

NEWSLTR

#AI SPECIAL

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Interview with Kelly Lea on the process of working collaboratively on AI student survey.

NILE AI TOOLS REVIEWED

AI Design Assistant in Blackboard Learn: Empowering Educators in Content Creation

WATERSIDE NORTHAMPTON WALL

Kardi Somerfield discusses how the new interactive wall came about and how it's been a learning experience

ULTRA AWARDS

Submissions now open

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Interview with Kelly Lea

NILE AI TOOLS

First look at new tools



I'm really pleased to support this termly Learning Technology newsletter which will keep you up to date with the latest work coming out of the team. We know how busy you all are and have been working hard on projects which will hopefully save you time in the long term. Please continue to work closely with your learning technologists and other members of the team to maximise your use of NILE, MyEngagement and content development tools which will enhance your delivery and work with students.

Rob Howe - Head of Learning Technology.



Padlet new features for 2024 include an exciting AI image generator:

1. Instant Polls: Know Your Class in a Snap
Now you can create quick multiple-choice polls within Padlet.
2. AI Image Magic: Art Without the Artistry
"I can't draw" mode lets you describe what you need, and AI makes it happen.
3. Scheduled Posts:
Perfect for weekly content or timed class responses.

PRONOUNS & PRONUNCIATIONS

He/She/They

Following a recent update, NILE users can now personalise their profile with pronouns and name pronunciations. This is a fantastic way to promote engagement with students in using the NILE Virtual Learning Environment.

When students feel seen and heard by their instructors and classmates, they are more likely to feel comfortable participating in class activities and discussions. This can lead to increased engagement and learning outcomes.

In addition, knowing how to pronounce each other's names and pronouns correctly can help to reduce misunderstandings and microaggressions. This can create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment for all students.

Finally, when instructors make an effort to get to know their students and respect their identity, it can help to build stronger relationships. This can lead to a more positive and productive learning experience for everyone.

Here are some specific examples of how instructors can use the

new pronoun and name pronunciation feature in NILE to promote engagement:

In the first week of class, instructors can ask students to share their pronouns and name pronunciations in their introductions. This can help to set the tone for an inclusive and respectful classroom environment. Instructors can use students' pronouns and name pronunciations in class discussions, assignments, and other communications. This shows students that their instructors are making an effort to get to know them and respect their identity.

Instructors can create opportunities for students to learn about different pronouns and name pronunciations. This can be done through class discussions, guest speakers, or online resources. Instructors can model inclusive behavior in their own commu-

Using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

nications. This includes using people-first language, avoiding gendered language, and being mindful of their own pronouns and name pronunciations. By taking these steps, instructors can use the new pronoun and name pronunciation feature in NILE to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. This can lead to increased engagement and learning outcomes for everyone.

<https://libguides.northampton.ac.uk/learntech/students/nile-help/personalise>



STUDENT AMBASSADOR DROP-INS

Recognising that not all students start with the same level of computer experience, LearnTech are offering personalised, one-to-one drop-in sessions with the new Student Digital Skills Ambassador, exclusively tailored to each student's needs.

Offering hands-on guidance on essential tasks such as University laptop usage, effective Internet browsing, file management, and email access, we aim to

ensure that every student can confidently embark on their digital learning journey.

This is exclusively designed for all on-campus UON students, enabling them to bridge the digital skills gap and navigate the digital landscape with confidence.

For details see

<https://libcal.northampton.ac.uk/appointments/learn-tech#s-lc-public-pt>

NEW NILE AI TOOLS REVIEWED

The LearnTech Team have recently been evaluating the new AI Design Assistant tools that are coming soon to Blackboard Ultra.

Course Structure Creation: The AI Design Assistant offers good suggestions for the construction of course structures, including learning module titles, descriptions, and thumbnails that align with the predefined course outcomes.

We found this feature particularly promising for generating fresh ideas when planning new courses. It's important to note that you remain in control, and the tool provides a valuable source of inspiration.

Image Recommendations:

The NILE AI assistant provides recommendations for royalty-free images to enhance course content, and it can even generate images based on the course details. While not infallible, it often generates intriguing ideas that can be of value.

