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Advancing Responsible Literacies in Research: AI, Data, and Software

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This presentation introduces a module designed to equip researchers with the critical skills necessary to navigate the ethical and legal dimensions of research involving data, artificial intelligence (AI), and software developed at the University of Suffolk. This module provides a structured approach to understanding and applying ethical frameworks, legal regulations, and responsible research and innovation (RRI) principles.

Participants will engage with real-world case scenarios to explore the complex interplay between ethics, legislation, and responsibility. Key topics include algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the broader societal implications of data and AI-driven research. By critically engaging with emerging challenges in data, AI and software, researchers will develop strategies for addressing ethical dilemmas and ensuring compliance with evolving legal standards. The module facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how ethical guidelines and legal frameworks shape responsible research practices, enabling participants to integrate these considerations into their research design and implementation.

We will frame the presentation around the findings of a recent study examining how academics perceive their own competencies in AI and how they assess the competencies of their peers, providing an evidence-based lens for understanding gaps in AI literacy among researchers in terms of capacity building, showcasing the value of structured learning pathways to bridge these divides. By informing the module with these findings, we ensure that the module not only addresses theoretical and regulatory aspects but also actively responds to the professional development needs of academics engaging with data and AI in their professional practice, empowering them to conduct responsible and impactful activities that align with societal expectations and regulatory requirements.

Students in the Loop: Intensive Learning Communities, Critical AI Literacy, and World Readiness

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As higher education institutions respond to economic and political pressures to adopt generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), many focus on skills acquisition rather than critical engagement. Resisting this trend, Colorado College (CC) leverages its Block Plan's intensive learning model to establish Critical AI Literacy as an ongoing, reflective practice. This presentation explores how an intensive "learning community" course structure fosters deep interdisciplinary inquiry, experiential learning, and student-led research to shape the future of GenAI's role in education and society.

In Spring 2025, a 3.5-week course called "AI at CC: A Block 6 Learning Community" examined the ethical, academic, and societal implications of GenAI as it is used and not-used at Colorado College. More than a class, this initiative functioned as an integrated learning community where students, faculty, and staff collectively assessed AI's impact on institutional priorities. Students engaged in hands-on research and collaborative inquiry, faculty provided disciplinary expertise and pedagogical guidance, and staff offered institutional perspectives on GenAI implementation and policy development. Together, they explored the intersections of GenAI with academic integrity, antiracism, sustainability, and world-readiness. Perhaps most central to the learning community ethos, the course emphasized the use of Possibility Books, an innovative and signature pedagogy at CC focused on reflection, iteration, and knowledge production through the process of a daily mark-making and journaling practice.

This presentation explores the structure and outcomes of the course as well as the ways the learning community format impacts students' development of Critical AI Literacy—one they will carry forward into the future. It uses a mixed-methods research approach—combining classroom observations, surveys, and interviews—to assess not only the learning and engagement of students, but also that of the faculty and staff involved throughout the experience. CC's approach provides a scalable model for using block-long learning communities at other intensive practice institutions to approach complex and evolving subjects impacting higher education.

Simply Anchored in Immersive Learning? Opening Up the Debate about the Importance of Enabling and Valuing Active Learning and Teaching Scholarship for Block Teaching

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Although active teaching and learning has received increasing attention in educational research, its connection to block teaching remains underdeveloped. While recent work highlights the benefits of block models—such as improved student outcomes and immersive learning environments—there is limited exploration of the pedagogical strategies that underpin effective block teaching. Much of the existing discussion centres on curriculum changes rather than how academic staff can actively engage students through small group teaching, experiential learning, and skill development. At De Montfort University (DMU), a major institutional shift has seen over 80% of students transition to a block curriculum, with early results showing positive impacts. Initially focused on curriculum delivery through rapid revalidation processes, DMU recognised a gap in pedagogical consistency and responded by creating the Active Teaching and Learning Model. Informed by academic literature, this model outlines seven core principles: building community and belonging, encouraging engagement and attendance, ensuring relevant and experiential learning, delivering timely and useful feedback, offering diverse learning approaches, maintaining high expectations, and respecting diversity. This framework provides a practical guide for academic staff to embed active learning practices within the block structure, aiming to move beyond simple content delivery towards a more engaged, student-centred educational experience.

Exploring and Developing Block Teaching Practice: Lessons Learned from a Participant Research Workshop

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Whilst there is a growing body of literature on block teaching and learning, this is primarily based on single institutional studies that focus on such aspects as the nature of the student learning environment, the coordination of timetables, assessment and feedback practices, and methods of teaching. Far less attention has been attached to cross-institutional studies, pedagogical frameworks, faculty views of block, and ways in which research on block teaching can contribute to the methods of undertaking research. Given that there is an emerging group of scholars working on block teaching, this workshop seeks to harness this educational community by drawing on participants experience. Through a participatory action research framework, the workshop will seek to pose questions about participants views of block teaching and seek to tease out from the discussions understandings about success and failure relating to block teaching. The workshop will include a pre and post-test questionnaire relating to participants understanding and experience of block teaching. Issues of discussion will include the local and national contexts in which block teaching has been adopted, the challenges and successes of block teaching delivery, the use of narratives in block teaching and learning, and participants view of how institutions can further develop and enhance block teaching.

Bard on the Block

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The block seems an unlikely schedule to encourage complex, dense reading, especially Shakespeare. Can we really expect students to read a Shakespearean tragedy overnight? Realistically, we are not just expecting students to read Shakespeare overnight but also to engage with and understand his work for the next day's class. Though the block is short on days, it is long on in-class instructional time which makes block universities well situated to excel in experiential education and critical reading practices.

While little research has been conducted on intensive pedagogy in the Humanities, more research is available on the importance of experiential educational practices in Shakespeare and performance pedagogy. Lucas and Radia (2017) describe a six-week Shakespeare after-school drama program for children seven to twelve years-old. The workshops are led by university students who adapt a play using narrative dramaturgy and literary analysis to make meaning of the text for the children. Lucas and Radia (2017) write, "From dramaturgical work ... to the process of rehearsal... students put their learning to practice and exemplify judgment, organization and leadership" (p. 136). Putting "learning to practice" both in and outside of the classroom is what Kolb (1984) would describe as the final step in his Experiential Learning Cycle that includes experiencing, thinking, reflecting, and acting (p.30).

This presentation describes an 18-day block class that engages students with six Shakespearean plays and a selection of sonnets. This model dubbed "Read It, Be It, See It" is informed by experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and performative pedagogy theories (Pineau 1994), and critical reading practices (Larsen, Young, Leibham 2011). With these theories and practices, I reveal how block and other intensive-learning models can invite co-creation of knowledge by teachers and learners in the Shakespeare classroom and beyond.

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Developing Authentic Assessment in Block for Student Success: A Radiography Case Study

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The radiography course team has been refining its authentic assessment strategy over three years. The core assessment element for *Becoming a Radiographer* (Level 6) and *The Contemporary Practitioner* (Level 7) is a simulated job application and panel interview, mirroring National Health Service (NHS) recruitment cycles and using a bespoke Learning Management System (LMS) hospital website. Students prepare a professional CV and supporting statement tailored to a real job advert added to the LMS hospital site, then take part in a live interview scenario with academic staff and external practitioners role-playing a hiring panel. This approach provides students with vocationally relevant experience, allowing them to practise applying for roles, articulate their professional identity, and respond to realistic interview questions. In doing so, it enhances their confidence, career readiness, and ability to demonstrate learning outcomes in authentic, high-stakes settings (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2013; McArthur, 2023; Gravett, 2024).

