
8-10 September 2026

14th Annual Education and Student Experience Conference



Conference theme

Co-Creating Inclusive Futures: Flexible, Diverse, and Competency-Driven Learning



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Message from the organisers

A warm welcome from Library Academic and Digital Services in Student Journey to this year's Annual Education and Student Experience Conference.

This is our 14th conference and we're really proud of the programme this year.

This year's conference theme is Co-Creating Inclusive Futures: Flexible, Diverse, and Competency-Driven Learning. We have some amazing speakers for you.

First up, our keynote speaker: Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra. Dr Basra (PFHEA, NTF, CATE) is an Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning and Inclusive Education Lead at De Montfort University. With over two decades of experience in higher education, she is a nationally recognised leader in inclusive, anti-racist and decolonising pedagogies. Her work spans institutional strategy, curriculum transformation and academic development, with a sustained focus on improving student outcomes, belonging and equity.

Dr Basra will be talking about the work that has been done at De Montfort University with decolonised curricula. She will also be leading a workshop for attendees. Complementing Dr Basra, we've got examples of decolonising the curriculum at AU, recently achieving Bronze in the Race Equality Charter.

We'll be joined by Chester University's Professor Ruth Healey. Ruth is an expert in student collaboration and will be presenting the session, *From tokenistic to authentic: meaningful co-creation with students*.

WONKHE's Jim Dickinson will be presenting alongside UndebAber's Trish McGrath on a European model to skills development – a session not to be missed as we look ahead to further work in this area.

And we're joined by Ruben Jacquart from Blackboard. Ruben will be showcasing some new features that we've got coming up in future releases. We'll be presenting on achievements with Life Science's Dr Ifat Shah, which we are hoping more colleagues will use over the coming year.

We'll be hearing from our Education and Student Experience Award recipients – we're really proud of the 4 projects that have been funded. We hope you feel inspired by what you hear at the conference and consider submitting a proposal for our second year.

Thank you very much for attending – we hope you get a lot out of the 3 days.

A big thank you to yourselves for joining the conference, to our brilliant speakers who volunteer their time to share some astounding teaching practices, and colleagues in Library Academic and Digital Services for supporting the event.

Dr Jim Woolley
Digital Education Team
Library Academic and Digital Services
Student Journey

Day One - Tuesday 8 September (online)

09:15-09:30	Welcome Professor Anwen Jones
09:30-10:00	From tokenistic to authentic: meaningful co-creation with students Professor Ruth Healey
10:00-10:30	The Aber Medieval Physic Garden Eleri Phillips, Elizabeth New, Sian Nicholas
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-11:30	Developing a Sustainable Student Gear Hub Emma Sheppard, Toni Beardmore, Eleri Phillips
11:30-12:00	Inclusivity and Accessibility in Assessment Design and Feedback Practices Kate Woodward
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-13:30	Learning in Action: the case for an entrepreneurial curriculum Alexander Hubbard
13:30-14:30	Don't forget me! How to make staff-student collaboration accessible and inclusive for Neurodivergent and Disabled individual Corben Marrs
14:30-15:00	Break
15:00-15:30	Designing Asynchronous Listening Exercises for Spanish Language Learners on Blackboard tests Fernando Castellano-Bañuls
15:30-16:00	Build your own festival! A creative-analytical form of assessment for a modern languages film module Gabor Gelleri

Day Two - Wednesday 9 September

09:15-09:30	Registration	Think Tank
09:30-09:45	Welcome	A6
09:45-10:45	Decolonising the Curriculum at DeMontfort University Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra	A6
10:45-11:15	Break	Think Tank
11:15-12:15	Workshop Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra	B23
12:15-13:15	Lunch	Think Tank
13:15-14:15	On decolonial curricula 'Unlearning', community-building, and anti-racism in teaching and learning International Politics Gareth Hoskins, Catrin Wyn Edwards	A6
14:15-14:30	The Celtic Collection: improving access to the Library's special collections Amy Staniforth	A6
14:30-15:00	Break	Think Tank
15:00-15:45	Trauma Informed Project Update Saffron Passam, Martine Robson	B23
15:45-16:00	Discover Your Digital Capability: a short introduction to the Jisc Digital Discovery Tool Joy Cadwallader, Keziah Garratt-Smithson	B23
09:00-16:00	Stands • AberSkills (Non Jones) • Royal Literary Fellow (Samantha Wynne-Rhydderch)	Think Tank

