



Engaging Learners through Uncertainty

Holding Space for
**Interdisciplinarity, Novelty &
Open-endedness**
in Digital Learning

An uncertain world

- ❖ Conspiracy theories
- ❖ Mis- and disinformation
- ❖ Scams, deepfakes, AI slop
- ❖ Uncertain futures:
 - ❖ Economy
 - ❖ Climate
 - ❖ Health



Image credit: [The Sun “The Great Moon Hoax” of 1835](#), Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Uncertainty and information literacy

- ❖ Critical thinking and doubt
- ❖ Pausing to ask questions
- ❖ Contested sites/ambiguity



Image credit: [Viva Luna Studios](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Demands for certainty in higher education

- ❖ AI study tutors
- ❖ Neoliberal rhetorics
 - ❖ “return on investment”
 - ❖ a degree vs education
- ❖ Responses to student queries: “how long is a piece of string”

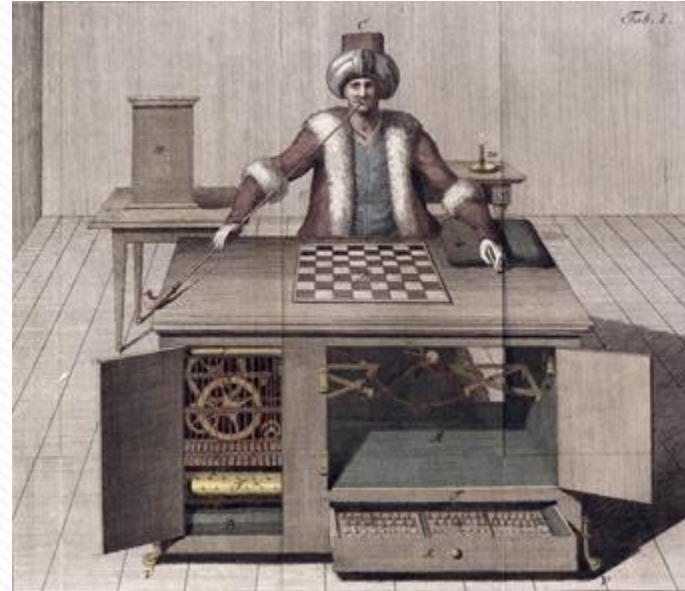


Image credit: [Racknitz – The Turk](#) on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

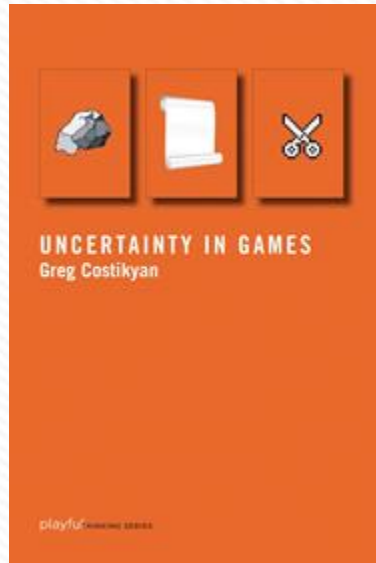
Digital learning and in-built certainty

- ❖ Closed vs open-ended questions
- ❖ Privileged disciplines
- ❖ Constructive alignment who?



Image credit: [Hans zeigt Zahlen an](#) on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

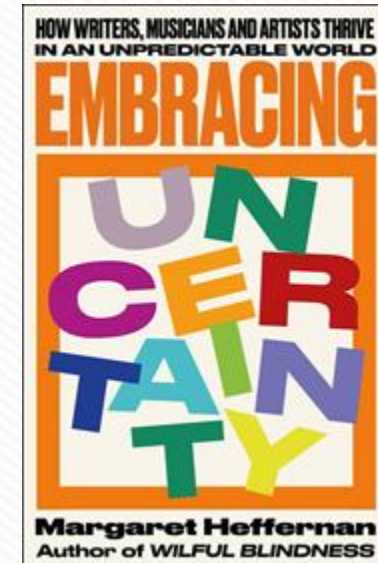
The value of not knowing



Uncertainty in Games by
Greg Costikyan (MIT
Press, 2013)



