

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

Professional standards for learning design: Mapping values, practices and professional identity

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Learning design as a profession remains in a liminal space, increasingly central to digital education yet without the formal recognition or collective voice enjoyed by other professional domains. This panel addresses the current lack of shared professional standards by asking: What values, practices and indicators of quality might form the basis of a professional standards framework for learning designers? Drawing on established models from education and technology professions, and sociological theories of professionalisation, the panel invites ASCILITE participants to collaboratively explore what such a framework might look like, how it should be developed, and why it matters. Through guided provocations and participatory workshop activities, attendees will help shape a draft map of core values, domains of practice and levels of expertise, forming the foundation for further community-led work.

Keywords: Learning Design, Education Design, Professional standards

The problem of professional identity

This panel builds on the standing-room-only 2024 ASCILITE symposium “Learning Design isn’t a profession (yet)”, which identified a lack of shared professional standards as a key barrier to recognition. This year’s interactive panel directly addresses this gap.

Learning design, despite its growing influence in pedagogical and technological innovation, lacks formal recognition as a profession. A key barrier to this recognition is the absence of a shared standards framework, a coherent articulation of the values, practices and levels of expertise that define the field. Without such a framework, the identity of learning design remains fragmented, career pathways are ill-defined, and learning designers remain vulnerable to marginalisation within institutional structures.

This panel asks: What might a professional standards framework for learning design look like, and how should it be created? Drawing on sociological studies of professionalisation, including the work of Macdonald (1995), Saks (2010) and Reed (2017), we argue that the development of shared standards is a critical step in building

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

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legitimacy, recognition and influence. These scholars variously identify criteria such as the formation of a collective knowledge base, codification of roles and responsibilities, and the development of a recognised education pathway as essential to professional identity.

At the same time, the panel recognises the risks of premature or exclusionary standardisation, particularly within a diverse and third-space profession such as learning design (Whitchurch, 2008; McIntosh & Nutt, 2022). Learning designers operate across disciplinary, institutional and technological boundaries, and any effort to define standards must reflect this complexity. Our position is that standards should not be externally imposed, but rather emerge from inclusive, participatory processes that empower the community: enabling greater self-determination, cohesion, and advocacy within and across institutions.

To support this argument, we draw on examples from existing professional frameworks in adjacent fields. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) provide outcome-based levels of performance. The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) uses a reflective model grounded in principles and values. The Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) defines capability in terms of transferable skills across technical and digital roles. Each of these models offers different structures, such as hierarchical levels, competency-based domains or value-driven categories.

We explore key design questions: Should standards be descriptive or aspirational? Should they be uniform across sectors or adaptable to local contexts? Should they emphasise certification, or serve as reflective tools for individual and organisational development?

This panel ultimately argues that for learning design to chart its own future, the time has come to define what matters in our work and to begin sketching what a community-driven standards framework might look like.

The panellists

The panellists have been selected because of their leadership roles in the development of degrees in the field of learning design, or because of their lived experiences as learning designers and educational technologists across sectors.

- **Prof Michael Henderson** is Professor of Digital Futures in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. He has been teaching educational design for 15 years and created the Graduate Certificate of Educational Design, and Australia's first Bachelor degree in Learning Design and Technology.
- **Dr Keith Heggart** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney. He has worked in education and educational leadership roles in Australia and England, as well as running his own learning design consultancy. He developed UTS's award-winning Graduate Certificate in Learning Design.
- **Dr Nhung Nguyen** is Senior Lecturer at The University of Tasmania. She is a passionate educator with twenty years of experience in the education domain, focussing on learning design, digital technologies in education, science education, and academic development. She has worked as principal learning designer, educational designer and is currently teaching units of the Monash Graduate Certificate of Educational Design.
- **Dr Simon Paxton** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Komazawa University in Tokyo, Japan. He is currently a visiting scholar at the Centre for Research in Education in a Digital Society (CREDS) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), where his research focuses on learning design and online learning in higher education. His current work investigates the evolving role of learning designers and the future of digital education.
- **Jacqueline Trebilco** is Senior Manager of Education Development at Monash University, who is currently leading the operationalisation of a university-wide programmatic assessment and AI integration project. Jacqueline manages a central team of educational designers and has directed several strategic initiatives in areas of academic integrity, professional development for educators, asynchronous learning and assessment design.
- **Dr Scott Bradey** is Head of Education Design at James Cook University. He has been an academic

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

developer, learning designer and a senior educational technologist leading the strategic implementation of enterprise learning systems and digital learning innovation.

- **Lila Azouz** is a Senior Educational Designer and Manager of the Education Design Team at Monash Business School, Monash University. With over a decade of experience in higher education, government, and industry across Canada and Australia, she specialises in instructional design, adult learning, and educational technologies. At Monash, Lila provides strategic leadership in assessment reform, programmatic assessment, and AI literacy, guiding faculty-wide initiatives that enhance teaching quality and academic capacity.

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