5th BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

University House - 11th of September, 2025

"SHAPING BUSINESS LEARNING: AUTHENTIC, RESPONSIBLE, FUTURE-FOCUSED"

THE CONFERENCE BOOK

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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5th BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

"SHAPING BUSINESS LEARNING: AUTHENTIC, RESPONSIBLE, FUTURE-FOCUSED"

Conference Chairs: Dr. Ehsan Khavandkar, Dr. Kelly Rogers and Charley Hafiz

September, 2025

Conference Website: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/events/2025/5th-education-conference

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WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Prof. Sarah Montano
Director of Education,
Birmingham Business
School

I am delighted to welcome you to the 5th Education Conference here at Birmingham Business School. The conference offers us an exciting platform to discuss, share and consider the opportunities for innovation and transformation within curricula. Today, we extend a special welcome to colleagues from across the UK who join us for thought provoking and simulating discussions. The four conference themes and tracks enable us to enjoy a range of submissions from experiential learning to the embedding of sustainability to personal growth and contemporary challenges. Not only do we have academic papers, case studies and roundtables, we also welcome the perspective of our professional service colleagues.

The University was established 125 years ago with a vison to be "*a great school of universal instruction…taking all knowledge in its province.*" Education is transformative for ourselves and our students, enabling us all to make a difference to the world. Focussing on Birmingham Business School, established in 1902, *"we deliver world-class research and teaching that provides the insight, ambition and skills to shape advanced and sustainable business strategies. The School's vision is to promote curiosity and thought leadership for responsible business."* This conference provides us with the forum to be able to discuss, reflect and consider how we might continue our respective missions, simulating students' curiosity, offering intellectual challenge, enabling employability skills and challenge ourselves to innovate and develop our educational practice.

Welcome to Birmingham Business School and the 2025 Education Conference!

Professor Sarah Montano
Director of Education
Birmingham Business School
University of Birmingham

FOREWORD FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIRS

Dr. Ehsan Khavandkar
Conference Chair
Birmingham Business
School, University of

Dr. Kelly Rogers
Conference Chair
Birmingham Business
School, University of

Charley Hafız
Conference Chair
Birmingham Business
School, University of
Birmingham

It is our distinct honour to welcome you to the 5th Birmingham Business School Education Conference. On behalf of the organising committee, we extend our sincere gratitude to colleagues across the UK higher education sector and our international partners, whose valuable contributions have enriched and shaped this year's programme.

Over the past five years, the BBS Education Conference has established itself as a premier forum for dialogue, critical reflection, and innovation within business and management education. The conference's distinctive character lies in its ability to unite academics, professional services colleagues, students, and external partners, fostering meaningful conversations that transcend traditional professional boundaries and disciplinary divisions. We are particularly proud that in 2025, professional services colleagues are formally recognised as presenters and co-creators of knowledge, ensuring their expertise and innovation in enhancing the student experience receives due acknowledgement.

This year has witnessed remarkable levels of engagement, with a record number of submissions received from an expanded network of UK universities and international institutions. This breadth of participation reflects both the pressing nature of the challenges facing our sector and the collective appetite for collaborative solutions.

The conference's central theme, "Shaping Business Learning: Authentic, Responsible, Future-Focused," embodies our shared commitment to reimagining business and management education for a rapidly evolving global landscape. As business schools navigate digital transformation, harness the potential of generative artificial intelligence, respond to demands for authentic and experiential learning, and address calls for enhanced responsibility and inclusion, this theme challenges us to examine critically how we design curricula, support colleagues, and prepare graduates for future success. It encapsulates both the opportunities and responsibilities that define higher

education in 2025, providing a conceptual framework through which all contributions may be understood.

The development of this year's programme was informed by comprehensive consultation and survey research, which identified four strategic priorities for contemporary higher education:

- Pedagogical innovation and transformative assessment practices
- Responsible and inclusive educational approaches
- Professional development and enhanced services
- Diverse perspectives in educational methodologies

These themes underpin our comprehensive programme, featuring over 30 presentations, interactive workshops, keynote addresses, and roundtable discussions.

Our distinguished keynote speakers provide intellectual leadership for our conversations. Lynn Gribble of the University of New South Wales challenges us to reimagine assessment practices in the era of artificial intelligence, balancing innovation with academic integrity. Fiona Walkley, Peter Andrews, and Fannie Yeung from the University of Hull present Authentic Business Learning as a forward-thinking, institution-wide strategy. Maya Cara and Mark DeFreitas of University College London examine approaches to embedding external engagement that effectively connect classroom learning to career preparation. Collectively, these presentations offer critical insights into assessment reform, curricular strategy, and employability enhancement.

The conference's strength extends beyond its keynotes to encompass a diverse array of presentations and case studies. Colleagues will demonstrate innovative approaches including authentic assessment in postgraduate programmes, curriculum integration of artificial intelligence, student-led teaching initiatives, scenario analysis as experiential learning, and the development of reflective pedagogies for systems leadership. Additional contributions address educational sustainability through animated storytelling, intercultural learning via international online exchanges, and inclusive assessment practices that challenge implicit biases. These presentations reflect not only creativity in pedagogy but also robust evidence-based research, evaluation, and demonstrated impact.

Our workshop programme provides practical opportunities to engage with emerging methodologies: decolonising business education through creative practice, utilising LEGO® Serious Play for developing sustainability mindsets, implementing gamification strategies with and without artificial intelligence, creating inclusive content through generative AI, and reconceptualising the Master's dissertation within a changing global context. These sessions are designed to equip participants with immediately applicable tools and techniques for implementation within their respective institutions.

The roundtable discussions promise dynamic engagement with pressing sector concerns. Panel sessions will examine the implications of university

rankings, explore employer perspectives on graduate preparedness, and investigate the evolving role of professional services in an AI-enhanced environment. These discussions reflect the conference's commitment to addressing both the opportunities and tensions that characterise contemporary higher education.

Taken together, this year's programme offers a comprehensive examination of the future trajectory of business education. From authentic pedagogical approaches and digital transformation to sustainability initiatives, inclusive practices, and professional services innovation, the conference demonstrates both the diversity of current approaches and our shared commitment to developing business education that is increasingly authentic, responsible, and future-focused.

We express our profound appreciation to all contributors for their creativity, scholarship, and generous sharing of expertise. We also acknowledge our organising committee and volunteers for their dedication in developing this year's programme. Most importantly, we thank all participants for their engagement, which transforms the BBS Education Conference into a vibrant forum for collaboration and educational advancement.

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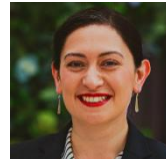# CONFERENCE ORGANISATION, TRACKS AND COMMITTEES

Track A: Pedagogical Innovation and Transformative Assessment


Dr. Laura Salciuviene

Dr. Ehsan Khavandkar

Holly Austin-Davis

The conference welcomed contributions that explored thoughtful approaches to business education designed to enhance student learning through innovation and meaningful assessment. This theme examined how digital technologies, authentic learning experiences, and varied assessment strategies could transform the educational landscape and foster deeper student engagement across cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. We received papers, case studies, and practice-based reflections that showcased effective pedagogical innovations, explored data-informed teaching approaches, and demonstrated how student engagement frameworks could be applied in business education. Contributors particularly addressed how to stimulate intellectual curiosity, nurture emotional connections to learning content, and encourage active participation through innovative teaching approaches. Submissions shared experiences of implementing project-based learning, gamification, simulations, and innovative assessment strategies that created meaningful connections with learners and prepared students for the complexities of the modern business environment. The track covered a broad spectrum of following topics:

1. Experiential Learning, Digital Innovation, Gamification and Simulation Approaches to Business Education
   - The role of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in business education
   - Gamification techniques to enhance student engagement in business courses
   - Simulation-based learning for complex business scenarios
2. Authentic and Project-Based Teaching and Learning Approaches in Business Education
   - Embedding live consultancy projects with industry partners in the curriculum
   - Work-integrated learning and its impact on employability outcomes
   - Case-based and problem-based learning strategies for business education
3. Innovative Assessment Strategies for Student Engagement and Impact
   - Competency-based assessment models in business schools
   - Developing authentic assessments that reflect real-world business challenges
   - Formative assessment approaches for deeper learning
4. AI, Data Literacy and Analytics for Enhanced Teaching and Learning Experiences
   - Supporting staff and students in developing data literacy skills
   - Using learning analytics to improve student retention and success
   - Ethical considerations in data use for educational purposes
   - Encouraging behavioural engagement through active learning techniques

Track B: Responsible, Inclusive, and Future-Focused Business Education
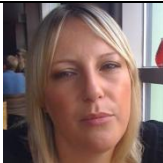
Dr. Kelly Rogers   Dr. Joachim Timlon   Ben Cuffin-Munday

The conference welcomed submissions that examined approaches to embedding sustainability and ethics in curriculum design, developing entrepreneurial mindsets, promoting inclusive pedagogies, and building meaningful community partnerships. This theme explored how business education could address global challenges whilst fostering inclusivity and preparing students for future careers. We received papers addressing how business schools could champion equity, integrate responsible business practices, nurture future skills, and engage with communities for positive societal impact. We particularly valued contributions from diverse perspectives that showcased inclusive recruitment, retention strategies, and learning environments reflecting the varied world our graduates would navigate. The track covered a broad spectrum of following topics:

1. Embedding Sustainability, Ethics, and Governance Models in Contemporary Business Curriculum
   - Embedding climate change, Net Zero transition, and responsible business practices into the curriculum
   - The role of business schools in fostering ethical and purpose-driven leadership
   - Sustainable campus initiatives and their impact on student learning and green business building skills
2. Future Skills Development Through Entrepreneurial Mindsets, Adaptability, and Responsible Digital Leadership
   - Entrepreneurship education: Encouraging innovation and new economic models in student and staff-led projects
   - Developing adaptability as a core business competency for global challenges
   - Building digital leadership capabilities with responsible AI ethics for future business environments
3. Equity-Driven and Inclusive Pedagogies for Global Business Education and Leadership
   - Inclusive curriculum design: Ensuring accessibility, representation, and purpose-driven approaches
   - Supporting students with varying levels of English proficiency and digital literacy for ethical global engagement
4. Building Community and Global Partnerships for Ethical Business Practice and Societal Impact
   - Business schools as catalysts for local, regional, and global economic development and governance innovation
   - Collaborative projects between universities and businesses for social impact and green business building
   - Teaching responsible AI development: Preparing students to confront risks while transforming technological potential into ethical value creation

Track C: Professional Growth and Wellbeing in Business Education


Dinisa Kandasamy

Charley Hafiz

The conference sought contributions examining how institutions could support the professional development and wellbeing of all staff and students whilst adapting to the changing landscape of higher education. This theme encompassed strategies for enhancing resilience and growth, promoting globalisation, fostering cross-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaborations, and exploring the evolving professional roles. We welcomed papers exploring approaches to staff (academic and professional) development, wellbeing and EDI initiatives, leadership models, strategic change, and the international aspects of business education. The track covered a broad spectrum of following topics:

1. Supporting Staff Resilience and Wellbeing in Higher Education
   - Wellbeing strategies for academic and professional services staff
   - Addressing workload pressures in an increasingly digital work environment
   - Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace culture in business schools
2. Cross-Disciplinary Approaches to Professional Development and Leadership
   - Collaborative leadership models between academic and professional services teams
   - Developing leadership pathways for early-career academics and professional staff
   - The role of mentoring and peer support in continuous professional development
3. Evolving Academic and Professional Service Identity and Roles in Modern Business Education
   - Strengthening collaboration between academic and professional services staff
   - Transforming Professional Services Through Digital Innovation
   - Using learning analytics and student feedback to enhance student satisfaction and achievement
   - Enhancing Student Success Through Personal Tutoring Excellence
4. Going Global in Business Education
   - Internationalisation strategies for UK business schools
   - Enhancing global mobility and exchange opportunities for students and staff
   - Addressing challenges in transnational business education

Track D: Diverse Perspectives and Approaches in Business Education

Dr. Ehsan Khavandkar
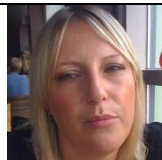
Dr. Kelly Rogers

The conference welcomed all contributions that offered valuable insights into business education which did not align with the previous themes. This inclusive forum created space for a wide range of topics, methodologies, and viewpoints that enriched our understanding of teaching and learning. We encouraged submissions from colleagues with diverse experiences, institutional contexts, and disciplinary backgrounds. Whether work explored niche areas, presented preliminary findings, examined practical challenges, or offered reflective accounts of educational practice, we valued these perspectives. This theme embraced diverse approaches that collectively strengthened our educational community and invited everyone to share their unique contributions to business education. The track covered a broad spectrum of following topics:

