However, when university teaching moved online in response to Covid-19, Silvia had to rethink the delivery of the Arena One training – not least because the usual three-hour, synchronous sessions would not be workable in a purely digital format. Now, these sessions last just an hour and a half, and are mainly devoted to group discussion, while the majority of activities are undertaken asynchronously and independently, using the University Teaching: Core Skills programme as a “core resource”. “It worked really well”, adds Silvia, “because the topics that you cover in the course really easily map against what we do – reflecting on your teaching, assessment and feedback, supporting students, active learning – they’re really the same topics.” Silvia would recommend the mapping exercise that she undertook: “you can really see where your course is filling the gaps, because it’s offering something we don’t have, or it’s clarifying points, and adding extra literature or examples – and then you can really use it to enhance your provision”.

With the support of Moira Paganelli, a Programmes Officer, Silvia uploaded the University Teaching: Core Skills programme to a dedicated ‘Arena Core Teaching Skills’ Moodle page, and began sign-posting to the resources through their regular, face-to-face workshops and training sessions. Although Silvia also used other channels, such as intranet pages, newsletters, and Twitter, to promote University Teaching: Core Skills, she found that the members of staff who first engaged with the programme in person were the ones who went on to make the most use of it independently. The programme’s initial implementation was therefore blended – its self-paced format allowing members of staff to access and revisit content according to their particular needs, and particularly supporting members of staff who were unable to engage with face-to-face activities. “We understand that different colleagues have different needs”, explains Silvia, “one of the selling points, for me, is really the flexibility”.

When considering how best to implement the finished programme, Silvia discussed various options with one of Epigeum’s Senior Learning Consultants, before deciding to use the PSF-aligned resources to complement the training offered by the university’s Arena One scheme – a development pathway for postgraduate students with teaching responsibilities, leading to the optional submission of an application for Associate Fellowship with Advance HE.
Looking to the future, Silvia plans to continue taking a blended approach to training. As well as signposting parts of University Teaching: Core Skills as “core” content, she hopes to incorporate the programme into wider initiatives, including support for members of professional services staff applying for Associate Fellowship – for whom the flexible, online format would be “highly supportive”, given their more regimented work hours – and members of teaching staff who are on probation, and required to submit a successful application for Fellowship with Advance HE. “Some of our colleagues really pulled from your resources in order to put together their application”, notes Silvia, “so I’m thinking about finding those parts, and maybe uploading them to the Moodle pages of all those programmes and courses”.

Overall, “we’ve all learnt from this experience that so much can be delivered online”, reflects Silvia, and although the face-to-face support will continue to be central to their approach, “I think we can make better use of our virtual learning environment”. Silvia plans to personalise the programme with elements that are specific to UCL, including an introductory video, integration of the university’s pedagogical vision, and mapping to the university’s teaching strategy, to complement the existing mapping to the Professional Standards Framework.

Aside from some issues with navigating between the modules on Moodle, feedback from the Postgraduate Teaching Assistants who have engaged with University Teaching: Core Skills has been positive. In particular, the videos, international examples, and quizzes have been well-received, with content “pitched at the right level for early career academics”. Silvia adds: “what the course does, that is particularly helpful, is to build a vocabulary, a certain discourse of teaching and learning in higher education”, which may be unfamiliar to many junior members of staff, but which is vital to preparing a successful application for Associate Fellowship. “I really saw an opportunity there”, explains Silvia, as the programme explores relevant theory and literature “in a way that is approachable for different disciplines”, allowing members of staff to become familiar with the key concepts and terminology that they will need in order to reflect on, and evaluate, their teaching practices as part of their Advance HE applications, and thereby complementing the more “hands-on” Arena One sessions.

To discover how Epigeum’s interactive online training could benefit your institution, email: epigeum@oup.com