

# Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre 2<sup>nd</sup> Post-Festival Publication 2024

## Future Horizons in Learning & Teaching Practice

### Editorial

**Jess Power, Davina Whitnall and Craig Morley**

University of Salford: Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre

Corresponding editor: [e.j.power@salford.ac.uk](mailto:e.j.power@salford.ac.uk)

The third annual Festival of Learning and Teaching (2-3rd September 2024) was held in Salford's New Adelphi Building. It provided an opportunity for Salford's learning and teaching community (L&T) community to come together to share best practice, network, and celebrate our achievements in the L&T sphere. Almost 200 colleagues attended across the two days, which was the largest University of Salford Learning and Teaching Festival to-date. It provided a wonderful opportunity for us to come together as an institution to explore the theme of 'Future Horizons in Learning and Teaching Practice'. The Festival featured: three keynotes, twenty-nine presentations and lightning talks, four workshops, and eleven poster presentations, with seventy individual contributors. Over the course of the two days, we explored the overarching theme through three distinct lenses of:

- community, collaboration and networking,
- future curriculum and student experience,
- digital enablement.

The 2024 Post-Festival Special Edition builds on our inaugural special edition “LTEC 2023 Post-Festival Publication” which explored the themes of authenticity in the context of: “practice”, “identity”, and “community” published by the online journal [Innovative practice in Higher Education](#). To host our second edition of the Post-Festival Publication we launched Salford’s first L&T open access journal “Pedagogy: LTEC Learning and Teaching Showcase” via the digital platform Janeway. Contained within this inaugural edition is a collection of papers and audio poster from the Festival of Learning and Teaching 2024, which represent examples of practice through the lenses of community, collaboration and digital enhancement embracing our theme of “Future Horizons in Learning and Teaching Practice”.

The Festival keynotes Prof Tara Brabazon of Flinders University, Dr Melanie-Marie Haywood of Birmingham City University, and Prof Andy Miah from the University of Salford set the scene for the Festival exploring: digital, multimodality and cultural identity which are at the heart of the Salford learning experience.

Professor Tara Brabazon delivered a powerful message, emphasizing the importance of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within multimodality, challenging attendees to be agents of change for a future-facing curriculum building from where people are. This was followed by an equally thought-provoking keynote from Dr Melanie-Marie Haywood, where she highlighted the significance of lived experiences and cultural identity, advocating for storytelling to create belonging and equity. Our final keynote, Professor Andy Miah awed the auditorium through expanding their understanding of Generation Alpha’s expectations of future-facing technology. He showcased how industry is experimenting with artificial intelligence (AI) and what opportunities the future of digital holds for educators and learners. AI was coined as the critical friend, Andy urged educators to embrace opportunities to develop meaningful authentic immersive experiences to enhance learning.

These essential themes of lived experiences and narrative, authentic digital enablement and active blended learning instil confidence, inclusion and compassion across and within our academic community and facilitate a sense of ‘belonging’ at Salford. This publication draws on a selection of presentations from the 2024 Festival of Learning and Teaching which have been re-worked to showcase a

snapshot of future horizons: through the lens of “Community”, “collaboration”, “digital” enhancement which enhance the student experience and strengthen academic practice. Thus, contributing a wealth of knowledge through authentic reflective practice.

**Strand one:** the “*community collaboration and networking*” strand draws on educational practices; key themes included: empowerment, narrative, collaborative working, and cultural inclusivity. **Empowerment** was a central focus, particularly through initiatives like Digital Skills Week. Smith’s paper presents a project that emphasized student ownership and self-directed learning, enabling students to identify and address digital skill gaps. In fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, students were encouraged to take responsibility for their professional development, leading to deeper engagement and better academic outcomes. Building on a key sentiment expressed by our keynote speakers; **Narrative** and its significant role in both student and staff experiences was woven throughout the Festival. Oforji and Whitnall highlight unintentional discrimination in higher educational institutions using innovative storytelling and proposed inclusive frameworks through capturing diverse lived experiences to improve outcomes. Narrative continued as a theme within Naphthine-Hodgkinson’s audio poster, which explored the use of poetry to prompt pedagogic reflection to bring fresh learning perspectives. She argued that deeper reflection and connection in a wider context could be achieved through refining structure, rhythm, and wording. Whitnall’s contribution also supported the use of poetry to bridge gaps in understanding neurodivergent experiences. Together they argue that the metaphorical language in poetry provides a gateway to explore difficult topics to overcome feelings of vulnerability, developing confidence to communicate the untold.

Through **collaborative working** Thomson et al. exemplified the staff narrative from an international partnership. This partnership, between the University of Salford and the State University of Trade and Economics in Kiev, showcased the resilience of academic communities amidst adversity. The collaboration produced comprehensive learning resources. Demonstrating the power of shared knowledge and the impact of global partnerships on professional development. **Cultural inclusivity** was another critical theme. Oforji and Whitnall’s, and Veysey and Sayan’s work emphasised the

importance of language and the need to unpack jargon to create inclusive learning environments. Whitnall's Audio Poster further illustrated this by using Phenomenon-Based Learning to encourage reflection and discussion, empowering a diverse range of voices. Advocating a move away from 'done to' to 'learn from and with-in' to create an environment whereby lived experiences are shared to encourage reflection and discussion. Her approach advocates an open discussion to enable participants to share in a 'brave' space to develop confidence and to empower a diverse range of voices.

