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LSST

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WELCOME

Welcome to this bumper September 2025 edition of LSST Life.

At the core of this issue is a milestone moment: LSST has achieved an extraordinary 94.5% teaching satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2025 (p56). This remarkable recognition reaffirms our reputation as a national leader in student-centred higher education — a tribute to the talent, tenacity, and teamwork of our entire community.

We highlight student Abida Khanom's heartfelt contribution to LSST Birmingham (p6), celebrate student ingenuity with Dragons' Den triumphs (p27), and unveil initiatives like our 'Interview Wardrobe' empowering employability (p30).

We shine a spotlight on LSST academic advancements, with Oxford University presentations on sustainable talent management and AI ethics (p51, p54), alongside global recognition for groundbreaking mental health research (p68; p70). Equally, we explore critical conversations - from resisting AI in education (p14) to the hidden risks in modern diets (p72) and rethinking heart failure therapies (p81).

And because LSST is powered by its people, we applaud new leadership at LSST Stratford (p64), students stepping boldly into the future (p62), and researchers who reveal hidden histories and alternative ways of thinking (p10, p37, p46; p77).

Immerse yourself in these pages, share your pride and let this edition of LSST Life remind you that every achievement is possible at LSST.

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi
CEO of LSST

IN THIS EDITION

HIGHER EDUCATION WITH HEART: ABIDA KHANOM'S EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION TO LSST BIRMINGHAM

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

In an era where academic success is often measured solely by grades and accolades, the quiet force of human character can be overlooked. Yet, at LSST Birmingham, the story of Abida Khanom – a BSc Health and Social Science student – reminds us that, at LSST, education is as much about compassion and purpose as it is about intellectual achievement.

Her beginnings are as humbling as they are heroic. Born in Bangladesh, Abida was delivered in good health, only for polio to alter the course of her childhood abruptly. Yet, in what might have cast a lifelong shadow, in Abida's words, became a source of strength: "Polio randomly came into my life," she reflects with quiet sincerity. "But it has strengthened me in many aspects. It's made me independent and free."

Abida exemplifies the type of leadership that rarely seeks the spotlight but certainly earns respect. Her journey, marked by a tireless commitment to motivating and helping others, is a testament to what it means to learn not just with the mind but with the heart.

Since enrolling at LSST Birmingham in September 2024, Abida has not only completed her Foundation Year in BSc Health & Social Science – she has, in effect, redefined the narrative of what it means to thrive within higher education. She is not simply a student team player; she is a presence – vibrant, luminous and inspiring.

She navigates LSST's Birmingham campus independently, aided not only by the LSST's wheelchair-accessible facilities but by the firm care of its academic community and support staff. "It's fairly easy," she adds. "The campus is wheelchair-friendly and the students and staff are incredibly helpful. Each day is an adventure for me and I just love making new friends here."

Yet, her journey is not solely one of personal gain. What sets Abida apart – and cements her as an unsung cornerstone of LSST's student body – is the impact she makes on others. A staunch advocate for kindness and perseverance, she has become a peer leader in every sense of the term.

"Abida is a positive force of nature," says Mr Mohsin Riaz, Dean of LSST Birmingham. "When students are around her, they just feel better, more hopeful and more capable. She never forgets names. Speaks to others as though she has known them all her life. Simply put, she tirelessly seeks out the best potential in everyone."

ABIDA KHANOM – A BSC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENT (L) AND LYNNETTE DOUGLAS, STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES TEAM LEAD (R) AT LSST BIRMINGHAM. PHOTO: LSST.

This sentiment is echoed by Lynnette Douglas, Student Support Services Team Lead, who has championed Abida since her first day at LSST: "I knew from the moment I met Abida that she was extraordinary. She transforms every obstacle into an opportunity. She isn't just studying – she's shaping the very soul of the LSST Birmingham student community. Her laughter, her warmth and her generosity are contagious. She is, quite simply, unforgettable."

Balancing motherhood with academia would be an insurmountable challenge for many – but for Abida, it is simply another dimension of her tenacity.

"The most challenging part has been the work itself – and staying focused, since I'm a mother as well," she explains. "But when I help others, it somehow helps me keep going. I find being kind to others empowers you."

"My children are my motivation," she adds, her voice resolute. "And I have an eagerness to put myself out there to know more and to grow."

Abida's passion for learning is matched only by her deep empathy. Her curiosity extends beyond textbooks — it embraces the stories and struggles of others. For her, education is not a solitary ascent but a shared horizon. "When I meet new people on campus, I ask them to share their stories with me and this has been one of the most rewarding parts of my year. It's opened me to new perspectives and helps me resonate with others. We must take time to focus on where others are coming from to understand them better."

Though she is modest in self-description, Abida has emerged as a de facto role model for many LSST students as an embodiment of courage in motion. And when asked what advice she might offer to others navigating hardship, her answer is strikingly insightful: "Get to know other people. Never put yourself down. Always exceed your expectations. Don't hang on to criticism. And never be scared of the current position you're in – because anything is possible in the near future."

For Abida, the future is both a goal and a promise. "I want to get a very good career and plan a better future," she says with calm determination. "But I remain content in the journey more than the destination."

But in truth, she is already shaping futures – not just her own but those of countless others who see in her a reflection of what can be achieved through grace and gratitude.

Abida Khanom is not merely studying Health & Social Science at LSST. She is living it – leading by example, curing through hope and reminding us that true education is as much about character as it is about curriculum.

Abida and Lynnette will run LSST workshops in October/November 2025 on the key role that social factors have in the higher educational trajectories of people with disabilities and how to build fairer and more inclusive societies in further and higher education.

A MOMENT FROM ONE OF LSST'S MANY VIBRANT CAREER FAIRS. LEADING EMPLOYERS CONNECT WITH LSST STAFF AT OUR BIRMINGHAM CAMPUS. PHOTO: LSST.

LSST JOINS INSTITUTE OF STUDENT EMPLOYERS TO CHAMPION GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

In a huge step towards enhancing student success beyond the classroom, LSST has proudly joined the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) – the UK's leading authority on student recruitment and graduate development.

Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President, said: "This membership marks a pivotal advancement in LSST's work to deliver not only an outstanding academic experience for its students, but a comprehensive pathway into meaningful high-impact careers, which is what LSST students want. It signals a bold alignment with our aspiration of shaping the future of work."

"At LSST, our commitment doesn't end at graduation – it also begins there," said Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO. "LSST's membership with the ISE is not simply a badge of honour – it is a tool for transformation. Through our membership with the ISE, we are deepening our responsibility to prepare students for lives of leadership in the modern workforce."

BRIDGING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The ISE represents over 300 of the UK's most forward-thinking graduate employers and universities. As a not-for-profit thought leader in the sector, it brings together a network of professionals dedicated to enhancing student employability and aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations.

Stephen Isherwood, joint CEO of the ISE, commented: "It's great to have LSST on board as ISE members. They will be a valuable addition to our community who I'm sure will benefit from their student insight. As well as access to our research and resources, they will have the opportunity to engage with employers and peers, sharing challenges and solutions with a support network of like-minded professionals."

Through ISE membership, LSST now gains privileged access to:

- Cutting-edge labour market intelligence and future skills forecasting
- Employer-led insights into recruitment, onboarding and graduate performance
- Events, summits and webinars that facilitate direct dialogue between educators and industry leaders
- Professional development opportunities to upskill LSST's careers staff and academic teams
- National benchmarking to strengthen strategic planning and enhance institutional performance on graduate outcomes.

"This is about relevance, readiness and results," added James Platt, Careers and Employability Manager at LSST. "By joining ISE, LSST is sending a clear message: we are not just preparing students for exams – we are preparing them for real careers, with real employers, in the real world."

REAL IMPACT FOR REAL STUDENTS

Beyond the strategic benefits, LSST's ISE membership will create tangible outcomes for students. From internship opportunities and employer-hosted workshops to live work-based challenges and mentorship schemes, LSST students will gain early access to experiences that mirror the demands of today's graduate job market.

Complemented with Handshake integration, by directly involving employers in the learning journey, LSST ensures its graduates leave with more than just a certificate – they graduate with a sense of direction, a professional network and a set of industry-ready capabilities.

As the graduate employment landscape continues to evolve, LSST is taking active steps to embed employability into every aspect of its academic and support infrastructure.

"In an age where student outcomes are under close examination, our goal is to set gold standards," added Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President. "This partnership will empower everyone at LSST to listen more deeply to employers and lead more boldly in preparing graduates for lasting success."

ALEJANDRO ARGUELLES BULLON, TRAINEE LECTURER IN HEALTH AT LSST ELEPHANT & CASTLE. PHOTO: LSST

LIVED EXPERIENCE ROLES IN ACADEMIA: BRIDGING MENTAL HEALTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

By: Alejandro Arguelles Bullon GMBPsS MRSPH, Trainee Lecturer in Health at LSST Elephant & Castle Campus

What does it mean to be valued in academia – not just for what you know, but for what you've lived? I first began to understand the power of lived experience in research during a conversation with one of my PhD supervisors, who has long championed the inclusion of lived experience roles in academic work. That conversation stayed with me. It made me reflect on how far these roles have come – and where they might be heading.

Over the last few decades, mental health has received growing attention, funding, clinical focus and recognition (Wykes et al., 2021; Foulkes & Andrews, 2023; Liese et al., 2019). There is hardly a day that goes by without some mention of mental health. Most importantly, the shift from a medical model to a recovery-focused model of health has helped individuals and wider society understand the value and impact that people with lived experience of mental health challenges can bring to the workforce (Carr et al., 2023; Jacob, 2015; Cruwys et al., 2020). In many sectors—such as charities or health policy—mental health has been embedded in ways that create roles specifically designed for those actively experiencing mental health difficulties (Robinson & Isaacs, 2024; Stirrup et al., 2021; Davey, 2022). Academia and higher education are no exception. More and more lived-experience researchers (those with personal experience of mental health challenges, employed specifically to design, conceptualise, and share research through that lens) are employed. As universities work to become more inclusive and mentally healthy spaces, lived experience roles are becoming a growing and valuable area to explore.

WHY LIVED EXPERIENCE MATTERS IN ACADEMIA

What sets lived experience researchers apart as a valuable asset for academic teams? These roles and individuals contribute unique qualities that frameworks or strict protocols cannot directly influence: empathy, relatability, and authenticity. These qualities challenge and enrich traditional research conventions in a field dominated by clinical or theoretical frameworks.

One example that vividly illustrates this shift is the Library of Lived Experience project led by Lancaster University and Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust (Lobban et al., 2023). This initiative, co-designed with lived experience researchers, transforms individuals with mental health experiences into 'Living Books.' These 'Living Books' are not just passive subjects, but active designers, facilitators, and authors, trained and supported to share their stories in one-to-one conversations. These conversations are shared with 'Readers'—students, staff, carers, or anyone seeking a deeper understanding of mental health.

The outputs from this project reflect the power of co-production and lived experience researchers. By using participatory methods like interviews or creative workshops, this collaborative approach has led to practical, impactful tools, including an implementation guide, a Community of Practice, and resources to evaluate and run Living Libraries across various contexts. This approach challenges long-standing hierarchies in academia and paves the way for more democratic knowledge production, promoting safer, inclusive environments where marginalised voices are central (Sartor, 2023; Beames et al., 2021). The library project demonstrates that when people with lived experience are equal partners in academic work, the outputs can be more relevant, inclusive, and emotionally resonant, offering hope for the future of mental health research.

CHALLENGES AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Despite the convincing rationale and growing number of lived experience roles, there are still several challenges that higher education and these roles are working to navigate. One primary concern is that these roles may become tokenistic rather than meaningfully embedded to drive real change (Hawke et al., 2022). If these roles risk becoming symbolic rather than substantive, should universities continue to formalise and professionalise them? Should higher education employers encourage recovery rather than create roles that require individuals to continue experiencing or identifying with mental health difficulties?

Tensions also surface between academic or clinical experts and those in lived experience roles—particularly around role clarity and influence. For instance, academic or clinical experts may question the qualifications and expertise of those in lived experience roles, while the latter may feel their perspectives are undervalued. Whose perspective should carry more weight in decision-making? Moreover, if decisions lead to intended or unintended consequences, who should be held accountable within the scope of each role? (Fraser et al., 2022).

Stigma remains another issue. A lived experience researcher who openly discloses their mental health history may quickly become "the person with mental health" in their team. This is different from a researcher who happens to have mental health experiences but chooses whether or not to disclose them.

Then, there is the question of how the identity of lived experience evolves. What happens when someone recovers—are they

at risk of losing their job? Must someone remain unwell to qualify for a role that relies on lived experience of mental health? (Gupta et al., 2023).

I invite you, as readers, to engage in a reflective process on these pressing questions that higher education institutions, policymakers, and research bodies must seriously consider. This reflection is crucial to ensure that lived experience roles are embedded in ways that benefit everyone: the person in the role, the employer, and the people ultimately served by the research.

STUDENTS (L-R) – ALEJANDRO ARGUELLES BULLON, TRAINEE LECTURER IN HEALTH (CENTRE) STANDS WITH HIS HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION YEAR STUDENTS CHRISTIANA AYIM; SHONNET CHASE; SELIMA ALHASSAN; GABRIELA FRANCISCONI; COLLINMAX MAWEJJE; JOSEPHINE JACKSON DAVIS AT LSST ELEPHANT & CASTLE. PHOTO: LSST

A REALIST PERSPECTIVE ON LIVED EXPERIENCE MENTAL HEALTH ROLES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

These ongoing uncertainties on the purpose, structure and future of lived experience roles in higher education have led to wide variation in how these roles are translated into practice. Some roles seem short-term, while others have more fixed-term research responsibilities. This inconsistency, however, reflects a deeper issue. While some lived experience roles may be genuinely empowered to contribute meaningfully to the organisation, others find themselves on the side-lines or struggling to navigate unclear expectations. The structure is unclear—and so, too, is the impact. What makes these roles work well in some places and less so in others? What conditions allow the lived experience role to thrive, rather than survive, in research spaces traditionally shaped by academic and clinical expertise?

My research, viewed through a realist lens, delves into these questions. This approach is not just about determining if lived experience roles are effective in higher education but also about understanding how, why, for whom, and under what circumstances they work or not (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson et al., 2005). The realist lens is particularly valuable in this context as it allows me to move beyond direct observations, such as numerical outcomes or personal experiences, to reveal the underlying mechanisms that drive the success or failure of these roles, depending on the context (Hunter et al., 2022). The context, as you can imagine, is complex. It is not just about the institution or job description but also about factors like organisational culture, staff relationships, preconceptions about mental health, expectations tied to lived experience, and power dynamics within research teams. These often-hidden dynamics can significantly influence whether someone in a lived experience role can engage in meaningful, sustained work or feels isolated, undervalued, or emotionally burdened.

Through a realist approach this research aims to understand the real-world conditions affecting lived experience roles. This theory-driven exploration will offer practical, evidence-based insights for universities, policymakers, and researchers. The goal is to help create impactful roles that prioritise lived experience in research efforts.

Students (L-R) – Alejandro Arguelles Bullon, Trainee Lecturer in Health (centre) stands with his Health and Social Science Foundation Year students Christiana Ayim; Shonnet Chase; Selima Alhassan; Gabriela Francisconi; Collinmax Mawejje; Josephine Jackson Davis at LSST Elephant & Castle. Photo: LSST

A CALL TO REFLECT

With the increasing presence of lived experience researchers in higher education, we are witnessing a shift from plain tokenism to a more profound and impactful integration. Lived experience brings a unique depth of insights that traditional academic or clinical training alone cannot replicate. These roles have the potential to not only enrich research with authenticity but also to transform the culture of academia into one that is more secure, responsive, and grounded in the real-world experiences of the people it aims to serve.

However, this potential does not automatically lead to real impact. Organisations face complex dynamics, power imbalances, stigma, ambiguity, and identity issues. Creating a role alone is not enough; careful planning is essential. Institutions must ask: What do we hope to achieve by meaningfully integrating lived experience into our organisation?

The realist approach provides a powerful lens to delve into the tensions and complexity of lived experience work in higher education. It prompts us to question whether these roles are effective, how, why, when, for whom, and in what contexts, offering a roadmap and alignment to navigate nuance, context, and contradiction. The objective is to comprehend what promotes their growth and what impedes it. If we aspire for these roles to be more than symbolic, we must persist in asking difficult questions, looking beneath the surface, starting with theory and constructing explanations. When executed proficiently, these roles enhance research and refine the systems that shape it. This is a future that is desirable and one we must strive towards. If higher education is to evolve, it must not just include lived experience, but be shaped by it.

THE FUTILITY OF RESISTING AI IN EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

By Dr Muhammad Emdadul Haque (SFHEA),
Senior Lecturer at LSST Wembley

IMAGE: CREATED BY THE AUTHOR USING DALL·E 2

ABSTRACT

The rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the educational realm is a critical juncture in the history of pedagogy. Its ability to tailor learning, optimise administrative processes, and revolutionise testing has long been known and appreciated, yet the implementation of AI in education is confronted by intense opposition. Remembering past opposition to calculators in the 1980s and the internet in the early 2000s, this resistance is founded on fear of the erosion of critical thinking, ethical concerns, cheating, and dehumanisation of learning environments.

This essay critically discusses the historical patterns of resistance to educational technology and situates the backlash against AI in this context. It makes a case based on theories of technological determinism (McLuhan, 1964) and moral panic (Cohen, 1972) and challenges the socio-political processes behind resisting AI and evaluating the pedagogical implications of ignoring this dislocating move. The article includes comparative international case studies China's policy-driven deployment of AI, Finland's decentralised and ethical adoption, and the United States' fragmented but innovation-led uptake to compare and contrast various global approaches.

In addition, the article discusses strategic advice for UK universities to adopt AI responsibly, harmonising technological progress with humanistic pedagogy. The conclusion posits that opposing AI in learning is not only futile but could be counterproductive to learner equity and institutional salience. Therefore, the emphasis has to change from containment to co-creation where educators are empowered to ethically craft the future of AI-enriched learning.

1.INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed a convergence of rapid technological change and growing demands on education systems to prepare learners for an increasingly digital world. At the heart of this shift lies Artificial Intelligence (AI), a suite of computational technologies capable of learning, reasoning, and adapting, which are now being integrated into classrooms, learning platforms, and administrative systems worldwide (Chen, Chen and Lin, 2020). Defined broadly, AI in education (AIEd) refers to the use of machine learning, natural language processing, predictive analytics, and intelligent tutoring systems to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning (Lin, Huang and Lu, 2023).

Despite its potential, the integration of AI into education has been met with apprehension. Educators' express concerns about loss of pedagogical control, student dependency on automation, and the erosion of traditional academic values (Beirat et al., 2025). These anxieties are exacerbated by popular media portrayals of AI as a threat to human agency, and by legitimate fears regarding data privacy, bias in algorithms, and the commodification of education. Yet such reactions are not new. As will be shown throughout this paper, the history of educational technology is characterised by waves of resistance, followed by eventual assimilation.

This introduction sets the stage for a broader interrogation of why AI in education provokes resistance, what underlying societal and pedagogical concerns it surfaces, and how these concerns can be addressed. Drawing upon historical analogies and critical theory, the discussion foregrounds the urgent need to move beyond binary debates of "AI versus teacher" or "innovation versus tradition." Instead, the focus must be on developing a nuanced understanding of AI as a tool that, when responsibly designed and implemented, can uphold and even enrich the core values of education equity, creativity, criticality, and community.

To this end, this paper will first explore the historical antecedents of technological resistance in education, analysing parallels with the introduction of the printing press, calculators, and digital platforms. It will then examine the current landscape of AI adoption in education through global case studies, highlighting both best practices and ethical tensions. The final sections will propose a roadmap for UK higher education institutions to embrace AI not as a threat, but as a catalyst for pedagogical transformation. In doing so, the paper calls for a paradigm shift from reactive caution to strategic empowerment in how educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners approach AI in learning environments.

2. HISTORICAL RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Historical resistance to educational technology is a ubiquitous trend. With each major technological development from the printing press to web-based technology there has been scepticism that is born of fear over loss of established pedagogy, exploitation of knowledge by commodification, or making teachers impotent. Here, this writer explores three paradigmatic examples: the printing press, the calculator, and the internet.

