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Owning the moment: Expectations, trust and developmental co-constructions in online post-observation dialogue

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In the move to online learning as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, providing an accessible yet academically robust approach to teaching observation for our PGCLTHE participants initially presented something of a challenge. We were accustomed to traditional face-to-face classroom observations followed by written feedback, and/or spoken feedback sessions *in situ*. Naturally, in September 2020, when all activities suddenly moved online, a change of approach was required. At the time, we saw this as a temporary expedient, but further investigation of the situation changed our thinking and practice on a more permanent basis. In this article, we report on the findings of a SEDA-funded small-grant project related to post-observation dialogues, based on work at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Worcester.

At Manchester Metropolitan University, our response to Covid-19 and the pivot online resulted in the creation of three specific ways to enact 'observation' for staff teaching across disciplines: observing synchronous online sessions in real time; watching recordings of synchronous sessions; reviewing teaching resources, plans and other documentations. At the University of Worcester, online observation of teaching sessions was undertaken in real time within Collaborate, the 'virtual classroom' associated with Blackboard, the University's virtual learning environment software.

Initially, there were fears that our alternative approaches might offer a sub-standard participant experience. Educational developer colleagues spoke of the missing 'body language' and of limitations of two-dimensional interactions. The technical equipment was new to some teachers and was not always predictable. Students might lack appropriate kit, or spaces in which to use it, and this might have adverse effects on teaching and observations thereof. Some of us anticipated that the physical 'distance' between observer and observee might equate to relational distances. Whilst we offered a well-articulated process for all participants using 'virtual' alternatives, we were not convinced that they were of equal value to our traditional routines.

As exponents of Relational Pedagogy (Murphy and Brown, 2012), it was important for us to provide a positive relational experience for colleagues, particularly given the anxieties of teaching during a pandemic and the adaption of new pedagogical practice in the online context. Offering a respectful and trusting environment based on a relational approach was therefore paramount; we felt we should, as Murphy

and Brown suggest, provide a domain for 'doubt, confusion and relational anxiety agendas' (Murphy and Brown, 2012, p.643).

As we proceeded with our observation schedule (and discussed our experiences) one notable element emerged. The observation itself became a less striking part of the process, whereas the post-observation discussion, which was the 'constant', became more significant. Paradoxically, in the online observation events, some relational barriers were reduced, and some inherently unhelpful power dimensions minimised. Without the physical presence of the observer in the classroom, there was less inhibition and more focus on the learners. In many cases the post-observation meeting was experienced as the purposeful and practitioner-focused opportunity for reflection. In this space we felt that the teacher had the chance to 'own the moment' − as one of the informants put it, 'a precious time' in which useful reflections could be prompted and built on (for example, towards a constructive commentary for the course assessment). For us, the post-observation dialogue became the central developmental experience.

When we went on to reflect on prior 'face to face' observation practice, we perceived some disadvantages hitherto unremarked. For example, some feedback conversations occurred immediately after sessions, allowing scant time for reflection. Other conversations took place in relatively public places (such as the faculty café), which were not conducive to more sensitive interactions, or they happened in the office of the education developer, clearly not 'neutral territory'. Some of us sent undigested written reports directly to participants straight after the session, reducing time for processing on both sides. Revisiting and reappraising some of our assumptions of 'good practice' was indeed a transformational experience (Mezirow, 1997) brought about by the 'trauma' of the hasty pivot to online work.

At Manchester Metropolitan University, we determined to review our institutional developmental observation scheme to include a more formal expectation of engagement in post-observation professional dialogue, in addition to the provision of written feedback. We felt this process had the capacity to ensure a more rounded experience for both observer and observee. At the University of Worcester, the dialogue tended to be in a written format only, via an email exchange. This also offered participants a period of time to reflect upon comments prior to responding.

Following the SEDA small grant award we have examined this work in more detail to capture the views of PGCERT participants and academic developers at Manchester Metropolitan and the University of Worcester regarding online observation processes, exploring nuances of the post-observation dialogue from the perspective of academic developers (observers) and PGCLTHE participants (observees). Here we outline key reflections from the project including our conclusion that online dialogue should remain a feature of post-Covid staff development practice.

An effective 'professional dialogue' provides the space to take time to listen, reflect and discuss moments of practice, as a crucial aspect of professional learning (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998; Pilkington, 2014). It can support academics in identifying new approaches to further enhance or develop their professional practice, with authentically transformative potential for both the observer and observee (Aldred *et al.*, 2021). For the dialogue itself to become transformational there must be clarity around expectations and understanding of the potential benefits, as Freire suggests:

> *'Dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness. If the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounters will be empty, sterile, bureaucratic, and tedious.'* (Freire, 2018, p. 92)

Method
The research was conducted across two institutions, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Worcester. Having data from two institutions mitigated some assumptions about the 'right' way to carry out observation

processes, and allowed for comparative analysis. A qualitative approach was selected to introduce free comments, and to obtain potentially rich data from both observers (educational developers from the two institutions) and observees (typically relatively new teachers studying for their Post-Graduate Certificates in Higher Education). Through a series of 1:1 semi-structured interviews and small focus groups we gathered the views of informant-colleagues who had recently been involved in an online observation process, either as observers or observees. In addition, an additional data set of information was gathered via an online questionnaire to current/recent PGCLTHE graduates (November, 2022). Focus groups with recent participants followed (March-April, 2022) as well as semi-structured interviews with academic developers (April-May 2022). We adopted the use of thematic analysis to interrogate the data collected. This process allowed for a robust yet flexible mechanism for establishing key themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Findings and discussion

Thematic analysis was used to facilitate a structure by which to reappraise our own experience and assumptions (inductive analysis); critically, we opened ourselves to reappraising the investigation method. The focus groups under-recruited, providing fewer participants than intended. However, the deeper discussion this afforded gave us an opportunity to capture more complex responses; we reflected that with larger numbers of respondents, some rich content would have been overlooked.

The survey questionnaire confirmed that the professional dialogue plays an important part in the observation experience: 100% of participants found it either 'very' or 'extremely' useful.

Responses were interestingly balanced in terms of value perceived. 14% of respondents thought the focus of the dialogue should be *next steps for professional development*. 11% felt it should *direct you to useful resources*. 23% suggested the key focus was *giving detailed feedback on the teaching session observed*. 23% of respondents suggested offering *an opportunity for reflection* and drawing their own conclusions was the most valuable focus. For 27% of the respondents, *making suggestions for improving practice* was most important. The spread of perception of the dialogue's value indicated that our participants sought different developmental outcomes from the experience, based, we surmised, on the different individual and professional contexts.

The questionnaire data included open questions prompting free-text comments. Many of these comments referred to the fact that feedback in any form was useful, and could lead to changes in practice. These comments further reinforced the idea that '*suggestions for improving practice*' is a valuable aspect of the post-observation discussion. Respondents rated highly the opportunity for teachers to share and reflect upon experience.

Through the questionnaire responses, interviews and focus groups, a number of key themes emerged.

Framing expectations

A clear and transparent process was essential. It was appreciated that at MMU over 100 observations are undertaken per year as part of the PGCLTHE programme. Observees present possible dates for observation to allow for staff availability. This process is managed centrally using Microsoft forms, Excel and direct email communication. Instructions are clearly available via a central platform.

In addition to planning, it became clear that managing observee expectations was an important element which became more obvious when participants reflected upon the process in focus groups.

As members of the focus group commented:

> '…I don't feel like I got what I expected to, but perhaps my expectations, I didn't manage them effectively at the start.'

> 'It's the way you kind of frame it at the beginning of the observation as well because that set your expectations...'

Procedures were in place to 'frame' the observation event with the observee at the centre in both institutions. For example, at Manchester Metropolitan University, observees provide key information such as preferred name and gender pronoun, to personalise the initial communication and foster trust and respect, central to a relational approach (Murphy and Brown, 2012). Communications are friendly and professional, with a clear message regarding the follow-up dialogue in the week following the observation. It was interesting that 24% of our survey respondents suggested dialogues should take place within three days and 68% felt it should be within seven days, confirming the appropriateness of the time frame.

Building trust

Another key theme that emerged through the focus groups and the interviews was the importance of providing an opportunity for trust to develop:

> '...thinking about providing some sort of brief to your observer and...there were things that we wanted our observer to look at specifically […] you know hopefully having that open environment, that trust again...'

We acknowledge and constantly remind ourselves as tutors on the PG Certificate course that observations are potentially stressful events which can place colleagues' professional identity in jeopardy. We aim to reduce anxiety by open and mindful procedures. An undue focus on the 'performance' can be stressful and unhelpful. A focus on the post-observation dialogue can alleviate 'performance anxiety' and prompt deeper thought. Heightening the status of the professional dialogue not only allowed for a genuine interaction about experiences of teaching, but led to a more spontaneous and creative exchange, even providing a springboard for future collaboration in some cases. Implicitly or explicitly an atmosphere of trust was referenced by many observees: '*trust is really important […] that safe space that you develop*'.

Developing knowledge and skills

We found that the online experience of the post-observation dialogue was a more inclusive approach than that of the traditional face-to-face meeting, which could take place in a private office (e.g. that of the Teaching Academy) or a public space such as a campus café or similar. In the online space, conversations are on a more 'equal' footing. They take place on a (virtual) neutral 'territory' and allow participants to have notes and *aides-memoire* (such as session plans) discreetly at hand. Some participants feel less inhibited in their own space, and noted a saving of time and energy to find/reach the room.

As anticipated, some perceived barriers to online dialogues had been articulated in the main responses from academic developers, who preferred 'in person' meetings. This was 'because they can read your body language', and because online meetings had a 'different energy'. They said they felt more natural when in person, and they had better eye contact undistracted by 'another screen'. In person, they said, 'they've got my complete attention'.

We ended up questioning exactly how far the 'body language' (for example) really benefited participants, and how far 'in person' observation events were by their nature more effective. We saw benefits of minimised physical presence, as this seemed to promote more equality and ease, especially for those being observed. Two outcomes were noteworthy:

1. We were able to articulate principles which could be shared 'up front' to observees to align participant expectations; as a participant put it: 'what matters is the way you frame the observations at the beginning'. Observers communicated their awareness they were seeing just a 'snapshot' of practice, not a full representation of their teaching practice, in fact a 'moment' only, and moreover, that the observees were the 'experts' on the context, the students, and the discipline.
2. We proposed an approach to observational dialogue framed around relational pedagogy, a space that acknowledges intersectionality in the intersubjective 'moments', where honest reflections manifest and can become developmental opportunities. The dialogue was a key part of the relationship itself.

The framework is outlined in Table 1, below. We would suggest this framework is context specific and should be discussed/co-constructed with your participants based on an agreed philosophical approach (see top row). The first column identifies the philosophical positions that emerged from our analysis, subsequent columns how the observer might construct their relationship with the observee. We feel it moves the emphasis of developmental observation in a critical way. The 'emotional work' lies in the creation of the dialogue environment, rather than in the observation event.

Framework for an effective post-observation dialogue

Having identified the post-observation dialogue as the most important part of the process, we then needed to explore more deeply the nature of the dialogue in this context. We asked ourselves how to ensure that the post-observation conversation was of 'high quality', liable to build trust and mutual respect, and likely to facilitate professional development for at least the observee. Through analysis of our findings and further discussion, we distilled the components which needed to be addressed with care, thinking from both observer and observee points of view. The three key components we arrived at were: Behaviours, Speech, and Attitude. We did not see these as sharply divided categories; they were convenient labels by which to explore what actually occurred in the dialogue 'event'. Using our own reflections and the findings from our research, we drew out themes that had emerged as important to colleagues, which were Framing Expectations, Building Trust, and Developing Knowledge and Skills. These themes are also possible to 'overlap' and again were used for convenience, as means of identifying important functions of the dialogue. We then found examples of each theme and component, which we were persuaded would be effective in practice, that is, most conducive to an effective post-observation dialogue.

Our framework embedded the approach of relational pedagogy, which has been central to the CPD offer at Manchester Metropolitan University. We were conscious that other general philosophies of education could usefully be embedded, depending on different contexts. Our framework is meant as a starting point for discussion amongst educational developers embarking on an observation schedule. Different examples may be added, after discussion. We also intend to use it to introduce the observation process to our participants, in the spirit of framing expectations and building trust in the process. We continue to seek to create spaces where active, participant-centred learning can occur, with critical aspects of identity explored. We feel that through this experience we have moved beyond simple 'transactional' negotiation, and have gone a step beyond asking participants 'What would you like to be observed on?'

