



'Authentic Student Engagement in Contemporary Higher Education'

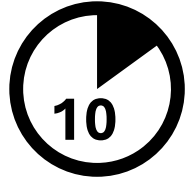
Northumbria University

Presentation and presenter information

Instructions/info

- Abstracts are organised by themes and alphabetical order (Surname)
- Please check the programme for times of sessions

Session Types



Hybrid

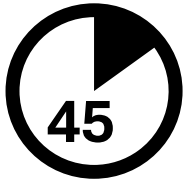
- **Presentations of Practice:** Clear introduction of practice, implementation strategy and impact



- **Storytelling:** Mainly use pictures to narrate the project

In Person Only

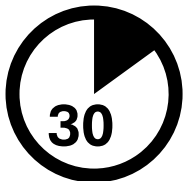
- **Poster:** A2 specifying project introduction, project delivery and Impact



- **Campfire Conversation:** 2-minute outline of research project summary followed by discussions with the audience (no PowerPoints involved)



- **Podcast:** Sit down and discuss your work in a short interview

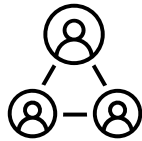


- **Interactive workshop.** A chance for delegates to get hands-on with your project/research/approaches to student engagement

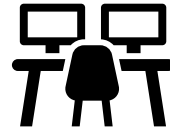
Sub -Themes



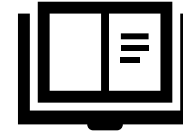
Responding to
GenAI
(including playful
and purposeful
learning)



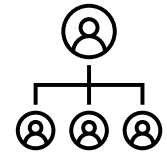
Partnering with
Students as
Co-Creators of a
Future Higher
Education



Embedding
Employability
into
Assessment
and the
Curriculum

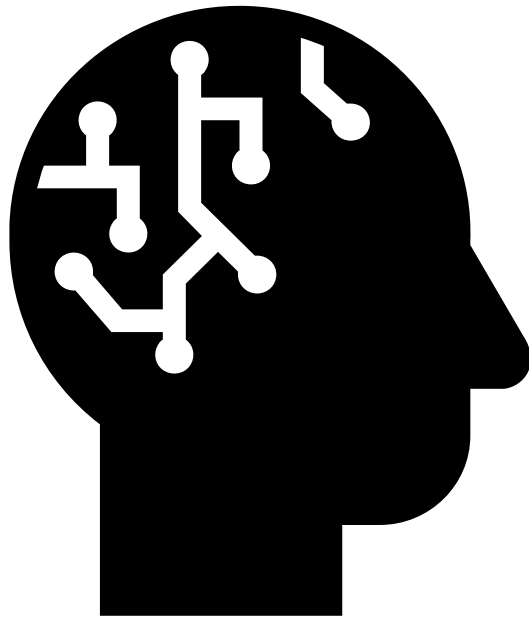


Ensuring Education
Remains People
Focused: Balancing
Attendance with
Inclusivity



Evolving Roles
and Third-Space
Practices for
Authentic
Engagement

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Drawing the Line: Why Students Reject AI-Automated Marking in UK Higher Education

Tadhg Blommerde, Dr Stephany Verger, Nurun Nahar, Kerry Gibbins, Henry Richards,
Adam Greenway, Chloe Peeters, Idanai Dube

This mixed-methods study investigates a critical frontier in student engagement: the use of Generative AI (GenAI) for the automated marking of summative assessments. Adopting a ‘Students as Partners’ (SaP) framework, the research integrated qualitative co-researcher insights (7 student interviews) with a survey of 549 UK students. Analysis reveals a significant ‘trust gap’. Despite high digital literacy (mean 3.95/5), students overwhelmingly reject AI-led marking, with 57.2% preferring wholly human assessment and only 2.6% supporting wholly automated systems. Participants perceive AI marking as a threat to the human-to-human relatedness essential for flourishing, viewing it as a breach of the institutional contract that leaves them feeling ‘dismissed’. The impact of this work provides a framework for relational governance. It offers a guide for HE leadership, demonstrating that protecting human-centric validation is vital for maintaining student engagement and ensuring perceived fairness in an increasingly automated academic landscape.



The Clarity Gap: How Ambiguity in AI-Enhanced Assessments Impacts Student Engagement Presentation of Practice

Alice Graeupl

The advent of Gen(erative) AI (Artificial Intelligence) is transforming the educational landscape, however, remains open to experimentation and interpretation how we address these challenges. Several universities encourage students to utilise AI within set boundaries for their assessments (Moorehouse et al, 2025). Based on a first-year undergraduate business-related assessment which required students to use targeted AI prompting to generate ideas to help them get their work started, this presentation will outline the learning process that students and staff went through and how, despite clear instructions (Cotton et al, 2024) there remained a "clarity gap" between both parties. Evaluating these adoption issues and learning from experiences, the aim of this presentation is to provide some context for anyone who is thinking of using AI-enhanced assessments and how to approach this topic with their students to implement the process successfully therefore closing "the clarity gap".

References:

Cotton, D. R. E., Cotton, P. A., & Shipway, J. R. (2024). Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(2), 228-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2190148>

Moorehouse, B. L., Yeo, M. A., & Wan, Y. (2023). Generative AI tools and assessment: Guidelines of the world's top-ranking universities. *Computers and Education Open*, 5, 100151.

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Next Level™ Playful C-Creation for an AI-Responsive Interactive Learning Floor

Leanne Graham

'Next Level™' explores an upcoming Teesside University project that brings students and staff together to co-design a digitally enabled, AI-responsive future learning space within the Library's first floor. In alignment with the Jisc Digital Transformation Through a Library Lens project, Next Level™ explores how libraries can evolve as catalysts for digital confidence, creativity and partnership, including how students and staff respond to and work alongside emerging GenAI tools.

Playful Learning underpins both the project and the associated conference session, using curiosity-driven, low-stakes experimentation to empower students as co-creators. Reflecting this pedagogy, the session adopts a game-based workshop where participants navigate design challenges and unlock power-ups, supported by AI-generated prompts that mirror the realities of collaborative space planning.

By experiencing co-creation through play, attendees will gain practical insights into purposeful GenAI use, authentic partnership, and the shifting role of library spaces in an AI-rich Higher Education landscape.



How two decades of evolving analogue-based active learning approaches can provide essential counterweights to the limitations of digital-heavy methods such as Generative AI

Clive Holtham, Martin Rich

Project: Since 2003, a business school building designed to enhance student engagement has been supported by a continuous pedagogic engagement initiative, enlarging our repertoire of active learning methods.

Methods: Subsequent NTF funding, and its network:

- Increased method diversity
- Reduced innovation risk

One MBA elective piloted active learning methods from 2005. Its success led to implementations steadily adopted throughout two decades.

Impact: The 2000s financial crises highlighted limitations in business pedagogy, addressed by "liberal learning" (Carnegie 2011 report). The dA@rive became a signature pedagogy, embedded from Foundation to CEO levels; the Nursing School's adoption won an NHS national pedagogy award

In 2025 school leadership actively sought our input on distinctive signature pedagogies: we advocated active learning/low-resource analogue methods as:

- core to developing humanistic qualities lifelong
- preconditions of digital success

Workshop: High tempo, samples three active learning analogue methods, reflecting RAISE engagement objectives, joined up through a fourth: custom paper folded zines.



Towards Inclusive Verbal Assessments: an anti-ableist approach

Carys Kennedy

Drawing upon a small-scale research project at UAL (Crippling the Crit: Examining Crits and Presentations through the Lens of Disability Studies) and centred around student voice, I will share practical strategies for making verbal assessments more inclusive. Across the sector, HEIs are re-designing assessment, responding to GenAI usage and issues of academic integrity. This includes increasing moves towards verbal presentations. However, with this shift in practice come risks in relation to inclusion, with verbal presentations presenting barriers for many disabled and neurodivergent students, as well for students who are non-dominant speakers of English. In this presentation, I will highlight considerations for verbal assessment in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the need to make anticipatory adjustments in assessment design.



Gen AI and authentic student engagement in a mixed dissertation and pre-production design module

Mary Loveday, Nick Lewis, Nora Nadvegi

A revalidation of modules at the University of Sunderland gave the opportunity to rethink the way final year practice and theory for third year Illustration and Animation & Games Art students could be made more integrated and impactful. The traditional dissertation module was amalgamated with practical studio-based pre-production for students' final major project. Previous dissertations could show signs of AI-generated submissions and lack of engagement. The new model required students to integrate academic research and contextual analysis with their studio projects, leading to demonstrably deeper and more critical engagement with theory. In addition, the choice of submission formats was widened to include zines, presentations, and online exhibitions. Studio and theory staff worked together to ensure each element was given consideration and attention. Early evaluation indicates some improvement across several measures, including some grades, as well as, qualitatively, a far greater level of engagement with the process, without loss of criticality.

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Janita's Journey: Purposeful GenAI Partnership in Applied and Authentic Leadership Case Study Design

Nathan Loynes

<https://youtu.be/BxF609lu9Vw>

This presentation demonstrates the case study method enhanced through AI-as-colleague collaboration. We developed serialised leadership case studies featuring Janita Okoro, a female safeguarding leader from an unspecified ethnic background; navigating authentic multi-academy trust challenges. The design process orchestrated multiple AI systems as academic team members: one for theoretical framework research, another for dialogue generation, another for pedagogical structure.

Method: Within a flipped-learning Leadership and Management degree module, we used systematised GenAI workflow to produce 24 videos (4 episodes — 6 classes). Each episode features cliffhangers where Janita learns from mistakes across ethics, power dynamics, and motivation theory.

Evaluation: Student feedback demonstrates increased theoretical confidence and framework integration; diverse learners report Janita provides aspirational representation.

Impact: Produces theoretically sophisticated materials at scale whilst maintaining cultural specificity and inclusive pedagogy; demonstrates how purposeful GenAI partnership amplifies teaching expertise; offers replicable methodology for curriculum co-design centring equity and authenticity.

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Who's in Control? Values-based Critical Engagement with GenAI

Ruth Powell, Helen Boulton, Phoebe Troup

How can Higher Education critically engage students with Generative AI in the context of vast and polarising ethical, environmental, and cultural challenges? This interactive workshop explores how authentic student engagement with generative AI can be fostered through values-led learning design rather than technical skills alone.

As co-collaborators of the QAA-funded Art, Design and Artificial Intelligence: An Educator's Toolkit, will lead participants in a hands-on activity with the toolkit's AI Design Value Spark Cards, which prompt ethical, critical, and student-centred engagement with AI.

The workshop models participatory pedagogies through structured small-group discussion. It will demonstrate how values such as Human Creativity First, Critical and Ethical Inquiry, and Process over Output can inform learning design that positions students as active agents, co-learners and reflective practitioners.

Participants will leave with ideas for designing and evaluating AI-related learning that enhances agency, relevance and meaningful student engagement across disciplines.



Using Generative AI to create authentic assessments for final year Life Sciences students: A case study

Emma Reid

Using Microsoft Co-pilot, I generated an 800-word essay to summarise a core topic from my new final year course for Human Biology undergraduates. Students critiqued the essay in 90 minutes, under exam conditions, with prompt questions provided to guide their evaluation. Students were not made aware of the topic in advance, and did not have access to the essay, prior to the assessment.

This assessment shifted the examination focus from the traditional memorisation approach, to positioning students as critical evaluators, with the emphasis on analysis and application of knowledge, and grades achieved were comparable with in-course assessments. It also enabled students to recognise the limitations of generative AI and demonstrate their depth of understanding by providing greater detail than provided by the brief AI-essay.

This case study shows that generative AI can be used to create innovative and authentic assessment profiles, to evaluate student understanding and engagement with course content.



Teaching AI Ethics When Your Students Are Already Using It: Moving Beyond Policy to Partnership

Tom Ritchie

This interactive workshop will explore authentic student engagement with GenAI by addressing a critical paradox: educators teaching AI ethics while students already use AI in ways we don't see. Drawing on my experience teaching AI ethics across UK and US contexts (including my Fulbright research and use of playful pedagogies like LEGO® Serious Play in my AI courses), the session will demonstrate how to co-create approaches to ethical AI use in assessment and learning rather than impose institutional policies.

- Method: Participants will engage with three authentic classroom dilemmas through structured discussion, exploring how playful and purposeful approaches can surface assumptions about when and how AI use supports or undermines authentic learning.
- Evaluation: Evidence from comparative student responses across UK and US teaching contexts, feedback from 14,000+ AI ethics podcast listeners globally, and implementation of playful pedagogies demonstrates that co-creative approaches increase student reflexivity and reduce anxiety around ethical AI use.
- Impact: Participants will leave with question frameworks and examples of participatory methods for co-creating ethical AI use practices with their own students, moving beyond "allow or ban" toward authentic partnership.



Thinking with Bricks: A Constructivist LEGO® Serious Play® Approach to Understanding AI-Related Strategic Risk

Nagiet Shaneen

Teaching strategic business management requires students to engage with complex and uncertain challenges, including the strategic threats associated with artificial intelligence (AI), yet classroom practices often remain text-based and instructor-led. This paper examines the use of LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) as an experiential and inclusive pedagogical intervention within a Level 6 Strategic Management module to support students' sense-making of AI-related strategic risk. Grounded in constructivist learning theory (Moore 2012), the intervention reframed strategy learning as an embodied and socially constructed process. Through structured individual and shared model-building activities, students used LEGO bricks metaphorically to explore perceived AI threats such as organisational disruption, ethical uncertainty, skills displacement, and strategic misalignment. The principle that the model is the answer enabled students to externalise tacit assumptions and engage in reflective peer dialogue (Oliveira, Barbosa, Martinez-Perez, 2025).

Drawing on qualitative student reflections and classroom observations, the paper demonstrates that LSP enhanced engagement, inclusivity, and critical thinking compared to conventional seminars (Heidari-Shahreza, 2024). It supports that participatory pedagogies offer a valuable approach for exploring how AI-related risks and opportunities may shape business strategy towards 2035.

References

Heidari-Shahreza, M. A. (2024). Light and Delight: Playful Learning as an Ideology and Methodology in Adult Education. *Adult Learning*, 36(2), 71-83.

Oliveira, A. P., Barbosa, B., & Martinez-Perez, C. (2025). LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® as a Tool for Reflective and Sustainable Learning in Optometry. *Education Sciences*, 15(9), 1216.

Moore, A. (2012). *Teaching and Learning: Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture* (2nd ed.). Oxon: Routledge.

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)



Unboxing the Collection: a creative archaeological learning experience

Laura Thompson

How can you teach stories of the past when you don't even know where they start? Sometimes we have to think outside the box...

My doctoral research seeks to develop a playful and authentic student engagement with material culture to enrich learning in archaeology and heritage in Higher Education. In this workshop participants will be able to experience the creative archaeological process in practice; Unboxing the Collection invites participants to engage with my PhD case study, the William Brice Archive housed at the University of Manchester, an under-explored multi-media map of the life and work of an ordinary man with an extraordinary story to share. Participants will learn to creatively engage with the archival materials and develop interpretive analytical skills using Slow Looking and Object-based Learning techniques to produce an "Ode to Objects" (a sketch, written piece, poem or any combination) contributing to the artefact's archaeological record.



Authentic Learning and Assessment to Improve Engagement and Motivation for Level 4 Financial Accounting Students

Sarah Watson

To better integrate theoretical understanding with practical application in my financial accounting module, I have used a flipped classroom model for several years. Building on this foundation, I introduced a new simulation-based assessment this year, designed to immerse level 4 students in a realistic scenario where they apply their knowledge in context. By embedding assessment activities into taught sessions, students are given structured time and support to engage more deeply with the task, fostering greater participation and reinforcing the relevance of their learning.

This involved an inhouse developed bookkeeping/accounts portfolio. Setup in Excel the students ID populates different invoices and numbers. In the background the portfolio is coded to mark itself. Alongside this multiple submission opportunities allows students to learn from their errors and truly improve their learning.

The session will discuss how it went this year, what works and what challenges have been identified, and its impact on engagement.