A well-designed authentic assessment gives students the opportunity to apply their knowledge, skills and competencies in contexts similar to or mirroring real-world professional life (Gulikers et al., 2004; Connolly et al., 2023). However, long-term course validation limits major assessment changes, making iterative design essential for continuous improvement (Mei et al., 2021). By collaboratively refining the assessment in response to challenges—such as the COVID-19 pandemic, academic misconduct, and accessibility concerns—the course team has developed an assessment that promotes equity, integrity, employability, and student success.

Crucially, this strategy prioritises a learning-centred approach over tool-driven convenience, leveraging the LMS to enhance student engagement (Ajjawi et al., 2024). Future developments will further integrate technology to ensure relevance and sustainability while evaluating the long-term impact on student confidence, well-being, and employment outcomes. The radiography team provides a valuable case study for assessment design, modelling an adaptive, learning-centred approach.

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The Transition to Tertiary Education – Part 1

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Research focusing on the transition of students into tertiary education emphasises the first few weeks of study within an institution as crucial: a time when students make decisions about institutional fit and their intentions to persist with their studies (Austin & Thompson, 2023; Tinto, 2017; Wilson et al., 2016). Recent literature on students' transition to universities, particularly institutions that have a focus on widening participation, urges a focus on the strengths and capacities that incoming students have (Brook, Fergie, Maeorg & Michell, 2014; Devlin & McKay, 2014; Gale & Parker, 2014; Larson, Hovarth & Bridge, 2020).

Western Sydney University, The College, was established with a core mission to widen participation. However, longitudinal analysis of first-term student outcomes revealed that while many students transitioned successfully to second-year study, overall success rates remained lower than desired. This observation prompted a targeted research question: *Can the success rates of open-access students in tertiary education be improved through curriculum and pedagogical reform?*

To investigate this, The College launched a whole-of-institution transformation grounded in transition pedagogy and student strength-based approaches. Central to the research was a comparative study of modular versus traditional term-based Diplomas. Using a range of success metrics—including pass rates, retention, and student satisfaction—the research revealed significantly improved outcomes across all indicators for students in modular programs.

A key component of the reform was the implementation of a foundational subject, *Introduction to University Life*, as the first module. This subject aimed to induct students into academic culture, foster self-efficacy, and equip them with essential academic skills. Research findings demonstrated that students in this module achieved higher pass and retention rates than those in equivalent non-modular courses, confirming the effectiveness of the design.

These outcomes have informed the full institutional shift to modular delivery. Ongoing research continues to monitor the impact of this transition, reinforcing the effectiveness of structured, research-led approaches in improving student success in widening participation settings.

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The Transition to Tertiary Education – Part 2: The Big 5 Personality Traits and Their Link to Success – An Interactive Workshop

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At Western Sydney University, The College, the principles of transition pedagogy underpin curriculum and class design, with a strong emphasis on peer-to-peer engagement as a protective and empowering factor in the student learning experience. In alignment with this approach, the Block 1 subject *Introduction to University Life* was developed as part of an action research project to address the central question: *Can the success rates of open-access students in tertiary education be improved through targeted curriculum design?*

This action research framework involved iterative cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, focusing on real-world, authentic learning experiences that promote both emotional and cognitive engagement. Emotional engagement is cultivated by embedding students' lived experiences, identities, and aspirations into the curriculum, while cognitive engagement is fostered by aligning learning activities with students' pre-existing skills and interests (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Kahu et al., 2015).

As part of this research, class delivery was intentionally designed to promote active participation, reflection, and application of knowledge. One key activity, which will be explored in this interactive workshop, focuses on the Big Five personality traits and their relationship to academic and career success. Conference participants will engage with the activity as students would: defining personal success, completing a personality inventory, and analysing relevant literature to connect traits with outcomes.

This workshop serves both as a demonstration of the teaching methodology and as a reflection of the action research cycle in practice. The session will conclude with a discussion on the rationale behind this approach, its observed outcomes, and how participants can adapt the model to their own institutional contexts. Findings to date confirm that embedding structured, research-informed activities in the early stages of tertiary education significantly enhances student engagement and success.

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Exploring the Role of Spiral/Iterative Learning in Immersive Education

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In Block curriculum, there is often a perception that each block is a separate, discrete component, with learning on a topic ending once the block concludes. Traditional block curriculum follows a logical sequence, progressing from fundamental to more complex topics. However, this approach risks siloed subjects (Harden & Samper, 1999), which can make it difficult for learners to see the relationships between concepts across different blocks. There is also a risk of insufficient integration of blocks and a lack of cumulative review on key topics can hinder long-term retention and application. (Ireland & Mouthaan, 2020).

This research explores whether a spiral (Bruner, 1960) or iterative (O'Neill, 2015) curriculum design can mitigate these issues while retaining the advantages of a block structure. In this approach key topics would be revisited in multiple ways: within individual blocks (to reinforce foundational concepts), across different blocks (to build connections between topics), and across program levels (to ensure progressive deepening of knowledge over time). This approach would allow learners to consolidate prior knowledge, integrate it into new learning, and generate self-efficacy from previous iterations. The goal of this modified curriculum-design-paradigm is to: 1) Foster a holistic understanding of the program and its objectives, 2) Promote mastery of complex topics that exceed the scope of short, immersive blocks, and 3) Encourage lifelong learning through repeated engagement.

We investigate this through corpus-based research followed by semi-structured interviews with programme leads purposively sampled to reflect STEM, social-science and arts disciplines across a range of institutions. The main contribution from this research is a proposed framework for spiral implementation in block; we report existing good practice and identify areas to apply more innovative pedagogies.

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Use of the FeedBack Fruits Comprehension Tool to Promote Development of Critical Thinking Skills.

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This workshop showcases the use of the FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool as a formative assessment technique to foster the development of 21st century skills such as critical thinking communication and collaboration. Critical thinking is a key skill that is used to assess, evaluate, and process information. One of the ways to nurture this skill is via comprehension of different study materials such as documents, video, and audio.

The FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool has been helpful in assisting first year university students develop valuable collaborative and critical thinking skills associated with reading and analysing academic and peer viewed publications (Campbell et al., 2020; Aprilianti & Widyantoro, 2024). It allows students to work together to analyse text. Teaching staff can provide additional support by linking key considerations and questions as prompts within the shared document.

We aim to demonstrate how the FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool has been used to enhance typical Biology, Education and Outdoor Education units. In diverse units of study, the FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool was incorporated in collaborative student-centred learning activities that can be run synchronously inside the classroom and asynchronously beyond the classroom. Victoria University's Block Model® with its emphasis on blended learning approaches is particularly well suited for the development of pre-class, in-class and post-class synchronous and asynchronous collaborative learning activities that can be enhanced using the FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool.

In this interactive workshop, participants will be provided insights and academic literature on the implementation of the Feedback Fruits comprehension tool. There will also be multiple opportunities for participants to reflect on the application of the FeedBack Fruits comprehension tool in their own teaching area. For example, as a tool to scaffold academic reading as students collaborate in groups in reading circles to critically evaluate key issues within an academic journal article as part of an upcoming assessment task.

