

# Transcript for Teaching Talk #4: Who's Afraid of Digital Assessments

**Aron Fazekas:** Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Office of Teaching and Learning Teaching Talks. First, I want to start off by acknowledging today that we are all in different spaces and places that are governed by different treaties and relationships to the land and in particular now with the current social issues we are experiencing, our collective responsibilities to each other ask us to consider how we enact peace and friendship and inclusion and respect in our daily lives and actions. So today I have the pleasure of introducing Lindsey Robinson, Carlea Blight from the library media studio and Shehroze Saharan, who is an undergraduate research assistant with the Office of Teaching and Learning. Together our panelists today are going to talk about integrating digital assessments such as blogs, videos and podcasts into your course. So the webinar is an hour in length and the speakers will have about 20 minutes for their presentation and afterwards we'll have a question and answer session for all the attendees. Shehroze, did you want to explain some of the technical aspects?

**Shehroze Saharan:** Yeah. Hi everyone, just a few things to remember as you all come, in you will note that your audio and your video is turned off and will remain turned off for the remainder of the session and that is because we just want to keep our chat box as clean as possible. So for everyone to ask questions, all you have to do is find the ribbon at the very bottom of the screen and there should be a Q&A section. So in the Q&A section when you click that tab, that is where you will be able to ask your questions, comments anything you would like us to know for the panelist or us as moderators and as always please always stay respectful for the remainder of the session and if you ever need to refer to these instructions again, they can be found in the chat box at the bottom right of your screen. With that I will hand it over to Lindsey.

**Lindsey Robinson:** Hi, thank you so much for joining us today, I'm Lindsey Robinson and I'm the Digital Learning Specialist at the University of Guelph library. So I support faculty and integrating digital assessments into their courses and I also oversee the operation of the media studio and the staff that helps students through that digital creation process. So while the media studio is closed physically, there are still opportunities to provide support to you and your students in digital assessments. So what do I mean by digital assessment? We have blogging, which could be used for reflection or responding to course readings. There's info-graphics or digital posters which can be kind of a summary of articles, we've seen them been used before, podcasts which can be an audio essay or an interview and videos. So they can be simple smartphone videos or something more complex like a digital story that brings together a bunch of digital media together into one video. I'm just curious now to see how many of you have integrated a digital assessment into your course before and if so what have you done? We're going to do a poll now, so if you've done more than one type just do the one that's most recent or the one that you do most often. So, hopefully everybody has had a chance to complete the poll. It looks like most of you have not had anything and then the second highest is video so that's really great.

**Lindsey Robinson:** Nobody has done a podcast which is super interesting since they're all the rage these days. So It's great to get a quick glimpse at the work you've already done. It's great so thank you and I would like to hopefully hear from you about your experiences at some point in time, okay. Before we move on, just to clear some things up that digital assessments is not about learning a tool it's more than that. We have to move beyond thinking about it as being a tool based kind of assessment and it's more about learning to communicate in new ways, understanding how to use technology purposefully, thinking critically about how we use technology and in behaviour of being able to create something meaningful. So it's developing academic and professional skills as well as life skills to use for our own personal needs to engage within society as well. Regarding the components of an assignment, I'm not going to get into the specifics of assignments our assignment types today as there's so much to cover for that and they're all very different and dependent on what you want to include, but there are some kind of common components for all these digital assessments more or less.

So as you can see they actually contain quite a few things once you break them down; there's planning and brainstorming, researching and narrowing a topic, scripting and story-boarding, creating and gathering media so that could be images video sound or all of the above, there's editing media and bringing it together and of course there's always accessibility and copyright considerations to think about as well. The time commitment for each part varies depending on the complexity of the assignment, but there's two main things that I want to point out through this. One of them is that recognizing how much work a student has to put in to actually complete a digital assignment, so thinking about that and giving it the proper weight within within your the course assessment in general and the other thing is to think about staggering deadlines to help students with time management because these kind of assignments you can't rush all the way through, it you do need to complete the component before moving on to the next thing.

Skills, these are some top skills that students learn, gain or develop through these types of assessments, so obviously technology students are learning and engaging with new technologies or engaging with technologies in new ways because some of them might not be brand new to them. There's critical thinking, so engaging critically with a topic like they would in a more traditional assessment but also being critical about the tools that they're using and how they're using them. There's time management - nothing can be left to the last minute so each component takes a lot of time, it needs to be completed before moving on to the next one. With research evaluation and communication, the content can be similar to a more traditional assessment type but the output just looks a little bit different and then reflection is another thing as well so an awareness of their own learning process. I don't know about you but whenever you're learning a new technology, learning seems to be very apparent through all of the struggles so we often recommend building that reflection process into an assessment So this is just a sample outcome and was from a podcast assignment that Jason Dodd did for his UNIV\*1200 class on varsity athletics.

