

Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal

Preface

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Welcome to the fourth edition of *Spark*.

UAL recognises that we live in a digital age, and that this is a formative factor within creative education. Creative education is rapidly changing as a result and we need a high-level understanding of, and clear response to, these digital shifts if we are to continue to influence its future direction.

I'm proud that UAL takes a leading role in this area internationally and we are pleased to be able to curate the thinking from the *DeL* conference in this edition. It's been a pleasure to collaborate with Texas State University, Penn State University and the New School, New York to bring this edition together.

Digital has always been important to UAL. We have demonstrated innovation and excellence in our curricula and teaching. Modual and the [UAL Futures](#) programmes are just two examples of how UAL is thinking in new and creative ways about exploring digitally influenced, cross-disciplinary creative education. The articles here represent multiple case studies of digital teaching and learning projects, both from within UAL and from other universities around the world. The *DeL* conference has been a significant achievement in terms of surfacing new digital pedagogic practices, and now, via *Spark*, publishing them for a wider audience.

To effect real and lasting change UAL has actively placed digital at the forefront of our strategic thinking. As part of this commitment I was delighted to take on a cross-University role as Pro- Vice Chancellor: Digital in September 2016. This is a daunting, but very exciting role to undertake. My immediate challenge was to define what we mean by digital at UAL and understand how its component parts - teaching and learning, IT services and our online estate - support our students' learning.

I wanted to clearly understand how our students and staff interact with the digital environment and how they make use of digital tools to aid their creative process. My research has shown that here at UAL we understand the myth of the 'digital native' and that whilst our students are entirely comfortable having grown up in the digital environment, we cannot assume that they **have a complete set of digital skills**. UAL has the advantage of being London-based where the digital creative industries are growing and the current graduate pool is not meeting the recruitment demand. By making digital skills explicit within our [Creative Attributes Framework](#) we can far better equip our graduates for work in the creative industries.

As we progress with the 'Digital at UAL' project we will continue to work with our digital creative community to ensure that we prepare UAL's graduates to respond in an agile way to the specific needs of industries with which we work; as well as creating a digital environment that allows our staff to become world-leading and actively respond to and shape, the creative digital arts and industries.