

CONFERENCE

“Building the AI-Ready University: Tools, Systems, and Strategies for the Future”

Queen's University Belfast, 19-20 October 2026

BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS AND CHAIRS

Welcome addresses



Margaret TOPPING, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement), Queen's University Belfast

As Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement, Margaret Topping is responsible for attracting global talent, enhancing international networks and partnerships and advancing Queen's University Global Reputation.

She is also Professor of French and Intercultural Communication. Her research explores travel, migration and mobility, cross-cultural communication, and the public value of the Arts and Humanities. Her 2023 book, *The Humanities Pandemic: Towards an Essential Services Approach* (Palgrave), highlights the role of the Humanities in addressing global challenges such as COVID-19.

She is also active in social innovation, supporting initiatives that promote employment opportunities for people leaving the justice system and help young people in Belfast reach their potential. She holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from Oxford University and has previously worked at Oxford, Bangor and Cardiff Universities.



Luciano SASO, Secretary-General, UNICA

Luciano Saso (Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy) coordinated several research projects in the field of pharmacology and has been referee for many national and international funding agencies and international scientific journals in the last 30 years.

Prof. Saso has extensive experience in international relations and has been Deputy Rector at Sapienza University of Rome for 8 years (2014-2022). In the last 25 years, he participated in several projects and has been speaker and chair at many international conferences.

Prof. Saso has been Member of the Steering Committee of UNICA for four years (2011-2015) and President for eight years (2015-2023) He took over the role of Secretary General of the UNICA Network in June 2023

Session 1.

From Chalkboards to Chatbots: AI in Modern Higher Education

Chair



Katharine ROBSON BROWN, Vice-President for Research, Innovation, and Impact, University College Dublin (UCD)

Kate Robson Brown is Vice-President (Research, Innovation and Impact) at University College Dublin, Professor of Engineering Mathematics and Biological Anthropology, European Low Gravity Research Association President, Alan Turing Institute Honorary Fellow, Natural History Museum Trustee, and ESA EuroMaterialAgeing Co-PI.

Panelists



Manuela APARÍCIO, Pro-Rector for Pedagogical Innovation, NOVA University Lisbon

Manuela Aparicio previously served as Deputy Director for Education at NOVA Information Management School (NOVA IMS), part of NOVA University Lisbon. She holds a PhD in Information Management from NOVA University Lisbon. Her research interests include education and pedagogical innovation, with a particular focus on the use of systems in teaching and learning, and on exploring student success in these contexts. She has proposed two distinct business models for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Her research also investigates the impact of information systems on digital transformation and value creation within organizations. Her work has been published in leading journals such as Information & Management, Journal of Educational Technology & Society, Internet and Higher Education, Computers in Human Behavior, and Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, among others. Manuela Aparicio has been ranked among the Top 2% of the world's most influential scientists in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 by Stanford University. She is a member of the ACM (Association for Computing Machinery), affiliated with the EuroSIGDOC European chapter, and with ACM Women. In 2023, she received the international Diana Award/ACM SigDOC'23.



Áron BADINSZKY, Rector's Commissioner for AI, Eötvös Loránd University

Áron Badinszky is an expert in AI regulation, ethics, and law specialising in artificial intelligence (AI) regulation, technology law and regulatory innovation. He is affiliated with Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), where he serves as Rector's Commissioner responsible for coordinating the university's AI Flagship Project and also acts as a visiting lecturer, an RDI specialist and AI business transformation expert.

His research focuses on the legal and ethical challenges of emerging technologies, particularly the role of regulatory sandboxes in enabling responsible innovation and creating future proof AI regulation.

He has published on AI regulation, including the EU AI Act, and a PhD candidate at ELTE in AI and Law.



Philip HANNA, Dean of Education, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, Queen's University Belfast

Philip Hanna is the Dean of Education for the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences at Queen's University Belfast. With a background as a Professor of Computer Science, he is passionate about the role of technology in shaping the future of education in an increasingly fast-paced and evolving world.

A Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2017 for his work in strengthening alignment across primary, secondary, and tertiary education.



Simona Vasilica OPREA, Professor, Department of Economic Informatics and Cybernetics, University of Economic Studies, Bucharest University of Economic Studies (online)

Simona-Vasilica Oprea is a professor at the Faculty of Cybernetics, Statistics, and Economic Informatics at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. She specialises in power system engineering, renewable energy integration, and ICT applications, including big data and machine learning.

