

In This Edition . . .

1-2	Student and Educational Operations	5	CUSU-GU Student Advice Service
2-3	Developing a New Curriculum for Information Literacy	6	Supporting Students in Transition: Nothing New
3	CamTools Training Sessions	6	LTS Events for 2011-12
4	13 Things		

Redrawing Arrangements for Student and Educational Operations

Alice Benton and Kate Maxwell were recently appointed as Head of Student and Educational Policy, and Head of Student Operations respectively, and have commenced the re-organisation of graduate student services and administration into two central areas - policy and operations. This reorganisation aims to bring together cognate activities regardless of student type, streamlining procedures to generate efficiencies (including staff time of both administrators and academics) and aligning policy/operations for all types of students to try to achieve greater clarity and fairness, and ensuring that no categories of students can fall into the gaps. As part of this re-organisation certain activities previously handled by the Secretariat are to be absorbed into the Academic Division.

Student Operations

Work is underway to establish the following services:

- a Student Registry (with responsibility for all student records, bringing together the Student Administration and Records Section and records management within the BGS)
- an integrated Examinations Office within the Student Registry (bringing together Board of Examinations (BoE) and examination functions with the BGS)
- a single office to handle student complaints, examination appeals and mitigating circumstances (bringing together activities of the Secretariat, Education Section, BGS and BoE).

Within Student Operations, there will also be a Fees and Funding Team, an International Students Team, and Graduate Admissions.

Education and Student Policy

In order to bring together consideration of matters of policy, from 1 January 2012, the role of the Board of Graduate Studies (in committee form) will be revised and matters described below will be handled by the Education Committee and officers of the Education Section, rather than through the Board of Graduate Studies.

Consideration of teaching and learning issues by a single body will allow a view to be taken in the round. It will also reduce duplication of effort by reducing the number of central committees considering graduate matters.



Educational provision:

- approval of new courses, discontinuation of courses and changes to courses (including Masters courses)
- consideration (and recommendation to General Board and Council) of requests for new graduate-level Degrees
- consideration, if appropriate in consultation with the Board of Graduate Studies, and recommendation to the General Board of proposals to change the regulations for degrees which require registration as a Graduate Student and currently fall under the jurisdiction of the Board.

Quality assurance issues include: monitoring of External Examiners reports and responses for all courses with a taught element, including MPhils, MSts and MRes; PRES/PTES (alongside NSS); marking and classing; and in consultation with the BGS, monitoring of compliance with, and review of, the Code of Practice for Research Students.

Educational policy including, for example, Master's student numbers, plagiarism, transferable skills and employability.

In terms of committee work, the Board of Graduate Studies membership will be reduced and reconfigured. The BGS will continue to report to the General Board through the Education Committee. The membership of this latter committee will be augmented by the addition of a second appointee from the Board of Graduate Studies and a second student member representing graduates.

For further details of the changes outlined here, please contact Alice Benton:

Alice.Benton@admin.cam.ac.uk

- Education Section

Developing a New Curriculum for Information Literacy Arcadia Project, July 2011 – Report by Dr Emma Coonan



During Easter Term of 2011, I was seconded to the Arcadia Programme as a research fellow, with a remit to create a new and innovative curriculum for teaching information literacy in higher education. Together with my project partner, Dr Jane Secker of LSE, I had ten weeks in which to research and develop a practical structure that would comprehensively meet the ongoing information needs of students entering HE over the next five years - whilst retaining enough flexibility to be implementable in any higher education establishment. (No pressure, then ...)

To ensure that the curriculum would be grounded in relevant and current research and informed by existing best practice, we undertook both a wide-ranging review of published literature and a modified Delphi study, consulting experts in the information and education communities. From the first, Jane and I were keen to situate the research within the wider academic context, rather than identifying it exclusively as a 'library' initiative. This approach is in line with the recent movement to integrate various facets of academic information training and support provided by tutors and supervisors, learning development units, libraries, and other university providers. Whilst each of these strands may offer excellent provision, if each one works in

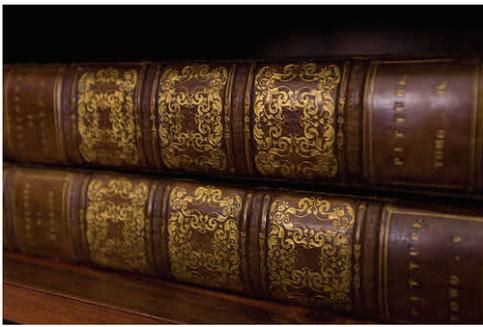
isolation a fragmented approach results which leads to confusion or conflict in students' understanding of how and where to find information and what to do with it once found. Unless provision is joined-up across an institution, students will not receive the support required to master each step of their academic development.

