

LITE

Leeds Institute *for*
Teaching Excellence



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

LITE Annual Report

2025 - 2026

LEEDS INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

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25|6 LITE at a glance

Student involvement

Employed **21 students** to conduct research, support LITE fellowships, act as representatives on governance groups and support our key areas of work



Conference fund

Supported researchers across the University to present their pedagogical research at conferences

 **12** colleagues  **3** students

 **3** in the UK  **4** in Europe  **6** further afield

Fellowships

Supported **19 pedagogical research projects** carried out by **18 academic** and **10 professional service colleagues**



Our Fellows are from across **all five faculties** and represent a total Fellowship buyout of **4.9 FTE**



Student Education Conference

Two day hybrid event celebrating pedagogical research



586 registrations



5-Strong student panel sharing their experience



84% of attendees inspired to change their own practice



87 out of 118 abstracts accepted

Recognition

52% of 2025 University Teaching Award recipients are affiliated with LITE

Events

21 events showcasing pedagogical research with over **300 attendees**

Engaging with our community



1029 subscribers to our monthly newsletter



1055 followers on LinkedIn



38,000 visits to our intranet site in the last year...



...with **2,500** unique visitors



As Director of LITE, it is a pleasure to introduce our first annual report and to reflect on a year that has been both transformative and energising for the Institute.

This year feels particularly significant. As LITE approaches its tenth anniversary, we have had the opportunity to celebrate the foundations laid by colleagues over the past decade while also continuing to shape a renewed vision for the future. Throughout the year, we have been guided by a simple ambition: to strengthen LITE's role as the research and development engine of educational enhancement at the University of Leeds.

At its heart, however, LITE is not defined by programmes, frameworks, or projects. It is defined by people. The creativity, curiosity, generosity, and commitment of colleagues and students across the University continue to demonstrate that improving student education is most powerful when it is a shared endeavour. Across Leeds, colleagues are working every day to create outstanding educational experiences for our students. LITE's role is to help connect those efforts, bringing together evidence, expertise, partnership, and evaluation to address educational challenges that matter to our Schools, Faculties, Services, and students.

Over the past year, we have continued to develop new ways of working that support this ambition. We have reviewed and expanded our Fellowship schemes, launched the Fellowship Preparation Pathway, established Incubators and Strategic Leads around priority educational themes, developed our Impact Framework, and strengthened our governance arrangements.

**LITE IS NOT DEFINED BY
PROGRAMMES,
FRAMEWORKS, OR
PROJECTS. IT IS
DEFINED BY PEOPLE.**

Together, these initiatives are helping to build a more connected ecosystem, creating opportunities for colleagues and students from different parts of the University to collaborate around shared priorities and challenges.

Alongside this, we have initiated our own strategic pedagogical research activity. This work is designed not simply to generate knowledge, but to support evidence-informed enhancement and contribute to the priorities of the University and the success of our students.



Beyond Leeds, it has been encouraging to see LITE's external partnerships continue to flourish. Through external collaborations, the organisation of the Dales Dialogues in Higher Education, and our support for the founding and growth of the UK SoTL Alliance, we have sought to contribute to wider conversations about the future of pedagogical research and educational enhancement. These partnerships remind us that educational challenges rarely belong to a single institution and that meaningful progress is often achieved through collaboration, openness, and mutual learning.

This report reflects the contributions of a remarkable community. I would like to thank our Fellows, student partners and researchers, Incubator and Strategic Leads, Steering Group members, collaborators across the University, the Leeds Student Education leadership, and colleagues across the sector who have contributed to LITE's work this year.

Most importantly, I would like to thank the LITE team. Their expertise, dedication, and willingness to embrace change have shaped everything described in these pages. They have worked tirelessly to support colleagues and students across the University while helping to realise an ambitious vision for LITE's future.

While we are proud of what has been achieved this year, we remain focused on what comes next. The challenges facing higher education are significant, but so too are the opportunities. LITE's next chapter will continue to be built through partnership, evidence, and innovation, but above all through people working together across our University community.

If OneLeeds is about achieving more collectively than we can achieve alone, then improving student education for the sake of our students is one of the clearest expressions of that principle. We look forward to continuing that journey together.

**Professor Gabriel
Cavalli**
Director of LITE





**LITE POSITIONS RESEARCH-
INFORMED EDUCATIONAL
ENHANCEMENT NOT AS A
PERIPHERAL ACTIVITY, BUT
AS A CORE STRATEGIC
ENDEAVOUR**

As I join the University of Leeds and begin my role as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Education and Experience, it has been a genuine pleasure to encounter the breadth, ambition, and energy of LITE's work at such an important moment in its history. This Annual Report, published as LITE approaches its tenth anniversary in October, captures not only its recent achievements, but also the development of a distinctive and increasingly important part of the University's wider educational ecosystem.

What stands out most clearly is the way in which LITE has evolved into a collaborative and research-informed space that connects colleagues, students, Schools, and Services around shared student education priorities.

Across the University, there is a strong commitment to educational excellence and enhancement, and LITE now occupies an important role within that wider landscape: helping to bring together evidence, innovation, partnership, and critical reflection in ways that support both staff and students.

At a time when the sector faces significant challenge and transformation, LITE's work demonstrates the importance of investing in evidence-informed approaches to student education and experience.

This past year has seen important developments across the Institute. The expansion and review of LITE Fellowship schemes, the establishment of Incubators and Strategic Leads, the growth of strategic pedagogical research activity, and the development of the Fellowship Preparation Pathway all reflect a strong commitment to building sustainable capacity for research-informed educational enhancement across the University.



I am informed that the Leeds Student Education Conference (SEC), back in January, once again demonstrated the scale of engagement and appetite for improving student education at Leeds, bringing together almost 600 participants from across the institution. I cannot wait to join you all at SEC in January 2027!

Alongside this, LITE has strengthened its national and international collaborations through initiatives such as the Dales Dialogues in Higher Education, partnerships with WIHEA, at Warwick University, and other institutions, and the development of the UK SoTL Alliance, which now represents a remarkably diverse network of universities committed to advancing scholarship and pedagogical research across the sector.

What is particularly striking is the way in which LITE has increasingly positioned research-informed educational enhancement not as a peripheral activity, but as a core strategic endeavour. Through its strategic research, LITE is helping to create the conditions for a more reflective, research-informed, and student-centred educational culture at Leeds.

I am sure that as we celebrate ten years of LITE in October, we will also look ahead with confidence. The Institute's growing community of Fellows, partners, student researchers, and collaborators represents an extraordinary collective commitment to educational excellence. I would like to thank everyone involved in LITE's work for their creativity, leadership, and dedication, and I look forward to seeing the Institute continue to shape conversations and practice both at Leeds and across the wider higher education sector.

**Professor Wendy
Robinson**
**Pro Vice Chancellor
Education**



Over the past year, it has been a pleasure to work closely with the LITE team across a number of strategically important educational enhancement initiatives at Leeds. What has been particularly striking is the way in which LITE increasingly combines pedagogical research and enhancement, working to support institutional priorities in practical and meaningful ways.

As educational enhancement becomes ever more important across the sector, LITE has become a core stakeholder in creating opportunities where Schools, Services, students, and educational leaders can work collaboratively around shared challenges and opportunities. This is evident in the increased alignment between successful LITE Fellowships and institutional priorities, and also in the greater number of Fellowship applications by teams from across the institution.

**LITE BUILDS
CONNECTIONS THAT
STRENGTHEN
EDUCATIONAL
PRACTICE ACROSS THE
UNIVERSITY AND
BEYOND**

I have also been especially encouraged by the collaborative culture surrounding LITE's work. Whether through the Fellowship schemes, student partnership in PedRes activity, the Educational Enhancement Framework discussions, or cross-institutional conversations through initiatives such as the Dales Dialogues, LITE continues to build connections that strengthen educational practice across the University and beyond.

As LITE approaches its tenth anniversary, this report reflects a community that is ambitious, thoughtful, and increasingly influential in shaping student education at Leeds and beyond. My thanks go to the LITE team, Fellows, partners, students, and collaborators whose work continues to make such an important contribution to our student education community.

Professor Charlotte Haigh

Associate Pro Vice Chancellor
Enhancement and Student
Experience



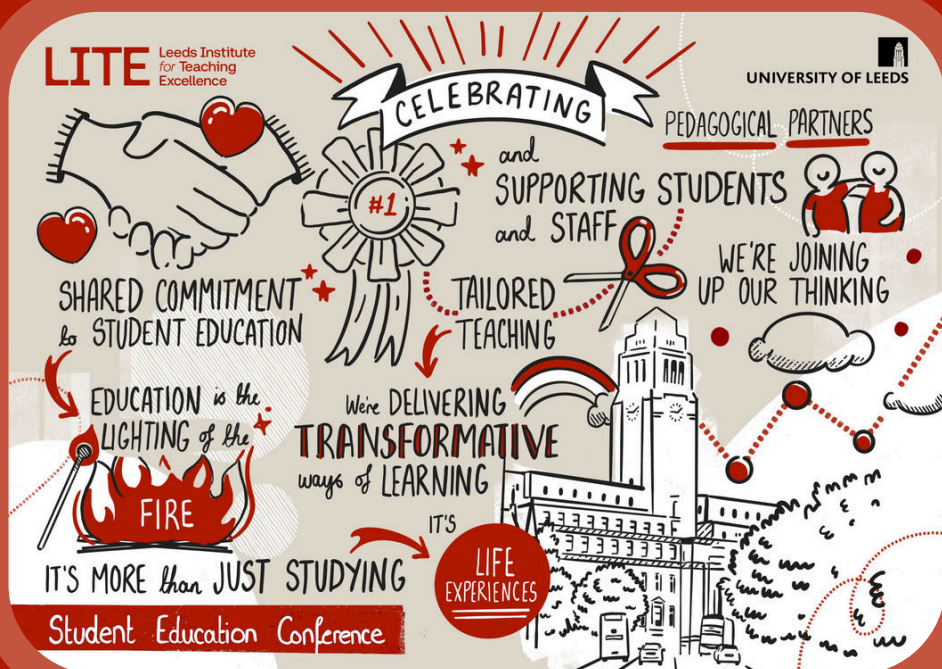
Highlights from the Student Education Conference

7-9 JANUARY 2026

SEC2026

LITE hosts the Student Education Conference, or SEC, at the University of Leeds every January.

The conference brings together our community of staff and students who are committed to positive change to the learning and teaching experience through research, scholarship and innovation.



THE 2026 CONFERENCE SAW
600 ATTENDEES JOIN US
ONLINE AND IN PERSON.



Really thought
provoking,
challenging and
important.

Lively,
energetic, and
inspiring.

The keynote emphasised the importance of staying connected, supporting one another, and approaching uncertainty with a collective mindset.

FEEDBACK FROM THE STUDENT EDUCATION CONFERENCE

I come to SEC and I
am surrounded by
people passionate and
energised by
education.

