



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



### **Praxis Pulse – November 2025**

Welcome to the November 2025 Praxis Pulse Newsletter — your connection to the dynamic initiatives and collaborations across the Praxis community. Here you'll find the latest updates from the Open University's WELS Scholarship and Innovation Centre, highlighting innovative research, teaching practices, and ground-breaking scholarship shaping the future of education.



## **November 2025**



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## A word from Director Prof. Carol Azumah Dennis



Happy New Year! I love Autumn. It's a time for new beginnings. We have a refreshed look for the Praxis website and a whole new set of challenges.

The political and policy terrain looks grim, filled with marauding monsters (I dare not look). Higher Education is no less fraught – the sector teeters on the edge of financial collapse or at least seismic change. But Teaching – by definition – is an optimistic enterprise: a profession of hope (Halpin, 2003). And so, if 1979 was the

year when golden ageism gave way to neoliberalism, there were then and there are now always good reasons to be cheerful ([part 3](#)).

Praxis has an inspiring seminar series lined up: Scholarship Matters. Please put these dates in your diary and be ready to be wowed! But this is just the start.

Professor Paul Miller, CEO & Principal, **Institute for Equity** has accepted our invitation to KeyNote the Festival of Scholarship, on Tuesday, April 28, 2026.



Many OU colleagues have recently gained Level 7 fellowship of Institute of Equity for equity projects. A critical exploration of the interface between theory and practice lies at the heart of what Praxis is about.

[Mark Carrigan](#) from Manchester University has agreed to deliver our Praxis Open Seminar on March 25, 2026 – 10:00 to 12:00. We want him to explore Generative AI for Academics. His talk will consider Teaching, Learning, and Assessment as part of the role of AI in academic life.

We're also celebrating huge Praxis successes. From my own co-authored paper to emerge from a Praxis-funded project (2023 – 2024) being awarded best research paper of the year by HERAD to Eira Paterson featuring in the BERA Research Intelligence for her remarkable work on students in secure environments: [Education in prisons – Generating hope, escaping stereotypes](#).

The excitement returns as I look at the projects we have funded for 2025 – 2026 in our May call. These are just about to get started. [You may read more about them here](#).

Our year kicked off with an OU / Gothenburg International seminar on 24 September 2025.

We had Arne Wackenhut (University of Gothenburg), Director of Studies at Global Studies presenting on teachers' professional development and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez (Open University) who presented her Praxis project [Decoding research and research-informed teaching: perspectives from Languages Associate Lecturers](#).

We are extremely excited that the OU/Gothenburg Seminar also the launched ['Into Practice': A Praxis scholarship hub for pedagogic and professional learning](#).

Thank you for being part of our wider Praxis community. Stay curious, stay hopeful, and get ready to join us as we explore new and exciting horizons of hope.

## The Praxis year

# Praxis 2024 –25 in numbers: The Highlights



## 24 newly funded projects

82 Team members – Including:  
13 AL members  
3 student members



## 6 Scholarship Matters Seminars

134 attendees



## 7 Project related publications



## Inspiring Digital Futures Event

170 Attendees  
1 Keynote  
3 Project Presentations



## Festival of Scholarship

150 Attendees  
1 keynote speaker  
20 project presentations  
3 Praxis Hub Presentations  
4 ALs presenting



## 3 Project Impact Events

15 Presentations



## 13 new project videos produced



## 14 Scholarship Hub Meetings



## 15 Writing Retreat participants

## Project spotlight

### Learning Behind Bars

Eira Patterson's project sheds light on the educational journeys of Open University SiSE students studying Access modules in English prisons. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, and surveys with learners and staff, the research highlights the pedagogical, social, and contextual factors that shape prison education—amplifying student voices and offering fresh insight into learning in this unique setting.

[Watch the video.](#)

[Read the report: Voices from beyond the walls: An investigation into the education experiences of students studying Open University Access modules from within prisons in England](#)



## New projects taking flight



For the 2025/26 academic year, while the University is navigating financial challenges, we have a reduced budget, however, we remain committed to supporting our projects with the same dedication as in previous years. We are especially delighted to share that we were able to fund six exciting new projects in our most recent call, and we look forward to seeing the impact they will create.