Rubric Generation:

The AI Design Assistant can craft rubrics for assignments, which can be customised based on the instructor's input, including descriptions and rubric type (such as percentage or points). We've discovered that by adding criteria in the rubric description section, we can create good-quality rubrics that reflect learning outcomes



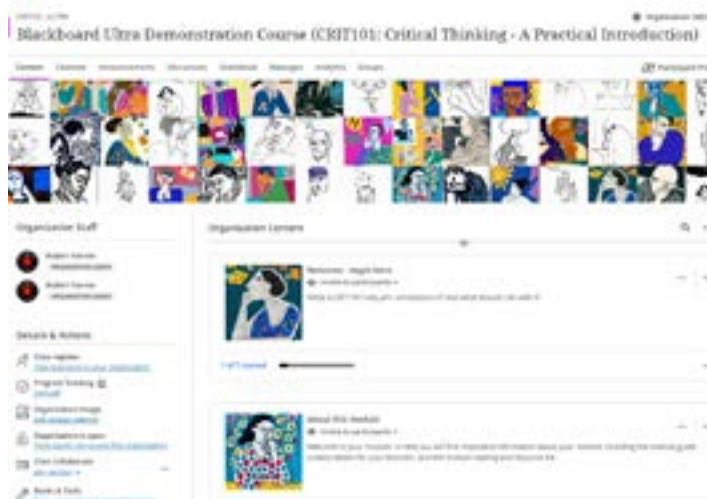
and provide clear guidelines. These could be very time-saving but we expect staff will want to manually add content to these.

Quiz and Test Question Bank Creation: Instructors have the capability to generate question banks for quizzes and individual test questions. The AI Design Assistant offers various question types, with the flexibility to adjust question complexity and quantity. This feature proved to be highly practical, making it easy to

select the most relevant and high-quality questions.

In summary, the new AI features offer practical tools that support teaching and learning using NILE, but continue to place the tutor firmly in control of the content creation process. It's important to note that whilst these tools provide useful assistance, they don't include a AI ChatBot assistant for generating text, presentations, or activities, but where they do provide content they do this effectively.

THUMBNAIL IMAGES IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT



NILE users surveyed have said that images added to content areas (learning modules) have improved their experience of NILE.

The comments showed that images helped them to navigate sites, to feel less overwhelmed by content, and increased their confidence to explore different sections.

The ability to add images to learning modules was introduced in the summer 2023 update.

A good example of this in use can be found in Rob Farmer's (Blackboard award winning) CRIT101 organisation, which is available to all staff

To find out how you can now add images to each of your Learning Modules see this help article for instructions

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Ultra/Course_Content/Create_Content/Create_Containers_for_Content/Create_Learning_Modules

A young woman with long dark hair is wearing a large headset with a VR visor. She is looking down at an open book on a desk. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and overhead lights.

HOW ARE STUDENTS USING AI?

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIST
KELLY LEA REFLECTS ON LISTENING
TO THE STUDENT VOICE

Like many adopters and enthusiasts of Generative Artificial Intelligence, my interest stemmed from the furor surrounding the launch of a ChatGPT almost a year ago. As a learning technologist at the University of Northampton and being new to this role with my background in primary education, any new tools for learning pique my interest, and this 'new tool' certainly grabbed my full attention.

It has been exciting to be part of a higher education institution during the past year, where conversations around AI and its potential within education have proven to be multifaceted and often dichotomous. A proactive approach was taken at the University of Northampton. Within the Centre for Active Digital Education (CADE), an AI Special Interest Group was established in 2022 which allowed staff to engage in discussions and debates about generative AI, fostering digital literacy and exploring various aspects, from ethical use to data security.

In December 2022, as part of the Learning Technology Team at UON, my colleagues and I began documenting the use of generative AI technologies. We interviewed early adopters who incorporated GenAI into their teaching and everyday lives and started to create case studies of some of these examples on our Learning Technology blog. Along with the media's focus on the use of AI in education for cheating, and research pertaining to the potential benefits and limitations of AI, we began to wonder where the voice of the student was. How did they feel about this seemingly disruptive technology? Were they harnessing the power of AI for good or bad? Were they harnessing the power of the AI at all?

As a newcomer to academia, it was interesting to begin a research project to understand the ethics of creating a survey and carefully consider the questions that we might ask in terms of the analysis that we might then do. We decided upon a student survey that, apart from a few demographic questions, would begin with a branching question that simply asked the students if they had used any AI tools within their studies. This allowed us to ask more targeted questions depending on how the respondents answered,

including questions on barriers to use, the perceived usefulness of AI tools, and students' thoughts on staff use.

From the one hundred and twenty nine responses across all faculties, it was easy to ascertain without any real analysis that the perceptions of our students were dichotomous and often polarised. A more thorough analysis revealed that the number of students who had adopted AI tools in their studies was in the minority, which was quite surprising! What was perhaps even more surprising was how ethically aware many of our non-adopters were, citing concerns of cheating as the main reason they were not using AI tools. Other popular factors were that students did not feel the need to use AI tools in their studies and that they did not have the skills to use them.

