MSc in Digital Education

COURSE GUIDE:
Course Design for Digital Environments

Session 2018/19: Semester 2

Contents

Welcome

Welcome to *Course design for digital environments.* This 12-week course takes a design-led perspective on the creation of online or digitally-mediated courses in a range of contexts – including formal, informal, workplace and other learning contexts. Over the coming weeks we will explore how to approach course design in a designerly, well-theorised and critical way. There will be opportunities to:

- Understand and analyse a range of design approaches and contemporary design challenges
- Discuss and question what makes a course, and what makes it 'digital'
- Explore your own design needs and aspirations, and those of your learners, colleagues or other participants

Our study over this semester will start from the perspective that there is no single, easy response to the question, 'How do I design an online course?' While much of the literature – sometimes rather uncritically – assumes that a single model can provide the answer, in fact there are multiple routes into course design, both online and offline. Each of these is informed by our own understanding of what it means to teach and learn, and the purpose of education and learning within our own particular context. Each is also, of course, structured by the institutional and technical contexts within which we are embedded.

There are many contemporary debates about course design, and a really fascinating range of design contexts and challenges for us to explore and be inspired by. So this is an interesting time to be considering what is important for online course design. We're looking forward to the coming 12 weeks, and to working with you.

 Jen Ross

 Michael Gallagher

Course learning outcomes

The formal learning outcomes for *Course design* are as follows.

On completion of the course you will be able to:

— understand and apply a range of approaches to the design of online and offline courses
— critically evaluate these approaches via an understanding of their philosophical and theoretical bases
— select and design media, learning activities and assessment tasks appropriate to each approach
— design and build course components appropriate to your own institutional and educational context.

Delivery and workload

Course design for digital environments – as with all our courses – is delivered entirely online using as its main delivery platform the virtual learning environment Moodle. Other environments will be used for synchronous sessions (Collaborate) and for tasks and activities such as your design journal.

As with other 20 credit courses, successful participation will require a time commitment of around 7-10 hours a week, with more likely around the time of assignment completion (20 credit courses require 200 hours of study). Your strong commitment to the collaborative class activities is expected across the 12 weeks of the course.

Although the course is designed to be flexible, **you will need to keep up with the week-by-week structure** in order to take part in the group tasks.

Participation etiquette

When taking part in the **Moodle discussion forums**, please apply the basic rules of etiquette:

— Make contributions short and to the point.
— Keep contestation polite.
— Try to make sure others' contributions are answered, though this doesn't mean everyone has to answer everyone else!
— Don't worry about structure or typos, but do make yourself clear.

Our main aim should be to move the discussion forward in a positive way.

Networking and connecting

As well as using different digital spaces for formal course discussions, we would strongly encourage you to make connections informally. Twitter and Skype may prove useful for students on the course in networking, after class discussions,

debriefs and the occasional 'wee blether' (a random chat about nothing in particular). Guidance on setting up accounts for these technologies is in the *Technologies Handbook*, available at https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/mscdetech/ Don't feel you have to wait for tutor encouragement!

Computer skills and equipment you need

As with other courses on this programme, you must have good access to an internet-enabled computer and browser capable of delivering the VLE Moodle and any other applications you wish to use this during the course.

You may wish to organise space on your own institutional virtual learning environment, if you have one, for your course build (please bear in mind that your tutors will need to access this for assessment purposes).

Course readings will be delivered electronically, via a Leganto Resource List managed through the Library.

Course structure and format

Course design runs over 12 weeks, or one semester, from Monday 14 January until Sunday 7 April 2019. It involves 10 weeks of teaching and collaborative activity, with two weeks for supported assignment preparation. A week of study on this course includes the weekend, i.e. each week of work runs from Monday to Sunday. Each week will start with a tutor introduction.

The course can be usefully divided into three broad themes: design thinking; designing for online learning; and wider issues that we might consider are 'beyond design'.