Exploring students' experiences of racially inclusive assessment practices in online distance learning. Developing a best practice model

**Anna Judd-Yelland and Paula Addison-Pettit**

Autoethnography as Pedagogy and Pedagogical Assessment: An Ethical and Critical Case Study

**Paul Reynolds**

Building student community ECYS

**Shona Clark and Carol Nolan**

Leading a racially inclusive pedagogy working group for Modified Seminar Workshops on a Level 2 module

**Mel Green**

Setting the baseline: what triggers online teachers' changes in practice?

**Ursula Stickler & Leigh Worrall**

Voices from beyond the walls: Modelling and trialling new approaches for supporting Open University studying from within prisons in England and Wales

**Eira Patterson**

## Website refresh





We're thrilled to share that our website has a fresh new look — and it's packed with more content and features than ever before! While we're still adding the finishing touches, the site is already looking fantastic: more accessible, easier to navigate, and designed to help you find exactly what you need.

### **New features you'll love...**

- **New Menu:** You can now navigate the website more easily with the new in-page menu.
- **Associate Lecturers & Student Partners:** Learn how we're working side by side to drive innovation and impact.
- **Revamped Projects Page:** Browse projects by school, with direct access to summaries, final reports, and more.
- **Project Videos:** Hear directly from project leads as they share insights and findings in their own words.
- **Praxis Hubs:** A brand-new section showcasing the hubs driving creativity and research.
- **News:** All the latest up-to-date news items from the team.
- **Podcast & Blog:** Tune into the *Praxis Scholarship Hub Podcast* and check out our regularly updated blog for fresh perspectives.

We can't wait for you to explore, connect, and be inspired by everything the new site has to offer. **Take a look today — we think you'll love it!**

## **Praxis Scholarship Hubs**

### **Praxis Podcast**

Our podcast now features seven episodes with OU academics, including Professor Mirjam Hauck and Eleanor Moore on the Critical AI Literacy Framework, and Professor Joan Simons on a Praxis-funded project exploring support for students with disclosed mental health conditions. [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](#).

### **Into Practice Scholarship Hub – Leigh Worrell & Ursula Stickler**

We are delighted to launch the new **Into Practice Scholarship Hub** providing a home for the OU's rich and diverse scholarship on professional learning for teaching. Drawing on experience from Praxis projects, staff development, and research across WELS and other faculties, the hub brings together colleagues to share expertise, collaborate on new initiatives, and explore innovative approaches to teacher development. Through seminars, workshops, sandpit events, and showcases, *Into Practice* aims to support higher education practitioners in becoming confident and effective mediators of knowledge, while celebrating and amplifying the insights of experienced teachers.

[Register for this hub.](#)

### **The Anti-Racist and Inclusive Assessment Scholarship Hub – Mel Green**

### **Social Media Scholarship Hub – Olivia Kelly**

The **Social Media Scholarship Hub** continues to grow after a successful first year of meetings and public seminars on topics like ethics and the future of social media in HE. In 2025/26, we plan more events, with Lead Olivia Kelly also supporting a new OU campaign to boost student engagement in module inductions. Our next internal meeting is on Wednesday 10 September, 12–1pm, to discuss plans for the year, including collaborations with the Marketing Communications Team and advising module teams on using social media to build student community. Members are encouraged to bring ideas and suggestions.

**Members Meeting:** Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>  
December 12.00 –13.00

**External public seminar:** Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>  
February 12.00 – 13.00

[Contact us if you would like to attend.](#)

### **The Immersive Technology Scholarship Hub – Lisa Bowers**

Since appointing a new lead, the **Immersive Technology Hub** is

The **ARIA Scholarship Hub** has an exciting 2025 ahead. Our first Speaker Seminar Series on Tuesday 30 September features Prof. Kathleen Quinlan and Dr Dave Thomas on *Culturally Sensitive Assessment in the Age of AI*—over 100 attendees have already signed up. [Register here](#). The AGM will follow on Tuesday 7 October, where Mel will welcome returning and new members. Looking ahead, the Hub will host sessions with Dr Karen Gravett on belonging in online distance institutions and a special surprise from OU senior leadership.

**Members' Meeting:** Tuesday 9th December

**Members' Meeting:** Tuesday 19th February

**Speaker Seminar Series 2:** Tuesday 17th March

**Members' Meeting:** Tuesday 21st April

**Members' Meeting:** Tuesday 30th June

gaining momentum, sharing papers and insights on **AR/XR/VR in education** via Teams and highlighting relevant conferences. We are exploring the value of immersive tech and ways to capture user perceptions, while several members contribute to the OU's 14 day AI event [FAIESTA – Festival of AI Exploration and Strategies in Teaching and Assessment](#). We'd like to encourage all Hub members to join and engage with these discussions.

