



Editorial

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The c-words we need: a case for collegiality in challenging times

I have to admit: I'm tired. This semester has left many of us exhausted – navigating organisational upheaval, bearing witness to job losses, and managing the uncertainty that seems to have become the background hum of higher education. In the two recent conferences I was part of – one organised by the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) in the UK and the other by the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL) in Australia – we were all reaching for the same critical 'c-words': *Compassion, Collegiality, and Communities* at the SRHE Conference, and *Connect, Collaborate, and Create* at the AALL Conference. In our field of Learning Development, these aren't just conference themes; they often feel like lifelines that keep us going.

In this editorial, I want to zoom in on the one essential word in our community: Collegiality.

We are still here. Despite the cuts and restructures, despite the trauma that has rippled through our institutions, we remain. But it would be easy to get lost in the thick smoke from the fires that have raged through our professional communities, to become cynical, to protect ourselves by caring less, to treat each other as competition for scarce resources. Which is precisely why we must be intentional about prioritising relationships – with our students, yes, but also with each other. In small, specialised communities like ours, we cannot afford to lose one another. Every connection matters. Every conversation, every shared resource, every act of solidarity.

Curiosity over judgment

There is much wisdom in approaching people and situations with curiosity rather than judgment. Maya Angelou reminds us that people will forget what we said and what we did, but they will never forget how we made them feel (while the attribution of these words to Angelou is questioned, I'm too tired to dispute it; the sentiment is what matters). In Learning Development, where we work so closely with students at their most vulnerable moments of academic growth, this principle extends to how we treat one another in the staff room, the corridor, the hurried email exchange.

What inspires me lately is Clare Hemmings' (2012) concept of 'affective solidarity' – originally proposed for feminist politics, but deeply relevant to our work. Affective solidarity is not about rational agreement or shared identity alone; it is about connecting through felt experience, about being moved together. Hemmings writes about empathy as 'key for challenging the opposition between feeling and knowing, self and other' (n.p.). In Learning Development, we already know that feeling is knowledge. Our students teach us this constantly.

But the devil is in the detail: affects can draw us together or force us apart. In this difficult year, we have felt both. The question is which direction we choose to lean.

Pure intentions

Music producer Rick Rubin (2023) talks about approaching creative work with 'pure intention' – as a devotional act, serving something greater than ourselves rather than

focusing on outcomes or approval. This resonates with why many of us entered Learning Development in the first place, and why we always prioritise process over product. We want to serve, to connect, to help students find their voice. Somewhere in the administrative chaos and existential institutional threats, however, it may be easy to lose sight of that original intention.

Rubin's approach suggests to follow your energy, listen deeply, let go of the outcome, and simplify. Remove the distractions to see what truly matters. When I apply this lens to our current moment in HE, what matters comes into sharp focus: the relationships, the small moments of breakthrough with a struggling student, the colleague who checks in when things are hard. As Buddhist teacher Thich Nhất Hạnh (1999) taught, we are all miracles – and perhaps the real miracle is remembering to treat each other that way.

We are all we have

In the particle physics of academia, where we can get lost examining ever-smaller units of individual metrics, isolated outcomes, and separate disciplines, it is worth stepping back to see the whole. Behind all those fragments are people: colleagues, students, communities. We are all energy. We are all miracles. And we are all we have.

In our joint keynote address at the aforementioned AALL conference (Syska and Buckley, 2025), my colleague Carina and I proposed one more c-word as this exhausting year draws to a close: Celebration. Let's celebrate what has been preserved. Let's celebrate each other. Let's celebrate the fact that we are still showing up, still caring, still finding ways to do meaningful work despite everything.

As Christmas time approaches with its messages of hope, love, and joy, I am reminded that different wisdom traditions converge on what matters most: presence, compassion, kindness. To paraphrase the words of the Thầy himself, let's smile widely, breathe deeply, and go slowly. Our Learning Development community needs compassion now more than ever – and it starts with us.

What other c-words would you add to our vocabulary for these times? We would love to hear your thoughts – a brief communication would be a wonderful contribution for a future issue.