Block 1: Design thinking (Weeks 1-2)

Our first block introduces and explores the concept of 'design thinking'. What does it mean to think and work in a 'designerly' way, and how can we, as educators, make use of design thinking approaches? What does the contemporary literature on learning design have to offer, and what are its limitations?

Block 2: Designing for Online Learning (Weeks 3-8)

Block 2 of the course dives into the specifics of designing for different online educational contexts. In the first two weeks, we'll look at theories of learning, exploring our own and others' assumptions around course design and why these matter. We'll then move on to explore specific challenges that come with designing for online learning, including time, pacing, structure, multimodality, platforms, modes and accessibility. In the last two weeks of the block, we'll explore some current design challenges. You'll develop this further for your first assignment, due at the end of week 8.

Block 3: Beyond Design (Weeks 9-10)

The third block of the course asks you to look critically 'beyond design', and consider what the limitations of design thinking and learning design approaches might be, and why these limitations matter. Exploring issues of complexity, code, unbundling, hidden curriculum and educational ecologies, we'll consider some possible approaches to the development of online education in the future.

Block 4: Assignment Preparation (Weeks 11-12)

The final two weeks of the course will be taken up with final assignment preparation. Although you have been thinking about this throughout the course, the final two weeks have been allocated for bringing it all together in the form of a course rationale and part-build.

The course you design will, of course, relate to digital environments, and we expect the use of those environments in this assignment to be *substantive* and *well-justified*.

If you plan to design a course for imminent delivery, this will be an excellent opportunity for you. Alternatively, you may wish to work on a hypothetical or 'dream' course that brings together some of the ideas we've developed over the semester. Note that the work is about **designing a course, not about evaluating one you have recently designed**. However, you may be re-designing something that exists, which would naturally involve a fair amount of evaluation.

Assessment

There are two parts to the assessment for this course:

1. a 'design challenge' analysis (20%)
2. a course design (80%)

Assignment 1. Design Challenge Analysis

For the first course assignment, you'll write a short critical analysis of a design challenge that is relevant to a particular digital education context. The aim here is

to think 'big' about that context and try to understand and analyse the significant features of the design setting. You may wish to focus on your own professional setting, but you don't have to – you can choose any of the challenge areas set out in the weeks 7 and 8 materials, or another area of interest to you. You should, however, choose a specific subject area, programme, initiative, company or platform to focus on. Full details are available on the Moodle site. This assignment is due at the end of week 8.

Design challenge analysis assessment criteria

In assessing the analysis, the following criteria will apply. The criteria are based on the university's Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme, which is more fully described in your *Programme Handbook*.

Knowledge and understanding
Does the analysis convincingly relate the selected challenge to the design setting, referring to relevant concepts from the course? Does it engage critically with approaches to course design?

Knowledge and use of the literature
Are concepts from the literature referred to appropriately in analysing this challenge?

Writing style
Is the account well-written, well-structured, engaging and coherent? Does it reference sources correctly?

The analysis should be 1,000 words maximum, and will constitute 20% of your final mark for the course. The word count is taken seriously, so please stay +/- 10% within the limit. (See the note on word counts at the end of this section on assessment.)

Assignment 2. A course design

The second assignment will involve you designing a course for delivery, or part delivery, online. It is acceptable for this to be a redesign of an existing course, though you should make it clear if this is the case. It will constitute 80% of your final mark for the course and is due at the end of week 12.

The assessment will comprise three elements:

a)   a course overview

b)   a written rationale for the design approach you have taken

c)   a part-build of the course in an online learning environment of your choice.

An overview of what will be expected for each element of the assignment is available on the Moodle site.

Assignment assessment criteria

The final assignment will be assessed according to criteria based on the Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme.

Knowledge and understanding of concepts

Does the assignment demonstrate critical engagement with (some of) the main concepts and theories developed in the course? Does it show the ability to integrate understanding into a coherent conceptual framework?

