

Research-led teaching and Digital Technology: MSc Dissertation project

Karol Kosinski, Instructional Designer; Nathan Johnson, Senior Learning Technologist; Dr. Sarah-Jane Fenton, Lecturer in Mental Health Policy
School of Social Policy and CoSS Birmingham Digital

Research-Based: *Working in research teams to create a collective academic paper and individual lab report to help students build skills relevant to research careers, meeting the demands of future labour markets.*



In the past decade we have observed significant changes to the labour market, which can be demonstrated by a sharp rise of brand new job titles. In addition to this, people are increasingly working flexibly and in teams across localities or even continents to complete projects. Accompanied by an ever accelerating pace of development of new technologies, this presents the next generation of graduates with both challenge and opportunity. This situation requires education providers to be reflexive, adaptable and to skill students within their programmes to be able to successfully enter the labour market of tomorrow. We suggest that a labour market of the future should be reflected in the education of today.

As a part of the students' dissertation, we have introduced a research led assessment to approximate working in research teams. This intervention enables students to build skills relevant to research careers and conduct research in larger teams. Our approach to assessment not only allows students to exercise this set of skills, but it also focuses on development of graduate attributes e.g. creativity, communication, team working skills. In the example of the dissertation, students work in virtual labs as part of wider teams to create both a collective (academic paper) and an individual (lab report) output. We enable students to perform research-based roles that mirror the expectations and reality of academic research teams through responding to iterative feedback to create a finished product as well as reflecting on their own contribution.

Working in research teams enables students to build skills which are relevant to research careers and conducting research in larger teams. As part of this exercise students are expected to choose the project they wish to be part of and complete an application that mirrors the application process for a job in the field. The project is supervised by an academic member of staff and each student will have a designated role in relation to the project. The research team is responsible for producing an analysis of a dataset in the form of an academic publication (of no more than 5000 words). Furthermore, each student is expected to produce an individual report (of no more than 5000 words). These two elements combined will form a 10,000 word dissertation, which forms 60% of the total grade. Additionally, students are asked to give an oral presentation describing the research process (20%). The final 20% of the grade is a tutors' mark from the project supervisor on a student's individual performance in executing the project work, project plan and initial literature review (20%).