

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

**11 March 2015**

**New Course Proposal: Wider Themes in Digital Education**

**Brief description of the paper**

This is the proposal for an option course for students studying on MSc Digital Education

**Action requested**

For comment and approval

**Resource implications**

Does the paper have resource implications? No

**Risk assessment**

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

**Equality and diversity**

Have due considerations been given to the equality impact of this paper? No

**Freedom of information**

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

**Any other relevant information**

No

**Originator of the paper**

Pete Evans

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

**13 March 2015**

## Course Proposal: Wider Themes in Digital Education

Brief description of the paper

The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed course proposal for a flexible structure for credit accumulation based on the aggregation of a portfolio of learning activities for inclusion in the Postgraduate Programme in Digital Education. The course design provides a framework for students to accumulate credits from a selection of smaller learning activities, tailored to student interests, activities and aspirations, that together aggregate to 20 Credits at SCQF Level 11.

The proposed course is a development on the Student-Led Individually Created Courses (SLICCs) available at the Undergraduate level.

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

If no, please indicate why the paper must be withheld, and for how long (eg until decision is publicly announced):

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act		Other (please give further details)	

Any other relevant information

Originator of the paper

Peter Evans, Digital Education  
March 2015

# Wider Themes in Digital Education

## Course Descriptor

---

### Purpose of this Paper

The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed course proposal for a flexible structure for credit accumulation based on the aggregation of a portfolio of learning activities for inclusion in the Postgraduate Programme in Digital Education. The course design provides a framework for students to accumulate credits from a selection of smaller learning activities, tailored to student interests, activities and aspirations, that together aggregate to 20 Credits at SCQF Level 11.

This paper is in two sections:

- A: the enhanced course descriptor for the proposed course
- B: a briefing paper providing a wider rationale for the course as well as additional detail on indicative course content.

### A: the enhanced course descriptor

Course Name	Wider Themes in Digital Education
Course Level	PG
Availability	Only for students on PG Dip/ MSc Digital Education
SCQF Credit Volume	20
SCQF Credit Level	11
Home Subject Area	Education
Other Subject Area	N/A
Course Organiser	TBC
Course Secretary	Angela Hunter
% Not taught by this institution	0%
Collaboration information	N/A
Total Contact Teaching Hours	
Costs to be met by students	N/A
Pre-requisites	This course would be open to students on the PGDip/ MSc in Digital Education who have completed the Introduction to Digital Environments for Learning (IDEL) course and at least one other course. This is to ensure that the students have a

	firm grounding in the content and approaches of the programme as a whole (and, therefore, excludes PG Cert students from this course).
Co-requisites	N/A
Visiting Student Pre-requisites	N/A
Summary Course Description	<p>The field of digital education is in a stimulating period, with the development of new and contested theoretical perspectives as well as fast moving changes in technologies and practices that are often not subject to critical theorising. This course provides a flexible 'building block' structure supporting students to participate in or create smaller learning activities or experiences, engaging with emergent components of theory and practice in digital education. Individual learning activities within this course will be designed to <b>approximate</b> 5 Credits at Level 11 that accumulate to total 20 Credits at Level 11. It will also be possible for students to engage in single learning activities that are identified as equivalent to 10 or even 20 Credits at Level 11. Students will, therefore, be able to participate in <b>up to</b> four learning activities over the duration of this course.</p> <p>This portfolio of self-selected learning activities will run for the duration of the programme of studies to which this course belongs within the constraints of the pre-requisites specified above and the requirement to have passed 120 Credits to be considered for progression to the dissertation stage of the MSc.</p> <p>Learning activities created for this course will include both activities initiated and led by academic staff from the programme as well as those developed and led by students.</p> <p>This course enables students on the postgraduate programme in Digital Education to engage more fully with a wider range of practices, activities and communities, and will 'incentivise the good citizenship' of our students by providing opportunities to gain academic credit through this engagement with emerging technologies and practices in the digital education arena.</p>
Keywords	Digital Education; open content; student-led
Fee Code if invoiced at course	