Day Three - Thursday 10 September

09:15-09:30	Registration	Think Tank
09:30-10:30	Blackboard	B23
10:30-11:00	Using Blackboard Achievements for Skills Recognition Ifat Shah, James Woolley	B23
11:00-11:30	Break	Think Tank
11:30-12:30	Graduate skills and how European systems build them differently Jim Dickinson, Trish McGrath	A6
12:30-13:30	Lunch	Think Tank
13:30-14:00	Physics / Careers employability assessment Manon Charles, Rachel Cross	A6
14:00-14:30	Pulling Together - Supporting better group work assessment in the Department of Life Sciences Scott Tompsett, Cal Walters-Davies, Mary Glasser	A6
14:30-14:45	Break	Think Tank
14:45-15:45	Who Develops the Developers? Professional Learning for the Plural Academic Panna Lloyd-Karlinger, Ian Archer, Annette Edwards, Prysor Mason Davies	B23
	Using Lego® Serious Play® as a teaching tool for undergraduate students Kathy Hampson	B20

Day Three - Thursday 10 September

09:30-15:45

Stands

Think Tank

- The Aber Medieval Physic Garden (Eleri Phillips, Elizabeth New, Sian Nicholas)
- Developing a Sustainable Student Gear Hub (Emma Sheppard, Toni Beardmore, Eleri Phillips)
- Inclusivity and Accessibility in Assessment Design and Feedback Practices (Kate Woodward)
- Pulling Together - Supporting better group work assessment in the Department of Life Sciences (Scott Tompsett, Cal Walters-Davies, Mary Glasser)



Abstracts - Day One

From tokenistic to authentic: meaningful co-creation with students

- Professor Ruth Healey, Millie Leach

Ruth Healey is a Professor of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, at the University of Chester. She is a National Teaching Fellow (NTF) (2017); a Fellow of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) (2019), a Senior Fellow of the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) (2024), and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA) (2026). She is one of the inaugural editors of the [International Journal for Students as Partners](#) (2016-).

Millie Leach is an undergraduate BSc Cybersecurity student at the University of Chester, working alongside her degree as a Student Learning Consultant for the university's Centre for Academic Innovation and Development. She is a recipient of Staff and Educational Development Association's (SEDA) 'Student Partnership Impact Award' (2025) and recently become an editor of the [International Journal for Students as Partners](#) (2025-).

Aber Medieval Physic Garden

- Elizabeth New, Eleri Phillips, Sian Nicholas
- History and Welsh History

This update is from the recipients of the Education and Student Experience Award.

Led by Elizabeth New (History & Welsh History), alongside Sian Nicholas, Eleri Phillips, and a student steering committee. The aim of this project is to create an outdoor amenity for staff and students that support education and recreation on campus. The project seeks to enhance students' learning through collaborative mentored historical research, gardening, and public engagement.

Developing a Sustainable Student Gear Hub

- Emma Sheppard
- Geography and Earth Sciences

This update is from the recipients of the Education and Student Experience Award.

This project is led by Emma Sheppard (DGES), alongside Toni Beardmore, Eleri Phillips, Morgan Jones, Emma Butler-Wray, Hywel Griffiths, and Tom Holt.

The aim of the project is to promote accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences by developing a 'library of things' for student borrowing and use.

The library will make use of second-hand useable resources and students will be able to participate in repair cafes, making the library sustainable.



Inclusivity and Accessibility in Assessment Design and Feedback Practices

- Kate Woodward
- Theatre, Film and Television Studies

This update is from the recipients of the Education and Student Experience Award.

