

LoCoR Symposium 2025: Students As Knowledge Producers

Summary of presentations and discussions



Table of Contents

01

INTRODUCTION

The Long-Term Collective Student Research (LoCoR) Symposium 2025 marks the launch of the LoCoR model, highlighting the potential of collective student research to generate sustained academic and societal impact.

03

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Session 1 of the LoCoR Symposium 2025 examined how project-based learning can support collective and meaningful student research, emphasising the benefits of research-led education.

05

THE FUTURE OF STUDENT RESEARCH

This concluding section reflects on the LoCoR Symposium 2025, highlighting how student research as a collective, co-creative practice can generate lasting academic and societal impact.

02

THE LOCOR MODEL

This section outlines the LoCoR model as a flexible, co-created framework that enables students to build on prior research across cohorts and disciplines, while carefully addressing ethical considerations.

04

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Session 2 of the LoCoR Symposium 2025 explored undergraduate research as a form of knowledge production, highlighting the role of students as active contributors to research culture within and beyond the institution.

06

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



01 INTRODUCTION



In the UK, over 400,000 undergraduate degrees are awarded each year. A project-based dissertation is a common component of many programmes, with a significant proportion addressing urgent STEM and sustainable development challenges. These are areas that require sustained, collective efforts to achieve meaningful impact. However, most of these dissertations are shelved after assessment, representing a long-overlooked goldmine of ideas and insights within higher education

This report summarises the presentations and discussions of LoCoR Symposium 2025, themed *From Pilot to Practice: Building a Legacy of Collective Student Research Together*, which brought together Warwick students, staff, and external partners to celebrate and reimagine the role of students as knowledge producers. The event, which took place on 7th November 2025 at Warwick Wolfson Research Exchange, marked the official launch of the Long-Term Collective Student Research (LoCoR) model, a cross-faculty initiative funded by the Warwick Education Fund. The symposium exemplified how collective, iterative, and interdisciplinary student research can reshape the future of research-led education at Warwick and beyond.

This report introduces the LoCoR model, a model that offers students the option to build on previous work, advancing research across generations, disciplines, and student cohorts, outlines the speakers' talk within the two thematic sessions during the symposium: 1) Project-Based Learning and 2) Undergraduate Research. The report summarises the value of the existing initiatives on student research across and beyond Warwick, predicting the future of student research which embraces co-creation, innovation and sustainability.

Professor Rebecca Freeman (DPVC, Education) and Dr Jane Webb (Head of School for Cross-Faculty Studies) opened the symposium by championing Warwick's commitment to fostering a culture where students and staff co-create knowledge. Their remarks framed student research not only as an intellectual process but also as a form of becoming, nurturing agency, curiosity, and shared purpose between students and educators:

“The best research-led teaching is where students start asking questions that we haven't thought of before – and to which we don't yet have the answer.”



Figure 1. Rebecca Freeman opening the symposium



Figure 2. Jane Webb delivering opening remarks

“A colleague recently said ‘the best research-led teaching is where students start asking questions that we haven’t thought of before — and to which we don’t yet have the answer’. And that’s right, in those moments, learning becomes a shared exploration, where curiosity leads the way and both teacher and student learn from each other.”

Rebecca Freeman

“Students often think that research undertaken in their undergraduate degrees is solely an academic exercise, intended to train them to become future scholars. But research at undergraduate level is so much more than that - first it is a skill that so many jobs call for, not just those in academia, and secondly because students doing research at first degree level are relatively new to the experience, they are not bound by implicit rules that can later become habit. Undergraduate research is often innovative and challenging, taking subjects that have had little or no investigation before. The LoCoR project will not only save these new academic pathways for future scholars, but will signal and confer to student-researchers themselves the importance of their own research.”

Jane Webb

02 THE LOCOR MODEL



Background: LoCoR is a two-year Education Fund initiative that aims to unlock the untapped potential of undergraduate research for long-term, collective, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By embedding this model into existing project-based modules, students will be offered the opportunity to build upon the work of their predecessors, enabling the continuation and advancement of research across cohorts.

What is LoCoR Model?