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From Imagining Block to Enacting Block: Insights into Design and Delivery of Educational Change

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As the global Higher Education (HE) sector strives for future-focused educational strategies whilst balancing challenges, many providers are embracing innovative curriculum design and delivery approaches, including Block delivery. Cited benefits of such block approaches include enhancements in student attainment (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022); retention (McCluskey et al., 2020); satisfaction (Goode et al., 2024); and wellbeing (Allman, 2024).

This presentation disseminates findings from an AdvanceHE funded collaborative project between UK and Australian Universities. The project, entitled "From imagining Block to enacting Block" supports educational institutions in implementing Block, and further developing a community of practice.

Data were collected from three international symposia events, held in 2025; including participant feedback, survey responses, and self-reported case studies generated by institutions engaged in Block. Survey analysis and thematic analysis of collective free text responses were undertaken to investigate lived experiences and disciplinary applications of Block.

The session will share perspectives, experiences and evidence evaluated against purported Block affordances and constraints. We draw on early findings by sharing institutional leadership and change management strategies, quality assurance perspectives, and practice-based appraisals of block.

Preliminary themes emerging include the importance of: i) a holistic approach to Block implementation encompassing pedagogy, student support, timetables, and assessment; ii) bringing academic staff along on the journey of change; and, iii) embracing continuous improvement post-implementation.

This project contributes to the scholarship of educational change by addressing myths and resistance to Block delivery, sharing best practices, and providing strategic and operational insights. It aims to enhance the global Block community of practice, offering valuable lessons on implementing and sustaining Block delivery in HE institutions.

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The Dynamics of Case Study Teams on the Block

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This exploratory research examined student study teams for case learning in the context of the block. A critical step in the case learning process during a compressed course delivery, which links individual preparation and class debate, is the small group discussion in a case study team (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008; Lussier & Achua, 2016). In these groups, team members have an opportunity to discuss their insights of the case and test their understanding of the case (Wood et al., 2019).

The sample group for this research was comprised of five undergraduate business classes with a total of 106 students. The method chosen to situate and examine this unique teaching approach in the block was qualitative in nature (Neumann, 2014) consisting of in-depth interviews. To acquire expertise in the topic and undertake a thoughtful thematic research analysis, several in-depth interviews with different team members were conducted (Gray et al., 2007). In addition to the in-depth investigation, the interviews were supplemented with open-response questions the interviewees were asked to answer in order to obtain a thick description of the learning team dynamics and enrich the research analysis.

Preliminary pedagogical findings of this exploratory research indicated that this kind of teamwork in the block is an important phase in the case preparation process. General themes emerged from the interviews which were divided into several categories, such as learning-team size, composition, roles, timing, and location.

The significance of this research project stemmed from the dynamic of case learning teams and their power in supporting the case learning process in the context of an intensive learning environment. Some of the key contributions made were to the areas of block pedagogy, team-based learning, and the intensive mode of teaching.

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Phygital Block Learning: Immersive Approach

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In the rapidly evolving global landscape, universities are challenged to prepare graduates with advanced digital skills, ethical insight, and cultural agility. Our interactive workshop illustrates a six-week module in International Business as a case study in block and intensive pedagogy—while also addressing strategies for student success and the role of universities as agents of change. Designed for final-year students, the module adopts a "phygital" approach that seamlessly blends face-to-face, human-centred experiential learning with digital tools (Khan, 2016, 2023; Howell & McMaster, 2022), including Bloomberg Terminal exercises and AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Gamma, Perplexity, and NotebookLM.

The block design centres on extended, interactive sessions that integrate data exploration, bespoke digital case study puzzles, and collaborative problem-solving activities in which students create artefacts, cultivating a rich bricolage of learning experiences (Blankenship, 2020). Thirteen global guest speakers contribute authentic cultural perspectives while emphasising sustainability and ethical business practices, deepening students' engagement with real-world challenges. Innovative assessments—including a digital MS Sway job application webpage and a reflective blog—empower students to articulate and evidence their interdisciplinary competencies, thereby boosting confidence for success in a competitive job market and aligning with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978). Methodologically, the module ties together intensive engagement and iterative learning to transform abstract theories into practical, actionable skills (Weldon & Konjarski, 2025). Preliminary evidence indicates significant improvements in student motivation, digital literacy, and critical thinking, with a recent module-level survey revealing an overall satisfaction rating of 4.6/5.

This workshop contributes to the discourse on block teaching by demonstrating how immersive, intensive pedagogy effectively bridges theory and practice. It reinforces the capacity of universities to drive meaningful change in a digital era and offers a replicable model for cultivating agile, ethically grounded, and future-ready graduates.

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Welcoming the World: Strategies for Supporting International Students' Success in Block Teaching

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International students are vital in today's higher education landscape, contributing not only to the academic and cultural richness of universities, but also to the wider economy and global reputation of higher education (Ryan, 2011, Universities UK, 2023). But international students can face challenges even before adapting to block teaching, a format that condenses learning into short, intensive periods. Cultural differences can create barriers, especially for those accustomed to passive learning and semester-based systems. Participatory methods like discussions and group work may be unfamiliar, and language barriers can be intensified by the fast pace of teaching. Time management becomes crucial, as students must balance independent study, part-time work or mandatory placements and social life, often while adjusting to a new culture (William et al., 2024). Social integration can also be difficult, with limited time to build friendships and support networks (Arkoudis et al., 2019). Varying approaches to assessment across institutions can add confusion, while the pressure of condensed schedules may increase stress and anxiety (Yin et al., 2024). Additionally, international students may not initially access academic support services (Roberts & Dunworth, 2012). Financial pressures further compound stress levels.

Working with our International student ambassadors, members of our international student community and drawing from the theoretical foundations of Problem Based Learning (PBL) our interactive workshop will ensure that the international student voice is heard, and their lived experience of block teaching considered (Farrell, 2020). Our workshop will begin with students posing a range of 'real-life lived experiences'. Working collaboratively in pairs or small groups participants will discuss these situations generating ideas and strategies. Following wider discussion students, with the support of the workshop leaders, will provide feedback and additional suggestions. Workshop participants will work collaboratively with international students to address real lived experiences, identifying practical, inclusive strategies.

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Impact of Block Learning Models on Student Perceptions of Diversity and Inclusion

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This presentation proposes that learner cohorts benefit from subject deliveries that consider and incorporate diversity and inclusion as part of the curriculum. Victoria University (VU) has one of the most diverse student cohorts in Australia, with many students from immigrant and disadvantaged backgrounds including low socio-economic status (LSES), non-English speaking background (NESB) and First in family (FiF) (Samarawickrema & Cleary, 2021). VU attracts diversity in student cohorts due to the location of the university in the inner west of Melbourne, as well as the institution meeting the financial concerns of the students and attending to their access to higher education (Samarawickrema & Cleary, 2021; Tangalakis et al., 2024). VU's Block Model was introduced in 2017 as an innovative approach to support the diverse undergraduate cohort and to reflect the university's commitment to widening participation and student success.

VU Block Model learning conditions often require that learners collaborate in small groups to address authentic holistic learning or assessment tasks (Samarawickrema, et al. 2022). These intensive learning environments require students to interpret and share their perceptions and understandings with peers (Zajda, 2023). Groups of learners typically include a variety of different, cultural, social, educational, and economic backgrounds (Morgan & Houghton, 2011). As learners become more familiar with one another they feel safe and comfortable in collaborative environments that allow them to make mistakes, openly express ideas and perspectives, and engage with feedback and reflective processes (Sayfulloevna, 2023). The sense of ownership this environment creates for the students organically nurtures a sense of inclusion. Our study investigates how the Victoria University (VU) Block Model is relevant to ensuring culturally and socially safe learning environments that promote diversity and inclusion.

