

## CIE Launch

### Podcast Transcript

**Chris Loxham [CL]: Hello and welcome to the CIE podcast. Today, as we're introducing a new series that will focus on all things innovative in education, we thought it'd be a good idea to provide an overview of our new department. I have two guests with me today, they are...**

Simon Thomson [ST]: I'm Simon Thomson, the Director of the Centre for Innovation in Education. We're actually situated as a service in the Student Experience and Enhancement Directorate, so our focus is supporting staff to provide a high-quality teaching experience for our students.

Ceri Coulby [CC]: I'm Ceri Coulby and I'm a Senior Educational Developer in CIE and I'm the faculty representative for Health and Life Sciences.

**Welcome everybody. I suppose the obvious place is to start with the acronym CIE, which is what many colleagues will know us as. So what does it mean?**

ST: I suppose we should say the official name CIE stands for Centre for Innovation in Education, but our local understanding of CIE is it stands for Cake Is Essential.

CC: That's right!

ST: Yes, so if you ever pop in...

CC: Please bring cake.

ST: Yes. We'll make tea but you have to bring cake.

CC: That's right!

**So Centre for Innovation in Education is still quite a mouthful, so what does that actually mean?**

ST: If you want the official line, it's that CIE is supporting innovation in learning, teaching and assessment through enhanced curriculum development

**And unofficially?**

ST: Unofficially we're just a really nice group of people that want to help academics produce the best learning experiences for our students. That's basically it. We like that process of helping others to get the very best out of their curriculum, their design.

CC: And we like getting out and about and seeing other people and areas of good practice.

ST: We don't like sitting in our own offices, so basically we designed jobs where we have to be out and about - across campus as much as possible, so please get in touch with us because we're dying to get out of 126 Mount Pleasant as often as we can.

CC: Absolutely

**It's interesting because innovation is one of those buzz words you hear thrown around quite a lot, so what does that word actually mean to you?**

ST: Well for me innovation is just a small change in local practice. It doesn't mean you're kind of thinking outside the box all the time. It's not these kind of amazing massive changes. Innovation can be very granular. So you might see, for example, a really nice piece of pedagogic practice in another

discipline and apply it to your own discipline - and that's the first time that's ever been done. That is innovative.

So innovation for me doesn't-, everyone kind of thinks innovation is about these really big changes, but actually all of us are innovating almost every day when we change something that we're doing that's been informed by something else. So that's how I see it.

CC: And I guess I just see it as trying new things. People being brave enough to try something out that they haven't tried before and feeling that they can do that. That there's a culture where they can try something else without it being the end of the world if it doesn't go 100% the first time. You know we don't learn anything if we don't ever try anything new.

ST: Like a good student, I'll go straight to Wikipedia. They say, *"Innovation can be simply defined as a new idea, creative thought... new imaginations in the form of device or method."*

So it doesn't have to be these really big things. It can just be a little change to your practice. It could be a change to the way you assess students. It could be a way you change to deliver content or provide feedback. There's lots of ways you can innovate

CC: And of course students can be our best innovators because by listening to them and their ideas, they can often lead us into areas where we would never have considered going in the first place.

**That's good, so just helping people understand the department properly - how can they expect to interact with you? What does CIE do on a day to day basis?**

CC: Well I don't know what Simon does on day-to-day basis, but the rest of us are here to work with the faculties. The other senior developers and

myself, we all have responsibility for one of the faculties here at the University. So our job is to work with programme teams from those areas, to help them plan new programme provision but also to help them review their existing provision through the internal periodic review process. And help out with, if people are doing curricular review for another reason.

And basically what we do is we go out and we talk to people about what they're currently doing. We help them identify the good practice they already have and then we help them, as critical friends, to look at the areas where they could enhance their provision even further.

