



Praxis
Centre for Scholarship and Innovation
Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies



Praxis Pulse October 2026

Welcome to Praxis Pulse Oct 2026 – your gateway to the ideas, people and collaborations energising the Praxis community.

As we begin our **9th academic year of Praxis**, it's a wonderful opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, while looking ahead to the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. From fresh thinking and innovative teaching practices to bold scholarship, new collaborations and ideas that are making a difference, Praxis continues to grow as a vibrant community of scholarship and innovation across WELS.

In this edition, discover the latest from the WELS Scholarship and Innovation Centre, celebrate the work of our colleagues and explore the projects, people and partnerships shaping the future of education.

Dive in and discover what's happening across Praxis!



October 2026



A word from Director Prof. Carol Azumah Dennis



Welcome to the new academic year and to this latest edition of the Praxis Newsletter.

As I reflected on the many achievements, developments and opportunities featured in this edition, one theme kept returning to me:

The power of one.

This year, we celebrate one new international partnership with Nord University, crystallised through an exciting programme of seminars and

discussions that will bring together colleagues from both institutions to share ideas, expertise and innovative practice. Our first seminar will take place on 3rd December 2026, and marks the beginning of what promises to be a rich and rewarding collaboration.

We also celebrate a new Network, dedicated to increasing Associate Lecturer (AL) engagement in scholarship. Led by Dr Kim Collett, the Praxis AL Scholarship Network recognises the vital role Associate Lecturers play within our university. As those who have the most direct, immediate and sustained contact with our students, ALs are the people through whom students experience the Open University. This network creates opportunities for ALs to engage directly in scholarship, not as objects of improvement but as active contributors to change, innovation and the generation of new knowledge.

The power of one was also evident at our recent annual seminar, *Unlocking Creative Potential in Higher Education*, which brought together over 150 colleagues for a stimulating exploration of creativity, innovation and the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence in higher education. If you were unable to attend, or if you would like to revisit the discussions and presentations, you can [access the seminar resources here](#).

Of course, ambitions of "one" begin to fall away when I look at the sheer scale and diversity of activity taking place across Praxis. Praxis has grown exponentially into a vibrant, radically inclusive and creative community of scholarship and innovation. The breadth and quality of the work featured in this edition is testament to the creativity, commitment and collaborative spirit of colleagues across the Faculty. From new scholarship projects and publications to emerging networks, resources and partnerships, Praxis continues to support and showcase work that is making a meaningful difference to teaching, learning and the student experience.

There is so much to look forward to in the coming year. We celebrate the growing contribution of Praxis scholarship to REF-quality outputs, with an increasing number of publications emerging from Praxis-supported projects and extending their influence far beyond the Faculty. We welcome an

outstanding new cohort of projects, explore the experiences of colleagues undertaking Praxis scholarship, showcase our Scholarship Hubs as spaces where people, ideas and innovation come together, and look ahead to an exciting programme of events and opportunities for collaboration.

And yet the theme of "one" returns once more.

Next year, Praxis will celebrate one decade of scholarship and innovation. Ten years of supporting colleagues, fostering creativity, building communities and championing scholarship that makes a difference. As we approach this significant milestone, I hope you will join us in reflecting on what we have achieved together and in looking forward with excitement to what comes next.

The countdown has begun. Let us look forward to the celebrations, and perhaps even a few fireworks.

