



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Learning and Teaching Conference



‘Student Voice: what is possible?’

Tuesday 16 June 2026

In person at Nucleus, King’s Buildings; online via MS Teams livestream

Conference Programme

For all enquiries, please contact: lt.conference@ed.ac.uk

Further information is available on our website:

[University of Edinburgh Learning & Teaching Conference](#) | [Institute for Academic Development](#)

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Joining Instructions

In-Person

Join us for in-person registration at The Nucleus **reception area from 8:30am**. Sign-in at the desk with your name to collect your badge. Refreshments will be available to the left of the reception area, and you are encouraged to make your way down to the **Alder Lecture Theatre** to visit the **posters and exhibition stands**.

All of the welcome talks and keynote speeches will take place in the **Oak Lecture Theatre** on the first floor, beginning at **9:30am**. Breakout sessions will take place in the **Elm, Larch, Oak and Yew Lecture Theatres**, and the **Rowan and Hawthorne Studio Classrooms**. You can find floor plans in the Conference Programme and on poster boards by the stairs.

All sessions will be available on a **first-come first-served basis**; no pre-booking is required. Some rooms have a cap on the number of delegates that can attend the session, which will be monitored by the session moderator.

Lunch will be served on the **ground floor and in the Alder Lecture Theatre**. There are plentiful seating areas throughout The Nucleus building, as well as outside.

Following the closing of the conference at 5pm, there will be a **networking reception with ice-cream** held on the **first floor** (just next to the Careers Service area). Please join us to continue the rich discussions that we hope the day will have inspired!

There will not be a Conference Photographer on site this year.

Online

Online delegates can join us for the whole day via **two live-stream** options:

- 1) **Oak Lecture Theatre** - welcome talks, keynote speech, poster pitches, and presentations during the breakout sessions, student panel and closing remarks.
- 2) **Larch Lecture Theatre** – for presentations during the breakout sessions.

The live stream will kick off at **9:30am in the Oak** for the welcome talks and keynote and at **11:30am in the Larch** for the first break-out session. Both streams will **break for lunch** between **12:30-1:20pm**.

Participants are **free to enter, leave and re-enter** the live-streams whenever they wish, so you do not need to commit yourself to a single live-stream for the entire day.

Chat functions will be enabled on both live streams, which will be moderated by a member of the Conference team - so please do engage with your fellow online delegates.

The live streams can be accessed through the conference team on MS Teams.

Larch Lecture Theatre: The Larch Teams Channel

Oak Lecture Theatre: The Oak Teams Channel

In-Person Schedule

*Please note: all sessions from the Oak Lecture Theatre (including keynotes and poster pitches) and Larch Lecture Theatre will be live streamed for online delegates.

Theme Key:

	Sense of belonging
	Creating space for student voice
	Empowering student leaders
	From hearing to acting
	Overcoming barriers

08:30-09:30	Registration with tea, coffee, and refreshments	Ground Floor and Alder Lecture Theatre
09:30-10:00	Welcome: Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary (Students) and Callum Paterson, Design Lead for Student Voice at UoE & Ash Scholz, EUSA President 2025-26	Oak Lecture Theatre
10:00-10:45	Keynote talk: “Nothing about me without me” The Student Voice – An Art of the Possible , Dr Emily McIntosh, Chief Student Officer, Harper Adams University	Oak Lecture Theatre
10:45-11:00	Poster Pitches	Oak Lecture Theatre
11:00-11:30	Morning Break: Tea, coffee, and refreshments Posters & Exhibitors	Ground Floor and Alder Lecture Theatre
Breakout Session One 11:30-12:30	Presentation: Student Voice: from ‘empty signifier’ to ‘being-in-relation’: increasing belonging in a Master students’ cohort through academic cohort events and relational teaching practice (Alice Gritti, Tahcita Medrado Mizael & Monja Knoll)	Elm Lecture TheatreTheme
	Presentation: Finding a place: International student voices on what it means to 'belong.' (Jenny Steele)	
	Presentation: PERIODically: A case study in how podcasting can create a sense of belonging through student voice (Charlie Simms & Sofia Olendraru)	
	Presentation: Co-Creating Inclusive Digital Spaces: Amplifying Student Voice in Online Learning (Megan Douglas, Michael Gallagher, Inga Ackermann, Philangenkosi Shabangu, Jenny Namutebi & Edgar Onyango)	Larch Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Listening, Responding, Connecting: Building Community in an Online MSc Programme (Liz Colquhoun & Neil Clarke)	
	Presentation: Student Perspectives in Collaborative Assessment in a Global Health Virtual PostGraduate Course (Evelyn Balsells - online)	
	Interactive session: From Student Voice to Student Capability: Co-creating GenAI Tools for Learning and Teaching (Pavlos Andreadis, Matvii Yatsenko, Caroline Rennier & Shlok Gupta)	Hawthorn Studio Classroom
	Interactive session: Teaching Students the Skills to have their voice heard (Lucy Patterson)	Rowan Studio Classroom

	Presentation: Surfacing student voice during curriculum development and impact evaluation (Celeste McLaughlin & Mary Brennan)		Oak Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Student voice in Learning and Teaching: what is possible when Honours students support curriculum development (Alison Cullinane, Elise Darmon, Jobran Chebib, Heather McQueen & William Nicholson)		
	Presentation: Possibilities for staff and student collaboration and innovation in curriculum development (Omolabake Fakunle & Lara Piffaretti)		
	Presentation: Navigating Alumni-University relationships through meaningful engagement with alumni voice (Jenna Fyfe & Carine Abraham) Interactive session (40): Are we listening? - How the student recruitment markets can help us anticipate future student needs (Clare Mackay & Christine Emmerson)		Yew Lecture Theatre
12:30 – 13:20	Lunch Break		Ground floor and Alder Lecture Theatre
Breakout Session Two 13:20-14:20	Interactive session: Creating belonging: An interdisciplinary workshop of shared experiences and practices across the student journey (Femke Morrison, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska, Lynsey Campbell, Steve Wright, Jane Hislop, Muz Ahmad & Veronica Davey)		Elm Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Manifesto for Co-Creation in Learning and Teaching (Celine Caquineau, Catherine Bovill, Neneh Rowa-Dewar, Heather McQueen, Rea Michalopoulou, Haolan Tu & Callum Paterson) Presentation: 25 Schools or 1 University: Surfacing Shared Problems and Solutions (Callum Paterson) Presentation: Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership (Amy Monks)		Larch Lecture Theatre
	Interactive session (20): Democratising Innovation: How equitable access to GenAI fosters belonging and empowers the Student Voice (Jim Killough, Andrew Hayward, Pragya Modi & Bart Pohorecki) Interactive session (40): Pedagogical Use of Generative AI: An Interactive Showcase (Marc Di Tommasi, Hermione Hague, Simon Maxwell, Chris McKenzie & Valentina Erastova)		Hawthorn Studio Classroom
	Interactive session: Integrating self-compassion into undergraduate medical curriculum... ten years in the making (Beth Langton, Marti Balaam, Kitty Wheeler & Mona Eskandaripour)		Rowan Studio Classroom
	Presentation: Ensuring student voice in the creation of guidance for enhancing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning during Ramadan (Liam Hill & Zayba Ghazali-Mohammed) Presentation: Improving the sense of belonging among physics students from underrepresented groups (Jenna Padgett) Presentation: The absence of the working-class student voice (Dr Neil M Speirs)		Oak Lecture Theatre

	Presentation: From Representative to Partner: Moving Beyond Representation as Process (Heather Innes) Presentation: Enhancing Student Representatives' Experience on College Committees: What's next for Student Voice representation and impact (Alessandra Eleuteri, Leopoldine Jack, Shirley Tian & James Andrew) Presentation: Symbolic Representation and Student Voice (David Levy)		Yew Lecture Theatre
14:20-14:30	Transition		
Breakout Session Three 14:30-15:30	Interactive session (30): Developing Student Voice through structured reflection on skills development (Lorna Devlin, Tara Morrison & Hannah Chalmers) Interactive session (30): Listening to alumni voices at programme level: Building meaningful dialogue beyond feedback (Ellie Devenish-Nelson, Carine Abraham, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska & Jenna Fyfe)		Elm Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Acting in the Anthropocene: creating spaces for critical student voice and hopeful action (Dan Swanton & Deirdre McClean) Presentation: Becoming a Teacher Educator: Student perspectives on creating and navigating brave spaces in HEI and the potential of ecological and complexity thinking to re-shape professional learning (Duncan McBride, ML White, Laura MacGregor, Alan Forrester, Jenny Marr, Suzanne Anderson & Lorna Henderson) Presentation: Art in Context: Empowering students to activate their critical voices as citizens in the Edinburgh Arts Community (Alice Planel-Frederiks, Adam Benmakhlouf & Jude Browning)		Larch Lecture Theatre
	Interactive session: (Mine)crafting student projects into public engagement and teaching experiences (Richard Fitzpatrick, Siobhan Vickerstaff, Perrin Grant, Kate Duggan & Zimo Liu)		Hawthorn Studio Classroom
	Interactive session: Workshop for addressing eco-anxiety: cultivating student wellbeing in climate and sustainability learning (Samuel Di Risio, Alan Peddie, Matthew Lawson, Lucy Patterson & Kat Zabecka)		Rowan Studio Classroom
	Presentation: Beyond Feedback: A Model for Student-Led Change (Jenny Gracie, Jenny Green & Adrian Penny) Presentation: Feedback Improvement Toolkits (F.I.T.): Co-creating Feedback Workflows (Peiyu Lan & Elena Ioannidou) Presentation: Designing alternative assessment to ease Psychology students' statistics anxiety (Elizabeth Pankratz)		Oak Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Interdependence as a mode for advancing student-staff research, learning and teaching (Kasia Kaczmarek, Urania Chan & Dan Malitsky) Presentation: Students Co-Creating Group-Based Learning Spaces to Voice "Unconfident Ideas" (Lauraine Vivian, Máté Novák, Amelia Johnson & Sean McLaughlin) Presentation: Beyond the Main Library: A Student Voice Approach to Co-designing 'Spaces for Students' Solution (Ksenia Grant, Guy McGarva & Akrit Ghimire)		Yew Lecture Theatre

15:30-15:45	Afternoon Break/ Coffee refresh	Ground floor and Alder Lecture Theatre
Breakout Session Four 15:45-16:15	Interactive session (30): Using alternative strategies to teach alternative strategies: insights from a course co-designed between staff and students (Alice Munro, Itamar Kastner, Carolina Fretwell, Runzhou Shan, Gemma Smith, Sally Keith & Josie Lord)	Elm Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: How can a shared programme ethos and structures create a meaningful dialogue with students? The development and experience of learning mentors on the MSc Clinical Education (Lynsey Campbell, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska, Jane Hislop, Steve Wright, Veronica Davey & Femke Morrison)	Larch Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: From hearing to acting: Reframing student voice through transparent partnership and shared responsibility (Hui-Chuan Li, Steve McLeister, Russell White, John Waddell, Madeleine Johnstone & Sophie Wilson)	
	Presentation: How the Careers Service redesigned their website with student needs at the centre (Nick Daniels)	Hawthorn Studio Classroom
	Presentation: Embedding career preparation in academic programmes. Responding to what students want? (Sharon Maguire & Kirsten Roche)	
	Interactive session (30): One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Information Problem (Christopher Campbell & Callum Paterson)	Rowan Studio Classroom
	Presentation: Amplifying Student Voice to Embed Accessibility in Computer Science Education: Insights and Early Implementations (Kejia Zhang) Presentation: Chatbots for accessing student voices (Jobran Chebib)	Oak Lecture Theatre
	Presentation: Beyond the Dissertation: using student voice to inform best practice guidance for diversified, taught, final year MSc (Andre Phillips) Presentation: A case study: Group-Based-Learning – the change driven by student voices (Sean McLaughlin & Tatiana Chebotareva)	Yew Lecture Theatre
16:15-16:20	Transition	
16:20-16:50	Conference Closing Panel - Student Voice: What do our students actually want? (Ash Scholz, Christopher Campbell, João Paulo Magalhães and Kate Chapman)	Oak Lecture Theatre
16:50-17:00	Closing remarks: Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary (Students)	Oak Lecture Theatre
17:00-18:30	Networking Reception	(Seating area by careers service/outside balcony)

Online (Live stream) Schedule

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Oak Lecture Theatre: Oak Channel

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	Presentation: Possibilities for staff and student collaboration and innovation in curriculum development (Omolabake Fakunle & Lara Piffaretti)	
12:30 – 13:20	Lunch Break	