Unifying Philosophy e.g. Relational Pedagogy			
	Behaviours, e.g.	*Speech, e.g.*	*Attitude, e.g.*
Framing expectations (for the dialogue)	Observer: Sends written observation notes in advance	Observer: Clear comms on the purpose of dialogue Acknowledges the 'snapshot' moment	Observer: Non-expert Critical friend
	Observee: Notes initial own reflections on session	Observee: Seeks clarification at any point	Observee: Expert on students, discipline, context
Building trust	Observer: Listens actively Finds neutral space Uses positive non-verbal communication	Observer: Relates own experiences Speaks with authenticity 'professional to professional'	Observer: Co-construction of ideas Sounding board 'Abundance' mentality
	Observee: Participates fully in process; is prepared to engage with dialogue	Observee: Ask Qs, offers reflection	Observee: Own the moment, take advantage of reflective opportunity
Developing knowledge and skills	Observer: Takes an appreciative stance Acknowledges mutual development opportunity	Observer: Asks genuine questions, e.g. Have you tried different techniques? Highlights good work observed 'It's great the way you …' Uses prompt questions for the academic developer e.g. 'Was this a typical session?'	Observer: Critical friend Engaged with how to 'unlock' thoughts, experiences and reflections of the observee
	Observee: Reconceptualises previous experiences Shares reflections honestly and openly in a neutral space	Observee: Seeks clarification, articulates own reflections in their context	Observee: Co-constructs strategies, techniques, and action plans

Table 1   Dialogue framework

Conclusion

Despite this being a small-scale study, we have generated a number of significant ideas in relation to the dialogue process which are a good starting point for further discussion with stakeholders. We have produced an adaptable framework which we feel can be readily adopted by others engaged in creating developmental observation schedules which will be of value to both observers and observees.

Our heightened awareness of intersectionality has enabled us to appreciate the complexity of the professional dialogue and its possibilities. We also acknowledge that simple elements, such as the neutrality of the physical space, in itself opens the door to a more authentic, and more open dialogue. We feel that a trusting environment (in this case predicated upon relational pedagogy) has meant explorations of practice become deeper and more meaningful, more likely to positively

benefit teaching teams and their students.

As academic developers, we have reached the conclusion that developmental learning by dialogue has great potential for both parties. Using a defined framework that considers the practicalities of generating positive experiences by considering Expectation, shared Trust and co-constructed Development, supports the process. Sharing the purposes of the dialogue openly means nobody owns the moment; the conversation can be experienced as a precious time lived in common between colleagues. The online space is, we feel, more likely to offer a unique moment away from the 'everyday', where genuinely co-creative reflective work can be done.

We suggest that future research should further explore opportunities for collaborative reflection from academic developers (adapting the framework as applicable to local contexts) with a view to making more transparent the purposes and methods of this means of educational development. Examples from the practices of colleagues can be gathered to share good practice around the themes identified, in order to offer high quality experiences for those embarking on a career teaching in Higher Education.

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Recognising the therapeutic university: Challenges and opportunities

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The appointment of the first Student Support Champion for universities in England, in June 2022, is yet another mark in the recognition to prioritise mental health and improve wellbeing across the sector. The Champion, Professor Edward Peck, Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham Trent University, has a strong learning analytics background that can contribute to the mix of solutions and approaches already being applied and trialled in several universities. This is a two-year appointment but it is not something that came out of the blue. In fact, five years ago (thus, coinciding with Universities UK's (UUK) 'Suicide-safer' guidelines for leaders and a year after UUK's Step Change Framework), one pro-vice-chancellor advocated the appointment of a commissioner for student mental health (cited in Clarke and Beech, 2018).

Overall, Professor Peck's appointment signals a recognition for sustained and committed leadership and consultation in the sector as there are no quick fixes or simple panaceas to addressing poor mental health. With this impetus, at the start of 2022/23, a significant number of universities and colleges signalled their intention to attain the University Mental Health Charter (UMHC), managed by Student Minds (Hughes and Spanner, 2019). It follows a Department for Education press release (20 June 2022) which cited the then universities minister Michelle Donelan's ambition for all HE providers to sign up to the UMHC programme 'within the next five years, if not sooner'; the press release coincided with a government call for evidence to inform a new ten-year mental health plan. This is an opportunity for educational developers to offer insights and strategies and to ensure their voice is marked as these institutional submissions are made.

This article focuses on two ideas that might be influenced by the process of chartership from an educational developer's perspective: first, how vulnerability might be reconsidered through a therapeutic gaze; and second, how an alternate model of leadership for wellbeing may reconfigure how educational developers engage with other institutional actors.

'Teaching as therapy'
Educational developers should relish the challenge the journey towards chartership offers. Good teaching *is* by nature a therapeutic process. How we consider learners in lesson planning, facilitate group work or conversation and debate, connect students with their peers (online or in face-to-face encounters), create engaging

content or apply flipped-classroom techniques, embed different methods of assessment, and give meaningful feedback — these are all aspects we could rationalise as therapeutic. Put another way, educational developers already recognise the affective, cognitive, behavioural and motivational attributes in student engagement and learning. And recognition is key: I am inclined towards Amitav Ghosh's

(2019) (author of *The Glass House*) perspective of it as 'a passage from ignorance to knowledge'; but one does not require an initial introduction, nor does recognition require an exchange of words — to recognise does not even require understanding or comprehension. Ghosh highlights the importance of 're-' (the first two letters), harking back to an already existing sense of awareness.

Students do not arrive at university as fully formed academic citizens, and part of that transition and experience is for the student to develop senses of being and belonging. This is strongly reflected in the 'learn' domain of the UMHC; principles of good practice are listed in the sub-categories 'transition to university', 'learning, teaching and assessment', and 'progression' (Table 1).

LEARN (1)	LEARN (2)	UG/PGT
Transition into university	*Learning, teaching and assessment*	*Progression*
Universities take a whole university approach to transition, embedding measures to support the positive transition of all students across their provision and into the curriculum. Measures to support transition begin from pre-application and continue through application, pre-entry, arrival, induction and through the first year. Measures to support transition aim to promote wellbeing, efficacy, academic integration and social connectedness. Universities provide additional or specific interventions for students who face additional barriers.	Universities ensure that curriculum takes a holistic and inclusive view of learners, using evidence-informed practice and secure scaffolding to enable all students to develop skills, confidence, academic self-efficacy and improve performance. Universities ensure that curriculum is designed to facilitate students to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at an appropriate pace. Universities ensure that curriculum and pedagogic practice encourages deep learning, meaning, mastery and development. Universities ensure that curriculum design, pedagogic practice and academic processes consider and seek to impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of all students. Universities clarify the role of academics in supporting student mental health and guide staff to maintain supportive, appropriate boundaries. Universities ensure that staff in teaching and learning support roles understand how they can support student mental health and wellbeing through good pedagogic practice.	Universities support students to prepare for the multiple, ongoing transitions they encounter during their university career, e.g. between years/levels of study. Universities provide targeted support for students on placement and on professional programmes, who may require more in-depth preparation and specific interventions. Universities provide adequate support for students taking breaks in study and proactively support their transition back into education. Universities support students to prepare for life, career and further study beyond graduation. Universities ensure that support for these transitions is structurally embedded into curriculum and university practice.

Table 1   UMHC – 'Learn' domain with principles of good practice

Being and belonging are dynamic processes and, as Barnett (2012) has argued, in an age of super-complexity, the processes involve developing competences — key skills and abilities. Being and belonging invoke senses of introspection and development that acknowledge vulnerability and a recognition of the journey toward

a better understanding of the self. Institutional policies and plans also reference these learning journeys. For instance, a recognition of vulnerability is evident in several statements included as part of Access and Participation Plans (APPs) universities in England put in place for the Office for Students. They include pledges to combat obstacles

faced by certain student groups: students from areas of low HE participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status; some black, Asian and minority ethnic students; mature students; disabled students; care leavers; carers; people estranged from their families; people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; and refugees.

In a theory of vulnerability, feminist and legal scholar Martha Fineman (2010) has argued that vulnerability is universal – as embodied beings we are all vulnerable and it is a constant feeling. Further, she argues that the discourse that has been arranged around identity characteristics may distort an understanding of a variety of other contextual issues and problems; in her prognosis, identity categories can serve as mere proxies for issues such as poverty or a failure of public education. Fineman rationalises that these then obscure the social and cultural forces that distribute privilege and disadvantage in systems that transcend identity characteristics.

A journey towards chartership can, therefore, be a valuable way of looking again at existing plans, to develop critical frameworks, and address a few of the key concerns labelled as therapeutic approaches to education, for instance captured in Ecclestone's (2007) observation of 'pessimistic images of people's resilience and agency' (p. 465).

University responses to the killing of George Floyd, and Black Lives Matter, that may have been followed by a more critical appraisal of a decolonised curriculum, can act as a means of *strengthening* the connections between learning and wider social-political themes and, consequently, tilt the balance toward building self-awareness and resilience. As Fineman (2010) concludes, a theory of vulnerability is one that recognises that vulnerability cannot be eradicated or eliminated, but it can be mediated by the promise of resilience. However compelling this may appear, this is not straightforward. As argued by Lukianoff and Haidt (2019), from their observations in the US, 'good intentions' can have an adverse effect on teaching practice if certain protections and an overzealous 'language of safety' are introduced in ways that short-circuit deeper conversations, as referenced in an interview Johnathan Haidt gave to the BBC:

> *'I used to be a provocative teacher. I used to use Socratic methods of bringing people to some uncomfortable possible conclusions, and then lead them away. I don't dare do that now, because if I make someone uncomfortable there's a number to call to report me.'* (cited in Mistry, 2018, p. 1).

These concerns on the cultural turn of emotions, personhood and risk are long-standing but worth noting (*cf.* Furedi, 2003). The key lesson here is that the framing of the therapeutic university goes beyond a checklist of policies and guidelines with 'good intentions' but, like the therapeutic process itself, requires space and opportunity to discuss, reflect, debate or challenge existing assumptions. (In fact, in their study, Luckianoff and Haidt credited Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a means of enabling meaningful dialogue among diverse groups of students.)

Culture change: Intersection with SEDA's work

The journey towards chartership is likely to be a culmination of conversations – on culture, on development and what a shared vision and responsibility for mental health and wellbeing really means or looks like. In summary, there is an opportunity for educational developers to engage in conversations on the functioning and character of institutions and decision-making. This is a prominent feature of the UMHC which, in the domain 'enabling themes', highlights sub-categories such as:

- Leadership, strategy and policy (holistic, evidence-informed, connected, prioritised)
- Student voice and participation (shared culture, transparent structure, resourced)
- Cohesiveness of support across the provider (shared vision, better understanding)
- Inclusivity and intersectional mental health (welcoming environment).

In bringing these themes together, there is an opportunity to re-imagine leadership (for positive mental health and wellbeing) modelled on empathy and care (Noddings, 2013). Taking the UMHC categories together, they align with educational developers' suggestions for an integrated workplace culture to support wellbeing, as set out in paper in a recent SEDA Special (Kolomitro *et al.*, 2020) (Table 2).

Recommended strategies	Description
Supportive administrative and institutional practice	Flattening organisation
	Improve communications
	Manage workloads
	Flexible policies
	Model positive behaviours
Effective leadership and management	Workload prioritisation
	Management and transparency
	Clear strategic planning and goal-setting
	Autonomy and flexibility

Table 2   Excerpt from Kolomitro et al. (2020) – Recommendations for fostering wellbeing for educational developers

If we blend some of the descriptions in the UMHC (holistic, connected, transparency, welcoming) and Kolomitro's recommendations, is it possible to *visualise* a different form of leadership? Traditional models of leadership determine power to reside at the very apex of a triangle, with communication flowing predominantly from that peak. Perhaps, in a therapeutic model, one can visualise leadership as community building — with *different* leaders occupying a space at the centre of concentric social circles; being prepared to move to the outer layer as new voices are brought in.

