Educational Excellence Symposium 2025

9 December 2025, Virtual delivery

Session abstracts

Reciprocal learning and pedagogical partnerships: reconceptualising observation and reflection to improve learning and teaching in higher education

Professor Matt O'Leary, Professor of Education, Birmingham City University

Drawing on research from several recent projects, this talk will explore how observation and reflection can be reconceptualised and applied as valuable tools to empower and improve educators' and students' reciprocal learning. Focusing on two innovative models of observation, the cycle of collaborative observation and unseen observation, I will share contextualised examples of how educators and students have used these models as the methodological drivers for collaborative inquiry into their learning and teaching experiences. From building student-staff pedagogical partnerships to creating deeper collegial connections between peers, this talk will draw on the experiences of the participants involved in these projects to illustrate how these collaborative, trust-based models of observation have revolutionised their practice and resulted in meaningful improvements in learning and teaching practices and outcomes.

Session 1.1a
International student pedagogy project

Simona Golshetti, University of Staffordshire

The number of international students attending UK universities has risen steadily over the last few years and many universities have made significant investment across their services to support this growth and uphold a high-quality student experience. This is not without its challenges, as international students' academic background and cultural shock when arriving to the UK (amongst other socio-economic factors), coupled with traditional HE structures, can impact their inclusion and successful academic performance.

Despite the availability of a wealth of information regarding numbers, demographics and motivations of international students, less consideration has been given to the environmental and structural factors surrounding the delivery of their courses. The Educational Development team at the University of Staffordshire is leading a 2- year project to explore and minimise the structural inequalities confronting international students, through the development of pedagogies with a specific focus on international student inclusivity. The first phase of the project has been interrogating the institution's current pedagogical practices - through focus groups with academic staff and international students. Based on our findings, we are now developing a toolkit to support staff in identifying and responding to students' needs, leading to the development and dissemination of good practices, across our institution.

This session will briefly introduce the project, then focus on the toolkit we have developed.

Student-produced videos to build awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in undergraduate degree programs

Dr Patrick Hamilton and Dr Shelly Dogra, University of Exeter

Internationally, there has been a drive to integrate the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) into undergraduate degree programmes. Embedding some SDGs in a meaningful way, however, can be challenging. In this project we are addressing this challenge by exploring the potential of co-creation of SDG-related module content. Students are collaborating to create video resources on the relationships of an aspect of their modules to UN-SDGs. We will discuss our approach to assessing the impact of the project both on the participating students and present results so far from reflective journals.

Parallel session 1, 10:40 - 11:40, Zoom 2

Session **1.2a**

A school-wide curriculum transformation to enhance student belonging and outcomes

Dr Hilary Wason and Dr Baljit Thatti, Kingston University London

Curriculum change is a 'highly complex social process which relates to individual, disciplinary and institutional identities' (Annala and Mäkinen, 2017 p. 1954). We will discuss a collaborative and innovative curriculum transformation project in the School of Life Science, Pharmacy and Chemistry at Kingston University which connected strategic leadership with academic and professional services colleagues, students, employers, and professional bodies (Howson and Kingsbury, 2021, p.3) to revalidate seven programmes for over 2500 students. Our holistic rather than siloed modular approach valued the diversity of voices in the design process and put student belonging and outcomes at the heart of the curriculum.

Session **1.2b**

Reimagining digital education support: Embedding a strategic enhancement model through curriculum transformation

Phil Vincent, University of Leeds

How do you move from fragmented digital support to an integrated service that enables meaningful curriculum transformation? This session shares the University of Leeds' journey to embed Digital Education Enhancement (DEE) as a strategic, values-led partner in learning and teaching. Drawing on the realignment of Learning Technologists into a central team and the university-wide Curriculum Redefined initiative, this presentation explores how DEE developed a service-led model, aligned CPD, and positioned itself to support scalable, inclusive digital curriculum innovation. Delegates will gain practical insights into operationalising enhancement at scale, through trust, partnership, and clarity of purpose.

Session **1.2c**

Gen-AI co-created maturity models for curriculum transformation

Katy Bernardelli, University of Gloucestershire

This presentation will demonstrate how a number of generative-AI tools have been utilised as co-creators in the development of interactive maturity models in support of curriculum transformation. These maturity models are designed to assist course teams to self-assess against key curriculum principles. They then use the self-assessment tool to generate personalised recommendations, allowing the development of an action plan.

This project has involved collaboration from academics and professional services staff across the university, drawing together existing internal and external recommended online resources into one place to provide a one-stop shop for curriculum and academic development support.

