



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



Praxis Pulse March 2026

Welcome to the March edition of the Praxis newsletter, a fresh start for a new season, and a chance to reconnect with the energy and ideas moving across our community. As spring approaches, we turn our attention to the **events** bringing us together in the coming months, alongside new developments from the WELS Scholarship and Innovation Centre. Inside, you'll find highlights of emerging research, inventive teaching practices, and forward-thinking scholarship that continue to shape the future of education.



March 2026



A word from Director Prof. Carol Azumah Dennis



Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the Praxis newsletter! As I look ahead at the events we have lined up over the coming months—including our Open Seminar on 25th March, *From Anxiety to Agency: Unlocking AI's Creative Potential*, and the Festival of Scholarship on 28th April, with keynote speaker Paul Miller from the Institute for Equity - I can't help feeling genuinely excited.

And it's not just the promise of exploring new ideas with colleagues and engaging wider communities. It's that every highlight in this newsletter - from Bob Halliwell's Interactive Writing Tool, to the 2025 - 2026

project proposals we're delighted to support, to Olivia Kelly's new podcast series - captures what I love most about pedagogic research, scholarship, and innovation at The Open University.

For me, teaching in Higher Education is far more than technical competence or adherence to carefully crafted specifications. What this newsletter reminds me of is that:

"Pedagogy ... is not a vehicle for exchanging information from one being to another; rather, teaching has immanence—it creates new connections, new styles for thinking and new images and ways of seeing'..."

(Location 622, Dernikos et al. (2020). Mapping the Affective Turn in Education: Theory, Research, and Pedagogies)

So I find myself wondering, and inviting you to ponder - with genuine curiosity and anticipation - what new worlds are opening up through the work colleagues associated with Praxis are now undertaking?

Events 2026



OPEN SEMINAR

From Anxiety to Agency: Unlocking AI's Creative Potential in Higher Education

Wednesday 25th March 2026

9:45 - 12:00

Registration now open

We are delighted to welcome Dr Mark Carrigan as the keynote speaker for our Annual Seminar. Mark is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of

Manchester and an AI Fellow at the Institute for Teaching and Learning. He is widely recognised for his critical insights into the social and educational implications of emerging technologies.

We hope you can join us – [REGISTER & FIND OUT MORE](#)

Praxis Festival of Scholarship 2026

Tuesday 28th April 2026

9:30 – 16:00

Registration now open

Join us as we celebrate our 8th Praxis Festival of Scholarship to hear more about the fantastic pedagogic research and scholarship that WELS colleagues – academics, associate lecturers, postgraduate researchers and students have undertaken for the past 12 months.

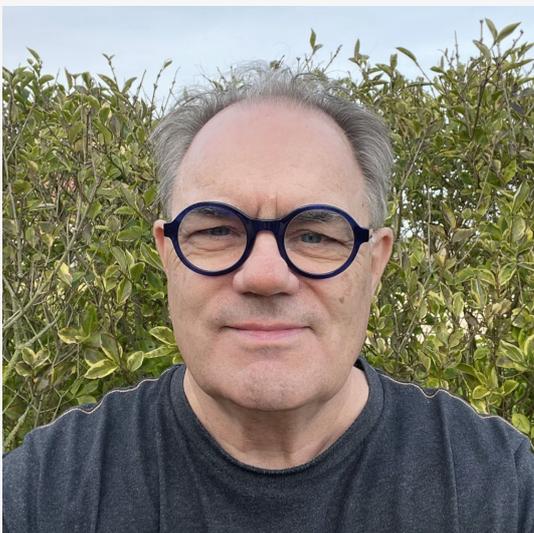


This year we have invited [Professor Paul Miller CEO of the Institute for Equity, newly inaugurated University Centre](#). Consistent with our enduring commitment to Praxis – the unity of theory and practice – Paul will guide us in exploring how a passionate dedication to equity can be translated into institutional action.