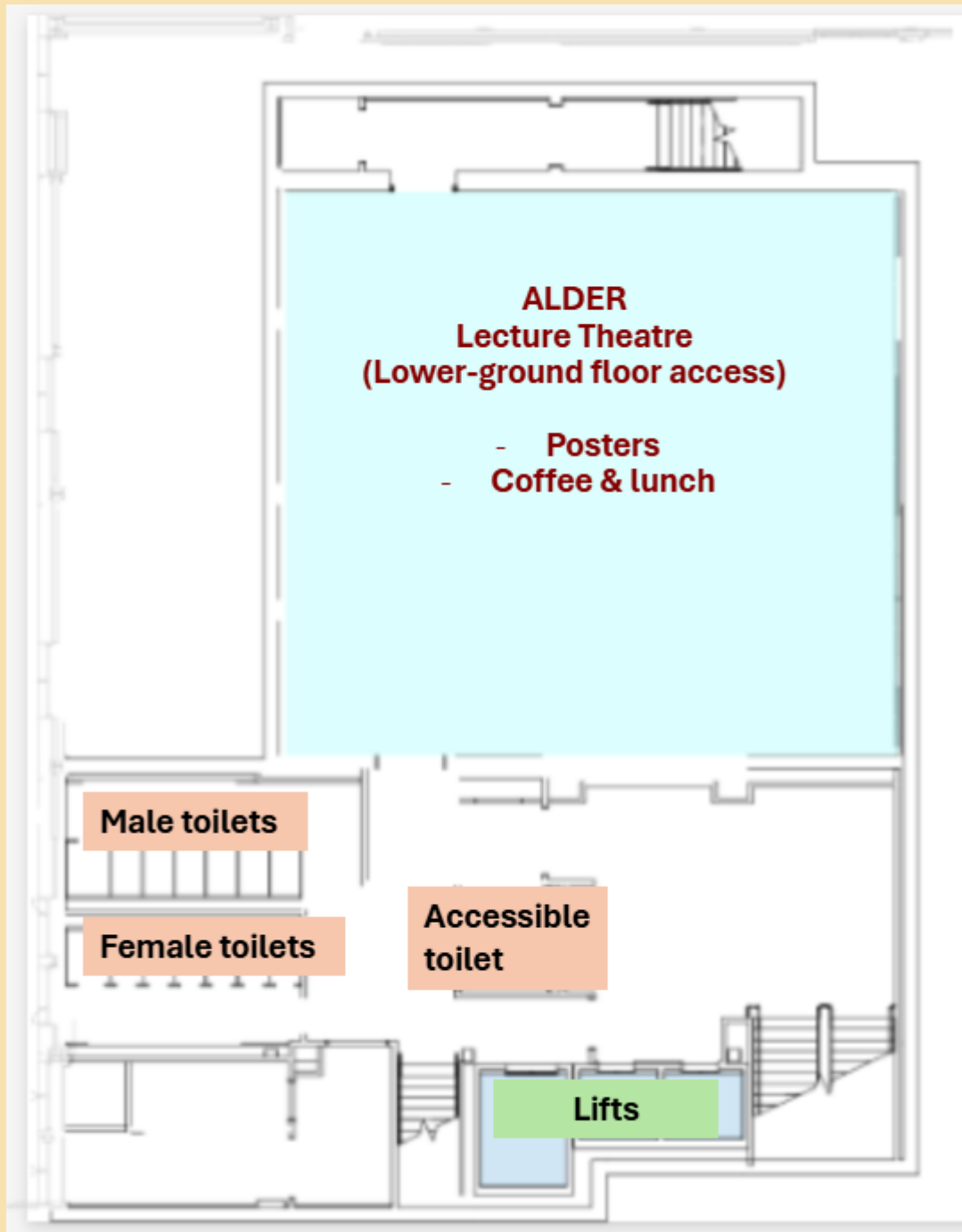
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	Transition		
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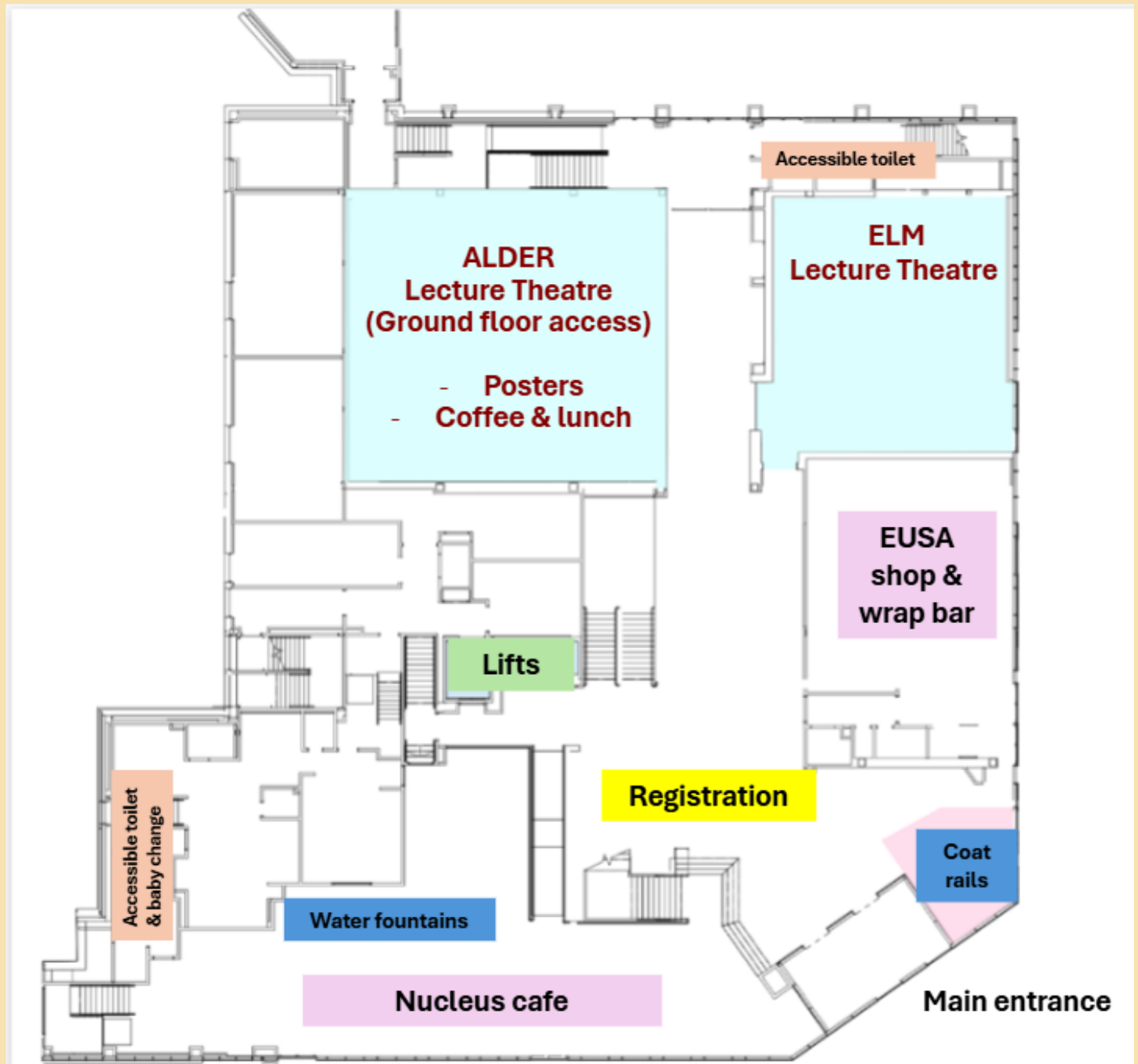
Venue Information

Nucleus Floorplans

LOWER-GROUND FLOOR



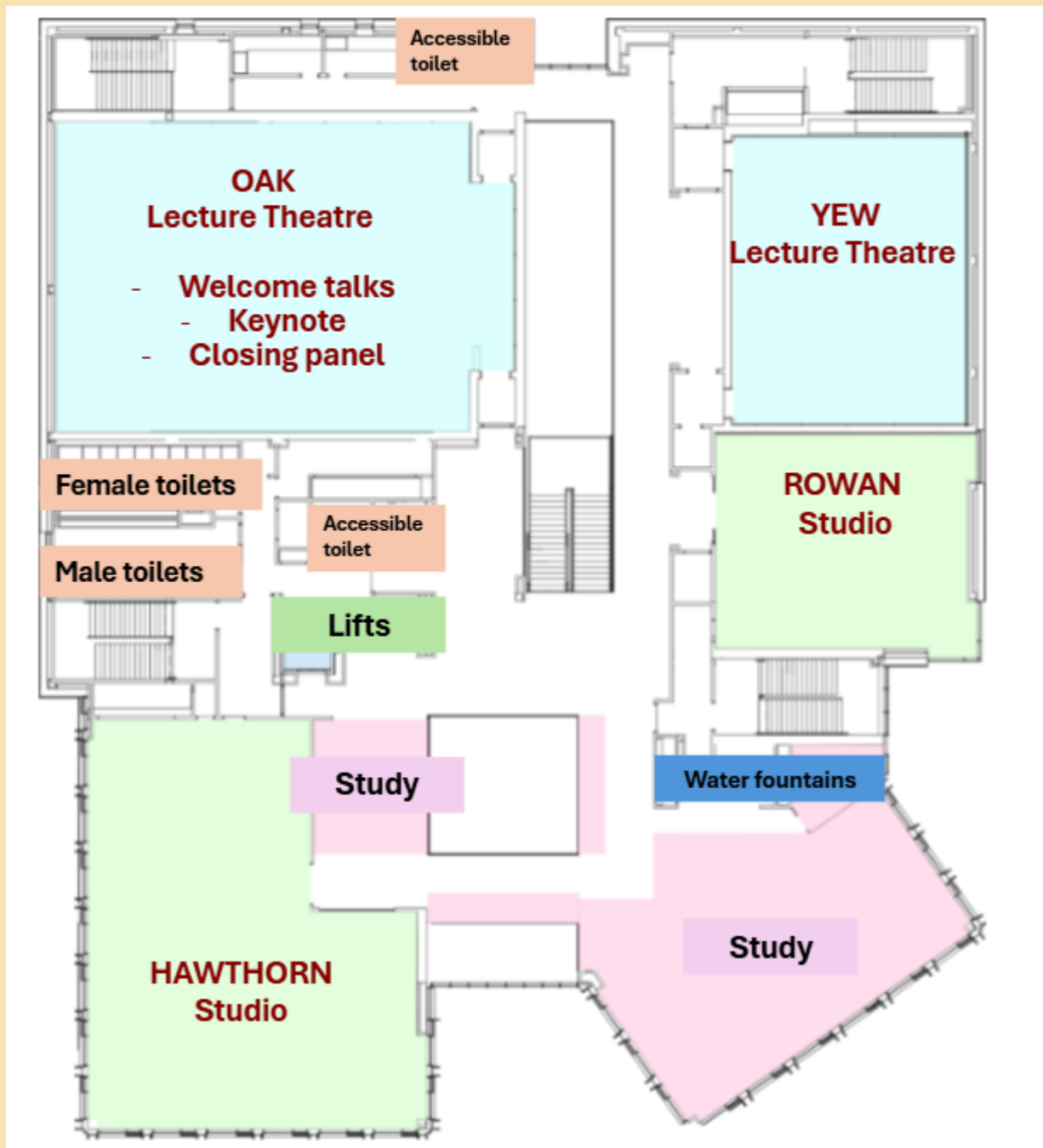
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



Directions to Nucleus

Detailed [venue information and travel guidance](#) to and from The Nucleus is available on our website. Due to limited parking availability, we encourage delegates to travel by foot, bike, bus or Liftshare.

If you require a Blue Badge parking permit for the day, please contact lt.conference@ed.ac.uk as soon as possible.

[Campus maps](#) – including how to get to King's Buildings from the central areas – have been produced and made available by the University. We have repurposed one of their maps below to give you further guidance on how to find The Nucleus building.

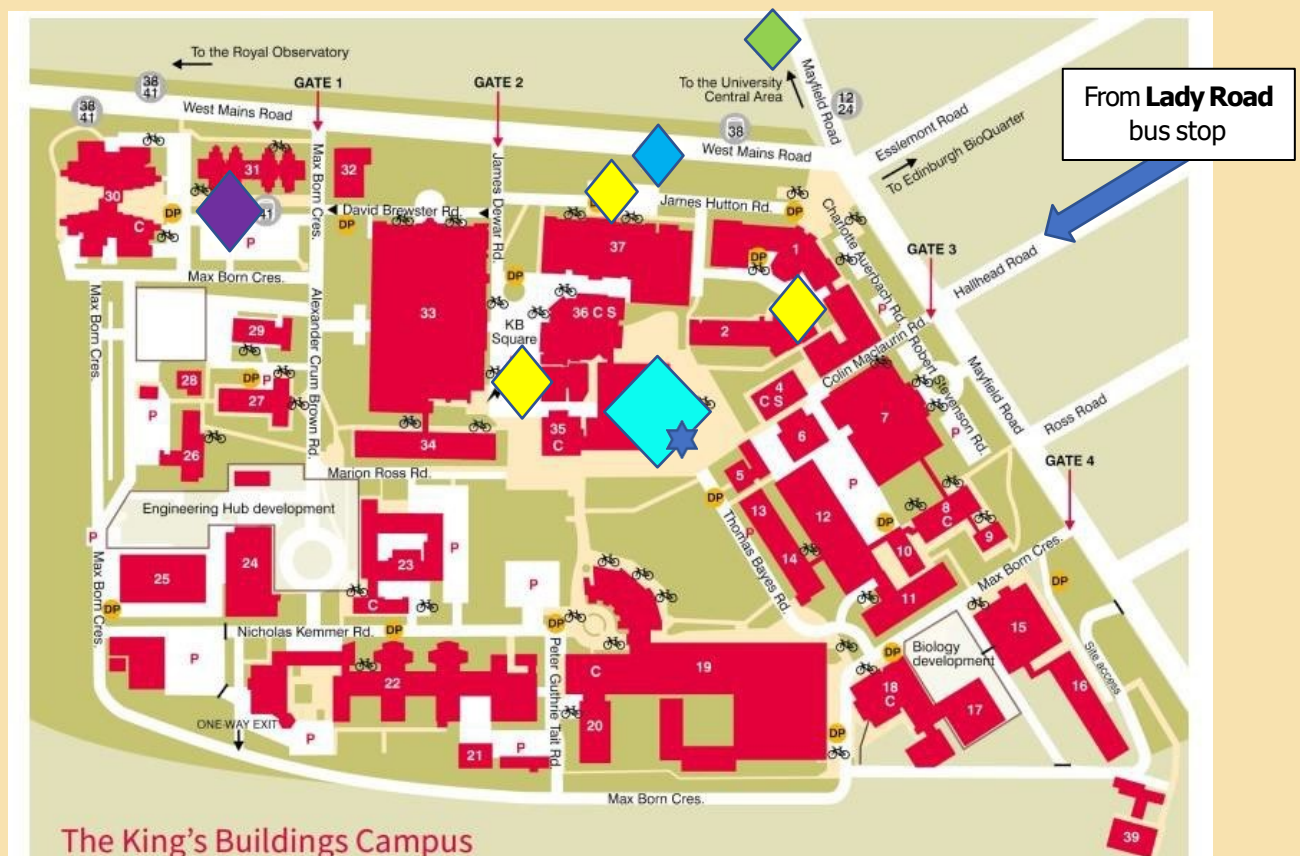
Please note: The Nucleus building is not yet signposted on the King's Buildings campus. Rather, follow signs for 'KB' or 'The Noreen and Kenneth Murray Library' and The Nucleus is the building next door.

-  = The Nucleus building
-  = Main reception
-  = Accessible car/taxi drop-off points
-  = Bus stop for Lothian bus service 38
-  = Bus stop for Lothian bus service 24
-  = Bus stop for Lothian bus service 9

****NOTE: the University shuttle bus service between King's Buildings and the Central Area WILL NOT be running during the Conference.**

There are also a number of Lothian bus services that drop off within a 10-minute walk from the King's Buildings campus: **3, 7, 8, 29, 31, 37, 47 and 49.**

If you take one of these services from the Central Area, the easiest route to The Nucleus is to jump off at **Lady Road** stop on Liberton Road. Cross over the road and head left on Gordon Terrace. Then take a right onto **Hallhead Road** and follow the road up to enter the campus at **Gate 3**.



Abstracts

Keynote talk: “Nothing about me without me” The Student Voice – An Art of the Possible"

Dr Emily McIntosh, Chief Student Officer, Harper Adams University

In an era where belonging, community and mattering are central to the narrative of achieving an inclusive educational experience, this keynote explores the transformative power of authentic student voice. Drawing on the principles of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model, it positions students not simply as participants in their education, but as genuine partners in shaping it. Through stories, evidence, and practice, the keynote will provides practical examples and considerations about how co-creation, shared decision-making, and a culture of trust can strengthen cohesion and create learning environments where every student feels seen, heard, and valued. This session invites participants to embrace the art of the possible, moving from consultation to collaboration, and from representation to real partnership, so that “nothing about me without me” becomes a lived reality across the whole student experience.

Bio: Dr Emily McIntosh has held a variety of leadership roles in learning, teaching and the student experience in several UK universities. She joined Harper Adams University in December 2025 as the inaugural Chief Student Officer (CSO), with executive responsibility for the student experience. Emily is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA, 2017) and a National Teaching Fellow (NTF, 2021). She is an Executive Member and Trustee of the Heads of Educational Development (HEDG) group and an Independent Board Member of Trafford and Stockport College Group (TSCG). She is also an Honorary Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Buckingham. Emily has published widely on a variety of topics from academic advising, personal tutoring and peer learning to integrated practice/third space.

Sessions

Break Out Session 1

Presentation: Student Voice: from 'empty signifier' to 'being-in-relation': increasing belonging in a Master students' cohort through academic cohort events and relational teaching practice (*Alice Gritti, Tahcita Medrado Mizael & Monja Knoll*)

Students' belonging is described as the subjective feeling of relatedness and connectedness students have to their peers, staff and the institution (Kirby & Thomas, 2022). It is associated with higher motivation, persistence, academic success and wellbeing (Allen et al., 2024). Acts that foster connection can contribute to belonging, but only when perceived as authentic and genuine (Gravette & Winstone, 2022).

In this presentation we will reflect on how, by building multiple opportunities for connection in a Masters Programme in Clinical Psychology, the satisfaction rate for 'Community' in the Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey increased by 44% over the course of 3 academic years (from 22/23 to 24/25).

Approaching teaching as a relational act (e.g., Bovill, 2020; Murdoch et al., 2020), the teaching team together with the students on the Programme co-created a relational learning environment utilising a series of academic cohort events comprising both academic (e.g., programme/course enhancement workshops) and social (e.g., Holiday events, picnics, wellbeing session) events, where students could feel heard and seen. As part of this, the educators, keeping in mind how each student would bring into the classroom their expertise and lived experience, fostered micro-moments of connection (Ajjawi et al. 2026) and thus encouraged collaborative learning and community building.