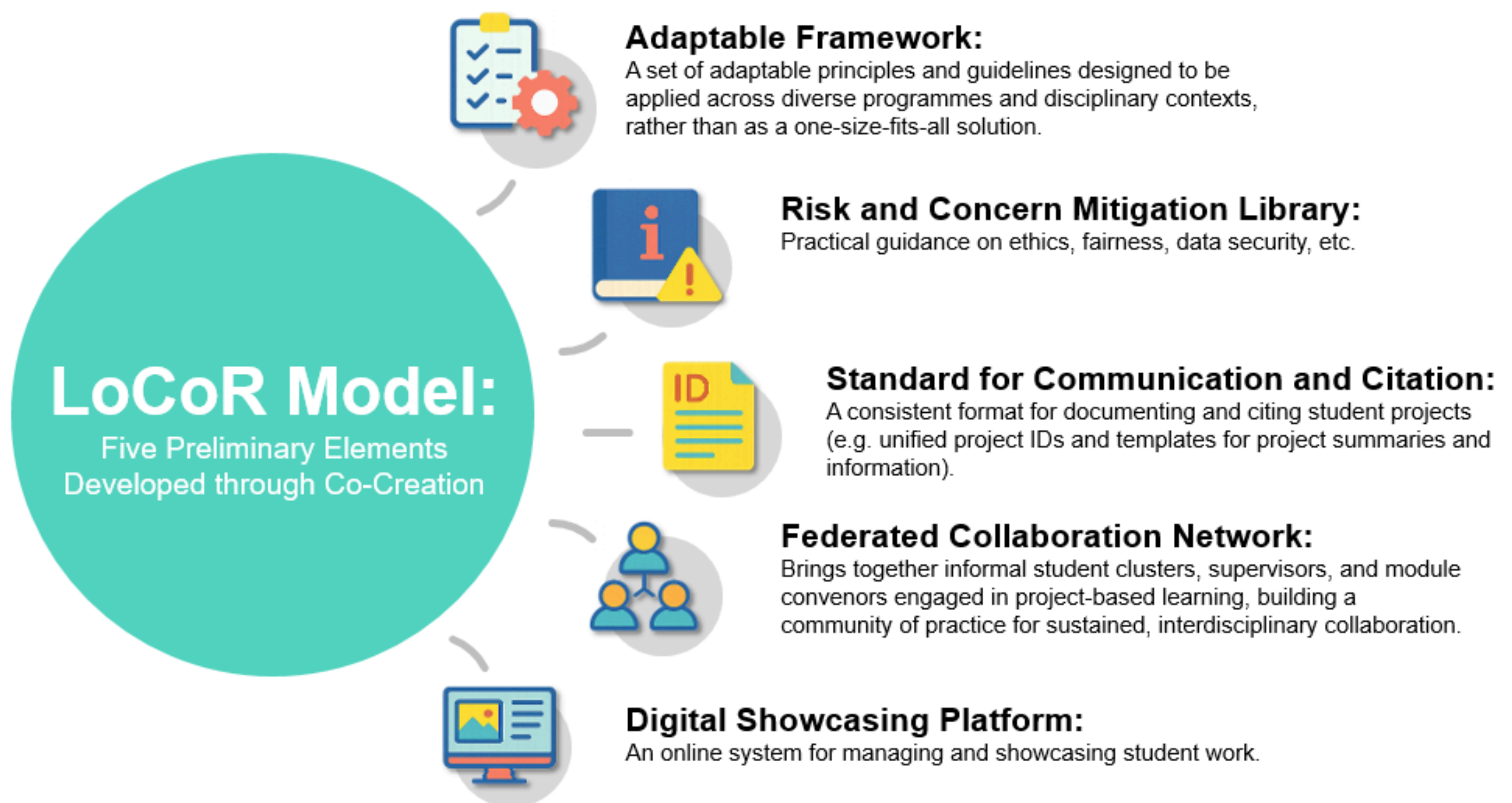


Figure 3. The LoCoR Model

The LoCoR model comprises a set of adaptable principles, guidelines, and approaches that can be tailored to diverse educational contexts, rather than serving as a one-size-fits-all solution. It is being co-created by students, supervisors, and wider stakeholders, with careful consideration of potential risks related to ethics, fairness, and data security. It is:

- A model that offers students the option to build on previous work, advancing research across generations, disciplines, and student cohorts.
- A model co-created by students, supervisors, and broader stakeholders.
- A model that fully considers risks related to ethics, fairness, and data security.
- A model tested, validated, and refined through integration into multiple participating modules.
- Not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a set of adaptable principles, guidelines, and approaches that can be tailored to diverse contexts.

The LoCoR Showcase

To support the implementation of the model, a prototype platform for managing and showcasing students' projects, designed to be fully compatible with the University's digital system. The platform will be piloted and further refined within participating modules. Students in the current academic year will form the first cohort to contribute their project information to the collective project pool, creating a foundation for future students to build upon and extend.