Alongside Praxis supported projects, the festival will include presentations from colleagues who have recently completed their Level 7 Institute for Equity Fellowship.

We hope you can join us – [REGISTER & FIND OUT MORE](#)

Praxis project spotlight



Demystifying criticality – scoping the potential of an Interactive Writing Tool

Dr Bob Hallawell's project sheds light on the challenge of teaching criticality as a core element of academic literacy. It argues that learning innovations and cross-module dialogue about critical thinking and writing must be made explicit and intentionally applied in order to provide students with more targeted support and to encourage a

lifelong approach to learning. The project reveals the complex, multi-layered nature of criticality in higher education, showing how it is shaped by lifelong

learning habits, disciplinary expectations, and the contexts in which learning takes place.

[Watch the Video](#)

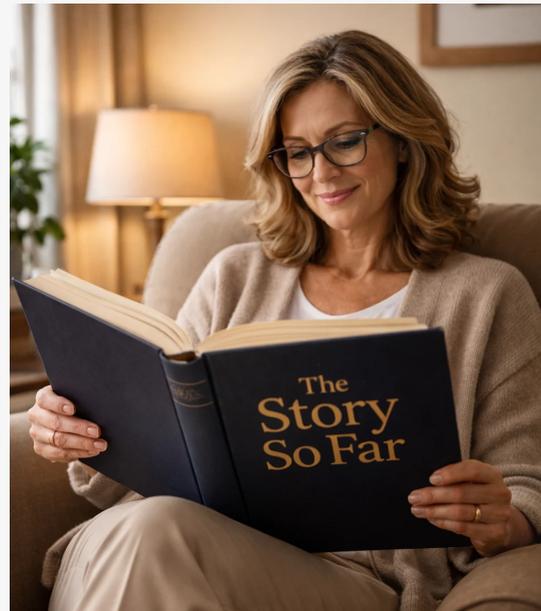
[Read the Final Report - Demystifying criticality – scoping the potential of an Interactive Writing Tool](#)

The story so far

We're delighted to share a new collection of videos showcasing our 2024/25 projects, now live on the website.

Hear directly from the innovators themselves as our project leads reveal the stories behind their projects - the challenges they've faced and the impact they're working to achieve. These short films offer a vivid glimpse into the passion and purpose driving each project.

Available on our [Praxis Website](#)



Scholarship Exchange



Congratulations to the three top viewed projects on the Scholarship Exchange:

1. Jane Cook - [Web-based simulation for Undergraduate Student Nurses – a pilot study](#).

Number of views: 297

2. Christine Pleines & Qian Kan-

[Exploring the use of tutorial recordings to support retention and best practice in tutorial design for beginner learners of Chinese](#)

Number of views: 292

3. Olivia Kelly - [Creating harmony from Discord™: Using innovative technology to create a sense of community in distance education](#)

Number of views: 247

Newly funded projects

Since the last newsletter we have funded an additional eleven projects:

[How does one's island identity impact upon the experiences of studying to be a registered nurse with the Open University – Tamsin Smith](#)

[Better Words for AI: A Collaborative Dynamic Lexicon- Mirjam Hauck & Eleanor Moore](#)

[Exploring Relaxed Tutorials in a mental health module: A co-operative inquiry – Katie Davies](#)

[Exploring the potential for online community events to support belonging and engagement in Access – Isabella Henman & Karen Bowen](#)

[A student-led investigation into the pan-university practices of peer mentoring and its potential impact on personalised learning – Danielle Pullen](#)

[A cohort Pilot study of a Digital Cancer Clinical Placement in the Nursing Curriculum – Kirsten Bashir](#)

[Fair access to social work education: understanding the barriers for some of our most underrepresented student – Helen Casey.](#)

[The Journey of the Early Childhood Student \(Phase 3: Spaces of Potential Mattering – Joanne Josephidou](#)

[Evaluation of relaxed tutorials on KE207 25J – Vicky Lyon](#)

[Equipping the Educators: Supporting Practice Educators to Guide Social Work Students in a Digital Practise Landscape – Sharif Haider](#)

Praxis Podcast



Our podcast now features thirteen episodes, including our latest with Dr Mark Carrigan, who will be the Keynote speaker at this year's Praxis Open Seminar.