To better understand student perceptions of diversity and inclusion, three data points will be collected during the first year of study. Data points 1 and 2 include short pre and post subject surveys for an early Block delivered during Semester 1. The third point is a brief follow-up questionnaire administered late in Semester 2 of the same year to participants. All three data points consist of a mix of Likert-style questions and open-ended questions. Data will be evaluated using both statistical analysis and thematic analysis for qualitative research as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Developing a deeper understanding of student perceptions of diversity and inclusion may help inform how Block and intensive frameworks may create greater opportunities to foster a sense of belonging in students (Kift et al., 2010).

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The Use of a Podcast to Enhance Student Success

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Podcasting is an increasingly popular digital medium for educational engagement, with studies showing that up to 70% of students report improved understanding of topics through educational podcasts (Sci-tec Today, 2024). In the UK, nearly half of 18–24-year-olds listen to at least one podcast weekly (Ofcom, 2024). Given this trend, podcasting offers a valuable opportunity to support student success, promote university services, and enhance recruitment through authentic storytelling.

This initiative aimed to explore the use of podcasting as a platform to:

- Share student and staff experiences within the university
- Showcase academic and support services
- Strengthen digital engagement and recruitment strategies

A podcast series was developed and hosted on the university's Student Experience YouTube channel. Students were invited to share their academic journeys and campus life reflections, while staff highlighted their roles and support initiatives. Episodes were designed for broad appeal, targeting both internal audiences (students and staff) and external stakeholders (prospective students and community members). Promotion occurred through university social media channels to maximise reach.

Preliminary observations indicate multiple benefits:

- For internal audiences, it promoted awareness and use of support services, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
- For external listeners, it provided authentic insights into university life, contributing to positive perceptions and interest in university offerings.
- The series also strengthened the university’s digital footprint and aligned with broader trends in on-demand, student-centred content delivery.

Supporting research indicates strong alignment with listener preferences for educational and experience-based content. Podcasting is a flexible and accessible tool that supports student engagement, internal communication, and recruitment goals. As students increasingly turn to digital platforms for learning and connection, institutions can harness podcasts to amplify voices, foster community, and extend their educational reach.

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Connecting Blocks with Learning Hubs

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The Learning Hubs were created as spaces for supporting individual learners' trajectories of skill development in a block and blend format of learning. While presenting a range of advantages, the focus on singular module in a block curriculum bears a risk of approaching learning through accumulation and banking (Freire, 1970) rather than continuous construction and development (Dewey, 1938).

Co-creation has been highlighted as a mechanism for involving students in influencing higher education curricula, enhancing student engagement and experience (Healy & Healy, 2019). At the University of Suffolk, a group of students, lecturers, and learning designers gathered as a learning 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to achieve a common purpose in a 'commission' (Trowsdale & Davies, 2024) to co-create 'Learning Hubs' – interactive digital resources for skill development (Lessner Listiakova et al., 2024).

Participatory and iterative research design allowed for continuous revisiting of the pedagogical principles and digital allowances. The project included several stages with layers of co-construction and evaluation utilising a mixed methods approach of surveys, focus groups, and qualitative reflective questionnaires.

Based on data generated through this process, principles of Learning Hubs for Brightspace, the University's online learning environment, were created, utilising pedagogical knowledge, student and lecturer experience. The principles, such as connecting learning to previous experience, active and applied learning with immediate feedback, are practically showcased in an exemplar Learning Hub activity.

With university learning rapidly changing, the Learning Hubs project is an invitation to co-create a university that works for its community. The aim is to share the principles of Learning Hubs with colleagues across institutions to encourage learning communities to enhance their blended learning spaces. The long-term vision is to empower universities to co-create educational practices and policies that respond to and pro-actively construct contemporary learning environments.

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Student Ambassadors as Actors of Civic Engagement

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Civic university commitment closely relates to its widening participation agenda, engaging students from diverse backgrounds and reducing barriers to their participation in higher education (HE). Student ambassadors play a significant role in addressing inequalities by supporting younger students in developing the relationships, confidence, knowledge, and skills they need to progress to and succeed in HE (Gartland, 2018; 2020). Applying a Bourdieusian lens (Webb et al., 2017) and the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the paper explores the role of student ambassadors as agents enacting university's civic responsibilities.

The project entitled The Development of Inclusive and Participatory Learning in Organisations through Multicultural Ambassadors (DIPLOMA) brought together academics, teachers, practitioners and students from the UK, France, Turkey and Romania. Its key ambition was to develop inclusive and participatory approaches to student ambassador outreach activity and training. The aim was to more effectively support the educational progression of underserved groups of young people who are currently underrepresented in higher education in the participating countries.

University student ambassadors, academics and other experts working together internationally and locally co-created a range of outreach activities in broad subject disciplines (STEM, Arts, Health and Social Sciences and Humanities) which were subsequently piloted in local secondary schools.

Ambassadors often share similar backgrounds or socio-economic status with school students and can serve as role models, fostering positive attitudes towards career paths and study fields. Moreover, engagement in outreach activities positively impacts student ambassadors' wellbeing, sense of belonging, interest and enthusiasm (Gartland & Negrea, 2022).

Outreach activities enhanced school students' interest in 'big topics' related to Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015) as well as student ambassadors' self-perception as contributors to the university's civic agenda and wider global goals. Universities should regard student ambassadors as key players in achieving their civic pledges.

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Big Block: Little Block. Moving from 15 to 30 Credit Blocks – Reflections from a Quality Perspective

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The New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) was established in Hereford with an explicit remit to both innovate in engineering and technology higher education. The curriculum at NMITE is designed around block delivery of problem-based learning modules based in a studio environment. As a new institution, NMITE has had the benefit of doing block delivery by design rather than retrofit, with the advantages of the whole Institution being designed around this curriculum model.

During the 2nd year of delivering its accelerated MEng (Hons) Integrated Engineering, NMITE took the decision to move from 15 credit value blocks to 30 credit value blocks.[1] This decision was designed to address feedback from both staff and students related to assessment overloading and lack of "soak" time for students within the smaller blocks.

The aim of the presentation is to share the rationale for the change, the experience of reviewing the curriculum to enable the change in block size and initial reflections on the experience of delivering larger credit blocks based on feedback from both staff and students. Finally, the presentation will challenge colleagues to reflect on whether there is such a thing as an ideal block size.

Much of the literature around block learning in the UK context focuses on the case for block learning as a pedagogical innovation or how to structure learning within the block (Buck & Tyrell, 2022; Nerantzi, & Chatzidamianos, 2020; Dixon & O'Gorman, 2019; Konjarski et al 2023; Weldon & Konjarski, 2025); reflections on the size of the block institutions are utilising, and the factors that feed into decisions around size of block, are not as well covered. The presentation will serve as the launch pad for research in this area which will take a mixed methods approach to investigating institutional drivers around block size.

