#DigitalEd26

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh
Atlantic Technological University

Teaching and Learning Centre

DigitalEd 2026 Conference in partnership with GenAI:N3

May 13th

ATU Galway Campus

Future-Ready Universities: Sustainable Digital Practices and Pedagogical Uses of AI in Teaching and Learning

Book of Abstracts

Conference outputs available at DigitalEd.ie

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Welcome to ATU's DigitalEd 26 Conference

The ATU DigitalEd Conference is an annual event that brings together educators, researchers, and practitioners working in digital education and transformation across the higher education sector. This year, the conference is delivered in partnership with the GenAI:N3 academic network, a structured academic network exploring the possibilities of generative AI in higher education in Ireland.

The conference theme, Future-Ready Universities: Sustainable Digital Practices and Pedagogical Uses of AI in Teaching and Learning, invites participants to share and explore innovative uses of educational technology and artificial intelligence in learning and teaching, while considering sustainability and future-focused learning.

This year's conference showcases over 40 presentations, including three keynote addresses, lightning talks, parallel sessions, a Gasta experience, and an expert panel discussion. The conference is formally opened by ATU President, Dr Orla Flynn, with a closing address by ATU Registrar and Chief Academic Officer, Dr Billy Bennett.

Keynote Speakers

The first keynote address is delivered by Professor Liz Thomas, Professor of Higher Education at the University of York. Professor Thomas has researched student diversity, learning experiences, and equitable outcomes in higher education for over twenty-five years. In 2023–24, she worked with multiple institutions to develop a whole-provider approach to student success.

Since 2024, she has collaborated with the Technological Higher Education Association Ireland (now TUA), N-TUTORR, and higher education providers including ATU and DkIT to explore whole-provider and whole-sector approaches to enhancing commuter student engagement and success. The second keynote address is delivered by Professor Maha Bali, Professor of Practice at the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the American University in Cairo. Professor Bali is co-founder of Virtually Connecting (a grassroots movement challenging academic gatekeeping at conferences) and co-facilitator of Equity Unbound, an equity-focused, open, connected, intercultural learning curriculum. This work has expanded into academic community initiatives such as Continuity with Care and Socially Just Academia, in collaboration with OneHE. Professor Bali writes and speaks extensively on social justice, critical pedagogy, artificial intelligence, and open and online education.

The third keynote address is delivered by Dr Louise Drumm, Associate Professor in Digital Education in the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement at Edinburgh Napier University (Scotland), where she leads the MSc in Blended and Online Education. Dr Drumm contributes to institutional and sector-wide ethical and responsible approaches to generative AI in higher education. With a diverse professional background spanning learning technology, academic development, software development, and theatre practice, she adopts open and creative approaches to teaching and academic development. Her research explores critical digital pedagogy, digital education policy and practice, rhizome theory, open education practices, feminist pedagogies, and digital literacies.

Conference Sessions

Parallel conference sessions and lightning talks feature contributions from ATU and the wider Irish higher education sector, including MTU, SETU, TU Dublin, University of Ulster, University of Galway, Mary Immaculate College (MIC), RCSI, and Heriot-Watt University (Scotland). Sessions explore a wide range of themes, including:

- Immersive learning
- Innovative pedagogies
- Transformative approaches to teaching and learning
- Generative AI and its role in education
- Education for sustainability
- Ethical uses of artificial intelligence
- A showcase from candidates undertaking the MA in Teaching and Learning Applied Capstone Module at ATU

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the ATU Teaching and Learning Centre and the DigitalEd Conference Team, we sincerely thank all presenters for sharing their expertise and experiences in digital teaching, learning, and assessment at DigitalEd26. We also extend our thanks to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning for their support of DigitalEd through the SATLE Strategic Fund. We hope you enjoy the conference and the DigitalEd26 Book of Abstracts. All conference outputs are available at **www.digitaled.ie.**

Dr Carina Ginty, DigitalEd Conference Chair
Head of Teaching and Learning
(Transformative Education and Sustainable Learning Futures)

Conference Co-Chairs:
Dr Hazel Farrell and Ken McCarthy (SETU and GenAI:N3)

Conference Co-ordinators:
Olga Vaughan and Sharon Mortimer, ATU Teaching and Learning Centre

DigitalEd Conference Committee:
Dr Carina Ginty, Olga Vaughan, Sharon Mortimer, Ewelina Kowalczyk, Dr Kevin Cunningham, Pat Heffernan, Dr Sean Daffy, John Hough, David Chernick, Emma McDonald, Annette Cosgrove, Noreen Henry, Ulrich Hoeche, Dr Hazel Farrell and Ken McCarthy.

Wednesday 13th May

TIME	ROOM	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	THEME
9.30 - 09.45am	1000	Welcome and Conference Opening Address by the President, Atlantic Technological University	Dr Orla Flynn (ATU) Ireland	
9.30 - 09.45am	1000	Introduction of Keynote	Dr Carina Ginty (ATU DigitalEd Conference Chair)	
9.45 - 10.30am	1000	Using Technology To Create A 'Commuter Compassionate' Learning Experience In Higher Education	Prof. Liz Thomas (University of York)	Keynote 1 Dr Carina Ginty (ATU), Session Chair
10.30-11.30am		PARALLEL SESSIONS 1	Dr Niamh Plunkett (ATU), Session Chair	
10.30-11.30am	1000	ATU Skills Discovery Tool: Bridging Student Skills with Industry Needs	Bridie Killoran (ATU)	Transformative Education in Learning and Teaching
10.30-11.30am	1000	The Marketing Minds Experience: A Transformative, Student Led Open Day Workshop	Dr Áine Doherty (ATU)	Transformative Education in Learning and Teaching
10.30-11.30am	1000	"Designing and Delivering Health Promotion Micro-Credentials in a Master's Context at the University of Galway"	Dr Aoife Howard (University of Galway)	Transformative Education in Learning and Teaching
10.30-11.30am	1000	Exploring Supports for Industry-Experienced, Mature Students Applying for and Completing the Part-Time BSc in Quality for Industry, (level 7 and level 8) in ATU Galway	Rachel McCarthy (ATU)	Transformative Education in Learning and Teaching
10.30-11.30am	1000	Interactive Python Notebooks: Scaffolding Mathematical Intuition Through AI-Assisted Design	Fionn Downes (ATU)	Gen AI & Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning

TIME	ROOM	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	THEME
10.30-11.30am	1000	Developing a Participatory Design Framework for Transparent and Ethical AI-Driven Predictive Learning Analytics in Higher Education	Clare Walsh (TU Dublin)	Ethical Use of AI
10.30-11.30am		PARALLEL SESSIONS 2	Dr John Scahill (ATU), Session Chair	
10.30-11.30am	994	Temporal Friction as Pedagogy: Designing AI-Aware Assessment that Protects Judgement in Creative Education	Gerald Kennedy (ATU)	Gen AI & Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
10.30-11.30am	994	Incorporating AI in the Assessment Process using a 3-step Approach	Marilla Keating (ATU)	Gen AI & Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
10.30-11.30am	994	Allowable AI: Setting Boundaries For Ethical Learning	Maire Carr (ATU)	Gen AI & Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
10.30-11.30am	994	Reflection and Considerations for Building Custom GPT T&L Support Tools in the HE Context	Katherine Whitehurst (MIC)	Gen AI & Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
11.30-11.45am	Café Foyer	BREAK		
11.45 - 12.30pm	1000	Inclusive and Compassionate Assessment in the Age of AI	Prof Maha Bali Center for Learning and Teaching at The American University in Cairo (AUC)	Keynote 2 Dr Carina Ginty (ATU), Session Chair
12.30-1.15pm		LIGHTNING TALKS A	Annette Cosgrove (ATU), Session Chair	
12.30-1.15pm	1000	Supporting Critical Thinking About 'Wicked' Environmental Problems In Early Undergraduate Science Students	Dr Katie O'Dwyer (ATU)	Education for Sustainable Development

TIME	ROOM	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	THEME
12.30-1.15pm	1000	Playing to Learn: Using AI to Design Lecturer-Created Board Games as Playful Assessment in Higher Education	Louise Kilbane (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
12.30-1.15pm	994	Digital Tools for Graduate Employability: The University Skills Passport and Health Promotion Education in Galway, Ireland	Dr Allison Dunne (University of Galway)	
12.30-1.15pm	1000	Embedding in-process assessment of critical thinking and contextual learning into the final year undergraduate research project	Dr Therese Montgomery (ATU)	
12.30-1.15pm	1000	Attending to Care in Responsible and Innovative Design: An Immersive Pedagogical Approach for Higher Education	Mary Nolan (ATU)	
12.30-1.15pm	1000	Catch Your Lobster And Eat It!	Ulrich Hoeche (ATU)	
12.30-1.15pm		LIGHTNING TALKS B	Dr Deirdre McClay (ATU), Session Chair	
12.30-1.15pm	994	Beyond Tools: Preparing Educators for Inclusive Immersive Learning	Yvonne Sarsfield (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
12.30-1.15pm	994	Teaching and Trust: Lecturer Anxiety in the Age of Generative AI	Dr Máire O'Sullivan (MTU)	GenAI and Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
12.30-1.15pm	994	Sculpting Variation: A Transformative Experience	Trish O'Connell (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
12.30-1.15pm	994	When To Lean On The Machine: Redesigning Architectural Education for an AI-literate future	Dr Susan Galavan (ATU)	GenAI and Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning

TIME	ROOM	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	THEME
12.30-1.15pm	994	Staff And Student Perspectives On GenAI In Scottish Higher Education	Assoc. Prof. Rosemarie McIlwhan (Heriot-Watt University)	GenAI and Navigating it's Role in Teaching and Learning
12.30-1.15pm	994	Vibe Coding in the Wild - From Prompt to Prototype, Building Day by Day with GenAI (and Care)	Ken McCarthy (SETU)	
1.15-2pm	Café Foyer	LUNCH (with 'Catch your Lobster and eat it' experience)		
2-2.45pm	1000	The Common Weal: Collective Action and Collaborations Across and Beyond Scotland	Assoc Prof Louise Drumm (Edinburgh Napier University)	Keynote 3 Dr Hazel Farrell (SETU & GenAI:N3)Session Chair
2.45-3.30pm		EXPERT PANEL	Ken McCarthy (SETU), Panel Session Chair	
2.45-3.30pm	1000	EXPERT PANEL Discussion Session	Future-Ready Universities: Sustainable Digital Practices and Pedagogical Uses of AI in Teaching and Learning	Expert Panel Discussion Session
2.45-3.30pm	1000	SESSION 4 Expert Panel Discussion	Darragh Coakley (MTU)	
2.45-3.30pm	1000		Dr Hazel Farrell (SETU & GenAI:N3)	
2.45-3.30pm	1000		Dr Louise Drumm (Edinburgh Napier University)	
2.45-3.30pm	1000		Dr Mark Kelly (ATU ESD Academy & National Forum ESD Policy Adviser)	
2.45-3.30pm	1000		Student Champion (ATU)	
2.45-3.30pm	1000		Prof. Frances Lucy (EU GREEN) (ATU)	

TIME	ROOM	SESSION TITLE	PRESENTER	THEME
3.30 -3.45pm	Café Foyer	BREAK		
3.45 - 4.40pm		GASTA SESSION	Dr Tom Farrelly (MTU), Gasta Chair	
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	Our VLE in Numbers	Dr Cormac Quigley (ATU)	Transformative Education in Learning and Teaching
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	Randomised by Design: Enhancing Academic Integrity and Assessment Efficiency	Trish O'Connell (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	From Consultation to Co-Creation: A UDL-Framed Showcase of Age-Friendly Innovation	Margaret McLoone (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	Automating Comments, Eroding Relationships? The Practice And Ethics Of GenAI Feedback	Dr Perry Share (ATU) Dr John Pender (ATU)	Ethical Use of AI
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	Exploring the Potential of Virtual Reality in Accounting Education	Dr Geraldine Gorman (ATU)	Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	Backpack Unpack	David Chernick (ATU)	Education for Sustainable Development
3.45 - 4.40pm	1000	The Sustainable Development Goals Through the Lens of a Haiku	Dr John Scahill (ATU)	
4.40pm - CONFERENCE CLOSING - Dr Billy Bennett, ATU Registrar & Chief Academic Officer				

Check out the full programme and conference outputs at **DigitalEd.ie**

ATU DigitalEd 26
Conference Abstracts

Welcome Session

09:30-09:45am **Welcome and Conference Opening Address**

(Room: 1000)

Dr Orla Flynn, President Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Ireland

Keynote 1

09:45-10:30am **Using Technology To Create A 'Commuter Compassionate' Learning Experience In Higher Education**

(Room: 1000)

Prof. Liz Thomas (University of York)

Dr Carina Ginty, Introduction of Keynote, ATU DigitalEd Conference Chair

Around 40% of full-time undergraduate students in Ireland commute to study, however comparatively little is known about this student group or their higher education experience. Research in 2024-25 was undertaken to explore the experience and impact of commuting in the Irish technological higher education sector, and to identify specific actions HEIs can take to improve experience. The research was qualitative, using online town hall focus groups, with staff and students, including commuter student jurors, and a review of institutional websites. It was informed by the whole provider approach conceptual framework which recognises the need for higher education providers to change to facilitate and enable the success of diverse students.

