

**Oxford Brookes International Teaching  
and Learning Conference 2025**

## **Academic Advising: Nurturing the Will to Learn**

**Wednesday 18 June** for all Oxford Brookes colleagues  
**Thursday 19 June** open to all

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Image designed by Becky Collins

# **Academic Advising: Nurturing the Will to Learn**

## **Conference Brochure**

- Strand A: Effective practice in academic advising
- Strand B: (i) Leading academic advising and
- (ii) Setting boundaries and working with professional services
- Strand C: Training, professional confidence, and roles
- Strand D: Content for advising tutorials

## **Thursday 19 June 2025**

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Disclaimer: this brochure was accurate at the time of production but may be subject to change.

**Reaffirming the core purpose(s) of academic advising: international perspectives in disruptive times**

In these most disruptive of times, this conference provides the opportunity to step back to identify and critically reflect on the core purpose(s) of academic advising. Offering international perspectives, our joint keynote will consider complexity – and the urgent need for action – related to contemporary themes of relevance, such as: different models of advising, including curriculum embedding; the challenges of supporting connections and the well-being of students (and staff); and, advising in the face of AI. We will explore the tensions inherent in the academic advising remit, particularly the desire for professionalising and standardising while also being responsive to the diverse needs of individual students and communities across the lifecycle. We will frame academic advising as fundamentally about purposeful meaning-making and agency, for both students and advisors. And we will emphasize the shared responsibility of academic advising to make a positive difference in the education of students and in the communities we serve through our collective work.



**Professor Peter Felten**, Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Professor of History, and Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning at Elon University, North Carolina, USA

Professor Peter Felten is Professor of History, Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, and Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning at Elon University, US. He has published seven books about undergraduate education, including [Connections are Everything: A College Student's Guide to Relationship-Rich Education](#) (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023) co-authored by Isis Artze-Vega, Leo Lambert, and Oscar Miranda Tapia – with an open access online version free to all readers. His next book, *The SoTL Guide: (Re)Orienting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, is co-authored by Katarina Mårtensson and Nancy Chick, and will be published (open access) in October. He is on the Advisory Board of the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) and is a Fellow of the [Gardner Institute](#).



**Professor Sally Kift**, PFHEA, FAAL, ALTF, Higher Education Consultant, President, Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows (ALTF), Vice Chancellor's Strategic Fellow, Victoria University, and Honorary Professor: University of Southern Queensland

Professor Sally Kift is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA), a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law (FAAL), and President of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows (ALTF). She has held several university leadership positions, including as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at James Cook University. Sally is a national Teaching Award winner, a national Program Award winner and a national Senior Teaching Fellow on the First Year Experience. In 2010, she was appointed an Australian Discipline Scholar in Law. In 2017, Sally received an Australian University Career Achievement Award for her contribution to Australian higher education. Since 2017, Sally has been working as an independent higher education consultant.

**Strand A: Bridging pedagogy and pastoral care: an integrated advising model for online computer science education**

Dr Juan Wang, FHEA, and Dr Tangming Yuan, SFHEA, University of York

Academic advising in online higher education must evolve beyond administrative functions to address holistic student needs. This study examines the integration of academic advising with subject-specific tutoring through a case study of the Algorithms and Data Structures (ADS) module in the University of York's online MSc in Computer Science. The research responds to critical challenges in virtual learning environments, including student isolation, diverse academic backgrounds, and the limitations of text-based communication.

The study developed an innovative advising model combining 1) Structured academic scaffolding: weekly announcements with step-by-step study methods and curated FAQs addressing coding setup and time management challenges; 2) Personalized pastoral support: empathetic responses to individual circumstances (e.g., family emergencies) and tailored guidance for non-computing background students; and 3) Active feedback integration: assignment critiques emphasising problem-solving processes alongside emotional encouragement.

Methodologically, the research employed qualitative analysis of feedback from 50+ students across three cohorts, comparative academic performance tracking between students who adopted versus those who didn't adopt the advised methods, and document analysis of advising interactions (emails, forum posts, feedback comments).

Key findings revealed 1) Academic impact: a consistent pattern of higher distinction rates among advised students; 2) Transformative outcomes: multiple career-changers achieved distinctions, attributing success to the structured support; 3) Psychological benefits: recurrent themes in student testimonials highlighted reduced anxiety and increased self-efficacy through the integrated support approach.

This research contributes a replicable framework demonstrating how subject tutors can effectively deliver academic advising, structured pedagogical support enhances both cognitive and affective learning dimensions, and proactive interventions bridge equity gaps for non-traditional learners.

The model offers actionable insights for online STEM education, advocating for advising models that seamlessly blend disciplinary expertise with holistic student support.

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## Strand B: Leadership in personal tutoring and advising practices across the higher education sector

Dr Gary Jones, SFHEA, University of Winchester, Associate Professor Helen Tidy, SFHEA, and Dr Joanne Irving-Walton, PFHEA, Teesside University

Personal tutoring and academic advising are recognised as key elements in supporting and enabling students to succeed during their educational journey; they assist students academically and provide pastoral and professional support (Adams et al., 2023). In the current higher education climate, where there is increased pressure on academic and support staff, personal tutoring is an area that has the potential to be overlooked. However, as noted in Advance HE's (2024) Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and

Progression (Essential Framework for Enhancing Student Success), academic and pastoral support are crucial for securing retention and attainment.