<b>level</b>	
<b>Examination and Assessment Information</b>	CA [Class and Assignment]
<b>Default Delivery Period</b>	N/A
<b>Marking Scheme</b>	Common Marking Scheme
<b>Taught in Gaelic</b>	No
<b>Course type</b>	Online
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<p>1. to be able to demonstrate critical analysis and reflection on concepts and practices within the domain of Digital Education;</p> <p>2. to be able to select and apply relevant conceptual and practical knowledge and understanding in developing effective personal virtual/ digital learning experiences; and</p> <p>3. to be able to engage in the application of existing knowledge in new and innovative ways or to generate new knowledge or meaning in Digital Education.</p>
<b>Special Arrangements</b>	
<b>Components of Assessment</b>	<p>100% coursework summatively assessed based on the total output for the 20 Credits at Level 11. Therefore, the assessment is both synoptic and holistic in nature.</p> <p>Prior to commencing a learning activity, each student will be required to write an interpretive statement detailing how they intend to demonstrate that they have met the Learning Outcomes identified. The detailed learning proposal, using a specified template, will be approved by staff prior to commencement of the learning activity.</p> <p>Students are required to demonstrate attainment of all the specified Learning Outcomes over the duration of this course.</p> <p>At the summative assessment stage, students will be required to write a synoptic statement providing a self-assessment of their outputs from the course against the Learning Outcomes.</p> <p>This self-assessment will inform the formal staff assessment and grading. The student self-assessment and the staff assessment will use a common course assessment rubric.</p>

Examination Information	N/A
Course Description	<p>The proposed course structure operates on two levels: (a) of the overall 'course' and (b) in the learning activities themselves.</p> <p>(a) Course structure</p> <p>The course is structured around a number of activities in each academic year. Each of these activities is designed to approximate 5 Credits at SCQF Level 11 or multipliers of 5 Credits to a total of 20 Credits. This flexible and open content course will be delivered <b>over the duration of the student's programme of study.</b></p> <p>Therefore, the total 'course' provides 20 Credits at SCQF Level 11 through the creation of a <b>post-course digital learning environment</b> constructed in the synthesis of each individual's collection of learning activities.</p> <p>(b) Learning activity illustrative structure</p> <p>Each learning activity will be structured differently according to the nature of the activity and the intended learning outcome. Each learning activity would include a specification of the activities to be undertaken, how these will contribute to the achievement of the course Learning Outcomes, the nature of the evidence to be collected and agreement on the nature of the evidence demonstrating attainment of the Learning Outcome(s).</p> <p>Indicative staff-led learning activities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augment a 'text': to analyse the argument in a selected text to create an augmented and multimodal object that surfaces the strengths, weakness and potentialities of the original text.</li> <li>• Substantive contribution to digital practices outside the formal MSc programme, which may include contributing to the Digital Education Dissertation Festival or the DiCE research group seminars or other external community activities, such as a professional community of practice. Contributions should demonstrate a critical engagement with theory and practice</li> <li>• Examining the implications of different</li> </ul>

	<p>learning theories for the design of digital learning experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-led master classes on research methods for digital education such as on statistical methods and posthuman methods</li> <li>• Credit for own publications</li> <li>• Leading and then reflecting on a World of Warcraft expedition as a learning experience</li> </ul>
Graduate Attributes	<p><b>A. Research and Enquiry</b> To be able to identify, define and analyse conceptual and/ or practical problems in Digital Education through the critical appraisal of existing evidence.</p> <p>To be able to generative creative and innovative solutions appropriate to the broader context of Digital Education.</p> <p><b>B. Personal and Intellectual Autonomy</b> To be able to exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in the identification and execution of their intended learning activities.</p> <p>To be independent learners able to develop and maintain a critical approach to issues in Digital Education.</p> <p><b>C. Communication</b> To be make effective use of the multimodal capabilities of digital technologies to communicate appropriate knowledge and understanding of emerging concepts and practices in Digital Education.</p> <p><b>D. Personal Effectiveness</b> To be able to recognise and respond to new opportunities for learning and development.</p> <p>To be able to work effectively with others in diverse digital environments for learning.</p>
Breakdown of learning & teaching activities	<p>Total Hours: 200</p> <p>Development of proposals: 12</p> <p>Tutorials &amp; guidance: 4</p> <p>Formative assessment: 9</p> <p>Summative Assessment hours: 0</p> <p>Directed &amp; independent learning hours: 175</p>
Study Abroad	
Reading List	
Feedback	<p>Formal feedback as formative assessments will be provided through two mandatory review points for each academic year that the course is running.</p> <p>At each review point, the student will write a review of their progress against the learning activity proposals to be submitted along with the supporting evidence of the learning activities as</p>

	<p>agreed in the initial activity proposal. Staff will provide verbal feedback (either as a synchronous meeting or through recorded commentary) to which the student must write a summary response including specifying actions to follow.</p> <p>Each student will also have the option of making their evidence against the Learning Outcomes available to other course students for peer feedback.</p> <p>All feedback (self, staff and peer) will be structured around the common course assessment rubric.</p> <p>This form of course differs significantly from a taught course and academic input is deliberately kept to a minimum. The focus of the course is on self-directed and self-regulated learning within each learning activity.</p>
High Demand	

## B: Wider Themes in Digital Education

### a new course proposal to allow for flexible credit accumulation

---

#### Purpose of this Proposal

The aim of this proposal is to outline a flexible open-content course structure based on a portfolio of self-contained learning activities responding to student interests, activities and aspirations for inclusion in the Postgraduate Programme in Digital Education. The course design provides a framework for students to engage in a variety of different learning activities to achieve 20 Credits at SCQF Level 11.

#### Rationale

The field of digital education is in a stimulating period, with the development of new and contested theoretical perspectives as well as fast moving changes in technologies and practices that are often not subject to critical theorising. This proposal provides a flexible ‘building block’ structure supporting students to participate in or create a portfolio of learning activities or experiences, engaging with emergent components of theory and practice in digital education.

Some of these learning activities might be developed by the course team – for example, a lecturer may form a limited-duration reading group to discuss an influential or groundbreaking text in detail over 3-4 weeks; or invite students to take part in a short course to explore an emerging trend or technological phenomenon; or share new research in the form of a lecture series.

Other learning activities would be developed and led by students. As examples, students might form an editorial board and publishing a student journal; develop or test and appraise a new technology for use within one or more of the programme’s mainstream courses or in another learning or educational context.

Beyond the immediate programme community and formal structures, many of the programme students are already engaged with emerging technologies and practices. Other students could benefit from being encouraged to put their growing knowledge and critical perspectives to work in the wider digital education sphere, whether through initiating or participating in events and projects, writing or editing for audiences beyond the programme, or developing and sharing diverse educational approaches. This approach enables the programme to engage more closely with a wider range of practices, activities and communities to ‘incentivise the good citizenship’ of our students by providing opportunities to gain academic credit through this engagement with emerging technologies and practices in the digital education arena.

This proposed Course contributes to the implementation of the College Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-2016 in the following ways:

- **Priority 1:** To instil in our students the ability to learn independently, collaboratively and with a spirit of enquiry.
  - Providing students with opportunities to enhance their academic/ professional development through learning in partnership with both peers and experts
  - Linking knowledge exchange and learning/ teaching to enhance the student experience and public engagement with our programmes.
- **Priority 2:** To nurture a supportive scholarly community of practice.
  - Working with students as partners.
- **Priority 3:** Appropriate pedagogy, assessment and effective feedback.
  - ... to ensure that the structure, content and assessment methods of our programmes encourage active, collaborative and independent learning
  - flexibility of pathways, modes of learning and assessments are to be encouraged across individual courses and programmes across the College.