How might educational developers position themselves in this arrangement? As strategic alliance builders first, before moving into the centre? Or as perpetual onlookers on the outskirts, but establishing connections with subaltern-ised groups in the university? (Figure 1).
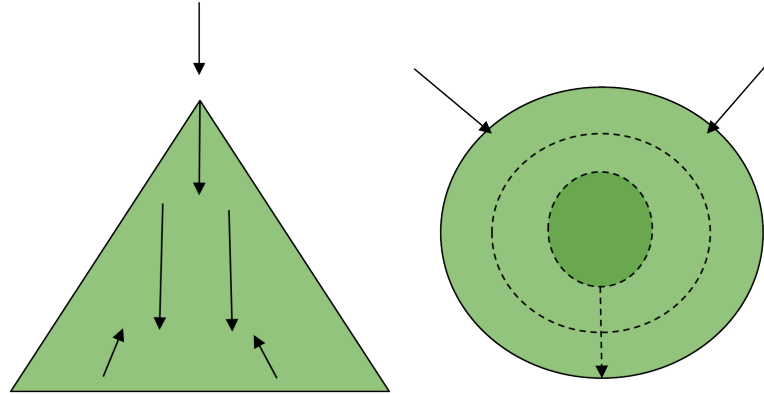
Figure 1   Traditional and alternative model of leadership for positive mental health and wellbeing

Another notable intersection between UMHC and SEDA's recent work can be viewed in the UMHC domain 'work' and the Supporting Health and Wellbeing award in SEDA's Professional Development Framework. Before the formal launch of the UMHC in December 2019, Student Minds conducted studies that served to inform the focus of the charter: this is *not* a student charter but a *university* charter and, therefore, recognises that the wellbeing of staff is also integral to a positive student experience (Hughes *et al*. 2018). Student Minds' vision is that every university becomes a place that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the university community, and the same spirit is carried over into the SEDA award: '[which] acknowledges the importance for both students and staff of balancing healthier lives and healthier working practices through increased resilience, and building awareness of, and strategies for wellbeing' (Pilkington and Curran, 2018, p. 2). This overlap on wellbeing is noted in Kolomitro et al. (2020) (Table 3) and the UMHC (Table 4).

Recommended strategies	Description
Attention to wellness	Explicit attention to wellness in the workplace.
	Supporting engagement in physical and mindfulness activities.
	Encouraging collaboration and relationship building.

Table 3   Excerpt from Kolomitro et al. (2020) — Recommendations for fostering wellbeing for educational developers (attention to wellness)

WORK (1)
Staff wellbeing
Universities develop a culture and environment that supports good staff wellbeing and good workplace conditions.
Universities ensure staff feel able to discuss their mental health and wellbeing and have access to effective, accessible support and proactive interventions to help them improve their own mental health and wellbeing.
Universities ensure staff feel psychologically safe to enable them to innovate, identify improvements and raise concerns about culture and practice that may impact on mental health.
Universities equip managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support good wellbeing within their teams and respond appropriately when staff experience poor mental health.
Universities enable staff to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle and workplace behaviours.
Universities support staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is meaningful to them and appropriate to their role.

Table 4   UMHC — Work domain (staff wellbeing) with principles of good practice

Conclusion

Further articulations of 'a therapeutic university' may help point the way towards the elicitation of modes of being that may be particularly appropriate to support universities as they establish sustainable cultures and prepare their submissions for chartership. While the sentiments in this paper may feel familiar, the greatest challenge is in understanding how a therapeutic instinct is counter-attacked or is manipulated by an antithetical side also dominant in the sector − a side with instrumentalism at its core.

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Transforming our students from passive listeners to confident assessors through the introduction of a programmatic approach to formative assessment

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Introduction

The current trend in education is to adopt a programmatic approach to assessment. However, much of the literature in this area focuses predominantly upon summative assessment. In order to effect real improvement in the learning journey for students, I would argue that we also need to take a programmatic approach to formative assessment and assessment support.

We often received feedback from students asking for more formative activities and help with assessment preparation. Students state that they didn't know what to do with the feedback they received, and there seems to be a lot of confusion surrounding the merits of different forms of formative assessment activities such as peer evaluation and self-assessment. At the same time, lecturers are finding it hard to squeeze lots of valuable formative activities into an already full-to-bursting curriculum.

In response to this feedback, together with a desire to implement a new approach to formative assessment across the entire programme, I have developed and I am currently implementing a new formative assessment strategy for our first-year students in the Law Department. The intention is that this strategy is rolled out to our second- and third-year students over the next 2 years.

The key proposal for the project was to take a programmatic, horizontal approach to formative assessment. So, instead of concentrating on what each individual module can offer in terms of assessment support, I would focus upon what our students are being offered in terms of assessment support across the entire year (and the entire programme, eventually).

One of the key challenges that I sought to address was the fact that students did not see how learning, skills development and (in particular) feedback received in one module could be applied to their other modules.

Interestingly, once you start to think about formative activities across a particular programme or year rather than in relation to a single module, then you stop thinking about how to prepare students for a particular assessment and start thinking about the learning and study skills that you would like students to develop during the course of the programme. You naturally move from a very narrow focus to creating more wide-ranging and skills-centric, formative assessment activities.

Key aims of the project

The fundamental objectives of the project are to:

- Expose students to a full suite of different learning experiences across the programme
- Facilitate the prioritisation of particular skills in different modules, allowing module co-ordinators to deal with particular skills in depth, rather than trying to cover everything
- Promote an adjustment of (both student and lecturer) focus from simply assessment support or formative assessment to the development of key learning and study skills
- Empower students to become confident assessors through honest reflection upon, and full engagement with, self-assessment, peer assessment and feedback/feedforward.

The overarching objective I suppose, is influenced by the work of Irons and Elkington, who assert that 'A key challenge is finding ways of thinking about assessment that have the desired positive, consequential influence on student learning for the long term, not just relative to a single assessment task or module' (Irons and Elkington, 2022, p. 198). Consequently, the real aim of the project is to try to ensure that assessment has a long-term effect on student learning and skills development that goes beyond a particular assessment, module or even programme and remains with the student throughout their undergraduate studies and into life beyond university.

Factors influencing our choice of formative assessment activity

In designing our chosen formative activities for our first-year undergraduates, I was guided by Irons and Elkington's three categories of practice for successful formative assessment:

- Clarifying and sharing an understanding of assessment criteria
- Creating opportunities for assessment practice, rehearsal and review
- Providing assessment feedback that moves learning forward. (Irons and Elkington, 2022, p. 53)

In addition, it was essential that I used a variety of formative assessment activities as recommended by Race (2014), so that all learners had an opportunity to play to their strengths, to enhance their existing skills and to develop new abilities and competencies.

The project also considered the six conditions of Sambell *et al.* (2013) that encourage assessment for learning, in particular focusing on condition six − developing students as self-assessors and effective life-long learners.

Finally, as recommended by Irons and Elkington (2022) and

Sambell *et al.* (2013), I spent a great deal of time considering the sequencing of these formative activities and ensuring that students were taken on a learning journey comprised of progressively challenging tasks.

So, the kind of learning journey that I created started with a marking activity to improve students' assessment literacy. I then incorporated some short form of low-risk self-reflection and peer-review exercises into the curriculum to give students plenty of practice. Finally, more complex activities were integrated, that require students to put all that they have learned so far into practice by reflecting on their work, engaging with the feedback they have received over the programme and developing personal action plans with the underlying aim of transforming our students from passive listeners to confident assessors.

Clear and effective messaging

Clear and effective messaging is obviously critical to the success of this kind of project. This messaging needed to take place throughout the academic year and through various different mediums.

Firstly, I created a clear assessment support guide. Whilst this guide summarised and explained the benefits of different forms of formative activity, it also provided students with an overview of the various formative activities that they would undertake through the year, together with an explanation of the key skills that they would develop, so that they could easily track their progress throughout the year and have a clear overview of their learning journey.

I also delivered an assessment support workshop in the first few weeks of term. This was an opportunity to discuss the project as a whole and to explain our programmatic approach and its expected benefits to students. I also used this time to work with students, interrogating what students think feedback is, identifying the many different forms of feedback, considering who can give feedback, developing an understanding of the value of non-tutor feedback, and understanding what to do with feedback once it is received. There was also a real focus on exploring the advantages of peer evaluation, self-assessment and reflection, and linking this to the development of lifelong learning skills.

One of the most important aspects of each formative activity is that students acquire skills and knowledge that they can apply to all of their modules, not just the one that is running the formative assessment activity. The key idea here is one of transferability. So, if students have, for example, a formative assessment activity in their public law module on developing their critical reasoning skills, then we will:

- Emphasise to students the transferability of skills learned in this activity to other modules and their future careers
- Ensure students understand that the feedback they receive in one particular formative assessment activity can be used to help them improve their performance in other modules.

Finally, students will be asked to bring in the feedback that they receive during the academic year to their one-to-one meetings with their academic advisers. During those meetings

academic advisers will work with students to help them recognise how feedback in one module can be applied to other modules that they study, guide students in the creation of personal action plans whereby they reflect on the feedback and feedforward that they have received, and set objectives for the future. Students will also be encouraged to reflect on their experiences, keep a log of the new skills that they are developing, and identify gaps in their knowledge and skills where further development is required.

The marking activity

I thought I would look at two of the formative assessment activities (one that has already taken place and one that we are intending to run later this academic year) in a little more depth. The first one is a marking activity that took place half-way through semester 1.

It was a large workshop for about 150 students. In the first part of the workshop students were asked to answer a short problem-style question on their own. As we were only at the early stages of the course at this point, it was a short-form question that we gave students 25 minutes to answer. In the second part of the workshop we did two things; firstly, we discussed as a group the key legal issues that they should have covered in their answers, and secondly, we examined the marking criteria for first-year law students (who were provided in advance of the workshop with the marking criteria to review).

In the third part of the workshop students were divided into small groups and were provided with six student scripts to grade using the marking criteria that was discussed earlier in the workshop. I used the interactive presentation software Mentimeter to introduce real-time voting and polling into the workshop. Students agreed on their grade in their groups and voted using Mentimenter. I then asked particular groups to provide reasons for the grade that they awarded and to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in the scripts. The groups often differed in their views and lots of interesting discussion and debate took place (particularly in relation to the marking criteria) before the actual grades and feedback for each of the six student scripts were revealed.

Finally, as a post-workshop activity, students were asked to reflect on what they learned in the workshop, to identify three particular areas of strength and three mistakes or areas of weakness in their own answer, and to explain how they intended to build on their strengths, correct their mistakes and improve in the future.

The student feedback from the session was extremely positive. Students commented that they were now more familiar with the marking criteria, had a good idea of what a successful answer looks like, were aware of the key pitfalls to avoid, and felt more confident generally about answering problem-style questions.

The rapid feedback and peer evaluation exercise

The second activity is a rapid feedback and peer evaluation exercise that will take place mid-way through semester 2. This will consist of a two-hour workshop for students. In the first part of the workshop students will answer another problem-style question on their own. This will be a longer exercise than the previous activity, thus replicating more of an exam-style question, taking fifty minutes to complete. Students will be given a guideline answer to review on their own for fifteen minutes and then the guideline answer together with the relevant marking criteria will be discussed in plenary.

In the second part of the workshop students will work in pairs, swapping their written answers and providing one another with feedback. As a post-workshop activity, students will be asked to reflect on their work and the feedback they both provided and received in the workshop, and to set out a plan of action going forward which will be discussed in their next tutorial.

Is it really as simple as that?

Obviously, we know how challenging students can find activities such as peer evaluation, and so this activity will be fully scaffolded throughout the year. This will be done by firstly completing the marking activity that we have just discussed, so that students are familiar with the marking criteria and feel confident in taking on a more challenging activity, having completed a similar but shorter writing task earlier in the year. Secondly, by employing shorter peer evaluation exercises earlier in the academic year that include an opportunity for students to have a go at designing their own peer evaluation assessment criteria.

It is also essential that students are reminded of the benefits of peer evaluation throughout the year and immediately before completing these kinds of activities. Otherwise, students can jump to the conclusion (reflected in the observations by Cassidy (2006) in his study) that they lack the expertise to review another student's work. It is only through practice and discussion that students will eventually come to appreciate that peer evaluation is not just about getting feedback on their work but that the real benefit comes from reviewing and assessing another's work. This is recognised by Bloxham and Boyd who emphasise the importance of explaining to students the rationale behind self and peer assessment by helping students to understand 'the academic standards of the module, developing the skills of judgement and giving feedback, learning from each other, and preparation for lifelong learning as they learn to monitor their own progress rather than rely on a tutor to do it' (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007, p. 62).

Finally, it is imperative that clear questions or short questionnaires are created to assist with the provision of feedback to help students to really focus on what they are looking for. These can be as simple as asking students to write down:

- Three things that your peer did well
- Three things that your peer needs to do to improve
- Three things that you will take forward from this activity into your own learning.

By the end of this activity students should not only be clear on what is expected of them in written assessments but more importantly they should be able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in their own work which will enable them to continuously improve in the future. Also, having marked a peer's work students should start to develop fundamental study skills such as evaluation, judgement and critical analysis and be

able to incorporate what they have learned, from providing a peer with feedback, into their own work.

