

11th CGHE Annual Conference: Navigating the Global Equity Crisis: Affordability, access and sustainability



*Teams links are embedded in the panel titles

Day 1 Thursday 23 April		
Time	Panel	Venue
09.30am – 11am	Opening plenary: <i>Celebrating Claire Callender</i> Chaired by Ariane de Gayardon Speakers: Chris Millward, Peter Scott, Miriam Zukas and Golo Henseke.	Wolfson College
11am – 11.15am	Walk back	
11.15 -11.45am	Tea/coffee break	Pring's Café and Seminar Room B
11.45am – 1.15pm	Parallel panels: <i>Free Tuition: Discourse vs. Realities</i>	Seminar Room A
	Measures of Teaching Quality: a legitimate guide for students and funders?	Seminar Room D
	Post-Brexit International Student Mobilities	Seminar Room E
	Internationalisation of Higher Education Beyond the Western Horizon: Critical Perspectives	Seminar Room G
	After the university? Transformations of higher education governance in an era of global polycrisis	Library Discussion Room
	Concepts in contexts : a pluriversal perspective on equity policies of access to higher education	Seminar Room K
1.15pm – 2.15pm	Buffet lunch	Pring's Café and Seminar Room B
2.15pm – 3.45pm	Parallel panels: <i>When Student Loans Work and When They Don't: Global Comparisons of Student Loan Policies</i>	Seminar Room A
	Tertiary education, the risk society, the state, and access to tertiary education. What are students 'buying'?	Seminar Room D
	International Student Mobility and Scholarships in a Fractured World: Rethinking Purposes, Politics, and Futures	Seminar Room E
	Whose academic freedom? Threats in different contexts and against different stakeholders	Seminar Room G
	University Governance in a Time of Democratic Decline: Student Participation and the Future of Institutional Structures in Higher Education	Library Discussion Room
	Cross-national perspectives on climate and sustainability in higher education	Seminar Room K
3.45pm – 4.15pm	Tea/coffee break	Pring's Café and Seminar Room B
4.30pm – 6pm	Funding Policies plenary: <i>University financing</i> Chaired by Thandi Lewin Speakers: Jeff Sze, Under-Secretary For Education, Hong Kong SAR (online), Shireen Motala, and Moses Oketch.	Kellogg Hub, Kellogg College
6pm – 7.30pm	Drinks reception kindly sponsored by Hang Seng University	Kellogg Hub, Kellogg College
7.00 pm –	Student Social	TBC

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Scan QR code or click [here](#) for more information on Day 1.

Day 2 Friday 24 April

Time	Panel	Venue
9am – 10.30am	Parallel panels: <i>Public and Private Funding and the Future of Higher Education</i>	Seminar Room A
	Higher education equity in Latin America and the Caribbean: From system and institutional policies to intersectional student-centred approaches	Seminar Room D
	Researching transnational mobility and education: Opportunities, challenges and debates	Seminar Room E
	Higher education in liberal societies: expansion, purposes, and accountability, past and future	Seminar Room G
	Diversifying Leadership in Global Higher Education	Library Discussion Room
	Grassroots Educational Initiatives for Sustainability and Equity in Higher Education	Seminar Room K
10.30am – 11am	Tea/coffee break	Pring's Café and Seminar Room B
11am – 12.30pm	Parallel panels: <i>Unequal Graduate Outcomes: Reassessing the Long-Term Returns to Higher Education</i>	Seminar Room A
	Marketisation Vs. Affordability: Challenges in the financing of Higher Education in India	Seminar Room D
	International Education, Migration, and International Student Journeys: UK and Australian Perspectives	Seminar Room E
	Higher Education Cooperation in the Global South: Reframing Influences on Knowledge Creation and Sharing	Seminar Room G
	Talent Attraction, Retention and Management: Comparative Perspectives	Library Discussion Room
	Transforming the Global Education Agenda: Beyond Sustainability, Toward Plural Futures	Seminar Room K
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Buffet lunch/	Pring's Café and Seminar Room B
1.30pm – 3pm	Parallel panels: Easy to say, hard to deliver: why are student finance policies so sticky?	Seminar Room A
	Sustainable academic partnerships for equity and social justice in HE in Palestine	Seminar Room D

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	Social Mobility and Equitable Access to International Higher Education	Seminar Room E
	China-Africa: Reflections on Cultural Exchange and Educational Collaboration (Seminar)	Seminar Room C
	Anti-Gender, Diversity and the Democratic University: Epistemic Struggles and Infrastructures	Online (& Seminar Room G)
	Rethinking equity and the public good through service-learning and community engagement (SLCE)	Online (& Seminar Room K)
3- 3.30pm	Tea/coffee break	Pring's Café & Seminar Room B
4pm-5pm	Closing plenary and book launch talks: <i>Launching new CGHE books</i> Speakers include Simon Marginson, Paul Ashwin, Aline Courtois, Catherine Montgomery and Ravinder Sidhu.	Seminar Room A



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THEME 1: WHY IT'S HARD TO MAKE THE FINANCES ADD UP

Location – Seminar Room A

Time	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>Free Tuition: Discourse vs. Realities</p> <p>This panel examines recent reforms in Chile (2016), South Africa (2017), and the Philippines (2017), three countries that adopted free-tuition policies in response to inequities and inefficiencies in previous financing regimes. Running counter to the global trend toward cost-sharing, these reforms foreground social justice, inclusivity, and HE as a public good. They represent distinct responses to rising costs and intensifying pressures on HE systems that have spurred governments to experiment with new financial models to balance affordability, equitable access, quality, flexibility, and sustainability. Yet, implementation realities – constrained public finances, persistent inequalities, and institutional pressures – often diverge from aspirational discourse.</p> <p>The first contribution provides a comparative framing of the free-tuition movement, tracing shared rationales of equity, justice, and political expediency while interrogating how these ideals have translated into financing models and eligibility criteria.</p> <p>The second contribution examines the Philippines' 2017 Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which extended free tuition in public institutions. It considers the distributive and procedural fairness conflicts that shaped political support, alongside trade-offs that have emerged in subsequent years.</p> <p>The third contribution examines South Africa's 2017 fee-free announcement, a response to student activism (#FeesMustFall) and entrenched inequality. It contrasts discourses of redress and transformation with the mixed results of the policy, exploring targeting, sustainability, institutional finances, and the unintended consequences of well-intentioned reform.</p> <p>The fourth contribution turns to Chile's 2016 Gratuidad reform, presented as a rupture with the neoliberal legacy of marketised higher education. It assesses impacts on cost distribution between households and government, conditionalities imposed on universities, and current debates around expansion and sustainability.</p> <p>Together, the panel situates these cases within global debates, exploring the dissonance between the lofty promises of free-tuition discourse and the complex,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ariane de Gayardon, Assistant Professor, University of Twente • Miguel Lim, Senior Lecturer in Education and International Development, University of Manchester (On the Philippines) • Sylvie Lomer, Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Manchester (On the Philippines) • Thandi Lewin, Associate Professor, University of Johannesburg (On South Africa) • Hector Rios Jara, Postdoctoral researcher, Research Center for the Study of Economy and Society (ESOC), Universidad Central de Chile (On Chile)

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	<p>costly, and sometimes regressive realities of implementation.</p>	
23rd April 14:15-15:45	<p>When Student Loans Work and When They Don't: Global Comparisons of Student Loan Policies</p> <p>Student loan systems have become a central mechanism for financing higher education in many countries. While loans can expand access and reduce public expenditure, they also carry risks, particularly in terms of equity, (family) repayment burdens, and long-term insecurity. This panel explores the conditions under which student loan systems succeed or fall short, drawing on research from the U.S., England, and Norway. The first presentation examines recent U.S. student debt forgiveness policies, arguing that the very need for forgiveness signals fundamental flaws in the system. It shows how relief can ease financial strain but may also favour higher-income borrowers, highlighting the importance of policy design for fairness and effectiveness.</p> <p>The second paper examines U.S. Parent PLUS loans, which shift debt from students to parents, disproportionately affecting low-income and minority families. Highlighting parental sacrifice – through frugality, delayed retirement, and prolonged repayment – it underscores the limits of loan-based funding and calls for stronger borrower protections and equitable policy reform.</p> <p>The third presentation assesses the nuances of the unfolding impacts of elevated debt levels on English graduates from the early £9,000 tuition fee cohorts. It explores how student loans shape individual and collective decision-making around employment, housing, further study, and impacts graduates' views on social mobility and higher education's value over time.</p> <p>The final paper evaluates Norway's move from need-based to universal student loans with performance-based grant conversion. While aid uptake rose, the reform benefited more advantaged students, reinforcing inequalities. It highlights how policy design can boost access and efficiency but also create trade-offs in fairness and debt burdens.</p> <p>Together, these case studies reveal the successes and failures of student loan systems in different policy contexts. The panel offers critical insights into how design choices – such as eligibility rules, repayment structures, and performance incentives – shape the effectiveness and fairness of student loan models.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ariane de Gayardon, Assistant Professor, University of Twente • Nick Hillmann, Professor and Director of SSTAR Lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison, US (Debt forgiveness in the US) • Christopher Grillo, CEO of Irnerius, Inc. & PhD Candidate, Boston College (US Parent Plus Loans) • Fahrana Gaffar, Leverhulme Trust Fellow, University of Nottingham (British graduates) • Andreas Fidjeland, Associate Professor, University of Stavanger & Senior Researcher, NIFU, Norway (Norway's policy change)