1.   Emerging Educational Contexts and Approaches
   • Addressing unique institutional challenges in business education
   • Innovative responses to changing student demographics and needs
   • Exploring alternative educational models and philosophies
2.   Interdisciplinary Connections in Business Teaching and Learning
   • Connecting business education with other academic disciplines
   • Cross-sector collaborations that enhance educational offerings
   • Integrating multiple perspectives to address complex business problems
3.   Reflective Practice and Continuous Improvement
   • Personal narratives and reflective accounts of teaching experiences
   • Lessons learned from educational initiatives and interventions
   • Approaches to continuous improvement in business education
4.   Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities
   • Responding to societal changes and their impact on business education
   • Addressing resource constraints while maintaining educational quality
   • Exploring tension points between traditional and emerging approaches
5.   Teaching and Learning Beyond the Classroom
   • Co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities that enhance learning
   • Community-based and experiential learning initiatives
   • Innovative approaches to placement and internship programmes

BBS Events and Projects Officer

Kelly Merriman

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

5TH BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL EDUCATION CONFERENCE: SCHEDULE

September 11th - University House, University of Birmingham [Morning Sessions]

08:30 - 09:00	**REGISTRATION AND REFRESHMENTS** (Atrium) [University House – Ground Floor]			
09:00 – 09:10	**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARK** *Professor Sarah Montano (Director of Education, Birmingham Business School)* *[VENUE: G12]*			
09:10 – 09:15	***WELCOME AND CONFERENCE REPORT*** *Dr. Ehsan Khavandkar, Dr. Kelly Rogers and Charley Hafiz (Conference Co-chairs)* *[VENUE: G12]*			
09:15 – 09:45	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:** ***REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT, REFRAMING GROWTH: INNOVATION, AI, AND THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION*** *Lynn Gribble, The University of New South Wales* *[VENUE: G12]*			
09:45 – 09:50	*MOVING TO ROUNDTABLE VENUES*			
	ROUNDTABLE (VENUE: G12]	**ROUNDTABLE [VENUE: 108]**	**ROUNDTABLE [VENUE: G05]**	**WORKSHOP [VENUE: G06]**
09:50 – 10:40	***MAKING RANKINGS MEANINGFUL: STRATEGIC TOOLS OR METRIC TRAPS?*** *Annette French, Abhinav Goyal, Ehsan Khavandkar, Simon Pettifor, Scott Taylor, Chengang Wang* *University of Birmingham*	***FUTURE-READY GRADUATES - WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED AND HOW COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES MAKES A DIFFERENCE*** *Dan Heffernan[1], Nicole Ivanova[2], Kelly Rogers[3] & Di Vernon[4]* *[1]AtkinsRéalis, [2]Shoosmiths, [3]University of Birmingham & [4]EmployabilityUK*	***RE-IMAGINING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AI INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION*** *Charley Hafiz[1] & David Hitchen[2]* *[1]University of Birmingham & [2]University of Reading*	***DECOLONISING BUSINESS EDUCATION THROUGH CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES*** *Rweyemamu Ndibalema, Caroline Chapain, Emma Surman & Anita Lateano* *University of Birmingham*
10:40 – 10:55	*COFFEE BREAK (ATRIUM) & MOVING TO PRESENTATION VENUES*			
	"DESIGNING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS FOR REAL-WORLD IMPACT IN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G12]	**"EMBEDDING RESPONSIBILITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL AND PROFESSIONAL INNOVATION" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: 108]**	**"GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR A CONNECTED WORLD" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G05]**	**WORKSHOPS [VENUE: G06]**
10:55 – 11:15	***EMBEDDING AI IN THE CURRICULUM THROUGH AUTHENTIC BUSINESS LEARNING*** *Peter Andrews, Fannie Yeung & Fiona Walkley* *University of Hull*	***ENHANCING SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION USING ANIMATED CARTOON VIDEOS*** *Anupam Mehta & Ann-Christine Frandsen* *University of Birmingham*	***RETHINKING ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY*** *Sharin McDowall-Emefiele[1], Wendyann Richardson[2] & Florence Barugahara[3]* *[1]University of Birmingham, [2]Coventry University & [3]York. St John's University*	*(10:55 to 11:40)* ***ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN: CREATING INCLUSIVE CONTENT WITH GENAI*** *Mary Dawood & Kamilya Suleymenova* *University of Birmingham*
11:15 – 11:35	***USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN A POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME*** *Wendy Tabrizi* *Aston University*	***DRIVING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: BBS GREEN IMPACT 2025*** *Kopal Bhatnagar & Laura Contrasti* *University of Birmingham*	***CROSSING BORDERS PROJECT: CREATING AN INTER-CULTURAL MINDSET THROUGH AN ONLINE COLLABORATIVE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME*** *Olga Kampaxi* *Birmingham City University*	
11:35 – 11:55	***DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION ASSIGNMENT: THE NEXT GAME-CHANGING IDEA*** *Laura Salciuviene* *University of Birmingham*	***BEYOND COMPLIANCE: TEACHING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A CORE BUSINESS SKILL*** *Alison Gibson, Alex Davenport, Rich Morgan, Tom Penny, Ian Wells & Kynna O'Brien* *University of Birmingham*	***GO GLOBAL SUMMER: INTEGRATING GLOBAL EXPERIENCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CURRICULUM*** *Maggie Wootton, Rachel Kean & Lucy Drummond* *University of Birmingham*	*(11:45 to 12:15)* ***PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE IN CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS MASTERS DISSERTATIONS (STRUCTURED DISCUSSION)*** *Narain Gupta, Peter Samuels & Krish Saha* *University of Wolverhampton*
11:55 – 12:15	***INNOVATING ASSESSMENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC, INDUSTRY-DRIVEN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION*** *Mouna Chetehouna & Eldad J Avital* *Queen Mary University of London*	***TEACHING ASSESSMENT TO TEACHERS: MOVING TOWARDS INCLUSIVITY*** *Lucian Tipi, Shivani Wilson-Rochford & Philippa Try* *Birmingham City University*	***THE YEAR ABROAD PROGRAMME*** *Dinisa Kandasamy, Diego Morris & Yongli Wang* *University of Birmingham*	
12:15 – 13:10	*LUNCH BREAK (CAFÉ 1902 – UNIVERSITY HOUSE) & MOVING BACK TO PLENARY (G12)*			

5TH BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL EDUCATION CONFERENCE: SCHEDULE

September 11th - University House, University of Birmingham [Afternoon Sessions]

13:10 – 13:50	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:** *FROM CLASSROOMS TO CAREERS: EMBEDDING EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AT PROGRAMME LEVEL AND BEYOND* — *Maya Cara and Mark DeFreitas, University College London* — *[VENUE: G12]*			
13:50 – 14:00	*MOVING TO PRESENTATION VENUES*			
	"AUTHENTIC BUSINESS LEARNING IN PRACTICE – EMBEDDING DIGITAL, ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G12]	**"PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: 108]**	**"EXPERIENTIAL AND STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESS EDUCATION" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G05]**	**WORKSHOPS [VENUE: G06]**
14:00 – 14:20	*ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION BY EMBEDDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT* Emma Neale, Adriana Braje & Helen Pugh Aston University	*MAXIMISING STAFF POTENTIAL: STRATEGIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR CONSISTENT, STUDENT-FOCUSED SERVICES* Angeliki Bompetsi University of Birmingham	*STUDENT-LED INNOVATIVE EDUCATION: SELF-TEACHING IN SMALL GROUPS WITH STUDENT TAs* Yongli Wang & Kamilya Suleymenova University of Birmingham	
14:20 – 14:40	*DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYABILITY MINDSET AND BUILDING TALENT FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS* Aliaksei Kichuk Birmingham City University	*REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AS A CATALYST FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN BUSINESS EDUCATION* Joanna Pokorska-Zare & Aineias Gkikas University of Birmingham	*"THIRD PLACES" FOR INNOVATION: FINDING AND CREATING EXPERIMENTAL SPACES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION* Lin Dong University of Birmingham	*GAMIFICATION IN INNOVATING TEACHING: WITH OR WITHOUT AI? AN EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP CHALLENGE* Ahmad Bhatti, Rweyemamu Ndibalema & Essa Bah University of Birmingham
14:40 – 15:00	*AUTHENTIC INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LEARNING IN PRACTICE: DESIGNING DATA ANALYTICS PEDAGOGY FOR CRITICAL, ETHICAL AND STRATEGIC COMPETENCE* Ehsan Khavandkar[1] & Hadley Christoffels[2] [1]University of Birmingham & [2]dataDecisions.ai	*DRIVING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES* Andy Buck, Tamika Pusey & Patrick Guillfoyle-Coombes University of Birmingham	*ACCELERATED SCENARIO ANALYSIS TEACHING USING EXPERIENTIAL TECHNIQUES* Neil Pyper University of Birmingham	
15:00 – 15:15	*COFFEE BREAK (ATRIUM) & MOVING TO PRESENTATION VENUES*			
	"EMBODIED AND REFLECTIVE PEDAGOGIES FOR DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIVE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G12]	**"ENRICHING LEARNING THROUGH RESEARCH, IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE, AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: 108]**	**"HIGHER EDUCATION IN FOCUS: DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES FOR A CHANGING WORLD" PRESENTATIONS [VENUE: G05]**	**WORKSHOPS [VENUE: G06]**
15:15 – 15:35	*EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING TRAINING FOR NON-FINANCE SPECIALISTS WORKING IN SMALL ENTERPRISES* Paul Caulfield University of Dundee	*FROM CLASSVENUE TO CUTTING-EDGE: DEMONSTRATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE OF MSC STUDENTS* Yao Yao University of Birmingham	*REIMAGINING THE UNCONFERENCE: A REFLECTIVE METHODOLOGY FOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY ENGAGEMENT* Aineias Gkikas & Joanna Pokorska-Zare University of Birmingham	
15:35 – 15:55	*STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING AND THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA: LEARNING GAME THEORY THROUGH PLAY* Wenyu Zang Birmingham City University	*DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNER-CENTRED RESEARCH METHODS TEXTBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MASTERS STUDENTS* Peter Samuels[1] & Kelly Rogers[2] [1]University of Wolverhampton & [2]University of Birmingham	*CAN MILITARY VETERANS TRANSITION INTO TEACHING TO HELP BRIDGE THE GAP OF WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE UK?* Bruce Morrison University College Birmingham	*SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP USING LEGO SERIOUS PLAY* Salma Ashour University of Birmingham
15:55 – 16:15	*CREATING MEANINGFUL PEER FEEDBACK WITH "FeedbackFruits: ARE YOU FRUSTRATED WITH GROUP WORK?* Jack Bainbridge[1], Cristina Sanbrook[2] [1] Feedback Fruits, [2]University of Birmingham	*INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SIMULATIONS: AN IMMERSIVE, EXPERIENTIAL, AND CULTURALLY ENGAGING EXPERIENCE* Simon Märkl[1] & Dinisa Kandasamy[2] [1]Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingols & [2]University of Birmingham	*TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION, CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT, BUSINESS TAX, BUSINESS LAW, GCC HIGHER EDUCATION* Muhammad Khawar[1], Husam Al-Malkawi[2], Sarah Alsultan[3] & Musaad Alwohaibi[4] [1]University of Birmingham Dubai, [2]British University in Dubai, [3]Kuwait University & [4]King Saud University	
16:15 – 16:25	*MOVING BACK TO PLENARY (G12)*			

5TH BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL EDUCATION CONFERENCE: SCHEDULE

September 11th - University House, University of Birmingham [Closing Ceremony]

16:25 – 17:15	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:** **AUTHENTIC BUSINESS LEARNING IS THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION: FROM CURRICULUM TO SCHOOL STRATEGY** *Fiona Walkley, Fannie Yeung, and Peter Andrews, University of Hull* *[VENUE: G12]*
17:15 – 17:30	**CLOSING REMARK** Professor Edgar Meyer (Dean of Birmingham Business School) *[Location: G12]*

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT, REFRAMING GROWTH: INNOVATION, AI, AND THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

Lynn Gribble

The University of New South Wales

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Dr. Lynn Gribble
The University of New South Wales

The future of business education is not simply defined by content, but by those who teach it. As educators, we are the architects of a future-fit learning environment, one responsive to volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). When we embrace innovation, we do more than just shift practice - we transform classrooms, empower learners, and unlock new pathways for professional growth and institutional impact.

Yet too often, we see constraints where flexibility lies. Traditional conceptions of assessment - including essays, reports, presentations, and exams - are no longer sufficient. This session invites us to challenge the nomenclature of teaching and assessment. Through co-design, co-teaching, and process-based assessment, we can reshape learning experiences to reflect the dynamic, AI-integrated world our students are preparing to enter. The ubiquity of generative AI demands that we reimagine both what we assess and how we teach, preparing learners not just for today's expectations but for tomorrow's realities.