IT
ALWAYS BRINGS
ME BACK TO MY
PURPOSE AND WHAT I
AM MEANT TO DO.



TRULY VERY
INSPIRATIONAL.

Teaching was framed as a scholarly identity built through the collective efforts of academics, professional services, students, and institutional systems working together.

Bloody Brilliant!! I'm buzzing
with lots of ideas to share with my
team and students, and to enhance my
teaching practice.

Only by keeping students
in view can we ensure
we are enabling and
empowering students to
achieve academic success,
whatever that means for
them as an
individual.



Still my favourite
part of the year!

I experienced such
joy and warmth from the new connections
I made and the approach that all of the
Educational leaders had at the conference.



Be mindful about the anxiety that may be felt by international students and affecting participation due to confidence in speaking and communicating in English.

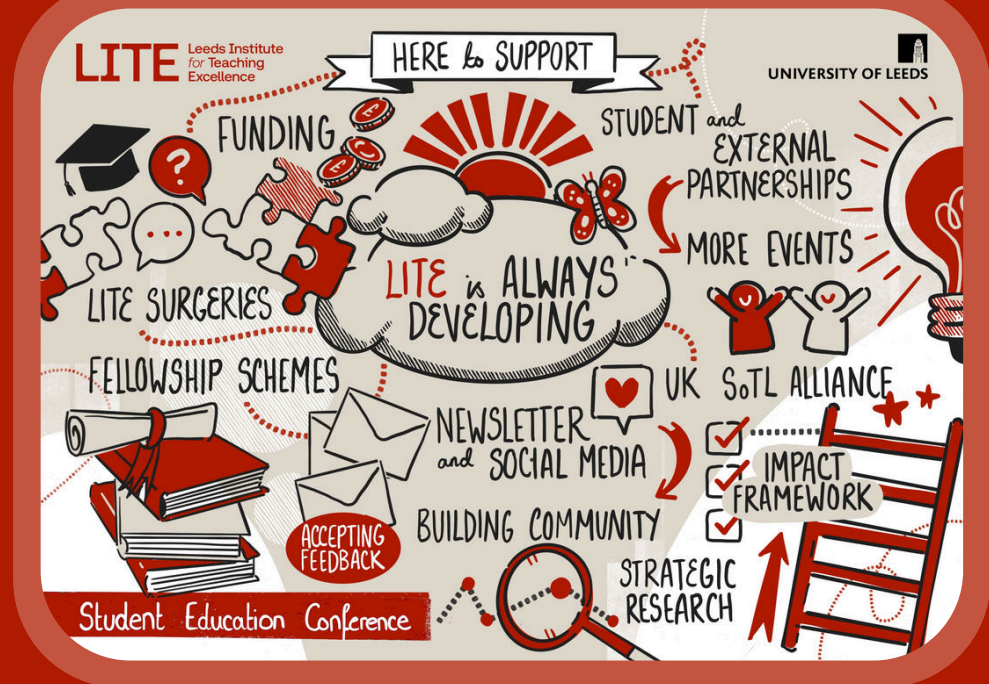
MY SEC PLEDGE TO ENHANCE EDUCATION AT LEEDS IS TO...

Enhance student co-creation in my practice.



Going back to the student panel, I'm struck by the empowering nature of engaging with other people and communities. So, I'm going to focus more on building community and engaging with communities of practice that already exist.





Insights from our LITE Researchers

OUR TEAM'S RESEARCH

INSIGHTS

As well as enabling others to carry out research projects, our team conducts their own research into pertinent topics of higher education and pedagogy. Here is a selection of insights they've published for our community this year.

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‘Becoming’ in pedagogical research

BY ROBERT AVERIES

LITE HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SUPPORT OFFICER

Introducing the multiplicity of PedRes identities

PedRes allows us to bring the multiple, co-constitutive facets of our educational identities to the fore in our efforts to understand, develop, and inform improvements to student education. The best PedRes does this in collaboration with colleagues and students with different knowledges, skills, and experiences to our own.

But to do this – and to do this well – we all must navigate difference. Bennett et al. (2015) portray this in a SoTL context through the evocative image of ‘Chimaera’, with the heads of the ‘teacher’ (or practitioner), the ‘disciplinarian’ (or subject/industry expert), and the ‘educational researcher’. The point is that through viewing such ‘conflicts and configurations’ as a necessary part of developing as a pedagogical researcher (Simmons et al., 2013), difference becomes generative, rather than constraining. As LITE Fellow Claudia Rogers put it, we come to reveal “two sides of the same coin” (Rogers, 2025).

Within these broad identities, there are countless others we might consider: ‘educator’ and ‘learner’, ‘established’ and ‘newcomer’, data ‘gatherer’ and knowledge ‘creator’, ‘researcher’ and (reflexive) ‘participant’, ‘private’ and ‘public’, to name a few. Perhaps some of these resonate with you.

As literature in this area has developed in recent years, a common theme has been that critically reflecting on the identities we bring to our PedRes directly impacts our ability to make the transitions or adjustments that high-quality sustained pedagogical enquiry requires (Whitton, Parr, and Choate, 2022; Marquis et al., 2017).

Hello – I’m Robert and I’m a member of the Research Team at LITE. In this article, I’d like to introduce you to the work I’m developing on identity in pedagogical research (PedRes). This has taken form as both LITE strategic research – with an emphasis on understanding, fostering, and elevating PedRes as a form of educational inquiry – and my part-time PhD, based in the School of Education. I hope you take something from reading about my ideas.

‘Becoming’ in PedRes

While it is tempting to view pedagogical researcher identity development in linear, spatial terms that prize certainty and closure (as we might do when we think about running a marathon or other forms of journey from ‘A’ to ‘B’), we risk closing off the process to the generative possibilities of new connections, turns, and yes – failures.

This is why I have come to appreciate the applicability of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s ontology of ‘becoming’, as seen throughout their work (Braidotti, 2012), to this subject. In short, this means rejecting a view of PedRes identity which relies upon fixed states and hierarchies of levels. Instead, it offers a starting point that, I would argue, speaks to the complexity and richness of this kind of work: as relational, emergent, and affective processes through which we seek educational change. ‘Becoming’, then, empowers an “entity that lasts, that endures sustainable changes and transformation and enacts them around him/herself in a community” (Braidotti, 2012, p.183).

Indeed, writing in a broader educational development context, Ian Kinchin – a leading thinker behind the concept of the ecological university – draws upon Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphor of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) to make the case for teacher identities that challenge a static philosophy of ‘being’ through this emergent philosophy of ‘becoming’ (Kinchin, 2023). The former, he suggests, is arborescent and sees professional identity reach a settled, but stagnant, form of ‘expert’ status. By contrast, the latter is rhizomatic – inherently unsettled and pushing at the boundaries of identity through its relationships and environments. A radical openness to learning, if you will. Now, then, might my research draw upon these ideas? And why does it matter beyond the level of the individual?

Aims and next steps

While literature has pointed to the value and nature of identity development in PedRes (most often, ‘SoTL’), we are yet to see a picture of longitudinal, evidence-based, and theoretically informed work emerge. And less still, despite the rise in ‘teaching and scholarship’ roles (HESA, 2024), identity-focused work that speaks to our contexts at Leeds and other UK ‘research-intensive’ institutions.

As such, my research aims to collaboratively develop and evaluate a rhizomatic approach – underpinned by a Deleuze-Guattarian ontology of ‘becoming’ – that colleagues responsible for fostering PedRes can adapt according to local (e.g. school or service-level) contexts. Importantly, as I suggested earlier, this does not mean responsibilising individuals, but collaboratively forging cultures that empower scholarly identity development and enquiry. In this way, my research will draw upon and add to existing work on educational cultures at Leeds.

In short, then, contributing to this knowledge gap in ways that meaningfully inform how we support PedRes is at the heart of this research. As Abel Nyamapfene put it during his fantastic keynote at SEC2026, bringing ‘behind the scenes’ scholarship to the fore both elevates its impact and reaffirms its importance for sustainable student education enhancement.

Get in touch

A priority of mine over the coming months is to learn more about current approaches for fostering PedRes at Leeds and beyond: what has been happening, contextual factors shaping this, and where things might be going. And, in turn, how my work might contribute. So, if you’re reading this and would like to have a conversation, please reach out!

For the full text of this article, including references, scan or click the QR code



Unpacking the hidden frameworks underpinning research

BY MATTHEW BACHMANN

LITE HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SUPPORT OFFICER

So, what's happening in your classroom?

No, really? Because what you think is happening there fundamentally shapes how you might evaluate it, or research it, or talk about it with colleagues.

We might say, or hear said, “this year’s students really threw themselves into the problems...” or find that this year “the space just isn’t ideal for keeping group discussions going...” and only half-jokingly say “we run mid-module tests so I can assess the learning before it gets chased out by the next thing...” Each of these relies on what we think is going on in our classroom.

My work unpacks research frameworks (or paradigms). In nascent research areas this often gets messy: while the framework itself isn’t under much scrutiny, the data that’s downstream of it may be. A good example might be asking students whether they feel a ‘sense of belonging’ without ever confirming what we all mean by ‘sense of belonging’, and whether this changes based on other factors, such as the time of year.

These frameworks are key to understanding what our data can tell us and what it can’t. Engaging with our frameworks directly is key to producing transparent research outputs which are useful for others to engage with in their own settings.

Failing to critically engage with our frameworks, as a field, leads to us acquiring data without understanding the coding we’ve built in, like looking at strings of words without grammar. This doesn’t mean it’s worthless or meaningless, but it won’t do the work that we really want if we want to make change, evidence impact, or springboard future work. Unpacking our frameworks in pedagogical research has some key challenges.

Subject area identities

Pedagogical researchers are often new to this space and come from varied disciplines with varied backgrounds. Some will have experience of this type of work, some will not. Some bring subject area identities that have strong ontological or epistemic commitments, some come from subject areas without such, or without realising it.

Complexity of context

Pedagogical research takes place in a deeply complex space - intersecting problems of geography, history, education, and sociology, as well as disciplinary differences. This can make the most basic questions of ‘what do we think is going on in our classrooms?’ or ‘what are we trying to do with our students?’ immediately rich in complexity.

Taxonomy of options

Existing work on ontology and epistemology tends to direct researchers to how these topics are taught at university, typically on philosophy programmes. This creates a taxonomy of positions or arguments and builds understanding by seeing the ‘moves’ in the various arguments gradually through engaging with these questions organically.

This separates the ‘what’ of different positions into the learning materials while the ‘why’ emerges in classroom discussion. This results in many guides for researchers on ontology and epistemology offering a taxonomy of available options from which they may ‘pick and choose’ without incorporating how or why to pick, what picking might mean for your research questions or methods, or why your choice might matter.

My current work is to offer an account of ‘doing ontology and epistemology in PedRes’ that simultaneously tackles all three challenges. How do we bring together researchers with wildly different experiences and identities to engage with complex questions of ontology and epistemology, when much of the literature offers only the ‘what’, not the ‘why’? What does ‘doing good ontology and epistemology’ look like?

