University of the Highlands and Islands Learning and Teaching Conference 2020

Dimensions of Tertiary Engagement

Keynote Sessions

We will be welcoming our keynote speakers to the university to explore the themes of the conference with participants at the plenary sessions on each day.

Sheila MacNeill

Sheila MacNeill is an independent digital learning consultant and open education practitioner based in Glasgow. Sheila has over 20 years' experience in developing the effective use of digital technologies for learning and teaching work at institutional and national level. Sheila is the current Chair of ALT (Association for Learning Technology), the UKs largest membership association supporting the effective use of learning technology. Sheila is an experienced academic developer and works with a range of staff in a number of universities across the UK. Sheila is active on a range of social media and shares her work, research and random thoughts on digital learning openly through her blog.

Bill Johnston

Bill Johnston is an Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Psychological Sciences and Health, University of Strathclyde. Before retiring in 2010 Bill was Senior Lecturer at Strathclyde's Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement.

Publications include:

- Johnston, B. MacNeill, S. and Smyth, K. (2018). Conceptualising the Digital University: intersecting policy, pedagogy and practice.

- Anderson, A. and Johnston, B. (2016). From Information Literacy to Social Epistemology: Insights from Psychology. Elsevier Chandos
- Johnston, B. (2010). The First Year at University: Teaching Students in Transition. Open University Press/Society for Research in Higher Education. McGraw Hill Education, Maidenhead, Berkshire.

Synopsis of Sheila and Bill's keynote

The presenters will identify key features of the 'challenging times' higher and adult education face. They will question the extent to which higher education is still accepted as a public good in a period of populist challenges to established thinking ways of defining the nature and purpose of higher education, and propose a view of public pedagogy as a possible challenge to populist accounts of learning in society. The substance of the keynote is a response to the UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Values statement, which they regard as a valuable and effective approach, aimed at supporting the realisation of the values in the curriculum. Their perspective is to treat the value statements as conceptual tools for curriculum and course (re)design. To this end they will offer a values based design scenario illustrating a critically informed digital decision-making process.

Tom Farrelly

Tom Farrelly: Having initially trained and worked as a Fitter & Turner, Tom decided on a change in career (and life) direction when he started his degree with the Open University aged 33. Upon completion of his BSc he undertook an MEd in Adult & Community Education in 2002 and was awarded his Doctorate in Education in 2010 where his area of research was the use of virtual learning environments by adult learners in higher education.

Tom has spent almost twenty years in the Institute of Technology, Tralee in Ireland's picturesque southwest on the wild Atlantic way. Although he still does some lecturing, his primary role is an educational developer in the institute's e-learning unit, acting as a support to individuals and academic departments in their technology enhanced learning journey. While a strong advocate for the role that technology can play in the enhancement of teaching and learning he describes himself as a 'critical technophile'; appreciating the opportunities while at the same time acknowledging that technology alone is not a panacea. Arguing that education and research is a public good he is committed to supporting the open science movement, advocating for it within (and without) his institution at every opportunity.

Tom will facilitate the Brightspace Gasta presentations.

Synopsis of Tom's keynote

So ubiquitous have VLEs become within the higher education landscape it can at times be hard to imagine what that landscape look like without them. In the 20 or so years since they first appeared they have at times been hailed as a significant development in the provision of e-learning, derided for stifling creativity and limiting learning spaces; old fashioned and

clunky; with Martin Weller in 2007 going as far as to tell us that the VLE/LMS is dead. Ten years ago Web 2.0 technologies seemed to herald in a new era whereby we would be able to ditch VLEs in favour of a more responsive and intuitive interface. However, as we start the third decade of the 21st century VLEs appear to be in rude health; and while many institutions are changing providers they are not divesting themselves of VLEs. At the heart of any institutional examination about the use of VLEs should be: what do we want to achieve from using a VLE? However, such is the range of claims, counter-claims, observations and refutations regarding their use it can at times be hard to cut through the fog. In this presentation I intend to explore the different metaphors that have been used over the past 15 years to describe or characterise VLEs; which in turn I hope will provide the platform by which we can articulate the metaphor that UHI would like to use to describe their use of a VLE.

Julia Fotheringham

Julia Fotheringham is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Practice at the University of Edinburgh where she leads the PG Cert in Learning, Teaching and Assessment Practice for academics new to teaching and teaches on the Masters in Blended and Online Education. Having spent 12 years teaching and developing staff in colleges prior to her University role, her research focus is in respect of transitions; for staff into their new academic roles and for students progressing from college to university. She is in the final stages of a doctoral study which explores the experience of Associate Students' articulation from college to university.

Synopsis of Julia's keynote

Transition support can be presented as a panacea for differences and challenges that students encounter when they make the transition from college to university. This presentation explores first of all the experiences of Associate Students who were presented with opportunities to engage with transition support, then, of their academic experience as direct entrants to third year degree programmes. Julia will present data from students and lecturers drawn from a longitudinal study involving 5 different institutions. The findings offer evidence of factors that influence Associate Students in the uptake and experience of transition support delivered by the university, and of their peripheral engagement with the traditional-entry students known as the 'uni-boys'. The presentation concludes with a reflection on key issues which continue to affect the college students' experience of transition and which universities and colleges may need to answer in partnership with one another.