Professional growth in this landscape stems from collaboration, courage, and curiosity. Innovation does not require grand reinvention; it begins with small, intentional shifts - five minutes of reflection, a single "what if," a willingness to try. In this keynote, Lynn will challenge you to reframe limitations as invitations to adapt, scale innovation without increasing workload, and discover impact in unexpected places. Join us as we navigate the four domains of innovation dissemination (the 4Cs) and chart a future of transformative professional practice.

Keywords

Innovation in Teaching; Assessment Redesign; Generative AI in Education; Professional Growth; Future-Focused Pedagogy

AUTHENTIC BUSINESS LEARNING AS A STRATEGIC FUTURE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION: FROM CURRICULUM DESIGN TO INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Fiona Walkley, Peter Andrews and Fannie Yeung
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Dr. Fiona Walkley
University of Hull

Peter Andrews
University of Hull

Dr. Fannie Yeung
University of Hull

In this talk, we explore Authentic Business Learning (ABL) as a transformative pedagogic strategy for reimagining business education at both curriculum and institutional levels. ABL responds to the increasingly urgent demands placed on business schools to enhance graduate employability, foster professional identity, and prepare students for the complexity of contemporary organisational life. While experiential components such as live projects and work placements are well established, ABL proposes a more integrated and sustained approach-positioning real-world engagement not as an enhancement, but as the foundation of curricular design.

We define ABL as an adaptive, career-centric educational model consisting of four interdependent elements: structured real-world learning (including business collaborations, internships, and professional tools); workplace-aligned assessment design; coaching- and mentoring-based teaching; and a competency-based, scaffolded curriculum architecture. This approach is underpinned by established theoretical frameworks including situated learning (Brown et al., 1989), constructivist epistemology (Dewey, 1938), and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). More recent insights from epistemic frame theory (Shaffer, 2006) and the ENDURE framework (Rahmian et al., 2024) further inform ABL's design as a socially responsive and identity-congruent model.

Methodologically, the study draws upon pre- and post-intervention student surveys, reflective artefacts, classroom observations, industry partner interviews, and internal curriculum development documentation.

Our findings demonstrate the substantial benefits of ABL in fostering students' professional confidence, self-efficacy, and career identity. Students increasingly perceived themselves not as passive learners but as junior consultants engaged in consequential work. These perceptions were

reinforced by external collaborators, who reported enhanced professionalism, problem-solving ability, and business impact. Institutional metrics corroborate these outcomes: the programme achieved 100% employability (HESA, 2023), ranked first nationally for teaching clarity in the NSS (2023), and placed in the Top 5 for value-added outcomes (Guardian, 2024).

Inclusion emerged as a critical affordance of ABL. The model of "thick authenticity"-where disciplinary relevance, personal meaning, and real-world consequence intersect-proved particularly effective in supporting students from underrepresented groups, enabling them to develop stronger career narratives and a sense of belonging in professional contexts.

However, our evaluation also revealed design tensions. Specifically, we address the "authenticity paradox" (Hatala & Ellaway, 2024), in which assessments intended to mirror real-world tasks may inadvertently suppress reflective engagement and increase performative anxiety. To mitigate this, the programme adopted scaffolded complexity (Nachtigall et al., 2022), combining formative assessment, coaching, and phased exposure to ambiguity and client expectations.

In this talk, we advance ABL not merely as a pedagogical method, but as a strategic curricular philosophy-one that can inform programme architecture, learning design, and school-wide educational vision. As business schools contend with challenges around graduate capability, employer confidence, and institutional distinctiveness, ABL offers a viable and impactful response.

Keywords

Authentic Business Learning, Curriculum Innovation, Employability and Professional Identity, Experiential Learning, Competency-Based Curriculum Design

FROM CLASSROOMS TO CAREERS: EMBEDDING EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AT PROGRAMME LEVEL AND BEYOND

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In an increasingly competitive and dynamic graduate employment landscape, universities must go beyond academic excellence to offer students meaningful exposure to the world of work. This keynote explores how sustained, purposeful external engagement can be embedded at programme level and scaled to broader institutional practices.

Drawing on our experience at UCL's BSc Information Management for Business programme, we will share a strategic approach to designing and delivering external engagement that enhances student employability, supports curriculum relevance, and builds long-term partnerships with industry. We will highlight collaborative initiatives between academic and careers teams, including co-delivered workshops, consultancy-style projects with employers, and alumni-led mentoring schemes.

The talk will also reflect on how external engagement contributes to sector-wide goals such as inclusive education, curriculum co-creation, and widening participation. We aim to offer practical insights, evidence of impact, and ideas for embedding career-focused engagement into programme design, ensuring students leave not only with knowledge, but with networks, confidence, and real-world skills.

Keywords

External Engagement, Employability, Curriculum Co-Creation, Industry Partnerships, Student Success

ROUNDTABLES &
ENGAGED DIALOGUES

MAKING RANKINGS MEANINGFUL: STRATEGIC TOOLS OR METRIC TRAPS?

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This roundtable explores the growing influence of subject-specific university rankings in business education, using the QS International Trade Ranking as a springboard for wider institutional reflection. Rankings increasingly shape how institutions evaluate teaching quality, align curricula to global standards, and articulate their value to students and employers. This session draws on our first submission to the QS International Trade Ranking for the MSc International Business programme. We approach debate on this process not merely as a case of technical compliance, but as a platform for cross-departmental collaboration and strategic learning.

In this, we approach rankings, following Erkkilä and Piironen (2021), as instruments of global knowledge governance, shaping how institutions think and act. We invite colleagues to critically reflect on their own engagements with subject-specific rankings, explore the strategic and pedagogical implications of performance metrics, and consider how rankings can be transformed into opportunities for institutional learning and innovation. This session aligns closely with the conference theme of innovation and quality enhancement in business education. Subject-specific rankings touch on curriculum design, assurance of learning, graduate outcomes, and institutional reputation - all central concerns for business schools. As Brankovic, Ringel and Werron (2021) observe, rankings can exert isomorphic pressure, driving institutions to conform to global norms. However, when engaged with reflectively, they can also surface institutional distinctiveness and catalyse innovation. Our discussion will examine both the strategic risks and the pedagogical opportunities that subject-specific rankings present.

The roundtable will be co-led by the academics and colleagues from the accreditation and rankings team who were centrally involved in the QS International Trade Ranking submission. This group represents a collaborative blend of academic leadership and professional services expertise, demonstrating the importance of integrated institutional responses to rankings. By sharing their experiences, panellists will open space for dialogue about how rankings are interpreted and operationalised across diverse roles and institutional contexts.

The session will open with a 5-minute framing overview of subject-specific rankings and their increasing role in shaping curriculum and institutional narratives. Each panellist will then speak for up to 5 minutes, focusing on their contribution to QS rankings activity and the International Trade submission, exploring enablers and barriers to the collaborative processes involved in interpreting ranking indicators, gathering evidence, and aligning pedagogy with global benchmarks.

The session will also highlight transferable models for building institutional capacity around rankings and contribute to a sector-wide conversation on balancing global comparability with local mission. A post-session summary of key themes and shared practices will be compiled and circulated to participants.

FUTURE-READY GRADUATES – WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED AND HOW COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Dan Heffernan[1], Nicole Ivanova[2], Kelly Rogers[3] & Di Vernon[4]

[1]AtkinsRéalis, [2]Shoosmiths, [3]University of Birmingham & [4]EmployabilityUK

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Dr. Kelly Rogers
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As the graduate employment landscape continues to evolve, universities are under increasing pressure to equip students with the skills, attributes, and experiences that prepare them for a dynamic world of work. This panel session brings together employers and university leaders to explore what it truly means to be "future-ready" and how collaboration between higher education and industry can have a lasting impact.

This in-conversation panel features Diane Vernon MBE, CEO of Employability UK, Dan Heffernan from AtkinsRéalis, Nicole Ivanova from Shoosmiths, and Kelly Rogers from University of Birmingham. Together, the panel will discuss the skills employers need, how those needs are changing, and the mutual benefits of engaging with students before they graduate, through internships, mentoring, live briefs, and other forms of partnership.

Attendees will gain insights into how employers view graduate readiness, what higher education can do to bridge emerging skills gaps, and how business schools can embed meaningful employability opportunities into the student journey.

This session is designed for academic staff, careers professionals, and education leaders seeking to enhance graduate outcomes and strengthen university-employer collaboration.

RE-IMAGINING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AI INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

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David Hitchen
University of Reading

Charley Hafiz
University of Birmingham

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into professional services is rapidly transforming the higher education landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, improve student experience, and support data-informed decision-making. This presentation explores how AI-driven workflows are reshaping administrative and support functions within universities, with a particular focus on Birmingham Business School's strategic approach to adoption and cultural change.

Drawing on real-world case studies, the session highlights specific processes within professional services that have been successfully augmented or re-engineered through AI. Each case study details the problem context, the AI solution deployed, implementation methodology, and measurable impacts on efficiency, accuracy, or service quality.

However, technological change alone is insufficient without an accompanying cultural shift. The presentation will share how Birmingham Business School is proactively cultivating a culture of professional curiosity among its staff to support this transition. The School has encouraged colleagues to explore AI tools with a critical but open mindset. This cultural evolution is seen as essential to overcoming resistance, managing ethical concerns, and fostering innovation from the ground up.

The School's approach is underpinned by three strategic pillars:

- Capability – ensuring staff have the skills and support needed to explore AI
- Confidence – empowering individuals to experiment safely and share outcomes
- Community – creating spaces for dialogue and reflection

Early outcomes suggest increased staff engagement, a greater appetite for experimentation, and cross-functional collaboration that breaks down traditional silos.

The roundtable will also address key challenges faced, including data governance, the risk of de-skilling, change fatigue, and the complexity of

scaling pilot projects. It will argue for a responsible, human-centred approach to AI adoption-one that positions professional services staff not just as users of technology, but as co-creators of future-ready systems and processes.

Attendees will leave with practical insights into implementing AI in professional services contexts, including how to identify suitable use cases, build cross-functional teams, and align technological change with organisational values. They will also gain an appreciation of the human factors critical to success, especially in fostering curiosity, adaptability, and digital fluency among professional services staff.

In showcasing Birmingham Business School's journey, this presentation provides a roadmap for other institutions seeking to harness AI not just as a tool for efficiency, but as a catalyst for meaningful cultural and operational transformation.

WORKSHOPS

DECOLONISING BUSINESS EDUCATION THROUGH CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

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By the end of this workshop, participants will:

1. Understand how creative, participatory approaches can support decolonisation in education.
2. Experience a creative methodology in practice and reflect on its power and potential.
3. Develop a draft creative approach or methodology to open space for marginalised voices and knowledge systems in their own teaching or curriculum.
4. Establish or refine criteria for a decolonial creative methodology.
5. Workshop Activities (60 minutes)

This workshop is designed to be highly interactive and experiential:

- Introduction & Context Setting (5 mins):

Brief presentation introducing decolonisation in education and how creative methodologies can serve as transformative tools.

- Experiential Creative Task (15 mins):

Participants are divided into small groups and given a hands-on creative task.

- Group Reflection & Criteria Development (10 mins):

Groups reflect on their experience and collaboratively propose criteria for what makes a methodology "creative" and "decolonising".

- Designing a Creative Decolonising Methodology (20 mins):

Groups design a new creative approach or methodology for a chosen topic or module in their own practice.

- Sharing & Reflection (7 mins):

Each group shares key points from their designed methodology with the whole room in a round-table style.

- Individual Commitment & Closing (3 mins):

Participants write down one concrete step they will take to integrate a creative, decolonising approach into their work and share if comfortable.

ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN: CREATING INCLUSIVE CONTENT WITH GENAI

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This workshop is designed to provide educators with the knowledge and tools to create inclusive and accessible digital content more effectively by leveraging the power of generative AI (GenAI) tool. Participants will gain an understanding of how to use GenAI tools to transform various content types—text, images, audio, and video—making them more accessible to all students.

We will start with an introduction to the universal design principles to accessible educational materials. Then, we will provide a demonstration of the potential of GenAI technologies to apply these principles to various digital content. Participants will learn about different GenAI tools available and see firsthand how they can be used to create text in accessible formats, generate alternative text for images, create transcripts and captions for multimedia content, and restructure content layouts for improved readability.

The hands-on activity will allow participants to explore and experiment with different GenAI tools using sample Business course content. This practical experience will allow attendees to see the immediate impact of these tools and understand their capabilities and limitations. At the tables, participants with their own digital devices will have the opportunity to try out some of the suggested tools providing hands-on application. This will feed into the small group discussions about the current and the previous experiences of the participants. The small group conversations will then be fed back to the general discussion to draw conclusions from the workshop. This collaborative effort not only enhances learning but also fosters a sense of community and an opportunity for networking and sharing practice.

