

CompendiumLD – a tool for visualising learning designs

CompendiumLD is a tool for helping teachers/designers create and visually represent their learning designs. It provides a set of icons to represent the components of learning activities; these icons may be dragged and dropped, then connected to form a map of nodes representing a learning activity. CompendiumLD is an adaptation of the Compendium tool (<http://compendium.open.ac.uk/institute/>) which is a form of mind mapping or argumentation software. Compendium provides a default set of icons for creating maps to describe argumentation, and for communicating issues within discussions amongst interested parties. The inherent philosophy underpinning Compendium (i.e. of providing visual representation to support the development of thinking and shared argumentation) aligns well with our requirement for a tool which develops user thinking specifically for the process of designing learning activities.

CompendiumLD has additional node types which represent various aspects of learning activities, and it enables these to be connected together to create maps of learning activities. An example of an activity map creating using CompendiumLD is shown in figure 1. This map has been annotated to explain the meaning of the node types used to represent aspects of learning. The conceptualisation of a learning activity in CompendiumLD is based on the notion that an activity comprises actors (e.g. students and tutors), who perform actions (learning tasks such as discussing etc.), making use of tools (e.g. forums, wikis) and resources (e.g. course texts).

In addition, CompendiumLD provides support to users engaged in the process of designing learning activities. It prompts users to specify role descriptions such as tutor or student; it prompts users to identify tools that will be used (e.g. blogs, e-portfolios). It can provide context-sensitive help which will suggest tools that are appropriate for specific learning tasks (e.g. discussion, reflection), and it is linked to a prototype search tool which retrieves resources from web sites related to learning design. Furthermore it provides activity templates i.e. abstract activities which can be edited to suit particular applications, and a series of guides to the process of learning design.

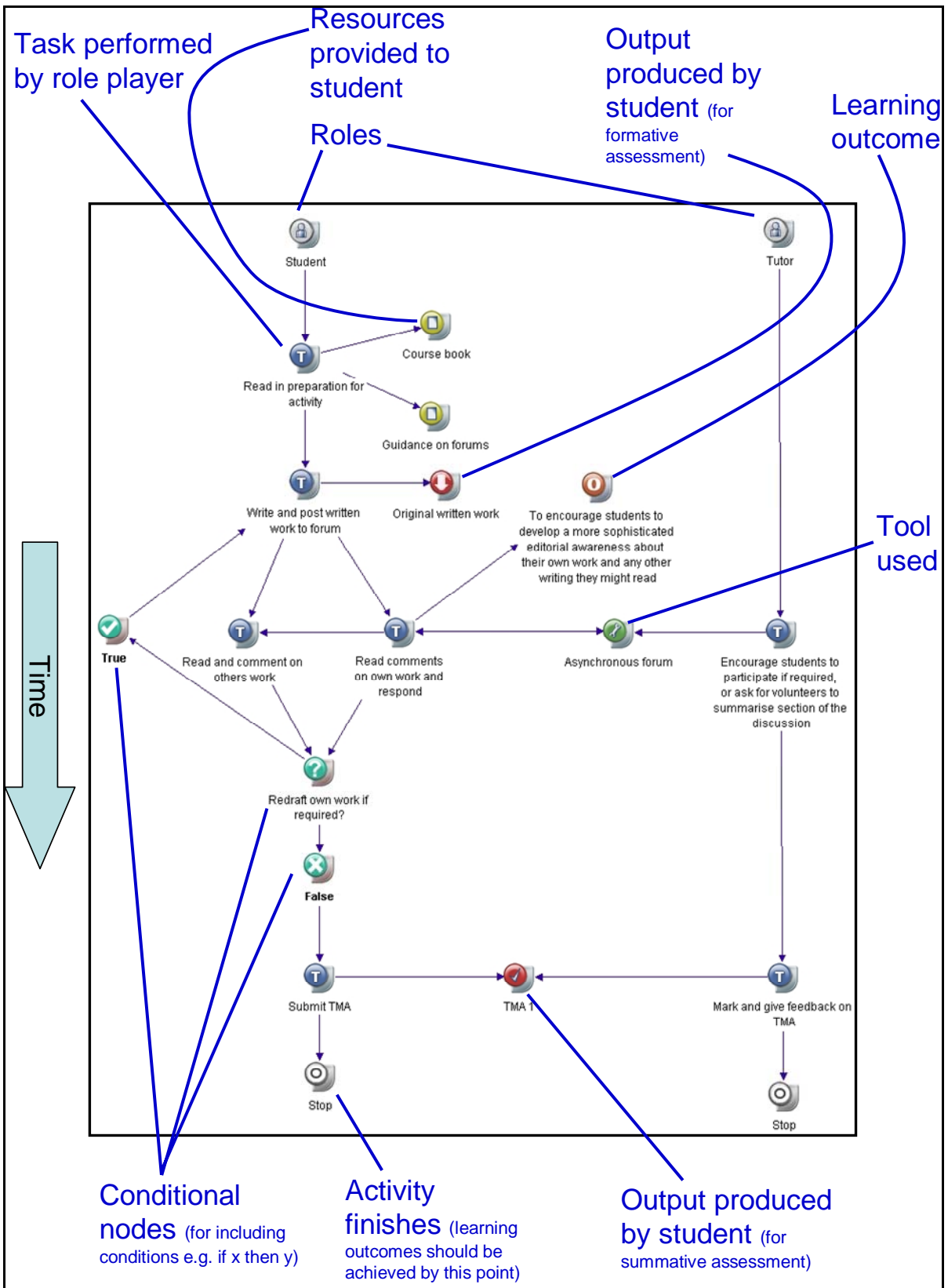


Figure 1: A map of a learning activity annotated to show the meaning of the node types