

Special Project Grant awards – September 2023

Title of proposal	Analysing the impact of Digital Roles Prototype on soft skills awareness among young people considering digital roles
Name(s) and institution(s) of Awardee	Dr Antesar Shabut, Dr Yashar Baradaranshokouhi and Dr Aliyu Lawal Aliyu, Leeds Trinity University
Date of Award	10 January 2024
Amount of Award	£4,961
Description	Although many practitioners and researchers have already put a great effort into developing digital career tools, it is crucial to be prepared for changes in the way we make young people ready to enter the workforce and assist employers in adapting to 'changing economic conditions'. Roles in the technology sector are changing rapidly, and the hiring process is also evolving. The support and guidance given to young people need to be responsive to these changes. Therefore, this research project aims to explore the impact of a simple web application on students' awareness of the diversity of roles in the technology sector and the skills required for those roles. More specifically, we would be seeking to raise awareness of the importance of 'soft skills' and how it could help make these skills determinable in relation to roles in digital. The web application is an early prototype of a 'Roles in Digital' app that is being considered by the researchers in the School of Computer Science at Leeds Trinity University as a tool for supporting career planning and professional development and widening participation in Computer Science. Discovering the desired additional features from young users and understanding the roles of employers and educators are also positioned as top priorities in our aims.

Title of proposal	Use of foundational AI in teaching and assessment – A practical case study in software engineering education
Name(s) and institution(s) of Awardee	Zhibao Mian, University of Hull
Date of Award	15 January 2024
Amount of Award	£4,980
Description	The emerging foundational AI systems such as ChatGPT and Bard, and software focused tools such as GitHub's Copilot are creating a challenge for how we teach and practice software development. Based on these challenges we propose some learning and teaching strategies to keep pace with AI. For example, we can encourage students to use AI in pair programming where one member of the pair is an AI. The aim of this project is to verify our proposed strategies in the form of a case study and to summarize a set of general teaching design and assessment recommendations, enabling the effective use of foundational AI systems in educational settings.

Title of proposal	Enhancing Learning and Teaching Experience for International Students Studying Computing
Name(s) and institution(s) of Awardee	Wei Jie, Sama Aleshaiker, Thomas Madsen, University of West London
Date of Award	19 January 2024
Amount of Award	£4,500
Description	In recent years, international students have become a dominating part of postgraduate computing intakes at many UK universities. For this reason, there is an increased need to systematically understand this cohort of students, across the wider UK higher education sector. Aiming to help enhancing current programs and resources, this project will begin by investigating the challenges faced by international postgraduate computing students and the existing programs and resources available to support their learning and teaching, across UK universities. Following this, the project will assess the effectiveness, benefits and challenges associated with the existing programs. Finally, recommendations for improvements will be provided, addressing how to best support these students.

Title of proposal	Investigating the impact of LLMs and the training requirements/needs of non-academic/non-expert staff in UK Universities
Name(s) and institution(s) of Awardee	Konstantinos Liaskos (Principal investigator), Martin Goodfellow (Co-investigator), University of Strathclyde
Date of Award	10 January 2024
Amount of Award	£3,546
Description	The purpose of this project is to investigate the impact of the introduction and increasing use of Large Language Models (LLMs) and Gen-AI on employees that support learning and teaching in the UK HE sector. In particular, we intend to explore their perspective on how such tools affect their current work activities and duties, and also investigate their needs for training, awareness and CPD offerings to bridge the gap between their roles and experts in their Departments/Schools/Universities. The project will involve three workshops and data collection and analysis, which will involve participants from the target audience across UK HE Institutions. We plan to collect data by conducting a series of qualitative and quantitative studies (i.e. surveys, focus groups, interviews and think-aloud observations) with volunteers to investigate the impact of such tools in the context of the audience's job activities and duties, and explore their needs for training and CPD. Our intention for this project is to be as transparent as possible by sharing our findings and resources with other UK collaborators, and by developing and piloting a short online CPD training course that will be available to employees at other UK HE Institutions.