2025 University of Worcester Learning and Teaching Conference:

Student Belonging at Worcester: Maximising Pastoral and Pedagogical Approaches for Building Success

17th (full day) and 18th June (afternoon only) 2025

University of Worcester, St John's Campus

The theme for the 2025 University of Worcester Learning and Teaching Conference is:

Developing a Sense of Belonging and Mattering within a Diverse Community: How Pastoral and Pedagogical Support can be used to Enhance the Student Experience and Success

This year's theme has been selected in response to growing sector interest in the significant role of student belonging and mattering in both retention and student success strategies, as well as providing a fundamental role in the delivery of Access and Participation Plan (APP) objectives. Student populations across Higher Education are rapidly becoming more diverse, not only culturally, but also through a combination of both purposeful and circumstantial factors that are influencing students' decisions on where to study. It is therefore important that the sector adapts alongside this, in order to continue to ensure that all students have the opportunity to connect, belong and thrive.

The **cost-of-living crisis** has meant that more and more students are having to take decisions that directly impact on their study, including more students opting to live at home, presenting new challenges to students such as **commuting distances and cost of travel**, that can impact on traditional timetabling methods and delivery of teaching sessions.

In addition, the **widening of access routes into higher education** and a rise in the development of more foundation courses have provided greater opportunities for students from **more diverse academic backgrounds to attend University**. However, supporting their success may require new ways of thinking and greater pedagogical creativity to facilitate an environment in which these students will thrive, including **more deliberate and targeted pre-entry support**, beginning much further upstream during transition to University.

We invite colleagues to consider how their teaching practices and the wider sector have responded to this changing environment and to share their research and insights into key interventions that have made a difference to the continuation and success of our students.

We would particularly welcome contributions that reflect the objectives set out in the [University of Worcester Access and Participation Plan.](#)

The conference

Day 1 of the conference will be explored through presentations and workshops and we welcome all staff to consider submitting an abstract to lead a presentation or workshop. This year we will also host a Teams site that will be able to display virtual posters and other supporting materials. We are also looking forward to confirming who this year's external keynote speakers will be, who will offer insights into how other Universities have tackled some of these shared challenges.

Day 2 will take place on the afternoon of Wednesday 18th June in the form of a 'world café' event, building on the learning from day 1 and developing this into evidence and outputs to be taken forward as part of the next Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) submission and delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP).

Abstract submission

We invite proposals showcasing practice or offering a critical insight into aspects of the priorities listed above from all staff and students at the University of Worcester, partner colleges and the wider academic community in one of the following formats:

- **Oral presentation** - Oral presentations should aim to give a summary of a piece of research or a project and should last up to 15 minutes. Time for questions/ discussion (5 minutes) will be provided at the end of each presentation.
- **Workshop** - If you are interested in hosting a 45-minute workshop, please outline its connection to the theme, what colleagues would get from participation and any specific room or equipment requirements.

Both presentations and workshops can include students, but please ensure that you have permission for their work to be used. We welcome submissions relating to research proposals, completed projects and discussion pieces for those that are 'work in progress'. Please ensure that your abstract makes this clear to the reviewing panel.
Please also indicate which stream your abstract best relates to from the list below:

- Harnessing Graduate Attributes: Embedding the University of Worcester attributes to empower success.
- 'I Matter': Developing and implementing initiatives for enhancing student retention.
- Accelerating Inclusion: Improving student outcomes for underrepresented or particular student groups.
- Sharing innovation and other good practice for supporting and empowering our learners.

Abstracts should be no more than **250 words (including references)** and will be reviewed by a staff review panel.

Criteria for acceptance

To be selected for the conference, the proposed contribution will need to:

- have clear relevance to the overall conference theme,
- be written with clarity so that the content and purpose is easily understood by the review panel and by conference delegates,
- have a clear rationale, with the research or evidence base provided,
- clearly describe the intended benefits and impact
- ensure accuracy of any citations.

This year, submissions will be assessed by a review panel using the following criteria:

- Relevance to the conference theme
- Clarity of purpose (e.g. research proposal, resource development, completed project)
- Provision of the research and/or evidence base
- The anticipated impact and reach of the proposed work

Abstracts can be submitted via the online form.

The closing date for submissions is 17:00 on Friday 7 March 2025. Submissions received after this date will not be accepted. Applicants will be notified of the outcome in April 2025.

For accepted presentations, copies of slides must be sent at least 7 days in advance of the conference to ltconference@worc.ac.uk.

Anyone presenting at the conference will be required to register their attendance. Registration instructions and other information will be available on the conference webpage. Please continue to check the webpage for updates.

For queries, please contact ltconference@worc.ac.uk.