**'Responding to the ‘digital essay’: how tutors approach the assessment of alternative format assignments in the multimodal classroom.'**

Technological advances combined with pedagogical innovation are helping to reshape the online classroom. With access to a growing array of digital tools, students can exploit different modes in the expression of ideas and preparation of coursework assignments. Podcasts, films, web essays and digital dissertations can complement or even replace the traditional text-based essay. In some cases, a single piece of coursework might present ideas in oral, textual and visual form. The online classroom is thus being reframed as a place of multimodal learning populated by transliterate students.

While this multimodal classroom provides new opportunities for the dissemination of ideas, a shift towards the presentation of work in alternative formats inevitably has implications for teaching and feedback. As the online classroom evolves, so there is a need for tutors to adapt to these new modes of communication and expression, and to consider how assessment might be (re)designed to exploit the potential offered by new technologies. Within this exists the challenge of reconciling or replacing traditional assessment criteria in a way that recognizes what is different or unique about work that is presented in an alternative, multimodal format.

**In this dissertation** I will look at how technological advances and pedagogical innovation are prompting a growth in the preparation of digital alternative format assignments within online education. I will then go on to explore how tutors on online programmes are responding to these developments through their assessment approaches.

My methodology will include the collection of data through observation, narrative thematic interviews and visual methodologies. The data will be analysed and then considered in relation to literature covering multimodality, alternative format assignments and online assessment. By taking a cross-disciplinary approach I hope to identify trends or practices that might be shared between tutors and be of wider benefit to those concerned with designing and delivering online programmes.

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