As the [MIT Taskforce](#) report on the future of education at MIT stated, engaging students in real world problems provides valuable contextualisation for their learning experiences and supports them in engaging with real world challenges. So a flexible open-content course is a mechanism for supporting project-based learning opportunities for and with students.

Similarly, Stanford University's reimagining of its' future, [Stanford 2025](#), included a restructuring of the curriculum involving an adaptive learning approach labelled as [Paced Education](#). Paced Education combines smaller immersive learning experiences from one day to one week as students experiment with their interests and learning preferences followed by the development of deeper discipline knowledge. The student then applies their knowledge, skills and understanding to identify and address a number of real-world problems. Micro-course structures are embedded in these redesigned curriculum models.

A related example is the recent and on-going experiments with Badges at [The Open University](#)<sup>1</sup> focused on 'soft' accreditation of open education resources on the [Open Learn platform](#). Here, badges are related to learner employability issues rather than integrated with the OU's mainstream degree programmes. A recent report from the Open University<sup>2</sup> providing "sketches" of ten emerging trends in higher education teaching, learning

---

<sup>1</sup> See also, Law, Patrina; Perryman, Leigh-Anne and Law, Andrew (2014). Badging and employability at The Open University. In: *European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN) 2014 Annual Conference*, 10-13, June 2014, Zagreb.

<sup>2</sup> Open University (2014). *Innovating Pedagogy 2014*, Open University Innovation Report 3, available at <http://www.open.ac.uk/innovating>

and assessment identified, a number of which tie in with this proposed flexible course structure: **learning to learn** which is concerned with developing personal capabilities in identifying the need for new skills and knowledge and how best to acquire these; **event-based learning** involving time specific learning activities such as Scratch Days<sup>3</sup>, Maker Faires<sup>4</sup>, Raspberry Jams<sup>5</sup>, bio blitzes<sup>6</sup> or workshops, seminars, taster days etc.

A long-standing flexible accredited learning programme is [University of British Columbia's](#) (UBC) [student-led seminars](#). At UBC students can propose and organise courses worth three credits. Each seminar generally lasts a semester and should be on a specific topic not available at UBC.

This proposed open-content, flexible course will encourage experimentation and conscious risk-taking as part of the students' learning experiences, creates new and tailored experiences for students, and gives both staff and students the opportunity to test ideas and cutting edge approaches: innovation which is so necessary to the domain of digital education. One example is that this course would provide a suitable environment for experimenting with the us of either Moodle and/ or Open Badges as a mechanism to support student progression, to inform formative assessments and support the self and peer assessment processes. It is anticipated that ideas initiated and explored in this flexible learning environment may be further developed as future prospective courses.

A further benefit of the open-content course framework is, as noted in the MIT Taskforce report, the provision of opportunities for "graduate students and postdoctoral researchers to participate in the co-creation and testing of these digital learning modules, which is an experience of potential value for those pursuing academic careers." (p12)

## Indicative learning activities

Suggested learning activities identified by the Digital Education Programme team include:

- "Just one text": to encourage the deep reading of a canonical single text (or text excerpt) and positioning that text in relation to the relevant antecedent and subsequent literatures.
- Augment a 'text': to analyse the argument in a selected text to create an augmented and multimodal object that surfaces the strengths, weakness and potentialities of the original text.
- Substantive contribution to digital practices outside the formal MSc programme, which may include contributing to the Digital Education Dissertation Festival or the DiCE research group seminars or other external community activities, such as a professional community of

---

<sup>3</sup> See <http://day.scratch.mit.edu/>

<sup>4</sup> As a geographically local example, see <http://makerfaireedinburgh.com/>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.raspberrypi.org/jam/>

<sup>6</sup> For a large-scale example, see <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/projects/bioblitz/>

practice. Contributions should demonstrate a critical engagement with theory and practice