First and foremost, it’s about

recognising this as a research practice, just like making good methodological choices or doing robust data analysis. This means that developing our ontology and epistemology is more similar to developing other skills and competences in our research teams.

There are two research skills that might offer useful analogies and direction for us to develop as a field: statistics, where we know what a statistical question looks like and have a rough idea about when to go find a competent statistician or to socialise a problem; and ethics, where we know what an ethical problem looks like and know that we’ll need to socialise our research topic in order to get a broad set of ideas about it to help spot factors that might be hidden from us. In both cases, practice identifying problems and socialisation of our problems are key.

As pedagogical researchers, we need to train ourselves to spot these questions for what they are and create spaces for us to socialise them, in our discussions, in our teaching practice, and in our publications. Bootstrapping foundational questions to these others also helps understand how this relates to training, practice, expertise, communication, and publication.

All we need, then, is a guide to spotting the questions that’s cross- or multi- or non-disciplinary, and a shift in our research culture to create space to raise and contest and answer these questions as a community. The next stage of my research is understanding how different potential guides work, or don’t, for pedagogical researchers, and what the barriers and incentives are for making this type of change.

In the meantime, if you want to discuss any of these ideas, or how you unpack your own teaching experience, please don’t hesitate to get in touch!

For the full text of this article, including references, scan or click the QR code



Educational gain: Why bother?

BY BEE BOND AND AGNĖ KOČNEVAITĖ

LITE STRATEGIC LEAD FOR PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT AND TRANSFER
AND LITE HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SUPPORT OFFICER

Defining educational gain

The term 'educational gain' was introduced as a key point of evaluation in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). There was no single, universally agreed definition of educational gain - the Office for Students deliberately left it open for institutions to define themselves. The broad understanding of educational gain refers to the overall progress or benefit that students experience throughout their time in higher education. This often includes academic, personal, and social development.

The lack of a standardised definition and no agreement or real understanding around how this nebulous concept could be measured, evaluated or evidenced ultimately led to educational gain being dropped from the TEF.

So, why bother thinking about it?

Despite much of our work (teaching, scholarship, and leadership) focusing on the importance of language, in this case the specific meaning of words used to describe a concept is less of a priority.

The question we have most frequently asked and been asked since taking on our Strategic Lead and Research Officer roles in LITE is: 'So what exactly is educational gain?' In this article, we argue that the real work lies not in chasing an elusive, perfect definition - because let's be honest, it doesn't exist. Instead, the work lies in embracing the complexity of practice and shifting our focus to the question itself.

Our focus is not on providing an irrefutable definition, but on exploring how concepts of educational gain might vary for different students, disciplines, faculties and universities. We suggest it is more important that we keep asking the question than that we find an answer to it.

We could stick to 'educational gain', revert to 'learning gain', mention 'value added', or think in terms of 'student futures', but all of these phrases are meaningless if we are not clear about why we should bother thinking about this and acting on it.

What (should) underpin educational gain are the ideological, philosophical, sociological, psychological, and educational questions around the value of a university education. In basic terms - why should a student bother coming to university and why should we bother thinking about the best way of working with them while they're here?

Let's act. Here's how

We return to the sticking point for the TEF evaluation. There is no simple answer, no one way of describing what students gain from a university education. The variables involved make single method of data collection unreliable when taken in isolation.

All of this does not mean that the endeavour itself is unimportant. Messiness and complexity are where interesting work takes place. Finding and explaining differences within and across disciplines helps us to be clear about what we do and do not value, and what values we emphasise in our teaching.

It helps us to understand what our 'signature pedagogy' (Shulman, 2005) and our 'pedagogic content knowledge' (Shulman, 2015) are. It defines the underpinnings of our educational practices and helps us to be clear about the impact that any changes (or resistance to change) might have both on our students' lives and on our own.

"Messiness and complexity are where interesting work takes place"

And that is why we should bother. We should bother because we care about the basic value of a university education. We care about the value of learning about our discipline. We care that our students leave us with the values and knowledge we care about. And we understand that if we are not able to express and evidence these values for ourselves, in our own way, then external forces may ask us to do it in a way that does not align with our own values.

A call to action

If you are interested in exploring what educational gain might look like and how you might evaluate, measure, evidence the impact of your education practices, then:

- Look at our living reading list, which includes key texts relating to educational gain
- Tell us about any work you are doing in this area - we can add publications to the reading list, or we might invite you to take part in a podcast or write a blog about your work
- Invite us to arrange a workshop with your disciplinary scholarship centre to facilitate ways of exploring the questions posed here within your subject area
- Email us and arrange to meet to discuss how to develop your ideas into a pedagogical research project within the LITE community

For the full text of this article, including references, scan or click the QR code



Our work with students

**IN 2025-26,
WE EMPLOYED 21 STUDENTS
IN A VARIETY OF ROLES**

LITE employs student research partners to work alongside our Fellows, Strategic Leads, Incubator Leads, and Research Team.

In this transcript extract from a LITE Bites podcast episode, LITE Student Partner **Bianca Joseph Vadukoot**, an undergraduate student studying microbiology, speaks to LITE Strategic Lead for Students as Partners in PedRes **Tao Jiang** and LITE Higher Education Research Support Officer **Tanya Hathaway** about her experience working in collaboration with University staff.

BJV: Coming into a huge institution like LITE, I thought it would be more like being consulted rather than collaborating truly.

TJ: Do you remember any particular examples or incidents that changed your first impression?

BJV: I think it was the first task you guys gave me, working on the students as partners principles document. I had a one-on-one chat with Tao, where she talked to me about what I personally thought should change, and she was actually writing down my suggestions. I thought, wow, they're actually taking what I'm saying into consideration.

TJ: In that moment, you became an owner of your contribution.

BJV: You guys taking into account what I had to say was a very empowering moment. It's all about mutual trust between all partners. That's when everything comes together and you can truly collaborate. And that translates into being invited into actual decision making in the research, which in LITE is so important, because your impact and your voice can lead to actual improvements in education. As a student, that's so important.

TJ: Thank you, Bianca. It's so nice to hear your point of view. I firmly believe learning itself is a two-way process. For us staff members, we are not the students anymore. Students, they know what really makes a difference. Bianca, you mentioned you like to be involved in the decisions and you like to see that you are making an impact. Student partners really appreciate the opportunities not just to improve their own learning but for all the students across Leeds and possibly beyond.

TH: Yes. Before coming into this role and working with Tao and Bianca, I'd never experienced this type of partnership before. I can see the evidence in Bianca and other students I work with in their own enhancement in the development of skills and attributes. From a personal perspective, I've got so much out of this partnership. Every time I come to work with Bianca and LITE's other student colleagues, it bowls me over in terms of how energetic and creative they are. Students come with such unique perspectives, and they bring so much to research.



Scan or click the QR code to listen to the full podcast episode



This year in LITE Resources

RESEARCH RESOURCES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

RESOURCES

LITE creates resources to support researchers.
Here is a selection of some of the resources
we've published this year.

<u>Framing your pedagogical research</u>	28
<u>Positionality guidance for researchers</u>	30
<u>Harnessing reflexivity</u>	32
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DEVELOPING YOUR PEDRES PROJECT

WHAT DOES A KNOWLEDGE GAP LOOK LIKE IN PEDRES?

There's a lack of
research on what
'X' group think
about 'Y' topic.



SCAN OR CLICK THE
QR CODE TO VISIT

Framing your Pedagogical Research

**CREATED BY LITE HIGHER EDUCATION
RESEARCH SUPPORT OFFICER ROBERT
AVERIES AND LITE RESEARCH
ASSISTANT IZZY HARVEY**

An interactive tool encouraging early reflection in planning your PedRes.

This interactive tool encourages you to take a step back and reflect on key questions at the early stages of planning a study into teaching, learning, and student experiences.

The resource provides information about investigating an educational issue (and why it matters), the issue's scope and scale, the gap in our knowledge, and the impact of addressing this (or the change you'd like to see).

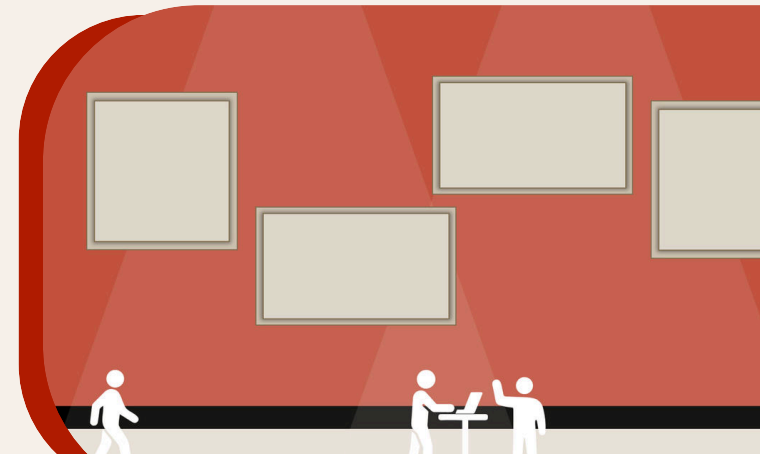
What theoretical or
philosophical
perspectives do I bring
from my own
discipline/subject area?



Read about how a LITE
Fellow navigated their
academic and PedRes
identities

UNCOVER WHY PEDRES MATTERS TO YOU

DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT: WHAT YOUR FELLOWSHIP CAN DO





**FROM:
POSITIONALITY
AND POWER: A
STUDENT
RESEARCH
EXPERIENCE
PLACEMENT
WITH LITE**

**YOUR
DISCIPLINARY
IDENTITY AND
SOTL
IDENTITY**



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QR CODE TO VISIT

Positionality in Research

**CREATED BY LITE SUMMER RESEARCH
EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT STUDENT
LEYAO LING**

A Padlet resource for understanding positionality and how it impacts your work.

Positionality offers a framework for recognising the assumptions, biases, and privileges researchers may potentially bring to their work. Our positionality is constantly shaped by our interactions with new ideas, disciplines, and communities.

For researchers, positionality is an important factor of identity that can be reimagined and reshaped to produce more credible, inclusive, and reflective studies that deepen understanding of ways to improve student education.



**REFLECTING ON
YOUR SOTL
IDENTITY
THROUGH
POSITIONALITY:
A STUDENT
RESOURCE**

**BRINGING
POSITIONALITY
INTO YOUR
OWN SOTL
PRACTICES**





WHAT IS REFLEXIVITY?