Parallel session 1, 10:40 - 11:40, Zoom 3

Session 1.3a

Bridging the gap: Course-embedded academic literacies support for first-year student success and equity

Dr Owen Wilson, University of New South Wales

The Academic Language & Literacies Embedding Project (ALL-E) at UNSW demonstrates how course-embedded, discipline-specific support can bridge academic literacy gaps for equity cohorts and aid all students' transition to university. Through strategic collaboration with faculties, ALL-E delivers timely academic literacy workshops directly linked to assessments, as well as online self-study modules on academic skills and integrity, to 20,000+ students from T3, 2024 – T2, 2025. The project has achieved high student and faculty satisfaction (90%) and increased student confidence (85%) as well as a 4% higher average grade for students who engage. This presentation reports on current approach and future direction.

Session 1.3b

Assessment unbound: Students producing learning, belonging, and change

Dr Maria Ishkova, The University of Sydney Business School

What if assessment could become a vehicle for academic and personal support? We like to movie-move it! pilot flipped the script in a third-year business unit, where students were invited to ditch traditional assignments to become producers, partners, and peer-mentors. Their challenge: create videos and in-class activities on teamwork and psychological safety to deliver them to 224 first-year students navigating university for the first time. The result? A cycle of belonging and resilience for both cohorts. This session provokes rethinking assessment not just as a task to be graded, but as a powerful mechanism for student-led support and institutional change.

Session 1.3c

A Neuro-affirming model for disability support and academic belonging: The Neuro-affirming learning guide

Dr Rachel Kasturi, University of New South Wales

Reasonable adjustments meet legal requirements in higher education but often fall short of building real belonging. This session introduces the Neuro-affirming Learning Guide (NLG): a relational framework developed at the University of New South Wales, Australia, to enhance how staff understand and support autistic and neurodivergent students. Offered in tandem with reasonable adjustments, the NLG includes values-based scripts, co-designed visual scaffolds, and a "Plus One" Universal Design for Learning approach. Drawing on early implementation, the session shares emerging insights into how small, relational strategies can transform support from compliance into connection, and from transactional support into collaborative inclusion.

Parallel session 1, 10:40 - 11:40, Zoom 4

Session 1.4a
Creative health: A 21st century healthcare placement
Professor Victoria Ridgway and Dr Alison Walsh, University of Chester

Creative Health is poised to transform 21st century healthcare. National bodies recommend healthcare students and professionals receive education and practical experience of the arts and creative health; HE must rise to this challenge. This session, student co presented, reports on the first known creative health placement for undergraduate nurses. The placement evaluation, improved student wellbeing and increased knowledge of creative health/social prescribing are shared. Examples of how interdisciplinary working could be used to create an innovative educational experience will be shared and we will reflect on what we have learnt so far about incorporating arts into nurse education.

Session 1.4b
Reflecting on reflection: Co-creating a toolkit to support student teachers' reflective practice
Dr Catharine Bleasdale, The Open University

Co-presented by a tutor and a student teacher, the presentation outlines a collaborative project that focused on student experience of reflection during a PGCE programme to inform the co-creation of a supportive toolkit to scaffold development of reflective practice. Underpinned by a co-creation framework, eight student teachers and four teacher educators established the optimum scaffolds for effective reflective practice through evaluating established models and personal preferences. The resulting toolkit ensured individual choice regarding how and when to reflect, as well as considering who and what to use to scaffold reflective activity.

Session 1.4c
Securing students' outcomes through enhancing lab-based learning: A case study
Dr Manase Ako Ayuk, Brunel University London Pathway College

Laboratory-based learning has been given central role in science education because it develops students' ability to acquire transferable skills and their employability. While reviewing the Life Science Programme as Programme Lead, I noticed a relatively low pass rates for Biology and Chemistry. Analysis of the results spreadsheets revealed that students who failed performed poorly in the lab-component or did not submit the online lab report. The present case study shows that optimising laboratory-based learning enhances students' outcomes and employability. Early feedback and a co-creation approach has been developed which has reduced the number of non-submissions, improved the quality of lab reports, students' outcomes and overall experience.

Parallel session 1, 10:40 - 11:40, Zoom 5

Session 1.5a
Increasing student attainment and academic behavioural confidence through the expansion of active collaborative learning at Nottingham Trent University
Kerry Gough and Anita Love, Nottingham Trent University

Nottingham Trent University adopted SCALE-UP (2013-) and Team-Based Learning (2022-) as preferred pedagogies following institutional evaluations showing their positive impact on student success. SCALE-UP improved attainment and progression, especially for underrepresented groups. The TBL Pilot (2022–2025) showed gains in academic confidence and module outcomes, reducing fails and low grades. With a positive OfS Type 2 evaluation,

both pedagogies now support NTU's Access and Participation Plan through the ACL@NTU Project, promoting inclusive, active collaborative learning across the institution.

