



## **The LearnHigher Resource-athon! Creative, collective contributions to the LearnHigher resource bank**

**Laura Key**

York St John University, UK

**Sumeetra Ramakrishnan**

University of Surrey, UK

**Clara Hiskey**

University of Leeds, UK

**Karen Hudson**

Queen Mary University of London, UK

### ***Presentation abstract***

In this creative, participatory workshop, colleagues had the opportunity to contribute directly to the LearnHigher resource bank. The premise was to bring together colleagues from across the sector to work together in cross-institutional teams to create new resources for LearnHigher. Colleagues benefitted from networking opportunities, as well as a chance to have their work published and disseminated online. As part of the session, participants were provided with prompts arising from the conference's key themes – they were encouraged to consider disciplinarity/cross-disciplinary approaches, inclusivity, research-based practice and technologies for learning. The session concluded with information about the next steps in the LearnHigher resource review process and an opportunity to put any questions to members of the LearnHigher working group. Each group was supported and mentored by a member of the LearnHigher working group, who offered advice and prompts for resource development. Since the conference, colleagues have received continued support from LearnHigher mentors, as the resources are being refined, finalised and submitted for peer review, prior to publication on the LearnHigher website.

**Keywords:** LearnHigher; learning development; resources; higher education.

## **Community response**

This creative workshop offered participants a unique opportunity to contribute directly to the LearnHigher resource bank through collaborative resource development. Designed as a hands-on, cross-institutional experience, the session brought together LD practitioners to address gaps in available resources while opening spaces for networking and collective creation.

The following response to the session provided a thoughtful reflection on the nature and value of collaborative work in LD:

I found it enriching to be tossed into collaborative dialogue with two fellow LD practitioners whose speciality/focus areas overlapped somewhat with my own, but not enough to be on precisely the same page. As I reflected on the workshop, I thought a lot about that 'same page' business – mainly, I keep wondering to myself how many 'collaborations' fall short of their potential because we're usually drawn to 'same page'-ers when undertaking projects. Someone thinks like I do, cares about what I do, wants to achieve what I do, conceives of how to achieve it in a way similar to what I do – and then I go, great, we ought to collaborate. Kind of an arrogant little ouroboros, that! The Venn diagram of collaboration surely benefits more when the circles intersect but don't directly consume one another. Anyway, my ramblings aside, I'm eager to see if a resource emerges from our nascent frenzy of ideas, and this was a great experience at the conference (Alice Stinetorf).

The participant's metaphor of collaboration as a Venn diagram where 'circles intersect but don't directly consume one another' captures an essential insight about effective partnership: that the most generative collaborations emerge from partial overlap rather than complete alignment. The self-reflective critique of same-minded collaboration suggests that the workshop challenged participants to move beyond their usual collaborative patterns. The workshop's design – bringing together practitioners with related (through LD) but not identical (through different specialisms and institutional foci) expertise – achieved something valuable beyond simple resource creation. The combination of immediate creative output with longer-term reflection on collaborative practice appears to have provided a rich experience that extended well beyond the conference session itself.

## **Next steps and additional questions**

Questions about how to ensure that LearnHigher keeps thriving as a valuable resource for LD remain. Among these, the following stand out in particular:

- What mechanisms might ensure that the 'nascent frenzy of ideas' translates into published resources?
- How might future workshops build on the insight about productive difference in collaboration?
- How can short-term collaborative experiences be used and followed up to build longer-term professional networks?

### ***Authors' reflection***

At the heart of this session was the goal of bringing together colleagues from different institutions and in different roles to offer a mutually beneficial experience – one that would enable colleagues to see their work published online and would also facilitate the building of relationships and networks. At the same time, it was also hoped that we would be able to build on gaps in our existing LearnHigher resource bank and encourage wider engagement with the platform. The idea grew from suggestions in working group meetings last year that we should move beyond multiple individuals submitting a number of very similar resources to LearnHigher. Rather than rejecting similar submissions outright, essentially, we needed to find a way to accommodate various perspectives on, and approaches to, the same topic. Cross-institutional collaboration was put forward as a potential solution, and thus the LearnHigher Resource-athon was born.

On the day of the conference, a flurry of ideas emerged from the small number of participants present at the workshop. As facilitators, it was a challenge for us to harness the differences between these ideas to encourage the development of a set of cohesive outputs. It was clear from the beginning that a significant amount of work would need to occur beyond the workshop to turn these ideas into feasible resources – but we had already planned for that in the design of the session by ensuring that we would offer continued support (in the form of mentoring) to those who had taken part.

It is particularly encouraging that participants in the session have been in contact since the workshop with a view to developing those nascent resources further and submitting them for publication. Given this success and the positive feedback obtained from the workshop, it would be useful to replicate this format again in future. One aim for the next academic

year, therefore, is for LearnHigher to offer more forums via which colleagues can network and create productive outputs cross-institutionally. In this sense, the 2025 Resource-athon can be seen as a pilot event that, we hope, can be developed as part of wider ALDinHE activity going forward into 2025-26. In doing so, we intend to reflect on the questions posed in the Community Response section above to hone and develop the structure of the workshops and the post-workshop mentoring offer. We believe ALDCon26 would be a suitable forum for us to present the outcomes of these collaborations and begin to evaluate the use of this new method for developing the LearnHigher resource bank further.

## ***Acknowledgements***

Thank you to all the contributors who shared their reflections and enriched our insight into this conference presentation and its impact on the audience. Special thanks go to Alice Stinetorf from the University of Southampton.

The authors did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

## ***References***

ALDinHE (2025) *LearnHigher resource bank*. Available at:  
<https://aldinhe.ac.uk/learnhigher/> (Accessed: 6 January 2025).

## ***Author details***

Laura Key is a Lecturer in Academic Practice at York St John University. She has worked in HE for 15 years and has specialised in Learning and Academic Development since 2017. Laura's main areas of interest include technologies for learning, compassionate curricula, and anti-racism and decolonisation. She is a Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE and has been co-chair of the LearnHigher Working Group since 2023.

Sumeetra Ramakrishnan is an Associate Professor at the Surrey Business School, University of Surrey. As a social sustainability researcher, her interests lie with equity and

wellbeing of students in further education and employees within the services sector. She has led projects on inclusive education and partnered with social enterprises towards creating equitable work opportunities for women entrepreneurs and business leaders. Sumeetra sits on the Board of the Institute of Travel and Tourism's Education and Training Committee and has co-chaired the LearnHigher working group since 2024.

Clara Hiskey is a Learning Advisor in the Learning Development Team at the University of Leeds. She collaborates with academic staff in Molecular and Cellular Biology and Mechanical Engineering to embed academic literacy into the curriculum. Clara is also committed to developing inclusive and engaging co-curricular learning opportunities that support student belonging and wellbeing, both through the provision of open academic skills workshops, and through her role facilitating creative and collaborative learning in the Library Makerspace. She is a Fellow of AdvanceHE and a member of the ALDinHE LearnHigher working group.

Karen Hudson is currently Innovation and Learning Manager at the Queen Mary Academy, Queen Mary University of London, where she works to build capacity in innovative teaching and learning, including artificial intelligence in education. A passionate advocate for inclusive, digitally enhanced pedagogy, Karen is dedicated to empowering educators to deliver a transformative world-class education. She is a Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE and an ALDinHE Fellow. Karen is also a member of the ALDinHE LearnHigher working group that manages the online repository of peer-reviewed teaching and learning resources.

## ***Licence***

©2025 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education (JLDHE) is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE).