India-UK Forum on Policy and Practice in Online and Distance Higher Education

25th June 2025

Abstracts

1. Designing effective learning experiences at scale

- **Professor Uma Kanjilal's abstract to follow**

- **Dr Margaret Korosec's abstract:**
  As online and digital learning expands, institutions face a critical challenge: how to scale high-quality experiences without sacrificing engagement, equity, or effectiveness. This talk explores practical design strategies that go beyond content delivery to foster interaction, inclusivity, and continuous improvement. We'll examine three core pillars—engagement-driven design, flexible and inclusive structures, and data-informed iteration—illustrated with real-world case studies. Whether you're building courses for thousands or rethinking hybrid programmes, you'll leave with actionable ideas and inspiration for designing at scale while preserving the human element that makes learning meaningful.

2. Strategic approaches to successful student engagement and wellbeing

- **Professor Norbert Pachler's abstract**:
  This short input will explore research evidence on engagement and wellbeing around the following questions: What are learner engagement and student wellbeing? Why are they important in the context of (online) learning? The session will explore the notion of an engagement and relational culture as a strategic response to successful engagement and wellbeing

- **Dr Parimala Veluvali's abstract:**
  In India's evolving online education landscape, ensuring student engagement and wellbeing is both a challenge and an opportunity. This case study showcases the strategic initiatives of Symbiosis School for Online and Digital Learning (SSODL), where student-centric practices such as clubs, peer learning groups, and community engagement have built a vibrant virtual learning community. A notable

achievement is the inclusion of Afghan students, who, despite challenging circumstances, have accessed flexible education and participated in social projects from their locations. These efforts have fostered academic engagement, emotional support, and a sense of belonging. This presentation will highlight how a thoughtful mix of academic rigor, co-curricular initiatives, and faculty mentorship enhances student experience and retention in online learning environments.

3. Assessment for student success

- **Professor Ajay Jaiswal's abstract to follow**

- **Professor Alan Tait's abstract:**
  This contribution aims to give participants the opportunity to reflect on the reform and redesign of distance and online assessment for their academic programmes. The COVID19 emergency in 2020 created the widespread move to online space for assessment as face-to-face examinations became impossible, followed very quickly by the widespread disruption of AI into the world of education in early 2023. The need to rethink assessment from perspectives of support to learning, academic integrity, the protection of academic standards and professional regulations, and perhaps more fundamentally the character of higher education are all essential.