Session 1.5b
Reducing withdrawals through dynamic student support: Using data to provide timely interventions for 'at risk' students and improve continuation
Claire Burrell and Dr Elaine Rust, University of Portsmouth

This session shares a faculty-wide approach to identifying and supporting 'at risk' students to reduce withdrawals, enhance continuation and strengthen achievement. Moving beyond static demographic indicators, our model employs a dynamic learner analytics framework that adjusts students' risk scores based on behaviours such as attendance, submissions and grades. These scores trigger targeted interventions from key teams and individuals, enabling timely and personalised support. Delegates will gain insight into a framework that balances ethical data use with scalable interventions, offering practical strategies for improving outcomes and building student-centred approaches to retention.

Session 1.5c
From insight to impact: Using wellbeing data to support student belonging and success in dance education
Elsa Urmston and Tobi Welstand-Keryk, London Contemporary Dance School

How can wellbeing data be transformed into meaningful support for students? This session explores how six years of longitudinal research at London Contemporary Dance School has shaped strategic interventions to enhance belonging, progression, and success in pre-professional training. Co-presented with the Student Wellbeing Team, the session will showcase key findings, illustrate their translation into practice through student vignettes, and highlight the role of staff CPD in fostering a compassionate, responsive culture towards student wellbeing. Delegates will gain practical insights into using evidence to inform support services, teaching practice, and institutional strategy to create environments where students can thrive.

Parallel session 2, 12:00 – 12:00, Zoom 1

Session 2.1b
'So where do I fit in?' Making a university's learning and teaching strategy relevant to professional services staff
Professor Bethan Wood, Laura Montgomerie and Heather Walker, University of Glasgow

University Strategies set out the organisation's plans, objectives and tracks for the future – they are essentially a direction of what they want to achieve and where they want to be, and crucially how they expect to get there. However, for some staff they seem like goals that have little relevance for them. This session aims to demonstrate how a University's Learning and Teaching Strategy was made relevant to the work of professional services staff, and by the end, delegates will be able to identify how strategy is put into practice at the grass roots level.

Session 2.1c
Spinning plates: Supporting staff to develop inclusive education
Dr Ceri Morris and Rachel Jones, Cardiff University

Inclusive Education is essential if students are given every opportunity to reach their potential. In this session we will reflect on the four years of the CU Inclusive Education project, giving insights into the development of a university-wide approach to inclusive

education, and the strategies used to ensure coherent and consistent teaching practices which will enhance student experience and success. We will explore how we used a range of CPD strategies including embedded Fellowships workshops, stand-alone live and asynchronous CPD, co-creation with students, toolkits and resources, and bespoke training, and give hints and tips for inclusive practice.

Parallel session 2, 12:00 – 12:00, Zoom 2

Session 2.2a
Creating the conditions for transformative learning via authentic assessment: Insights, challenges and reflections
Frantzeska Kolyda, University of Westminster

In an increasingly complex, rapidly evolving and interconnected world, how do we prepare our students to be 'fit for the future'? At the University of Westminster, our strategic commitment is to develop an outstanding teaching and learning experience that is authentic, practical, active, inquiry-focused, and socially engaged. Authentic learning and assessment play a crucial role towards educational excellence. By supporting students in developing productive learning mindsets and confidence, we take important steps towards fostering success for all our students. The session focuses on two approaches of authentic assessment in Level 5 within the Computing curriculum, and discusses practice-led insights, challenges, student feedback and reflections.

Session 2.2b
Can we trust AI detectors? Cheat GPT, assignment verification, and when AI use should be encouraged... Even when it isn't
Dr Alessio Faccia, University of Birmingham Dubai

Institutions keep rushing to ban "Cheat GPT" and enforce AI-free assessments, but this session interrogates the reliability of detection tools and the flawed assumptions underpinning them. False positives, opaque algorithms, and misaligned assessment policies risk undermining learning more than AI itself. Drawing on practical cases from finance, audit, and regulation training, the session reframes AI not as a threat, but as a potential scaffold for deeper thinking. Participants will explore how to redesign curriculum and assessments to promote transparency, critical engagement, and academic integrity, without falling into the illusion of detection.

Session 2.2c
Group dissertation with industry projects: A case study
Dr Rabeya Khatoon, University of Bristol

This research explores a novel approach to Economics postgraduate dissertations by integrating teamwork and industry projects. The design applies the equity share model and repeated interactions with mutual monitoring to address free-rider issues within team environments. The interdisciplinary MSc program is designed to promote team-building, a sense of belonging, and an appreciation for diversity among students. Data for the study is drawn from students' personal reflections, captured through emotional line graphs related to teamwork, assessment, and feedback. These insights are then analyzed alongside student performance, assessment schedules, and team composition to evaluate the experiences of the program's first couple of cohorts.