We also found it necessary to clarify (and to some extent rehabilitate) the definition of our basic term. Information literacy is not a skill, or a knack. It is not 'something the library teaches', nor merely knowing how to create complex searches in a specific database. Nor indeed is it solely a matter of being able to cope with 'information overload'. It is a complex, high-level cluster of abilities that resides within the individual learner, enabling him or her not only to *seek out* information but also to *assess* it for bias; to *evaluate* its worth and relevance to the learner's own needs, as defined by the task in hand; to *analyse* its argument and the grounds on which the argument is made; and finally to be able to *assimilate* new information, even if that conflicts with previously held beliefs or convictions. As such, it is the hallmark of the discerning scholar and also of the informed citizen. UNESCO's Alexandria Proclamation of 2005 defines it:

Information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations.

Being information literate therefore goes far beyond the academic context, towards an understanding of 'lifelong learning' which is closely associated with the emergence and development of our identities as humans. As independent, lifelong learners, we can generate strategies for dealing with new information contexts: for assessing, analysing and assimilating new knowledge, or for reappraising our existing beliefs in the light of new data.

Within HE institutions, however, the term 'information literacy' is prey to misunderstanding. The historic



tendency to situate its teaching within the library has led to a confusion - in the minds of some library staff as well as academic colleagues -

between information literacy and bibliographic instruction. Knowing when and how to use library resources is a part of being information literate in the academic context, but only a part: the information landscape of higher education, especially in a digital age, encompasses more than the library.

Our findings from both the review of published literature and the Delphi consultation strongly suggest that a conceptual fracture has occurred in HE between what are thought of as 'library skills' - functional skills such as catalogue use or database searching - and the 'academic' competencies such as critical evaluation, synthesis, and writing appropriately for a given audience. Yet *all* these capabilities, dealing as they do with information seeking, handling and management, reside within the greater field of information literacy in a complex assembly of abilities that underpins all learning activity.

Fundamental to the new curriculum, therefore, is a vision of information literacy as a continuum that encompasses this broad range of abilities, from functional skills through to high-level cognitive processes, culminating in the individual's capacity to manage his or her own learning. This vision informed the 10 strands into which the curriculum is divided, each of which reflects an aspect of this continuum and contains multiple levels of development. The strands fall into five broad learning categories:

Key skills such as storing information, note-making, reference management, using alert services

Academic literacies including academic writing and rhetoric, critical analysis and textual interrogation

Subject-specific competencies - mapping a discipline-contextual information landscape, including identifying key resources for a particular subject

Advanced information handling including ethical aspects of obtaining and using information, presenting and communicating findings appropriately, and formulating research questions

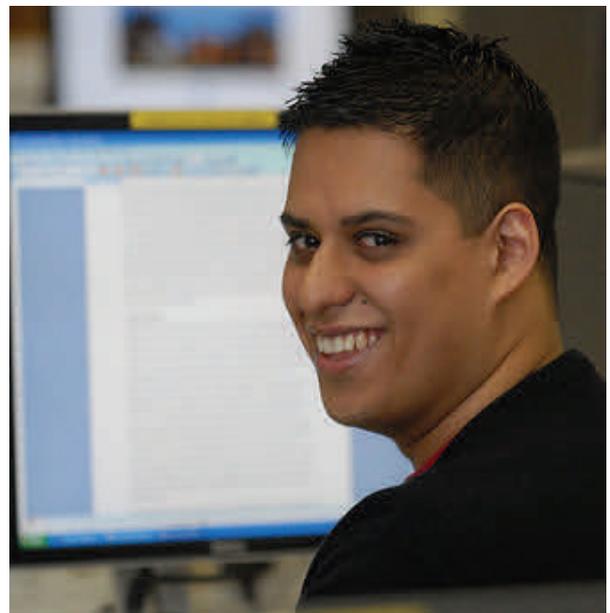
Learning to learn which focuses on developing reflective awareness and becoming an independent learner; also includes the transition from school to higher education, and the social dimension of information.