In the meantime, this issue features five research papers, two case studies, five opinion pieces, one brief communication, and no fewer than eight book reviews to inspire your practice in the spirit of compassion, creativity, and collegiality.

The issue opens with a paper by Richard M. Baylis, Lukas J. Helikum, and Sarah Jones. Given the proliferation and prevalence of generative Artificial Intelligence in every facet of higher education teaching and learning, it has become ever more imperative that students understand the full implications of its use, both its benefits and its drawbacks. In this paper, the authors share their innovative approach to assessment in an AI context. Giving their students AI-generated outputs, they teach their students how to evaluate its quality and thereby support the development of greater assessment literacy and critical thinking. Perhaps more importantly, this transparent and supportive approach helps to prepare their students for a career after university that will inevitably involve the considered use of generative AI, its risks, limitations and potential.

In their paper, Steve Briggs and Ralitsa Kantcheva address the lack of a formal classification for Academic Language and Learning Development (ALLD) roles within higher education's 'third space'. Unlike academic librarians, ALLD practitioners often share job titles yet undertake varied responsibilities, leaving their contributions and expertise under-recognised. Drawing on data from 92 practitioners across the UK, Canada, and New Zealand, the authors present an international taxonomy of roles and specialisms. This framework offers a basis for clearer role definition and greater recognition, supporting institutions, professional bodies, and practitioners in strengthening the unique identity of Academic Language and Learning Development within the higher education landscape.

The paper authored by Tebogo Magang, Tinotenda Douglas Hwara, Ayodeji Michael Obadire, and Jerald Hondonga reviews the implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD) in 4 HEIs in Botswana. Findings show that although ESD is viewed as critical for curricula, such implementation has not been fully embedded due to a lack of frameworks and student disengagement. The paper recommends the creation of institutional policies and staff training to fully support the use of ESD in Botswanan HEIs.

In 'Whose feedback matters? Exploring human and AI-supported writing feedback practices in a South African writing centre', Lutendo Nendauni uses both Feedback

Literacy and Critical Digital Pedagogy to explore the perceived value of and engagement with feedback from both human tutors and AI-based tools. Discussion emerging from student interviews highlight how AI tools are valued for quick, surface-level corrections, though students indicated a strong preference for relational, dialogic, and context-sensitive human feedback. In combining their sources of feedback, learners demonstrate emerging feedback literacy, though their practices can be limited by infrastructural challenges. The paper advocates for feedback ecologies that integrate technological innovation with human care to promote equitable and inclusive writing development in under-resourced, multilingual higher education contexts.

In the final paper, Angela Newton explores object-based learning. She argues that object-based pedagogies are useful in creating a multisensory, experiential learning environment that can effectively stimulate students' criticality and build confidence. The paper investigates student perceptions and experiences of participating in experiential object-based workshops at the University of Leeds. Students' responses were gathered via qualitative post-session questionnaires. The student participants were positive about their experiences and reported an engaging learning environment that allowed them to learn from others and develop communication skills as highlights of the approach.

In our first case study, drawing on professional practice experiences, Laura Maguire shares a personal reflection in terms of how to best support post-registration nursing students with dyslexia. Maguire discusses how in recent years improvements have been made in terms of supporting students with dyslexia but argues that we need to go further. Specific suggestions are therefore made in terms of potential student support enhancements via government and institutional provision, module level support and inclusive assessment. It is anticipated that this article will prompt LD practitioners to themselves reflect on the potential role they could play in delivering such changes.

Embodied dissemination is the adoption and recognition of the integral nature of bodily engagement in the expression of any research processes. For many researchers working with practice-based or professional disciplines, the traditional academic paper doesn't always present as the best fit for dissemination, and new methods need to be found. This article presents three reflective case studies of how the authors worked with doctoral students on considering and developing their own pathway towards embodied practices in the dissemination of their research. Rowena Senior, Kate Carruthers Thomas, Suzanne

Albary, and Sam Illingworth found that success in these attempts hinged on four key characteristics, uniquely realised in each researcher: authenticity, connection, community, and rethinking. Together, these offer a new way of considering dissemination.