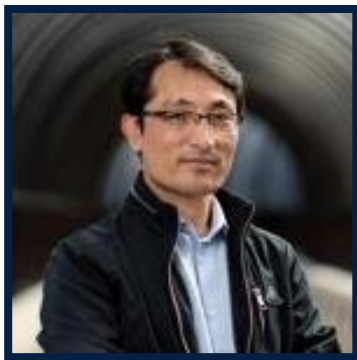
She holds two PhDs, in Electrical Engineering and Economic Informatics, and a master's degree from Yokohama National University, Japan. Since 2010, she has contributed to 11 national

and international research projects and authored 10 books and book chapters, alongside more than 160 scientific articles indexed in Web of Science. She also brings professional experience from Romania's energy sector, including Transelectrica and the National Energy Regulatory Authority.



Adela BARA, Professor, Department of Economic Informatics and Cybernetics, University of Economic Studies, Bucharest University of Economic Studies (online)

Adela Bâra is a professor at the Economic Informatics and Cybernetics Department at the Faculty of Economic Cybernetics, Statistics and Informatics from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies.. Her expertise includes data science, big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, energy management systems, IoT, and digital twins. She directs the university's Center of Excellence in Data Science and is Editor-in-Chief of the Database Systems Journal. She also serves on several scientific and editorial boards and acts as an expert for international research organisations. Her contributions to research have been recognised through numerous awards, including the 2024 "Mattei Dogan" Award in Social Science and Economy.



Salim SAAY, Associate Professor, University of Limerick

Salim Saay is an Associate Professor at the University of Limerick and a researcher at Lero, the SFI Research Centre for Software. He is also involved in the WAVE project. His research interests include software architecture design, low-code/no-code software development, organizational collaboration, software systems integration, blockchain technology, and AI-integrated systems.

Dr. Saay has a particular focus on secure software systems collaboration based on broker architecture, as well as

blockchain technologies and AI-driven systems. His work seeks to integrate emerging technologies to enhance system security, scalability, and efficiency in cross-domain, cross-border, and cross-organizational contexts.

Session 2.

Beyond the Buzz: What AI Tools Really Offer Universities in 2026

Chair



Andrew GINGER, Leader and Researcher in Higher Education

Presently at Ghent University, Andrew Ginger is a higher-education leader and researcher with extensive experience in academic leadership, international engagement, and HE strategy.

He has held senior academic and leadership positions at universities in the UK and the United States, including as a Vice Provost for International Engagement.

Andrew is a leading researcher concerned with intercultural relations and commonality and the history of technologies, with a view both to historical understanding and contemporary theories. He holds a doctorate from the University of Oxford and has contributed to international academic networks, national research assessment, and cross-institutional collaboration.

Panelists



Anet LELLO, Head of AI, Tallinn University

Anet Lello is Head of Artificial Intelligence at Tallinn University, leading the university's AI strategy across teaching, research and administration. She holds an MSc in Mathematical Statistics from the University of Tartu and is currently pursuing an MSc in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. Anet brings 18+ years of experience in international banking, including implementing BCBS 239 and enabling large-scale transformations, most recently at the European Investment Bank. Her work has ranged from building new central databases to defining unified group-wide key indicators, while securing funding, bringing together the right people and resolving roadblocks along the way. She is passionate about leading transformation and helping good ideas become reality.



Clare PHELAN, Membership and Project Coordinator, European University Association

Clare is Membership & Project Coordinator at the European University Association (EUA) in Brussels, where her policy portfolio covers digitalisation in higher education.

She coordinated EUA's expert committees on digital transformation and artificial intelligence and currently facilitates the work of EUA's expert group on institutional data. Before joining EUA, Clare managed student and staff mobility programmes at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in Dublin. Her work at EUA focuses on helping universities navigate and steer developments in the digital space.



Christine O'DEA, Reader & Programme Director, King's Business School, King's College London; Academic chair, Knowledge Hub on AI of Circle U

Xianghan (Christine) O'Dea is a Senior Fellow of Higher Education Academy, and Reader in Management & Technology Education in the Department of Public Services Management & Organisation at King's Business School. She has more than 20 years of experience in the Higher Education as lecturer, researcher and academic developer. With over 20 years of experience in higher education, she holds a PhD in Education from the University of Hull. Her research focuses on AI in education, particularly generative AI and AI literacy, as well as digital transformation and digital education.