2.1 THE PRINTING PRESS: MEMORY AGAINST MASS LEARNING

When Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press in the 15th century, scholars and clergy feared that it would weaken memory, promote heretical thinking, and overwhelm society with unregulated information. Prior to its discovery, knowledge was stored and shared through oral culture and hand-written manuscripts, which were only available to the elite (Füssel, 2020). Critics felt that books would make students mentally lazy, relying on external sources rather than internal memory (Greenblatt, 205; Finley, Naaz and Goh, 2028).

In spite of these fears, the printing press prompted an unprecedented expansion of literacy and scholarly study. It catalysed the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and ultimately, modern education. Today's resistance to AI recalls similar concerns especially on the matter of critical thinking, retention of facts, and epistemic power. The historic irony is apparent: what was feared as being dangerous to education is now its basis.

2.2 THE CALCULATOR: AUTOMATION VS. COGNITION

The introduction of electronic calculators into schools in the 1970s and 1980s provoked widespread backlash from educators and policymakers who feared that dependence on machines would inhibit mental arithmetic and diminish mathematical reasoning (Cohen, 1987; Banks 2011). One of the most publicised demonstrations of this resistance occurred in April 1986, when a group of elementary and secondary school teachers in Sumter, South Carolina, picketed against the use of calculators in grade schools. A widely circulated Associated Press photograph, published in The Daily Item on April 5, 1986, captured protestors holding signs that read "Turn them OFF until upper grades." The teachers argued that premature reliance on calculators would hinder students' understanding of core mathematical principles (Lawrence, 1986).

Although the identities of the protest leaders are not individually documented in the article, the event gained national attention and reignited debates within teacher unions particularly the American Federation of Teachers, which would later debate the appropriate age for calculator use in classrooms.

Ironically, subsequent empirical research demonstrated that calculators, when used appropriately, enhanced students' ability to focus on higher-order problem-solving rather than rote computation (Hennessy, 1999). Today, calculators are not only accepted but considered essential in most math curricula. The contemporary debate around AI closely mirrors this historical resistance: Are students bypassing intellectual engagement, or are they evolving how they learn?

2.3 THE INTERNET AND WIKIPEDIA: INFORMATION ACCESS VERSUS AUTHORITY

The large-scale adoption of the internet between the 1990s and early 2000s heralded a revolutionary shift in how pupils gained access to knowledge. Yet this revolution was resisted. Educators, scholars, and policymakers opposed digital encyclopaedias, most importantly, Wikipedia, on the argument that the open-editing process would destroy academic correctness and authority (Yun, Lee and Jeong 2023). Most schools and colleges prohibited Wikipedia as a credible source, warning students that the use of Wikipedia would weaken their research and critical thinking skills.

This opposition was largely on the grounds of misinformation fears, source credibility, and the potential watering down of traditional academic standards. Today, Wikipedia remains widely utilised as a starting point for learning about unfamiliar topics yet remains unacceptable as a citable source of information in formal academic work in most institutions. Rather than championing it as not rigorous scholarship, teachers now utilize Wikipedia to teach critical research practices helping students how to evaluate credibility, track the chain of primary sources, and navigate the politics of knowledge construction (Ho, 2022; Malik, Rafiq and Mahmood, 2023).

The Wikipedia case offers an illustration of how technological change can be resisted by critical engagement, policy development, and pedagogical innovation. Such controversies surround AI today as well in education. As with Wikipedia, AI has the potential to mislead and empower depending on how it is taught and controlled. Therefore, creating AI literacy rather than resorting to blanket prohibitions may be the more realistic and educationally productive response.

3. CASE STUDIES OF GLOBAL AI INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION

AI integration into education is following divergent trajectories in national contexts. The case studies illustrate how sociopolitical arrangements, pedagogical philosophies, and cultural values inform the design and deployment of AI technologies in education systems.

3.1 CHINA: AI AS STATECRAFT IN EDUCATION

China has pursued a comprehensive, government-driven strategy to integrate AI in education. Huang and Gadavanij (2025) state that from September 2025, all students at the primary and secondary levels must receive a minimum of eight hours of AI education annually. The curriculum integrates basic coding and machine learning concepts with AI ethics, delivered through stand-alone courses and integration with STEM subjects.

The initiative falls under China's ambition to become the global AI champion by 2030. Education-wise, the plan resonates with Confucian principles of discipline and state-led learning, coupled with centralized control over curriculum design. Facial recognition software to track student attention, AI-powered homework markers, and intelligent monitoring of classrooms are all part of China's AI educational toolkit (Bhutoria, 2021).

Critical Evaluation: Efficient and scalable though China's system is, it also raises grave ethical issues. The use of biometric data and constant monitoring risks normalising surveillance from an early age (Lähteenmäki, Hakkala and Koskinen, 2025). Critics argue that the model prioritises compliance over creativity and puts AI in a disciplinary instead of a pedagogical role.

However, China's rapid development of teacher training modules, textbooks, and AI integration standards offers valuable lessons in policy coordination and resource allocation domains in which Western education systems are behind.

3.2 FINLAND: ETHICAL PEDAGOGY MEETS ADAPTIVE AI

In comparison, Finland's approach is decentralised and ethically sensitive. AI is viewed as a support system, not a substitute for teaching by humans. AI platforms like ViLLE and Claned are employed in schools to personalise learning and assist independent development, particularly in maths and language learning (Vella, 2025).

Crucially, teachers in Finland participate in the co-design of AI instruments to ensure pedagogical consistency and openness. Teachers are encouraged to introduce AI only where it is demonstrably proven to enhance student resonance and inclusivity (Koskinen, 2023). Additionally, Finland's national curriculum embraces ethical discussions on automation and data protection, forging a generation of critically aware learners.

Critical Evaluation: Finland's model is a model of democratic values in technology integration. It prioritises dialogue, reflection, and experimentation over standardisation. Its success is also partly attributable to Finland's well-funded education system and high levels of teacher autonomy conditions not readily reproducible elsewhere.

3.3 UNITED STATES: INNOVATION AND INEQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the US, AI in education has been largely market-driven. Ed-tech companies and universities have driven the creation of tools such as:

- Automated grading systems for large-scale testing
- AI-powered chatbots for 24/7 student assistance
- Predictive analytics for students at risk of dropping out

Top universities such as MIT and Stanford are creating state-of-the-art AI curricula and ethics frameworks (Cantú-Ortiz, 2020). Online platforms such as Coursera and Khan Academy use AI to personalise learning globally.

Critical Evaluation: The U.S. model promotes innovation but lacks systemic coherence. More endowed institutions can experiment with AI, but under-resourced schools might lack the infrastructure to adopt such tools. Furthermore, the commercialisation of AI comes with student data exploitation and the privatisation of education.

Based on the insights from the international case studies, the following section considers forward-thinking steps that education systems can follow to harness the potential of AI and counter its intrinsic risks.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIC RESPONSE

With AI being progressively embedded within societal infrastructure, education systems must actively shape strategic responses to both its opportunities and threats. The future of AI in education should not be relinquished to technological determinism nor market-driven innovation. Instead, it requires concerted, inclusive, and ethically attuned planning across four important domains: pedagogy, policy, research, and institutional capacity.

4.1 BEYOND OPPORTUNISTIC EXPERIMENTATION TO STRATEGIC DESIGN

Universities must move beyond opportunistic experimentation and begin to design AI integration for long-term impact. This requires establishing pedagogical goals that AI should enhance, rather than being adapted to the teaching requirements of existing technologies (George, 2023). Furthermore, AI integration needs to enhance, not replace, learner-centred approaches emphasising scaffolding, formative feedback, and metacognitive development.

4.2 DEVELOPING AI LITERACY AT EVERY LEVEL

AI literacy must be developed as a fundamental competency similar to media or digital literacy. Students must learn not only to use AI tools, but to critically evaluate them, identify bias, and understand their ethical implications (Akgun and Greenhow, 2022). Professional development for educators is needed to enable confident, critical, and creative deployment of AI technologies in practice.

Table 1: AI Literacy Framework for Stakeholders

Group	Core Competencies	Example Activities
Students	Understanding AI basics, bias detection	Simulations, case study discussions
Teachers	Ethical tool use, pedagogical integration	AI-focused CPD, interdisciplinary units
Administrators	Procurement literacy, policy alignment	Vendor evaluation rubrics, audits

4.3 CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

No single actor university, state, or tech company can ensure responsible AI deployment. Collaboration and intersection among higher education institutions and developers are critical in developing AI tools that align with academic needs, respect privacy, and respect diversity. Universities also need to get involved in developing regulatory frameworks, leveraging their role as knowledge institutions (European Commission, 2023).

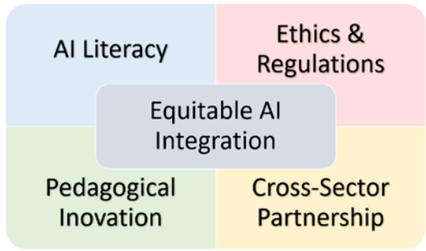
Country Examples

- Canada: Canada supports AI education programs focusing on inclusive innovation through its Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, financing AI research institutions like Mila and Vector Institute.
- Singapore: Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative integrates AI into lifelong learning, and the Ministry of Education's AI@Education program pilots AI literacy from primary to tertiary levels (Frana, 2024)
- Australia: The University of Queensland and Data61's CSIRO have developed AI ethics modules and national trials of curriculum including the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (Knight et al., 2023).

4.4 GLOBAL BENCHMARKS AND INCLUSIVE POLICY DESIGN

Countries should draw upon well-tested AI strategies, such as the OECD's AI Principles or UNESCO's AI and education guidelines, as blueprints for national policy. Such guidelines foster transparency, fairness, accountability, and human-centered design. Policymakers must involve a broad range of stakeholders – students, parents, and civil society if public confidence and inclusiveness are to be secured.

UK Context: Gherehes (2023) highlight the importance of developing an AI talent ecosystem, through AI conversion courses as well as sector-led education reforms. Khawaja (2024) has also drawn up guidance for embracing responsible AI at higher education and supporting institutions with data ethics, assessment reform, and institutional preparedness frameworks.



The diagram is a visually presented integrated structure for inclusive integration of AI into education. For the sake of viewing this diagram, please use the appendix or embedded image file included in this document. The figure depicts four core domains – AI Literacy, Ethics & Regulation, Pedagogical Innovation, and Cross-Sector Partnerships – each interfacing with students, teachers, developers, and policymakers.

4.5 MITIGATING KEY RISKS AND EMERGING ISSUES

While AI holds great promise, there are dangers that must be actively mitigated:

- Algorithmic Bias: AI systems can worsen existing education disparities if trained on biased data, impacting grading, admissions, or study assistance (Obed Boateng and Bright Boateng, 2025).
- Over-Automation: Over-reliance on automation can reduces teachers' skillsets, decrease personalisation, and risk to depersonalise the learning process.
- Educational Technolohy Monopolies: Dependence on a limited number of tech providers can potentially limit

institutional autonomy and create ownership concerns over data as well as commercial surveillance (Komljenovic and Williamson, 2024).

Mitigation of these risks can be achieved through active auditing, open-source alternatives, and stakeholder co-design.

4.6 MAINTAINING THE HUMAN IN THE LOOP

Finally, the future of AI in education must defend the special place of human connection. Education is not the transmission of content; it is guidance, compassion, adaptability, and care factors that no program can fully replace. AI should complement human capabilities and not substitute for them.

From international practices described above, the next section focuses on the UK higher education landscape, offering strategic directions towards responsible incorporation of AI.

5.EMBRACING AI IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

UK universities and colleges are at the heart of the world's education ecosystem. With a reputation for academic excellence and innovation, the UK must move quickly to embrace AI not only to stay ahead of the competition but to enhance equity, pedagogy, and institutional viability. The task is to create a balanced strategy that embraces innovation while safeguarding academic values and ethical norms.

5.1 STRATEGIC INTEGRATION AND INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Southworth et al. (2023) identifies education as one of the strategic areas in AI talent development. It calls on universities to develop interdisciplinary AI curricula and invest in AI literacy for all graduates. Elite universities such as University College London (UCL), the University of Oxford, and Imperial College London have already launched AI-dedicated degrees and responsible AI research centres.

To introduce AI across disciplines, HEIs are to include fundamental AI modules in non-STEM courses to enhance awareness among future lawyers, teachers, social workers, and artists. An example of an interdisciplinary initiative is the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Data, Culture and Society.

5.2 PERSONALISED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT REFORM

AI supports adaptive learning systems that have the ability to tailor content to the individual learning rate and style of each student. Vashishth et al. (2024) recommends that institutions pilot AI-driven platforms that offer real-time feedback, learning analytics, and adaptive pathways. For example, the Open University is using predictive analytics to identify students at risk of disengagement and introduce targeted support.

Assessment, too, can be rethought. Instead of standardised testing, AI offers hope for formative, competency-based assessment that reflects students' learning and creativity. Yet this must be accompanied by strong safeguards against over-surveillance and automation bias.

5.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

A key blocker to AI adoption in UK HEIs is staff preparedness. Universities must fund continuous professional development (CPD) programs to equip educators with the competence and confidence to pedagogically use AI. CPD must address not only technical skill, but also ethical concerns, algorithmic transparency, and inclusive design.

At a governance level, universities must create explicit frameworks for responsible AI use. These must address:

- Ethics review boards for AI applications in research and teaching
- Data protection policies mapped to UK GDPR
- Student participation in tech procurement and implementation decisions,

5.4 INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUITY ISSUES

While AI can help support diverse learners, it can also increase inequality if access is not equal. UK HEIs will have to ensure digital inclusion by:

- Providing hardware and high-speed internet for students who require them
- Providing AI tools with multilingual and accessibility features
- Creating algorithms that are culturally and gender unbiased

Such projects as the OfS Digital Capability Framework can guide institutions towards equitable implementation. In addition, UKRI and Innovate UK funding needs to be expanded to support inclusive AI education pilots.

5.5 A CULTURE OF CO-DESIGN AND INNOVATION

To succeed in the long term, students, educators, and developers must collaborate in identifying AI tools based on pedagogical needs. Hackathons, user-testing workshops, and interdisciplinary innovation hubs can help create a vibrant culture of co-design.

Case Snapshot: At the University of Bristol, the AI in Education Lab has partnered with student unions to test AI feedback systems, enabling real-time dialogue between learners and developers.

UK HEIs must also engage with global networks like the UNESCO AI Competency Framework and the European University Association's AI working group to share knowledge and set standards (Ul Hassan, Murtaza and Rashid, 2024).

The UK has the intellectual capital and institutional drive to be a world leader in ethical, efficient AI-driven higher education. Leadership, however, involves more than words – there needs to be investment in infrastructure, educational creativity, and long-term governance. By being first to harness AI as a collaborator in learning, not a competitor, UK institutions can future-proof their mission while equipping the next generation of learners.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined critically the historical, cultural, and policy-driven dimensions of resistance to AI in education. Through comparative case studies and visionary strategies, it has argued that technological resistance is neither new nor necessarily irrational, but it is problematic when it impedes pedagogical innovation and systemic development.

Historically, every educational technology from the printing press to the internet has encountered resistance based on apprehensions of dehumanisation, academic laziness, or loss of scholarly control. Over time and evidence, however, these tools only proved their potential to increase educational access, equity, and efficacy. The present resistance to AI repeats this pattern and, if not critically reoriented, promises to repeat earlier errors by holding on to outmoded paradigms.

AI today has transitioned from a buzzword of the future to an existing reality within learning management systems, assessment platforms, and classroom discussions. Rather than demonise or prohibit AI tools, education stakeholders must accept a vision of co-agency, a vision where human teachers guide, refine, and shape AI to augment and complement their efforts, not devalue them.

Each of the examples of China, Finland, the United States, and the United Kingdom represents varying patterns of AI adoption. None is perfect, but all provide insights into the policy, ethics, infrastructure, and pedagogy that need to come into play. The UK is at a turning point: with resources,

brains, and institutional frameworks to be world leaders, it has to choose between gradual adjustment and grand change.

In the future, the education system must build AI literacy, advocate for rights to data, support inclusive access, and build human-machine collaboration according to the principles of care, justice, and curiosity. Resistance to AI is understandable but not sustainable. What we require today is thoughtful, ethical, and equitable leadership that will enable AI to become not the end of education we know, but the beginning of its most human-centric chapter yet.

AI-POWERED EDUCATION: THE FUTURE OF TEACHING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

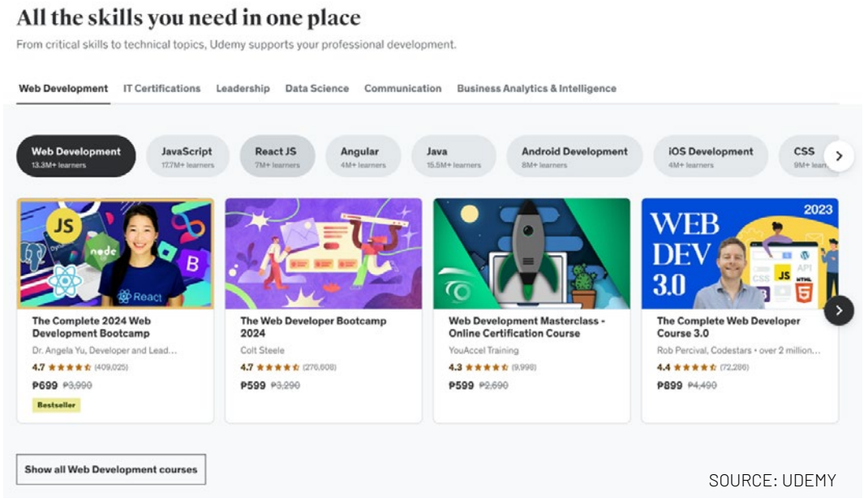
By Rashi Bansal, Lecturer in Business, LSST Elephant & Castle

SOURCE: THIS ARTWORK WAS CREATED BY RASHI WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NIGHTCAFE CREATOR

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising nearly every aspect of human life, and education is no exception. From personalised learning experiences to automated marking, AI is reshaping the way educators teach, and students learn. In today's digital era, lecturers must adapt to new AI-driven teaching methodologies to enhance student engagement and optimise educational outcomes (Wikoom, 2022). The relationship marketing model (Larsson & Viitaoja, 2017) and the e-loyalty model (Srinivasan et al., 2002) provide valuable insights into how digital interactivity and customised experiences foster engagement—a principle that can be applied to AI in education.

THE ROLE OF LECTURERS IN MODERN EDUCATION

The traditional role of lecturers as sole providers of knowledge is shifting. With AI-powered platforms offering instant access to information, lecturers must focus on becoming facilitators rather than simply dispensers of knowledge. AI-based

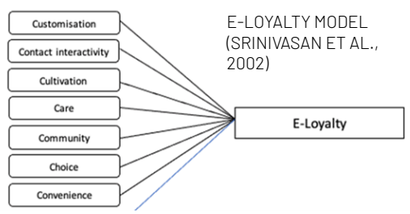


SOURCE: UDEMY

systems can analyse students' learning behaviours and provide personalised content recommendations, much like how digital platforms tailor user experiences in marketing (Larsson & Viitaoja, 2017).

For example, AI-driven Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Coursera, Udemy, and EdX use adaptive learning algorithms to customise courses based on students' performance. Lecturers can utilise these insights to identify struggling students and tailor their teaching approaches accordingly.

E-LOYALTY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN AI-BASED LEARNING



E-LOYALTY MODEL (SRINIVASAN ET AL., 2002)

The e-loyalty model (Srinivasan et al., 2002) identifies key factors that influence user retention on digital platforms, including customisation, contact interactivity, and convenience—elements that are highly relevant in AI-powered education.

Customisation: AI-driven platforms personalise learning experiences by adapting content to individual needs. Just as e-commerce platforms recommend products based on previous purchases, AI-powered education tools suggest study materials tailored to students' strengths and weaknesses. For example, platforms like Duolingo use machine learning algorithms to assess a learner's progress and provide customised exercises in language learning. Similarly, platforms such as Squirrel AI in China use adaptive learning systems to adjust difficulty levels and content in real-time based on each student's performance.

Contact Interactivity: AI chatbots and virtual tutors provide 24/7 academic support, much like digital customer service representatives in online businesses. IBM's Watson, for instance, has been used to assist students by answering questions and providing explanations in real-time. For example, Georgia State University implemented an AI chatbot named "Pounce" that successfully answered over 200,000 student queries in its first year, helping to reduce summer melt and improve student enrolment outcomes. Similarly, the University of Murcia in Spain employed a virtual assistant to answer FAQs, improving response efficiency and student satisfaction.