Responding to GenAI (including playful and purposeful learning)

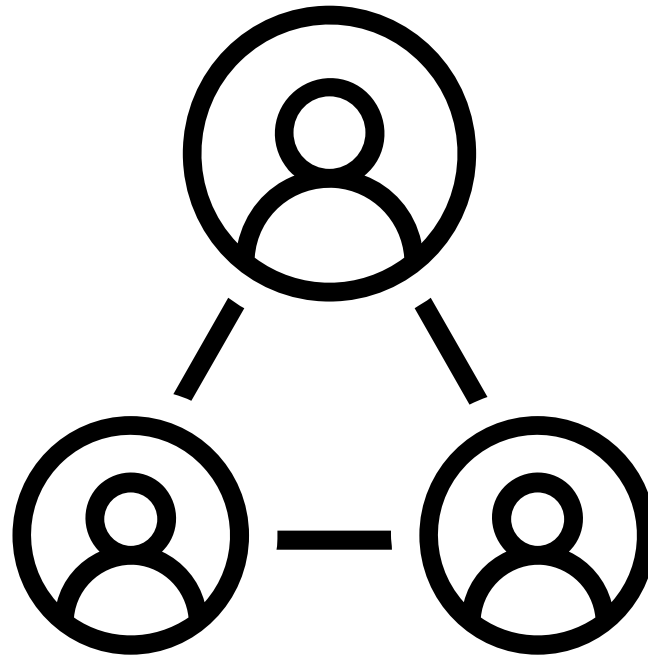


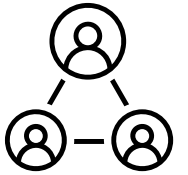
AI Ethics, Inclusion & Society MOOC: Flexible, Inclusive Pathways for Digital Literacy and Ethical Learning

Ciorsdaidh Watts, Frances Docherty

The AI Ethics, Inclusion & Society MOOC, co-created by student interns and staff at the University of Glasgow, demonstrates how inclusive, flexible learning can embed ethical and digital literacy in higher education. This three-week, fully asynchronous course enables learners to explore AI's opportunities alongside its risks, including bias, discrimination, and environmental impacts. Since launching in May 2025, over 900 learners have completed more than 20,000 steps and contributed 1,600 discussion posts. Satisfaction is high: 93% report the course met or exceeded expectations, and 95% gained new knowledge and skills, describing it as rigorous, eye-opening, and thoughtfully designed. Hosted on FutureLearn and embedded in Year 2 Chemistry and Final Year Engineering, it reaches global and credit-bearing audiences. Student interns gained transformative experience in filmmaking, web design, teamwork, and project management. Financially sustainable and widely disseminated, the MOOC offers a scalable, student-led model for embedding ethical literacy, fostering critical AI engagement, and building impactful, future-facing educational pathways.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators of a Future Higher Education





Understanding Academic Discourse of AI in Podcasts to Address Social Justice in Higher Education

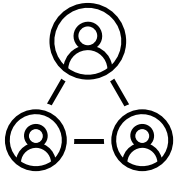
Daisy Bao

Since the public release of ChatGPT in 2022, academic debate about AI in higher education (HE) has accelerated across disciplines. While existing relevant scholarship—largely published in academic journals—has contributed important insights into pedagogy, equity, and social justice, podcasts have emerged as influential yet underexamined spaces where academics and sector leaders interpret and negotiate AI's implications for teaching and learning. As a form of public scholarship, podcasts particularly enable rapid sensemaking around fast-evolving topics such as generative AI and reach substantial international audiences (DeMarco, 2022).

Drawing on sociological theories of power and discourse, our study examines how AI in HE is framed in three of the most widely listened-to AI-in-education podcasts on Spotify. Through systematic review and qualitative discourse analysis, we will discuss: (1) how AI and social justice are discursively constructed; (2) which stakeholders within the HE ecology are foregrounded or marginalised; and (3) what futures for HE are imagined. The findings reveal dominant frames within podcast discourse and point to the need for ecology-based negotiation among HE stakeholders to balance innovation with educational equity.

What Are We Missing? Uncovering Structural and Relational Barriers in Student Partnership for Social Justice

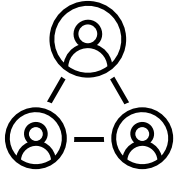
Daisy Bao



Student partnership is widely promoted in HE for advancing equity, inclusion, and student voice in scholarship and practices. Yet the structural and relational barriers that limit who can access and thrive across the ecology of partnership initiatives remain under-researched.

This interactive 45-minute workshop invites delegates to critically examine these barriers within their own institutional contexts, drawing on our published frameworks of social justice in student partnerships. Following a brief introduction to the domains and ladder of student partnership in HE, delegates will work in groups to map their partnership experiences using a live digital tool (a radar chart) to identify patterns of student engagement and exclusion in their own settings.

Participants will then be introduced to our five-dimensional reflective framework to analyse how institutional policies may enable or constrain socially just partnership practices. Building on this structural reflection, delegates will be introduced to our second reflective framework and guided to explore micro-level relational dynamics-such as power, belonging, and social recognition-and consider how these shape partnerships through everyday interactions. Integrating findings from three UK partnership initiatives with delegates' lived experiences, the workshop concludes with the co-creation of practical strategies for fostering more inclusive and sustainable student-staff partnerships.



Proximity and Perception: How Engagement with Student Voice Mechanisms Shapes Participation

Kian Berry, Larissa Nelson

Perceptions of the "student voice" vary widely among undergraduates and shape how they engage with institutional mechanisms intended to gather their views. This mixed methods study examined how Biosciences undergraduates perceive student voice in relation to institutional partnership commitments, and how proximity to formal mechanisms shaped those perceptions.

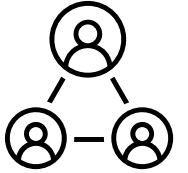
Survey data captured awareness, participation routes, and engagement across different levels of involvement, while semi structured interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to examine how students define meaningful voice. Findings indicate a disconnect: institutions typically frame student voice as procedural opportunities to give feedback, whereas students view it as credible influence, transparent decision pathways and visible impact on issues extending beyond individual modules. When these conditions were unclear or absent, student voice was perceived as symbolic rather than co creative.

These insights will inform the co development of clearer escalation routes, more dialogic formats and stronger visibility of how student input informs decision making.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators of a Future Higher Education

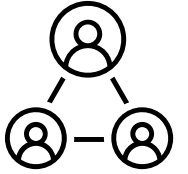
Leveraging Student-Led Research to Drive AI Engagement and Career Readiness

Tadhg Blommerde, Dr Stephany Veuger, Dr Jonny Hall, Christopher Simmonds, Adam Greenway, Chloe Peeters, Idanai Dube



This ‘Students as Partners’ (SaP) project investigates how co-created pedagogy enhances student engagement with Artificial Intelligence (AI) across Business, Law, and Applied Sciences. Three undergraduate and postgraduate student partners acted as co-researchers, conducting over 60 semi-structured interviews to identify peer anxieties regarding AI in academia and future careers. This peer-led insight informed targeted modular interventions aimed at fostering learner agency.

Evaluation via thematic analysis of follow-up interviews demonstrates that addressing fears through SaP-led instruction significantly bolsters engagement and perceived workplace readiness. Findings highlight the necessity of teaching ethical and critical AI usage to empower students. This research provides a scalable framework for UK higher education, offering evidence-based recommendations for institutional policy. It illustrates that prioritising student voices as partners is essential for enhancing satisfaction and ensuring students feel prepared for a rapidly evolving, digital-first professional landscape.



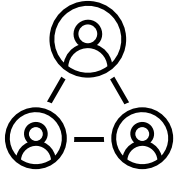
Improving academic support and student experience - a co-creation project

Helen Boardman, Ewura-Adjoa Yamoah, Hannah Fagioli-Kahky, Christopher Merrett,
Kathy Wilson

Building on a co-creation project which identified key areas students felt needed to be addressed to reduce awarding gaps in our School, this project investigated the potential methods to implement the findings.

Student interns used focus groups with students to identify ideas and develop an online questionnaire. The findings were presented and discussed with senior staff in the School to develop an action plan for implementation.

Student discussion sessions with the Head of School were relaunched with an increased focus on enabling students to ask questions and improving the student experience. Details of how to access information about welfare services when they are needed was lacking so staff email signatures were updated to include a link to our support pages. Students reported information overload and multiple communication methods - it was agreed that email should remain the primary method of communication supplemented with advertising of events via the student society.

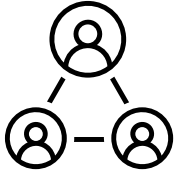


Making Effective Student Collaboration Matter: Facilitating student engagement in a cross-institutional collaborative model

Charlotte Boulton, Ashley Reilly-Thornton

The SEER Student Advisory Panel harnesses the collective voice of diverse students from SEER's small and specialist provider membership. Our panel facilitates students to share their experiences and ideas with senior HE leaders, and offer input on key concerns for provider operations, compliance and development/innovation. These are paid positions, engaged in cross-institutional discussions. Partnering with students here ensures that student voice is heard across multiple contexts. Student opinions are shared with our SEER member Steering Group by the Student Chair, embedding the student perspective across our membership. Feedback from the panel has prompted providers to review and improve their processes, such as a review of one SEER members' personal tutoring provision, demonstrating tangible influence.

Participation empowers students in an authentic, safe partnership space, encouraging open dialogue and genuine staff-student collaboration. Our presentation explores SEER's approach, its underpinning values, and the benefits and impact for students, staff, and our SEER members.



Co-Flourishing Toolkit: enabling co-creative and relational teaching and learning in Higher Education

Ana Cabral, Louise Younie, Steph Fuller, Max Addo, Emily Salines, Alastair Robertson

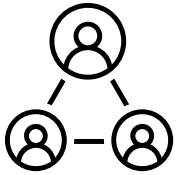
This paper introduces Co-Flourishing, a reflective toolkit designed to support educators in partnering with students as co-creators of learning and of a future higher education grounded in human flourishing. The connection between co-creation and flourishing remains relatively underexplored. We sought to address this by developing a practical tool that supports educators in adopting co-creative and relational approaches to teaching and learning.

The cards provide prompts and activities, which support educators to identify how they have been promoting relational pedagogies and explore opportunities for further enhancement of their co-creative practices.

We examine the impact of the Co-Flourishing toolkit on educators enrolled in Queen Mary's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. We argue that these early career colleagues are well positioned to advance more inclusive, relational, and sustainable forms of student engagement in higher education.

Embedding Skills for the Future: co-creating the Student Development Pathway at Edinburgh Napier University

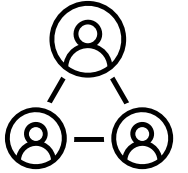
Pamela Calabrese, Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Euan Hickman, Sofiia Ruda



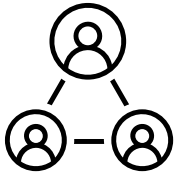
Edinburgh Napier University's strategic approach to student partnership places students at the forefront of our work. In this presentation we will share how our Student Consultant scheme facilitates different partnership practices to shape priority areas of learning, teaching and assessment. Students and staff will share reflections on collaborative working, focusing on the evolution of our "ENhance" Curriculum Framework, specifically the Student Development Pathway. Designed as a tool to embed skills development in the curriculum, the Pathway helps students articulate their transferable skills and attributes, supports their holistic development as individuals and helps them prepare for future employment. Student Consultants built strong relationships with staff to co-create workshop plans, working with each other to co-facilitate sessions, and with diverse groups of student participants to reflect on key aspects of skills development. Contributing to the data analysis and shaping the final version of the Pathway was particularly meaningful.

From Agenda Item to Impact: Embedding Authentic Staff “Student and Peer Engagement Across a Faculty

Alex Candon



This project presents a faculty-wide model of authentic staff-student partnership designed to rebuild engagement and address post-pandemic disconnection within a large Irish university. Using a student-led, evidence-informed approach, internal engagement data were analysed and presented as a formal motion to faculty governance structures, resulting in engagement becoming a recurring agenda item across seven schools. A series of co-created interventions-inter-year coffee mornings, a peer-mentorship proposal, redesigned consultation practices, and issue-specific student focus groups-were implemented to support commuter, placement-heavy, and remote learners. Evaluation combined participation metrics with qualitative feedback, demonstrating increases in class rep engagement (up 98%), renewed cross-year community-building, and meaningful inclusion of marginalised cohorts. Staff and student testimonials further evidenced cultural change and improved relational connection. The project offers a scalable, transferable model for embedding student voice and partnership into faculty decision-making, demonstrating institutional impact.



How a student-staff partnership in mental health research helped me in my mental health journey

James Cantwell

Working in a student-staff partnership brought me to a stage to address my own mental health, and here's how. A story of expert by experience.

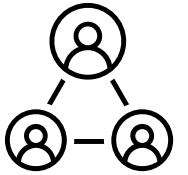
The project, based at the University of Hertfordshire, funded by the Learning and Teaching awards, explored staff and student perceptions of students' struggling with their mental health in a classroom setting. This project led to the development of a toolkit to improve mental health awareness among students and staff.

As a research assistant, I conducted semi-structured interviews, data analysis, academic writing, poster production and conference presentations, and during this period, I began to recognise the perceptions of others were speaking to me, about me, for the benefit of people like me.

I want to speak at RAISE conference to share that is okay. It is okay not to be okay and it is okay to work through that, and sometimes we do that through research.

Mature Student User Experience Project

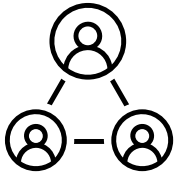
Kieron Carroll, Georgie Pilling



This project puts mature students front and centre in reimagining a more inclusive, future-focused higher education landscape. Working in genuine partnership with student co-creators, we uncovered four defining themes shaping the mature student experience: community building, resource visibility, scheduling, and technology confidence. But students didn't stop at identifying challenges-they drove the solutions. Together, we created tangible outputs including stronger community-building opportunities, clearer and more accessible support pathways, enhanced digital guidance, and smarter, more flexible approaches to scheduling and resource access. Through online and in-person engagement opportunities, participants described feeling truly heard. These insights are already informing institutional change, from alternative event-timing models to centralised signposting and proposed digital improvements. Now, we're ready for the next step: launching a Mature Student Community of Practice-and we invite conference attendees to join us in continuing this work, sharing innovation and co-creating better experiences for mature learners.

More Than a Meeting: Students Perceptions of Personal Tutoring

Quinn Cassidy and Larissa Nelson

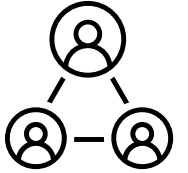


Personal tutoring plays a key role in academic guidance, pastoral care, and overall student experience. This study investigates Bioscience students' perceptions of a personal tutoring system through mixed method surveys and narrative style interviews. Thematic analysis revealed predominantly positive experiences, with students emphasising tutor helpfulness, availability, and personalised academic support, particularly in information provision and feedback. Negative perceptions were associated with limited availability and weaker relationship quality. Participants expressed a strong preference for individual meetings, highlighting their value for personalised academic and pastoral support.

Overall, the findings emphasise that relationship quality and tutor availability are central to positive personal tutoring experiences. The project provides evidence based insights that may inform future enhancements to personal tutoring practice, including increased structured one to one support and strategies to strengthen tutor-tutee relationships to improve student engagement and wellbeing.

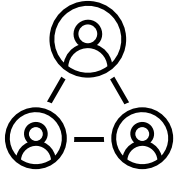
The Learning Well Project: A proactive approach to agency and wellbeing through student-staff partnership

Tiffany Chiu, Sue Sing, Vicky Sham



With growing diversity in higher education, supporting mental wellbeing is a sector-wide priority. Empirical data from the Imperial Learning Well Project shows that students' wellbeing and sense of belonging are shaped by their learning, teaching and assessment experiences, yet many students do not recognise this relationship, and typically seek support only when difficulties escalate. This is a particularly acute issue in highly competitive learning environments.

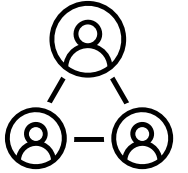
The Learning Well Project investigated undergraduate students' lived experiences of study strategies and wellbeing-related issues by gathering data through 33 focus groups with 112 students across the university. Drawing on key empirical evidence, staff and students co-created authentic and engaging resources that enable students to consider and adopt proactive, effective study approaches while supporting their wellbeing. In this presentation, we present our materials and share key insights gained from developing effective student-staff partnerships that foster genuine collaboration to make meaningful impact on the student experience.