The UKAT (United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring Association) RLA's (Recognised Leaders in Advising) collaborated on a research project that examined the current landscape of personal tutoring and its leadership within the UK. A survey on personal tutoring was distributed throughout the sector to gain insight into the diverse range of institutional models for personal tutoring and academic advising currently in practice. Additionally, it enabled the researchers to understand the reach, value, and impact of personal tutoring and academic advising, as well as how these can be harnessed to ensure quality, depth, and rigour in provision. This is particularly crucial when higher education faces significant resource challenges.

This presentation will share the initial findings of this research, providing insights into leadership in personal tutoring and advising practices across the sector.

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**Strand C: Strengthening academic advising through professional development: lessons from a global south context**

Dr Jessica Versfeld, HPCSA, University of Pretoria, and Associate Professor Curwyn Mapaling, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Academic advising plays a pivotal role in promoting student success in higher education, particularly within contexts of inequality and historical injustice. This qualitative study, conducted at a South African university, explores the lived experiences of four academic advisors within an engineering faculty, identifying enablers and constraints to effective practice. Using a socio-ecological lens, findings highlight critical dynamics across the microsystem (individual characteristics such as resilience and passion), mesosystem (interdepartmental collaboration and institutional culture), and macrosystem (national policy and socio-economic challenges).

While the study focuses on engineering, many of the challenges and opportunities identified are applicable across disciplines. The findings emphasise that academic advising is a relational, context-sensitive practice shaped by both personal advisor attributes and the institutional environment. The value of professional development emerged strongly: advisors who completed structured training reported enhanced confidence, communication skills, and role clarity. These findings align with international literature advocating for recognition of advising as a professional practice grounded in human, social, and decisional capital.

Importantly, the study argues that professional development in advising must move beyond a transactional model. Instead, training programmes should be holistic - fostering resilience, strengthening emotional labour capacities, and promoting reflective practice. Although developed in an engineering setting, these principles are transferable to advising in

non-engineering programmes, where advisors similarly require the confidence to navigate complex student realities, institutional fragmentation, and broader social pressures.

The study contributes to global academic advising discourse by providing contextually grounded insights from the Global South—a region often underrepresented in mainstream advising literature. It highlights how lessons from structurally unequal settings can offer fresh perspectives on advisor wellbeing, institutional support, and role recognition.

This presentation will explore implications for institutional policy and professional development practices in higher education. It invites a discussion on how institutions can cultivate professional confidence among advisors through recognition, training, and systems-level change.

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## **Strand D: What students want from higher education teaching interactions, and why - relationship with the academic advisor**

Kate Maguire, FHEA, Oxford Brookes University

This paper is a subsection of doctoral research currently ongoing, which seeks to enhance understanding of what students want from their higher education (HE) teaching interactions, and why. An early output of the analysis is the identification of nine key themes that clarify what students want to happen in teaching situations. One of these themes is connection, of which a relationship with the student's academic advisor is a sub-theme. The reasons for wanting this relationship include: to enhance learning, drive assessment success, improve wellbeing, support personal development, and receive personalised support. Student views on these points are explored, and challenges around consistency of academic advising and experience required by academic advisors are identified.

The key objective of the research is to empirically investigate students' understanding of value in HE teaching processes, with value defined as the student's perception of what they want to happen in a teaching situation in order to accomplish their desired objectives. The research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on lean higher education (LHE). It adopts Womack and Jones' (2003) five lean principles as the foundation of a lean approach, focusing specifically on the first principle: precisely specify value by specific product. The selected definition of value is aligned with means-end theory (Gutman, 1982), which

underpins this research and has informed the methodology, a laddering approach (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988).

Twenty-three laddering interviews have been conducted with final year business students. A laddering interview involves moving the participant through different levels of abstraction, in this case starting with discussing what the students want to happen in teaching interactions, then progressing to more probing questions to determine the links between those happenings, anticipated consequences, and higher-level objectives. Teaching interactions explored included lectures, seminars, and one-on-one interactions. Coding of the interview transcripts, although complex and iterative, is mostly complete. Codes have been assigned at three different levels: what students want to happen, what consequences they are looking to achieve from those happenings, and what objectives those consequences will help them address. Relationships have been identified between elements at the increasing levels of abstraction, analysis of these relationships is currently ongoing.

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**Strand B: The PASS tutorial framework as an exemplar for standardising academic advising and improving academic advisor engagement**

Dr Saad Arif, FHEA, and Dr Deborah Pearce, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

A variety of academic advising approaches have been implemented in programmes and Schools across Oxford Brookes University. The role of academic advising and related tutorials are arguably most relevant during the first year, when students require support for successful transition to the academic demands of university life and developing a sense of belonging within their new academic community. Here we describe the implementation, content, evolution and relative success of an academic advising and tutorial framework, referred to as Personal and Academic Support Scheme (PASS) tutorials, delivered to Biosciences students in the School of Biological and Medical Science by academic advisors. The PASS tutorial system is intimately intertwined with first-year skills modules and designed to encourage student academic development and engagement via eleven 1-hour tutorials evenly delivered across the first-year curriculum. Over the years, the PASS tutorials have incorporated additional elements of pastoral care with an increased emphasis on student welfare and progression. Furthermore, the PASS tutorials have provided a platform to present and discuss strategies for dealing with new challenges, such as ethical and appropriate use of generative AI tools in academic work. Finally, we present a brief summary of student views on the impact of PASS tutorials on their engagement in 2nd year and beyond. We suggest that our PASS tutorial system is an excellent framework for delivering standardized and high value academic advising in the first year.

