperative learning, students can share more knowledge, exchange experience, and make common progress</p> <p>More use of feedback</p> <p>Some of the participants in my group reflect a lot on their teaching, used what they learned in the course and won some prizes in teaching competition</p> <p>We think more about the teaching ways, and try to find ways to solve problems instead of blaming on students</p>

Table 6: OUC Tutor feedback participant learning--final survey 31-01-2022 (N= 14)

As we see here in Table 6, there is a rich variety of evidence for impact on planning and practice. From prize winning, to moving away from 'blame the student', to activity design, it is clear that changes are being evidenced here. Importantly these changes were regularly discussed in the tutor groups and contributed participant-to- participant peer learning: this characterises good online and distance education design.

3.4.3 OUC Tutors' self-assessment of their learning

We asked tutors to comment on the gain in learning they themselves experienced in relation to designing online and distance education and also to comment on what they have learnt about tutoring. We present this feedback in Table 7. In the final section of Table 7, tutors drew together their experiences and knowledge to put forward some important insights into effective tutoring practices.

Learning about designing for learning in online and distance education	Learning about tutoring distance education teachers
<p><i>Representative comments</i></p> <p>A good course needs a good design. 1. You need to have a deepened understanding of effective and efficient pedagogies about online learning. 2. You need practical experience for designing a course and get enough feedback. 3. You need to know more about the learners for a better understanding of the context.</p> <p>The importance and roles of assessment, which enlightened me to take assessment as a good tool to motivate and guide students to learn.</p> <p>Learners are also an important part of the learning process</p> <p>Designing individual learning activities and formative assessments. Designing collaborative activities and assessments</p>	<p><i>Representative comments</i></p> <p>When a teacher works as a student in a programme, he/she performs similarly as my distance learners.</p> <p>To make more collaboration activities. 2. To make them open to the group members. 3. To make them share their experiences and challenges. Communications are important.</p> <p>[I learner] how to organize the distance tutors to learn and what should be noticed.</p> <p>Distance education counselling needs to pay attention to timely feedback and targeted practice for learners</p>
Applying their experience of tutoring distance education teachers	
<p>To make everyone be open to others, to organize a good learning community</p> <p>Importance of Learning community and collaboration</p> <p>Encourage and foster reflections from practices and others experience</p> <p>Pay more attention to formative assessment and feedback</p> <p>Critical thinking and reflections are needed in the whole process</p> <p>Pay close attention to students' learning status, unblock interactive channels, and provide more learning help for students.</p> <p>Help students</p> <p>Develop and make the most the advantages and affordances of distance learning</p> <p>Hold regular tutor meetings</p>	

Table 7. OUC Tutor self- assessment of their learning-- final survey 31-01-2022 (N= 14)

In Table 7, tutors present clear examples of their developing practice and understanding. Rich examples include the links made between assessment and motivation to learning. Tutors are recognising the importance of understanding and focussing on the learner in the process of learning and teaching. As tutors their skills in communication have been pivotal. Tutors have demonstrated their understanding of the need to foster an open and collaborative community in which reflection is facilitated.

3.5 Evaluation of course content and areas for development

3.5.1 Strengths of the short course content

Overall, we see high levels of confirmation that the course content was relevant, useful and impacted practice and planning for enhanced practice. The breadth of content covered in the short course is valued and the overall topic selection is appropriate. By engaging participants with an initial needs analysis prior to the course and then mid way through the course, we provided an opportunity for participants and tutors to engage with self-assessment and peer assessment of learning.

3.5.2 Areas for improvement of the content of the short course

In asynchronous distance education, the discussion forum and the synchronous tutor group meeting are essential spaces where the participants come together and learn together. While we can build in more flexibility across the set time span of a topic, it would be inappropriate to make this a self-paced course as this effectively eliminates social, group learning.

There is evidently repetition of the call for greater interaction with CDE Fellows and for increased time flexibility and time to study that runs throughout all the feedback channels with the OUC participants and tutors. These are the dominant and pressing concerns that need to be addressed.

To address the limited available time and course workload the following focussed suggestions were elucidated in the CDE Fellows review and feedback:

- In the 2021-22 cohort we ran an induction for the tutors but not for the participants. An induction programme for course participants co-taught by CDE Fellows and OUC tutors would be very useful in establishing reciprocal expectations and in familiarising participants with the programme and the intended purposes and uses of the different elements.
- Extend the time-span of each topic from one week to two weeks. In week 1 participants read a paper and view videos and do small activities and discuss on the VLE forum where reflective learning is developed by the moderation of the CDE Fellows. In the second week students do activities to prepare for and participate in the tutor group meeting. Webinars will also be offered in week two or every fourth week
- Reduce the amount of content in each topic by separating out elements of the topic material that can be offered as optional extension material.
- We can offer different additional and optional pathways through the course materials leading to the award of a digital badge.
- Make the course materials available to tutors and participants earlier to allow more time for preparation and study
- Developing the course collaborative working partnership

3.5.3 Recommendations for enhancement of the organisational model

In summary, **recommendations** arising from the review of the course content:

For consideration by CDE

We propose that in moving forward with redesign of the short course we further develop the partnership with the OUC tutors. CDE are keen to invite OUC tutors to co-design or to advise on the design of the revised OUC course, and to contribute materials and resources. Co-design enables us to introduce some Chinese material and concepts.

- For example, we could invite OUC tutors to lead on parts of the course (e.g. some of the webinars) and to explain to the CDE Fellows the work they are presenting so that CDE are able to respond and to engage in discussion with them and with the OUC participants as a third party in the discussion.
- A further example arises in relation to contextualised materials. We need videos of classroom interaction for topic 6, as we cannot use You Tube. The focus of the relevant activity in this topic is an analysis of teacher talk. Videos of Chinese classrooms would be ideal. Sourcing the videos can also be developmental for the OUC tutors, as they need to identify in practice the research focus we are exploring.

For consideration by OU China

Colleagues in OU China are invited to engage with this report, and particularly with the evidence informing the suggested developments and enhancements. In relation to course content, OU China will need to explore the options for development of the course in line with their requirements and strategic outcomes. Examples of options for development of the course scope and content may include:

- Overall reduction in scope and content of the short course
- Splitting the short course into sub-courses
- Increasing the time period over which the short course runs (e.g. two weeks per topic, retaining 12 topics)
- Reduction in number of participants engaging with the short course
- Possible changes to workload requirements for those engaging with the short course

Conclusion

This was a successful short course that delivered an efficient and effective learning experiences for participants, tutors and CDE Fellows. It demonstrated good practice in design of large-scale online education and facilitated effective peer engagement through a distributed organisational model. Feedback from participants and tutors has been very favourable and learning has been demonstrated. There are opportunities to enhance this provision and focus will need to be placed on matters of workload and the language balance of the provision. The Centre for Distance Education looks forward to working in partnership with Open University China in the coming years.

Report completed March 2022

Review meeting scheduled April 11 2022