Student-staff collaboration and support for BTEC-qualified students transitioning to Higher Education

Silvia Colaiacomo, Hilary Orpin, Ashlame A Abimiku

This presentation reports on a pilot project examining how student-staff collaboration can strengthen support for BTEC-qualified students transitioning into university study. Two students and two staff members worked as co-researchers, using a participatory methodology that included interviews with first-year students, reflective discussions, and collaborative thematic analysis. This approach ensured that findings were grounded in authentic student experience and that proposed interventions addressed genuine needs rather than assumptions. Evaluation involved iterative feedback from student co-researchers, enabling continual refinement of themes and recommendations. The project's impact is demonstrated through a co-created framework for inclusive curriculum design that builds on students' vocational strengths while developing academic skills. Aligned with the University of Greenwich's Education Without Boundaries 2030 strategy, the project contributes to embedding digital literacy, real-world problem-solving, employability, and well-being into the curriculum. The session offers practical, evidence-based insights for educators seeking collaborative approaches to curriculum enhancement and equitable student success.



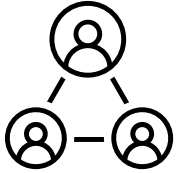
Evaluating Widening Participation from Within: How Student-Led Research Offers Insight Beyond Conventional Methods

Jen Coleman, Kayleigh Lampard, Siobhan Thompson

Evaluating student perceptions of UEA's Access and Participation Plan (APP) initiatives has historically been challenging, with traditional methods generating minimal engagement. In the current APP cycle, renewed emphasis on student consultation and student voice prompted the development of alternative approaches to deepen understanding of student experience. This presentation reports on a collaborative research project involving academic staff, professional services colleagues, and seven paid student interns. Working in small groups, the interns designed and ran qualitative projects to further our understanding of student awareness of institutional initiatives, and the influence of these initiatives on belonging and academic self-efficacy. The project provides interns with meaningful research experience and transferable skills, while the findings will inform ongoing enhancement of UEA's support for students. Additionally, through meeting with these students regularly, relationships have been fostered, creating the opportunity for staff to learn from them throughout the project, as well as from their findings.

Success for All? Rethinking Awarding Gaps for Inclusivity

Fleur Corbett, Ursule Taujanskaite, Sayaka Saito, Katie Fisher



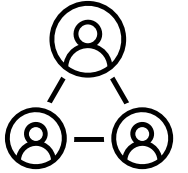
At their most granular, OfS awarding gaps are reported at a programme level with a 12-month lag. This approach severely limits the opportunities to evaluate the impact of programme changes that may disadvantage our underrepresented student groups, precluding interventions within the same academic cycle.

With awarding gaps widening post-pandemic and rapidly evolving teaching practices, we examined awarding gaps within a large BSc Psychology programme in a student-staff collaboration. For the first time, we analysed five years of module-level attainment and engagement data, enabling granular identification of disparities hidden within programme-level reporting using a value-added approach. Concurrent student-led focus groups explored enablers and barriers to engagement.

We identified specific module-level awarding gaps and explored how structural and pedagogical factors, such as the student's context, curriculum design and assessment mode contribute to these awarding gaps. We discuss sustainable institutional data-informed strategies to enhance inclusivity, enabling earlier intervention and more equitable student outcomes.

Co-Creating Authentic Student Voice in a new UK-India TNE Campus through Participatory Evaluation

Damien Corridan

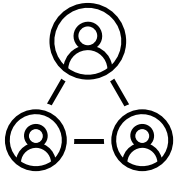


Transnational education (TNE) campuses are increasingly expected to evidence authentic student engagement while operating across cultural, regulatory and institutional contexts. This presentation reports interim findings from a seven-month project establishing student voice and student representation in a newly opened UK university campus in India (c.100 students, with planned growth). The work mirrors UK student voice systems while being co-created with students unfamiliar with them. Methodologically, the project uses a participatory action research (PAR) and design-based implementation approach. Students and staff form a co-research team to map local expectations, prototype structures (course reps, and a student council), and iterate processes through rapid improvement cycles. Evaluation is guided by a theory of change aligned to partnership principles, through (i) multi-wave student surveys, (ii) participation metrics (iii) observations of student voice committees and (iv) focus groups.

Impact is reported through implementation fidelity, early cultural indicators (e.g. confidence to speak) and quality enhancement outcomes.

“But aren't I getting a grade?” Engaging First-Year Students in Meaningful Peer Review

Helen Costello, Julieta Litka Milian



The project, a collaboration between Durham University Chemistry Department and the Academic Skills Centre, seeks to help first-year chemistry students improve their essay writing skills through peer review. First-year students are often unaware of the benefits of peer review and can be reticent about engaging in the process, preferring assessments to be graded by teaching staff. Our goal is to support these students in understanding the importance of these review skills, as essential both for academic work and also for future employment within the science community.

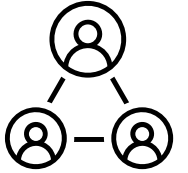
Surveys are conducted at the outset of the peer review process and again at the end, the questions relate to perceptions and understanding of peer review and levels of related confidence. Qualitative and quantitative data are collected to seek student opinion and changes are made in light of generalised views.

Ultimately, our goal is to foster a culture that values peer review.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators of a Future Higher Education

Students as partners in institution-wide digital change

Sam Crowley



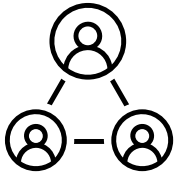
Students as partners in institution-wide digital change - we would like to do a podcast with students involved as well as the presentation

UWE Bristol has recently undertaken a major pedagogic and technical transition from Blackboard Original to Ultra. The Digital Learning Team used the project as opportunity to embed authentic student partnership and a pedagogy-first approach. Students were involved as co-creators throughout. Student Digital Leaders joined content design meetings, co-developed staff and student support resources, and produced student-facing video guidance. Wider student perspectives were gathered through the institutional student panel, shaping decisions around usability, accessibility, navigation and structure, informing the creation of an institution-wide module template. Student Navigators also supported academics directly by providing feedback on module pages. The project received an international Catalyst award for its people-centric implementation.

This approach had clear impact. Co-created videos achieved significant reach, the new module template received a usability rating of 8.26/10, and 82% of students surveyed rated Blackboard Ultra as better. This session shares learning from partnering with students during large-scale digital change.

Reimagining Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) as Student Voice Feedback Forums (SVFFs): adoption and adaptation across campuses and delivery modes

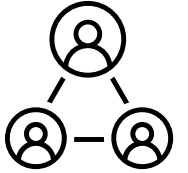
Dr Adam Dawkins, Tanya Dunne



In 2024/25 the University of Sunderland's academic governance review accelerated one evaluation element: shifting from Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) to Student Voice Feedback Forums (SSVFs). The three-fold objectives of the new SVFF model were firstly to informalise the legacy 'committee' system, to create power-balanced settings for student representatives and programme teams to raise, respond to and resolve concerns. Secondly, to apply a consistent structure to share good practice and identify improvements in the student learning experience and codify action follow-up. Thirdly, to strengthen institution-level oversight of feedback across SVFFs through independent identification of themes for collective feedback to the study body. The model is embedded at the University's UK campuses and is now being adopted and adapted for meaningful operation with the University's TNE and UK Collaborative Partners. The presentation will highlight achievements, barriers to student and staff engagement, how these are being overcome and ongoing evaluation of effectiveness.

Support Systems to Promote Success for Students Repeating an Academic Year

Frances Docherty, Mia Quinn

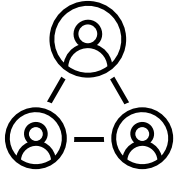


Whilst there is much data on supporting students transitioning into University, there is much less discussion of supporting students repeating a year. This project evaluates the main pressures and disturbances to university that play a role in why students make this decision, and the support that has worked well or been found to be lacking.

The opinions and experiences of repeat students in the School of Chemistry at the University of Glasgow collected via questionnaire and focus groups are reported. Interviews with various academic staff were also conducted to get a staff perspective on repeat years.

Key issues arising include mental and physical health issues, financial worries, academic stress, personal/familial events and the perceived stigma around being a repeating student.

We will describe a resource created by students to support students returning for a repeat year that we believe would be of interest to the wider tertiary education sector.



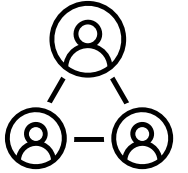
Co-Designing Assessment Rubrics: Enhancing Clarity and Student Engagement through Partnership

Nina Fisher, Lindsey Carruthers

Building on findings from Part 1 of the project, which explored how students interpret and use grading rubrics, this second phase moves from research to action through a co-design methodology. Working in partnership with a Student Consultant, students and academic staff, we will run a collaborative workshop to critically review existing rubrics and identify changes that enhance clarity, accessibility and inclusivity. Insights from the workshop will inform the co-creation of a concise "Quick Guide" for staff, offering practical, evidence-informed recommendations and examples for designing student-friendly rubrics that strengthen assessment literacy. The Student Consultant will co-lead the workshop and co-author the guide to ensure student perspectives remain central to all outputs. Evaluation will include participant feedback, analysis of workshop discussions, and review of the guide's usability.

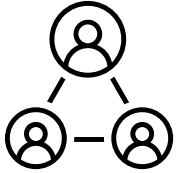
Voices of Belonging: Students Hosting the Conversation on Inclusive Higher Education

Lauren Flannery



Voices of Belonging is a student-led podcast series, hosted by ConnectEd, that explores what belonging means in UK universities. Five student hosts each led one-to-one conversations with practitioners, researchers and academics working on belonging, inclusion and student experience, deliberately shifting the usual power dynamic by positioning students as hosts, interviewers and curators. Across 37 episodes featuring contributors from 22 institutions and organisations, the series amplifies diverse perspectives on how belonging is fostered and why it matters.

Methods included collaborative topic selection, shared script development, online recording, reflective diaries and a post-series focus group with the student hosts. The focus group explored how taking up the role of interviewer influences students' sense of agency, identity and connection within the academic environment. Early findings suggest that Voices of Belonging strengthens staff-student partnerships, broadens notions of expertise and positions students as genuine co-creators of knowledge, narrative and the future of higher education.



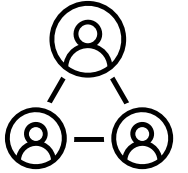
Transformational change: But where are the gender marginalised students? From feedback to action

Lesley Graham, Susan Lindsay, Alex Krupp, Bonnie Mokri Moayed, Maria Eshun

Assessment shapes not only what but how students learn. Involving students in assessment design strengthens learning by valuing their voices and supporting relational pedagogies that challenge assumptions about who scholars are. Yet marginalised students are often excluded due to structural biases, cis normative frameworks, and tokenistic diversity practices, resulting in assessment systems that assume a homogenous student experience and limit equitable attainment. Our session demonstrates the impact of co created practices on student success, showing how working as equal partners enhances outcomes for diverse learners. By sharing challenges, authentic assessment strategies, and student led changes, we aim to support meaningful, progressive improvements in educational practice.

Specifically, our session shares:

1. Overview of our student/academic partnership work (background/objectives) (10 mins).
2. Student partners interactive session (including challenges overcome and changes they have made); providing examples of our authentic assessment and feedback strategies developed, ensuring successful outcomes for all (30 mins).
3. Discussions/questions (5 mins).



What We Carry, What We Share: A Collaborative Toolkit

Monika Gravagno, Jiaqi Zheng, Runxin Zheng

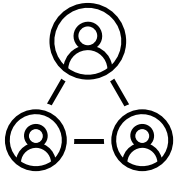
"What We Carry, What We Share: A Collaborative Toolkit" is a student-staff co-created resource developed at Central Saint Martins (UAL) through the "Climate Advocates" and "Changemakers" Programmes, which employ students as partners to co-shape curriculum and advance Social Justice across the institution.

The Toolkit addresses challenges students encounter in collaborative projects, offering reflective exercises grounded in relational care and shared responsibility to support ethical group work. Piloted in "Creative Union", a cross-disciplinary undergraduate unit at CSM, and informed by cross-programme peer evaluation, the project demonstrated measurable impact: it enhanced students' sense of belonging and fostered confidence in cross-disciplinary collaboration, while also revealing ongoing challenges around shared authorship, conflict resolution, and power distribution. Findings were shared at the UAL Educational Conference 2025, generating staff-student dialogue on the value of student voice and its role in shaping curriculum and the future of HE.

For RAISE 2026, we propose an interactive workshop exploring the toolkit's activities on relational care and reflecting on how students are authentic co-creators in designing future curricula.

Understanding the Postgraduate Research Experience

Chase Greenfield, Sandro Eich

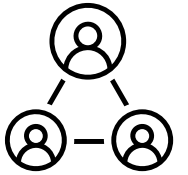


For over a decade, sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) has utilised its Student Learning Experience Model to empower students and staff to work together to identify priorities to enhance the quality of learning. In partnership with Scotland's research students, sparqs is currently developing an equivalent model of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Experience. The model will enable PGRs and staff to identify opportunities to enhance the research experience and will also serve as a sector benchmark in Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework.

This interactive workshop will introduce attendees to the developed PGR Experience Model; they will then explore the key elements (or "building blocks") that make up the PGR Experience - reflecting on their institution's strengths and areas for enhancement.

Participants will leave with:

- A strong understanding of partnership with PGRs;
- A shared language to discuss effective partnership between PGRs and staff;
- A practical tool to evaluate PGR partnership approaches within their own institutions, students' unions, or sector agencies.



Recognising Learning Beyond the Classroom: SOUL as a Framework for Authentic Student Engagement

Vivienne Griggs, Simon Glaze

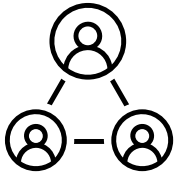
A new initiative at the University of Leeds has been the introduction of the SOUL framework (Structured, Open, Unbounded and Learner-led), an approach to partnering with students as co-creators of their learning. SOUL creates opportunities for authentic learning (including volunteering, leadership, community engagement, industry and practice based projects) within a flexible and academically robust framework.

Embedding experiential learning within the curriculum ensures opportunities become genuinely accessible to all students. The framework's reflective, portfolio based assessment supports the articulation of the skills, values and personal development arising from chosen experiences, linking activity to theory and strengthening students' ability to articulate career relevant skills and future focused development.

Pilot feedback demonstrates strong student engagement with SOUL's flexibility, authenticity, and learner-led design, alongside appreciation for the clarity of its structure and support mechanisms. As an institutional innovation, SOUL offers a model for embedding inclusive experiential learning within degree programmes without prescribing context or limiting student agency.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators: Building Inclusive, Ethical, and Sustainable Student Representation for the Future of Higher Education

Sannah Gulamani, Manjula Patrick, Farhiya Hassan, Sarika Riffert

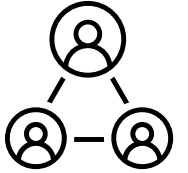


The global majority student midwife group was formed to strengthen support and create a safe space for students of colour. They requested an event to celebrate the unique diversity within the midwifery cohorts. This led to a conference celebrating diversity in birth reflecting students identity and experiences. There were a range of influential speakers and interactive workshops highlighting issues related to race inequity and positive actions for change. Global majority students who collaborated on the planning and running of the event reported feeling heard and a sense of inclusion. The conference provided an opportunity to demonstrate allyship and for White students to reflect on the privilege they hold. Anonymous feedback highlighted that the event created a sense of togetherness and belonging and fostered a greater understanding of culture. The conference also highlighted additional learning opportunities to promote student collaboration and co-creation within the programme.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators of a Future Higher Education

Co-creating evaluation for future pedagogies

Frania Hall



This project describes a partnership approach to evaluation, working with students to develop an evaluation framework and set of inclusive data collection tools to capture student voices.

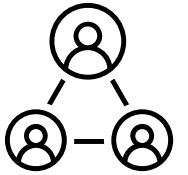
Evaluation is key to embedding strategies for continuous improvement, testing teaching and learning approaches and determining future pedagogies. Developing a shared language around evaluation with students makes the process more meaningful for them, while supporting staff to gather evidence that is representative. It leads to more staff/student conversations.

This project involved 2 workshops with students co-creating a framework and tools; as an art, design and communication university we focused on developing robust creative approaches. This has been used in practice, set up on a guidance blog and used widely across the Media School with direct impact on students.

With students as co-creators on the educational journey, evaluation is not a passive space for them but a place to mould and develop educational futures.