The feedback from the students was appreciative of the opportunities to engage socially and academically with the same groups of individuals, and highlighted how expressions of warmth, empathy and responsiveness from staff were seen as essential for feeling part of a community.

We advocate for a true adoption of relational pedagogy (Hickey & Riddle, 2023; Felten & Lambert, 2020) and community of inquiry (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007), always keeping relationships and staff/student interactions at the core of learning (Dulfer et. al, 2025), rather than confining Student Voice to specific predefined times (e.g., SSLCs) or specific roles (Student Reps).

Presentation: Finding a place: International student voices on what it means to 'belong.' (*Jenny Steele*)

Encountering new academic and social environments at university can precipitate a sense of anxiety and confusion. In the current context of financial crisis within UK higher education, 'belonging' is often framed as a tool for improving student retention. Yet, we need a better understanding of how belonging is actually lived and felt—especially amid politicised debates on immigration and rising concerns about loneliness and isolation. Individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may face additional pressure as they navigate unfamiliar expectations. This talk addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students, whose 'in-between' status offers a distinctive perspective on belonging. Drawing on doctoral research into how international postgraduates constructed identities during their time in Scotland, I present three in-depth case studies from a wider dataset. Findings suggest that belonging is shaped by intersecting personal, academic and social factors, with language functioning as a pervasive structural condition. Participants were not always free to choose how to 'fit in': some were constrained by power inequalities which contributed to feelings of marginalisation. At the same time, each interviewee developed distinctive coping strategies to create their own sense of place within the community.

By analysing these narratives, I challenge the tendency to treat international students as a homogeneous group who simply struggle to adapt. I discuss implications for policy and practice, including how to move beyond deficit framing and better recognise their agency and strengths. Reflecting on teachers' role in supporting learners, I argue that we need to critically reconsider what successful adjustment means. In the classroom, encouraging dialogue and being open about expectations could help to ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

Presentation: PERIODically: A case study in how podcasting can create a sense of belonging through student voice
(Charlie Simms & Sofia Olendraru)

PERIODically is a student-led podcast which discusses the lived experiences of those studying and working in STEM who menstruate, motivated by research into the gendered experience of chemistry tutorials. The podcast explores a breadth of experiences that situate menstruation within a wider context and reveal how the professional structures of STEM fields can sometimes pose barriers to inclusion. The episodes focus on open, non-judgemental, constructive conversations on how universities can better support those who menstruate.

Through focus groups and collaborative interviews, PERIODically invites the discussion of extremely personal, sometimes upsetting, experiences with menstruation in relation to education. This has been empowering for both its creators who volunteered to speak on the podcast, and its community of listeners who have engaged with the content through listening parties and further. PERIODically creates a safe space for students to share sensitive and otherwise stigmatised stories, and to voice suggestions for improvements to education for people who menstruate. The friendly, conversational nature of podcasting and availability on popular streaming platforms make this format more accessible than traditional research methods, and the quicker turnaround time removes barriers in communicating feedback. PERIODically has thus brought tangible changes to universities including the implementation of free period products, menstruation training for staff, and increased flexibility in teaching and assessment. This positive response shows institutional commitment to student wellbeing and fosters an inclusive culture.

PERIODically has been recognised through publications and awards including the highly prestigious RSC Horizon Prize for Education, and has led to invited presentations at universities across the UK and the wider world. This demonstrates the interest for these conversations in education spaces, and the power of student voice initiatives to drive institutional changes in teaching and learning by platforming lived experiences and centering student feedback.

Bruce, Hannah. "Investigating Gender Bias in Oxford MChem Chemistry Tutorials." N.p., 2022. Print.

Workplace support for menstruation and menopause, Chemistry World, 20th May 2025

Chemists smash period stigma with a podcast, C&EN, August 5th, 2024

Periods and practicals: how to help your students, Feo, Elba et al, Trends in Chemistry, Volume 5, Issue 11, 789 - 791

Presentation: Co-Creating Inclusive Digital Spaces: Amplifying Student Voice in Online Learning
(Megan Douglas, Michael Gallagher, Inga Ackermann, Philangenkosi Shabangu, Jenny Namutebi & Edgar Onyango)

Fostering belonging for online distance learners requires intentional design. As higher education increasingly expands online and distance learning, generating a genuine sense of belonging and meaningful engagement among online distance students remains both an opportunity and a challenge. Drawing on experiences from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, this presentation will bring together staff and online distance learners to reflect on how student voice can be meaningfully embedded within digital learning environments.

Aligned with the conference themes of "Creating a Sense of Belonging through Student Voice" and "Navigating and Creating Spaces for Critical Student Voice," this session uses case studies to examine how inclusive online learning environments can be meaningfully co-created with online distance students. Drawing on collaborative planning processes that position students physically based in Africa, but enrolled in programmes at Edinburgh, as partners in programme design and delivery rather than passive recipients, the presentation demonstrates how intentionally co-designed outputs—using the two examples of creating a shared set of programme values for in-person gatherings and a WhatsApp code of conduct—can foster trust, dialogue, accountability, and critical engagement. In addition to exploring the benefit of co-creation of such processes, the speakers will also share open and honest feedback about the challenges.

By centring both staff and student perspectives, this session will offer practical insights into empowering online distance learners through authentic student voice. Attendees will leave with transferable strategies for fostering belonging, facilitating critical dialogue, and designing participatory online learning spaces that are responsive to the needs and expertise of distance learners.

Presentation: Listening, Responding, Connecting: Building Community in an Online MSc Programme (*Liz Colquhoun & Neil Clarke*)

Online learning has been described as convenient, effective and collaborative (Watson et al 2023). This learning method, however, may result in student isolation and disengagement (Ahshan 2021) whilst the lack of a traditional in-person cohort can lead to a reduction in the feeling of community (Rim et al 2020).

The 2024 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey suggested that within the online MSc in the Clinical Management of Pain Programme, students wished for an enhanced sense of community and belonging.

“A pure online course is difficult for developing a sense of community...”

“Most of the time, you feel like you are alone.”

In response, the programme developed opportunities for students to engage with each other in a common space, taking cognisance of wellbeing, inclusion and equality of provision. We aimed to respond to student concerns, enhance student centred communication, and engage with the student voice.

Specific activities included:

- Regular, relaxed, student-centered virtual sessions. These supported discussion of challenges, useful resources and peer to peer advice. Interaction occurred verbally or through the chat function, which allowed all students to participate comfortably.
- A series of Guest Speaker Webinars which were available to the wider University, NHS colleagues and professional networks. Topics have included adverse childhood experiences and chronic pain; the gut microbiome and chronic pain.
- A regular programme newsletter including subject specific content, quizzes and crosswords, reading suggestions and, academic and pastoral topics was disseminated to all students.

Between 2024 and 2025, the programme has seen an increase of 24.7% in the overall ‘Community’ score within the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. Comments from students included:

“.. direct contact with staff, faculty and other students gives a feeling of being part of the course/ university”

“connecting with fellow students and university staff, making an online course feel less like an individual learning platform”

Ahshan, R. (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090483>

Rhim, H. and Han, H. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090483>

Watson, C. , Templet, T. , Leigh, G. , Broussard, L. , Gillis, L. (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105651>

Presentation: Student Perspectives in Collaborative Assessment in a Global Health Virtual PostGraduate Course (*Evelyn Balsells - online*)

For the past seven years, more than 100 distance-learning students enrolled in Global Health Challenges: An Introduction have completed a group-based assignment editing over 30 live Wikipedia pages on natural disasters and human-made crises. In the current version, students receive training from the University’s Wikimedia-in-Residence and work in groups over six weeks to select a page, develop individual sections informed by global health principles, and apply critical perspectives to complex everyday concepts. The assignment is worth 20% of the final course mark.

While student feedback has generally been positive, recurring challenges relate to collaboration in a remote learning environment. From a teaching perspective, a persistent issue has been how to assess contributions to the collaborative process rather than focusing only on the final product.

In 2025/26, peer assessment was introduced at the end of the project using the Blackboard WebPA tool. A post-course survey was distributed to the 28 enrolled students; eight responded (28%). Most respondents strongly agreed that knowing peer assessment counted toward the final mark affected how they contributed (5/8) and motivated them to engage consistently throughout the project, not just near deadlines (6/8). However, fewer agreed that peer assessment increased accountability (3/8) or improved collaboration (2/8).

These findings highlight the challenges of gathering feedback in asynchronous distance-learning courses. Student responses have identified areas for improvement in both the Wikipedia assignment design and the peer-assessment criteria.

Interactive session: From Student Voice to Student Capability: Co-creating GenAI Tools for Learning and Teaching
(Pavlos Andreadis, Matvii Yatsenko, Caroline Rennier & Shlok Gupta)

This interactive session presents a TeachAthon model that reframes Student Voice from feedback collection to active partnership through the co-creation of GenAI tools for learning and teaching. Rather than asking students to comment on existing practices, the Teachathon creates a structured space in which students identify lived teaching and learning challenges and develop solution drafts in the form of working GenAI prototypes. The work presented forms part of the dissemination of a PTAS-funded project on GenAI integration into Computer Science Education, which culminated in the first TeachAthon in 2025.

The initiative brings together students and staff as collaborators with distinct roles. Students act as designers and developers, identifying problems worth addressing and exploring possible GenAI-based responses, while staff provide context, high-level constraints, and evaluative feedback. Submitted projects include tools supporting assessment feedback, study and time management, accessibility, and learning scaffolding. Prototypes are intentionally at different stages of maturity, offering a realistic view of both the potential and the limits of student-led GenAI innovation.

The session will combine short student-led presentations and demonstrations with facilitated, guided discussion. Using structured prompts and live audience input, participants will be invited to reflect on where similar initiatives could be embedded in their own teaching contexts, what kinds of problems are addressable through student-led design, and what enabling conditions are required (for example, curricular space, digital platforms, funding, or institutional support). The discussion is explicit about the gap between ideation and long-term maintainable solutions, and explores how transferable practices and pipelines may be extracted even where individual prototypes are not adopted.

Participants will gain insight into how structured co-creation can surface actionable forms of Student Voice, clarify what can and cannot be acted upon in practice, and support curriculum enhancement through tangible artefacts rather than abstract consultation. The model is transferable across disciplines and has proven particularly effective in engaging early-year undergraduate students as capable partners in teaching and learning innovation.

Interactive session: Teaching Students the Skills to have their voice heard (Lucy Patterson)

In University, educators can create and guide learners through a mechanism for their student voice to be heard. But when it comes to real world application, the pathways to delivering opinions to the relevant agency on topics of most importance to students are often inconspicuous. This is particularly true of issues pertaining to climate change and sustainability. This session aims to provide a framework for educators to use that can develop student's independent skills for asserting their voice. Students and staff of the teaching climate and sustainability community of practice have developed this using youth participatory action research principles combined with the SRS's experience of stakeholder consultation.

- **Identify:** Using open debate amongst peers encourage students to form an opinion on an issue that affects them personally, identify other stakeholders and challenge them to role play to identify others diverse opinions on the matter.
 - o Eg. Small group debates on the topic of 'Would you support the introduction of car free cities in Scotland for emission reduction?'
- **Research:** Evaluate case studies of similar desired change in other contexts to understand power dynamics around an issue. Output a stakeholder power-interest matrix in their own context.
 - o Eg. Car free cities in Amsterdam's Autoluw project.
- **Analyze:** Ask students to assume the theoretical position a project manager to strategically plan stakeholder engagement using the IAP2 spectrum of public participation. Output a stakeholder engagement plan for their real-life stakeholder category.
 - o Eg. As city residents they might be offered input through survey, townhall meetings, consultations.
- **Act:** Using scenario-based role play, allow students to communicate their opinion persuasively through a choice of feedback mechanism on the initial issue.
 - o Eg. Present Edinburgh's city centre transformation plan to students and ask to respond either to a survey, written consultation, or at a mock public meeting.

This session has been developed through a workshop of the Teaching Climate and Sustainability community of practice. This group of students and staff agreed there is a gap in preparing students to transfer knowledge to action, both from student experience and staff confidence to teach, which this framework could help bridge. Therefore, this session will be delivered in the context of climate action, but the framework is applicable to any topic.

Presentation: Surfacing student voice during curriculum development and impact evaluation (*Celeste McLaughlin & Mary Brennan*)

Developing, enhancing and transforming our curricula to meet evolving student needs, volatile graduate employment, and major societal crises is challenging. To help address these, a collaborative Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) funded project has developed an innovative curriculum design, review and evaluation framework. Entitled, Pillars of Impact, this new six pillar framework aims to help institutions, of different types and sizes, to assess and enhance the impact of curriculum design through proactive and strategic approaches, provide a tangible way to surface and include student voice in curriculum design, evaluation and impact initiatives whilst also building expertise across stakeholder groups, including students. Student voice is centred as one of the six pillars driving its impact beyond compliance to enable co-created pedagogical and curricula innovation.

To help contextualise the new framework, a set of supporting case studies and resources are under development with University of Edinburgh (UoE) contributing a case study on Challenge Courses. By exploring the design and development of Challenge Courses using the framework, valuable insights will be provided for UoE and the wider HE sector given the interdisciplinary nature and transformative vision of UoE Challenge Courses. The framework helps unpack the complex curriculum processes and centres student voice to ensure student perspectives and experiences in decision making are recognised and made more visible.

This presentation will introduce the new framework highlighting the consultative approach taken in its development, the benefits accrued from cross institutional collaboration, and how the framework can be aligned with strategic institutional priorities, and adopted by different types of institutions and at different levels of curricula development. Initial findings from the UoE case study, involving discussions with educators and students regarding the design of the initial five pilot UoE Challenge Courses will also be presented.

Curriculum design and review: Pillars of impact - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/membership/benefits-of-qaa-membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/learning-and-teaching/curriculum-design-and-review--pillars-of-impact3>

Presentation: Student voice in Learning and Teaching: what is possible when Honours students support curriculum development (*Alison Cullinane, Elise Darmon, Jobran Chebib, Heather McQueen & William Nicholson*)

Our presentation will showcase co-creation with our Honours Project student researchers (HPSRs) that incorporates practical and inclusive changes to curriculum-embedded resources for our pre-honours (Years 1–2) courses in the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) at the University of Edinburgh. Bovil (2016) theorises about the value of students as active partners and co-producers in learning development in the higher education discourse. Our project outcomes illustrate the clear impact of including the students as curriculum developers. The HPSRs focused on a variety of topics, including tools to demystify artificial intelligence (AI) for research and learning purposes during university study. Another focused on strengthening engagement with the assessed reflective portfolio, a compulsory element on our SBS pre-honours (Years 1–2) courses, and others that consequently shape and build reflective learners to be thoughtful scientifically literate citizens. The talk will present how HPSRs explored data from self-designed questionnaires and focus groups, produced teaching resources and will explain the methods they used to evaluate their effectiveness with students. We will share individual project outcomes and example work, as well as the HPSRs and SBS academics reflections on the process.

Presentation: Possibilities for staff and student collaboration and innovation in curriculum development
(Omolabake Fakunle & Lara Piffaretti)

This presentation outlines the steps involved in an innovative approach to course development involving staff (academic and professional services) and students (undergraduate and postgraduate), including minoritised student groups and representatives. The development of the challenge course, 'Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World' involved the following steps:

- Staff and student consultations via roundtable discussions
- Consultation with student leaders
- Recruitment of staff and student members of a Community of Practice
- Clear and consultative approach on participation and contribution
- Completed course delivered by course organiser and guest lecturers from different disciplines in semester 2 2025/26 academic year

For the presentation, staff (Course Organiser) and a student will share their reflections on the journey through a holistic and inclusive approach to course development and delivery. This presentation provides an opportunity for sharing innovative and inclusivity in pedagogical practice, and meaningfully engaging with the student voice in the curriculum, throughout the process of developing a new challenge course at the university.

We will share the key underlying centrality conceptual framework that underpinned the approach that guided the active involvement of students at different stages of the course development, and due recognition of their contribution. A Teaching Matters blog series (February – March 2026) with contributions from staff and students will illuminate different aspects of the course, including its conception, development and delivery. The blogs capture a range of accounts of the impact of the course on staff and student's sense of belonging and enrichment of their experience as members of the university.

Presentation: Navigating Alumni-University relationships through meaningful engagement with alumni voice
(Jenna Fyfe, Carine Abraham, Avita Rath, Nadia Niyonizewe, Marije Hennus, Antonio Pedrotta, James Sinclair, Ellie Devenish-Nelson & Magda Cerbin-Koczorowska)

Alumni constitute a distinctive group within the University of Edinburgh community, positioned outside the immediate institutional framework, they can reflect on their experience from a different perspective and with greater candour. These reflections can be essential for future programmes affecting learning, belonging and curriculum development. Navigating this relationship can be challenging as institutions and programme teams often pursue different purposes for alumni engagement. This presentation outlines the preliminary findings of a project funded by the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme, which aims to assess the long-term impact of online MSc programmes at the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM). Alumni from three programmes were successfully engaged in in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Our study focuses on two key aims: (1) understanding how online postgraduate learning has influenced alumni's personal and professional development, and (2) identifying programme features that most contributed to their trajectories, thus highlighting opportunities for enhancement. Data collection occurred in early 2026, and anonymised interview transcripts are currently undergoing thematic analysis. Preliminary data suggest that alumni do not always have access to forms of engagement with the university that align with their needs. For some, maintaining a meaningful professional network is key; others seek opportunities to support subsequent cohorts of postgraduate students. The findings indicate that both institutional and individual understandings of a "meaningful relationship" may differ substantially. While the centrally organised Development and Alumni Office focus primarily on philanthropy, participants found the most value in opportunities for direct co-creation with their former programmes and involvement in student support at the programme- level. Although the prestige of the University of Edinburgh brand was widely acknowledged as beneficial, alumni strongly articulated a focus in continuing relationships with programme teams rather than with university-wide structures. Our results highlight the importance of balancing centralised alumni management with a sustained sense of belonging and engagement at the programme- level.

Interactive session (40): Are we listening? - How the student recruitment markets can help us anticipate future student needs *(Clare Mackay & Christine Emmerson)*

The University has made a clear commitment to the student voice, and to developing a feedback loop that can allow our students to meaningfully influence the design of the future curriculum. But what can we learn from future student demand, and what that is telling us about the motivations of intakes yet to join us? This session explores how market insight can help us better anticipate student needs, so that we are ready to deliver in real time the outcomes future students are seeking, driving up student satisfaction and underpinning sustainable student recruitment.

Future student motivations for, and expectations of, higher education are evolving, with an increasing focus on demonstrable ROI through skills acquisition, graduate outcomes and career success; a growing emphasis on sustainability and other values-driven narratives; and ever greater expectations of access and service. Overlaid to these general trends are variations in audience segment, underscoring the relationship between developing our offer, and both shaping and satisfying our student population.

Against the backdrop of an increasingly challenging student recruitment climate, the Learning and Teaching Workstream has initiated a project to make recommendations for an enhanced Market Insight capability. Central to success will be a culture of listening, and an understanding of how insight can inform key stages of portfolio planning and review; and programme ideation, design and approval.

This short presentation will:

- consider the relationship between our academic mission and our responsiveness to market demand;
- explore some of the ways in which future students are talking to us;
- identify key principles for the use of market insight to inform programme and portfolio design.

The session will be of interest to all those involved in course and programme design, and to those who seek to influence portfolio and curriculum management, whether from an academic or student recruitment perspective.

Break Out Session 2

Interactive session: Creating belonging: An interdisciplinary workshop of shared experiences and practices across the student journey (*Femke Morrison, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska, Lynsey Campbell, Steve Wright, Jane Hislop, Muz Ahmad & Veronica Davey*)

Background

Creating a sense of belong and mattering starts from when an applicant makes contact to express their interest in pursuing a programme of study. Within our online PGT Clinical education programme our ethos is underpinned a relentless welcome (Felton, 2020) and has built on the foundations laid by Fawns et. al. (2021). In this workshop participants will explore ways of creating effective dialogue between student and staff and to co-create an educational community which fosters a sense of belonging and mattering.

Delivery Plan

1) Introductions and background (5 mins)

Definition of terms, timeline of student journey.

2) World Café (25 mins)

The plan is to make use of a world café methodology (Brown et. al., 2007) where facilitators will be situated at different tables which will represent key stages of the student's journey. Participants will be invited to join one of the tables and together with the facilitator they will look to share and compare effective and inclusive practice for dialogue, creating opportunities for mattering with students. Ideas will be mind-mapped onto flip chart paper with post-it notes, groups will move around the tables and participants can build upon the ideas of other groups. To enable asynchronous participation we will mirror the stations in a Miro Board and share images from the station to the board at the conclusion of the workshop. This can also be shared with participants from the workshop.

3) Conclusion and next steps (10 mins)

Participants will be given 2 minutes to reflect and write down a solution they can bring back to their teams.

Learning Objectives

1) Identify a range of potential solutions to foster dialogue with students across various stages of a programme of studies

2) Critically reflect on the adequacy/feasibility of these solutions for the specific programmes they are involved in.

Presentation: Manifesto for Co-Creation in Learning and Teaching (*Celine Caquineau, Catherine Bovill, Neneh Rowa-Dewar, Heather McQueen, Rea Michalopoulou, Haolan Tu & Callum Paterson*)

There is vast and compelling evidence that co-creation in learning and teaching enhances student engagement, sense of belonging, and staff satisfaction. We, as UoE staff and student colleagues, are committed to enhancing and expanding co-creation practices in learning and teaching. We have developed a Manifesto for Co-Creation in Learning and Teaching, articulating a shared understanding of what co-creation means within the classroom and how students and staff can work together to achieve it. Co-creation can empower students to bring their perspectives and new innovations to learning and teaching, while contributing to more rewarding teaching for staff. By bridging gaps in engagement and fostering inclusive and relevant educational experiences, co-creation enhances the value of higher education both during students' degrees and beyond graduation.

In this session, we will explore the core elements of the Manifesto, share insights from our collaborative process, and invite participants from all disciplinary contexts to contribute to transforming the student and staff experience. This session is a call to action: join us to discover what we can achieve when students and staff work together and help make co-creation a reality.

Presentation: 25 Schools or 1 University: Surfacing Shared Problems and Solutions (*Callum Paterson*)

Every course, programme, School, and College is in near-constant receipt of student feedback and yet in the National Student Survey many students consistently tell us that they feel their feedback isn't valued, and nearly half say that they do not clearly see how it is acted on. This year, through the launch of the Student Feedback Action Log, we have begun the process of surfacing recurring issues, actions, and solutions from Student-Staff Liaison Committees across the University so we can prevent issues being siloed and ensure senior leaders within the University know what is happening on the ground. From creating a stronger and consistent flow of information, to coordinating University-level action, join us to hear about the vision to help ensure student feedback is treated with the respect and seriousness it deserves.

Presentation: Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership (*Amy Monks*)

One of the overarching principles of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) is "Student Engagement & Partnership," but what does this mean in practice, and why does it matter to staff and students? In this session, delivered by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs), we invite participants to understand and explore the value of meaningful partnership between staff and students on topics of learning, teaching, and quality processes. Participants will be introduced to [Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership](#), and learn how this tool can be used for self-evaluation and fostering stronger dialogue with students. Participants will leave with a stronger understanding of what student partnership is, why student partnership matters, increased confidence to engage students as partners, and practical ideas they can apply within their teams and institution wide. This session will be particularly helpful for Heads of School (or senior decision makers) and staff who work closely with student representatives, as well as teaching staff. This session is also open to student participants and student representatives.

Interactive session (20): Democratising Innovation: How equitable access to GenAI fosters belonging and empowers the Student Voice (*Jim Killough, Andrew Hayward, Pragma Modi & Bart Pohorecki*)

The rapid rise of Generative AI (GenAI) in Higher Education risks creating a tiered student experience: those who can afford premium subscription models (like GPT-5), those relegated to inferior, free versions and those unfamiliar or uncertain about the technology and avoid it entirely. This digital divide silences the voices of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those less confident with new technology, effectively excluding them from the critical conversation about the future of their own education. If you cannot access the tools defining the future, you cannot meaningfully participate in it.

This session presents ELM not merely as a software platform, but as a critical instrument of equity and belonging. By providing unlimited, free, and secure access to state-of-the-art Large Language Models (LLMs) for every staff member and student, the University of Edinburgh has levelled the playing field.

We will explore how removing financial barriers empowers all students—regardless of background—to experiment, critique, and co-create the University's approach to AI. And how the extensive training and AI Guidance available freely to all, seeks to bridge the competency and confidence gap. When access is universal, the "Student Voice" becomes truly representative rather than a reflection of privilege.

Attendees will learn how the "walled garden" approach of ELM allows students to move from passive observers to active participants in the GenAI dialogue. We will share usage insights demonstrating how equitable access fosters a shared sense of belonging in our digital campus, ensuring no student is left behind in the AI revolution.

Interactive session (40): Pedagogical Use of Generative AI: An Interactive Showcase (*Marc Di Tommasi, Hermione Hague, Simon Maxwell, Lin Watson, Chris McKenzie & Valentina Erastova*)

This workshop presents a set of teaching applications developed through the AI for Learning Innovation initiative, with a shared focus on strengthening student voice, agency, and participation in learning. Each project uses generative AI to create interactive learning environments.

The session will open with an introduction to the initiative and its pedagogical aims. The remaining time will be divided equally across six hands-on demonstrations:

“Voices from the Past” (Marc Di Tommasi) Using the entire written corpus of past historians to create virtual personas allowing students to engage in conversations with them.

"Virtual Ward" (Simon Maxwell): using AI to generate realistic patient for medical trainees, allowing them to interact with the patient, and formulate a diagnosis and management plan before being presented with feedback.

“ClientConnectEd” (Hermione Hague) AI to enhance the training of law students in professional skills and responsibility, particularly in the interviewing techniques required in legal practice.

“CaseConnect AI” (Chris McKenzie) Generative AI for creating interactive, customisable environments in which staff can design discipline-specific scenarios tailored to their courses.

“EnviroForum” (Valentina Erastova) Stakeholder-interview simulator where students undertaking Environmental Chemistry module talk with land managers, government advisors, environmental protection officers, engineers, and local businesses and residents about proposed environmental projects weighing pros and cons, and policy impacts.

“Consult-Ed” (Lin Watson) Developing AI chatbots for students to gain a realistic idea of patient context, and to help training for holistic assessment, diagnosis and case management.

Participants will have opportunities to try each tool, ask questions, and discuss pedagogical applications. Moreover, participants will: gain a clear understanding of practical, student-centred uses of generative AI in higher-education teaching and leave with adaptable ideas for their own disciplinary contexts
This session will appeal to colleagues across subject areas who are interested in evidence-informed, practice-based examples of AI enhancing student engagement, reflection, and autonomy.

Interactive session: Integrating self-compassion into undergraduate medical curriculum... ten years in the making (*Beth Langton, Marti Balaam, Kitty Wheeler & Mona Eskandaripour*)

There is increasing awareness in medical education of the need for wellbeing in our own lives and in our curricula, with people working in health and social care reporting higher levels of burnout and mental health difficulties than in any other occupational group (Balaam & Harris 2021).

Burnout is the most commonly used measure of doctors’ mental health. It presents as: emotional exhaustion, reduced capacity and depersonalisation (Balaam and Harris, 2021) and with reference to the students we teach, data collated from universities shows increasing levels of distress, anxiety, depression and loneliness among students, and decreasing levels of trust, sense of belonging, and connection (Balaam and Harris, 2021)

When addressing stress and burnout the medical school for the last ten years has worked with the science and practice of compassion, when delivering professionalism education to undergraduate medical students. Medical students are charged with practicing compassionate self-care by the GMC (GMC, 2018) and a wealth of research provides the evidence of the strong benefits of compassionate practice in educational environments. Compassion can calm our stress responses; make positive changes within the brain; improve our physical health and as a consequence less health-care uptake; improve patient outcomes; affect how we relate to ourselves and others; improve our work environments and productivity at work (Balaam and Harris, 2021)

The workshop will begin by presenting the current self-compassion curriculum within the MBChB, including extra-curricular activities, which is being consolidated and extended during Edinburgh Medical Schools 300th anniversary. We will then run an interactive element, as used with students, to familiarise the audience with self-compassion and empathy teaching techniques.

This will include:

- Mindfulness techniques
- Sharing activities to promote belonging
- Empathy awareness exercise in pairs
- Questions in a hat

Each exercise will encourage participants to share and practice how they deal with everyday stresses, which promotes a sense of shared experience, empathy and compassion for others and offer a way forward for other educators wanting to integrate compassion and empathy provision into their curriculum.

Presentation: Ensuring student voice in the creation of guidance for enhancing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning during Ramadan (*Liam Hill & Zayba Ghazali-Mohammed*)

With over 320,000 Muslim students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK and a substantial awarding gap of 16% between Muslim and non-Muslim students (HESA, 2024) there are clearly still barriers to inclusion that need addressing. For example, amongst Muslim doctoral students in the UK, a lack of Muslim visibility, representation and support within their institutions is noted to have serious negative consequences for sense of belonging and overall student wellbeing (Mahmud, 2024). A particularly important area within which there is a need for more inclusive university practices is Ramadan. This is the annual Islamic holy month of fasting, when observing Muslims abstain from food and drink during daylight hours. Between December 2024 and March 2025, our multi-university research team (which includes both current university staff and students) conducted two online surveys to gather information from first higher education staff (N=287) and then students (N=220) on (i) their awareness of Ramadan, (ii) their views on the need for changes or adjustments in teaching and learning practices during this period and (iii) their experiences of such adjustments being implemented within their institutions, if applicable.

This talk will first report on how data collected from the staff-survey was used, in time for Ramadan in 2025, to produce evidence-based guidance for educators on how to create inclusive approaches to teaching and learning during Ramadan. It will then shift focus on to reporting the findings from subsequent qualitative analysis of the student-survey responses (not available in time to be considered when creating the initial guidance). These important critical insights from students will be used to suggest updates and further improvements to the initial guidance, aptly illustrating the value of involving student voice in the process of developing more inclusive practices within Higher Education.

Presentation: Improving the sense of belonging among physics students from underrepresented groups (*Jenna Padgett*)

Studying and understanding how students build a sense of belonging is vital as sense of belonging has previously been linked to factors like academic achievement, motivation, and retention. This is especially critical in physics as underrepresented minorities within physics often experience barriers to developing a strong sense of belonging during their undergraduate degree. This can stem from things such as the “natural genius mindset”, weed-out culture, and isolation. I will present findings from past and present undergraduate student interviews conducted as part of an undergraduate summer project in 2025 at Imperial College London, wherein students discussed their journeys through higher education. I will also share possible solutions to overcome this lack of sense of belonging and make recommendations, such as building stronger ties between students and staff, greater emphasis on Active Learning and diverse panels of students talking about their own experiences with lack of belonging. While these solutions will most impact students from underrepresented groups, this work can help strengthen the sense of belonging the entire physics student body and have positive impacts on the wider physics community.

Presentation: The absence of the working-class student voice (*Dr Neil M Speirs*)

Under conference theme five, this session will discuss the absence of working-class student voices in student voice projects in learning and teaching through a Bourdieusian framework. It will conclude with proposals on how to overcome the obstacles to participation. The session will open with a discussion of Fielding's assertion that 'there are no spaces, physical or metaphorical, where staff and students meet one another as equals, as genuine partners'. For Fielding, regardless of how genuine the efforts of student voice projects are, they will be fruitless without the conditions 'that provide the organisational structures and cultures' required for success. For many, the 'dominant understandings of student voice have been located within a democratic and participatory framework' (Taylor et al. 2009). However, it is critical that we are aware that student voice does not stand as a neutral proposition. Without democratic and participatory structures and cultures, student voice projects in learning and teaching will not provide democratic and participatory outcomes. At this point the session will move to outline the role of the hidden curriculum (Speirs, 2020) in validating a particular habitus (class-culture embedded) as a beacon of success, know-how and excellence. These classed structures and cultures driven by the hidden curriculum are normalised across campus and taken for granted in pedagogy, policy and practice. The session will conclude with a review of the resultant negative consequences of these classed structures and cultures for working class students and campus life in general before closing with a series of proposals. These proposals will outline how we can employ a critical pedagogy that results in the appropriate equitable structures and cultures, that will ultimately lead to democratic and participatory outcomes for student voice projects in learning and teaching.

Presentation: From Representative to Partner: Moving Beyond Representation as Process (*Heather Innes*)

In large, research-intensive universities such as The University of Edinburgh, student representation structures are well established and often extensive. Yet the presence of committees, elections and training does not automatically translate into meaningful partnership. When representation becomes procedural, its transformative potential is diminished. This session explores what it takes to move from "rep as requirement" to "rep as partner." Drawing on practice within Edinburgh University Students' Association and partnership working at The University of Edinburgh, it considers how leadership development for representatives, through intentional training, mentoring and structured dialogue spaces, can build confidence, institutional literacy and a strong sense of legitimacy.

However, empowering student leaders is only half of the equation. For representation to function as genuine partnership, staff must also choose to engage differently. This involves recognising student insight as expertise grounded in lived experience, being open to challenge and resisting the temptation to treat representation as a compliance exercise.

The session will explore the reciprocal conditions required for partnership, including:

- * Preparing representatives to navigate complex governance structures with clarity
- * Demystifying institutional language and power dynamics
- * Creating shared expectations around dialogue, challenge and mutual accountability
- * Addressing the subtle cultural signals that can unintentionally undermine student voice

It will argue that meaningful Student Voice is relational rather than procedural. Structures enable participation, but belief sustains it. Participants will be invited to reflect on where representation in their own contexts' risks becoming performative, and how it might instead become transformative.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Critically assess how Student Voice structures may unintentionally privilege certain student groups, even when intentions are inclusive.
2. Identify key structural and cultural barriers embedded within their own representation or engagement mechanisms.
3. Apply at least one practical redesign principle to make Student Voice more realistic, equitable and sustainable.

Presentation: Enhancing Student Representatives' Experience on College Committees: What's next for Student Voice representation and impact (*Alessandra Eleuteri, Leopoldine Jack, Shirley Tian & James Andrew*)

This short presentation will provide reflections and share ideas from the perspectives of student reps and staff involved in a recent mini-project on enhancing the experience and effectiveness of student representatives on college-level committees in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. We strive to ensure that in College committees we, in partnership with our student representatives, create and foster an empowering space where students have a meaningful opportunity to, and feel safe to, raise concerns gathered from their student body and can influence discussions and decisions. However, there are ongoing challenges:

- Committee membership is usually an additional ask for student representatives who are already committed to School or programme level representation and the time-commitment can be underestimated;
- Navigating complex committee and College/ institutional governance structures and jargon;
- Supporting them to feel equipped in contributing to high-level cross-College discussion.

Acknowledging these barriers, our project goal is to co-create better conditions that enable student representatives to understand and thrive in their roles and to increase the impact of their voices on shaping and enhancing student experience at the University.

Our project has worked with two student representatives with recent College-level experience to create a set of guidelines and recommendations for three target audiences: College committee conveners, College working groups, and future committee student representatives. The guidelines provide advice to enhance the experience of student representatives joining CAHSS committees and preparing them (staff and students) more effectively for their roles.

The project directly aligns with the conference theme of empowering student representatives, as it aims to equip them with the necessary tools and support to actively participate in governance and decision-making within the College committee structure. Primarily, the output is intended for College-based committees to integrate these guidelines into their current support practices, but with the aspiration that these approaches might also positively influence guidance and support for future student representatives' experiences at the School and University levels.

Presentation: Symbolic Representation and Student Voice (*David Levy*)

Student voice opportunities such as SSLCs face recurring problems because they assume a political-democratic conception of representation. However, for many reasons, our student representatives are not and cannot be representative in that way. I propose a re-conception of student representatives using Hanna Pitkin's seminal four-part analysis of representation. I show how our student representatives are not in Pitkin's terms 'descriptive' or 'substantive' representatives. Through our misconception, many sought outcomes from student voice activities prove unsatisfying year after year. If we recognise this, we can reconfigure some student voice opportunities so as to be more successful, more visibly successful in their own terms, and more meaningful for participants. While student representatives are 'formalistic' representatives in Pitkin's classification, we could transform them into 'symbolic' representatives. So conceived, their representational legitimacy would not be in question. The role they would then play would more visibly be that of speaking for students and being heard as voices of students. This can re-orient opportunities such as SSLCs from a help desk or triage operation to a venue for dialogue, in the sense of mutual questioning and answering to achieve a better understanding of each other. This would replace the predominant asymmetric mode of interaction which is question and response. In the course of my presentation, I will present a diagnosis of the problem; an outline of Pitkin's four-level schema of representation; how it applies to current modes of student representation and voice; and an outline of how to revise SSLCs to incorporate this approach. The last is the considered reflection, analysis, and experimentation of many years experience in student voice. My presentation will therefore stimulate reflection on how we conceive of student representation as well as offering practical prompts for how to put re-conceptions of representation into practice.

Break Out Session 3

Interactive session (30): Developing Student Voice through structured reflection on skills development (*Lorna Devlin, Tara Morrison & Hannah Chalmers*)

Learning outcomes for the workshop:

Develop curiosity about the importance of helping students to recognise, capture and articulate the skills they are developing on their programmes

Explore options for students to recognise, capture and reflect on skills gained and how these could be co-created. Rumble with how we create an environment to make it as easy as possible for our students to recognise and articulate their skills

This workshop proposes to inform staff about the vision and expectation of the Skills for Success Framework as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. It will focus on what this means for students – articulation of skills gained through teaching and other university experiences is at the heart of this work. This workshop will be an opportunity to bring ideas already generated from staff and students to the table for consideration and development by collaborative interdisciplinary groups.

With staff and students being time-poor, creating a simple and easy to use mechanism to help students to capture and articulate their skills will overcome a barrier that prevents effective student voice in the area of their own development. We aim to create a solution that is discipline agnostic in its design, with subject specific reflective prompts, which will cultivate a reflective habit. The Learning and Teaching conference provides a timely opportunity for co-creation to design an appropriate solution for the problem of helping students to articulate their skills.

Interactive session (30): Listening to alumni voices at programme level: Building meaningful dialogue beyond feedback (*Ellie Devenish-Nelson, Carine Abraham, Marije Hennus, Nadia Niyonizewe, Antonio Pedrotta, Avita Rath, James Sinclair, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska & Jenna Fyfe*)

Do alumni have more to say, and should we change how we listen to them? Communication with alumni at the university-level is primarily fundraising- or marketing-focused, meaning that feedback on programme-specific pedagogy and its effectiveness is missed. While programmes collect feedback from current students, the most honest and transformative insight emerges once their studies are completed. Alumni represent the longitudinal student voice, who can reflect on long-term impact and relevance of a programme. Listening to and acting on alumni perspectives completes the feedback loop to strengthen the learning experience for future students, while also fostering meaningful alumni relationships that build belonging and open doors for alumni-student collaboration. Creating an effective alumni-staff dialogue thus requires going beyond viewing alumni as a one-way interaction. However, little guidance about best practices exists for engaging with alumni at programme-level. To address this, three online MSc programmes in CMVM are conducting a Principal's Teaching Award Scheme project to assess the long-term impact of postgraduate learning and develop recommendations for good practice in evaluating and monitoring of programmes for alumni.

In this interactive workshop, we will showcase approaches to engaging with and listening to alumni, and share lessons on how these activities can be employed across diverse programmes. We will hear from alumni about the value of being asked for their perspectives and their motivations for participating. Workshop participants will be invited to reflect on what they would like to learn from alumni and share their thoughts in a facilitated discussion on the practicalities of engaging with alumni. At the end of the workshop, participants will improve their knowledge of the significance of the alumni voice and gain an understanding of how to design programme-level communications for obtaining alumni feedback (e.g. identifying questions, mapping desired insights, planning implementation).

We hope that this 40-minute workshop will provide a catalyst for participants to develop their own programme-level alumni activities. While our experiences relate to online postgraduate part-time study, we are keen to hear from those engaging with alumni from in-person and undergraduate programmes.

Presentation: Acting in the Anthropocene: creating spaces for critical student voice and hopeful action (*Dan Swanton, Carry Arnold, David Henty, Susan Lechelt, Gavin Melaugh, Deirdre McClean, Bernd Schroers, Eduardo Serafin & Tim Stratford*)

In this presentation staff and students from the challenge course Living in the Anthropocene will share and reflect on student creative work that proposes actions in response to climate and nature crises. We will discuss how co-creation in the course makes spaces for critical student voice and hopeful action to address challenges related to environmental sustainability.

Living in the Anthropocene is an interdisciplinary pre-honours course that makes spaces that empower students to take action in the face of the most pressing challenges facing our planet. The course concludes with an exhibition of student work. Students work in interdisciplinary groups to design and propose actions that respond to issues that range from plastic waste to sustainable energy, and from fast fashion to adaptations to sea level rise. The students made posters, podcasts, apps and YouTube shorts to share their research and proposed actions.

Our presentation will examine how group work and the course exhibition created spaces for both student belonging and critical student voice. In particular, we will share staff and student reflections on how the course developed students' skills in design thinking and scaffolding collaborative and cooperative working. We will introduce the design of learning activities and assessments and offer perspectives on how students came together in interdisciplinary groups, learning from different ways of seeing and skills.

Presentation: Becoming a Teacher Educator: Student perspectives on creating and navigating brave spaces in HEI and the potential of ecological and complexity thinking to re-shape professional learning (*Duncan McBride, ML White, Laura MacGregor, Alan Forrester, Jenny Marr, Suzanne Anderson & Lorna Henderson*)

In this jointly-led presentation, we — student-practitioners and course tutors from Becoming a Teacher Educator (BaTE), a master's-level course within the MEd in Leadership and Learning at Moray House School of Education and Sport — explore how creating space for critical student voice within Higher Education can catalyse activism in professional learning beyond it.

As experienced education practitioners, working in leadership roles in both schools and local authority settings, we came to BaTE already leading professional learning in our own diverse and dynamic contexts. What the course offered was not simply new knowledge, but a brave space in which to develop and use our critical voices: to challenge assumptions about how teachers learn, to question traditional hierarchies in professional development, and to reimagine our own roles as agents of change. Through self-study, critically reflective practice, and collaborative assessment approaches, the course positions us not as passive recipients of curriculum but as co-creators of knowledge — modelling the very power shifts we are working to enact in our own settings.

In this session we share how this experience of having our voices genuinely heard and valued in a Higher Education space has directly shaped our activism as teacher educators. Drawing on complexity thinking and ecological perspectives, we explore how professional learning might be better understood not as something delivered to teachers, but as something that emerges within responsive, networked communities of practice.

Presentation: Art in Context: Empowering students to activate their critical voices as citizens in the Edinburgh Arts Community (*Alice Planel-Frederiks, Adam Benmakhlouf & Jude Browning*)

Art In Context is taught across year two of the BA Fine Art. The second semester is book-ended by two workshops in which students employ Fine art methodologies including drawing, creative writing or printmaking, to situate their own artistic practice in relation to the city of Edinburgh. Students are encouraged to become active citizens in Edinburgh by developing a rich, practical and critical understanding of the professional field they will join when they graduate. The aim here (at level 8) is for students to become more confident voicing their critical perspectives as they progress on the BA.

The workshops are designed to empower students to take responsibility as artists / cultural producers and equip them with the skills to take meaningful action in their communities. The teaching models an ethics of care, citizenship and community that offers students a safe space to engage with institutional critique. Students learn to harness creative approaches with text, drawings, three-dimensional objects or performance towards constructing a critical response.

While the first workshop seeds semester two's learning, the second invites students to collectively consolidate processes and outcomes. Together they support students to situate their practice within wider collective principles of equity and freedom in the city and formulate responses that are informed, engaged and critical. Here, drawing on the typically active and applied modes of L&T in Art, teaching is dynamic and learning is embodied, integrated and shaped by student activation. The student voice emerges through this shaping of delivery and is amplified collectively through the networks of artistic practice and active community engagement.

In a visual presentation students and staff from Art will reflect, through examples, on how theoretical content is taught through Fine Art methodologies to empower each student towards situating their practice within professional and institutional frameworks with a confident critical voice.

Interactive session: (Mine)crafting student projects into public engagement and teaching experiences (*Richard Fitzpatrick, Siobhan Vickerstaff, Perrin Grant, Kate Duggan & Zimo Liu*)

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate a method of incorporating iterative student project work into educational contexts
2. Highlight through reflection the short, mid and long term skills and attributes that this approach can develop in students.

Disease Detectives is a multi-audience, multi-purpose interactive simulation which first emerged from a 2020 Honours Project titled "Building Biological Models in Minecraft". After 6 years and several iterations it has evolved into a public engagement workshop used in schools and at festivals, and is also now being used to teach Epidemiology at UoE and at the Zhejiang-Edinburgh Institute in China.

This was not pre-planned. Each step of this process (including this session!) has been conceived and built iteratively with students, who were given ownership of their project beyond the initial outline, and have helped direct them into the spaces it is currently used. We believe this approach not only fosters a space for many of the graduate attributes we seek to instil in our students, but also demonstrates a workable pipeline for making impactful, iterative student projects that feedback into our learning ecosystem.

All 4 people who to date have worked on this project as students will speak about their experiences, including reflections on the projects they crafted, the skills that fostered, and showcasing what they did with live demonstrations. After a quick introduction, participants will have the chance to interact with different iterations and use cases of Disease Detectives, depending on their specific interests. This will be run as "stations", which will allow for hands-on playing as well as a chance to ask questions to the speakers at each station.

Keywords: Iterative; Minecraft; Student projects; Public Engagement; Video games; Teaching

Interactive session: Workshop for addressing eco-anxiety: cultivating student wellbeing in climate and sustainability learning (*Samuel Di Risio, Alan Peddie, Matthew Lawson, Lucy Patterson & Kat Zabecka*)

This session is a workshop for staff and students designed to explore the concept of eco-anxiety and how activities and techniques for addressing it can be included in pedagogical practice in ways that promote student voice and wellbeing in climate and sustainability. The workshop is based on research that combines scholarship on eco-emotions, pedagogy, and psychoanalysis. Eco-anxiety is one of the most prominent eco-emotions (emotions associated with nature and climate), and it typically manifests as forms of worry and concern of varying degrees of intensity, from acute worry about the physical dangers posed by extreme weather events, to general feelings of melancholy about the loss of nature, and a range of emotions in between.

Through a series of hands-on activities, the workshop aims to uncover, for each participant, areas where their research, teaching, and learning interacts with eco-emotions (and specifically eco-anxiety), and aims to provide an opportunity to test and develop ideas for activities and tools that can enhance student voice and wellbeing in the classroom.