This project is led by Theatre, Film, and Television Studies' Kate Woodward. The aim of the project is to ascertain student understanding of the role of feedback and to maximise student engagement with feedback. The department is also looking to ensure staff familiarity with inclusive and compassionate feedback design and assessment criteria. They are changing current practices by adapting and standardising rubrics, feedback and assessment criteria.

Learning in action: The case for an entrepreneurial curriculum

- Alexander Hubbard
- Careers and Employability Service

This is a period of intense scrutiny for higher education institutions across the United Kingdom. Pressure on degree schemes to more readily and obviously equip students for the world of work, questioning and problematising of traditional methods of teaching delivery, and students wanting to feel more empowered and energised about their learning all contribute to this challenge. This paper will consider how embedding entrepreneurial competences within the curriculum can benefit learners and address these issues, focusing on Aberystwyth University's participation in the 2025 Pan Wales Hackathon. The hackathon, an extracurricular initiative involving universities across Wales, asked students to:

- Address key socio-economic issues with a focus on tackling climate change, sustaining communities, and improving failing national infrastructures
- Understand complicated pieces of national legislation and their impact on particular areas of working
- Consider how their learning in a university context can inform and enrich their solutions to complex problems

The breadth and success of the responding contributions demonstrates that an entrepreneurial curriculum does not necessarily aim to turn students into founders and freelancers, as much as it is drawing attention to the inherent creativity, ambition and adaptability embedded in academic study of all kinds. By embedding entrepreneurial competencies in teaching and assessments, university curricula can be forward-looking and future-proofing, all the while protecting the integrity of particular academic disciplines and subjects.

Don't forget me! How to make staff-student collaboration accessible and inclusive for Neurodivergent and Disabled individuals

- Corben Marrs
- Geography and Earth Sciences

Following on from a highly commended workshop at the Neurodiversity Conference which has led to multiple follow-on projects and presentations, Corben (President of Undeb Aber's Disability and Neurodiversity Society) presents: Don't Forget Me! An interactive workshop aimed at increasing understanding of the barriers Neurodivergent and Disabled individuals could face and how, through inclusive and accessible staff-student collaboration we can make sure the outcomes of these collaborations benefit ALL.

To start the workshop Corben will give an overview on Disability and Neurodiversity, what these terms means to people as well as positives and negatives the communities face. The aim of this segment is to give audience members who are perhaps not familiar with the communities a chance to learn terminology and understand how these groups may be impacted on a daily basis.

Following on from the Overview, the main event! Using their uniquely devised 'concepts in action' methodology Corben will guide the audience through the five steps: Concept, Information, Example, Action and Takeaway. This framework is a tried and tested method of breaking down a situation into its component parts, analysing them in different contexts and then putting these parts back together in a way that makes the situation as accessible and productive as possible.

After 'concepts in action' comes 'educate and initiate', the step where members of the audience are taught how they can increase their own personal understanding through self-education and then initiate all they have learnt to identify potential issues, address them and create a more inclusive and accessible environment. The aim is for this to become a widespread and automatic thought process, making sure collaborative work between staff and students works for everyone both at the time and in the outcomes of the projects that follow.

To end the session, a recommended reading list, additional resources, and an ask anything Q and A.

Designing Asynchronous Listening Exercises for Spanish Language Learners on BlackBoard tests

- Fernando Castellano-Banuls
- Modern Languages

Following input hypothesis of language acquisition (Krashen), second language learning occurs when being exposed to comprehensible language input - that is, language that the students can recognise and understand. Thus, the role of language teachers when crafting listening activities becomes that of a "curator", finding effective audiovisual material, and a "mediator", turning that material into a pedagogical resource to be used by learners (Cassany, 2022). This presentation will share the tutor's reflection in designing asynchronous listening exercises for Spanish Language learners (using BlackBoard tests) with these ideas in mind. It will describe the process from finding effective audiovisual material in correlation with module's learning aims, to challenges of turning them into adequate pedagogical material through a variety of processes (for example, through subtitles).