Notes:

1. Credit Values in the UK context indicate the amount of learning associated with a particular block of learning, with credit values equating to a number of notional learning hours. One credit is typically equal to 10 hours of notional learning. For further information see: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/what-is-credit-guide-for-students.pdf?sfvrsn=4460d981_14

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Unpeeling the Onion: Creating Meaningful Learning Design in a New Campus

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The phrase “like unpeeling an onion” aptly describes the complex and layered process undertaken during the development of the London Campus Project—an ambitious initiative by the University of Portsmouth (UoP) to establish a teaching-focused campus in London. In its ideation, it was like the phrase it is about unpicking how to create an idealistic teaching focus campus based on active blended learning principles, using enABLe UoP’s ″ team-based approach to learning design", although not as eye-watering as an onion. While the process may not have induced tears, it did involve a meticulous unpacking of pedagogical assumptions and design priorities in the pursuit of a model that foregrounds teaching excellence.

The outcome is a vibrant academic setting defined by a clearly articulated model of ‘Focused Learning’, underpinned by a committed teaching team, purpose-designed learning spaces, and a thriving student body. Staff are continually working to adapt to block teaching, integrate active blended learning strategies, design authentic assessment tasks, and make intentional use of educational technologies. These efforts are driven by a commitment to Armellini’s (2021) philosophy of “context over content” and are structured through Laurillard’s (2013) learning types, which guide programme and module design.

This presentation offers a learning designer’s perspective on building courses and modules from the ground up, rather than retrofitting existing ones into a block model—a challenge often documented in the literature. The session will reflect on the experience of translating modular campus courses into a more agile, student-centred format tailored for the London campus. It will examine strategies both inside and outside the classroom, and demonstrate how tools such as Panopto, Padlet, Vevox, Moodle, H5P, and AI technologies can be leveraged to create innovative, engaging, and lasting learning experiences. The discussion will highlight key dimensions of the new curriculum and reflect on the challenges and opportunities that have emerged through this transformational endeavour.

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Rethinking the Block: Maximising Student Engagement in STEM Delivery

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Intensive block delivery models have been increasingly adopted in Higher Education to enhance flexibility, efficiency, and course completion rates (Wilson et al., 2024). However, in STEM disciplines, where deep learning, innovation, and applied skills are crucial (Santana et al., 2020), these models may have unintended consequences. This study critically examines how intensive delivery can contribute to a transactional approach to learning, where students focus on assessment-driven engagement rather than meaningful academic and professional development.

The intersection of consumerism in Higher Education (Norris, 2020) and the rise of commuter students further compounds these challenges (Kenyon, 2025). With higher tuition fees and increased financial pressures, students increasingly perceive education as a service, prioritising return on investment over intrinsic learning. Commuter students, who often juggle employment and caring responsibilities, may struggle to engage in extracurricular or industry-facing opportunities (Guardian, 2024; Moore, 2013) that foster transformative learning. As a result, intensive block structures risk reinforcing surface-level engagement, limiting students' ability to develop broader competencies beyond the taught curriculum (The Council on Undergraduate Research, 2024) and approaching through a transactional lens, due to extrinsic motivating factors (Mezirow, 1991; Burns, 1978).

This research seeks to understand how these factors shape students' expectations for curriculum design and delivery, with an emphasis on meaningful academic and professional activities. Research will be undertaken through a questionnaire using convenience sampling in order to reach the most readily available participants in a time efficient manner.

This study advocates for curriculum redesign strategies that integrate flexible learning pathways, industry partnerships, and collaborative experiences, ensuring that block delivery models foster deeper, sustained engagement. The findings will inform pedagogical practices that create inclusive, student-centred learning environments in STEM education.

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Scoping the Block Model Landscape: Co-designing Solutions and Research Initiatives to Advance Block Pedagogies

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The Block Model is gaining traction in higher education as examples of innovative pedagogical approaches (Chau et al., 2023), with institutions worldwide implementing the approach and reporting success (Samarawickrema & Cleary, 2021). Block Model is characterised by characterised by concentrated and immersive learning experiences, condensed into short, intensive periods of teaching and learning.

In this interactive workshop, we will present the findings of our scoping review research to provide a broad understanding of the conceptual frameworks underlying Block Model, as well as the teaching, learning and design elements involved. At the time of this research, no recent scoping review has explored the Block Model literature. Using a systematic approach, seven online academic databases were searched to identify relevant literature relating to Block Model and intensive teaching deliveries in higher educational contexts. A total of 137 sources published between January 2000 and June 2024 were identified and examined. Benefits (93%) and challenges (69%) were highlighted, with studies reporting improved student outcomes (62%) and concerns related to the student experience (28%). However, contradictory findings on student satisfaction, preferences, workload perceptions, and institutional delivery approaches were found. While the literature points to enhanced engagement and academic achievement for students, further research—particularly on high-impact pedagogies and longitudinal studies on content retention—is needed to better understand these delivery modes.

In this highly interactive session, attendees will engage in group discussions and co-design activities to address the challenges and research gaps identified in the scoping review on Block Model delivery. Through a structured ideation session, participants will contribute to the development of strategies, including pedagogical approaches, while also exploring opportunities for future cross-institutional research collaborations. The session aims to advance collective understanding and enhance the implementation of the Block Model in Higher Education.

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Building Sustainability Structures within the Block Curriculum

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De Montfort University (DMU) has undergone a significant transformation in its approach to educational delivery by implementing a block curriculum. Sustainability is at the core of this vision, forming one of the cross-cutting themes within the institution's empowering university vision. Additionally, DMU is one of only 17 global university hubs around the world for the United Nations 17 Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), and we are honoured to be the new hub for SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Correia and Kinchin (2022) propose Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a fusion of two concepts: pedagogic resonance and threshold concepts. Pedagogic resonance being the academic 'bridge' between student learning and teacher knowledge, whereas Loring (2020) defines threshold concepts as critical in enabling the transition into a discipline or paradigm, when considering ESD uptake. Hussain et al. (2024), propose utilising an amalgamation of pedagogic approaches for successful ESD engagement, including active, experiential, and problem-based learning (PBL). PBL correlates with metacognition and autonomy, evidencing the principle of heutagogy; essential for a lifelong learning culture.

An action research methodology was undertaken, incorporating PBL with an interdisciplinary mechanism for communicating ESD, in the format visual icons. These six sustainability themes (Nichols-Drew, 2024) have been integral in aiding the transition from a liminal space, into a new all-encompassing ESD viewpoint. Rather than a 'one size fits all' route, here, we embrace real world examples. Multiple case studies were created, demonstrating how ESD could be built, evidencing qualitative and quantitative outputs.

The block sustainability workstream project has initiated an alternative outlook with the ultimate aim of connecting colleagues, who are the gatekeepers to their students' knowledge, to ESD within their own diverse subject disciplines and practice areas. Ultimately, offering a novel outlook for the future of our transformative block curriculum.

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Operation Enigma: A Novel Tri Active Modal Experiential (TAME) Case Study Investigation for the Block Curriculum

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De Montfort University is the only UK university to be a United Nations Academic Impact SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Hub Chair. We embrace the SDG ethos within the Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences accredited BSc Forensic Science undergraduate degree block curriculum, by exploring contemporary societal themes aligned to the Criminal Justice System.

In this workshop, we will showcase Operation Enigma; an organised crime group case study, as a unique benchmark exemplar involving a concept devised by Nichols-Drew (2021), known as TAME (Tri Active Modal Experiential) Learning. TAME learning utilises an amalgamation of pedagogic approaches for successfully maximising student engagement, attainment and retention, within the tripartite arena of physical (campus environment), contextual (authentic details), and virtual (technologies).