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24th April	Public and Private Funding and the Future of Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thandi Lewin, Associate Professor at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg
9:00-10:30	<p>This panel focuses on understanding global trends and political discourses related to the funding of higher education during a time of rapid change and uncertainty, employing both historical and contemporary lenses to consider what the future of higher education might look like in various contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vincent Carpentier, Professor of Higher Education and Society, Department of Education, Practice & Society, UCL Institute of Education
	<p>The public funding of higher education is in decline in many parts of the world, linked to the growth of competitive forms of academic capital and an increased commodification of higher education which altogether increasingly question the sustainability and fairness of the contemporary models to fund higher education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moses Oketch, Professor in International Education Policy & Development Department of Education, Practice & Society UCL Institute of Education
	<p>The panel will examine some of the successes and failures of higher education funding models, with a focus on systemic funding policies and their evolution over time. It will also consider the question of the balance between private and public funding, as well as the distinction between institutional and individual funding for higher education, and the political context of funding policy, exploring how this has evolved over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saumen Chattopadhyay, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies (ZHCES), School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)
	<p>There are significant differences across national contexts, with some countries exploring various types ranging from free tuition to strong commodification. Worldwide, the growth of private higher education providers and challenges of student debt has generated debates on the form of cost-sharing needed to sustain higher education systems. But what will this look like, and what does it mean for equity and social justice? Is there a future for the public funding of higher education?</p>	
24th April	Unequal Graduate Outcomes: Reassessing the Long-Term Returns to Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anan Chen, Postdoctoral Researcher, Peking University, and Honorary Research Fellow, UCL
11:00-12:30	<p>Higher education is widely assumed to be a powerful mechanism for social mobility, skills development and economic reward. Yet cross-national evidence increasingly shows that the long-term returns to higher education are uneven, context-dependent and potentially declining. This panel brings together four papers examining graduate outcomes from complementary angles: earnings mobility, international/transnational education, employability development, multidimensional job quality and social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golo Henseke, Associate Professor in Applied Economics, University College London • Sangwoo Lee, Assistant Professor at the Institute for Employment Research (IER), University of Warwick

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	<p>returns, to interrogate a central question: Does higher education still deliver on its promise of equality and quality, and long-term graduate advantage?</p> <p>Together, by bringing insights from different research and context, this panel will address key conference aims by exploring:</p> <p>Under what conditions does higher education expansion promote equitable outcomes?</p> <p>Do international and transnational models generate distinct advantages or reproduce inequalities?</p> <p>How should we rethink graduate outcomes beyond earnings, incorporating skills, job quality and wellbeing?</p> <p>What funding and policy models best support sustainable and just returns to higher education?</p> <p>This panel will provide new theoretical, empirical and policy insights into the equity, justice and sustainability of graduate outcomes worldwide. It also offers broader insights into how higher education participates in social reproduction and mobility under hybrid institutional orders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuqi Zhang, Ph.D candidate in Educational Economics, University College London
24th April 13:30-15:00	<p>Easy to say, hard to deliver: why are student finance policies so sticky?</p> <p>‘I promised to rebuild the middle class, and to fight for hardworking American families. Today, we are taking another significant step to deliver on that promise by canceling \$130 million in debt for 7,400 student borrowers.’ (President of USA Joe Biden, 2023)</p> <p>‘Ending the State-Guaranteed Student Loan and establishing a new financing system is imperative for those who do not have free education...alleviating the burden of educational debts that seem eternal is a commitment that we are going to approach with conviction and dialogue.’ (President of Chile Gabriel Boric, 2023)</p> <p>‘Reworking the present system gives scope for a month-on-month tax cut for graduates, putting money back in people’s pockets when they most need it. For young graduates this will give them breathing space at the start of their working lives and as they bring up families.’ (UK Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, 2023)</p> <p>The USA, Chile and England are distinctive in relying on greater private than public investment in higher education (OECD, 2025). But as higher education participation increases worldwide (UNESCO, 2025), repayable loans with different modes of government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Krzysztof Czarnecki, Researcher, Social Policy Unit, Stockholm University, and Assistant Professor, Department of Labour and Social Policy, Poznan University of Economics • <u>Chris Millward, Professor of Practice in Education Policy, University of Birmingham</u> • Zhamilya Mukasheva, LSE Fellow in Public Policy, London School of Economics • Hector Rios, Postdoctoral Researcher, Economic and Society Research Centre, Universidad Central de Chile • Sofia Baeza Barcelo, PhD Student, University College London

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	<p>support and co-ordination are becoming increasingly common.</p> <p>As exemplified by the quotations above, politicians in countries at the vanguard of liberalising student finance have begun to promise reform. This is intended to encourage access to higher education, relieve financial pressures on working people and unlock spending to support economic growth. It also aims to gain political support among growing graduate populations.</p> <p>Reforms such as these have, though, proved difficult to deliver in practice. The session will explore insights from policy makers and scholars on why and how this transpired in USA, Chile and England, and how this resonates with patterns in novel data-sets on fees and student support across more than 30 other higher income countries. The data and the specific cases help to understand the characteristics and current challenges of student finance and reforms in different countries, how factors such as public opinion, party politics, and higher education structure influence them, and why some instruments appear to be more salient than others.</p> <p>The session will be of interest to researchers working on student finance policy and colleagues involved with higher education policy worldwide.</p>	
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THEME 2: EQUITY, QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Location – Seminar Room D

Time & Location	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>Measures of Teaching Quality: a legitimate guide for students and funders?</p> <p>The absence of an agreed measure of teaching quality in higher education remains a wicked problem. As teaching quality cannot be measured directly, proxies are widely used. These measures are what Gunn (2022) calls the wider 'teaching mission of the university'. This is a wider pool of measures that can include student satisfaction and outcomes.</p> <p>The use of such proxies raises questions of how the data generated should be used, specifically, how indicators of teaching quality have been, or should be, used in applicants' decision making and in resource allocation. It has been argued they can inform student choice,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Helen Carasso, University of Oxford • Dr Andrew Gunn, University of Manchester • Professor Paul Ashwin, Lancaster University • Professor Christopher Millward, University of Birmingham • Dr Patricio R. Sanchez-Campos, University of Nottingham

