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Employing history: Enhancing 'employability' in BA history degrees with recorded video presentation assessments

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Abstract

Until recently, British university history departments have rarely made use of assessed recorded video presentations. Inspired by the increased popularity of Online Educational Resources (OERs), it moves away from traditional essays, exams, and oral presentation-centred assessment strategies. This article outlines an intervention undertaken on a first-year cultural history module to incorporate such an assessment and evaluates its effectiveness in promoting greater 'digital literacy'. Building on the greater availability of more effective submission platforms, and acknowledging increased student tech-literacy, changing skill requirements for history-related career paths and the growing significance of the employability agenda, the article explores how history graduates can be made more 'employable'. Using a mixture of open questionnaires and a focus group, student experience and interpretation is used to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention from the perspective of its prospective beneficiaries.

Keywords: employability; history; audio-visual; presentations; digital literacy

Introduction

National economic difficulties and subsequent public sector cuts in the higher education sector often have a worse effect upon the non-vocational humanities subject areas. Some have suggested that it could trigger the end, or at least a decline, of the uptake of humanities degrees (Cohen, 2009;

Donoghue, 2008). Humanities degrees are traditionally regarded as ideal subjects for the ambitious, with 'transferable skills', which prepare students for a diverse range of careers including Law, the Civil Service and the creative industries (Barrow et al, 2010). According to one UK regulator, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), history is a highly employable degree which provides a wide variety of skills alongside benefits to "the public good" (QAA, 2014). The recent decline in prestige of humanities, and the primacy of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) orientated subjects, has forced scholars in non-scientific fields to consider how they can defend the relevance of their disciplines (Kent, 2012).

In the modern British academic environment, where tuition fees and expectations have escalated, university-level teachers must consider seriously how students are prepared for the workplace. This agenda is not, in itself, new (Dacre et al, 2007). It has been underpinned by skills development based on sector-wide frameworks codified in conjunction with employers (Fallows & Steven, 2000). While, it is acknowledged that they do not guarantee employability, certain skills are understood to assist students to gain employment after graduation (Yorke, 2006) and these may also complement existing subject-specific skills. In particular, assessment which recognises greater IT-literacy among undergraduate cohorts has the potential to be of great benefit to students seeking employment a more technically driven world.

This article interrogates collected, qualitative data to discover whether students engaged well with a recorded video presentation assessment, and the extent to which they recognise its intended purpose. To the more technically literate, the nature of the assessment will be intuitive, and perhaps preferable due to its more practical approach, but, if students appreciate its rationale and describe it as developing or utilising skills that are not usually tested, the usefulness of the assessment will be demonstrated. Due to the priorities of university data gathering, module-specific metrics concerning the post-university career trajectories of the cohort were not available, so the

qualitative evidence-base for the article relies on focus groups and questionnaire feedback collated from the students after they submitted their final assessment. This article reviews the potential of this approach based on surveys of student experience, examining how the recipients reacted to the innovation. Its ambition is to incorporate pedagogic research within a collaborative relationship between teacher and student.

Developing a recorded video presentation assessment

Previously described concerns regarding employability influenced the design of our first-year course 'War, Society and the Media'. We developed, as a formative assessment, a five-minute public history Online Educational Resource (OER). This took the form of a recorded video presentation based around a narrated PowerPoint and recorded through Panopto software. Moving away from a reliance on text-based assessments, the module and assessment engaged with issues linked to imagery, commemoration, and the representation of war in popular culture. The module examined how warfare shaped individuals and societies across the world since 1914, focused on the projection and reporting of war in the media and popular culture.

To do this, students selected a topic from a list of 10 (topics such as 'war poetry', 'propaganda', and 'the collapse of Yugoslavia'). Mapping on to some of the key benchmarks of a History degree, lectures and seminars explored how historic events are reconstructed in the present. Graphic depictions of the barbarism of modern warfare abound, from photographs of the horrors of First World War trench warfare to the release of uncensored beheading videos on social media in the post-9/11 climate. Students were encouraged to see this as an exercise in creating an OER that would be presented in a way that was accessible to a wider public.