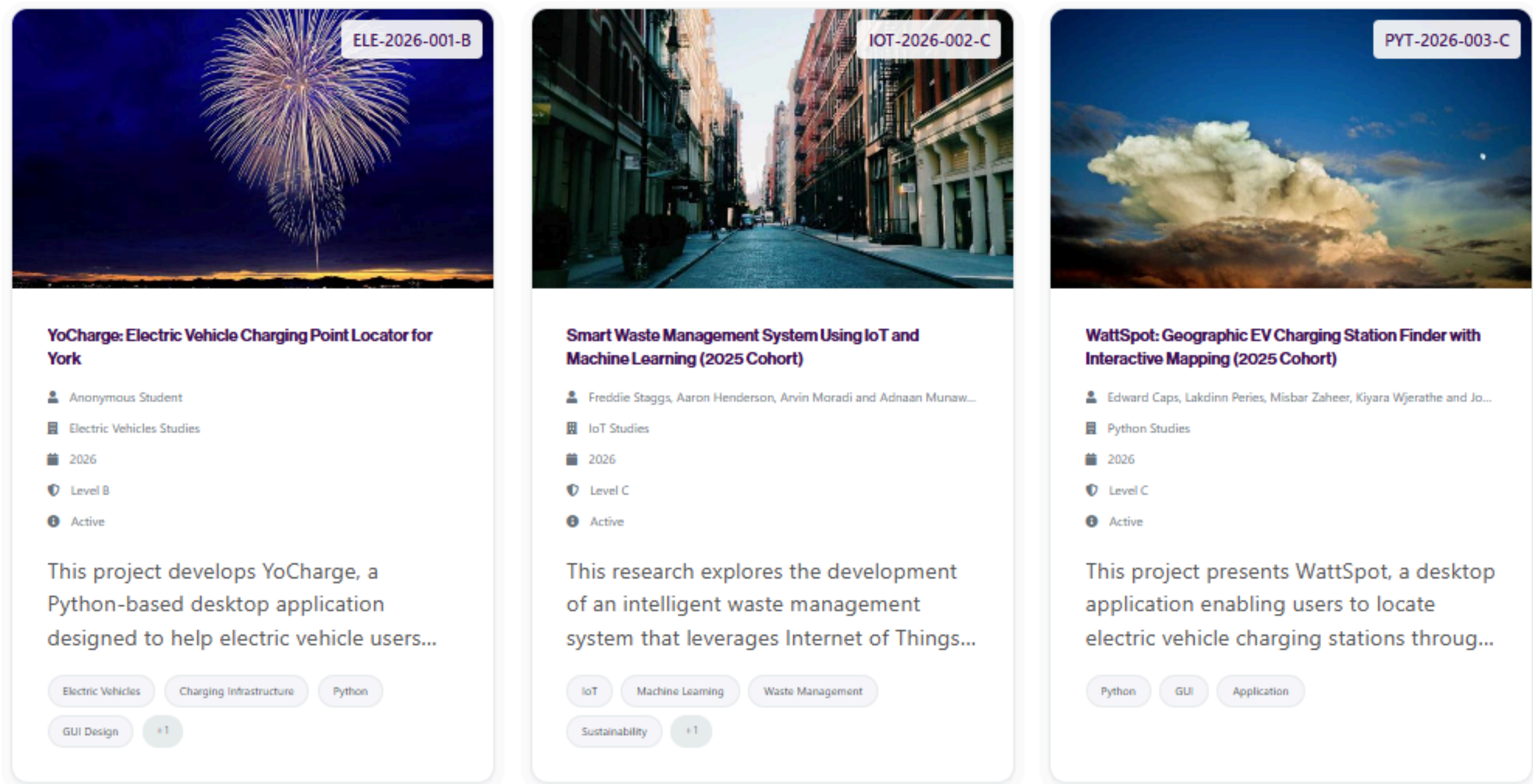


Figure 4 - Prototype of the LoCoR Showcase Platform



Figure 5 - Feng Mao introducing the LoCoR model



Figure 6 - Bing Lu facilitating the LoCoR symposium

03 PROJECT-BASED LEARNING



How can project-based learning (PBL) move beyond isolated, short-term outputs to support collective, sustainable, and meaningful student research?

PBL emphasises learning through inquiry, design and reflection, often centred on real-world challenges. Session 1 of the LoCoR Symposium 2025 examined how this approach can move beyond isolated, short-term outputs to support collective and meaningful student research. Together, these talks revealed that research-led education is not about replicating professional research but about inviting students into the practice of discovery - through trust, creativity, and collaboration.