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<p>institutional priorities, and the funding decisions of the state.</p> <p>The continued interest amongst public policy makers to fund teaching on a quality basis, i.e., based on a measure of performance, sustains the profile of the debate on how to measure teaching quality. The use of performance agreements by states which allocate resources by factors such as completion rates provide an example of funding being tied to performance indicators. Such formula funding models are used in countries including Denmark and Sweden. Teaching quality may also inform supplementary funding such as the MECESUP programme in Chile (1999-2016) where performance agreements were used to improve institutional quality. (Staring et al., 2025; World Bank, 2018)</p> <p>England has the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which grades providers on a range of measures. The development of new metrics for the TEF shows the challenges of developing new measures of teaching quality (Gunn, 2022). And the measure that can be used are at best indicators of possible differences in teaching quality, and not absolute metrics. In the England in 2025 the proposal that the outcomes of the TEF could be used to determine the caps set on home undergraduate fee levels resurfaced, a decade after it was first suggested and then dropped.</p> <p>Here, teaching quality measures are a feature of a high-tuition funding model using income-contingent student loans. They are seen as an incentive to deliver higher quality teaching at a time of financial strain. The legislation proposed in October 2025 showed the government was committed "..... to ensure the Office for Students has the capacity and power to swiftly identify low-quality teaching provision, and intervene to tackle it..... we will make future fee uplifts conditional on higher education providers achieving a higher quality threshold ." (Department for Education, 2025 p. 65). This suggests that significant credence can be placed on judgments on teaching quality, as made in England through the TEF). However, the Discover Uni website (https://discoveruni.gov.uk/), operated by the Office for Students to provide standardised information to undergraduate applicants, includes only one evaluation of each institution - its TEF outcome. This information, the site explains, does not provide absolute</p>	
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	<p>measurement of teaching quality: "...it is helpful to look at the TEF rating as this <i>can</i> give an indication to the university or college's overall level of excellence....."</p> <p>(Authors' emphases)</p> <p>Within the context of a live debate in England on the validity and applicability of measurements of teaching quality, this panel considers the extent to which such judgments can and should have a role in financial models of higher education.</p> <p>Framed within the context of a range of national experiences, it will, debate how proxy indicators of teaching are being used, the extent to which they can be reliable, the incentives unleashed in practice and if these can deliver the desired results.</p>	
<p>23rd April</p> <p>14:15-15:45</p>	<p>Tertiary education, the risk society, the state, and access to tertiary education. What are students 'buying'?</p> <p>Alongside the 'high-tuition/high-aid' Anglophone tradition, policymakers in wealthy English-speaking countries have also sought to divert the questions of affordability and access that Claire Callender's work poses by situating alternative tertiary education routes that are putatively closer to labour markets. This panel takes a broader perspective that considers the nature of the 'risks' students undertake through such 'investments' in education and how relations of class, gender, race and other dimensions of inequality mediate their access and perceptions of cost and risk.</p> <p>Our analysis explores the social institutions in which students are enmeshed, which provide varying levels of support for transitions into tertiary education (including higher and vocational education) and thence to work.</p> <p>The sociologically mediated individualisation of the individual and the individualisation of risk increase the 'stakes' in decisions to participate in tertiary education, because of the subordination of social institutions, democracy and civil society to the market. As Streeck (2016, 22 original emphasis) explains, 'Now states were located in markets, rather than markets in states'.</p> <p>As social institutions have diminished, the significance of education, now a substitute for the welfare state, and its 'investment' risks has increased. Meanwhile, the purposes of education have narrowed to support the market through the production of human capital.</p> <p>Universal systems of tertiary education are not universalist: whilst students in elite institutions may still access a universalist curriculum, those in 'mass' institutions, such as 'new' universities and vocational</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Stephanie Allais Centre for Researching Education and Labour, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa • Professor Bill Esmond, Institute of Education and Skills University of Derby • Professor Simon McGrath Associate Dean: Research Culture College of Social Sciences University of Glasgow • Dr Gavin Moodie Honorary Research Fellow Department of Education University of Oxford • <u>Professor Emerita Leesa Wheelahan</u> <u>Honorary Research Fellow</u> <u>Department of Education</u> <u>University of Oxford</u>

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	<p>colleges, access only narrow interpretations of human capital, defined as skills, and measured by contingent labour market outcomes.</p>	
24th April 9:00-10:30	<p>Higher education equity in Latin America and the Caribbean: From system and institutional policies to intersectional student-centred approaches</p> <p>This roundtable will bring together emerging and established researchers from The Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, and Perú whose divergent professional and lived experiences are connected by a shared research commitment to higher education equity in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Part I will focus on the policy context underpinning efforts to create more equitable higher education systems and institutions. Miah Dionne Sears will draw on a comprehensive literature review conducted in partnership with UNESCO studying higher education equity policies for equity-deserving groups, highlighting the emerging themes for LAC. Emma Harden-Wolfson will examine access and financing policies in Uruguay, a context where one of the principal challenges is a lack of recognition of inequality in the higher education system. Andrés Valencia Mafla will explore how Colombian public universities are transitioning to human rights-oriented well-being systems, and some implications of this shift for faculty, staff and workers. Cristina Fioreze will discuss the need for greater investment in institutional policies in Brazil to combat persistent socioeconomic and racial inequalities despite high-profile policies to democratize access to higher education.</p> <p>Part II will investigate equity from intersectional student-centred approaches. Through a case study of the Amazon region of Perú, Luz Gamarra Caballero will explore indigenous women students' success in higher education and their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities they face. Anna Maria Del Fiorentino will present on first-generation women graduates and their mothers in Brazil and England, comparing how different financing structures shape intergenerational access, belonging, and mobility. Julieta Abba will give details of ongoing research on the access of migrants and refugees to Brazilian public higher education and the challenges these groups face in persisting in their studies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julieta Abba, Associate Researcher and Vice-Coordinator of the UNESCO Chair on Education in Global Citizenship and Socio-Environmental Justice, Universidade de Caxias do Sul, Brazil • Anna Maria Zuhlke O'Connor Del Fiorentino, PhD student, University of Cambridge, UK • Cristina Fioreze, Professor, Universidade de Passo Fundo, Brazil • Luz Gamarra Caballero, PhD student, University of Newcastle, Australia • <u>Emma Harden-Wolfson, Assistant Professor, McGill University, Canada</u> • Miah Dionne Sears, Master's student, McGill University, Canada • Andrés Valencia Mafla, PhD student, McGill University, Canada
24th April	<p>Marketisation Vs. Affordability: Challenges in the financing of Higher Education in India</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor N.V. Varghese Distinguished Visiting Professor, IIT Bombay, former Vice Chancellor, NIEPA, New Delhi

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11:00-12:30	<p>In the growing knowledge economy in the era of globalisation and supportive global policies towards internationalisation, financing of higher education has become an important policy concern for emerging economies like India. The massive expansion of Indian higher education in the initial decade of the 21st century has pushed the GER in higher education to 28.4 percent in 2025. However, since the expansion is driven by the private higher education institutions offering market oriented courses, this has further accumulated serious concerns of affordability by the students from deprived sections of the population. While competing demand for public funds restricts allocation of resources supporting the quasi-public good argument for higher education, the growing expansion of private higher education sector further complicates the concerns of regulations, global standard or quality and majorly affordability to higher education by the underprivileged sections of population. Internationalisation and the race for 'Global ranking' by higher education institutions to align with policy recommendations overshadows the concerns of affordability to job oriented courses by at least 50 percent of the population of the country. Several alternative financing models such as interest free education loans, voucher systems in the form of fee reimbursement schemes, and philanthropic contributions have failed to address such concerns as recommended by the National Education Policy 2020.</p> <p>This panel based on empirical research work using a mixed-methodology approach addresses such concerns of sustainable financing to enhance affordability by the deprived sections of the society. It highlights the financing of private higher education institutions, recent internationalisation initiatives in India with an equity perspective. Innovative financing options such as State Credit Card Schemes are explored which have remained unexplored in the Indian context</p>	<p>Founding Director Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, NIEPA & former Head of Governance and Management in Education, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO), Paris (as Chairperson/Discussant)</p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Jinusha Panigrahi Associate Professor, MRIIRS, Faridabad, Delhi-NCR <p>Title of the paper: The Price of Prestige: Who Pays for Marketed Excellence in Private Higher Education in India?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Eldho Mathews Programme Officer for Internationalisation of Higher Education at the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC), India <p>Title of the paper: International Branch Campuses in India: Promise of Investment or Perpetuation of Inequality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Emon Nandi Assistant Professor, School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India <p>Title of the paper: Innovative Financing in Indian Higher Education: Assessing State Credit Card Schemes and Direct-Payment Strategies</p>
24th April 13:30-15:00	<p>Sustainable academic partnerships for equity and social justice in HE in Palestine</p> <p>Whilst there is recognition that research partnerships between the Global South and the Global North should be equitable, inclusive and collaborative, there are enduring institutional, structural and geopolitical obstacles that undermine Southern researchers being able to co-lead on the setting of research agendas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professor Dina Kiwan, School of Education, University of Birmingham <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Omar Shwaiki, Director, Friends of Palestinian Universities (formerly Friends of Birzeit University)

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<p>based on contextual priorities, sharing intellectual property, enhancing local capacity, and co-creating new emerging knowledge. In Palestine, attempts to decolonise the knowledge production has long been challenged by occupation and ensuing infringement of academic freedom (Kiwan, 2024), coupled by the hegemony of neoliberal and politicised funding systems in the Global North (Giacaman, 2023). Given the ongoing occupation in the West Bank, and 'plausible' and now widely recognised genocide in Gaza (ICJ, 2024), 'scholasticide' (Nabulsi, 2009) and the attempted annihilation of Gazan higher education has seen the targeting of all 19 universities, with over 80% of all universities being physically destroyed (UNESCO, 2025). University partnerships will be critical for the reconstruction of Gaza, but agendas must be led by Palestinian experts (Mqadma, 2025). This panel will discuss a number of challenges in establishing UK-Palestinian university partnerships, including i) the UK higher education environment, which has failed to demonstrate moral and ethical solidarity or uphold its professional and human responsibility toward a higher education system under deliberate and sustained attack, reflecting hesitant and bureaucratic senior university leadership that remains largely unreceptive and fearful of establishing meaningful partnerships; ii) Initiatives and strategies to date that can be further developed; and iii) first-hand accounts of dual decolonisation efforts from West Bank and Gaza.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Rita Giacaman, Birzeit University, West Bank • Professor Nazmi Al-Masri, Islamic University of Gaza and CARA Visiting Professor, University of Glasgow • Dr. Maha Shuayb, Center for Lebanese Studies and Department of Education, University of Cambridge
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THEME 3: MOBILITIES AND INEQUALITIES