The growth and usage of OER's and digitised resources has been encouraged by global cultural bodies like UNESCO (2019). Within the education and cultural sectors more widely, and museums and heritage in particular, relevant digital literacy skills are therefore more in demand (Royston and

Parry, 2019; Parry, 2018). Notably, the heritage industry, long a leading employer of history graduates, is moving towards incorporating more technology in its operation, utilising more sophisticated digital storytelling techniques. University-level adoption of such assessments may encourage and aid the evidencing of student development of these particular skillsets, and help graduates negotiating the post-education job market.

Digital literacy and historical studies

While incorporating this type of assessment into the study of an earlier period or a topic more focused on textual sources may have proved more problematic, the contemporary focus of the module, with its emphasis on technological change, allowed for more creativity. As technologies and ideologies changed during the modern period, the impact of warfare beyond the battlefield was also transformed (Edgerton, 2006). Furthermore, new technology has meant that the impact of war on people can be observed in real time and, with this in mind, it is important to reflect the conceptual approach of the module within the assessment. The focus on media therefore offered opportunities towards more experimental assessment that encouraged students to engage more clearly with visual imagery and its uses.

Alongside a traditional essay-based exam, which focused on both module-wide themes and source engagement, students were also examined through an academic film review with the requirement to critically engage with historiography and the recorded video presentation. The module handbook emphasised the unique expectations of these assessments with the assessment guidelines stating that students must 'communicate ideas clearly and lucidly in seminar discussions and the podcast'. This informed students that the degree of rigour, discussion, and engagement of historiography was the same as a written assignment.

For the experimental teacher, a fundamental problem is that historical study at degree level has long remained wedded to the essay and exam assessment format. However, the realities of the internet, growing technical proficiency

and digital literacy have drastically changed how students interact with each other and with information (Guzman-Simon et al, 2017). Higher education assessment should reflect this reality. Of course, technology is not a panacea (Gibson, 2001), but, as Shelton (2017) has observed, its careful application in education can be useful in the right circumstances. With the growth of public history in the heritage sector together with an increased interaction with digital technology (Parry, 2018), it has become arguable that academic history's traditionalist approaches to teaching and assessment must undergo creative diversification to equip graduates for the employment market.

The utilisation of a video-based assessment that encouraged students to produce rigorous work of degree standard was the key aim of this study. Our conclusions are based on qualitative evidence gathered by means of a student questionnaire and focus group, as well as the experiences of the module team. Within this article, we have sought to engage with student evaluation, despite concerns outlined by scholars like Feistauer and Richter (2016). Doing so recognises the realities of the current student-consumer culture of more aware and vocal academic citizens who are capable of discussing their own learning in reflective and often thoughtful ways. With this in mind, practitioners need to consider how ideas of employability and digital assessment can be integrated in subtle, discipline-specific ways, beyond generic modules crediting work experience (Yorke, 2006).

Employability, non-traditional assessment, and historical studies

While history has long been regarded as an employable degree, the increased significance of the employability agenda since 2000 (Yorke et al, 2007) has required university historians to consider how employability may be evidenced. History students must demonstrate their building of various career skills, including oral and written communication skills, and digital literacy (QAA, 2014). As Knight and Yorke (2006) have advocated, a curriculum that considers employability will often require different assessments to mainstream academic programmes, and to be effective these should be utilised as formative rather than add-on, summative aactivities. Furthermore, such

innovative, employment focused assessment can inform module design and encourage technology-enhanced learning (HEA, 2016c; HEA, 2016a). Through developing a student's skillset in this way employability is enhanced.

To target this study most effectively, we evaluated the potential career pathways any intervention might benefit and chose the museum and heritage sector which is where many history graduates seek employment. As Holmes (2006) has suggested, volunteering in this sector to gain employment is often reliant on the serendipity of finding an effective mentor. Furthermore, there is an expectation of greater technical literacy driven by the availability of newer, more complex information resources and the changing expectations of users and visitors (Marty, 2007). Thus encouraging greater digital and technical literacy through integrating it within undergraduate learning outcomes and assessments has become necessary.

