

HELOA

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GECKO

Professional Development Conference - Working Smarter

Tuesday 8 September 2026, 10:00 - 15:45
Crowne Plaza Royal Victoria Hotel, Sheffield

10:00 - 10:15 **Registration and Welcome**

10:15 - 11:00 **Putting Strategy Into Practice: Formulating, Monitoring and Evaluating Effective Operational Plans - Part 1. Leah Green and Sarah Whitaker, University of Hull**

Turning strategy into meaningful action can be challenging, particularly in a rapidly changing HE environment and competing resourcing priorities. Drawing on the recent transformation of the UK Student Recruitment function at the University of Hull, this session will explore practical approaches to developing operational plans, monitoring progress, evaluating impact and creating motivated and successful teams. Through real-world examples and discussion, delegates will gain insights into delivering change while maintaining alignment with institutional and local strategic objectives.

10:15 - 11:00 **From Gut Feeling to Great Decisions: Making Data Work for Student Recruitment - Part 1. Jim Calcutt, University of Winchester**

In a sector overflowing with dashboards, reports and competing priorities, how do we move from simply collecting data to actually using it with confidence and purpose? This interactive session explores how recruitment professionals can use data to strengthen decision-making, identify opportunities and influence strategy - without needing to be analysts or data experts. Combining practical examples, collaborative discussion and real-world scenarios, the session will help delegates build confidence in interpreting data, asking better questions and translating insight into meaningful action.

11:00 - 11:15 **Comfort Break**

11:15 - 12:15 **Putting Strategy Into Practice: Formulating, Monitoring and Evaluating Effective Operational Plans - Part 2**

11:15 - 12:15 **From Gut Feeling to Great Decisions: Making Data Work for Student Recruitment - Part 2**

12:15 - 13:15 **Lunch**

13:15 - 14:30 **Beyond the Prompt: The New Fundamentals of Working with AI. - Jonny Atkinson-White, Gecko**

In this interactive workshop, we'll explore what today's AI tools are genuinely good at, where they still fall short, and how to use them more effectively in your day-to-day work. Through live demonstrations, practical higher education examples, and hands-on activities, you'll discover how AI can support in areas such as planning, presentations, research, communications, and analysis while keeping people firmly in control. (Please bring your own device to this session)

14:30 - 14:45 **Comfort Break and Networking**

14:45 - 15:30 **Key Takeaways and Round Up**

15:45 **Finish**

*Please note this programme is subject to change