Location – Seminar Room E

Time	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>Post-Brexit International Student Mobilities</p> <p>As has been well-documented in the extant literature, international student mobilities are shaped, often in quite profound ways, by broader geopolitical forces (Mok et al., 2024; Bamberger, 2025). With respect to the UK, the decision to leave the European Union has had a significant impact on such mobilities into and from the UK, with respect to both 'whole degree' mobility and stays of shorter duration (Brooks and Waters, 2026).</p> <p>In this panel, we explore four different components of the mobility landscape, in the UK, post-Brexit. These comprise: (i) the introduction of the Turing Scheme, following the UK's withdrawal from the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (paper given by Sophie Cranston, Suzanne</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel Brooks, University of Oxford • Jo Waters, University College London • Sophie Cranston, Loughborough University • Suzanne Beech, Ulster University • David McCollum, University of St Andrews • Siwan Davies, Swansea University

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	<p>Beech and David McCollum); (ii) the Taith mobility programme – an addition to Turing in Wales (paper by Johanna Waters and Siwan Davies); (iii) participation in the EU’s ‘European Universities Initiative’ by some UK universities, as a means of maintaining connections to Europe and facilitating intra-European mobility (paper by Rachel Brooks and Lee Rensimer); and (iv) the rise of ‘virtual mobilities’ in many UK universities as a response to various financial, environmental and policy challenges (paper by Aline Courtois, Sazana Jayadeva and Gregor Schaefer).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee Rensimer, University College London • Aline Courtois, University of Bath • Sazana Jayadeva, University of Surrey • Gregor Schaefer, University of Bath
23rd April 14:15-15:45	<p>International Student Mobility and Scholarships in a Fractured World: Rethinking Purposes, Politics, and Futures</p> <p>The cross-border movement of students has long been imagined as a symbol of openness, exchange, and shared futures. Today, however, international student mobility and scholarships are caught between competing political, economic, and security claims. Across some of the major destinations, debates have narrowed to questions of migration control, repeated concerns that students and their families might stretch public services, restrictions on work rights, visa routes, and dependants have begun to reshape who can move, under what terms, and at what cost. Yet even as the political climate tightens, governments, universities, and scholarship funders continue to see international education as a public good – not only for cultivating knowledge and networks, but also for strengthening institutional capacity across borders and for developing the civic and diplomatic ties that connect societies over time.</p> <p>This panel will not follow the usual paper-presenting format. It will take the form of a structured Q&A conversation among scholars and policy leaders, with space for audience engagement. The aim is to bring research and policy perspectives into dialogue, opening up a grounded discussion of the current dynamics of mobility and funding.</p> <p>The conversation will explore questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of evidence best speak to the societal value of mobility and scholarships? • Under what conditions do internationally educated graduates become agents of civic and institutional renewal? • What choices face universities, funders, and governments if openness is to be sustained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maia Chankseliani, University of Oxford, UK • Brendan Harrison, The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC) and The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), UK • Emma Hennessey, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK • Andreas Hoeschen, DAAD UK • Joonghyun Kwak, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland • Jenna Mittelmeier, University of Manchester, UK • Hans de Wit, Boston College, USA

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	<p>At a time when mobility is increasingly securitised and instrumentalised, this panel seeks to reframe the debate. It will invite participants to consider not only costs and benefits, but also what is at stake for knowledge, democracy, and global interdependence if international education contracts.</p>	
24th April 9:00-10:30	<p>Researching transnational mobility and education: Opportunities, challenges and debates</p> <p>As globalisation intensifies, the integration of the world economy and advanced transportation technologies have greatly enhanced the mobility of people across national boundaries. As a result of increasing global mobility, we have witnessed the growth of transnational migration, refugee movement, and international student mobility across transnational borders in the world. As a result of growing mobility, the foreign-born population of OECD countries rose to 150 million or 11% of the total population in 2023, up from 9% in 2013 (OECD, 2024). Without any doubt, transnational mobility has brought significant changes to the demographics and socio-cultural fabric of receiving societies.</p> <p>At a conceptual level, it is claimed that a 'new mobilities' paradigm, also known as a 'mobility turn', is being formed within the social sciences to transcend disciplinary boundaries (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006). As a powerful discourse that creates its own effects and contexts, the emerging mobility paradigm challenges the 'a-mobility' of much research in the social sciences until recently. Furthermore, the transnationalism paradigm, which emerged in the mid-1990s, challenges the rigid, territorial nationalism that defines the modern nation-state (Lie, 1995, p. 304). Under the transnationalism paradigm, mobilities are conceptualised as circulatory and transnational, moving us beyond the framework of methodological nationalism. On this view, many migrants can no longer be exclusively characterised as 'uprooted', people who are expected to make a sharp and definitive break from their homelands (Glick Schiller, Basch & Szanton Blanc, 1995). Instead, their daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan L. Robertson, University of Manchester/Wolfson College Cambridge • Jian Wu • Fazal Rizvi, University of Melbourne • Yan Guo, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary • Yingling Lou, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary • Erin Spring, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary • Susan Brigham, Faculty of Education, Mount St. Vincent University • <u>Shibao Guo, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary</u> • Ling Lei, Faculty of Education, Western University • Simon Marginson, Department of Education, University of Oxford

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	<p>public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. These migrants have lives that incorporate daily activities, routines and institutions in both a country of destination and transnationally and this is referred to by Levitt and Schiller (2004, p. 1003) as 'simultaneity'.</p> <p>While there is an emerging scholarship on the transnationalism and new mobilities paradigms, unfortunately little has been done to examine the relationship between transnational mobility and education. Therefore, this panel explores the connections between transnational migration, refugee resettlement, and international student mobility under the integrated framework of transnational mobility. In particular, it focuses on the impact of transnational mobility on education and implications for educational theory and practice.</p> <p>Collectively, this panel addresses issues of both mobility and immobility from comparative lenses. It reveals that the growing diversity and transnationality of world population posed significant challenges to education, particularly post-secondary education. This panel examines processes of inclusion as well as exclusion. We explore the role of education as mediating force in facilitating the transitions of migrants, refugees and international students as newcomers to the education environment of their host societies. It is hoped that the multiple paradigms and their connections to transnational mobility and education appeal to an international audience of the conference.</p>	
<p>24th April</p> <p>11:00-12:30</p>	<p>International Education, Migration, and International Student Journeys: UK and Australian Perspectives</p> <p>There is a significant literature within higher education studies on the relationship between international education and migration, and a somewhat separate body of research on the wellbeing of international students. Scholarship also tends to be focused on single-country case studies. This panel combines perspectives on international education, migration and student wellbeing while also offering a comparative perspective between the UK and Australia, which are among the world's most significant hosts for international students. In addition, the panel will contribute frameworks which together constitute international student journeys from initial motivations</p>	<p>• Gaby Ramia – Professor of Policy and Society, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Sydney</p> <p>• Marta Moskal - Professor of Migration and Diversity, School of Education, University of Glasgow</p> <p>• Benjamin Mulvey - Lecturer, School of Education, University of Glasgow</p> <p>• Siwen Liu - PhD Candidate, Sydney Centre for Healthy Societies</p>

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	<p>for education-driven mobility, through in-host-country experiences, to decisions on whether to stay in the host country after graduation.</p> <p>The session will incorporate the expertise of three UK-based and three Australian researchers, and combine sociological and policy studies perspectives with higher education, migration and health studies. Specific themes include: the relationship between student mobility, immigration policies, housing, and labour markets in Scotland; the means by which education-based trajectories for students of healthcare courses intersect with longer-term skilled migration pathways in Australia; resilience and social exclusion among international students in the UK and Australia; and the 'healthcare-education-migration nexus'. Framing the individual contributions, the panel Chair will introduce the policy and intellectual contexts at the beginning, and offer international implications for comparative research at the end of the session. Throughout, both speakers and Chair will draw out connections and comparisons between the studies and systems. This allows for the analysis of learnings for the higher education studies community and for policy reform.</p>	<p>and School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Sydney</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaac Thornton - PhD Candidate, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, University of Brighton • Leah Williams Veazey - ARC DECRA Research Fellow, Sydney Centre for Healthy Societies and School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Sydney
<p>24th April</p> <p>13:30-15:00</p>	<p>Social Mobility and Equitable Access to International Higher Education</p> <p>This panel examines the complex intersections of social mobility, equity, and international higher education, highlighting how structural inequalities and individual agency shape who gets access to transnational educational opportunities and under what conditions. Focusing on South and Southeast Asia, the discussion interrogates the promises and paradoxes of international education as a pathway to empowerment and social advancement. Our panelists explore how global education opportunities, while promising transformation and upward mobility, often reproduce structural inequalities shaped by social capital, geography, and institutional privilege. Contributors offer insights into innovative models of international cooperation and the diverse roles played by governments, education agents, and individual students in expanding or constraining access.</p> <p>Dr Zhe Wang examines how young changemakers from less privileged backgrounds in Southeast Asia navigate the transformative yet uneven terrain of international education mobility. Her analysis highlights "agency in motion" - the dynamic strategies through which</p>	<p><u>• Dr Que Anh Dang, Assistant Professor, Coventry University</u></p> <p>• Dr. Zhe Wang, Lecturer, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, University of Oxford</p> <p>• Mark Andrew Elepano, Doctoral Researcher, Coventry University, UK, and Aarhus University, Denmark</p> <p>• Sarah Patrick, Doctoral Researcher, Coventry University, UK</p> <p>• Quang Chau, Lecturer, Vietnam National University</p> <p>• Dr. Que Anh Dang, Coventry University, UK</p> <p>• Trang Nguyen, Doctoral Researcher, University of Liverpool, UK</p>

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	<p>marginalised youth leverage international study to challenge social hierarchies and enact change in their communities.</p> <p>Mark Andrew Elepano examines “who gets to go global” by analysing the financial, institutional, and cultural resources that shape access to dual award PhD programmes. Sarah Patrick continues this discussion by questioning whether dual award doctorates genuinely expand opportunity or simply privilege those already equipped with cultural and academic capital to navigate global academia. Drawing on perspectives of students from the Global South pursuing dual award programmes between the UK and India, Indonesia, and South Africa, they illuminate how programme design, funding, and institutional expectations condition participation and belonging in transnational researcher networks.</p> <p>Dr. Que Anh Dang and Quang Chau present on Vietnam’s bi-national universities - public institutions established through bilateral cooperation with Germany, France, and Japan - as hybrid models that aim to reconcile excellence and equity. Their findings suggest these universities offer affordable alternatives to private international campuses, yet competitive entry and urban concentration continue to limit equitable outcomes.</p> <p>Finally, Trang Nguyen interrogates how Vietnamese educational agents mediate students’ access to overseas study, revealing how marketized intermediaries may reinforce, rather than reduce, social inequalities.</p> <p>By situating Asian experiences within global debates on social mobility and equity, the panel offers critical reflections and multi-level perspectives on how actors negotiate the competing demands of equity, excellence, and global engagement, and considers how international education can more effectively foster social change.</p>	
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THEME 4: UNIVERSITIES, FREEDOMS AND GEOPOLITICS

Location – Seminar Room G

Time	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>Internationalisation of Higher Education Beyond the Western Horizon: Critical Perspectives</p> <p>This panel brings together several contributors from our forthcoming Comparative Education special issue,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Mulvey, University of Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

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	<p>Internationalisation in Higher Education beyond the Western Horizon: Critical Perspectives. The special issue responds to dominant framings of internationalisation in higher education, which too often reproduce a reductive binary between an essentialised and monolithic 'West' and a homogenised, victimised 'non-West.' A central premise of the special issue is that such perspectives often undermine the pursuit of social justice, as they risk essentialising non-Western contexts and inadvertently giving authoritarian states a 'pass' for their own (neo)colonial projects and ambitions. By drawing attention to these silences and distortions, the panel advances a more politically nuanced and critical understanding of internationalisation beyond the Western horizon.</p> <p>Each of the contributors problematise dominant framings of internationalisation in the Global South in some way. Bamberger offers an analysis of a corpus of articles representative of the 'internationalisation otherwise' literature, arguing that they often reproduce the essentialist, binary perspectives noted above. Mulvey offers a critique of the China-focused 'critical internationalisation studies' literature, arguing that much of it seeks to 'de-centre' the West, but inadvertently reproduces orientalist discourses and overlooks epistemic illiberalism and the PRC's own colonial practices. Relatedly, Yan critiques the growing promotion of the concept of tianxia as a framework for global higher education, arguing that its contemporary framing as 'harmonious cosmopolitanism' neglects its imperialist roots and risks legitimising authoritarian politics. Ortiga focuses on the tensions around international student recruitment in the Philippines, calling for greater recognition of how actors and institutions within the Global South can have their own agency in shaping international education. Caliskan and Buyukgoze examine Turkey's internationalisation policies, interpreting them as instruments of neo-Ottomanism, econo-Islamism, and pan-Turkism, strategically deployed for regional influence. Finally, Yudkevich traces international student recruitment in Russia from the 1950s to the present, showing how shifting balances of political, administrative and market logics have constrained university agency. Taken together, these contributions go some way to addressing or challenging the essentialisation of non-Western contexts in the field of international and comparative education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fei Yan, Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong • Annette Bamberger, Bar Ilan University, Israel • Yasmin Ortiga, Singapore Management University, Singapore • Omer Caliskan, University of Kassel, Germany • Hilal Buyukgoze, Bartin University, Türkiye • Maria Yudkevich, University of Haifa, Israel • Akiyoshi Yonezawa, Tohoku University, Japan • Latika Gupta, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, New Delhi • Edward Vickers, Kyushu University, Japan
23rd April	<p>Whose academic freedom? Threats in different contexts and against different stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniela Craciun, University of Twente: What's the news on

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14:15-15:45	<p>Academic freedom makes it possible to question social and scientific truths that are taken for granted, while respecting the standards recognised by the scientific community (MCO 2020, UNESCO 1997). Over the last decade, concern about the erosion of academic freedom has become increasingly pronounced (e.g. Maasen et al. 2023, Lyer et al. 2023, EP 2024, Hao 2020). This trend is not only visible in dictatorships and autocracies, but increasingly in democracies as well (Craciun & Mihut 2017, Kinzelbach et al. 2025).</p> <p>However, the types of academic freedom issues depend across political systems, regions and disciplines. This panel will explore the diverse impact of academic freedom infringements on those working in universities and research organisations regarding both the core elements of academic freedom (learning, teaching, research, and dissemination) and its supporting conditions (self-governance, institutional autonomy, employment and financial security) (Kováts & Rónay 2023). Restrictions on academic freedom affect social sciences and humanities more often, because these fields focus on exploring social problems and academics in these fields are often critical of political and economic actors. In addition, academic activity and social activism often merge in these fields leading to the controversial „scholactivism” (see Farnum 2016; Ramsey 2018).</p> <p>The panel examines recent developments in the global dynamics of academic freedom from a comparative perspective. The empirical contributions highlight how the nature and scope of attacks on this fundamental scientific right are shifting. First, we present cross-temporal, cross-disciplinary, cross-regional, and cross-national analyses of academic freedom, drawing on a bibliometric study of academic research and a content analysis of University World News coverage of academic freedom in higher education. We then examine the influence of current political contexts on academic freedom, before turning to two national case studies, the United States and Hungary, to assess how infringements affect universities and specific academic disciplines.</p>	<p>academic freedom? Automated text analysis of University World News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcelo Marques, University of Luxembourg: Understanding Academic Freedom: A Bibliometric Analysis of Cross-Disciplinary, Cross-Regional, and Cross-National Perspectives • Gergely Kováts, Corvinus University Budapest: Political context to academic freedom • <u>Rita Hordósy, University of Nottingham: Academic freedom in disciplinary contexts: the case of Hungarian sociology</u> • Brendan Cantwell, Michigan State University: Postliberal university governance – USA context
24th April 9:00-10:30	<p>Higher education in liberal societies: expansion, purposes, and accountability, past and future</p> <p>Liberal states, those that deploy political freedom as a means of governance, hold higher education (HE) as a common good and instrument of economic progress. The</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Josh Patel, Edge Foundation: Universities and the Purpose of Higher Education: Expansion and Development in Post-War Britain</u> • <u>Chris Millward, Birmingham: HE access policies in England during</u>