Knowledge and use of the literature

Are key areas of the literature referred to appropriately? Is there evidence of sustained and wide reading, and are existing conceptual approaches integrated into a coherent analytical framework?

Constructing academic discourse

Is the quality of writing (in the written elements) well structured, clear and appropriate? Is the rationale, in particular, written according to the conventions of academic writing?

Framing and analysing practice

Does the course design take appropriate account of organisational and sectoral contexts? Does the built element demonstrate appropriate understanding of the nature and form of the digital environment for learning? Is there internal coherence in the course design? Does the course design demonstrate creativity and innovation?

A note on word counts: The absolute minimum/maximum for each of the written assignments is +/-10%. So for the two written parts of the assignment taken together the minimum is 2700 and the maximum is 3300. However, this is *not* an invitation to write 3300 words for the assignment! Aim for as close to the 3000 limit as possible, but don't worry if you go a little over or under – that's the purpose of the margin.

Word counts *include* anything in the assignment up to the list of references (including tables, footnotes, and so on). The list of references and appendices are not included in the word count. Please state the word count somewhere in your assignment. Those going over or under the 10% margin will be considered not to have met the requirements for the assignments, and mark penalties are therefore very likely to result.

Submission dates

The reflective account should be submitted at end of week 8 – by **Sunday 10 March 2019**. You will receive feedback on this by the start of Week 11.

The final assignment is due on **Sunday 7 April 2019**. You should receive feedback and your provisional mark for the course within 15 working days.

All assignment documentation should be submitted in the Moodle assignment dropbox.

The postgraduate common marking scheme

Grades will be awarded in line with the University's postgraduate common marking scheme:

Mark (%)	Grade	Description
90-100	A1	An excellent performance, satisfactory for a distinction
80-89	A2	An excellent performance, satisfactory for a distinction
70 – 79	A3	An excellent performance, satisfactory for a distinction
60 – 69	B	A very good performance
50 – 59	C	A good performance, satisfactory for a masters degree
40 -49*	D	A satisfactory performance for the diploma, but inadequate for a masters degree
30-39**	E	Marginal fail
20-29	F	Clear fail
10-19	G	Bad fail
0-9	H	Bad fail

The pass mark is grade D (40%).

For more detail on the regulations which govern the course and the programme you should consult your Programme Handbook and the University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) which are to be found on the Web at: http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/

In particular, the regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes are included at: http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/17-18/regulations/postgrad.php

Credit and continuation of study

Successful completion of this course will give you 20 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) points at postgraduate level 11. More details of the SCQF can be found on the Web at: http://www.scqf.org.uk/

The full MSc in Digital Education will comprise one foundation course and four additional 20 credit courses, plus a dissertation. The list of available options is available on the programme web site at: http://digital.education.ed.ac.uk/courses

The regulations governing satisfactory progress for continuation to Masters level by submission of a dissertation are given in your Programme Handbook.

Readings

You are not required to purchase any books for this course. All essential readings are provided, in electronic form, in the relevant areas of course content. A few are openly available on the web. The majority are in the form of links to e-books and e-journals which you should be able to access if you are signed into EASE.

E-books are presented in various ways by different publishers. If you are asked for your Shibboleth link, this means finding the University of Edinburgh in the drop down list provided. See the Library for more information on access to e-books. If you do not get a good result from your link to e-books in the Library, you might want to try changing your browser. If there seems to be a problem, though, do let us know.

As with other courses on the programme, you are expected to read all of the **essential** readings, and a selection of the **further** readings.

Formative feedback/feedforward

The course has been designed to include opportunities for formative feedback on participation and planning for assignments. This will take place through discussion forums and (optional) workshops. Your participation in tasks and the discussion around these form an important source of feedback from peers and tutors, so your sustained engagement in these elements of the course is strongly encouraged. You will receive feedback on your first assignment before the final assignment is due, and can use this as feedforward for that purpose.

Course tutor contact information

Do contact Jen or Michael if you have any questions about the course.

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