**Strand C: Mental Health First Aid (MFHA) for academic advisors: what role does/can MHFA play in academic advising?**

Dr Dan Butcher, SFHEA, Sue Jennings, FHEA, and Helen Foord-Warren, FHEA, Gerry Sheppard, and Mary Lacy, Oxford Brookes University

In a concerted effort to improve Mental Health in the UK, approximately 1 in 40 adults in England have completed Mental Health First Aid training. The mission of MHFA England is to grow this to 1 in 10!

In 2022 the Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery (OSNW) committed to preparing all its pre-registration nursing students with Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) skills. To date, approximately 680 students have completed the 2-day course focused on developing knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to Mental Health crises, and to challenge some of the stigma that persists.

In addition, we as a team of MHFA Instructors, have grown and run courses for our colleagues and fellow academic staff with Academic Advisor/Personal Tutoring responsibilities, and we have received some great feedback.

*'[The] course helped build my confidence and give me a structure to manage challenging conversations.'*

## **Workshops, 11.10 am - 12.00 pm**

We know that the incidence of poor mental health among higher education students is increasing and can severely impact overall experience and academic performance. As a first and ongoing point of contact with students, the Academic Advisor/Personal Tutor may find themselves in a position of having to manage situations where they lack confidence or knowledge. While signposting is a crucial response and boundaries are important, creating space for students to share their concerns and developing a willingness to listen and legitimise mental health concerns are also crucial.

This workshop is not a Mental Health First Aid course in 50 minutes, but it will explore the nature of HE student mental health by drawing on recent reports (Lewis & Stiebahl, 2024), revisiting our obligations and boundaries. We will draw on some of the relevant MHFA® principles and helpful models, and consider how these can be applied to conversations Academic Advisors/Personal Tutors have with students. It will acknowledge the UKAT Core Values of Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising, and provide delegates with an opportunity to consider their own experiences and gain insights from OSMN MHFA instructors and student contributors. Our aim is to promote confidence in conversations and provide some models that help us understand that positive mental health is important for our students, ourselves, our colleagues and our families.

**Strand D: BEE timeline: integrating academic advising with employability skills**

Dr Laura Novo de Azevedo, FHEA, Lindsey Harrison, Dr Blanca Rodriguez Beltran, and Dr Mary Kitchener, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

The BEE (Brookes Enterprise and Employability) timeline is a project led by Principal Lecturers in Education and Student Experience at Oxford Brookes University. It is part of the Brookes [IDEAS](#) framework and provides a graphic representation of opportunities for students to enhance their employability and enterprise skills at a programme level.

Since its conception, it has been a main component in delivering a more meaningful academic advising process for the BA in Urban Design, Planning and Development (BA UDP). The timeline provides a bespoke structured framework that guides students through their academic journey, highlighting key opportunities to develop employability and enterprising skills, refine professional profiles, and expand networks. By suggesting critical milestones and activities organised per level of study, the BEE timeline enables academic advisors to systematically track students' progress, identify areas for improvement, and offer targeted support. This structured approach can help students feel better-prepared for the professional world, with a clear understanding of the skills and competencies required in urban design and planning.

The BEE timeline also plays a crucial role in the development of e-portfolios, which are an essential part of the BA UDP. As students engage with the various stages and activities outlined in the BEE timeline, they gather valuable experiences and skills that are documented and showcased in their e-portfolios. These e-portfolios, which are developed from year one and assessed as part of the Professional Practice module, in their final year, allow students to curate their learning journey, reflect on their achievements, and present their work in a visually appealing and professional manner. Academic advisors use e-portfolios in conjunction with the BEE timeline to gain insights into students' strengths and areas for development, facilitating more personalized and effective advising sessions. In this session, we would like to present the BEE timeline as a useful toolkit for academic advising sessions as it provides a bespoke and useful roadmap for students' academic and professional development. The timeline has been piloted in the BA UDP, but it is a flexible toolkit that can be adopted by any programme. The BEE timeline is sponsored by OCAED (Oxford Centre for Academic Enhancement and Development).

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### Academic Advising in 2025: practice, research, and theory

In this interview panel session, the authors of the forthcoming second edition of [\*Effective Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising in Higher Education\*](#) will discuss the latest developments in personal tutoring/academic advising in the UK higher education sector and beyond. Having produced this scholarly and practical text in 2018 covering aspects such as definitions, coaching, boundaries, monitoring students, and measuring impact, the authors will talk about current thinking in the field since the first edition including personal tutoring pedagogies, key concepts surrounding effective student interactions, and inclusive personal tutoring.