In a timely opinion piece, Jonathan Denham introduces Perspectivism as a theoretical lens through which Learning Development practice and values might be viewed and explored. In drawing on whole self, relational engagement with and reaction to all aspects of an environment, Denham suggests that Perspectivism can usefully frame, guide and challenge us to make sense of the conversations we have, the learning we support and the confidence we nurture. Denham's provocations within the opinion piece offer points of reflection in highlighting the impact of differing perspective on the process of deepening understanding.

Hela Hassen's opinion piece discusses how Model United Nations (MUN) simulations have been used to facilitate experimental learning and promote global citizenship. Drawing on learning from a SimONU event held at a European HE institution, Hassen highlights and explores the pedagogic, social and development benefits synonymous with this approach. The article concludes by considering synergies between MUN simulation and the field of Learning Development. Specifically, how both seek to scaffold learning, promote active learning, emphasise inclusion and facilitate reflective practice. It is anticipated that the approach outlined may be new to many Learning Developers so could offer readers a novel means of expanding and advancing their practice.

Focusing on her experiences as a doctoral student, Yulu Hou considers how AI can be integrated meaningfully into curriculum to promote student collaboration. Positing the benefits of AI as a thought partner, this opinion piece discusses examples where AI was implemented within a classroom and the potential it brings for learning development from a student perspective.

Large language models are prevalent throughout education, yet many students and staff struggle with some of the issues around the use of these and other generative AI tools. While many staff are rightly concerned about critical development and academic integrity, and students focus on the GenAI skills needed in the workplace, the common factor is the loss of agency. Manish Malik's opinion piece presents a framework to support AI literacy and empower staff and students to work effectively with GenAI tools. Using mind-

metaphors, including techniques such as mind-surfing and mind-bending, users can direct attention, align output with intent and, most importantly, co-create content in a way that retains human agency.

In the final opinion piece, Jackson M. Miller and Jason K. Hughes make the case for expanding hybrid forms of healthcare programmes. With reflections on the instructional design considerations and required support from Learning and Educational Developers, this piece demonstrates the potential to increase capacity for clinical education through the appropriate use of hybrid provision.

In his brief communication, Manuel Diaz argues that Learning Developers don't just have a remit to support academic success, but respectfully reminds us that as a community, we are also well-placed to support sustainability endeavours through our work if we can adopt and develop a green mindset.

The issue closes with a bumper crop of eight book reviews. In the first one, Michael O. Begun reviews Leslie Cordie's edited collection *Transition from pedagogy to andragogy: an international perspective*, which foregrounds the shift toward learner-centred approaches for adult learners in higher education. He commends the book's glocalising framework, integrating global themes with local contexts, alongside its emphasis on lifelong learning, self-directed learning, and instructional design. While Begun notes some unevenness and missed opportunities, such as limited discussion of generative AI or UK higher education, he finds its coherent thematic focus and cultural awareness compelling. Overall, Begun recommends the collection as a valuable resource for educators and third-space practitioners seeking to apply international insights into their own contexts.

In her review of Marita Grimwood and Steve McHanwell's *Evidencing teaching achievements in higher education*, Ursula Canton explores how this concise guide supports educators in evidencing teaching impact to support their career progression. Canton values the book's holistic framing of teaching, extending beyond classroom delivery to curriculum design and SoTL, alongside its practical prompts for building education-focused careers. Yet she questions whether such a slim volume can meet its ambitious aims. Canton concludes that the book offers useful starting points and works best as an initial reference or reflective tool rather than a comprehensive manual.

Sunny Dhillon examines Jason Eyre's *Learning Development in Higher Education*, a philosophically rich text that interrogates the sociopolitical forces shaping Learning Development practice. Dhillon highlights Eyre's reframing of crises as opportunities for creative judgement and his innovative use of fictional case studies to connect abstract theory with practice. While noting that limited engagement with alternative perspectives beyond Deleuze, Dhillon finds the book rigorous, original, and empowering. He recommends it as essential reading for Learning Developers seeking to interrogate power, ethics, and professional identity in higher education.