The workshop begins from the premise that feelings of eco-anxiety are valid, and that these feelings present an opportunity for teachers and students to engage in reflective deliberation about the climate emergency, their relationship to it, and their relationship to themselves and their learning in a way that promotes their overall wellbeing (including their growth and development) and encourages within them a more intentional, sustainable form of their living and engaging with the world.

The workshop is an informal and safe space for dialoguing with eco-anxiety and trialling strategies to address this feeling in HE pedagogical contexts, where, if not to 'remove it', the aim is to at least provide students and teachers with the tools to understand, reframe, and transform (or 'traverse') their eco-anxiety.

Aims and objectives:

- To define and explain eco-anxiety
- To identify classroom and pedagogical contexts which cause eco-anxiety to be felt by students
- To identify effective activities that allow students to address eco-anxiety in classroom and pedagogical contexts

Delivery plan:

- Introduction and key information (7 minutes)
- Activity x3 and participant feedback (27 minutes)
- Wrap up, outline key insights gathered, discussion of next steps (6 minutes)

Presentation: Beyond Feedback: A Model for Student-Led Change (*Jenny Gracie, Jenny Green & Adrian Penny*)

We initially gathered insights into the widening participation student experience using focus groups. This evolved into a feedback session that empowered students to drive priority actions, culminating in student-led community events. This student-staff partnership made our students feel not only heard, but valued. We moved beyond mere feedback, with lessons applicable across schools and institutions.

We fostered safe spaces for sharing, both among peers and with staff. Participation was accessible, allowing students to join sessions in-person, online, or offer written input. Staff distilled discussions into themes and possible actions, with students actively ranking and developing proposals. Participants were compensated, addressing barriers underserved students face in participating in extracurricular activities.

The Community Champions funding call was an ideal avenue for empowering student-led events. Our application was successful and UG students Fatima Khan and Josh Griffin-Carrill were employed to support action implementation. They organised social and academic peer support events in semester one 25/26, with logistical support from staff. These initiatives aimed at integrating students from diverse backgrounds into the school community while remaining open to all. Student feedback highlighted the success of these events in fostering new connections. One attendee remarked they "wouldn't usually come to socials, but this felt aimed at people like me."

Students' engagement highlights a desire to shape their experience. Involving students beyond feedback gathering resulted in strong buy-in, opportunities for them to connect with peers, get to know staff, and develop their confidence.

Like our project, our presentation will have our students at its heart, with both WP community champions supporting this submission. Although they may be unavailable due to out-of-term timing, we will recognise their contributions to fostering a sense of belonging within the school.

Presentation: Feedback Improvement Toolkits (F.I.T.): Co-creating Feedback Workflows (*Peiyu Lan & Elena Ioannidou*)

Feedback Improvement Toolkits (F.I.T.) is an initiative to strengthen qualitative feedback practice across engineering disciplines. It aims to support educators in providing effective and actionable feedback and to close feedback loops in engineering teaching and learning. Through the project, a team of academics, a learning technologist, and an education PhD student with an engineering background explored the following questions: what makes feedback effective in engineering coursework, how educators can provide effective feedback within real constraints, and how students can take ownership of their learning and act on feedback.

The F.I.T. consists of two parts: an adaptable feedback workflow informed by the Action Feedback Protocol and UoE feedback principles, helping course teams clarify the purpose, delivery, and expected use of feedback; and practical examples from previous courses, including assignment briefs, assessment rubrics, and sample feedback comments aligned with feedback principles.

In three workshops with course organisers in the School of Engineering, we presented student perspectives on “feedback I wish I had received”, alongside F.I.T. as a discussion prompt. The findings highlighted mismatches in expectations between students, markers, and course organisers regarding the content, quantity, and frequency of feedback. Constraints such as workload, and limited marking capacity were identified as common challenges across disciplines. Although participants noted the importance of feedback literacy and student engagement, more opportunities for students to act on feedback is needed to close the feedback loop.

Presentation: Designing alternative assessment to ease Psychology students' statistics anxiety (*Elizabeth Pankratz, Umberto Noè, Emma Waterston & Josiah King*)

Many undergraduate students in Psychology are very anxious about the statistics courses that are part of their degree. As the teaching team behind the statistics courses in Psychology, we've spent the last year redesigning our five-semester curriculum in an effort to help students reduce their anxiety and build their understanding around statistics. This talk will focus on how we drew on student views to design our new alternative assessment framework, and how we'll interface with future students to discover how well it's worked.

We tried hard to get student input on our redesign, but of the approximately 400 students we served this year, we only got feedback from six. What do the other hundreds of students think? We just don't know. But we can use the literature to guess.

Drawing on perspectives from our students and from students in the literature, we've made two key changes to our assessment structure. We're moving away from traditional weighted-averages grading—known to harbour social inequities, hinder the learning process, and harm student mental health (e.g., Kohn, 1993)—and instead adopting a skills-based grading framework (e.g., Clark & Talbert, 2023) which, at pre-Honours level, will culminate in a pass-fail course outcome. The students who gave us feedback during the design process recognise that the skills-based framework matches how they'll use statistics in practice, and that pass/fail will ease the massive stress they feel now about “chasing an A”.

How will we know what difference our efforts will make? We're running a research project to find out. Our new first-year course launches in September 2026, so this past year we have collected the “before” data. And if all goes well, a year from now we'll present data about how adopting less traditional, more compassionate assessment practices affect how Psychology students approach statistics.

Presentation: Interdependence as a mode for advancing student-staff research, learning and teaching (*Kasia Kaczmarska, Urania Chan & Dan Malitskyy*)

The paper presents undergraduate and doctoral students' as well as academic staff's perspective on the work of the Ukrainian Politics Network, UPN. We believe that the model of cooperation and interdependence we have developed under the aegis of the UPN serves as an example of good practice in developing and sustaining meaningful relationships that are beneficial for learning and teaching (L&T). More broadly, this paper seeks to contribute to the ethics of care in academia and to pedagogies for involving students in learning, research, and academic outreach activities.

The UPN was established two years ago with support from two small grants. Since its inception, students have contributed their volunteer work, including overseeing its communication strategy, representing the UPN at the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Ukraine, running the Student Essay Competition, and the Kyiv-Edinburgh Student Forum. The UPN also provides space for students to develop and publish small research and writing projects, and to organise academic workshops and conferences. The UPN provides its volunteers with opportunities to develop knowledge and professional skills while creating additional opportunities for the wider body of students, scholars, and the public to engage with the study of Ukraine. The students are particularly keen to engage Ukrainian diaspora communities.

The UPN has also served as a conduit for discussing future L&T initiatives, particularly the development of a course on Ukraine. Two of the UPN's workshops focused on the course's structure and T&L methods, as did focus group discussions with student volunteers.

The UPN supported two funding applications led by the students and helped promote two student journals - *Diiaspora* and *Leviathan*. It also collaborates with student societies to invite academic speakers.

Students see the UPN as a way to amplify their voices and support their initiatives. Academic staff rely on student volunteers to undertake initiatives that aim to foster knowledge making and sharing about a region that has long been marginalised.

Presentation: Students Co-Creating Group-Based Learning Spaces to Voice "Unconfident Ideas" (*Lauraine Vivian, Máté Novák, Amelia Johnson & Sean McLaughlin*)

Direct responses from four second year MBChB students, Máté, Cassandra, Amelia, and Anna discuss how our transformative Group-Based Learning (GBL) environment has meant students create spaces where they feel safe to express thoughts and work through "unconfident ideas" together.

Their emerging voices are drawn from Lauraine's 30-minute interviews for her PgCAP research. In their consensus the clinical case scenarios in GBL are better than previous Problem-Based Learning (PBL) cases because they required a different skill of enquiry. Importantly, the focus on "common disorders" promoted discussion of the pathology and biology so that knowledge was actively clarified through group explanations, applied, linked, and integrated. Thereby working through case scenarios drew others into the thinking processes and learning happened in "understanding better". Problem-solving skills were described as essential, particularly in brain-storming sessions. Knowledge building was improved when lectures were concurrent with GBL. This established an iterative process which brought them to question facts and think critically.

In essence GBL was therefore like PBL but felt to be more effective in integrating core material, consolidating learning, and gaining a new perspective. Here feedback and reflective sessions empowered students to confidently share their thoughts on this change and how they felt that GBL benefitted them. Significantly, ownership of their co-created GBL space developed higher order academic thinking because students learnt how to build on responses, and manage being corrected by their peers. They felt able to bring their thoughts to the table, so that the group process taught them about trust, equality, and learning. In GBL they learnt to articulate whereas in lectures they had to listen passively to science.

Our enquiry-based teaching paper advances student – staff voices to adhere to national recommendations for GBL in professional development. Of interdisciplinary interest, is how our innovative GBL design employs a

“traditional” methodology in integrating clinical case scenarios that engage all voices in rehearsing biomedical subjects, alongside the humanities.

Presentation: *Beyond the Main Library: A Student Voice Approach to Co-designing ‘Spaces for Students’ Solution*
(Ksenia Grant, Guy McGarva & Akrit Ghimire)

Limited and unfamiliar study space is a long-standing theme in student feedback at the University. When students cannot easily find appropriate places to work, it affects not only productivity but also their sense of belonging on campus and their student experience. Therefore, making the best use of available facilities and making students aware of all the places they can go to study (not just the Main Library that students gravitate to) has become a critical issue.

EDINA and EUSA partnered to create Spaces for Students, a web application that helps students quickly identify and choose suitable study spaces across the University. It provides location and detailed information for 300+ rooms across 50+ buildings, enabling students to filter spaces to match their needs (e.g., individual/quiet versus group work, type of desks/furniture) and to discover under-used facilities.

We developed the service in-house (rather than adopting an off-the-shelf product) so that Student Voice could shape the solution from the outset. We have been working in partnership with EUSA student representatives as well as involving students in multiple stages of the project, from defining requirements, room data collection and validation, usability testing, and continuous improvement through ongoing feedback.

This work also surfaced cultural and operational barriers that can restrict student access (e.g., inconsistent local practices). Therefore, alongside the digital build, we are working on tackling these issues by engaging with multiple University stakeholders to change practices and make campus spaces welcoming to students.

Delegates will take away: practical approaches to student–staff co-design, strategies for maintaining an iterative feedback dialogue, and lessons learnt that can be replicated to improve other learning-and-teaching services through Student Voice.

We will also include a demo of the Spaces for Students application.

Presenters: Guy McGarva, Geospatial Consultancy Service Manager, EDINA, ISG
Akrit Ghimire, EUSA VP Community, a computer science and AI student (UG)

Break Out Session 4

Interactive session (30): Using alternative strategies to teach alternative strategies: insights from a course co-designed between staff and students (*Alice Munro, Itamar Kastner, Carolina Fretwell, Runzhou Shan, Gemma Smith, Sally Keith & Josie Lord*)

This panel discusses insights from the Honours-level seminar “Teaching Linguistics” from the perspective of the students and course organiser. This discussion-based course invited students to critique the structure of higher education teaching and grading practices. Students engaged with literature on alternative grading, the psychology of learning, and pedagogical methods. The course organiser and students worked collaboratively to interrogate structures that define their learning environment. Assessment was based on group and individual projects where students engaged creatively with a topic from the course, presented and discussed in a final seminar.

We’ll detail how we developed the structure of the course in real time, deciding on the basis of our research how the course should progress and eventually aligning the format and content of the course with the tenets of critical pedagogy being investigated.

Learning Outcomes:

- Appreciate the research base motivating critiques of the reliability of traditional assessment.
- Understand how critical pedagogy can be put into practice, and where bureaucratic constraints limit its scope.
- Demonstrate the positive impact of alternative teaching and grading practices on student engagement, motivation and mental health.

Delivery Plan:

A panel of 3 to 4 students and the course organiser, moderated by a student, will discuss the seminar and take audience questions. Students on the panel represent a range of perspectives from the course, and the course organiser will outline his experience designing and managing the course.

Discussion will include:

- Seminar introduction and context
- Issues with current systems of teaching and assessment
- Improving learning outcomes and student motivation
- Future concerns in higher education
- Sample student projects: “Addressing generative AI misuse in higher education with alternative teaching and grading methods”; “MSc Applied Linguistics in Linguistics College Edinburgh”; etc.

Presentation: How can a shared programme ethos and structures create a meaningful dialogue with students? The development and experience of learning mentors on the MSc Clinical Education (*Lynsey Campbell, Magdalena Cerbin-Koczorowska, Jane Hislop, Steve Wright, Veronica Davey & Femke Morrison*)

Educational mentorship is a recognised method of building dynamic, collaborative partnerships. This "Sharing Practice" presentation explores the role of Learning Mentors in fostering a sense of belonging for postgraduate students in the online, part-time Masters in Clinical Education programme. We will explore the reality and challenges of communicating with students in an online programme. We will share how we define the role of learning mentors in our programme and discuss the underlying ethos; highlighting processes that allow us to engage with and promote student voice throughout our programme. We will reflect upon our experiences as learning mentors - a role which has evolved within our programme to foster partnerships and supportive connections between academic faculty and students and conclude by sharing our hopes for future developments to expand mentorship impact and visibility. This includes strategies for integrating student feedback into curriculum development and exploring partnerships between staff and students to further embed student voice in academic decision-making.

The session highlights the impact of the Learning Mentor role on our students’ journey, including how it can promote student engagement and success and allow us to co-create and incorporate student perspectives into the design and review of our programme. This short presentation, focused upon actively engaging with student voice, ultimately aims to share good practice and experiences of creating more inclusive and responsive educational settings through active collaboration between students and academic faculty.

Presentation: From hearing to acting: Reframing student voice through transparent partnership and shared responsibility (*Hui-Chuan Li, Steve McLeister, Russell White, John Waddell, Madeleine Johnstone & Sophie Wilson*)

Student voice is widely embedded in higher education, yet its impact is often constrained by narrow interpretations that define meaningful engagement solely as the implementation of change. This presentation reframes student voice as a partnership process, emphasising transparent communication, shared understanding, and mutual responsibility between students and staff. It focuses on the PGDE Secondary programme, a one-year postgraduate initial teacher education programme combining university-based learning with school placements, and emphasising professional values, engagement with educational research, and reflective practice. Within this context, student voice shapes both academic and professional learning experiences.

Jointly presented by staff and students, the presentation shows how student voice has informed programme development, curriculum design, communication practices, and learning and teaching approaches. The presentation also discusses approaches to understanding student voice through feedback, recurring themes, and student-staff dialogue. It empowers tutors to lead student voice discussions and emphasises shared responsibilities across student, tutor, Course Organiser, and Programme Director levels to foster shared ownership and partnership.

Student perspectives highlight that meaningful engagement relies on staff willingness to consider criticism as well as positive feedback. Students feel genuinely heard when concerns are acknowledged, addressed constructively, and followed up with clear explanations, even when immediate change is not possible. Visible responsiveness and a sense of community building reinforce trust in student voice and representation mechanisms. Communication is viewed as a shared responsibility, with student representatives acting as a bridge between peers and institutional decision-making.

Psychological safety is essential given power dynamics between staff and students. Multiple class or subject-specific representatives, proactive two-way communication, and consistent follow-up support open dialogue. Addressing recurring issues such as placements, course structure, and expectations through early and transparent communication is highly valued. These insights demonstrate that student voice strengthens partnerships, fosters inclusive learning cultures, and sustains meaningful engagement.

Presentation: How the Careers Service redesigned their website with student needs at the centre (*Nick Daniels*)

The Careers Service website connects students to advice and resources that support their next steps after studying at Edinburgh. In 2025, the User Experience (UX) Service collaborated with the Careers Service to review and redesign this website. This talk tells the story of that work.