PRACTICAL WAYS OF EMBEDDING REFLEXIVITY



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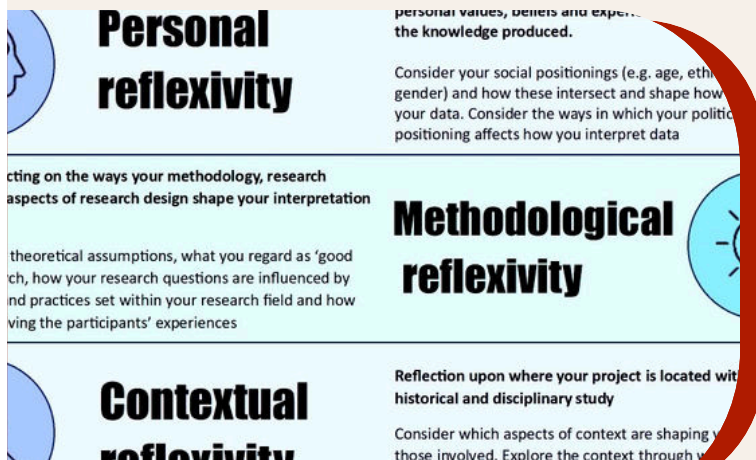
Harnessing Reflexivity

CREATED BY LITE RESEARCH
ASSISTANT LUCY HEMINGWAY

A guide to understanding reflexivity and promoting ways of harnessing it in practice.

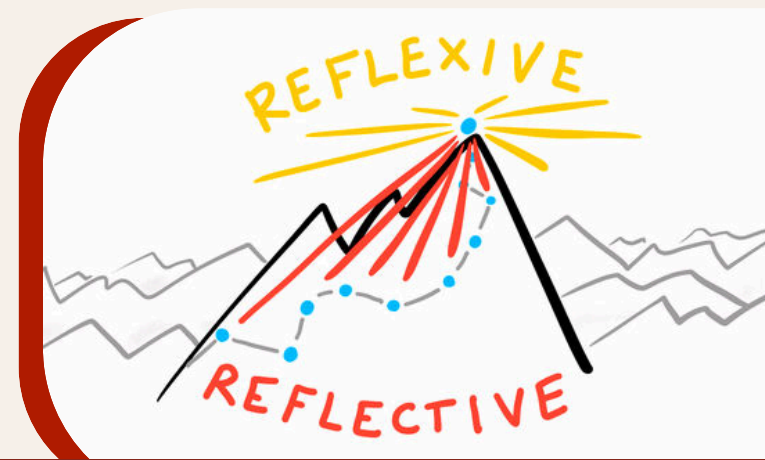
The intention of this resource is to provide guidance on the ways that researchers can engage with their data in more thoughtful, reflexive ways. While learning to accept a level of uncertainty is a critical part of the reflexivity journey in qualitative research, this guidance should help researchers navigate this.

The resource includes sections on what reflexivity is, how it differs from reflection, the different types of reflexivity (including related critical prompts) and ideas of ways to embed reflexive practices into the everyday of research.



TYPES OF REFLEXIVITY AND THINKING PROMPTS

REFLEXIVITY VS REFLECTION



A glowing orange and yellow neon sign that reads "ON AIR" in a stylized, slightly irregular font. The sign is mounted on a dark background, possibly a wall or a door.

**EDUCATIONAL
GAIN AND
STUDENT
FUTURES:
ENTERPRISE
CONSULTANCY
AND LEARNING
AT SCALE**

**WORKING WITH
STUDENT
PARTNERS IN
PEDAGOGICAL
RESEARCH:
WHY
PARTNERSHIP?**



LITE Podcasts

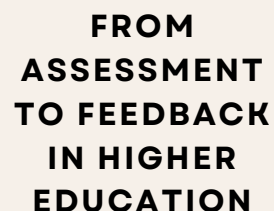
**HOSTED BY DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF
THE LITE TEAM**

SCAN OR CLICK THE
QR CODE TO VISIT

Welcome to LITE podcasts

We've published nine episodes of LITE Bites in 2025/26, where LITE Fellows, LITE Strategic Leads, and LITE Incubator Leads share experiences, findings, and practical implications from their pedagogic research projects. LITE podcasts is also the home for 'En-LITE-ning Dialogues', occasional in-depth discussions at the intersection of cutting-edge educational topics with external speakers.

Our podcasts are recorded at [HELIX](#), the University's learning innovation hub for students, staff, and the local community.

A photograph showing two people in a recording studio. A woman with short brown hair, wearing a green patterned shirt and large headphones, is smiling and looking towards the right. Another person with blonde hair, also wearing headphones, is seen from the back, sitting at a desk with a laptop. Professional microphones on boom arms are visible in the foreground.

**FROM
ASSESSMENT
TO FEEDBACK
IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**

**EDUCATIONAL
GAIN AND
STUDENT
FUTURES:
ENGLISH FOR
ACADEMIC
PURPOSES**



LITE
Strategic Lead

LITE
Incubator

LITE Incubators and Strategic Areas

**CREATING COMMUNITIES
AND DELIVERING THOUGHT
LEADERSHIP**

As part of our five year strategy to foster student education success for all, we have themed **LITE Incubators and Strategic Areas** to develop research on vital topics in pedagogical research.

The six **LITE Incubators** encourage and develop collaborative research, providing a playground where professional services, technical, research and academic staff, students and teams can work in partnership on long-term projects within each Incubator to create real change in student education.

Our four **LITE Strategic Leads** each have a remit which carries across the incubators, uniting their work towards our strategy.



Here, our **LITE Incubator Leads and Strategic Leads** share their highlights from the last academic year.

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Hosted a spotLITE workshop on the World Café method
- Established a METHOD Steering Group to inform the planning of Research Design, comprising LITE Fellows and other experts in qualitative and creative methods as well as PedRes development
- Delivered literature overview sessions as part of various incubator workshops

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN PEDRES

- Collaboratively developed LITE Students as Partners principles, with a Student Partner leading the process
- Recorded a student-led podcast reflecting on the lived experience of working in LITE with contemporary research
- Supported the launch of a PGR Higher Education Network, bringing together students from across Faculties and Schools



LITE
Strategic Lead

2025/26 Highlights



RESEARCH ETHICS

- Successfully launched the new LITE research ethics process
- Contributed to cross-sector collaboration to produce guidance for use of AI in human participant research, hosted by King's College London Artificial Intelligence Institute
- Invited to speak on panels and collaborate with other SoTL centres from SEDA, Warwick, Cambridge, York and Glasgow

PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT & TRANSFER

- Created a podcast series which showcases work taking place at Leeds in this area
- Started a seminar series hosting external invited speakers, providing state of the art insights into the type of work we could be doing at Leeds
- Published a thought-provoking article asking 'why bother?' with educational gain to stimulate conversation

ACTIVE & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- Created and launched the Lab-Based Learning Community with Jo Brown – from a conversation at SEC in 2025 to a community with 78 members on teams, monthly lunch and learns and 2 showcase events!
- Worked with the first successful Technician-Led LITE Fellowship projects
- Funded 9 small scale research projects focussed on Active and Experiential Learning

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & BELONGING

- Co-designed our community ethos through a community of practice approach
- Co-created a reading and discussion group with our student partner, bringing students into the community, to enrich our understanding
- Enabled a 'brave space' at our café drop-ins where staff can connect and we can bust myths about PedRes

FEEDBACK

- Held successful events, including 'The wicked problem of feedback', with guest speaker Naomi Winstone
- Provided seedcorn funding for a research project looking at co-designing features for an AI-assisted chatbot

LITE
Incubator

2025/26 Highlights

DIGITAL & OPEN EDUCATION

- Provided tailored 1:1 surgery support for Fellowship preparation
- Appointed new Incubator Leads
- Supported student partner work to inform AI research on assessment and feedback

ASSESSMENT

- Started a regular reading group, to keep up to date with all the latest research in all things assessment PedRes
- Hosted a networking breakfast at the Assessment Matters conference, covering themes such as artificial intelligence, authentic assessment and digital assessment
- Held a speed networking session in March to build and strength connections

SUSTAINABILITY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Distributed seedcorn funding to research projects
- Employed a student partner who led a series of student voice advisory panel meetings
- Co-created a map of the landscape and a 'starter pack' of resources with our community

External Advocacy

DALES DIALOGUES & UK SOTL ALLIANCE



DALES DIALOGUES

What began as a small residential gathering through the Dales Dialogues in Higher Education in June 2025 has evolved into something much larger.

One of LITE's most significant contributions over the past year has been its role in helping to create a new national space for collaboration, leadership, and advocacy in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), through the UK SoTL Alliance and the Dales Dialogues.



Organised jointly by colleagues from Leeds, Warwick and Queen Mary University of London, the Dales Dialogues were deliberately conceived as a "non-conference": a space for open-ended conversation, collaborative workshops, reflection, and relationship-building rather than traditional presentations and parallel sessions.

Set against the backdrop of the Yorkshire Dales, participants spent time walking, talking, and exploring some of the most pressing questions facing pedagogical research, educational enhancement, and student learning in higher education.



These conversations repeatedly returned to common themes. Across very different institutional contexts, colleagues were grappling with remarkably similar challenges: how to demonstrate impact, support educational innovation, strengthen student partnership, build sustainable pedagogical research cultures, and ensure that scholarship meaningfully informs institutional decision-making.

The Dales Dialogues created an environment in which these issues could be explored collectively, openly, and with a spirit of mutual learning.



UK SoTL ALLIANCE

From the initial Dales Dialogues emerged the **UK SoTL Alliance**, a cross-institutional network dedicated to advancing research-informed educational enhancement and strengthening the visibility, influence, and impact of SoTL across higher education from an institutional and sector perspective.

In October 2025 the Alliance Steering Group was established, co-chaired by WIHEA (Warwick International Higher Education Academy) Director Jessica Humphreys and LITE Director Professor Gabriel Cavalli. In the subsequent months, the Alliance rapidly grew into a national community representing around 40 higher education providers.

Importantly, the Alliance's membership spans research-intensive universities, post-1992 institutions, specialist providers, and educational organisations, bringing together a breadth of perspectives that reflects the diversity of UK higher education itself.

The UK SoTL Alliance now has 42 member organisations, comprising 40 Universities, the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) and the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE).

This diversity has become one of the Alliance's greatest strengths, creating opportunities for institutions to learn from one another while developing a stronger collective voice for SoTL and pedagogical research.

During its first year, the Alliance established a formal governance structure, launched communications platforms, initiated its own research and created Action Groups focused on key sector priorities including SoTL career pathways and recognition, pedagogical research impact, advocacy, and contributions to national initiatives such as the Hidden REF.

The second Dales Dialogues, hosted by LITE in June 2026, marked an important milestone in this journey. Bringing together representatives from member institutions across the UK, the event provided dedicated institutionally/sector-focused space to move from conversation to collective action, strengthening collaborations and exploring how SoTL and pedagogical research can contribute to the future of higher education on the topics of the initial Action Groups.

This work reflects a core principle of the LITE strategy.

Educational challenges do not stop at institutional boundaries, and neither should the conversations to address them. Through the UK SoTL Alliance, Leeds is helping to foster a more connected, collaborative, and influential community dedicated to advancing educational enhancement through scholarship, evidence, and shared learning.