Convenience: AI-based platforms enable students to learn at their own pace, anytime and anywhere. This flexibility aligns with the growing preference for digital education over traditional classroom settings. For example, Coursera and EdX offer AI-enhanced learning pathways that allow students to access course materials, video lectures, and quizzes on demand. Khan Academy also provides personalised dashboards where learners can set goals and progress through content at their own convenience.

AI-POWERED ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Assessment has always been a challenge in education, often limited by time constraints and human bias. AI can revolutionize grading and feedback through automated systems that assess assignments, quizzes, and even essays with greater accuracy.

For example, Turnitin's AI-powered grading system not only detects plagiarism but also provides writing improvement suggestions. Similarly, platforms like Gradescope use machine learning to analyze student responses and offer instant feedback, enhancing the learning process (Gradescope. 2024).

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite its benefits, AI in education comes with challenges:

Bias in AI Algorithms: AI tools must be carefully designed to prevent biases that may disadvantage certain student groups. For example, research has shown that facial recognition algorithms used in remote proctoring tools like Proctorio or ExamSoft may misidentify or fail to recognise students with darker skin tones or those from non-Western backgrounds, leading to unfair testing experiences.

Loss of Human Connection: While AI enhances efficiency, excessive reliance on automated systems may reduce personal interactions between students and lecturers. For instance, some students using AI-marked assignments on platforms like Gradescope have reported feeling disconnected from instructors, citing a lack of feedback with a "human touch" that helps build academic relationships.

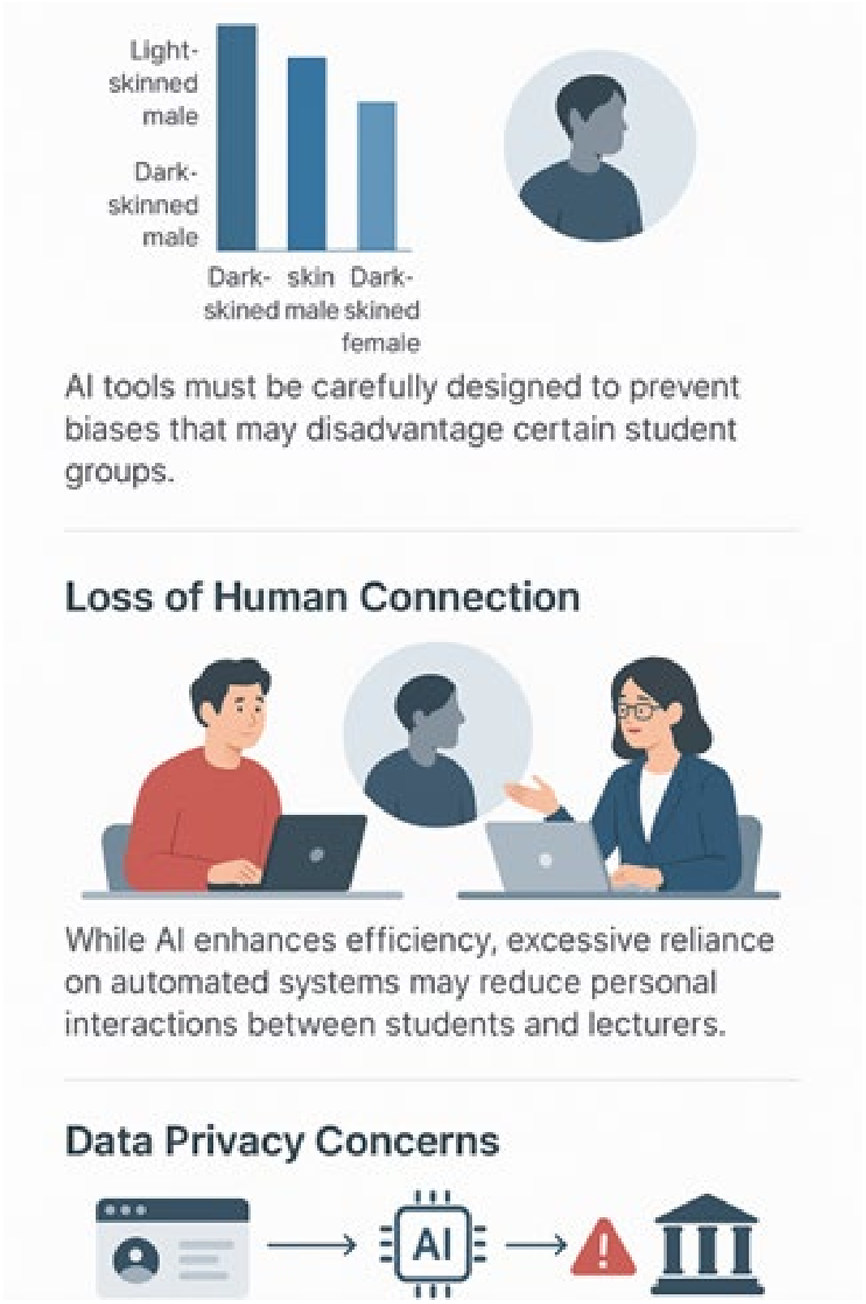
Data Privacy Concerns: AI-driven platforms collect vast amounts of student data, raising concerns about privacy and security. Institutions must implement strict data protection measures. For example, in 2020, Zoom was scrutinised for sharing user data with third parties without sufficient transparency. In educational settings, such incidents raise red flags about how AI platforms manage sensitive student information.

THE FUTURE OF AI IN EDUCATION

As AI continues to evolve, its potential in education is limitless. Future advancements may include AI-driven holographic teachers, VR-based immersive learning experiences, and emotional AI that detects students' moods and adapts lessons accordingly (Wikoom, 2023).

Lecturers who embrace AI and integrate it into their teaching methodologies will not only improve student engagement but also future proof their careers in an increasingly digital world.

AI is not here to replace lecturers—it is here to empower them. By leveraging AI-powered tools, educators can create personalized, interactive, and efficient learning experiences that align with modern digital expectations. Just as relationship marketing and e-loyalty models highlight the importance of engagement in customer retention, AI-based education relies on interactive, customised, and convenient experiences to foster student success.



SOURCE: THIS ARTWORK WAS CREATED BY RASHI WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NIGHTCAFE CREATOR

STUDENT WINS £3,000 AT LSST DRAGONS' DEN 2025 FOR NATURAL SKINCARE BRAND

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

LSST DRAGONS' DEN 2025 WINNER NASHIKA SPENCE, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENT AT LSST BIRMINGHAM (L), WITH JAMES PLATT, LSST'S CAREERS MANAGER (R). PHOTO: LSST.

LSST brought entrepreneurial ambition centre stage with the culminating event of its annual Dragons' Den 2025 student competition.

Representing each LSST site, four outstanding LSST student finalists delivered high-stakes pitches before a distinguished panel of industry leaders – and unveiled commercially viable ventures designed to confront real-world challenges with ingenuity and purpose.

More than a showcase, the event, hosted at LSST Birmingham, exemplified LSST's staunch commitment to enterprise-led education – one that fuses intellectual rigour with applied strategy, preparing graduates to lead with conviction in volatile and complex markets.

"In a climate where employability is no longer enough, LSST equips students to become architects of opportunity – confident, credible and investment-ready," said Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President. "LSST's Dragons' Den is not simply a contest; it is a crucible for tomorrow's trailblazers and is something I recommend all LSST students apply to."

A WINNING FORMULA

The top honour – a £3,000 grand prize – was awarded to Nashika Spence, a Health and Social Science student at LSST Birmingham, whose all-natural skincare brand – TropicSkin – captivated the judging panel with its compelling fusion of scientific integrity and commercial promise. Her venture, designed to support individuals with chronic skin conditions, distinguished itself through a bold brand narrative and an articulated market strategy.

"I feel elated to have been selected as the winner – especially knowing how incredible the other finalists and their business ideas were. I genuinely didn't think I stood a chance, so when they announced my name, I was in complete shock – I cried! I encourage anyone who has ever dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur or brand owner to pursue their goals. If your mind can conceive it, you can achieve it. I'm so grateful to LSST for this incredible opportunity and for believing in my vision. This experience has truly been life-changing." Nashika Spence, LSST Dragons' Den 2025 Winner

Judges praised Nashika's pitch for its depth of research, commitment to sustainability and powerful human impact.

"Her passion for creating inclusive, transformative skincare solutions was both authentic and inspiring. Nashika's presentation demonstrated not only a strong business model but a mission with meaningful reach. This is a venture with genuine commercial and social potential," said James Platt, Careers Manager at LSST.

CREATIVITY ACROSS CAMPUSES

Each campus finalist was awarded a £500 prize in recognition of their entrepreneurial merit and advancement to the national stage. Runner-up, Mariia Deputat, a Business Management student at LSST Elephant and Castle, secured an additional £1,000 for her visionary Ukrainian loungewear brand HoneyBe – a venture that seamlessly fuses luxury with cultural identity.

LOOKING AHEAD

Eduardo Silva, a Business Management student at LSST Wembley, discussed how his business was unique and the services he would bring to the market. Photo: LSST.

"As LSST continues to cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurs, plans are already underway for the Dragons' Den 2026," commented Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO. "Our Careers team is already actively seeking pitch mentors, sponsorship partners and judges to support next year's competition and ensure even greater impact."

"This competition is more than just a showcase – it's a launchpad," added James Platt. "We're proud of every student who stepped forward and pitched. Their courage and creativity are what LSST is all about."

LSST DRAGONS' DEN 2025 FINAL RUNNER UP MARIIA DEPUTAT (L), FOUNDER OF HONEYBE AND A BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT FROM LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, WITH JAMES PLATT (R), LSST'S CAREERS MANAGER. PHOTO: LSST.

EDUARDO SILVA, A BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT AT LSST WEMBLEY, DISCUSSED HOW HIS BUSINESS WAS UNIQUE AND THE SERVICES HE WOULD BRING TO THE MARKET. PHOTO: LSST.

LSST DRAGONS' DEN STYLED JUDGES WERE LOCKED IN FOR 2 HOURS OF PRESENTATIONS AND DRILLED OUR ENTREPRENEURS TO GET TO THE HEART OF THEIR BUSINESSES WHILE PROVIDING HELPFUL ADVICE. PHOTO: LSST.

(L-R) STUDENT CONTESTANTS NASHIKA SPENCE (BIRMINGHAM WINNER, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENT), MARIIA DEPUTAT (ELEPHANT & CASTLE WINNER, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT), EDUARDO SILVA (WEMBLEY WINNER, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT), AND OANA CHISTOL (LUTON WINNER, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT). PHOTO: LSST.

(L-R) JUDGES SHERIDAN SULSKIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE REINVESTMENT TRUST (CWRT); JAMES PLATT, LSST CAREERS MANAGER; ARIECHO GROS, A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WITH EXTENSIVE BOARD-LEVEL EXPERIENCE ACROSS MULTIPLE HIGH-GROWTH ENTERPRISES; AND MARIA MARTYAK, FOUNDER OF THE STRATEGIC CONSULTANCY DOYLE BLACKFRIARS. PHOTO: LSST

(L-R) CHLOE, JAMES AND HARVI FROM LSST'S CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE. PHOTO: LSST

LSST LAUNCHES 'INTERVIEW WARDROBE' TO EMPOWER STUDENTS AND CHAMPION EMPLOYABILITY

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

LSST is thrilled to launch its latest student-focused initiative: the Interview Wardrobe. First introduced at LSST Birmingham – and soon to be available across all campuses – this empowering programme provides students with free access to professional clothing for job interviews, career fairs and networking events. By removing an existing obstacle to career progression, LSST is helping students present themselves with confidence and seize every opportunity their future holds.

"The initiative is part of LSST's broader commitment to promoting social mobility and supporting mature learners, many of whom juggle education with family responsibilities, employment or personal challenges," said **James Platt,** LSST's Careers and Employability Manager. "With the average LSST student aged 35 or older, the Interview Wardrobe responds to a very real and practical need: helping students present themselves professionally and confidently in competitive job markets."

Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President, praised the project: "This initiative speaks directly to the heart of what LSST stands for. Many of our students come from non-traditional backgrounds and have overcome significant adversity to reach this stage. With the Interview Wardrobe, they now have one less hurdle to face. It's an inspiring example of what happens when we listen to each other and act with empathy."

Chloe Pearson, Careers Officer at LSST Birmingham, added: "For our students, the first impression can be make-or-break. Many are balancing financial pressures and simply can't afford to prioritise interview clothing. The Interview Wardrobe is about restoring confidence and ensuring that no one is held back by something as solvable as attire."

Charlie Tennant, LSST's Vice Principal, commented: "Our mission has always been to widen access to opportunity – and that means thinking beyond the classroom. The Interview Wardrobe embodies our values of inclusion and community support. We're proud to take tangible steps that help students transition from education into meaningful and life-changing employment."

This initiative builds upon LSST's broader strategy of embedding employability into the student experience – offering CV support, career counselling, mock interviews, and now, professional dress support. It's a holistic model that reflects LSST's vision of education as a gateway to independence and social mobility.

HOW TO SUPPORT LSST'S INTERVIEW WARDROBE

The launch of the Interview Wardrobe has been well-received so far, highlighting the importance of such support systems in higher education institutions. So far, organisations such as Leonardo Hotels and Graduate Career Solutions have made sizable contributions to the project.

Members of the public, alumni, local businesses and community organisations are encouraged to donate high-quality business wear in good condition. Every item donated contributes directly to a student's journey toward securing meaningful employment.

BEYOND THE BOOKS: INCLUSIVE CAMPUSES AND THE REALITIES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR MATURE LEARNERS

By Rashi Bansal, Lecturer in Business, LSST E&C and Yunus Ali, PAT co-ordinator, LSST E&C

OUR LEVEL 4 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENTS (L-R) EHIJIE JOVE EGBEMHENGHE, ESTHER CONTEH, MARIA NUTU, EUGENIA CALIN, ULRICH ANGOUA, ADRIANA GOUVEIA SANCHEZ (SITTING LEFT) AND MIHAELA DRUGA (SITTING RIGHT). PHOTO: LSST.

THE NEW FACE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is no longer the domain of just 18–22-year-olds. Across colleges and universities, we are seeing a growing population of mature learners—students who return to education later in life, often while juggling jobs, families, and other responsibilities (Kasworm, 2018; HEPI, 2022). These students bring rich life experiences and deep motivation but also face unique challenges that traditional academic environments may not fully accommodate (Bamber & Tett, 2010). As educators, administrators, and institutions, we have a duty to ensure that higher education is not only accessible but also inclusive and supportive of all students, especially those navigating complex life commitments (Stone & O'Shea, 2019).

> *"My reason to return to education was to build a solid foundation that would open more opportunities for growth and advancement. Gaining new skills and qualifications can make a big difference when aiming for a better position in the job field."*
>
> Adriana Gouveia Sanchez, Business Management, LSST E&C

BALANCING ACTS: WORK-LIFE CHALLENGES FOR MATURE STUDENTS

For mature learners, returning to education often means managing multiple demanding roles—employee, parent, caregiver, partner—alongside the role of student. Unlike traditional undergraduates, they may not have the luxury of devoting most of their time to studies. This can result in chronic time pressure, stress, and feelings of isolation (O'Shea & Stone, 2011).

> *"The biggest challenge has been time management. I work in a coffee shop and live in a busy household, so balancing shifts, assignments, and personal time can be overwhelming."*
>
> - Maria Nutu, Business Management, LSST E&C
>
> *"Energy management becomes crucial - after a full day of caring for others, finding the mental and physical energy to focus on studies can be exhausting."*
>
> -Mihaela Druga, Business Management, LSST E&C

Some common challenges include:

- Time management difficulties, especially when classes overlap with work or family commitments (Kasworm, 2018).
- Emotional and physical exhaustion, with students often sacrificing personal wellbeing (Bamber & Tett, 2010).
- Limited access to peer support, as social circles in higher education tend to be geared toward younger cohorts (Stone & O'Shea, 2019).

Financial pressures, including tuition costs and reduced income from part-time or flexible work (Callender & Wilkinson, 2013).

Despite these hurdles, mature students tend to be highly motivated, self-disciplined, and goal oriented. They're not just seeking a degree—they're investing in personal transformation and long-term opportunity (HEPI, 2022).

INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

Inclusion in higher education goes far beyond accessibility or diverse student recruitment. True inclusivity means designing learning environments, support systems, and institutional cultures that embrace the varied experiences and needs of all learners, including mature students (Thomas, 2022).

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Mature learners often feel like outsiders in predominantly younger classrooms. Creating a sense of belonging is crucial—not only for academic success, but for mental wellbeing (Thomas, 2022; Stone & O'Shea, 2019). This includes everything from recognizing life experience in classroom discussions to ensuring mature students feel respected and heard.

> *LSST and my lecturers have been really supportive in helping me manage my studies alongside my personal and professional life. They offer flexible learning options, like recorded lectures and online resources, which allow me to study at times that fit around my work and family commitments. This flexibility has been a huge help in balancing everything.*
>
> - Eugenia Calin, Business Management, LSST E&C

FLEXIBLE STRUCTURES AND SERVICES

> *"It's definitely been demanding, especially during assessment periods. But LSST's support has helped me stay focused. I've developed routines that keep me organised and on track."*
>
> - Maria Nutu, Business Management, LSST E&C
>
> *"Returning to study after a long break meant relearning academic skills, research techniques, or adapting to new technologies and online learning platforms. However, I received great support from LSST lecturers especially during my foundation year in obtaining basic technological skills, doing research and how to manage my assignments."*
>
> -Esther Conteh, Business Management, LSST E&C

Inclusive education demands flexibility—in course scheduling, assignment deadlines, and modes of delivery. Evening and weekend classes, hybrid learning options, and recorded lectures can all significantly improve access for those balancing external commitments (Kasworm, 2018; Stone & O'Shea, 2019).

TARGETED SUPPORT

Mature students benefit from tailored academic and personal support, such as:

- Mentoring schemes (Bamber & Tett, 2010).
- Career guidance that aligns with mid-career goals (Callender & Wilkinson, 2013).
- Financial aid and scholarships specific to mature learners (Callender & Wilkinson, 2013).

> *"In my foundation year, LSST lecturers taught me to understand my learning style and how to prioritise tasks,"* Adriana explains. *"Tools like the Personal Development Plan (PDP) and personalised support from Personal Academic Tutors (PAT) at LSST helped me leverage my strengths and work on my challenges."*
>
> - Adriana Gouveia Sanchez, Business Management, LSST E&C

TEACHING THAT SUPPORTS ALL: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND THEORIES

ANDRAGOGY: ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Proposed by Malcolm Knowles, andragogy focuses on the specific needs of adult learners. Key principles include:

- Adults are self-directed learners.
- They bring life experiences that should be acknowledged and integrated into the learning process.
- They are goal-oriented and appreciate practical, problem-solving learning over abstract theory.
- They need to understand the relevance of what they are learning.

Lecturers can incorporate andragogy by involving students in course design, using real-life case studies, and facilitating peer learning through collaborative projects (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015).

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

UDL is a framework that aims to make learning accessible for all students, regardless of age, ability, or background. It encourages:

- Multiple means of engagement (e.g., discussions, projects, self-paced modules)
- Multiple means of representation (e.g., videos, readings, infographics)
- Multiple means of expression (e.g., essays, presentations, digital media)

UDL is especially helpful for mature learners who may have different learning styles or technology comfort levels (CAST, 2018).

TRAUMA-INFORMED PEDAGOGY

Many mature students return to education after experiencing setbacks or trauma, whether personal, financial, or professional. Trauma-informed teaching encourages empathy, consistent communication, and creating safe, respectful learning environments (Carello & Butler, 2015).

MOVING TOWARD TRULY INCLUSIVE CAMPUSES

The mature student population is growing—and enriching higher education with their diverse experiences, insights, and resilience (Kasworm, 2018; HEPI, 2022). True inclusion means not just accommodating but celebrating the resilience and contributions of these learners.

> *"I want to retrain and broaden my future prospects and I want to encourage my children that they are never too old to learn."*
>
> -Violett Morris, Business Management, LSST E&C

By acknowledging the work-life balance challenges they face and actively working to foster inclusive campuses, we can empower mature learners to thrive academically and personally (Stone & O'Shea, 2019). Creating an environment where they are not only accommodated but celebrated strengthens the entire academic community. Higher education should be a place where everyone, regardless of age or background, feels they belong—and where lifelong learning is truly possible (Thomas, 2022).