Some final thoughts and key takeaways

When thinking about formative assessment consider adopting a programmatic approach, as this will allow you to adjust your focus from simply assessment support to the development of key learning and study skills. As a result of this approach students should start to see links between their modules and the emergence of these transferable lifelong learning skills.

Try to facilitate the prioritisation of particular skills in different modules, allowing module co-ordinators to deal with particular skills in depth, rather than trying to cover everything. This will ensure repetition of activities and skills is avoided and will enable you to expose students to a full suite of different learning experiences.

Finally, think carefully about the sequencing of activities, try to take students on a learning journey comprised of progressively challenging tasks, developing key employability skills such as critical analysis, evaluation, and judgement along the way, and ultimately transforming them into confident assessors

who are able to learn independently and achieve continuous improvement.

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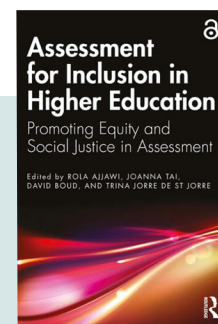
Book Review

Assessment for Inclusion in Higher Education – promoting equity and social justice in assessment

Edited by Rola Ajjawi, Joanna Tai, David Boud, and Trina Jorre de St Jorre
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When I was offered the chance to review this recently published open-access book, I jumped at the opportunity. Like many educational developers, enhancing the inclusiveness of assessment is a topic close to my heart and a central theme in much of my professional development activities. Now, after reading the book, I feel the privilege of having engaged with such a rich discourse on this topic and the pressure of doing it justice in this short review.

Perhaps the first thing to note is that as an edited collection, the book offers over 20 chapters with contributions coming from students, researchers, teachers, equity practitioners and leaders in higher education. The dominance of Australian authors does mean that there is a leaning towards this national context, but the key messages are relevant across the global context, and a strength of the book is the platform that it gives to a diverse range of voices on this topic.

The second important point is writ large in the title of the book: this is a volume about assessment *for* inclusion. I emphasise the 'for' because this framing is central to the overarching aim of the book, which is to explore the journey of seeking change *in* assessment and *through* assessment. It is here that the connection to social justice is made. Interestingly, I still see attempts to separate 'inclusive assessment' activities from endeavours focused upon decolonising assessment or creating socially-just assessments. The former is often positioned as focusing on the procedural elements of assessment, *e.g.*, the reasonable adjustments process, the diversity of assessment methods employed, *etc.*, with the latter being defined as lenses through which we interrogate and critique our assessment practices. From the beginning, this book challenges this separation and highlights the interplay between the

procedural elements of assessment and the conceptual understandings of it, *e.g.*, what purpose(s) it serves, who and what it privileges, its contribution (or not) to a just society. Emerging from the chapters as a key message for me is that if we are not grappling with these conceptual ideas and assumptions around assessment, and how they impact upon the procedures that students experience, we will only ever be scratching at the surface of what inclusive assessment could be. Far worse, we may serve to further entrench for students, albeit unintentionally, disadvantaging and inequitable experiences and outcomes.

So the title should give readers the hint that this is not a book giving quick fixes or 'how to' guides to create inclusive assessments. Good practices are shared, but the book is premised on the notion that immediate practical solutions are unlikely to lead to the fundamental changes required in our assessment

practices to lead to more just outcomes for individuals and society. The structure of the book also makes this point clearly by exploring in three sections the macro, meso and micro contexts of assessments. The first section effectively highlights the systemic and political cultures that assessment sits within and how these shape the procedural elements that students experience. The overarching message in this section is a large one: a focus on assessment is not enough, as a collective we need to consider questions about the mission, purposes and values of HE and the role of assessment within this. This message could seem an overwhelming one, but the chapters do not offer it in this way. They focus on the need to problematise, challenge and critique our taken-for-granted practices and assumptions at an institutional and individual level. For me, I took a message of hope from this section and in many chapters found a vision of what a truly inclusive HE could be.

The thoughtful structuring of the book and ordering of chapters succeeds in building another key point: that is, that mainstreaming assessment for inclusion is a journey in which all stakeholders at all levels of HE have agency, and success here can only be achieved through collective and collaborative endeavours. It is here that I see the power of this book for educational developers. We are in what I see as the privileged position of working across the macro, meso and micro levels of an institution. We engage with the broad spectrum of colleagues, from those just starting out in their teaching careers, to leaders developing departmental and institutional policy and strategy. In the final chapter, the editors express their hope 'that this book opens new conversations and investigations about assessment for inclusion' (p. 236). Educational developers are in a strong position to spark and cultivate these conversations within the many practitioner and strategy-focused spaces that we create, facilitate and work within. Helpfully, many chapters end with questions to support readers' continued reflections and critical endeavours towards their practices. These questions are a handy resource for educational developers and may usefully feed into course content for new lecturers and other professional development activities. They also offer ways to begin incrementally chipping away at taken-for-granted practices and assumptions in the strategic spaces that we often occupy, e.g., module/ programme approval committees, macro and meso education committees.

Finally, the editors note the courage required by educators in changing assessment and make a plea for us 'to work with students to take on this challenge' (p. 236). This is the point that I would like to end on as it is a powerful message conveyed throughout this edited volume. Students are at the heart of this book. Indeed, the most powerful chapters in section three are those that centre authentic student voices. These students, either by writing chapters or sharing their experiences with researchers, demonstrate their transformative agency. Mainstreaming assessment for inclusion requires the disruption to established norms, values, etc., that can only occur through meaningful collaboration with our students. Our position as educational developers gives us a metaphorical megaphone through which we can shout loud about the need to work with our students in this way, to learn from them and ultimately let them lead us on this journey for inclusion.

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The sound of silence – Live polling meets hesitant postgraduates

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The University of Law offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Law, Business and Psychology. Our research focused on postgraduate students in law wishing to either attain a law degree, the Graduate Diploma in Law, or go on to become solicitors with the Legal Practice Course. Our students come to us from all walks of life – from students who just finished their undergraduate degrees and career changers, to international students.

When a student arrives at the University, they are greeted by their academic coach and throughout their journey, they will be taught and supported by a host of tutors who are specialists in their subject areas. The courses tend to be rigorous and therefore the tutors/coaches will be expecting a lot of input from the student during workshops. The classroom will not be packed with students but there will certainly be enough of them in the room to create a collaborative space where their ideas will be discussed, challenged, and assessed. Despite criticism, this collaboration and assessment may be achieved using the Socratic method (Christie, 2010, p. 340).

Asking questions

We are certain most of us would have been in a situation where we ask our students a question and we are met with nothing but resounding silence. We are taught to let this silence continue, into what seems like infinity, because surely, at least one student will eventually cave in and respond. While this tended to work well before the Covid-19 pandemic, in our experience, the series of lockdowns fundamentally changed the way in which students engage during face-to-face sessions, making them less likely to respond while being physically present on campus.

Speaking to students in between sessions, we heard about their worries behind speaking up. Some of it was due to the well-known, pre-pandemic fear, 'what if I look silly in front of my peers?', but interestingly, we also heard about their anxiety behind phrasing their answers now that they could

not hide behind a screen and/or chat-box. Some students struggled more than others meaning that sometimes a session could easily be overtaken by a confident student, drowning out other, more hesitant, voices. Not all students have the confidence to speak to the entire class (Parisi-Amon and Plotkin, 2021).

Faced with this, we wondered what we could do to support a hesitant, struggling student. It seemed clear that giving them a degree of anonymity would be beneficial, so why not try live polling to get them involved? They all have their electronic devices in front of them, so why not drive engagement through those devices? We asked our Learning Technology Service for assistance.

Although polling technologies are not new within higher education, studies have consistently shown increased student engagement and motivation (Simpson and Oliver, 2007, p. 200) and support for students with exchanging ideas or elaborating on each other's arguments (Ludvigsen *et al*., 2020, p. 2484). With legal modules, anonymised polling supports legal students critically analysing concepts (Brown and Murray, 2016, p. 51) with polling questions and answers displayed to the group as formative feedback in small or larger groups (Haksgaard, 2021, p. 7).

We believe this has implications for hyflex teaching design where some students are participating remotely with groups in a physical teaching space. Posting the polling questions with the correct answer may assist with students who missed the teaching sessions, whose first language is not English, or who would prefer to read and reflect afterwards. Visibility of remote students within a physical room may enhance the participation in hyflex sessions but will need additional consideration for polling design (Haksgaard, 2021, p. 10).

The influence of technology

We discussed our findings from a brief literature review and developed a matrix to review capabilities of the most common polling systems. We used a concept map to inform our design and decided we would not directly research any correlation with attainment for the pilot, which consisted of a short series of sessions in two modules with relatively small cohorts, the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), respectively. We also decided not to use any hyflex sessions whilst it was still unclear which sessions would be selected by students for live streaming; however, we would share our findings with a future classroom project group currently reviewing design of physical and hyflex learning infrastructure.

We initially ran a one-off session experiment for both LPC and GDL students using blank pieces of paper on tables to see if students would write any open questions of their own during the workshop. We did not get any responses to the paper experiment, albeit we explained that we would only be walking round occasionally during the session. Perhaps we did not receive any answers because it only felt semi-anonymous as another student could still observe another student writing, or because they did not bring a pen, or did not want to write. They may not have had any comments or questions in relation to that session.

However, it was a useful indicator for the pilot as it became apparent that students had many avenues to ask us questions. The focus therefore shifted from questions to answers and whether we obtain their answers in a more collaborative but also anonymised way. In the next sessions, we compared two polling tools to ask the students about their preparation in advance of the session, using the Mentimeter and Slido apps. We created questions in advance and shared the short code with students when the questions were live. We noticed that Slido displayed results in a list and Mentimeter displayed them randomly on the screen.

Mentimeter worked brilliantly when it came to getting students engaged during the session. The one question which we have retained since the pilot is 'How did you find the preparation for this session?', which allowed the students to give us anonymous feedback ranging from 'the reading was too long' to 'I struggled with...', to a smiley-face emoji. As educators, we think each one of these responses reveals something interesting.

Knowing that a student struggled with something or is even protesting the amount of workload allows us to dedicate more time in the session to these issues. An emoji is not only reassuring, but also introduces a bit of levity at the beginning of a session. We asked this question verbally in previous sessions and we only tended to hear from one to two students – not only that, but if one student said, 'I found that preparation went well', other students tended to follow suit, even if they later confessed to struggling.

It also seemed to work well for yes/no questions and closed questions on the LPC Solicitors Accounts and the Equity and Trusts modules, as it then served as an *aide-memoire* to the students. We could discuss correct and incorrect answers without making any of the students 'feel silly' in front of their peers. While many of us would have no doubt found our own ways of addressing incorrect answers while giving constructive feedback, using live polling can take the 'sting' out of the feedback, potentially preventing the student from seeing feedback as a personal attack.

In terms of gauging whether the students understood the information presented to them, it is important that the questions, whether posed verbally or via live polling, are phrased in a manner which reflects the learning objectives and furthers learning. Asking a question like 'do you understand?' may not always elicit a good, if any, response, no matter the method used. This is where 'higher-order' questions can assist (Dean, 1986, p. 184).

Student perception

We used a questionnaire to gather feedback from the students following our pilot which revealed that not all found it as anonymous as we would have liked. This is potentially an issue of how close the students sit to one another and may also be related to the paper experiment. Perhaps we should work on introducing the concept of digital social distancing for physical attendees! They were mostly happy with the privacy of the app itself on their devices.

Some students also mentioned that they would prefer to only answer verbally, but it did make us wonder whether those students were not the same ones who were quite confident

answering verbally in the first place. However, it is useful to consider this in future design, especially if some students feel that using a polling technology has influenced the flow of the session (Buil *et al*., 2019, p. 428).

Live polling might not replace the traditional verbal feedback, but it is a great aid to see how students are feeling and start a conversation on complex points of law. While the students might be sitting there in silence typing their answers, we could hear them loud and clear from the screen behind us filled with their thoughts.

What next

We plan to introduce live polling in other sessions to include undergraduate students and embed more asynchronous polling in either fully online or hyflex sessions. We want to explore the relationship between overall learning outcomes and contributions via polling. We acknowledge that data collection is one element, however, we need to be careful what data we ask for and collect – this is imperative to examine whether the student has attained the conceptual understanding beyond a quick check at that point in time.

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Hybrid sessions in learning and teaching – What should we be aiming for?