Students were also asked for their opinions regarding the usefulness of tools, availability of AI tools, equity in tool provision, impact of AI on future opportunities, and their awareness of university guidelines regarding the use of AI. The most interesting finding to come out of the responses to these questions was how powerful the impact of prior engagement with these tools was on the user's attitude towards them. If already using AI, students perceived them positively, found it useful in a variety of ways, were less anxious about needing restrictions, and were less concerned about their impact on their future selves. Conversely, students who had not yet adopted AI use expressed strong opinions about the need to restrict access and the unfairness of their use, and were more anxious about the impact on their future opportunities.

The qualitative findings offer a deeper look into the benefits and challenges of using generative AI in higher education. While these tools provided assistance in idea generation, information synthesis, and text summarisation, ethical and academic integrity concerns loomed.

Content generated by generative AI could lack personal perspectives and sometimes contain inappropriate references. Students also noted concerns regarding bias, accuracy, and the possibility of the use of AI diminishing their degree.



Kelly Lea, Learning Technologist

The use of AI in assessment and feedback raised scepticism among students, who doubted its ability to provide personalised and nuanced feedback which they placed a lot of value on. On the other hand, some students saw the benefits of potentially quicker and more consistent feedback and highlighted how this efficiency could lead to an improved student experience. Regarding AI-generated teaching content, opinions were again varied. Some students were enthusiastic about the potential for more engaging and innovative content, while others worried about its lack of personality and specificity, as well as its impact on the role of human educators.

This survey provided us with a much-needed narrative of the student in what has become quite a noisy landscape of voices. It helped us to further understand this complex landscape of generative AI in education and, in particular, to better understand and support our students by being in a position to address concerns, mitigate issues, and develop more transparent guidance that is fit for purpose.

This process has taught me many things, but most importantly, it has taught me how valuable research is in gathering the perceptions of all the stakeholders. In a world where the influence of AI is rapidly growing, understanding student perceptions of it is not just an academic exercise. It is a critical step in shaping the future of education and ensuring that AI technologies align with students' educational needs and expectations.

The full report is available on the LTE site: <https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/lte/use-of-ai-in-academic-work/>



ULTRA COURSE AWARDS 23/24

The NILE Ultra Course Awards recognise and celebrate the excellent work that is being done by academic staff to create engaging and effective learning experiences in NILE Ultra. Nominations are open to all academic staff who have taught a NILE Ultra course in the 2022/23 or 2023/2024 academic year.

Effective use of NILE Ultra features: The course should make effective use of the NILE Ultra features to create a engaging and interactive learning experience for students.

High-quality content: The course should be well-organised and contain high-quality content that is relevant to the learning objectives.

Clear and concise instructions: The course should provide clear and concise instructions for all activities and assignments.

Do you have a story we could feature in our news letter?

Contact:
Richard.Byles@northampton.ac.uk

INTERACTIVE WATERSIDE WALL BY KARDI SOMERFIELD



In the heart of the Waterside Campus, a new art installation by Senior Digital Media Lecturer and creative artist Kardi Somerfield is rewriting the rules of engagement, merging art and education to create a unique learning experience and visual identity for the newly refurbished Waterside bar.

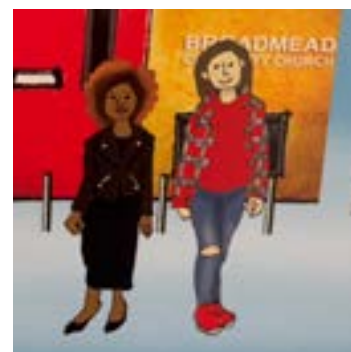
Kardi's work stands as an extraordinary tribute to Northampton, stretching three metres in height and an impressive nine metres in length. It encapsulates the very essence of Northampton. Boasting over 200 distinct locations and nearly 300 characters, this monumental piece symbolises the heart and soul of the town. The installation, at its core, epitomises inclusivity in our local community.

Creating a work of these dimensions came with its own set of

challenges. Transitioning from drawing on a digital screen to delivering a huge-format vinyl involved creating a vast Photoshop file with over 1000 layered elements including buildings, characters, transport and wild-life.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Kardi's creation is its interactive dimension. By integrating QR codes, she created a digital-physical bridge, allowing visitors to interact with the artwork in unique ways. This innovative artwork blends digital and analogue technologies and transcends the visual spectacle to become a powerful pedagogical tool, particularly for storytelling within the realm of education.

The interactive wall is located on the ground floor of the Learning Hub at Waterside Campus.



[View our full video case study on the LearnTech blog.](#)