



**UHI Learning,
Teaching, and
Student Experience
Conference 2026**

**Inclusive Tertiary Learner Journeys:
engagement in, progression through,
and future proofing student learner
journeys at UHI**

17 & 18 June 2026

**UHI Inverness and UHI House,
Inverness**


About

The focus for the conference is on Inclusive Tertiary Learning Journeys at UHI and will explore how the UHI partnership supports students to engage in their learning journey, positively progress through their journeys and will consider the student learner journeys of the future. The conference will offer delegates the opportunity to participate in presentations, interactive workshops and the popular Gasta sessions as we welcome back Dr Tom Farrelly to the conference.

For colleagues attending on campus there will be networking opportunities throughout the conference and lunch will be provided on both days.

Quiet room available during breakout times
(no mobile calls or work meetings please)

Day 1 – Room 142
Day 2 – Classroom 3



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Day 1 – UHI Inverness



Day 1 – Wednesday 17th June – UHI Inverness

All sessions in the Lecture Theatre can be joined through one joining link.

**Lecture
Theatre
joining link**

11.15-12.00

Registration and light lunch/brunch

Atrium

12.00-12.15

Opening of the conference: Professor Keith Smyth, Dean of Learning, Teaching and Students UHI

Lecture
Theatre

12.15-13.00

[Keynote: Shaping the journey: Inclusive Pathways in a changing tertiary landscape](#)

Dr Vic Boyd, Head of Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) and Deirdre Murphy, Lecturer in the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) City of Glasgow College

Lecture
Theatre

13.10-14.15

[Parallel presentations and workshops 1](#)

14.15-14.45

Coffee and networking

Atrium

14.45-15.15

[Student Officer panel](#)

Lecture
Theatre

15.25-16.30

[Parallel presentations and workshops 2](#)

16.40-17.10

[Gasta Presentations:](#) Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer and Senior Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU)

Lecture
Theatre

17.10

Finish day one

Atrium



12.15 - 13.00 Keynote

**Shaping the journey:
Inclusive Pathways in
a changing tertiary
landscape**

As the learner population across Scotland's tertiary sector becomes increasingly demographically, experientially and motivationally diverse, institutions are presented with an opportunity to rethink how student journeys are designed. This session considers student success through the lens of inclusive tertiary learning journeys, exploring how progression into, through, between and beyond different types of formal, intentional learning can be shaped to reflect the realities of a changing learner population.

Drawing on the City of Glasgow College Student Success Framework, the presentation highlights how a whole-system approach might shape coherent pathways that foreground belonging, wellbeing, and progression at every stage. The framework emphasises relational practice, early engagement, and the importance of designing learning environments (physical, virtual and blended) that recognise and respond to learner diversity. It also calls for a sector-wide community response in curating a network of support for staff and students alike.

By shifting focus from individual adaptation to systemic design, this session offers a conceptual lens, and early implementation reflections, on how inclusive tertiary education can enable students to participate, progress, and succeed across increasingly complex learning journeys.

Keynote Speaker Bios

Vic Boyd, Head of Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA)

Dr Vic Boyd has worked in tertiary education for nearly 30 years in a breadth of research, development, teaching and leadership roles. She is particularly passionate about both inclusive and technology-enhanced learning and teaching, and these parallel threads have run through her career path as well as her research outputs, publications and sector contributions. Vic's research and practice interests focus on exploring and enhancing staff and student digital confidence, embedding co-curricular academic literacies, improving learner self-efficacy and contextual re-framing of academic integrity principles. Advocacy for both inclusive and digitally-enabled student success remain the basis of her professional values and continue to shape the projects in which she is involved. Vic is currently Head of the Learning and Teaching Academy at City of Glasgow College, where she feels privileged to lead the Learning Innovation and Development and Learning Technology teams. She is a Senior Fellow of Advance HE and of the Association of Learning Development in HE as well as member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education. She is a co-lead for the STEP *Understanding the staff development landscape required to support diverse learner journeys in the tertiary sector* project and a member of multiple communities of practice that aim to better understand and inform academic and professional practice across the changing tertiary sector.

Deirdre Anne Murphy MEd FHEA, Lecturer in the LTA at City of Glasgow College

As a multi-disciplinary 3d designer-maker and arts educator, Deirdre worked in creative education for over 2 decades. With a wealth of experience in managing staff and resources, restructuring and developing courses, course materials and assessment strategies, she has led on a breadth of courses to engage and progress a diverse range of students.

Now in her new Learning Innovation and Development role within the Learning and Teaching Academy at City of Glasgow College, and a recent graduate from the MEd Learning and Teaching in the Arts programme at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, her interests lie in promoting and supporting learning, teaching and assessment practices that imbed inclusion and promote self-determination, with an approach that incorporates partnership, collaboration and co-creation.



Dr Vic Boyd and Deirdre Anne Murphy

13.10-14.15

Parallel presentations (hybrid) and workshop 1

In person delegates will select one room to attend at the conference registration on day one/two. Hybrid participants: room numbers are hyperlinked to the joining link for each session.

Lecture Theatre

Catherine Collin and Dr Catherine Porter, University of Manchester:
Full Circle Co-Creation: From Student Designers to Student Facilitators in Optometry Education.

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Nathan Erskine, East Lancashire UC:
(presenting online)
Promoting Student Belonging in College-Based Higher Education.

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

146/147

Annie Mason and Scarlett Fox, HISA:
Is it time to stop thinking of 'diverse student journeys' as something other than the norm?

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Dr Megan Dickson and Morag Forbes, Centre for Rural Health Sciences:
Adjustments Passports: A Tool for Inclusive Practice Learning

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

G1d/e

Ali Hepburn, UHI Orkney:
Play in Higher Education

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Dr Corin Anderson, UHI NWH:
Co-Creating Learning Journeys: Students as Partners in a Networked Practice-Based Programme

[Session outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

140

Workshop

Simon Varwell:
Critical thinking to enhance the student experience: how can we ask the right questions?

[Workshop outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

(In person participation only)

14.15-14.45

Coffee and networking (including travel time)

Atrium

14.45-15.15

Student Officer panel: Perspectives on UHI Transformation, shaping the student experience, and more.

Lecture Theatre

Oliver Sweeney: 2026-27 President

(past Depute President Inverness)

Andi Garrity: 2026-27 Vice-President Education

(past Perth President)

Chloe Young: 2026-27 Depute President Inverness

(past Inverness President)

Chair: **Nicola Smith**, Head of Student Experience, UHI

15.25-16.30

Parallel presentations and workshop 2 (hybrid)

In person delegates will select one room to attend at the conference registration on day one/two.
Hybrid participants: room numbers are hyperlinked to the joining link for each session.

Lecture Theatre

Dr Fíona Quinlan-Pluck,
Edinburgh Napier
University:

In your context: Recognising and supporting the pedagogical contributions of non-traditional teaching and support roles in the positive progression and experience of students

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

Lyndsay Sutherland and Michaela Gilmore, UHI Executive Office :
Student Funding: Money Matters.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

[146/147](#)

Doru Todoran, City of Glasgow College:

Analysis and Expanded Reflections on Responsive Pedagogies & Students as Partners.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement, Future Proofing.

Maureen MacDonald, UHI Executive Office:
From Application to Offer: The Academic's role in Admissions.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement, Positive Progression

[G1d/e](#)

Dr Clive Fox, UHI Executive Office/ Scottish Association for Marine Science:

Progression routes to Postgraduate research in UHI.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

Nicola Smith, UHI Executive Office :
Retention in Practice: Building a Sustainable Early Warning System;

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

[140](#)

Workshop

Dr Tom Farrelly, Nick Baker and Dr William Evans, Munster Technological University (MTU) :

Coaching Students to Climb the AI Spiral: Applying the Constraints-Led Approach to Curriculum Design

[Workshop Outline](#)

16.30-16.40

Travel time

16.40-17.10

Gasta Presentations:
Dr. Tom Farrelly, Academic Developer and Senior Lecturer at
Munster Technological University (MTU)

Lecture
Theatre

Jilly Munro

Inspiring STEM Futures from the Early Years - An overview of the UHI STEM Outreach Programme (themes: Positive Progression)

**Associate Professor Michelle Beattie
and Dr Clive Fox**

Expanding Access to Doctoral Education: PhD by Retrospective Publication or Portfolio (themes: Inclusive Engagement)

Kian McDonald

The environmental impact of GenAI: science students' views (themes: Future Proofing)

Jamie Thomson

Online versus in-person learning: students' views from AHBE (themes: Future Proofing)

Day 2 – UHI House, Inverness



Day 2 – Thursday 18th June – UHI House

All sessions in the Auditorium can be joined through one joining link.

Auditorium
joining link

8.30-9.00	Registration and coffee/pastries	The Street
9.00-9.10	Opening of day 2 : Professor Brian Williams, Deputy Principal Academic and Research, UHI	Auditorium
9.15-10.00	Keynote: Prioritising Student Engagement at the Heart of Student Success Tom Lowe, Principal Lecturer and Assistant Head of School (Student Experience) University of Westminster	Auditorium
10.05-10.30	Gasta Presentations: Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer/Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU)	Auditorium
10.30-10.55	Coffee and networking (including travel time)	The Street
10.55-12.00	Parallel presentations and workshops 1	Auditorium, Classroom 1, Classroom 2, Classroom 4, Classroom 5
12.00-12.45	Lunch and networking	The Street

Continued...



Day 2 – Thursday 18th June – UHI House

Continued



12.45-12.50

Introduction to the keynote: Nicola Smith, Head of Student Experience UHI

Auditorium

12.50-13.35

Keynote: Dr. Charlie Ball, Head of labour market intelligence at JISC

Auditorium

13.45-14.50

[Parallel presentations and workshops 2](#)

Auditorium, Classroom 1, Classroom 2,
Classroom 4, Classroom 5

15.00-15.25

[Gasta Presentations](#): Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer/Senior Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU)

Auditorium

15.25-15.30

Conference close

Auditorium



9.00-10.00 Keynote

**Prioritising
Student
Engagement at the
Heart of Student
Success**

Colleagues in tertiary education currently find ourselves in a student engagement crisis. Prior expectations saw students' engage in learning in the classroom, create friendships through clubs and hang-outs on campus, and those struggling could be identified and supported in-person by our staff, but now our students' interactions with our universities are more complex and often unknown. Increasingly students are reporting to be time-poor, through prioritising part-time work, being strategic in choosing what they are engaging with (and when), and taking advantage of online engagement options as an alternative to attending class. It is also within this complicated context of student engagement, that universities and colleges are working hard to support student success relating to a variety of academic and outcome measures. This is not only due to moral obligations as educators to support students' ambitions, but also to meet the requirements of a sector under pressure from finances and regulatory reporting. To address this context, this keynote will focus on the changing nature of student engagement, where recommendations will be made to place students at the heart of our policy and practice, to improve student success. This talk will draw on literature from the field of student engagement, and empirical studies conducted post-Covid-19 which explore students' perceptions of time management and attendance in commuter majority higher education. This keynote will endorse curiosity in an ever-changing context, where through only discussing and engaging with students in partnership, can we truly understand and manage expectations for the tertiary education of the future.