Parallel session 2, 12:00 – 12:00, Zoom 3

Session 2.3a
The chatbot will see you now: AI simulations of professional practice
Adam Nicholls, University of Exeter

This session showcases an innovative, practice-led approach to education using custom-built GPTs to simulate client interactions, advocacy, and Socratic dialogue. Drawing on experiences in legal education, it explores how generative AI can support student development of professional, communication, and reasoning skills through immersive, low-risk practice. The session outlines the limitations of using AI "off the shelf," demonstrates the process and benefits of developing custom GPT simulations, and shares student feedback on their effectiveness. Attendees will gain practical strategies and insights into how AI can reintroduce dialogic, experiential learning at scale, enhancing not replacing, human-led education across disciplines.

Session 2.3b
A student-centric approach to developing independent learning and digital proficiency
Dr Alan Hanna, Queen's University Belfast

This session outlines the design and evolution of a module developed to boost digital proficiency and independent learning. Leveraging universal design for learning, the module empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey and become confident, lifelong learners. Insights include strategies for motivating students, fostering agency, and supporting career readiness through authentic, project-based assessment. Attendees will discover practical approaches to support student learning, integrate reflective practice and drive improvements in engagement and outcomes.

Session 2.3c
Enhancing understanding of line manager roles in work-based learning programmes
Dr Kristen Reid, The Open University and Dr Rebecca Jan Quew-Jones, University of Portsmouth

This presentation will explore the crucial role that workplace line managers play in facilitating work-based learning within degree and higher apprenticeships. Presenters will draw on findings from their research to uncover how this learning is facilitated within organisations, the challenges that line managers experience and to understand their practices in supporting work-based learning. This presentation offers insights into the role of line managers and 'work-based mentors', who support 80 per cent of apprentice learning but whose practices are far less visible in pedagogical research. Our findings have important implications for how students are supported in HE work-based learning programmes.

Parallel session 2, 12:00 – 12:00, Zoom 4

Session 2.4a
Inclusive learning with AI: Rethinking lab education
Dr Wennie Subramonian and Anita Gupta, The University of Manchester

This student partnership project explores how AI can be used to promote more inclusive learning in engineering laboratories. We showcase a pilot project featuring AI-supported pre-lab activities designed to reduce barriers such as complex technical language, unequal

group dynamics, and limited prior lab experience. Drawing on insights from a student focus group, we present early findings and scalable strategies to support equitable learning across diverse cohorts. The session invites participants to reflect on their own teaching and consider how AI can be responsibly and effectively integrated into inclusive STEM education practices.

Session 2.4b
From passive learners to empowered changemakers: Lessons from a two-year transformative ESD relational practice project
Dr Janbee Shaik Mopidevi, Innovate Teaching Research & Advocacy Consulting (ITRAC) Global

"Transformative Sustainability Education as an Everyday and Embodied Relational Practice" redefines sustainability learning as a collaborative journey. Across two phases in the Netherlands and Germany, undergraduate research partners teamed with families, educators, and children—using photovoice, drawing, and creative workshops—to explore and nurture sustainable mindsets. The initiative yielded significant gains in systems thinking, ethical decision-making, emotional resilience, and leadership. Drawing on these insights, the project introduces a five-stage Relational Co-Creation Framework—spanning socio-cultural scaffolding, student-led co-design, disorienting dilemmas, competency transfer, and governance support. This theory-driven model positions students as empowered changemakers, offering higher education a practical blueprint to co-create just, regenerative communities.

Session 2.4c
Co-creating inclusion: Student partnerships in EDI for Arts and Humanities
Dr Simona Aimar and Mazal Oaknin, University College London

Our session explores student-staff co-lead Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. We will explore co-created inclusive teaching practices in Philosophy and Modern Languages and the AWE initiative empowering Afghan women's education. Through a dynamic case study, participants will gain practical allyship strategies to enhance equitable learning environments. We will showcase impactful student partnerships and offers actionable insights for fostering inclusion. Our goal is to inspire educators to co-create transformative educational experiences.

Parallel session 2, 12:00 – 12:00, Zoom 5

Session 2.5a
Supporting student collaboration during online distance study
Helena Staszkiewicz, The Open University

Online learning is becoming more prevalent, a trend accelerated by Covid19, and often this learning is shared by students who are living geographically disparate and are likely to never meet. But what part should peers play in online study? This session shares reflections upon a short research Praxis study by three researchers who explored adult student interactions when studying a degree online, and the findings from the student interviews, to help inspire best practice. This session also shares the innovative use of Artificial Intelligence in coding and analysis of this project.