She has published in leading academic journals and media outlets, including Studies in Higher Education, Times Higher Education and Wonkhe. Christine regularly delivers international workshops and seminars and serves as Associate Editor of the Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice and Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education. In addition, she is also co-Editor-in-Chief for the journal Artificial Intelligence in Education. She serves as an Academic Chair for the Knowledge Hub for Artificial Intelligence within Circle U., representing King's College London.

Katharine ROBSON BROWN, Vice-President for Research, Innovation, and Impact, University College Dublin (UCD)

See bio details in Session 1



Stephen MCCABE, Executive Director at Momentum One Zero, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Stephen McCabe is Executive Director of Momentum One Zero at Queen's University Belfast, a major innovation centre focused on translating advanced digital technologies into real-world impact.

With experience spanning research, policy development and project delivery across academia, industry and government, he leads initiatives that connect university research with industry needs. His work focuses on fostering collaboration and driving innovation in areas including cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital health and advanced wireless technologies, supporting economic growth and technological development in Northern Ireland.

Session 3.

AI Accelerating Discovery in Academic Research

Chair



Archie CLEMENTS, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Clements is responsible for leading the University's research and enterprise portfolio. As PVC, he is a member of the University Management Board, and is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the University's research strategy. He also oversees initiatives related to research culture, commercialisation, and the Belfast Region City Deal. Before joining Queen's in 2023, he held leadership and research positions at universities in the UK and Australia.

An infectious disease epidemiologist, he has studied the spatial epidemiology of parasitic, bacterial and viral diseases, predominantly in tropical regions of the world. He has also

worked on community-based intervention studies exploring the role of multi-component, integrated strategies for sustainable infectious disease control.

He has been a researcher at University of Queensland and Imperial College London, and was awarded his PhD in 2006 by the Royal Veterinary College, University of London. He also has a Master's degree from the University of Glasgow and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Sydney, both in the field of veterinary science.

Panelists



Alistair NOLAN, Senior Policy Analyst, OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation (online)

Alistair Nolan is a Senior Policy Analyst in the OECD's Directorate for Science, Technology, and Innovation.

Mr. Nolan currently leads various strands of OECD work on artificial intelligence (AI), most recently on AI in science and on the diffusion of AI and other advanced technologies in the business sector. Working with a team of scientists and AI experts he edited and co-authored the 2023 OECD book [*Artificial Intelligence in Science: Challenges, Opportunities and the Future of Science*](#). He led work at the OECD on a new survey of AI adoption in firms across the G7 countries, published in May 2025: [*The Adoption of Artificial Intelligence in Firms: New Evidence for Policymaking*](#). He is currently developing a series of workshops on the future of AI and its implications for several fields of science and policymaking.

Among other work, Mr. Nolan led preparation of the 2017 book [*The Next Production Revolution: Implications for Governments and Business*](#), together with work on robotics – [*Making life easier, richer and healthier: Robots, their future and roles for public policy*](#), and edited the 2020 book [*The Digitalisation of Science, Technology and Innovation : Key Developments and Policies*](#). Earlier in his career at the OECD Mr. Nolan helped

develop the *Survey of Adult Skills*, a large-scale study of key cognitive and workplace skills of working-age adults in over forty countries.

Prior to the OECD, Mr. Nolan spent nine years with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.



**Kaan ORHAN, Vice Rector and Dean of Research ,
Ankara University (online)**

Kaan Orhan is a Professor of Dentomaxillofacial Radiology at Ankara University, where he serves as Vice Rector and Dean of Research, a position he has held since 2022. He completed his dental education in 1998 and his specialization and PhD in maxillofacial radiology at Osaka University and Ankara University in 2002. He became Associate Professor in 2006 and Professor in 2012, and has held visiting professorships at leading universities in Belgium, Poland, and Hungary. In 2023, he received an honorary doctorate from Semmelweis University.

With over 400 international peer-reviewed publications, more than 10,000 citations, and an h-index of 56, Prof. Orhan is a leading researcher in maxillofacial radiology. He has served as President of the European Academy of Dentomaxillofacial Radiology (2014–2016) and was elected President of the International Association of Dentomaxillofacial Radiology for 2025–2027. He is also an editorial board member and reviewer for numerous scientific journals and has contributed to more than 10 books.