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	<p>history and present of HE in liberal societies indicates this paradigm contains significant tensions.</p> <p>In the UK, the period from 1945 to 1970 is remembered for 'social democratic' expansion funded by interventionist taxation regimes, as an instrument of social justice and democratic participation. By the 1990s, 'neoliberal' models were ascendent, purporting to secure the accountability of HE via market forces, but narrowing the civic epistemic purposes of higher education. UK governments argued that investing in expanding HE participation and research would be a better strategy for navigating globalisation and technological change than restricting trade and mobility.</p> <p>There are now, however, signs that some of these liberal principles may be under revision or even entirely abandoned. In the UK, this is marked by the financial crisis of 2007-08 and Brexit, and it is accompanied by a resurgent far-right across the liberal world. The 1999 50% participation target for England was achieved in 2017, but it has been repudiated by governments since the UK left the European Union (EU) in 2020. It has now been replaced by a 67% target including 'gold standard' apprenticeships and technical qualifications, which signals a profound recalibration of the relationship between higher learning, work, and citizenship.</p> <p>This panel examines how the liberal imaginary of HE, including its understanding of its contribution and its relationship with the good, free society and the validity of different funding methodologies, has and continues to evolve. To what extent are the tensions untenable? Do the apparent contrasts between social democratic and market models conceal a deeper continuity? Are alternative imaginaries necessary to confront the equity and sustainability crises confronting global HE today?</p>	<p>the 21st century and the Rise and Fall of the Knowledge Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Berry, Sussex: Universities and Democratic Culture: General Education in a Digital Age • Helen Carasso, Every Student Has Their Price: The Neoliberal Remaking of English Higher Education
24th April 11:00-12:30	<p>Higher Education Cooperation in the Global South: Reframing Influences on Knowledge Creation and Sharing</p> <p>In an era shaped by globalisation, countries of the Global South are increasingly questioning the colonial and neocolonial structures and dynamics that have historically influenced their educational and political systems. Among these, countries such as China, Brazil, India, and several African nations have gained prominence due to their increasing economic and demographic relevance, which has expanded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shen Wenqin (Peking University): The Shifting of Spaces? Chinese Elite University Students' Decision-making on Studying Abroad Destinations • Tai Lee Ming (Asian Development Bank): ADB's Role in South-South Cooperation in Higher Education • Oluwasegun Adesola Oladipo (Zhejiang Normal University): Transnational Education in the

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	<p>opportunities for South–South and North–South cooperation, particularly in higher education.</p> <p>This panel explores transnational higher education as a central strategy for internationalisation, focusing on the Global South. Transnational education (TNE) partnerships are increasingly seen not only as mechanisms to enhance institutional performance, research capacity, and global visibility, but also as platforms for intercultural dialogue and the pursuit of shared developmental goals. Participants will examine how global pressures, including university rankings and knowledge diplomacy, intersect with national priorities and shape the design and outcomes of internationalisation strategies.</p> <p>The discussion draws on political, economic, and cultural perspectives to analyse how bilateral and multilateral collaborations are negotiated and implemented, and how these dynamics influence both policy and practice. For that, it considers key drivers of internationalisation, such as academic mobility, joint research initiatives, and institutional networking, alongside the practical challenges these partnerships face in different national contexts.</p> <p>By critically examining these experiences, the panel highlights how TNE contribute to more resilient, equitable, and contextually grounded higher education systems. It identifies factors underpinning successful collaborations in the Global South, offering insights into cooperation models that promote innovation, sustainability, and educational sovereignty. Perspectives from different countries and institutions provide a comparative lens to understand how diverse Southern actors navigate opportunities and constraints in shaping mutually beneficial partnerships.</p> <p>Ultimately, this panel aims to foster dialogue among scholars and practitioners about strategies to strengthen inclusive and sustainable higher education collaborations, with implications for policy, research, and institutional practice across the Global South.</p>	<p>Global South: Success Factors from Sino-Foreign Degree Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Taís Bahia (Peking University): Brazil-China Cooperation in Higher Education: Managing Transnational Education Partnerships</u>
24th April 13:30-15:00	<p>Anti-Gender, Diversity and the Democratic University: Epistemic Struggles and Infrastructures</p> <p>The global “equity crisis” in higher education is not only about access, affordability, and funding models – it is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Dr Daniel Schumann (Freie Universität Berlin)</u> • <u>Prof Kathrin Zippel, PhD (Freie Universität Berlin)</u>

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(Online)	<p>also deeply epistemic. Around the world, universities have been contested arenas where questions of whose knowledge counts and whose voices are silenced are at the heart of broader political struggles. This panel examines how anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) and anti-gender mobilizations intensify the equity crisis by challenging the very legitimacy of knowledge fields, reshaping academic authority, and narrowing the democratic potential of higher education and critical knowledge production.</p> <p>The starting point of this roundtable is to consider (anti-)gender and diversity alongside (anti-)democracy as two interwoven processes shaping science and higher education. It builds on existing scholarship (e.g., CCINDLE and SCRIPTS) and selected outcomes of an international workshop on “Contested Spaces of Democracy and Inclusion in European Universities” (Berlin, November 2025), which brings together scholars working on gender and diversity, (de-)democratization, and higher education. Continuing and expanding this dialogue, the roundtable places a special focus on how epistemic struggles around democracy and inclusion intersect with the infrastructures of higher education. These infrastructures – e.g. ranging from systems of teaching evaluation and university DEI programs to research (de-)funding mechanisms and transnational strategic partnerships – configure, at different institutional scales, the conditions that may strengthen or weaken democratic and inclusive spaces.</p> <p>We illustrate this through empirical examples from three world regions (Europe, North America, Middle East) and across higher education fields (research, teaching, administration). Particular emphasis is placed on the European Universities Initiative (EUI), which funds 65 transnational alliances with over 570 participating HEIs. The roundtable reflects on their role in epistemic struggles around democracy and inclusion and asks if and how such alliances can build resilient structures in anti-democratic times – both in Europe and globally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Kathrin Zippel, PhD (Freie Universität Berlin) Epistemic Warfare, the Dismantling of Gender Research, and the Liberal Script in the United States • Dr Jessica Gold (International Panel on the Information Environment) & Assoc Prof Laura Nelson (University of British Columbia) DEI as Infrastructure – And Why We’ll Miss It When It’s Gone • Prof Emanuela Lombardo (Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence) Moral Panics and the Epistemic Politics of Anti-Gender Forces in Spain • Dr Didem Ünal (University of Helsinki) Gendered Epistemic Struggles and the Politics of Knowledge in Authoritarian Turkey • Prof María Bustelo (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) University Teachers' Evaluation in Anti-Gender Times: The Impact on Gender-Oriented Faculty • Prof Julian Hamann (Humboldt University of Berlin) Campus Culture: Academic Freedom and the Responsibility of the Democratic University • Dr Marina Cino Pagliarello (London School of Economics) European University Alliances as Infrastructures of Informal Diplomacy: Negotiating Autonomy, Democratic Values and Geopolitical Pressures • Dr Daniel Schumann (Freie Universität Berlin)
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		Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water? European University Alliances and DEI
Seminar At Seminar room C	<p>China-Africa: Reflections on Cultural Exchange and Educational Collaboration</p> <p>China and Africa have engaged not only in trade and infrastructural projects but also in cultural and educational exchanges. In the last decade or so, China has attracted an increasing number of students to study or engage in academic exchange with major Chinese universities. This panel sets out against the growing impact of geopolitics on higher education to critically examine how China and Africa continue to promote cultural and educational exchange, research collaboration and other forms of collaborations. Speakers joining the panel will discuss whether the deep collaborations between China and Africa can offer a new theoretical lens to analyze cross-continent and inter-university collaborations by making reference to Chinese concept of "relational" and humanistic orientation when fostering collaborations across countries / regions and organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof David Mills (Oxford University) • Prof Ka Ho Mok (<u>The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong</u>) on African students learning experience in China: Implications for China and Africa relation • Prof Padmore Amoah (Lingnan University, Hong Kong) on China and Africa Relations: Cultural Exchange and Educational Collaborations • Dr Ayomide Oluwaseyi Oladosu (<u>The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong</u>) on African Students' Wellbeing and Integration in Hong Kong and Canada • Dr Thandi Lewin (University of Johannesburg) • Prof Xie Ailei (South China Normal University) on African students in ASEAN countries

THEME 5 : GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Location – Library Discussion Room

Time & Location	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>After the university? Transformations of higher education governance in an era of global polycrisis</p> <p>In this panel, we argue that the equity crisis of global higher education forms part of a broader structural transformation of the university, at the intersection of academic capitalism, questions about the social, economic, and political role of public higher education, and an authoritarian turn in global politics. Around the world, universities find themselves in a deep crisis. In countries such as Argentina and the USA, the political success of authoritarian populism poses profound</p>	<p><u>• Daniel Nehring, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy, Swansea University</u></p> <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Kristiina Brunila (Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland):