The full curriculum includes detailed learning outcomes and sample activities and assessments for the elements

within each strand. The curriculum, together with supporting documentation, can be found at <http://newcurriculum.wordpress.com/project-reports-and-outputs/>. Also available are separate reports on the expert consultation process and the theoretical background to the research, together with an executive summary.

In ten weeks we were able only to delineate the need for a new approach to information literacy in higher education and to create a curriculum which we hope offers a holistic, modular and practical structure for implementing that approach. The next step will be to explore ways in which the curriculum can actually be put in place in Cambridge. I'm delighted that one of the Michaelmas Term Arcadia Projects, headed by Dr Helen Webster, will be doing just that! You can read more about how Helen will be taking the New Curriculum forward in Cambridge at:

<http://arcadiaproject.lib.cam.ac.uk/projects/strategies-for-implementation.html>



CamTools Training Sessions

CamTools Communicate and share materials with students, researchers and college groups



"CamTools has proved to be a vital link between course organisers, students, lecturers and administrators"

[find out more](#)

CamTools Upgrade and Certain Tools

If you should experience any issues with the styling or presentation of any tools, e.g. Wiki, A...

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- An Introduction To CamTools Thu, 20/10/11
- What's Changed In CamTools Tue, 08/11/11
- Getting More Out Of CamTools Tue, 22/11/11

All held in Seminar Room, CARET, 16 Mill Lane, 1 - 2 PM

To book a place go to the following website:

<https://camtools.cam.ac.uk/join/camtools-training>

13 Things for Curriculum Design

If you're a lecturer, course organiser or teaching committee member then one of your responsibilities is updating and improving courses. That might involve adjusting content, co-ordinating with other lecturers and departments, improving teaching and assessment methods, changing schedules - any aspect of curriculum design. A number of universities and funding agencies have in recent years developed technology to help you.

Organised by the CourseTools project at CARET and the Open University's Learning Design Initiative, the 13 Things for Curriculum Designers programme invited Cambridge staff to try out a selection of these tools and share their impressions. The programme ran for 7 weeks from March until May this year, introducing two 'Things' a week and asking participants to spend half an hour experimenting with them and then blogging their responses to four general questions: What were your initial impressions of this tool? After getting to know the tool, were your expectations borne out or were you surprised? In what ways do you see this being useful to you? How could it be improved?

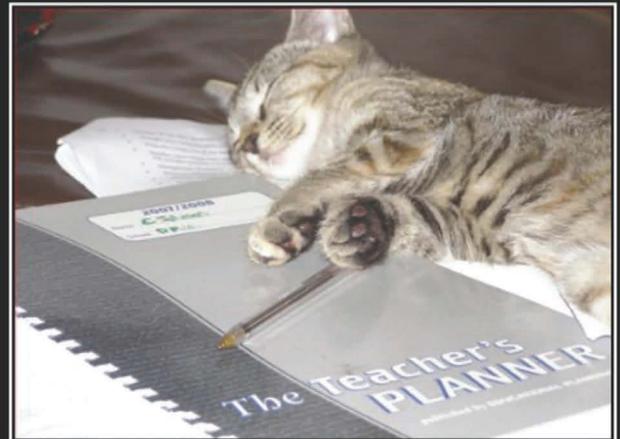
Because a '14th' Thing was the usefulness of forming a network of peers interested in teaching and learning, informal lunchtime meetings were held before, after and during the programme.

This format was adopted from the "23 Things" programme about web technologies for librarians last year, which was run by a group of Cambridge librarians. In contrast to 23 Things' didactic purpose, 13 Things was designed as a dialogue, the purpose of which was to find out what kinds of tools succeed in making life easier for teaching staff at Cambridge.