Wendy Hunt (URSS Coordinator) illustrated the transformative impact of the Undergraduate Research Support Scheme (URSS). Through self-directed, non-assessed research, students develop intellectual independence, interdisciplinary thinking, and confidence, with tangible benefits such as higher degree classifications and postgraduate success.



Figure 7 - Wendy Hunt explaining the URSS

Professor Elena Riva (Head of IATL) presented the Research-Infused Curriculum as a blueprint for embedding inquiry and interdisciplinarity into teaching. Her talk highlighted IATL's student-led projects, the International Conference of Undergraduate Research (ICUR), and Reinvention Journal, which together democratise research opportunities and nurture a culture of collaboration across disciplines.

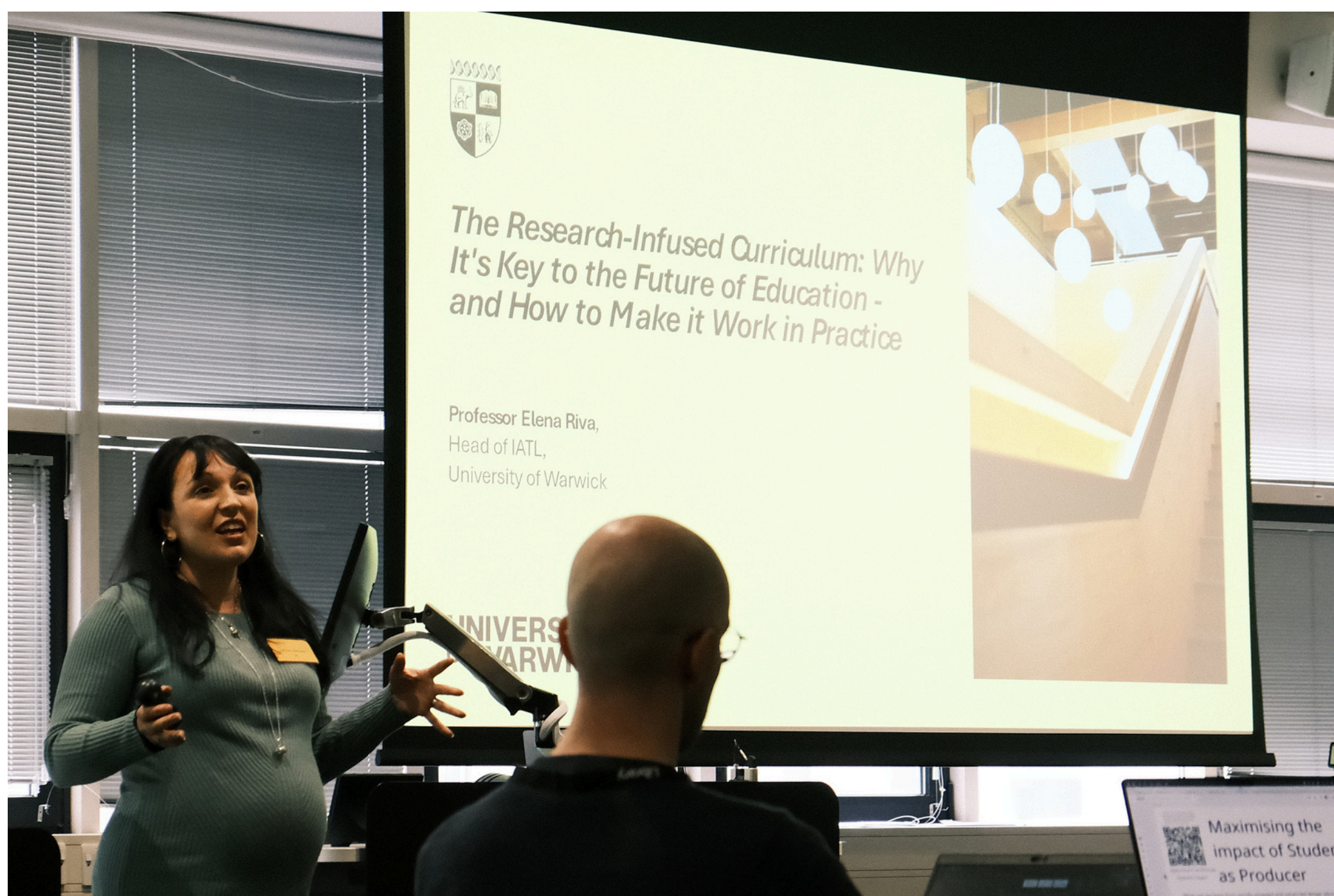


Figure 8 - Professor Elena Riva presenting IATL curriculum

Dr Maryam Masood (WMG) unpacked the Hidden Curriculum of Research, showing how student research internships teach more than technical skills - they cultivate resilience, confidence, and belonging. She emphasised the importance of making tacit learning explicit to promote inclusivity in research spaces.