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	<p>challenges for universities, from governments' efforts at defunding them to escalating challenges to free speech. In the UK, the long-term underfunding and commercialisation of public universities have led to sweeping closures of humanities and social science programmes and mass sackings of scholars. At the same time, emerging stealthy initiatives aim at conforming scholars' endurance and sensibilities towards optimisation agendas for economic growth has greatly narrowed the thematic remit of 'high-value' research and research funding. In the Nordic countries, long-standing egalitarian ideals meet accelerating marketisation and performance governance, reshaping universities' social missions and academic work. In turn, China is accelerating its global superpower status in knowledge production, systematically inserting itself into the systems of global academic capitalism while stringently curtailing academic freedom.</p> <p>The foregoing are salient instances of deep, wide-ranging transformations at the international level of what universities are, how universities are governed, and how scholars can think and work. In response, this panel examines to what extent and in which ways contemporary higher education organisations can still be characterised as universities, in the classic, for example Humboldtian, sense of the term. Drawing on empirical research on diverse international contexts, the panel's four papers particularly seek to theorise contemporary relationships between contemporary higher education governance and practice, academic freedom, and democratic politics, against the backdrop of global polycrisis.</p>	<p>The Accelerated University: Power, Governance, and Academic Subjectivities in an Era of Global Crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Daniel Leyton (School of Education, University of Exeter, United Kingdom): Struggles over Academics' Becoming: New Discourses and Actors of Self-Optimisation in Higher Education • <u>Dr. Daniel Nehring (Department of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy, Swansea University, United Kingdom):</u> Universities for the post-neoliberal age: rethinking higher education governance at the intersection of academic capitalism and the authoritarian turn • Dr. Yadi Zhang (School of Journalism & Communication, Chongqing University, China) • Dr. Mengwei Tu (Department of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy, Swansea University, United Kingdom): Privileged and exploited? Higher education governance and China's high-end talent recruitment schemes
23rd April 14:15-15:45	<p>University Governance in a Time of Democratic Decline: Student Participation and the Future of Institutional Structures in Higher Education</p> <p>Authoritarianism is on the rise, as democracy is on the decline globally (Graham & Svolik, 2020; Grumbach, 2023; Nord, 2025). At the same time, higher education institutions have a vital role in how democracy in society is shaped (Biesta, 2007; Cook & Nation, 2016). Besides being sites of knowledge production, colleges, universities, and other postsecondary institutions strengthen and advance democracy by equipping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Shannon Hutcheson, McGill University • Dr. Olivier Bégin-Caouette, Université de Montréal • Dr. Emma Harden Wolfson, McGill University • Dr. Shikha Diwakar, McGill University • Yvonne Zhang, McGill University

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	<p>students with information and critical skills necessary for informed civic participation (Tierney, 2021).</p> <p>However, this democratic potential is often undermined by the internal governance structures of higher education institutions, which are increasingly influenced by market-driven logics that prioritize efficiency, material gain, and privatization (Del Paggio, 2025). Many universities globally operate with centralized decision-making models that limit meaningful input from students, which raises questions about how organizational structures within universities reflect or resist democratic values.</p> <p>There is a growing research interest in understanding how university governance works in practice and how it reflects broader tensions between democratic ideals and neoliberal imperatives. This panel explores various organizational structures of higher education institutions, specifically in the UK and in Canada, and how they are theoretically and practically designed to balance diverse voices within the university. It examines the role of governing bodies and how their composition and power dynamics can sometimes include and sometimes marginalize student perspectives.</p> <p>By analyzing policies and bylaws related to student participation in university governance, this panel seeks to uncover how internal university structures may both reflect and reinforce authoritarian tendencies, even within institutions traditionally seen as democratic spaces. The panel further explores the implications of these governance models for the democratic mission of higher education and raises critical questions about what kind of future these institutions are shaping: one that empowers civic engagement, or one that consolidates power and limits democratic practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Lucia Dikaczova, McGill University</u>
<p>24th April 9:00-10:30</p> <p>Diversifying Leadership in Global Higher Education</p> <p>Global higher education is confronting a multifaceted crisis, with persistent inequalities and a lack of diversity in senior executive leadership standing out as a critical concern. A cursory glance of the roll call of names across the world's most elite universities reveal the dominance of predominantly white males in positions of power and influence. But what is our understanding of the biographies of those who lead elite universities globally? And what are the wider implications for diversifying leadership at this level?</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Professor Sarah Aiston Professor in Higher Education and Public Policy, Teesside University</u> <u>Professor Vikki Boliver Professor of Sociology, Durham University</u> <u>Dr Ayca Gunaydin Kaymakciogl</u> 	

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	<p>This panel will present evidence from the <i>Diversifying Leadership in Elite Universities: The Development of an Empirically Grounded Recruitment Framework for the Global Higher Education Sector</i> project, funded by the ESRC. Currently, the 'success' factors that lead to being appointed as a Vice Chancellor/President are obscure. This project seeks to identify and interrogate these success factors to make the implicit explicit; to deconstruct unwritten assumptions and the concept of 'cultural fit'. Importantly, the role of Executive Search Firms, governing bodies and, in some national contexts, the state in the recruitment process is considered. The analysis of 89 institutions that feature, at least twice, in international rankings (THE, QS, ARWU) reveals that university leaders remain overwhelmingly male, predominantly elite-educated, and frequently promoted from within their own institutions. Advanced statistical techniques highlight patterns of institutional and career 'in-breeding'. These patterns highlight the structural barriers in recruitment and career progression, shaped by implicit biases and institutional practices. This panel responds directly to these challenges by drawing on findings from the project to interrogate the dynamics of leadership trajectories in elite universities.</p> <p>This panel will be led by <i>Professor Aiston (Teesside University)</i>, Principal Investigator of the ESRC-funded project <i>Diversifying Leadership in Elite Universities</i>. Her research highlights the barriers to diversifying senior leadership and the systemic changes required to foster equality at the highest levels of academia. Invited discussants will bring complementary perspectives from policy, practice, and international contexts. <i>David Bass (Advance HE)</i> will contribute insights from sector-wide equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, reflecting on strategies for institutional change. <i>Professor Mok (Hang Seng University of Hong Kong)</i> and <i>Professor Hou (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)</i> will situate the debate in Asian higher education systems, where global competitiveness intersects with social equality. <i>Jamie Cumming-Wesley (WittKieffer)</i> will provide perspectives from executive leadership recruitment, addressing how shifting priorities in Vice-Chancellor/President selection affect opportunities for more diverse leadership pipelines. Together, the panel will critically examine how leadership, recruitment practices, and institutional cultures contribute to, or mitigate, inequalities in higher education. By linking empirical research with practice and international policy perspectives, the session aims</p>	<p>Post-Doctoral Researcher, Teesside University</p> <p><u>Discussants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Angela Yung-chi Hou National Chengchi University, Taiwan• David Bass Director of EDI, Advance HE• Professor Ka-Ho Mok Provost and Vice President (Academic & Research), Hang Seng University of Hong Kong• Jamie Cumming-Wesley Senior Partner, WittKieffer
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	<p>to spark dialogue on critical approaches in higher education leadership.</p>	
24th April 11:00-12:30	<p>Talent Attraction, Retention and Management: Comparative Perspectives</p> <p>This panel sets out in the broader context when global economic conditions are becoming unstable, while investments in higher education encounter challenges. Invited panelists will discuss their recent research experiences related to talent attraction and retention issues from different geographical locations. Comparative insights and international perspectives will enrich our cross-cultural understanding of policies and practices when managing the war for talent happening across different parts of the globe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Shen Wenqin, Peking University (paper on Mainland China) • Prof Angela Hou, National Chengchi University, Taiwan (Paper on Taiwan region) • <u>Prof Ka Ho Mok, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (Paper on Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia)</u> • Dr Ayo Oladosu, The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (Paper on Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia) • Prof Lisa Lucas, University of Bristol, UK (Paper on the UK) • Prof Thandi Lewin, University of Johannesburg (Paper on Africa) • Dr Obert Hodzi, University of Liverpool (Paper on China and Africa)

THEME 6: SUSTAINABILITY AND REPARATIVE FUTURES

Location – Seminar Room K

Time	Title	Panellists
23rd April 11:45-13:15	<p>Concepts in contexts : a pluriversal perspective on equity policies of access to higher education</p> <p>UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 sets a target to ensure equal access to affordable and quality tertiary education for all by 2030. Yet, despite rising global enrolment rates, persistent inequalities in participation and success in higher education (HE) continue to challenge this goal. The growing exclusion of aspiring youth from quality HE opportunities poses significant risks to the socio-economic and political stability of countries—evident in youth-led recent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penny Jane Burke, UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice and Higher Education and Global Innovation Chair of Equity, Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education at University of Newcastle, Australia. • <u>Yann Lebeau, Professor of Higher Education Research in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia (UK)</u>