Keynote Presenter Bio

Tom Lowe, Principal Lecturer and Assistant Head of School (Student Experience) University of Westminster

Tom Lowe has researched and innovated in student engagement across higher education for over twelve years, in areas such as student voice, retention, employability and student-staff partnership. Tom currently works at the University of Westminster as Assistant Head of School (Student Experience) in Finance and Accounting where he leads on student experience, outcomes and belonging. Tom is also the Chair of RAISE, a network for all stakeholders in higher education for researching, innovating and sharing best practice in student engagement. Prior to Westminster, Tom was a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education at the University of Portsmouth and previously held leadership positions for engagement and employability at the University of Winchester. Tom has published three books on student engagement with Routledge; 'A Handbook for Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theory into Practice' in 2020, 'Advancing Student Engagement in Higher Education: Reflection, Critique and Challenge' in 2023, and most recently 'Student Belonging in Higher Education: Perspectives and Practice' in 2025. Tom has supported over 40 institutions in consultancy and advisory roles to improve student engagement, where his most recent research focuses on Student Attendance post Covid-19.



10.00-10.10

Set up Gasta

10.10-10.30

Gasta Presentations:

Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer and Senior Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU)

Auditorium

Professor Keith Smyth: UHI - An Introduction to STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

Anna-Wendy Stevenson: UHI - STEP Project - Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes in Disabled Student Communities (SAPSO)

Liz Richardson (joining online): UHI Argyll - STEP Project - Strategies to Support Student Engagement and Partnership Within an Increasingly Time-Poor and Cash-Poor Student Population

Dr Vic Boyd: City of Glasgow College: STEP Project - Traversing Staff Development Project

10.30-10.55

Coffee and networking (including travel time)

The Street

10.55-12.00

Parallel presentations (hybrid) and workshops 1

In person delegates will select one room to attend at the conference registration on day one/two. Hybrid participants: room numbers are hyperlinked to the joining link for each session.

Workshops

Auditorium

Wendy Jessiman, UHI Executive Office:

What's in it for you? Use of a VLE active template and beyond!

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Deirdre Anne Murphy, City of Glasgow College:

Inclusion and Student Partnership Through Agency and Collaboration in Self and Peer Assessment Activities.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Classroom 4

Katy O'Connor, UHI Moray:

From Theory to Reality: Lived Experience, Active Research, and the Social Scientist of the Future

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Future Proofing

Professor Rich Kyle, UHI Centre for Rural Health Sciences (presenting online)

Supporting Positive Progression into Nursing for Healthcare Support Workers: Recommendations from a UHI Scoping Project

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

Classroom 5

Katie McClement and Katie Johnstone, UHI Perth:

ESOL projects supporting inclusivity and progression.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement; Positive Progression.

Allie Scott, UHI Executive Office :

(presenting online)
Designing Inclusive Campuses: Creating Accessible and Neuro-Affirming Learning Environments.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Classroom 1

Richard Hughes and Kasia Szostak, UHI Executive Office:

Collaborative excellence in practice: delivering an inclusive library experience.

[Workshop Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

(hybrid participation)

Classroom 2

Nicola Smith, Sorcha Kirker and Andi Garrity, UHI Executive Office and HISA:

Building student partnership through the SPA, TQER and more.

[Workshop Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

(in person participation)

12.00-12.45

Lunch and networking

The Street

12.45-13.35

Introduction and keynote

Auditorium

Dr Charlie Ball

Head of Labour Market Intelligence, JISC

Charlie is the in-house specialist on the graduate labour market. Charlie researches and analyses all things to do with post-18 employment, including regional economies, skills supply and demand and postgraduate issues, usually with a careers and employability perspective.

13.45-14.50

Parallel presentations (hybrid) and workshop 2

In person delegates will select one room to attend at the conference registration on day one/two. Hybrid participants: room numbers are hyperlinked to the joining link for each session.

Workshops

Auditorium

Deepak Shamvedi, The University of Dundee:

Bridging the Gap between Industry and Academia through Integrating Research-Led Project-Based Learning in a Graduate Apprenticeship Engineering Programme

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement, Positive Progression

Lois Gray, UHI NWH and Clara Hickey, UHI Executive Office:

Supporting our working students: multiple means to nurture engagement, representation, action, and expression.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Classroom 4

Ali Hepburn, and Ingrid Groat, UHI Orkney:

Sustaining Culture Through Food: Intergenerational Heritage Skills, Place-Attentiveness, and Early Learning in Orkney

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Future Proofing

Iain Eisner and Helen Anton, UHI Executive Office:

Helping our students to be 'Future Fit' for life beyond UHI

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

Classroom 5

Simon Varwell, HISA:

Empowering students to shape their learning experience: case studies from the Student Voice Rep system in 2025-26

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

Danielle Woods, UHI Centre for Rural Health Sciences :

Preparing Student Nurses for the Future: Developing Leadership, Teamworking and Communication Skills via a Major Incident Exercise.

[Session Outline](#)

Themes: Future Proofing

Classroom 1

Lyndsay Sutherland and Lorna Ferguson, UHI Executive Office:

Confident conversations: Navigating disclosures of gender-based violence.

[Workshop Outline](#)

Themes: Positive Progression

(in person participation)

Classroom 2

Wendy Jessiman and Alex Walker, UHI Executive Office:

(hybrid participation)
General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) update- what do I have to do?

[Workshop Outline](#)

Themes: Inclusive Engagement

(hybrid participation)

14.50-15.00

Travel time

15.00-15.25

Gasta Presentations:

Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer and Senior Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU)

Auditorium

Thorsten Lauterbach, RGU: STEP Belong Project

Andi Garrity, HISA: STEP Language Accessibility Project

Clara Hickey, UHI: Supporting Transferable Skills in FE and HE

Peter Noble, UHI NWH (joining online): Why Soup Matters

15.25-15.30

Conference close

Auditorium

Feedback survey

- We would be grateful if you could please complete this survey at the end of the conference to help us plan future events





**Abstracts and
Biographies**

Day 1 – Short Presentations

Full Circle Co-Creation: From Student Designers to Student Facilitators in Optometry Education

Catherine Collin and Dr Catherine Porter

Session outline

This presentation shares a two-year case study of embedding whole cohort co-creation within the Master of Optometry programme at the University of Manchester, illustrating how a simple digital scaffold can evolve into a sustainable, cyclical partnership model. The initiative centres on first-year students designing their own Team-Based Learning (TBL) application exercises using a structured Padlet framework with dedicated sections for topic selection, activity design, learning outcome alignment, facilitation notes, and guided reflection. This design enables transparent, flexible collaboration for commuting and on-campus students, ensuring equitable opportunities for participation.

Across both years, students created authentic application exercises that highlighted their understanding, misconceptions, and creativity. Selected groups collaborated with academic staff to refine their exercises for whole cohort delivery. In its second year, members of one original student team returned to co-facilitate their exercise for the new first-year cohort and delivered a talk sharing their reflections, challenges, and practical advice, helping to build confidence and belonging among year groups. Their contribution demonstrated that partnership can extend beyond the immediate activity, becoming a meaningful part of the programme identity.

The presentation will offer a transferable model for implementing this type of “full circle” co-creation: where students not only design learning activities but later refine, deliver, and mentor the next cohort. It demonstrates how a simple, low-tech framework can support sustainable, scalable co-creation that enriches both the learning design process and the wider student experience.

Biographies

Catherine Collin is a Senior Lecturer in Optometry, a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Educators. She has a special interest in clinical education pedagogy with a focus on programmatic assessment. Catherine has over 20 years’ experience as an optometrist in a variety of practice and hospital settings before moving into academia in 2019. She has presented at the Association of Medical Educators, the Global Festival of Active Learning conference and university teaching and learning conferences and was awarded the student led creative teaching award in 2022

Dr Catherine Porter is a Senior Lecturer in Optometry and Lead for Optometry PGT at the University of Manchester. She has presented workshops and lectures nationally and internationally on clinical aspects of optometry. She has a special interest in the evaluation of clinical pedagogy. She is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and holds a PGCertHE. In 2023 she was the recipient of the University of Manchester’s first CATE.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities; Engaging students in reflection and research; Enriching learning through digital practices; Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching



Catherine Collin

Presentation keywords:

- Team-based-learning.
- Optometry
- Co-creation
- Student partners
- Curriculum,
- Sustainable

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Promoting Student Belonging in College-Based Higher Education

Nathan Erskine

Session outline

The focus of the presentation is to present the initial findings from the Mixed Economy Group funded research on Promoting Student Belonging in East Lancashire UC. This research is heavily influenced by the work of Blake et al. (2022) Building Belonging in Higher Education and the work of Charlie Thewell at Bedford College, who's work I was introduced to at the AdvanceHE College-Based Higher Education Festival of Scholarly Activity in July 2025.

The research takes the themes of Connection; Inclusion; Support; and Autonomy from Blake et al. (2022) and attempts to apply them to the specifics of a small, college-based higher education setting. Additionally, the research has been carried out in the context of the organisation having undergone a recent rebranding as East Lancashire UC. (under East Lancashire Learning Group).

The initial research by Blake et al. shows two key findings. Firstly, that students who feel a sense of belonging to their institution will achieve higher; and secondly, students less likely to feel a sense of belonging will come from marginalised groups such as disabled students or students who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Tackling low sense of belonging, therefore, is of critical importance if we are to achieve Inclusive Engagement within our learning communities. This presentation will be of interest to all staff who are interested in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with a particular focus on inclusivity of marginalised learners. Those who work with marginalised and non-traditional learners will find the session useful. Due to the UHI's history and organisation, the College-Based Higher Education context that the research has been conducted within will be of particular use to staff in the organisation.

Biography

Nathan Erskine is a Lecturer in the Social Sciences at East Lancashire UC (East Lancashire Learning Group) and has been the External Examiner for the BA(Hons) Health and Social Studies programme at UHI since 2023. Having previously lectured at the University of Cumbria (2013-2020) on the BA(Hons) Working with Children & Families and BA(Hons) Youth & Community Development Studies, Nathan's professional background is Youth & Community Development Work; with experience primarily focused on community relations work with young people in Northern Ireland. A Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE, Nathan currently lectures on a range of programmes at East Lancashire UC, including BA(Hons) Health & Applied Social Studies; FdA Alcohol & Substance Misuse Work; FdA Mental Health Work; and CertHE Working with Children & Families.

Nathan's interest around Student Belonging was sparked at the AdvanceHE College-Based Higher Education Festival of Scholarly Activity in July 2025 and felt timely due to his organisation going through a complete re-brand. In this context, Nathan is passionate about putting students (both past and present) at the heart of his research.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities; Supporting the learner as an individual; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching



Nathan Erskine

Presentation keywords:

- Belonging
- Inclusivity
- Connection
- Support
- Autonomy
- Progression

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Is it time to stop thinking of ‘diverse student journeys’ as something other than the norm?

Annie Mason and Scarlett Fox

Session outline

In this presentation, we will demonstrate the ways that ‘diverse student journeys’ are more common than that terminology suggests, both in UHI and the wider UK student body. We will compare quantitative data from UHI (specifically age-range, mode of study, and level of study) between UHI academic partners, and with data from HESA and other similar sources. We will demonstrate that whilst ‘non-traditional’ studenthood occurs at UHI at a greater frequency than in most other academic institutions, we still find an apparently invisible portion of the UK student population falling outwith the assumed student experience. We will add context to these statements with qualitative and anecdotal examples from our own experiences working with students in North, West, and Hebrides, and Argyll, as well as drawing from experiences shared by staff involved with widening participation courses at the University of Bristol.