The workshop will conclude with a discussion on how to apply these new skills and knowledge in the participants' own teaching or institutional settings.

Thus, by the end of this workshop, participants will not only have gained practical skills and knowledge but also a new perspective on the importance of accessibility in education. Our aim is to inspire colleagues to become champions of accessibility, promoting best practices and bringing back to their institutions these innovative approaches, equipping colleagues with more efficient tools to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students.

GAMIFICATION IN INNOVATING TEACHING: WITH OR WITHOUT AI? AN EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP CHALLENGE

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By the end of this workshop, participants will:

1. Understand the fundamentals of gamification and its pedagogical benefits.
2. Evaluate the role of generative AI (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT) as a creative partner in designing gamified learning activities.
3. Experience the process of developing a gamified teaching activity either with or without AI assistance.
4. Critically reflect on the effectiveness, creativity, and practicality of AI-supported versus traditional gamification approaches.
5. Identify actionable strategies to integrate gamification - and optionally AI - into their own teaching contexts.

This highly interactive 60-minute workshop begins with a brief introduction to gamification, outlining key concepts and successful examples used within higher education. Participants will then be divided into two groups:

- Group A: Uses AI assistance (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT) to design a gamified activity.
- Group B: Designs a gamified activity without AI support, relying solely on group creativity and existing tools.

Both groups will receive the same prompt:

"Design a short classroom game to teach a complex concept in your discipline to undergraduate/postgraduate students."

Participants will have 25 minutes to brainstorm, design, and prepare a brief pitch or demo of their game. AI-supported groups can use laptops/tablets/phones to interact with AI tools during this time.

Each group will present their gamified activity (5 minutes each), followed by peer and facilitator feedback focusing on innovation, engagement potential, and scalability.

The session concludes with a 20-minute reflective group discussion on perceived differences, advantages, and challenges of integrating AI in creative pedagogical design. Participants will document their key takeaways and consider implementation in their own teaching.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE IN CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS MASTERS DISSERTATIONS

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By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- To appreciate the contemporary context of business masters dissertations in the UK
- To learn from each other's shared experiences with business masters dissertation students
- To explore the relative strengths of different models of masters dissertation supervision
- To explore issues relating to ethical research conduct and assessment

According to HESA, between 2019 and 2023 UK international masters student enrolments increased by 114% across all subjects and by 146% in Business and Management. Despite recent visa changes, there still remains a high demand for UK masters courses from international students, with some masters courses having over 95% international students, and some universities recently establishing masters in research courses. The dissertation remains the final assessed coursework of most masters degree programmes. However, the resourcing and quality assurance of dissertation modules is increasingly becoming a challenge with large cohort numbers, students' inexperience of extended academic writing or research, and concerns over unethical conduct, including the use of essay mills and misuse of AI. Some universities have introduced alternatives to individual supervision, such as group supervision and seminars, with remarkable levels of success.

This workshop provides a space for participants to share their experiences and discuss possible solutions to shared challenges. The organisers will also present their vision to create a forum to promote good practice in business masters dissertation pedagogy in the West Midlands. This forum aims to host regular professional development events, promote and share effective practices, build a collective knowledge base, and ultimately apply to edit a special edition of an academic journal. Participants will explore one key issue in depth:

- Models of supervision (individual, group, seminar-based, in-person, online)
- Ethical conduct and assessment (AI, essay mills, alternative assessments)
- Other topics (research methods teaching, writing support, software training, systematic reviews, employability)

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION BY EMBEDDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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This paper aims to evidence how the BSc Marketing programme embeds industry standard practices and tools, including live briefs, guest lectures and internships. The programme aligns theoretical foundations with practical experiences that equip students with highly demanded industry skills, focusing on developing marketing professionals for the future.

Universities need to offer degrees which enable students to graduate with the necessary skills to add value and make a difference in the workplace. Research revealed that 74% of the world's senior marketers are struggling with talent shortages (The Economist Group, 2022) and as academics and practitioners, we need to ensure that students are fully equipped with the knowledge and skillset to thrive in industry as well as 'open-doors' for students to gain valuable work experience whilst at university and beyond.

Wingard and Farrugia (2021) explores the relationship between the quality of universities and graduate outputs, it suggests that employers strive to recruit relevant practical and soft skills, which allow them to thrive in industry. For students to succeed in the workplace, there is a need for universities to create opportunities for networking and work experience as well as practical tools and skills. As an example, the university became the first Adobe Creative Campus in the region, granting students to cutting-edge Adobe solutions. Module delivery and assessments incorporate creative tools such as Adobe Express, Photoshop and more, which encourages engagement and achievement.

In September 2024, we launched the revised BSc Marketing programme to reflect the changes in the UK labour market and to align with the AdvanceHE framework. The Higher Education experience should enhance learning as well as enhance graduate prospects and the revised programme embeds employability, focusing on inclusivity of the Adobe creative suite to enhance skills, collaboration with local businesses to solved problems and apply learning, this also includes internship and graduate scheme opportunities and engagement with careers, external networks, and local businesses.

To further align with the employability and enterprise elements of AdvanceHE (2023) 3E agenda, we have aligned several assessments with live clients, to provide students with experiential learning opportunities. In the new Essential Skills for Marketers module, we have collaborated with a Birmingham-based marketing agency, providing students with the opportunity to apply for a

summer internship as part of the assessment process. Similarly, in the new Stakeholder Relations Management module, we have arranged several PR professionals to deliver guest lectures to provide students with applied examples and add more context to the theoretical elements delivered through the asynchronous learning elements.

We are also collaborating with a local agency to offer a six-week Internship opportunity for students in Birmingham. In addition, students can gain valuable work experience through internships with a range of SMEs and charities across the region. The CIM Marketing Club has also been launched, and the CIM qualification is now fully integrated into the programme, further strengthening students' employability and professional development.

Keywords

Employability, Experiential Learning, Industry Collaboration, Marketing Education, Professional Development

EMBEDDING AI IN THE CURRICULUM THROUGH AUTHENTIC BUSINESS LEARNING

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As the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business continues to grow, we recognise the need to equip our Business School students with the skills, understanding, and ethical awareness required to thrive in an AI-enabled world. Our approach to embedding AI in the curriculum begins with listening to our students and builds upon research-led frameworks that support meaningful and progressive learning. We share a range of examples of how we've embedded AI activities into modules mapped across a programme. This study aims to investigate how embedding AI literacy within Authentic Business Learning (ABL) enhances students' digital and ethical competencies. We evaluate the effectiveness of a progressive, curriculum-wide AI framework in supporting applied learning. The study explores student perceptions of AI integration in real-world business contexts. We began our journey by conducting a comprehensive survey with our current students to gain insights into how they use AI tools in their academic work and their wider perceptions of AI in learning, adopting Queen Mary University of London's measurement tool. The findings help shape our strategy and ensure the curriculum is not only forward-looking, but also responsive to student needs and actual experiences. Building on this foundation, we adopted Queen Mary's research-based model to enhance students' AI literacy across our undergraduate programmes. This model supports students' development through three progressive levels - foundational, intermediate, and advanced - aligned with Bloom's taxonomy. Importantly, we are embedding AI literacy within our ABL approach, where students work on live business projects in partnership with industry throughout their degree.

The synergy between AI literacy and ABL is clear: both are designed to help students apply their learning in real-world settings, solving real problems. Just as ABL enables students to develop practical skills through live projects, the AI framework encourages them to use digital tools purposefully and ethically.

At the foundational level, students undertake learning activities that allow them to understand basic AI usage for tasks such as searching for information, checking grammar, and applying ethics when using AI for academic writing..

Keywords

AI Literacy, Curriculum Design, ABL, Ethics, Digital Competencies

INNOVATING ASSESSMENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC, INDUSTRY-DRIVEN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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This initiative, initially implemented in a STEM context, aims to bridge the gap between academic theory and professional practice, thereby fostering career-ready graduates. Traditional assessment methods often fall short in cultivating practical attributes crucial for navigating complex professional challenges, such as project management, collaboration, negotiation, or delivering value under real-world pressure. The core objective was to design and validate a scalable framework that embeds authentic assessment, evaluating students on their abilities to perform genuine professional tasks.

The intervention replaces conventional capstone projects with an immersive, challenge-based learning experience. This model is built on three pillars: situating learning within genuine, high-stakes problems aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals; integrating industry partners as active co-mentors and clients; and utilising professional outputs as the basis for assessment. A pilot involved a transnational UK-India collaboration focused on co-developing wind energy solutions for off-grid communities, requiring students to navigate technical challenges, cross-cultural communication, and varied stakeholder expectations.

Implementation directly applied constructive alignment, replacing traditional assessments and grading students on the quality and impact of professional outputs, specifically co-authored research papers submitted to international conferences. This immediately reframed the objective from ""getting a good grade"" to ""producing work that meets professional standards"". The learning process was carefully scaffolded around three ""Training Work Packages"" (TWPs): joint professional seminars (TWP1), laboratory-based skill development (TWP2), and an intensive international research residency (TWP3). Academics shifted from lecturers to facilitators, empowering student teams to take full ownership of the project, from defining the problem scope to managing deadlines and disseminating their findings to real-world audiences.

The model proved exceptionally effective, with all participants achieving high academic outcomes, with final marks ranging from 70% to 94%, confirming that professional outputs can be assessed with academic rigour. More importantly, the teams produced work that was externally validated by industry professionals and global academic bodies, with one team winning a 'First Place' award at a major student conference. This provided students with undeniable

proof of competence, a far more powerful career credential than a traditional transcript. Qualitative feedback indicated a dramatic increase in student motivation, confidence, and self-efficacy in managing complex, professional tasks.

Practice recommendations, highly transferable across disciplines for creating authentic learning and industry innovation in education:

- Reconfigure Curricula into Scaffolded Work Packages: Structure capstone experiences as projects with distinct, progressive phases, like the TWPs.
- Mandate "Real-World Submission" as Assessment: Replace final reports or exams with high-stakes professional outputs, which were also turned into final reports to satisfy UK engineering council requirements.
- Integrate Partners as Clients, not just as Guest Speakers: Embed partners deeply into the project lifecycle, ensuring they co-design the initial problem, act as the client during milestone reviews, provide critical feedback, and serve as the final arbiters of project success.
- Nurture Diverse Talents and Implement Democratic Processes: Actively ensure equitable access to opportunities and empower student-led innovative projects, building a culture of shared success and talent recognition.

Keywords

AUTHENTIC INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LEARNING IN PRACTICE: DESIGNING DATA ANALYTICS PEDAGOGY FOR CRITICAL, ETHICAL AND STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

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The increasing reliance on data in international business decision-making has placed new demands on analytics education in business schools. Yet many pedagogical approaches remain rooted in narrow, technocratic paradigms that prioritise software proficiency over epistemic development, ethical awareness, and strategic judgement. In response, this paper presents a model of Authentic Business Learning (ABL), implemented within a postgraduate module on International Business Data Analytics. Drawing on Bernstein's (2000) theory of the pedagogic device and Young's (2008) work on powerful knowledge, the ABL model reframes authenticity as a multidimensional pedagogical principle. Rather than positioning students as technicians, ABL enables them to interrogate the assumptions, limits, and implications of data-driven business practice in complex, intercultural contexts.

This paper addresses three aims. First, it conceptualises Authentic International Business Learning as a pedagogical model grounded in critical pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2006), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997), and social realist curriculum design (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Wheelahan, 2007). Second, it explores how this framework is embedded into module design through scaffolded learning sequences and authentic assessments aligned with competency-based education principles (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Cravero et al., 2022; Stek et al., 2023). Third, it evaluates the implications of the model for graduate development, programme-level curriculum reform, and the ethical renewal of business analytics education.

The study employs a dual methodological approach. A systematic review of literature on authentic learning, competency-based curriculum design, and internationalised pedagogy informed the creation of a five-dimensional ABL framework, comprising disciplinary, personal, real-world, contextual, and assessment authenticity (Newmann et al., 1996; Hatala & Ellaway, 2024; Rahmian et al., 2023). This theoretical foundation was complemented by qualitative analysis of student feedback gathered over three consecutive module iterations. The data were analysed thematically to explore learner perceptions of authenticity, skill integration, and cross-cultural competence, offering insight into both design alignment and pedagogical impact.

The implementation of ABL yielded three notable outcomes. First, students demonstrated deeper engagement when challenged to integrate empirical

analysis with institutional and cultural complexity. Rather than treating analytics as a neutral process, learners reflected on model limitations, method choices, and strategic interpretation. Second, assessment design was key to sustaining authenticity. A group infographic and live pitch required macro–micro integration and cultural framing, while an individual consultancy report progressed students from descriptive analytics to regression and forecasting. These assessments aligned with the four domains of competence - cognitive, functional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005) - and were scaffolded through feedback, reflection, and ethical AI support. Third, students began to demonstrate what Hatala and Ellaway (2024) term "authenticity wisdom": the capacity to navigate complexity with ethical and contextual sensitivity.

