Unit:
Study Skills for Postgraduate Learning

Assignment title:
Technology and Learning within the UK Higher Education Sector

December 2015

Important notes
- Please refer to the Assignment Presentation Requirements for advice on how to set out your assignment. These can be found on the NCC Education website. Click on ‘Policies & Advice’ on the main menu and then click on ‘Student Support’.
- You must read the NCC Education documents What is Academic Misconduct? Guidance for Candidates and Avoiding Plagiarism and Collusion: Guidance for Candidates and ensure that you acknowledge all the sources that you use in your work. These documents are available on the NCC Education website. Click on ‘Policies & Advice’ on the main menu and then click on ‘Student Support’.
- You must complete the Statement and Confirmation of Own Work. The form is available on the NCC Education website. Click on ‘Policies & Advice’ on the main menu and then click on ‘Student Support’.
- Please make a note of the recommended word count. You could lose marks if you write 10% more or less than this.
- All electronic media will be checked for plagiarism.
Introduction

The aim of this assignment is to enable you to demonstrate your academic skills at postgraduate level, within a given research topic. In addition, you will demonstrate reflection upon the skills used to engage with this research topic in order to produce an academic essay. Submissions will be supported by evidence using the Harvard reference system.

The assignment consists of two key elements: an academic essay on a given topic that is supported by appropriate and correct references and a portfolio of professional practice.

Assignment

The nature of learning is changing and researchers within the UK higher education sector often talk about the Net Generation’s expectations for the use of technology in their learning environments. In particular, according to Roberts (2015):

‘Net Generation students have never known a world without computers, the World Wide Web, highly interactive video games, and cellular phones. For a significant number, instant messaging has surpassed the telephone and electronic mail as the primary form of communication. It is not unusual for ‘Net Geners’ to multitask using all three communication methods at once, while still surfing the Web and watching television.’

Folley (2010) questions if the lecture is indeed dead! As such, it would appear the very mediums through which teaching and learning takes place are changing, although Britland (2013) warns that for educators and institutions:

‘Technology changes at a fast pace and making it accessible to pupils, teachers and other stakeholders is an ongoing challenge’.

Examples of Technology impacting on learning include: Embedding of mobile technologies in the curriculum (Walker and Voce, 2014); Increased flexible and online provision of taught postgraduate and continuing professional development modules; Transfer of massive open online content (MOOC) inspired practices to on-campus teaching (Yuan, Powell and Olivier, 2014) to support teaching of large cohorts.

However, despite the apparent expectation by the modern learner, of technologies embedded in curricula to enhance their learning experience, Walker and Voce (2014) argue that:

‘sstudent expectations in an increasingly competitive undergraduate marketplace remain the main driver for change, with their demands focusing on better administration, resource provision and support for learning, rather than innovation in teaching methods’

Roberts (2015) further argues that:

‘few efforts have been made to directly engage students in a dialogue about how they would like to see faculty and their institutions use technology to help students learn more effectively.’
As such, the higher education sector faces a challenging time as it struggles to understand the modern learner and their needs. As a result, researchers are urged to evaluate examples of existing practice, to identify, to what extent technology enhances the learning of net generation students in the UK and whether the traditional lecture and hand-out is indeed a ‘pedagogy of the past’.

References

Task 1 – 40 Marks
Academic essay

You are required to effectively research the topic given in the assignment brief (above) to produce an academic essay on the following topic:

Evaluate examples of existing practice to identify to what extent technology enhances the learning of net generation students in the UK and whether the traditional lecture and hand-out is indeed pedagogy of the past.

The essay must demonstrate critical reading and writing, using a range of sources to demonstrate your research skills (which should be correctly referenced). Furthermore, the essay must be well presented, making use of appropriate structure to support arguments so that meaning is conveyed effectively. The recommended word count for this task is 1400 words, excluding the reference list.

In preparation for the essay it is suggested that you make use of a concept map and also a project plan to outline your intentions to plan and manage the project. Please note: This will be expected as evidence for Task 2 below.

Task 2 – 60 Marks
Portfolio of professional practice

You are required to submit a portfolio demonstrating reflection of the skills that you have accumulated and exercised in Task 1. You must consider the skills that you have developed and used, and the extent to which they need further development. Self-reflection and honesty are critical to this task. The portfolio must include the following aspects and the recommended word count is 1600 words.

a) A concept map, outlining the interrelated dimensions forming structure to your research. (10 marks)

b) A project/research plan outlining your plan to manage Task 1 – consider time allocated to research, evaluation and synthesis, and writing up. Clearly outline intended activities, time allocated and deadlines imposed for completion. (15 marks)
c) A reflective journal, outlining your experiences whilst following your project plan – consider what skills you used, how they were used and if this was effective use. You also need to consider where you perhaps encountered problems and explain how you overcame them as part of the project management process. (15 marks)

d) A skills audit – list the skills you feel you would need/like to develop further and consider how you might achieve this, taking into account your individual learning style. (20 marks)

Guidance
Complete all the tasks in order. Consult with your tutor if you are uncertain about any aspect of the assignment.

Submission requirements
- A word-processed document containing all material for presentation, including the academic essay and portfolio of professional practice.
- The word count is 3000 words, not including the appendices and bibliography.
- The document should be properly structured with a bibliography (online and literature sources) and appendices (where necessary). Refer to the Assignment Presentation Requirements for more information (see front cover).
- Produce clear and specific reasoning to justify answers.
- An electronic copy of the document must be submitted to NCC Education by email using this address: level7assessments@nccedu.com
- Work containing viruses, or work that cannot be run directly, will result in a fail grade being awarded for this assessment.

Candidate checklist
Please use the following checklist to ensure that your work is ready for submission.

Have you read the NCC Education documents What is Academic Misconduct? Guidance for Candidates and Avoiding Plagiarism and Collusion: Guidance for Candidates and ensured that you have acknowledged all the sources that you have used in your work? □

Have you completed the Statement and Confirmation of Own Work form and attached it to your assignment? You must do this. □

Have you ensured that your work has not gone over or under the recommended word count by more than 10%? □

Have you ensured that your work does not contain viruses and can be run directly? □