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Introduction

Many of the problems with hybrid session delivery result from the justifiable desire to allow students to communicate freely with each other as though in the same room. However, this approach is time and resource intensive and, perhaps more importantly, can work to counteract the benefits present in each learning environment. This article suggests we instead aim for equity of learning opportunity across the two groups by working *with* instead of *against* the situation; acknowledging and leveraging what is distinctive about each environment to give students the best learning experience available to them. Digital technologies are, of course, vital to hybrid sessions, but we have noticed that the current discourse often foregrounds equipment in service of allowing everyone to continuously communicate with everyone else. Clearly a successful approach is going to depend on factors such as learning aims, numbers of students, proportions of students on-campus and online, and subject matter; one size does not fit all.

This article offers an alternative perspective on what we should be aiming for when we approach hybrid sessions. It first summarises the current discourse around what hybrid sessions are and the case for delivering learning in this way, as well as what advice exists so far for what makes a successful hybrid session. It then uses an illustrative example of practice in which the minimum of equipment is used, and the two groups of students are treated as distinct, yet connected. Far from attempting to provide a blueprint for others to follow, we intend to inspire a new avenue for the debate that is focused on which pedagogical approaches may work for different learning aims, and advocate for looking beyond new technologies and equipment to solve problems inherent in this mode of delivery.

Definitions and literature

Hybrid teaching is so new to most people in higher education that there isn't even a fully agreed-upon name for it: it is sometimes referred to as mixed mode, dual mode, mixed method, concurrent or even hyflex, which has its own separate definition relating to whole course and program design outlined by Brian Beatty in his open access ebook (2019). To make matters even more confusing, there has historically been a use of 'hybrid' as a synonym for blended learning (Secker, 2021). This piece uses the term 'hybrid' to refer to sessions in which some students are participating in the room with the instructor,

and some are present through an online meeting. Since the pandemic provided a sudden need for hybrid sessions, there has been a huge amount of discussion in learning development and educational technology communities about how we address the obvious problems with teaching and learning in this way: the instructor's split attention, the cost of appropriate equipment, the stress of using new technological tools under pressure, and the difficulty for online students to be heard.

Many argue that running a successful hybrid session requires such extensive resources and support that it should be avoided wherever possible (for example Mihai, 2021, or Schaberg, 2022). Nevertheless, it cannot be fully put back in its box and forgotten, having offered a glimpse of how education worldwide could adapt to fluctuating circumstances. More than that though, the flexible access offered by hybrid delivery is being seen in the light of equity and inclusivity for all students (Goria *et al.*, 2022, p. 6). Higher Education institutions have been investing in hybrid equipment and expertise, recognising that we are entering a new era of personalisation and choice for students in which hybrid ways of learning and working will play a part (Universities UK, 2022).

So far, we have a few tentative reviews of the literature that provide some common themes in terms of what is effective for hybrid sessions: taking an active learning approach, keeping class sizes below 40 students, talking to the students about expectations around communication, having a second instructor to take on some of the burden, and offering adequate instruction to students and staff on how to use the technology (Raes *et al.*, 2019; Secker, 2021; Goria *et al.,* 2022). However, the literature and institutional guides on how to run hybrid sessions generally assume that students need to be able to communicate directly with all other students at all times. This might be the case for some types of sessions but relies on either acquiring and learning to use expensive audio-visual technologies, if the aim is for students all to be able to see and hear one another, or else the in-room students need to use their own device and take part in the online meeting, negating some of the benefits of their being on-campus.

The measure of hybrid success is often regarded to be the degree to which the remote students feel like they are in the room (e.g. Bower *et al.*, 2015), and staff therefore feel that the learning experiences are the same for both groups. This is a logical goal, but not the only possible outlook on hybrid sessions. We are going to give a brief example of practice in a specific context that aimed to ensure learning outcomes could be achieved by all students through embracing the two distinct learning environments. That this session was offered on a hybrid basis as an emergency response to the pandemic meant that only technological equipment considered standard at UK HE institutions was used. Instead of introducing more cameras, devices, and microphones, other ways for on-campus and online students to engage with each other were found.

An illustrative example

This example of practice involved 20 students in an MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages research methods module (15 in class, 5 remote). Prior to the session, students completed a pre-session activity consisting of a reading, which the students then evaluated using a set of 40

given questions. During the session, students were placed into groups of five: three on-campus groups and one remote group. Each group was given around five questions from the set to discuss, and to write down group answers. Those in the classroom were given a whiteboard and pens with which to record their answers, whereas the online students wrote theirs in the meeting chat. The students in the room did not need any electronic devices of their own for the session. Crucially, while the group discussion was happening, the instructor and one of the authors of this article, Sam Barclay, (having informed the students in advance) turned off the projector screen displaying the online students and muted the lectern computer for a set time, so that the students in the room could not hear the students online and vice versa. Sam then photographed the whiteboard responses with his phone camera and posted them directly into the meeting chat for the online students to discuss and respond to. Meanwhile, the groups of students in the room rotated around to look at the whiteboards of the other groups, and the meeting chat on the lectern computer to see the online students' answers (Figure 1).
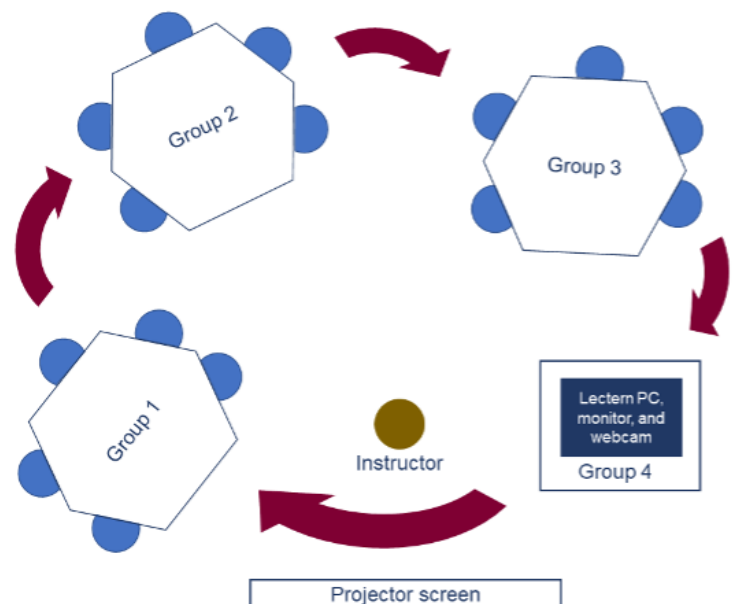
Figure 1   Visual representation of how the different groups interacted in this session

The activity was successful for both instructor and students. In terms of limitations, the instructor still needed to manage the cognitive load of two groups of students – and the session would have been complicated further if there had been more than one online group. Although it did not solve all the challenges of hybrid sessions, the technological aspects of the set-up were far less burdensome than they could have been because they were all familiar to the instructor. It also allowed for the students in the room to take maximum advantage of being physically present, picking up on social cues that facilitate good discussion without the distraction of having a screen in front of them.

From the online students' perspective, although these social cues and non-verbal forms of communication were less available to them, they benefited from the ability to communicate silently in the online 'chat' throughout the session. They also enjoyed privacy from the in-person students in group discussions when their meeting was muted

and no longer projected. Feedback from the online students suggested that knowing their audio was not coming through a speaker in the room made them feel more comfortable and muting the lectern microphone allowed the online group to better hear themselves. This raises the point that, even when technology allows students to see and hear each other, the experiences of seeing and hearing, and being seen and heard, are different for online students and this ideally needs to be considered at the planning stages.

Conclusion

The approach shared in the practice example was relatively 'low-tech' because changing circumstances in the pandemic did not allow for access to or training in specialised hybrid rooms or equipment. Nevertheless, even with sufficient time and access to the latest in hybrid session technology, there is an argument for considering whether the pedagogical circumstances of a particular session require all individuals to be able to communicate with all others throughout. At the Academic Practice in Technology conference in 2022, as part of a session discussing the opportunities and challenges of hybrid, one of the authors of this article (Rosemary Pearce) posed the question: *should* the aim of hybrid sessions be for everyone to feel like they are in the same room? One of the panel, Dominic Pates, replied that, for him, a hybrid session should 'feel like we're sharing the same moment'. This response resonates with the illustrative example provided by Sam Barclay. As a goal it may be less specific, but having this in mind allows for new possibilities beyond advances in microphone and webcam technology. Based on these ideas, we suggest three reflective prompts that could be included in planning a hybrid session:

1. For students to meet the learning outcomes, will they need to be able to see and hear all other students in the session? If so, will that be the case for the entirety of the session?
2. What is the minimum amount of technology that you can include without compromising the necessary communication channels between instructor and students, and between students?
3. What advantages are there within each learning

environment for the students attending the planned session? How could these be preserved?

This approach perhaps adds a layer of complexity in planning but removes the complications that frequently arise in situations involving large numbers of devices, webcams and microphones interacting with one another, and allows each community to enjoy the benefits afforded by the different learning environments.

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From SEDA funding do oak trees grow…The unexpected benefits of a SEDA grant

Shelley Parr, University of Southampton, **Anita Laidlaw,** University of Aberdeen, **Stephanie Bull,** University of Exeter and Imperial College London, and **Alison Cooper,** University of Birmingham

Summary

Our group of four education-focused (EF) academic staff from across the UK were awarded a SEDA grant in April 2020 to explore career perceptions of education-focused academics in research-intensive universities. The research was also funded by SALTI, University of St Andrews.

We had not all met in person before being awarded the funding. Little did we know when we applied for the grant that we would be attempting to do this research during a pandemic. Whilst the pandemic did bring about challenges for us to conduct the research, including significantly extending the time we took, the peer support the project provided was invaluable to us through this period of uncertainty and extreme work pressures. It also helped us to reflect on our own career experiences and our expectations

and identities of being EF academics in research-intensive universities. This article will share these reflections, many of which align with the results of our research, in which the importance of peer support was a strong theme for our participants. A summary of the methods and timeline is provided in Figure 1.

Perceptions of Education Focused Academics Research Project
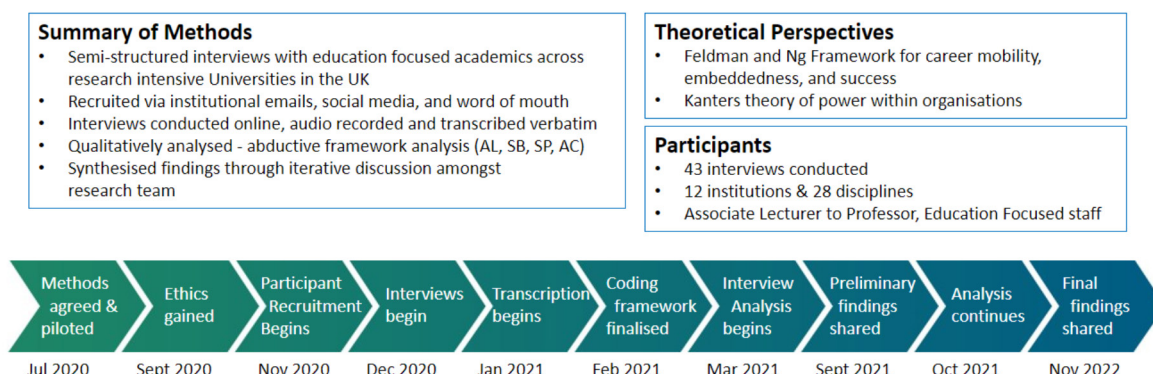**Outline of Methods, Participants and Timeline**

Summary of Methods
- Semi-structured interviews with education focused academics across research intensive Universities in the UK
- Recruited via institutional emails, social media, and word of mouth
- Interviews conducted online, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Qualitatively analysed - abductive framework analysis (AL, SB, SP, AC)
- Synthesised findings through iterative discussion amongst research team

Theoretical Perspectives
- Feldman and Ng Framework for career mobility, embeddedness, and success
- Kanters theory of power within organisations

Participants
- 43 interviews conducted
- 12 institutions & 28 disciplines
- Associate Lecturer to Professor, Education Focused staff

Methods agreed & piloted	Ethics gained	Participant Recruitment Begins	Interviews begin	Transcription begins	Coding framework finalised	Interview Analysis begins	Preliminary findings shared	Analysis continues	Final findings shared
Jul 2020	Sept 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2022

Figure 1   The research study

Reflections of group members

Professor Shelley Parr

University of Southampton

I made a conscious decision to pursue an education-focused role early in my academic career (2000) despite knowing it was not yet an established pathway. It has had its highs and lows but I do not regret making that decision. It has taken many years and multiple sideways steps to move up the career ladder, but I have been fortunate enough to achieve promotion to Professorial level (2016). For me, undertaking education research has always been tricky to prioritise on top of the 'day job', a point also raised by participants in this study. On this occasion, I followed the advice I give to others which is that 'by working in a team and securing some funding you will be motivated to prioritise some quality educational research'. Anita and I met when we were both leading medical education units and she was the person that I first thought to approach when considering some research into the education-focused pathway. Having identified a gap in the evidence base and an opportunity for funding, we approached two other education-focused staff in geographically distant locations and applied for funding from SEDA to create an inter-institutional team to undertake our research project. It felt ambitious at the time to attempt a research project almost entirely online, but little did we know that would become the default position for us and all of our academic colleagues!