This presentation aligns with the conference themes fairly holistically, with implications for many aspects of learning, teaching, and student engagement. However, it can best be described as enhancing our ability to recognise diverse student journeys, as this is arguably the fundamental angle being discussed. As well as the larger overarching themes of inclusive engagement, it is posited that, as we head towards UHI Transformation, having both a quantitative and qualitative understanding of the UHI Student body, with both its similarities and differences to the wider UK student body, should be at the very heart of what we hope to achieve with transformation and any other future practices and developments.

Biographies

After moving from Bristol to Oban, **Annie** began working at HISA in 2024 as a Local Coordinator for Argyll & SAMS, where she works to support local student representatives engage both with institutional structures and the wider student voice. She is also responsible for working to increase HISAs engagement with the PGRs of UHI, developing connections with the research student body, the Graduate School, and the HISA PGR Society. Working directly with the broad range of student experiences that are contained between these three cohorts has given her a real-world appreciation for the diversity of potential student journeys.

Annie leads on organising online welcome week events across HISA, aimed at allowing a wide range of UHI students to engage with HISA and extra-curricular activities, and increasing the sense of community within the student body. She also works in the Communities Engagement department, liaising with clubs, societies, and local teams across HISA to facilitate greater awareness of the opportunities available to students. Annie has also undergone her own academic journey as a mature student, having completed three degrees at the University of Bristol, and is due to begin a part-time PhD at Edinburgh later this year.

Scarlett has worked within student representation within HISA since 2022, beginning as Local Coordinator for UHI Outer Hebrides prior to its merger into UHI North, West and Hebrides. In her role, she supports student voice across distributed, multi-campus, and jointly delivered provision, working closely with Student Voice Representatives, elected officers, and academic governance structures.

She has also contributed to the development and standardisation of SVR meeting systems across UHI, helping to create greater consistency and clarity within representation processes that operate across complex institutional arrangements. Her work regularly involves navigating accountability, belonging, and structural alignment in partnership-based delivery models.

Alongside her professional role, Scarlett is also a part-time student studying hairdressing. This dual perspective informs her interest in how increasingly diverse and non-linear student journeys intersect with governance frameworks that were designed for more traditional models of education. Her work focuses on strengthening systems so that representation and support structures reflect the realities of contemporary student experiences."

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Supporting the learner as an individual; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching



Annie Mason



Scarlett Fox

Presentation keywords:

- Student experience
- UK-wide comparisons
- Engagement
- Transformation
- Learner Outcomes

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Adjustments Passports: A Tool for Inclusive Practice Learning

Dr Megan Dickson and Morag Forbes

Session outline

Creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for nursing students in practice learning is an essential component of high-quality education. Many students who require learning adjustments, such as neurodivergent learners, students with health conditions, or those with specific learning differences, report uncertainty and inconsistency when communicating their needs within placement environments. These challenges often relate to hesitation around disclosure, the emotional effort involved, and differing understandings of what constitutes a reasonable adjustment in clinical practice. To support students in navigating these conversations, we developed a Student-Owned Adjustments Passport: a simple, structured communication tool that enables students to articulate their agreed adjustments clearly and confidently.

This presentation will describe the development of the passport and the collaborative discussions that informed its creation, drawing on insights from students, academic staff, and the disability support service. A key intention of the passport is that it acts not merely as documentation but as a living tool that evolves in response to conversation, reflection, and the realities of different placement contexts. It is designed to prompt constructive discussion between students and supervisors, encourage shared understanding, and ensure that adjustments remain responsive rather than static.

Biographies

Megan Dickson is a nurse academic within the Centre for Rural Health Sciences, teaching across the undergraduate nursing programme and the wider postgraduate portfolio. She is the Lead for Postgraduate Taught Programmes and Programme Lead for the MA Health and Wellbeing. As an early career researcher, Megan's interests centre on community-based participatory research, with a focus on collaborative approaches that work alongside communities to address health inequalities, build local capacity, and improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Alongside her teaching and research roles, Megan serves as a disability contact within the Centre, supporting undergraduate and postgraduate students across multiple programmes. She provides guidance on academic and practice-based learning adjustments to promote equitable access and a supportive learning environment.

Megan also co-chairs the Scottish Learning Disability Nurse Education Network, which works to ensure meaningful inclusion of learning disability content across undergraduate nursing programmes and strengthen the profession's ability to deliver safe, person-centred, and equitable care.

Morag Forbes is a lecturer on the Nursing programmes at UHI. Her clinical background is in midwifery, Family Nurse Partnership and school nursing. As one of the two Student Disability Contacts for the Nursing programmes, Morag supports students across the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to access reasonable adjustments for their learning. Recently, this has included developing an Adjustments Passport to help students communicate their reasonable adjustments in practice placements. Morag also teaches on a range of equality, diversity and inclusion issues in the undergraduate Nursing programmes. She recently completed her MEd Tertiary and Higher Education. Her dissertation research investigated the experiences of LGBTQ+ student nurses and midwives. This research suggested some important intersectional issues for students who are LGBTQ+ and also neurodivergent.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Supporting the learner as an individual; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching



Dr Megan Dickson

Presentation keywords:

- Reasonable adjustments
- Practice learning
- Student empowerment
- Professional practice
- Student-centred approach

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Play in Higher Education

Ali Hepburn



Ali Hepburn

Session outline

This session presents findings on the use of Play Pedagogy in Higher Education and the impact this has on student wellbeing and inclusive practice. It focuses on a cohort of students preparing for roles in Early Learning, Childcare and Education settings. Situated in a rural island context with strong historical and cultural connections to the Nordic region, Orkney’s educational identity is shaped by language, place-conscious practice, and digital connectivity within the wider University of the Highlands and Islands network. The study responded to heightened student anxiety following disruption to school-based education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants reported reduced confidence and apprehension about engaging in higher education. In response, a structured “soft start” to the academic day was introduced, centred on play-based, low-stakes, collaborative activities. This pedagogical intervention was designed as an experiential and relational approach to inclusion, foregrounding wellbeing as foundational to equitable participation.

Findings indicate that the play-based soft start reduced anxiety, strengthened peer relationships, and enhanced students’ sense of belonging. It also enabled staff to identify individual learner needs more effectively and provide tailored academic and pastoral support. The session will critically examine play not as an adjunct strategy, but as a socially just pedagogical framework capable of disrupting hierarchical norms in further and higher education. Implications for rural teacher education and sustainable, equity-focused practice will be discussed. Since the study was completed, a play pedagogy approach has been considered by other lecturers at UHI Orkney. This session will encourage participants to consider ways that play can be incorporated in their own learning and teaching practice to promote inclusion.

Biography

Ali Hepburn is a lecturer in Teacher Education and Educational Leadership at UHI Orkney. Her research centres on Northern and Arctic pedagogies, with particular emphasis on place-attentiveness and play pedagogy as critical frameworks for educational practice in geographically and culturally distinctive contexts.

Ali’s teaching supports student teachers in developing reflective practice that actively promotes inclusion, diversity, and social justice. She works with students to integrate theory, research, and professional experience in ways that are contextually responsive and community-engaged.

Her research on Play Pedagogy in Higher Education has informed curriculum innovation and learning and teaching enhancement at UHI Orkney. This work has also been shared internationally through the UArctic Network for Education, contributing to wider conversations on Northern educational practice and pedagogical transformation.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Engaging students in reflection and research; Supporting the learner as an individual; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching

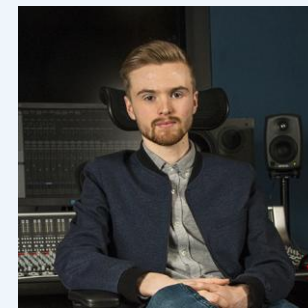
Presentation keywords:

- Play pedagogy
- Theoretical practice
- Experiential learning
- Student wellbeing
- Inclusive practice

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Co-Creating Learning Journeys: Students as Partners in a Networked Practice-Based Programme

Dr Corin Anderson



Dr Corin Anderson

Session outline

Focus of the presentation:

This session explores how the BA (Hons) Applied Music programme at the University of the Highlands and Islands engages students as active partners in their learning journeys. The presentation highlights how blended delivery, portfolio-based assessments and practice-based residential activities support students from diverse backgrounds, including those entering Higher Education via non-traditional routes, balancing study with work or caring responsibilities and learning across geographically dispersed and rural locations. The session will discuss practical strategies that foster inclusive engagement, student ownership of their own learning and a sense of community and belonging.

Alignment with the conference themes:

Aligned primarily with the theme of Inclusive Engagement, the presentation demonstrates how co-created curriculum and assessment practices empower students and enhance their learning experiences. It also touches on Positive Progression, showing how inclusive, partnership-based approaches prepare students for portfolio careers, self-employment and community-embedded creative practice. Elements of Future Proofing are included through discussion of flexible pathways, modular learning and online/blended delivery that support resilient, student-centred programmes across the Highlands and Islands and the wider UHI partnership.

Intended audience/participants:

This session is relevant to academic staff across disciplines, including programme leaders, teaching staff and learning support teams interested in inclusive pedagogies, student engagement and distributed/blended teaching. It will also be relevant to those interested in co-creation, small-cohort or practice-based programme design.

Biography

Dr Corin Anderson is the Programme Leader of the BA (Hons) Applied Music degree at UHI North, West and Hebrides, an electronic music composer/producer, and an auditory-visual synaesthete. Corin recently completed his PhD in Music at Edinburgh Napier University, for which he researched the impact his auditory-visual synaesthesia has on his music composition processes and outputs. Corin writes and produces music under the name CoriAnder and will shortly be releasing his new synaesthesia-inspired album, titled Photisms.

While working towards his PhD, Corin led Edinburgh Napier University's Widening Participation music programme Creative Musicianship for four years and taught on the university's BA Music programme and at their Music Tech Academy for high school pupils. Corin also previously worked as a Development Officer at LEAPS, where he co-ordinated their Transitions Course and supported young people from underrepresented backgrounds to access and participate in Higher Education.

Presentation

keywords:

- Students as partners
- Networked
- Practice-based
- Online
- Applied Music
- Asynchronous
- Blended learning
- Flipped classroom
- Experiential

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values: [All Values](#)

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

In your context: Recognising and supporting the pedagogical contributions of non-traditional teaching and support roles in the positive progression and experience of students

Dr Fíona Quinlan-Pluck

Session outline

A significant development in the transition from the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) to PSF2023 is the explicit incorporation of inclusive practice and the guiding stem phrase “in your context.” This reframing foregrounds the principle that teaching and the support of student learning are shared responsibilities distributed across a broad professional and academic community. By explicitly recognising the diverse contexts in which learning support occurs, PSF2023 more explicitly affirms the pedagogical contributions of colleagues beyond traditional academic roles, including laboratory technicians, careers advisers, academic skills specialists, quality enhancement professionals, and other members of professional services. This shift brings long-overlooked forms of student-facing support into formal view, acknowledging their centrality to the holistic learning environment, particularly for increasingly diverse student cohorts. Within this framework, AdvanceHE Fellowship provides a structured and widely recognised mechanism through which professional services staff can evidence their pedagogical influence, articulate their inclusive practices, and demonstrate how their work complements, enhances, and collaborates with academic provision. For these colleagues, gaining a category of Fellowship offers multiple benefits: recognition of often-invisible labour supporting student success, increased confidence and professional identity within teaching and learning communities, and enhanced opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration. These outcomes contribute directly to more coherent, inclusive support structures that are responsive to varied student needs, experiences, and backgrounds.