**Members' Meeting:** Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December

**Members' Meeting:** Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February

**Members' Meeting:** Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April

## OU International Seminars Invitation: Partners in Scholarship



The Open University in the UK, Faculty Centre for Pedagogic Research, Scholarship and Innovation, is seeking to develop a new partnership with an international Higher Education Institute to co-host (online, occasionally face-to-face) seminars two or three times a year, around a shared theme.

The seminars usually follow a 20 / 20 / 20 format: 2 x 20 mins presentation by an academic from each HEI followed by 20 mins for discussion. We take the

organisation of each event in turns.

We invite an audience from both institutions and view this as a networking research event that encourages a broader view of HE pedagogies through an international lens. You may view our most recent seminars [here](#):



May 2025

September 2025

Is this a partnership that you might like to consider? If so, please let [@wels-praxis](#) know. We can arrange to meet and discuss further.

## Highlights

### **Praxis Festival of Scholarship 2025: Shaping the Future of Teaching & Learning**

After six successful years as an inward-facing event, this year's Festival stepped boldly into the wider Higher Education sector, sparking collaboration and dialogue beyond our institution. Over 150 attendees

joined us to celebrate an inspiring range of Praxis projects, from creative uses of video technology in teacher education to powerful explorations of anti-racist and inclusive assessment practices. The day was alive with presentations on wellness, education, and language studies, all united by a shared commitment to research-rich teaching, student-centred learning, and professional growth. A highlight of the Festival was our keynote from Syra Shakir, Associate Professor in Learning and Teaching and Strategic Lead on Race Equity at Leeds Trinity University, who challenged us to move from rhetoric to action in her talk *From the Race Equality Charter to Building an Anti-Racist University: Mechanisms for Change*. With lively discussions, innovative ideas, and a collective spirit of curiosity, the Festival proved to be a vibrant space shaping the future of teaching and learning.



[The Keynote presentations along with all other presentations can be found on the Praxis Website.](#)



### **Praxis Writing Retreat 2025 – A Creative Boost for Our Writers**

Fifteen of our colleagues came together this year for the Praxis Writing Retreat – a protected space to focus, reflect, and make real progress toward publishable outputs from Praxis projects.

The day was guided by our very own Prof. Carol Azumah Dennis, Praxis Director, who opened the retreat with an inspiring session on *creativity and academic writing*, using powerful images to spark ideas and help us get started.

From there, participants enjoyed a lively mix of workshops:

- Dr. Julia Molinari explored *what makes writing academic*, unpacking questions of language, diversity, and why diversity matters for student and doctoral writing.
- Dr. Jon Rainford ran a practical *Power Hour*, giving us a structured way to turn focused writing into real progress.
- Dr. Maria Leedham shared insights on *Scholarship and REF*, helping participants shape a publication strategy with REF in mind—what to write, how to frame it, and how to meet the criteria.

Crucially, the retreat gave colleagues something we all crave but rarely get—protected time to really focus on their writing, free from the usual interruptions.

It wasn't all hard work, though! The retreat also offered time to chat, swap experiences, and connect socially—because good writing thrives in good company.

This year's writing retreat reminded us that academic writing doesn't have to be solitary or stressful—it can be creative, collaborative, and even fun!

We're always looking for inspiring speakers and coaches for our events. If you believe you could make a valuable contribution, we'd love to hear from you.

## And finally...

We're thrilled to share that a paper co-authored by our Director of Praxis, Prof. Carol Azumah Dennis, has won the HERDSA Routledge Article of the Year Award 2024! [Find out more on our website.](#)

AND

Exciting news from one of our Praxis project teams, Poppy Gibson, Sagun Shrestha, and Helena Staszkievicz's work on *Student Experiences and Attitudes Toward Online Group Collaboration in Distance Learning* was accepted for publication in *Times Higher Education* — please follow the link and have a read.

## On the horizon



## Important dates

### **HOLD THE DATE!**

#### **Praxis Open Seminar 2026 (Theme to be confirmed)–**

Wednesday, 25th March, 2026 10.00 – 12.00

**Festival of Scholarship 2026 – *Generative AI for Academics*** – Tuesday, 28th April 2026 09.30 – 16.00

## 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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