

12:00

12:00-13:30

WELCOME

Registration & Networking Lunch

13:30

13:30-14:00

Conference Opening - Welcome & Group Discussion

explorance

ROOMRISE & SHINE

14:00

14:00-14:45

KEYNOTE

Whose Table Is It? Recentering Student Voice for the Future of Higher Education



Students aren't always brought into the conversation and when they are, they're rarely brought into the room where solutions get designed. Favour Samuel, NUS England President, draws on her own path from the Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa to leading a Students' Union through a period of major institutional change at the University of Nottingham, to ask what it would really mean to put students at the centre of higher education, not just alongside it. This session moves beyond the language of consultation and partnership to a practical question every institution in this room can act on: what changes when students aren't just heard, but are in the room when solutions are designed?

ROOMRISE & SHINE

14:50

14:50-15:25

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

What Are the Right Amount of Student Surveys? Findings From a Sector Audit of UK Universities' use of MEQs



Module or unit level evaluation questionnaires (MEQs) are as much a core to higher education student voice strategies as student academic representatives or NSS completion campaigns. These evaluations offer an 'on the ground' student voice check in which is both wide and deep reaching, shedding light on understanding of module and course level students' experiences in year to highlight areas for enhancement. Yet as digital solutions to survey populations becomes easier to deploy and efficient to analyse, many students now report survey fatigue due to a bloating number of online questionnaires asking for students' engagement. When one considers an evaluation as a survey, many universities report up to 60 student surveys during an undergraduate student journey, when including student service, university-wide and course/module level surveys. Therefore, many universities have reported innovation in this space, where as part of the 2025 UK Audit of Student Voice and Representation, questions were asked regarding current university practice with MEQs. This session will disseminate the findings from 78 UK universities and share wider perspectives from the research and literature to greater understand current practice to inform delegate discussions and planning for the academic year ahead.

ROOMGROW

14:50-15:25

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

From Student Voice to Career Readiness: Using Student Insight to Personalise Learning at Scale



Over the past three years, Hull University Business School has developed the Student Aspirations Insight Framework, combining student voice, reflective inquiry and quantitative indicators to better understand student aspirations, motivations, confidence, identity, career ambition and developmental needs. Drawing on data from all Level 4 students across this business school annually, the framework analyses reflective narratives alongside quantitative measures to identify recurring themes relating to career readiness, engagement, belonging, employability and approaches to learning. Rather than categorising students, it provides a richer understanding of the diverse perspectives within a cohort and supports evidence-informed curriculum enhancement, student engagement and employability development. Through interactive discussion and practical examples, this workshop explores how institutions can move beyond collecting feedback towards understanding student aspirations at scale, using qualitative insight to inform personalised educational experiences, inclusive practice, student support and decision making across a range of higher education contexts.

ROOMBUZZ

14:50-15:25

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Building Belonging at Scale: Lessons from Growing a Global Student Voice Network



The Centre for Belonging in Education (CBE) began in 2026 as a Fulbright project at Elon University and has grown into a network of over 2,000 members across six continents. This session explores what it takes to scale student voice work internationally: running National Student Voices Panels across all four UK nations and Ireland, hosting a first National Policy Roundtable in London, and launching a Founding Fellowship of 65 international student and staff Fellows. As CBE moves into Year 2, building out governance across Policy, Practice, and Research hubs, Tom will share practical lessons on embedding student voice in institutional strategy and governance, and on building genuine belonging and culture across institutions and borders.

ROOMWORK

15:25

15:25-15:45

BREAK

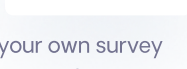
Networking Break

15:45

15:45-16:15

SESSION

Maximising Student Feedback Participation: Insights from the Global Response Rates Tournament



Learn which tactics helped higher education institutions increase survey participation and what those choices mean for your own survey strategy. This Explorance-led session breaks down the 2026 Global Response Rates Tournament results to show which approaches appeared most often among our customers, where institutions focused their efforts, and how those decisions supported broader feedback goals. You will leave with practical ideas for course evaluations, student voice initiatives, and institutional surveys, along with a clearer understanding of how communication, timing, sponsorship, and delivery channels influence participation at scale. The session is designed to help you assess your response rates baseline and uncover improvements you can apply on your campus.