At LSST, students like Adriana, Maria, Violett, and many others are not just surviving—they're thriving. Thanks to tailored support, inclusive teaching, and a community that truly understands their journey, every student is empowered to succeed.

BUSINESS STUDENTS ADRIANA GOUVEIA SANCHEZ (STUDENT AMBASSADOR), ESTHER CONTEH, MARIA NUTU, EHIJIE JOVE EGBEMHENGHE, ULRICH ANGOUA, EUGENIA CALIN, YUNUS ALI (SITTING LEFT) – PAT CO-ORDINATOR AND RASHI BANSAL (SITTING RIGHT) – LECTURER IN BUSINESS AT LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE. PHOTO: LSST.

10 TIPS TO BE A LEARNER'S LEADER

By Shan Wikoon, Senior Lecturer in Business and Module Leader, LSST Elephant & Castle

AUTHOR'S IDEA VIA PROMPTS CREATED USING CHATGPT.

When I joined LSST in 2019, I carried with me conventional notions of higher education. However, the diverse learning needs of our students – mature learners juggling work and family, international students navigating language barriers, and individuals with varying academic backgrounds – quickly taught me that one size definitely does not fit all. This realisation sparked a transformation journey that led me to reimagine education through ten key innovations that I'm excited to share with fellow educators.

Just as we wouldn't use a horse-drawn carriage on today's motorways, we cannot rely solely on yesterday's teaching methods to prepare students for tomorrow's challenges. Here's how I've tried to evolve from a traditional lecturer into a learner's leader, always putting our students' success at the heart of every innovation.

Scan this code to listen to the Podcast version of this blog (by NotebookLM)

1. THE SPIRAL CURRICULUM REVOLUTION

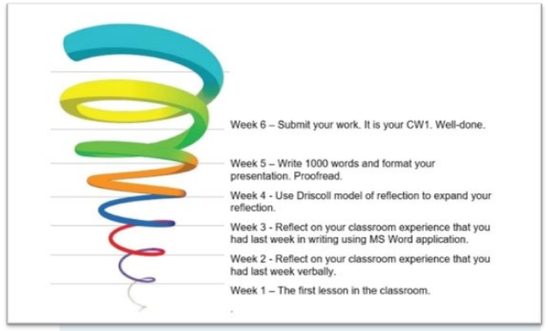
When I took on the role of module leader for two foundation year modules – "Preparing Success Knowledge and Creativity" and "Inquiry Based Learning" – I recognised that our Business and Health degree students may need more than just content delivery. They need a learning experience that would build their confidence progressively.

This is where Jerome Bruner's spiral curriculum became my guiding principle. Rather than presenting topics once and moving on, I redesigned our module materials to revisit key concepts with increasing complexity throughout the student's educational journey. Think of it like learning to drive – you don't start on the motorway; you begin in an empty car park, progress to quiet streets, then gradually build up to complex traffic situations.

How the spiral curriculum works in practice:

- Students encounter topics, themes, or subjects multiple times
- Each revisit introduces greater complexity and deeper analysis
- New learning connects seamlessly to previous understanding
- Students consolidate knowledge while building critical thinking skills

Spiral Curriculum Visualisation



(CREATED BY AUTHOR) A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF HOW STUDENTS PROGRESS THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT TASK ACROSS SIX WEEKS, BUILDING COMPLEXITY WITH EACH ITERATION – FROM FIRST CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE TO FINAL COURSEWORK SUBMISSION.

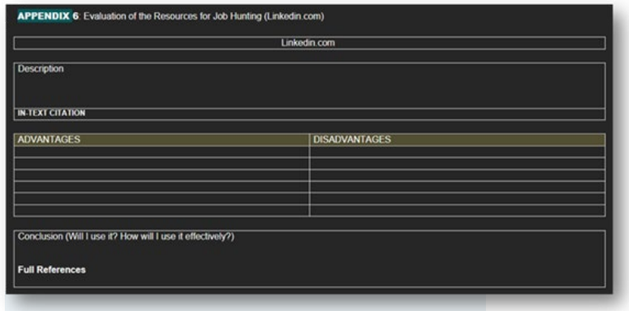
The results have been remarkable. Students who previously struggled with academic writing and IT skills now approach these challenges with confidence, knowing they'll have multiple opportunities to master these essential competencies.

2. TEMPLATES AND VISUAL LEARNING

Have you ever tried to assemble furniture without clear instructions? That's exactly how many students feel when facing assessment requirements. The integration of templates and visual breakdowns into our assessment guidance has revolutionised clarity and accessibility for our learners.

Templates provide that consistent structure students crave, reducing cognitive load and facilitating knowledge transfer. When students can see exactly what's expected – through visual frameworks rather than lengthy text descriptions – their anxiety decreases and their performance improves significantly.

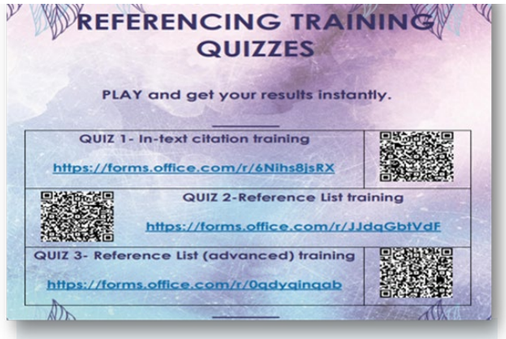
Assessment Template Example



LINKEDIN RESOURCE EVALUATION TEMPLATE SHOWING CLEAR SECTIONS FOR ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND FINAL CONCLUSION – TRANSFORMING VAGUE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA INTO VISUALISED GUIDANCE. CREATED BY THE AUTHOR.

This approach particularly benefits our diverse student population, including those with learning difficulties and international students who may struggle with traditional text-heavy instructions. Visual content captures attention, enhances engagement, and leads to improved retention of complex concepts.

3. GAMIFICATION THAT ACTUALLY WORKS: THE HARVARD REFERENCING SUCCESS STORY – LEARNING SHOULD BE ENGAGING, NOT INTIMIDATING.



THE POSTER FOR QUIZZES. CREATED BY THE AUTHOR.

HARVARD REFERENCING TRAINING QUIZZES

PLAY and get your results instantly.

QUIZ 1- In-text citation training

https://forms.office.com/r/6Nihs8jsRX

QUIZ 2-Reference List training

https://forms.office.com/r/JJdqGbtVdF

QUIZ 3- Reference List (advanced) training

https://forms.office.com/r/0qdyqinqab

You can also play using the phone or any other device.

Need only LSST email address and password. TRY.

When I first created interactive quizzes using Microsoft Forms to help foundation students master Harvard referencing, I had no idea they would become such a phenomenon at LSST.

The numbers speak for themselves:

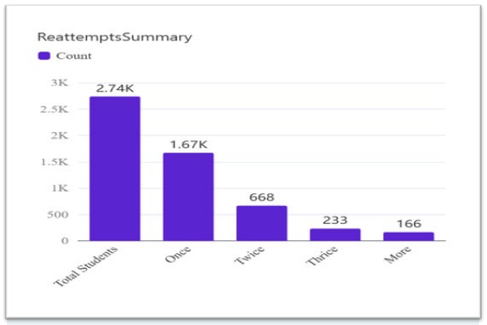
Data of LSST QUIZ 1- In-text citation training (From Sep 2021 to Feb 2025)

Total Entries	Unique students	Total Points Mean	Total Points Median	Total Points Std Dev
4527	2738	67.77	70.00	28.37

This quiz has been in action since 2021. The above data (as of 18-02-2025) reflects LSST students' performance on an in-text citation quiz. Overall, there were 4,527 submissions from 2,738 unique students, with an average score of 67.77 (out of 100), a median score of 70, and a standard deviation of 28.37, indicating a moderate spread in overall performance.

We found that students played the same quizzes multiple times to master the referencing skills.

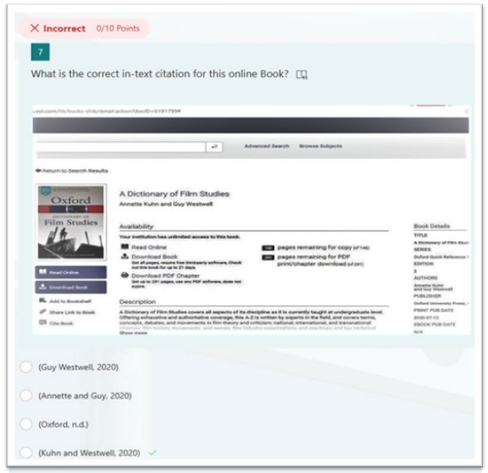
Quiz Engagement durations – Data Visualisation



CHARTS CREATED USING JULIUS.AI. BAR CHART SHOWING STUDENT RE-ATTEMPT PATTERNS, DEMONSTRATING HOW GAMIFIED LEARNING ENCOURAGES VOLUNTARY SKILL DEVELOPMENT BEYOND CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS.

What makes these quizzes special is that they function as both assessment tools and short lessons (see below). Students receive content before answering questions, creating a safe learning environment where they can fail, learn, and improve without penalty.

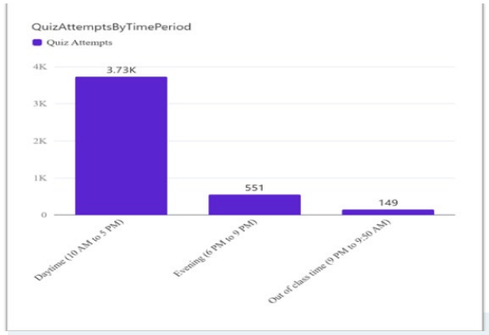
The timing data reveals another fascinating insight: while most activity occurs during class hours (10 AM to 5 PM with 3,730 attempts), 149 attempts were made during out-of-class hours (9 PM to 9:50 AM). This demonstrates how providing flexible,



(CREATED BY AUTHOR)

gamified learning tools enables mature students to engage with material on their own schedules – a crucial factor for learners balancing multiple responsibilities.

Quiz Usage by Time Period



(CHARTS CREATED BY JULIUS.AI) DATA VISUALISATION SHOWING PEAK USAGE DURING DAYTIME CLASSES, WITH SIGNIFICANT AFTER-HOURS ENGAGEMENT DEMONSTRATING THE FLEXIBILITY THAT MODERN LEARNERS REQUIRE.

How to Use the MS Forms App for Creating an Effective Quiz?

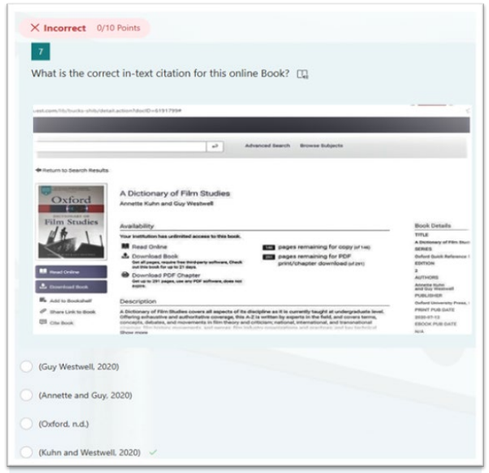
https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/create-a-quiz-with-microsoft-forms-a082a018-24a1-48c1-b176-4b3616cdc83d

4. BEYOND SLIDES: CREATING COMPREHENSIVE SELF-LEARNING RESOURCES

Traditional lecture slides often leave students with more questions than answers. By transforming my presentation slides into comprehensive self-learning tools through expanded speaker notes, I've created resources that work both during live sessions and for independent study.

This approach involves enriching the speaker notes section with detailed explanations, illustrative examples, and deeper insights into complex topics. Students can access the same rich content that I share verbally during lectures, ensuring that those who learn better through reading, or who need to revisit concepts multiple times, have equal access to knowledge.

Enhanced Slide Example



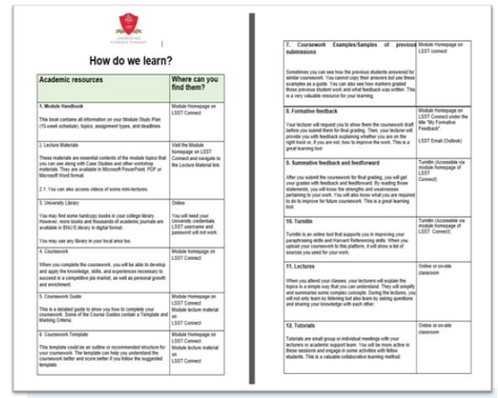
(CREATED BY AUTHOR) SCREENSHOT SHOWING A LECTURE SLIDE WITH COMPREHENSIVE SPEAKER NOTES, DEMONSTRATING HOW VISUAL CONTENT IS SUPPORTED BY DETAILED EXPLANATIONS FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING.

5. FIGHTING INFORMATION OVERLOAD: THE SUMMARY PAGE SOLUTION

In our digital age, students often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of available resources. My solution? A concise, one-page compilation of essential learning materials that serves as a navigation compass through their academic journey.

This streamlined approach helps students efficiently locate key information without getting lost in endless document searches. By consolidating crucial resources into a well-designed document, we reduce cognitive load and allow students to focus on learning rather than hunting for materials.

Resource Guide



(CREATED BY AUTHOR) CLEAN, ORGANISED LAYOUT SHOWING HOW ESSENTIAL ACADEMIC RESOURCES CAN BE INTRODUCED IN A STUDENT-FRIENDLY, EASILY NAVIGABLE FORMAT.

6. TECHNOLOGY FOR INCLUSION: MICROSOFT LEARNING TOOLS REVOLUTION

Every student deserves equal access to learning, regardless of their linguistic background or learning differences.

Integrating Microsoft Learning Tools such as Immersive Reader, Translator, and Dictation has significantly enhanced learning experiences for our most vulnerable student populations.

Visit: **https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/use-immersive-reader-in-word-a857949f-c91e-4c97-977c-a4efcaf9b3c1**

For students whose first language isn't English, these tools provide real-time translation and text-to-speech functionality. For those with learning difficulties, features like adjustable text size, background colour modifications, and voice-to-text conversion remove barriers that might otherwise prevent academic success.

The impact is transformative:

- Immersive Reader reduces visual stress and supports focus
- Translator enables multilingual classroom participation
- Dictation assists students who struggle with traditional writing methods

These tools foster an inclusive learning environment where diverse linguistic and learning needs are not just accommodated but celebrated.

7. AI AS A TEAM MEMBER: BUILDING CONFIDENCE RESPONSIBLY

The integration of AI writing tools represents one of the most exciting yet challenging developments in higher education. Rather than banning these technologies, I've chosen to embrace them as confidence-building tools when used responsibly and transparently.

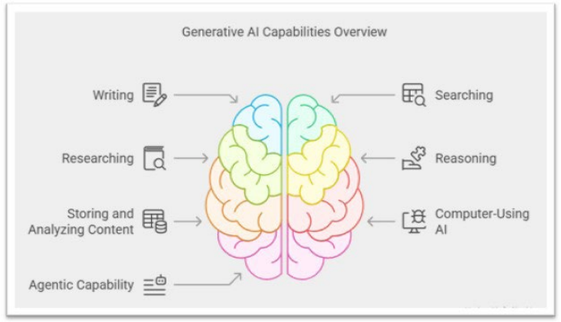
My approach emphasises ethical usage:

- Clear guidelines requiring disclosure of AI assistance
- Emphasis on AI as a refinement tool, not a replacement for original thought
- Critical engagement with AI outputs rather than passive acceptance
- Focus on building writing skills rather than avoiding the writing process

For more insights on AI in education, read my previous articles:

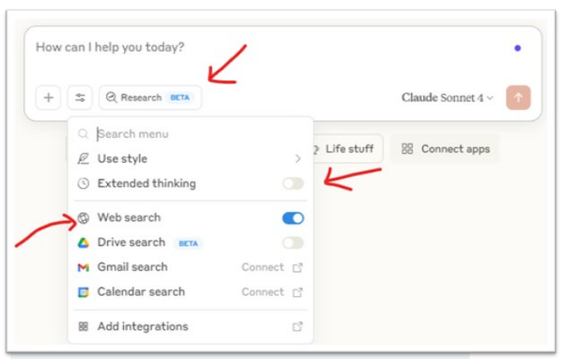
Are you teaching or joking? Can we ask the robots to help? Connecting with ChatGPT as an Educator

Guiding the students in new capabilities of AI



(AUTHOR'S IDEA, CREATED BY NAPKIN.AI) IMAGE SHOWING 7 CAPABILITIES OF CURRENT GENERATIVE AI TOOLS.

Generative AI is evolving fast – and it's not just about writing anymore. Today's tools can search the web in real time, breaking free from outdated data to offer fresh, accurate insights (think Perplexity AI or Bing Copilot). They can reason through problems, analysing patterns and suggesting thoughtful, step-by-step solutions – just ask ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini. And they can research with depth, using platforms like Consensus or Elicit to sift through evidence and summarise key findings. Some even remember what you upload – tools like NotebookLM can explore your own documents, connect ideas, and turn scattered notes into organised knowledge.

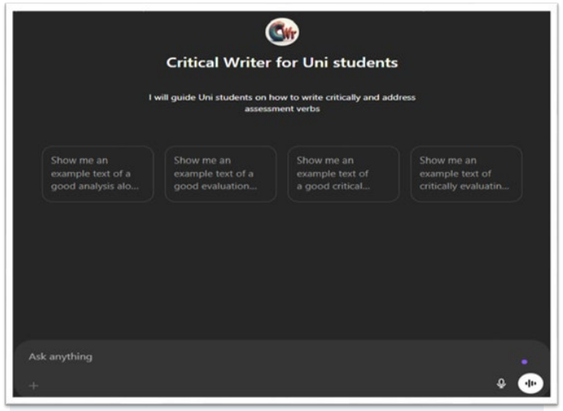


(SCREENSHOT OF CLAUDE.AI CHAT INTERFACE)

This Claude AI Interface (June 2025) showcases powerful research capabilities, including real-time web search, Drive integration, and extended thinking – all designed to support deeper, smarter inquiry.

I've also created a ChatGPT agent specifically designed to support critical writing skills development, providing students with a personalised tutor available 24/7.

Custom ChatGPT Agent Interface



(AUTHOR'S IDEA, CREATED BY NAPKIN.AI) IMAGE SHOWING 7 CAPABILITIES OF CURRENT GENERATIVE AI TOOLS.

8. LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: EDUCATIONAL GAMES AND SIMULATIONS

Business education shouldn't happen in isolation from real-world decision-making.

Incorporating educational games and simulations into our business management curriculum has transformed abstract concepts into tangible, experiential learning opportunities.

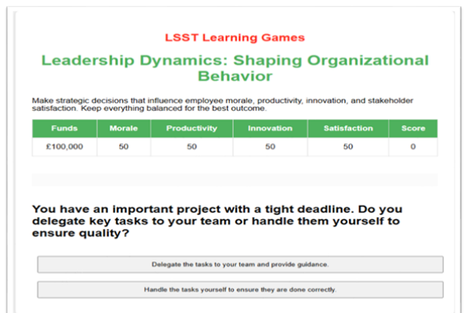
These interactive tools allow students to apply theoretical frameworks in realistic scenarios, improving knowledge acquisition, cognitive skills, and decision-making abilities. Business simulation games foster critical thinking and strategic planning – essential competencies in today's dynamic business environment.

Business Simulation Game Interface

(CREATED BY AUTHOR) SCREENSHOT OF "INVENTORY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE" SHOWING HOW STUDENTS MAKE STRATEGIC DECISIONS THAT IMPACT FACTORY PERFORMANCE METRICS IN REAL-TIME.

https://shanwikoon.github.io/InventoryM/

Leadership Dynamics Game



(CREATED BY AUTHOR) SCREENSHOT OF "LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS: SHAPING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR" SIMULATION GAME WHERE STUDENTS BALANCE MULTIPLE FACTORS INCLUDING MORALE, PRODUCTIVITY, INNOVATION, AND STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION.

https://shanwikoon.github.io/Leadership-Impact-Game/

The beauty of simulations lies in their ability to create a safe environment for experimentation. Students can make bold decisions, witness consequences, and learn from failures without real-world risks – deepening their understanding of complex business dynamics.

Try some of my other games here.

https://shanwikoon.github.io/OrganizationalBehaviorGAME/

https://shanwikoon.github.io/BusinessTycoonGame/

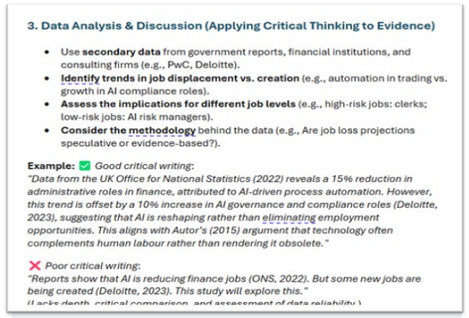
Do I know how to code? Not at all. And guess what – you don't need to either. Just ask any generative AI tool like ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, and they'll do the coding for you. It's like having a digital assistant who speaks fluent tech – so you can focus on the ideas, not the syntax.

9. FEEDBACK THAT TRANSFORMS: GOOD VS BAD EXAMPLES

Effective formative feedback is the bridge between current performance and future potential. Rather than simply pointing out what's wrong, I've developed an approach that shows students exactly what excellence looks like through comparative examples.

By providing extensive feedback that contrasts good and poor critical writing, students can visualise the difference between surface-level analysis and deep, evidence-based reasoning. This approach is particularly powerful for developing critical thinking skills.

Comparative Feedback Example



A COMPARISON SHOWING EXEMPLARY CRITICAL ANALYSIS VERSUS SUPERFICIAL COMMENTARY, WITH DETAILED ANNOTATIONS EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH, EVIDENCE USE, AND ARGUMENT DEVELOPMENT.

This method helps students understand not just what to avoid, but what to aspire to, providing clear pathways for improvement.

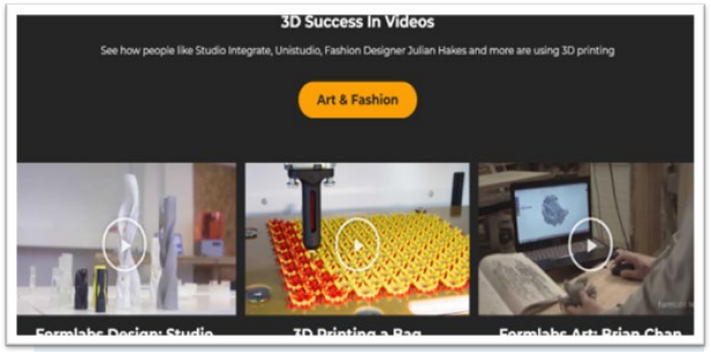
10. INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS: BRINGING THE FUTURE INTO THE CLASSROOM

Education should open doors to emerging career opportunities.

Recognising that many of our students are unaware of cutting-edge industry developments, I've actively sought engagement with industry experts to showcase emerging technologies and career paths.

One particularly exciting collaboration involved working with AdditiveX, a leading UK provider of additive technology solutions, to share their expertise in 3D printing with our students. This partnership resulted in a comprehensive blog post that introduced students to the vast potential of additive manufacturing.

Read the full blog on **https://www.lsst.ac/blogs/additive-x-shares-its-3d-printing-story-with-lsst/**



SCREENSHOT OF ADDITIVE-X'S WEBPAGE SHOWING CREATIVE APPLICATION OF £D PRINTING TECHNOLOGY.

These collaborations serve multiple purposes: they inspire students by showing concrete career paths, provide networking opportunities, and ensure our curriculum remains relevant to industry needs. Students gain exposure to technologies and opportunities they might never have encountered otherwise.

The Learner's Leader Philosophy: Looking Forward

As we look toward 2030 and beyond, I believe the role of educators will continue shifting from information deliverers to learning facilitators, from content experts to learner advocates. We're not just teaching subjects; we're nurturing human potential in an age of rapid technological change.

The ten innovations I've shared represent just the beginning of this transformation. Each success has taught me that when we truly listen to our students' needs and respond with creativity, evidence-based practice, and genuine care, remarkable things become possible.

My invitation to fellow educators is simple: embrace the title of "learner's leader" and join me in reimagining what education can become. Our students – and our future – depend on our willingness to evolve, innovate, and lead with learning at the heart of everything we do.

EXPLORING CAREERS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE: ROSIE SKEAD SHARES SECTOR INSIGHTS WITH HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDENTS

By Renata Carvalho – Senior Lecturer and Academic Team Leader at LSST Stratford

A SNAPSHOT FROM ONE OF LSST'S ENGAGING GUEST SPEAKER SESSIONS. ROSIE SKEAD FROM THE SINGLE HOMELESS PROJECT SHARES INVALUABLE INSIGHTS WITH STUDENTS AT OUR STRATFORD CAMPUS. PHOTO: LSST.

INSPIRING CAREER PATHWAYS: ROSIE SKEAD SHARES INSIGHTS AT LSST STRATFORD

On May 21st, LSST Stratford Campus welcomed Rosie Skead, a dedicated professional from The Single Homeless Project, for an engaging guest lecture that captivated LSST students studying on the accredited BNU L3 BSc (Hons) Health and Social Science with Foundation programme. Drawing on her rich experience in the homelessness charity sector and beyond, Rosie's talk illuminated the diverse and rewarding career paths within health and social care. From actionable advice to real-world perspectives, her session left students inspired and eager to explore the possibilities ahead. Read on to discover the highlights of this transformative event!

A MOMENT OF LEARNING CAPTURED AT LSST STRATFORD. ROSIE SKEAD FROM THE SINGLE HOMELESS PROJECT DELIVERS AN INSPIRING LECTURE, EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND CAREER INSIGHTS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE. PHOTO: LSST.

As part of our commitment to providing real-world learning experiences, on Wednesday 21st of May 25 LSST's accredited BNU L3 **BSc (Hons) Health and Social Science with Foundation** programme at Stratford Campus welcomed external speaker **Rosie Skead** for an inspiring and informative session on careers in health and social care.

> It is an honour to witness students engaging with an event like this. **Our goal is to enrich their academic journey with meaningful employability experiences.**
>
> MR. SYED RIZVI

Rosie, who currently works in the homelessness charity sector, delivered an engaging talk that shed light on the diverse pathways available across public, private, and voluntary roles. Drawing from her professional journey – from volunteering at a brain injury charity to working in psychiatric care, private home support, and investigative psychology. Rosie helped students better understand how to navigate the sector and pursue meaningful careers.

Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees described Rosie's presentation as precise and clearly articulated, praising her deep knowledge of the sector and her ability to communicate complex information in a relatable way. Many appreciated the practical advice she shared on applying for roles and building a career path aligned with one's long-term goals.

Stratford Campus Dean, Mr Syed Rizvi, said: "It is an honour to witness students engaging with an event like this. Our goal is to enrich their academic journey with meaningful employability experiences."

Rosie provided a clear and structured overview of career opportunities across the public sector (e.g., NHS, social work, probation), private sector (e.g., private hospitals, care agencies), and charity and voluntary sector (e.g., mental health and homelessness services). She highlighted

the unique challenges and advantages of each sector, such as career progression frameworks in the NHS, flexibility in private roles, and the mission-driven nature of charity work.

Students were particularly drawn to her discussion of the homelessness sector, finding it eye-opening to learn how this area of care integrates physical health, mental health, and social needs. The concept of multidisciplinary working, where professionals collaborate across specialisms, also resonated strongly.

Beyond sector-specific information, Rosie emphasised key shared values that underpin health and social care work, including safeguarding, person-centred care, dignity and respect, and ethical practice. She encouraged students to explore voluntary opportunities – even just one day a week – as a way to gain valuable experience and build confidence in the field.

Health Lecturer, Selin added: "Seeing students so interested, engaged, and allowing their curiosity to flourish was truly rewarding for me. The event was engaging, and it was inspiring to witness how eager the students were to ask questions and participate actively."

Resources were recommended for those looking to explore different roles or engage in short-term volunteering.

Rosie Skead's visit offered students not only valuable sector knowledge but also a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Her talk bridged the gap between academic learning and the realities of frontline care, leaving students better prepared – and more inspired – to take the next steps toward a rewarding and impactful career.

As Rosie's insightful session concluded at LSST Stratford Campus, her message resonated deeply with the students: success in health and social care lies not only in professional knowledge but also in empathy, resilience, and a genuine commitment to making a difference. Rosie's visit served as a testament to LSST's dedication to bridging academic learning with real-world experiences, ensuring our students are empowered to thrive in their chosen fields.

LSST WEMBLEY RESEARCHER HELPS UNCOVER HIDDEN CRISIS IN WAR-TORN SYRIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

A pioneering research study led by Dr Fuad Trayek, Lecturer in Business at LSST's Wembley campus, has exposed the severe administrative barriers facing universities in conflict-affected northwest Syria. Published in the International Journal of Educational Research Open, the study finds that outdated, paper-based student-record systems prevent thousands of Syrian students from progressing academically and being recognised internationally.

The research, conducted in partnership with the University of South Wales and other universities operating in opposition-held territories, uses a mixed-methods approach involving over 370 student surveys and qualitative interviews with academic and administrative staff. The internationally applicable results reveal a stark truth: the continued reliance on fragile hardcopy record systems is not merely a logistical inconvenience but an educational emergency.

GROUNDBREAKING STUDY BY LSST WEMBLEY'S DR FUAD TRAYEK HIGHLIGHTS AN URGENT NEED FOR DIGITAL STUDENT RECORDS, INTERNATIONAL POLICY REFORM AND INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE IN CONFLICT ZONES. PHOTO: LSST.

"This is not a minor technical issue," said Dr Fuad Trayek at LSST Wembley. "The absence of digital academic records renders students invisible to international universities and employers. It locks them out of opportunity, mobility and recognition."

The study outlines the multifaceted challenges preventing digital reform, including infrastructure breakdown, intermittent electricity, limited internet access and security concerns related to data storage in conflict zones. Institutions face serious resource constraints, a shortage of trained administrative staff and a lack of standardised academic protocols. Compounding these difficulties, both students and employers often favour paper

records due to concerns about authenticity and digital integrity.

"The practical and psychological barriers are immense," added Mohammad Haider, Academic Dean at LSST Wembley. "But so too is the cost of inaction."

A HUMANITARIAN AND ACADEMIC IMPERATIVE

"LSST researchers are taking decisive steps to address the crisis and can deploy digital expertise through capacity-building programmes and strategic partnerships aimed at empowering staff in conflict-affected academic settings. LSST can offer technical mentorship and staff training and help secure international partnerships. This is not charity – it's solidarity," Dr Trayek emphasised.

The study also issues a call to action for governments and academic bodies. It recommends the expansion of scholarship and academic mobility programmes. The researchers also call for more flexible and humane visa processes and recognition of prior learning – even when documentation is incomplete or missing due to conflict.

"We must rapidly move toward inclusive evaluation systems that understand the unique constraints of conflict-affected learners," added Dr Trayek.

To read the full paper on Science Direct visit: Evaluating the effectiveness of student-record systems in conflict-affected universities in northwest Syria relative to student transition and mobility – ScienceDirect

LSST TRAINEE LECTURER TO PRESENT PIONEERING RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE TALENT MANAGEMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

MARJAN ANASTASIESKI, A TRAINEE BUSINESS LECTURER AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT TUTOR AT LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, IS PASSIONATE ABOUT EMBEDDING TALENT MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL. PHOTO: LSST.

Marjan Anastasieski – a Trainee Business Lecturer and Academic Support Tutor at LSST Elephant and Castle – will present his research at the 14th International Conference on the Restructuring of the Global Economy (ROGE) 2025 at the University of Oxford on 11–12 August 2025.

The conference, renowned for bringing together eminent academics and global thought leaders, is centred on promoting sustainability and remains a cornerstone of interdisciplinary academic discourse.

Marjan's research paper, "From Talent Identification to Retention: Embedding Talent Management for Sustainable Development in Football", investigates the nuanced transition from the early recognition of athletic potential to the strategic retention of high-performing individuals within elite footballing contexts.

MARJAN PREVIOUSLY PLAYED PROFESSIONALLY FOR QUEENS PARK RANGERS UNDER 21 (YOUTH LEAGUE). PHOTO: LSST

Drawing from his journey – having played for QPR (Queens Park Rangers) U21 during his studies – Marjan brings a rare dual perspective. "As a former professional football player," he explains, "my firsthand experience in elite sports environments offers unique insights into the often invisible challenges of talent progression."

This real-world insight, combined with postgraduate study and a dedicated move into academic research, has enabled Marjan to develop a clear and practical approach to improving how talent is supported in sport. Central to his research is the idea of Talent Management Units (TMUs) – specialised support teams that bring together coaches, psychologists, medical staff and career advisors. These teams work closely with young athletes to guide their development on and off the pitch, helping them stay mentally and physically healthy, improve performance and plan for long-term success in football or beyond.

Through a comparative analysis of English and continental European football academies, the research critiques inefficiencies in current systems and argues that Talent Management Units (TMUs) offer a strategic response to bridging the gaps between raw talent and structured career pathways in both sporting and business contexts.

The work ultimately draws compelling parallels between the dynamics of elite sport and corporate talent systems, arguing for human-centred, sustainable talent ecosystems applicable far beyond the football field.

Reflecting on the academic significance of this milestone, Marjan commented:

"This research offers a contemporary redefinition of talent management – one that is grounded in sustainability, interdisciplinarity, and strategic foresight. Presenting at the University of Oxford provides a rarefied platform through which to engage wider scholarly and professional communities with its implications."

FROM PITCH TO PODIUM: MARJAN IS BRIDGING ELITE SPORTS EXPERIENCE WITH ACADEMIC RESEARCH FOR TALENT MANAGEMENT WHILE EXPLORING HOW STRATEGIC APPROACHES IN FOOTBALL SHAPE SUSTAINABLE TALENT PRACTICES IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT. PHOTO: LSST.

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, Deputy CEO of LSST, remarked:

"This achievement reflects the calibre and ambition of LSST's academic community. The emphasis on sustainable talent ecosystems speaks directly to the values we champion as an institution — innovation, impact and intellectual integrity."

Eniana Gobuzi, Associate Dean at LSST Elephant and Castle, added:

"We are immensely proud of this ongoing research excellence. It showcases not only our commitment to academic rigour but also our capacity to contribute meaningfully to real-world challenges by bridging theory with transformative practice."

She concluded:

"It is truly amazing to see our staff with such passion and dedication towards research and making a meaningful impact. The future looks bright with such enthusiastic minds leading the way!"

The paper will be delivered in a hybrid format with an in-person presentation at Oxford University on 11 August and a virtual engagement on 12 August 2025. The paper will be published on ResearchGate soon after.

LSST WEMBLEY ACADEMIC TO PRESENT AI AND ETHICS RESEARCH AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

We are delighted to announce that a leading research paper authored by Dr Elaheh Barzegar, Graduate Trainee Lecturer at LSST Wembley, has been accepted for presentation at the 9th International Conference on Modern Research in Education, Teaching and Learning (ICMETL 2025) at Oxford University.

The conference (22 – 24 August 2025) will convene leading scholars from around the globe to examine pressing developments in pedagogy and academic innovation.

Titled *Balancing Ethics and Mental Health: The Influence of AI Tool Use in University Learning Environments*, Dr Barzegar's paper interrogates the increasingly complex relationship between AI, student wellbeing and academic integrity.

In a rapidly digitising educational landscape, where AI-assisted tools have become embedded in everyday learning practices, Dr Barzegar's research confronts a pivotal question: At what point does AI support cross the threshold into ethical ambiguity and psychological strain?

"As an educator, I've witnessed a rapid shift in how students engage with AI to manage academic demands," Dr Barzegar explains. "While these tools offer undeniable benefits, I observed patterns of over-reliance, increased stress and ethical confusion – especially in the absence of clear guidance. This duality is what prompted my inquiry."

ETHICS AT THE EDGE OF INNOVATION

The research highlights a central ethical dilemma when students are often unsure where legitimate AI assistance ends and academic dishonesty begins.

"Many students operate in a grey zone," Dr Barzegar observes. "They are uncertain whether using AI constitutes innovation or infringement. This lack of clarity – particularly when institutional messaging is vague – can lead to unintentional breaches of academic integrity."

Moreover, the research raises concerns about the erosion of critical thinking skills. With generative AI tools offering instant output, the temptation to bypass original cognitive effort is real. Dr Barzegar advocates for discipline-specific ethical guidelines, noting that universal policies often fail to account for nuanced academic contexts.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MACHINE AGE

Perhaps most striking is the research's psychological dimension. The study also finds that unguided or excessive use of AI correlates with declining student wellbeing.

"Students reported both relief and anxiety. On one hand, AI helped them manage time and workload. On the other hand, its unchecked use caused stress, particularly when students felt unsure whether their usage was 'allowed'. This mirrors the principles of cognitive load theory and the transactional model of stress: ambiguity increases anxiety."

The emotional toll, Dr Barzegar notes, is compounded by inconsistent messaging across higher education institutions, leading to diminished academic confidence and heightened emotional fatigue.

A FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSIBLE INTEGRATION

In response to these challenges, the paper proposes a three-pronged institutional framework for the ethical and sustainable adoption of AI in higher education:

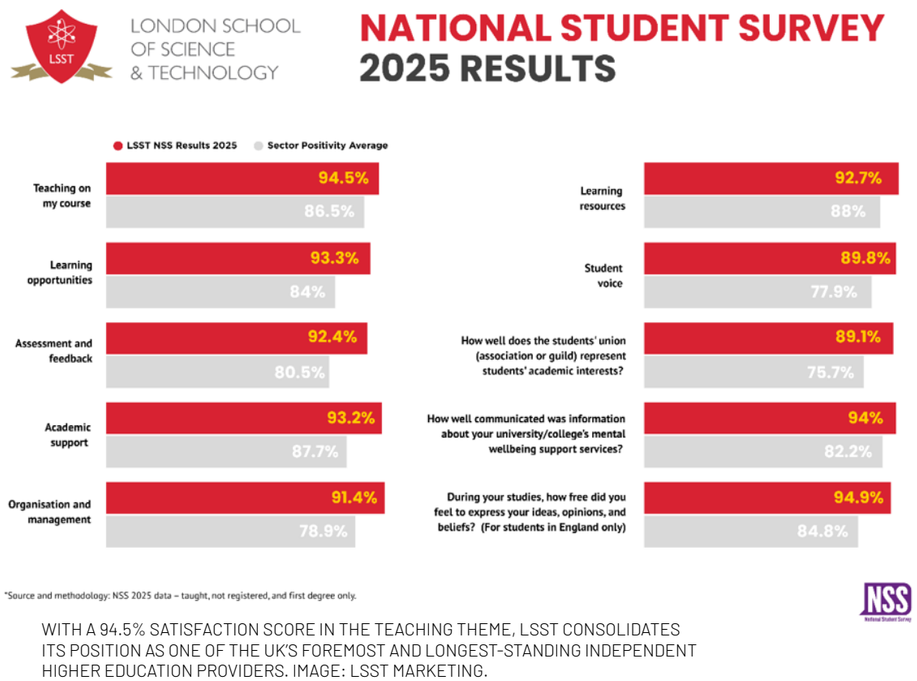
- **Clear Institutional AI Policies** – Develop and disseminate transparent, accessible guidelines that define ethical AI use, with discipline-specific examples to eliminate ambiguity.
- **Education and Awareness** – Deliver targeted workshops and digital literacy training to build students' understanding of AI's capabilities, limitations, and academic boundaries.
- **Integrated Mental Health Support** – Equip student wellbeing services to recognise AI-related stressors and provide tailored support, ensuring students feel safe, informed and empowered in their learning.

"By embedding ethics, education and emotional support into the AI integration process, we can cultivate learning environments where students feel both empowered and protected," Dr Barzegar concludes. "AI should augment education and not erode its integrity or its humanity."

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO, added: "Dr Barzegar's research addresses one of the most intellectually and ethically exigent questions that faces higher education today. We are profoundly honoured that such a contribution, emerging from LSST's academic community, will be presented at a forum as esteemed as Oxford University."

The acceptance of this research by ICMETL 2025 highlights LSST's ongoing commitment to scholarship that is both socially relevant and academically rigorous. As universities worldwide grapple with the challenges posed by AI, this work offers an urgently needed blueprint for balancing innovation with responsibility.

Further details about ICMETL 2025 can be found at **www.icmetl.org**.



WITH A 94.5% SATISFACTION SCORE IN THE TEACHING THEME, LSST CONSOLIDATES ITS POSITION AS ONE OF THE UK'S FOREMOST AND LONGEST-STANDING INDEPENDENT HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS. IMAGE: LSST MARKETING.

LSST ACHIEVES 94.5% TEACHING SATISFACTION IN NSS 2025 – REAFFIRMING ITS POSITION AS A NATIONAL LEADER IN STUDENT-CENTRED HIGHER EDUCATION

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

LSST has once again received nationwide recognition in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2025, with above sector average positions for each of the 10 survey themes, achieving an overall 94.5% student satisfaction rating in the "Teaching on my course" theme – a testament to the sustained educational excellence and steadfast commitment to student experience at LSST.

The latest outcome further cements LSST's upward trajectory, making a continued rise from last year's already exceptional 93.89 percent score in the same theme. Crucially, LSST's performance surpasses both the Office for Students benchmark 92 percent and the UK-wide sector average 86.5 percent, placing it firmly ahead of many long-established universities, showing students feel very positively about their time at LSST.

SUSTAINED OUTPERFORMANCE

The NSS is administered independently by the Office for Students and Ipsos and serves as the definitive measure of final-year undergraduate satisfaction across the UK. LSST's strong results reflect not only the dedication of its academic and professional staff but also LSST's sophisticated, inclusive and industry-relevant teaching model that continues to resonate with a diverse and discerning student body.

"We remain steadfast in our dedication to deliver a transformative, rigorous and caring academic experience," said **Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi**, LSST's Deputy CEO. "The NSS results are not just a mirror of our teaching quality but a reflection of who we are and how seriously we take the trust placed in us by every LSST student."

LSST's continued success in the NSS derives in large part from its consistent approach to accessible teaching, subject relevance and academic support. Survey data reveal that students particularly value how teaching staff clarify complex material and actively work to ensure that course content is made both compelling and applicable.

The survey's first question, which evaluates how lecturers communicate subject matter, saw LSST receive a 95.6% positivity score – well above the national average benchmark of 92.7%. The second question, on how effectively lecturers make content engaging, recorded a 94.6% satisfaction rate, a marked improvement on last year and significantly higher than the sector-wide average of 82.5%.

This demonstrates that LSST's ongoing investment in pedagogical training, curriculum delivery and student feedback mechanisms has yielded quantifiable returns.

"We are proud to provide teaching and learning systems that are not only intellectually rigorous but also shaped by student voice," said **Charlie Tennant**, LSST's Vice Principal. "These NSS results affirm that our staff are not only knowledgeable but also inspirational and capable of making complex disciplines feel both accessible and relevant."

"Once again, our dominating NSS scores place LSST well above sector averages and confirm that our pedagogical approach is not only effective but inspiring," said **Syed Rizvi**, Academic Dean of LSST Elephant & Castle and LSST Stratford and Dean of Learning and Teaching. "Our excellent teaching staff do more than deliver content – they connect, challenge and cultivate curiosity. We are proud to see that this is being recognised by those who matter most: our students."

THE NSS SIGNIFICANCE

Beyond its internal significance, the NSS holds broader implications for institutional accountability and market positioning. Increasingly, it is employed by regulators, prospective students and employers as a proxy measure of institutional quality – particularly amid growing scrutiny surrounding graduate outcomes and franchised provision across the UK's higher education sector. Given that LSST has consistently enhanced its NSS standing over successive years – during a period of intense sector-wide transformation – this is particularly noteworthy.

LONDON SCHOOL OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2025 RESULTS

Questionaire	LSST Positivity (%)	LSST Benchmark (%)	Sector Average Positivity
Teaching on my course	94.5	92	86.5
Learning opportunities	93.3	91.3	84
Assessment and feedback	92.4	89.9	80.5
Academic support	93.2	90.3	87.7
Organisation and management	91.4	88.2	78.9
Learning resources	92.7	90.3	88
Student voice	89.8	86.1	77.9
How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?	89.1	85.6	75.7
How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?	94	88.8	82.2
During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs? (For students in England only)	94.9	92.4	84.8

*Source and methodology: NSS 2025 data – taught, not registered, and first degree only.

GIVEN THAT LSST HAS ACHIEVED SUCH SCORES AT ITS LARGE AND URBAN CAMPUSES ACROSS LONDON, LUTON AND BIRMINGHAM MAKES THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT IS ALL THE MORE STRIKING. IMAGE: LSST MARKETING.

"I am delighted to see that LSST has achieved an outstanding 94% satisfaction rating for its mental wellbeing services, compared with a sector benchmark of 82.2%," said **Dr Wendy Wigley**, Head of Student Lifecycle and Partnerships Manager. "At a time when higher education is undergoing both pedagogical and regulatory review, these results demonstrate LSST's capacity not only to meet but to exceed the expectations of modern learners. It is not enough to be adequate – we strive to be exceptional and continue to make significant contributions to enhancing key NSS areas for our valued partners."

LSST STUDENT VOICES DRIVE STRATEGY

Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President, said: "Our Student Union views the NSS not merely as a performance indicator but as a strategic guide. It is LSST's student voice – honest, heard and addressed – that informs much of the institution's evolution."

Feedback collected through earlier NSS feedback has directly influenced numerous enhancements over the past year, including:

- Strengthening of personal academic tutoring models
- Expansion of interactive learning resources across campuses
- Increased integration of industry guest lecturers and applied projects
- Greater investment in AI and digital learning environments and learning analytics.

"What I hear from LSST students is how much their lecturers care – not just about the academic content but about how students connect with it. They explain things clearly and always relate the theory to something we've seen in real life. It's motivating and, as demonstrated by the NSS 2025 scores, it is because LSST gives students a strong voice. I have been able to – and will continue to – use that to the Student Unions' full advantage," added Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President.

LOOKING HIGHER

LSST's pedagogical approach – rooted in clarity, compassion and challenge – remains its most potent differentiator. The NSS 2025 results will serve not as a conclusion but as an impetus. With a student population exceeding 8,500 and strong partnerships with awarding bodies and universities, LSST continues to reimagine higher education as a dynamic, inclusive and outcomes-focused sector.

"It is another excellent year for student positivity at LSST," commented **Noman Nafees,** Registrar and Head of Student Finance. "The results give us important insight into how our students feel about their whole LSST experience and how everything we do is built on the premise that students can achieve remarkable things when supported with integrity and taught with precision."

The NSS gathers opinions from final-year undergraduate students about their academic experiences. The 2025 iteration was overseen by Ipsos on behalf of the Office for Students.

LSST'S DEGREE AWARDING POWERS AND REGISTRATION CATEGORY APPLICATIONS PROGRESS AS OFS GRANTS EXCEPTION AND OPENS INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP WITH BNU

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

PHOTO: LSST

The London School of Science and Technology (LSST) is pleased to confirm that the Office for Students (OfS) has reopened LSST's applications for Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) and Change of Registration Category (CORC).

In December 2024, the OfS announced a temporary reprioritisation of its regulatory work, suspending applications for new registration, degree awarding powers and university title. In a letter to LSST dated 22 May 2025, the OfS confirmed it would make an exception to the reprioritisation decision, stating it was "prepared to make an exception to the reprioritisation decision and progress your DAPs and CORC applications."

This decision marks a significant milestone and reflects LSST's long-standing commitment to delivering high-quality, independently governed higher education.

CLARIFYING THE OFS INVESTIGATION

The same letter from the OfS confirmed it would open an investigation related to LSST's historic partnership with Buckinghamshire New University (BNU).

It is important to note that the OfS confirmed, "The decision to open an investigation does not mean that any form of non-compliance or wrongdoing has taken place." The OfS also mentioned in their letter to us that our "applications for DAPs and CORC will be progressed alongside the investigation".

We are one of few alternative higher education providers in the country registered with the OfS, demonstrating our commitment to transparency and regulatory compliance. Given the regulatory concerns and widespread media coverage surrounding franchised provision, particularly involving non-OfS registered delivery partners, our formal partnership with BNU will conclude in 2026. However, LSST will continue to fully support more than 6,000 BNU-registered students, who retain full access to our teaching, resources and support services through to the completion of their studies.

LSST'S COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

LSST has maintained strong academic partnerships with UK universities since its inception 22 years ago. We are one of the few alternative higher education providers in the country registered with the OfS, demonstrating our commitment to transparency and regulatory compliance.

Recent indicators of LSST's performance include:

- **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF):** Awarded Bronze in the latest national assessment, recognising quality across teaching, learning environment and student outcomes.
- **National Student Survey (NSS) 2025:** Achieved a 94.5% overall teaching satisfaction rate, placing LSST among the top-performing institutions nationally.
- **Ofsted Monitoring Visit:** Rated as having made 'significant progress' in two out of three key evaluation themes — a strong endorsement of LSST's professional and pedagogical infrastructure.
- **LSST** has secured the prestigious matrix (sic) Standard accreditation for its steadfast commitment to student success and offering high-quality student Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG).

LOOKING AHEAD

We understand and welcome regulatory scrutiny, especially in light of recent events in the higher education sector. We remain confident and fully engaged with the OfS throughout this process. The reopening of our DAPs and CORC applications is a clear vote of confidence in LSST's development and a testament to our academic and operational maturity. We look forward to building on this foundation to better serve our students, the wider higher education sector and raise the bar on compliance, transparency and student protection across the sector.

FROM CAMPUS TO CAREER: LSST GRADUATES STEP INTO THE FUTURE

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

PHOTO: LSST

"Ad astra per aspera" – through hardships to the stars – aptly encapsulates the journey of this year's LSST graduates, whose perseverance, passion and purpose were celebrated in a moving graduation ceremony that marked not just academic achievement but also their transformation.

LSST proudly celebrated the accomplishments of its latest cohort of graduates this month, honouring students who completed their BNU-accredited degrees in BSc (Hons) Health and Social Science with Foundation and BA (Hons) Business Management with Foundation. The ceremony brought together students, families, faculty and friends for a day of pride and anticipation for what lies ahead.

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, Deputy CEO of LSST, lauded the graduates for their unwavering diligence: "Graduation signifies the culmination of both courage and commitment. It embodies not only the academic excellence of our students but also their resilience and visionary outlook for the future. We take immense pride in standing alongside them as they embark on new chapters brimming with purpose and potential."

Elena Soare, LSST's Student Union President, said: 'I am immensely proud to represent a student body so full of resilience, ambition and heart. The future is brighter because of what our graduates bring to it.'

Charlie Tennant, LSST's Vice Principal, emphasised the institution's ongoing dedication to nurturing student achievement: "This graduation stands as a living testament to LSST's ethos to illuminate lives through inclusive and exemplary higher education. Today's graduates are not just degree-holders – they are agents of change. Their dedication inspires us all and we eagerly anticipate the positive imprint they will leave on society and industry alike."

Charlie added: "LSST remains steadfast in championing inclusivity, excellence and lifelong learning – one graduate at a time."

Syed Rizvi, Academic Dean of LSST Elephant & Castle and LSST Stratford, as well as Dean of Learning and Teaching, underscored the vital importance of lifelong learning and the graduates' capacity to effect meaningful community impact: "Today's graduates possess far more than degrees – they carry with them the mindset, skillset and heart set to lead with empathy and distinction. They exemplify LSST's foundational ethos of accessible education, empowering individuals not only to transform their own lives but also to uplift those around them."

Dr Wendy Wigley, Head of Student Lifecycle and Partnerships at LSST, reflected on the magnitude of the occasion: "The academic journey transcends personal development – it is about elevating others as we progress. With each passing graduation, my pride grows stronger. Congratulations to every individual who crossed the stage; your success is a shared triumph and a profound source of joy."

The ceremony affirmed LSST's enduring commitment to delivering accessible, high-quality education that unlocks opportunity for learners from all walks of life. Through its robust foundation pathways and bespoke support services, and recent 94.5% Teaching Satisfaction NSS score, LSST has guided – and continues to guide – thousands of students from aspiration to accomplishment.

CHARLIE TENNANT (L), LSST'S VICE PRINCIPAL, WITH DR WENDY WIGLEY (R), LSST'S HEAD OF STUDENT LIFECYCLE AND PARTNERSHIPS, AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY. PHOTO: LSST.

CHARTING A COURSE FROM CLASSROOM TO CAMPUS LEADERSHIP: HAZAR KORKMAZOGLU APPOINTED AS LSST STRATFORD ASSOCIATE DEAN

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

A CONFLUENCE OF CAPABILITY AND CHARACTER: HAZAR KORKMAZOGLU APPOINTED AS ASSOCIATE DEAN OF LSST STRATFORD. PHOTO: LSST

There are moments in professional life that resonate beyond personal milestones – they stand as a testament to institutional ethos and individual endeavour alike. For LSST Stratford, the recent appointment of Hazar Korkmazoglu as Associate Dean embodies precisely that: a confluence of capability and character.

Sitting in her LSST Stratford office, composed and confident yet grounded in humility, Hazar momentarily lowers her gaze – not out of reticence, but in thoughtful reflection, her tone measured and deliberate, underlining the gravity of the occasion: "I feel absolutely honoured and humbled by this appointment," she begins. "It's a proud milestone in my career and a moment of immense gratitude. To be recognised at this stage and entrusted with a leadership role within an institution that has been integral to my professional journey means the world to me."

HAZAR KORKMAZOGLU STANDS AMONG SOME OF HER LSST STRATFORD TEAM. PHOTO: LSST.

In a world increasingly focused on instant impact, Hazar's journey stands as a paragon of patient progression and persistence. With a deep sense of appreciation, Hazar reflects: "My journey at LSST has been nothing short of transformative."

Having entered LSST in 2021 as one of the inaugural Graduate Trainee Lecturers at LSST Elephant and Castle, her initiation was emblematic of embracing the unknown. "I didn't know what to expect," she confesses. "But LSST provided an environment rich in development opportunities with outstanding training."

Indeed, from academic rigour to cross-campus collaborations, her ascent through the ranks -Graduate Trainee Lecturer in Business, Trainee Lecturer in Business, Lecturer in Business, Course Coordinator for Business – culminating in her current role as Associate Dean, is as methodical as it is meritorious.

"There were moments of pressure and uncertainty," she shares, "but LSST's leadership always recognises potential. That culture of belief in people played a pivotal role in where I am today."

Asked to isolate key inflection points, Hazar said: "Becoming Course Coordinator was one of the first big steps. It taught me about academic management beyond teaching."

Participation in quality audits and external validations further broadened her horizons

-strengthening her strategic acumen alongside her pedagogical prowess. Yet, as she affirms, "Being part of the team is one thing. But leading the team requires constant dedication – it's a challenge I am happy to take."

AN ACADEMIC CALLING

Hazar's foray into academia was catalysed not by mere ambition but by altruism: "My supervisor deeply influenced my passion for academia during my Masters' in Business Law and International Commercial Law at the University of Hertfordshire," she recounts. "Her patience and empathy left a lasting impression. It is something I always want to pay it forward."

From those formative experiences grew a vocation committed not just to disseminating knowledge but to developing people holistically.

Her current doctoral studies in Higher Education – Research Evaluation and Enhancement, at the University of Lancaster, and pursuit of Senior Fellowship illustrate a lifelong learner leading by example: "LSST has shaped my professional identity. Leadership here isn't about hierarchy. It's about empowerment and empathy."

When asked about immediate goals as Associate Dean, Hazar's response is as resolute as it is relatable:

"In summary, my immediate goals are student ascension, staff authenticity and overall academic excellence," Hazar added: "To be a role model – especially as a new woman in academic leadership. I want to show that with perseverance and the right support, anything is possible."

Additionally, with operational objectives centred on community and capacity-building, her agenda is ambitious yet anchored in realism: "Stratford is such a vibrant and diverse community. I want our campus to reflect that energy – to be a place where students feel seen, heard and supported holistically."

SYNERGY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Beyond leadership style, Hazar's commitment to maintaining LSST's academic excellence tradition is unwavering: "I want to build stronger bridges between theory and real-world application," she explains. "From guest speakers to local business connections – it's about ensuring our students graduate not just with qualifications but with outstanding confidence."

When asked about LSST's impact on her evolution, Hazar's voice carries a quiet conviction:

"You're never alone at LSST. It's a big family that uplifts and supports one another."

Two mentors, in particular, stand prominently in her narrative:

"First, Mr Syed Rizvi. From my first day, his continuous faith in me enabled me to achieve beyond my expectations. His knowledge and support are unmatched."

She adds: "Eniana, my former Team Leader and Associate Dean at LSST Elephant and Castle – we were so aligned in values and ambition. Her leadership style – collaborative and compassionate – deeply influenced my own."

FROM EXPERIENCE TO ENCOURAGEMENT

For aspirants within LSST's growing ecosystem, Hazar's counsel is both practical and profound: "Believe in yourself and your journey. LSST is evolving. There's endless opportunity if you're willing to put in the work. Stay consistent, ask for guidance, and never think your efforts go unnoticed. Hard work, passion and dedication will be recognised here."

Her final maxim lands with deliberate clarity: "Believe in yourself and never give up."

"Hazar exemplifies LSST's commitment to cultivating talent from within. Her journey from trainee to Associate Dean is not just a personal achievement – it's an institutional success story. Her leadership is characterised by humility, hard work and a heartfelt dedication to student success," said Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO.

Syed Rizvi, Academic Dean of LSST Elephant & Castle and LSST Stratford and Dean of Learning and Teaching, added: "Hazar's appointment is not only outstanding – it is perfect for LSST Stratford. Her energy, empathy and expertise align exactly with LSST's mission. She represents the next generation of academic leaders and blends strategic insight with genuine care for both students and staff."

As Hazar Korkmazoglu confidently steps into her new role as Associate Dean at LSST's Stratford Campus, her story serves as both inspiration and guidance. It is a narrative marked by humility, driven by hard work, and defined by a strong sense of dedication to education and empowerment.

LSST GAINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AS LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE LECTURER LEADS GROUNDBREAKING MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH AT GLOBAL FORUM

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

DR DHANESWAR BHOI, LECTURER AND RESEARCHER IN SOCIOLOGY AT LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, ATTENDS THE 2025 ISA FORUM IN RABAT, MOROCCO. PHOTO: LSST.

LSST is proud to announce a landmark achievement as Dr Dhaneswar Bhoi, Lecturer and Researcher in Sociology at LSST Elephant and Castle – and Honorary Fellow at the University of Edinburgh – led two pivotal research sessions at the 2025 International Sociological Association (ISA) Forum in Rabat, Morocco.

Representing LSST's commitment to socially responsive research, Dr Bhoi organised and chaired two internationally acclaimed sessions based on the Sociology of Mental Health and Illness:

- **Academic Achievement, Mental Health and Wellbeing: Racial and Ethnic Minority Students in Higher Education**
- **Cast(ed) Emotional Transactions and Self-Harm: Unpacking Caste-Embedded Narratives in Indian Higher Education**

Both sessions drew participation from academics across the UK, Cambodia, China and Hong Kong, firmly establishing LSST's presence in global academic conversations on mental health equity, race, caste and structural inequality in higher education.

"This research speaks to the very soul of what higher education should stand for," said Dr Dhaneswar Bhoi, Lecturer in Sociology at LSST Elephant and Castle. "We must move from simply acknowledging mental health issues to actively dismantling the social structures – racial, caste-based or otherwise – that perpetuate emotional harm in academic spaces."

Dr Bhoi's presentations, which combined Goffman's theory of stigma (1963) and Pearlin's stress process model (1981) with lived student and staff narratives, were widely recognised as setting new standards for engaged and critical sociology. His analysis of racial minority stress in UK higher education and caste-based emotional trauma in Indian universities captured both theoretical rigour and human-centred impact.

(L-R) PROF JEREMY DIXON, PRESIDENT, RESEARCH COMMITTEE 49 (RC49), CARDIFF UNIVERSITY; DR DHANESWAR BHOI, RC49 MEMBER, SESSION CHAIR AND ORGANISER, SOCIOLOGY LECTURER AT LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE; DR MOUNDIB ABDELRHANI ABDELRHANI, MED V UNIVERSITY, MOROCCO; DR FELIPE SZABZON, SECRETARY, RC49, UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN, DENMARK. PHOTO: LSST.

Eniana Gobuzi, Associate Dean for LSST's Elephant and Castle Campus, stated, "Dr Bhoi's leadership has brought honour to LSST internationally. His efforts exemplify the academic bravery and cultural accountability that oppose cultural disadvantages we aim to eliminate in higher education worldwide."

The presentations, chaired by Professor Jeremy Dixon, a Reader in Social Work at the Centre for Adult Social Care Research (CARE) at Cardiff University, and Dr Bhoi's sessions, were formally recognised as models for future engaged sociological research. Plans are now underway for a series of edited volumes and special issues in several leading international sociology journals with LSST's involvement.

"This is yet another defining moment for LSST," said Syed Rizvi, Academic Dean of LSST Elephant and Castle and LSST Stratford and Dean of Learning and Teaching. "Dr Bhoi's research not only advances academic insight but also makes a direct contribution to policy and practice in higher education. It challenges us all to create institutions that further prioritise wellbeing, equity and dignity alongside achievement."

Dr Bhoi expressed his heartfelt thanks to LSST's leadership, including Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO, for its "intensive support and encouragement". His work continues with co-authored academic publications and collaborative research groups dedicated to exploring how structural violence – including racial, caste-based and intersectional inequalities – shape academic experiences worldwide.

"Despite our outstanding NSS 2025 scores, true academic excellence is not measured by rankings alone," added Eniana. "It is measured by the courage to confront uncomfortable truths and by the compassion we show every student and colleague."

Through Dr Bhoi's pioneering work, LSST continues to define itself at the forefront in critical and justice-oriented research – committed to building a more inclusive and compassionate academic world.

LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE BUSINESS LECTURERS HERALD PIONEERING RESEARCH ON GENERATIVE AI AND HYBRID SERVICE-LEARNING

By Kunal Chan Mehta | PR Manager, LSST

LSST ELEPHANT AND CASTLE LECTURERS JOY DSOUZA (L) AND DR YING LIU (R) ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT GENERATIVE AI AND HYBRID SERVICE-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS. PHOTO: LSST.

LSST is delighted to announce that two distinguished business lecturers from its Elephant and Castle campus – Dr Ying Liu and Joy Dsouza – have achieved global academic distinction through their ongoing collaborative research in the transformative application of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) – such as ChatGPT – within hybrid service-learning environments.

Their highly praised co-authored chapter, Transforming Hybrid Service – Learning with Generative AI: The LivePBL Ada-Rob Communication Skills Design Approach, is published by IGI Global in the volume Next Generation of AI Methodologies in Education.

Their contribution introduces the Ada-Rob Skill Communication Design Approach, a paradigmatic framework that addresses skill communication deficits in service-learning through an ethically grounded and human-centred AI methodology.

At the heart of the Ada-Rob model are two interdependent pillars:

- Ada – which supports adaptive and personalised learning pathways.
- Rob – which fosters role-based, structured communication for better collaboration.

Dr Ying Liu, Lecturer in Business at LSST Elephant and Castle, explains; "The Ada-Rob model views communication skill development as both role-anchored and adaptively situated. For example, at LSST, lecturers often switch roles – academic guide, mentor and adviser – within a single session. One student may need help understanding a concept, while another may need encouragement. When applying Gen AI to facilitate such communication, we develop skills from both sides of the same coin: Rob supports structured, role-based communication, while Ada ensures flexibility and responsiveness to learner needs. Together, they enable communication that is clear, empathetic and professional."

Their research spans international contexts, including China, Nepal and cross-cultural community partnerships, affirming its versatility across divergent educational and socio-economic landscapes. By fusing adaptive learning with structured role-based service, Ada-Rob transcends conventional AI frameworks, prioritising scalability, layered ethical responsibility and human-in-the-loop governance.

Dr Ying Liu, Lecturer in Business at LSST Elephant and Castle, added: "Our aspiration was to pioneer a system where Gen AI is not merely a computational artefact but a socio-pedagogical instrument. The Ada-Rob model embodies a dual commitment – to technological innovation and human dignity. It affirms LSST's commitment to building global pedagogic advancements through ethically scaffolded AI."

Joy Dsouza, Lecturer in Business at LSST Elephant and Castle, added: "The nexus between business education and service-learning demands more than mere digital augmentation. Ada-Rob integrates adaptive learning with structured role demarcations, fostering resilient, autonomous learners while nurturing essential business acumen such as leadership, collaboration and reflective practice."

Building upon this seminal work, Dr Ying Liu has further contributed to Routledge's new volume, Generative Artificial Intelligence Empowered Learning: A New Frontier in Educational Technology. His chapter critically interrogates the evolving discourse surrounding so-called "Weak AI" (Soft-Gen-AI) while advocating for frameworks that shun one-size-fits-all rigidity in favour of lifecycle ethics and role-specific information governance.

Syed Rizvi, Academic Dean of LSST Elephant & Castle and LSST Stratford and Dean of Learning and Teaching, observed: "This is not merely research for its own sake; it is research with profound implications for educational praxis. The Ada-Rob approach sets a formidable benchmark in reconciling AI's capabilities with pedagogic integrity."

Eniana Gobuzi, Associate Dean, LSST Elephant and Castle, remarked: "At LSST, we cultivate intellectual leadership that reverberates far beyond our institutional walls. This research is emblematic of that ethos – scholarship that is both globally relevant and, despite the focus on AI, rigorously human-centric."

Their collective work underscores LSST's strategic vision of positioning itself at the vanguard of AI-integrated educational research by leveraging interdisciplinary inquiry to chart new horizons in higher education, service-learning and beyond.

ARE FOOD ADDITIVES SAFE? THE HIDDEN RISKS IN MODERN DIETS

By Monika Rau, Trainee Lecturer in Health, LSST Elephant and Castle

SOURCE: AUTHOR, 2025. IMAGE CREATED USING DEEP AI.

In today's fast-paced world, food consumption patterns have evolved dramatically. While people enjoy the convenience and variety of modern diets, the use of food additives has sparked a global debate about safety and health concerns. This blog explores the role and types of food additives in contemporary consumption, their safety, and the broader implications for global health.

WHAT ARE FOOD ADDITIVES?

Many food elements naturally occur as minerals and can be found in some foods in lesser amounts. However, once they are manufactured and intentionally added to foods to achieve specific purposes, such as preserving freshness, enhancing flavour, improving appearance, or modifying texture, these elements become additives. During processing, their proportions are much higher, and they have been assigned E-numbers (Davidson and Singh, 2024). For example, common artificial colours include tartrazine (E102), sunset yellow (E110), and Allura Red (E129). They are used primarily in processed and packaged foods but can also be found in some fresh foods such as jams, jellies, and dairy products. They serve specific technological, sensory, or nutritional purposes during food processing, preparation, packaging, or storage (Lindsay, 2007). One of them is widely used artificial sweeteners such as aspartame (E951), sucralose (E955), saccharin (E954), acesulfame potassium (E950), and neotame (E961). They play a crucial role in maintaining the safety, quality, and appeal of modern food supply. The main roles include spoilage prevention by inhibiting the growth of harmful microorganisms, thereby extending shelf life, and ensuring food safety (Silva and Lido, 2016; Herrera et al., 2020). They improve or modify the taste, smell, colour, texture, and appearance of foods to make them more appealing and consistent for consumers (Downham and Collins, 2000). Additionally, to facilitate food manufacturing and preparation by controlling acidity, aiding leavening, preventing caking, or stabilising emulsions (Ukwo, Udo, and Ndaeyo, 2022).

KEY TYPES OF ADDITIVES AND HEALTH

BENZOATES

Sodium benzoate is a widely used synthetic food preservative derived from benzoic acid, which can occur both naturally and artificially. As the sodium salt of benzoic acid, it is commonly found in various food products, beverages, and personal care items. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognises sodium benzoate as safe (GRAS) when used in appropriate amounts, and it serves a crucial role in inhibiting the growth of mould, yeast, and bacteria, thereby extending the shelf life of many products (Code of Federal Regulations, no date; Lennerz et al., 2015).

However, concerns have been raised about the potential health risks associated with benzoates, particularly in children. Research links them to behavioural disturbances, including hyperactivity and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (McCann et al., 2007; Kemp, 2008). Additionally, studies suggest that sodium benzoate may have neurotoxic effects due to toxic metabolites produced by gut microbes (Pedigo, 2019; Yadav et al., 2021). Long-term use has also been associated with cellular damage and potential teratogenic effects, which can disrupt normal foetal development and lead to birth defects (Saatci et al., 2016; Walczak-Nowicka and Herbert, 2022; Stanford Medicine, no date).

While the health risks and toxic effects—such as behavioural disturbances and neurotoxicity—are primarily associated with synthetic benzoates, it is important to recognise the essential role they play in food preservation. Natural benzoic acid is found in some fruits, but the sodium benzoate used in processed foods is typically manufactured synthetically and does not occur in significant amounts in natural food sources (Han, 2020). This dual perspective highlights the importance of careful regulatory oversight and consumer awareness in balancing the benefits of food additives with potential health risks.

NITRATES AND NITRITES

Nitrates can be either synthetic or naturally occurring chemicals composed of nitrogen and oxygen. Found in soil, water, and many foods—especially vegetables—they are also used as food additives, primarily as preservatives in processed meats and cheeses. Nitrates and nitrites are effective in preventing the growth of harmful bacteria, particularly Clostridium botulinum, which causes botulism, a serious food-borne illness. Additionally, they help cured meats retain their characteristic pink colour and enhance flavour (Pierson, Smoot, and Robach, 1983; Flores and Toldra, 2021; Shakil et al., 2022; Quansah and Saalia, 2024).

However, excessive exposure to synthetic nitrates can lead to significant health issues, particularly methemoglobinemia.

This condition alters haemoglobin, impairing its ability to carry oxygen efficiently and potentially resulting in serious symptoms such as cyanosis (bluish skin), cardiac arrhythmias, and various central nervous system effects, ranging from dizziness to coma (Fewtrell, 2004; Rapaport, 2023). Infants under six months are especially vulnerable, with fatal cases linked to formula prepared with contaminated water (Fewtrell, 2004). Chronic exposure to high levels of nitrates and nitrites may lead to additional health concerns, including frequent urination, abdominal pain, and even death (Harper et al., 2017; United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1999).

natural and synthetic nitrates and nitrites serve essential roles in food preservation and safety, awareness of their potential risks—especially from processed foods and contaminated sources—is crucial for informed dietary choices.

SULPHITES

Sulphites are a group of chemical compounds, including sulphur dioxide and various sulphite salts such as sodium sulphite, sodium bisulphite, sodium metabisulphite, potassium bisulphite, and potassium metabisulphite. While they occur naturally in some foods and in the human body, sulphites are predominantly used as

SOURCE: AUTHOR, 2025. A PHOTO WAS TAKEN OF A COMMON SALAD DRESSING AVAILABLE IN THE KITCHEN.

Importantly, naturally occurring nitrates in vegetables are generally considered less harmful and may even provide health benefits, thanks to the presence of protective compounds like antioxidants (Rapaport, 2023). In contrast, synthetic nitrates and nitrites found in processed meats are more closely associated with negative health effects, particularly the formation of carcinogenic nitrosamines during cooking or digestion. While acute toxicity, such as methemoglobinemia, is most linked to synthetic nitrates from contaminated water, it can theoretically occur from excessive intake from any source (Rapaport, 2023). Thus, while both

food additives to preserve freshness and enhance shelf life in a variety of products, including beverages, dried fruits, wine, jams, seafood, and meats (Grotheer, Marshall, and Simmone, 2005; Quansah and Saalia, 2024). According to the European Food Safety Authority (2016), common sulphites include sulphur dioxide (E220) and sodium bisulfite (E222), which play an essential role in preventing spoilage and maintaining food quality.

However, sulphites can provoke adverse reactions in sensitive individuals. Symptoms can range from mild issues like dermatitis and hives to more severe respiratory

problems, such as asthma attacks, particularly in asthmatic individuals, where sensitivity is estimated to be between 3 and 10% (Vally, Misso, and Madan, 2009). Additionally, high dietary intake of sulphites has raised concerns over potential effects on the central nervous system, including delayed nerve cell responses, which may indicate early signs of dysfunction (Dalton-Bunnow, 1985).

In conclusion, while sulphites are valuable as preservatives and antioxidants, ensuring food safety and quality, they pose significant risks for sensitive populations, particularly those with asthma. Adverse reactions can range from mild to severe, emphasising the need for caution among individuals with known sensitivities. Therefore, while sulfites serve essential functions in the food industry, it is crucial for consumers to be aware of their potential risks and read labels carefully when selecting food products.

FOOD ADDITIVES SAFETY REGULATIONS IN THE EU AND US

The EU regulates food additives primarily under Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008, which lays out strict requirements for the safe use, approval, and labelling of food additives. Only additives that have undergone a rigorous safety assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and have been authorised by the European Commission are permitted for use (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2008). The EU regularly re-evaluates approved additives due to new scientific evidence, updating regulations and phasing out substances if safety concerns arise (e.g., the titanium dioxide ban). Novel foods, including new additives, are regulated under Regulation (EU) 2015/2283, requiring a separate safety assessment before market entry (European Commission, 2024; Askew, 2021).

"The Food Additive Amendment (1958) to the FDCA subjected food additives to regulatory scrutiny and gave the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to require premarket approval for new food additives" and that "any substance intentionally added to food is a food additive and is subject to premarket approval by the FDA unless the use of the substance is GRAS (generally recognised as safe) or otherwise excepted." (Pressman, Clemens, Hayes, and Reddy, 2021).

GLOBAL CONCERNS ABOUT FOOD ADDITIVES

There is growing international concern about the health impacts of food additives, especially as scientific studies increasingly link certain additives to a range of health problems. Research has associated harmful additives and preservatives with conditions such as asthma, ADHD, heart issues, cancer, obesity, and hormonal disruptions, particularly in children, who are more vulnerable to these exposures (Sambu, Hemaram, Murugan, and Alsofi, 2022). Some additives may interfere with hormones, influence growth and development, and contribute to the rising rates of childhood obesity.

For instance, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies "ingested nitrate and nitrite under conditions that result in endogenous nitrosation" as probably carcinogenic to humans by 2006 (Group 2A) (IARC Working Group on The Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Human, 2006). Some studies suggest increased risks of childhood diabetes, recurrent diarrhoea, and respiratory infections in children exposed to high nitrate levels (Bahadoran, Ghasemi, Mirmiran, Azizi, and Hadaegh, 2016; United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1999). Epidemiological studies from 2022 have linked high intake of food additive nitrates and nitrites to increased risks of certain cancers, such as breast cancer (nitrates) and prostate cancer (nitrites), particularly from processed meats. Associations with gastric, renal, thyroid, and colorectal cancers have also been reported, though results are sometimes inconsistent and may depend on the source (animal vs. plant)(Chazelas et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2022).

CALL FOR ACTIONS

Experts and advocacy groups are calling for more rigorous, independent oversight of food additives, harmonisation of international standards, and greater transparency in regulatory processes (World Health Organization, 2023). There is increasing pressure on governments—especially in the U.S.—to re-evaluate the safety of additives already in use and to close regulatory loopholes that allow potentially harmful substances into the food supply. Meanwhile, nitrates and nitrites themselves are declared to be not directly carcinogenic, but they can react with amines and amides in the body (especially in acidic environments like the stomach) to form N-nitroso compounds (nitrosamines), many of which are known carcinogens (Katwowska and Kononiuk, 2020; de Andrade Junior et al., 2021). Therefore, additives' safety must be re-evaluated, considering many populations cannot afford to buy only highly processed foods.

CONCLUSION

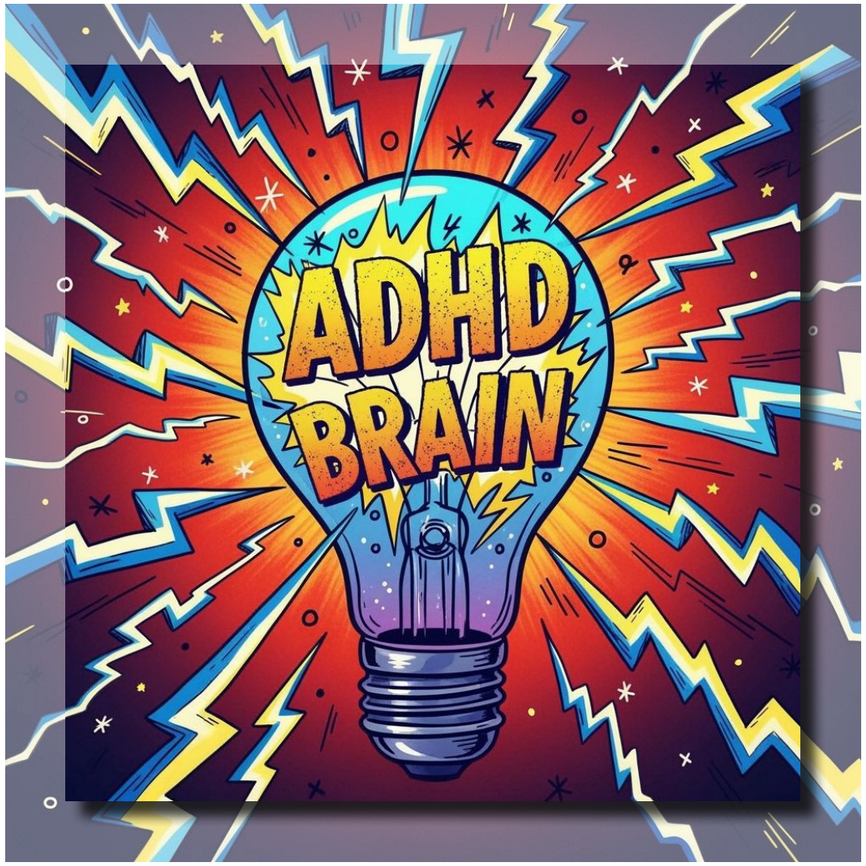
In the complex landscape of contemporary food consumption, the role of food additives is both significant and multifaceted. While these substances are essential for ensuring food safety, quality, and longevity, growing concerns regarding their health implications cannot be overlooked. As we navigate this intricate terrain, it is crucial for consumers to remain informed and proactive about their dietary choices.

The increasing awareness of potential risks associated with certain additives—especially among vulnerable populations like children—highlights the need for transparency in food labelling and regulatory practices. As consumers demand greater accountability and seek natural alternatives, the food industry must adapt to foster a safer and more sustainable food system.

The future of food consumption will rely on a collaborative effort between consumers, producers, and regulators to prioritise health, well-being, and environmental sustainability. By making informed choices and advocating for rigorous safety standards, we can collectively shape a food environment that safeguards public health while promoting innovation and quality in food production.

ADHD IS NOT A DISTRACTION: IT'S A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING

By Rashi Bansal, Course Coordinator, Health L3&4, LSST Elephant and Castle, and Yunus Ali, PAT coordinator, LSST Elephant and Castle



SOURCE: THIS ARTWORK WAS CREATED WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – NIGHTCAFE CREATOR

Let us begin by turning the traditional narrative on its head: ADHD is not a flaw – it's a form of cognitive diversity that can drive innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. Within higher education, it's time we shifted the focus from remediation to recognition.

NEURODIVERSITY AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Our understanding of ADHD is evolving thanks to frameworks like Neurodiversity Theory (Singer, 1999; Armstrong, 2010), which reframes neurological differences not as deficits but as naturally occurring variations in the human genome. From this perspective, ADHD is not something to "fix" – it's something to understand and embrace.

LSST Life Magazine

Parallel to this, Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978) offers a powerful pedagogical lens. Constructivism suggests that learning is an active, contextualised process, exactly the type of environment where students with ADHD thrive. These students often engage deeply when content is meaningful, collaborative, and experiential.