At ENU, our two accredited pathways to Fellowship have been revised to align with PSF2023 and to better reflect the diverse contexts of professional services’ work. These adaptations have enabled increased engagement and successful applications from Professional Services colleagues across Associate Fellow, Fellow, and Senior Fellow categories, with almost 30% of our current SF cohort coming from non-traditional or non-academic roles. The resulting growth in recognition has strengthened the visibility of professional services’ pedagogical contributions, supported more integrated approaches to student learning, and reinforced our institutional commitment to inclusive education. We will discuss and showcase the changes to these routes to Fellowship that we have made for and with professional services colleagues to ensure that our accredited provision not only supports these roles and but also further benefits our student population, a positive student experience and supports student progression.

Biography

Fíona is a Lecturer in Academic Practice at Edinburgh Napier University. With a disciplinary background in Chemistry and long experience of supporting PhD students in their first steps in teaching and supporting learning, she uses her own experience of teaching diverse student cohorts in Ireland, France and Scotland to support a wide range of colleagues across the University in their practices, in their contexts. She is a Module Lead on the PGCert in Teaching and Supporting Learning, and Scheme Lead of the University's experiential route to Fellowship, ENroute. She has a particular interest in supporting and affirming the pedagogical contributions of colleagues beyond traditional academic roles, as well as how professional frameworks such as the PSF 2023 can help shape professional reflection and development. Outwith the academy, Fíona plays roller derby in Edinburgh and is always keen to chat about how the sport helps her day job!

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching; the learner as an individual; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching

Presentation keywords:

- PSF 2023
- Fellowship
- Inclusive Practice
- Professional Services
- Accredited Provision
- Teaching and Learning Support
- Diverse Learning Contexts
- Professional Identity
- Collaboration

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Progression routes to Postgraduate research in UHI

Dr Clive Fox

Session outline

I'll aim to present the range of options students offered at UHI for moving into Postgraduate Research. I'll present examples of completed and in-progress PhD projects to demonstrate the exciting range of subjects which can be studied. I'll also describe the newer MRes options which are available in some subject areas and why that can be a good intermediate step. I'll discuss some of the things students should think about if considering taking on Post Graduate studies, I will also touch on issues such as funding options, and how to get started with discussions with potential supervisors. The intended audience is anyone considering starting Post Graduate research at UHI (or elsewhere). Overall, my aim is to help students decide if this is the right route for them.

Biography

Clive is closely associated with PostGrad provision at UHI through his role as Head of PGR Development. Clive works closely with the Graduate Office and also chairs the Grad School Committee and is interim chair of the Research Degrees Committee. By training Clive is a marine biologist and has over 35 years experience working in fisheries and aquaculture research and teaching. While at SAMS he led fourth year undergraduate modules on Fisheries and Marine Environmental Impact Analysis, and he has conducted research involving the Scottish fishing and fish farming industries, as well as supervising a range of Masters and PhD students.



Clive Fox

Presentation keywords:

- PhD
- MRes
- Research
- Progressing from undergraduate level

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Student Funding: Money Matters

Lyndsay Sutherland and Michaela Gilmore

Session outline

This information session is designed for staff and will highlight the key funding challenges students face, along with the support available to those experiencing financial hardship.

The ongoing cost of living crisis continues to significantly affect students, with many facing financial difficulties that can cause considerable stress and anxiety during their studies. This session will provide staff with a greater understanding of the impact financial hardship can have on students, and will outline the financial support options available to help them successfully progress through their student journey.

Biographies

Lyndsay Sutherland – UHI Student Support Manager, UHI Executive Office

Lyndsay brings two decades of experience in further and higher education, with a specialist focus on student support. She began her career at UHI Argyll in Oban before taking a nine-month secondment with the UHI Student Experience Team in Inverness as a Student Support Assistant. What began as a temporary role evolved into a long-term commitment, and 15 years later, Lyndsay continues to be part of the UHI Student Experience Team, now as Student Support Manager.

In her current role, Lyndsay coordinates student support activities to ensure a consistent and equitable experience across the university partnership with a focus on creating safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments. A key area of responsibility is focusing on student hardship and managing the university's discretionary fund.

Michaela Gilmore - Student Support Officer

Joining the Student Experience Team in 2013, Michaela is involved in all areas of student support and works closely with colleagues across the partnership, reporting to the Student Support Manager. Michaela also leads on several strands of marketing and communication including the Learning, Teaching and Students monthly Newsletter, the annual Healthy Body Healthy Mind Photography competition and calendar, and the UHI Health & Wellbeing Facebook page, as well as maintaining many of the Student Support pages on the UHI website. In addition, Michaela is responsible for helping to support the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) role, which includes training, guidance, and annual Development Days, and managing the formal Panel process for Academic Misconduct, and Academic Appeals.



Michaela Gilmore

Presentation keywords:

- **Funding**
- **Finance**
- **Hardship**
- **Financial support**

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:
Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

From Application to Offer: The Academic's role in Admissions

Maureen MacDonald

Session outline

The session would be covering key areas of what an academic should focus on when reviewing applications:

- Entry requirements - understanding the specific academic qualifications required for the programme and how to assess if an applicant meets the criteria
- Personal statements and references - what to look out for in personal statements and academic references to gauge an applicant's motivation, suitability / potential
- Contextual information - how to interpret contextual or extenuating circumstances
- Admissions Criteria and policies - what are the guidelines and where to find them
- Sharepoint - where you can access additional information to assist an academic with making a decision
- Communication - importance of communication with the admissions team to ensure clarity and consistency in decisions
- Common pitfalls to avoid - things to look out for when reviewing applications, such as overlooking qualifications or missing important details
- Clearing - what happens at clearing that is different to the rest of the cycle and the importance of faster decision making

Biography

Maureen MacDonald is the Admissions Manager at UHI House, where she leads and oversees Higher Education admissions for UHI and the partnership. Her role involves developing offer making strategies, ensuring compliance with all regulatory requirements and maintaining adherence to codes of practice.

Maureen has worked in both the FE (Further Education) and HE (Higher Education) sector since 1995, with a particular focus on HE admissions since 2016. She is passionate about improving the student experience from the very beginning of their journey. In her current role, she is dedicated to enhancing the admissions process across UHI, ensuring greater alignment and consistency across the partnership and delivering a seamless, supportive experience for prospective students.

Presentation keywords:

- Entry requirements. Personal statements and references.
- Contextual information, admissions criteria and policies.
- Communication, clearing and common pitfalls.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Retention in Practice: Building a Sustainable Early Warning System

Nicola Smith

Session outline

This presentation outlines a pragmatic, phased approach to strengthening student retention through the development of a Brightspace-enabled Early Warning framework. Drawing on institutional implementation experience, it explores how Auditor functionality and dedicated Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) shells have been leveraged to enhance visibility of student engagement across modules without relying on complex, fully automated risk-scoring systems.

This presentation aligns with the theme of Positive Progression by demonstrating how early visibility of engagement enables timely, supportive intervention. Rather than focusing on deficit monitoring, the framework strengthens PAT student dialogue, helping students address challenges before they escalate. By connecting engagement insight with structured academic support, the model promotes sustained participation, academic achievement, and successful outcomes.

This session is relevant to any member of staff involved in supporting students in their academic study.

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

Understand the rationale for adopting a phased, semi-automated Early Warning approach to support retention

Identify how existing VLE engagement data can be leveraged through the PAT Shell to enhance academic tutoring practice"

Biography

Nicola Smith is a highly experienced higher education leader with over 20 years' experience in the sector. She joined the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) in 2005, having previously served on the senior management team at Lochaber College within the UHI partnership. Nicola is passionate about supporting student success and has extensive experience of partnership working and has led a range of European-funded transnational projects focused on professionalising social enterprise management, widening access, student support, and strengthening employer engagement. She played a key role in establishing and developing the University's Career and Employability Service. As Head of Student Experience, Nicola leads a high-performing team delivering support to students, employers and staff. She also leads the institution's strategic approach to student retention in response to the ELIR Outcome Report (November 2021). Nicola holds a Master's in the Management of Work-Related Learning, a PgCert in Marketing, a CMI Diploma in Management, is an HEA Auran, and a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning, Supporting the learner as an individual

Presentation keywords:

- Student Retention, Early Warning Systems
- Engagement Monitoring
- Data Informed Intervention
- VLE Analytics (Brightspace)
- PATs

[**BACK TO PROGRAMME**](#)

Analysis and Expanded Reflections on Responsive Pedagogies & Students as Partners

Doru Todoran, City of Glasgow College

Session outline

This presentation examines the persistent challenge of learner passivity within a Nautical STEM higher education context and explores how responsive pedagogy can be strengthened through the systematic use of learning analytics and AI-enabled ecosystems within Canvas LMS. Drawing on sustained professional inquiry and reflective practice, the session analyses patterns of limited engagement, weak self-directed study habits, and underuse of digital tools among overseas maritime students. It critically reflects on the implementation of traditional, hybrid, and flipped teaching models, highlighting structural constraints such as limited contact hours, deeply embedded prior educational conditioning, and the absence of clear accountability mechanisms.

The presentation proposes a shift from static use of the VLE as a content repository towards a responsive Canvas + AI ecosystem capable of generating real-time behavioural insights, identifying disengagement early, and enabling analytics-informed instructional adaptation. Central to this model is repositioning students as partners within a reciprocal feedback loop, where digital behaviour meaningfully informs teaching decisions and AI-based scaffolding supports self-regulated learning.

Presenter bio

Doru Todoran is a Lecturer in the Nautical STEM Faculty at City of Glasgow College. His professional career extends over the full maritime trajectory from cadet to Master Mariner, complemented by experience in ship management, maritime consultancy, higher education teaching, and skills instruction within maritime training centres. This breadth of operational and academic expertise informs his interdisciplinary approach to maritime education.

In 2025, he completed the TQFE qualification and is currently undertaking a Master's degree in Digital Education at the University of Strathclyde, focusing on technology-enhanced learning and instructional design. His work critically engages with the pedagogical transformation from linear, teacher-centred instruction towards student-centred, non-linear learning environments that emphasise strategic thinking, adaptive intelligence, and future-oriented competencies.

His research interests include AI tutors and avatar-assisted learning, responsive pedagogies with students as partners, contemplative approaches in maritime education, and the integration of learning analytics to address learner passivity in Nautical STEM contexts. He is also involved in an innovation collaboration between City of Glasgow College and the University of Strathclyde developing a Strategic Game-Based Learning Architecture as an evolutionary framework for immersive, technology-enabled education.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning, Engaging students in reflection and research, Authentic assessment and meaningful feedback, Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching, Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching



Doru Todoran

Presentation keywords:

- Curriculum Design
- Graduate Apprenticeship
- Inclusive Pedagogy
- Industry–Academia
- Integration, Research-Led Learning.

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)



Abstracts and
Biographies

Day 1 –
Workshops

Critical thinking to enhance the student experience: how can we ask the right questions?

Simon Varwell

Session outline

Questions are at the heart of any learning experience: What do I know? What do I think? How do I find out more? How well have you done? How good is our student experience and how do we improve it? For instance, Freire's problem-posing education in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Rancière's concept of the Ignorant Schoolmaster (1987) suggest that the key to learning is asking good questions with and of each other.

At a time when UHI faces major changes from artificial intelligence, funding pressures, developments in our curriculum, political and social debates, and of course UHI Transformation, it has never been more important to challenge what we know, constructively challenge and shape decisions, not be ashamed of what we don't know, and build our inquisitive and critical skills in order to ask the right questions.

