



Harnessing Multimodality in HE: **Principles for new learning, teaching and** **assessment**

A QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

Thursday October 10th, 2024

Overview

- 1. About the project** – Focus, approach, and outputs.
- 2. Multimodality in practice** – A (re)framing exercise.
- 3. Plenary discussion** – summarising insights and plausible future directions.

Project Partners

Teesside University

- Professor Sam Elkington
- Professor Paul Chesterton
- Dr. Ann Thanaraj
- Eve Fitzgerald (Student Researcher)
- Chukwuma Njoku (Student Researcher)

Anglia Ruskin University

- Professor Andrew Middleton
- Birgit Fraser
- Sarah Elsegood
- Nic Collenette
- Meghana Nadella (Student Researcher)
- Dunsin Israel-Olotu (Student Researcher)

University of Greenwich

- Dr. Emma Kennedy
- Jimmy Lo
- Naima Purnima (Student Researcher)
- Sumaiya Taher (Student Researcher)

Birmingham City University

- Maggie Gibson
- Rachel Curzon
- Tom Ashmore
- Elliot Spence.

About the Project

Project Aim

To generate and utilise actionable knowledge related to how educational spaces and practices are being reimagined through different conceptualisations of multimodality to inform new avenues for learning, teaching, and assessment.

Project Scope

The project captured and examined shared learning from accounts of integrating multimodal practice interventions and initiatives to leverage the pedagogical affordances of networks, devices, resources, applications, physical learning spaces and/or virtual environments.

Harnessing multimodality in higher education: Principles for new learning, teaching and assessment

This project will capture and examine a range of practice innovations in multimodal digital education, resulting in the co-creation of cross-institutional principles and interactive resources that model truly future-facing learning, teaching, and assessment.

Multimodal digital strategies can empower educators to explore new pedagogical practices, connect students with a wider range of resources, and support new forms of knowledge production. This project aims to generate and utilise actionable knowledge related to how educational spaces and practices are being reimagined through different conceptualisations of multimodality to inform new avenues for learning, teaching, and assessment.

Through collaborative fieldwork involving a consortium of University Alliance institutions, this project will develop a shared understanding of cross-institution multimodal strategies, approaches, and arrangements through identifying and examining a range of practice-based interventions and initiatives designed to provide flexible and inclusive learning, teaching, and assessment.

Outputs

The project team will develop practical outputs to support the sector to adopt innovative multimodal digital education in their own contexts including:

- A set of evidence-informed principles for effective digital multimodal learning, teaching, and assessment.
- A series of accessible and interactive resources to illustrate effective practice models aligned to these principles.
- A symposium event to showcase the resources and share best practices.

Read the project blog

Learn more about the project in blog posts by Professor Sam Elkington from Teesside University.

- [How are we using different modes of communication to engage students with their learning?](#)
- [Introducing the Harnessing Multimodality in Higher Education podcast series.](#)



Approach

Phase 1 – Sector Insights

At the QAA's annual Quality Insights Conference (23 February 2023), we introduced our initial definitions and mapping of key terms as a conceptual basis for the project, i.e., digital and spatial fluency, simulation and hybridity.

“ What does multimodality mean to you? ”



Approach

Phase 2 – Developing A Conversational Framework

Sector insights were used to develop a series of **four** framing themes to encapsulate the philosophic positions, experiences, pedagogical practices, and opportunities for multimodal innovation for individuals and their organisations.

- **Experience** – what people and their organisations know about multimodality in relation to their formative life-wide learning experiences.
- **Philosophy** – what people and organisations value in relation to multimodalities in higher education.
- **Innovation** – what people and their organisations would like to do by incorporating multimodalities in their experience of designing or engaging in higher education.
- **Practice** – what people and their organisation do in relation to multimodality in their experience of designing or engaging in higher education.

Approach

Phase 3 – Themed Institutional Research Projects

Each partner designed and conducted an institutional research project aligned to a relevant and significant (internal) strategic theme to further interrogate and develop the emergent conversational framework for harnessing multimodality in HE.

* ***Simulation-based learning @
Teesside University***

* ***Gen(AI) @ University of
Greenwich***

* ***Developing Spatial Fluency @
Anglia Ruskin University***

* ***Digital exam practice @
Birmingham City University***

Approach

Phase 4 – Exploring Multimodal Practice

Combined insights from institutional projects informed a series of foundational principles and practical themes - presented as “lenses” - and key considerations designed to frame and engage design thinking around effective multimodal learning, teaching, and assessment.

