

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

Leaning on collegial conversations in times of change

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Every one of us has encountered times of change and disruption in our work, our institutions, and our world that challenge and reshape how we teach, learn, and lead. This panel explores how university learning and teaching professional development is sustained and reimagined in such times. Drawing upon the panellists' experiences we ask: *How do we adapt, and what enables us to thrive?*

Through collaborative autoethnographic reflection, we examine disruptions at the micro (individual), meso (institutional), and macro (sector and global) levels. These reflections have served not only as a method of inquiry but also as a means of resilience and renewal. Our discussion highlights the tensions and possibilities that emerge when professional development intersects with uncertainty, and how reflective collaboration can foster adaptability, community, and innovation.

This session invites audience participation to collectively explore how we might shape more sustainable and inclusive futures for professional development in higher education.

Keywords: professional development, change and disruption, reflective inquiry, collaboration

Area of focus

This panel addresses the evolving landscape of professional development in higher education, particularly in response to ongoing and multifaceted disruptions. It explores how educators and academic developers sustain and adapt their professional development practices during periods of institutional, sector, and global change, including the acceleration of digital technologies. Drawing on their lived experiences, the panellists examine how collaborative, reflective inquiry can serve as both a survival strategy and a catalyst for innovation in academic development.

Grounded in the methodology of collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013), the panel engages in collective meaning-making through the sharing and analysis of personal narratives. This approach foregrounds the relational and contextual nature of knowledge construction and is well-suited to exploring the emotional, intellectual, and professional dimensions of disruption, including how digital platforms mediate collaboration, reflection and connection. The work is further informed by Fanghanel et al. (2016) who conceptualise academic development as occurring across micro (individual), meso (institutional), and macro (sectoral and global) levels. This framework provides a lens through which to examine the layered and intersecting challenges faced by educators in times of upheaval. Additionally, the panel draws on Chen's (2021) scholarship on intentional and reflective practice in academic development, which emphasises the importance of context-sensitive, values-driven approaches to supporting educators and fostering scholarly teaching.

The central question guiding this panel is: *How is university learning and teaching professional development continued and adapted in times of change?*

To explore this question, the panel brings together a diverse group of educators working across diverse roles, institutions, national contexts, and career stages. From facilitating professional development programs to

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mentoring peer educators, each panellist offers a distinct vantage point on how professional development is experienced and enacted in times of change.

- Dr Emma Price, a Scholarly Teaching Fellow at a regional university in Victoria, is responding to the impact of recent restructures that have reshaped her role and prompted a rethinking of how professional development is supported through digital platforms within resourcing constraints.
- Dr Corinne Green, an academic developer, is based at a metropolitan university in South Australia embarking on the co-creation of a new institution. This affords new opportunities for delivering teaching and learning professional development at scale, coupled with widespread meso-level uncertainty and change.
- Erin Fay, a graduate student in the United States, teaches undergraduate students to become peer educators. Her perspective brings a student-educator lens shaped by macro-level disruption in the context of societal and governmental instability heightened by rapid media releases of the Trump administration.

Through contrasting our experiences, we will illuminate the emotional and professional complexities of working in higher education today as we ask each other, and the audience: *how do we adapt, and what enables us to thrive?* We will highlight the challenges and setbacks we have each encountered, how our collaborative reflections and conversations have helped us forward, and how what we have learned can be translated into other contexts.

Our collaborative autoethnographic process has enabled us to make sense of these disruptions through structured reflection and peer dialogue. In this session, we share how this approach has supported our resilience and renewal, and how it might be adapted in other contexts. We invite attendees to reflect on their own experiences and consider the potential of collaborative inquiry to foster adaptability, community, and innovation in professional development.

Panel format and audience engagement

The session will use an interactive format that blends storytelling, scholarly insight, and collaborative reflection to foster engagement, shared learning, and practical takeaways. It will be structured as follows:

1. **Introduction and contexts:** Each panellist will briefly introduce their professional context and the specific disruptions they have encountered at the micro, meso, and macro levels.
2. **Collaborative autoethnographic process:** The panel will describe their methodology, including the use of independent written and artistic reflections as a foundation for collaborative dialogue. Representative excerpts from these reflections and discussions will be shared to illustrate key themes.
3. **Audience reflection and dialogue:** Attendees will be invited to engage with reflective prompts in small groups, sharing their own experiences of professional development during times of change.
4. **Collective sense-making:** The session will conclude with a whole-group discussion, during which participants will contribute to a live digital mindmap. This collaborative artefact will capture individual and collective insights, strategies, and aspirations for navigating change in higher education.

This session is designed for academic developers, educational designers, educators, and institutional leaders interested in professional development, reflective practice, and educational change. It will also appeal to those experiencing significant change or disruption who are interested in using collaborative autoethnography or collegial dialogue as tools for reflection, resilience and renewal.

Expected Outcomes

- Explore how collaborative, reflective practices can support resilience, adaptability and innovation in professional development during disruption.
- Gain insight into diverse experiences of educational change across roles, institutions, and national contexts, including the impact of digital technologies on professional development delivery and engagement.
- Contribute to a shared dialogue and co-created resource that captures collective strategies for navigating uncertainty in higher education.

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Key Takeaways

- Disruption, while challenging, can be a powerful catalyst for growth and innovation.
- Reflective collaboration offers a meaningful and sustainable approach to navigating change.
- Professional development must be contextually responsive, emotionally attuned, and grounded in shared values and experiences, particularly as digital technologies reshape how educators connect.

References

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