

Piloting an Information Literacy Framework for one-to-one teaching at the University of Oxford

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Abstract

This case study evaluates practical uses of an adapted version of the Jisc Digital Capabilities Framework for one-to-one teaching in the Bodleian Health Care Libraries, University of Oxford. Predicted frequency of teaching twelve framework skills was compared with observed practice. The content of ten one-to-ones with postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, and clinical medical students was mapped against the framework's twelve skills. Valuable applications of the framework included prioritisation of training for new instructors, and prompting librarians to suggest additional topics that users may not request spontaneously. The skills list could also act as a "menu" or service catalogue when arranging sessions. However, effective one-to-one teaching should remain flexible and responsive to the user's needs, rather than following a strict checklist.

Key words: libraries, medical; education, medical, continuing; information literacy; competency-based education; case study.

Introduction

In 2024, the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford adopted an information literacy framework to support information skills training, predominantly offered by library staff as the iSkills programme (1). This programme is undergoing a review of its remit, as previously reported in this journal (2). After a collaborative selection process, an adapted version of the Jisc Digital Capabilities Framework (3), focusing on the "Information, data and media literacies" section, was chosen. This case study investigated potential uses of the framework for library staff carrying out one-to-one teaching within the Bodleian Health Care Libraries (responsible for supporting staff and students within the Medical Sciences Division (MSD) and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) staff). The scope included postgraduate taught (PGT), postgraduate research (PGR), and clinical medical students (years 4-6). Sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes and were held in person or via Microsoft Teams.

Methods

Before the pilot began, I read an internal document explaining Oxford's Information Literacy Framework, enumerated the skills, and made explanatory notes on how I would cover each skill in one-to-one teaching (Table 1). I then predicted for each skill how frequently I expected to discuss it in a one-to-one (Table 2). During October-December 2025, I used a post-training reflection document based on the Gibbs' reflective cycle (4) to reflect on each eligible one-to-one I taught that term, finishing with 10 in total.

In December 2025, I analysed my notes from the term and created a table describing how often I covered each of the skills (Table 3) and how that compared to my predictions (Table 4), wrote up my findings as a report, and presented my conclusions to colleagues.

Competencies and skills

The framework consists of four competencies: Find, Evaluate, Manage, and Share, which are divided into twelve skills.

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Piloting an Information Literacy Framework

Number	Skill	Notes
1.1	Understand different information source types and how they are created	What is grey literature, primary vs secondary sources
1.2	Select appropriate research tools	Which databases to search
1.3	Understand your topic, identify key words and construct an effective search query	PICO, synonyms, subject headings, Boolean, etc
1.4	Find online and print sources	Doing the search in a database, getting to full text
1.5	Document search queries and tools used	Accounts, saving, reporting
1.6	Keep up to date with new research	Alerts, rerunning searches
2.1	Critically assess the information gathered, with reference to the context and conventions within which it was produced	Critical appraisal of the choice of database/journal
2.2	Evaluate information	Critical appraisal of the content of the results
2.3	Adapt search queries	Translation
3.1	Gather, store and manage information	Covidence, Zotero, EndNote etc
4.1	Share information that you have found and acknowledge other people's work	Referencing styles, avoiding plagiarism
4.2	Understand the impact of journals	Publishing advice, metrics

Table 1. Enumerated list of skills with notes on the topics they would include in a medical librarian one-to-one setting.

Number	Skill	PREDICTION: How often in a 1-to-1?
1.1	Understand different information source types and how they are created	Sometimes
1.2	Select appropriate research tools	Always
1.3	Understand your topic, identify key words and construct an effective search query	Always
1.4	Find online and print sources	Always
1.5	Document search queries and tools used	Always
1.6	Keep up to date with new research	Sometimes
2.1	Critically assess the information gathered, with reference to the context and conventions within which it was produced	Rarely – on request
2.2	Evaluate information	Rarely – on request
2.3	Adapt search queries	Always
3.1	Gather, store and manage information	Sometimes
4.1	Share information that you have found and acknowledge other people's work	Rarely – on request
4.2	Understand the impact of journals	Rarely – on request

Table 2. Predictions of how often each skill might be covered in a one-to-one session.

Before teaching any one-to-ones, I made a prediction of how often I expected to cover each skill, given in *Table 2*.

Some of these skills, particularly 4.2 (choosing where to publish, using research metrics), are not something I regularly teach in group sessions, but I felt confident that I could answer basic questions on all skills, as well as signpost sources of further support.

Skills 1.2-1.5 and 2.3 are what I predicted to teach most commonly in one-to-ones, covering designing and running searches in databases.

Other skills such as critical appraisal (2.2) or using ref-

erence management software (3.1) are topics that I might spend an entire one-to-one covering on request of the reader.