The VIBE Project, Evaluating the student - Voice, Inclusion, Belonging and Experience at University

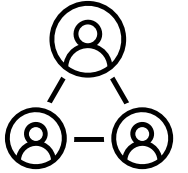
Holly Hancock



Developed as one of the University of East Anglia's Fellowships for Inclusive Teaching, the VIBE project aims to explore the Student Voice, Inclusion, Belonging and Experience as an undergraduate student at UEA. Rooted in the theme of belonging, the project utilises existing data from the University and wider literature as a starting point, and through paid focus groups aims to give a voice to underrepresented students, exploring important topics from transitions to University life, academic belonging, representation and inclusion and barriers to belonging. Through co-collaboration with students, this creates the unique position of capturing authentic insights into the lived student experience, enabling the potential to identify gaps and challenges, and working with students to co-create solutions. These outputs include a mapping of the student journey and a typology of student belonging.

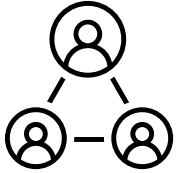
Co-creation for inclusive lab-based higher education through staff-student partnership

Isabelle Ho, Raya Kamleh, Georgios Nikiforidis



Teaching large cohorts presents a critical pedagogical challenge, often creating a distance between staff and students that makes it difficult to gauge real-time understanding and identify pressure points in learning, exacerbated in fast-paced lab sessions. This university-funded project tackles this issue through a structured staff-student partnership within a large-cohort, lab-based science module, Advanced Materials Processing and Manufacturing.

We identified the specific parts of lab manuals and theories that students find most confusing. From this, we developed pre-lab instructional videos to create an equitable starting point for students with diverse academic backgrounds and created detailed guidelines for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs) to ensure consistent, high-quality support during the sessions. By putting the student voice at the heart of lab design, our resources render STEM education more practical, inclusive, and effective for everyone.



Student Co-Design in Action: Partnering with Students to Reimagine Personal Academic Tutoring

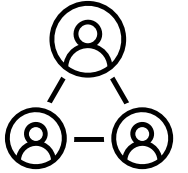
Jo Holmes, Sarah Chapman

Join us for your very own Co-Design Workshop as we explore working with students on the University of Southampton's Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) project.

The PAT Project's ethos has been to work with students as partners and harness the power of their voice to drive meaningful change in personal academic tutoring at Southampton.

Along with Student Experience Surveys and a team of 21 Student Interns, the Student Co-Design Panel has supported the PAT project to work with students in designing great personal academic tutoring support. Now in its fifth year, the panel brings together 150 students from all faculties and levels of study to collaborate on key initiatives, designing the future student experience in partnership with one another.

In this session you will hear more about how our student voice mechanisms at UoS shaped the PAT project whilst also taking part in your very own co-design panel session.



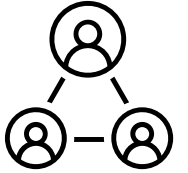
From Student Voice to Collaborative AI Policy: A Sustainable Multi-Level Partnership Model for Co-Creation

Faustina Jayaprakash, Huong Anh Trinh et al.

As AI continues to transform higher education (HE), institutional policies are largely made about, rather than with, students despite rising emphasis on student voice. We present a tripartite partnership model recognising students as experts in their own education and co-creating a student-led AI manifesto. King's AI Student Partners, in collaboration with KCLSU and supported by King's Academy, engaged students in conversations about AI through a series of AI stalls and workshops. Using reflexive thematic analysis, we extracted emerging themes into student principles and institutional demands for the manifesto, validated through further student consultation. Staff check-ins furthered the conversation and ensured alignment and institutional buy-in. This manifesto is widely praised within King's and now informs AI policy and faculty-level assessment redesign conversations. We hope this serves as a transferable model for co-creation in HE, demonstrating how partnering with students as essential experts can transform institutional responses to AI and other areas.

Capacity-building for sustainable cultures of co-creation

Libby Johnstone

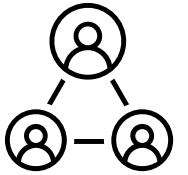


Benefits of co-creation are well established in SaP literature, but there are often significant institutional barriers to implementation. A dominant approach to embedding co-creation is through student partnership programmes, where a small number of engaged students and staff collaborate on a project basis. Established in 2024, the Student Partnerships Team at University of Leeds employs an innovative capacity-building approach with the goal of fostering responsive, sustainable cultures of partnership and embedding co-creation at different levels and scales across the institution.

This presentation outlines our strategy and offers practical ideas adaptable to different contexts. A case study will demonstrate our bespoke advisor support for academics, which informs our growing bank of "worked example" resources and co-created toolkits. You'll also hear how we support a vibrant network of students and staff through our Partnership Changemaker Community. We'll share evidence of impact and reflect on how this approach drives authentic engagement in co-creation.

Co-creating AI podcasts to engage lecturers with ethnicity awarding gap research

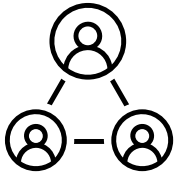
Sibel Kaya, Kathryn Sidaway, Rukayat Abdulsalam, Mariam Abbas



Widening participation initiatives succeed when academics engage meaningfully with student data, yet time constraints often prevent this engagement. This presentation reports on a collaborative project where researchers partnered with widening participation students to design podcasts and workshops connecting academic staff with data and research on the ethnicity awarding gap. The partnership aimed to generate significant outcomes: academic staff had the opportunity to develop critical evaluations of their practice, establish clear objectives for addressing awarding gaps, and gain heightened awareness of diverse students' needs, while student researchers were supported to enhance their confidence and acquire employability skills. By positioning students as co-creators rather than subjects of research, the project ensured that interventions were grounded in lived experience and responsive to student perspectives. The presentation will examine the benefits and challenges of creating podcasts as a tool for bridging research and practice, initiating discussions and offering insights for institutions developing similar initiatives.

Synoptic Meaning Making in Multi- and Inter-Disciplinary Study

Sadek Kessous, Alice Fitzmaurice

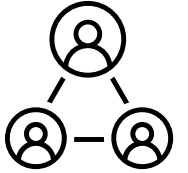


Multi-subject students face the distinct challenge of identifying and articulating the meanings that underpin their unique combinations of subjects and modules. This presentation arises from a new approach to this challenge of facilitating "synoptic meaning making" on multi-disciplinary programmes. Together, we have developed a new Stage-1 module - Social Justice Beyond Disciplines - with the intention of creating spaces for this kind of meaning making early into students' multi-subject degrees. By considering three linked global challenges - Climate Crisis, Gender Inequality, and Poverty - that extend beyond any single discipline, this module seeks to foster an ongoing, interrogative reflection on our individual relationship with interdisciplinarity. Drawing on staff and student experience, we will share our successes on this module and the work yet to be done as we map how modules with a programme-level focus might allow us to see not only the thinkers we currently are but also might be in future.

Partnering with Students as Co-Creators of a Future Higher Education

Supporting international PGT students to thrive: co-creation of a future higher education.

Alison Leslie



Recent postgraduate taught experience surveys suggest that "sense of community" is a key area to address (Quinn, 2024 and 2025) and HEIs are being tasked to do more to value the social and cultural contributions international students bring to the UK learning experience (UKCISA, 2022; Ebel, 2024). This workshop will give staff and student participants the opportunity to explore how we might support international PGT students by building a greater sense of community which enables them to thrive. It will draw on student co-created resources from a longitudinal research project, which evaluated academic support in a Russell Group university. These are being used to help deliver student success and are available on an Open Science Framework for adaptation to local contexts. They will be shared in the workshop for discussion of how representative and adaptable they are to participants' experiences and other practical strategies on enabling international students to thrive.

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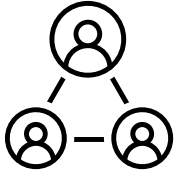
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From consultation to co-creation: Building a student-led academic skills resource

Siobhan McHugh, Megan Caulfield



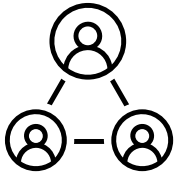
This project showcases the development of a central academic skills resource created by students, for students to support navigation of university study and reduce barriers to success. To ensure the resource reflected authentic student need, we facilitated structured workshops with undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. Participants identified key transition points, academic challenges, and priority skill areas, and advised on preferred platforms and modes of delivery.

In parallel, extensive consultation took place with academic and professional services colleagues. Notably, student and staff priorities aligned entirely, reinforcing both the validity of student insight and the value of partnership approaches.

This presentation outlines our co-creation methodology, implementation strategy, and early impact. It reflects critically on utilising a theory of change to inform, evaluate and embed authentic student voice into academic support design. The project demonstrates how structured partnership can move beyond consultation to meaningful collaboration in shaping future higher education.

Student Life Content Creators: creating content, confidence and career pathways

Rosanna McNamara, Shanika Flanore, D.A. Nguyen



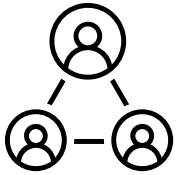
The Student Life Content Creators programme is a paid initiative enabling students to produce peer-led content for Kings' communications channels, showcasing diverse aspects of student life including study, extracurricular activities, campus events, and living in London. Using a structured framework, students are recruited, trained and supported to create authentic digital content while developing transferable skills and a professional portfolio.

The pilot programme ran from November 2024 to April 2025 with six students and was evaluated through pre- and post-programme surveys measuring changes in confidence, skills, and understanding of content creation. Outcomes were highly positive, with an average programme rating of 4.7/5 and 83% of participants strongly agreeing they developed valuable skills for the future.

Thanks to the pilot's success, the programme has expanded to nine students. A former participant was also commissioned to train the new cohort on video creation, extending the programme's impact on employability beyond the original cohort.

What it really feels like: Disabled chemistry students on belonging, barriers, and change

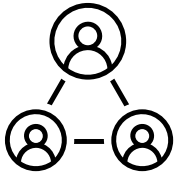
Julieta Litka Milian, Alger Wang, Aida Chang



This project uses a staff-student partnership approach in chemistry education to explore disabled students' experiences of belonging in laboratory intensive programmes. Student interns, co authors on this work, acted as co researchers whose lived experience shaped the research questions, informed the design, and guided the co analysis of interview data, challenging traditional researcher-participant hierarchies and modelling authentic student engagement in qualitative inquiry. The evaluation combines qualitative accounts from disabled students with reflexive logs from the student researchers, allowing the team to identify both practical and social barriers (for example, inaccessible labs, inflexible assessments, stigma and lowered expectations) alongside enablers of belonging and participation. The impact lies in student led recommendations that will be shared with staff and senior leaders, outlining proposals for change in communication, learning environments and assessment practices. The project offers a transferable model of partnered qualitative inquiry that generates actionable insights for more inclusive practice in laboratory based disciplines.

Creating Campus Life: A Journey From Participation to Authentic Student Partnership

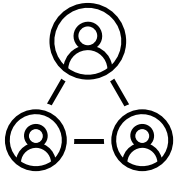
Laura Montgomerie, Jeanna Davies, Amy McFarlane, Ieuan Owen, Priya Meesala, Janey-Rose Bain



This presentation examines the evolution of student co-creation of non-academic experiences at a rural higher education campus, offering a reflective analysis that starts from the pre-pandemic period through to the present day. Rather than treating these activities as separate from academic learning, we position them as essential elements of a whole-student approach supporting wellbeing, identity-building, and the development of confident, well-rounded students. Framed by Healey, Flint and Harrington's (2014) four stages of student engagement, consultation, involvement, participation, and partnership, we demonstrate how the campus has progressively moved towards more authentic and collaborative co-ownership. Using insights gathered from the campus community, this presentation highlights key initiatives used to achieve authentic student partnerships, and how they were developed throughout this time. It also argues that student engagement is a responsive cycle to these needs. Effective partnership, we conclude, relies on trusted relationships, shared ownership, and flexibility to co-create meaningful experiences.

Revitalising Curriculum Co-Design: Partnering with Students as Co-Creators

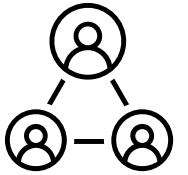
Emilee Morrallis



This pilot project redesigns curriculum co-design by enhancing student partnership, exposing differences in staff and student priorities to prompt actionable change in course development. A two-part process separates student consultation, recasting their input as the stimulus for subject-specific academic discussion. Students engage in a structured dialogue, rotating through thematic stations: learning experience, skills and employability, assessment and feedback, and digital transformation. They explore priorities for change and provide a synthesised summary for academic parties to consult. Staff subsequently map the students' input against institutional priorities and align student priorities with programme aims. Evaluation focuses on justification for recommendations as well as stakeholder perceptions, including student and staff satisfaction and meeting quality expectations. The process creates transparency around decision-making and offers the student body a central role in future-proofing their learning. Data from traditional and reformed course outcomes facilitate a comparison of employability pathways, digital capability and efficiency gains.

The Evolving Role of the Student Partners at the University of Manchester

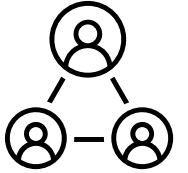
Samhita Mukherjee, Kai Prince, Katie Jackson, Rachel Cox



What would higher education look like if students were given equal power? Over the years, the University of Manchester has begun to recognise the value of "third spaces" practices and roles in improving teaching and learning. In our presentation, we will discuss our evolving role in the Library Student Team, operating within this space as catalysts for authentic engagement in higher education. While we are sensitive to the challenging contexts that institutions are working in, we feel that this space is essential for effective problem solving and ideation. Through exploring practical examples, such as collaborating with senior leaders on UoM's 10-Year Strategy, we will demonstrate the extent of students moving from having education done to them to becoming changemakers of, not only their own education, but the student experience at an institutional level. We aim to leave practitioners motivated and empowered with ideas that they can apply within their institutions.

The Quiet Erosion: Developmental Consequences of Disengagement in Higher Education

Kalina Nenova, John Speakman



Student disengagement is frequently addressed only once participation declines, yet its developmental consequences often begin much earlier. This session argues that higher education can inadvertently legitimise emerging disengagement by interpreting withdrawal from collaboration, reduced creative contribution, or quiet compliance as signs of autonomy within group activities.

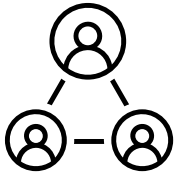
Presented from a theoretically informed student standpoint, the session draws on engagement theory and Smythe's e-theory to examine how disengagement signals are missed, why delayed responses matter, and where responsibility for re-engagement is often misplaced. Reflective analysis illustrates how unrecognised disengagement can narrow confidence, constrain capability, and reshape learners' sense of academic agency.

Rather than positioning disengagement as student deficit, the session reframes it as a shared educational responsibility requiring earlier recognition and intentional response.

Attendees will gain a clearer lens for identifying developmental risk and leave better equipped to foster conditions that sustain involvement, protect student growth, and support authentic engagement across collaborative learning environments.

Generalised Language: A Hidden Barrier to Authentic Engagement and Partnership

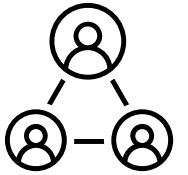
Lisa Nowak



Language is a powerful tool for promoting engagement and partnership, but it can also act as a barrier. This presentation draws on philosophical research to highlight a type of language- generics- that most of us use on a daily basis in our personal and professional lives, including when promoting, discussing and disseminating work about student engagement. Generics are used to make generalised statements about categories, but they can have a range of interesting (and unintended!) effects, which can act as a barrier to authentic student engagement and partnership. Most strikingly, they can play a key role in disseminating stereotypes and prejudice, as well as perpetuating forms of social oppression. This presentation will address how this happens, why it's a problem for authentic engagement and partnership, and what we as educational practitioners can do to address it.

Feedback as Contamination: A Framework for AI-Resilient Assessment

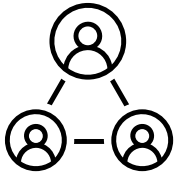
Petra Palkovacsova



This presentation introduces feedback as contamination; a pedagogical framework developed from scholarship on mycorrhizal and fungal networks (Sheldrake; Simard) and their later application to collaborative artistic practice (Tsing; Ostendorf-Rodríguez). Drawing on these principles of openness, decentralisation, collective learning, and collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, this presentation explores feedback as a mutual process rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge from educator to student. The presentation argues that this perspective has particular relevance in the context of AI in higher education. Rather than focusing on the detection of AI-generated work, feedback as contamination offers a framework for designing assessments that make learning processes more visible. Examples include scaffolded group work, peer-learning partnerships, and portfolio-based assessments that emphasise reflection, dialogue, and development over time. The presentation considers how these approaches may strengthen feedback literacy, support authentic learning, and contribute to more AI-resilient assessment practices.