Professor Carol Azumah Dennis

Director, Praxis Centre for Scholarship and Innovation

The Praxis Year

Praxis 2025 -26 in numbers: The Highlights



17 newly funded projects

Team members: 70
ALs: 12
Students: 5



Festival of Scholarship

52 Attendees
1 keynote
17 project presentations



11 Hub events



23 events held



18 project videos produced



Unlocking AI's Creative Potential in Higher Education Event

150 Attendees
1 Keynote
4 Project Presentations



7 Project Impact Events



10 Hub Podcasts released



15 Writing Retreat participants



1 AL Network Launched



1 new Scholarship Hub



1 new international partnership



6 peer-reviewed publications



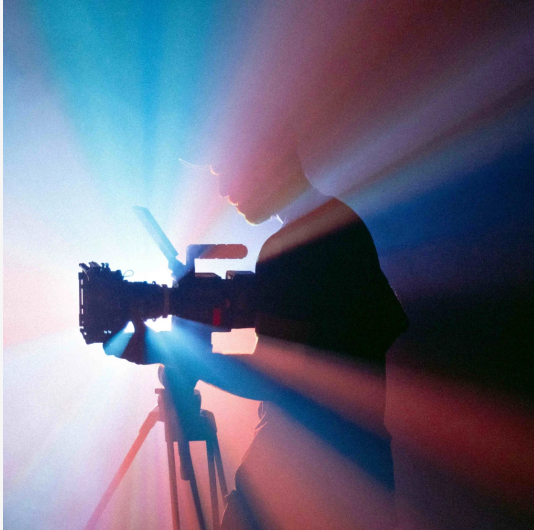
21 External Conference presentations



1 Impact project

Bringing Our Projects to Life

With the number of live projects growing year on year, Praxis is home



to an exciting and ever-expanding diversity of ideas, approaches and research methods. To celebrate the people and thinking behind this work, we invite Project Leads to share their stories through our growing collection of short videos.

The Story So Far takes us behind the scenes, hearing directly from project leads about the ideas that sparked their work, the challenges they have tackled and the difference they hope to make. These engaging snapshots

reveal the passion, creativity and purpose driving Praxis scholarship.

But the story doesn't end when a project does. **Lasting Legacy** explores what happens next — how project ideas continue to influence practice, inspire new thinking and create meaningful change long after the funding ends. Together, these videos showcase not just what Praxis projects achieve, but the lasting impact they leave behind.

New Resources: Exploring Methods of Inquiry

We've been expanding the Praxis website with new resources to support colleagues exploring Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Our new seven-part Methods of Inquiry video series offers practical and accessible insights into different approaches to inquiry, helping academics and practitioners explore, shape and strengthen their own scholarship. And there's more to come: we're developing a linked OpenLearn resource focused on practitioner methodologies, creating

an accessible space where colleagues can discover new approaches and take their scholarship further. **See the videos on our website.**



Taking Praxis Scholarship Beyond WELS

Praxis-funded scholarship is making its mark well beyond the Faculty, with



project findings continuing to reach wider audiences through high-quality, peer-reviewed publications and sector outlets. During 2025/26, Praxis projects contributed fresh thinking to conversations around reflective practice in teacher education, online learning, student collaboration, digital communities, prison education, lifelong learning and the hidden curriculum in higher education. By turning project insights into published scholarship, Praxis is extending the reach and influence of our work,

contributing to important sector debates and showcasing WELS as a hub for research-informed teaching, innovation and educational change.

Bleasdale, C. (2025) Collaborative toolkit creation to support reflective practice in teacher education. *Journal of Education, Innovation & Communication* <https://oro.open.ac.uk/108079/>

Dorrian, J. (2026) What is a tutorial? exploring 'learning event literacy' to address aspects of the hidden curriculum in higher education. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e - Learning*, 1 - 17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2026.2651727>

Gibson, P., Shrestha, S. & Staszkievicz, H. (2025) How students really feel about collaborative tasks in online learning. *Times Higher Education* <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/how-students-really-feel-about-collaborative-tasks-online-learning>

Kelly, O. (2026) From Discord to Connection: Tutor Perspectives on Building Community in Distance Higher Education. *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning* <https://ojs.library.lancs.ac.uk/stel/cfp-social-media>

Patterson, E. (2025) 'A voice from beyond the walls' - Education in Prisons: Generating Hope, Escaping Stereotypes. *BERA Research Intelligence Special Edition*, Volume 164 <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/autumn-2025>

Rainford, J. (2025) Using Zemiology to explore the potential social harms of a lifelong learning entitlement. *Journal of Education Policy* <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2025.2560376>

New Projects Join the Praxis Community

Our May Funding Round has brought **12 exciting new projects** into the Praxis community, adding even more breadth, creativity and fresh thinking to our scholarship portfolio. Each project brings a new question, perspective or approach to educational practice — and we can't wait to see where they lead. Explore

the new projects and find out more on the Scholarship Exchange.

You may need an Open University Scholarship Exchange login to access some of the 2026–2027 projects.