Parallel Sessions 1

10:30-11:30am **Parallel Sessions 1**

(Room: 1000)

Dr Niamh Plunkett, Session Chair

10:30-11:30am **ATU Skills Discovery Tool: Bridging Student Skills with Industry Needs**

(Room: 1000)

Bridie Killoran (ATU)

Theme: Transformative Education in Learning & Teaching

Our presentation introduces ATU MyCareerPath's Skills Discovery Tool, designed to help students identify, understand, and articulate the skills essential for their future careers, mapping each student's competencies against the World Economic Forum's most in-demand global skills. These include AI and Big Data, Resilience, Flexibility and Agility, Empathy and Active Listening, Analytical Thinking-skills increasingly required in a rapidly evolving labour market. By visualising how their skills align with industry needs, students gain valuable clarity, confidence, and direction as they prepare for the transition to work and life after ATU. The Tool, developed by Cappfinity, features a self-reporting assessment that measures 80 behavioural skills across three areas: Performance, energy, and use. In our presentation and live demonstration, we'll demonstrate how the Skills Discovery Tool can be woven into career development initiatives across the university and help students identify their key skills and strengths, offering a clearer picture of what they naturally excel at and how those abilities can translate into real-world impact.

By building this stronger sense of self-awareness, the tool not only empowers the student but also enhances the value they bring to the people, teams, and organisations they engage with. As students become more confident in articulating their skills, they are better equipped to navigate opportunities, collaborate effectively, and step into roles that align with both their strengths and their aspirations.

10.30-11.30am **The Marketing Minds Experience: A Transformative, Student Led Open Day Workshop**

(Room: 1000)

Dr Áine Doherty (ATU)

Theme: Transformative Education in Learning & Teaching

Transformative education fosters deep learning for students through hands-on engagement and interaction with real-life projects and reflection. This presentation showcases a level seven Contemporary Issues in Marketing module assessment strategy which enabled learners to design, plan, implement and reflect on their own event at ATU Donegal Open Day called "The Marketing Minds Experience." The module advances learner's practical knowledge of digital marketing software and technologies. The acquired knowledge was embedded into the creation of an open day workshop to promote the BBus Honours Degree in Marketing at ATU Donegal to prospective students (PS). The module lead, also programme coordinator, identified the opportunity to promote the degree to PS as part of the assessment strategy, thereby facilitating a hands-on learning experience which fostered critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Throughout the semester learners gained experience using Canva, Cupcut, Microsoft CoPilot, QR Code generators, Audacity, Mailchimp, Microsoft Forms, AI tools, and Google Ads. They attended a Mixed Reality workshop demonstrating the creation of mixed realities using Matterport software and equipment, as well as experiencing virtual environments via virtual reality headsets. They integrated the digital marketing software and technologies into the Open Day event by engaging PS with Canva, Cupcut and Gen AI marketing campaigns. QR codes were used to drive traffic to the course webpage, and students dressed up in a cookie costume offering free branded cookies to all who engaged! Students reflected on their engagement with the tools and workshop in their final reflective portfolio where findings indicated a transformative learning experience.

10.30-11.30am Designing and Delivering Health Promotion Micro Credentials in a Master's Context at the University of Galway

(Room: 1000)

Dr Aoife Howard (University of Galway)

Theme: Transformative Education in Learning & Teaching

Micro-credentials are short, accredited, and flexible courses designed to support targeted upskilling and reskilling within an evolving workforce. Situated within the University of Galway's Student Digital Pathways programme, they provide credit-bearing opportunities that support lifelong learning and create structured routes toward further academic progression.

The micro-credential programme was developed collaboratively by the Health Promotion faculty, who worked together to design and structure the micro-credential offerings. The process was further informed by stakeholder interviews with Health Promotion practitioners to ensure alignment with current practice and workforce needs. The proposal was approved through university governance structures, and ongoing consultation with the institutional Micro-credential team ensured consistency with national policy frameworks and digital pathway requirements.

The programme offering comprises three modules: Promoting Healthy Behaviours, Mental Health Promotion, and Promoting Health in the Workplace, all of which form part of the MSc Health Promotion programme. By embedding micro-credential students within established master's modules, the programme maintains academic rigour and quality assurance standards while broadening access to postgraduate education.

Now in its second year, a notable strength is the integrated learning environment. Micro-credential students engage alongside full-time master's students, enriching peer learning through the exchange of professional and academic perspectives. Feedback has been highly positive, particularly regarding academic challenge, relevance to practice, and cohort diversity.

Future challenges include developing stackable pathways toward higher awards and sustaining flexible delivery models for diverse learner groups. Overall, the programme illustrates the potential of micro-credentials to widen participation and respond effectively to contemporary workforce demands.

10.30-11.30am Exploring Supports for Industry Experienced, Mature Students Applying for and Completing the Part-time BSc in Quality for Industry (level 7, level 8) in ATU Galway

(Room: 1000)

Rachel McCarthy (ATU)

Theme: Transformative Education in Learning & Teaching

To determine and develop supports for industry-experienced, mature students to successfully apply for, and complete the part-time BSc in Quality for Industry, (level 7 and level 8) in ATU Galway. This will involve gathering data from current students and graduates of the programme, as well as ATU staff who have been involved in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process.

The intended aim of this project is to increase the number of successful applicants and consequently, much needed (by industry) graduates of this programme.

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10.30-11.30am Interactive Python Notebooks: Scaffolding Mathematical Intuition Through AI Assisted Design

(Room: 1000)

Fionn Downes (ATU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

Year 1 Science students enter ATU with vastly diverse mathematical backgrounds yet must develop conceptual understanding of functions-a threshold concept in mathematics. Traditional approaches relying on static textbook graphs and symbolic manipulation often leave students struggling to connect abstract parameters with their graphical effects.

This showcase presents a comprehensive series of interactive Python Google Collab notebooks developed for the Mathematics 2 module, covering linear, quadratic, cubic, reciprocal, logarithmic, exponential functions, and simultaneous equations. Each notebook transforms passive learning into active discovery: students manipulate intuitive sliders to adjust parameters and witness instantaneous graphical transformations, with key mathematical features (intercepts, inflection points, vertices, asymptotes) automatically calculated and highlighted. Explanatory text bridges visual and symbolic representations, catering to varied learning preferences and paces.

Generative AI accelerated development significantly enabling rapid creation of sophisticated interactive environments that would have required substantial programming expertise if developed conventionally. This human-AI collaborative model demonstrates a sustainable workflow for creating accessible, UDL-aligned resources across disciplines.

Students experience live demonstrations of the notebooks during practical tutorial sessions, where they actively engage with parameter exploration while completing their mathematics journals. This integrated approach embeds the interactive tools directly into their learning workflow, providing immediate support as they work through module requirements. Initial usage analytics show promising engagement, and qualitative feedback suggests students value the ability to explore at their own pace and the immediate visual connection between parameter changes and graphical outcomes.

Participants will learn a practical framework for developing similar resources in their own disciplines using AI-assisted design, with examples of how interactive notebooks can be embedded into existing teaching and assessment practices.

10.30-11.30am Developing a Participatory Design Framework for Transparent and Ethical AI-Driven Predictive Learning Analytics in Higher Education

(Room: 1000)

Clare Walsh (TU Dublin)

Theme: Ethical Use of AI

Understanding what drives learner success and how it is achieved remains a key challenge in learning analytics (LA) research. Predictive LA (PLA)-a rapidly expanding research area in the field of AI in Education (AIED)-focuses on developing models to forecast future learner outcomes. By analysing data such as attendance, grades, and engagement levels, AI algorithms predict learners' likelihood of success. Most research focuses on the accuracy of predictions, with little attention given to interpreting model decisions, explaining individual predictions to stakeholders or transparency of how decisions were made. The application of AI in PLA raises ethical questions regarding privacy, fairness, robustness, and transparency. A lack of transparency is considered to diminish user trust and conceal possible algorithmic biases-particularly those stemming from outdated or unrepresentative training data-which can unfairly impact specific student populations and lead to inequity of learning outcomes. These risks point to a need for human-centred learning analytics (HCLA) approach. Studies are beginning to address the issue of involving end users in the design and evaluation of LA and PLA. A human centred approach opens the possibility for ed-tech companies, AI practitioners, policy makers, higher education leaders, staff and students and other relevant stakeholders become part of the design, deployment, and implementation process. Employing a co-design approach unlocks the black box of transparency, interpretability, and explainability within complex AI systems. This work in progress describes how co-design can be achieved by exploring human-centred design (HCD) methods-which can give a meaningful voice to non-technical stakeholders-and how these methods can be adopted and adapted. This work focuses specifically on how a university can involve its stakeholders in the co-design, deployment, and implementation of transparent LA and PLA tools. Using a participatory design (PD) approach, the study applies human-centred design methods-such as interviews, journey mapping, co-design workshops, prototyping, and usability testing-to create a participatory design framework that universities can use to actively engage end users and ensure that the resulting LA and PLA tools align with their needs, values, and contexts. Within the learning analytics domain, these HCD methods play a critical role in fostering transparency, interpretability, and ethically informed decision-making.

Parallel Sessions 2

10.30-11.30am

Parallel Sessions 2

(Room: 994)

Dr John Scahill (ATU), Session Chair

10.30-11.30am

Temporal Friction as Pedagogy: Designing AI-Aware Assessment that Protects Judgement in Creative Education

(Room: 994)

Gerald Kennedy (ATU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

Generative AI changes not only what students can produce, but how learning becomes visible. In creative disciplines, assessment has traditionally relied on iterative process as evidence of judgement: briefs, drafts, critique, revision, and documentation. Generative systems accelerate output and can compress these formative stages into rapid cycles of prompting and selection, where fluency substitutes for reflection and a finished-looking artefact arrives before doubt has time to surface. This creates a pedagogical problem rather than a purely technical one: students may submit credible outputs with limited demonstrable reasoning, while institutions still require defensible standards of authorship, integrity, and accountability.

This paper proposes temporal friction as a practical framework for future-ready teaching in the AI era. Temporal friction refers to deliberate pauses and structured checkpoints designed into learning and assessment workflows to protect interpretation, critique, verification, and responsible disclosure. The paper synthesises two complementary lenses from design research: constraint-led procedural approaches (Conditional Design) and reflective, slow-oriented interaction traditions (Slow Technology). Building on these, it offers an actionable taxonomy of frictions suitable for higher education: input friction (briefing and intent), process friction (bounded iteration and stop conditions), output friction (annotation, provenance notes, and revision logs), governance friction (disclosure and audit requirements), and attentional friction (separating generation from critique).

Using a studio-assignment scenario, the paper demonstrates how these frictions translate into assessment patterns, including AI process logs, rubric criteria for evidence of judgement, and redesigned briefs that foreground decision-making rather than output alone. The contribution is a transferable set of pedagogical interventions to help educators navigate GenAI while sustaining meaningful learning.

10.30-11.30am

Incorporating AI in the Assessment Process Using a 3-step Approach

(Room: 994)

Marilla Keating (ATU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

At the time of writing this abstract, it is not possible to reliably detect the use of AI in asynchronous assessments so therefore any rules limiting its use are not enforceable. This reality poses the challenge regarding the validity and reliability of asynchronous assessments to accurately measure the extent to which learning outcomes are achieved.

This re-design adopts the principles of the University of Sydney two-lane approach (2025) combined with the University of Newcastle 3P framework (Verhoeven, 2026) to spread the focus of assessment across output (product), approach (process) as well as student learning (person).

This assessment re-design is made up of three steps as follows: Step 1 involves an initial off-campus asynchronous group task (with optional use of AI) to collaboratively create a product/output. Step 2 involves an on-campus verification/defence of the output using the principles of dialogue interactive oral (O Riordan et al, 2023). Step 3 asks students to reflect on their learning (Verhoeven, 2026) and how this new learning/knowledge contributes to their future professional needs (Boud, 2025) This assessment re-design emphasises the role of student agency including the active participation of learners to understand (assessment) requirements, to establish the best approach/process, to select tools/sources/supports that consider safe, responsible and ethical choices, to develop evaluative judgement skills and verification strategy in order to ensure that all outputs (including any AI co-authored output) are fit for purpose, checked for accuracy, free from bias, defendable and transferable to future professional contexts.

This talk will explain the structure and implementation of this 3-step assessment redesign and will share what worked and what challenges remain.

10.30-11.30am

Allowable AI: Setting Boundaries For Ethical Learning

(Room: 994)

Maire Carr (ATU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

The HEA's recent 10 Considerations for GenAI in Higher Education highlights Allowable AI as a key pillar: distinguishing acceptable uses that uphold academic integrity and disciplinary norms.

Students thrive within clear boundaries. Gen AI is everywhere and educators must lead by defining what is allowed and what is not. Remember, students are using AI due to performance pressure and general social norms; "everybody is doing it, why can't I?" This mentality drives misuse and cognitive offloading. We can counter this by setting firm boundaries. Define when AI can and cannot be used and offer AI powered tools to facilitate self-driven learning.

I've developed a Study Buddy Bot for Cyberpsychology: A GenAI agent that quizzes students on psychological theories and critiques their responses. Rather than passively copy-pasting essays, students can actively recall, reflect, and build knowledge using gen AI, encouraging self-regulated learning at their own pace.

This is Allowable AI in action, a bespoke learning tool that students can collaborate with to deepen understanding. This is just one example of how educators can customise GenAI tools to meet students' learning needs.

Coupling these tools with transparent AI declarations-via frameworks like AIR (Young, 2026)-ensures students grasp responsible use and fuels deeper engagement.

Solid boundaries benefit – let's define those boundaries, create the tools, and set our students up for success in an AI powered world.