This paper offers a replicable, research-informed model for embedding Authentic Business Learning in postgraduate analytics education. It challenges instrumentalist models of employability by integrating scaffolded complexity, critical reflexivity, and epistemic agency into curriculum design. The ABL approach supports institutional goals of inclusion, relevance, and ethical graduate capability. More broadly, it contributes to a reimagining of business education as a transformative, globally engaged practice that prepares students to navigate uncertainty and pluralism.

Keywords

Authentic International Business Learning; Curriculum Design; International Business Education; Data Analytics Pedagogy; Competency-Based Education

DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYABILITY MINDSET AND BUILDING TALENT FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS

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Authentic assessment aims to replicate the tasks and performance standards found in the world of work and enhance students' learning, motivation, engagement, and employability skills. Changing the assessment setting to an authentic one is introduced as an improved way to embed elements of employability into the curriculum (Gulikers et al., 2004). Moreover, Kinash et al. (2018) highlighted that the major concern of different stakeholders in HE is graduate employability, as employers often believe that universities are responsible for equipping their students with the knowledge and skills required in their future careers. The review of the Teaching and Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (Pearce, 2019) has resulted in HEIs now being measured specifically on student experience, student outcomes, and postgraduate employment. This research explores the impacts of authentic assessments on students' employability skills, focusing on live client scenarios in the MAN5080 Introduction to Hotel Operations and Room Division and MAN6065 International Multi-unit Hospitality Leadership modules. This paper's objectives are as follows:

- To examine the rationale for authentic assessments in the curriculum.
- To explore opportunities for authentic assessments to enhance employability.
- To understand how authentic assessments and exposure to the hotel environment impact student motivation, engagement, and industry readiness.

The research is underpinned by the theory of situated learning, which highlights that students' abilities and talents are shaped by activity, culture, and environment (McLellan, 1996). Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on communities of practice further supports this by arguing that understanding emerges through practical experience and social interaction. The study uses two case studies:

- Case 1 involved a live assessment with DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, where students presented revenue improvement strategies to hotel management.
- Case 2 involved Aloft by Marriott, where students created a business plan for hotel operations.
- Key Findings

Authentic assessment enhanced learning by increasing motivation and engagement. Students in both modules achieved 100% pass rates, with marks in the upper second to first-class range. According to external examiner feedback, student performance exceeded sector norms for Levels 5 and 6. The live case studies helped bridge the gap between education and the real world, and students demonstrated strong alignment between assessment value and future career relevance.

Implications

Educators gain insights into how to design authentic assessments that foster employability and industry readiness. Students benefit by recognising the relevance of their assessments to real-world careers. The academic community gains a deeper understanding of how authentic assessments foster critical thinking and knowledge construction.

Keywords

Authentic Assessment, Employability, Motivation, Engagement, Learning Experience

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION ASSIGNMENT: THE NEXT GAME-CHANGING IDEA

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The theory of disruptive innovation has reshaped how scholars and practitioners understand business growth, competitive advantage, and innovation strategy. This teaching case outlines the design and implementation of a postgraduate assessment task centred on the theory of disruptive innovation, inviting students to engage with the concept through the creation of their own "next game-changing idea."

The assignment required students to identify a real-world industry or market currently underserved or overlooked by existing solutions, and to propose an innovative product or service that could disrupt established incumbents. The brief guided students to articulate the problem, justify the selection of the market, describe the innovation, and critically evaluate its potential for disruption using Christensen's theory as a framework.

To support students, the module included dedicated teaching sessions on innovation theory, critical analysis techniques, and real-world case studies. Peer discussion and formative feedback sessions were built into the teaching schedule to allow iterative development of ideas. Assessment criteria emphasised originality, application of theory, and critical reflection.

This case study discusses the rationale behind the assignment, student responses to the task, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Students reported that the assignment was both intellectually stimulating and practically relevant, helping them connect theory with entrepreneurial thinking. Some challenges emerged in relation to distinguishing disruptive innovation from other forms of innovation, which became a valuable opportunity for clarifying core theoretical distinctions.

The assignment also proved valuable in assessing students' ability to think strategically, creatively, and systemically. It encouraged students to synthesise complex concepts and to engage in higher-order thinking beyond rote application. The task is now being considered for adaptation to undergraduate modules and executive education contexts.

Keywords

Disruptive Innovation, Theory, Multinational Corporations, Entrepreneurship, Strategy

USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN A POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

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The BMM601 Marketing Management module aims to teach PGT students the approaches used in contemporary marketing practice. Traditional, didactic teaching methods had been used to teach the principles of marketing, consisting of a weekly lecture and seminar session. The module had been assessed using an open book, exam-based approach based on a case study. However, the pandemic required a rethink about how the module could be taught and assessed, necessitating a major re-design and use of an online approach.

After the pandemic, it was decided to keep the elements that had worked well and students seemed to prefer, according to the module feedback received. A blended approach was adopted using asynchronous pre-recorded lectures and in class seminars which focused on experiential learning. The assessment method was changed to use a group presentation of a real-world, live case study. This approach was adopted because according to Bonwell and Eison, (1991) the use of live, authentic issues allows students to experience and find solutions in the classroom that may be experienced by them in the future, thereby helping students to better close the gap between the theory and practice. According to Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner (2004), authentic assessments are those that that require students to use their competences, knowledge, skills and behaviours that can be applied into a real-life, work situation.

Working with a newly formed local SME, Your Digital Hub Ltd (YDH), who were looking for student input on how to expand and improve their marketing practices, a case study based on their business was developed. The Sales and Marketing Director, Steve Arnold, was invited to the university to provide detailed background company information to the PGT students.

The module seminar sessions were planned to focus on the assessment, which required students to work in groups of four to develop a marketing plan in the form of a 20-minute presentation to YDH. The assessment was developed following the 8 design principles for authentic assessment outlined by Rowe, Herrington and Brown (2013). According to Brown and Craig (2004), authentic assessments focus on the skills and knowledge students are "able to demonstrate" during the completion of specific tasks. Archbald and Newmann (1988), suggest that the use of such assessments allow students to

demonstrate their skills and knowledge through engagement in a "complex performance, creating a significant product or accomplishing a complex task using higher order thinking, problem-solving and creativity" (Archbald and Newmann, 1988, pp33).

Steve Arnold was invited back to the university to help assess the presentations and provide feedback to the students. He was delighted with the outcomes and as a result, offered several internships at YDH to those PGT students who delivered the best marketing plans.

Moving forward, based on the success of this of this module, we will continue to work with local companies to offer authentic assessments to PGT students on this and other marketing modules.

Keywords

Authentic Assessment, Experiential Learning, Blended Learning, Industry Collaboration, Marketing Education

STUDENT-LED INNOVATIVE EDUCATION: SELF-TEACHING IN SMALL GROUPS WITH STUDENT TAs

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This case study discusses a recent small-scale pilot of a student-led teaching initiative implemented in the MSc module Economics of Corporate Finance at the University of Birmingham in the Spring term 24/25. The initiative aimed to improve student engagement and deepen their understanding of the content of the course. To this effect, students were invited to volunteer to lead on small group seminars, essentially becoming a teaching assistant (TA) on a rotation basis. The lecturer acted as a facilitator, prompted further discussion and addressed questions where student-TAs were not comfortable to respond. This ensured the accuracy of the content delivered (as lecturer was able to intervene where necessary), while putting students at the centre of the learning session.

The benefits to both students acting as TAs and students in the audience have been previously discussed: for example, Wright et al. (2011) discusses the case of class co-leading between students and faculty; while Fingerson & Culley (2001) make some practical recommendations to improve the benefits specifically of the TAs. While contexts of those studies are different, we investigate if similar benefits and challenges were encountered in the context of our BBS: our expected results were a more in-depth understanding; engagement, interactivity and breaking barriers; as well as building of communication and presentation skills for volunteers.

The sessions were conducted in the following manner: each session typically included ten problem-solving questions, with the exception of one session that focused on a case study. Two students were invited to volunteer as TAs one week prior to each session. However, for the first seminar session, two students volunteered at the start of the session. The student TAs were responsible for presenting solutions to the problems requested by their peers and addressing any additional questions from their peers and the lecturer during the session.

To evaluate the results of the pilot, two surveys were run (end of semester and after exam/pre-grades release). In addition to understanding students' perceptions of benefits of this pilot (knowledge, engagement), we aimed to identify the barriers to volunteering and seek suggestions for improvement for next year's implementation. We also use lecturer's reflections to complement the data set.

Our findings indicate that student-led sessions provided broadly positive learning experience to students, enhancing interactivity, engagement, and improving interaction. Student TAs reported improved understanding of the subject, academic development, and public speaking. Interestingly, we found little evidence on improved communication skills and academic confidence. Perhaps, unexpectedly, we also found the language barrier to be a major reason for low volunteering.

Keywords

Student Engagement, Peer Teaching, Academic Development, Confidence, Language Barriers

"THIRD PLACES" FOR INNOVATION: FINDING AND CREATING EXPERIMENTAL SPACES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Business educators frequently operate within inherited educational structures that strongly influence how and where learning occurs. Classrooms, curricula, and delivery modes are often shaped by institutional norms that privilege efficiency and hierarchy. While these arrangements provide stability, they can also constrain innovation and filter out diverse perspectives, making it difficult to respond to the evolving and complex demands of students.

This presentation introduces the concept of "third places" as a way to reimagine business education. Originating in sociology, third places are inclusive, flexible, and experimental environments beyond home and work that encourage informal exchange, creativity, and connection. Applied to higher education, they offer a framework for developing physical, digital, or relational spaces that lie outside dominant institutional logics, providing opportunities to test new pedagogical approaches without the immediate pressure to conform to established rules and expectations.

Audience will be able to: (1) recognise the constraints within traditional educational spaces that limit innovation, (2) understand how the idea of third places can inspire alternative models of teaching and learning, and (3) design and share context-sensitive strategies for creating experimental spaces that support pedagogical change.

The presentation will open with a short introduction to the third-place concept and its application to business education, followed by small-group activities that move from reflection to ideation. Participants will first identify where innovation feels constrained in their teaching environments, then share cross-boundary or co-created initiatives they have tried or imagined, before prototyping a "third place" suited to their context. Ideas might include co-curricular experiments, interdepartmental collaborations, digital platforms, or new relational approaches. The session concludes with a sharing and takeaway phase to consolidate insights and strategies.

Keywords

Experimentation, Innovative Practices, Space-Making

ACCELERATED SCENARIO ANALYSIS TEACHING USING EXPERIENTIAL TECHNIQUES

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Scenario analysis has been a popular area of study in business and management education for over fifty years. While its origins lie in strategic foresight, particularly in the context of uncertainty and long-range planning, in recent years its uses have extended into a variety of educational applications, including risk management, innovation, and policy studies.

This case study explores an accelerated experiential approach to teaching scenario analysis within a postgraduate international business module. The teaching intervention was designed to move away from traditional lecture-based formats and instead adopt an experiential model that places students in a consultancy role to tackle a live problem. Students were divided into small groups and asked to develop plausible future scenarios for a real-world client operating in a complex, uncertain global environment.

The process included a short, intensive briefing on scenario techniques, followed by guided workshops that encouraged collaborative brainstorming, research, and presentation skills. Students were assessed on their ability to identify drivers of change, develop a set of contrasting scenarios, and communicate strategic implications to the client.

The results suggest that this accelerated, applied model of scenario analysis helped deepen students' understanding of uncertainty, systems thinking, and the dynamic nature of international strategy. Qualitative feedback from students highlighted increased engagement, a sense of ownership over learning, and an appreciation for the creative and interpretive dimensions of strategic foresight. Some students reported a greater confidence in applying scenario planning methods beyond the classroom, particularly in consulting or policy-related roles.

This teaching case contributes to the growing literature on experiential learning in business education, particularly in the domain of foresight and future-oriented thinking. It also raises questions about how to balance speed and depth in delivering complex analytical tools within tight academic schedules.

Keywords

Accelerated Learning, Experiential Education, Scenario Analysis, Uncertainty, International Business

EVOLVING AN EMBODIED AND CRITICAL REFLECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

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Evolving an embodied and critical reflective pedagogical approach to systems leadership addresses a core question in contemporary management education: how do we prepare students to lead in complexity? This case study explores a distinctive teaching approach that integrates embodied practices, critical reflection, and systems thinking within a postgraduate module on leadership and systems change.

Grounded in both academic theory and practitioner experience, the pedagogy draws from disciplines including mindfulness, cognitive science, and organisational studies. It encourages students not only to analyse systems but to become aware of how they themselves are participants within those systems - cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally.