This workshop introduces the Question Formulation Technique: a reflective groupwork methodology that encourages us to think about the questions we ask in life, work and learning. It can be used in learning environments, as a staff development activity or as a shared space to explore a "wicked problem". The methodology will be demonstrated and explored as something that can help us all ask questions and think about how we can work together to improve those questions.

Participants will have a chance to experience the Question Formulation Technique in its fun, participative and accessible format, and they will hopefully leave with a sense of how they could use it to equip and support their fellow staff and students to ask the very best questions about their own skills, knowledge and learning, and about the future of the learning and wider student experience at UHI.

Presenter biography

Simon Varwell is Director of Student Engagement and Representation at HISA, and is based in their UHI House office in Inverness, where he leads the students' association's student voice activity, including its local teams, support for democratic engagement and advice functions. He joined HISA in November 2023, prior to which he spent 16 years at sparqs, Scotland's national agency for student engagement. He has presented and published across Scotland and internationally, and has supported student participation projects in various other countries including as Ireland, Belgium and Armenia. He has particular research interests in concepts of student partnership and the interface of student engagement and staff development. He has a Masters in Student Engagement in Higher Education from the University of Winchester and is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.



Simon Varwell

Presentation keywords:

- Question Formulation Technique
- Groupwork
- Critical thinking
- Reflection
- Groupwork;
- Empowering curiosity.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Engaging students in reflection and research; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Coaching Students to Climb the AI Spiral: Applying the Constraints-Led Approach to Curriculum Design

Dr Tom Farrelly, Nick Baker and Dr William Evans

Session outline

The rapid embedding of generative AI across most sectors demands higher education curriculum responses that move beyond individual assessment tweaks towards meaningful, programme-level redesign and structural change that can provide greater confidence that students have achieved the desired learning outcomes. Yet few practical frameworks exist to guide educators in scaffolding both disciplinary knowledge and AI literacy simultaneously across a curriculum.

This hybrid workshop, presented by an international team from Canada and Ireland, introduces the Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) as a promising curriculum design framework for the AI era. Originally developed within sports coaching and skill acquisition, CLA conceptualises learning as emerging from the dynamic interaction between the learner, the task, and the environment. When applied alongside a Spiral Curriculum model, CLA offers educators a principled, adaptable architecture for progressively embedding AI within disciplinary learning.

Through brief presentation, discussion, and collaborative activity, participants will explore how CLA can be operationalised across diverse disciplines, and leave with practical strategies for reimagining their own curricula.

Presenter biographies

Dr. Tom Farrelly is an Academic Developer/Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU) in Ireland's southwest with over 25 years of experience in higher and further education.

His initial degree in Social Science was obtained through the Open University (OU), giving him a particular affiliation with, and insight into, supporting remote and distance learners. Holding a Doctorate in Education (focused on Virtual Learning Environments) and an MEd in Adult and Community Education, his expertise spans diverse pedagogical areas. His key research interests include Digital Education, the impact of Generative AI on learning, and actively advocating for Open Access (OA) publishing.

A self-described 'critical technophile,' Dr. Farrelly promotes effective and inclusive digital teaching and learning strategies. He is also the originator of the widely adopted, rapid-fire Gasta presentation style for dynamic academic engagement.

An active researcher, he also plays a key role in supporting the MTU research landscape by serving as one of the two co-chairs of Munster Technological University's Human Research Ethics Committee.



Dr Tom Farrelly

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)



Abstracts and
Biographies

Day 1 –
Gasta Presentations

Inspiring STEM Futures from the Early Years - An overview of the UHI STEM Outreach Programme

Jilly Munro

Session outline

An overview of the 3-year STEM Outreach Programme.

The aims were to:

- inspire the next generation by shaping pathways into STEM from early years through primary and secondary school and into further education and training, promoting access to STEM careers.
- build the confidence of pupils and practitioners, provide schools with equipment and teaching resources, and offer in-school support to embed STEM learning.
- address equity of opportunity, with particular focus on rural communities and gender equity.

Biography

As Academic and Curriculum Development Advisor, Jilly provides staff facing development opportunities across the academic partnership to support staff in the development of curriculum, learning and teaching and educational technologies within and across the tertiary context.

An experienced education professional, Jilly was previously STEM Curator for the UHI STEM Outreach Programme (2023-2026), leading the development and quality assurance of engaging STEM content for primary learners across the UHI region.

For the 15 years prior to this role, Jilly worked in primary education, most recently as a Principal Primary Teacher with The Highland Council. With a strong background in Additional Support for Learning, she is committed to ensuring that high-quality learning is accessible, engaging, and relevant.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities



Jilly Munro

Presentation keywords:

- STEM
- STEAM
- Early Years
- Primary
- Rural
- Outreach
- Skills

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Expanding Access to Doctoral Education: PhD by Retrospective Publication or Portfolio

Associate Professor Michelle Beattie and Dr Clive Fox

Session outline

This presentation explores the PhD by Publication/Portfolio as an inclusive and culturally responsive doctoral pathway that recognises and validates the career long scholarly contributions of academics who have not progressed through traditional doctoral routes. Drawing directly on the University of the Highlands and Islands' PhD by Publication Guidance (Version 6, 20 Feb 2026), the session highlights how this model enables experienced practitioners/academics, particularly those entering academia from practice based professions, to gain doctoral recognition for work already situated in the public domain. By valuing diverse forms of knowledge production, publication types, creative outputs, and professional contributions, the route offers a powerful mechanism for widening access, promoting equity, and acknowledging the scholarly richness that arises from our varied cultural, social, and professional backgrounds.

Biography

Michelle Beattie is a nurse academic with expertise in healthcare quality improvement (QI). Michelle is a qualified nurse with 20 years clinical and managerial experience predominantly in acute care. Her PhD was measuring the patient experienced of hospital quality care and her programme of work focuses on improving the experience and outcomes of patients and practitioners by improving processes and systems.

Michelle is Postgraduate Research Coordinator in Health and has an interest in alternative academic routes.

Clive is closely associated with PostGrad provision at UHI through his role as Head of PGR Development. Clive works closely with the Graduate Office and also chairs the Grad School Committee and is interim chair of the Research Degrees Committee. By training Clive is a marine biologist and has over 35 years experience working in fisheries and aquaculture research and teaching. While at SAMS he led fourth year undergraduate modules on Fisheries and Marine Environmental Impact Analysis, and he has conducted research involving the Scottish fishing and fish farming industries, as well as supervising a range of Masters and PhD students.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting the learner as an individual



Dr Michelle Beattie



Presentation keywords:

- PhD by Publication
- Portfolio for Academic Staff

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

The environmental impact of GenAI: science students' views

Kian McDonald

Session outline

GenAI presents many questions for learning and teaching – from skills to assessment. But as a Marine Science student I am interested in the environmental impact (such as data centres' use of water) and how much my fellow science students think about that.

As Faculty Intern for Science, Health and the Environment at the University of the Highlands and Islands, I am undertaking a project to explore the views of students in my faculty, particularly environmental scientists, about how they balance their views of the educational advantages GenAI might present with the environmental consequences of the technology.

My methods include a survey of students in my faculty and focus groups with students at my campus.

I will use this data to inform how we respond to GenAI in science subjects, and to demonstrate the value of students being able to research the key issues they care about within their learning experiences.

Biography

Kian is Faculty Intern for Science, Health and the Environment. He was previously Depute President of HISA for SAMS. He is a 4th year BSc Marine Science student from SAMS.

Presentation
keywords:

- GenAI
- Student engagement
- Student representation

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

**Engaging students in reflection and research; Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching;
Supporting the learner as an individual**

[BACK TO
PROGRAMME](#)

Online versus in-person learning: students' views from AHBE

Jamie Thomson

Session outline

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

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

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

Biography

Jamie Thomson is Faculty Intern for Arts, Humanities, Business and Education. He is studying an HNC in Administration and Information Technology at UHI Perth. He has previously been a Student Intern with the HISA Perth team.

Presentation keywords:

- Student engagement
- Student representation
- Online learning



Abstracts and
Biographies

Day 2 –
Short Presentations

What's in it for you? Use of a VLE active template and beyond!

Wendy Jessiman

Session outline

This presentation will focus on the VLE used at UHI, Brightspace, and the unit/module active template that was introduced in 2024. In a joint project between Information Technology and Digital Infrastructure (ITDI) and the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) the template was developed as a response to student and staff evaluations over a number of years.

The presentation cuts across a number of the conference themes as the template influences the learning experience of all students and how the VLE is used to support a student's journey. Staff too require a VLE that has the functionality that they require, and the guidance and support to utilise that functionality.

This presentation will also explore future developments in a programme template and participants views will be critical.

As part of the presentation participants will be able to:

- examine and report on your use of the active template
- provide views on the next steps in the VLE

Presenter Bio

Wendy is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Development and Innovation. Over 4 decades Wendy has published and presented (PURE), sharing her experience and supporting others to develop in the Highlands of Scotland and beyond. She provides expert guidance and bespoke support to programme teams, cognate subject areas, faculties and academic partners in enhancement and innovation in learning teaching and assessment, curriculum design, and related areas of academic practice in alignment with the university's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy.

Wendy leads and manages the design and delivery of staff facing professional development including the Professional Recognition Portfolio route to Fellowship of AdvanceHE and relating effective practice in digitally enabled education, ensuring currency and relevance to staff, student and institutional needs, working closely with Information Technology and Digital Infrastructure to support staff in using digital tools and platforms for learning and teaching.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Enriching learning through digital practices



Wendy Jessiman

Presentation
keywords:

- VLE
- Active Template

[BACK TO
PROGRAMME](#)

ESOL projects supporting inclusivity and progression

Katie McClements and Katie Johnstone

Session Outline

The presentation will focus on the use of projects within the ESOL curriculum at UHI Perth. Designed to reflect the different learner levels and stages of progression, the projects facilitate the integration of language skills, meta-skills, and content which meet the current needs and interests of students. Beginning with an outline of the different ways in which ESOL teaching supports learner engagement and progression, there will then be a focus on the rationale for introducing projects into the curriculum over the last two years. This will be followed by a case study of how these projects are practically implemented across different learner levels, including examples of project topics, lesson content, bespoke assessments, student work and the standardisation of marking. Lastly, it is intended that the positive impact on engagement and progression of students into other courses within UHI will be evidenced through student feedback.

The presentation aligns to the positive progression of ESOL students through and beyond UHI. The inclusion of meta-skills facilitates collaborative learning for settings beyond the classroom. In addition, the projects support inclusive engagement as students have input into developing specific programmes of work. The curriculum meets the diverse needs of our students with tailored assessments created and adapted as the projects progress.

This presentation is for ESOL departments and other courses with international students. However, anyone supporting ESOL and international students within the college setting may find the content relevant to develop their understanding of the difficulties some of our learners have when engaging in college life.

Participants will gain an insight into the diverse and changing needs of ESOL and other international students. They will go away with two things: an example of how projects can prepare students for collaborative learning outwith the classroom, and ideas for engaging and supporting ESOL and international learners in their own contexts.

Presenter Bios

Katie McClements began her career in 2001 when she took up a teaching post in Japan. She taught a wide range of abilities and ages and decided to move back to Scotland for further training and experience. Katie enjoys challenges and likes to be kept busy, which is just what she gets while working with students at Perth UHI.

