

*Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*

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‘Lessons from digital spaces: opportunities and challenges for widening participation through online learning’

A special issue of the *Journal of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*

Call for Papers



# Background

The global pandemic wrought turmoil across many sectors, with specific challenges impacting students and educators. The necessity to continue learning drove many universities to rapidly move all classes to digital and online fora. In this challenging context, new opportunities arose through extended investment of time and resources designed to foster online engagement and enhance online learning. However, this shift further exposed issues of inequality around technological access, drawing sharp focus toward issues of participation and pedagogy, including digital literacy, digital inclusion and digital poverty. It is timely to reflect upon the opportunities and challenges presented in order to support quality online learning for students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds.

# Purpose

This special edition invites academics and practitioners involved in designing, delivering and supporting online learning to share insights from research and praxis. We particularly encourage student-focused papers, rather than those focused on technological implementation. Through a focus on the learner experience, this special edition hopes to identify ways to manage challenges and better support access, engagement, and inclusion in digital spaces. Our goal is to further quality online learning with a focus on students from WP backgrounds, and broader benefits for inclusive practice for all.

## **Themes include:**

- Inclusive online and blended learning
- Widening participation through student access and engagement in online spaces
- Exploring new modes, including synchronous and hybrid online teaching
- Creating a sense of identity and belonging for all within digital learning communities
- Critical application of pedagogy through digital spaces and learning technologies
- Creative pedagogies and new assessment models in online spaces
- Insights around digital poverty and strategies for digital equity
- Lifelong learning through empowering digital literacy

Submissions to the journal are welcomed from academics, practitioners and professionals in the fields of education, sociology, community development, social policy and related disciplines. If you have any journal related queries please contact us at [WPLL-journal@open.ac.uk](mailto:WPLL-journal@open.ac.uk)

## Guest Editor

Jennifer Stokes, Senior Lecturer at the University of South Australia, one of our journal's experienced international Editorial Board members will guest edit this special edition and will draw on the expertise of our valued peer-reviewers and colleagues. If you wish to discuss your article prior to submission please contact the Guest Editor Jennifer Stokes at [WPLL-journal@open.ac.uk](mailto:WPLL-journal@open.ac.uk).

## Guidance for authors contributing to the journal

Each edition of the journal consists of a section of main articles followed by sections devoted to innovative practice, research/methodology notes and updates, discussion pieces and book reviews. All contributions must fulfil the following criteria:

- Articles must directly address the core interests of the journal; i.e. access, widening participation and lifelong learning.
- Articles should provide a clear theoretical rationale for the work discussed rather than providing just a descriptive account.
- Work should be contextualised in order to make it understandable to an international audience.
- Innovative Practice articles should be descriptive as well as maintaining critical reflection, and include coverage of problems encountered and solutions found in establishing a specific project.
- Articles will be considered for publication only if they have not been published, submitted or accepted for publication elsewhere; any exceptions to this should be clearly indicated at the time of submission.
- A brief abstract must be submitted, highlighting the key issues and focus points of the article. Key words for the article allow a more specialised peer reviewer to be selected and therefore should be included in the submission.

We are pleased to accept completed book reviews, offers to undertake book reviews and suggestions of books to review, within the topic of the special issue.

## Specifications for articles for the Main Section

- Articles for the main section should be research-based and have a clear theoretical rationale.
- Each article will be reviewed by the editors and sent to a number of referees for blind peer review.
- Articles will be accepted or rejected, or revisions suggested, based on their recommendations.
- Articles should be between 4,000 and 6,000 words and associated abstracts should be between 100 and 200 words in length.

## Specifications for the Innovative Practice Section

- Submissions to this section of the Journal will be peer reviewed by the editors and are selected for their contribution to innovative practice.
- They should be a critical evaluation of practice and include references to appropriate literature.
- These articles should be between 1,500 and 3,000 words in length.

## Specifications for other article types

- Submissions to this section of the Journal will be peer reviewed by the editors.
- **Research methods articles** will be selected for their contribution to the analysis and development of research methodology, in the fields of widening participation and lifelong learning;
- **Research notes and updates** provide an opportunity to present interim and final research findings in a quick and accessible way, to inform practitioners and researchers in the widening participation and lifelong learning fields.
- **Discussion pieces** offer an opportunity to present informed opinion and reflection on current research and policy developments.
- These articles should be between 1,000 and 2,000 words in length

## House Style

Full details about the house style including referencing formats can be found on our journal web site, where there is also a useful Microsoft Word template which should be used for all articles submitted. Click here for the full [WPLL Journal Guidance](#).

## Timeline for submissions to this special edition of WPLL

All relevant articles which are submitted to us **by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021** will be considered for inclusion in the June 2022 special edition of the journal.

Papers will be accepted from the time of circulating the call until the deadline. Papers submitted ahead of the deadline will be reviewed earlier than the timetable below. Any papers received after the deadline will be considered for inclusion in a future edition.

<b>Deadline for submission of articles</b>	<b>Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021</b>
Peer-review and decision making process	October 2021 – February 2022
Final revisions and editor decision	By end of March 2022
WPLL Editorial Board meeting	April 2022
Post Board revisions	April 2022
Copy edit, final proof read	May 2022
Publication	June 2022