"Making it stick: University student views on what helps - and hinders - campus community building"

Dr Susan Doherty, Queen's University Belfast

What makes a campus "sticky"? This session will be based on the findings of a co-created research project with an undergraduate student, exploring what encourages or prevents students from engaging with university life beyond the classroom. Drawing on survey and focus group data, it will highlight practical, student-informed strategies to foster belonging and boost engagement. Aligned with the symposium theme of using data and insight to strategically support student success, the session will offer actionable recommendations for creating more inclusive, connected campus environments.

Session **2.5c**

Partnering qualitative and quantitative data approaches in transition and belonging initiatives: An institutional learning journey in two case-studies

Dr Vicky Greenaway, Royal Holloway, University of London

Using two case-studies of Transition and Belonging initiatives at Royal Holloway, University of London and Kingston University, this presentation shares our learning of how to usefully engage qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to drive improvements in the numerical performance indicators associated with student success (here, retention and continuation). Our presentation adds to the sector conversation on the complexity of defining student success through metrics; it will afford specific insights for those working on Transition and Belonging initiatives and propose general principles around the successful partnering of qualitative and quantitative data of interest to all those working on student success strategies.

Parallel session 3, 13:50 – 14:50, Zoom 1

Session **3.1a**

Balancing standardisation and personalisation to improve equity and student outcomes

Helen Cooke and Dr Tyrrell Golding, The Open University

With almost 200,000 students studying over 400 Open University modules, achieving the right balance between personalisation and standardisation is essential for designing inclusive, effective module websites. The Standardising Module Design project was launched in early 2024 to improve the consistency, quality, and efficiency of module design at The Open University, whilst respecting the unique voice and teaching style of each module. In this session, you'll learn how the project team designed the Toolkit with inclusivity in mind - particularly for students and staff with protected characteristics - resulting in a solution that will benefit a wider range of users.

Session **3.1b**

Positioning educational excellence through a sense of place

Dr Jonathan Eaton, University of Cumbria

Working with and through a sense of place is increasingly important for higher education providers in fulfilling their civic responsibilities and meeting the complex needs of the communities that they serve. This presentation will explore how the University of Cumbria

has reframed its strategic approach to learning, teaching and assessment through drawing upon a profound sense of place to co-develop a distinctive reimagining of educational excellence. The session will be of value for attendees interested in the transformation of learning and teaching at scale through harnessing a co-design process aligned with institutional philosophies and the wider societal and economic landscape.

Session 3.1C
Co-creating pedagogical excellence: A shared repository for active blended learning

Dr Maria Allen and Aimee-Lee A. Youngson, University of Salford

The presentation begins by defining Active Blended Learning (ABL) and how this new approach is being introduced within a Business School in the Northwest of England. It explores how the imminent adoption of this pedagogical model has led to the co-creation of a shared repository of teaching artefacts. This resource enables staff to contribute and access examples of effective practice. The presentation highlights the benefits of ABL and demonstrates how the repository should enhance teaching quality, fosters collaboration, and support both staff development and student outcomes.

Parallel session 3, 13:50 – 14:50, Zoom 2

Session 3.2a
Integrating care: Advancing midwifery and physiotherapy education through a spiral, interdisciplinary approach to pelvic floor dysfunction

Lorna Dow, University of Brighton

Pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) affects up to 40% of women, yet its teaching within midwifery and physiotherapy programmes remains limited and profession specific. This session introduces an interdisciplinary spiral curriculum on PFD, developed to enhance integration across both professional disciplines. The curriculum incorporates collaborative teaching methods, interactive learning, and progressive topic development, aiming to enhance clinical practice. Student and staff perspectives will be shared to highlight the educational and clinical value of this approach, alongside strategies for addressing sensitive topics collaboratively. The session will conclude with reflections and recommendations for advancing teaching practice and identifying opportunities for future educational research.

Session 3.2b
Embedding solutions-oriented pedagogy: Rethinking environmental curriculum in higher education

Dr Adrian Gonzalez and Professor Claire Hughes, University of York

The study of intractable 'wicked' problems such as the climate crisis and biodiversity loss are critical components of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences disciplines. Whilst a range of progressive pedagogies exist to support these disciplines and content, a growing range of issues such as 'climate fatalism' in young people indicate the need for further advancements in learning frameworks. The presentation will explore the wholescale adoption and approach to a 'solutions oriented' pedagogy in the Department of Environment and Geography at the University of York.