LITE

Leeds Institute *for*
Teaching Excellence

LITE

Fellowship

LITE Fellowship

ENABLING PEDRES

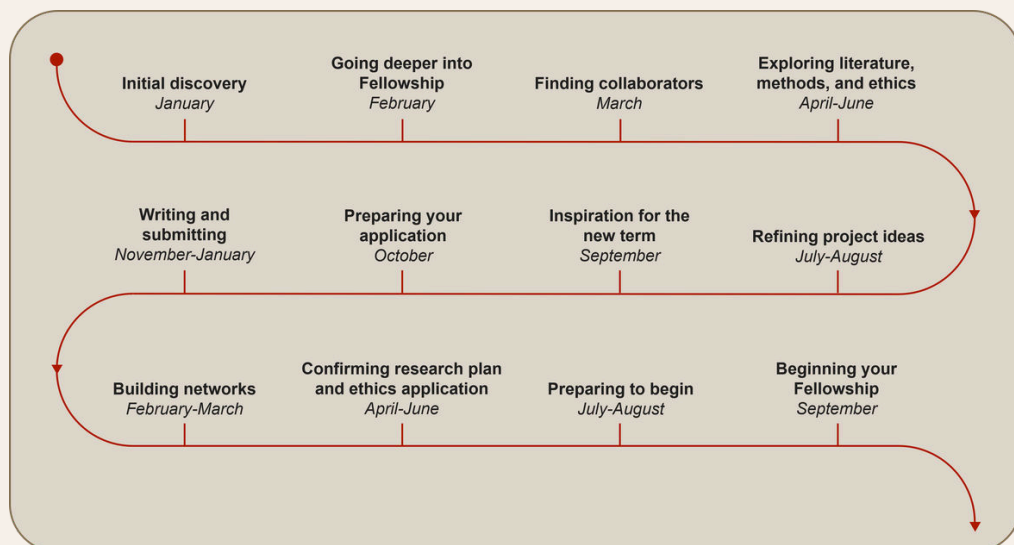
LITE Fellowship

LITE Fellows are a community of pedagogic researchers who are working alongside their role at the University to explore an area of interest within teaching and learning.

Our Fellows are a mix of staff from across the University, including academics, professional services colleagues, and technicians. The work of our Fellows informs decision making and practice across the University, as well as producing academic publications and conference papers.

The LITE Fellowship Preparation Pathway is an 18-month roadmap for researchers at all stages to refine their ideas, identify co-researchers, and get ready to apply for and begin a LITE Fellowship project.

The Fellowship Preparation Pathway



Fellowship Impact

CLASS OF 2024

A photograph of Angela Newton, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a black top, standing and gesturing with her hands while talking to a group of people in a meeting. Other people are visible in the background.

ANGELA NEWTON

Developing object based learning at Leeds

Following her LITE Fellowship, Angela launched a national object based learning network which includes colleagues from 16 different UK institutions, hosting meetings where members can share their practice and learn from each other.

"Angela's research has completely opened my eyes to object based learning, and it's now something I really enjoy using and frequently think about how I can use it in my own teaching."

CLARE TAYLOR

Sharing information about disabled students

As a result of Clare's Fellowship, specific changes were made to Support Summary Sheets, which share information about disabled students with relevant staff members. Clare's dissemination of her findings, including presentations at the Student Education Conference and videos and blogs published online, have caught the eye of senior level colleagues at the University, including Vice Chancellor Shearer West and Director Curriculum and Operations Wayne Keating.



Research Impact

LITE Fellows Class of 2024

A photograph of Andrew Kirtton, a man with short dark hair, sitting at a table with three female students. They are all looking at a laptop screen. The setting is a modern, bright room.

ANDREW KIRTTON

Removing dominance and gatekeeping in HE

Andrew's Fellowship research into how students can understand and play with the norms of their discipline has led to marking criteria being re-written within his home School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science. This has helped to improve their National Student Survey (NSS) scores, particularly in relation to students' perceptions of feedback.

ERIC HEWITT, ANDREW PEEL

The role of assessment type in awarding gaps

Eric and Andrew's Fellowship research identified that awarding gaps between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and white students were programme specific, with programmes with greater emphasis on skills training creating a smaller awarding gap. The assessment framework in the Faculty of Biological Sciences was updated as a direct result of their project, making modules more equitable and improving student experience.





Steve Carter



Richard Harris



Pam Birtill



Mohsen Besharat



Adam Richardson



Martin Ward



Maddi Pownall



Millie Bolt



Ben Hanson



Ayako Yoshino



Eve Smith



Ryan Kromer



Barbara Kempf



Amy Allhouse



Manoj Ravi



Tridib Ray

LITE

Fellowship

CLASS OF 2025

Fellowship Case Studies

CLASS OF 2025

Investigating the perceptions and experiences of ageism in mature students

REFLECTIONS

BY MILLIE BOLT (FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH)

**“There was a gap
in the literature,
and that’s when
the penny
dropped...
This could be the
area I explore”**

Reflections on Fellowship

I’m keen on professional development, so I was looking at different opportunities that the University offers, and I stumbled across pages about the LITE Fellowship. I saw that professional services staff were specifically encouraged to apply for LITE Fellowship, and I thought, that sounds amazing.

In EDI, we talk a lot about sexism and racism and homophobia, but ageism doesn’t come up as often. Mature students are included in the student success and access strategy, because there’s a continuation and awarding gap for mature undergraduate students, but when I looked into literature, there was a gap in if ageism affected the mature student experience. That was when the penny dropped for me: This could be the area I explore.

There was a lot of prompting from the LITE team around impact throughout my Fellowship, including the LITE impact model, which was really useful.

About Millie

Millie Bolt has worked at the University for three years in a variety of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) roles, and undertook this LITE Fellowship whilst based in the Faculty of Medicine and Health.



Before I knew what my key findings were, I had been encouraged to consider potential outputs, so when it was time for dissemination, I felt quite prepared.

It feels like the research findings have been well received and taken seriously. Lots of people have been very open and willing to take the findings on board and adapt processes, which is great, because that could make someone's University experience better.

Notably, a key positive finding was people singing the praises of the Lifelong Learning Centre and the support they provide. Leeds clearly has a lot going for it when it comes to supporting mature students!

I've fed my research, which shows that mature students do experience microaggressions in a range of different contexts, into OD&PL training with the Lifelong Learning Centre on understanding the mature student experience, as well as the Mature Student Skills Resource.

There's a lot of things I've done as part of my Fellowship which I'd never done before – as a professional services member of staff, it's added so much to my skill set. I've grown in confidence, I've presented my research at conferences and led a student consultancy group. There's been a development in my ability to influence people as well – I'm going into rooms I wouldn't have felt comfortable in before, and sharing my findings, and they're being receptive to that. My mindset has shifted. I've gotten used to thinking, 'how can I generate impact from this? How can I create change?'.

Visit page 68 to read Millie's Fellowship report.



Assessment Flexibility To Embed Real-professional practice

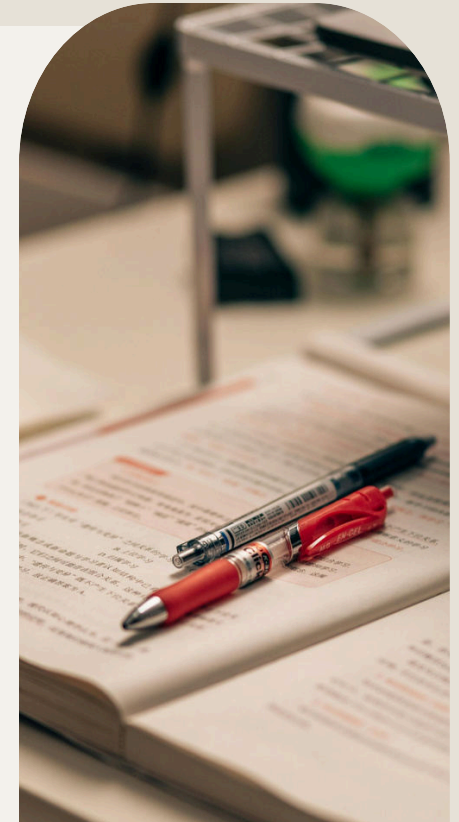
BY MANOJ RAVI (SCHOOL OF CHEMICAL AND PROCESS ENGINEERING)
AND MOHSEN BESHARAT (SCHOOL OF CIVIL ENGINEERING)

Reflections on Fellowship

We first met through in 2022, when we both started at the University. Through discussing our shared research interests, we immediately began thinking of projects where we could collaborate. As we found our footing as lecturers, we kept an eye on spaces to do with student education and pedagogical research.

We participated in meetings and workshops led by LITE about pedagogies like active learning and eventually decided to apply for LITE Fellowship.

The learning curve of having to get used to pedagogical research, which neither of us have had any experience with prior to the LITE Fellowship, was an expected challenge. So, knowing we were both together in learning these new ways of thinking was incredibly helpful.



About Manoj and Mohsen

Manoj Ravi is a Chemical & Process Engineering Lecturer, and Programme Lead for BEng & MEng Chemical Engineering. Mohsen Besharat is a Hydraulics and Water Systems Associate Professor, and Deputy Director of Student Education and Assessment Lead for Civil Engineering, Civil & Environmental Engineering, and Civil & Structural Engineering.

“The highlight of the Fellowship was not just the project, but the community”

We were able to use each of our respective areas of expertise to our collective benefit, manage the work between us, and have those shared conversations to simply make that journey into the unknown less scary.

The support of the LITE team, specifically Lucy Hemingway and Robert Averies, helped us to learn new qualitative research skills. Lucy put together learning guides that we were able to return to throughout the Fellowship. We also attended conferences and conducted our own research on qualitative analysis to upskill ourselves beyond the Fellowship.

We came to discover that the highlight of the Fellowship was not just the project itself, but the community and team that we worked through it with.

We are proud to see the impact of our Fellowship among colleagues in our field. For instance, two colleagues changed their design and delivery based on the findings of our research, to make their module assessments more authentic for the students. It's amazing to see a direct impact from work we've done and to know that we were able to develop methods that will benefit our students in the long term.

The skills we have developed as part of the LITE Fellowship have enriched our careers and opened new opportunities for us in unexpected ways. We're more confident now in both qualitative and pedagogical research, and it's been lovely to be able to use our experience to help guide others. Through the LITE Fellowship, we have broadened our research horizons beyond our disciplinary work.

Visit page 76 to read Manoj and Mohsen's Fellowship report.

Immersive approaches in Geoscience education

BY RYAN KROMER (SCHOOL OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT)

Reflections on Fellowship

When one of our physical field trips got cancelled, I ended up doing some work on extended reality (XR) with the Digital Education team for the creation of a virtual field trip. This sparked my interest in the further development of these tools, and I wanted to spend more time looking into their application. A colleague pointed me towards the LITE Fellowship as a space to continue this project.

The process – from initially deciding to undertake this Fellowship, to the application – spanned about a year. Right at the start, I booked in a chat with a member of the LITE team, which encouraged me to explore the positive impact my research could have on pedagogy and student education, rather than just the technical aspect of what these XR tools were capable of.