*On Not Knowing: How to Love
and Other Essays* by Emily
Ogden (Peninsula Press, 2022)



*Embracing Uncertainty: How
Writers, Musicians and Artists
Thrive in an Unpredictable
World* by Margaret Heffernan
(Bristol University Press, 2025)

Academic skills and uncertainty



Image credit: [Cootie Catcher](#) by Paul Blais on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

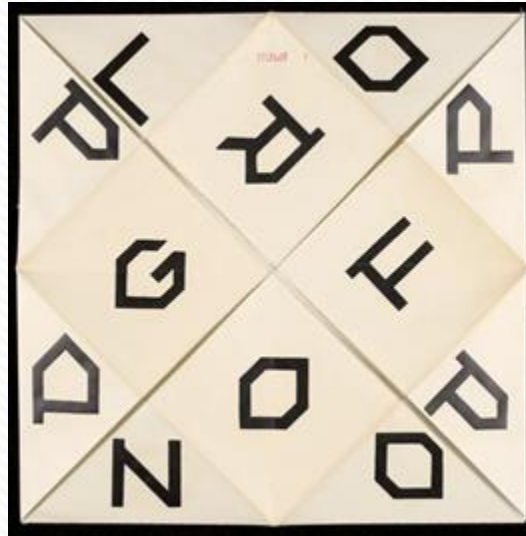


Image credit: Frog, Pond, Plop by dsh (1st fold), University of Manchester



QR code for “Digital Concrete: Reconstructing Frog, Pond, Plop”, by Jo Castle

Tolerance of uncertainty

- ❖ Sitting with discomfort
- ❖ Not knowing (yet)
- ❖ Process over outcome
- ❖ Reflective practice
- ❖ Magic tricks and games



Image credit: [Clay pairs of dice from Mingechevir \(3rd c. BC - 8th c. AD\)](#) [cropped] on [Wikipedia Commons](#)

Building uncertainty into digital learning: reflective quiz

Image credit: [University of Manchester My Learning Essentials Editing and Proofreading](#) CC BY-NC 3.0

Proofreading quiz

Select your responses to the quiz below to find suggestions to improve your current proofreading practice. You can type your answers to the feedback questions or write them in a notebook.

← previous

Q1

Q2

Q3

Q4

Q5

Q6

Q7

Q8

Q9

Q10

next →

Do you proofread when you are most alert?

Always

Occasionally

Never

That's good!



Do you notice that there are times of day that work best for you, in terms of your energy levels? What tools could you use to schedule your proofreading for when you're feeling more alert?

Note down your answers in the textbox below.

Building uncertainty into digital learning: comment streams

Image credit: [University of Manchester My Learning Essentials Strategies for effective note making](#) CC BY-NC 3.0

★ Activity: which strategies will you try?

Having watched these videos, which strategy do you think you'll try next? What context will you be making notes in and how do you think this strategy will help?

Responses from the same person are the same colour. (All comments are anonymous).

Post

Building uncertainty into digital learning: action organiser

Image credit: [University of Manchester My Learning Essentials Making the most of academic feedback](#) CC BY-NC 3.0

Action Organiser

Add your thoughts in the box below. Nobody else can see what you type. The text is saved automatically on this device and browser only. Use the arrows to move between sections or select 'Show/hide all' to view all sections on one page.

+

Show/hide all

Email a copy

Clear data

←

→

The details

Assignment title:

Unit code:

Date completing this:

Recognising the risks of uncertainty

- ❖ Who carries the burden of anxiety?
- ❖ Assumed knowledge and unwritten rules
- ❖ Navigating challenging emotions



Image credit: [The Crystal Ball by John William Waterhouse \(1902\)](#), public domain on [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Thank you!

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Image credit: [Logan Voss](#) on [Unsplash](#) [cropped]