Parliamentary simulation of legislative activity as an example of interdisciplinary experiential learning

Dr Sofiya Kartalova, University of Nottingham

This paper discusses my teaching experience as a legal scholar teaching undergraduate students, who possess knowledge of politics and governance but not of the law, as part of an optional module on Law-making in Europe, which I designed and taught myself. For this purpose, I created a parliamentary simulation of legislative activity - an innovative teaching method which allowed the students on the module to learn the basics of drafting laws and critically analysing proposed legal solutions in an engaging and interactive manner. More specifically, this exercise gave them the opportunity to discuss the merits of a proposed bill of legislation in a classroom, according to a simplified version of the parliamentary procedural rules of the UK Parliament. This is a prime example of an interdisciplinary experiential learning initiative because it demands that its participants experience first-hand the debates and deliberations in the legislative process by using their political acumen and some newly acquired basic legal skills. The paper suggests that such an exercise could have a positive impact on the students' motivation for learning more about the law and its relationship with politics, and discusses to what extent their previously held assumptions about the legislative process could change as a result of their participation in the parliamentary simulation.

Parallel session 3, 13:50 – 14:50, Zoom 3

Session **3.3a**

Propeller projects: Support for graduates' professional transitions

Dr Lise Uytterhoeven, London Contemporary Dance School

London Contemporary Dance School supports graduates' transitions into diverse roles in the dance ecology through Propeller projects, which give students real-world experience applying for professional opportunities in the performing arts industry. This presentation will outline and evaluate the current Propeller projects, which reflect the range of professional destinations that students prepare. Zooming in on the Propeller choreographic residency, the presentation will share initial reflections on challenges identified through the first two years of the project and on its initial impact on the dance ecology. Voices from graduates reflecting on the Propeller opportunities are woven into the presentation.

Session **3.3b**

Bartholomew's taxonomy of self: The motivated undergraduate student' – Students lead competency-focused conversations during personal tutorials

Dr Jane Bartholomew, Educational Consultant

Developing intrinsically motivated, autonomous graduates is arguably the purpose of a transformative higher education experience. Between the ages of 18-22, human beings progress along the adolescent-to-young-adult continuum. This developmental journey requires a supportive personal tutorial framework to accompany their studies to ensure students develop the necessary 'self-awareness', 'independence' and 'autonomy' to be ready for their futures. 'Bartholomew's Taxonomy of Self: The motivated undergraduate student' is a tool for personal tutors to use to encourage students to start the tutorial by

sharing their own initial observations and thoughts as they explore the core competencies embedded within the Taxonomy.

Bridging educational traditions and active learning: Evidence-based OBE pedagogy for chinese students in a cognitively complex syllabus
Dr Leyla Ranjbari, University of Birmingham

This session presents evidence-based innovations in academic and personal support developed while teaching Computational Finance (CF) to Chinese students within an Outcome-Based Education framework for Financial Mathematics Program. Confronted with challenges such as students' lack of prerequisites, cultural silence rooted in Confucian-heritage traditions, and institutional monitoring pressures, I designed adaptive pedagogical models that blended Bloom's taxonomy scaffolding, flipped learning, problem-based tutorials, and assessment redesign.within a highly complex CF course. By integrating active learning environmen, student performance improved dramatically: average marks increased from 61.2 (2018) to 74.6 (2020), pass rates rose from 88.64% to 100%, and satisfaction reached 4.4/5. As an international recognition and institutional impact, the City University of Hong Kong, as external moderators, adopted the course materials as a benchmark for internship and rated the assessment "Excellent". The session will share transferable models for supporting international learners and promoting inclusive excellence in UK higher education.

Parallel session 3, 13:50 – 14:50, Zoom 4

Shifting the balance of power: The benefits of working collaboratively with students to create innovative school projects
Emma Bryant, Grace Lee Su Ern, and Shreevanth Gopalakrishnan, University College London

Students have consistently reported the positive outcomes of co-creating projects run with schools by the UCL Access and Widening Participation School Engagement programme. We will discuss the benefits of co-production and working with academics in a less hierarchical way. UCL students have worked on these projects since 2018 and, using their feedback and post-university outcomes we will discuss how these experiences enriched their university experience and helped with next steps. Student members of the 'Ants, Swarms and Robots' schools project will share their experiences. The discussion will conclude with a consideration of the benefits and challenges of co-creation.

A seat at the table: Co-creating supportive pedagogies with students in early childhood studies
Ruksana Beigi, University of East London

What happens when students are given not just a voice—but a seat at the table?
This session spotlights a bold, creative project that put Early Childhood Studies students in the lead. Through art-making, storytelling, and honest dialogue, students explored their experiences of mental health, identity, and employability, and helped redesign the very support systems meant to serve them. The result? New ways of teaching, assessing, and

connecting. Packed with practical ideas and powerful student insights, this session shows how co-creation can move beyond consultation to real, inclusive change. Come be inspired by what's possible when we reimagine learning, together.