Technology and historical interpretation have a long, experimental history. Integrating audio-visual forms of presentation within museums and heritage settings has been debated since this technology became available in the 1970s (Alt, 1979). More recently, the development of the PC and associated software has provided an opportunity for higher education to utilise computerised equivalents, with projects, including Leicester University's Informal Mobile Podcasting and Learning Adaption (IMPALA), elaborating the potential of audio-visual teaching to revolutionise the delivery of information to students (Edirisingha & Salmon, 2007). Furthermore, as part of the growing compatibility of digital technology and pedagogy, E-assessment has been trialled in environmental sciences (Hill & Nelson, 2011) demonstrating its additional potential to revolutionise teaching in the arts and humanities (Weis et al, 2002). It will assist in responding to changing student expectations what skills are gained, and for what purpose.

This deeper understanding of audio-visual technology provides many opportunities for potentially rigorous assessment and the development of a variety of employment-focused skills. In part, this provides an effective opportunity to embed employability within curriculum design (HEA, 2016b).

This can also be a sign of institutional agility, by allowing assessment to be flexible to facilitate the needs of the learner, and make for more innovative, appropriate module design (HEA, 2016b). If carefully crafted, learning outcomes can then reflect a module's unique construction and contribute to a wider culture of employability within the teaching of history programs.

In the British context, the concept of employability has become one of the university sector's key standards. The creation of the Higher Education Academy's UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) has emphasized it as one of many issues that both teaching and assessment must address. To do this teaching approaches must be developed to create more effective learning environments which must, within the changing and challenging context of higher education, maintain standards and meet students' varying needs and requirements. Teaching methods must be reviewed, analysed, and evaluated. Through engaging with new teaching technologies, practitioners should be able to develop assessment which provides useful skills and feedback whilst respecting learners' individuality.

This form of assessment must consider student and staff familiarity, and engagement with, the gateway software. While visual products such as Microsoft PowerPoint have become staples of teaching methodology, some have already questioned their intelligent use (Savoy et al, 2009). In particular, Dobson (2006) has observed that some have questioned the effectiveness of PowerPoint on student learning from oral presentations. Meanwhile, Murphy and Barry (2016) have experimented with recording orally delivered PowerPoint-based presentations with the express purpose of having students evaluate their work after playback, and, similarly, Griffin et al (2009) have considered whether linking PowerPoint slides and voice tracks has pedagogical benefits. More recently, Deeley (2018) has argued that flexible curriculum design and careful experimentation can aide improved learning and feedback in Higher Education. These approaches can provide interesting outcomes while having little impact on the process of academic assessment.

To understand the potential uses of technology within humanities pedagogy, we must examine its previous usage and consider the successes. In the modern climate, employability is only one component of a module's objective. It must also be fit for providing history-specific skills and knowledge (HEA, 2016a). Hence, for a module that engages with the cultural history of war and its impact on society, assessment must evaluate student engagement with imagery, physical structures, and material culture. However, by using audio-visual methods, we can use 21st century technology to 'encourage students to communicate in modes…relevant to ways of seeing and knowing in the 21st century' (Zemits, 2017). Since the obvious restraint on this approach is the impact it may have on student engagement (Molesworth et al, 2009) any assessment must accommodate students' creativity to engage with skills they already possess and to develop skills that may be beneficial.

Several serious questions over the effectiveness of video learning aides, such as Online Educational Resources, have been raised (Knox, 2013), and, concerning oral presentations, questions abound regarding the rigour of assessment applied (Dobson, 2006; Langan et al, 2008). While Langan et al (2008) suggested that peer-review may improve this form of assessment, pedagogical analysis of oral presentation assessment within high education humanities, and history in particular, is lacking. This study was designed to address this specific gap in the literature and to provide a practical example of good pedagogic IT practice.