Alcohol-Free Evening Events Supporting International Student Wellbeing

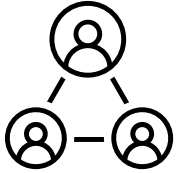
Ramitha Nittore Ramnath



This presentation shares a student-co-created wellbeing initiative delivered through themed tea parties at the University of Chester. Developed in response to post-COVID disengagement and isolation, particularly among international students, the project used small-group, informal gatherings to create safe spaces for dialogue around wellbeing, identity, belonging, and the student experience. Methods included creative theming, peer-led discussion, and collaboration with academic departments and community organisations. Evaluation drew on attendance data and post-session feedback collected across multiple sessions. Findings show that 80% of participants reported feeling less stressed after attending, while 95% reported improved wellbeing, new skills, or new social connections. Several outcomes extended beyond the sessions, including the formation of peer support groups and increased engagement with university and community support services. The initiative demonstrates how low-barrier, relational, student-led approaches can strengthen authentic engagement, amplify student voice, and embed people-focused practice within contemporary higher education.

Co-Creating Belonging: A Student-Led Model for Inclusive, People-Focused Engagement in Higher Education

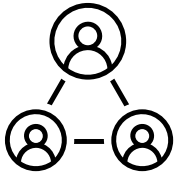
Ramitha Nittore Ramnath



This presentation explores a student-led, co-created model of authentic engagement developed at the University of Chester in response to post-COVID disengagement, isolation, and inequitable access to wellbeing support, particularly among international students. Using participatory leadership, peer-led design, and community partnership, the project embedded low-barrier, alcohol-free, culturally inclusive spaces within campus life. Methods included student-designed cultural events, themed wellbeing tea parties, peer support networks, creative evening activities, and collaborations with local charities and NHS-linked services. Evaluation drew on attendance data, participant feedback, and longitudinal engagement across three academic years. Over 2,000 students participated, with 70% reporting new friendships, skills development, or reduced stress. Several initiatives are now embedded within institutional structures, demonstrating sustainability beyond individual leadership. The project evidences how partnering with students as co-creators can generate scalable, people-centred engagement models that strengthen belonging, wellbeing, and community connection in contemporary higher education.

Co-Creating and Evaluating Student-Staff Behavioural Charters: A case study from Law

Amy Richards, Hamida Al Khoder, Victor Rauber



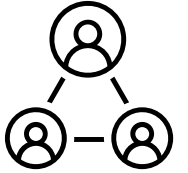
HE is changing significantly, bringing new challenges, including "student incivility" (Burke et al, 2014). Characterised by relatively low-level disturbance, it is often insufficient to warrant disciplinary action, but its disruptive nature affects students' development (Bjorklund and Rehling, 2010).

One of the most effective ways of reducing incivility is by developing a shared understanding of expectations (Nordstrom et al, 2009) and fostering an environment that promotes civility and a sense of belonging (Wilkins et al, 2010). Consequently, staff and students have co-produced the "Charter"; a framework that guides mutual expectations around behaviour and fosters a respectful community.

We will outline findings from an evaluative research project employing student researchers, and drawing on Listening Rooms (Heron, 2019), to ensure the Charter is fit for purpose and to make recommendations for change. The aim of this project is to co-create and sustain a "safe space" and sense of belonging within the School.

Building Together: Co-creating Peer Support with Students as Partners

Ailsa Riddell, Jaden Allan, Lewis Smith

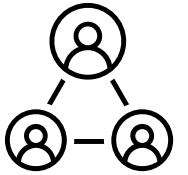


This presentation explores authentic student-staff partnership in designing and delivering peer support at Northumbria University, where peer support is embedded within our Access and Participation Plan. By adopting co-design methodologies, we position students as equal partners throughout the development process, from identifying support gaps to creating delivery frameworks and evaluation measures. Participants will hear directly from one of our student mentors, who will share their perspective on working collaboratively with staff and student mentors, offering valuable insights into what works, what challenges emerged, and ideas for future improvements. We will demonstrate how our peer support programmes combine centralised institutional support with departmental ownership and student leadership.

This session highlights innovative methods to developing peer learning by demonstrating how co-design principles and a universal design informed approach underpins this student-led intervention to help build genuine community and foster belonging.

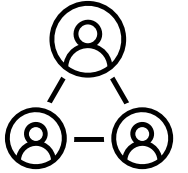
Centre for Belonging in Education: Building Sector-Wide Capacity for Student Belonging Interventions

Tom Ritchie



The Centre for Belonging in Education demonstrates how to build sector-wide capacity for evidence-based student belonging interventions through a replicable three-hub model (policy, practice, and research) that supports institutions in developing context-appropriate belonging frameworks.

- Method: The Centre delivers global belonging conversations (partnership with DePaul University), sector training for institutions and providers (including IHE sessions on belonging frameworks and techniques), integration with international teaching initiatives (TTES), toolkit development for implementing and evaluating belonging interventions, and policy brief synthesis addressing contemporary challenges including GenAI.
- Evaluation: Early evidence from toolkit beta-testing, feedback from sector training and global conversations engaging 70+ institutions, and Fulbright research on AI and belonging demonstrate demand for evidence-based approaches to emerging belonging challenges.
- Impact: Co-created with students, the three-hub model moves belonging from concept to measurable institutional practice. The presentation will share lessons from rapid Centre development and strategies for replicating the model across disciplinary and institutional contexts.



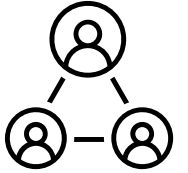
Co-Producing a BSc Psychology unit on Autism

Amber Ruigrok, Stefan Perryman, Lorna Brown, Emma, Gowen

We co-produced an optional BSc Psychology unit on Autism. We took a neurodiversity-affirmative approach and co-produced the unit with autistic people in several ways:

- (1) our team includes autistic undergraduate students;
- (2) focus groups with autistic students;
- (3) input from the Autism@Manchester Expert-by-Experience groups;
- (4) autistic people teach on the course.

Autistic people have historically been underserved and excluded from society. By co-producing this unit, we hope to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment that is beneficial for people across the neurodiversity spectrum. Furthermore, our aim is to ensure the content reflect the values and experiences of autistic people, challenging common myths around autism and autistic people. We will share our experiences co-developing this unit, evaluate students' experiences on the unit, and reflect on our practice and approach. This work will hopefully inspire others to listen to and include students who are often overlooked in higher education settings.



Representation Matters: Partnering with students as co-creators of representative assessment practices

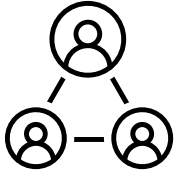
Amber Ruigrok and Stefan Perryman

This "Campfire Conversation" explores how the Representation Matters participatory action research (PAR) project positions students as co-creators in shaping more inclusive, future-facing assessment practices in higher education. Responding to persistent inequities experienced by disabled and racially minoritised students, the project uses hybrid co-creation workshops to centre student experience as expertise. Students and staff, supported by artists and designers, co-produced multimodal qualitative data and practical resources that challenge deficit narratives and explore transformative possibilities for inclusion and representation in assessments at the University of Manchester. By adopting a PAR co-creation approach, the project reshapes and reimagines ethical partnership with students.

This session invites participants to an open conversation about the opportunities and tensions of co-creation: How do we share ownership of knowledge and outputs? What responsibilities arise when the student experience becomes a pedagogical resource? Together, we will reflect on the shifts required to build a genuinely co-created higher education.

A faculty-based approach to student community and voice

Kara-Jane Senior

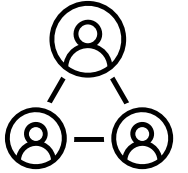


After an internal democracy review in 2024/25, the University of Sunderland Students' Union introduced a faculty-based approach to community building and representation. A paid part-time Student Communities Officer was introduced in each faculty as a result, to support partnership work between students and faculty staff, develop a sense of academic community and belonging, and enable purposeful and effective student voice processes.

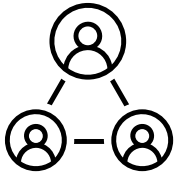
The principles of community organising at are the core of the role and the pioneering Student Communities Officers have tried a variety of activities to increase engagement between students in their respective faculty, with each other and with student voice processes. Within the pilot year, the school-level Student Voice Representative role was also reviewed, to ensure an effective representation structure that supports common objectives. This presentation will provide an overview of the journey so far and the next steps, to increase affectability and impact.

SEED-AI: Designing Social Enterprise Education through AI-Enabled Student “Community Partnerships”

Rehan Shah, Anne Preston, Sara Hamandi, Craig Martin



Our project, funded by the RAISE Research Fund, focuses on the co-design of a new, shared social entrepreneurship module featuring students working with an East London community organisation to develop socially driven entrepreneurial ideas using ethical and creative applications of Generative AI. Our team comprising two student co-researchers, a community partner, and two academic staff members, have employed a participatory design methodology to collaboratively design the module structure, assessment, and GenAI learning activities. Our work builds on existing students' community engagement work at QMUL and UCL East and responds to student interest in learning that is locally relevant, socially impactful, and future-focused. By co-creating the curriculum with students and communities, we aim to model a more democratic and socially responsible approach to educational design. The final module blueprint output will provide a transferable model that other institutions can adopt to support student partnership, ethical GenAI use, and community-engaged curriculum development.



Informing future cross disciplinary module collaboration: Art & Design meets Community & Youth Work

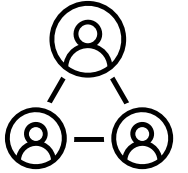
Helen Smith, Wendy Gill

Emergent from previous research "Autonomous Youth: the impact of voluntary participation in youth-led music collectives in the North East of England in the 1980s", (Gill, Smith et al. 2023,) and drawing upon the value-based processes of Community and Youth Work (C&YW) and social arts practice methods of Art & Design (A&D) this research expands upon two key findings:

- Professional learning of undergraduate researchers in cross disciplinary, collaborative and participatory research design, delivery and analysis.
- Individual tangible legacy, lifelong learning and "becoming" through connection and informal education rooted in participatory practice.

Housed within the egalitarian values of C&YW, Participatory Action Research (PAR), and arts research practice, this research works across A&D and C&YW disciplines in collaboration with "Sunderland Culture: Culture Start," a place-based charity helping children and young people access free creative and cultural activities.

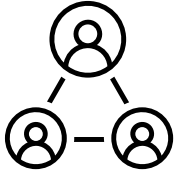
This case study involves University of Sunderland students and apprentices on placement with Sunderland Culture working with young people to design a bespoke arts/culture project using the creative methods of printmaking. This will be inductive and experiential, combining skills, knowledge, behaviour and praxis of each professional discipline to work with a youth sector organisation in planning and completing a contextual arts project "Exploring how students apply and extend distinct professional disciplines"



The Impact of Institutional Support on Wellbeing and Sense of Belonging in Neurodivergent University Students: a mixed-methods study

Christina Sotiropoulou Drosopoulou, Chloe Russo, Mary Metcalfe, Amy Leslie

Neurodivergent students often face distinct academic, social, and emotional challenges in higher education. The present mixed-methods study aimed to examine whether perceived university support mediates the relationship between neurodiversity status (neurotypical, suspected, diagnosed) and student well-being and belonging. A cross-sectional survey of 180 UK university students integrated both validated scales and purpose-designed measures, alongside open-ended questions tailored to capture the unique experiences of neurodivergent individuals. Mediation analyses revealed that perceived pastoral and social support significantly mediated the relationship between neurodivergence and both outcomes, whereas academic and general support did not. The thematic analysis highlighted the importance of emotionally attuned, person-centred institutional support. These findings suggest that the impact of support depends not just on its presence but on its quality and delivery. Embedding student voice and lived experience into support design may help institutions better meet the complex needs of all neurodivergent students.



Engagement as a Leadership Responsibility in Group Activities

John Speakman, Kalina Nenova

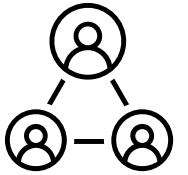
Persistent disengagement in group activities signals a leadership problem experienced by students as early loss of ownership. Engagement is often treated as participation or compliance, leaving leaders reacting to breakdowns rather than shaping sustaining conditions. This project reframes engagement as a sustained psychological condition arising when attention, motivation, and experienced meaning align.

Method: Drawing on longitudinal supervision of undergraduate projects, the approach integrates engagement theory with Agile-informed leadership to identify practical levers including decision ownership, communication structure, and responsibility distribution. Instead of measuring engagement, it focuses on recognising misalignment indicators such as withdrawal from decision-making and narrowed ownership, and responding through structured intervention. Delegates diagnose misalignment through scenarios, map leadership levers within their contexts, and test strategies to sustain engagement.

Evaluation & Impact: Multi-cohort evidence shows shifts in collaboration, supporting shared ownership, voluntary investment, and progression toward autonomous, self-regulating collaboration as a leadership outcome.

Co-creating a Decolonised Bioscience Curriculum

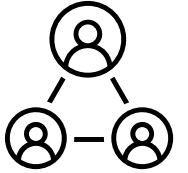
Anastasios Stavrou, Faiza Ahmad, Mohamad Jomaa



Working with second- and third-year students as co-creators, we designed and piloted decolonised resources across Bioscience modules, in multi-pronged approach. Students helped design questionnaires and facilitated focus group interviews to gather perceptions of decolonisation in their course. Likert-scale questionnaires, supplemented by open-ended feedback were used. Others co-created resources via workshops to identify and remove colonial constructs from lecture content. Thematic analysis of student responses identified representation, belonging/inclusivity, relevance of curriculum and personal experiences as priorities. Students reported limited connection and enjoyment to some modules showing the need for incremental and iterative change. Findings from student-created resources will inform module and subject leaders. Sharing the tools used in the design of this project and evaluation of the findings will inform a cycle student-staff co-creation more widely to enable ongoing authentic engagement. Student partners have also identified development of skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and communication for their courses and beyond.

A Decade of Student Partnership: How the learnings of UCL ChangeMakers can improve student partnership working within your institution

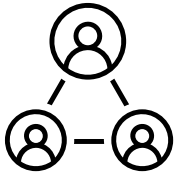
Ashley Storer-Smith



UCL ChangeMakers is one of the longest running and largest Student Partnership Funds & Systems in the UK with over 50 projects funded annually within our main fund and over 40 projects funded through our other initiatives including Student Fellows (Change Agents Model) and Teaching Excellence (Co-created Teaching Dialogue Model). In 2025/26, we did a wide-ranging and in depth review of our systems, practice, resources, and experience in partnership with our Student Fellows. This review has not just effectively set our strategic direction for the next five years, but has created a range of key learnings around areas which can be utilised within other institutions. This workshop will focus on these learnings, how student partnership working has changed since 2014, and the approaches that institutions and staff on the ground can take to better work in partnership with students in a post-COVID, commercialised, and AI & data driven sector.

Online and in-person learning: a faculty research project into student views

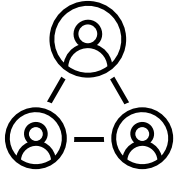
Jamie Thomson



The choice of learning online versus in-person is a big and pressing conversation at UHI which as a federal and multi-campus university has pioneered blended learning and is undertaking a major restructure that will impact on the future of its delivery.

I am researching this choice as UHI's Faculty Intern for Arts, Humanities, Business and Education 2025-26, gathering students' and reps' views on this choice through surveys of students and of Student Voice Reps. Our curriculum in the faculty is split over several campuses and both online and in-person delivery, so experiences vary greatly.

This session will share what students think across these subjects, and my recommendations for learning and teaching in the future both at UHI and lessons for other institutions.



The Impact of Authentic Assessments on Student Outcomes in Accounting and Finance

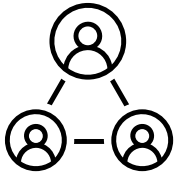
Aigerim Umbetbayeva, Natalia Krasnikova, Obby Phiri, Nataliia Miedviedkova, Masar Hadla, Sonila Malko, Irene Brew-Riverson, Julie Ayton

This study investigates how authentic assessments influence student outcomes in the subject areas of Accounting and Finance. Thus, this project critically examines the extent to which authentic, practice-oriented assessments influence student learning, engagement, and employability within higher education. Authentic assessments (such as case analyses, client reports and, simulations) replicate the complexity of professional practice, requiring students to apply disciplinary knowledge in contextually rich, real-world scenarios (Ajjawi et al., 2024). Although such assessment approaches are increasingly embedded in accounting and finance curricula, empirical evidence on their measurable impact on outcomes such as academic achievement, employability, engagement and transferable skills remains limited.