Careers Service staff initiated a series of sprints to make improvements to their site. This began with a rigorous audit of pages, an analysis of their site structure and an assessment of existing content. With around 700 pages on their site, the Careers Service team recognised the benefit in weeding out non-visited and duplicated content to make the site more manageable.

Keen to support their longer-term goal of improving their website, and recognising an opportunity to help them prioritise content to focus on, the UX Service worked with the Careers Service team to devise a series of collaborative design activities.

These included:

- an interactive workshop for Careers Service staff to bring together existing knowledge about student needs
- a user mapping session to pinpoint the ways PhD students typically interact with the Careers Service
- a sketching workshop to reveal student expectations of a Careers Service homepage
- a digital-sustainability-focused initiative to gauge the environmental impact of the Careers Service website and to consider ways to reduce this

By attending this session, attendees will learn:

- how to take existing insight into student needs and develop this into a digital content strategy
- how to use a wide range of design approaches to generate insight into what students need from digital content
- how to adapt the language on your site to more closely match keywords associated with student tasks

Presentation: Embedding career preparation in academic programmes. Responding to what students want?
(Sharon Maguire & Kirsten Roche)

The Careers Service manages key institutional data sets capturing the student voice, in 2025 over 20,000 students responded. A key theme emerging from these datasets and other external surveys is the importance of career to our students.

Incoming taught students tell us that developing skills and knowledge for their career is a top 3 motivation for doing a degree. On graduation, the What's Next survey tells us that well under half of graduating students have career plans confirmed.

In 2025, national surveys showed only 75% of our UG finalists felt their course developed knowledge and skills needed for their future (ranges from 66% to 95% across Schools; National Student Survey) and only 65.7% PGT students agreed that the University provides activities and resources to prepare them for their career (Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey). Through these responses and comments students clearly tell us that career preparation should be an unavoidable part of their degree.

Is there a mismatch in what students tell us they want and what they have gained from their degree? The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 states: 'We will support our students to reflect on and connect their academic experiences to their futures'. But how are we doing this? Embedding our Skills for Success Framework will help students surface the skills they develop but how will we help them connect this to their futures? How do they develop the career management skills to enable them to explore their career options, make good decisions and move on to careers of their choice. We know this is particularly acute for students on non-vocational degrees.

Careers Consultants are experts in approaches to embedding careers and employability within the curriculum. We collaborate with academic colleagues, using their expertise in curriculum design and their subject, to find ways to embed careers authentically within disciplines in a way that is tailored and appropriate for each School. In this presentation we will share examples of how we have been using data, and in response to the student voice, working with academic staff in some Schools to embed elements of career learning within curriculum – responding to student expectations that this is part of their programme.

Interactive session (30): One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Information Problem (Christopher Campbell & Callum Paterson)

Lack of information is a major barrier to effective student voice. This session aims to describe this systemic issue, sketch some potential solutions and, most importantly, stimulate thought.

Most student representatives in a given year are new to the role. They necessarily raise the issues most obvious to them, which often have been brought up by previous representatives and have not been resolved because they are not trivial. Hearing the same point repeatedly may frustrate staff, who give a standard response which has not changed in years, in turn frustrating representatives and giving the impression that change is impossible.

By default, students do not know the internal workings of the University. This is understandable, since even many seasoned staff find the University's processes arcane — now imagine being dropped in with no prior knowledge and having to figure it out on a part-time, unpaid basis in just a few weeks. In addition, far too often representatives give feedback and it vanishes for them with a promise to be taken up next year. Next year's representatives then (might) hear about some changes but don't know the initial request, so the conversation never progresses. In contrast, when representatives are properly informed, they can build on the past and advance the conversation.

In the School of Physics and Astronomy we have had some successes, including better networking and collaboration, having representatives stay on for multiple years (including myself), and giving them positions of real leadership — all of which helps build institutional knowledge and break the annual cycle.

This session will begin with a short talk outlining the problem and suggesting some solutions, followed by discussion to allow participants to share best practice and brainstorm actionable ideas suitable to their local

context. We'll share and discuss some successes and look at what systems Schools can try to ensure they have truly informed representatives. Only then can they be empowered to share the most useful criticisms and co-create lasting solutions.

Presentation: Amplifying Student Voice to Embed Accessibility in Computer Science Education: Insights and Early Implementations (*Aurora Constantin, Kejia Zhang, Snigdha Ramkumar, Cristina Alexandru & Fiona McNeill*)

With accessibility increasingly recognised as a critical component of inclusive higher education, empowering students to shape how accessibility is integrated into their learning is essential. We used results from interviews and a focus group with Computer Science (CS) students in a PTAS project to understand their perspectives on accessibility in learning, assessment, and curriculum design.

Our findings highlight how students can actively influence course design teaching and learning, moving from feedback to tangible action. Students have been central in identifying opportunities to instil accessibility into learning activities in non-compulsory ways and contributing to initiatives that raise accessibility awareness from the start of undergraduate study. Importantly, exposing students to real-life examples, lived experiences, and industry perspectives, alongside engaging them in extra-curricular, student-led initiatives, was shown to deepen their understanding of accessibility challenges and enhance their active engagement in addressing them.

Early implementations of these insights include co-designing activities in a student-led, industry-partnered hackathon focused on AI for Accessibility, and embedding accessibility in a training course for the teaching support providers (e.g., tutors, demonstrators and teaching assistants).

This presentation will share both the results of CS student interviews and focus groups and practical examples of early implementations. By taking a "small changes at a time" approach rather than aiming for wholesale reform, we illustrate how iterative, student-informed interventions can create meaningful impact. The project offers a model for leveraging student insights to embed accessibility across higher education programmes, showing what is possible when students are partners in shaping inclusive learning experiences.

Presentation: Chatbots for accessing student voices (*Jobran Chebib*)

Student Representatives in Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) are often not representative of the average student. They tend to be a small subset of students which are outspoken, high-achieving, and engaged in their classes, and who have no problem with asking instructors questions in class, after class or by email. But what about the rest of the class? When Student Representatives are asked about the lack of engagement from their fellow students they report that many students find it intimidating to speak up during or after live teaching sessions, to directly contact staff, or even to post on discussion/questions boards. This means that many student's voices are not heard, and therefore not represented in Student Voice initiatives. How can we rectify this without putting additional strain on over-extended staff? I attempt to tackle this by developing course-specific chatbots, called Biobots, which students report are less intimidating to engage in hopes that it will engage a broader range of students. Biobots are trained on course guidebooks and/or course content, and may capture more students because: the student remains anonymous, accurate responses are available all hours of the day, queries and responses are not provided to any third-party, and they perform well in all major languages. Biobots were used in seven courses in Semester 1 of 2025, including courses in all four undergraduate years. By the end of the semester, 2631 student queries had been made, with the majority of their timings coinciding with deadlines in the various courses. A review of the queries and responses showed that many course guides required better clarity of information on their courses. Especially regarding assessments. It is also clear that a wide variety of students were using the chatbots including many non-native English speakers. Although it is possible that these students might have asked staff these questions, I believe that many of these would have gone unasked and these voices never heard.

Presentation: Beyond the Dissertation: using student voice to inform best practice guidance for diversified, taught, final year MSc (*Harriet Thatcher, Andre Phillips, Susan Morrow, Ellie Devenish-Nelson, Daisy Bao & Kirsten Stuart-James*)

Online, global Master's programmes are frequently undertaken by professionals seeking career progression, whose competing work and personal responsibilities necessitate a flexible mode of study. Acting on student feedback that identified the need for an alternative pathway to Masters, diversified routes were created by two MSc programmes within the University of Edinburgh Medical School. Progression through these diversified curricula has proven successful with positive student feedback and strong progression rates across all pathways. However, we do not yet know whether we are meeting student expectations, nor how best to support students when choice in pathways to completion is offered.

A three-package project was designed to develop student-focussed, best practice guidance and support around diversified curricula. Package 1, a scoping review looked at the available knowledge to underpin guidance. Package 2 consisted of focus groups on student and alumni experience taking both the traditional dissertation and new diversified pathway to understand why they chose pathways and how we could further support their decision and learning. Finally, Package 3, focuses on the collaborative application of findings by students and alumni to co-create best practice guidance.

This presentation will provide an overview of the project development so far. Outlining initial student and alumni feedback and broader knowledge that guided this change, presenting preliminary findings from focus groups, and discussing how this broader knowledge and feedback will feedforward into a co-creation of best practice guidelines. This project has been designed to engage students as both researchers and participants within our project and therefore, we will also represent student and alumni voices within our presentation. The best practice guidelines generated through this project are intended to be transferable across programmes and schools, enabling systematic incorporation of the student voice to support curriculum diversification.

Presentation: A case study: Group-Based-Learning – the change driven by student voices (*Sean McLaughlin & Tatiana Chebotareva*)

In response to student feedback in AY2024-25 of the MBChB curriculum calling for more clinically oriented, patient-centred cases, the long-standing Problem-Based Learning course was transformed into an Edinburgh Medical School-designed Group-Based Learning (GBL) module. The GBL study sessions were developed to include interactive systems to co-design course content and activities.

The GBL model aligns with General Medical Council standards, encouraging development of professionalism and teamworking skills, among other competencies. In Year 1, the first case focuses on team-building and value-setting, followed by 11 clinician-written cases centred on realistic patient presentations. Driven by student feedback, the sessions were adjusted to incorporate a variety of engagement opportunities: small-team (3-4 students) learning activities, guided case exploration, and whole group discussions, thus providing ample opportunities for diverse voices to emerge.

Multiple modalities for students to voice feedback on GBL experience are available through Weekly Evaluation Post-it boards on Teams, in student-led verbal Evaluations at the end of cases, and through a case dedicated to course Feedback each semester, when students co-produce a Group Feedback Form with their facilitator and submit an Individual Feedback Form. Facilitators respond to group and individual student feedback, and Year Directors review evaluations and enable course changes.

GBL groups of 12-14 medical students remain together throughout each pre-clinical Year, fostering group cohesion, inclusivity, and trust. Student chairs lead cases, and scribes record discussions, promoting student leadership in learning, active peer voicing, and the affirmation of shared knowledge through collective production of an academic transcript or mind map. Facilitators guide GBL groups through each case, from an initial exploratory discussion to achieving the learning objectives through dialogue and questions.

The GBL course continues to be challenged and shaped by student voices. As new case formats are being explored, we invite students to develop their own study scenarios and reflect on their experience.

Posters

Posters will be on display in the **Alder Lecture Theatre**, with authors available to chat with during the morning coffee break.

A selection of posters will also be available to view online on a **Miro board accessed through the Conference Teams site**.

Poster 1. Facilitating Student Autonomy with Technology Enhanced Learning (*Abby Anderson, Sylvia Parma & Mate Varadi*)

A traditional, single-pronged approach to Assessment and Feedback can work for some students, but not all. In an ever-changing (and hard to predict) educational landscape, it is becoming difficult to find an assessment type which allows students to reach their full potential, taking into account both learning requirements and preferences. However, Technology Enhanced Learning can be utilised to allow student autonomy in how they undertake their assessments. Our poster would cover the three following areas, referencing examples in our School where Learning Technology has been harnessed to allow for variety in assessment:

Why traditional single-option assessment can prevent full student engagement and what are some alternatives?

How can Learning Technology facilitate this?

Examples in School of PPLS

The poster will look at how Learning Technology can streamline processes, optimising existing tools so the new assessment and feedback workflows are sustainable and futureproofed. Successful implementation of Technology Enhanced Learning can allow for Student Voice to be prioritised, enhancing engagement and autonomy in their individual learning journeys.

Poster 2. Directing student voice through a Student and Alumni led Open Access Journal of Biodiversity and Ecosystems (*Andre Phillips, Ellie Devenish-Nelson & Pam McDormond*)

Student voice can manifest in a variety of methods but for Postgraduate students who want to work in research, publications are a key pathway many of them strive towards to advance their careers. Without publications they can struggle to be accepted into research roles.

Our programme is the online, part time, distance Masters in Biodiversity, Wildlife and Ecosystem Health (within the Medical School) (BWEH). Our students are often mature professionals looking to begin or shift a career in biodiversity, many into research roles.

One of our students, Pam McDormand, now Alumni, saw this gap and started the process of setting up a student and alumni journal. This journal was designed from the start to be linked to our programme and called the Open Journal of Biodiversity and Ecosystems. Thanks to a successful partnership between current students, Alumni and Edinburgh Diamond Open Access, we have had our first submission deadline and are in the process of the first edition's review.

The diversity of our interdisciplinary programme, from animal behaviour to social science, is reflected in the accepted formats for the journal. This includes photo essays, art, book reviews reflections and scientific letters, all free of charge, because of this, and because of the global nature of the BWEH program, we are also able to amplify voices of early career researchers in the Global South.

In this poster, we'll talk through the motivations, procedures and output of this initiative for amplifying our students' voices, and the training, mentoring and leadership opportunities this has provided for students and alumni. We hope to encourage others to explore launching their own journals or to use our journal to disseminate their research.

Poster 3. Beyond Enforcement: Overcoming Barriers to Attendance in Online Synchronous Learning (*Aryelly Rodriguez*)

Student attendance at online synchronous (live) teaching sessions in higher education remains inconsistent, raising important questions about how student voice is understood, valued, and acted upon in digital learning environments. While non-attendance has historically been framed as a deficit in student motivation, emerging evidence suggests that attendance patterns often reflect students' responses to structural constraints, pedagogical design, and the extent to which learning environments feel inclusive, responsive, and worthwhile.

This study synthesises current research to examine existing recommendations for improving attendance at online synchronous sessions. A systematic literature review was conducted using thematic synthesis methods, guided by Joanna Briggs Institute qualitative evidence synthesis principles and reported in line with PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Twenty-six peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025 were included and analysed using inductive, line-by-line coding.

Seven themes were identified: infrastructure and access support; interactive pedagogy with high-quality content; instructor presence and responsiveness; flexible delivery models; clear course structure and assessment alignment; a supportive online climate and sense of belonging; and student self-regulation and motivational supports. Across studies, students' reported experiences and preferences consistently shaped recommendations, indicating that attendance improves when synchronous sessions reflect student needs, reduce participation anxiety, and prioritise meaningful interaction over passive content delivery.

Findings suggest that improving attendance requires moving beyond simply hearing student concerns toward acting on student voice through inclusive course design, flexible participation options, and psychologically safe learning spaces. Notably, attempts to enforce attendance by restricting access to recordings were widely cautioned against, as they risk amplifying inequities and silencing students facing legitimate barriers to participation.

Overall, this review positions attendance as an outcome of how effectively institutions and educators respond to student voice. Sustainable engagement in online synchronous learning depends on creating learning environments that acknowledge students' lived realities and translate student feedback into tangible pedagogical action.

Poster 4: Acting in the Anthropocene: creating spaces for critical student voice and hopeful action (*Eduardo Serafin & Carry Arnold*)

Living in the Anthropocene is an interdisciplinary pre-honours course that makes spaces that empower students to take action in the face of the most pressing challenges facing our planet. Students work in interdisciplinary groups to design and propose actions that respond to issues that range from plastic waste to sustainable energy, and from fast fashion to adaptations to sea level rise. The students made posters, podcasts, apps and YouTube shorts to share their research and proposed actions.

Our poster will present principles used for course design and delivery, assessment and feedback, and administrative workflows.

We outline the criteria and process used for selecting PebblePad as the main platform for the Creative Blogs component of the course and the principles behind using Blackboard Learn for the project submission. We evaluate the options available while using Feedback Templates in PebblePad and Rubrics in a Learn assignment. Administrative challenges are/will also be outlined.

An initial evaluation will be presented highlighting areas for enhancement and improvement, aiming to make the overall goal of the course a more integrated student and staff experience.

