



Coimbra Group High-Level Seminar on Education Policy “From Learning Spaces to Learning Environments”

Uppsala University, 9-10 November 2022

The Policy Seminar is geared towards Rectors and Vice-Rectors for Education of Coimbra Group Universities and offers **an opportunity to engage in strategic-perspective conversations on the evolving relationship between learning environments and education policy**. Ten months after its adoption by the European Commission, the [new European Strategy for Universities](#) will provide a baseline for discussion, with the objective to provide some recommendations for its translation into tangible outcomes for our institutions.

These conversations will be facilitated through:

- **introduction to examples of innovative teaching and learning activities**, taking place in physical and virtual learning spaces from different universities within the Coimbra Group,
- **interaction with both teachers and students** on their respective experiences,
- **insights from current research** on the significance of new learning spaces,
- **exchange, with peers and experts**, on aspects of critical importance for the successful development of academic learning environments, that promote student learning and critical thinking.

Worldwide, universities have invested considerable resources in the construction of new, physical learning spaces, often equipped with different digital technologies. During the Covid-19 crisis, the use of online, virtual learning spaces also expanded quickly. For future development, we need to look beyond the walls of the physical learning spaces and towards their integration into the wider learning environments of our students. Without that broader view, we run the risk of developing very expensive rooms, with only limited impact on the curriculum and on student learning.

Coimbra Group institutions are no exception in the area of vividly developing virtual and digital technologies, and by 2022, it seems timely to take stock of experiences and results from our universities' innovative learning spaces, as well as current research. Within the CG Education Innovation Working Group, a number of examples of innovative learning spaces from the CG universities have already been collected. Several of the working group's members have been involved in creating and running these facilities and are well equipped to present a broad spectrum of various learning spaces. Locally, there are several new learning spaces at Uppsala University, both brand new and simpler, rebuilt rooms, which will be visited during the seminar, and both faculty and students will contribute to our discussions.

The seminar will address questions such as (non-exhaustive):

- How can universities ensure the broader adoption and more integrated use of often costly, innovative spaces for teaching and learning, in order to benefit a high number of students and contribute to the positive return on educational investment?
- How can we ensure that the many lessons learnt during the Covid-19 crisis¹ can be turned into fruitful, pedagogical development, creating learning environments which make the best possible use of both online and campus-based activities?
- How can our universities, at all levels, share experiences, best practices, and strategies for the development of creative, sustainable and inclusive learning environments - whether they are physical or virtual, and whether they concern courses or the entire campus? How can we best learn from each other?

¹ Cf. [Universities' response to the Covid-19 crisis: What have we learnt so far? Key messages and recommendations from Coimbra Group Universities](#), December 2021



Coimbra Group High-Level Seminar on Education Policy Programme

The seminar is structured into **three sessions**, moving from research and empirical observation towards the strategic leadership level.

The first session, on Wednesday afternoon, 9 November, provides participants with overviews of current research, including concrete examples of innovative teaching and learning practices carried out in physical and virtual learning spaces. Lessons from the Covid-19 crisis and the challenges of hybrid teaching will be addressed, and a wide variety of approaches to the innovative use of learning spaces within the Coimbra Group network will be shared.

The second session, on Thursday morning, 10 November, builds on what has been said and discussed previously. It takes the form of a workshop, allowing participants to delve deeper into several opportunities and challenges that should be considered when developing new learning spaces. What conditions must be met to create appropriate learning spaces for our educational goals and learning environments that foster critical thinking and creativity? Participants will discuss with their peers about diversity, sustainability, professional development, international collaboration, and other topics, many of which were recently highlighted in the European Commission's European Strategy for Universities.

The third session, on Thursday afternoon, 10 November, will move on to focus on the strategic leadership level: how can the insights provided by the first two sessions contribute to the formation and implementation of effective, university-wide strategies which draw on diversity and digital resources, as well as on research and traditional, academic values, as building blocks for 21st-century learning environments?

For each of the three keynotes, there will be a first respondent.

Abstracts for the keynotes and speaker bios can be found at the end of the document.



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Wednesday, 9 November

Please notice: On Wednesday morning, the Executive Board and the Education Innovation Working Group will hold separate meetings, followed by lunch.