Using a mixed-methods research design, the study employs Gulikers et al.'s (2004) five-dimensional authenticity framework to systematically evaluate the relationship between assessment authenticity and student outcomes. While most publications focus on philosophy, life sciences, law, and other fields, accounting and finance contexts are particularly under-researched, and few projects embed students as co-researchers. A distinguishing feature of this initiative is its students-as-researchers model, which engages students as researchers in all stages of the research process, from instrument design to data analysis and dissemination. This approach promotes inclusivity, enhances research capability, and deepens engagement through experiential learning. The study contributes to pedagogical scholarship and professional education reform.

Co-developing scholarly informed teaching activities with a student partner

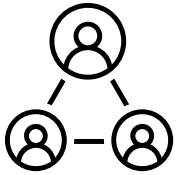
Louise Walker, Sarah-Sonia Balan



In this talk we will describe a project to explore the pedagogical literature and develop scholarly informed teaching and learning activities for undergraduate mathematics students. The work was done collaboratively between an academic and a student partner and was partly funded by a London Mathematical Society Undergraduate Research Bursary. During the six week project the student partner interviewed lecturers and wrote a comprehensive literature review. Based on this evidence, we co-developed teaching and learning activities to be used in our undergraduate mathematics course units and our student peer support scheme. We will describe how the partnership enabled us to develop our expertise in teaching and learning and how we both benefitted from the project and used the outputs to support our peers.

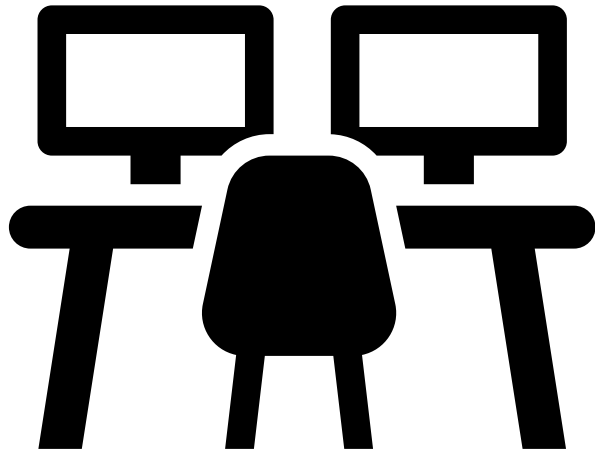
Working with Students to Build Project Archive for Redesign and Knowledge

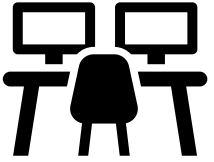
Li Wang, Yousef Zawahreh, Zaynah Syed, Zhijie Zhao, Khadeeja Ahmed-Razzak, Tianrui Zhao



In the last few years, there has been an accumulation of the design projects, for the module of Engineering Design. Students had been working hard through the semester to complete these design projects. Not only their effort, but it also contains their "heart and soul". But when the assessment is finished, these projects were just achieved into the system. For this project, 4 students from these cohorts have been working with the instructor to build a searchable database and turn these design projects into engineering design stories, which is in a way to bring those design practice alive again. Learning from this practice/stories/examples will help students to apply concepts and think through a series of decisions that allow them to define, interpret, and solve a problem. The co-creation element of this project has helped the output to be students -centric, and also benefited the future development of this module.

Embedding Employability into Assessment and the Curriculum

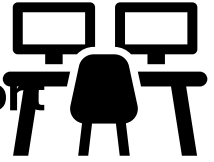




Overcoming barriers to participation in full time work placement (year in industry) for undergraduate students

Jake Barber, Emily Whinnett

This interactive workshop explores the design, delivery and equity implications of year-long undergraduate work placements, drawing on research evidence and a detailed case study from Westminster Business School at the University of Westminster. Adopting a UK definition of "thick" placements lasting 42-52 weeks and embedded within degree programmes, the session examines how extended workplace experience contributes to graduate employment outcomes, professional self-efficacy, social capital development and professional identity formation. At the same time, it addresses persistent barriers to participation, including unequal access to social and cultural capital, competitive recruitment processes, and structural constraints such as early timelines and opportunity costs. Through the narrative of a student journey, participants will analyse how targeted institutional interventions-careers guidance, digital platforms, curriculum-embedded reflection and personalised support-can mitigate disadvantage. The workshop offers a practical roadmap for institutions seeking to scale high-quality, inclusive placement provision across diverse national and policy contexts.



Taxonomy: Futureproofing Students! How can pedagogic choices and curriculum design support skills and competency acquisition?

Jane Bartholomew

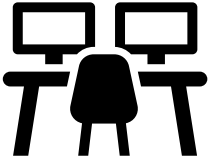
This workshop offers delegates time to reconsider how the curriculum can support the development of students' skills and competencies to ensure their readiness for the "future graduate job roles that are as yet undefined" (OECD, Future of Education and Skills 2030). Higher Education needs to accept the impact that technical advancement and AI are having on current and future employment opportunities. To "futureproof" today's students, we need to identify appropriate pedagogic choices that develop and nurture the necessary "human traits" that are now being recognised as essential learning, alongside subject knowledge. Today's students therefore need to practice decision making, problem-solving, creative thinking, negotiating and presentation skills, so how can all this be incorporated? By participating in this workshop, you will use "Bartholomew's Taxonomy: Futureproofing Students!" to discuss and debate pedagogic-driven initiatives that can assist with integrating skills and competency acquisition into the curriculum, developing "take-home" ideas to share with colleagues.



How to build an SKE module: Embedding employability through live-brief projects

Emily Bastable

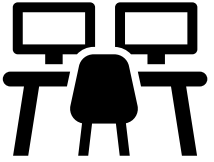
Student Knowledge Exchange (SKE) projects within curriculum can generate immense benefits for our students including improving both disciplinary/sector knowledge and skills, developing employability and transferable skills, and enhancing the educational experience and learning outcomes. These projects can be in collaboration with industry, cultural, community and third sector organisations: the nature and locality of which can affect the nature and outcomes of the projects, bringing learning and change to these external stakeholders and the places within which they are rooted. At a time when UK higher education is being challenged to make a stronger contribution to their communities, play a fuller part in regional development and raise the bar further in student-centred teaching standards - student knowledge exchange should be recognised as a highly effective way to meet those challenges. This workshop will take attendees step-by-step on how to introduce a new module or amend a current module to include student knowledge exchange- as well as potential benefits for students, universities and external partners.



Building Inclusive Employability Through an Authentic and Scaffolded Pathway

Yan Birch, Carla Chivers, Alison Lane

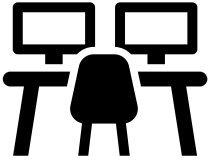
In this talk, we introduce how we have embedded employability through an authentic and scaffolded employability pathway across our BSc Psychology programme. Purposefully designed as a staged model spanning all years of study, the pathway integrates career development within the curriculum rather than positioning it as an optional add-on. Employability is embedded through structured opportunities for career exploration, skills development, experiential learning and reflective practice. A key consideration in its design has been our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, recognising that career knowledge and access to professional opportunities and networks are not evenly distributed. By adopting a curriculum-embedded approach, we aim to provide equitable access to authentic employability experiences for all students, regardless of background. Drawing on student and stakeholder feedback we evaluate the efficacy of this approach at embedding employability meaningfully within the curriculum strengthening career knowledge, confidence and graduate readiness in all students.



Vertically Aligned Authentic Industry Practice to Build Student Confidence

Matthew Blacklock, Chris Connor, Roger Penlington

This session presents a vertically aligned curriculum model embedding authentic industry-linked practice across all five levels of an undergraduate engineering programme. Rather than concentrating employability in final-year projects or isolated placements, the redesign structured a deliberate progression: from highly scaffolded discipline-focused problems in early years, through interdisciplinary collaborative projects with industry feedback, to live industry-engaged group projects requiring professional accountability and judgement. Implementation involved coordinated assessment redesign and shared project frameworks across programme stages. Evaluation draws on multi-year student experience metrics, retention patterns, professional accreditation commendations, and student accounts of increased confidence in handling ambiguity and stronger identification with engineering practice. The findings indicate that sustained, progressively structured authentic engagement strengthens professional identity and normalises participation as engineers in development. The session argues that employability is most effectively embedded not through add-on initiatives, but through vertically integrated curriculum design.



Scaling-up work-integrated learning: Enhancing student engagement with employability across a UK university

Marina Boz, John Parkin, Zoe Mogridge

Student engagement in HE is a well-established challenge faced by higher education (Lowe, 2023). Moreover, current evidence suggests that there is still unequal access to both work placements and graduate employment affecting disadvantaged students in the UK (Divan et al., 2022). To address challenges with student engagement with and access to employability development opportunities, Anglia Ruskin University implemented a work-integrated learning approach throughout its undergraduate curriculum providing every student with the opportunity to engage with professional practice. The Live Briefs Programme was initially implemented as a compulsory initiative in levels 4 and 5 from 2020/21, but following a positive impact on students, academics increased their engagement with the programme with last year seeing around 39% of all Live Briefs outside compulsory modules. Our presentation shares insights from this institution-wide pedagogic approach and highlights findings on its impact, as well as the design and implementation processes.



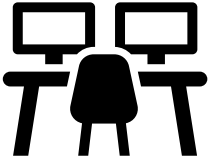
Embedding the Pillars of Employability at UCL

Wendy Browne

Through imagery, we will present out UCL's definition of employability, the Pillars of Employability framework, has been refreshed and embedded into key strategic education projects across UCL. Details will also be given on how the framework has been embedded into our term 3 extracurricular ExtendED Learning Programme and an accompanying skills platform which has been developed to measure impact include engagement and skills gain.

Encouraging employability skill development through collaboration with industry experts

Ellie Fowler



When asked to develop a session on enhancing employability for a student cohort of senior leaders, I initially thought of inviting in a few industry experts to give a talk. However, I didn't want to offer yet another transactional and potentially boring session, so I decided to move to the more dynamic approach of using a world cafe. A world cafe offered the opportunity for students and industry experts to collaborate and share their employability experiences in an informal yet structured manner. This approach resulted in a high energy and vibrant session with lots of discussion and shared learning for all. Feedback was excellent, with students valuing the authenticity and real-world experiences of the industry experts, and the industry experts valuing the different perspectives of the student cohort.

Join this storytelling session to find out more about a world cafe approach, the practicalities, benefits and how you might introduce it into your teaching toolkit to flip transaction into collaboration.



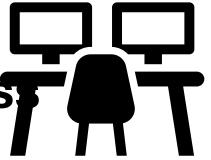
Empathy Mapping as SoTL: Embedding Employability through Customer Experience Led Assessment in Marketing Education

Eman Gadalla

This project evaluates the use of Empathy Mapping as an innovative, customer experience-led assessment within a marketing ethics module. Students critically analyse greenwashing controversies using secondary research, structuring their insights around what consumers think and feel, see, hear, and say and do. The method embeds theoretically grounded CX frameworks into a summative presentation, requiring synthesis of academic literature, media narratives, and regulatory evidence. Evaluation draws on reflective teaching practice and module-level feedback, examining how the approach fosters deeper understanding of customer experience, ethical reasoning, and stakeholder-centred analysis. Preliminary findings indicate that Empathy Mapping enhances student engagement, promotes critical thinking, and develops employability-relevant skills such as ethical judgement, analytical sensemaking, and professional communication. By integrating authentic, industry-aligned methods into assessment, this project demonstrates a transferable SoTL-informed approach for embedding employability within the curriculum while maintaining academic rigour.

Embedding Employability in International Excursions: A Case Study from Westminster Business School

Natalia Krasnikova, Tom Lowe



In 2025, a team from the University of Westminster organised a fieldtrip of 40 students to Brussels, with the aspiration to create an engaging, authentic and employability rich experience. Disadvantaged students often face barriers to international opportunities, due to social, financial and cultural barriers to participation. This project engaged our BSc Accounting & Finance programme (of 67.2% first in family and 94.5% global majority), where short-mobility offered an inter-cultural opportunities in experiencing a new setting. To ensure the trip had impact, the team of crafted a careers focused agenda to not only benefit the student experience but also employability. The excursion included visits to the European Parliament, employers, alumni talks, and two careers workshops to directly translated the value of the excursion to students future applications. This presentation will share the practice of the project as well as an evaluation study sharing the benefits to short mobilities on students" engagement.

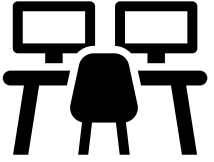


Rewarding reflection: a scheme to transform STEMM+B students perception of holistic self-awareness.

Paulina Kristiansson, Martyn, Kingsbury, Roisin Gwyon

This study was conducted at Imperial, where students tend to be highly strategic and STEMMB-focused, often undervaluing non-academic experiences. Although graduate employability outcomes are strong, students can struggle to articulate their transferable or "soft" skills. An institutional Award was established to address this gap, supporting the integration of curricular and broader non-academic experiences to evidence agentic, coherent narratives of growth.

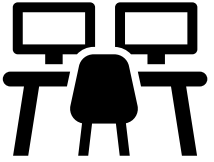
Questionnaires captured participants' initial motivations, expectations and perceived barriers, and informed later semi-structured interviews with seven partially engaged students and eight completers. Analysis shows that early engagement was largely strategic, with the Award viewed primarily as a mechanism for formal recognition. However, participants increasingly valued structured reflection, with evidence of a shift towards more agentic engagement. Findings highlight the importance of maintaining low perceived barriers alongside appropriate challenges, which are often retrospectively recognised as transformative and instrumental in students' development.



Engaging Students in Placement Preparation through Embedded Employability

Tom Lowe, Emily Whinnett, Irene Brew-Riverson, Emma Elkington, Abdelhafid Benamraoui, Pythagoras Petratos, Samuel Ze-To, Tadej Vindis, David Scott

This presentation will share the findings of a new at the University of Westminster to ensure student engagement with placement preparation through embedding employability in a core Level 5 module. The "Financial Industries" unit has been designed to follow the Careers Theory DOTS (Decision Learning, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Learning, and Self-Awareness), to enhance students ability to secure graduate employment. The module's lectures covered the landscape of the financial industry, placement application methods, and two authentic assessments. The teaching sessions deliberately complemented the assessment seeing high student attendance due to high perceived relevance. The first assessment was a Live Brief from an employer, where students formed Financial Consultancies, which were presented in a expo format. The second assessment asked student to apply for a live placement opportunity, where the application was also submitted and marked. The practice of this module will be shared with delegates to share practice in student engagement.



Making Skills Visible at Scale: 'creating The Complete Graduate™ to Embed Employability in the Life Sciences Curriculum

Laura Mccaughey, Anna MgGregor, Lesley Hamilton

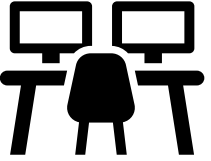
We present The Complete Graduate (CG), a Moodle based signposting and portfolio tool co created with five student interns to make skills development equitable, visible and assessable across fourteen Life Science degrees at the University of Glasgow (~2,400 students). The framework integrates four domains (Knowledge, Transferable Skills, Practical Skills, Well being), curriculum maps, embedded reflective prompts (e.g., STAR(R)) and a Practical Skills Tracking (PST) programme with formative sign off and HEAR recognition. Implementation used automatic enrolment, staff-student communications, and annual course coordinator updates. A mixed methods evaluation combined Moodle analytics, two online surveys (PST: n=46; CG: n=30), and a focus group (n=7). Impact: students reported greater awareness and articulation of skills and gave a median recommend score of 4/5 for the tool. Thematic analysis highlighted "breaking down barriers" for time poor students and PST completions were high (77% in 2023/24; 82% in 2024/25). We offer a scalable, portable model of authentic student engagement that embeds employability within formative assessment and the curriculum.

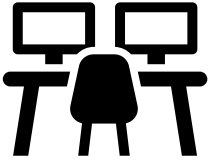
Embedding Employability into Assessment and the Curriculum

Beyond the dissertation.....

Susan Morrow

We....