**Andrew Stork**, SFHEA, Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Education, University of Sheffield

Andrew Stork is an academic and Programme Director in postgraduate medical education in the School of Medicine and Population Health at the University of Sheffield. Andrew is co-author of three highly regarded texts on personal tutoring and academic advising, a Senior Fellow of Advance HE, has delivered keynote conference presentations on personal tutoring, and is a personal tutor. Andrew has experience of a wide range of educational sectors and contexts, and has taught on and led postgraduate education programmes across a range of sectors. Previously, Andrew was cross-institutional quality lead for personal tutoring and student experience, and has held a wide variety of curriculum leadership, quality, learning & teaching enhancement and staff development positions.



**Ben W. Walker**, SFHEA, Senior Lecturer in Educational Development, Oxford Brookes University

Ben W. Walker is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Development at Oxford Brookes University, where he leads on academic advising, is the EXPLORE Experiential Scheme Leader (overseeing Fellowship of Advance HE applications), delivers staff development, and is an active educational researcher. For NACADA (the Global Community for Academic Advising), he is the UK representative on the Global Steering Committee. A keen writer and researcher in education with over 20 years' experience in teaching and teacher education, he is committed to developing the field of student support further. As co-author of practitioner texts and journal articles on personal tutoring/academic advising, he is at the forefront of professional development and research in this area.



**Dave Lochtie**, Operations Manager, Ann Craft Trust

Dave Lochtie is the Operations Manager for the Ann Craft Trust, a national charity dedicated to safeguarding adults, based at the University of Nottingham. He is a Co-Chair of the Association of Peer Learning Support, founding member of the Safeguarding in Higher Education Network, and former Chair of UK Advising and Tutoring (UKAT). His work on advising and tutoring, coaching, mentoring and peer support has been published and cited extensively.



**Dr Nienke Alberts**, Senior Research Associate, University of Bristol

Nienke Alberts is a Higher Education researcher, whose work focuses on educational inequalities, fair access, and personal tutoring. Nienke is currently working with the Sutton Trust, a charity that aims to improve educational opportunities for young people from non-privileged backgrounds and increase social mobility. Nienke is an Honorary Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol, where she led The Personal Tutoring Project, a research project investigating personal tutoring at the University of Bristol and across the sector.



**Dr Alison Raby**, SFHEA, Senior Lecturer and Senior Tutor, University of Lincoln

Alison is a Senior Lecturer/Programme Leader at the University of Lincoln, where she is also responsible for personal academic tutoring. Alison has spent most of her career working with international students, firstly as a Teacher of English as a Foreign Language and School Director in Poland, then at Nottingham Trent International College, and most recently working with the British Council on Accelerating English Language Learning in Central Asia. She has completed a PhD (Prof) in Education around Chinese students' experiences of personal tutoring in the UK and also holds SFHEA. She has authored texts around personal tutoring and is keen to conduct further research in this area.

**Strand A: Transforming advising practices: relational tutoring for employability beyond the classroom**

Dr Diana (Dee) Clayton, SFHEA, and Dr Anna Klenert, FHEA, Oxford Brookes University

Mentoring serves as a dynamic relationship capable of fostering talent development, facilitating the establishment of social bonds and bridges (Putnam, 1995) and partnerships with industry, and cultivating a collaborative learning community of practice (Gannon, Clayton, & Klenert, 2021). In addition, mentoring is evidence of experiential learning for students (Klenert, 2021) as an integral element of their learning journey. In a similar vein, university academic advising typically represents a developmental relationship between students and academics (Wakelin, 2023) aimed at fostering individual educational outcomes, employability skills, and overall readiness for life post-graduation (Stork & Walker, 2015; Walker, 2018). This paper aims to reframe personal tutoring by exploring the Bacchus Mentoring Programme (BMP) at Oxford Brookes Business School, which serves as an alternative form of one-on-one (academic) advising.

Designed for Hospitality and Tourism final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Oxford Brookes Business School, the BMP connects students with external business practitioners within their field to provide mentorship focused on career development, employability, and professional growth. Further, the BMP addresses Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) objectives by offering students value-added networking opportunities, increasing their likelihood of attaining graduate-level employment (Office for Students, 2025, February). These mentoring relationships are integrated within the compulsory curriculums and encourage reflective learning and personal development for future leadership roles. Mentoring, like tutoring, is a two-way relationship (Lancer, Clutterbuck, & Megginson, 2016) where mentors guide mentees at earlier stages of development, promoting self-awareness and competency insights (Clutterbuck, 2008). Developmental mentoring has shown particularly positive outcomes for under-represented groups, including such as: non-white (Alcocer & Martinez, 2018), low-income (Mac Iver, Sheldon, Naeger, & Clark, 2017), disabled (Taylor, 2004) and neurodiverse students (Roberts & Birmingham, 2017). This mentoring model supports university enrichment, retention, and achievement (Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, & Pifer, 2017; Jacobi, 1991).

The roundtable will examine BMP's effectiveness as a mentoring model for academic advising, highlighting its impact on employability, networking, leadership skills, and core sector-specific values. By emphasising external engagement, relationship-building, and personal learning, this panel discussion presents mentoring as a reimagined form of one-to-one tutoring that enriches students' academic experiences.