I think what's great about the department is because we cover a lot of different areas, we come together, we speak to each other, and we pick up practice from other areas. And we sort of become the people that can help spread practice from one faculty to another. Because this idea of professional identity and the silos that people tend to keep their teaching practices in, can often be quite fake actually. So an idea that's working really well in Communication and Media, for example, could work just as well in Medicine or Veterinary Sciences or Biosciences, but they don't know about it and they don't know about each other. So in some ways we act as connectors, as well as those curriculum developers.

And we've got a team of learning educational developers, as well, that work within that structure. And they're the wonderful people behind the scenes that develop all the resources and the workshops. And generally mean that Simon I can swan about enjoying ourselves really.

ST: A little bit! It's not entirely true because the educational developers do run workshops as well. We do let them out.

CC: Oh yes, occasionally.

ST: But the way that we kind of talk about it internally is that we have three main approaches. One is that our work is informational. So the work that we do should provide information to others to help them carry out their roles. Two, is that we are developmental. So we're developing curriculum, developing people, developing experiences. And the other one is influential. So we're also kind of horizon scanning and trying to use grassroots innovation to influence changes more broadly in the institution.

And Ceri touched on a term now that we use quite a lot which is critical friend. Because we want to be able to build up really trusting relationships with programme leads, module leads, academic staff, but we want to be able to ask difficult questions in a kind of safe, trusted environment to help move on practice and change practice where it's needed. But also, we want to be able to draw out good practices going on.

The model we have is really kind of a partnership one. Where-, we can't actually directly change curriculum or we can't actually directly affect change in the student experience. We can only do that by partnering with others. So we very much need a collegiate relationship to work. So that's what we're trying to do over the course of the coming weeks and months. To build those relationships. And sometimes that's through a formal process like IPR or a validation or supporting a formal curriculum design process. Sometimes that would be more ad hoc. So somebody just coming to us for an idea. But either way it's about forming those relationships early on.

Above all, I was thinking this the other day, our strapline could be 'The really helpful service.' That's what we really want to be isn't it?

CC: Absolutely.

ST: We want to be the service that people go to; “That was helpful!” You know, so I think we should have that strapline in our office.

CC: Yes, I like that.

ST: A strapline that says ‘the really helpful service’, so we're always thinking: “Am I being helpful here?” Because you know, many of the educational developers and senior developers here, myself included, have been academics in other lives, and the challenge of being an academic is that there's a lot of call on your time for doing different activities within the university. I suppose what we are saying is we want to help with that process around the curriculum. So when you're looking at curriculum work, we can actually feel as if we can lighten the load a bit. We can get you to where you want to be quicker and we can do it more efficiently, drawing from the breadth and depth of our experience and expertise. But yes, above all I think we want to be helpful. The really helpful service. That's it. I'm going to write that down.

**You mentioned curriculum review which is where many stuff will come across you. I know a large part of that is Curriculum 2021, which they might have seen. Now this is quite a hefty topic, I know, but what would you say is a short overview of Curriculum 2021?**

ST: So from quite a strategic point, obviously the education strategy clearly sets out the ambitions of the University of Liverpool in a strategic way - in terms of the way that we want to present a curricular experience to our students.

For me, Curriculum 2021 is how we kind of say, “This is the uniqueness of our curriculum design at Liverpool, regardless of which discipline you’re in.” And what we want to do is say a University of Liverpool curriculum will

have been informed by these three hallmarks within the curriculum, which is *Research-connected Teaching, Active Learning and Authentic Assessment*. And we'll also have developed students around three attributes, the first one being *Confidence*, the second will be in *Digital Fluency* and the third one being *Global Citizenship*. And what we need to do is we need to promote that internally and externally, because if you look at the sector, there's so much diversity in the sector but also there's so much duplication.

So if you think how many universities in the UK must be delivering English degrees, for example. How do we ensure that an English degree at the University of Liverpool is distinctive? Especially when the design of that degree will be informed by very similar QAA benchmarks, for example. So Curriculum 2021 is one way that we can add a unique flavour to that curriculum. There's lots of other ways you know, staff individuality, staff research, expertise, local context and everything, but Curriculum 2021 is a way of making sure that the flavour of the curriculum or the lens through which we look at our curriculum is done through these hallmarks, across the whole of the institution.