I went back to the drawing board and conducted a few pilot studies within my module groups, the results of which were used to support my Fellowship application at the end of that year. I had a few colleagues from within and outside the university read over my application draft, who were helpful in providing an objective perspective of my proposal.

The shift to a more pedagogical focus led to some unexpected highlights of the Fellowship, such as the opportunity to work closely with students, and being able to step out into the field. We had some XR sessions in HELIX, and it was thoroughly enjoyable witnessing the benefits of departing from traditional practice and getting into new technology.

About Ryan

Ryan is an Associate Professor in Engineering Geology and Programme Lead for the Engineering Geology MSc. He has worked at the University for five years.



My research background studies the behaviours of the earth, ground, and geometric processes, but I'd never done thematic analysis before. Diving deep into the data to pull out all the 'hidden' observations was challenging at first.

Luckily, I had the help of my LITE Research Assistant, Izzy Harvey, to assist me with the thematic analysis, as well as the Digital Education Service and my Field Assistants all supporting me along the way – people who were specialists in the things I was newer to and who could bring fresh perspectives to my work.

The LITE Fellowship has opened a lot of doors for me, and I don't feel like my work is done yet, even though the Fellowship itself is complete. I've introduced the tools to my team, we're looking at how virtual sites can have benefits to supporting students on site visits across Faculties, and I've joined a national extended reality community exploring mixed reality pedagogical tools.

My advice for anyone interested in pursuing a LITE Fellowship is to let an idea come to you organically through your practice and do some initial research on it first, using that as a jumping off point for all the thinking you need to do leading up to the application. Consider the potential impact of your project (across disciplines) and test your ideas out first if you have the chance, as these will help formulate and solidify your research questions.

“The LITE Fellowship has opened a lot of doors for me, and I don't feel like my work is done yet.”



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LITE

Fellowship

Fellowship Reports

RESEARCH FINDINGS

[Visit page 82 to read Ryan's Fellowship report.](#)

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What sort of support do PGRs want from the Careers Service?

BY STEVE CARTER (STUDENT CAREERS)



Key findings

The survey showed a 93.1% awareness of the Careers Service and how to access support. However, verbal evidence from focus groups suggests that the further the distance from being a taught student, the less relevant the Careers Service is felt to be, especially relating to employer engagement.

PGRs would like to meet and speak to employers relating to the skills and knowledge they accrue through their PhDs, particularly 'employers who want their level of qualifications as well as subject matter and skills'. There were focus group discussions about 'demystifying' a 'realistic' pathway to academia.

International students feel that there is not enough specific support put on for them about finding work in the UK, including roles within academia.

Project overview

To look at PGR (postgraduate researcher) perceptions and awareness of the services the Careers Centre offers, and whether they feel that it meets their needs with regards to individual careers advice, workshop sessions, and employer engagement.

Implications for practice

Careers Service senior managers can use these findings to better inform their overall service to, where possible, consider if they are meeting the needs of the PGR community. A good example would be looking at how we can better engage employers who specifically would like to recruit PGRs.

Where the Careers Service cannot fill all the gaps highlighted in this report, we can look at where we can collaborate with other parts of the university; for example, providing one off sessions with faculties and PGR student bodies.

Doctoral College senior managers will be provided with an overview of the Careers Service provision, and the PGR perception of it, to combine efforts to meet PGR needs as part of the new PGR Opportunities and Futures Strategy.

Graduate School managers and other stakeholders working with PGRs can utilise the findings to create and implement bespoke events for their PGRs such as application workshops or alumni panel events.

There is a basis for further research into the employability provision for our PGR community, such as employer engagement about the value of recruiting PGRs for their organisation.



To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Steve Carter (s.g.carter@leeds.ac.uk)



Project start date: 1 September 2022

Developing a global citizenship education toolkit

BY RICHARD HARRIS, PAM BIRTILL AND MADELEINE POWNALL
(SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
& BELONGING

Key findings

Attributes associated with global citizenship education are relevant for every discipline, but it remains a widely contested term. Only 12.87% of students in our study were familiar with the term "global citizenship education" explicitly, but many were sympathetic to its goals and principles.

Both staff and students recognise potential issues with the language of "global citizenship", including the tension between local and global problems, connotations of white saviourism, and the need to balance disciplinary knowledge with broader global goals

Project overview

Global citizenship education is concerned with the integration of knowledge and skills into the curricula that allow students to contribute to solving global problems in a responsible, informed, and ethical way. Our Fellowship examined subject-specific barriers to implementing global citizenship education.



Implications for practice

Practitioners can identify and highlight elements of global citizenship education already present in their programmes by aligning them with QAA subject benchmark statements and embedding them explicitly in a way that suits their discipline.

There may be value in explicitly integrating and surfacing the global citizenship attributes. This can be achieved through introducing and exploring ethical issues relevant to each subject area, supporting students to critically analyse the societal and global impacts of their work, and promoting responsibility and encouraging ethical behaviour.

Critical and evidence-based thinking should be emphasised across disciplines, encouraging students to engage with broader aspects of global citizenship education.

Themes such as sustainability, social justice, and intercultural perspectives should be woven into the curriculum. There is value in addressing issues such as environmental and organisational sustainability, equity, diversity, and the intersection of privilege and power, to support students' understanding of global challenges.

Global citizenship education is a contested term, and this should be considered in interventions that aim to explicitly surface this to students. Thus, working with students to discuss and clarify language may be important.

To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Richard (R.J.Harris@leeds.ac.uk), Pam (P.Birtill@leeds.ac.uk) or Maddi (M.V.Pownall@leeds.ac.uk).



Project start date: January 2022

Investigating the perceptions and experiences of ageism in mature students

BY MILLIE BOLT (FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH)

“There is often an intersectional nature to mature undergraduate students’ experiences of ageism.”

Key findings

Mature undergraduate students experience three types of interpersonal ageism, which can come from students, academic staff, and professional service staff.

Internalised ageism is common among mature undergraduate students and can both inform and be informed by ageism demonstrated by others.

Timetabling is a significant barrier for mature undergraduate students who often need flexibility to balance work and other responsibilities.

There is often an intersectional nature to mature undergraduate students’ experiences of ageism.

Despite the cited experiences and perceptions of ageism, mature undergraduate students often have an overall positive learning experience at Leeds.

Project overview

While there are many barriers to mature students’ attainment and continuation, such as often being from a lower socio-economic background, working during study, and having caring responsibilities, this study investigates if ageism plays a role in these gaps.

Implications for practice

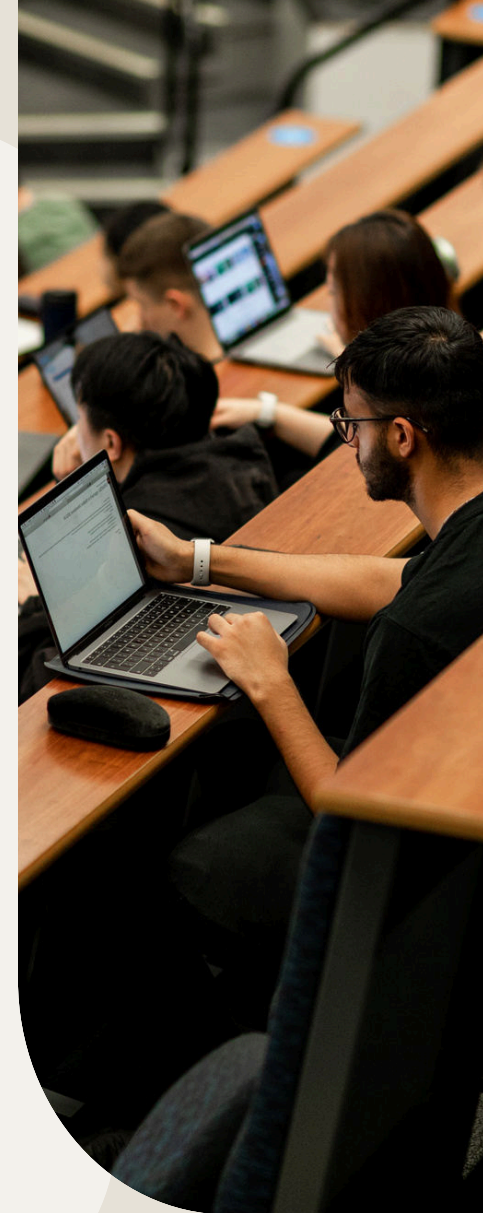
Staff, whether academic or professional services, should be aware that our student cohort is diverse, and reflect this with their language and behaviour, ensuring they provide equal opportunity and support.

Cultural competency around mature undergraduate students should also be encouraged in all students to create a more inclusive environment for mature undergraduate students and mitigate/reduce how they may be excluded both within and outside of the classroom.

The University should endeavour to be as flexible around timetabling, and provide this further in advance, to mitigate how this is currently a significant barrier for mature undergraduate students, who often have to juggle additional responsibilities, including working whilst studying and being a parent/carer.

Service areas should be mindful of the tailoring of sessions and services to recognise that not all students are school-leavers and have a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences (e.g. careers and wellbeing services).

Any training on working with mature undergraduate students should recognise ageism as informing part of their learning and social experience and how this can manifest.



To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Millie Bolt (m.bolt@leeds.ac.uk)



Project start date: September 2024

Virtual Reality enhancement of student learning

BY BEN HANSON (SCHOOL OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY)



Key findings

VR interventions appear to increase the self-efficacy of students regarding the concept taught.

VR interventions appear not to increase the actual understanding of students regarding the concept taught.

Integration of conceptual and mathematical understanding is potentially higher on Bloom's Taxonomy than previously thought.

Project overview

Philosophers and scholars have hypothesised that understanding is acquired first as conceptual understanding, then as technical understanding. We build an internal story that becomes more robust as we gather evidence. However, some aspects of physics are so abstract that conceptual understanding is difficult to attain, as it is impossible to gain first-hand experience.

The project investigates whether virtual reality (VR) can be used to supplement first-hand experience, and thus aid learning. Through VR "scenarios" that have been designed to address a specific physical concept, this investigates whether VR aids both conceptual and subsequent mathematical understanding of complex physics topics.

"VR interventions should [...] be used in an accessible manner and only where necessary."

Implications for practice

VR interventions can assist people with experiential learning methods, but to generate the associated constructivist (rational) understanding, additional, associated interventions are needed.

If using a VR intervention, refer to the intervention as part of any subsequent book-work in order to synthesise the experience with a theory.

VR development is a costly (but fun) exercise. Engage with Helix and other colleagues with expertise where possible.

VR interventions are not a replacement for the real thing, similarly to how an A.I. chat bot is not a replacement for a human. Students recognise gimmicks and may cut corners very quickly, as such, VR interventions should therefore always be used in an accessible manner and only where necessary.



To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Ben Hanson (b.hanson@leeds.ac.uk)

Project start date: 1 September 2022



Inclusive assessment and group work

ASSESSMENT

BY BARBARA KEMPF (ACADEMIC PRACTICE TEAM - ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING)

Key findings

Group work can be very stressful for both staff and students, especially for international students and disabled students. Stress factors identified included: allocation and diverse group membership, scheduling out of class, assessment, especially group grades & peer assessment, lack of clarity/rules/structure.