Mark is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester and AI Fellow at the Institute for Teaching and Learning. Mark's work has been central to understanding how digital platforms, from early social media to today's large language models, are reshaping academic practice,

identity, and community.

Together, Olivia and Mark explore the rapid rise of generative AI and its profound implications for higher education. Their conversation moves beyond

the usual task-based narratives to examine the deeper sociological issues

[Listen to all episodes here.](#)

Explore the updates below to see what each hub has been working on—and sign up to get involved!

For further information and to register for any of the Hubs, visit the [Praxis Website](#).

Praxis Scholarship Hubs



Into Practice Scholarship Hub – Leigh Worrell & Ursula Stickler

Our new *Into Practice Hub* launched at the Gothenburg International Seminar in September 2025, creating a space to explore research and practice in professional learning for higher education. The Hub connects scholarship across the University – from Praxis projects and teacher education research to online learning development and Associate Lecturer staff development at the The Open University – encouraging collaboration across pedagogies to strengthen teaching practice. This year, a Praxis funded study will examine factors shaping changes in

Social Media Scholarship Hub – Olivia Kelly

The Praxis Social Media Scholarship Hub continues to enhance our understanding of the role social media plays in teaching and learning. It provides a university-wide hub for scholarship into social media, creating and hosting knowledge and evidence exchange events with the aim of contributing to wider dialogue across the HE sector. In February, the hub hosted a public seminar with invited guest speaker, Dr VaNessa Thompson of the University of Michigan to discuss Student Belonging on Social Media. Hub members are currently working on

practice, focusing on the experiences of OU Associate Lecturers. Our first seminar on 29th April features Kris Stutchbury, followed by the inaugural Hub meeting on 5th May.

[Register for the Into Practice hub.](#)

The Anti-Racist and Inclusive Assessment Scholarship Hub (ARIA) - Mel Green

The ARIA Hub has had an active year. Its Speaker Seminar Series drew over 100 attendees across three events on assessment, belonging, and inclusive practice, including a session with Professor Quinlan and Dr Dave Thomas on culturally sensitive assessment and generative AI. The next seminar on 17th March, presented by Dr Karen Gravatt, will explore assessment and students' sense of belonging in online learning.

The Hub includes around 50 colleagues across the university, and ARIA podcasts from last year are now used in student intern induction. In October 2025, two Praxis projects launched with a Level 2 module team and partners to embed anti-racist and inclusive assessment. The first Community of Practice event took place in November, with a follow-up AI-focused session led by Professor Mirjam Hauck planned. In early 2026, Mel will share ARIA's work on racially inclusive assessment at a Faculty event.

[Register for the ARIA hub](#)

two publications while developing OU-wide student friendly guides for social media use. The hub hopes to achieve clarification and amendments to tutor guidelines for social media use in their teaching roles.

[Register for the Social Media hub](#)

The Immersive Technology Scholarship Hub - Lisa Bowers

The Praxis Immersive Tech Hub remains a progressive group within the WELS Distance Learning Hub. As we move through 2026, the Hub is expanding its focus on how Extended Reality (XR) and simulated environments can support complex subject areas, such as student language practice, using AI and real-world simulations. The Hub lead was kindly invited to contribute to a [podcast](#) about the recent BBC programme *Seeing into the Future*, which offers insight into how emergent technology can aid and add value to human engagement with technology. Please feel free to listen in and follow the Immersive Technology group's ongoing scholarly activities.

[Register for the Immersive Technologies hub](#)

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).

Visit the **Praxis website.**

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