- Leading master classes on research methods for digital education such as on statistical methods and posthuman methods
- Credit for own publications
- Leading and then reflecting on a World of Warcraft expedition as a learning experience
- A quandary style ([http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com/quandary\\_tutorials\\_examples.php](http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com/quandary_tutorials_examples.php)) action maze/ adventure tool. The activity would focus on the design of a tool to assist students in identifying their individual stances on ontology, knowledge and methodologies through decision-trees that open up and close down possible choices
- A short course on creativity and its implications for digital education, with a particular focus on the visual, discussing theories of creativity and looking at examples of digital education from the fine art field, with an assignment devoted to creating a visual digital artifact or group of artifacts that critically engage with the themes presented.
- Short courses adapted from portions of 20-credit courses previously offered on the programme but currently unavailable: for example, Psychological and Social Contexts of E-learning (EDUA11150) and Language, Culture and Communication in Online Learning (EDUA11154).
- In a similar vein, short courses could be adapted from relevant courses previously offered by the Management of Training and Development programme: for example, Managing Communication, Information and Decision-Making (EDUA11216) contains useful material on the use of information systems and technology to support organisational learning, while Digital Environments for Training and Development (EDUA11217) explores a range of key themes around the use of technology in an organisational learning and development context.

Staff on the MSCDE team would propose, plan, organise and lead specific learning activities. These would be presented as options to students at the start of each Semester. Students would also propose their own learning activities at the start of each Semester.

In scoping the learning activities, care will be taken to ensure that the activities are achievable within a timeframe and hourage appropriate to the credits that the activity is being designed to approximate.

## Annex A: Mastersness<sup>7</sup>

Using the QAA model of Mastersness, the course learning activities will align with Masters level study in terms of the following facets:

Facet	Through
Abstraction	Constructing new knowledge or meaning from existing knowledge
Depth (of learning)	Engaging in a narrow topic in depth or in multidisciplinary topics to apply knowledge in innovative ways
Research & enquiry	Developing critical enquiry skills and attributes
Complexity	Through the application of knowledge in practice, complexity of learning processes or conceptual complexity
Autonomy	Taking responsibility for own learning
Unpredictability	Addressing real-world 'messy' and complex contexts
Professionalism	Ethical behaviour, developing academic integrity, contributing to a professional community

---

<sup>7</sup> Term comes from the QAA [enhancement theme](#)

## Annex B: student scenario

Alice is a student on the MSc in Digital Education. She works as a Learning Technologist in a university in Finland and helps facilitate an online community of learning technologists in Finland. She is also a regular contributor to a global online FOSS<sup>8</sup> community and in her 'spare' time, plays World of Warcraft (WoW).

She has completed two courses (60 Credits) on the MSc in Digital Education. She would like to use her next course option to connect and theorise aspects of her participation in the two online communities, and so signs up for *Wider Themes in Digital Education*. She then notes that a member of the programme teaching team is offering an expedition in WoW as a collaborative learning experience, and joins to investigate the dynamics of group problem-solving in online environments, which will help her in the redesign of some courses she is responsible for in her day job. Later in the year, the expansion of the learning technologists' online community requires additional assistance in facilitation of the community activities. So Alice designs and builds an online facilitator's training package that can then be submitted as part of her Digital Education studies. Over the summer, Alice decides to follow up on some interesting course-based discussions on posthumanism and digital education research with other students from earlier in the programme. Alice and two other students form a small discussion group responding to a recent journal article on posthumanism suggested by a staff member who also supports the group's discussions over a five-week period. Finally, Alice presents a paper to a workshop on FOSS and educational technology in Helsinki. Alice submits for her final assessment a critical reflection on the WoW experience, the design rationale for the training package and the discussions on posthumanism and digital education alongside the workshop paper. In writing her critical reflections, Alice identifies a topic and possible theoretical perspective that she will further develop as her dissertation topic through the *Research Methods* course.

---

<sup>8</sup> Free & Open Source Software