This is a transformative ethos, integrating co-creation, peer feedback, reflection, participatory, and problem-based learning (PBL). Additionally, enhancing students' Graduate Attributes, with development of 21st century employability skills (collaboration, critical analysis, communication, creative thinking). This aligns to the principle of heutagogy; which is self-determined learning, fundamental for a lifelong learning culture (Blaschke, 2012).

Ultimately, Operation Enigma is a benchmark exemplar demonstrating the paramount importance of real-world learning. This will interest educators from any discipline, as to innovative and immersive learning opportunities to maximise student success within the block.

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A Model for Embedding Academic Skills into Student's Learning Journey Within Block teaching

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The University's transition from a semesterised structure to block teaching required a shift in academic skills support. Previously, the Library and Learning Services (LLS) team offered generic workshops and ad hoc in-course sessions. To ensure meaningful and contextualised skills development, the LLS team adopted an embedded model, aligning support with the student learning journey.

Research shows that integrating academic skills within disciplinary courses enhances student engagement and contextual application (Gunn et al., 2011; McWilliams & Allan, 2014). This approach increases relevance and bridges the gap between expectations and performance (Clarence & McKenna, 2017; Wingate, 2015), while also promoting inclusivity by providing structured support, and benefiting students who may not seek help independently, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds (Wingate, 2018).

The model encompasses a range of academic skills essential for student success within a block teaching structure—such as academic writing, exam and revision strategies, and time management—integrated through a strategic consideration of the timing and sequencing of skill development across the academic year. To inform the design of the embedded model, data from one-to-one tutorials, previous support requests, and course handbooks were analysed. Assessment types and deadlines were mapped to identify optimal points for delivering targeted skills support. Close collaboration with course leaders was crucial to ensure alignment with course content and learning outcomes. This partnership fosters stronger connections between subject lecturers and learning services, resulting in a more cohesive and integrated learning experience (Murray & Nallaya, 2016).

The embedded approach has demonstrated clear benefits: delivering timely and targeted support, broadening student reach through scheduled in-course workshops and asynchronous resources, and improving operational efficiency by reducing demand for one-to-one tutorials. However, limitations were also encountered, particularly in courses involving extended placement periods and during staff transitions, which occasionally disrupted continuity and communication.

This model contributes to scholarship by addressing the gap in research on embedding academic skills within a block teaching model. Practically, it offers a transferable framework for institutions seeking to align academic skills support with block delivery or enhance their embedded provision more broadly.

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How are GenAI Platforms Currently Being Utilised by Educators in an FE College in East Anglia?

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The integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Further Education (FE) settings presents both opportunities and challenges for educators. This research explores the adoption of GenAI by teachers at Suffolk New College, focusing on its impact on workload, pedagogy, and professional development. Despite the UK government's interest in AI's role in education, there is a lack of research specifically addressing the FE sector. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining how educators use GenAI for administrative tasks, lesson planning, and student engagement, while also identifying barriers to adoption.

The research is grounded in several theoretical frameworks, including Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977), the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Koehler, 2017), and the Zone of Proximal Teacher Development (Shabani, 2010). These perspectives highlight the importance of confidence, competence, and ethical considerations in AI integration. Findings will contribute to the design of a professional development (CPD) programme aimed at improving GenAI literacy among FE teachers. This programme will address digital competency, ethical concerns, and practical applications of AI in education, with the goal of enhancing teaching effectiveness and reducing workload-related stress.

Furthermore, this study examines the balance between AI's potential to alleviate administrative burdens and the risk of new responsibilities negating these benefits. Ethical concerns, including data privacy, bias, and accessibility, will also be explored to ensure that AI adoption supports both educators and students equitably.

By addressing these factors, this research aims to provide insights into the role of AI in FE settings, inform policy decisions, and develop training initiatives that empower educators to use GenAI effectively and ethically. Ultimately, this study seeks to improve teacher retention and student outcomes by fostering a sustainable, AI-enhanced educational environment.

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You Can't Do that in Block? The Impact of an Immersive Block Model on Student Success and Satisfaction Across Disciplines at an Australian University

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A range of evidence supports the positive impact of immersive block models on students' academic achievement across whole institutions (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Loton et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2024), as well as specifically for pathways (Goode et al., 2024b), international (Goode et al., 2024a), and equity group cohorts (Roche et al., 2025b; Samarawickrema & Cleary, 2021). However, evidence suggests that the success of block teaching may vary by subject area (Dixon & O'Gorman, 2020; Wilson et al., 2024), and its suitability for different disciplines remains a point of contention (Konjarski et al., 2023).

This study (Roche et al., 2025a) explores whether an immersive block model has had contrasting impacts on student success and satisfaction across nine disciplines at a public Australian university: Natural & Physical Sciences; Society & Culture; Information Technology; Creative Arts; Management & Commerce; Health; Education; Agriculture; Environmental & Related Studies; Engineering & Related Technologies.

Pass rates (N = 92,461) and student feedback survey results (N = 26,298) were gathered for each discipline over a four-year period. Pearson's chi-square tests assessed changes to student success and satisfaction in the immersive block model compared to the traditional semester model.

Statistically significant increases ($p < .001$) in success rates were observed in the immersive block model across seven disciplines. Contrastingly, there was no significant change to satisfaction in most disciplines.

This study highlights that immersive block models can result in significant uplift to student success across diverse disciplines, countering concerns that block learning is inherently unsuitable to particular fields of study. Nonetheless, results indicate poorer outcomes in Engineering compared to other disciplines. The data also suggest that satisfaction results may be more difficult to shift, underscoring the importance of future research into students' experiences in immersive block learning. Implications for practice are discussed.

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Transforming Textile Design Education: A Block Teaching Model for Cross-Disciplinary Integration at De Montfort University

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The Undergraduate Textile Design and Fashion Textile Design programmes at De Montfort University will implement a transformative block teaching model from August 2025, strategically addressing contemporary design education challenges. This forward-looking initiative aims to create an integrated, collaborative curriculum framework across related design disciplines.

The proposed model will build on the restructured block delivery (2022) course delivery by developing shared learning blocks that facilitate cross-disciplinary engagement. By designing a curriculum that allows students from both programmes to participate in common intensive learning experiences, the approach seeks to enhance interdisciplinary skill development and resource optimization. Both Textile Design and Fashion Textile Design programmes involve working with materials and contemporary practices utilising similar skills such as print, knit, weave, and mixed media (Liu, 2024; Ermer, 2018; Montagna et al., 2022). However, the Fashion Textile Design course focuses on creating fabrics solely for a fashion outcome, while Textile Design course emphasizes material development, innovation, and textile testing for viable fabric creation across fashion, interiors, and technical textiles. Research methodology will employ prospective mixed-methods analysis, including planned tracking of student performance metrics, comparative assessments, and qualitative feedback mechanisms (Leavy, 2022; Ivankova & Greer, 2015). Data collection strategies will focus on evaluating potential collaborative learning outcomes and interdisciplinary skill development.

Anticipated outcomes include enhanced student engagement, improved cross-disciplinary understanding, and more efficient curriculum design. The shared blocks are expected to facilitate knowledge transfer between textile design domains, enabling students to develop broader, more holistic design perspectives.

The case study will contribute to educational scholarship by presenting a forward-looking model of interdisciplinary curriculum design. By proactively breaking down traditional course boundaries, the block teaching approach offers a potentially replicable framework for integrated design education (Trinh et al., 2022). Scheduled for implementation in August 2025, this collaborative approach represents a strategic response to evolving design education needs, emphasizing flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, and innovative pedagogical methodologies.

