

**Session title:** Creating fully rounded academic professionals through coaching, compassion, contemplation and community.

**Session type:** Paper

**Main presenter(s):** Sarah Wolfenden, Brunel University London

**Session summary:**

Compassion, connection, and contemplation are themes that run through the Academic Professional Development Unit at Brunel University London and in particular its Academic Professional Programme for new academics.

In this session, participants will learn how using coaching skills enables these themes to emerge, identify how to be vulnerable while also setting boundaries and to be curious about introducing creative and contemplative practices in their own professional and personal lives.

**Session outline:**

To teach well we must know ourselves, be authentic and inspire others with our passion and continued desire to learn (hooks 2003; Brown 2018). We must support each other by sharing information and working collegiately and collaboratively. In addition, as we move to a world where increasingly roles are being replaced by automation, we need to focus on what makes us individual, personalised humans (Gleeson, 2018).

This can be challenging when the university sector is described as an anxiety machine (Morrish 2019). As an academic developer, coach and yoga teacher, I think it is important that we not only teach our academics the knowledge, skills and behaviours to teach and research but to also maintain their wellbeing during and after the process. The APEX Framework at Brunel University London attempts to do just that.

The programme is aligned to the UKPSF and the Academic Professional Apprenticeship Standard. Within it, participants are encouraged to hold government priorities up against their own teaching philosophies. They consider what universities are for and they identify their values and purpose. They are introduced to key people whose works inspired the programme – bell hooks, Henry Giroux, Nel Noddings and Paulo Freire, amongst others, and are encouraged to find their own role models. Participants take part in a loving-kindness meditation and are introduced to contemplative pedagogies. They experience individual coaching in progress meetings and group coaching through action learning sets.

To continually develop our whole self to best serve others means recognising and bringing our whole self to our practice. It means encouraging others to do so too in a union of mind, body and spirit (Hanh & Weare 2017). Participants on the programme have told us that not only have they enjoyed the course – they have also learned to become reflective practitioners, and learned to connect with themselves, their students and staff across the university.

**References:**

Brown, B. 2018, *Dare to lead: brave work, tough conversations, whole hearts*, Vermilion

Gleeson, N. (Ed) (2018). *Higher Education in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Palgrave Macmillan DOI <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0194-0>

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Nhất Hạnh, T & Weare, K (2017) Happy teachers change the world: a guide for cultivating mindfulness in education. Parallax Press.

Morrish, L. & Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) (United Kingdom) (2019). Pressure Vessels: The Epidemic of Poor Mental Health among Higher Education Staff. Occasional Paper 20, Higher Education Policy Institute.