It will also serve as a reflection around successes and failures of the endeavor and the potential use of GenAI for crafting pedagogical resources. The goal of the presentation is twofold: 1. Share the experience with other language educators (and learners) to ignite conversations around how to craft effective (listening) activities; and 2. Reflect around the challenges and potentials of designing asynchronous activities on BlackBoard, understanding it as an inclusive practice for flexible learning.

Build your own festival! A creative-analytical form of assessment for a modern languages film module

- Gabor Gelléri
- Modern Languages

In the Modern Languages (French) film module 'History, Film, Memory', students are given the possibility to replace one of their essays by a creative project: creating the plan and accompanying documents (functional website; press release, flyer, plus a commentary) of a film festival that would be held in the Arts Centre. It has to feature additional events that they have to conceive, and the programme has to feature films not extensively discussed in class. In this presentation, I will discuss the rationale of using such a form of assessment, set at the intersection of the 'creative assessment' projects, competence-driven learning, and traditional critical commentary. I will share the experience gathered since the introduction of this form of assessment, and showcase some examples created by students.

Abstracts - Day Two

Keynote and Workshop

- Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra

Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra will be joining us in person for a keynote presentation and a workshop.

We will get so much valuable input from Dr Basra that will really help us to enhance our education and student experience offering as well as build on the incredible work of the Race Equality Charter.

Dr Hardeep Kaur Basra (PFHEA, NTF, CATE) is an Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning and Inclusive Education Lead at De Montfort University. With over two decades of experience in higher education, she is a nationally recognised leader in inclusive, anti-racist and decolonising pedagogies. Her work spans institutional strategy, curriculum transformation and academic development, with a sustained focus on improving student outcomes, belonging and equity.

Hardeep has led major institution-wide initiatives, including advancing inclusive curricula, addressing awarding gaps and shaping Access and Participation strategies. She has played a key role in sector-leading work such as Decolonising DMU, contributing to Race Equality Charter success, and designs impactful staff development programmes including the PG Cert in Empowering Education.

As a Principal Fellow of Advance HE, National Teaching Fellow and CATE award holder, she contributes to national conversations on equity, excellence and transformational change in higher education.



On decolonial curricula

- Gareth Hoskins
- Geography and Earth Sciences

First paper reports on a spin-off activity from a recent AU - Race Council Cymru collaborative event 'Beyond the Toolkit' where the need for teaching resources on Black and Minority Ethnic history in Wales was mentioned as a priority. The presentation hopes to report on progress made in establishing 'history workshops' with students, teachers, pupils and community members working together to create content for the 'new curriculum' inspired by Charlotte Williams's 2021 assertion that : "[a] broader knowledge of difference and diversity, solidarities and coalitions, and of conflict and contestation, past and present, [is] a gift for every child in Wales; an entitlement to a knowledge base that isn't fixed or final but a work in progress.

<https://wcpp.org.uk/blog-posts/embedding-black-and-minority-ethnic-history-identity-and-culture-into-welsh-education/>

Other papers in the session will report on the design and delivery of decolonial modules across the undergraduate curriculum in AU.

'Unlearning', community-building, and anti-racism in teaching and learning International Politics

- Catrin Wyn-Edwards
- International Politics

This presentation will focus on a new MA module, Race, (Im)mobility and Incarceration, which focusses on critical approaches to race, policing, bordering, and migration. It introduces students to key theories on racial capitalism, prison and border abolitionism, and productions of Black and Indigenous criminality. In exploring alternative, critical understandings of International Relations, it responds to the fact that the discipline is rooted in 'racialised, capitalist, cis-normative heteropatriarchal structures of power, and in the epistemic violences of colonisation committed against the bodies and lives of black and Indigenous peoples, and peoples of colour' (Boer Cueva et al. 2023).

The module provides students with the intellectual and practical tools to actively engage in anti-racist work, establishing collective solidarity, and embarking on a process of 'unlearning' in IR (D'Costa, 2021). The module is centred on i) community-building, collaboration and care, ii) (un)learning support, and iii) consultation and communication, and these principles underpin the module design and content. When designing the module, I prioritised student support where students feel supported both on their journey of 'unlearning' regarding systemic racism and 'methodological whiteness' (Bhambra 2017) and in navigating potentially triggering material and topics. In doing so, the module and its objectives reinforce Aberystwyth University's recent anti-racist efforts such as the Anti-Racist Plan and the Race Equality Charter (including efforts to diversify and decolonise the curriculum) and actively responds to the broader call to decolonise IR and the HE curricula.