ROOMWORK

16:20

16:20-16:55

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Embedding Professional Literacies and Work-readiness Through Student-led Insight



Universities are increasingly focusing on how to embed professional literacies into curricula to facilitate professional identity and enhance graduate prospects. The importance of enabling students to link academic knowledge with practical scenarios is well recognised, however creating trustful spaces in which we listen to our students to help inform and reflect on our practice is less understood. This session will present student narratives of how essential skills such as team-building, interdisciplinary working and project management can be built into the core curriculum. Using intentional and considered pedagogical and experiential learning approaches shaped by student voice, we will demonstrate how to weave employability across a range of programmes from Physiotherapy to Marketing through simulation-based education, structured reflective practice, and live client projects.

ROOMGROW

16:20-16:55

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Rebuilding the Learning Community in a Large Undergraduate Cohort



In 2022, the School of Psychology at the University of Sheffield faced low National Student Survey (NSS) scores for Student Voice (50.7%), driven by post-pandemic disconnection. Taking on the role of Student Voice Ambassador, I spearheaded a strategic, culture-first approach to rebuild trust and engagement. This presentation explores how targeted community initiatives—such as Psychology Movie Nights, Study-Buddy groups, and interactive campus trails—re-established a vibrant learning community. Parallelly, we eliminated the feedback 'black hole' by launching a transparent Student Voice website with an active Action Tracker, empowering a student SSC chair, and publishing video summaries. By fostering a safe space for dialogue, anonymous input, and clear communication—even when student requests couldn't be met—student voice satisfaction surged to 93% (2nd in the UK). Attendees will gain actionable strategies to build trust, co-create partnerships, and transform student engagement in their own departments.

ROOMBUZZ

16:20-16:55

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Costs of Student Engagement



Building on the work of QAA's Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC) on Value for Money in 2025, the committee identified the costs of student engagement as a priority area for 2026, focusing specifically on the costs of engaging in activities that support quality assurance and enhancement borne by students. This work is underpinned by a simple premise: if students cannot be in the room, providers cannot hear from them. To explore this issue, student members of the committee gathered feedback from students about their experiences of participating in activities that support quality assurance and enhancement. The project highlights, in students' own words, the challenges and barriers they face in engaging with these activities. In this session, participants will hear about the project's initial findings, reflections, and emerging recommendations for providers seeking to strengthen student engagement in the current higher education landscape.

ROOMWORK

17:00

17:00-17:35

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Power in Partnership: Rethinking How We Build Student Voice Strategy



Listening to and valuing the perspectives of our students enables us to take a collaborative and nuanced approach to co-create actions and build trust in the cultural changes needed for long-term improvements. Fundamental to this process is the development of trustful spaces in which all voices are heard and valued. At Oxford Brookes University we are working collaboratively with our Students' Union to develop a Student Voice Strategy and Annual activity plan with targeted opportunities to listen to students. This session will explore how we have worked together to develop a Student Voice Strategy and facilitate long term, effective changes using survey data, thematic listening events and focus groups. This strategy is designed to provide opportunities to listen to our diverse student population and ensure that we actively close the feedback loop with our students.

ROOMGROW

17:00-17:35

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Support, Community and Culture in Postgraduate Education: Insights from PTES and PRES



Postgraduate student experiences can differ in important ways between taught programmes and research degrees. Using findings from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), this session will explore what postgraduate students across the UK are telling us about support, community and culture, as well as the wider student experience. This session will highlight similarities and differences between taught and research postgraduates and consider what institutions can learn by paying close attention to postgraduate student voice.

ROOMBUZZ

17:00-17:35

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Module Evaluation Surveys Low? We Piloted a Course-level Alternative at Sheffield Hallam University



Response rates of 30-40% are quite typical for digital surveys that evaluate students' learning experience (Chaudhury and Jenkins, 2021), such as Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) which have long been the tradition at Sheffield Hallam University. Since 22/23, the average MEQ response rate across the university has hovered between 17 - 19% and, when confronted with this, module leaders are often nervous about acting on the intelligence that these surveys offer when response rates are low. This brings into question whether the university should continue its use of MEQs, or try something different. In academic year 2025/26, we piloted a Course-Level Evaluation Questionnaire (CLEQ) across three of the nine schools/institutes within Hallam. The aim was to achieve a more meaningful response rate and therefore student feedback that course and module delivery teams could trust. However, the response rates of the course-level survey were no better than MEQs. This paper explores what's next for staff and students at the university.

