

BILT CASE STUDY

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Centre for Innovation

Reimagining assessment and pedagogy for an AI-enabled world while keeping learning human.

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AI AND THE HUMAN CONVERSATION IN LEARNING

Centre for Innovation | University of Bristol

MA Digital Innovation



Rethinking Postgraduate learning

Across our new MA Digital Innovation programme, we've fundamentally rethought what postgraduate learning looks like in an AI-enabled world.

Our goal is elegantly simple yet profoundly important: to keep learning human, reflective, and adaptable in an age of artificial intelligence.

This means designing educational experiences that honour the complexity of human thinking whilst embracing the potential of new technologies.



The shift in assessment

From essays

Traditional written submissions
focused on polished final products

To conversations

Structured dialogues revealing thinking
and development

From product

Emphasis on what students produce
as final work

To process

Understanding how ideas evolve and
develop over time

We've moved to **Learning Conversations** – reflective dialogues that make thinking visible and assessment meaningful.

Learning Conversations in practice

Instead of traditional essays, students engage in **structured dialogues** where they articulate their learning journey.



Explain understanding

Students articulate what they've learned in their own words



Reflect on evolution

They discuss what changed their perspective throughout the learning process

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Demonstrate application

They show how theory connects to practice and real-world contexts



AI as mirror, not writer

AI plays a quiet but powerful role in our students' learning process. Rather than generating content, it serves as a **thinking partner**.

How students use AI

- Testing and refining initial ideas before discussions
- Challenging their own assumptions through dialogue
- Rehearsing explanations and identifying gaps in understanding
- Exploring alternative perspectives on complex problems

Students use AI as a rehearsal partner that helps them prepare for genuine intellectual engagement.



Assessment that AI cannot fake



Process over product

We evaluate how ideas evolved, not just the final outcome. Students document decision points, dead ends, and breakthroughs.



Reflection over perfection

Assessment focuses on self-awareness and critical thinking about their own learning journey and methodology.



Accountability over automation

Students demonstrate ethical use of AI, explaining when, why, and how they engaged with technology as a tool.

Why this approach works



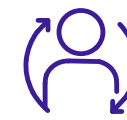
Authenticity

Learning Conversations reveal genuine understanding because students must explain, justify, and defend their thinking in real time.



Development

Focus on process allows us to see intellectual growth, creativity, and problem-solving skills that written work often obscures.



Connection

Dialogue creates meaningful relationships between educators and students, fostering deeper engagement with complex ideas.

The result is assessment that values **accountability, reflection, and self-awareness** - qualities that artificial intelligence simply cannot replicate.

Practical guidance for educators

Design for dialogue

Move beyond submission-based assessment to conversational formats that reveal thinking.

Ask students to own their learning

Request documentation of process, not just polished outcomes. Value rough drafts, iterations, and pivots.

Keep it human

Focus assessment on qualities that distinguish human intelligence: creativity, ethical reasoning, and adaptive thinking.

📄 **Small shifts create significant change.** Educators can begin by asking students to talk through their process in brief presentations or reflective conversations – no major curriculum overhaul required.

The future of learning

AI extending imagination, not replacing it

At the Centre for Innovation, we're integrating technology in ways that deepen human connection and amplify creativity rather than diminish it.

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The future of learning



Human insight

Critical thinking, ethical reasoning, creative problem-solving



AI support

Rehearsal space, idea testing, perspective expansion



Enhanced learning

Deeper understanding, authentic assessment, meaningful dialogue

This is what innovation in higher education looks like: **a conversation between minds** - supported by AI - but powered by people.

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