An exercise like this can only produce a collection of opinions, but the thoughtful reflections of 13 Things' participants support some extremely useful preliminary conclusions, or at least educated hypotheses, about what kinds of tools are helpful for curriculum designers:

- **Clear benefits and minimal learning curve.** Time-pressured academics are happy to pick and choose from new possibilities, but only if it is easy for them to make a cost-benefit calculation. For example, course visualisation tools split opinion, but because they were easy to understand and decide it may still be worth offering them
- **Practical.** All of the tools presented were motivated by interesting ideas. Those that failed the test of being valuable to teachers did so on grounds of being inaccessibly confusing, unsubstantiated, immature, or populated with material of variable quality. CARET should reject such tools and continue to be led by user needs

13Things



CURRICULUM REFORM

Not so exciting after all

- **Curated, high-quality teaching resources with a high relevance quotient.** Collections, whether of teaching and learning techniques and case studies (like the LTS database), or of teaching materials, need to be up-to-date, well publicised and carefully selected
- **Cambridge specific.** Cambridge's teaching approach is unique and curriculum design tools developed externally usually need tailoring to fit
- **Aid consistency and accessibility of course information.** Easy to find and compare course information isn't only useful for students, it saves time for curriculum designers
- **Peer support.** Many participants said the most useful thing about 13 Things was the opportunity to meet up and discuss teaching and share experiences.

The immediate outcome of all this is to help CARET's CourseTools project identify and improve several useful tools, which will eventually be offered to the whole University. In the near future CARET will also look in to trialling an 'online course handbook' for one or two interested departments, possibly working with MISD to integrate it into CamTools. In parallel LTS will be considering whether and how to develop its database of practice and networking and peer support aspects, and how CARET might complement this with an online discussion and sharing tool.

We would like to thank all our participants for their invaluable help. You can find all the 13 Things at the blog at <http://13thingscam.blogspot.com/>, along with summaries of participants' responses and links to all their blogs.

- Dr Amyas Phillips, CARET

CUSU-GU Student Advice Service

The Student Advice Service is now in its second year of service. Thanks to the energy and dedication of its first ever team in 2010/11, the Service has gone from strength to strength, and we have now supported nearly 300 individual students. It is also important to acknowledge the help and encouragement we have received from colleagues within the University and colleges. We've had referrals from almost all of the main service providers, such as the Disability Resource Centre, the Board of Graduate Studies and the University Counselling Service as well as from Tutors and Senior Tutors. It has also been a pleasure for us to work directly with tutors who value the expertise we are developing within the service, and have used us as a resource. We would like to thank all of these colleagues for their trust and encouragement.

The Student Advice Service is provided by Cambridge University Students' Union and the Graduate Union. The service offers free, confidential and independent support to all students. Students can come to the service with any issues or problems they experience as a student - from questions or concerns about their education or University procedures to a health enquiry or a mental health issue.

Need advice?...
Have a problem?...
Want to chat about it?...

student advice service
 ..email: advice@camstudentadvice.co.uk
 ...call 01223 746999

We have a great team in place this academic year which includes two continuing members, last year's Student Support Officer (now Education Officer) - Morgan Wild, and of course the full-time permanent member of the team, the Student Advisor - Lisa Déry. The CUSU-GU Welfare and Rights Officer (Rosie O'Neill) is the officer responsible for the service this year, and she brings to the team the experience and knowledge she gained as CUSU Eating Disorders Officer in 2010/11. Ruth Graham, the CUSU Women's

Officer, also provides support within the Student Advice Service.

The Service has provided support so far for both personal and academic matters. With issues ranging from degrading/intermitting to student complaints, and from disability issues to finance, we have really valued the close relationship we have built up with the College Nurses' network, the Disability Resource Centre and the University Counselling Service. Acquiring knowledge about University and college rules, regulations and procedures has been and continues to be an important facet in the service's operation and we very much appreciate the support we have received from the Board of Graduate Studies, the Academic Division, the Education Section and the Secretariat, as well as various Senior Tutors and Tutors.

We recognise that there is a lot of support available within colleges, and we always ensure that students who come to us know that they can also speak to their College Tutor, Senior Tutor, DoS, Nurse or Chaplain, if they haven't done so already.

Why do students choose to use the Student Advice Service? They may:

- be unaware of the support available in College
- wish to supplement the support they are receiving from their College
- prefer to talk to someone outside of their College
- feel that they have been treated unfairly
- wish to find out about their rights as a student
- want to deal with an organisation which is independent from their College and the University
- not know where else to turn.