ROOMWORK

17:35

17:35-17:45

Day 1 Closing Remarks

explorance

ROOMRISE & SHINE

17:45

17:45-19:00

RECEPTION

Social Networking - Canapes & Drinks



DAY 2
OCTOBER 15



Student Voices
in Higher Education

9:00

9:00-9:30

WELCOME

Registration & Refreshments

9:30

9:30-9:45



Student Voices in Higher Education 2026 – Manchester – Day 2 Welcome

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

9:45

9:45-10:30

KEYNOTE



Empowering Student Voice Through Innovative Technology

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

10:30

10:30-11:15

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION



The Next Chapter in Student Voice: Manchester's Evolution with Blue and MLY

As institutions seek to make student feedback more meaningful, timely and actionable, the University of Manchester is entering the next phase of its student survey evolution. Now in its fifth year of using Explorance to deliver surveys at scale, Manchester is preparing to implement an approved redesign of its institutional survey portfolio.

In this session, Daniel Bayes and Sarah Williams will reflect on Manchester's journey with Blue and MLY, from a phased implementation across a large and complex institution to the robust foundations these platforms now provide for strategic transformation. They will explore how Explorance has strengthened the University's ability to collect, analyse and respond to student feedback, and how the next phase of development aims to ask the right questions at the right time, reduce duplication and survey fatigue, and create clearer pathways from insight to action.

Participants will gain practical insights into the opportunities and challenges of implementing survey systems at scale, alongside honest reflections on lessons learned and key milestones achieved. The session will demonstrate how technology, thoughtful design and a clear student voice strategy can work together to strengthen engagement, support evidence-informed decision-making, and help close the feedback loop with students.

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

11:15

11:15-11:35

LIGHTNING TALK



Shattering Assumptions – How the First National Pilot of the Pre-Arrival Questionnaire (PAQ) is Helping to Shape How the Sector Understands Postgraduate Student Needs

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

11:30

11:40-12:10

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

What Happens After Students Speak? Using Qualitative Student Feedback to Inform Curriculum Enhancement

Universities collect a lot of student feedback. The harder part is deciding what to do with it.

This session will share how Ulster University is using qualitative feedback and MLY to identify recurring themes, focus on particular subject areas and access relevant student comments quickly. A worked example will explore how feedback about assessment clarity informed targeted workshops on assessment briefs and rubrics.

Participants will work with a selection of student comments and consider what can reasonably be concluded, what further evidence may be needed, who should be involved and what an appropriate response might look like.

The session will focus on practical ways of moving from collecting feedback to using it, while keeping human judgement and communication with students central to the process.



ROOM

GROW

11:40-12:10

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Amplifying Student Voice Through Peer Guides: Building Meaningful Engagement and Connection

This presentation explores how Peer Support can strengthen student voice by creating meaningful opportunities for engagement, consultation and partnership. We will share examples of 'Peer Guides' contributing to focus groups, student panels and wider feedback activities, to help institutions access authentic and diverse student perspectives. The session will also demonstrate how the Vygo app supports ongoing peer-to-peer interaction, enabling Peer Guides to connect with students in an accessible and informal way to gather insights and signpost support effectively. By combining structured student voice mechanisms with digital community-building, our approach enhances belonging, increases participation and helps institutions make more informed, student-centred decisions.



ROOM

BUZZ

11:40-12:10

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Student Voice by Design: Embedding Feedback, Choice and Agency Through ACEL

Student voice is often collected after learning has happened, through surveys asking students to comment on an experience they had limited power to shape. This session explores a different approach: designing student voice into the learning model itself.