10.30-11.30am

Reflection and Considerations for Building Custom GPT T&L Support Tools in the HE Context

(Room: 994)

Katherine Whitehurst (MIC)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

As Generative AI increasingly becomes embedded in the tools we use and by extension the everyday tasks we complete, there is a growing need to explore how Generative AI can be appropriately integrated into a Higher Education context. As is widely understood, Generative AI tools are not completely reliable. Yet, there has been a growing discourse that custom GPTs provide more reliable outputs (Kabir, 2025; Microsoft, n.d.; MIT Sloan, 2026; OpenAI, 2023). Nazim Ali, Sarah Aynsley, and Linda Becker in Times Higher Education (2025) suggested that, "whether through Rag [Retrieval-Augmented Generation], custom GPTs or simple prompt-based methods, GenAI models can be used in bespoke ways to provide responses that are more accurate and relevant to your teaching and learning requirements" (n.p.). In this presentation, we explore the potential for a custom Generative AI powered agent to be used within Higher Education, by considering what would be involved in the development of a Custom GPT T&L support tool. This presentation, drawing on existing scholarly literature, provides a survey of how custom GPT technology has been used in the past, and explores what this scholarship suggests about the future use of this technology in Higher Education. The presentation will provide practical recommendations for those looking to develop their own custom chatbot agent for use within a Higher Education context. These recommendations will centre around 4 key areas: the use of chatbots as pedagogical tools in HE; ethics of chatbot use; accounting for accessibility; and prompt engineering with GPT builder technology.

Break

11:30–11:45am

Break time

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Keynote 2

11:45–12:30pm

Inclusive and Compassionate Assessment in the Age of AI

(Room: 1000)

Prof Maha Bali (Center for Learning and Teaching at The American University in Cairo)

Dr Carina Ginty, Introduction of Keynote, ATU DigitalEd Conference Chair

In this interactive session, we will explore a variety of creative approaches to thinking about our assessments in inclusive and compassionate ways. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about the compassionate learning design approach and how to apply it to our AI guidelines; the cake analogy and how it can help us decide which assessments should use or exclude; the two-lane approach, and how it may help reduce our anxiety over assessment; and the learning-equity matrix, and how it can help us choose assessments that are most appropriate for our teaching philosophy while remaining as equitable as possible for our learners.

Lightning Talks A

12.30-1.15pm

Lightning Talks A

(Room: 1000)

Annette Cosgrove (ATU), Session Chair

12.30-1.15pm

Supporting Critical Thinking About 'Wicked' Environmental Problems In Early Undergraduate Science Students

(Room: 1000)

Dr Katie O'Dwyer (ATU)

Theme: Education for Sustainable Development

Developing critical thinking in early undergraduate science students is essential for addressing complex, value-laden environmental issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss, often described as "wicked" problems. Critical thinking is also a core competency in sustainability education, supporting deep learning and the capacity to question norms, reflect on values, and take informed positions in sustainability discourse. This study investigates how critical thinking about such problems can be effectively embedded in early-stage undergraduate curricula. A qualitative mixed-methods design was employed. First, a desk-based review analysed programme- and module-level learning outcomes within an aquatic science degree to assess the extent to which critical thinking and sustainability competencies were explicitly articulated. Second, empirical data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with teaching staff and focus groups with early- and late-stage undergraduate students. Staff interviews explored expectations of students' critical thinking abilities and their confidence in facilitating higher-order thinking. Student focus groups examined experiences of transitioning from exam-oriented learning cultures, clarity around what constitutes critical thinking in science, and factors shaping engagement, including scientific literacy and climate anxiety.

A prototype framework for an interactive workshop was developed to support structured small-group engagement with 'wicked' environmental problems. The framework was presented to staff and students to gather feedback and inform refinement. By identifying approaches to strengthen critical thinking skills acquisition, this work aims to better prepare undergraduate students to navigate the complexity of future professional and societal challenges.

12.30-1.15pm

Playing to Learn: Using AI to Design Lecturer Created Board Games as Playful Assessment in Higher Education

(Room: 1000)

Louise Kilbane (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

As universities seek future-ready approaches to teaching and assessment, the pedagogical uses of AI invite critical and creative exploration. This practice exemplar presents an AI-supported, lecturer-designed board game developed as an innovative assessment strategy within a content-rich Early Childhood Education module. While students in this discipline are expected to value and facilitate playful learning for young children, they are often assessed through traditional, text-based formats. This project addresses that misalignment by reimagining assessment as a collaborative, dialogic, and play-based learning experience.

Artificial intelligence was used as a design partner to generate board games, refine game mechanics, and diversify pathways. The resulting board game positions play not as a motivational add-on, but as a serious pedagogical stance. Students demonstrate understanding through dialogue, applied reasoning, collaborative decision-making, and theory-to-practice connections rather than through recall alone.

Grounded in assessment for learning, sociocultural theory, and research on playful and creative assessment, this approach frames assessment as an ongoing site of learning, experimentation, and safe failure. Game elements such as multiple routes, peer interaction, and opportunities to revisit decisions support learner agency while maintaining disciplinary depth. This exemplar contributes to discussions on sustainable digital practice by illustrating how AI can enhance, rather than replace, educator expertise. It offers a transferable model for integrating pedagogically intentional AI use into assessment design, aligning disciplinary values, academic standards, and innovative digital practice within higher education.

12.30-1.15pm

Digital Tools for Graduate Employability: The University Skills Passport and Health Promotion Education in Galway, Ireland.

(Room: 1000)

Dr Allison Dunne (University of Galway)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

In the last five years, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence has transformed the labour market, leading to employment uncertainty among new graduates. Increasingly, employers are looking for candidates that can demonstrate competence in transferable skills such as communication and leadership in addition to their academic achievements.

To address this challenge, the University of Galway introduced the University Skills Passport. Launched in 2025, the passport contains digital badges which can be earned by students for participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Currently 133 different digital badges are available. By February 2026, 15,887 digital badges had been awarded to students, through over 7814 University Skills Passports.

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In the Health Promotion Master's programme at University of Galway, the students develop and demonstrate nine core competencies by learning in the classroom, working on case studies and undertaking a work placement. Each competency can be represented with a digital badge. As a pilot, one competency badge for Communication and one curriculum badge for Promoting Healthy Behaviours were launched for MA students in 2026.

This portable and verifiable digital credential equips students with the language, confidence and examples needed to demonstrate the competencies they have developed during their studies. Student feedback to date has been very positive and further badges are planned for the next academic year. This case is an example of how digital tools can enhance the university experience and student satisfaction. Further research will evaluate the impact of the University Skills Passport on employability after graduation.