As well as providing support to individual students, the Student Advice Service provides and coordinates networks, training, and workshops for JCR/MCR Officers as well as other support officers. Sessions offered include 'Core Skills' (Listening, Confidentiality, Boundaries and Referrals), 'Academic Welfare', 'Mental Health', 'Understanding Students from a Social Perspective', 'Disabilities'. We have very much appreciated the support we have received from the University Counselling Service and the Disability Resource Centre in delivering some of these sessions.

We are always keen to go 'on the road' and promote the Student Advice Service. We would like to thank all those individuals, committees and departments who have invited us to speak about the Student Advice Service. If you or your department would like to know more about the Student Advice Service, we would be very happy to give a talk and presentation.

You are also very welcome to get in touch with us for an informal chat about the service. You can visit us at the GU and at CUSU where we are based. You can contact us by emailing advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk or by ringing 01223 746999.

- Student Advice Service Team

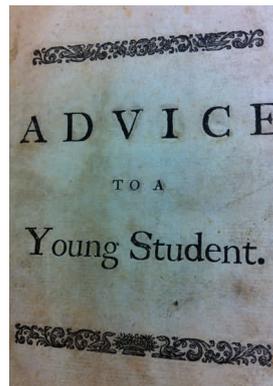
Supporting Students in Transition: Nothing New

Supporting first year students' transitions to University learning practices is a long-held tradition at Cambridge as this extract from Daniel Waterland's 'Advice to a Young Student' (1730) demonstrates. Introducing his treatise to students he states,

'I have drawn up this System or Manual of Rules and Directions, to be ready at hand for a young Student's Use, from the Time of his first coming to College. He will find here more perhaps than any Tutor can have Time to say to every one of his Pupils; and this small Treatise lying on the Table before him, may serve better than a Tutor's repeating and inculcating such Advices a thousand Times over'

Waterland goes on to dispense advice to students on time-management, note-taking, reading strategies and use of sources, areas of focus that are critical to students' understanding of the differences between school and university. Significantly, Waterland clearly recognizes the importance of providing explicit advice to students 'from the first time of his coming to College'. Although the purpose of the Transkills Project is not to provide a 'manual of rules' (Waterland, p.1), it is to provide explicit advice to students from the point of transition from A-level and complement advice provided by supervisors on aspects of learning at University.

Our online resources are created to support supervisors in addressing aspects of student practice which are crucial to making the transition to independent learning and, if incorporated into teaching, may help to solve the problem of the supervisor having to repeat 'such Advices a thousand Times over' (Waterland, p.1). They are also designed to be a self-access resource for students outside of the supervision



context where authentic activities embedded in the resources will encourage independent learning strategies.

The Transkills project, in its first phase, collaborated with disciplinary experts in Biological Sciences and MML to produce online resources to support students in academic writing, using feedback effectively and writing for exams. Over the last academic year, members of the

project team have been working closely with Directors of Studies, supervisors and students to create similar resources for English and History. These new resources will be available to students and supervisors from the beginning of Michaelmas term. All of our resources are now accessible on our project website:

<http://skills.caret.cam.ac.uk/transkills>

As the Transkills Project continues into its fourth year, we look forward to working in new disciplinary contexts to extend our range of student and supervisor resources. If you have an idea for a resource that would support students in your Faculty, Department or College, please contact Dr. Corinne Boz (cb583@cam.ac.uk). The Transkills project does not take a 'one-size-fits-all' approach so please get in touch if you have an idea you would like to develop.

Waterland, Daniel. (1730) Advice to a young student with a method of study for the first four years. London: John Crownfield.

- Dr Corinne Boz, Transkills

LTS events for 2011-12

For reports on previous LTS events please see our website below.

The following LTS events have been planned for 2011-12:

- **Tuesday 25 October, 2011: Libraries & Technology for Learning & Teaching: how libraries can do more to support you and your students**
- **Thursday 1 December, 2011: Plagiarism: University policy, processes and procedures**
- **Tuesday 13 March, 2012: Language skills: supporting and enhancing academic achievement**
- **Tuesday 1 May, 2012: Employability: work placements and future careers**

These events will be held over lunch. Details will be available on the LTS website.

LTS website: www.cam.ac.uk/lts