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## Round tables, 1.10 - 2.00 pm

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## Strand B: Signposting is only the start: effective referrals for successful student outcomes

Dr Michelle Reid, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

You've referred a student...but do you know they have got there? This round table discussion, facilitated by the Centre for Academic Development, brings together academic advisors, students, and student services staff to explore the expertise that informs successful referrals to other services. It directly engages with the conference theme of "Setting boundaries and working with professional services". It will examine referral processes, the right tone and soft skills involved in referrals, and an understanding of why some people may not access support. Evidence shows that meaningful relationships between staff and students are at the core of student success and retention (Thomas et al., 2017). However, there are many barriers to seeking support that can prevent these relationships from forming (Grant, 2021). Having robust, standardised methods of referral can paradoxically enable more informal and individualised support for students (Power, 2022). However, referral processes alone are not enough; staff need to be proactive in helping students make "active connections" with people in support roles (Tevis and Britton, 2020). The manner in which a student is recommended to seek support, and the corresponding tone of the welcome they receive from the service can be a critical moment that defines the success of the referral. Indeed, research into the most important skills for both academic advisors and student service professionals list communication, listening and interpersonal skills as the top three (Burkard et al., 2004; Menke, Stuck and Ackerson, 2018), with student services staff reporting that they need advanced human relation skills far beyond the basic level (Burkard et al., 2004).

Attendees at this round table discussion will gain a greater understanding of how collaboration can enable successful referrals, and it will provide an opportunity to identify any missing links in our holistic support for students.

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**Strand C: Fostering effective academic advising relationships with adults: bridging the relational space with colleague learners**

Dr Mary Kitchener, SFHEA, and Gillian Kelly, Oxford Brookes University

Academic Advising plays a crucial role in EXPLORE, Brookes' scheme designed to help new academic and teaching staff gain Fellowship of Advance HE. It supports colleagues throughout the scheme, from onboarding to celebrating their achievements, to ensure high retention and completion rates.

Furthermore, academic advisors are invaluable resources for colleagues new to higher education and Oxford Brookes University. They provide guidance to help navigate the complexities of the new environment and institutional culture as colleagues progress through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and integrate into the academic role.

However, academic advising involves navigating the delicate relational balance between being a learner on a practice-based, holistic development scheme and being a colleague. The literature on academic advising centres around undergraduate and, to a lesser extent, postgraduate students (Morgan, 2025) and adult learners (e.g., Roessger, Eisentrout, and Hevel, 2019). The relational aspect of serving as an academic advisor to a colleague is notably underexplored.

The programme leader and participants from EXPLORE will share insights and practical approaches to fostering such adult working relationships with colleagues through academic advising. In particular, the programme leader will unpack how concepts of Heutagogy (Hase and Kenyon, 2000), Andragogy (Knowles, 1975) Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1961), and Unconditional Positive Regard (Rogers, 1980) are crucial in building trust and mutual respect among colleagues to foster a supportive and non-judgmental environment to ensure colleagues are well-equipped to navigate their academic and career path.

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**Strand A: Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into academic advising for purposeful career development**

Associate Professor Margaret Mbindyo, Millersville University, Pennsylvania, USA

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes seventeen interconnected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides a framework for addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Academic advising can play a crucial role in cultivating students' awareness of these goals and helping students develop essential skills for contributing to a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2015). Academic advising, when approached through the lens of the SDGs, offers a transformative approach to student development and career preparation. This approach moves beyond traditional advising models to include aligning students' career interests to SDGs, which fosters global citizenship and social responsibility. Lastly, this approach in advising necessitates a shift towards a more critical advising framework, one which promotes sustainability (Drake, 2013). By incorporating the SDGs into advising practices, students are empowered to connect their academic pursuits with real-world challenges, leading to more purposeful career choices and a deeper understanding of their role in creating a better world. In addition, students develop social responsibility, global perspective, and sense of civic responsibility.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) emphasizes the importance of integrating sustainability practices and preparing students for careers and citizenship by encouraging social responsibility and global perspectives within academic advising programs (NACADA, 2023). CAS has developed fifty sets of functional area standards and three cross-functional frameworks for higher education programs and services which include sustainability programs.

In addition, while NACADA's core values focus on academic advising, they align significantly with the spirit and intent of the SDGs (NACADA, 2017). One of the core values is caring, which in academic advising emphasizes empathy, compassion, and a genuine concern for the well-being of students (SDG 3). By providing support and guidance, advisors can help students navigate academic and personal challenges, which can positively impact their mental and emotional health. Another of the core values is inclusivity. This aligns with SDG 10, which seeks to reduce inequalities. Inclusivity in academic advising means creating environments where all students feel welcome, valued, and respected, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances (Molinah Roldán, et al 2021). Academic advising that respects and values diverse student populations contributes to a more equitable educational system.

Academic advisors can guide students in exploring career pathways that align with the SDGs and help students to find meaning and purpose in their professional lives. This approach aligns with the advising goal of helping students "clarify educational, career, and life goals" and by embracing the SDGs in their advising work, academic advisors can play a pivotal role in shaping a generation of globally conscious and socially responsible graduates.

This presentation will explore the transformative role of academic advising in integrating SDGs into the advising profession. It will focus on practical strategies for advisors to embed SDGs into advising practices. Adopting an SDG-informed approach in their advising, advisors foster an environment where all students, irrespective of background or challenges, are encouraged to aspire to achieve their highest potential (Creamer, 2000).