[Developing Critical GenAI Literacies in Initial Teacher Education: A Collaborative Approach to Exploring Practice and Developing Policy](#)

Jonathan Giddy

[Autoethnography as Pedagogy and Pedagogical Assessment: An Ethical and Critical Case Study](#)

Paul Reynolds

[Mapping lived experiences of the student journey through Stage 1 Master's modules: examining equitability, accessibility and transitioning](#)

Rhiannon Moore

[Developing feedback literacy with Level 1 students](#)

Ola Fadoju and Shona Clark

[In what ways do Neurodiversity cafes support students and staff balance positions of power, authenticity and belonging in HE Distance Learning](#)

Ellesar Elhaggagi and Jo Strang

[Understanding and Supporting OU \(WELS\) students going through bereavement](#)

Jackie Musgrave

[Do university students studying via distance learning experience loneliness, and what factors contribute to those feelings?](#)

Evelyn Mooney

[Exploring tutorial approaches in a mental health module: needs and perceptions of students and tutors](#)

Katie Davis

[Constructing Compliance: How Apprentices Understand and Engage with Apprenticeship Requirements](#)

Nerys Bolton

[Developing an inclusive flexible tuition strategy for KE324 \(new module presentation\)](#)

Vicky Lyon

[Introducing Discord to build and sustain communities for students in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics](#)

Olivia Kelly and Danielle Pullen

[Voices from beyond the walls: Modelling and trialling new approaches for supporting Open University Access students studying from within prisons in England and Wales](#)

Eira Patterson





Series 2 of the Praxis Scholarship Hub Podcast launched on Tuesday 1 September with an episode featuring **Tamsin Smith**, who discussed ***The Experiences of Younger Nursing Students in Scotland***.

A new episode will be released each month, with the series continuing through to June 2027. The series provides an opportunity to explore a range of experiences, perspectives and scholarship from colleagues across the sector.

Praxis Scholarship Hubs



Praxis Scholarship Hubs: Connecting People, Ideas and Innovation

One of the greatest strengths of Praxis is its ability to bring people together, and nowhere is this more evident than in our growing network of **Scholarship Hubs**. Designed to connect colleagues around shared interests, the hubs create vibrant communities where ideas can flourish, collaborations can develop and scholarship can be transformed into meaningful practice.

Each hub provides a space for colleagues to explore emerging issues, share expertise and develop projects that align with Faculty priorities. Some are established in response to strategic priorities, while others emerge organically from colleagues who recognise an opportunity to build a community around a shared area of interest.

This year, our four Scholarship Hubs have continued to grow and evolve, each making a significant contribution to the wider scholarship community.

The **Social Media Scholarship Hub**, led by **Dr Olivia Kelly**, has expanded to 49 members and continues to explore how digital communities can enhance teaching and learning in higher education. Current areas of interest include the use of social platforms to support both tutors and students in distance-learning environments.

Led by **Lisa Bowers**, the **Immersive Technology Hub** is exploring how virtual, augmented and extended reality can create more engaging, ethical and inclusive learning experiences. Through cross-disciplinary collaboration, the hub is helping to position The Open University at the forefront of innovation in immersive learning.

The **Anti-Racist and Inclusive Assessment (ARIA) Hub**, led by **Mel Green**, continues to attract colleagues from across the University who are committed to embedding more inclusive and equitable assessment practices. Through seminars, research projects and student partnerships, the hub is creating important conversations that are influencing both policy and practice.

Meanwhile, the newly established **Into Practice Hub**, led by **Ursula Stickler and Leigh Worrall**, has already begun building an exciting international network focused on teacher education, professional learning and practice-based scholarship.

Into Practice Scholarship Hub Event:

Seminar with Dr. Martina Emke, Programme Co-ordinator for Academic Staff Development at the Netzwerk hdw nrw – 13th October 2026 11.30 – 12.30 – Hosted on MS Teams (contact ursula.stickler@open.ac.uk for MS Teams invite)

Together, these hubs demonstrate the power of collaboration in driving innovation, strengthening scholarship and creating communities that inspire new ways of thinking across the University.

Find out more by visiting **[The Scholarship Hubs](#)** page on our website.

On the Horizon



Important Dates

17th March 2027, 10:00 – 12:00

Praxis Open Seminar 2027 – The Raisin In The Rice Pudding

Keynote Speaker – Lorraine Jones – Director of EDI at the Open University

12th May 2027, 9:30 – 16:00

Praxis Conference 2027

Keynote Speaker – Lou Mycroft

Lou Mycroft is a systemic changemaker, facilitator and organisational strategist who helps transform workplace culture and strategy. She is also a TEDx speaker and writer, with a focus on creating meaningful and sustainable change.

Get in touch

We are here to help with all things scholarship so please do get in touch or visit us online for more information.

Email WELS-Praxis (WELS-Praxis@open.ac.uk).

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