Katie Johnstone, an ESOL lecturer at Perth UHI, started her teaching career in China, 2012. She then returned to Scotland to complete a Master's Degree in ESOL & Linguistics at Stirling University, before spending the next 6 years in a variety of teaching roles in Cambridge, Spain, and China again. Now back in Scotland, Katie enjoys applying her international teaching experience to create supportive and engaging classes for ESOL college students.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities; Engaging students in reflection and research; Authentic assessment and meaningful feedback; Harnessing open education approaches; Supporting the learner as an individual



Katie McClements

Presentation keywords:

- ESOL
- Language skills
- Meta-skills
- Equipping for future studies
- Collaborative learning
- Student engagement in curriculum design
- Tailoring materials and assessments to match student journeys

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Inclusion and Student Partnership Through Agency and Collaboration in Self and Peer Assessment Activities

Deirdre Anne Murphy

Session outline

Outlining a series of experiences and interventions that led to a 12-week case study, this presentation explores inclusive practice within formative self and peer assessment activities as well as in students' summative reflections on their development through those processes.

Informed by theory, practice, student feedback and qualitative data, Deirdre has developed an approach to engender a sense of belonging and agency through the delivery of assessment activities that encourage peer support to enable self-reflection, self-assessment and self-directed learning skills.

The presentation shows the impact of the case study through analysis of data from student interviews. Aligning with the conference theme of inclusive engagement, this data demonstrates the impact of partnership and collaboration on students' feelings of belonging, agency and competence, which ultimately enables them to identify and address their own development needs more independently.

In bringing this study to a wider audience, she hopes to inspire other educators and academic development staff to consider how they might address the negative impact of passive assessment practices through the inclusive act of engaging students as partners.

The audience will learn how she has approached the incorporation of student belonging and agency through an inclusive student partnership approach within assessment practices and students' experiences of that collaborative effort.

Presenter Bio

As a multi-disciplinary 3d designer-maker and arts educator, Deirdre worked in creative education for over 2 decades. With a wealth of experience in managing staff and resources, restructuring and developing courses, course materials and assessment strategies, she has led on a breadth of courses to engage and progress a diverse range of students.

Now in her new Learning Innovation and Development role within the Learning and Teaching Academy at City of Glasgow College, and a recent graduate from the MEd Learning and Teaching in the Arts programme at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, her interests lie in promoting and supporting learning, teaching and assessment practices that imbed inclusion and promote self-determination, with an approach that incorporates partnership, collaboration and co-creation.



Deirdre Anne Murphy

Presentation keywords:

- Inclusive practice
- Student
- Partnership
- Collaboration
- Belonging;
- Agency
- Competence
- Peer assessment
- Self-assessment
- Self-directed learning
- Self-determination

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:
Authentic assessment and meaningful feedback

Supporting Positive Progression into Nursing for Healthcare Support Workers: Recommendations from a UHI Scoping Project

Professor Rich Kyle

(presenting online, hybrid participation)

Session outline

Healthcare Support Workers (HCSWs) face barriers to progression into Registered Nurse (RN) practice. Entry requirements and progression pathways into undergraduate nursing that typically include reliance on Highers and full-time, campus-based, Higher National (HN) Certificate and Diploma programmes, may limit opportunity for adult learners balancing employment, caring responsibilities, and financial pressures. This inadvertently excludes capable and committed caring professionals from nursing careers, cutting off a critical recruitment and retention pipeline in remote, rural and island communities across Scotland. This presentation shares findings from a Scottish Government-funded project undertaken at UHI to widen access to undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes through development of more inclusive, flexible, and work-based progression pathways. Desk-based scoping examined national educational and workforce policy, current entry requirements and progression routes, including recognition of prior learning (RPL) and articulation processes. Structured discussions were held with partners across UHI and NHS Boards to explore workforce challenges, learner experience, existing progression pathways, and professional, financial, and geographical factors influencing career progression.

Scotland has an enabling policy environment to support positive progression for HCSWs. National frameworks for HCSW development, progressive RPL policy, established articulation principles, and introduction of NextGen: HN qualifications with embedded 'metaskills' provide a strong foundation. UHI's evolving partnership structures, driven by UHI Transformation, create momentum and opportunity to innovate new, potentially nationally transferrable, work-based, remote, and flexible entry routes into RN practice for HCSWs. However, scoping identified inconsistencies in availability, visibility, and operation of progression pathways, alongside organisational and financial barriers that risk inequitable access. Recommendations include development of a 'One UHI' curriculum map to improve progression pathway transparency and learner decision-making, refinement of 'metaskill'-focussed RPL processes to enable flexible part-programme entry points, greater use of national digital platforms, including TURAS, to support work-based learning, and more consistent financial support for learners and employers across partners and NHS Boards.

Presenter Bio

Professor Rich Kyle is a strategic leader in healthcare education, research, and workforce development with over two decades of experience in higher education. He currently serves as a Project Manager at UHI, where he leads a Scottish Government-funded initiative focused on widening access into nursing programmes for healthcare support workers. Rich is a Visiting Professor in the School of Health and Social Care at Edinburgh Napier University and a Trustee and Board Member of the UK Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE). He was previously Professor of Interprofessional Education and Director of the Academy of Nursing at the University of Exeter, and served as Deputy Head of Research and Evaluation at Public Health Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rich is a passionate advocate for workforce wellbeing and inclusive education pathways. He blends strategic leadership with scholarly insight to drive system-level improvement to expand opportunity and improve outcomes across health professions education and practice.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Supporting the learner as an individual



Rich Kyle

Presentation keywords:

- Supporting Positive Progression into Nursing for Healthcare Support Workers
- Recommendations from a UHI Scoping Project

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Designing Inclusive Campuses: Creating Accessible and Neuro-Affirming Learning Environments

Allie Scott

(presenting online)

Session Outline

This presentation explores how the physical and sensory design of campuses can support a more inclusive and accessible learning experience for all students, particularly those who are neurodivergent. While much attention in higher education is placed on curriculum design and academic support, the environments in which students learn, study and connect can significantly influence their sense of belonging, wellbeing and ability to engage.

The session will focus on practical ways institutions can create more neuro-affirming and inclusive learning environments through thoughtful design of campus spaces. Drawing on examples from learning commons design and student wellbeing initiatives, the presentation will explore strategies such as colour-coded spaces and clear wayfinding, delineated zones for collaborative and quiet study, sensory-aware lighting, and calming or decompression spaces for students who may experience sensory overload. It will also consider the role of biophilic design and opportunities for connection with nature; including natural light, outdoor seating and sensory gardens, in supporting student wellbeing and focus.

Presenter Bio

Allie Scott is the Mental Health & Counselling Manager for the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), where she coordinates student counselling and mental health provision across one of the most geographically distributed university partnerships in the UK. Allie's work focuses on developing sustainable, embedded models of student support that strengthen belonging, improve retention, and ensure parity of access for learners studying both online and in rural or island communities.

Allie contributes at sector level across the UK through her chair positions on national networks; the BACP Heads of University Counselling Services (HUCS) SIG, The Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education (MWBHE) Group and The College Counselling Network Scotland. With a particular focus on upstream prevention, compassionate policy design, and trauma-informed organisational culture.

Bringing a background in counselling, supervision and service leadership, Allie's work integrates pluralistic, relationship-centred therapeutic practice with strategic change and system design. She is especially interested in how institutions create environments of real care and how policy, pedagogy, and student support models interconnect to create a sense of belonging for students.

Presentation keywords:

- Inclusive campus design
- Neurodiversity
- Accessibility
- Student wellbeing
- Learning environments
- Biophilic design
- Sensory-aware spaces,
- Student experience

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Supporting the learner as an individual; Enriching learning through digital practices

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

From Theory to Reality: Lived Experience, Active Research, and the Social Scientist of the Future

Katy O'Connor

Session outline

This presentation explores how integrating lived experience into social science teaching and active research can future-proof learners across Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). In a context shaped by artificial intelligence, automation, and increasing social and economic complexity, content knowledge alone is no longer sufficient; learners must develop the human capabilities that technology cannot replicate, including critical thinking, ethical reasoning, contextual intelligence, and the ability to navigate lived realities. The session argues that lived experience is not anecdotal or secondary knowledge but a legitimate and powerful source of insight that strengthens social inquiry. Practical examples from FE and tertiary settings will illustrate how reflective practice, community-embedded inquiry, and student-led research approaches can be embedded across levels. The presentation aligns with conference themes focused on future proofing student learner journeys. Intended participants include FE and HE educators, curriculum leaders, and educational developers seeking to strengthen engagement and relevance in social science programmes. Attendees will gain practical strategies for embedding lived experience ethically and leave with clearer approaches to developing reflexivity, adaptability, and meaningful skills for work, citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Presenter Bio

With over 12 years' experience as a Social Science Lecturer at UHI Moray, Katy brings a dynamic and globally informed perspective to learning and teaching. She holds a Master's degree in International Humanitarian Affairs (Distinction) and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Committed to educational leadership, she has also completed the HEA Aurora Leadership Programme, strengthening her practice in inclusive and transformational learning environments.

Her academic work is enriched by lived experience and extensive travel and project involvement across the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. These experiences inform her teaching, enabling her to connect theory to real-world contexts and bring global social issues into the classroom. As artificial intelligence reshapes higher education and makes learning pathways more complex, she is passionate about future-proofing the social science student journey. Her approach emphasises critical thinking, adaptability, and authentic engagement, ensuring students are prepared not just for employment, but for meaningful contribution in a rapidly changing world. A dedicated mentor and coach, she is known for creating inspiring, engaging learning spaces where students feel empowered to grow and succeed.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Engaging students in reflection and research; Harnessing open education approaches

Presentation
keywords:

- From Theory to Reality
- Lived Experience
- Active Research
- The Social Scientist of the Future

[BACK TO
PROGRAMME](#)

Bridging the Gap between Industry and Academia through Integrating Research-Led Project-Based Learning in a Graduate Apprenticeship Engineering Programme

Deepak Shamvedi, Graduate Apprenticeship Programme, The University of Dundee

Session Outline

This presentation will share the development and delivery of the Advanced Design and Manufacture module within the University of Dundee Graduate Apprenticeship in Engineering Design and Manufacture programme. The module has been running for four years and integrates project-based learning with workplace practice to support inclusive progression through units and the programme. Core to the module is a hands-on project where apprentices design, simulate, 3D-print, test, and iteratively refine a wind turbine, and work in groups towards producing an academic research paper.

The presentation demonstrates how structured, hands-on projects, varied assessment approaches, and continuous feedback can foster inclusive learning environments that support students from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. It also touches on supporting engagement beyond the curriculum, as one student group has advanced their project to present their research at the Wind Turbine 2026 conference in Spain. The module promotes active participation, research engagement, and collaboration, demonstrating a model for integrating applied learning with scholarly development in apprenticeships.

Attendees will benefit from a concrete example of how inclusive, research-led engineering education can bridge the gap between academia and industry, enhance learner confidence, and stimulate interest in applied research. The presentation will provide transferable ideas and approaches relevant across disciplines where inclusive, project-based learning and professional engagement are priorities.

Presenter Bio

Deepak is the Programme Lead for the Engineering Design & Manufacture (Graduate Apprenticeship) degree at the University of Dundee. He joined the university in 2020 as a Lecturer, where he teaches modules in Electrical & Electronics, Programmable Electronics, Manufacturing, and Work-Based Learning.

Prior to his role at Dundee, Deepak worked as the Mechanical Lead for the potential spin-out company Infinect at Heriot-Watt University. Deepak's research interests are interdisciplinary. His PhD focused on the design of 3D microwave components using direct metal laser sintering, leading to several published research papers. Currently, his research investigates project-based learning, the integration of Industry 4.0 manufacturing into education and training, and the use of blended and hybrid teaching methods to enhance learning outcomes.