## Free Form, 2.05 - 2.55 pm

Delegates attending this session will explore strategies for academic advisors to embed SDGs into their advising practices, how SDG-aligned advising fosters critical thinking, global awareness, and purposeful career development among first-year students, how to empower students to connect their academic pursuits with real-world challenges and align their educational choices with meaningful career pathways, and how SDG-aligned advising, particularly in relation to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), can enhance student retention, success, and informed career choices, especially among marginalized groups.

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### Strand B: Working with inclusive support to support students with Dyslexia/Neurodiversity

Catherine Black, Oxford Brookes University

I have worked as a Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties/Differences (SpLDs) Tutor in the Inclusive Support Service at Oxford Brookes University (OBU, 2025a) since September 2010. I will give an overview of Dyslexia and other SpLDs/Neurodiversities British Dyslexia Association (BDA, 2025a; BDA 2025b)/Neurodivergences (Botha et al., 2004), including Dyspraxia/Developmental Coordination Disorder, Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D), and Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) (DANDA: Developmental Adult Neuro-Diversity Association, 2013). I will describe signs of these conditions that may become apparent during academic advice sessions (BDA, 2025a; BDA 2025b). Neurodiverse students may experience difficulties with self-advocacy (Bublitz et al., 2017). They may fear stigma around disclosing special needs, and Academic Advisors may be one of the first professionals they meet on campus, so sensitive referral to professional services is beneficial (Zilvinskis et al., 2020). Screening and personalised outreach can help facilitate this process (Deacon et al., 2017). I will explain how to refer students to the Dyslexia/SpLD Team within the Inclusive Support Service and how we support students referred to us (OBU, 2025h). This includes Dyslexia/SpLD assessment (OBU, 2025c); exam access arrangements (OBU, 2025f), which have been shown to provide equal opportunity rather than an unfair advantage (Rodeiro & Macinska, 2022); and library arrangements (OBU, 2025g) organised by OBU. It also includes assistive technology (OBU, 2025d) and 1:1 tutorials with myself or one of my colleagues (OBU, 2025j) funded through the Disabled

Students' Allowance (OBU, 2025e). I will cover Brookes' guidance regarding making online resources, lectures, and other materials accessible (OBU, 2025i) and how my manager monitors this with colleagues. I will describe access arrangements students may request for in-class tests (OBU, 2025f). While my colleagues and I can teach general study skills (OBU, 2025j), students will rely on academic advice sessions for subject-specific support (OBU, 2025b). Neurodiverse students benefit from individualised tutoring (Graham, 2020; Kelly and Erwin, 2022) and coaching (Doyle and McDowall, 2024; Manning and Myers, 2025) to help build confidence and achieve their potential.

Delegates will gain a greater understanding of how to support and refer neurodiverse students to Inclusive Support during this session.

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### **Strand C: How might the Academic Advising (AA)/Personal Tutor role purposefully help student nurses develop the required professional values and associated behaviours in preparation for future employment?**

Sue Chilton, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

This presentation will share details of the first phase of a project undertaken between September - December 2021 in the Oxford School of Nursing & Midwifery at Oxford Brookes University as part of a university-wide 'Academic Advising Scholarship Group' initiative.

The session will critically explore those factors influencing unhealthy working cultures within nursing which impact recruitment/retention/job satisfaction of nurses and patient outcomes, identify the key qualities required for developing therapeutic/civil relationships with service users/colleagues, and consider, using initial project findings, ways in which the Academic Advising process might purposefully help develop the required professional values/attributes.

This project focuses on the development of professional values/attributes as research/inquiries/reports continue to show that the recruitment/experiences/retention of nurses are often influenced negatively by unhealthy working cultures (HEE, 2018), highlighting the need to develop more humanistic working practices (McCalman and Potter, 2015). As 'today's students are tomorrow's colleagues', conversations regarding how to address incivility and bullying should include specific aspects of nursing academia and the preparation of new nurses (Luparell, 2011, p.92). The project links to the NMC Code (2018) and one of OBU's graduate attributes – Personal Literacy and Critical Self-awareness.

Key findings were that the Academic Advising process should:

- be universal, supporting students academically, pastorally, and professionally across the years.

## Free Form, 2.05 - 2.55 pm

- allow AAs to role model professional values.
- be 'emancipatory and transformational', enabling critical self-reflection on experiences in theory & practice & promoting professionalism, which is pivotal in creating more humanistic working cultures.
- offer students strategies/frameworks for independent learning, signposting to support whilst guiding students to develop emotional intelligence.
- be available in a group format to deliver common information/advice & promote collaborative reflection and debate and in a 1:1 format to address specific/sensitive issues in a safe, non-judgmental space.
- have clear, pre-set goals, sets of questions, discussion points and outcomes at different progression points.
- be valued, have a higher profile and be mandatory (like PDR process in employment).

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## Strand D: Artificial intelligence and academic advising

Dr Charlie Simpson, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping higher education, and its integration into traditional academic advising systems offers promising opportunities to enhance student support.