Session 3.4c
Careers Assessment Portfolio (CAP): Linking programme assessments to better student futures
Dr Eamonn Walsh, King's College London

Discover how CAPSTONE empowers students to bridge the gap between academia and the workplace. This session explores a structured framework for reflection that helps students connect academic achievements to career goals, build confidence, and sharpen their narrative skills. Through reflection logs and portfolio development, participants will see how CAPSTONE supports self-awareness, career readiness, and effective self-presentation. Join us to learn how this approach equips students to articulate their experiences with clarity, strengthen job applications, and transition successfully into the workforce.

Parallel session 3, 13:50 – 14:50, Zoom 5

Session 3.5a
Driving rapid enhancement: Data-led approaches to student success in collaborative provision
Dr Christopher Lewis, Buckinghamshire New University

Franchised and validated provision forms a significant part of the UK higher education landscape, yet it presents unique challenges for ensuring consistent student experience, outcomes, and regulatory compliance. This paper presents a case study of a university-wide initiative to transform academic quality and teaching excellence across a large, high-risk portfolio of franchised provision representing over two-thirds of institutional enrolment.

Session 3.5b
Co-creating success: The impact of a student-led learning analytics dashboard on retention and equity
Dr Catherine Comfort, The Open University

Discover how learning analytics can transform student success.
This presentation showcases the Open University's innovative Student-Facing Dashboard (SFD), co-created with students and staff to improve retention and outcomes—especially for underrepresented groups. Drawing on a decade of analytics, the SFD provides intuitive, actionable insights and prescriptive guidance that empower students to take control of their learning. Two years of research reveal significant improvements in assignment submissions and pass rates, particularly among students with additional needs. Join us to explore how data-driven, machine-learning powered tools can foster equity, motivation, and academic confidence across diverse student populations.

Session 3.5c
Evaluation partnerships: Embedding evaluation into teaching practice for educational enhancement
Dr Frania Hall, University of the Arts, London

How can evaluation help staff develop their teaching practice while also being meaningful for students? Embedding evaluation design into teaching practice and adapting creative and

inclusive processes in partnership with students helps staff understand what works, collaborate with students and share best practice. This approach to evaluation, developed within the Media School at University of the Arts, London has allowed staff to design and implement their own evaluations – providing rigorous data for teaching enhancement. This session will introduce the blog and the tool kits that we have implemented and outline the co-creation projects that we have evaluated.

Parallel session 4, 14:55 – 15:35, Zoom 1

Session 4.1a
Re-imagining learning experiences with design thinking
Dr James Forde, University of Leeds

Design thinking is an approach that is under-recognised and utilised in educational development, but it has the potential to radically shift perceptions and work practices, particularly in relation to curriculum design. This talk outlines how the University of Leeds (UK) is using design thinking tools and methodologies to enable and encourage an institution-wide approach to student-centred curriculum design. The professional development and staff support opportunities available are vital to the long-term success of this programme of change. This talk outlines how staff are supported and how the university aims to embed long-lasting and meaningful change as a result.

Session 4.1b
A badge without barriers: Taking universal design beyond the classroom, from Ireland to Northumbria University
Jean Moore, Northumbria University and Kathryn Orr, University College Dublin

This presentation will showcase an innovative and flexible Universal Design Digital Badge staff development programme to upskill staff in how to embed a whole institution approach to access and inclusion, ensuring an inclusive educational experience for all students.
You'll learn about the origins of the programme and of Northumbria University's collaboration with University College Dublin to contextualise it for use in a UK Higher Education setting.
You will have the opportunity to learn about the resources available and reflect on how this approach could be used in your own institution using the open education resources developed by the project team.

Parallel session 4, 14:55 – 15:35, Zoom 2

Session 4.2a
Impact of curriculum embedding of Library InfoSkills Programme for UWTSD widening participation cohorts
Jason Huxtable, Olivia Edmonds and Sarah Jones, University of Wales-Trinity Saint David

This presentation outlines the formal curriculum embedding of the Library Online InfoSkills programme at UWTSD Birmingham campus, designed to enhance digital and academic literacy. Through strategic integration into core curriculum and a blended delivery model, the initiative has improved student engagement, confidence, and academic integrity. Evaluation data and qualitative feedback demonstrate the programme's role in bridging educational gaps and fostering inclusive learning environments. The success of this approach has informed wider institutional practice, positioning InfoSkills as a model for supporting equitable access and success in higher education.