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Creating Belonging Through Our Introductory Block on Product Design

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In developing our introductory block on Product Design (2021) we drew heavily on the importance of creating a sticky campus (Robertson 2018; Berman et al., 2022) and a sticky curriculum (Orr & Shreeve, 2018) in order to support student learning. To this end we developed sessions and activities that engaged students in their studio and their workshops, in order to immerse them in this creative environment. We developed sessions and activities to engender a sense of belonging (Pedler et al., 2020) as we felt this was key in developing a healthy student relationship with the programme and the studio environment. The outputs of this block are a portfolio of the 8 core skills of a Product Designer (Research, Drawing, Digital Drawing, Parametric CAD Modelling, Metalwork and Engineering, Plastic and Soft Model Work, Woodwork and Laser, RP and Digital tools) which we then review with the student's personal tutor in order to assess with them their entry point with these skills and signpost to the students' resources that would help them in their learning journey. This presentation will be of the findings and refinements of this Block as we have run it over the last 3 years.

Internal feedback through both the personal tutor families and the Student Voice Committee (SVC) have reported students love this block project. The portfolio review prior to the first personal tutor family meeting also led to a higher percentage of students engaging in the personal tutoring system and the personal tutor family has led to a greater level of interaction between the years in the Product Design studio. Across the programmes students who engaged with this block saw an 8% increase in year-on-year successful progression to their next level of study.

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Using Creative Technologies and Design Thinking to Develop Engaging Practical Sessions

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A partnership has existed for a number of years between De Montfort University's Product Design programme and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science at the University of Nottingham. This partnership looks to deploy design thinking and techniques to develop simulation and education models that improve the teaching experience for students and the welfare of teaching animals. This presentation looks a number of example projects and their impact on teaching this partnership has developed.

One example of this being the Anatomical Ear Model, this project looks to safeguard the health of humans and animals while training the next generation of nurses and vets by providing an anatomically accurate ear developed from CT scan data and printed using a variety of 3D printers.

At the University of Nottingham, the 3D printed canine ear models we created has been used in the curriculum, by over 1200 students at Level 5. A student research project has evaluated the student and clinicians' perceptions of the model and its use, 96.5% of students the cutaway model made them more confident about their knowledge of the ear canal and 92.5% felt more confident otoscoping their patients. Educators' feedback on otoscopy and ear canal anatomy was that the majority (87.5%) of MRCVS (Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) participants agreed that the use of the TPU cutaway and TPE complete models would improve students understanding of both ear canal anatomy and otoscopy.

The importance of these projects is to make the teaching contextual and enjoyable so students are encouraged to take advantage of every opportunity on their campus and in their curriculums (Robertson 2018; Berman et al., 2022; Orr & Shreeve, 2018).

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Exploring University Academics' Engagement in Collaborative Peer Observation Learning Circles

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The literature supports peer observation as an effective approach to professional learning and institutional quality assurance. However, peer observation is often not systematically supported in higher education (HE) (Johnston et al., 2022; Sutherland et al., 2020). This study sought to promote academics' professional learning by identifying the key factors influencing their engagement in Collaborative Peer Observation Learning Circles (CPO/LCs) (Sinnayah et al., 2023).

To explore academics' experiences with the various components of CPO/LC, a mixed-methods approach was employed. This research combined descriptive statistics from an online questionnaire with qualitative data gathered through one-on-one interviews, offering a comprehensive means to capture and analyse academics' experiences of participating in the CPO/LC.

Thematic analysis revealed four key themes that supported engagement: mentorship, leadership, the development of a community of practice, and fostering an open mindset.

Participants reported several benefits from engaging in CPO/LCs, including:

- Purposeful Observation: Gaining insights through structured observation of teaching methods.
- Feedback and Self-Reflection: Receiving constructive feedback and reflecting on their own teaching practices.
- Curriculum Design Ideas: Sharing innovative approaches to curriculum design.
- Collaborative Learning: Engaging in mutual learning experiences with colleagues.

The findings contribute to the broader discourse on faculty development by emphasizing the role of institutional leadership in sustaining professional learning initiatives. Moreover, the study underscores how CPO/LCs can serve as a catalyst for innovation in curriculum design and student engagement strategies.

This research informs policy and practice, encouraging institutions to invest in peer observation frameworks that support ongoing professional growth, ultimately leading to improved student learning outcomes and academic excellence.

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Enhancing Student Success in Science-Based Disciplines

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Recent trends indicate a decline in the preparatory levels of students entering first-year university science courses in Australia, with a marked decrease in high school students' engagement with science and increasing levels of science-related anxiety (Wilson et al., 2014). The tertiary education sector faces challenges in bridging the gap between students' entry-level readiness and the standards set by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), particularly in science-intensive fields such as nursing (Mehta et al., 2008). Factors contributing to this issue include lower entrance scores for nursing and health programs and a lack of prior scientific study (Crane & Cox, 2013). Additionally, students experiencing science-related anxiety often struggle with comprehension and retention of new concepts, further exacerbating the learning gap.

The Headstart Anatomy & Physiology (A & P) program was developed to address these challenges by providing early access to foundational learning activities via the VU Collaborate platform. The program consists of interactive H5P modules covering essential physiological concepts to help students build confidence before formal coursework begins. An anonymous survey was conducted to assess learning experiences and science-related anxiety, with 38% of the enrolled student cohort participating.

Survey results revealed that the program significantly improved time management skills and clarified learning expectations. Notably, it helped in reducing science-related anxiety, though feedback suggested that students preferred a structured, lecturer-guided learning approach over a fully self-directed model.

Building on these insights, a peer mentorship framework was introduced in 2024, where high-performing second- and third-year students were trained as mentors to assist first-year students. This approach aimed to bridge knowledge gaps, mitigate academic anxiety, and foster confidence through facilitated webinars supporting online self-paced modules.

This study highlights the importance of transition support programs in science education. The findings demonstrate that tailored bridging resources play a crucial role in improving foundational knowledge, easing students' transition into higher education, and fostering academic success. The program's positive impact has led to its adoption across additional disciplines, including Paramedicine, Dermal Science, and Speech Therapy, supporting students moving into their second year or master's programs.

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Knocking Down Walls: Embedding Inclusion into Real-World Learning Environments

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When designing learning environments that are representative of the real world, educators engage in a process of not just developing a student's practical skills and knowledge but also contribute to the development of the student's citizenship. Manoharan (2021) states that due to the diversifying student population it is vital that universities facilitate significant real-world experiences at scale so that all can reap the benefits without relying on extra-curricular activities. It is also important to develop an inclusive and decolonised curriculum that promotes access for students with disabilities and different backgrounds, allowing engagement with a greater diversity of thought within the subject domain (Grace & Gravestock, 2008; Wimpenny et al., 2022)

Early-career academics across the University of Suffolk studying the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) for the 2024/25 academic year have been engaging in a collaborative learning process which encourages staff to share their experiences about their practice, including how to embed inclusivity within their curriculum and strategies for supporting and developing real-world learning environments.

Our poster features a collection of pedagogical and practical strategies currently being adopted, as well as collaborative opportunities across schools and support services, that we report to promote student engagement with inclusivity within real-world learning environments. These practices focus on developing inclusivity skills including self-awareness, understanding unconscious bias, cultural awareness and competence, and professional curiosity. All of which contribute to the broader development of citizenship skills in preparation for employment.

