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Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching
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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

CASE STUDY 9 - SUMMARY

NAME
Richard Higgs

COURSE
LIS5025F - Principles of Digital Curation
(Virtual Lab assessments)

FACULTY
Humanities

LEVEL
Postgraduate - MPhil

CATEGORY
Transforming Assessment

One sentence summary
Downloadable file corruption software was used to conduct a data decay experiment whereby students had to make and record empirical observations in a lab notebook which was submitted for assessment.

Context

The course has incorporated blended learning since 2015. Before ERT, there were 10 online lectures and 3 days of face-to-face lectures of fairly complex material. So those face-face lectures had to be replaced. Students had to download a file corruption software, simulate software, use it to conduct experiments, and keep a notebook and recording of their findings and interpretation. I'm completely against surveillance in education and therefore my approach encourages students to work and learn together.

Purpose:

The objective was to get students to understand data decay; what preceded it and what impact it has on data objects.

Process

Principles of data decay were taught and presented in recorded lectures on Lessons in Vula. For the assessment, students had to download the software on their device and upload digital objects (e.g. photos, docs, etc.) into the software (instructions were provided). Then they had to keep a laboratory notebook of what the changes were (i.e. data decay). The empirical component was making and recording their observations in their lab notebook, which was then submitted and formally assessed. Before ERT, this component was absent, as students only watched the software being used. There was no empirical component.

Outcomes/ Lessons learned

Introducing this assessment task and the empirical component was new to the course and to most students. But it worked well. It was hugely enriching and raised the standard of the course.

Recommendation

Providing a practical component by requiring students to observe and document the data decay by themselves as an assignment greatly enhanced the learning on the course. Preparation of the material and requirements as well as clear instructions are essential for this kind of assignment to succeed.