Stop. Step In. Solve: Developing the 3-S forum theatre approach for training and assessing professional development attributes in dental students

Dr Ines Avery, University of Plymouth

Professional competencies such as cultural competence, professional integrity, social accountability, and ethics are challenging to teach and assess. At Peninsula Dental School, we developed an innovative Forum Theatre approach within the Professional Development and Lifelong Learning module. Working with educators, forum theatre specialists, and professional actors, we created authentic dental scenarios. In workshops, students paused live performances to address dilemmas, propose solutions, or step into roles, followed by reflection and a shared symposium. This immersive method fostered deep engagement, critical analysis, and peer learning, offering a safe yet authentic environment for competencies that are traditionally difficult to assess.

Parallel session 4, 14:55 – 15:35, Zoom 3

Session **4.3a**
Enhancing student retention and belonging in distance education: A personal tutor pilot at The Open University

Emma Clarence and Jude Wilson-Hughes, The Open University

This paper presents findings from a two-year pilot project at the Open University aimed at addressing declining student retention and progression at Level 1. Recognising the importance of connection, belonging, and mattering in fostering student resilience, the project introduced a personal tutor model to support students throughout their studies. The pilot targeted students on four social science qualifications identified as being at risk, providing individualised pastoral care and academic mentoring. The results demonstrate significant improvements in student outcomes, tutor engagement, and institutional collaboration, while also highlighting ongoing challenges in fostering peer learning communities.

Session **4.3b**
The alternative field experience: A sustainable approach to simulated practice learning

Nicholas Gladstone, Megan Hall-Jackson and Jen Taylor, London South Bank University

Due to challenges faced at London South Bank University with placement shortages and evolving workforce demands a five-day, online simulated practice placement was developed for student nurses. The programme was delivered to over 500 pre-registration nursing students across all fields using problem based learning with real life, interdisciplinary scenarios that explored collaborative practice and meeting patients' needs. Collaborative activities were underpinned by professional videos that drew on patient stories; reinforced with structured debriefs that promoted communication, empathy and critical thinking. While some students had difficulties engaging due to varying levels of digital literacy, feedback from both students and staff was overwhelmingly positive.

Parallel session 4, 14:55 – 15:35, Zoom 4

Session 4.4a
Sounding off and sorting out: Embedding student voice in institutional improvement
Dr Emily Finch, University of Surrey

Students do not just want their voices heard: they want to feel involved in improving their university experience. When problems arise, they want to be 'in the room' (literally and figuratively) working on solutions. Sound Off and Sort It Out is a student-created initiative that places students at the centre of conversations about things that matter to them. Using the World Café, this approach creates a comfortable space for open dialogue, collaborative problem-solving and honest feedback loops. It moves beyond performative listening and takes meaningful steps towards a more responsive, student-centred approach based upon genuine partnerships between staff and students.

Session 4.4b
Empowering future-ready graduates: Integrating professional body partnerships and industry certifications in higher education
Dr Ramalingam Dharmalingam, Majan University College

Dr. Ramalingam is an Assistant Professor with extensive experience in academic leadership. Dr. Ram has been instrumental in creating and launching the BSc (Hons) Computing and BSc (Hons) Data Science programmes at MUC. As an active researcher, Dr. Ram has secured funding for AI-based projects, including disease detection in agriculture. He integrates industry partnerships into his teaching and has authored multiple papers. A SFHEA, Senior Member of IEEE, and Fellow of Internet Governance, he is also a Gold Member of ISACA. Dr. Ram contributes to MUC's strategic growth and national efforts in higher education through programme reviews at MoHERI, Oman.

Parallel session 4, 14:55 – 15:35, Zoom 5

Session 4.5a
Embedding employability and strengths into the curriculum at two different UK business schools
Dr Aikaterini Koskina, Dr Carola Weissmeyer, Keele University and Emma Holt, Dr Anastasia Kynighou, Manchester Metropolitan University

This session explores how Manchester Metropolitan and Keele Business Schools have embedded employability and strengths profiling into their curricula. Using Cappfinity's Strengths Profile, students gain insight into their talents to support academic success and career planning. The session highlights institutional strategies, compares approaches and adoption timelines, and reflects on impact, challenges, and future directions. It aligns with national calls for curriculum reforms and closer alignment of educational outputs and curricula with labour market needs, with employability as a central theme, showing how strengths-based coaching enhances student confidence, resilience, and graduate outcomes.

Session 4.5b
Expected educational gains through the eyes of non-traditional students: Insights from Arden University
Dr Kikelomo Mbada and Professor Brian Smith, Arden University

What do non-traditional students expect to gain during their university experience? This session presents findings from focus group discussions conducted at Arden University regarding the educational gains that students consider most crucial for their personal, professional, academic, and social development. The presentation emphasises student perspectives and priorities, which are useful for informing curriculum design and educational strategies, covering areas from confidence and communication skills to English proficiency, academic writing, critical thinking, and practical experience. Join us to discuss how higher education institutions can align educational outcomes with students' aspirations through meaningful consultation with students.