DEBBIE ROOSKOV: Hello to everybody. My name is Debbie Rooskov, and I am one of the National Disability Coordination Officers. I would like to welcome you to this session. Inclusive By Design, Engaging and Supporting International Students through UDL and our three presenters from Edith Cowan University, we have Dr Charmaine Herfkens‑Fernandez, Alejandra Speziali and Heather Pate. Welcome.

This session is being live captioned by Melissa. So, thank you, Melissa. To activate the captions, click the CC button in the tool bar that is located either on the top or the bottom of your screen. We also have captions available via browser, which we will now add to the chat box. This session is being recorded. We ask you to please turn off your camera and mic for this session and to also use the Q&A function to pose questions for the three speakers. We will be monitoring the Q&A function. We will put all that information in the chat box for you. We're going to start this session with a presentation and then wrap up with a 10-minute Q&A session. I'm going to hand straight over to you, Charmaine, to start the presentation. Thank you.

DR CHARMAINE HERFKENS-FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Debbie. Hi, everyone. Welcome to ‘Inclusive by Design: Engaging and Supporting International Students through UDL’. I am Charmaine, a Learning Designer and I am joined by Alejandra, who is a Senior Learning Adviser, and Heather Pate, who is a Senior Learning Designer. We all work at the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia.

Debbie already went through some of the housekeeping. The presentation is being recorded with a 10-minute Q&A segment at the end. Live captions and closed captions are both available. The chat function is available but will not be monitored. Go ahead and talk to each other during the presentation if you want. All questions, please post them to the Q&A function and we'll address them during the Q&A segment. Let's start.

First off, we respectfully acknowledge the past and present traditional custodians of this land from which we are Zooming in today, the Noongar elders and people. In this presentation we summarise the background to our workshop initiative, addressing the main challenges identified by staff teaching international students in a particular course. Then we'll share how we use universal design for learning to design the workshop that we ran. We close with some informal participant feedback about the workshop and ideas we have moving forward.

A little about the cohort. So, the particular course that we ran the workshop for was the Masters of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). The Master of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) course at ECU historically had low international enrolments. These rose dramatically after the pandemic. We see 187.5 per cent increase in international student enrolment since 2019 and a 64.29 per cent increase since last year alone. You can see this pie chart in a typical on-campus classroom there are more international students than domestic students, which prompted teaching staff to rethink their strategies and lesson objectives. The majority of these international students are from China. So, we were approached to support staff preparedness teaching this cohort.

ALEJANDRA SPEZIALI: The university's Accord interim report emphasises the commitment of the sector to improve the quality of international student educational experience which has been consistently lower than the domestic student educational experience. Though not usually included in equity, diversity and inclusion considerations ‑ and thank you to the keynote speaker for mentioning this particular group several times ‑ some authors have proposed including international students as an equity group given the challenges they face. More structured support for their holistic learning and overall educational experience is needed.

There are similarities between the local and international students’ experience. For example, both groups experienced presentation anxiety. It's a different extent more than in kind with local students being more concerned about the content of presentation and international students about their personal attributes and abilities to communicate. Some of the specific challenges international students face have to do with familiarisation with a different culture and different learning context as well as learning disciplinary content and concurrently developing their language skills.

Teaching staff in the early childhood education course and other course coordinators in the school of education were asked to identify the challenges faced when teaching classes with a majority of international student enrolments. The highest occurring theme was the need for teacher support, including addressing unconscious bias and navigating complexities of teaching classes with a majority of international students. Staff also noted that international students needed to understand the Australian educational context at university and in their placement centres. We used the universal design for learning guidelines to frame the challenges identified by the students and staff and designed the professional development workshop we ran. The engaging and supporting international students PD workshop aimed to equip participants with engagement strategies in three content modules and support the development of a community of practice for staff teaching international students.

HEATHER PATE: Module 1 introduced ways to support international students in the classroom using UDL as an underlying concept. The focus in the module was looking for ways for students to be engaged in the course content. Self‑regulation refers to individuals finding ways to manage their own learning. One self‑regulation technique we used was to ask participants to watch a short video before attending the workshop. The video showed a day in the life of a boy in an Chinese early childhood centre. Participants were asked to consider differences between this Chinese early childhood centre and an Australian centre. This allowed participants to consider how they might engage with the content before coming together as a group.

Recruiting interest refers to sparking learners’ desire to engage with the topic. In our workshop we recruited interest by starting with a nice breakout activity where the participants discussed their own experience in early childhood education. The purpose of this activity was to help participants realise that, like the students, their own experiences in early childhood education differed. This set the workshop up as a brave space and involved them in exploring the workshop topic more deeply.

Sustaining effort and persistence refers to giving learners opportunities to keep working and to remain engaged. For this element we focused on asking the participants how they could encourage students to engage with others throughout their course and while on placement. An example from a past Chinese student illustrated differences between the Chinese and Australian university context. The student pointed out that collaboration is built into the nature of the Chinese university environment, whereas in Australia everyone lives separately and after class students tend not to stay on campus. The workshop then moved on to the second module.