Dr Rod Brazier will introduce Adaptive Chunked Experiential Learning (ACEL), developed at International Humanitarian College London, and show how its six-part weekly cycle embeds learner agency through choice-based assessment, personalised feedback, structured reflection, coaching and continuous dialogue.

Particular attention will be given to the Feedback Corner and Thinking Space, where students can influence how they receive feedback, reflect through different formats and connect learning with their own experiences, goals and circumstances.

The session will also examine how student perspectives can inform ongoing enhancement. Delegates will leave with practical ideas for moving beyond episodic feedback towards a more continuous, inclusive and meaningful approach to student voice.



ROOM

WORK

12:10

12:10-13:10

BREAK

Networking Lunch

13:10

13:10-13:40

PLENARY SESSION



Being, Belonging, Becoming: What Three Institutions Have Taught us About Listening to Students

The Being, Belonging, Becoming (BBB) framework, grounded in Meehan and Howells' (2018) research, asks what students need to flourish, not just to survive. This session traces the framework's journey across three very different institutional contexts: its development and operationalisation at the University of Portsmouth, its refinement at the University of Buckingham, and its latest application at South East Technological University (SETU) in Ireland.

At SETU – a multi-campus technological university where 52% of students are the first in their family to attend higher education – a first university-wide student survey (2025) revealed that belonging is both contested and critical: 63% feel they belong, yet 35% seriously considered withdrawal. This session shares what the data showed, what SETU did in response, and what a new cross-institutional benchmarking pilot using the BBB survey could reveal about sector-wide patterns. Evidence-based, institutionally honest, and immediately applicable.

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

13:45

13:45-14:20

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Working Collaboratively to Build Student Success

The University of Worcester has over the last few years taken a targeted approach to responding to and using feedback captured from students via formal mechanisms such as the national Pre-Arrival Questionnaire (PAQ), and more informal project initiatives such as the Green Impact Project Assistants (GIPA) scheme.

This presentation will explore how using a Design Thinking approach to respond to student voice can identify solutions to key institutional strategic challenges, including student engagement, retention, space utilisation, wellbeing and support.

The session will focus on how this approach has explored:

- Mechanisms for cross-institutional collaboration
- Additional ways to share and identify evidence of impact
- Surfacing innovation, creativity, and examples of good practice

By bringing together diverse expertise from across the institution, this approach has enabled colleagues to generate collaborative ideas and actionable insights to strengthen the University's approach to student success.



ROOM

GROW

13:45-14:20

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

From Policy to Practice: How School EDI Champions Drive Inclusive Student Voice and APP Success

How can higher education institutions embed authentic student partnership into local equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) structures? This interactive workshop explores our embedded EDI School Champion model – a strategic structure that places a dedicated student champion within each academic school. We will guide delegates through the complete operational journey of the initiative: from inclusive recruitment, targeted onboarding, and training, to day-to-day delivery, execution, and local governance. Attendees will discover how this model bridges central strategy with school-level student experiences, driving tangible success stories and directly advancing Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets. Through a collaborative mapping exercise, participants will analyse the structural mechanisms that make this model effective, evaluate key challenges, and leave with a practical framework for adapting and scaling a decentralised EDI champion network within their own institutional contexts.



ROOM

BUZZ

13:45-14:20

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION

Benefits of Engaging in the Student Voice

Originality/Value

The paper is underpinned by three successive years of qualitative comments collected in the End of Module Survey (EOMS) and the National Student Survey (NSS). The exclusive nature of the inquiry differed from previous studies that examined qualitative comments in a generic manner. Essentially providing a more comprehensive prescription on the interpretation and value of integrating the Students Voice via Students Representatives in a formal and structured process.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline how qualitative data facilitated by the Student Voice Initiatives can be assessed in order to obtain insights into various elements of the student experience and be instrumental in facilitating change at institutional, departmental and modular level.



ROOM

WORK

14:25

14:25-15:10

PANEL DISCUSSION

Student Unions: Driving Change, Shaping Voices



ROOM

RISE & SHINE

15:10

15:10-15:30



Closing Remarks – Reflection to Transformation: Leveraging Technology for Impact

ROOM

RISE & SHINE

15:30

15:30-16:00

RECEPTION



Conference Close & Afternoon Tea