**Lindsey Robinson:** I wanted to draw attention just to the fact that the top part here is the outcomes for the assignment itself and then the course of what course outcomes this assignment met. So you'll notice that none of them are tool related so they're not directly tied to a technology and that's true as well as the digital storytelling one, this is a the first ones where the podcasting one was an individual assignment and worth twenty percent of their grade and the podcast was about five to ten minutes, this was a digital story so a video where they had to go work in groups and they created about a three minute video together but none of the outcomes revolved around tools. The technology just acted as a way to create something, but wasn't learnt itself. So it's about aligning the larger core course outcomes and the technology is simply a tool to help them communicate and we're never expecting people to become experts in these things right? We're not training people to be professionals, we don't expect you to be experts within with the technology it's more about exposure and breaking down the barriers around technology and seeing how it can be used.

Some of you might be thinking how is this even possible within the online environment, well I think it actually is quite possible. We just need to rethink our ideas about what the assignment might look like and what our expectations are so basically it just means that with the media studio closed they don't have access to specialized equipment so it means they'll be using the equipment that they have which means computers and phones right? So it's something that they probably already know how to use but they might be using it in a new way and they'll still have access to tools so usually when we work with faculty or instructors on this type of assessment we usually recommend open source and free tools. The library does have some subscriptions to you some web-based tools for video creation including PowToon and WeVideo so we have some seats available to use for courses as well.

To be clear about technical expectations in the assignment and the rubric, it's important that you can understand what the person is saying that it's loud enough but it doesn't need to be completely perfect - we're not trying to create professional podcasters. So in a lot of cases, the technical aspects within the rubric are not a huge amount of the grade, sometimes instructors don't even include it in the rubric as well but that's something to think about. There is also a lot of self-directed online help from the library so we have a lot of self-directed online tutorials and videos as well as online help guides and we will be offering appointments for troubleshooting selecting a tool, questions about copyright and finding media. Those types of appointments will be available to students as well through the fall and while we're still working out what they will look like, there will be support available for people.

**Lindsey Robinson:** So we are going to be moving into having students talk about their perspective but before we get to that I'd like to do a little poll again to kind of gauge how people are feeling.

How nervous are you about integrating a digital assessment as your course?

Five being like really terrified - whoa can't imagine it, to one being really relaxed cool as a cucumber - can see doing it.

So it seems most people are in the middle. One person is maybe too terrified to imagine doing it and then I guess five, two and one are up there and are about the same, okay that's great to know.

So now we're going to hear from Shehroze and he's going to share a little bit of his experience.

**Shehroze Saharan:** Hello everyone, my name is Shehroze and just finished my third year of biomedical science at the University of Guelph with a minor in media studies in cinema, so I've had a wide variety of courses that I've taken throughout my university career so far. So I wanted to focus on two courses specifically that have used some sort of digital assessment, the first one being THST\*2450 which is approaches to media and is one of the courses that all students who take the media minor have to take.

So in this course, one of the projects that we had was to create an individual video that was very, very self-paced and that was something that I really liked about this project. We had a very long time to know exactly what we wanted to do for this video, which gave me a lot of time to think and push myself outside of the box and this is one of the things I wanted to highlight about a video project or digital assessment this video. It not only forces students to apply what they're learning in class to their projects but it pushes us to be creative, it pushes us to think outside of the box and most importantly, it lets us get outside of our comfort zone because after doing this project for example one of the rubric outlines was I had to use at least five shots and I had to use X number of video editing techniques, so I was applying what I learned from my class into this video and then also taking away a new skill that I'm going to use for life in a wide variety of different places.

So that's something I very much did take away from this course and the other one that I wanted to highlight was NUTR\*3210 that I took last year and so I did also share a poster that my group and I made. We were tasked to create an infographic targeted towards people in high school maybe who wanted to know a little bit about vitamin D and my group and I ended up creating this project for our nutrition class and once again getting into a group of people because with the traditional type of pen and paper type of exam assessment, we don't necessarily get to work a lot with other people in our degree so doing this type of assessment very much did get us outside of that mindset of: "all assessments are done individually" and this was a nice breath of fresh air to work with a team again because I remember in my degree in biomedical sciences there isn't much collaboration or teamwork projects, it's mostly exams with multiple choice and short answer long answer so this was a nice breath of fresh air to get to work with the team and collaborate and build those skills while doing a digital assessment.