Tools such as chatbots and smartphone apps, usually powered by large language models such as ChatGPT, create an approachable, round-the-clock resource for students, simulating conversational exchanges and providing quick answers to common queries (Baillifard et al., 2025; Latrellis et al., 2024). For example, Latrellis *et al.* (2024) asked ChatGPT-4 to generate text responses to typical scenarios that an academic advisor might encounter. These scenarios included providing students with recommendations to help secure internships, select a BSc dissertation topic, or to improve their preparedness to progress onto an MBA programme. These recommendations (n=40) were added to human-generated responses (n=27) using the same scenarios. Next, five human academic advisors (with ~18 years of related academic experience) reviewed all AI and human-generated outputs using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree) for the following dimensions: acceptability, clarity, relevance, practicality, and impact. The human reviewers were blinded to the authorship of each recommendation. The global mean score for AI-generated recommendations was  $3.1 \pm 0.6$  compared with  $3.4 \pm 0.6$  for human-generated recommendations, with 6 of the 15 highest rated responses generated by AI. These results underscore the growing potential of AI-powered advising tools.

Academic research into the suitability of AI-powered advising systems is still in a nascent stage due to the inherent lag between rapid technological innovation and academic review processes. However, a growing range of commercially available AI-powered platforms that claim to support academic advising systems are already available (e.g., [Element451, Advisor.AI](#)).

However, challenges persist, including ethical considerations regarding data privacy, bias in AI algorithms, and the potential dehumanisation of the advising process (Batsaikhan and Correia, 2024). To mitigate these issues, staff must be trained to critically evaluate and ethically deploy AI tools, ensuring that these innovations augment rather than replace human expertise.

Attendees will gain new insights about current AI applications and how these can be deployed to assist both students and staff in teaching and pastoral roles. Drawing on practical examples, the session will demonstrate a selection of the latest generation of AI tools that might be useful for supporting student learning and improving academic advising.

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**Strand A: Purposeful academic advising practices: a student developmental offering (Paper)**

Dr Shelley Beck, FHEA, and Deborah Carpenter, FHEA, Oxford Brookes University

The role of an academic advisor has become integral to the success of students while at higher education institutions (McIntosh *et al.*, 2021; Walker, 2018). However, the role of an academic advisor has lent itself towards being pastoral in nature in addition to providing the advisees academic support (McGill, Ali and Barton, 2020). According to McIntosh *et al.* (2018) it is critical to develop the whole student, not only their academic capabilities. Therefore, there is a need for academic advising to develop practices that focus on supporting students to develop critical skills for lifelong learning (McIntosh *et al.*, 2018). This paper seeks to further that conversation and put forward a skill and competency focused offering to encourage advisee personal development. This study has made use of quantitative data gathered from 23 postgraduate students at a Higher Education Institution in the United Kingdom. This study found that including strategically placed signposting of critical skill and competency based material through the academic advisors Moodle site increased student's interactions with these materials and workshops. An interesting finding was that of all the critical skill and competency workshops that were clicked on, active listening and self-management workshops were most sought after. The results of this study provide evidence that an 'intentional programme of meaningful, structured activities' (Grey and Osborne, 2019) increases student engagement with academic advising and has the potential to contribute to a student's 'learning gain' (Lochtie, Stork and Walker, 2022). Recognising its potential to actively engage students in the development of lifelong learning competencies, academic advising should be more prominently integrated into students' programs of study.

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**Strand B: Bridging the awarding gaps: effective academic advising practices to address persistent awarding disparities (Paper)**

Dr Satomi Kimino, SFHEA, University of Hull

The role of personal supervision (academic advising) is pivotal in tackling the awarding gaps in higher education, particularly for racially minoritised students. By offering personalised guidance, fostering engagement, and nurturing a sense of belonging, this support is essential for promoting academic success and equity.

Between 2021 and 2024, awarding gap trends in our subject group have shown both significant progress and persistent inequities. Mature students saw a remarkable improvement, with their gap shifting from 34.4% in 2021/22 to a reverse gap of -22.4% in 2023/24. Similarly, students with disabilities experienced a positive change, with their gap narrowing from 11.8% to -9.7%. However, ethnic disparities remain deeply concerning. For instance, Black students experienced a sharp rise in their awarding gap, escalating from -16.7% to 83.1%, while Asian students recorded a peak gap of 25.9%. These disparities highlight the urgent need for targeted, strategic interventions.

Personal supervision has proven to be an effective approach to addressing such inequities. Robust personal tutoring systems provide tailored support that helps students overcome academic challenges while creating a more inclusive learning environment (Gabi *et al.*, 2024). Structured approaches to personal tutoring have been shown to enhance students' confidence, engagement, and sense of belonging—factors critical for retention and academic success (Hooff & Westall, 2016). For example, the Tutoring Action Programme in Spain illustrates the importance of discipline-specific mentoring in guiding students' academic and career pathways (Pozo-Rubio *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, personal tutoring functions as a strategic tool for promoting equity by offering consistent support to underrepresented groups and addressing systemic inequities (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006; Gabi *et al.*, 2024). However, challenges persist, including a disconnect between students' expectations of engagement and their actual experiences with tutoring systems (Simpson, 2006). Addressing these challenges requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation of tutoring practices to meet the diverse needs of today's student population.