12.30-1.15pm

Embedding In Process Assessment Of Critical Thinking And Contextual Learning Into The Final Year Undergraduate Research Project

(Room: 1000)

Dr Therese Montgomery (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

The final year Undergraduate Research (UR) project is typically worth approximately ¼ of the available credits in a BSc hon's programme. UR is a vehicle for the development of key graduate attributes such as critical thinking, applied problem solving, evidence-based research and dissemination skills. However, the arrival of GenAI has altered the landscape, rendering the more traditional modes of end-point thesis and viva assessment more challenging. Typically, the viva takes the form of questions after an oral or poster presentation at the end of the project and is very limited in scope. For large student cohorts the viva can create significant logistical challenges and is either moved online, shortened or omitted entirely. Furthermore, given the large number of staff involved, issues can arise with regards to assessment robustness, transparency and validity unless crouched in extremely clear guidelines. To counteract this, we have introduced an in-process lab bench audit. This semester, 63 students will undergo a 10 min in-person lab bench audit mid-way through their research projects, based around three simple questions – what, why and how? The audit is being assessed by 14 different lecturers assigned as second readers to the student's thesis. Lecturers are asked to grade the students using a flexible one-page rubric directly on Moodle. Overall, we hope to reduce our dependence on endpoint assessments, promote earlier student engagement with their projects and to facilitate the assessment of student aptitude, application, self-efficacy, and progression overtime in their project work. The question is, did it work?

12.30-1.15pm

Attending to Care in Responsible and Innovative Design: An Immersive Pedagogical Approach for Higher Education

(Room: 1000)

Mary Nolan (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

Grounded in an ethics of care framework, this workshop introduces an immersive pedagogical approach that reframes responsibility as relational, context-aware, and embodied practice. Rather than positioning ethics as the application of abstract principles or compliance with professional codes, the approach invites participants to explore how responsibility emerges within relationships, systems, and lived experience. In an age of AI, where knowledge production and technical problem-solving are increasingly automated, the cultivation of evaluative judgement and relational awareness becomes central to the fundamental purposes of higher education.

This workshop aims to equip educators with a practical, care-informed approach that strengthens these human capacities through immersive learning. Drawing on LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, inclusive design principles, and structured reflective dialogue, the session models how embodied and participatory pedagogy can surface tacit assumptions about power, stakeholder impact, marginalisation, and unintended consequences. Participants will engage in a facilitated build activity followed by guided reflection and dialogue.

Informed by Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the approach offers multiple means of engagement and expression, supporting diverse participants in contributing meaningfully to ethical inquiry. Transferable across disciplines, the framework is applicable wherever innovation, policy, or decision-making shapes human experience.

Participants will leave with a clear facilitation structure, adaptable prompts, and practical guidance for embedding immersive, care-informed approaches within their own teaching

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12.30-1.15pm

Catch Your Lobster And Eat It!

(Room: 1000)

Ulrich Hoeche (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

At the crossroads of science, sustainability, and culinary arts, 'Catch your lobster and eat it!' is an immersive digital learning experience that enables students to engage remotely in authentic field, laboratory, and kitchen-based practice. Framed within transformative and immersive education, the project reimagines access to resource-intensive learning experiences that are often financially or logistically out of reach. Lobster, both a cultural emblem in coastal communities and a high-value culinary commodity, provides a powerful lens through which to explore ecology, heritage, ethics, and gastronomy. Students follow the lobster's journey from Irish fishing traditions and evolving harvesting technologies to sustainable fisheries management, marine ecosystem protection, and the culinary uses of lobster. They examine lobster biology, physiology, and welfare in a virtual laboratory before moving into a digitally mediated culinary setting, where scientific knowledge underpins preparation and cooking techniques. This structured progression supports systems thinking, linking environmental sustainability with food systems, cultural history, and responsible consumption. Student partnership is central to the design. Learners co-created elements of the resource contributed feedback, and feature throughout, enhancing authenticity, relevance, and engagement while promoting learner agency. By integrating ecological literacy, cultural context, and culinary practice within a digitally immersive framework, this initiative demonstrates the potential of technology to advance sustainability education. It provides a scalable model for connecting theory with real-world application and supports the ongoing digital transformation of teaching, learning, and assessment.

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Lightning Talks B

12:30–1:15pm

Lightning Talks B

(Room: 994)

Dr Deirdre McClay (ATU), Session Chair

12:30–1:15pm

Beyond Tools: Preparing Educators for Inclusive Immersive Learning

(Room: 994)

Yvonne Sarsfield (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

As our university expands its focus on immersive and emerging technologies through the newly established Community of Practice, understanding the conditions that support sustainable pedagogical innovation is increasingly timely. This study, conducted within our institution as part of a Master's in UDL research project, examined educator preparedness and in-house supports for integrating emerging technologies in engineering education, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the research explored educators' confidence, perceived barriers, and experiences of institutional support related to technology-enhanced teaching. Findings indicate strong interest in leveraging immersive and emerging tools to enhance engagement and conceptual understanding. However, uncertainty around pedagogical alignment, accessibility, and practical implementation limited sustained adoption.

The study identifies UDL as a critical framework for guiding immersive learning design, enabling educators to intentionally provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Importantly, institutional supports - including structured professional development, peer collaboration, and responsive technical assistance - were found to significantly influence educator confidence and long-term integration.

Positioned within our current institutional momentum around immersive innovation, this research offers evidence-based insights into how communities of practice can strengthen educator readiness and ensure that immersive learning initiatives are inclusive, sustainable, and pedagogically grounded.

12:30–1:15pm

Teaching and Trust: Lecturer Anxiety in the Age of Generative AI

(Room: 994)

Dr Máire O'Sullivan (MTU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

The rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools has significantly disrupted teaching and learning practices in higher education. Initially institutional responses focused on preventing and policing use before pivoting to advocacy for its productive uses in teaching and learning (McDonald et al., 2025). This study explores higher education (HE) lecturers' emotional responses and professional experiences regarding both their own and their students' use of GenAI. Drawing on qualitative data from focus groups conducted in a Technological University, across multiple disciplines and campuses, this paper focuses on two key themes emerging from the data: acute anxiety surrounding academic integrity and a perceived lack of institutional support and guidance.

Although many participants see potentially positive use cases for GenAI in pedagogy and describe encouraging students to engage with AI in aspects of their studies, the overwhelming response is one of anxiety and uncertainty. Participants described worries around assessment validity and the erosion of trust in student work. Many reported feeling ill-equipped to detect or respond to AI-assisted submissions, leading to heightened stress and a sense of professional vulnerability.

Lecturers also expressed frustration at unclear institutional policies and limited training opportunities. Even those lecturers who had embraced AI as part of their curricula often expressed uncertainty as to whether this was 'allowed.'

12:30–1:15pm

Sculpting Variation: A Transformative Experience

(Room: 994)

Trish O'Connell (MTU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

Teaching Statistical Process Control (SPC) and process capability concepts within biopharmaceutical and manufacturing education presents a significant pedagogical challenge. Students frequently struggle to transition from a product-focused understanding of quality to a systems-oriented appreciation of process variation, stability, and capability. Concepts such as the Voice of the Process (VoP), Voice of the Customer (VoC), and the distinction between process control and process capability are often perceived as abstract, mathematically complex, and disconnected from authentic industrial practice.