The second strand of the festival drew together themes of transition, enhancement, lived experience, and narrative under the strand of "*future curriculum and student experience*". **Transition** to higher education was a significant thread woven throughout. Whitehead's paper and Cooper Ryan et al.'s poster addressed the challenges students face when entering higher education. Whitehead emphasized the importance of understanding the hidden curriculum and fostering a sense of belonging, particularly for students from non-traditional backgrounds. A toolkit was presented which had been used to bridge the gap and support smoother transitions. Cooper Ryan et al.'s poster explored the transition into post-graduate studies, identifying facilitators that help both students and staff overcome challenges, using digital solutions to create a positive learning experience. Our collective draws extensively on student experience **enhancement**, demonstrated through various initiatives. Smith highlights the value of professional standards through integrating learning opportunities to gain certifications for widely used commercial platforms, thereby increasing the wider skills development as we wait for the government to announce the shape of '*Skills England*'. Morgan and Jones showcased a digital escape room platform embedded within the discipline of microbiology. This is shown to significantly enhanced student engagement and knowledge through gamification. Further to this, Harrison explored the third space and the vital role of technicians in supporting learning, arguing for a more integrated approach that blurs traditional academic boundaries of technical, support and academic staff and places students at the centre.

**Lived experience** and narrative continued to weave through the second strand, proving to be a crucial theme, particularly in understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by diverse student groups. The work of Veysey and Sayan presented a learning toolkit that enhanced learners' understanding of command words in assessments, contributing to closing awarding gaps and easing the transition to HE for student from non-traditional entry routes. This approach emphasized the importance of contextual understanding and practical solutions to support diverse learners and the universities commitment to widening participation. The use of storytelling and personal experiences was evident in various works, including the audio poster by Naphthine-Hodgkinson, which used poetry to prompt pedagogic reflection. This approach provided a fresh perspective on learning, allowing for deeper reflection and connection. The metaphorical language helped navigate challenging topics and enabled vulnerability to be explored in a positive learning environment. Whitnall's case studies showcased this bridging to support and better understand neurodivergent experiences.

Our final strand of "*digital enablement*" draw on themes of active blended learning, authenticity, and immersive learning. **Active blended learning** was a central feature across our learning and teaching festival, with various approaches highlighted to embed digital skills in higher education. Smith's paper detailed how the Business School at Salford adopted a Universal Digital Skills Week to identify and address digital skills gaps between academic teachings and commercial requirements. This initiative aimed to better prepare graduates for the digital demands of the contemporary workplace. **Authenticity** in learning was emphasized through innovative assessment methods. Islam's poster presented a newly developed media suite at Salford Business School, podcasts transformed the assessment experience. This change was coined as "*the best assessment experience*" for students, showcasing active blended learning in practice and its impact on our student's development journey. Islam's advocates that the use of podcasts provided a more authentic and engaging way for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Further to this **immersive experience** were showcased using digital escape rooms by Morgan and Jones. These immersive and interactive digital approaches enabled learners to participate at their leisure, without the need for physical space. The escape rooms encouraged active learning and engagement, leading to an increased

understanding of the topics covered. This work clearly demonstrates the benefits of interactivity and the enhancing of learning. Additionally, Cooper Ryan et al. provided examples of digital environments that offer immersive support solutions, enabling students to flourish in competence and confidence. These digital solutions created a positive and collegial experience, further highlighting the importance of interactivity in education.

Overall, these three combined stands underscore the importance of:

- active blended learning, authenticity in assessment, and interactivity in enhancing educational practices and preparing students for the digital demands of the modern workplace,
- supporting transitions, enhancing the student experience, valuing lived experiences, and leveraging narrative within educational practices,
- empowering students, fostering collaboration, and promoting cultural inclusivity in educational practices.

The Editors would like to thank all the contributors to this special edition for disseminating their scholarship, and to the keynote speakers who helped to make the festival a success. We also are very grateful to those who contributed to the reviewing and refining process: Maria Allen, Kathy Hartley, Rob Higgins, Helen Keegan, Dean Irwin, Lynne Marrow, Sara Namvar, Sonal Patel, Sami Safadi, Wendy Taylor, Calum Thomson, Paul Vivian and Neil Whitnell.

This post-festival special edition is an inaugural publication for the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTEC) at Salford as we launch our first open access journal “Pedagogy: LTEC Learning and Teaching Showcase” via the digital platform Janeway. This builds on our previous special edition “LTEC 2023 Post-Festival Publication” which explored the themes of authenticity in the context of: “practice”, “identity”, and “community”.

[Vol. 5 No. 3 \(2024\): LTEC 2023 Post-Festival Publication - Exploring authenticity in the context of: “practice”, “identity”, and “community” | Innovative Practice in Higher Education.](#)

We hope you enjoy our collection of papers and posters from Salford's Future Horizons in Learning & Teaching Practice Festival of Learning and Teaching 2024.

Best Wishes from the Editorial Team.

Prof Jess Power – APVC learning and teaching enhancement

Davina Whitnall – LTEC equity, diversity and inclusivity lead

Dr Craig Morley – LTEC academic developer

University of Salford: Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre