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Editorial

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Editorial

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‘Are we done with generative AI yet?’, a colleague has mooted in a recent conversation. After the initial trepidation caused by the perceived grave consequences of GenAI for higher education, the volume of institutional and individual responses to the challenge descended on us like a weighted blanket, bringing a sense of comfort and gently reducing our stress levels associated with the quiet revolution we never thought we’d have to deal with. Among the many analyses, commentaries, and interventions, Russell Group universities issued their set of ‘principles on the use of generative AI tools in education’ (Russell Group, 2023) providing some much needed, if vague, guidelines for the sector. Meanwhile, international Learning and Teaching colleagues crowdsourced ‘Creative ideas to use AI in education’ (Nerantzi et al., 2023), and the very active Facebook group ‘Higher Ed discussions of AI writing’ became for many a platform offering unmatched levels of emotional and specialised support including examples of authentic in-class tasks that engage GenAI ethically and real exchanges with students responding to them, as well as classroom policies and syllabi, alongside sharing collective hopes and individual frustrations. With the new semester now bubbling with possibility, we thus seem relatively confident we can meet its challenges while anticipating just about anything in terms of consequences.

One fundamental question for our readers concerns the role of Learning Development in this fluctuating and uncertain HE landscape. There is a real interest in exploring this question collectively, evidenced by the unprecedented response to Kate Coulson's recent invitation on LDHEN to form a community of practice around it. With over 175 interested in taking part, it is a real testimony to the continued need not only for leadership but also for a space to discuss, share, and inspire each other so we can offer a unique, humanistic and caring approach underpinned by the values of LD community.

In the journal, we begin by acknowledging that GenAI is here to stay and that our authors are increasingly likely to use it to enhance their research and writing. While we do not use GenAI tools in our editorial work, we believe that our role is not to police that use among our authors but to support them in developing ethical practices based on the principles of transparency, integrity, author accountability, and scholarly rigour. We have therefore developed a policy that requires disclosure around GenAI tools, including the type of system used and extent of the content generated with it, as well as its purpose. We believe that these principles will allow us to thoughtfully integrate these emerging technologies into our journal and field while upholding rigorous standards of research quality in the scholarship of Learning Development and Teaching and Learning. We welcome feedback from our scholarly community as we continue to evaluate appropriate uses of GenAI in research and publishing.

None of the authors in this volume have used GenAI to augment their manuscripts, which is perhaps a testament to some discomfort with or even resistance to these tools from writers and researchers in our field. It will be fascinating to watch how the transformation of science and writing anticipated by many unfolds in our future editions. Meanwhile, in our current Issue 28, we bring you fifteen 'traditionally' written scholarly analyses on a range of topics, from academic buoyancy to video games and engagement with support initiatives, examined across ten papers, one opinion piece, one brief communication, and three book reviews.

Academic buoyancy is a student's ability to succeed amidst academic difficulties and setbacks in academic settings. In the first paper in this volume, Peter Aloka discusses first-year students' adjustment challenges at university, focussing on gender differences in academic buoyancy among first-year undergraduate students in one public university in western Kenya. The project concludes that gender accounts for significant differential

levels in academic buoyancy as male students are more buoyant than female students, indicating that they could have better coping mechanisms for academic challenges at university. Moreover, it could imply that female students do not adjust well to the new learning practices in higher education. The author recommends that university counselling staff develop gendered orientation programmes to enhance the academic buoyancy of female students. Moreover, universities should develop more focussed academic orientation and nurturing among all first-year students to uplift academic buoyancy in all courses.

In the second paper, Neil Anderson explores perceptions of grading rubrics. Little is known about the use that sport and exercise sciences students of different levels of study at university make of grading rubrics. The aims of this study were to develop a greater understanding of the perceptions students and teaching assistants (TAs) have of grading rubrics when writing and grading laboratory reports, respectively. Results showed that students in the earlier stage of their academic careers had more positive perceptions of rubrics and that students in the later part of their academic careers wanted more specific information from rubrics. Grading rubrics were generally well received by students at each level of study and should be presented to sport and exercise students to enhance the educational scaffolding within the learning environment.

Helen Briscoe, Claire Olson and Maisie Prior’s paper evaluates the impact of an intervention which aims to increase student engagement with academic feedback. In particular, the authors outline the need to ensure students actively receive, engage with, and act upon their academic feedback. In a sector that continuously prioritises student academic success, a common concern and topic of discussion is how to facilitate student resilience to failure, as well as inspiring student development. This research looks at students’ readiness and willingness to engage with their academic feedback and assesses whether learning about academic resilience can improve feedback engagement. Two cohorts of students were identified to take part in a Grow Your Academic Resilience (GYAR) Workshop at Edge Hill University, UK. Through using a mixed methods approach, participants were invited to complete a pre- and post-session questionnaire to evaluate the intervention. Participants quantitatively rated their pre- and post-session confidence about dealing constructively with academic feedback, while free-text responses provided qualitative data. The findings suggest that offering students practical tools and strategies

increases their willingness and confidence in engaging with and acting upon their feedback.

The paper authored by Louise Frith, Leah Maitland, and James Lamont reports on a research project that took place at a university in the North of England. Academic Skills Tutors provided weekly two-hour classes to international PGT Education students, supporting the development of their academic and communication skills. The research used an online survey and three focus groups to investigate student interaction, participation, levels of academic anxiety, and sense of belonging. Results were shared back with students. From this, PGT students were recruited to share their experiences via videos, helping to create a resource for incoming PGT students to help their transition to studying in the UK. The videos focused on three core themes: participation, academic anxiety and belonging.

In her paper, Emma Richards explores young adult carer (YAC) students engaged with targeted support initiatives. The underlying premise of Richards's argument is that HEIs fail to reach out to YACs adequately. Therefore, this paper investigates the extent to which self-identity influences students' engagement with support services, as well as how much universities rely on students' self-agency to access these support systems. The research was conducted through a sequential programme of a survey and semi-structured interviews. Richards found that self-identity does indeed play a pivotal role in how YAC students and the university interact, and that the onus should be on HEIs to find and reach out to these students, not the other way around.

'Should open-book, open-web exams replace traditional closed-book exams in Science in higher education?', ask Laura Roberts and Joanne Berry. Their paper examines student responses to the widespread shift to open book exams. It specifically explores responses of students from different disciplinary backgrounds in a fine grained way, comparing responses of students from more analytic STEM subjects (maths, physics and computer science) with those from more discursive STEM subjects (Geography and Bioscience). In examining the student experience of open book, open web exams compared to closed book exams, five aspects of the experience were explored: General information, Preparation and Revision, The Exam Experience, and Impacts on Learning and Employability. While this small-scale research was carried out in a time of significant upheaval it contributes to our understanding of the field in highlighting the distinctive disciplinary approaches to study that students apply to their assessment. It reveals that

students from adjacent but distinct STEM disciplines are well inducted into disciplinary ways of thinking, which results in quite distinct approaches to exam preparation and conduct. Implications of these findings for staff and students are explored. This topic is of increasing importance when the sector is subject to ongoing wholesale alteration to assessment policy and practice, an issue that with AI appears set only to increase.

'Experiential and authentic learning in a Living Lab: the role of a Campus-based Living Lab as a Teaching and Learning Environment' focuses on the use of Living Labs as an authentic and spontaneous site for teaching, learning and assessment. Drawing on examples from Keele University, the paper presents four current case studies from a range of disciplines to demonstrate how Living Labs can promote student empowerment, inclusivity and sustainability. These examples also show the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary potential of Living Labs and the value of offering such opportunities on-campus. The authors also introduce a design framework for the development of learning activities for use with Living Labs. The paper makes a clear contribution to the design of Living Labs, based around five principles. The first four are designed to ensure teaching and learning are fully considered by establishing the guiding strategy, interactions, experiences and processes. The final element focuses on embedding Living Labs within the curriculum and providing support for learning activities.

The limitations of the checklists many HEIs use to ensure they meet the moral and often legal obligations for an inclusive offering, serves as the starting point for Katie Stripe and Iro Ntonia's research. Through documentary analysis, the authors take the reader on the research journey, sharing insights into both UK equality legislation and trends across institutional policies. The findings in turn informed questions used in a survey of those involved in delivering and supporting inclusive teaching. This provides further valuable insights into both the opportunities for, and barriers to, the implementation of inclusive teaching. The paper concludes with twenty-two recommendations, usefully categorised by the level of challenge, and a call to use these as a starting point for institutional discussion and developments.

Jessica van Horssen, Zoe Moreton, and Gaspard Pelurson explore the ways video games can enhance learning through play, critical analysis, and discussions. It presents two case studies where games were paired with course content to spur reflexive thinking. In one, *Civilization IV* augmented history lectures, enabling students to challenge narratives by

experiencing historical moments first-hand in-game. The other used *GreedFall* to critique historical inaccuracies and ideals of diversity. Connecting gameplay to learning outcomes unconsciously developed students' critical eye. The authors conclude that thoughtfully incorporating games engages students and hones analytic skills by letting them identify ideologies and debate complex issues through playful spaces. It advocates for video games as a medium for humanities students to sharpen reflexive, critical thinking while absorbing course material in an innovative and interactive way.

Mohammad M. Zeidan, Jessica Allred and Ruikun Zhao's study focuses on the extent to which the language used in the wording of Physics problems can, for English as a second language (ESL) students, impact understanding and, in turn, the students' ability to visualise the scenarios described. Although focusing on Physics, this study highlights issues pertinent to many subject areas. Following a discussion of the requirements and challenges of learning Physics, the authors outline a study involving 300 first year undergraduates and pre-enrolment level (foundation) Physics students. The students were provided with original and modified questions requiring visualisation. In all instances and for both groups of students, performance improved when multi meaning words were clarified and the questions were switched from the passive to active voice. The paper concludes with a valuable discussion of the importance of recognising and addressing the role that language gap interference may play in students' abilities to understand physics problems.

In his opinion piece, Simon Brownhill reflects on the best ways to supervise master's students at the dissertation stage effectively. The discussion suggests the ways supervisors can alleviate some of their supervisees' anxieties by introducing them to the SCE model – Support, Challenge and Extend. The piece aims to show readers how this simple yet useful model effectively encourages taught master's students to establish and knit connections between their review of literature chapter and findings chapter, comparing and contrasting the study results with those of other relevant studies. The SCE model's additional value is that it has transferability to other stages of an individual's academic journey, including undergraduate and PhD.

A question persists within student affairs in higher education of how to connect our student support services and initiatives, to support student engagement and success. To meet this area for development, colleagues in higher education are increasing drawing upon

psychological engagement methods, such as ‘nudge theory’, to inspire student ‘movement’ and progression along their educational journal. The brief communication from Adam Tate offers an overview on the key literature findings on the topic from his Ph.D. From post-COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing of 2020-22, there is clear evidence that Higher Education is moving towards digital nudging. It is important for Learning Development professionals to consider the ethical implications of this change and how nudging might be used in virtual learning environments, especially given the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence, which is likely to be deployed alongside learning analytics to shape students' learning behaviours.

Our current volume closes with three book reviews. Samantha Ahern provides an overview of the book *Pedagogy of tele-proximity for eLearning: bridging the distance with Social Physics*, authored by Chryssa Themelis. Key themes running throughout the text are connection and learner agency as it is facilitated via social connection, presence, and equity of participation. The text advocates for the shift away from teacher-centred learning to self-determined learning through formal and informal pathways with the aim of developing and strengthening collective intelligence and defending democracy. Central to this transition is the concept of the pedagogy of tele-proximity. At key points throughout the text Themelis references the Covid-19 pandemic and switching to online provision. The pedagogic approach outlined by Themelis has the potential to democratise participation in online spaces and foster connections. As we are recovering from the pandemic and exploring how we can facilitate access to higher education and lifelong learning opportunities this is a timely and important text both for those new to digital pedagogy and learning design and as a theoretical underpinning to work already undertaken by those more experienced in the field.

Finally, Carina Buckley reviews two books: *Collaboration in higher education: a new ecology of practice* edited by Sandra Abegglen, Tom Burns and Sandra Sinfield, and *Narratives of becoming leaders in disciplinary and institutional contexts* by Anesa Hosein, Namrata Rao and Ian M. Kinchin. The former is an enticing overview of a comprehensive exploration of the process and outputs of collaboration. With over a hundred contributors, the collection of case studies is a rich tapestry including examples of both structurally organised collaborations with staff, with students, and with stakeholders as well as broadening out thematically and exploring collaboration in the context of creativity, social justice and experience. Even in discussions around familiar terms, such as communities of

practice, peer learning, equity and interdisciplinarity, the reader will find fresh and diverse approaches that both challenge and broaden understanding.

In her second review, Buckley highlights the importance of Hosein, Rao and Kinchin's edited volume in providing insights into the process of becoming a leader, or of claiming that position or identity. The narrative style, encouraged by the editors, has enabled authors to provide insights into the diverse and rich journeys to leadership they have experienced. The focus on institutional and discipline leaders may seem removed from the experiences of research developers, but the wisdom of lived experiences and diversity of stories provides insights that are both personal to the authors and pertinent to all readers. As the reviewer concludes, 'This volume provides an array of tools and inspiration to anyone wishing to take the next step'.

We hope that this collection of papers, case studies, brief communications and book reviews will be a fitting response to our community's need for intellectual stimulation and practical inspiration, and that it will open up new conversations around the issues that matter to all those invested in learning and teaching.

With this volume, we are saying goodbye to our editor and very good colleague, Dr Nicola Grayson, who was a treasured presence on our Editorial Board. We would like to thank her for her invaluable service to the journal and the community, and wish her well on the new stage of her professional journey.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank our magnificent reviewers whose critical reading of submissions and thoughtful feedback and recommendations have made invaluable contributions to the quality of the articles in this volume. Our heartfelt appreciation for the time, expertise, and work it took to review articles in this issue goes to the following reviewers:

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With best wishes,
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The *JLDHE* Editorial Board

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