This lightning talk presents a SATLE-funded teaching innovation that employed play-based experiential learning and simulation-based instructional design to address these challenges within a final-year undergraduate biopharmaceutical science module. Using Play-Doh as a simulated manufacturing material, students worked within defined standard operating procedures (SOPs) to manufacture products to specification, record measurements, construct SPC charts, and conduct capability analysis.

The activity deliberately exposed students to process variation in a tangible and memorable manner. Despite identical instructions and specifications, substantial variation emerged across groups, enabling students to directly observe the realities of manufacturing variability, process instability, and capability limitations. The exercise transformed theoretical statistical concepts into visible and measurable experiences. Student reflections highlighted enhanced engagement, deeper conceptual understanding, and strong connections between classroom learning and industrial application. Learners described the activity as memorable, thought-provoking, creative, and highly relevant to future careers in pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing.

This presentation demonstrates how low-cost, playful, and experiential approaches can significantly enhance the teaching of complex analytical and quality-management concepts in STEM education while simultaneously fostering engagement, reflection, and applied understanding.

12:30–1:15pm

When To Lean On The Machine: Redesigning Architectural Education for an AI-literate future

(Room: 994)

Susan Galavan (ATU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

This paper builds on my ongoing work exploring the rapid advancement of AI in architectural education and professional practice. The paper offers practical strategies and reflections for educators seeking to build future-ready, critically engaged professionals. It explores the potential of AI-not as a threat, but as a tool to enhance teaching, learning, and creativity in the classroom. It reflects on how this shift has informed the redesign of assessment: critically examining what approaches are working, what are not, and why. Through the exploration of multimodal submissions, oral exams, and reflective learning journals, I examine how assessment can foreground process, transparency, and critical engagement. I will consider the opportunities and challenges these methods introduce and argue that student-led dialogue is essential if we want to develop AI-literacy in the classroom. Student discussions reveal diverse and sometimes contradictory attitudes towards AI, highlighting the need for pedagogies that legitimise uncertainty and experimentation. Ultimately, making AI visible fosters a more collaborative learning environment, reshaping the classroom as a shared conversation

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12:30–1:15pm

Staff And Student Perspectives on GenAI in Scottish Higher Education

(Room: 994)

Rosemarie McIlwhan (Heriot-Watt University)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

Staff and student attitudes towards the use of GenAI in higher education have been shifting since the public release of ChatGPT in November 2022, which accelerated the mainstreaming of large language models. This research presentation draws on two surveys undertaken a year apart (AHE 2024 baseline survey, ScAITEN 2025 survey), providing an opportunity to explore trends in attitudes towards GenAI. The key findings challenge some common assumptions. A substantial proportion of students and staff do not knowingly use GenAI tools in their studies and professional practice. This raises questions about awareness of GenAI technologies, particularly where these are embedded in other tools, and about training around GenAI. Both surveys found that staff and students have persistent concerns around quality, accuracy, and reliability of GenAI outputs, as well as wider ethical and environmental implications. The presentation explores how these concerns have changed over time. The presentation discusses changes in staff and student attitudes towards the academic and administrative tasks where GenAI could be used, whether such use should be permitted, and how views on these are becoming more polarised. The presentation will share potential questions and lessons for those setting learning and teaching policy in higher education, as well as points for thought for educators.

12:30–1:15pm

Vibe Coding in the Wild – From Prompt to Prototype, Building Day by Day with GenAI (and Care)

(Room: 994)

Ken McCarthy (SETU)

Theme: GenAI And Navigating It's Role In Teaching And Learning

What does it actually look like to build something real with generative AI, not as a gimmick, but as a genuine thinking partner? In this session I share my experience of "vibe coding": an exploratory, design-led approach to developing a mobile-first chemotherapy cycle tracking app using GenAI tools. This session explores what happens when GenAI tools are used as a genuine thinking partner building rapidly, iteratively, and with strong ethical guardrails prioritising privacy, clarity, and care from the outset.

We'll explore how prompts evolved into working prototypes, where GenAI genuinely accelerated progress (and where it didn't), and why responsible AI needs to be embedded from the very first prompt, particularly in sensitive contexts. The session will also consider what TEL practitioners can realistically experiment with in their own practice.

Lunch

1:15–2pm

Lunch (with 'Catch your Lobster and eat it' experience)

Keynote 3

2–2:45pm

The Common Weal: Collective Action and Collaboration Across and Beyond Scotland

(Room: 1000)

Assoc Prof Louise Drumm (Edinburgh Napier University)

Dr Hazel Farrell, Introduction of Keynote, SETU & GenAI:N3

As a small sector, Scotland's universities have opportunities for collaboration and networking not dissimilar to Irish HEIs. With a similarly long-standing history of quality education, responses to the advent of generative AI coalesced in Scotland around established values such as open education and human-rights. This keynote will trace how an evolving network has challenged the dominant narratives around generative AI, to empower institutions and individuals, and draws on recent data which reinscribe the need for recognising and valuing diversity within higher education.

Expert Panel

2:45-3:30pm

Future-Ready Universities: Sustainable Digital Practices and Pedagogical Uses of AI in Teaching and Learning

(Room: 1000)

Ken McCarthy (SETU), Panel Session Chair

Panel members:
Darragh Coakley (MTU)
Dr Hazel Farrell - SETU & GenAI: N3
Dr Louise Drumm - Edinburgh Napier University
Dr Mark Kelly - ATU ESD Academy & National Forum ESD Policy Adviser
Student Champion - ATU
Prof Frances Lucy - EU GREEN / ATU

Break

3:30–3:45pm

Break time

GASTA Sessions

3:45–4:40pm

GASTA Session

(Room: 1000)

Dr Tom Farrelly (MTU), Gasta Chair

3:45–4:40pm

Our VLE in Numbers

(Room: 1000)

Dr Cormac Quigley (ATU)

Theme: Transformative Education in Learning & Teaching

This talk builds on learning analytics work done to evaluate the Galway-Mayo VLE as part of the REAL analytics project. The Gasta provides a high-level overview of how our VLE is being used across our programmes, what level of interaction is typical for a student and what the high-level drivers of interaction and engagement are. The aim is to provide a clear, accessible snapshot of current VLE usage in Galway–Mayo. This knowledge is then used to consider how we might best support educators to develop their own pedagogical approaches.

The Gasta also addresses the limits of learning analytics and aggregated activity indicators, emphasising responsible interpretation and the importance of pairing data with local context.

The Gasta finishes by briefly considering how our university's strategic vision for its VLE can impact pedagogy and what educators might need from the University to drive improved pedagogy, student engagement, and student retention.