CHARMAINE: Module 2 aims to support staff to use technologies to create inclusive and accessible elements, unit sites and resources to enhance engagement of international students. Underpinned by the UDL principle to provide multiple means of representation, module 2's tasks are geared towards enhancing reception, language and symbols and comprehension.

First, participants considered how international students would benefit if on-campus units were designed to adhere to the fully online requirements in ECU's technology enhanced learning standards. This got them thinking about using the available learning technologies with accessibility and inclusion in mind for their international students. The listening comprehension task asked participants to summarise the content after listening to an excerpt from a local Dutch radio program. This effectively simulated how international students with English as an additional language might feel in their classrooms. Participants then played with the transcribe and translate features of the MS 365 suite and they were encouraged to think about how these features could offer alternatives for auditory information.

Next, a user-friendly and accessible glossary for the workshop site was modelled to provide additional information linked to external multimedia and clarify vocabulary used in the site. A glossary template was created and shared with participants to use in their unit sites to promote understanding across languages for international students. We also introduced the immersive reader integration available on LMS and in the MS 365 suite. Participants had not used it before because they thought it was only for students with visual disability. We encouraged their use of the immersive reading during the workshop and discussed how the integration could be used to guide information processing and visualisation for international students. They were keen to encourage students to use the tool after they had a play with it and discussed how they might use more MS Word docs instead of PDFs for this purpose.

The workshop then progressed to the content and tasks in module 3.

ALEJANDRA: Module 3 focused on the principles, strategies and approaches underpinning the support for international students in higher education. We will look at some examples of action and expression strategies we incorporated in the PD workshop as well as on the Canvas site in terms of physical action, expression and communication and executive functions. The first guideline in this principle suggests varying the methods of response and navigation. An example of this was the introductory activity for module 3, a Mentimeter survey where our workshop participants were asked to predict how stressful university students perceived different activities to be according to a survey of about 800 students conducted in the UK across two different universities. Workshop participants identified that the most anxiety provoking activity for a student was delivering oral presentations. Surprise, surprise. However, the workshop participants responses differed from the reported student perceptions in two categories, lectures and sharing in IT space, which were both ranked much lower, in terms of stress, by the study participants.

The next example refers to building fluencies gradually. Some of the resources in the module addressed oral participation in group work as this was an issue raised by staff as well as students. We included a video in module 3 which provides three international students’ perspectives on class participation, a Chinese, a Korean and a Mongolian student. The excerpt you can see on the screen was provided by the Chinese student participating in this presentation. Completely bewildered about the expectations in class.

Postgraduate students’ views are also provided in the module from a different study to the one mentioned earlier which shows that students appreciated the use of group work as a strategy as it enabled them to develop autonomy and participate in class discussions more confidently.

A third example illustrates the executive function guideline, which applies to students and staff through the gradual development of skills throughout the course. Our resources directed staff, for example, to the distributed leadership model which recommends CLO development progressively throughout the course. One of the reflection activities relate to students. Staff were asked to select a strategy to encourage international student engagement and provide graduated scaffolds to help students implement the recommended strategies.

We provided references, if you would like to access them when you receive the slides.

CHARMAINE: So, some feedback. The workshop participants found the content valuable, especially the video on international contexts and the availability of easy-to-use learning technologies that they hadn't previously even considered using to engage and support for international students. They also appreciated the opportunity for discussion and sharing strategies within a team. As a team, they planned to review and enhance the LMS unit sites and resources for better support of all students. This came out through the feedback, which we were very happy with, not just international students.

HEATHER: What's next? We're currently reviewing the workshop for its next iteration in the school of education. At the same time, we're discussing the usefulness of a similar workshop for other courses in other schools at ECU. We are keen to share our findings and initiatives with other interest groups, this symposium being one of them. We have plans to apply for ethics to formalise this workshop as a research project that could contribute to enhancing the international students' educational experience at ECU. Thank you so much for joining us today. If you'd like to discuss the content of our presentation further or are considering a collaboration, please don't hesitate to contact us. We welcome your questions.

CHARMAINE: Thank you.

DEBBIE: Thank you, Charmaine, Alejandra and Heather. That was fantastic and I really think 15 minutes wasn't enough to do that justice. That was really brilliant. Thank you. We are up to Q&A, so we have some time to have some questions. Please don't be shy. I've got the little box open. I'm just making sure that I have access to it. Does anyone have any questions that we would like answered? We have the experts here in the room. I've now been made host so I should be good. Okay.

CHARMAINE: Perhaps some background about the photos, there was a comment about the old photos of the presenters.

ALEJANDRA: I thought that might need explaining.

CHARMAINE: We all came together because of our interest in this particular topic and the interest in the demographic of international students because we have had adventures across borders ourselves. We just show the different milestones, one of the milestones in each of our lives when we embarked on that pretty scary journey across borders to be either international students or experience a new country.

DEBBIE: Thank you. I do ‑ they were great photos. I do have a question that has come in. No, what have I done with it? I guess I was looking at all the takeaways that we could get from your presentation. It was just coincided that someone said can you please recap some of the main takeaways that you think we need to have from your presentation? Let's do one or two that you really think we need to take away with us.

HEATHER: A few takeaways, I guess thinking about ‑ if you're thinking about a cohort of students, what their needs are, and then highlighting some areas that are going to support them, that's going to support everyone. I guess the key takeaway is it's going to support everyone. I guess we know that. Looking at what you're presenting, so how it’s being presented, and using the tools available to you, like Charmaine talked about, all the wonderful things that are available in Canvas that we were able to utilise. So just use what's available to you.

I think the other one might be just consider students' learning. Consider their ‑ giving time and acknowledging students, like in our pictures here, they're people. They're having a fantastic experience and a fantastic time. So open it up to them to make it a positive experience by giving them opportunities to learn.

ALEJANDRA: Yeah. And also not just doing that self‑check. Am I looking at the world through my own culture and my own language, abilities and so on? What would be expected in a different culture? That was really important for us as a discussion with staff even. The workshop was actual ‑ we had to race through some of the content because the initial discussions around personal experiences and to do with culture and what the students needed took over some of the discussions because, yes, that's critical, especially, I guess, for all graduates, but education students even more so.

DEBBIE: Just a quick one to follow up on that – sorry, I butted in there, Charmaine, was the workshop in person or was it an online?

ALEJANDRA: In person and, Charmaine, if you would like to talk about the site?

CHARMAINE: We also wanted to build an LMS site because one of the things we wanted to do to encourage staff to support international students was to make things available even after the event because most international students are required to be on campus. But there's so many who would do well with either working through the work for translation purposes, for comprehension purposes before class, and then after class as well. We created this LMS site with all the things we would have engaged with face‑to‑face, for them to go back, for staff to go back and return to them just like we would like them to do for their students.

DEBBIE: There's a few questions coming through now. I hope to get through all of them. Otherwise, we might collate those, and we might be able to put them as a complementary resource with the recording. Was there anything surprising that led you to make changes for the next time you run one of your workshops?

HEATHER: I think a big thing was the amount of time that we needed. We were trying to cover a lot of things, lots of different areas, and what the staff members really needed was time to unpack what they'd experienced. As Alejandra mentioned, that took a lot of time, and we gave it to them because clearly they needed to do that. That also opened it up to a really valuable discussion and a safe space where people could really think about things. I think we would look at building that in for the future.

CHARMAINE: As well, just again for a key takeaway, we talked about this a lot, that we wanted to do it but they really felt it because it was part of the feedback that it was a community of practice. They were in the same team and they worked together so much more and so often, every day, but a lot of people were anxious about sharing the difficulties and challenges they were facing with international students, and this gave them the opportunity to hear from each other, get on the same page, and then take it away in terms of a plan. All the units in that particular course, they were aiming to have this one plus approach. The next iteration that is something we would like to include at the end or during, aim for that plus one. What are you going to do? What are you going to take away with your work that's going to help support students with UDL?

ALEJANDRA: That was important, especially because it was a school of education, they all know this, but there's all those individual understandings of how we should proceed. This was really important to cover common ground and start discussions on shared understandings of how to proceed, and how UDL applies to primary and secondary is very different to uni. So, I guess start those ‑ generate those discussions. It was very important then to have that site where all of our resources are available from because for future staff to refer to, and to use as a central point. In fact, a workshop was organised for new tutors, and they referred to this site as part of their future steps before they start teaching.

DEBBIE: We've got a really big question I would like to ask but I think time is going to beat us on that, so I might just go to one, and I think you might have answered some of these in some of your answers. They have been very well explained, so thank you. It’s just based on your research, what would you recommend lecturers to do in class to better support students? I guess that's more about getting them engaged and trialing different things as well.

ALJEANDRA: So, from the presentation of the unit, consistency so it's easy to find everything. Documents presented/designed with having this sort of framework in mind but accessibility in mind, and also providing various ways of accessing information, so a video and also a script and also a document in advance so that they are more prepared to participate in class. That was very important. Anything else, Heather? There was so much there.

HEATHER: I was just thinking how we are all so busy, everyone is so busy and has no time, I sometimes feel like you have got to do more. It's always more. I'm wondering if this is a good opportunity not to do less, but to relax into it a bit. It's okay for it to be fun. Getting students to communicate and work together in groups takes work but we know it's going to be really valuable for students and I think for staff members as well. You get a lot out of a really active classroom where students are happy. It changes the feeling of the room. I think ‑ again maybe it's a takeaway might be enjoy it.

DEBBIE: Thank you. I'm very sorry we have to wrap that up straight away now. We need to move on to our next session. I'd like to say thank you again to Charmaine, Alejandra and Heather for sharing your expertise in this area. I am sure we have got a takeaway we are all taking with us. I'd like to thank everybody for attending the session but also the presenters for putting such a succinct presentation together. It’s been really enjoyable. Thank you very much and enjoy your afternoon. We will see you in the next session.

CHARMAINE: Thank you.