Materials and Methods

To evaluate the effectiveness of the study, the authors developed an open questionnaire and facilitated a student focus group. The project was approved by the school ethics officer. All participants involved in both types of data collection signed an ethics form allowing the use of anonymous quotations from their participation in the project.

Open questionnaire

This was distributed to all students at the end of the final lecture of the module, not long before the submission of the recorded video presentation. It asked a variety of questions concerning the student's experience of the assessment. The use of an anonymous questionnaire permitted respondents to be more honest than they might be an interview, and made it is easier to collect a larger bank of data (Norton, 2009). Furthermore, questionnaires can provide broader and more representative responses which are not biased by assumptions of respondents' reasoning (Singer & Couper, 2017). The questionnaire asked students to answer nine reflective questions about undertaking the recorded video presentation project.

Questionnaire items included general questions, for example 'Overall, how did you find the assessment?' and 'Did you find recorded video presentations preferable to oral presentations?', together with were more specific enquiries , for example 'Did you have prior experience with creating recorded video presentations (OERs) similar to the assessment?', 'Did the assessment help you consider how you present you work for different audiences?' and 'Did you learn useful digital skills that will be useful during your degree or later?'. Enough student feedback was acquired to provide an evidential basis to question the study's assumptions. Twenty-one students returned questionnaires which represented a 41% response rate and provided a sufficient pool of evidence to analyse student views of the module. An additional student focus group was designed to further investigate themes present within the questionnaire data.

Focus group

To reduce potential bias the focus group was composed of students that were carefully selected from the cohort based on their attainment in previous modules. Since questionnaires were anonymous, it is unknown if and how the focus group participants had contributed to that data. The focus group had seven student participants which is the optimum size for non-commercial

research (Guest et al, 2017; Kreuger & Casey, 2014). It was conducted as 'an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics' (Beck et al, 1986) with firm moderation to prevent certain voices becoming dominant (Guest et al, 2017). This approach generates rich data by enabling the description of common concerns and opinions through interaction between the participants (Wilkinson, 1998). Furthermore, it avoids the moderator creating artificial differences in student opinion.

Using this approach it is therefore possible to evaluate a tapestry of interventions through a collective deliberation. Prompt questions included How did you find the assessment?', 'How have you found it compared to oral presentations?', 'Did knowledge of a wider audience change how you worked?', 'Should such assessments used more widely?', 'Did the assessment improve your technical skills?', 'Did you develop any historical skills?', and 'How could the assessment be improved?'.

Results

Questionnaire Responses

Students had mixed prior experience in making videos or recording presentations. Some had made presentations at High School level, or maintained a YouTube channel, with thirteen having no prior experience whatsoever. One student noted that they 'did not expect the technical aspect' when they signed up for the module. However, only three participants admitted using the module-specific, advertised drop-in sessions offered by the Library's Learning Technology team. Four felt the timetabled information workshop offered by module tutors 'was enough to know what I had to do'. All agreed (most answering only 'yes') that they had the opportunity to practice and develop a number of technical and ICT skills during the assignment.

Concerning whether the students preferred the recorded video presentation, eleven said they preferred the video assessment and ten preferred more traditional, essay-based assignments. One student, who reflected the tone of

many, observed that they enjoyed the creativity and variety of the video assessment, as it was 'not a boring essay'. Meanwhile, those who did not like making videos felt them fiddly and time-consuming; one suggested that it took up too much time for a project that 'was only worth 30-40% of a module'. A variety of viewpoints were clearly held on the likeability of the assessment. However, when provided with the traditional oral presentation as an alternative, fourteen submissions favoured the recorded video presentation. One respondent preferred how 'it allowed me to edit and change my work…I was less nervous about presenting'.

A number of students felt that the assessment taught useful skills. Thirteen felt that the project was useful in developing technological skills and in thinking about writing for a more popular audience. One noted that it 'made me think about who would watch it, what information I had to incorporate. Six felt that it merely reinforced existing skills held, rather than offering anything new. Interestingly, of the seven opposed to the recorded video format, all stated they favoured the oral presentation's emphasis on public speaking skills. However, there was a sense that the assessment helped some students consider how they studied history, and who they are writing for. Fifteen felt the video presentation was a good choice for an assessment as it allowed them to consider issues such as audience type and presentation styles from a fresh angle, but five felt that it created little difference in experience with one suggesting that it simply 'felt like a different way of putting information together'.

When asked whether they would want to produce a recorded video presentation again: twelve said they would with two arguing that they felt it occupied a useful space between essays and non-essays; four said they were unsure with two saying it was dependent on the module topic; and five said they felt it was not as effective in communicating their ideas and arguments as essays and exams. Concerning producing recorded video presentations in the future, there was again a varied response. Six would do so again, eight said that they might, and five said that they would not. The most common

comment was that students would do them 'only if they were compulsory' which suggests that they might not be useful as formative or non-assessed work. One student enquired whether they could be made compulsory.

Finally, students were asked for a general reflection. Several students enjoyed the video presentation, seeing it as something different and 'a change'. One suggested that it allowed flexibility to try something different and undertake focused work based on a topic that interested them. Several also commented that it was "challenging", forcing them to utilise methods they otherwise would not use, but that this was positive. From a perspective of their skills and personal development, most students seemed to concur that they benefitted from the recorded video assignment.

Focus Group Responses

A focus group allowed for a more discursive evaluation of the assessment. There were varied views on preference for oral or recorded video presentations. A common comment was that the assessment seemed 'daunting at first' as students had 'not done it before'. Whilst two of the participants had prior technical experience, all were anxious about 'the recording of their voice', nerves and even a self-consciousness about their regional accents. In advance of the module, several students did not expect the technical aspect of the assessment, but all agreed that they enjoyed the assignment not being a 'live' presentation, which removed aspects of their nervousness.

 All welcomed also the attempt to integrate a different type of assessment into the curriculum, but four were concerned by it replacing oral presentations. These students believed that speaking in public was a life skill that should not be lost, which suggested that they had an appreciation of the requirements for future employment. One student noted that the video presentation might be popular with introverts, but this could fail to give them the full experience of presenting to a live audience. Overall, it was a welcome opportunity to develop a more comprehensive script without fears of being

marked down for poor audience engagement. New skills were developed, and students realised they could not 'panic write' a recorded assessment as it required more work. Students described how they felt proud of the work, especially since they had a digital remnant to show later to friends, family, or even potential employers.

As a technical exercise, all seven students found it useful, since it highlighted a clear improvement in their IT skills and commented that they enjoyed undertaking an alternative type of information research and presentation. The importance of finding and analysing imagery was different to previous assessments they had completed as it required them to move beyond more traditional, textual sources. It was also a welcome break from the essay and exam combination. Having to engage with new software and new approaches did not appear problematic, but approximately half of the participants felt that they had to rethink how they addressed their audience and, consequently, reconsider evidence choice and images. Three students raised issues related to what they termed 'transferable skills' that had been 'advertised to me in open days', and all agreed recorded video experience was a useful exercise which was valuable for a variety of career paths, although one student noted she could not foresee using the learning within her own aspirations.

Responses regarding our chosen software platform were not always positive. The whole sample observed that many classmates had struggled with the platform, finding that 'uploading to Panopto [the submission software] was difficult'. However, a welcome and unintended outcome seems to have been the development of collaboration and peer support. Students described how their self-managed, cohort-wide Facebook group was full of discussions over technical aspects of the project. This felt the assignment differed from essay writing, exams, and solitary oral presentations as it 'encouraged us to support each other'; a crucial component of assessed group work, but without the complications caused by personality differences and the difficulties of distinguishing individual student effort within groups. This unintended collaboration was fruitful for students and may explain why, during the

module, only seven students attended the advertised drop-in sessions and the module team receiving only one email query about the technicalities of the assessment.