3:45–4:40pm

Randomised by Design: Enhancing Academic Integrity and Assessment Efficiency

(Room: 1000)

Trish O'Connell (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

Maintaining academic integrity while delivering scalable, efficient, and meaningful assessment has become an increasingly significant challenge within higher education. Traditional assessment approaches are often vulnerable to collusion, answer sharing, and the growing influence of generative AI tools. Simultaneously, educators face increasing pressures relating to grading consistency, feedback quality, and administrative workload.

This presentation explores an innovative assessment strategy that utilises the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to deliver randomised assessments designed to strengthen academic integrity while streamlining assessment management. By generating individualised assessment variations for students, the approach substantially reduces opportunities for academic misconduct while preserving alignment with learning outcomes and assessment fairness.

The presentation demonstrates how rubric-based marking workflows integrated within the VLE enable efficient, transparent, and consistent grading practices. Assessment results, feedback, and performance analytics are automatically captured within the VLE gradebook, supporting both student feedback processes and programme-level monitoring.

The session will discuss the pedagogical rationale underpinning randomised assessment design, practical implementation considerations, student experiences, and the broader implications for authentic assessment in digitally mediated learning environments. The presentation argues that thoughtfully designed VLE-enabled assessments can simultaneously enhance integrity, improve operational efficiency, and support more sustainable assessment practices in higher education.

3:45-4:40pm From Consultation to Co-Creation: A UDL-Framed Showcase of Age-Friendly Innovation

(Room: 1000)

Margaret McLoone (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

Universities are pivotal in combating ageism and enabling lifelong, intergenerational learning. This showcase presents a Universal Design for Learning (UDL)–framed, multi-pedagogical initiative that transforms teaching, assessment, and institutional decision-making while advancing Atlantic Technological University's (ATU) Age-Friendly University (AFU) commitments. Embedded within undergraduate (BSc Public Health & Health Promotion) and postgraduate (MSc Health Promotion Practice) modules, students co-designed and facilitated a large World Café with 46 older adults during ATU's Age-Friendly Festival (March 2025), followed by 11 semi-structured interviews with retired staff delivered through online and in-person formats. Ethical approval was granted by ATU Sligo's Research Ethics Committee.

UDL guided every stage of the initiative, prioritising choice, clarity, multimodal participation, accessible materials, and reflective practice to ensure contributors felt welcomed, respected, and listened to. Students acted as table hosts and accessible scribes, completed reflective journals and competency mapping, and synthesised findings through thematic analysis. Importantly, student-generated outputs were embedded directly into institutional processes, informing the work of the AFU Working Group and shaping ATU's Age-Friendly Action Plan.

Findings identified actionable priorities, including a desire for intergenerational learning and mentoring opportunities and sustained engagement with retired staff through the establishment specifically of a formal retired staff association. Students reported increased confidence in hosting, research, and intergenerational communication, and highlighted the authenticity, relevance, and employability value of the assessment experience.

This project demonstrates how UDL-aligned, community-engaged assessment can act as a catalyst for institutional change while transforming learner identity, engagement, and belonging. Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of how to design and plan transformative teaching and learning partnerships, a clearer insight into the practical steps involved, and renewed motivation to adapt and apply this approach within their own teaching and learning contexts.

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3:45-4:40pm Automating Comments, Eroding Relationships? The Practice and Ethics of GenAI Feedback

(Room: 1000)

Dr Perry Share (ATU), Dr. John Pender (ATU)

Theme: Ethical Use of AI

With GenAI tools it is possible to produce feedback comments instantly and at scale, making it attractive to education systems in a time (as ever) of constraints on resources and educators' time and energy. But such use risks shifting feedback from a relational, dialogic practice to a transactional 'text delivery' service. Many ethical issues arise. AI can write good comments, potentially more comprehensive and accurate than human-generated text. But what does AI-mediated feedback do to teacher judgement, student voice, and trust? Drawing on emerging 'manifesto' principles for feedback in the age of GenAI, and examples of the presenters' own practices, this Gasta talk highlights the risks of academic and student deskilling, automation bias, the homogenisation of academic voice and widening inequities in the feedback process. It distinguishes between AI as assistive infrastructure (that supports noticing, synthesis, and prioritisation) and AI as substitution for pedagogical presence.

3:45-4:40pm Exploring the Potential of Virtual Reality in Accounting Education

(Room: 1000)

Dr Geraldine Gorman (ATU)

Theme: Immersive Learning: Innovative Pedagogies

Virtual Reality (VR) is attracting growing interest in higher education, yet its role within accounting education remains largely unexplored. Accounting is typically taught through text, numbers, and structured case studies, while professional practice often involves judgement, context, and working with uncertainty. This Gasta presentation shares reflections from a one-day VR showcase delivered to accounting students, aimed at exploring what immersive technologies actually look like in an accounting learning context.

The session was not designed as a formal teaching intervention or evaluation. Instead, it offered students brief, guided exposure to a VR experience, followed by discussion and reflection. The intention was to consider where VR might support particular types of learning, such as situational awareness, ethical judgement, or engagement with ambiguity, and where it may offer little added value compared to more familiar teaching approaches.

This presentation provides a short walkthrough of the VR experience from a teaching perspective and reflects on the practical considerations involved in showcasing VR in business education, including facilitation, accessibility, and managing expectations around emerging technologies. Rather than promoting adoption, the session invites educators from accounting and related disciplines to reflect on where immersive learning might meaningfully complement existing pedagogical practices, and where a more traditional approach may still be the better fit.

3:45-4:40pm

Backpack Unpack

(Room: 1000)

David Chernick (ATU)

Theme: Education for Sustainable Development

This talk traces the instructional design challenges of developing MyDigitalBackpack.ie Starting out under NTUTORR and transitioning to the national forum, the backpack evolved from a basic Moodle page into a communal platform hosting 18 courses and awarding nearly 13,000 badges across the TU sector.

3:45-4:40pm

The Sustainable Development Goals Through The Lens of a Haiku

(Room: 1000)

Dr John Scahill (ATU)

Theme: Education for Sustainable Development

This presentation takes a fresh, poetic approach to the Sustainable Development Goals by translating all 17 SDGs into a series of haiku. As each haiku holds exactly 17 syllables, the form becomes a playful mirror of the goals themselves, offering a compact yet evocative way to explore global priorities. Instead of charts and bullet points, the SDGs appear as brief moments of imagery and rhythm, inviting listeners to experience these challenges and aspirations from a more imaginative angle. By condensing big ideas into small poetic frames, the talk highlights how creative perspectives can spark new understanding. The aim is not just to describe the SDGs, but to reawaken curiosity about them, reminding us that sustainable development depends not only on policies and data, but also on our ability to see the world differently.

Closing Ceremony

4:40pm

Conference Closing Address

Dr Billy Bennett, ATU Registrar & Chief Academic Officer

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