# Building on previous research: FLAN Glasgow meeting

Together, we’re building a substantial body of work related to learning at scale. This was clearly evident at the autumn meeting of the FutureLearn Academic Network(FLAN) held at the University of Glasgow on 7 December.

Adriana Wilde from the University of St Andrews and Conchúr Mac Lochlainn from DCU both linked their research work to earlier work by the FutureLearn team that had identified [FutureLearn archetypes](https://partners.futurelearn.com/data/learner-archetypes/). Each of these seven archetypes has a characteristic motivation for joining a particular MOOC, and is associated with a set of needs and values. Conchúr related these archetypes to student motivations on a specific course, while Adriana was interested in exploring different ways of clustering learners, dependent on their activity on the MOOC.

Two speakers presented research-supported tools that could be used to support exploration and learning. Phil Tubman contrasted the utility of the FutureLearn platform – what it does – with the usability of the platform – how this is conveyed to learners. He noted that a focus on progression may distract learners from reflecting on what has gone before. Phil’s [Comment Discovery Tool](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKvue5ou1E0), reported at earlier FLAN meetings, has proved to be a useful way of navigating comments on specific MOOCs. Another tool was introduced by Mike Sharples, who presented [NQuire](https://nquire.org.uk/) tool, the result of research into science teaching and learning. Mike explained how the tool could be used to support inquiry-based learning in FutureLearn MOOCs.

Three speakers from Dublin City University presented work related to the university’s series of MOOCs that provide an introduction to [Irish language and culture](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/irish-language). Each study dealt with the courses from a different perspective, building up a rich picture of motivations, identity, emotions and social media activity.

Shi Min Chua’s work built on previous research in conversational analysis and linguistics. She is exploring why some learners’ comments provoke response, while others go unanswered. If you want a response, it seems it’s good to use words like ‘please’, ‘wonder’ and ‘why’ when you comment, inviting opinions and expressing uncertainty. And, if you’re a language educator who want to get a Twitter conversation going, Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl revealed that it’s really helpful to start sharing images and text about your dog!

We’ll be developing our research agenda at the next meeting of FLAN, which will be at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on Tuesday 6 November. Everyone from a partner institution who’s interested in FutureLearn research is welcome to attend either in person or via the livestream.