Through their answers, all participants gained discipline relevant experience. In sourcing evidence, they were forced to uncover different, illustrative evidence, not just 'quotes in books'. Audience was important to the participants who discussed the different styles of addressing an audience; they exhibited an awareness of the particularisms of tailoring and blending material from both 'public' and 'academic' history. Greater encouragement of redrafting was a major positive outcome of the video presentation with the participants taking ownership and, sometimes, refocusing their work; a stage that they admitted to sometimes skipping when undertaking more traditional assessment formats. One student confessed 'it's the first time I have felt forced to redraft and rewrite'. Overall, the assessment instilled a useful appreciation of the nature of the creative process as well as pride in the outcome.

Lastly, participants discussed weaknesses and concerns about the assignment. To encourage greater use of the technical support provided, some participants suggested more sessions closer to the submission date. They also felt that the focus of the assessment needed review because the topics offered were too broad and greater specificity would encourage greater depth and analysis. One participant also suggested it would have been better to watch all the recorded video presentations as a group, which would have fostered direct collaborative learning. Additionally, concerns were raised over the time limit of the presentation, with all participants favouring this being extended. Finally, participants felt that greater specificity within the assessment rubric would have helped. All participants said that they understood the difference between 'public' and 'academic' history, but they were not always aware of what that difference meant in practice.

Discussion

In this study students broadly welcomed the idea of greater plurality and variety within assessment with those who did not like the video assignment suggesting that they preferred or benefitted more from face to face presentations. Students' perceptions of the value of a less traditional assessment were reflected in the changes in the way they engaged with different types of information (Guzman-Simon et al, 2017), and indicates their awareness of both employability and transferable skills. More broadly, students viewed assessments through the lens of measuring and developing skills. They used this term 'transferable skills' interchangeably with ideas of employability rather than employment and, consequently, were clearly sceptical of the direct applicability of the video assignment to the workplace, but it did add to their developing useful skill base (Yorke, 2006).

Another issue that arose from the study was that recorded video productions implicitly forced students to redraft and modify their work, particularly compared to preparation for a single occasion, live oral presentation. This clearly showed how technological change and digital requirements are encouraging students to work differently and in what Zemits (2017) described as twenty-first century ways. This was a useful outcome because drafting is an important part of the writing process that is often neglected in the construction of history assessments. Creating a recorded video presentation as an OER is reflective of long-term project development and contrasts with how an individual essay might be perceived. Furthermore, video presentations also relate to the real-world tasks students may encounter in their future careers especially within the heritage sector (Royston & Parry, 2019). In sum, through considering IT-literate methods of assessment together with the current discourse on employability, the module teaching team have created an assessment capable of examining students' technical, historical, and presentational skills.

While the assignment provided the students with ample support to develop audio-visual presentations infused by their own interpretations and

understandings, several students expressed unease and nervousness about using the specialist software and voice-recording. Since the authors were aware that deploying social media for communication purposes was almost second nature to the generation of students involved in the study (House of Commons, 2019), they assumed that the students would also be technically proficient and familiar with using audio-visual software in the Microsoft Office package, thus making the IT element of the assessment a straightforward one. However, the findings indicate that this was clearly not the case. Cultivating familiarity with the more intricate functions of software such as Power Point is an important prerequisite for future similar assignments and, more broadly, is a career skill that history curricula should, and could, nurture (Griffin et al, 2009).

Similarly the assignment stimulated students to reflect on how they produced their work. This greater consideration to their approach seemed to take the form of asking themselves questions such as: should I describe a particular source or analyse it?; and how should that information be conveyed?. This level of reflection and wider acceptance of redrafting is heartening if all students were to subsequently replicate the practice when undertaking other, more traditional, assignments. In sum, our "curriculum flexibility" (Deeley, 2018) made it possible to harness technological changes within formal assessment to encourage more developed learning practices. Through its innovative nature, the recorded video assessment encouraged students to think, and reconsider, their learning practice to produce better quality work.