The course invites students into a process of unlearning dominant paradigms of control and prediction, and instead cultivates capacities such as presence, openness, and reflexivity. Teaching methods include dialogic inquiry, journaling, somatic exercises, and experiential workshops. Weekly structured reflections are scaffolded to help students develop awareness of their assumptions, patterns, and blind spots, while making connections between theory and lived experience.

The pedagogical stance is explicitly developmental, inviting students to expand their inner capacity to hold multiple perspectives, navigate tensions, and act with ethical discernment. Student feedback consistently highlights increased self-awareness, a shift in understanding leadership as relational and systemic, and the value of having a safe space to explore their own positionality. This case contributes to growing interest in post-conventional approaches to leadership education that integrate cognitive, emotional, and embodied learning. It offers a model for educators aiming to support transformative learning that goes beyond knowledge transfer toward deeper capacity-building for real-world complexity.

Keywords

Reflective Pedagogy, Systems Leadership, Systems Thinking, Embodiment, Critical Reflection

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING TRAINING FOR NON-FINANCE SPECIALISTS WORKING IN SMALL ENTERPRISES

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This study investigates how incorporating a work-based component into financial training for non-finance managers in small enterprises - grounded in participants' own experiences - can shape perceptions of the programme's success. Using an iterative design and evaluation process over four training cycles, the research collected feedback through questionnaires, interviews, and observations to continuously refine the training content. The findings indicate that tailoring the training to reflect the specific financial information needs and organisational contexts of participants significantly enhanced its perceived relevance and led to greater adoption of management accounting techniques in the workplace. The study underscores the importance of context-sensitive training design in improving financial competence among non-finance managers and offers practical insights for developing more effective financial literacy programmes. The objectives are as follows:

- To provide evidence-based research that outlines the process involved in the delivery of effective work-based Management Accounting training for non-finance managers who undertake internal financial management in small enterprises.
- This would be done by creating a context-sensitive training model that would evolve through a series of iterations, each informed by participant feedback and grounded in real-world financial decision-making needs.

The research design combines quantitative survey methods with qualitative interview techniques to assess executive management accounting training effects on financial practices in smaller organisations. The research follows action research principles by involving participants throughout the process to maintain practical relevance. The training is adapted based on participants feedback through an iterative process of training programme development.

Key metrics measured are level of adoption from the training as well, motivation and confidence in working with financial management concepts, and these are assessed quantitatively through structured surveys before and after training participants have attended relevant training programmes in financial management and accounting. Additionally, qualitative data will be collected through interviews to gain insights into the context, institutional requirements and the perceived effectiveness of the training. A longitudinal approach

comprising of surveys, field observations, and focus groups will follows changes in employee adoption of management accounting techniques in their organisations over time.

The results demonstrate a clear trajectory of increased perceived usefulness and adoption of management accounting training content as the course was iteratively adapted to meet participants expressed financial information needs. The literature suggests that management accounting systems are most effective when tailored to the specific contextual factors of an organisation (Otley, 2016). This idea underpinned the training development process, which evolved over multiple cycles in response to participant feedback. The evidence presented here highlights how relevance, understanding, and practical uptake of the training content increased as the course was refined over time.

Management accounting training is 'beneficial in improving the financial competence of the small enterprises when the finance training is targeted to meet the training needs of the organisation,' and that the training developed 'needs to be 'funnelled' towards targeting the organisation strategic needs. By considering the contingency theory of management accounting in the management accounting training programme iterative development design, then this funnelling process is more accurate and will result in a more effective management accounting training programme for non-finance managers with some finance related duties working in small enterprises.

Keywords

Work Based Management Accounting Training, Contingency Theory, Small Enterprise Training, Management Accounting, Iterative Training Development

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING AND THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA: LEARNING GAME THEORY THROUGH PLAY

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Game theory provides a powerful lens through which to understand strategic decision-making in both economic and organisational contexts. However, many students find the concepts abstract and difficult to grasp without opportunities for experiential learning. This workshop introduces participants to the standard prisoner's dilemma game and extends the analysis to repeated games, highlighting how different strategies and equilibria emerge over time. The focus is on enabling participants to understand the distinction between one-off and repeated games, identify possible strategies, and locate Nash equilibria within different scenarios. A central application of the model will be its relevance to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and decision-making around oil production, supported by discussion of recent media reports.

The session combines explanation with active participation. The presenter will guide attendees through the core concepts of the prisoner's dilemma, one-off versus repeated interactions, and the implications for cartel agreements such as those within OPEC. Following this, all participants will take part in a six-round prisoner's dilemma game designed to simulate strategic interaction in a collective setting. Each round requires participants to decide between collusion and competition, with points awarded according to the distribution of choices across the group. The incentive structure is reinforced by tangible prizes (chocolates), awarded based on cumulative performance across rounds. By the end of the session, attendees will have developed a practical understanding of Nash equilibrium, strategic decision-making in repeated games, and the application of theoretical models to real-world contexts. The workshop is designed for students new to game theory, particularly those interested in strategy and economics, as well as academic staff seeking to embed interactive simulations into their teaching practice.

Keywords

Game Theory, Prisoner's Dilemma, Experiential Learning, OPEC

FROM CLASSVENUE: TO CUTTING-EDGE - DEMONSTRATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE OF MSC STUDENTS

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This submission presents a case study that highlights the educational and research impact of meaningful collaboration with MSc students. This work demonstrates the capability of taught postgraduate students and how, with thoughtful academic mentorship, MSc students can produce high-quality, original research that contributes to real-world scientific advancement. Beyond generating new knowledge, this case sheds light on educational excellence, that is, how to foster deep disciplinary learning and critical thinking for students, and how to build the confidence needed for students to develop as future researchers and change leaders. The research project collaborated with three MSc students is based on national strategic priorities, including the National Materials Innovation Strategy and the Royal Society of Chemistry's 2040 roadmap for sustainable polymers. By engaging students with research at the forefront of sustainability and materials innovation, the work exemplifies how postgraduate education can align with the UK's national goals for technological leadership and net-zero transition. This submission showcases not only the outcomes of student-led inquiry but also the institutional commitment to embedding high-impact, real-world research into the taught postgraduate experience. The research addresses key challenges in sustainable materials, including the development of biodegradable polymers in liquid formulations (PLFs) and circular economy strategies for material reuse. MSc students, under expert supervision, have engaged in original research across disciplines—ranging from environmental modelling using OECD's ENV-Linkages framework, to lab-based polymer innovation and economic assessments and evaluations.

Pedagogically, this collaborative model not only accelerates scientific discovery but also cultivates essential skills in future researchers. The quality of work achieved by our MSc cohort exemplifies the research potential of early-career scientists when given opportunities and academic support. I hope to showcase selected research outputs, methodologies, and reflections from students and supervisors—demonstrating how academia can meaningfully contribute to research advances, MSc students experience and fostering future change leaders.

Keywords

Postgraduate Education, Collaboration, Sustainability, Research Excellence

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SIMULATIONS: AN IMMERSIVE, EXPERIENTIAL, AND CULTURALLY ENGAGING EXPERIENCE

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In February 2025, the Economics department fully funded 5 of their students on a 9-day study trip to Germany to participate in the Management Simulation in Tourism at Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU). The programme is designed to incorporate theoretical approaches into an engaging simulation game with group work and reflections. It is an immersive experience embedding elements of histories and communities in Bavaria, building on walking in cities as an embodied way of knowing and learning (Küpers and Wee, 2018). Participants from various disciplines and countries collaborated in intercultural teams to develop a business plan and marketing strategy for a fictional hotel while drawing on creativity, interculturalism, communication, and strategic thinking. The course combines virtual and real-life components, in which students demonstrate and test their skills.

The cooperation with international partners represents an added value of the module and is reflected in the intercultural knowledge transfer of the underlying student teams. The shared experience is enriched by activities such as excursions, creative presentation formats and unforeseen challenges. University partners from across Europe including Poland, Estonia, and Slovakia, supported the simulation this year by delivering specific sessions based on subject expertise and their students participated as student coaches or as part of a mixed team. Students are expected to improve their intercultural competence, work on breaking down strategy into operational decisions and activities, analyse product portfolio and competitors in the market, coordinate within teams, apply operational and financial planning, work on information systems, develop confidence in marketing their products/brands, and consider ways to manage unexpected events.

The practicality of the programme is somewhat adventurous, and we can't help but think of students as 'Alice' being led, guided, challenged, shaped and influenced into the constructs of space and time ('Alice-learners' was first proposed by Mueller et al., 2015). The students are on a personal journey moving around the learning cycle and the reflective work hopes to facilitate transformative learning, something we (educators) are constantly striving for. The blend of interdisciplinary design, experiential learning, and gamification offers a truly unique and engaging educational experience.

According to the KU Mission Statement for Studies and Teaching, the Management Simulation in Tourism is based on the principle of "discursive education", in which teachers and learners shape the educational process together and interactively. No traditional teaching formats are used, but rather a mixture of short thematic inputs, self-study phases and feedback formats, supported by excursions and events as well as a mixture of on-site coaching and digital teaching-learning settings. The lecturers predominantly take on the role of coaches who support the students' self-learning process. Those students who are student coaches or part of the media team are in an intermediate role in which they are both teachers and learners. Networking between different disciplines and nationalities is a central component of the module. The module promotes transversal skills such as innovative thinking, intercultural competence, teamwork and communication skills and thus contributes to the development of a responsible personality. The Erasmus+ BIP format also strengthens the European idea. The format is also suitable for addressing social challenges, such as sustainability issues.

Keywords

Experiential Learning, Intercultural Competence, Simulation-Based Learning, Gamification, Transformative Learning

DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNER-CENTRED RESEARCH METHODS TEXTBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MASTERS STUDENTS

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Between 2019 and 2023, the number of international students undertaking a UK masters in business and management increased by 146% (HESA). Despite recent visa changes, demand for UK masters courses remains high. Most UK business and management masters programmes continue to include a dissertation as a significant component. Many international masters students have English as an additional language and limited prior experience in research methods or extended academic writing. Although digital tools are widespread, students often express a preference for physical books (Alsaeedi et al., 2021). However, existing research methods texts are often overly long, not strategically focused on dissertation deliverables, and lack support in areas like academic writing and soft skills. Students frequently rely on previous dissertations for guidance, but this can lead to superficial replication. While more concise guides (e.g. Saunders & Lewis, 2014; Cottrell, 2017) have emerged, there remains a gap for a single, step-by-step, subject-specific resource that addresses the full student experience.

The authors present a proposal for a new research methods book tailored for international masters students in business and management. Recently accepted by a UK publisher, the book builds on a successful earlier title (Samuels, 2023) and incorporates the following features: Discipline-specific content; Concise format; Academic writing guidance; Real student examples with feedback; Soft skills support (e.g. supervisor relationships); Strategic focus on dissertation coursework. The book focuses specifically on the post-proposal dissertation process. Feedback on the authors' previous book has been overwhelmingly positive, especially from international students at the University of Birmingham. Students found its clear structure, accessible language, and practical examples helpful for building confidence and understanding academic expectations. Though designed for international learners, the resource has proven beneficial to a broader postgraduate audience. The authors recommend adopting a holistic, student-centred approach to textbook design, particularly for diverse, international student populations navigating independent research projects.

Keywords

Research Methods, Dissertations, International Master's Students, Student-Centred Learning, Book Design

ENHANCING SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION USING ANIMATED CARTOON VIDEOS

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This project aims to enhance sustainability education by developing an innovative pedagogy integrating animated real-life case studies into business education. We will transform traditional text-based case studies into engaging, animated video content using Ruscombe Artisan Food & Drink Ltd., a UK-based SME navigating financial and environmental sustainability challenges. This approach addresses cultural, linguistic, and engagement barriers, making complex sustainability decisions more accessible and interactive. Our objectives include:

We aim to provide a pedagogic format within higher education to engage students in sustainable education, both individually and in group work. The animation we suggest is familiar to many students today and provides an engaging, collaborative, and creative environment to communicate sustainability competence and decision-making.

The project builds on turning an earlier Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) funded work where real case studies were turned into cartoons (Mehta and Frandsen, 2025), extending into creating animated videos. Cartoons are an art where the key syntactical feature is time as space on the page (Chute and DeKoven, 2006: 769). This format and their key benefit are slightly different to the animated, where space is translated into time as distinct movements. However, both forms should consider a narrative start and endpoints. With two innovative formats, we hope to build a platform for new and innovative pedagogy that attracts students' attention, imagination, and engagement. In this way 'scenes' are needed for the plot intended and how each moving scene jumps to the next.

1. Developing high-quality animated videos and an instructor manual to guide effective classroom integration.
2. Conducting student-focused evaluations through surveys and focus groups to assess engagement and learning outcomes.

We have conducted focus group interviews with students from Singapore, Dubai, and the UK campus. The primary findings show keen interest in the innovative pedagogical approach we used for animated videos.