Foundational Principles

Principle 1 – Context: It is important that we are being sensitive to the wider learning context accounting for how our shared physical and digital environments shape and are themselves influenced by our educational designs.

Principle 2 – Transparency: It is important that we are ensuring the processes for working with and implementing multimodal practice are clearly articulated, relevant to context, and designed to enable meaningful action in the ways they foster student learning.

Principle 3 – Learning ecologies: it is important that we are factoring in how different contexts, relationships and interactions can provide students with opportunities and resources for learning, development, and achievement.



Approach

Phase 4 – Exploring Multimodal Practice

Combined insights from institutional projects informed a series of foundational principles and practical themes - presented as “lenses” - and key considerations designed to frame and engage design thinking around effective multimodal learning, teaching, and assessment.

Four Lenses for Exploring Multimodal Practice

A series of prompt statements and associated reflective questions aligned to the core features for each of the Philosophical, Experiential, Practical, and Innovation Lenses.

Lenses to be used individually and collaboratively by two groups:
1) Leaders; 2) Education practitioners.

The Four Lenses for Exploring Multimodal Practice should be used in conjunction with the “Routes to Practice” sections of the thematic institutional research project chapters, to facilitate deeper understanding of core themes.



Project Outputs

A Playbook for Harnessing Multimodality in HE

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Harnessing Multimodalities: A Conversational Framework

Chapter 3 – Simulation Based Learning @ Teesside University

Chapter 4 – Spatial Fluency @ Anglia Ruskin University

Chapter 5 – Generative AI @ University of Greenwich

Chapter 6 – Hybrid Digital Exams @ Birmingham City University

Chapter 7 – Four Lenses for Exploring Multimodal Practice

Project Outputs

Tune into the podcast series

The project team are developing a podcast series which explores understandings of multimodalities. Each podcast addresses a sub-theme from the project including simulation in education, Artificial Intelligence, multimodality and assessment, and spatial fluency. These reflect the institutional priorities of the four project partners.

- [Episode 1: Spatial fluency](#)
- [Episode 2: Simulation in higher education](#)
- [Episode 3: Assessment and multimodality](#)
- [Episode 4: Generative artificial intelligence and multimodality](#)



Reflecting on / (re)framing Multimodality in Practice

In small groups, you are asked to reflect on and respond to a series of themed provocations:

- 1) Authenticity
- 2) Learning Environments
- 3) Innovation

Please document your reflections on shared **Padlet** provided.



Multimodal learning:

“A broader range of possibilities for teaching and learning practices [involving] ...different modes of communicative action (audio-visual, spatial, and behavioural) that work together in the expression, creation, and representation of meaning in and through the learning of staff and students.”
(HM project report, 2024)

In responding to the following provocations, think about strategies and designs to promote learning (e.g.):

- Simulated scenarios and challenges
- Remixing your use of physical and digital settings and media
- Adaptable and personalised assessments and technology/media-enhanced feedback
- How new technologies can aid productivity, and challenge and provide timely feedback to students
- Making time and access more flexible (e.g. remixing asynchronous and synchronous activities)
- Consistent, coherent and stimulating designs that aid learner flow and growth
- Discovery and use of data or evidence that takes diverse forms

Project Resources

Harnessing multimodality in higher education: Principles for new learning, teaching and assessment

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Toolkit

A toolkit which comprises and articulates the four lenses of authority, experience, practice and innovation – this is designed to be used as a framework through which to explore the development of multimodal education, illustrating effective practice models. This is intended to be used by leaders and practitioners to promote productive conversations underpinned by three key principles: clarity and transparency; an understanding of the relationships and interactions of learning ecologies; and a sensitivity to wider learning contexts.

Access the seven chapters of the Harnessing Multimodality Toolkit using the links below:

Chapter 1

[Introduction >](#)

Chapter 2

[Harnessing multimodalities: A conversational framework >](#)

Chapter 3

[Simulation-based learning - Teesside University >](#)

Chapter 4

[Spatial fluency - Anglia Ruskin University >](#)

Chapter 4 supplemental A

[Spatial fluency and multimodalities >](#)

Chapter 4 supplemental B

[Spatial fluency stories >](#)

Chapter 5

[Generative Artificial Intelligence - University of Greenwich >](#)

Chapter 6

[Hybrid digital exams - Birmingham City University >](#)

Chapter 6 supplemental A

[A proctoring option infographic >](#)

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