He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education (PGCAPHE) from the University of Dundee, UK.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Engaging students in reflection and research; Supporting the learner as an individual

Presentation keywords:

- Curriculum Design
- Graduate Apprenticeship
- Inclusive Pedagogy
- Industry–Academia Integration
- Research-Led Learning.

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Sustaining Culture Through Food: Intergenerational Heritage Skills, Place-Attentiveness, and Early Learning in Orkney

Ali Hepburn and Ingrid Groat, UHI Orkney

Session Outline

This presentation outlines an interdisciplinary, intergenerational project at the University of the Highlands and Islands Orkney (UHIO) that positions traditional food practices as a vehicle for cultural continuity, place-attentiveness, and early childhood development. Bringing together students from Professional Cookery and Childhood Practice programmes with children in Early Learning and Childcare Centres (ELCC), the project explores how shared food preparation can function as both pedagogical method and cultural transmission. The session will explore how inter-generational learning and place-attentive pedagogy can support UHI's social obligations within the community and society. It will frame food as a socio-cultural practice embedded in language, memory, identity, and community, with particular attention to rural and Northern contexts.

The core of the presentation details the collaborative design of the project: students engage in traditional skill development—such as preparing heritage recipes and using locally sourced produce—before facilitating culturally grounded food activities with young children. These exchanges are designed to promote emotional wellbeing, social interaction, and language development, including the promotion of Scots (Orkadian) language through everyday food practices. Methodologically, the project employs structured observations and semi-structured interviews with participating students and practitioners to examine perceived impacts on children's social and emotional development, student professional learning, and community engagement. Preliminary findings suggest that shared culinary activity can enhance relational learning, foster intergenerational dialogue, and strengthen children's sense of belonging through tangible connections to place.

The session will conclude by reflecting on implications for rural teacher education, vocational education, and community partnerships in the north. It argues that embedding heritage skills and traditional foodways within higher education curricula not only supports culturally responsive practice but also contributes to sustaining local knowledge systems. Participants will be invited to consider how similar interdisciplinary models might be adapted within their own contexts to reinforce cultural continuity through everyday pedagogical practice.

Presenter Bio

[Ali Hepburn](#) is a lecturer in Teacher Education and Educational Leadership at UHI Orkney. [Bio](#)

[Ingrid Groat](#) is a chef lecturer at UHI Orkney, where she leads professional cookery and hospitality programmes grounded in technique and contemporary industry standards. Drawing on extensive professional kitchen experience, she delivers skills-based training that emphasises precision, sustainability, provenance, and high professional standards.

Her teaching makes strong use of Orkney's distinctive food landscape, promoting seasonal, locally sourced produce and close engagement with the regional hospitality sector. Ingrid supports students in developing advanced practical competence alongside essential knowledge of nutrition, food safety, menus, and kitchen leadership. Her research interests focus on heritage skills and traditional foods, particularly the preservation and reinterpretation of regional culinary practices within modern hospitality contexts. She is interested in how traditional techniques, recipes, and foodways can inform sustainable practice, strengthen local food identity, and contribute to cultural continuity.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities; Engaging students in reflection and research; Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching; Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching



Ali Hepburn



Ingrid Groat

Presentation keywords:

- Intergenerational learning
- Place-attentiveness
- Food practice
- Traditional skills
- Sustainability

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Empowering students to shape their learning experience: case studies from the Student Voice Rep system in 2025-26

Simon Varwell

Session Outline

How we engage students and their representatives in shaping the quality of their learning is key to partnership working, students' confidence and skills, and above all to the enhancement of the student experience at UHI. Core to this is the Student Voice Rep system, where over 500 SVRs from across UHI's programmes represent the views of their fellow students and contribute to conversations with HISA, their teaching staff and wider decision-making in UHI.

This session will explain recent developments in the SVR system, including feedback gained from a systematic use of sparqs' Student Learning Experience model in SVR meetings and conversations, case studies from two years of HISA's SVR Impact Competition, and enhancements to training for SVRs. The session will also present an opportunity for conference participants to give their own thoughts on how the SVR system can better support staff-student conversations about the enhancement of learning. It will therefore appeal to those interested in programme level quality and the empowerment of students as active citizens of UHI. Attendees will learn more about the SVR system and gain an opportunity to shape it for the future.

Presenter Bio

Simon Varwell is Director of Student Engagement and Representation at HISA, and is based in their UHI House office in Inverness, where he leads the students' association's student voice activity, including its local teams, support for democratic engagement and advice functions. He joined HISA in November 2023, prior to which he spent 16 years at sparqs, Scotland's national agency for student engagement. He has presented and published across Scotland and internationally, and has supported student participation projects in various other countries including as Ireland, Belgium and Armenia. He has particular research interests in concepts of student partnership and the interface of student engagement and staff development. He has a Masters in Student Engagement in Higher Education from the University of Winchester and is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.



Simon Varwell

Presentation keywords:

- Student representation
- Student
- Partnership
- SVRs
- Enhancement' student voice

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Connecting learning across communities; Engaging students in reflection and research; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Supporting our working students: multiple means to nurture engagement, representation, action, and expression

Lois Gray UHI North West and Hebrides and Clara Hickey, UHI

Session outline

This short presentation session will showcase the multiple means by which we engage, support, develop, and involve our working students. As the demographic of our students changes from full-time undergraduates to part-time working students, usually in the same subject area, we need to consider different ways to support these students. Starting with the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process to encourage students with work, rather than academic, experience to enter our courses, we will go on to talk about how our courses are specifically designed and modified to integrate our working students with those fully in academia.

We will highlight our successes, noting the value of including working students. We will present our mitigation and solution of problems and difficulties associated with this approach. Finally, we will discuss weaknesses in our methods, encouraging questions and recommendations from the audience.

The theme aligns with inclusive engagement to enhance student learning journeys. In particular, it meets the UDL requirements for providing multiple means of engagement, action and expression. It also aligns with SPARQS SLE themes of Curriculum, Resources, Delivery, and Assessment.

The intended audience is academic staff, for example programme leaders, module leaders, and lecturers. The intended outcome is to showcase how courses can be adapted to encourage non-traditional learners. Our enthusiasm for supporting working students comes from our own experience as a Graduate Apprentice (Clara) and from working with and developing people with little obvious academic capability, to achieve stellar careers (Lois).

Presenter Bios

Lois Gray has been an engineering lecturer at UHI North West and Hebrides, Thurso campus, for over 20 years. She came to UHI following a 20-year career as an electronics designer, and, as such, she is a strong proponent of industry-relevant and work-based education. She studied her own MSc remotely, whilst working full time. She strongly supports inclusive education, and has a National Teaching Fellowship award for her pedagogical approach to delivering engineering education remotely and flexibly, using innovative technologies. Lois has won several HISA awards for the academic and pastoral support she gives her, mostly-working, students, which is informed by her active membership of the IEEE's Education Society. She is also a certified member of the Association of Learning Technologists, a Chartered Engineer, a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and the Scottish representative for the nationwide Association of National Teaching Fellows.

As the Work-based Learning Manager for UHI, **Clara Hickey** oversees the apprenticeship contracts for the university and supports the academic partners to ensure contract compliance. In addition, the Hub provides support and facilitate community of practice in relation to work-based learning including the development of new Graduate Apprenticeship or work-based qualifications, best practice for assessments and ensuring a quality delivery. As someone who has previously undertaken a Graduate Apprenticeship while working full-time, she can understand the issues apprentices face while also balancing the need to ensure we meet the rigours of academic standards.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment, Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Authentic assessment and meaningful feedback, Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching, Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching

Presentation keywords:

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Work-based learning
- Work-based assessment
- Apprenticeship

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Preparing Student Nurses for the Future: Developing Leadership, Teamworking and Communication Skills via a Major Incident

Exercise

Danielle Woods, Eve Eadie and Pamela McKay

Session outline

Preparing future nurses for qualification encompasses many different elements. Responding confidently and effectively during situations such as major incidents requires more than clinical competence; it demands strong leadership, coordinated teamwork and clear communication under pressure. This project presents the development of a large scale, interprofessional major incident exercise designed to enhance these core capabilities among Adult and Mental Health nursing students. The simulation immerses students in a high fidelity major incident scenario structured around the recognised bronze, silver, and gold command framework. Participants are deployed across operational areas including triage, resuscitation (Red), urgent care (Yellow), walking wounded (Green), mental health ward, the command centre, and on scene response teams. Scenarios incorporate adults, children and individuals with learning disabilities, requiring students to work collaboratively across professional and clinical boundaries while maintaining person centred, safe and ethical care. Leadership development is embedded throughout the exercise. Students must make time critical decisions, prioritise care, delegate tasks appropriately and manage risk within dynamic and uncertain environments. Teamworking is strengthened through interprofessional role understanding, resource negotiation and shared situational awareness. Communication skills are deliberately foregrounded, with students required to use structured approaches such as SBAR and closed loop communication to ensure clarity, accuracy and accountability in fast moving situations. Learners based at the Western Isles campus participate via a table-top exercise, mirroring the realities of contemporary healthcare delivery across geographically dispersed regions. This initiative illustrates how major incident simulation can be purposefully designed to maintain nursing learning outcomes. It offers a scalable, transferable model for educators seeking to embed leadership, teamwork and communication development within undergraduate nursing curricula.

Presentation
keywords:

- Nursing
- Major Incident
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Communication

Presenter Bios

Danielle Woods' clinical background for 19.5 years was working as a senior nurse in a local acute NHS Trust, 14 of those years working in the Accident and Emergency department and 5.5 years as the Trust's Lead Nurse for Dementia. In 2018, Danielle moved into academia undertaking a full-time Nurse Lecturer post at the University of Bradford's School of Nursing and Health Care Leadership. In 2021, she relocated to the Highlands and joined the University of Highlands and Islands within the same role. Danielle is currently the Programme Lead for the BSc Nursing Undergraduate Programme responsible for the operation, monitoring and ongoing development of the UG programme. In December 2024 Danielle was promoted to Senior Lecturer. In support of maintaining her clinical credibility, Danielle works at a local Minor Injuries /Out of Hours unit as a Bank Nurse. This role involves assessment, treatment, management of patients via the NHS hub, 111 referrals or walk ins presenting with a range of acute medical/surgical conditions and/or minor illness and injuries.

Eve Eadie is a Mental Health Nurse Academic, Professional Lead for the Undergraduate Mental Health Nursing Programme and Joint Lead for Practice Learning at the Centre for Rural Health Sciences. Eve has been a qualified Mental Health nurse for 10 years and has worked in acute admissions, alcohol and drug detox and most recently as a Primary Mental Health Worker in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Eve has been with the Centre for Rural Health Sciences now for almost 6 years with a keen interest in Quality Improvement. She is committed to the education of student nurses and their progress throughout the nursing programme and continuing on to future careers.

Pamela McKay is a lecturer in adult nursing at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Pamela is a qualified nurse with over 25 years clinical experience, working predominately in the surgical specialities. She has experience of teaching on a variety of academic nursing subjects to undergraduate students and, supervises MSc students. Pamela has 12 years' experience as a Musculoskeletal Audit Nurse. A variety of audits were undertaken as part of the national Strategy set out by the Scottish Orthopaedic Service Development Group. In addition, she has worked as a Practice Education Facilitator developing and supporting the role of the nursing assistant. Pamela has an interest in research having undertaken an MSc and then being afforded the opportunity of a Studentship at the University of the West of Scotland to undertake PhD research.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment, Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Authentic assessment and meaningful feedback, Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching, Celebrating diversity through learning and teaching

[BACK TO
PROGRAMME](#)

Helping our students to be 'Future Fit' for life beyond UHI

Iain Eisner/Helen Anton

Session outline

The focus of the presentation - highlighting how UHI Futures supports students through our messaging, our career management platform Handshake and working collaboratively with teaching staff to embed careers/employability in the curriculum.