12:00-13:00	Registration	Lunch provided (optional)	<u>Campus Blåsenhus</u> , Entrance Hall
13:00-13:40	Welcoming remarks	Coco Norén, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University Ludovic Thilly, Chair, Coimbra Group Executive Board Anna Ekström, Swedish Minister for Higher Education (TBC) European Commission Representative (TBC)	Experimental Classroom, Blåsenhus
13:40-15:00	Keynotes 1 & 2	Marie Leijon, Malmö University: <i>Hybrid learning spaces – a hype or a hope?</i> Sandra Kučina Softić, University of Zagreb: <i>Rethinking Learning Spaces for 21st century Student</i>	
15:00-15:20	<i>Coffee</i>		
15:20-16:20	Walkabout session: Learning spaces of the Coimbra Group	Parallel presentations by members of the Education Innovation Working Group	
16:20-16:30	<i>Short break</i>		
16:30-17:30	Teaching and Learning in an Experimental Classroom	Students from Uppsala University, and their teacher, Linn Areskoug (Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor at the Department of Education)	
19:00-22:00	<i>Dinner (with lots of traditional, Uppsala lore!) at <u>Värmlands</u>, one of the <u>Student Nations</u> Address: <u>Inqmar Bergmansgatan 2</u></i>		



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Thursday, 10 November

9:00-10:50	Workshops: <i>From Learning Spaces to Learning Environments</i>	An Active Learning Classroom will be used for two rounds of parallel group discussions (with coffee break between them) on themes, central to the development of learning environments. During the first round, chaired by EDU WG members, each group will explore one theme. During the second round, participants will discuss with peers how these themes, and other perspectives, can be brought to bear on current policy work, related, e.g., to the <i>European Strategy for Universities</i> , to University alliances etc.	<u>Ångström Lab</u> Room 90103 Bus will pick up participants in the morning, either at <u>Hotel Radisson Blu</u> (dep. 8.15), or at the University Main Building (dep. 8.40), where luggage can be left for the afternoon
10:50	Walk through Ångström Lab, ending with brief stop in new building	Johan Tysk, Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology, Uppsala University Presentation of the newly built extension to the <u>Ångström Lab</u>	Bus transport to Uppsala castle 11:15
11:30-12:15	Uppsala – views from the Castle	A guided introduction to the history and sights of Uppsala	
12:15-13:15	<i>Lunch, Vasasalen, Uppsala Castle</i>		
13:10	Walk to University Main Building (or bus, in case of bad weather)		
13:30-14:00	Keynote 3	Brent Carnell, University College London: <i>Connected University Strategy: Learning Environments and Education Policy Working Together</i>	<u>The University Main Building</u> , Lecture Hall IV
14:00-14:45	Round Table	Panel discussion on aspects of the development of new learning environments, focusing on policy and strategy questions	
14:45-15:00	<i>Short Break with refreshments</i>		



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15:00-15:15	Taking it forward after the seminar	Nicoleta Popa, Chair, Education Innovation WG Presentation of a proposed Learning Environments Network	
15:15-15:45	Concluding remarks	Ludovic Thilly, Chair, Coimbra Group Executive Board Coco Norén, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University Key take-aways Looking ahead – Action Plan Farewells	
15:45	<i>Farewell Coffee (for those who may have to leave early, coffee to-go is offered)</i>		

Speakers and abstracts

Marie Leijon: *Hybrid learning spaces – a hype or a hope?*

Hybrid learning spaces has been suggested to be both a present solution and the future for teaching and learning in HE. Hybrid options supports widening participation in HE, serves as a solution in times of crises and provides students with a high degree of flexibility in that they could choose time and place for their studies. There is an optimistic discourse around hybrid – at the same time, critical voices states that hybrid teaching is very complex and challenging. Research tells us that teachers need much support to develop a communicative competence to teach in hybrid spaces. So, is hybrid a hype or a hope? This talk uncovers some of the challenges and opportunities associated with hybrid learning space design in HE.