Kim Fisher reviews Saba Ahmed's *A 101 action research guide for beginners*, highlighting its accessible approach for educators taking their first steps into action research. Fisher highlights how the book offers clear explanations of terminology, learning theories, and reflective practice, alongside practical guidance for structuring action research cycles. She values the author's empathetic approach, grounded in real-world STEM examples and enriched with active learning features such as chapter quizzes. Fisher commends the book's relevance across further and higher education contexts and its potential to foster confidence and scholarly engagement, particularly for those starting to engage with research for the first time.

Celeste McLaughlin explores Sam Elkington and Alastair Irons' edited collection *Formative assessment and feedback in post-digital learning environments*. She highlights the editors' framing of technology and pedagogy as entangled and values the book's rich case studies exploring approaches such as rubrics, e-portfolios, multimodal assessment, and AI-enabled tools. Her review combines an overview of recurring themes with deeper engagement in selected chapters, noting the collection's strength in contextualising practice rather than focusing on tools. Overall, she recommends the book as a timely, nuanced resource for educators seeking to navigate complexity in hybrid learning environments.

Iwi Ugiagbe-Green engages with Kalwant Bhopal and Martin Myers' *Race, racism and higher education*, an incisive critique of systemic racial inequality and the normalisation of everyday racism in UK universities. In centring student voices, Ugiagbe-Green suggests the book exposes the normalisation of everyday racism and interrogates elitism, whiteness, and the hidden curriculum. She values its analysis of different forms of capital but questions its reliance on Bourdieu, advocating for stronger integration of Critical Race

Theory and intersectionality. Overall, she commends its clarity and recommends it as a powerful, urgent text.

Rebecca Upsher reviews David A. Rettinger and Tricia Bertram Gallant's *The opposite of cheating*. This book offers a timely and optimistic guide to embedding academic integrity in an AI-enabled world. Upsher highlights the authors' systemic approach, praising how they frame integrity as relational and pedagogical, rather than punitive. She values the book's practical strategies for assessment design, inclusive pedagogy, and GenAI integration, alongside its conceptual grounding in motivation and belonging. Upsher suggests the book is an essential resource for educators seeking to rehumanise higher education in an AI-enabled world.

Finally, Ben Windle reviews Stephen Bailey's *Academic writing: a handbook for international students* (6th edn), a practical guide aimed at supporting international students with the conventions of English-medium academic writing. The book offers a clear and structured approach to developing academic writing skills. Windle notes the inclusion of AI guidance as timely yet brief and suggests future editions could do more to foster contextualised learning. Despite these gaps, Windle sees the handbook as a useful starting point for writing support and adaptable for Learning Development contexts.

In closing, we wish to thank our reviewers, whose expertise and constructive critiques have elevated the quality of the works published in this volume. Their continued dedication to facilitating good scholarship is the foundation of our scholarly community. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to:

Alina Congreve	Erin Hawkins	Lucy Myers
Amy Aisha Brown	Fran Sutherland	Maria King
Amy May	Gwenda Mynott	Martha Stewart
Arina Cirstea	Hongfen Zhou	Matt O'Connor
Briana Chapple	Ian Johnson	Melanie Crisfield
Brigid Callaghan	Ivan Newman	Nicola Tomlinson
Christopher Little	Jennie Blake	Nikita Boardman
Clare Brown	Jessica Cooper	Peter Hartley
Emilia Piera	Joshua Wang	Reece Sohdi
Emily Martini	Kassie Cigliana	Sharon Boyd

Silvia Rossi

Suzanne Albary

Sunny Dhillon

Tadhg Blommerde

Suparna Ghose

Tolu Adedoja

The work in this issue reminds us what matters: thoughtful practice, generous collaboration, and genuine care for our students and each other. We hope it inspires and sustains you in equal measure.

With very best wishes for the festive season,

Alicja Syska

JLDHE Editorial Board

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