



University  
of Glasgow

School of  
Education



教育学院  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



## Glasgow-Peking Comparative Higher Education Symposium 2025: Co-imagining Shared Futures of Higher Education in Diverse Contexts, Histories, Cultures, and Traditions

### Call for Abstracts

Contemporary universities often position themselves as bastions of liberal and critical thinking—places where different cultures and values are explored, understood, and celebrated. Yet, universities—or institutions of higher learning—have evolved through rich, complex, and culturally embedded histories that differ significantly across regions and eras. For example, universities in Scotland and England, like many in Europe, have roots in medieval Christian religious institutions and evolved through the European Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. In contrast, modern universities in China were shaped by various Western models but are situated within a tradition of higher learning that traces back to the ancient Chinese academies, which emphasised scholarly authority and strong connections to state service. From the ivory tower to the multiversity, both local factors and global models—especially the rise of the research university—have shaped how universities develop within different contexts. In many countries and regions, indigenous systems of advanced education have been reshaped by experiences of colonialism and the processes of liberation or withdrawal of colonial powers. Narratives of local engagement and cultural relevance—such as the recent promotion of universities as central actors in the development of Learning Cities—further suggest a logic that should both embody and explicitly value diversity and multiple models of the university.

However, there are also powerful forces driving homogenisation, largely shaped by neoliberal imperatives that emphasise global rankings and standardised benchmarks for research universities. Scholars such as Hayes have long expressed concerns about the so-called *McDonaldization* of higher education: a fourfold drive toward efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. In recent decades, global policy actors such as the OECD and UNESCO have promoted comparative frameworks that implicitly endorse a single version of educational quality and institutional value. Discourses of mobility have led to standardisation in degree structures, disciplinary frameworks, and institutional models. The impact of digitalisation further normalises a particular set of practices and (capitalist) values, while the encroachment of for-profit “service” providers—from publishing houses to technology companies such as Amazon—further erases difference. These trends not only reinforce the image of the “university-as-factory,” but also suggest the emergence of a new form of coloniality. The dangers of biodiversity loss are well understood in ecological systems. Similarly, this symposium invites participants to consider the causes of assimilation and the erasure of diversity in higher education, and to imagine what a future landscape might look like—one that actively embraces and embodies diversity, multiculturalism, and pluralism.

As a collaboration between the University of Glasgow and Peking University, the symposium will feature keynote plenary panels with leading scholars and researchers working in this area. It will also serve as an inclusive space for intellectual exchange, showcasing research from early career researchers and graduate students. The programme will include both presentations and active discussions, with the aim of producing one or more co-authored position papers as direct outputs, and an edited book with the Manchester University Press (currently at the proposal stage).

We welcome contributions that address the core questions outlined above. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity: reimagining university structures, teaching, and research
- Universities and local/indigenous knowledges
- Technological hegemony and strategies for resistance or avoidance
- Alternative values of higher education and ways of measuring or expressing them
- Tensions between internationalisation and local relevance/service
- Contested issues in internationalisation of higher education and academic mobility
- The roles and outcomes of higher education in the age of AI

This symposium is hosted and generously supported by [the Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning \(CRADALL\)](#) and [the School of Education, University of Glasgow](#), as a collaborative initiative between the School of Education University of Glasgow and the [Graduate School of Education Peking University](#). The event is further supported by [the Glasgow Comparative and International Education Research \(GLACIER\)](#) Network at the University of Glasgow, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing dialogue and research in comparative and international education.

### Symposium Details

- Dates: **22–23 July 2025**
- Location: University of Glasgow, Scotland
- Format: In-person event

### Abstract Submission Guidelines

- Deadline: **30 April 2025** (23:59 GMT+1).
- Abstracts of up to 400 words should be submitted via the [online portal](#).

### Registration

- Costs: Attendance is free; however, participants are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.
- Registration deadline: **20 May 2025** (23:59 GMT+1). All participants must register for logistical and catering purposes. The registration link will be shared in due course.

### Key Dates

- Call for Abstracts Opens: 1 April 2025
- Abstract Submission Deadline: 30 April 2025 (23:59 GMT+1)
- Notification of Acceptance: 10 May 2025
- Registration Deadline: 20 May 2025 (23:59 GMT+1)
- Symposium Dates: 22–23 July 2025

For further inquiries, please contact [cradall@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:cradall@glasgow.ac.uk). We look forward to your participation in this exciting and collaborative event!



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