Our poster makes recommendations to academics designing or developing real-world learning environments. Primarily, we encourage academics to acknowledge their responsibility to challenge power structures and to interrogate one's own assumption of what constitutes 'real' knowledge or 'valuable' experience. Fostering students' engagement with inclusivity skills requires an intrinsic motivation from the educator to design experiences which embed that knowledge within the curriculum.

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Assessing the Effectiveness of Block Mode Legal Placements in Enhancing Work-Integrated Learning

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Legal education increasingly integrates work-integrated learning (WIL) to better prepare students for professional practice. This research investigates the effectiveness of a four-week block mode legal placement model, a flexible structure where students complete 150 hours of legal placement over a defined period either intensively (full-time over four weeks) or through a part-time arrangement (one or two days per week). Unlike traditional semester-long placements integrated into weekly schedules, block mode placements are time-bound and designed to provide an immersive legal experience without long-term disruptions to academic timetables.

Supervised by legal practitioners and assessed academically, this model aims to enhance professional resilience, ethical decision-making, and employability skills. Students undertake placements in law firms, in-house legal teams, government agencies, and community legal centres, providing exposure to varied legal areas. Alongside placements, classroom discussions address legal resilience, ethical dilemmas, judicial bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, and legal risk management, offering critical insights into contemporary legal practice. Peer engagement, alumni mentorship, and collaboration with Career Consultants are embedded in the program to support both legal competencies and the development of essential soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and networking.

Assessment is designed to facilitate reflective learning and peer engagement. Students document their experiences in reflective journals, sharing insights through discussion forums, presentations, and peer feedback. Completing legal research tasks also plays a vital role in the learning process. Given the diversity of placements, cross-institutional knowledge exchange fosters a broader understanding of legal practice.

This study will adopt a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data will be collected through student reflective journals and semi-structured interviews with both students and legal supervisors. Thematic analysis will be applied to identity patterns and emerging themes related to student development, supervision quality, and placement outcomes. Coding will be conducted inductively, and cross-case comparisons will provide insights into how different placement formats and contexts influence learning. Quantitative survey data will complement the qualitative findings by highlighting broader trends in student satisfaction and self-reported skill development.

By aligning with higher education priorities such as curriculum innovation, experiential learning, and career readiness, this study provides evidence-based recommendations for educators, institutions, and policymakers. The findings will inform strategies for optimising placement structures, assessment methods, and industry collaborations, ultimately enhancing student employability, professional resilience, and ethical awareness in legal education and beyond.

Exploring Student Experience in Block Teaching: A Pedagogic Inquiry at a Post 1992 University

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Block teaching is an emerging transformative approach in higher education, aimed at enhancing student engagement, retention, and success. De Montfort University has implemented a block curriculum model to enhance the student learning experience. While previous research has focused on student attainment (Buck and Tyrrell, 2022), this study expands the discourse by examining student transitions, sustainability, and the work-life-study balance within this delivery model.

Responding to the need for deeper understanding of block delivered student experience, a research initiative was launched in 2023. This study investigates the effectiveness of block teaching by exploring student perspectives on key aspects of their academic journey, focusing on transitions, well-being, and sustainability, influenced by the research methodology of Wilson et al (2024). The research builds upon previous projects, including a Quality Assurance Agency Collaborative Enhancement Project (QAA 2024), yet distinguishes itself through the use of primary data collection.

Following ethical approval, qualitative data was collected via a series of semi-structured focus groups. These focus groups were designed to explore students' lived experiences and perceptions of block delivery, particularly regarding transitions, balancing academic, work, and personal responsibilities, and sustainability.

Thematic analysis identified patterns in student narratives. The findings are communicated in this presentation under the core areas of transition, well-being, and sustainability, linked to the critical factors in shaping the student experience. We also discuss the impact of these findings on next steps.

This research advances scholarly knowledge on block curriculum delivery, moving beyond attainment-focused studies to capture a holistic understanding of student experiences. The findings will inform institutional policy, pedagogic strategies, and student support, while contributing to the broader academic discourse on delivery models in higher education. Further, scholarly outputs will share insights with the sector, reinforcing our university's role in leading innovative curriculum design.

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Does Block Teaching Provide Quality Feedback? A Case Study of a Year 2 Entrepreneurial Degree in China

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As universities undergo disruption from many quarters, degrees are changing in response. Within China, there is a growth of entrepreneurial degrees to help develop the critical thinking skills and flexible mindset needed for future and current industries/workplaces in an AI-enhanced era (Lackeus, 2015; Cui et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial education is often associated with innovative teaching practices, including intensive delivery patterns (Nabi et al., 2017). The introduction of intensive delivery patterns necessitates a change in how assessments and feedback are designed, delivered and used within the learning space. The time constraints for providing effective feedback to students studying in such delivery patterns is highlighted by Thomas et al. (2024), with the resultant need to rethink appropriate models of feedback (Boud, 2000) which enables learners, who are central to the feedback process, to generate and solicit their own feedback through the development of 'evaluative judgement' (Bearman et al., 2024).

This paper discusses the results of a project to investigate how staff teaching on an entrepreneurial degree within an EMI joint-venture institution within China have adapted their feedback techniques to try and provide quality feedback to help students develop their critical thinking and evaluative judgement skills, which are essential to developing an entrepreneurial mindset. It is set in the context of teachers struggles to provide effective feedback, especially formative feedback, within the time constraints of intensive delivery. Data has been collected through stimulated recall interviews with key teaching staff, complimented by feedback document analysis. Analysed through a thematic framework, the paper makes suggestions for changes to teaching practice to accommodate effective feedback, the importance of interaction between GenAI generated feedback and human feedback, and the potential for student generated feedback. The findings provide suggestions for enhancing feedback practices within intensive delivery patterns, and further suggestions for future research directions within this growing field.

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But what about Research Methods? Using Innovations in Block and Blend to Embed Research Methods across the Curriculum

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As we at the University of Suffolk move to a 30-credit academic framework, our policies for UG and PG degrees have moved from requiring a mandatory stand-alone research methods module to a requirement that research methods are taught in whatever manner is appropriate to the course. Most courses would struggle to include a full 30-credit stand-alone research methods module alongside other core subjects. The policies therefore still require research methods to be taught at both UG and PG levels, but not necessarily in a stand-alone 30-credit module. This workshop will share emerging best practice across the University in using a hub-model to embed research methods across course curriculums. We will also explore sharing hubs across courses themselves. The workshop facilitators will come from different schools across the university to show where there is overlap and where there may be field-specific differentiation. Participants will work through their course needs for delivering research methods and begin to develop solutions, and are encouraged to bring course specific challenges to consider and workshop.

Reflective Discussion: Current Challenges & Successes

- How have research methods been taught in your course(s) so far?
- What challenges have you faced in integrating research methods?
- Have there been any successes or innovative approaches that worked well?

Moving Forward: Integration Models & Learning Hubs (cultivated learning spaces which cut across multiple modules or learning groups)

- How research methods could be better integrated into different courses.
- The role of interdisciplinary or university-wide learning hubs.
- Potential support structures for staff and students.

As we learn more about block learning and develop new and innovative pedagogical pathways (Nind & Katramadou, 2023; Matos et al., 2023), this workshop will help practitioners, lecturers, and educators to think creatively about embedding this core skill across a curriculum rather than in a stand-alone, isolated module, creating authentic learning experiences for students.

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