As expected, the project has allowed me to enhance my qualitative research skills: collecting, analysing, discussing and disseminating data about the education-focused academic pathway that I am passionate about. What I hadn't anticipated was the invaluable support network it provided during the pandemic, which was such a difficult period of my life. Whilst we each have different roles, personal circumstances, geographical locations and institutions, our regular research meetings and the study interviews felt like a momentary escape from the intense and reactive reality of my 'day job' and home life (which felt less separated than ever). It allowed me to pause and reflect on the enormous changes that were happening in our lives and to share this with a group of like-minded colleagues. The pandemic created difficulties for people in such different ways according to both work and personal circumstances that it was wonderful to have safe space in which to talk about the impact it was having on staff in education-focused roles. The research topic also meant that we focused on understanding the life and careers of education-focused academics, mostly of others, but it naturally led to reflections on our own careers. It was comforting to focus on something longer term during a time of such acute intensity and uncertainty. Many participants also mentioned enjoying taking part in the interviews and reflecting on their careers with other staff who they knew were education focused. I would like to think that these participants gained similar benefit to me, of being able to take some time away from the difficulties to reflect upon their career as a whole.

Dr Anita Laidlaw

University of St Andrews

I met Shelley in person at a medical education conference in 2017 and we'd kept in touch remotely. We had discussed a research idea examining education-focused academics' careers and spotted a potential funding call (SEDA). Stephanie and Alison came on board, neither of whom I'd met before, and we met remotely (via Skype!) and developed the application from there.

Following the funding success and due to entering lockdown, we were soon meeting via Teams, along with most of the rest of the UK. Regular meetings were scheduled in the diary and talking about an exciting research project provided a welcome change of context compared with the day job. The day job at that time involved learning how to teach and support students remotely, whilst deciding how to assess our students

reliably and rigorously online, and then starting to plan for the academic year starting in the autumn of 2020.

Ethical approval was achieved for our research, but we decided to delay participant recruitment as our own experience told us EF academics would be under significant time pressure in the Autumn of 2020. I found sharing my own experiences in the research team during that period validated them. It was a relief to find that others, in all corners of the UK, were facing similar challenges: how did we manage home schooling/caring for aged relatives and full-time work, how exciting was the weekly food shop, how fed up were we of the home office?

We started recruitment in late autumn/early winter of 2020 and data collection carried on for several months. We shared (in an anonymised format) what our participants were saying. This made me think about my own working life. We discussed the differing or similar perceptions of the policies within the institutions our participants worked for, highlighting the importance of *organisational*-level factors. Discussions around the aspects of their role that participants enjoyed or found challenging helped me to understand what aspects of my role that I found most rewarding. It helped me to clarify what this '*occupation*' meant to me. This meant that I had a better understanding of what I wanted career-wise as an education-oriented academic who found educational research compelling; what I wanted my *occupation* to be. Once you know what you want, it's easier to plan and progress.

Dr Stephanie Bull

When I was approached to join this research team, I was leading core components of education within my faculty and was supporting many other academics in delivery of teaching. I had worked exclusively within one academic institution and had led some education research projects and evaluations. I wanted to collaborate with educators from different universities, partly as I knew that a multi-site study would deliver a higher quality output, partly because external networks could benefit my career progression, but also from a desire to take some time for myself, and to do something that was of interest to me.

Sharing experiences with team members on the project, each hard-working student-centred academics, created a strong community of practice. This offered me the opportunity to look outwards and to observe policies and practices at other institutions. It provided support at a time when teaching challenges were high, and offered some confidential career advice and mentorship. These themes also emerged from our research, where the value of working externally or finding mentors who can offer alternative perspectives was recognised as important. Finally, the Feldman and Ng framework for career success, embeddedness and mobility used within our study, opened my eyes to the range of factors that influence career progression and mobility, and has helped me to navigate a recent career decision. Factors in the framework include: structural (the higher educational landscape), occupational (the responsibilities of an educational-focused academic), organisational (staffing policies, promotion criteria), workgroup

(especially recognition and perceived relevance), personal life (demands and work-life conflicts), and personality (sense of control, desire to teach).

Dr Alison Cooper

I became a teaching-focused academic before the term became commonly used in the university sector! I happened to be at a career crossroads at a time when external factors meant that part of my institution's plan to increase student numbers was to create roles for individuals with a much greater focus on education compared to a standard academic with research commitments.

Over the subsequent years, staff with an education focus have increased in number at my own institution, which has provided opportunities for peer networks to form, but this was all within the context of one institution. It was clear from the flux of staff that other institutions did things differently. This meant that, whilst the definition and career of an academic role might be broadly similar across the sector, there seemed to be a lot of difference in all aspects of a career for those with an education focus, and I'd never stopped to think about the impact of this for the individuals or for institutions.

When I was approached by Shelley, who I had known for many years, to become part of a group of four teaching-focused academics at four different institutions looking into this variability and what the impact of that was, I saw an opportunity to contribute but also to learn. As a neuroscientist by training, a whole aspect of research that I had not ventured into previously opened up – looking at general theories about organisations, employees and structure and how they might apply in universities and specifically to the group that I belonged to, was highly illuminating. I learned, and hope I contributed, a lot just from talking to the other three as we shaped a research project. Then March 2020 came and focus went elsewhere. However, in many ways, the enforced delay, followed by the rapid introduction of technology to facilitate remote interaction, has brought us benefits. Having an established team with a single goal helped keep us both in touch for general peer support as well as keep the project moving. Despite the many pressures on everyone trying to deliver education in the pandemic, we were able to recruit a diverse group for interviews. I have never done qualitative research before and learning how to do it and then hearing the results was eye-opening. Many participants from STEM backgrounds also discussed how the research methods required to conduct pedagogic research differed from those used in their primary discipline. Sharing this with the rest of the group – seeing the similarities and differences between interviewees and our own experience, and then how we could relate this to general management theories, has made me think about this area in ways I would never have otherwise – a lived experience of grabbing an opportunity as you never know what might come of it!

Overall conclusion

The project was wider-reaching than we would ever have achieved individually, and it really reinforced the benefits of peer networks for education-focused academics outside of their

own institutions. Being able to co-construct meaning, not only provided clarity in the midst of the data, but also in the midst of an ongoing pandemic. Our research team has only met online, yet we feel connected, supported, and have each developed through being part of this community of practice.

A short abstract of the research and development outcome is on the SEDA website at https://tinyurl.com/4ndtrb4e.

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Development of an online resource to promote inclusive practice of medical educators

Selma Omer and **Pirashanthie Vivekananda-Schmidt,** University of Sheffield

Introduction

Universities UK #Closing the gap has previously put the microscope on the significant attainment gap between Caucasian and BAME students (NUS and UUK, 2019). There is now compelling evidence of an ethnicity attainment gap in Higher Education (HE) in the UK which showed that the proportion of BAME students achieving higher degrees was 23.1% lower than their Caucasian peers (OfS, 2019). The research identified factors that contribute to the attainment gap and showed that a sense of 'belonging' is a key determinant of student outcomes. Belongingness is an individual's sense of connection and acceptance from others, and is created through an interaction between an individual and their surrounding environment (Vivekananda-Schmidt and Sandars, 2018). An inclusive approach is key to promoting belongingness. However, students in our working group told us that they do not always feel a sense of belonging because staff do not always have the skills to make them feel included. Therefore, we conducted a study to explore the student experiences with racial equality within our institution to derive recommendations that will nurture staff capabilities to create a more inclusive learning environment.

Methods

We conducted a mixed-method study to explore belongingness in the students' learning environment focusing on the experiences of BAME students. We were especially interested in using the study findings to produce recommendations that would help develop staff capabilities to create a more inclusive learning environment. We administered a survey that was completed by 262 medical students in all years (January-March, 2021) and conducted three focus groups (April-September, 2021). Students shared their personal experiences with racial equality in their learning environment, and their views on how these inequalities could be addressed.

Our study findings highlighted that an investment into staff development activities that improve staff confidence of what inclusive practice means, how to hold themselves and colleagues to account, and how to support students, was needed. It was important for this training to be tailored to the health professions educational (HPE) settings, and provide accessible learning for busy and geographically dispersed educators. To achieve this, we drew upon examples from our study findings to raise awareness about racial inequality and provide educators with useful strategies to improve inclusivity in learning environments. We created an online resource to facilitate convenience and flexibility of learning (Cook and Steinert, 2013), wider dissemination and more time to reflect and learn concepts.

Developing an eLearning resource on creating an inclusive learning environment

The resource provides introductory-level training for educators. The structure and organisation of the resource is outlined in Table 1.

Title	Creating an inclusive learning environment
Duration	30-40 minutes
Aims and learning	Aims: • To emphasise the importance of inclusive practice and adaptation to the increasing diversity in health profession education • To raise awareness about racial inequalities in the learning environment that impact on students' sense of belonging • To develop staff capabilities to create a more inclusive learning environment in health professions education Learning outcomes: • Describe the role of an inclusive learning environment on the students' sense of belonging • Explain what is meant by unconscious bias and how to challenge personal biases • Recognise and analyse situations where micro-aggression or discrimination occur in the learning environment • Examine and reflect on one's own practice in relation to facilitating an inclusive learning environment • Identify strategies to address inequalities in the learning environment

Title	Creating an inclusive learning environment
Content	*Introduction: Welcome to this resource* Provides an overview of the resource along with aims and intended learning outcomes *Part One: Students' belongingness* Provides an introduction to students' belongingness in the learning environment and highlights what our students say about their experiences, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from the study *Part Two: Exploring unconscious bias* Encourages users to reflect on unconscious biases; uses interactive exercises and explains where biases come from *Part Three: Recognising microaggressions in learning environments* Utilises case studies adapted from study findings to enable participants to reflect on situations that can lead to micro-aggressions *Part Four: Addressing microaggressions* Offers a strategy to address microaggressions based on the Microaggressions Triangle Model (Ackerman-Barger and Jacobs, 2020) *Part Five: Take action* Provides opportunities for reflection and sign posting so that participant can take small steps to take forward and apply learning from this resource to improve their inclusive teaching and learning practices

Table 1 Structure and content of the eLearning resource

The key features of this resource include the following.

Case-based learning

A case-based learning curriculum helps to raise participants' awareness about micro-aggressions in the students' learning environment and increases self-efficacy in responding to them (Acherman-Barger *et al.,* 2021; Acholonu et al., 2020; Sandoval *et al.,* 2020; Sotto-Santiago *et al.,* 2020). We developed two case studies that depict common examples of microaggressions in the learning environment, drawn from our study findings. These were adapted as videos/recordings and used in the resource alongside interactive questions/feedback to stimulate critical reflection to enable users to recognise the microaggression, their causes, impact on student learning and how to approach them (Figure 1).
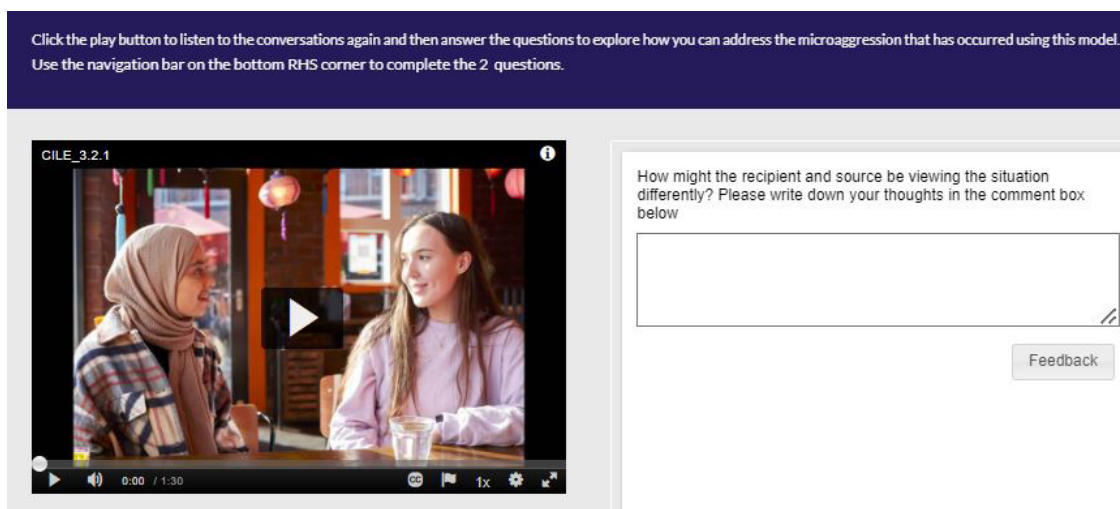

Figure 1 Case-based learning design

Framework-guided strategies to change behaviour

Published curricula that attempted to address microaggressions in the clinical setting focus on the use of frameworks to guide how to address these situations (Sandoval *et al.,* 2020; Brooks *et al.,* 2016; Mostow *et al.,* 2010; Wheeler *et al.,* 2019; Martinchek *et al.,* 2017). We used the Microaggressions Triangle Model (Ackerman-Barger and Jacobs, 2020) to help learners understand microaggression from the standpoint of the person receiving it, the source of the microaggression, and the bystander. We first introduce the model in the resource and use the case as a trigger to explore the roles of all the members involved in the microaggression and provide opportunities for applying the framework to address the microaggression.