**Shehroze Saharan:** One of the things that I very much wanted to highlight, which I believe is the most important part and I love doing beautiful assessments because of this, is because by doing this project and by researching vitamin D on my own time and finding what I needed to do for this project, my group and I can say this without a doubt will remember vitamin D for the rest of our lives. We're going to remember that some of the sources are sun, eggs, fish and this is something that we're never going to forget because we took what we learned from our class and we're actually applying it to a project which I think is so important.

Not only that but I'm going to be taking this infographic skill and these video editing skills and apply them to a wide variety of things in other courses in my undergraduate degree, my masters if I end up doing that or work. I just think digital assessment are absolutely amazing because it can be applied to a wide variety of different things.

With that I'm going to hand it off to Carlea.

**Carlea Blight:** Hi everybody, so I spent the last academic year as a media studio consultant, so I was finishing my last year of my undergrad and I was helping other students as well and now I'm the media studio technician. My experience as a consultant has given me a lot of insight into way that students interact with digital and media creation assignments.

The most memorable assignments that I watched students navigate through were part of an introductory philosophy class as well as a business class. The philosophy students who came into this studio were tasked to create a podcast in a small group debating an assigned philosophical topic. Some students were very intimidated by the whole concept and were unsure how and where to start. This is where we came in as we had the opportunity at the time to help them set up in a sound booth and start and finish their recordings and we would give them advice because the media studio won't be physically accessible come Fall, I think the most important thing we need to consider when assigning digital assignments is the amount of support students will be able to receive.

So in a group setting in this instance, there seemed to be at least one student in every group who showed a lot of fluency or confidence with technology and therefore was really enthusiastic about the project and even some students without technological experience were very intrigued by the whole concept. In these instances students felt pretty comfortable relying on one another however I do believe that there needs to be a way where students feel they can receive help and they are unafraid to ask technical questions even though we don't have the physical space for it.

**Carlea Blight:** So, the podcasting assignment was a vital learning experience in the sense that students had to make multiple small attainable steps to complete it. However, this learning opportunity has the potential to be overshadowed by the fear of media creation and technical difficulties if students don't receive the proper support. So my recommendation for supporting a project like this would be possibly hosting an initial lesson in podcasting before students start the project, whether that's from somebody from our studio or somebody from our team in the library and in this case it might ease some of the initial anxieties, then have a media student consultant like myself available for consultations whenever the student may need an appointment to talk through it. I would also suggest for our instructors to be willing to meet virtually with students or be available to talk with them over email to discuss topics or scripting, and perhaps that would allow you to monitor the progress of the groups and sort of gauge how they feel and recommend them to us or an expert if they need extra support.

The business students that came into the studio - they were creating a very basic short video. So the students would come up with a small pitch and they had the choice to film it in our studio or even just with their own devices, so students interest in this topic was pretty split and some saw it as a really cool way to practice marketing and learning new skills and adaptability and others saw it as a hassle. Some students took advantage of the project and a lot of them went the extra mile and they kind of went for some of the more intense editing for the professional look. This meant that our experience with the studio and editing suites was able to aid a lot of the students that came in for help. Some of them spent roughly half an hour, some of them spent roughly two hours. It really depended on the interest and their experience with the tools, so in terms of transitioning into doing this online, I feel that having an individual assignment would perhaps work better in a smaller class size, perhaps maybe an upper year because smaller class sizes would allow the opportunity to create an online community where peers can discuss with one another and look to each other for support.

With an online class that is considerably large like a lot of first year classes, I would generally discourage your students to ask for help or looking to others for support. It would also ensure that instructors and media consultants would have the ability to help these students one-on-one in a larger class and it might be better to assign a video assignment in groups so that peers can work on it together and live through one another which is also a valuable experience. Therefore support could be given two groups in time or representatives of groups, which would ensure that everyone feels heard and they like had they have the ability to receive the help that they need.

So I what I'd like to emphasize here is that media based assessments seem to be extremely beneficial to students and in my experience working with them in the physical studio, this is absolutely true but there needs to be support by a combination of peer collaboration, instructor feedback in meetings and specialists or consultants ready to take questions or provide help.

**Lindsey Robinson:** Thank you Carlea for that, we would like to open it for questions now and I will let you know that I am offering three more webinars later in the month. I'm partnering with some instructors who have already integrated these assignments into their courses, so they are going to be sharing their experiences and we're going to get into a little bit more on specifics of the assignment types so these are the times. I'm going to talk about PowToon videos, PowToon is a video creation tool and I'm going to be talking with Clive Thompson about his experience and then podcasting with Joanne O'Meara from Department of Physics and digital storytelling with Brendan Stewart. So that will provide a little bit more specifics about those assignment types.