Enhancing Business Education Practice

The findings and the framework we have created will support educators in delivering sustainability education more effectively. The anticipated outcomes

include improved student engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and a replicable model for future pedagogical innovations in business education. Research indicates that animated cartoons can enhance engagement by adding visual elements (Liu & Elms, 2019).

Keywords

Sustainability Education, Business Education, Animated Case Studies, Student Engagement, Pedagogical Innovation

DRIVING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: : BBS GREEN IMPACT 2025

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This proposal highlights the impactful work of the Professional Services team in embedding responsible business practices, advancing sustainability initiatives, and championing environmental responsibility at the University. Through cross-functional collaboration, proactive engagement, and a shared commitment to positive change, the team has successfully integrated key principles of sustainability into everyday operations.

Our efforts have ranged from reducing waste and improving energy efficiency to supporting inclusive practices and sustainable procurement. By aligning our actions with the University's wider strategic goals for environmental and social responsibility, we've fostered a culture of awareness and accountability across administrative and operational areas.

A key milestone in our journey was achieving a Gold Award in the Green Impact programme - a recognition of our team's dedication to continuous improvement, innovative thinking, and measurable impact. This award reflects not only our operational achievements but also our role as champions of responsible business across the wider campus community.

Through this presentation, we aim to share our learnings, showcase practical actions that led to our success, and inspire other Professional Services teams to lead the way in responsible business and environmental stewardship.

Keywords

Responsible Business, Sustainability, Green Impact Award, Professional Services

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: TEACHING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A CORE BUSINESS SKILL

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When teaching Business studies, part of what you're doing is equipping your students to be inclusive, ethical, and responsible employees and employers when they graduate. As part of that ambition, how many of you include upskilling your students on digital accessibility?

In the recent Jisc Digital Insights survey, only 617 out of 5136 student responses at the University of Birmingham said they had received training on this core skill. This presentation will provide quick tips and ideas about how to incorporate digital accessibility skills into your teaching, to ensure your students are not only supported in their own learning while here, but that they are responsible and inclusive employees when they graduate.

Digital accessibility refers to the design of digital products, services, and environments that are usable by people of all abilities. While legal frameworks such as the UK Equality Act 2010 and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) provide a baseline for compliance, the real opportunity lies in cultivating a mindset that sees accessibility as a driver of innovation, inclusion, and long-term business value. None of us know when a temporary or permanent injury will affect how we need to interact with the digital world, and it is keeping this awareness front and centre that we must cultivate. Accessibility for all is the driving force.

This presentation demonstrates how digital accessibility can be embedded into business education, and all education, as a core competency. We must equip graduates to lead inclusively, work responsibly, and advocate for accessibility in their organisations. This is especially critical for businesses which rely on digital platforms for customer engagement, service delivery, and internal operations.

This presentation also highlights the employability benefits of accessibility skills. As companies face growing pressure to meet accessibility standards and demonstrate corporate social responsibility, graduates with knowledge in this area are well-positioned to lead accessibility initiatives, influence policy, and contribute to inclusive innovation.

So ask yourself: while your students are flexing their creative muscles coming up with eye-catching visuals for their assignments, do they also understand colour ratios, text sizes, legal requirements about transcripts, and the myriad

other small details that hugely impact on the accessibility of the content they create? Do they understand how to make a Word document or Powerpoint presentation accessible for their teachers, peers, and future colleagues to use?

This presentation will demonstrate how you can incorporate these core skills into your teaching.

Keywords

Digital Accessibility, Responsible Business, Ethical Business Education

TEACHING ASSESSMENT TO TEACHERS: MOVING TOWARDS INCLUSIVITY

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Teachers often devote considerable time and energy to designing assessments that are academically rigorous and inclusive. However, academics may not always receive the necessary support, training, or reflective space to develop these assessments systematically. This paper explores the design, delivery, and evaluation of a professional development intervention aimed at helping educators critically engage with inclusive assessment design.

The intervention was implemented as part of a cross-disciplinary initiative to enhance assessment literacy among university teaching staff. It included a series of workshops structured around inclusive pedagogical principles, equity in assessment, and the use of authentic tasks that reflect diverse learner needs. Sessions were interactive and used problem-based scenarios, peer sharing, and critical reflection to stimulate dialogue.

Drawing on critical pedagogy and universal design for learning (UDL), the workshops encouraged participants to rethink traditional assumptions about assessment, question hidden biases, and collaboratively explore alternative approaches. Educators reflected on their own practice, shared disciplinary perspectives, and co-created actionable strategies for making assessments more inclusive without compromising academic standards.

Evaluation data collected from participant surveys and follow-up interviews indicated a shift in mindset and increased confidence in implementing inclusive assessment practices. Participants valued the safe, collegial space for discussion and the opportunity to test ideas with peers. Many noted that they left the sessions with practical tools and a clearer sense of what inclusive assessment looks like in their context.

This paper argues that inclusive assessment training should be embedded within institutional development programmes and treated not as a one-off session, but as an ongoing conversation about equity, pedagogy, and academic integrity.

Keywords

Assessment, Equity, Students, Inclusion, Training

MAXIMISING STAFF POTENTIAL: STRATEGIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR CONSISTENT, STUDENT

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In an increasingly turbulent higher education landscape, the ability to deliver high-quality, user-focused services hinges on maximising the potential of professional services staff. This presentation reflects on the approach taken to workforce planning and development based on the premise that the right people, with the right skills, are in the right roles at the right time-delivering consistent, responsive, and user-focused service delivery. The session will discuss how capacity can be increased through targeted efficiencies in processes, a focus on digital innovation, and clear alignment of activities with institutional priorities. By streamlining and simplifying routine operations, and removing duplication, staff are freed up to focus on work that adds the greatest value, moving from reacting to demand to proactively delivering on the school's ambitions. A critical enabler of this transformation is the optimisation of technology-enhanced approaches. Using tools that are available enables staff to enhance service quality, improve responsiveness, and allow for more agile working models in a time of increasing demands and higher expectations from service users.

At the heart of this approach is staff development, recognising that the school's success is dependent on staff feeling valued, supported, and equipped to adapt in a dynamic environment. The launch of the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) Mentoring Scheme marks a significant milestone in this journey. The scheme is designed to foster cross-functional learning, confidence-building, and career progression, creating a culture of peer support and shared expertise. By matching mentors and mentees across teams, the initiative encourages the sharing of insights, diverse perspectives, and institutional knowledge that might otherwise remain siloed. The presentation will reflect on the benefits of being a member of the business school sector, and the opportunities to create external connections through CABS and AHEP. Professional Services staff are encouraged to engage beyond institutional boundaries to stay informed, connected, and aligned with best practice. Through maximising external opportunities, staff are becoming better placed to meet the challenges faced by the sector, and developing best-in-sector practices to meet the school's ambition of being a top Global Business School.

Keywords

Professional Development, Student-Focused, Talent Management

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AS A CATALYST FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Reflective practice is widely recognised as a vital element of professional development, wellbeing, and identity formation across various sectors. Within higher education, its benefits for student learning are well documented. However, the use and impact of reflective practice among staff, particularly across academic and professional services roles, remain underexplored. This study investigates how reflective practice functions as a catalyst for professional growth, wellbeing, and cross-role collaboration within business education contexts.

Drawing on existing literature that highlights structured reflection's positive influence on professional identity and emotional wellbeing (Brookfield, 2017; Finlay, 2008; Schön, 1983; Reissner & Armitage-Chan, 2024), this research addresses gaps concerning the institutional embedding of reflection opportunities and the design of inclusive reflective spaces. Specifically, the study examines whether staff are encouraged and supported to engage in reflective practice, and explores the potential of participatory formats such as Collaborative Reflection Labs, which are theoretically grounded in collaborative reflection literature (Haniford, Allison, & Ramirez, 2023), to foster shared professional development across diverse roles.

Collaborative Reflection Labs, introduced in this study, are envisioned as co-created, inclusive spaces where academic and professional services staff engage in structured yet flexible reflective activities. These labs are designed to challenge hierarchical knowledge structures, support diverse epistemologies, and promote critical reflexivity, making them particularly suited to decolonising the curriculum and fostering inclusive professional cultures (Bohlmann, 2022; Taylor, Ryan, & Elphinstone, 2021). By valuing lived experience and multiple ways of knowing, the labs are intended to create emotionally safe environments that support identity formation and mutual learning.

Using qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with academic and professional services staff, as well as survey data, this mixed methods approach aims to generate rich insights into current reflective practices, institutional attitudes, and the potential of collaborative reflective formats to enhance identity, wellbeing, and collegiality.

Preliminary expectations include findings that institutional support for reflective practice is inconsistent, with opportunities often dependent on

individual initiative rather than systemic provision. Furthermore, engagement in reflection is anticipated to contribute to greater professional identity clarity and enhanced wellbeing, particularly among those operating across hybrid or cross-functional roles (Reissner & Armitage-Chan, 2024). The communal and emotionally safe environment facilitated by Collaborative Reflection Labs is expected to reduce feelings of isolation and encourage mutual learning (Haniford et al., 2023).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform higher education leadership, professional development practitioners, and human resources professionals about embedding reflective cultures that support staff wellbeing and professional identity development. By foregrounding both academic and professional services perspectives, the study contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of professional growth in business education settings. Moreover, it offers practical recommendations for adopting participatory reflective formats such as Collaborative Reflection Labs, which can promote collaboration, emotional safety, and sustained professional development, while also advancing decolonial and inclusive practices (Bohlmann, 2022; Taylor et al., 2021).

Ultimately, this study seeks to advance knowledge on the intersection of reflective practice, professional identity, and wellbeing, while providing actionable insights for cultivating reflective, supportive environments within higher education institutions. The findings are expected to have implications beyond business schools, offering transferable lessons for embedding reflective practice in diverse academic and professional contexts.

Keywords

Reflective Practice, Professional Identity, Wellbeing, Collaborative Reflection, Inclusive Higher Education

DRIVING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

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The Education Support Team at Birmingham Business School is undertaking a strategic transformation initiative aimed at enhancing operational efficiency, staff development, and service delivery through a structured programme of Continuous Improvement (CI) projects. This initiative is grounded in the School's commitment to fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and professional growth, and aligns with broader institutional goals of digital modernisation and service-led provision. The programme is organised around four key thematic areas:

Enhancing Skills & Training: This stream focuses on identifying skills gaps across teams, developing tailored training plans, and leveraging internal and external expertise to support staff development. By reviewing current knowledge areas and aligning training with emerging needs, the initiative aims to build a more agile and capable workforce. Collaboration with stakeholders such as Registry, Exams, Timetabling, and international campuses (e.g., Dubai, SIM) ensures a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Process Enhancements: Teams are tasked with reviewing existing administrative and academic support processes to identify inefficiencies, redundancies, and opportunities for simplification. The goal is to implement a consistent "One Team" approach that standardises best practices across departments, improves service quality, and reduces administrative burden.

Digital Modernisation: Building on the momentum of the SharePoint migration, this stream seeks to identify outdated or manual processes and replace them with digital solutions. The focus is on improving data accessibility, automating routine tasks, and enhancing collaboration through technology. Future planning includes identifying training needs to support digital adoption and ensuring long-term sustainability of new systems.

Dissertation Process Alignment: This project aims to harmonise dissertation-related processes across programmes and departments, ensuring consistency in student experience and academic standards. Key deliverables include standardised dissertation handbooks, aligned timelines, and shared resources, developed in consultation with academic leads and cross-functional teams.

Team Structure and Engagement: All Education Support Team members are assigned to a CI project group, each led by a designated Lead or Co-Lead in

collaboration with the Project & Innovation Team (PIT). Staff are allocated protected time-half a day per month-for CI work, in addition to personal development time, reinforcing the School's investment in staff growth and innovation.

Governance and Support: Project Leads work closely with PIT coordinators and Deputy Education Support Managers (DESMs) to define project scopes, set timelines, and drive progress. DESMs provide coaching and strategic oversight, ensuring alignment with operational goals. Regular monthly meetings are scheduled to maintain momentum, with participation considered a core component of each team member's role.

Outcomes and Impact: This initiative is expected to deliver measurable improvements in service delivery, staff satisfaction, and operational efficiency. It also aims to cultivate a proactive, empowered workforce capable of leading change and contributing to the School's strategic vision. By embedding continuous improvement into everyday practice, Birmingham Business School is positioning itself as a leader in administrative excellence and innovation in higher education.