Theory-based design approach

A theory-based design approach is advocated to guide the design of interactive self-directed e-learning modules for faculty development (Omer *et al.,* 2017). The design of this eLearning resource was underpinned by Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1989), which offers a model of learning based on experiences followed by reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation to apply learning to a future learning experience. We mapped the design features to Kolb's model where videos/recordings of the cases simulated an experience, questions and feedback stimulate reflection, and activities provide opportunities for experimentation and applying learning to future practice (Figure 2).
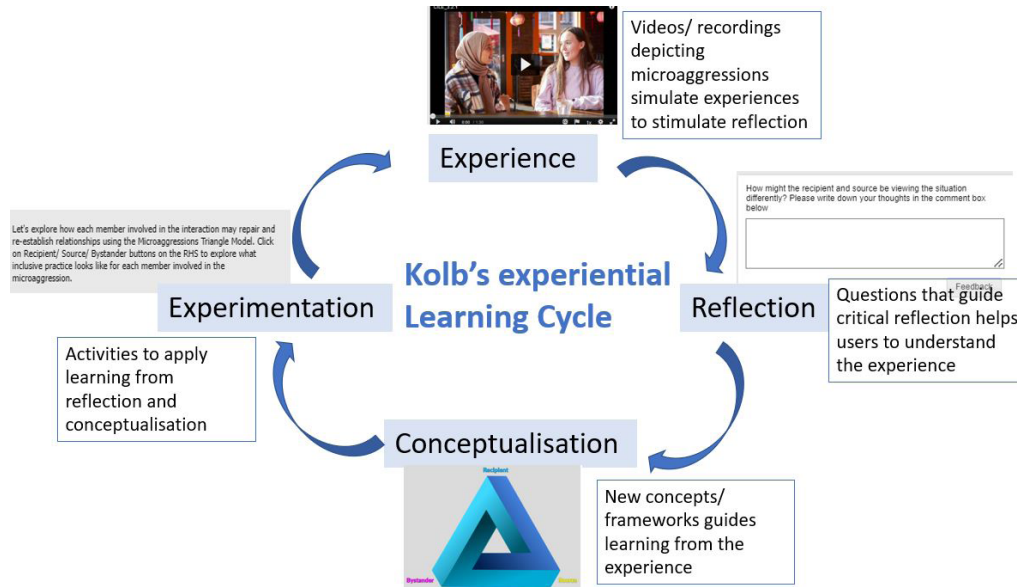
Videos/ recordings depicting microaggressions simulate experiences to stimulate reflection

Let's explore how each member involved in the interaction may repair and re-establish relationships using the Microaggressions Triangle Model. Click on Recipient/ Source/ Bystander buttons on the RHS to explore what inclusive practice looks like for each member involved in the microaggression.

Kolb's experiential Learning Cycle

Experience

Reflection

How might the recipient and source be viewing the situation differently? Please write down your thoughts in the comment box below

Questions that guide critical reflection helps users to understand the experience

Experimentation

Activities to apply learning from reflection and conceptualisation

Conceptualisation

New concepts/ frameworks guides learning from the experience

Figure 2   Kolb-based design approach

Lessons learned

- The resource provides educators with useful insights into the perceptions and experiences of students regarding inclusivity in the learning environments, offering strategies for promoting inclusion.
- The staff/student collaboration to co-create material gives students a voice and thereby improves the validity of learning
- The online approach enables our educators to access this training anytime, anywhere and the potential for wider dissemination beyond our own institution.
- Although it is designed as a stand-alone online training, there is potential to use some of the resource material during face-to-face staff development events and student orientations. It can also springboard facilitating discussions about race and inclusive practice and how to respectfully challenge practice that is not inclusive.

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Strategies and tactics supporting institution-wide adoption of accessible, inclusive and equitable educational approaches

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Introduction

For many universities, creating an educational offer that is accessible, inclusive and equitable (AI&E) for all students represents an important strategic mission. Furthermore, the need to offer an educational experience that enables unrestricted access and participation for all students represents an important legal and legislative requirement for all universities. This article presents a series of critical steps that universities must take to support the strategic management of institution-wide change, toward the adoption of a more AI&E educational offer.

In 2016, De Montfort University began the process of adopting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as its institution-wide approach to learning, teaching and assessment as part of a 4-year culture change project. In addition to important advice provided in the literature, the learning journey that DMU has been on since 2016 has influenced the defining of each of the critical steps in the change process featured in this article. Subsequently, specific elements of DMU's adoption of UDL will be featured throughout the article to demonstrate how individual steps in the adoption process have been achieved.

Step 1: Convincing senior stakeholders of the need for change

The first step to accomplishing institution-wide adoption of AI&E approaches to education is the achievement of senior stakeholder 'buy-in'. In some circumstances, as advocates of accessibility, inclusivity and equitability, educational developers must be the ones at the forefront of convincing senior stakeholders of the need for change.

To elicit senior stakeholder, 'buy-in', a number of important areas (summarised in Figure 1) can be targeted including:

Recruitment, retention, achievement
Senior stakeholders are often responsible for institutional performance in relation to the recruitment, retention and achievement of students. A commitment to accessibility, inclusivity and equitability has clear and obvious benefits in this area, since it serves as an important unique selling point (USP) in the recruitment and support of increasingly diverse communities of students.

Learning for life
The learning for life agenda is growing in higher education (HE). Consequently, there is a need to ensure transferability of learning beyond the university context. When students are supported in ways that reflect their needs, preferences and interests, it can develop their lifelong learning capabilities. For example, UDL possesses clear metacognitive elements (Meyer *et al*. 2014; CAST, 2011), supporting students to learn more effectively in lifelong fashion.

Curriculum control/autonomy
HE institutions are largely responsible for creating and quality assuring their own curricula. Consequently, universities have a great deal of autonomy in relation to the curriculum in terms of what is included and how it is delivered. This aspect should be espoused and leveraged for the great opportunities it allows to embed AI&E educational approaches.

Staff development
The key characteristic of HE staff communities is their diversity. Staff represent different disciplines, backgrounds, cultures, have different experiences, and different levels of teaching proficiency, yet universities often try to develop them in a 'one-size-fits-all' way. Staff are students too, and will possess the same level of learner variability as students. Hence, AI&E approaches are needed to effectively support staff learning.
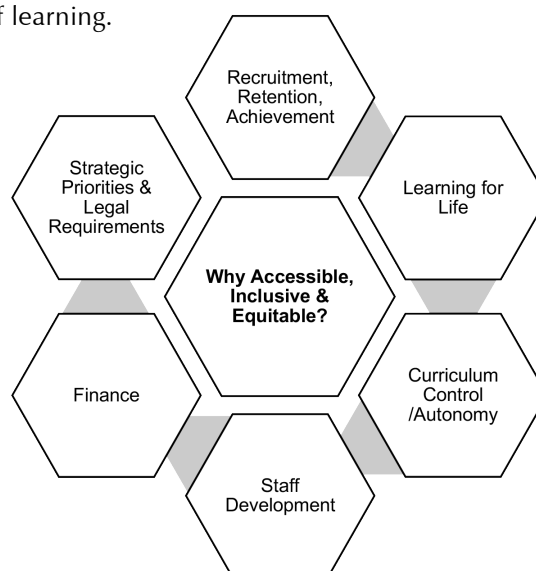

Figure 1   Areas of focus for obtaining senior-stakeholder buy-in for AI&E approaches to education

Finance
Many universities rely upon the recruitment of students to sustain financial viability, ensuring those students are happy with their university experience, having learned effectively and achieved. As mentioned, a commitment to accessibility, inclusivity and equitability serves as an important USP in the recruitment and support of increasingly diverse communities

of students, which ultimately supports the financial health of institutions.

Strategic plans, and legal and legislative requirements
Universities are required to create plans for access and participation linked to their conditions of registration with bodies like the Office for Students (OfS). Many will also possess strategic objectives around access, participation, equality, diversity and inclusion. There's also the matter of compliance with legislation such as the Equality Act. Therefore, AI&E approaches are essential to meeting various strategic and legal requirements.

Step 2: Creating a strategy for adoption
The second important step in achieving institution-wide adoption of AI&E education is to create a clear adoption strategy. Whatever that strategy is, people must be the emphasis of it, since it is the people in an organisation that are responsible for the adoption of any new way of doing things.

At DMU, the Diffusion of Innovations (DoI) theory (Rogers, 1983) was used to create a strategy to support university-wide adoption of UDL.
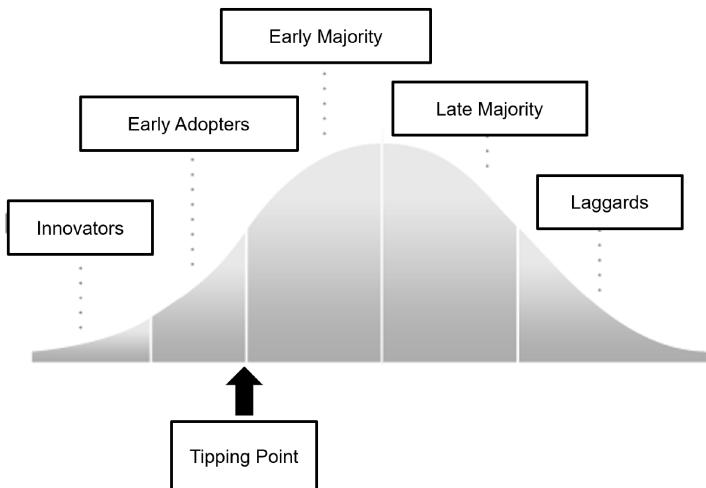

Figure 2   Adoption curve for new innovations, adapted from Rogers (1983)

The adoption curve in Figure 2 shows the pathway of adoption for any new innovation, which for DMU was UDL. For mass adoption of any innovation, a tipping point must be reached where the majority of people in an organisation begin to adopt the innovation (Rogers, 1983).

Three laws must be obeyed to produce a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000). The first is the 'Law of the Few', which recognises that in any system there will be a select group of innovators and adopters that can support the achievement of a tipping point (Gladwell, 2000). Innovators and adopters represent individuals already using the innovation. Subsequently, one of the immediate tasks undertaken at DMU was to identify the 'innovators' and 'early adopters' of UDL. Innovators and early adopters of UDL in each faculty were given 'UDL Champion' roles, with the specific purpose of supporting UDL adoption.

Next is the 'Law of Stickiness' which is about the stickiness of the message concerning the new innovation or way of working (Gladwell, 2000). To support the Law of Stickiness at DMU, an intentional communications plan was created (discussed in Step 3, below).

The final law is the 'Law of Context'. Tipping points are sensitive to the contexts in which they occur (Gladwell, 2000). For example, the DMU context is represented by an exceptionally diverse student community. As such, UDL was 'pitched' to staff through the communications plan as intuitively the right thing to do to support diverse communities of students, supporting a clear rationale for UDL adoption.

Irrespective of whether a university follows DMU and uses the DoI theory to create an adoption strategy, the theory itself provides a reminder of three critical elements of adoption that are required to change culture: 1) the people already practising AI&E approaches must be identified and utilised to drive adoption; 2) a clear and adhesive message must be provided to everyone expected to implement adoption; 3) adoption of AI&E approaches must reflect the institutional operating context.

Step 3: Communications
To support the achievement of a tipping point at DMU, a clear communications plan was used. A four-stage change-communication approach (Davidson, 2013) was employed, and designed to take staff through each of the four stages of change, which are 'Awareness', 'Understanding', 'Acceptance' and 'Commitment' (Figure 3).