CC: And I think what's really interesting about the hallmarks and attributes is that if you consider the hallmarks-, you know *Research-connected Teaching, Active Learning, Authentic Assessment* - for me, if we design curricula around those core curriculum principles then that already sets us on a really great path to helping students achieve those three graduate attributes. Because in engaging with research-connected teaching, for example, we help students to develop confidence through developing transferable skills around using evidence, conducting research, conducting evaluations, problem-solving when their projects don't go

right - which is usually what happens! It gives you a huge amount of transferable skills outside of research-connected teaching that employers are looking for. So that one element, that one hallmark – research-connected teaching for example, informs how the students achieve those attributes throughout their journey with us at Liverpool.

**So what's the best way for staff to learn about these and how to incorporate attributes and hallmarks into their modules?**

ST: Well some of that will be through a formal process. So if they've got a program that's coming up for an IPR schedule for example, we know there'll be a touch point. I just think if-, if I was a module lead, which I have been many moons ago, if I think: is this an opportunity for me to look at my module through different-, a different lens? So just everybody that's involved in teaching and learning could look at what they're doing and say, "Yes, I wonder the extent to which this module is research-connected? I wonder the extent to which this module develop students' digital fluency?"

We could all ask ourselves those questions at a very kind of granular level activity or modular level, so anybody could start that now. And then they could say, "Well I really want to develop this module built around more of an active learning approach, how do I go about that?" Well contact CIE and we'd be more than happy to do that.

CC: And from another practical point of view, we have a very good website which is full of resources to support Curriculum 2021. So if people are looking for an introduction to the hallmarks and attributes and want to know what they are, the first port of call is our website. There are introductory videos on there regarding all of the hallmarks and attributes. And there's also a booklet that you can download and read at your leisure.



So there's a breadth and depth by which you can engage with Curriculum 2021.

You can get a brief overview from those basic resources, but then if you're wanting to learn more and think, 'Well okay that sounds great, but I'm not sure how I do it in my discipline?' We also have a really great series of case studies on the webpage as well, which have been taken from good practice across campus already. From each of the faculties and our professional services colleagues as well, which show some really wonderful innovative examples of implementing these hallmarks and attributes in day-to-day practice, modular design activities and sometimes extracurricular activities as well.

What we often find is, when you start achieving one hallmark or attribute you tend to hit others at the same time. So one activity which could have started out being designed around *Authentic Assessment*, will then suddenly hit *Active Learning*, *Digital Fluency*, *Global Citizenship* as well. So there's some really lovely concrete examples there of how people can go about trying that out in their own practice. And a lot of our case study authors have left their contact details on there as well, so you can talk to them directly too.

### **So what can people expect in the future from CIE?**

ST: One of the things we will be doing is raising the profile of Curriculum 2021 across the University and through multiple channels. So you'll probably see us turning up at committee meetings for example, waving our Curriculum 2021 banners or whatever we've got -, we've got flags.

CC: We have got pull up stands, no flags yet!

ST: We have got pull ups yes, we'll get some flags. But anyway, you will see us around about. So we've just run a three-day symposium entirely focused around Curriculum 2021. During those three days, we developed a pick-and-mix set of workshops around the hallmarks and attributes. The feedback from that's been really positive so we'd like to do more of that and we'd like to do some more of that locally, you know at a faculty or school level. So we're really looking for invites now to come and take the workshops that we've developed at the Curriculum 2021 Symposium and take some of that activity and move it locally. Because we recognize that if we-, you know, if we book three days for a symposium, we know that everybody in the University can't come to that. So we'd like some invites, knowing that, locally, people know when they're likely to be available and we can come and run some of these there.