If collaboration is a competence standard for a programme or module, this should be made clear to students at recruitment stage and collaborative skills be explicitly taught at level 1 or 0 to allow students who discover they struggle with these to change programme without losing access to student finance.

Where group work is an assessment method, alternatives must be offered, which may be easier if terms like 'collaboration' or 'team-based learning' are used in assessment guidance.

Blended and digitally enhanced learning and communication can make group work more inclusive.

Project overview

This project identifies existing good practice for facilitation and assessment at the University of Leeds, other institutions and from other resources. It aims to create university-wide guidance and resources to aid the design and support of team-based assignments and their assessment drawing on the principles developed in the research.

This engages with staff and students to develop and ongoing conversations including presentations, publications, design thinking workshops and the development of a community of practice.

Implications for practice

This study confirmed the findings of a previous LITE Fellowship on what makes team-based learning for diverse cohorts and all cohorts successful, with the addition of three main points: making best use of technology for collaboration and communication, the need to specifically teach collaboration, and to include collaboration among competence standards where appropriate.

So much can be learned by talking to colleagues about their practice and how many other people in this university are already active in this space. Hopefully, the community-of-practice approach, resulting from this LITE Fellowship, will facilitate many more such conversations.

Tutors always need to ask the question of why they are doing group work, what skills exactly they want to teach in this way, if and why they need to assess these, and how they can mitigate for this collaboration in their assessment design.

Where collaboration is non-negotiable, for example in externally accredited courses, such as Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, or Social Work, it should be made clear to students before they apply that collaboration is a competence standard, and the required skills should be scaffolded at levels 0 or 1 so that students, who discover they struggle, can still change their programme without losing their student finance.

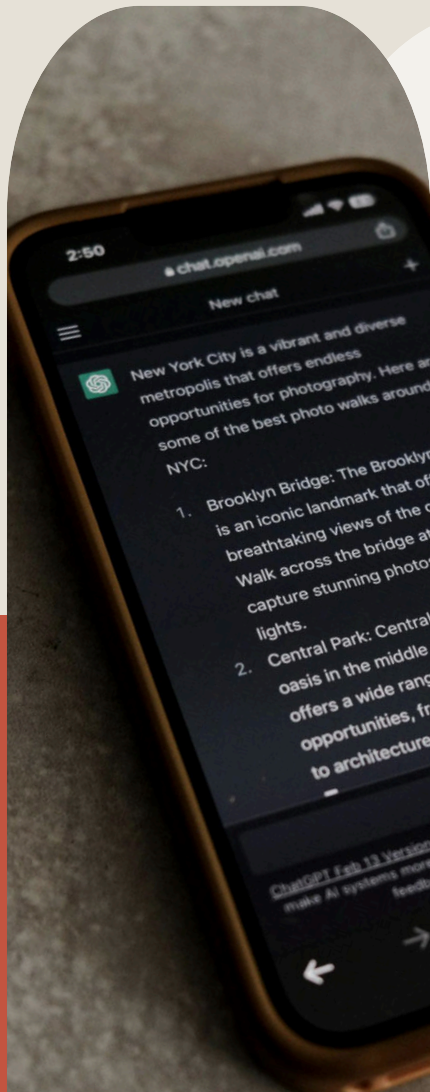
To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Barbara Kempf (b.kempf@leeds.ac.uk)

Project start date: September 2023



Navigating skill gains and losses in the era of Generative AI

BY AMY ALLHOUSE (LIBRARY LEARNING DEVELOPMENT TEAM)



Key findings

Overall, the study found the emotional complexity international students face while studying abroad, as they navigate unfamiliar academic environments and balance self-doubt with motivation; GenAI helps students transform negative emotions into empowering, actionable responses.

Over 75% of GenAI users believe using GenAI helps save time, even though only 22% believe using GenAI will help achieve better results.

GenAI tools are increasingly present in how students engage with learning, reading, and writing. Assessments are often co-developed with the support of these tools, regardless of the university's GenAI traffic light system.

Project overview

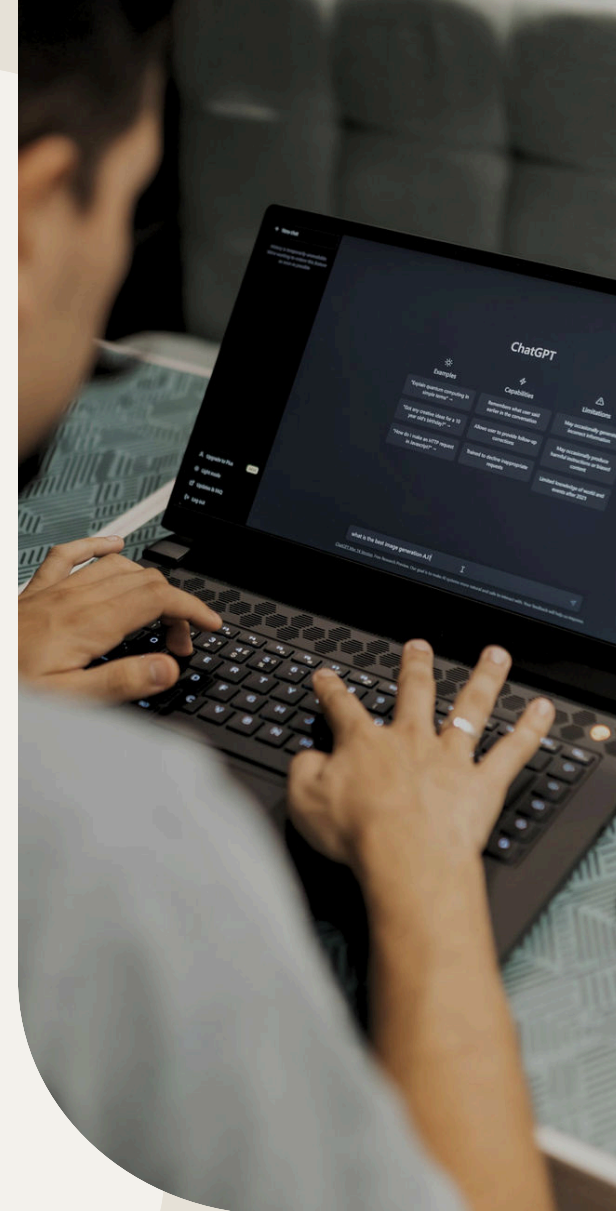
This project explores international students' views on how GenAI enhances their academic skills development. Students, whether local or international, often face a transition period when they first enter university, adapting to new academic environments. This learning shock varies based on factors like prior education, cultural background, and expectations.

Implications for practice

Adopt a constructive and inclusive approach to GenAI, which can improve student engagement, digital and information literacy. Rather than restricting the use of GenAI, we should create space for open dialogue with students about how to use it thoughtfully, which could cover how to select appropriate tools, when its use adds value, and what learning experiences might be missed through over-reliance.

Consider moving beyond optional GenAI guidance and instead embed clear, practical training into programmes: This training should be directly linked to learning outcomes and assessments, ensuring students feel confident and supported in using GenAI responsibly.

Consider collaborative development of resources: co-create guidance and resources with students to reflect their lived experiences, and with employers to ensure job-ready skills are embedded within modules and programmes.



To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Amy Allhouse (s.h.hsu@leeds.ac.uk)

Project start date: September 2024



Assessment Flexibility To Embed Real-professional practice

ASSESSMENT

BY MANOJ RAVI (SCHOOL OF CHEMICAL AND PROCESS ENGINEERING)
AND MOHSEN BESHARAT (SCHOOL OF CIVIL ENGINEERING)

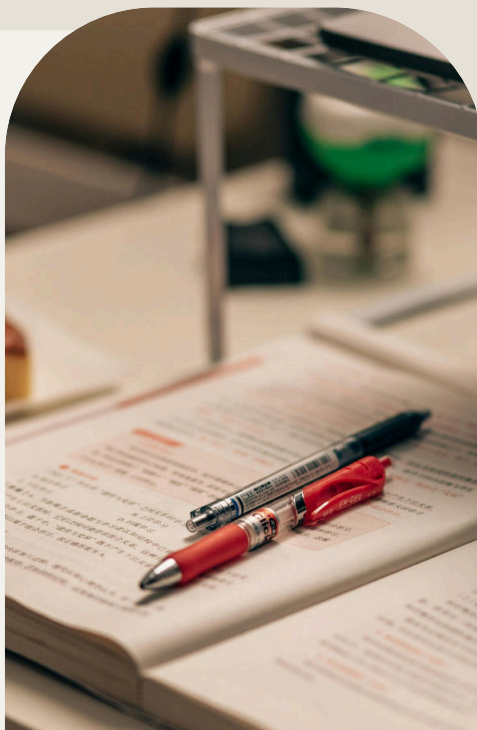
Key findings

The manner in which students work towards assessment deliverables is often misaligned with professional practice, with a comparative paucity of peer review and feedback practice.

Staff resistance to flexible and authentic assessments stem from concerns about marking equity, increased workload and appropriate support required for implementation of such assessments.

Leveraging flexibility as part of authentic assessments helps provide students with timely, detailed and actionable feedback.

Best assessment practice would require shifting focus from outcomes to learning processes, balancing structure and flexibility for professional alignment.



“Flexibility in assessments can be used to unlock creativity.”

Implications for practice

The findings of this project encourage educators to consider student working practice for assessments with as much importance as the design of the assessment task itself, to foster professional competencies in students.

The assessment pilots trialed in this project can be used as case studies by educators to inform and adapt their assessment practice.

The findings show that flexibility in assessments can be used to unlock creativity—an important skill to develop professional practice.

Project findings can feed into institution-wide guidelines recommending authentic, flexible, and student-centred assessments, as well as assessment toolkits currently under development at institution level.

Project overview

The AFTER project aims to explore embedding ‘authenticity’ in the ‘delivery’ of assessments, since considerations of authenticity are currently confined to the technical ‘design’ of assessment tasks. Under current assessment practice, students are driven to perfect a piece of work against a marking rubric, often right until the submission deadline. This is in contrast to actual professional practice, which tends to value the pursuit of multiple creative outputs over perfection and incentivises early submissions. Hence, AFTER will research how students work towards their assessment deliverables and how this process can be modified to resemble actual professional practice.

To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Manoj Ravi (m.ravi@leeds.ac.uk) or Mohsen Besharat (m.besharat@leeds.ac.uk).



Project start date: September 2023

Induction for online academic practice

BY ADAM RICHARDSON (DIGITAL EDUCATION SERVICE)

Key findings

Any created induction package will need to cater for different staff with varying levels of skills and confidence in online learning.

While many see academic skills as portable, it was felt that there are a specific set of skills for online and there needs to be a recognition—materially and psychologically—that they are different, and educators need to recognise that it's a craft that is developed over time.