Each stage in the communications plan is important, but the most critical is the 'Understanding' stage, which consists of two parts. The first part is about supporting staff to understand the rationale behind the adoption of an AI&E approach – the point, purpose and reasons. The second, and most important part is about supporting staff to understand *how* to adopt AI&E approaches at granular level, such as how it can be applied to their teaching, and the steps needed to implement the approach in practice.
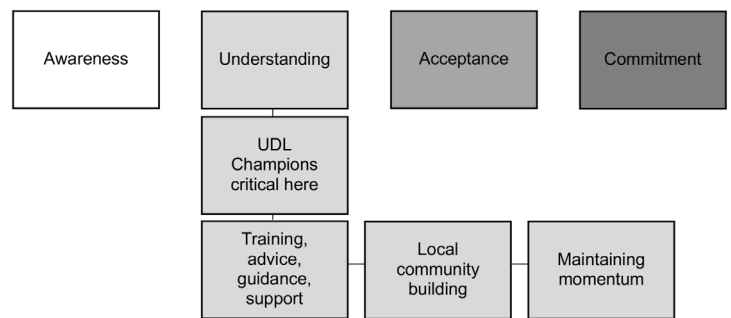

Figure 3   Change communications plan implemented by De Montfort University, adapted from Davidson (2013), and showing the influence and importance of UDL Champions

Innovators and early adopters play a decisive role in supporting staff to understand how to adopt AI&E approaches. For example, since innovators and adopters occupy local contexts (school, faculty, college *etc*.), they possess a knowledge of the characteristics, nuances and challenges that underpin given academic disciplines and their operating environment, that staff based centrally may not possess. UDL Champions have been essential in supporting DMU staff to understand how to adopt UDL in local contexts.

Mindset shift
The understanding element of any communications plan also supports an important mindset shift required for adoption of AI&E education. The shift encompasses five critical elements (adapted from Black and Fraser, 2019) (Figure 4). They are:

1) shifting from a medical support model to a social model; 2) moving from labelling students (as disabled, BAME *etc.*) to recognising that all students are variable; 3) moving from a reactive adjustment approach to proactive design; 4) moving from making accessible and inclusive adjustments to making accessibility, inclusivity and equitability part of pedagogy; and 5) moving from an *ad hoc*, when-support-is-needed approach, to deliberate and intentional support.

At DMU, UDL Champions played a critical role in supporting the mindset shift due to their local deployment. Supporting a mindset shift locally using local innovators and early adopters allows the shift to be approached in context, supported by people that can build trust and subsequent relationships with staff. The importance of identifying innovators and early adopters in influencing staff thinking and behaviour cannot be over estimated.
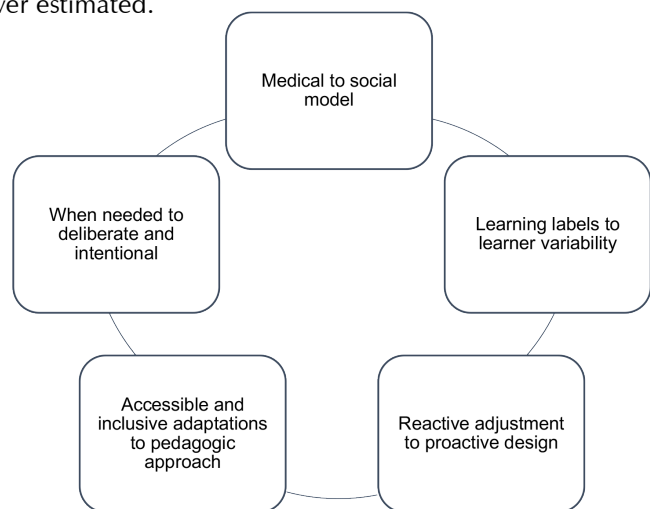

Figure 4   Five critical mindset shifts required for institution-wide adoption of AI&E education

Step 4: Building community

Building staff communities of practice is essential in achieving institution-wide adoption of AI&E education. Local communities are the most important, because they support the interpretation, application and change management process in a context-specific way, and the most effective way to build communities is around innovators and early adopters in local settings as discussed, several times.

At DMU, a critical role of UDL Champions was to support staff to understand how to apply UDL as part of local communities of practice. The approach to supporting UDL adoption was also important. For example, UDL Champions were encouraged to use UDL as a means of supporting staff with common learning and teaching challenges, rather than proposing UDL as one further initiative that they must embrace (Black and Moore, 2019).

Getting staff to adopt anything by asking them to layer yet another initiative onto their existing practices will be met with the usual responses about not having enough time. Framing the adoption of a new AI&E approach as a means of overcoming common challenges such as improving engagement, or creating more interesting and authentic assessments, for example, is more effective because staff will possess a natural desire to address such challenges. Hence, an important tactic for all universities is to utilise their change agents in a way that supports rather than dictates.

Step 5: Design down, deliver up

Several strategic areas can be targeted in the drive toward a more AI&E educational offer. Areas include the professional development of staff, institutional quality assurance and enhancement processes, and implementation of various learning technologies, to name a few important areas. However, the most important starting point is the curriculum.

Black and Moore (2019) stress the need to design down and deliver up (Figure 5), meaning that programmes (influenced by industrial/professional requirements and institutional policy) must be the starting point for AI&E approaches, as opposed to modules or individual teaching sessions. Embedding at programme level provides greater influence on, and leverage for, module or unit, and classroom-based practices that espouse the removal or reduction of barriers, because as shown in Figure 5 the design process flows downwards rather than upwards.
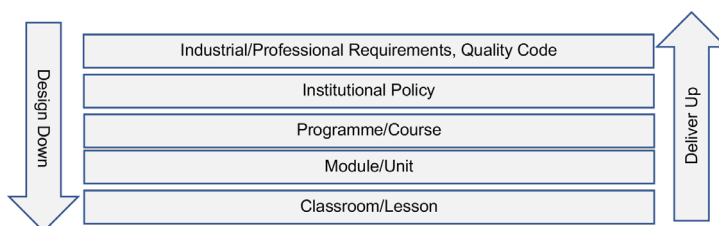

Figure 5   Design down, deliver up, adapted from Black and Moore (2019)

Subsequently, it is essential to embed accessibility, inclusivity and equitability into the processes for programme approval, design, creation and delivery as an initial priority to support institution-wide adoption.

At DMU, UDL curriculum considerations were initially made in reverse, beginning with a quick-start guide (Table 1). The guide was produced centrally (as opposed to locally) and intended for use in classroom settings. Subsequently, UDL adoption was initially inconsistent following introduction of the guide, which is unsurprising given the lack of contextualisation attached to the guide and its focus on telling staff 'what to do' rather than supporting the resolution of local challenges.

Eventually, DMU established 'CUTLAS' (Creating Universal Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies) (Merry, 2019), a team-based course design tool, enabling UDL to be designed into programmes by a team of key stakeholders (academic staff, educational developers, students, disability specialists) in true design-down, deliver-up fashion. However, CUTLAS largely emanated from the initial mistake of focusing principally on classroom-based practice as an initial adoptive mechanism. This is a mistake universities should avoid.

	UDL Quick Start Ideas for Consideration
1	Making learning resources available in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at least 48 hours in advance of teaching sessions in a modifiable format.
2	Emphasise active learning and knowledge checks during all teaching sessions.
3	Signposting opportunities for self-directed study during teaching sessions.

| 4 | Allowing students to replay, review or revisit learning covered during teaching sessions via the VLE. |
| 5 | Providing flexible ways of formatively and summatively assessing students. |

Table 1   UDL quick-start ideas for consideration implemented at De Montfort University

Step 6: Build on existing strengths

Achieving university-wide adoption of AI&E education requires staff to build on existing pedagogic strengths (Black and Moore, 2019). At DMU, the 'Cheese Sandwich' approach to instructional design (Merry, 2018) was created as a means of layering UDL on top of existing pedagogic approaches staff were already using.

The Cheese Sandwich intentionally utilises flipped learning to enable teachers to spend more time supporting students to develop high-order cognitive capabilities, and less time delivering content. The approach is built upon existing cognitivist and constructivist ideas known to provide the greatest impact on student learning and attainment (Hattie, 2012). Ideas include challenging active learning tasks involving high-order thinking skills, problem solving, cognitive task analysis and feedback, to name a few. UDL was laid over the top of those practices to build on existing strengths. 'Buy-in' is often more easily achieved by building on existing positive practices, rather than abandoning them for a completely new approach.

Step 7: Training and modelling

Individuals are more likely to modify their educational practices by positively experiencing AI&E approaches, as opposed to being told about them (Black and Moore, 2019). Subsequently, staff development through modelling of desired practices is an effective stimulus for adoption.

At DMU, the most significant professional development offering is the staff-focused Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE). The programme was designed using the CUTLAS and Cheese Sandwich approaches to intentionally model UDL.

Mandatory UDL training sessions are also delivered. Although useful, at DMU, training is largely used for the 'Awareness'-raising aspect of the UDL communications plan. Driving institution-wide change through short, one-off training experiences that often lack authenticity is challenging. Modelling UDL through the PGCLTHE has been more influential than training in supporting changes in educational practice. For example, the programme represents an authentic environment with real week-to-week sessions, students, assessments, and real challenges. Participants of the programme experience UDL applied in a real-world environment similar to the environment in which they work, more effectively supporting UDL adoption:

> *'The UDL approach used on the PGCLTHE has transformed my understanding of how to approach teaching activities, and assessment techniques.'* (PGCLTHE participant)

Step 8: Student, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Services

Partnering with Student Services (SS), and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) services is critical to institution-wide adoption of AI&E education. Such services need no convincing about the rationale and benefits of institution-wide change. Furthermore, SS and EDI communities often possess staff with learning and teaching experience and expertise. Subsequently, SS and EDI staff frequently represent 'ready-made' innovators and early adopters which, as mentioned throughout, are crucial to the interpretation and application of accessible and inclusive approaches. The UDL project at DMU intentionally included SS and EDI staff. SS and EDI staff supported adoption by assisting UDL Champions, being part of CUTLAS design teams, and by reviewing learning, teaching, assessment and training-related resources for their accessibility and inclusivity.

Step 9: A final word on Professional Services

It is essential that Professional Services (PS) is included in any educational development work around accessibility, inclusivity and equitability, particularly Human Resources (HR). There is little point in the academic function of a university espousing accessibility, inclusion and equitability, if the PS function does not embrace such things. In many universities, more staff are employed in PS roles than academic ones, hence the potential for genuine culture change could be compromised if such a large community of staff are excluded.

Several areas within the PS remit may benefit from AI&E approaches, particularly staff recruitment and selection. For example, recruitment processes often disadvantage many individuals due to various characteristics such as ethnicity, race, language, disability status, and other personal attributes that should have no bearing on their ability to fulfil a job role (Arenas *et al*., 2017). Consequently, many individuals face barriers when faced with university recruitment processes (Barak, 2022). Ultimately, by making education more AI&E, barriers to learning are removed or reduced enabling unrestricted student access and participation. As such, it is equally important to ensure barriers are removed or reduced, allowing prospective staff unrestricted access to, and participation in. university employment.

A ten-point plan for adoption summarising key advice from each of the steps discussed above is summarised in Table 2.

1	Target senior staff with key leverage points
2	Have a clear, people-focused adoption and communication strategy
3	Build local, contextualised communities to support a mindset shift with innovators and early adopters
4	Make the curriculum your first/primary area of focus
5	Use innovators and early adopters to support people to meet challenges and build on existing strengths
6	Have a clear purpose for and be aware of the limitations of 'training'
7	Model best practice in authentic environments
8	Involve Student Services and EDI from the start
9	Don't forget to include Professional Services
10	Be iterative – effective AI&E education requires continual reflection and rethinking

Table 2   Ten-point plan for adopting an AI&E educational offer

Conclusion

Accessibility, inclusion and equitability, although different terms, share one common characteristic. They are all concerned with the reduction or removal of barriers. The steps featured in this article can support institutions to adopt approaches that reduce and remove barriers for all, enabling higher education to truly meet its purpose — to transform lives, be a catalyst for social justice, and promote access, inclusion, fairness and equity for all, irrespective of their background or characteristics.

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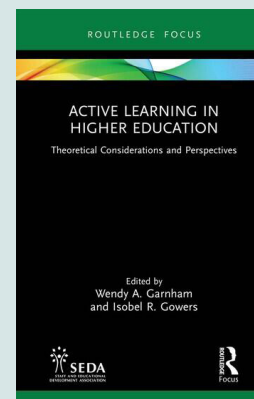
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