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	<p>movements such as those in Nepal, Madagascar, and Morocco—and challenges the relevance of dominant fair access policies to the public good of HE.</p> <p>This panel critically examines the global pervasiveness of structural inequalities in HE access. While efforts to decolonise university spaces and curricula have gained traction, prevailing policy and research ontologies often fail to address—or even obscure—the structural dimensions of inequity.</p> <p>Through a series of examples and a plurality of perspectives, this panel will contextualise massification processes and accompanying pro-equity policies. It will highlight the effects of the historical and geographical translation of policy concepts, and critically examine the rationales that frame—and often misframe—equity and widening participation policy and practice. The panel will then propose new directions for research into the complex interactions between context-specific structural inequalities, marginalisation and exclusion, and often decontextualised equity policy assemblages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jennifer Agbaire, Lecturer in Education at the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies at the UK's Open University. Abass Isiaka, Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Higher Education Research, Practice, Policy and Scholarship (CHERPPS), University of East Anglia (UK). Nidhi S. Sabharwal, Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi. Vincent Carpentier, Professor of Higher Education and Society at the Institute of Education, University College London. Patricio Langa, Professor of Comparative Higher Education, Policy, and Innovation Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University (U.E.M.), Mozambique, and Associate Fellow, Department for Science Studies, Forum Internationale Wissenschaft, University of Bonn, Germany.
23rd April 14:15-15:45	<p>Cross-national perspectives on climate and sustainability in higher education</p> <p>The last decade has seen a marked increase in both action and research on climate and sustainability in higher education institutions around the world. Publications on the topic have grown not only in long-standing areas of environmental education, but also in non-educational journals focusing on governance, policy, campus management and community impact. However, this large body of literature is dominated by isolated, technical accounts that pay little attention to context and the influence of local and national factors of a cultural, political and economic nature. This panel aims to provide a contextualised comparative view on the ways universities, their staff and students are</p>	<p><u>Tristan McCowan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final list to be confirmed Roxana Chiappa, Universidad de Tarapacá (online)

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	<p>engaging with these agendas. In particular, it addresses diverging conceptions of sustainability, differences in language used, and the ways they might draw on or link into local, religious or indigenous knowledge traditions.</p> <p>There will be four presentations in the panel. First, Teodor Zidaru (St. Andrews) will present on “Extending knowledge ecologies in Tanzania and Kenya: lessons from university-brokered engagements between policymakers and communities”. Batool Zaidi (UCL) will then move the focus from researchers to students in “Student Voices of Lahore, Pakistan for Planetary Health in Higher Education”. Interaction with global agendas will be covered in Salim Al Maqbali & Khalaf Al'Abri's (Sultan Qaboos University) “Evaluating Sustainability Performance in Gulf Universities: Comparative Insights from the QS 2025 Rankings”. Finally, Tristan McCowan (UCL) presents a three-country comparison in “Faculty of education engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals in Brazil, Canada and the UK”. The subsequent discussion will aim to generate insights from the cross-national comparison, involving further inputs from audience members.</p>	
<p>24th April</p> <p>9:00-10:30</p>	<p>Grassroots Educational Initiatives for Sustainability and Equity in Higher Education</p> <p>In the UK, university knowledge economies operate within a high-tuition, high-aid model that poses significant challenges to equitable access for marginalised student groups. This panel examines how student-led partnerships function as effective catalysts for localised sustainability initiatives (Budowle et al., 2021; Gramatakos & Lavau, 2019; Murray, 2018; Reeves, 2019). Often emerging as informal micro-communities, these initiatives operate as Communities of Practice (Borges et al., 2017) that challenge existing power dynamics and promote equity through what has been termed inclusive sustainability (Lu et al., 2017).</p> <p>The panel explores tensions between sustainability goals, institutional governance, and financial barriers faced by students, particularly considering how restrictions on financial aid shape the composition of the student body and, in turn, influence sustainability-oriented research outputs and opportunities for collective learning. It also examines inconsistencies in institutional sustainability narratives, with particular</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Olga Mun, Dphil at University of Oxford</u> • Amelia Farber, Research Fellow at Reuben College, University of Oxford • Isobel Talks • <u>Julie Lin</u> • Zara Tripp • Emmanuel Leon, junior project and community manager part of the Museum Ethnographers Groups and recently finished the Visual Material and Museum Anthropology MSc at the University of Oxford • Rommy Anabalon Schaaf,

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	<p>attention to equity challenges faced by marginalised higher education stakeholders and the resulting limitations in research outputs, including a lack of intersectional perspectives and research grounded in the Global Majority.</p> <p>Through empirical cases—including a student-led climate change reading group, a Sentipensar (feel-thinking) framework enacted through creative and decolonial reading practices, and a grassroots language initiative developed with precarious migrant university workers—the panel demonstrates both the possibilities and limits of grassroots sustainability efforts. While these initiatives foster collective learning, solidarity, and critical engagement beyond technocratic or institutionally sanctioned approaches, the case of the language programme shows how grassroots initiatives, when absorbed into university moral and reputational economies without structural accountability, expose the limits of equity and sustainability in British higher education.</p> <p>Finally, the panel advocates a reparative approach to sustainability that promotes inclusive sustainability and facilitates intersectionality within and beyond higher education. By foregrounding student-led and grassroots initiatives as drivers of change, the panel challenges institution-led sustainability agendas that remain constrained by existing practices (Compagnuccia & Spigarelli, 2020). The initiative, collaboration, and peer support embedded within these groups offer grounded practices that contribute to a broader and more equitable understanding of sustainability, education, and institutional accountability.</p>	<p>University College London</p>
<p>24th April</p> <p>11:00-12:30</p>	<p>Transforming the Global Education Agenda: Beyond Sustainability, Toward Plural Futures</p> <p>As the 2030 deadline of the Sustainable Development Goals approaches, this panel asks whether “sustainable development” should continue to anchor global education and higher education agendas. The term’s enduring appeal lies in its promise of a win-win balance between human progress and ecological protection. Yet its conceptual vagueness and complicity with colonial, capitalist, and technocratic paradigms invite critical interrogation. What does it mean to sustain a system that has generated deep inequalities and planetary precarity? And what might come after sustainable development as a guiding vision for education?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olga Mun, University of Oxford • Moira V. Faul, Geneva Graduate Institute • Tristan McCowan, UCL • Nigel O. M. Brissett, Clark University • Benjamin Scherrer, CUNY Lehman College • Roxana Chiappa, Universidad de Tarapacá (online)

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	<p>This panel gathers four scholars who offer distinct yet complementary critiques and alternatives. Moira V. Faul and Oakleigh Welply explore how coloniality continues to shape global education institutions, calling for epistemic transformations that challenge Western paradigms and reorient universities toward plural, interconnected futures. Olga Mun's <i>Rewilding Comparative and International Higher Education</i> proposes a reparative framework that integrates indigenous and ecological philosophies to reimagine higher education beyond modernity's developmental myths. Nigel O. M. Brissett argues that "sustainable development" perpetuates injustice and ecological harm, advocating instead for "education for social transformation and just futures." Benjamin Scherrer's <i>Finding Ceremony Beyond the Ruins of Sustainable Development</i> reads the remnants of failed sustainability projects as spaces of possibility, envisioning new genres of the human grounded in relationality and ceremony.</p> <p>Together, these interventions move beyond critique to reimagine the role of education in shaping post-2030 planetary futures. The panel invites dialogue on reframing higher education's moral, epistemic, and ecological responsibilities in an age that demands repair rather than sustainability.</p>	
<p>24th April 13:30-15:00 (Online)</p>	<p>Rethinking equity and the public good through service-learning and community engagement (SLCE)</p> <p>While debates around higher education access and equity often focus on models of tuition and aid, these approaches may neglect deeper considerations such as the relationship with community and societal relevance, institutional culture, and experiences of higher education. To be truly equitable, contemporary universities need also remain relevant to the needs and desires of their surrounding communities, especially those historically excluded from these institutions of higher learning. University functions of service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) have become vital avenues for connecting academic learning with societal needs. Yet across the globe, SLCE faces challenges: limited funding, uneven institutional support, questions of reciprocity between partners, and tensions between short-term projects and long-term community development.</p> <p>This roundtable convenes graduate students and early-career researchers from across the globe to explore how SLCE is imagined, practiced, and sustained across</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claire McCann, University of Oxford (United Kingdom) • Nigel Machiha, University of Johannesburg (South Africa) • Dr Shilohna Phillanders, independent consultant (recent PhD graduate) (Trinidad and Tobago) • Dr Matías Flores, independent (recent PhD graduate) (Chile) • Diana Coello, Universidad San Francisco de Quito (Ecuador) • Joao Elton, Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP) (Brazil)

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diverse higher education systems. We ask: What does it mean for universities to fulfil their 'public good' mission in contexts marked by escalating costs, widening inequalities, and calls for decolonisation and social justice? And what role can SLCE play in protecting the public good dimensions of higher education amidst constrained state finances?