Keywords

Continuous Improvement, Digital Modernisation, Collaboration, Skills Development, Operational Efficiency

REIMAGINING THE UNCONFERENCE: A REFLECTIVE METHODOLOGY FOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY ENGAGEMENTIN EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

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In an academic landscape often dominated by structured conferences and content-heavy presentations, the UnConference model offers a refreshing alternative. It prioritises reflection, dialogue, and inclusivity. This paper examines the 3rd annual UnConference hosted by the Birmingham Business School on April 8th as a case study in methodological innovation. Rather than viewing the event as a one-off gathering, we position it as a reflective methodology that fosters meaningful engagement across disciplinary and professional boundaries. The UnConference was grounded in the theme of "Reflective Practice in Pedagogy, Research, and Professional Activities." Participants co-created the agenda, engaging in discussions on topics such as reflective assessment, student skill development, leadership, and employability. The format encouraged spontaneous, participant-led sessions, enabling attendees to explore shared challenges and insights in a collegial, non-hierarchical environment. This structure aligns with Donald Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner, which emphasizes "reflection-in-action" as a means of navigating complex professional contexts (Schön, 1983).

The event also drew on Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy, which conceptualises education as a collaborative, political, and humanizing process rooted in dialogue between teachers and learners (Freire, 2017). In this spirit, the UnConference fostered a space where participants could engage in critical conversations that transcended disciplinary and hierarchical boundaries. Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice further supports this model, highlighting how learning emerges through social participation and shared enterprise.

Methodologically, the UnConference can be understood as a living case study in reflective practice (Stake, 1995). Data for this analysis includes participant feedback and thematic synthesis of session content. The co-chairing process itself became a site of reflexive inquiry, as facilitators navigated the balance between structure and spontaneity, ensuring inclusivity while allowing for emergent dialogue.

Key findings highlight the significance of participant agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). By shaping the agenda, attendees transitioned from passive recipients to active co-creators of knowledge (Cornwall, 2008). The event fostered cross-role dialogue, bringing together academics, professional staff,

and students in shared inquiry. Informal networking over tea and coffee reinforced the importance of relational spaces in academic life (Boud & Lee, 2005). Mini-presentations from invited speakers served as catalysts for deeper reflection and sparked conversations that extended across sessions.

This format carries significant implications for pedagogical and institutional practice. Pedagogically, it models reflective teaching practices and offers a blueprint for student-centered learning environments. Reflective writing and assessment, for instance, have been shown to enhance employability and critical thinking when supported by appropriate frameworks and feedback (Guo, 2022). Professionally, the UnConference supports inclusive development by flattening hierarchies and valuing diverse perspectives. At an institutional level, it challenges traditional notions of academic engagement and shifts the focus from content delivery to process-oriented dialogue.

In conclusion, the UnConference represents more than an event. It constitutes a reflective methodology that reimagines how we gather, learn, and grow in academic spaces. By centering dialogue, agency, and inclusivity, it offers a powerful alternative to conventional academic formats and contributes to a more participatory and reflective academic culture.

Keywords

Reflective Practice, UnConference, Dialogic Pedagogy, Communities of Practice, Inclusive Academic Culture

CAN MILITARY VETERANS TRANSITION INTO TEACHING TO HELP BRIDGE THE GAP OF WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE UK?

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There are many compelling reasons to consider the potential contribution of military veterans to teaching in UK Further Education. To find out more about the perspectives and texts of veterans moving into teaching, a comprehensive review of the literature was done. The review's objectives were to acquire a thorough grasp of how former military personnel might serve as a valuable source of candidates for the further education industry and to pinpoint tactics that would facilitate this. The Office for Veteran Affairs (OVA) approach and other publication sources are discussed. The results showed how FE teaching and military traits are comparable, as well as the difficulties these veterans have transitioning, and how to successfully apply these understandings across the country. Principals of colleges, administrators, and legislators will find this review helpful in implementing their recruitment goals. The findings can be used as inputs to support the development of a sustainable workforce in the FE sector and at the same time help veterans to find a worthy and worthwhile second career.

Keywords
Teacher, Military, Sustainability, Transition, Recruitment

TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION, CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT, BUSINESS TAX, BUSINESS LAW, GCC HIGHER EDUCATION

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Foreign universities operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries often deliver the same business programmes as in their home countries. However, the extent to which these programmes address local legal, regulatory, and labour market needs remains underexplored. This study investigates the relevance and contextualisation of law and tax modules in these programmes, focusing on student experiences and curriculum alignment with professional expectations.

The study draws on two main sources of quantitative data. First, over 630 respondents, including applicants, enrolled students, and recent graduates from both foreign and local universities in GCC countries, participated in a structured online survey. The survey collected data on university selection preferences, motivations for studying business law and business tax modules, and opinions on whether foreign and local content should be included in the curriculum. Second, a desk-based review of 350 business programmes across 150 universities in the region is conducted. Module titles, credit values, learning outcomes, and assessment methods were extracted and evaluated for alignment with professional qualifications such as ACCA. Natural language processing techniques in Python were used to analyse the online syllabi, including Bloom's Taxonomy classification to assess cognitive depth. Additionally, semantic analysis using AI tools was applied to map the syllabus content against the ACCA framework.

Survey respondents expressed strong career-related motivations for enrolling in tax and law modules. Overall, graduates rated studying overseas or at a reputable local university more positively than attending a foreign university based locally or a local institution in another GCC country. A majority of participants supported the inclusion of foreign content in university curricula, with 70 per cent favouring the teaching of foreign law and 64 per cent supporting the teaching of foreign tax. When asked about jurisdictional preferences, 44 per cent preferred UK law, and 30 per cent preferred US law, while 45 per cent preferred UK tax and 32 per cent preferred US tax. Notably, more participants preferred that foreign universities deliver local tax and law

content, indicating demand for hybridised curricula. The curriculum review identified notable gaps between university modules and professional benchmarks, particularly in coverage depth and jurisdictional scope. Many learning outcomes were found to emphasise lower-order skills rather than higher-order cognitive competencies.

The preliminary findings provide early evidence that business education in the GCC, particularly in law and tax, would benefit from stronger alignment with both professional qualification requirements and student expectations. Participants placed a clear value on the inclusion of local tax and law content and notably indicated that foreign universities operating in the region should deliver local content. These early insights offer a foundation for curriculum reform, transnational education policy dialogue, and targeted engagement with employers and regulators. A more in-depth analysis of the curriculum and student responses is ongoing, and the findings will guide subsequent qualitative investigations with educational and industry stakeholders.

RETHINKING ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Student engagement is a critical and evolving concept in higher education (Maskell & Collins, 2017). In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, institutions have embraced new modes of delivery, including online and blended learning alongside traditional face-to-face formats, prompting a redefinition of what constitutes meaningful engagement (Singh et al., 2024). Although student engagement has been linked to academic performance (Siregar et al., 2023) and student retention (Van den Broeck et al., 2023), there remains no consensus on how to define or measure it effectively in the 21st century.

Existing research has largely focused on enhancing engagement in specific environments, such as blended learning (Heilporn et al., 2021), online platforms (Salas-Pilco et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2024), or on identifying key determinants (Siregar et al., 2023; Karabchuk & Roshchina, 2023). However, studies exploring how engagement can be effectively and comprehensively measured in a dynamic and changing higher education landscape remain limited.

Traditionally, engagement has been equated with class attendance. Yet, as Lam et al. (2023) argue, while attendance may be necessary, it does not guarantee active learning. This metric is particularly inadequate in varied learning contexts, as it overlooks the diverse ways students interact with learning materials, teaching staff, and peers. Attendance alone fails to fully reflect student engagement.

This study proposes that engagement is better assessed through observable behaviours, such as adherence to instructions and participation in academic activities. We advocate for a broader, more inclusive framework that recognises diverse forms of engagement, such as participation in online quizzes, discussion forums, group projects, one-on-one consultations with tutors, and use of virtual learning environment (VLE) resources. Monitoring these behaviours offers a more holistic view of student involvement, especially for those who face challenges with traditional modes of participation. This approach supports the early identification of at-risk students, improves accessibility, and enables more tailored academic support.

The study is grounded in Educational Engagement Theory (Rahmad, 2022), which posits that engagement transcends physical presence, encompassing

emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions. We adopt a quantitative methodology to examine engagement among undergraduate and postgraduate students across three UK higher education institutions. Weekly Menti quizzes, featuring open-ended, closed, and mixed-format questions will capture engagement trends. Additional methods include monitoring participation in live sessions and online platforms, reviewing attendance records, and VLE analytics. This research aims to enhance understanding of how student engagement extends beyond traditional attendance metrics, offering insights and recommendations for measuring engagement more effectively and supporting learners more equitably.

Keywords

Engagement, Higher Education, Attendance, , Blended Learning, Learning Analytics

CROSSING BORDERS PROJECT: CREATING AN INTER-CULTURAL MINDSET THROUGH AN ONLINE COLLABORATIVE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

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The Crossing Borders Project was a joint initiative between VIVES University College, Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, and Birmingham City University. For the Birmingham City University students, it began as a voluntary activity as part of an undergraduate module entitled The Global Manager. Participating students were able to embed their learning into the reflective component of their assessment. They met online with international peers four times during the semester, following a guided set of topics.

This was the first time both the students and the module leader had participated in such a programme, creating an open-ended and exploratory experience. Coinciding with this, at the beginning of the semester, Donald Trump intensified his efforts to ban EDI initiatives through executive orders that extended into private and international sectors. Against a backdrop of anti-immigration rhetoric and growing pressure on international student mobility, the relevance of this project became increasingly significant.

Student feedback highlighted the value of experiential, cross-cultural learning beyond the classroom. Many reflected on the importance of diversity, intercultural communication, and global awareness. One student shared:

"The 'Crossing Borders' project strengthened teamwork, problem-solving and time management while working in a diverse group. I gained valuable insights into Ukrainian and Belgian perspectives on lifestyles and each country's challenges. This improved my ability to navigate cultural differences and strengthen my analytical approach to human interactions."

Although qualitative analysis of the feedback was still ongoing at the time of submission, initial responses clearly indicate the project's positive impact. This experimental pedagogical initiative has underscored the importance of creating international partnerships and embedding inclusive, intercultural experiences into assessed learning. Plans are in place to expand the initiative to additional courses and modules across BCU in the next academic year.

Keywords
Cross-Cultural Education, Partnerships, Inclusive Education, Global Mindset

GO GLOBAL SUMMER: INTEGRATING GLOBAL EXPERIENCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CURRICULUM

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This presentation introduces Go Global Summer, a University of Birmingham initiative that broadens internationalisation in business education by offering students a rich mix of global experiences - both embedded within the curriculum and available as extra-curricular opportunities. Delivered across the Edgbaston and Dubai campuses, the programme supports the University's internationalisation strategy and commitment to enhancing global mobility.

Students can access a wide range of international experiences such as international summer schools, language and cultural immersion courses, research projects, global internships, and volunteering placements.

By combining academic and experiential learning, Go Global Summer equips students with the intercultural competencies, global awareness, and professional skills needed to thrive in international business environments. The presentation will showcase case studies, student feedback, and partnership models that demonstrate the impact of this integrated approach.

This session aims to inspire colleagues to adopt flexible, inclusive strategies for internationalisation that empower all students to engage meaningfully with the global business landscape, improving their academic outcomes and making them more employable.

Keywords
Go Global, Student International Mobility, Employability

THE YEAR ABROAD PROGRAMME

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This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Year Abroad Programme at the Business School over the past three academic years, highlighting its structure, student participation, and educational impact. The programme exists in two main formats: a compulsory year-long work or study placement for students enrolled in the International Business Programme within the Management discipline, and an optional year abroad opportunity for students in all other programmes. This dual structure allows for a diverse range of student experiences and outcomes, which we aim to explore in detail.

We begin by examining the demographics of students who have participated in the Year Abroad Programme. This includes an analysis of gender, nationality, academic background, and socioeconomic status (where available). Particular attention is given to the types and levels of funding support available to students, including scholarships, grants, and other financial aid mechanisms, and how these influence participation rates. Understanding who goes abroad and who does not is essential for evaluating the inclusivity and accessibility of the programme.

Next, we explore the destinations chosen by students, identifying trends in geographic preferences and institutional partnerships. We will also discuss the logistical and academic challenges students face when preparing for and undertaking their year abroad, such as visa issues, credit transfer, and adapting to different educational systems. Drawing on student feedback, we will share a range of experiences that reflect both the opportunities and obstacles encountered during their time abroad.

A key focus of the presentation is the educational value of the year abroad. We will present data and qualitative insights on student learning outcomes, including intercultural competence, language acquisition, disciplinary knowledge, and engagement with global issues. These outcomes are assessed through module performance, reflective assignments, and post-return evaluations. We aim to demonstrate how the year abroad contributes to the development of globally aware, adaptable, and resilient graduates.

Finally, we address the broader institutional context, examining the structures and strategies at both the University and School levels that support or hinder student participation. This includes advising systems, promotional efforts, and administrative processes. We will also consider the challenges of widening

participation, particularly for students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, and propose recommendations for making the programme more equitable and impactful.

By presenting a holistic view of the Year Abroad Programme, this session will offer valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers interested in international education, student mobility, and curriculum internationalisation.

Keywords

Year Abroad, Go Global, International, Intercultural

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