There is a lot of support for colleagues in the design and development of online education. However, the teaching of it is an area where it was felt more support was needed. This can be at the start of the journey in covering elementary aspects such as technical set-up, comfort with online tools and thinking about how to teach in an engaging way online to the more advanced, enhancement side of teaching by offering increased practitioner support and how data can be used to improve the experience.

Project overview

The project aims to support the development of an induction programme for academic staff working on the University's fully online programmes. The project seeks to understand the existing skills and knowledge gaps an induction programme can address to support academic colleagues in their professional development.

Implications for practice

Avoid Assumptions:

Deconstructing the idea that all academic staff enter the online world with the same skills, knowledge and experiences. Conversely, academic colleagues need to drop the assumption that professional service staff are purely administrative or IT support.

Clarity:

Be clear about what is being created: Online education is an intentionally designed learning journey that will take a lot of time and effort to create.

Be clear about staff: Their expertise, why they are in the room and how you will interact with them.

Be clear as to mission: Why the institution is doing online education, and its role within the university.

Teaching Support:

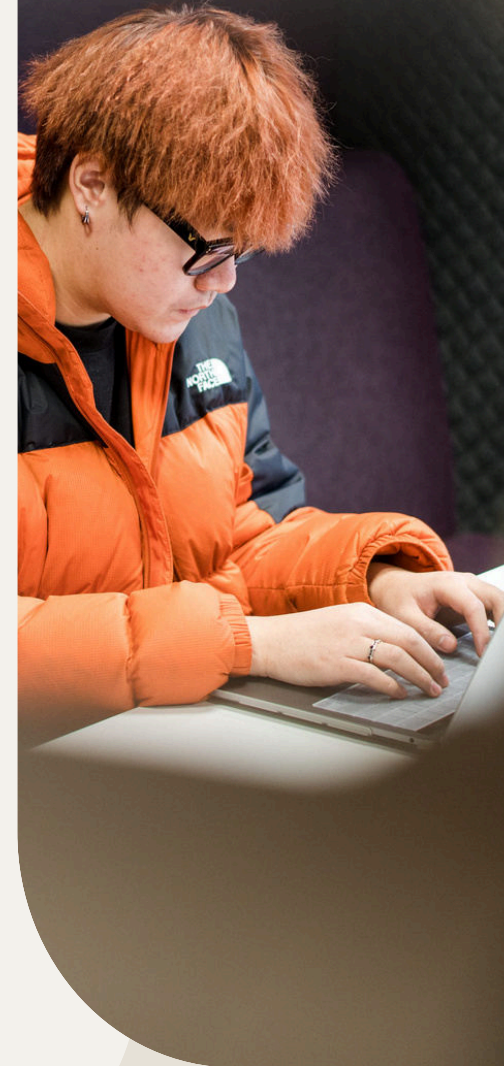
Staff need training in what an online webinar is, how to structure them, and how to make engaging experiences for students. They also need technical training so they are confident and students have confidence in them.

Community:

Think about how community is built both at programme team level and at a broader institutional community level. How do we help colleagues reflect and grow, together?

Share the Joy:

There are a lot of misconceptions about online learning. Share the success stories, promulgate the positive and tell the stories of our staff and students.



To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Adam Richardson (a.p.richardson@leeds.ac.uk)



Project start date: September 2023

Internationalising student education at Leeds

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
& BELONGING

BY MARTIN WARD, AYAKO YOSHINO (EAST ASIAN STUDIES - SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND SOCIETIES), AND EVE SMITH (LANGUAGE CENTRE)

Key findings

Remote teaching during the pandemic sparked increased interest among academics in implementing COIL-type pedagogies, equipping them with skillsets required for COIL.

Colleagues felt that previously institutional support structures were lacking and there was no clear roadmap for those who were interested in COIL.

While Leeds already had a very small number of COILers, the practitioners were isolated due to the lack of community of practice, leading to duplicated efforts.

Students highly valued the opportunity to engage in international collaborative experiences as part of their university education.

While students anticipated challenges in group work, they expressed enthusiasm for participating in international collaboration through COIL.

Project overview

This project is researching barriers to COIL perceived by academics at Leeds and elsewhere, as well as the perspectives of students at Leeds regarding the potential for, and value of, embedding COIL at scale into the curriculum. The existing and growing body of literature has clearly demonstrated the benefits of COIL for students but awareness of this methodology at our institution, and as a result implementation, is limited. This project seeks to identify the reasons for this and facilitate broader uptake.

The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Sharepoint supports the proliferation of COIL at Leeds.

Implications for practice

COIL is of strategic importance to student education at Leeds as it aligns with the institution's international strategy and student education strategy.

Leeds students expect and value an internationally-oriented curriculum which COIL can enable.

As demonstrated through the newly created COIL community of practice, harnessing diverse expertise is vital for institution-level pedagogic change.

Collaboration between academic and professional service colleagues is crucial to enable the embedding of COIL as a foundational element within the institution's educational framework.

To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Martin Ward (m.s.ward@leeds.ac.uk), Ayako Yoshino (a.yoshino@leeds.ac.uk), or Eve Smith (e.d.smith@leeds.ac.uk)

Project start date: September 2023



Immersive approaches in Geoscience education

BY RYAN KROMER (SCHOOL OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT)

Key findings

XR increased student engagement with learning. Students reported high levels of interest, focus, and involvement, supporting engagement with geological concepts and learning activities.

XR as part of a virtual field trip enhanced students' geospatial understanding, spatial reasoning, and perception of scale. Immersive visualisation helped students interpret terrain, geological structures, and the relative size and scale of hazards and landform features that are difficult to grasp through maps, photographs, or 2D projections.

Flexible and repeatable access to XR alongside fieldwork reduced physical, logistical, and time-related barriers, while increasing student confidence and supporting learning consolidation and revision.

Different XR implementations supported different learning preferences and needs. Collaborative mixed reality sessions were perceived as less disorienting, while the headset VR implementation was valued by learners who preferred self-directed learning.

Project overview

The project explores how extended reality (XR) technologies can support geospatial visualisation and enhance field-based learning in applied geoscience education. It investigates how immersive and interactive XR approaches can help students understand complex spatial relationships while improving engagement. Rather than replacing traditional fieldwork, XR can complement in-person experiences by supporting preparation, consolidation, and inclusive access.

Implications for practice

XR can effectively bring field sites into the classroom, offering immersive learning experiences when visiting sites is not possible, practical, or environmentally sustainable.

Institutions should provide appropriate training, software, and technical support to enable effective XR adoption and reduce implementation friction, addressing the technical and practical challenges identified in this project.

Student feedback strongly supports the adoption of XR as a complement to traditional fieldwork, not a replacement, ensuring experiential and skill-based learning outcomes are maintained.

Best practice guidelines are needed to support wider XR implementation across disciplines, and this project contributes evidence to those guidelines.

To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report, or contact Ryan Kromer (r.a.kromer@leeds.ac.uk)

Project start date: September 2024



An experience design approach to cultivating a higher student engagement

INNOVATIVE
ACTIVE LEARNING

BY TRIDIB RAY (LEARNING DESIGN AGENCY)

Key findings

Reality vs expectations:

The expectations had entering their programmes didn't always align with their experience, leading to a learning curve in their courses.

Transition:

Students moving from an unknown undergraduate ecosystem to the UK require significant adjustment, and fail to find adequate support to cushion that.

Preparation for employability:

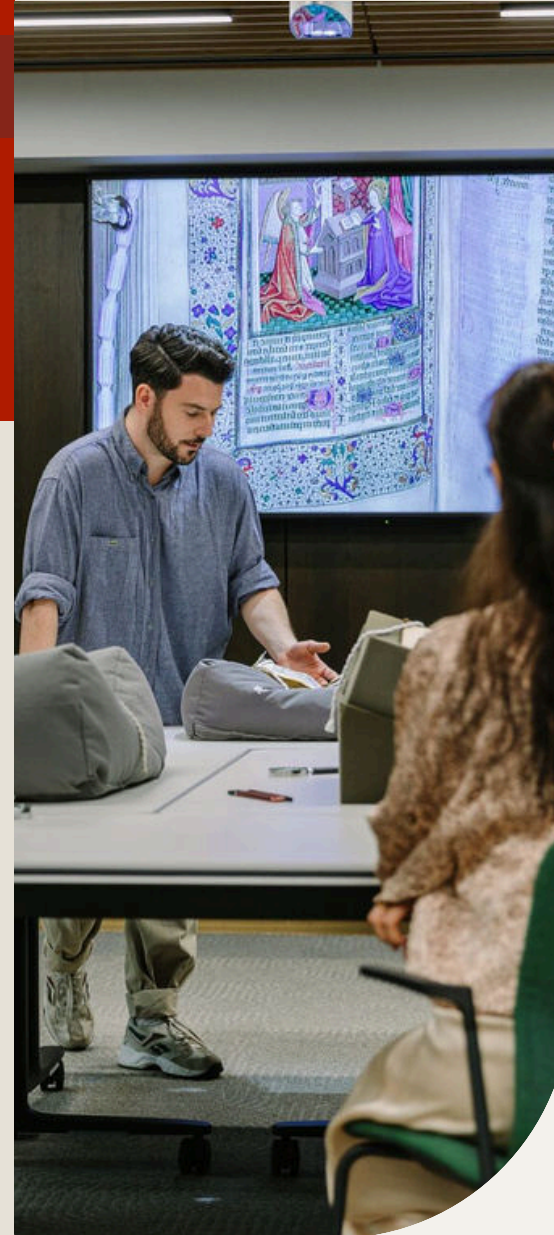
Students and alumni highlighted the gap they faced between academic learning and professional readiness.

Student voice in feedback:

Course and curriculum development processes exist, but are often seen by students and alumni as slow, and underutilised.

Experience of university:

Students saw the induction and early orientation to be insufficient, especially from an international point of view.



Implications for practice

Short term:

Creating materials for dissemination that encourage practical steps for scaffolding PG experience at Leeds and steps for signposting for wellbeing resources catering to life at Leeds. Introducing intuitive peer-led networks especially while managing transition to the PG course. Enhancing induction processes and reflective practices enabling students to settle into academics at the university and process expectations and experiences with future opportunities.

Long-term:

Creating a PG 'persona' database that maps the purposes and goals of diverse local and international PG student groups studying in the UK, in turn helping universities design more responsive frameworks catering to diverse learning needs and lived realities. Allowing students to find common ground with their institutions, which also serves as a foundation to future advocacy on PG education globally.

Fostering the design of a sustainable dialogue between students, staff and policy-makers to ensure student voices remain central in shaping HE practices around internationalisation strategies.

Project overview

The project intends to explore ways to increase engagement between post-graduate taught (PGT) students and academic staff in people-centred design activities to create a common ground.

To find out more details about this Fellowship, scan or click the QR code to read the full Fellowship report or contact Tridib Ray (t.ray@leeds.ac.uk)



Project start date: September 2024

LITE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



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