This module was awarded the AU Exemplary Course Award 2025-26.

The Celtic Collection: improving access to the Library's special collections

- Amy Staniforth
- Student Journey

This lightning talk will describe the library's work with Department of Information Studies post-graduates on improving access to the Celtic Collection. The Celtic Collection brings together material relating to Brittany, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and contains approximately 25,000 books. As well as continuing to grow, the collection has moved over the years and its item descriptions have varied in quality, making it tricky to surface its diverse resources. To improve local discoverability of this important collection via the library catalogue Primo, and nationally and internationally via Jisc's Library Hub Discover, we are enhancing the bibliographic descriptions. At the same time, student volunteers from DIS are gaining hands-on experience of working in a Library Management System and seeing demonstrable impact of their work in real time.

Trauma Project Update

- Saffron Passam, Martine Robson
- Psychology

In this presentation, we explore how trauma-informed (TI) approaches can create positive change when educators are given the knowledge and tools to better understand students' experiences. Using a participatory approach, we worked with twelve educators at Aberystwyth University as they completed trauma-informed training and put what they learned into practice. We examine how wellbeing and regulation are shaped not only by individuals, but also by the relationships, environments and systems around them. We conclude by sharing practical examples of trauma-informed strategies that educators can adopt and adapt within their own practice.

Discover Your Digital Capability: a short introduction to the Jisc Digital Discovery Tool

- Joy Cadwallader, Keziah Garratt-Smithson
- Student Journey

A short introduction to the JISC Digital Discovery Tool which returns to Aberystwyth University for 2026-2027. Find out more about this self-assessment tool for digital capabilities, enabling students and staff to explore their skills strengths and gaps. The tool also provides anonymised data to best enable the deployment of resources for skills delivery and support, and benchmarking against UK universities. During the session attendees can log in and part-complete the question set for themselves (can be completed later). We will also confirm deployment of the tool to the 2026-2027 first year undergraduate cohort.

Abstracts - Day Three

Blackboard

- Ruben Jacquart

Ruben Jacquart is a Senior Solutions Engineer with over 10 years of experience supporting higher education institutions in their digital learning transformation journeys.

Based in Amsterdam, he works closely with universities and business schools across Europe and the UK to help institutions enhance teaching, learning, accessibility, and student success through innovative educational technology.

His expertise spans learning management systems, digital accessibility, learning analytics, artificial intelligence, interoperability standards, and enterprise integrations. Ruben regularly collaborates with institutional leaders, academic staff, and technology teams to address strategic and operational challenges in digital education.

He is particularly passionate about advancing accessibility in education and helping institutions create more inclusive learning environments. Through his work with Ally, he supports universities in improving the accessibility of digital course content, empowering educators to adopt inclusive practices, and ensuring that all learners have equitable access to educational resources.

Ruben is also deeply interested in how AI and data-informed approaches can further enhance the learner experience while strengthening inclusion and student success.

Ruben will be running a 1-hour session.

The session will include latest updates to:

- Blackboard Ally
- Blackboard AI Design Assistant
- New features roadmap for Blackboard

Using Blackboard Achievements for Skills Recognition

- Ifat Shah, James Woolley
- Department of Life Sciences + Library Academic and Digital Services

This presentation and workshop aims to introduce colleagues to Achievements in Blackboard.

Achievements are a great way to reward competences and skills beyond assignments. They are available in every Blackboard course.

Achievements include the following features:

- Create course badges and set criteria for students to earn the badges.
- Review which students have earned a course badge.
- Students can access the requirements to earn a course badge.
- Students can access both earned and unearned course badges

The Department of Life Sciences have been using achievements for their skills passport.

Participants at this workshop will get the opportunity to design and implement their own achievements.