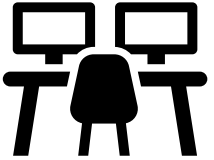




Employability Through Collaboration: Rethinking Assessment for Early Year Success

Aurelie Le Normand, Barbara Waters

This project examines how assessment design influences first-year Fashion students' development of employability skills through group work. Students completed an anonymous survey after participating in two units: one assessed through a shared group grade, and one individually graded despite collaborative outputs. Findings show that most students felt comfortable in their groups and reported that working across the two units strengthened peer connections. Students widely agreed that group work enhanced key employability competencies, including communication, time management, problem-solving, and the ability to collaborate across cultures. Shared group grades were associated with greater motivation, structure, and accountability, whereas individually graded collaboration was perceived as more relaxed and creatively enjoyable. Open comments revealed both challenges such as uneven participation and communication and benefits including idea sharing, support, and exposure to diverse working styles. These insights highlight how early-year assessment choices can intentionally shape students' professional behaviours and readiness for collaborative industry practice.



EmPLAYability: embedding a playful approach to career conversations into an undergraduate degree

John Parkin

This workshop explores embedding a playful and co-constructed approach to employability into a Primary Education Studies degree. I explore using the playful tool Playmobil pro as a tool to support emPLAYability. The session begins with a short presentation about how I used Playmobil pro with final year undergraduates to devise career plans and consider the skills needed to succeed in graduate careers. Attendees will spend most of the workshop participating in facilitated activities using Playmobil pro to explore employability. Attendees will discover how a playful approach to employability can be used in their own contexts.

The emPLAYability project was evaluated through participating students completing exit tickets at the end of lectures to understand their experiences, benefits and limitations of the approach.

The impact of emPLAYability activities was providing participating students a safe space to reflect on their career aspirations and plan next steps in career journeys.



From Reflection to Readiness: Structured Conversations for Future-Ready Graduates

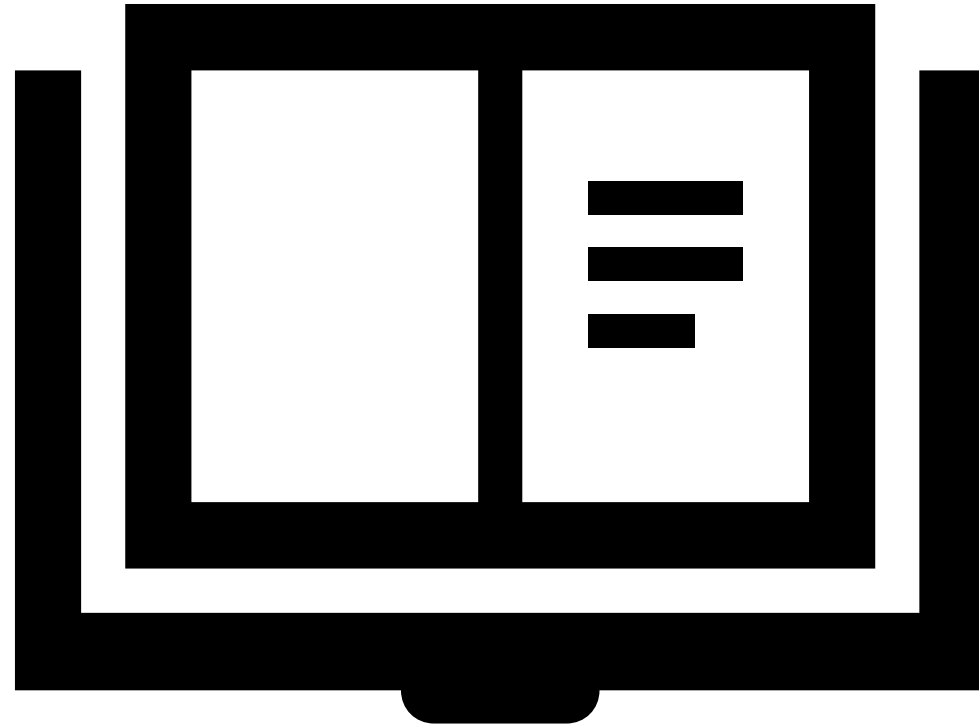
Samantha Wilson-Thain, Chris Rodrigues, Bruno Martins, George Haughie

Higher education faces increasing pressure to graduate students equipped for global workplaces, combining disciplinary expertise with transferable skills and intercultural competencies. Yet graduates often feel underprepared, and employers cite gaps in communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving.

Building on the idea that reflective, authentic assessments bridge academic and professional practice, this case study examines an initiative in the School of Life Sciences. We introduced a formative, structured dialogic process informing summative assessment, aligned to Warwick's 12 core skills, positioning students as active partners in their development. This approach fosters meaningful dialogue between students and supervisors and engages academic and professional staff in co-creating an inclusive, transparent assessment experience.

Drawing on authentic assessment and employability literature, the framework enhances assessment literacy, scaffolds growth, and enables students to better articulate their skills, potentially improving graduate outcomes data and preparing them for complex global contexts.

Ensuring Education Remains People Focused: Balancing Attendance with Inclusivity





I would die on this hill: An interactive democratic workshop

Emily Bastable, James Cantwell

Calling all students and HE professionals with strong opinions!
We want your unfiltered voice to support RAISE's ambition to advance the sector's approach to student engagement. Through a rapid co-production workshop, we will develop a ranking of the top 20 most popular opinions about the state of Higher Education in the UK. We're using a participatory approach for our workshop using three steps:

Ideation: Come with one popular- unpopular opinion

Ratification: Walk around and agree or disagree with opinions, voting for the ones you most agree with.

Prioritisation: We'll count the votes behind the scenes and reveal online the top 20 opinions.

We'll be continuing the conversation through webinars, podcasts, in our SiGs and reading groups, so join us to co-produce with us our mission.



Student voice in distance education

Paul Blacklock

Distance Education (DE) is seeing increasing demand (Forte et al, 2016) and is a format which makes access to education more inclusive (Surdick, Bockes and Wong, 2021 in Agyekum et al 2023). This research investigates student voice for DE to inform inclusive practice and design. There is a need for a more specific focus on the lived experience of DE students who are likely to be from a different demographic to on campus students (Otto, Kleinesper and Preuß, 2024).

Student voice in distance education is under researched (Healey, 2017). Replicating student voice processes that are in place for on campus students is not necessarily what is best for students studying at distance. Former DE students were involved in the decision-making process for the questionnaire and interview design. This submission will outline initial findings from the questionnaire, which was completed by 305 students in and from 61 countries worldwide. It will also outline the findings of interviews which are currently being conducted. Outcomes from this research will include developing a model for student voice for distance education students.



Creating 'The Nook' - a campus space students say 'feels like home'

Adele Browne, Kieron Carroll

'It may change the story of inclusion on campus': In 2024 we facilitated student-led explorations into their ideal campus look and feel; in 2025 we secured an empty unit we could transform. We strove to create a dwell space built on students' voice: a space to 'pause, meet, discover', which, through its ethos and design, would particularly help quieter students feel at ease. We selected lighting, decor and furniture to reflect what students described, and agreed on principles including 'always open to all', 'no entry barriers' and 'stay as long as you wish'. Students' response has been overwhelming and their usage itself defines the space daily. Over 200 pieces of positive feedback include: 'It's not trying to make you do anything or be conscious of anyone'; 'It creates a sense of community without pressure' and 'As someone who is an introvert, it's the perfect place for me to rest'.



Is everything OK? Success in using Compassionate Communications in nudge emails

George Cox

As part of the NTU Student Engagement and Attendance Policy, students who do not engage with their studies for 7 consecutive days receive a nudge email with the aim of encouraging them to engage with their course with relevant support. A tenet of Compassionate Communications, outlined by the Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce in November 2024, is "clear, empathetic, action-focused and supportive" communications. Using a randomised AB trial, we found that a 7-day email more explicitly referencing the Engagement and Attendance Policy and with more personalised wording had a statistically significant positive effect in increasing student engagement. Those students receiving the new emails were 15% less likely to have an additional period of non-engagement during the term. Another outcome was the number of students choosing to reply; there had never been a single reply to the original email, but over 200 directly responded following the change.



Understanding student non-engagement and the Student Calling Insight Process

George Cox

Following our well-received poster last year, this interactive workshop will seek to evidence or challenge delegates' assumptions around why students do not engage with their studies using data from NTU's Contact and Engagement Service (CES). After an introductory overview of our alerts-based telephone intervention, colleagues will be tasked with collaborating to draft a visual wheel of non-engagement factors. This will then be compared to our own graphic based upon intervention data and student remarks from several qualitative evaluations. Subsequently, delegates will be asked to plot on a timeline how these factors may change in prevalence throughout the academic year, and how different groups of students might face different barriers at different times. After providing our own findings and associated actions, we will end the session with a prompt for reflection: how might colleagues use the understanding of student non-engagement they have developed today to influence their own practice?

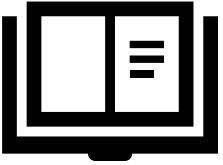


Beyond Attendance: Designing Student Engagement for Real Lives and Flexible Pathways

Harriet Dunbar-Morris

As higher education moves towards more flexible, modular and lifelong learning pathways, traditional assumptions about student engagement and attendance are increasingly misaligned with the realities of student lives. Drawing on early insights from a Visiting Fellowship focused on lifelong learning, this presentation explores how colleagues in institutions can co-design for engagement and belonging without relying on idealised models of continuous participation.

The session presents emerging practice from collaborative curriculum and student experience design, informed by Being, Belonging, Becoming (BBB) survey data gathered from students. It illustrates how evidence about access, engagement and belonging can be used to redesign assessment, personal tutoring and structured interaction in ways that are inclusive, purposeful and people-focused. Rather than equating engagement with physical attendance, the presentation argues for designing belonging into curriculum and support structures, enabling authentic participation across flexible and episodic pathways, and will be relevant to academic and professional staff across higher education.



Beyond recruitment: Understanding and acting on engagement patterns and the expectation-reality gap in Student Mentoring

Sarah Hadlow

This presentation examines patterns of engagement, withdrawal, and representativeness within a large undergraduate peer mentoring scheme using a mixed methods approach. Quantitative analysis showed that almost half of employed mentors became inactive after the first few weeks of term, with male students and those holding BTEC qualifications significantly less likely to engage. Qualitative interviews revealed that prior experience and existing relationships supported initial confidence, but mismatches between expectations and the realities of the role, alongside structural constraints and inconsistent staffing support, created barriers to sustained engagement. These findings informed a series of developments designed to enhance accessibility and improve the experience of all mentors, not only those who are most confident or well connected. Given the significant benefits associated with taking up and continually engaging as a peer mentor, this presentation outlines steps taken to improve accessibility the scheme, whilst acknowledging the ongoing challenges encountered along the way.



Belonging Beyond Entry Point: Supporting Direct Entrant Students in Contemporary HE

Eloise Heathcote, Aimee Barnes

Direct entrant students remain largely absent from higher education research and institutional data, despite policy calls for more flexible progression routes. Often categorised as "continuing students", their transition experiences are obscured within systems designed for first-year entry, limiting opportunities to develop belonging and understanding of academic expectations. Engagement is frequently interpreted through attendance and compliance rather than inclusive, people-centred practices that recognise diverse pathways. This presentation shares practice-based interventions embedded within existing institutional systems. This will be informed by internal scoping of the Sport Outdoor and Exercise Science programme and co-creation of training materials with a student mentor from the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme. Early impact will be demonstrated through qualitative feedback from direct entrant students, academic input and a current PAL leader to evidence how small structural adjustments can support the transitional needs of direct entrant students through programme induction and peer to peer mentoring.



Exploring the effect of inequality-themed artworks on creative students' learning of analysis

Sidney Hope

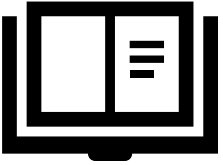
In this storytelling session I will show the visual outcomes of an Academic Support workshop using experiential inclusive pedagogies that I wrote and co-delivered 6 times (2024-25) which focused on enabling BA and MA Fine Art students to learn analytical and reflective skills. The workshop invited students to analyse 3 artworks and then asked them to make their own artworks using the same methods as each artist. For instance, for the artwork "Negative/Positives" by Lubaina Himid students were asked to redact a double-page spread of the Guardian newspaper then analyse what they had made. The other artworks were "Untitled", 1991 by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Martha Rosler's classic artwork, "The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems", 1974-75. The reactions by the students to this activity were diverse, becoming much richer than simple redaction. Student engagement was high and feedback was gathered with the effects of the workshop reflected on positively.



Higher education post-2020. How Blended Learning factors into the future of learning and teaching. A comparison of staff and student experiences

Tom Langston

Blended learning has inadvertently become central to post pandemic higher education. Often what blended learning is, happens by accident by the very nature of how easy it is to add content into online platforms but the thought of how the learning takes place is not clearly defined. This campfire session, based on interview with staff and students for a doctoral comparative study, explores perceptions of blended learning, examining how differing understandings influence core dimensions of student engagement, including motivation, attendance, and belonging. Early findings suggest students frequently lack clarity about what blended learning entails and how to navigate flexible learning environments, while staff vary in how they design blends of online and face to face activity. Drawing on established definitions that emphasise the thoughtful integration of digital and in person learning and the value of active, participatory pedagogies, the study argues that alignment between staff and student expectations is essential for fostering effective engagement.



Designing for Engagement: The Impact of Collaborative Assessment on First-Year Student Success in a Mega Module

Zhonglin Liu

This study investigates how assessment design influences student engagement and success within a large first-year university "mega module". Using a comparative case-study approach, the study examines outcomes from two assessments: Assessment One (A1), an authentic collaborative group project that mimics a real-world disciplinary task, and Assessment Two, an individual poster task. Quantitative performance data, alongside indicators of participation and confidence, were analysed to explore differences in engagement and achievement. Findings indicate stronger academic outcomes and higher engagement in A1, suggesting that authentic collaborative assessment supports students' transition into university learning through meaningful application. The evaluation draws on principles of first-year curriculum design, including active learning, timely feedback, and scaffolded challenges aligned with students' developmental needs. The project demonstrates that intentionally designed collaborative authentic assessment fosters deeper learning, strengthens early academic confidence, and enhances retention potential. It offers evidence-informed strategies for improving engagement and success in large first-year modules through purposeful assessment design.



Monitoring to Meaning: Using SEL Coaching to Rethink Attendance

Laura Massey, Toni Phillips

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) helps students understand and manage emotions, build relationships, make responsible decisions, and navigate challenges. The SEL coaching programme uses a collaborative, inclusive approach to improve engagement, attendance, and retention by exploring the reasons behind disengagement. It acknowledges that attendance issues often stem from personal barriers, including anxiety, overwhelm, stress, or belonging, rather than simple non compliance. Coaching supports students to set clear, measurable goals around engagement while fostering personal growth. Through targeted support, students develop self awareness (recognising emotions linked to attendance), self management (handling fear, avoidance, or overwhelm impacting attendance), relationship skills (understanding the impact of choices), and motivation rooted in personal goals rather than policy expectations. The programme values diverse lived experiences, co designs realistic engagement plans, and helps students access support for hidden barriers such as mental health concerns or imposter syndrome. Evaluation is ongoing and informs future development, ensuring the programme continues to meet student needs.



Equity-Driven Pastoral Interventions for Students Managing Complex Circumstances

Simon Massey

Persistent inequalities in higher education highlight the need for people centred systems that anticipate and respond to diverse student needs. At Manchester Met's School of Sociology and Criminology, we have embedded equity into teaching and pastoral support as the foundation of our education strategy.

This workshop introduces an example of that with our data informed pastoral model, which identifies early signs of non submission or disengagement. This allows for timely, personalised outreach from dedicated Pastoral Heads of Year. In addition to evidence showing this has enabled to work at scale (1500 UG students approx.), the approach protects academic workload during peak periods while ensuring students receive responsive support.

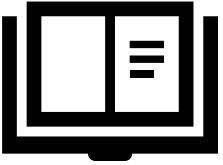
Participants will engage in a group exercise to develop equity focused strategies for their own contexts, exploring anticipated student needs, possible barriers, and opportunities for collaborative practice. Attendees will leave equipped to use data compassionately to guide interventions and enhance people centred educational practice.