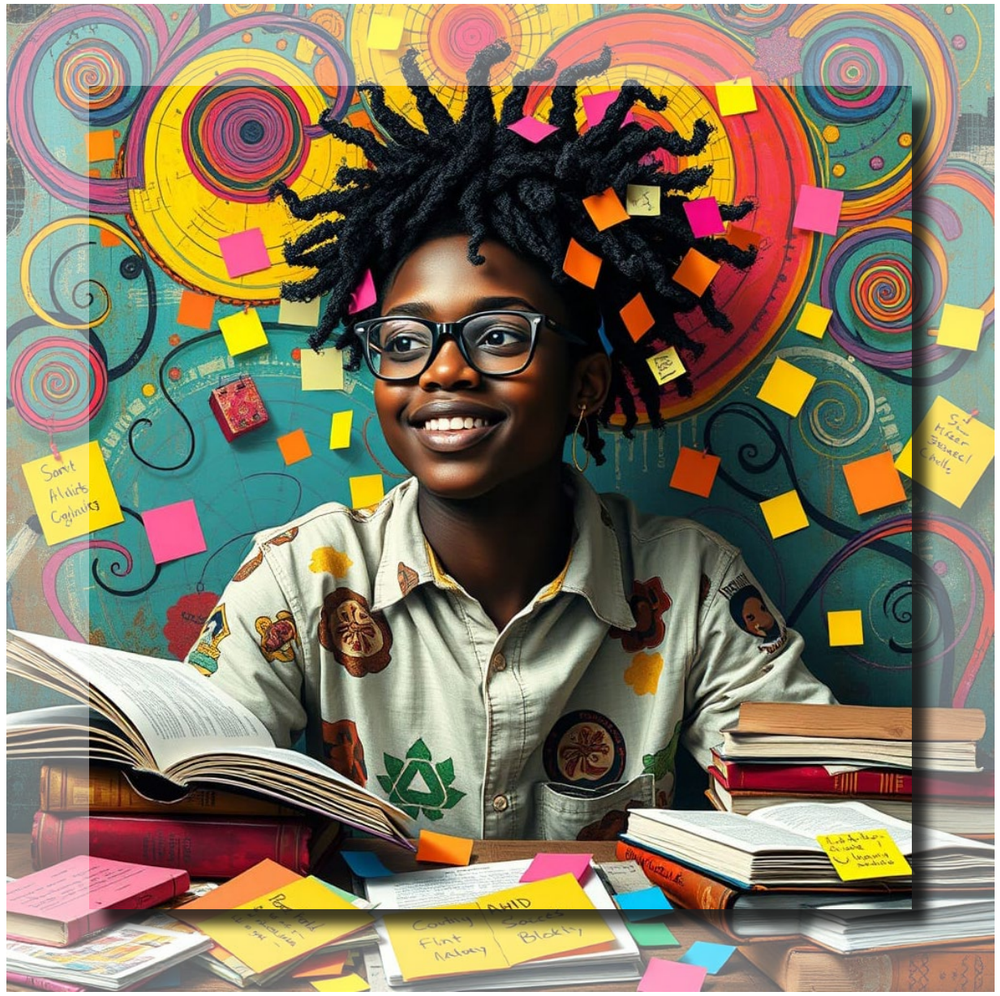
BEYOND THE BOX-TICKING: WHY ADHD MINDS ARE ASSETS IN BUSINESS

Let's be honest, the business world doesn't reward robotic compliance. It rewards original thinking, fast pivoting, and risk-taking. Traits commonly found in individuals with ADHD include divergent thinking, high energy, spontaneity, and hyperfocus on areas of passion (Sedgwick et al., 2019).

Some of the most iconic entrepreneurs – Richard Branson, David Neeleman, and IKEA's Ingvar Kamprad – openly credit their ADHD-like traits as drivers of their success (White & Shah, 2006). So, why do classrooms still penalise students who can't sit still or who "daydream" during PowerPoint-heavy lectures?

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US AT LSST

At LSST, we pride ourselves on championing inclusivity and equity. But it's time to go from accommodation to celebration of neurodiversity. Here's how:



SOURCE: THIS ARTWORK WAS CREATED WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NIGHTCAFE CREATOR

1.Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL (Rose & Meyer, 2002) is a framework that encourages designing educational environments that accommodate all learners. Offering multiple ways to access content and demonstrate knowledge benefits everyone, not just neurodivergent students.

2. Assessment Flexibility

Encouraging multimedia submissions, collaborative projects, or entrepreneurial pitches as alternatives to traditional essays allows ADHD students to showcase their talents in authentic ways (Hehir et al., 2016).

3.Staff Development

Professional development in neurodiversity should be a core part of teaching excellence. The more we understand executive functioning, sensory regulation, and working memory challenges, the more inclusive we can be in our teaching methods (Alloway et al., 2009).

4.Student Voice and Co-Design

Engage students with ADHD in designing their learning experiences. This honours the constructivist principle of learner agency and makes our classrooms truly inclusive (Cook-Sather, 2020).

ADHD IS AN ASSET – IF WE LET IT BE

When we stop viewing ADHD as a disruption and start recognising it as a different cognitive operating system, we create space for brilliance. Not every student learns in straight lines: some spiral, some zigzag, and some leap. That doesn't make them less capable; it often makes them more visionary.

Let's move from compliance-based education to creativity-based education. Let's be bold, disruptive, and inclusive, just like the ADHD thinkers we aim to empower.

Coming Straight from the Source: Mr. Yunus Ali's Perspective

Let's pause for a moment and listen to someone who's not only walked the walk but is now actively paving the way for others. Mr. Yunus Ali, a fellow lecturer and PAT Coordinator at LSST, lives with a neurodiverse condition, and he is one of our most energetic, empathetic, and innovative educators.

Yunus often shares how his personal journey has shaped his teaching philosophy and his connection with students. He describes himself as "self-diagnosed with a bag of coping mechanisms", and what a brilliant bag it is. From breaking lectures into micro-units of high engagement to encouraging brain-dumping exercises during tutorials, Yunus embodies the inclusivity we often theorise but rarely practise consistently.

But perhaps what's most impactful is the emotional safety Yunus creates in his learning spaces. Students from a wide range of backgrounds, including neurodiverse learners, first-generation university students, mature learners, and those for whom English is an additional language – often describe his sessions as "judgement-free zones." This resonates strongly with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist framework, where learning is built through collaboration, trust, and supportive dialogue. By modelling vulnerability, compassion, and authenticity, Yunus invites

"I am a firm believer in creating a safe, supportive space where my students feel seen, heard, and empowered to bring their full selves into the learning experience. Psychological safety is foundational to learning. I begin each module by setting expectations around respect, inclusivity, and confidentiality. I openly acknowledge that neurodiversity exists and that different brains learn differently. Sharing aspects of my own ADHD journey – when appropriate – helps normalise differences and reduce stigma. I also create anonymous feedback channels where students can raise concerns or suggestions without fear. These practices encourage open dialogue and allow all students, not just the vocal few, to feel seen and valued."

Mr. Yunus Ali (PAT coordinator, LSST Elephant & Castle)

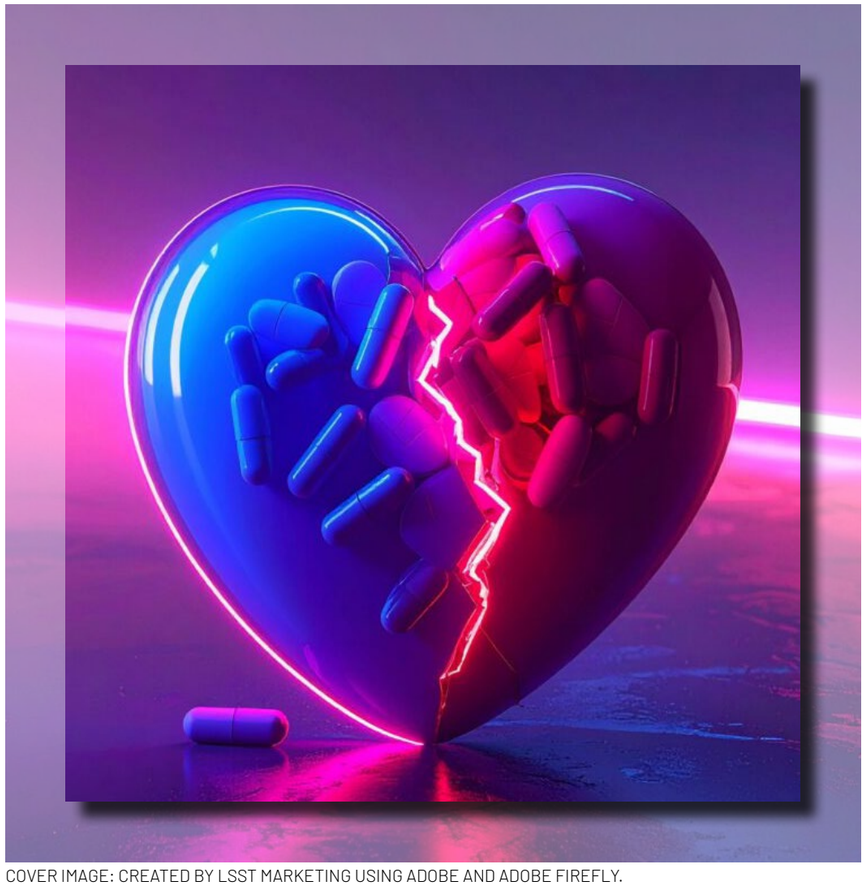
his students to bring their whole selves quirks, questions, cultures, and all, into the academic space.

In a sector where students from underrepresented or marginalised groups may already feel "othered," educators like Yunus remind us that creating a safe space isn't just about accommodations – it's about building trust, fostering connection, and offering radical belonging. It's about seeing the individual behind the label and helping them thrive as they are.

SOURCE: THIS ARTWORK WAS CREATED WITH THE HELP OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NIGHTCAFE CREATOR

WHEN GOOD MEDICINES GO WRONG: RETHINKING TNF THERAPY IN HEART FAILURE

By Professor Qamar Javed, Senior Lecturer in Health & Social Science, LSST Luton



COVER IMAGE: CREATED BY LSST MARKETING USING ADOBE AND ADOBE FIREFLY.

UNDERSTANDING HEART FAILURE

Chronic heart failure is a progressive condition where the heart gradually weakens and changes shape. Its chambers may enlarge, the walls become stiff or thin, and scar tissue (fibrosis) builds up, reducing the heart's ability to relax and pump blood efficiently. Muscle cells can die or lose function, their energy production falters, and problems with calcium handling impair contraction. At the same time, stress hormones and inflammatory chemicals remain persistently active, worsening the damage. Together, these changes cause the tiredness, breathlessness, and swelling conditions so often seen in patients.

One key inflammatory player in this process is tumour necrosis factor-alpha (TNF). When blood flow is restricted by narrowed arteries (stenosis), the oxygen-starved heart muscle releases TNF as an "alarm signal." While intended to help, excess TNF fuels inflammation, promotes scar formation, and accelerates the decline in heart function (Fig 1).

HEART DIAGRAM: CORONARY ARTERY BLOCKAGE, INFLAMMATION, AND ISCHEMIA

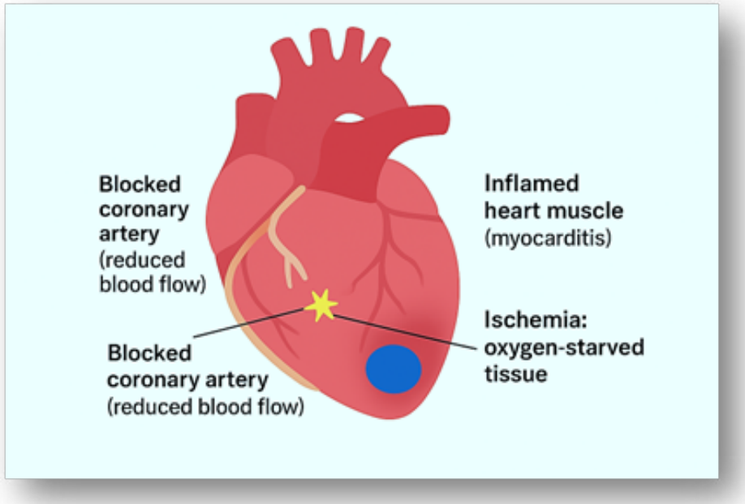


FIGURE 1. SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF CORONARY BLOCKAGE, HEART INFLAMMATION, AND ISCHEMIA. THIS FIGURE WAS GENERATED BY THE AUTHOR USING AI, WITH RELEVANT HEART PATHOLOGY CONDITIONS TAGGED TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROCESSES.

This illustration highlights three major pathological features of heart disease: a blocked coronary artery (yellow), where plaque or clot reduces blood flow; inflamed cardiac muscle (red), representing myocarditis and tissue injury; and ischemic regions (blue), showing oxygen-starved tissue downstream of the blockage. Together, these processes weaken the heart and contribute to the progression of heart failure.

ANTI-TNF THERAPY: PROMISE AND SETBACKS

Because TNF drives inflammation, anti-TNF drugs were developed to block it. In conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease, this approach has worked well. In one of my postdoctoral research projects at the University of Leicester, supported by a personal grant from the British Heart Foundation, I investigated the therapeutic role of anti-TNF therapy in cardiovascular pathology. Our findings showed that local neutralisation of TNF with an anti-TNF antibody reduced vascular hyperplasia (excessive vessel wall thickening) in human vascular tissue, effectively limiting vascular blockage. These results, published in a peer-reviewed journal, highlighted TNF as a promising therapeutic target for cardiovascular disease. Similar strategies from other laboratories, particularly in animal models, have also reinforced the potential of TNF inhibition to mitigate cardiovascular events.

Because heart failure is closely linked to chronic inflammation, doctors hoped that blocking TNF would improve heart health. In inflammatory conditions like rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and Crohn's disease, anti-TNF treatments have already shown clear benefits, improving patient outcomes. However, the story turned out differently with heart disease. Instead of helping, anti-TNF therapy sometimes made things worse, leading to new cases of heart failure and other cardiac complications.

Clinical trials tested two major drugs: infliximab (INF), designed to neutralise TNF, and etanercept (ETA), which targets TNF receptors. The goal was to lower levels of this inflammatory protein in the blood, thereby reducing heart failure complications. But the results were disappointing; rather than protecting patients, both drugs were linked to worsening cardiac symptoms, higher hospitalisation rates, and in some cases, even an increased risk of death (Fig 2).

WHY DID TREATMENT FAIL?

In my recent mini review published in Molecular Biology Reports, I examined the cellular and molecular mechanisms of TNF signalling within the heart and circulation. TNF interacts with distinct receptors on the surface of cardiomyocytes (heart cells), which can be thought of as "doors" through which its signals pass. TNFR1, often considered the "bad door," activates inflammatory and cell death pathways, contributing to tissue injury. In contrast, TNFR2, the "good door," promotes healing and tissue repair in the heart (Fig. 2).

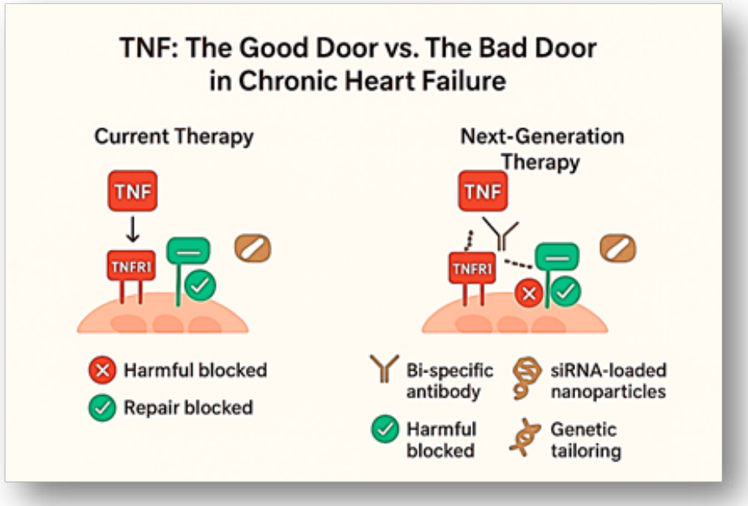


FIGURE 2: TNF COMMUNICATES WITH THE HEART THROUGH TWO RECEPTORS. TNFR1 (THE 'BAD DOOR') DRIVES HARMFUL INFLAMMATION AND CELL DEATH, WHILE TNFR2 (THE 'GOOD DOOR') PROMOTES HEALING AND REPAIR. TRADITIONAL ANTI-TNF DRUGS (INF, AND ETA) BLOCK BOTH RECEPTORS, WHICH CAN WORSEN HEART FAILURE. FUTURE THERAPIES AIM TO BLOCK ONLY TNFR1, PRESERVING TNFR2'S PROTECTIVE EFFECTS. THIS FIGURE WAS GENERATED BY THE AUTHOR USING AI, WITH RELEVANT THERAPEUTIC PATHWAYS TAGGED TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROCESSES.

Both INF, and ETA showed disappointing results in the heart failure patients. These disappointing results can be explained by the dual nature of TNF signalling. TNF works through its specific receptors: TNFR1, which drives harmful inflammation, scarring, and cell death of the heart tissue, while TNFR2 promotes cell survival, cardiomyocytes repair, and blood vessel growth.

Anti-TNF therapy drugs (INF, and ETA) blocked both receptors simultaneously. This meant the damaging effects of TNFR1 were reduced, but at the same time, the protective effects of TNFR2 were also lost. In essence, these drugs shut down the heart's natural repair system while trying to control inflammation (Fig 2).

THE NEW DIRECTION: RECEPTOR-SPECIFIC THERAPIES

Researchers are now developing smarter treatments that work by targeting TNF's two receptors in different ways. The goal is to switch off TNFR1, which drives harmful inflammation and heart damage, while keeping TNFR2 active, since it supports repair and recovery.

One major innovation is the development of bi-specific monoclonal antibodies (BsAbs). Unlike older TNF inhibitors, BsAbs can do two jobs at once: block the damaging signals from TNFR1 while boosting the protective functions of TNFR2. In heart

disease, this means stopping the "bad" signals that fuel inflammation while strengthening the "good" ones that help the heart healing process (Fig. 2). These therapies are already in use for some cancers, and scientists are now testing whether they could also help in heart failure and blood vessel disease.

Early evidence from animal studies and laboratory experiments is promising. BsAbs have been shown to lower inflammation, protect heart cells under stress, and promote the repair of damaged tissue. This approach matters because it moves beyond the old "one-size-fits-all" method of blocking all TNF activity. Instead, receptor-targeted therapies aim for balance, suppressing harmful inflammation without shutting down the heart's natural healing. If ongoing trials support these findings, receptor-specific therapies could mark the beginning of a new era of safer, more personalised treatments for heart failure.

New ideas are now being tested to make treatment smarter. Another approach is to use tiny carriers called nanoparticles that deliver special molecules (siRNA) to block only the harmful switch, TNFR1. Other nanoparticles can even carry "helper signals" to activate TNFR2, boosting the heart's natural repair system.

In early animal studies, these targeted treatments reduced scarring, lowered inflammation, and helped the heart pump more effectively. In the future, this kind of precise, personalised therapy could give patients safer and more effective options than the older conventional treatments.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next step for anti-TNF treatment is to match the right therapy to the right patient. Instead of one medicine for everyone, doctors could use simple tests to check a person's genes and inflammation pattern to see how active the two TNF "switches" are (TNFR1 and TNFR2). New tools make this targeting possible: bi-specific antibodies (BsAbs) can block the harmful TNFR1 signal while supporting the helpful TNFR2 signal, and siRNA medicines can quietly "turn down" TNFR1 inside cells without touching TNFR2.

Combined with genetic screening for TNF-related variants, these approaches aim to calm damaging inflammation but keep the natural repair process working, offering a safer, more precise way to protect the heart.

Importantly, growing evidence from genetic studies, including our own published work on TNF gene polymorphisms, shows that individual variability in TNF expression influences disease risk and treatment response. Integrating such polymorphism profiling into therapy design could identify patients who are genetically suited to benefit from anti-TNF approaches, while protecting others from potential harm. By combining receptor-selective strategies with genetic and molecular stratification, future anti-TNF therapies can move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and advance toward precision-guided immunomodulation in cardiovascular disease.

CLOSING NOTE

This article also reflects knowledge from my own research journey. In my postdoctoral projects, I studied how TNF influences blood vessels and contributes to cardiovascular pathology. Later, I supervised PhD students investigating how TNF gene activity shapes the progression of heart failure. By linking these earlier insights with today's advances, it becomes clear how past research continues to shape the development of new therapies. The hope is clear: by refining anti-TNF strategies to block only the harmful effects while keeping the protective ones, we may offer heart patients safer and more effective care in the future.

It is important to note that current AHA/ESC guidelines do not recommend anti-TNF therapy in heart failure due to associated risks. Accordingly, this review does not advocate their use; rather, it highlights the molecular mechanisms underlying their limited success and explores future strategies. Such strategies include the use of bispecific antibodies (BsAbs), nanomedicine-based delivery systems, and genetic profiling based on TNF polymorphisms to streamline treatment approaches and improve patient outcomes.

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You said you needed better career guidance	We did by launching the Handshake career platform and increasing access to professional development events, CV clinics and one-on-one career coaching.
You said you needed help with English language skills	We did by appointing experienced English language specialists at every campus and running regular support sessions in academic writing, speaking and comprehension.
You said you needed more help managing stress and well-being	We did by strengthening our student support services, expanding mental health resources.
You said you wanted more transparency in feedback and grading	We did by training academic staff on clearer marking criteria and ensuring feedback is timely, constructive and aligned with learning outcomes.
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