Graduate skills and how European systems build them differently

- Jim Dickinson, Trish McGrath
- WonkHE (partnering with Undeb Aber)

This session pulls together examples of practice from across Wonkhe SUs European study tours, organised under three themes:

- student-or SU-led careers events and initiatives;
- academic credit for participation, leadership and volunteering;
- curricula that embed credited work experience, placements or recognition of work-based learning.

Drawing on cases from Nordic, Baltic, Benelux, DACH, Iberian, Irish and Visegrad systems, the session explores not just what universities and students' unions do, but why these systems enable activity at a scale and ambition that is difficult to imagine in the UK.

Physics/Careers employability assessment

- Rachel Cross, Manon Charles
- Physics + Careers and Employability Service

In alignment with the University's Employability Plan, the Physics Department and the Careers and Employability Service have co-designed an employability-focused assessment for first year Physics students. The collaborative nature of the assessment strengthens links between academic staff and professional services, demonstrating a shared institutional approach to graduate outcomes.

The peer-assessed mock interview embeds an authentic employability activity within the curriculum; encouraging students to identify and articulate their transferable skills while developing a stronger understanding of recruitment and selection processes from both applicant and recruiter perspectives.

This presentation will outline the rationale for the assessment design, an overview of the collaboration process, and impact on student engagement and learning. We will discuss the benefits and challenges of embedding employability into assessments in a way that fosters reflection, peer learning, and early career readiness within discipline-specific contexts.

Pulling Together - Supporting better group work assessment in the Department of Life Sciences

- Scott Tompsett, Cal Walters-Davies, Mary Glasser, Caroline White
- Department of Life Sciences + Student Journey

The Department of Life Sciences employ group work activities in range of assessments across all degree schemes. The outcomes of these are a central component of Royal Society of Biology scheme accreditation. However, coursework assessment tasks involving group working pose a number of difficulties, especially for neurodivergent students.

Our project has employed focus groups and workshops involving academic staff, the Student Accessibility and Wellbeing team and DLS students to identify the key issues that lead to discord amongst students engaged in group work activities. In response to the output from these we have developed and tested a suite of tools to aid students and staff in managing group work assignments for everyone's benefit.

Here we will present the outcomes of our research, the resources developed to date, and the plans in place to embed better practice in core DLS modules and potentially more widely across the University.

Who Develops the Developers?

Professional Learning for the Plural Academic

- Panna Lloyd-Karlinger, Ian Archer, Annette Edwards, Prysor Davies, (Charles Musselwhite, Ben Lloyd-Karlinger)
- School of Education, Human Resources, Psychology

The modern academic is no longer simply a teacher-researcher(-administrator). Drawing on our forthcoming paper introducing the Plural Academic framework, this panel will discuss the reality of contemporary academic labour: over 20 distinct roles spanning knowledge contributor, educator, researcher, support or office worker, quality controller and the salesperson. Yet professional development often remains focused on teaching competencies, ignoring the pastoral, administrative, entrepreneurial, and relational work that consumes the majority of academic time and disproportionately burdens women and minoritised staff (what we call the "shrapnel effect").

This panel brings together voices from academic development and educational research to ask if competency-driven learning prepares students for complex futures, why doesn't it prepare academics for their complex present? We propose a more holistic competency framework for academic practice across all five dimensions we identified, arguing that sustainable, equitable higher education requires developing the whole academic - not just the educator. The session invites participants to co-design the future of academic development at our institution.

Using Lego® Serious Play® as a teaching tool for undergraduate students

- Kathy Hampson
- Law and Criminology

Lego® Serious Play® has been developed for use in business to facilitate creative thinking and ideas creation. This session will both demonstrate and give attendees an opportunity to try out how this method can be applied to undergraduate teaching.

Taking a criminological theme (which will be explained!), delegates will explore Lego® Serious Play®, become familiar with its key concepts, and hopefully develop an awareness/ideas of how they could use it in their own teaching.

Help

In case of any questions please
contact us at **elarning@aber.ac.uk**
or visit the Think Tank

We hope that you enjoy the
conference!

