

**The University of Edinburgh**  
**The Moray House School of Education**  
**School Postgraduate Studies Committee**  
**17 September 2014**

Assessment change to EDUA11319 *Assessment, Learning and Digital Education*

Brief description of the paper

This paper describes a proposed change in the nature of the assessment and to the ways in which assessment grading is handled in the course *Assessment, Learning and Digital Education*.

Action requested

For approval

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? No  
If 'Yes', in which section(s) of the paper are they described?

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No  
If 'Yes', in which section(s) of the paper is it set out?

Equality and diversity

Does the paper have equality and diversity implications? No  
If 'Yes', in which section(s) of the paper are they described?

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Any other relevant information

Originator of the paper

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MSc in Digital Education

## **MSc in Digital Education**

### **Change to the Assessment Regime for 'Assessment, Learning and Digital Education' [EDUA11319] (previously 'Online Assessment [EDUA11147])**

This paper describes a proposed change in the nature of the assessment and to the ways in which assessment grading is handled in the course *Assessment, Learning and Digital Education*.

#### **The Previously Approved Course Assessment Regime**

Below is set out the previously proposed and approved assessment regime for the course.

1. Class wiki assignment (25% of final mark, around 1000 words per student). The aim of the wiki was to support and enrich everyone's evolving grasp of online assessment with material that is helpful, informative and thought-provoking. The wiki provided an opportunity to experience a collaborative, innovative online assessment first hand.
2. Individual critical review assignment (75% of final mark, 3000 words). Students were given the option of:
  - a. A critical review of forms and directions in online assessment in a *chosen subject area* or discipline OR
  - b. An analysis of developments in an *emerging e-assessment theme* such as plagiarism, automated essay scoring, collaborative/multi-author online assignments & assessments or any other area of evolving practice OR
  - c. A focus on a (real) course unit or module currently using little or no online assessment, set out and justify a development plan for introducing online assessment on a significant scale.

#### **Nature of the Proposed Change**

The course tutor team (Dai Hounsell, Tim Fawns and Clara O'Shea) would like to propose a change to both the weighting and nature of the assessment to better reflect the innovations in assessment being evaluated in the course itself, the needs and opportunities of the participant group and the ethos of the MSc programme.

The assessment above will become three separate but related, cumulative assessments.

**1. An individual "think piece"** - a critical reflection drawing on the materials encountered in the course in preparation for the upcoming learning and assessment work (for instance, in examining the challenges of multimodality for assessment for and of learning). This would be worth 25% of overall grade, be around 1000 words in length and due around week 6 of the course.

**2. A group-based wiki assignment** - as per the previous regime, but with a group- rather than class-wide grade and an increased weighting that better reflects the level of engagement students have shown with this assignment. Students would self select in groups of up to four members to co-author a response to a provocative and interpretable statement about online assessment that gives them an opportunity to focus their learning on a preferred topic. Examples of these statements are: 'In the digital age, plagiarism is an outdated concept'; 'Whether online or offline, assessment is inherently divisive rather than inclusive.'

This would be worth 50% of overall grade and take place between weeks 7-12 of the course. The word count equivalent would be around 1000-1500 words per student, including some multimodal elements as appropriate.

**3. An individual critical reflection** on the wiki experience (e.g. on the nature of collaborative learning and assessment in digital environments). This would be worth 25% of overall grade, be around 1000 words in length and due after week 12. Since the group-based wiki assignments are on specific assessment themes, this would be an opportunity for students to reflect more deeply on the experiential aspects of the wiki assessment design, enabling them to make a more explicit, analytical connection between their collaborative experience and the assessment literature on that and related themes (e.g. peer learning, feedforward and feedback, stakeholders and purposes). It would also encourage students to move from the micro-perspective of their personal experience to the macro-perspective of a more scholarly understanding of collaborative learning.

It is not anticipated that the new regime will require additional tutor time, as the overall word count (or its equivalent for multimodal assessments) is slightly less than the existing assessment regime. As with our current design, we will have feedforward opportunities built into the wiki assessment. Since we will no longer offer the 75% individual critical review assignment, the feedforward time spent on that has been shifted to the wiki assignment allowing for two iterations of formal tutor support in the collaborative process. Firstly, in the early stages of the wiki assignment, groups will be offered a brief, text-based feedforward on their planned approach to the assessment. Secondly, at the end stage of the assignment, groups will receive an audio-based feedforward from a tutor pair discussing the product so far and suggesting ways forward for the final submission. (In our experience, feedforward can require additional tutor time. For this reason, we negotiate with students that the 'cost' of feedforward is brief feedback on the final submission. We have found that feedforward can help students develop a higher quality end product which requires less marking time.)

Our intention is that the new first assignment will create a strong foundation for the collaborative element in the second assignment and encourage students to better integrate earlier teaching with later group work. The second assignment (the group wiki) has been one of the most thought provoking assignments we have encountered and particularly productive of rich learning. For that reason, we would like to increase its weighting. While we feel it is not appropriate to isolate individual contributions within a group-authored work, the work of each group can be differentiated. From our research (O'Shea and Fawns, 2014a and 2014b), we think that doing so will create a greater incentive for each group to aim for a higher-quality submission, since their influence on the grade is increased.

Finally, to encourage students to take an analytical stance on their collaborative experience, we would like to include a critical reflection that encourages them to move from the personal to the critical, relating their experiences to the literature and principles of assessment feedback.

We believe introducing the two reflective pieces creates a scaffolded, cumulative and coherent assessment regime for the course, with the first assignment consolidating the learning required to face the significant (but worthwhile)

challenge of the collaborative wiki assignment and the last assignment providing an opportunity to debrief that experience.

This proposal has been discussed among the core Programme teaching team including our programme director, is based on their various experiences, and has their general approval.

### **References**

- O'Shea, C. and Fawns, T. (2014a). Disruptions and dialogues: Supporting collaborative connoisseurship in digital environments. In Kreber, C, Anderson, C., Entwistle, N., & J. McArthur (Eds.). *Advances and innovations in university assessment and feedback*, pp. 259-273. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- O'Shea, C. and Fawns, T. (2014b, forthcoming). Group connoisseurship: creating shared understandings of quality in online collaborative assessments. *Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching*.