Bio

Dr Marie Leijon is an Associate Professor in Educational Science and a Senior lecturer in Educational development at the Center for Academic Development, Malmö University, Sweden. Her research focus is Learning spaces in HE, university teacher profession and forms of knowledge. She is currently involved in a

four-year long research project funded by the Swedish Research Council on *University teachers' profession in post-pandemic hybrid higher education teaching and learning environment* with the aim to investigate what the rapid transformation into digitalized higher education means for university teachers' sense of professional identity and professional practice. Marie has published several research articles on how learning spaces relates to interaction and learning in HE. She has also suggested a theoretical framework on how to support teachers didactical spatial competence (DisCo).

[Home page](#)

Sandra Kučina Softić: *Rethinking Learning Spaces for 21st century Students*

Space, either physical or virtual has a significant impact on learning. It can encourage collaboration, communication, discussion and exploration or be a place of silence, isolation and disconnectedness. Traditional learning is often connected to a number of assumptions like learning happens only in the classroom, happens only at a fixed time, or learning is an individual activity. Nevertheless, the traditional way of learning in a classroom is something that has been done for centuries and is still quite dominant today; familiar to teachers, students, parents, and the community.

Opposite to a traditional physical space where everyone knows what will happen and it feels safe, in new and digital spaces it is like chaos, where teachers and students are finding new ways to communicate, collaborate and participate. In order to prepare students for the complexity of their future life and work environment, the 21st century classroom should transform from traditional teacher-centered lecturing into more student-centred learning.

In order to promote such transformation, a meaningful strategy is reconceiving the physical environment where learning takes place. The pandemic of COVID -19 made the education system move online, something that some teachers never envisaged. Yet, online learning successfully facilitated access to higher education for those affected by campus closures and it highlighted the potential of new digital models of learning. Thus, online delivery is now an established feature of the learning landscape. Still, the benefits of new flexible



models of education do not disappear on the tide, nor do they magically transform more traditional or impoverished forms of pedagogy. But how can we change the learning environment to adapt it to the most recent methodologies for teaching and learning and for diverse users? This is the focus of the presentation.

Bio

Dr. Sandra Kucina Softic, Board member of EDEN Digital Learning Europe, Assistant Director at the University of Zagreb University Computing Centre (Croatia) and Head of the E-learning Centre. She has 25 years of experience working in higher education. Her work is focused on monitoring and fostering e-learning in Croatian higher education and providing support and advice to institutions, teachers and students in the implementation of new technologies in learning and teaching. She was appointed Croatian representative in ET2020 Working group on Digital Skills and Technologies (2016-2018) and in ET2020 Working group on Digital Education: learning, teaching and Assessment (2018-2020). In 2018, she was appointed a member of the European Education and Training Expert Panel. Her field of interest is open online and distance education, application of educational technologies teaching and learning process and digital competences of teachers. She is active on national and international levels in projects; author of more than 30 papers; author of training courses for teachers, and keynote speaker at conferences. In 2021, she authored the book on digital transformation in higher education published in Croatian.

She has a MSc. in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom) and a Ph.D. in Information and Communication Technologies at the University of Zagreb (Croatia). In 2022 she was elected as Assistant Professor. She has been a member of the EDEN UK Executive Committee since 2013; in 2014 she received the EDEN Fellow Title, and in 2022 she was awarded the title of the EDEN Senior Fellow. From 2019-2022 she was president of EDEN UK and is a founding member of EDEN Digital Learning Europe.

[LinkedIn profile](#)



Brent Carnell: *Connected University Strategy: Learning Environments and Education Policy Working Together*

Many universities are negotiating an ageing estate portfolio, increases in capital expenses and energy costs, alongside education quality assurance and enhancement pressures, among other driving forces for change. Despite this tension, university strategies do not always connect learning environment policy with high-level education policy. Indeed, often education development and estates teams work to separate agendas. This talk will argue for equal collaboration and investment (in time, energy, resources, and strategy). Using University College London (a large research-intensive university in London, UK) as a case study and a small research project, this talk makes a series of propositions for university leadership to develop connected university strategy in the post-pandemic era.

Bio

Dr Brent Carnell is an Associate Professor and Director of Education in The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Previously he was Associate Director of UCL Arena, UCL's Education Development Department. Brent has spent a number of years enabling UCL's research-based education strategy, the UCL Connected Curriculum. He has a PhD in architectural history from The Bartlett School of Architecture and has published in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, including on learning spaces and research-based education.

[Home page](#)