Motivational Interviewing as a Third-Space Strategy for Student Engagement: A Qualitative Study of Staff Perspectives

Abdul Hye Miah

Motivational Interviewing (MI) offers structured strategies for resolving ambivalence, a common barrier in behavioural change and reframes staff-student dialogue to enhance student engagement. Positioned within the University of Northampton's Integrated Learner Support Model, this study, an incremental stage in a broader research programme, examines the under-researched potential of MI as a bridging practice combining academic and student support roles to provide strengthened holistic student support. As part of the University's Access and Participation Plan, MI training was delivered to Personal Academic Tutors and Student Support Officers. Using a qualitative design, semi-structured interviews and surveys explored staff perspectives of MI's relevance, integration into practice, and its influence on student support conversations. Findings suggest MI-informed approaches create opportunities for more meaningful and enhanced student-staff interactions towards student engagement, highlighting MI's potential as an innovative third-space strategy towards learner support. Future phases of the project will incorporate student perspectives and measurable outcomes.



Fostering Creative Resilience Through Collaborative Writing Practices

Petra Palkovacsova

This presentation shares a practice-based approach to fostering student engagement and creative resilience through collaborative writing workshops in higher education and community learning contexts. Drawing on experience as a creative writing educator, facilitator, and independent publisher, it introduces three workshop models that challenge dominant assumptions of authorship as solitary and feedback as evaluative (Wandor; Pheby): Independent Collaboration (The Silent Space), Facilitated Collaboration (The Guiding Frame), and Embedded Collaboration (The Round Table).

Each model foregrounds dialogue, co-authorship, and shared vulnerability, inviting participants to engage with writing as a collective rather than individual process (Salesses; Donn & Mrdja). The presentation outlines how these approaches were implemented across different learning contexts and reflects on the facilitator's shifting role from guide to collaborator. All workshops are evaluated through an accessibility-focused lens, considering how facilitation models support or hinder participation across differing levels of confidence and vulnerability. The session reflects critically on challenges such as managing vulnerability, unequal participation, and balancing structure with openness (hooks; Montgomery; Salesses), concluding with practical insights for people-focused, inclusive approaches to student engagement (Bruffee).



Rehumanising the Capstone Experience: A Compassionate Framework for Supervision in Engineering and Computer Science Education

Mahesha Samaratunga

Capstone projects in Engineering and Computer Science education represent a critical yet emotionally charged phase, carrying significant academic weight while demanding independence and technical competence. Students often experience elevated stress, anxiety, and fatigue pressures intensified by job applications, family responsibilities, and uncertain post-university transitions. Moving from structured classrooms to independent supervision can create mismatched expectations, leading to disengagement and low attendance. Neurodiverse learners are particularly affected by detached supervisory practices and unstructured project pathways.

This presentation explores how embedding wellbeing and authentic relationships within capstone project supervision fosters engagement during this vulnerable stage. Drawing on Carl Rogers' person-centred theory, it introduces a compassionate supervision framework grounded in psychological safety, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Findings from qualitative action research show that relational authenticity enables intellectual risk-taking and genuine learning, without compromising academic rigour. Supervision, reimagined as a reflective and human-focused practice, recentres higher education on its most vital foundation -people.



Belonging and identity in modules shared across programmes

Stuart Sims

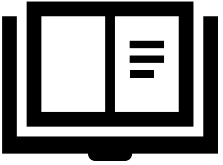
Shared modules bring students from different degree programmes into the same learning spaces, often with varied expectations, identities, and patterns of engagement. In this campfire conversation, we'll share insights from a collaborative research project exploring how students experience inclusivity, belonging, and participation within shared modules.

Collecting data from three universities, the research involved surveys of staff and student-led focus groups. This campfire conversation will briefly introduce the key themes from the findings of this research, focusing on what students told us about navigating shared teaching spaces and barriers to engagement

This area is under-discussed in UK HE despite the use of shared modules being widespread. Many shared modules are developed for instrumental reasons in a sector facing increasingly limited resources. This conversation is intended to share any experiences of attendees to move towards a better shared understanding of this practice and a more meaningful student experience on shared modules.

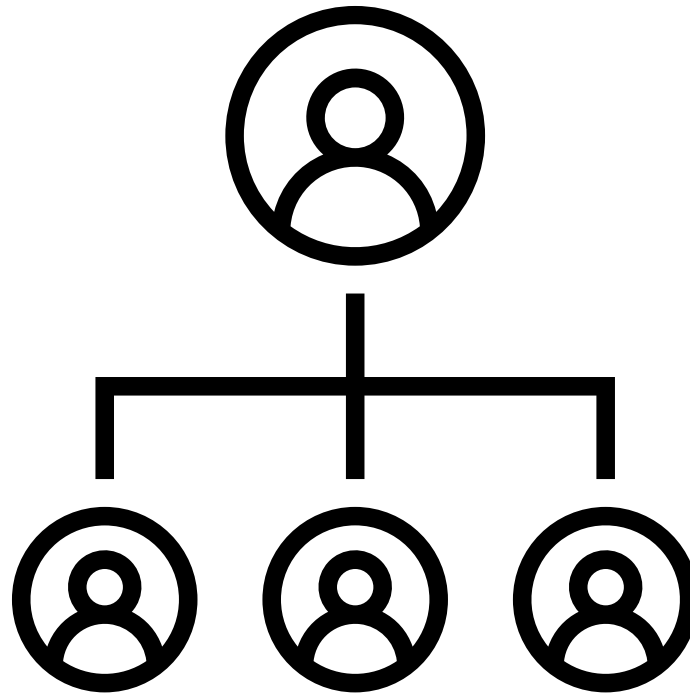
From Belonging to Mattering: Rethinking Student Engagement for Home-Based Learners

Jacqui Thijm



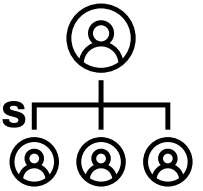
The profile of students in contemporary higher education is increasingly diverse, with growing numbers studying part-time, online, or from home while balancing employment and caring responsibilities. However, dominant approaches to student engagement remain largely campus-centred, often treating belonging as a universal indicator of success. My research will ask whether such models adequately reflect the lived realities of home-based, non-traditional students and explore student mattering as a more people-focused alternative. Informed by feminist standpoint theory, the study centres the voices and experiences of home-based students, acknowledging the researcher's own situated position within this group. Engagement is examined through everyday "mattering moments" in which students feel seen, valued, and taken seriously by the people in their institution. By foregrounding these human interactions, the research seeks to reframe student engagement as relational, contextual, and rooted in care, offering insights into how higher education can remain meaningfully people-focused amid changing patterns of participation.

Evolving Roles and Third-Space Practices for Authentic Engagement



Developing non-cognitive skills for improved wellbeing in Foundation Year Psychology students

Amuda Agneswaran, Jennifer McGahan

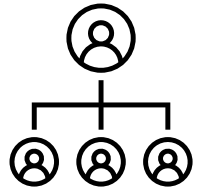


Non-cognitive skills are a set of attitudes, behaviours and strategies including self-regulation, motivation, and creativity. Better non-cognitive skills are linked to increased psychological well-being and positively predict educational and occupational outcomes. Despite their importance, formal teaching of non-cognitive skills is largely absent from universities. VESPA is a research-driven framework that targets essential non-cognitive skills by developing academic skills and mindsets to increase engagement and academic attainment. This is crucial at Foundation Year level, as students, traditionally, tend to lack confidence and come to University with lower grades. Therefore, this compassionate approach recognises the gaps and focusses on realistic improvements in attitude and effort, allowing students to take charge of their academic growth.

We will outline the integration of VESPA, as a third-space practice, into a Psychology FY module, with 100 students, and explore the positive behavioural changes demonstrated by empirically analysing their experiences and engagement through questionnaires and focus groups.

Positionality in Student and Community Engagement

George Cox, Melanie Wellsley

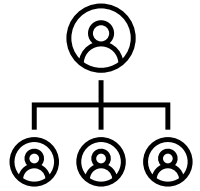


This paper will reflect on the implementation of positionality workshops in a department built around student and community engagement. Over the past year, we have initiated and encouraged discussions around positionality and how it may relate to the work of practitioners in areas as diverse as schools outreach, volunteering, collective impact, and student engagement, as well as researchers evaluating this work tied to Access and Participation. We will give an overview of these sessions.

Inspired by pre-existing graphics illustrating axes of privilege and power, we will then present a wheel of privileges (based on conversations with the aforementioned colleagues in the third space) that can be used for both practitioners and researchers when considering their own positionality to stakeholders, participants, partners, and the work itself. Finally, we will present a case study of Round Table Analysis, where the method of data analysis (collaborative/action-focused/student co-led) was informed by this intersectional thinking.

Conversations: evaluating chat platform efficacy in fostering collective engagement among on campus and online postgraduates

Jenny Crow, Stuart Gray, Gemma Ryde, Angelinca Yin, Kirstin Stuart James



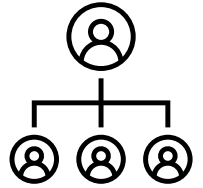
Digital transformation brings opportunities to reimagine how diverse cohorts of students can engage together in their learning. According to Garrison, this affords opportunities to build communities through fostering both cognitive and social engagement (Garrison et al., 1999). In MSc Sport and Exercise Science and Medicine, cohorts study both on campus and online and represent learners with diverse backgrounds in terms of life stage, cultural background and discipline. Microsoft Teams offers a 'third space' mechanism in its chat platform for facilitated discussions across the cohorts through text, video, images, emojis, and reactions. But the efficacy of this approach in fostering engagement was unknown. A mixed-methods analysis of conversations and student perspectives provided insights to inform future programme development in terms of student-centred, active learning. The session will share project insights, key findings, and lessons learned, alongside plans for applying these to enhance teaching practice.

References

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516\(00\)00016-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6)

Can providing more informal opportunities to access Learning Development support help overcome barriers to accessing support?

Joanna Davidson

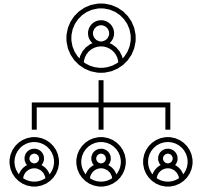


This project aimed to reposition Learning Development support for Integrated Foundation year students, making it more accessible and approachable. In response to challenges with engagement through traditional mechanisms of accessing support, drop-ins located in the canteen and timed around the students' lessons were set up, study buddy sessions were run in a visible location at the same time every week where students could turn up without booking, and Learning Development support was provided in class during formative assessments in collaboration with the lecturers.

The project was evaluated by tracking student engagement with support across the semester, and obtaining qualitative feedback from students regarding engagement with support via a questionnaire at the end of the semester. Student perception and use of support was positively impacted. 46.5% of FY students engaged with support at least once, and 82% of students now view support as a normal part of the student experience.

SPARK: A Third-Space Community of Practice Connecting Advanced Practice, Education and Research

Lauren Flannery

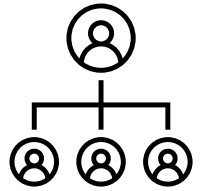


SPARK (Sustaining Partnerships to Advance Research and Knowledge in Health) is a cross-professional Community of Practice designed as a third-space between university and practice for learners, clinicians, advanced practitioners, educators, researchers and alumni. Originating from staff-student innovation in the School of Health Sciences at the University of East Anglia, SPARK delivers low-cost, high-impact monthly online sessions showcasing quality improvement projects, research-in-progress and service innovations, supported by a digital Padlet hub for resources and ongoing collaboration.

A mixed-methods evaluation integrates registration and engagement analytics with brief pre/post surveys and qualitative feedback to explore members' experiences, sense of belonging and inclusivity, professional development, and perceived impact across the four pillars of Advanced Practice. Early findings indicate that SPARK demystifies academic-clinical boundaries, creates new identity spaces for hybrid practitioner-educators, and offers a scalable model of authentic, digitally enabled third-space engagement that supports evolving roles and post-qualification development in health professions education.

Inclusion as Practice: Working Across Boundaries to Shape Learning Journeys

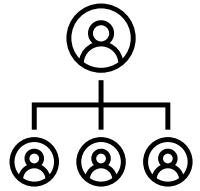
Fiona Hartley, Amy Palmer, Elliot Green



This project explores how a group of undergraduate students are navigating their learning journeys and how early experiences shape their academic, social, and personal development over three years of study. Situated within evolving third-space practices, the project brings together academic staff, professional services, and the Student Inclusion Team to co-create a more authentic understanding of student transitions. Through longitudinal focus groups and journals, we will analyse and compare students' perspectives on key themes including transitions into university, relationships with academics, assessment practices, community-building, and communication. By foregrounding student voice and fostering collaborative researcher-student partnerships, the project reimagines the roles of staff working across academic and professional boundaries to enhance belonging and inclusion. Insights generated will inform evidence-based recommendations to improve the learning experience for future cohorts and strengthen institutional approaches to student engagement. Ultimately, the project demonstrates how third-space collaboration can create more responsive, inclusive, and relational learning environments.

Lab Club - How we are trying to reduce laboratory anxiety and develop practical skills

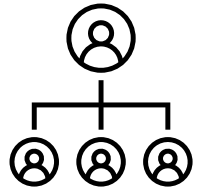
Jess Johnson



Lab Club was a pilot initiative designed to offer a low-stakes, supportive environment for students to build confidence in a laboratory setting. Developed in response to student feedback and staff observations, Lab Club delivered optional, small-group sessions focused on practising core techniques without assessment or time pressure. Sessions were advertised through course teams and used a simple online sign-up process to manage attendance and resources. Evaluation at this early stage draws on staff reflections, anonymised student comments, and basic attendance patterns. Initial student feedback indicates reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and a sense of enjoyment in the laboratory setting. These insights are informing plans for the next iteration of Lab Club, and the model shows promise for application to other practical or skills-based teaching contexts.

Understanding the Changing Roles of Engagement Through the Eyes of Students, Lecturers and Professional Staff

Alison Loddick

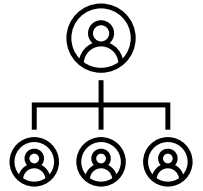


Student engagement means different things to different people, and the roles of students, lecturers and professional staff in supporting it are changing. This interactive workshop draws on my doctoral research into factors influencing engagement, such as family support and motivation. The session provides space for participants to explore how their roles shape their understandings of engagement and how these align with or differ from emerging third space perspectives when working to achieve authentic student engagement.

Participants will work in three groups to consider the roles of students, lecturers and professional services, evaluating what engagement and disengagement look like to them and what helps or hinders students. These ideas will then be compared with emerging research themes to highlight similarities, differences and gaps. The workshop aims to open conversations about how people in different roles perceive engagement, how these perceptions may be shifting, and what this means for future practice.

Humanising STEM: Reframing Teaching through Affective and Learner-Centred Practice

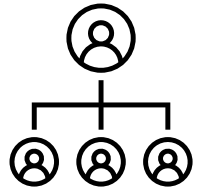
Manesha Peiris, Mahesha Samaratunga



Affective development is often overshadowed by cognitive development within STEM education. While considerable attention is given to cultivating learners' cognitive abilities, this emphasis can constrain the development of affective attributes such as resilience, emotional intelligence, and relational awareness, capabilities that are critical for successful transitions into the world of work. We argue that affective development must coexist with cognitive development to foster graduates who are not only technically competent but also able to flourish in professional contexts. A key challenge for practitioners, however, lies in identifying opportunities for affective learning within tightly structured, cognitively focused curricula. We contend that supervision, mentorship, and coaching constitute underutilised pedagogical spaces in which affective development can be intentionally supported. Drawing on our experiences of final-year project supervision in STEM, we propose a conceptual roadmap for supervision that adopts a compassionate, learner-centred approach aligned with Krathwohl's affective taxonomy. By challenging traditional, rigid norms that prioritise cognitive outcomes alone, this study foregrounds equity, relationality, and affective learning as central to inclusive student progression. In doing so, it highlights the potential for collaborative affective development in both learners and educators, grounded in reflective practice.

Beyond Individual Projects: Rethinking Student Engagement Across the Institution

Michelle Watson, Sara Wysoka



This workshop invites participants to reflect on how student engagement is understood, supported, and enacted across an institution, using Warwick's Student Engagement Toolkit as a shared point of exploration. Developed as an institution-wide, web-based resource, the toolkit brings together practical guidance, common language, and tangible examples through case studies to support colleagues at different stages of working with students across both professional services and academic departments.

Drawing on emerging evidence from toolkit use, qualitative feedback, and submitted case studies, the session reflects on what it takes to move towards more embedded and authentic student engagement over time. Through facilitated activities, delegates will be invited to share current practice, surface common barriers, and consider how institutional systems, assumptions, and principles can enable and constrain meaningful involvement. Participants will leave with practical insights, lessons learned and reflective prompts to support more connected, institutionally aware approaches to student engagement in their own contexts.