How the presentation aligns to the conference theme - UHI Futures helps our students be ready/fit for their next steps.

The intended audience/participants - UHI staff.

Learning outcomes - greater awareness of UHI Futures, better understanding of the value of career support and a fresh look at how to view career development as an important part of the student learner journey.

Biography

Iain supports students and graduates from across the university with their career development. Iain has a BA in Applied Social Sciences and a postgraduate qualification in Career Development. Although qualified and experienced in career development, his 'career' journey to date has seen him work in various roles - Postman, Recruitment, Funeral Directing, Megabus Driver, Jobcentre Adviser and now Careers and Employability Adviser with the university. Iain feels his career journey is far from unique and typical now of the nature of career journeys and the role that chance/happenstance can play across our lives.

Helen supports students and graduates with their career development and learning. She also compiles the monthly student newsletter and manages the Career Centre social media feeds. Helen recently completed a PG Cert in Digital Marketing and is currently half-way through a PGDip in Career Information Advice and Guidance through the University of Warwick. She has had a multitude of jobs from picture framer to photography tutor, is an advocate of careers being a journey not a destination and believes keeping an open and inquisitive mind is crucial in career development.



Helen Anton



Iain Eisner

Presentation keywords:

- Confidence
- Re-assurance
- Adaptable
- Positive
- Aware
- Prepared,
- Connected

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)



Abstracts and
Biographies

Day 2 –
Workshops

Collaborative excellence in practice: delivering an inclusive library experience

Richard Hughes and Kasia Szostak

(Hybrid participation)

Session outline

Building on our recent Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) in 2025, we will demonstrate how integrated approaches to reading list management (Talis Aspire), seamless resource access (Lean Library), and copyright compliance can simplify access to resources and improve student satisfaction across all levels and modes of study in diverse geographical locations.

Intended for academics, curriculum leaders, and Learning and Teaching professionals, this session will highlight service improvement and provide practical examples of how embedding library tools and resources provide an engaging and less stressful student experience, supporting the conference themes of inclusivity and future proofing the learner journey.

The session will highlight:

- Practical examples on how to reduce student frustration when accessing resources, and providing context on the level and volume of reading required.
- Introducing a consistent experience across modules and ensure the library has relevant print and electronic content.
- Fully utilising copyright tools and licences to improve the student experience
- Examples of using the Talis system to engage users throughout the academic year and embedding content in the VLE with minimum fuss
- Tools that can improve access to resources for remote learners and simplify access.
- The support materials and library assistance that is available.

Presenter biographies

Richard Hughes is the University Librarian and responsible for co-ordinating library activity and strategy across the partnership. The library service provides a variety of systems and eResources to the benefit of student and staff across UHI. He also oversees the Learning Technology area of ITDI and chairs the Learning and Technology Development Group.

Kasia Szostak is the UHI Systems Librarian, ITDI, and the Subject Librarian for Land and Marine Science. She administers a variety of systems and tools, including Library Search, Talis Aspire and Lean Library. She supports academic staff, students, and librarians in accessing and using library services, tools, and resources effectively.



Richard Hughes



Kasia Szostak

Presentation keywords:

- Library,
- Learning resources
- Resource lists
- Copyright
- Distance learners
- Student experience
- Technology

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Supporting flexible and student-centred learning; Enriching learning through digital practices; Integrated and sustainable learning and teaching; Supporting the learner as an individual

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Building student partnership through the SPA, TQER and more

Nicola Smith, Sorcha Kirker and Andi Garrity

On Campus Participation

Session outline

Partnership is increasingly at the heart of Scotland's tertiary sector, and UHI is ideally placed to embrace and progress partnership in a pioneering and innovative way. This workshop will outline latest developments including the path to the 2026 Student Partnership Agreement (SPA), explore partnership in Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). and generate ideas about how we can build partnership into our approaches at all levels and in all parts of UHI, both on a day to day level and strategically.

The workshop will begin with an exploration of UHI and HISA's new Student Partnership Agreement which provides a structured framework for embedding student-staff collaboration within institutional governance and quality enhancement, the SPA formalises a shared commitment to co-creation, transparency, and continuous improvement around issues that students highlight. This part of the session will demonstrate how a clearly defined partnership model strengthens engagement, and enhances learning and teaching quality and experience. It will then engage participants in a discursive and reflective exercise that considers their own positionality on and contribution to partnership, using various resources such as Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership which was created by the sector to help drive partnership within the TQEF and which will be a key consideration for preparation for UHI's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) in autumn 2026. The workshop will identify lessons, perspectives and ideas from participants to inform future work on the SPA, TQER preparation, and wider partnership working between staff and students. The workshop will appeal to participants who are interested in learning more about, and sharing their own experiences of, staff-student partnership in learning and enhancement

Presenter biographies

Nicola Smith is Head of Student Experience in the UHI Learning, Teaching and Students Directorate. Well versed in the opportunities and challenges presented by partnership working, she has been involved in the management of a variety of partnership projects focusing on a transnational approach to the professionalisation of social enterprise management, the development of wider access routes and support mechanisms for students, employer engagement and the ultimately the set up and development of the University's Career and Employability Service. In her current position as Head of Student Experience, she is responsible for the management of a highly successful team focussing on enhancing the student experience across Mental Health and Counselling, Career and Employability and Student Support provision, she is also responsible for the UHI Retention Strategy and annual operational planning.

Sorcha Kirker is the Student Partnership and Development Coordinator in the UHI Learning, Teaching and Students department. Sorcha is an experienced practitioner of student engagement and student voice, having been both a local and regional student officer for HISA, before being elected into the role of NUS Scotland women's officer. Since joining UHI as a staff member, Sorcha has led and worked on a number of student engagement related projects, including redevelopment of the SVR training, leading on student experience and representation at the UHI Halls of Residence; and supporting and later leading on work related to the Student Partnership Agreement on behalf of UHI.



Sorcha Kirker

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

Confident conversations: Navigating disclosures of gender-based violence

Lyndsay Sutherland and Lorna Ferguson
On Campus Participation

Session outline

Disclosures of gender-based violence (GBV) can be challenging for staff to navigate, often leaving them uncertain about how to respond appropriately, sensitively, and within organisational boundaries. Many staff worry about saying the wrong thing, causing further harm, or not knowing what support pathways are available. This presentation recognises these challenges and focuses on building confidence, clarity, and practical skills for responding to GBV disclosures. It will explore common barriers staff face, outline trauma-informed and survivor-centred response principles, and provide concrete strategies for listening, validating, and signposting safely. By strengthening knowledge and self-assurance, the session aims to help staff feel better prepared to support individuals who disclose GBV while maintaining professional wellbeing and boundaries.

This interactive session will focus on the below key areas:

What is GBV; Challenges with disclosure; Responding sensitively; Confidentiality; Signposting

Presenter biographies

Lyndsay Sutherland – UHI Student Support Manager, UHI Executive Office

Lyndsay brings two decades of experience in further and higher education, with a specialist focus on student support. She began her career at UHI Argyll in Oban before taking a nine-month secondment with the UHI Student Experience Team in Inverness as a Student Support Assistant. What began as a temporary role evolved into a long-term commitment, and 15 years later, Lyndsay continues to be part of the UHI Student Experience Team, now as Student Support Manager. In her current role, Lyndsay coordinates student support activities to ensure a consistent and equitable experience across the university partnership with a focus on creating safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments. Her key areas of responsibility include the prevention and response to gender-based violence, supporting vulnerable student groups, safeguarding, inclusive support, and student hardship.

Lorna Ferguson - Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, UHI Executive Office

Lorna leads on a range of university-wide initiatives focused on mental health, wellbeing, and student support. She was instrumental in developing the university's Mental Health and Counselling Policy and works across the partnership to design and deliver training that supports both staff and students. Her work includes the creation of the Concerned Parent Protocol, the development of the Suicide and Risk Intervention Policy and guidance, and the delivery of Suicide Intervention Training and Reflective Practitioner Groups.

Lorna also plays a key role in advancing gender-based violence and wellbeing initiatives, leading the university's annual 16 Days of Action campaign contribution, in collaboration with members of the Highland Violence Against Women Partnership. In addition, she works closely with HISA on projects such as the Student Mental Health Agreement, strengthening collaborative approaches to student wellbeing.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:
Supporting the learner as an individual

Presentation keywords:

- Gender-based violence
- Disclosures
- Confidence
- skills development

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)

General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) update- what do I have to do?

Wendy Jessiman and Alex Walker, UHI

Session outline

In 2018, there was a national agreement that all lecturers working in Scotland's colleges would register with General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). Reflecting on practice using GTCS Standards is mandatory for all GTCS registrants. This process is designed to develop and enhance professionalism, benchmark professional competency and support self-evaluation.

This session will support GTCS registrants to reflect on their practice and begin to compile the evidence they require annually and for the 5 yearly confirmation of their registration with GTCS. The session is in the format of a guide- 'how to' for GTCS registrants- participants will be able to leave the session with greater understanding of what is required and when. The role of the reviewer and confirmer will also be examined as part of GTCS Professional Review and Development Process.

Presenter biographies

Wendy is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Development and Innovation. Over 4 decades Wendy has published and presented (PURE), sharing her experience and supporting others to develop in the Highlands of Scotland and beyond. She provides expert guidance and bespoke support to programme teams, cognate subject areas, faculties and academic partners in enhancement and innovation in learning teaching and assessment, curriculum design, and related areas of academic practice in alignment with the university's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy. Wendy leads and manages the design and delivery of staff facing professional development including the Professional Recognition Portfolio route to Fellowship of AdvanceHE and relating effective practice in digitally enabled education, ensuring currency and relevance to staff, student and institutional needs, working closely with Information Technology and Digital Infrastructure to support staff in using digital tools and platforms for learning and teaching. IN 2025/26 Wendy has led a Short-Life Working Group with representatives from across UHI on GTCS information and support for GTCS registrants and reviewers.

Alex heads the UHI Academic Practice Development provision, supporting the leadership and coordination of staff facing professional development and recognition across UHI. At UHI Alex has established pathways for staff to seek professional recognition, set up a successful mentoring programme and established a programme of development opportunities to enhance and develop learning and teaching. Central to this has been utilising technology to build communities of practice across the UHI academic partnership to share and enhance academic and academic related practice. Alex is passionate about pedagogically driven and inclusive approaches to mentoring and professional development and has presented and published in this area. Alex was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2025, completed a MEd in Tertiary and Higher Education in 2022 and holds Advance HE Principal Fellowship and Certified Membership of the Association for Learning Technology (CMALT), with a specialism in utilising technology for professional development in geographically dispersed contexts. In 2023 Alex achieved a level 5 ILM coaching and mentoring qualification and has mentored and coached UHI colleagues.

UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy Values:

Learning for personal growth and employment



Wendy Jessiman



Alex Walker

Presentation keywords:

- Professional Update
- Reflection
- Professional Review and Development
- Professional Learning Cycle

[BACK TO PROGRAMME](#)