No skill was covered in every one-to-one, even those on literature searching (1.1-1.6, 2.3). All skills were covered to some extent in at least one session – this highlighted to me that readers requested more varied help than I had predicted. The most commonly covered skills were 1.2-1.5 and 2.3 (literature searching), while the most rarely covered were 1.6 (alerts), 2.1-2.2 (critical appraisal) and 4.1-4.2 (referencing and publishing). The number of skills covered in each one-to-one ranged

Skill	1 (MSD PGT)	2 (Clin Med)	3 (Clin Med)	4 (OUH PGT)	5 (OUH PGT)	6 (OUH PGT)	7 (OUH PGT)	8 (MSD PGR)	9 (MSD PGR)	10 (OUH PGR)	Count
1.1	x	–	–	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	4
1.2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	–	✓	9
1.3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	9
1.4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	8
1.5	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	x	✓	x	✓	7.5
1.6	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1
2.1	x	x	x	x	–	x	✓	x	x	x	1.5
2.2	x	x	x	x	–	x	✓	x	x	x	1.5
2.3	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	–	✓	7.5
3.1	✓	✓	–	x	–	–	x	–	x	✓	5
4.1	x	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	2
4.2	x	x	x	–	x	x	x	x	x	x	0.5
Count	7	6.5	6	6.5	6	6.5	3.5	5.5	2	7	

Table 3. Results of observations recording which skills were partially or fully covered in each of the ten one-to-ones taught. Each column represents one teaching session, and each row represents one skill.

✓ = Covered thoroughly; – = Covered in passing, mentioned, or signposted a way to get help elsewhere; x = Not covered; MSD = Medical Sciences Division; Clin Med = Clinical medical student; OUH = Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; PGT = postgraduate taught; PGR = postgraduate research

Piloting an Information Literacy Framework

Number	Skill	PREDICTION: How often in a 1-to-1?	REALITY: How often in a 1-to-1?
1.1	Understand different information source types and how they are created	Sometimes	Sometimes
1.2	Select appropriate research tools	Always	Almost always
1.3	Understand your topic, identify key words and construct an effective search query	Always	Almost always
1.4	Find online and print sources	Always	Almost always
1.5	Document search queries and tools used	Always	Often
1.6	Keep up to date with new research	Sometimes	Rarely
2.1	Critically assess the information gathered, with reference to the context and conventions within which it was produced	Rarely – on request	Rarely
2.2	Evaluate information	Rarely – on request	Rarely
2.3	Adapt search queries	Always	Often
3.1	Gather, store and manage information	Sometimes	Sometimes
4.1	Share information that you have found and acknowledge other people's work	Rarely – on request	Rarely
4.2	Understand the impact of journals	Rarely – on request	Rarely

Table 4. Comparing the predicted frequency of covering each skill with the reality observed.
Bold = difference between prediction and observation.

from 2 to 7, but 70% (7/10) of the one-to-ones covered between 6 and 7 skills.

This table shows the difference between my predictions and the data on how often I covered each skill in a one-to-one.

None of my predictions were completely incorrect, but 50% (6/12) of them were slightly wrong, changing "al-

ways" to "almost always" or "often", and "sometimes" to "rarely".

Several topics covered didn't fit within the framework. I advised on methodological questions, usually around how to carry out a systematic review, choose between review types, or write a protocol. I also provided advice on academic writing and study skills, particularly for OUH staff.

Uses of the framework

The framework is useful to current library instructors as a skills audit, gauging their level of confidence in teaching each skill and to what extent. I felt confident that I could answer basic questions on all 12 skills, but some (e.g., 4.2, on publishing and research metrics) are better supported by classes from colleagues. This would identify areas suitable for continuing professional development and awareness of other sources of information for students.

Undertaking an exercise considering which different skills in the framework are taught most frequently (as in *Tables 1 and 4*) would be useful when training new library instructors. They could prioritise becoming confident in teaching the skills taught most often, moving to the less frequently-taught skills at a later stage. Librarians in other disciplines could undertake a similar process with the framework to inform inductions of new staff (either based on observations from teaching sessions, or predictions from past experience, as this proved to be accurate for ranking the skills). This could also be done for group training contexts as well as one-to-ones.

The framework is also useful for library staff to consider other topics to discuss in a one-to-one, where appropriate. Students may not be aware of skills they lack (e.g., the need to translate a search strategy for other databases), or realise that the library provides support for them (e.g., critically appraising a paper). The list of skills could potentially be offered as a "menu" or "service catalogue" when arranging a one-to-one, or available for the student to consult during the teaching session, to encourage further questions.

It would not be useful to treat the framework as a checklist of what must be covered in a one-to-one – this would be too much for a single teaching session and would be overwhelming for the student.

The nature of individual teaching

I found that I covered a wider variety of topics within a session than I might in a group class (which might focus on a few of the skills in more detail). This is because it is possible to tailor the content to the needs of the student, and they feel freer to ask questions. This flexibility is the key advantage to one-to-one teaching and should not be reduced in favour of a more rigid approach.

Often, a one-to-one may involve pastoral care and reassurance – sometimes students will feel able to ask questions that they feel embarrassed to ask academic staff. They may feel anxious or overwhelmed, and simply need some common sense advice or a fresh pair of eyes.

Conclusions

This case study analysed a term's worth of PGT and PGR teaching with MSD and NHS readers (10 examples). From this limited sample, it isn't possible to extrapolate confidently to other disciplines, but some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

The information literacy framework is a helpful reflection tool for assessing library staff's confidence in teaching each skill in a one-to-one setting. Library staff preparing to start one-to-one teaching can use the framework as a list of skills they should be prepared to teach (or signpost support for), with the more commonly covered skills taking priority. The framework should not be taken as a checklist for a one-to-one session (trying to cover too many skills at once). The framework can be helpful to remind library staff, or students, of additional topics they may choose to cover in a one-to-one. Some aspects of one-to-one teaching are not covered by the framework, including providing reassurance and pastoral care. One-to-one teaching should continue to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the reader.

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