

Title: **Introducing the Digital Dissertation**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Discuss the nature and format of narrative in the digital postgraduate dissertation.
2. Reflect on structural, narratological and pedagogic opportunities afforded and challenges presented by the introduction of a digital dissertation.
3. Contemplate the adoption of a digital postgraduate dissertation within their own context

Session Outline

The session addresses a number of the conference themes including programme level and formative assessment strategies, innovative assessment and technology-enhanced approaches to assessment and feedback. The context for the paper is an established fully-online Masters programme offered at Edinburgh Napier University which attracts a broad range of HE and FE educators, learning technologists and professional services staff, as well as those from the third sector and private industry. The redevelopment of the MSc Blended and Online Education programme in 2014-15 offered further enhancement to the curriculum and continuation of opportunities for extended analysis contextualised within a multimodal approach.

One of the modules which invited review was the final 60 credit dissertation. At this stage it took the form of a traditionally presented study which, whilst valuing the student's development of a project of central interest to them, contrasted at the conclusion of a programme that had sought for them both to engage in learning about and using innovations in blended and online education, and to apply to their use in their own practice. With the support of its external examiner, the programme team proposed the development of a digital dissertation for the programme framework.

The proposal was approved, bringing into being a module which would require at least one component of the final work to be presented as a digital artefact, the nature of which would be negotiated and agreed with the dissertation supervisor.

Structurally, the introduction of a 'digital' element, at its core, aligns with the team's desire to ensure authenticity in its assessment strategy and also further augment the team's

commitment to enabling meaningful formative assessment. Pedagogically, through the use of a range of tools and online platforms, our interpretation of a digital narrative discourse is moved forward.

This paper presents the story so far and includes with it reflections on how the intention to enhance the student experience brought with it an accompany need for staff development so that the process of engagement in the module could truly be a co-construction.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

05 mins – Outlining the context for the paper

15 mins - What is a digital dissertation – nature, format, possibilities for narrative discourse? Discussions around a reinterpretation of the narrative structure, told digitally.

20 mins - What are the standards for a digital dissertation? How is it assessed?

What are the challenges? What digital/technical skills are students likely to need to have, given they are educators, not necessarily artefact creators? And what do we need to think about regarding staff development?

5 mins – Reflections to date and what next?

References

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