But I thought it was great overall. You know, it was a good three days and lots of opportunities for people to share experiences. And also, I think for me, it was very useful for people to observe that Curriculum 2021 is not out of their reach, because they're already doing some stuff that aligns to the hallmarks and attributes. And it's just a matter of them going, "Actually yes, I'm doing that - that is actually developing students' confidence."

CC: Absolutely, I think that's a really important point to make actually, because whenever something like this comes along people's instant reaction is, "Oh my goodness, it's going to be so much extra work, you know, how will I be able to do that?" And I think by helping people to see by working with them, that they are already doing these things. And that it is just a case of thinking about their current provision in a slightly different way and then maybe considering how it could be enhanced. And that makes it a lot less scary. In fact one of the bits of feedback that we got after

the symposium event was, “This is great because it's made Curriculum 2021 less scary” Which I think is great news for us.

And I think perhaps the highlight of the Curriculum 2021 Symposium for me, because obviously we ran workshops around each of the hallmarks and attributes, but on the first day in the afternoon we ran a showcase event with all our case study authors. So they brought the resources that they developed or they brought students with them to talk about what they've been doing. Special Collections brought objects for object based learning. We had a huge range of people there and what was wonderful about that was not just seeing the people who had come to see that showcase walking around and talking, engaging so well with everybody there, but also watching the people within that showcase talking to each other and creating new connections. New potential avenues for collaborative projects.

Somebody came up to me at the end and said: “All this is great, I've met this colleague and we're going to do some work together” And that's music to a developer's ears isn't it, when you make a connection like that. So I think that was the highlight for me of that event and it just showed how much good practice is already within Liverpool and how we should be celebrating that.

### **Yes, so in what ways can staff get involved or engage further?**

CC: Okay, so other than coming to see us and engaging with our resources, and us coming out to see you as programme teams, we also are launching a series of networks around each of the hallmarks and attributes. So we're looking to develop communities of practice here at the University around each of those aspects. They got launched at the Curriculum 2021 Symposium.

ST: Well initially they'll end up being mailing lists, but please don't-, we don't want that to put people off. We know email is a kind of an overused communication tool. But we are also exploring how we will eventually turn those into online communities. So we just really want to get-, I suppose a coherent, cohesive number of people together to start a network around each of the hallmarks and attributes. We're not expecting everyone to join every single hallmark or attribute.

What we really probably expect is for a person to join one or two, that interest them the most, or that they have the most experience in. Or it might be the one they need the most support in. But just to make a decision about which one or two of those they want to join. So if they want to join those networks just get in touch with us we'll put you on the mailing list for now, with a promise that in the future it will be less dry than a mailing list and something a bit more exciting perhaps.

CC: I do know that there is activities planned for those networks. So I know that-, because it can be difficult with just a mailing list to have a purpose for these things. So I know that they are looking to host events one or two times a year that showcase good practice from around the University, and the things that people have been talking about on that mailing list.

So it'll be a good opportunity for people to get their work out if they're doing innovative things and talk with other like-minded people who may be interested in trying the same ideas or different ideas or working together to try something new.

ST: Yes. Great.

**Great, anything else before we go?**

ST: I suppose before we say goodbye, we ought to just put a request out. What we'd really like to do is increase the number of case studies that we have around the hallmarks and attributes. So if there's some great work that you're doing in the curriculum, or the students think you're doing a fantastic job around supporting their learning around the hallmarks or the attributes, get in touch. We'd love to build a case study from that and to hopefully give you a bit of recognition through that, raise your profile a little bit, but also it's great for us to be able to share the practice that's going on in the University. So if you have any case studies that you think you'd like to contribute one to the hallmarks or attributes, please get in touch with us.

**Yes. You can get in touch with any of our staff members. Our details are on the webpages or just email [cie@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:cie@liverpool.ac.uk).**

**A big thank you to our guests and thank you for listening. I hope you're a little more aware of what CIE is and does and we hope to see you next time**