



Innovative Assessment of Digital Writing

examining practices on the MSc in E-learning at the University of Edinburgh

What is different about digital writing?

Learning and teaching in online environments opens up new possibilities for creating, sharing, collaborating on, and discussing writing in 21st century higher education.

But certain orthodoxies underpin our institutional assessment practices, which assume that students' writing:

- is created by an individual
- is stable and fixed
- ends at the point of assessment.

These assumptions no longer hold true when we pursue these new possibilities. The digital text is often collaboratively produced, fluid and persistent (Landon 2006, Bayne 2006).

We need new ways to engage with digital writing that are both scholarly and contextually meaningful, and foster critical literacies and attributes our graduates need in a rapidly changing world.

How do we assess digital writing?

Here are some ways:

- tutor-student communication, formative feedback and summative assessment through reflective weblogs
- assessing collaborative writing in wikis
- assessing multimodal, hypertextual and 'mashed up' work
- student-nominated assessment criteria.

About the research project

"Student writing: innovative online strategies for assessment & feedback" is a two year research project, funded by the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme at the University of Edinburgh. The project is exploring MSc in E-learning feedback and assessment practices in partnership with students on the programme, with the aim of identifying principles for successful feedback on and assessment of digital writing.

Project Team

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Project web site:

<http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/swop>

MSc in E-learning web site:

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Digital Cultures and Education (DICE) research group:

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Bayne, S. (2006) Temptation, trash and trust: the authorship and authority of digital texts. *E-learning*, vol 3, issue 1.

Landon, G. (2006) *Hypertext 3.0*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

Examples of Digital Writing



This reflective blog was worth 50% of the final course mark. This student chose to make her blog public, and other students as well as tutors on the course regularly contributed comments.



This hypertext essay by Sarah Payne incorporates text, image, video and links. Its fragmented design echoes its subject matter: the uncanny in digital learning environments.



The reference list for an assignment in Second Life, created by Eneas McNulty. The tutor is standing in the middle of one of the course readings, marking the assignment. The types of literacies in use here go beyond what is traditionally thought of as 'writing'.



This course started as a 'blank page' and was constructed collaboratively by students, who received 70% of their final mark for this wiki-based group project.