Recognized among Stanford University's World's Top 2% Scientists from 2021 to 2023, Prof. Orhan has received numerous prestigious awards for his scientific contributions, including the Lincoln R. Manson-Hing Citation Award, the Ankara University Science Award, and the Innovative Dentist of the Year Award for his work on artificial intelligence in dentistry. He is an active member of several international professional organizations and has contributed to the

recognition of dentomaxillofacial radiology as a specialty in Turkey.



Daniela PETKOVA, Policy Officer, AI in Science and Critical Technologies, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission (online)

Daniela Petkova is a Policy Officer in the AI in Science Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, where she works on policy initiatives and funding calls supporting the AI in Science Strategy and the Resource for AI Science in Europe. She also manages the annual AI in Science Summit. Her previous roles at the European Commission have included digital intelligence, evaluation, and corporate communications, alongside work at the Joint Research Centre in Italy. Before joining the Commission, she spent ten years in the private sector in Bulgaria. Daniela is currently completing a second degree in Data Science at the Open University in London, complementing an existing academic background in communications.



Iain STYLES, Professor Of Computer Science, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Iain Styles is Professor of Computer Science at Queen's University Belfast and Director of the Centre for Intelligent Sustainable Computing.

His research focuses on developing artificial intelligence and computational methods to analyse complex scientific data, particularly in imaging, spectroscopy, biomedical research and healthcare. He also co-leads the Digital One Health initiative at Momentum One Zero, supporting interdisciplinary collaboration to translate advanced digital technologies into real-world impact.

Session 4.

AI for Scholarly Productivity: Publication and Grant-Writing

Chair

Iain STYLES, Professor Of Computer Science, Queen's University Belfast

See bio details in Session3.

Panelists

Archie CLEMENTS, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, Queen's University Belfast

See bio details in Session 3



Richard GAULT, Lecturer, Academic Convenor for the Vision and Language, School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Queen's University, Belfast

Richard Gault is a Lecturer in the School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. His research focuses on computer vision and artificial intelligence, particularly the development of deep-learning methods for analysing microscopy images.

His work has applications in medicine, digital pathology, biological sciences and environmental research. He is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Senior Member of IEEE, with experience in interdisciplinary research and medical image analysis.



Cristina HUIDIU, Product Owner Digital Library Services, Wageningen University & Research

Cristina Huidiu is Product Owner - Digital Library Services at Wageningen University & Research (WUR) Library. She leads team that builds and maintains library and research information products used across the university and nationally. She led the introduction of generative AI across several of these products and contributes to university-wide work on responsible AI adoption and governance.

Her career has centred on research output metadata and the infrastructure behind it. She started as a librarian at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" in Bucharest, supporting researchers on the topics of publishing and research intelligence. She then spent almost a decade on the vendor side of scholarly communication. At Digital Science she worked on research intelligence and analytics (Dimensions, Altmetric), and later as Group Product Manager for research funding data at Elsevier. Across these roles she has seen how research output is produced, measured and funded across multiple actors within the academic space and beyond.

Working with research output metadata while integrating generative AI means weighing how each decision affects the reliability of the scholarly record. She brings that view to discussions on AI in publishing and research funding.

Cristina is also active in several national and international working groups on research information, open science and AI.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cristinahuidiu/>



**Zoltán Tibor LANTOS, Head of the Department of
Virtual Health Guide Methodology, Semmelweis
University**

Zoltán Tibor Lantos is Head of the Department of Virtual Health Guide Methodology at Semmelweis University in Budapest, Hungary. His work focuses on the development and application of digital health solutions, with an emphasis on virtual health guidance, health education, and supporting patients in navigating healthcare systems.

Through his work at Semmelweis University, he contributes to the integration of digital technologies and innovative methodologies into healthcare and medical education.

He holds a doctorate degree in Health Care Administration by Corvinus University of Budapest.



**Karen SIU TING, Lecturer in Computational Biology,
School of Biological Sciences, Queen's University
Belfast**

Dr Karen Siu-Ting is an early-career principal investigator from Peru and a Lecturer in Computational Biology at Queen's University Belfast, where her research combines genomics, bioinformatics and AI-based tools to understand animal evolution and monitor biodiversity. She is an Associate Editor at Molecular Biology and Evolution and a panel member for UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council, and also serves on the Ethical, Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Earth BioGenome Project.