Limitations and moving forward

There were some weaknesses in the study which reduced the utility of the collected data. As the intervention took place within a new module, there were no previous data for comparison. Similarly, external factors around staffing changes meant the team only ran the module once. However, a discipline wide data showed that student achievement was comparable with similar modules, and the assessment did not negatively affect grades. Furthermore, the data collected demonstrates that students felt this was an

appropriate assessment. While the video assessment has proved to be durable in that it is still in use on a successor module, there has been limited the opportunity for further development.

Methodologically, a more sophisticated strategy for data collection may provide a more detailed and comparative evidence base. Perhaps the current data could be used to aid the construction of a closed version of the questionnaire to be conducted at different points within the module (Singer & Couper, 2017). This would provide a 'before and after' understanding of student reactions to the assessment. To develop this further, perhaps questionnaire data from former cohorts either later in their degree or when in graduate employment may allow the authors to track the impact of the assessment, measure its usefulness, and make further amendments to its implementation.

Conclusions and recommendations for tutors

This teaching intervention was ideally suited to the module 'War, Society and the Media' for which it was designed. Rather than being based around textual readings, media and communication were at the core of the module with the appreciation of the power of image and other forms of visual sources being paramount. As historical enquiry develops in line with new approaches and methodologies, the way we teach and assess must change. While recognising that they cannot provide an ideal employee for every sector, history degrees are adapting to new realities in the world of work to produce more informed and skilful candidates. By providing greater opportunities for students to develop digital literacy, communication skills and public engagement, and encouraging these skills through assessments, history departments can demonstrate to employers that such agendas are being taken seriously by the discipline. However, there are restraints. Any innovative teacher must ensure that their activities are appropriate and commensurate with the current aims of the discipline. Whilst it is important to recognise and react to changes, teachers must ensure the use of technology does not obscure a holistic appreciation of the discipline's core learning outcomes.

In undertaking this study, care was taken to ensure that the recorded video assessment fitted the type of content delivered on the module. It was appreciated that one type does not fit all. In the transition to a more technologically led and digitally literate age, assessment of undergraduate students must track a myriad and far-reaching economic, social, and cultural changes, but in a way that does not detract from the discipline's fundamental requirements. The recorded video assessment encouraged some unexpected outcomes. For example, students organised informal autonomous peer support groups to aide their learning using social media in ways that contrasted with the authors' conception of digital literacy.

This study concerning 'War, Society and the Media' showed that a balance between tradition and change is possible within the discipline of history. Since the initial draft of this paper was submitted, the university sector has been forced to adopt significant pedagogical change by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Further experimentation with digital learning and assessments have become necessary, rather than optional with university staff developing greater awareness of more sophisticated and flexible uses for VLE platforms. Circumstances now mean academics may be more willing (or be pushed by new institutional priorities) to experiment with assessment types. Similarly, the requirements of online home-working are changing the nature and patterns of workplaces. Hence, and greater digital literacy is likely to become more, rather than less, important.

In sum, these conclusions raise several issues that practitioners should consider when introducing recoded video assesments:

1. Relevance. The assessment must have clear relevance to the aims of the module. Clear purpose must be offered to the students for the use of the assessment, and it should reflect module learning outcomes.

2. Clear guidance. In the module handbook, through the VLE, and in assessment specific workshops, there should be clear outlines of the assessment's expectations. Once a non-traditional assessment is

experienced, it opens opportunities for further experimentation and
innovation.

3. Submissions. The method of submission should be as simple as
   possible. Focus on using existing platforms, with which students are
   familiar. Importing unnecessary new platforms with which students
   have limited experience can add unnecessary confusion.

4. Appropriate technical support. With 'War, Society, and the Media', we
   were lucky to have the expert support of the University Library's
   Learning technology team. They offered drop-in sessions for students
   alongside those run by the module teaching team. This allowed
   students with technical issues an alternative route for support.

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Disclosure statement

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