We will also present student interviews to hear in their own words what they've learned from the course, what made it enjoyable, their group work experience and what impact it had on their personal lives.

Eduardo Serafin (corresponding author), Carry Arnold, Leigh Corstorphine, David Henty, Susan Lechelt, Gavin Melaugh, Deirdre McLean, Bernd Schroers, Rachael Scott, Dan Swanton, Tim Stratford

Poster 5. Realising the Potential of Student Research through the Edinburgh Student Journal of Science (Jack Lee Smith & Milly Mead)

We present the Edinburgh Student Journal of Science (ESJS), a multi-institutional academic journal, founded at the University of Edinburgh and designed specifically for undergraduate and Master's students. Throughout their degrees, most undergraduate STEM students are encouraged to undertake their own scientific research through a dissertation or a research project. This research is too-often discarded by the student as soon as a grade has been awarded, the value of their research equal only to the mark they received. The Edinburgh Student Journal of Science (ESJS) offers undergraduate and Master's students the opportunity to professionally publish their original research, preventing the loss of student-led research to the scientific community and helping students understand the innate value of their work.

The ESJS tackles the 'hidden curriculum' of publishing, while addressing two key institutional priorities: we enhance student belonging through partnership, and educate the next generation in open research practices. The journal is run by postgraduate students and provides a supportive and educational environment for students to engage first-hand in the process of peer-review (by PhD students) and publishing. This supports students in their transition from knowledge-consumers to contributing members of the scientific community, while acquiring key transferrable skills for the next steps in their careers.

As a Diamond Open Access journal, the ESJS is free to submit to and read, removing financial barriers and directly addressing the need to use open outputs to train future researchers. In this way, students learn about open and ethical research by practicing it while obtaining tangible (DOI-assigned) outputs, as we will highlight through student testimonials. The success of the ESJS demonstrates that by integrating professional publishing standards with a pedagogical focus, we foster a profound sense of academic identity and a research culture where students are recognised as genuine researchers, equipped with the values and skills necessary for the future of open science.

Poster 6. From Free Bagels to Belonging: How Student Voice Built PPLS's Breakfast Club (Karen Luo)

This poster outlines how a student-led Breakfast Club in the School of Philosophy, Psychology, and Language Sciences (PPLS) grew from a pilot into a weekly community of over 100 students. Students consistently reported feeling disconnected from peers and staff. Feedback gathered through programme representatives and surveys indicated a clear desire for informal interaction and shared identity. In response, an undergraduate school representative used that feedback to launch a weekly Breakfast Club that has become the school's most popular community space.

The model is built on a simple principle: student voice should not stop at collecting feedback but should drive what actually gets delivered. Funding for free breakfasts existed at the university level, yet no clear pathway connected it to school-level operation. By giving students real input into how community initiatives run, attendance and a sense of belonging followed naturally. Before the launch, programme reps surveyed students on food preferences, and the location was chosen deliberately for high foot traffic where students enter the building. Despite only 35 initial signups, 71 students attended the first week because the visible setup drew people in. By week four, over 80 students were arriving within the first 30 minutes. Growth was entirely organic and powered by word of mouth.

Sustainability is ensured through a built-in feedback loop where the representative visits tables weekly to ask what students want next. This gives them direct ownership over the event while the representative manages setup, allergy labelling, and headcount. Additionally, invitations were sent to Heads of Departments and postgraduate students to stop by for coffee. Academic staff now regularly join for informal conversations, which reduces the perceived distance between staff and students in ways that formal office hours rarely achieve. Postgraduates also connected with undergraduates about future study paths. Consequently, the Breakfast Club has become a weekly anchor point where students study together and socialise across year groups and degrees. Students have shared that the club encourages them to come to campus and feel part of something bigger than their individual programme.

The model requires minimal staff labour and no complex infrastructure. This presentation will outline the operational steps and encourage any student leader looking to build belonging through something as simple as breakfast.

Poster 7. Acting on Student Voice: Co-Designing Compassionate Support for Medical Students on Placement
(Lindsay Rutherford, Jamie Gentil, Emily Hu, Cuebin Choi, Agata Dunsmore & Barbara Phipps)

The development of a wellbeing-focused compassion initiative within the Medical School was directly informed by listening to the students' voice. Students said that they felt isolated during clinical placements, especially on remote placements, away from Edinburgh and where they were separated from established peer networks and familiar support systems. The distance intensified feelings of uncertainty and disconnection alongside the pressures of adapting to different clinical environments and increased professional responsibility.

In response, we co-designed and delivered a Winter Warmer session in partnership with students on programme, peer support representatives, and the WellMed Society. The session created a dedicated space for staff and students to openly share the difficulties and challenges they had faced in clinical practice, study and personal life and to reflect on how they had navigated these experiences. This honest dialogue modelled vulnerability, normalised challenge, and strengthened a sense of shared endeavour.

There were contributions from central University services outlining the range of wellbeing, crisis and student support services available, with clear guidance on how these services can be accessed. A GP with a specialist interest in lifestyle medicine was present to share and encourage sustainable self-care during placements. They discussed nutrition, sleep, movement, and the importance of maintaining social connection.

The student panel was exceptionally well received. The panellists spoke candidly about their own anxieties, setbacks, and coping strategies, offering practical hints and tips for succeeding on placement. Crucially, they reassured peers that feelings of self-doubt and anxiety are not uncommon and that support is both available and appropriate to access.

By responding directly and quickly to student feedback, this initiative demonstrates the power of acting on student voice to drive meaningful, supportive interventions. By focusing on lived experience and partnership, the initiative fostered a sense of belonging, resilience, and a proactive culture of wellbeing within clinical education.

Poster 8. Creating a sense of belonging at the start of postgraduate taught programmes: A Narrative Literature Review
(Regina Prigge)

Creating a sense of belonging is viewed as crucial in higher education, given that previous research indicates its positive effects on student experiences, engagement, wellbeing, retention, and academic success. While much emphasis has been placed on undergraduate and campus-based programs, there is a significant gap in research concerning postgraduate and online environments. This poster summarizes findings of a narrative literature review exploring strategies that may promote belonging at the start of postgraduate taught programmes.

A thematic analysis of seven studies revealed three themes:

1) Engaging teachers as enablers of sense of belonging

Engaging teachers play a pivotal role in establishing early connections and acting as role models. Five studies emphasized their importance in facilitating the transition from teacher-led to student-led activities by encouraging interactive participation.

2) Student Voice: Involving learners as active partners

Six studies highlighted the importance of learners as active partners in advancing their own belonging throughout the rest of the course. This involves students being motivated to learn, engaging with materials, peers, and instructors, and actively contributing to discussions and problem-solving, described as "the giving of self" (Matheson & Sutcliffe, 2019).

3) Embedding online induction in purposeful curricula and learning environments

All studies highlighted the start of the programme or the start of courses as particularly important time for creating connections between the teaching staff and students. A comprehensive induction process is crucial, starting from pre-enrolment and continuing throughout the course, through to employment.

These findings emphasize not only the importance of committed staff and supportive structures in creating a sense of belonging at the start of postgraduate taught degrees but also that students are integral to their own belonging.

Poster 9. Empowering Postgraduate Voices in Digital Research at The University of Edinburgh (*Eleni Kotoula, Eleonora Mameli, Andre Vieira & Mishal Howard-Taylor*)

This poster explores the pivotal role of postgraduate research (PGR) students in the Digital Research Services (DRS) Outreach project at the University of Edinburgh and highlights strategies that enhance the upskilling of future research leaders beyond digital research.

The DRS Outreach project promotes best research practices, boosts digital research skills, and raises awareness of resources and services throughout the research lifecycle, with an emphasis on digital, data-led, and computational research. PGRs are at the centre of the DRS project, as learners, users and researchers.

Resources and training have been designed to support the postgraduate community in data and computational research, including the 'Digital Research Survival Guide for Postgraduate Researchers', webinars, and induction video series. The analysis of training data from 2020 to 2024 revealed a strong interest in project planning and data analysis and interpretation across the arts, humanities, medical, and science fields.

The 2025 Digital Research Facilitation survey provided a deeper understanding of PGR's digital research needs. Data security, coding practices, long-term storage, and data visualisation are the skills prioritised by PGRs. While online training is preferred, there is a demand for in-person sessions and live, interactive workshops and tailored advice. The favourite engagement channels are email, events, websites, and social media.

Since 2019, DRS organises a 12-week, part-time internship to offer PGRs interdisciplinary, hands-on research experience. This flexible, paid opportunity has been supporting effective use of digital tools, fostering best practices, and cultivating collaborations, enhancing both research outputs and student experience. Furthermore, continuous post-internship partnerships have led to larger projects and innovative research developments.

This poster aims to stimulate discussions on enhancing PGR engagement and educational journeys, equipping them with skills to lead and innovate in their respective fields. It underscores the importance of adaptable, interdisciplinary training that prepares students to overcome future challenges.

Poster 10. INSPIRE summer scholarship experience (*Jane Hislop & Valentina Joseph*)

Background: As part of an INSPIRE scholarship project, a year 2 MBChB student worked with the Clinical Education team in the summer of 2025 for six weeks to co-design a research project to explore the programme team's experiences of Peer Review approaches to assessment. The peer review approach to formative assessment had been introduced in 2021 into the online MSc Clinical Education programme, which is for qualified healthcare professionals who are also educators. The assessment asks students to post up a piece of academic writing, and to review and provide feedback to two of their peers. Through this review process, students are able to compare their work with other. The student researcher was able to bring her own perspective to the project.

Methods: The student researcher worked with the team to co-create a focus group guide, which included open-ended questions. She learnt how to facilitate interviews via teams, and developed an understanding of ethical considerations for research as well as how to manage research data. Co-analysis of the transcripts was undertaken between the student and a senior lecturer.

Results and conclusion: Student Researcher: Prior to this studentship, I was really interested in a career involving clinical academia, and this was the perfect opportunity for me to gain insight into what this would be like. I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the whole process of qualitative research, including how to collect qualitative data through focus groups. It also gave me good insight into the type of research questions which are suitable for clinical education, and the approaches that can be used to address these. This opportunity has provided me with the fundamental initial steps to boost my motivation to work in academia, and I will take on my skills learned to try to prepare myself for my future aspirations. Senior Lecturer: working with a student researcher on this project was invaluable. Working on this project together created an opportunity for dialogue between staff and students around approaches to assessment and feedback, where as staff we could listen to and respond to students' perspectives.

Hislop, J., Joseph, V. (2025) Using peer review to exploit the natural comparison process within online formative assignments. (25th Nov 2025) [online] Teaching Matters Blog. Available from: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/teaching-matters/using-peer-review-to-exploit-the-natural-comparison-process-within-online-formative-assignments/>

Poster 11. Imploding Digital Culture in Clinical Education: Co-Constructing and Online Course (*Steve Wright, Tyler Harvey & Femke Morrison*)

This poster will showcase the pedagogical approach to co-creation implemented on the Clinical Education and Digital Cultures course.

Through enabling student agency in selecting a topic of interest, clinical educators on the course were invited to identify a specific material or digital object then, using the "implosion method" (Dumit, 2014). Students trace the connections from their selected artefact to its professional, technological, historical and educational dimensions. Student explorations included diverse topics ranging across the history and ethics of live cases in cardiology, digital legacies in Palliative Care, devices in precision livestock farming, the parallel curriculum of question banks, and doctor influencers on social media.

The approaches and insights shared are applicable beyond Clinical Education:

The "implosion method" encouraged critical engagement with science and technology studies - posing questions to guide investigations and explore a topic in detail through original desk-based research. It also provided a narrative structure and visual elements for presentations.

The Miro boards constructively aligned with a presentation-based assessment - creating a collaborative scrap book and organisational space for draft presentations.

Giving agency and enabling deconstruction of a problem space followed by either critical consideration of a response or the creation of an intervention to respond within their professional context led to diverse, creative, innovative and high-quality work that the students were invested in and able to use. Presentations included broadcast-quality documentary interviewing students and educators; as well as an innovative, commercially viable beta of an eLearning platform for cardiology created by a student with no web design experience using "vibe coding".

Assessment was iterative, with formative proposals with peer and tutor feedback (0%), a part 1 presentation (40%) with rapid video feedback enabling focus on, and illustration of, presentation elements as feed-forward for the second presentation (60%).

Student feedback has been very positive.

This poster will be used to showcase work, implementation and share practices and insights from the course.

Reference:

Dumit, J. (2014). Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World One Thing at a Time. *Cultural Anthropology*, 29(2), 344-362. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14506/ca29.2.09>

Poster 12. Languages Beyond University - experiential student-led learning in the community (*Annette Götzkes, Imogen Davies, Georga Beattie & Patricia Rueda*)

Languages Beyond University (LBU) is a degree course for second year students of French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish based on an experiential learning and assessment framework - Student-Led, Individually-Created Courses (SLICCS), developed at the University of Edinburgh.

SLICCS provide a flexible reflective framework for experiential learning. LBU brings what used to be co- and extracurricular activities into the credit-bearing provision and offers our students academic credit to formally recognise their learning.

Students create a cultural project they deliver in local schools and community centres. They define their anticipated learning based on five generic learning outcomes which are aligned with our institutional graduate attributes: analysis, application, skills, mindsets and evaluation. They articulate and interpret these in the context of their individual learning experience and reflect on their learning in their blogs and e-portfolio. Students as pedagogical co-creators are equal partners in the structuring of the teaching and learning experience.

Experiential learning values opportunities which come from problem-solving, overcoming challenges and making mistakes which are often penalised by traditional assessments methods.

Students as near-peer role models help school pupils see and achievable process of language learning boosting their motivation: seeing people close to their age as successful language learners helps them imagine that they might succeed too.

Providing students with a work experience, and boosting their graduate skills offers an equal opportunity to WP students and increases their employability.

LBU boosts language uptake into senior phase and beyond and contributes to learning and teaching conversations about language learning at all stages of a student lifecycle, from school to university. As an institution, such community engagement activities help address the complex issues surrounding WP.

Poster 13. Listening, Responding, Connecting: Building Community in an Online MSc Programme (*Liz Colquhoun & Neil Clarke*)

Online learning has been described as convenient, effective and collaborative (Watson et al 2023). This learning method, however, may result in student isolation and disengagement (Ahshan 2021) whilst the lack of a traditional in-person cohort can lead to a reduction in the feeling of community (Rim et al 2020).

The 2024 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey suggested that within the online MSc in the Clinical Management of Pain Programme, students wished for an enhanced sense of community and belonging.

“A pure online course is difficult for developing a sense of community...”

“Most of the time, you feel like you are alone.”

In response, the programme developed opportunities for students to engage with each other in a common space, taking cognisance of wellbeing, inclusion and equality of provision. We aimed to respond to student concerns, enhance student centred communication, and engage with the student voice.

Specific activities included:

- Regular, relaxed, student-centered virtual sessions. These supported discussion of challenges, useful resources and peer to peer advice. Interaction occurred verbally or through the chat function, which allowed all students to participate comfortably.
- A series of Guest Speaker Webinars which were available to the wider University, NHS colleagues and professional networks. Topics have included adverse childhood experiences and chronic pain; the gut microbiome and chronic pain.
- A regular programme newsletter including subject specific content, quizzes and crosswords, reading suggestions and, academic and pastoral topics was disseminated to all students.

Between 2024 and 2025, the programme has seen an increase of 24.7% in the overall ‘Community’ score within the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. Comments from students included:

“.. direct contact with staff, faculty and other students gives a feeling of being part of the course/ university”

“connecting with fellow students and university staff, making an online course feel less like an individual learning platform”

Ahshan, R. (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090483>

Rhim, H. and Han, H. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090483>

Watson, C. , Templet, T. , Leigh, G. , Broussard, L. , Gillis, L. (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2022.105651>