

Title: **Rhetoric and reality: The drive of learning technology and its implications for academic development**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Consider objectively the drive of technological determinism in higher education;
- Discuss and highlight some of the motivations and drives between disciplines related to learning technology in higher education and how these impacts academic identity;
- Consider the role of academic development in relation enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment, how the role impacts on academic confidence and empowerment for utilising learning technology.

Session Outline

Throughout the last decades there has been an increased drive for the use of technology in higher education teaching and learning. This is fuelled by studies focusing on the benefits and transformative potential of technologies as well as the barriers to their adoption, alongside government and sector funding (Laurillard, 1993, 2002; Beetham and Sharpe, 2007; Mayes, et al., 2009; Clark, 2010; JISC, 2011). Despite the drive, there are considerable differences in adoption rates in learning and teaching and between those who 'do' technology and those who have technology 'done to' them as well as how institutions prioritise and support its implementation. Technology is not only about tools, and it is not neutral; it is about social systems and processes that have impacts which favour some groups above others (Selwyn, 2013, 2014).

As educational professionals we need to step outside these celebratory discourses to reflect on, discuss and question the reality of technology adoption and the elements of enhancement and value added to the learning experience. We need to consider academic decision practices and how these accommodate technology, as well as understand the unintended, unseen and hidden impacts on academic knowledge, practices and identity.

The role of educational developers is intrinsically linked to this technological drive as we influence academic understanding of technology adoption (Hudson, 2009). Additionally these roles carry responsibility for translating institutional strategies and policy into practice that frequently promote technology. It is important therefore we take a connected and holistic approach to learning technology within educational development; understand the reality in practice, differing disciplines needs as well as the impact on individuals, while supporting wider aspirational rhetoric of institutional strategy.

The session asks participants to take a journey of reflection and discussion around these key issues. We look beyond the rhetoric of what we could and should use for learning and teaching and reflect on what we actually do use and promote. It asks participants to consider disciplinary difference in needs and uses of technology and lastly asks us to consider the impact technology has on us as educational professionals and those we seek to support (Selwyn 2013, 2014).

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

5 minutes	<p>Presentation Introduction to technology determinism, social aspects of technology, academic identities, and the role of strategy in wider institutional development.</p>
5 minutes	<p>Participant group discussion Discussion in small group on knowledge and professional experiences of disciplinary differences of actual use and understanding of pedagogical purpose of learning technologies. Questions: What are the similarities and differences between disciplines? Are there notable differences and similarities between disciplines?</p>
5-7 minutes	<p>Presentation Short presentation highlighting early outcomes of an EdD study that looks at humanities academic decision making processes and use of learning technology (both positive and negative).</p>
10 minutes	<p>Open discussion & question: How can we recognise differences in disciplinary needs? What are the seen and unseen impacts of technology on academic practices? In light of the conversations, how can we as educational professionals approach and support academic development and learning technologies holistically? What are the non-technical aspects and discipline specific elements and needs we need to recognise and can we plan for these?</p>

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