Our work highlights proactive strategies such as structured meetings ahead of assessment deadlines, tailored guidance on academic processes, and personalised progress reviews. These interventions have been effective in fostering a sense of belonging and improving outcomes for at-risk groups. By integrating personalised communication and data-driven support, we can narrow awarding gaps and support student success holistically. This presentation aligns with the Learning and Teaching conference themes by showcasing how academic advising and personal supervision can advance equity, address awarding gaps, and enhance student outcomes through relational and evidence-based practices.

**References to follow.**

**Strand C: Teaching tutors: incorporating a module on academic advising within an MA Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme (Paper)**

Dr Elizabeth Munro, SFHEA, University of Winchester

This paper examines the design and implementation of a 10-credit, postgraduate module on personal tutoring within the postgraduate master's programme, Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (MA LTHE). Applying Lowenstein's integrative learning theory (2014), this work calls for a practical and conceptual shift within educational development in order to better support academic staff to cultivate effective personal tutoring practices. Given the ever-increasing importance of belonging and mattering within Higher Education, underpinned by a heightened appreciation of the wider socio-emotional dimensions of the student experience, the paper concludes that the explicit teaching of personal tutoring is now an integral duty for educational developers to undertake. The paper will outline how the module was created, including indicative activities, content and student feedback, to support other colleagues to reflect upon how such a module could be developed in their own context.

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**Strand D: What, where, and when is academic advising? (PechaKucha)**

Dr Matt Lawson, FHEA, Oxford Brookes University

Academic advising plays a crucial role in fostering student success and engagement in University settings. This short paper explores the different environments in which academic advising occurs, with a focus on the timing, settings, and effective practices involved. While formal, timetabled meetings with academic advisors are essential for providing structured guidance, advising often also takes place in less formal settings such as email exchanges, post-lecture chats, and corridor conversations. These informal interactions offer students flexibility and can address immediate concerns, but they may lack the depth and formality needed for comprehensive support.

Proactive academic advising is also an essential approach that shifts the focus from reacting to academic struggles to anticipating and addressing potential challenges before they become crises. This method of advising involves regular, ongoing communication between advisors and students, focusing on identifying early warning signs of academic or personal difficulty and intervening before students fall behind or experience significant setbacks. In proactive advising, advisors take the initiative to reach out to students at key points throughout the academic year, rather than waiting for students to seek help when issues arise. This paper argues that regular, predictable timetabled academic advising sessions facilitate this proactive process.

### 3.05 - 3.25 pm, Papers and PechaKucha

We examine the relationship and balance between formal and informal advising, stressing that effective academic advising requires a combination of both approaches. A holistic advising strategy that integrates structured meetings and informal conversations helps students navigate academic and personal challenges while fostering a supportive advising relationship. The paper also highlights the importance of ensuring that informal interactions are still meaningful and aligned with students' academic needs. Academic advising should be viewed as an ongoing holistic process inside and outside of formalised meeting spaces, with diverse modes of communication working together to support students' academic journeys.

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**Cultivating success: the spectrum of integrated advising**

A transformative student experience lies at the intersection of personal and academic engagement, connection and growth. Achieving intentional and individualised student development is best accomplished through a relationship-rich education, where the pursuit of a successful student experience is a collective priority. In the context of higher education globally, this session will highlight a spectrum of advising practices at two Australian universities. Through differing approaches, both institutions share a commitment to partnering with students to cultivate an experience that fosters belonging, self-efficacy, positive emotions, and well-being as pathways to engagement and success. In doing so, the session will also reflect on the variety of approaches and practices highlighted throughout the day's proceedings.



**Dr Catherine Mann**, Associate Director, Academic Mentoring, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Catherine leads university-wide strategic enhancement of Academic Mentoring for undergraduate students at the University of Melbourne, working with academic leaders, professional stakeholders and students to build shared purpose and value, implement professional development and uplift the student experience. She has been a member of the UK Advising and Tutoring Association (UKAT) since 2015 and sits on the Global Initiatives Committee of NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.



**Dr Cat Picton**, SFHEA, Student Success and Development Coordinator, University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia

Cat leads and implements a pan-university, embedded approach to student development focussing on cross-disciplinary skills and competencies within the curriculum. Her research interests include student engagement, student success and academic student success advising, with a focus on the regional university experience. In her current professional role, Cat is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and has a keen interest in the recognition of integrated 'third space' practitioners who work across professional and academic boundaries.

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**Dave Lochtie**, Operations Manager, Ann Craft Trust

**Dr Catherine Mann**, Associate Director, Academic Mentoring, University of Melbourne, Australia

**Dr Cat Picton**, SFHEA, Student Success and Development Coordinator, University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia

**Dr Alison Raby**, SFHEA, Senior Lecturer and Senior Tutor, University of Lincoln

**Andrew Stork**, SFHEA, Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Education, University of Sheffield

### *Parallel sessions*

**Dr Saad Arif**, FHEA, and **Dr Deborah Pearce**, SFHEA, Oxford Brookes University

**Dr Shelley Beck**, FHEA, and **Deborah Carpenter**, FHEA, Oxford Brookes University

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With gratitude and our very best wishes.

*Ben Walker and Adrian Wallbank*