Figure 9 - Maryam Masood explaining the Hidden Curriculum of Research

Emma Barker and Dr Fiona Farnsworth (IATL) explored Developing a Positive Research Culture Through Undergraduate Research. Drawing on initiatives like ICUR and Reinvention, they argued that true research culture values people and environments over outputs and begins with recognising students as early-stage researchers.



Figure 10 - Emma Barker and Fiona Farnsworth discussing research culture

Project-based learning is becoming increasingly important in the AI era, especially as educators place greater emphasis on authentic assessment. For PBL to move beyond isolated, short-term outputs, it must be reframed as an initiation into a 'knowledge-creating culture'. This requires a fundamental shift from individual learning as a destination to collective knowledge building as a continuous, meaningful endeavour. Longitudinal structures like the LoCoR model, leveraging digital archiving platforms to create a third space for conceptual artefacts, and implementing assessment systems that prioritise epistemic agency, schools can transform student research into a sustainable and socially significant practice

Despite its benefits, PBL faces several barriers in higher education. These include a lack of student research skills at the outset, time constraints due to loaded curricula, and a lack of faculty motivation or institutional rewards for mentoring student projects (Adebisi, 2022). Additionally, traditional university structures often keep research and teaching in separate silos, making it difficult to treat them as an integrated pedagogical system (Healey & Jenkins, 2009). We suggest that universities can reward faculty for mentoring student research by formally integrating mentorship into workload planning and including it as a criterion for promotion.

04 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH



How is undergraduate student research positioned in the pedagogical nexus of teaching and research?

Session 2 expanded the discussion to national and sectoral contexts, linking Warwick's efforts to broader conversations about student research culture.

The session opened with a lively panel of student co-creators from GSD and WMG who shared their experiences of research and co-creation. They described how participating in LoCoR and related initiatives helped them see themselves not merely as learners but as contributors to knowledge. Key themes included:

- Developing confidence to design and lead projects.
- Learning through reflection and peer collaboration.
- Realising the social impact of research within and beyond academia.
- Their reflections reaffirmed LoCoR's ethos: students learn best when they learn through doing research, together.

Undergraduate student research has great potential to be recognised by university and wider society. There is a need for a coherent framework for student research that can contribute to curricular and pedagogical decision-making (Brew, 2013). The piece 'Rethinking the undergraduate dissertation' published by *The Guardian* (2011), suggests that while retaining the core learning outcomes of traditional dissertations, there's room to offer students alternative formats that align more closely with their interests and future career paths. Acknowledging the impact of undergraduate research is underpinned by scholarship on student-as-producer (Neary & Winn, 2009).



Figure 11 - Student Panel chaired by Chloe Barker, UG

Professor Paul Taylor (University of Leeds, BCUR Chair) traced the evolution of Undergraduate Research from the Reinvention Centre at the University of Warwick to today's national British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR), the largest conference in the UK dedicated exclusively to undergraduate research. He argued for authenticity and inclusivity in student research, noting that non-assessed projects often have greater long-term impact than graded assignments.



Figure 12 - Paul Taylor discussing Undergraduate research history and authenticity

Emmanuel Okpaluba (Jaguar Land Rover, Graduate Innovation Challenge) discussed how industry-based project learning builds innovation capacity and leadership. His talk demonstrated how research-based thinking can prepare graduates for complex, real-world challenges.



Figure 13 - Emmanuel Okpaluba discussing JLR's lifelong research initiatives

Yvonne Budden (Warwick Library) explored Open Research Practices for Undergraduate Research in the talk 'Standing on the shoulders of giants', showing how transparency, data sharing, and FAIR principles empower students to contribute to trustworthy and accessible research.



Figure 14 - Yvonne Budden discussing Open Research Practices

Dr Fraser Logan (IATL) closed with 'Humanising the Curriculum through Student-Led Learning and Skills Sessions', emphasising empathy, creativity, and student-led inquiry. His examples showed how humanised, reflective teaching practices make research inclusive and personally meaningful.



Figure 15 - Fraser Logan discussing humanising the curriculum

05 THE FUTURE OF STUDENT RESEARCH



What does the future of student research look like?

Dr Robert O'Toole (Associate Professor of Arts, Humanities and Design Education) facilitated the closing discussion on maximising the impact of 'students as producers'. He underscored the importance of socially engaged and values-led design education, connecting LoCoR's vision with broader efforts to humanise and democratise research culture.

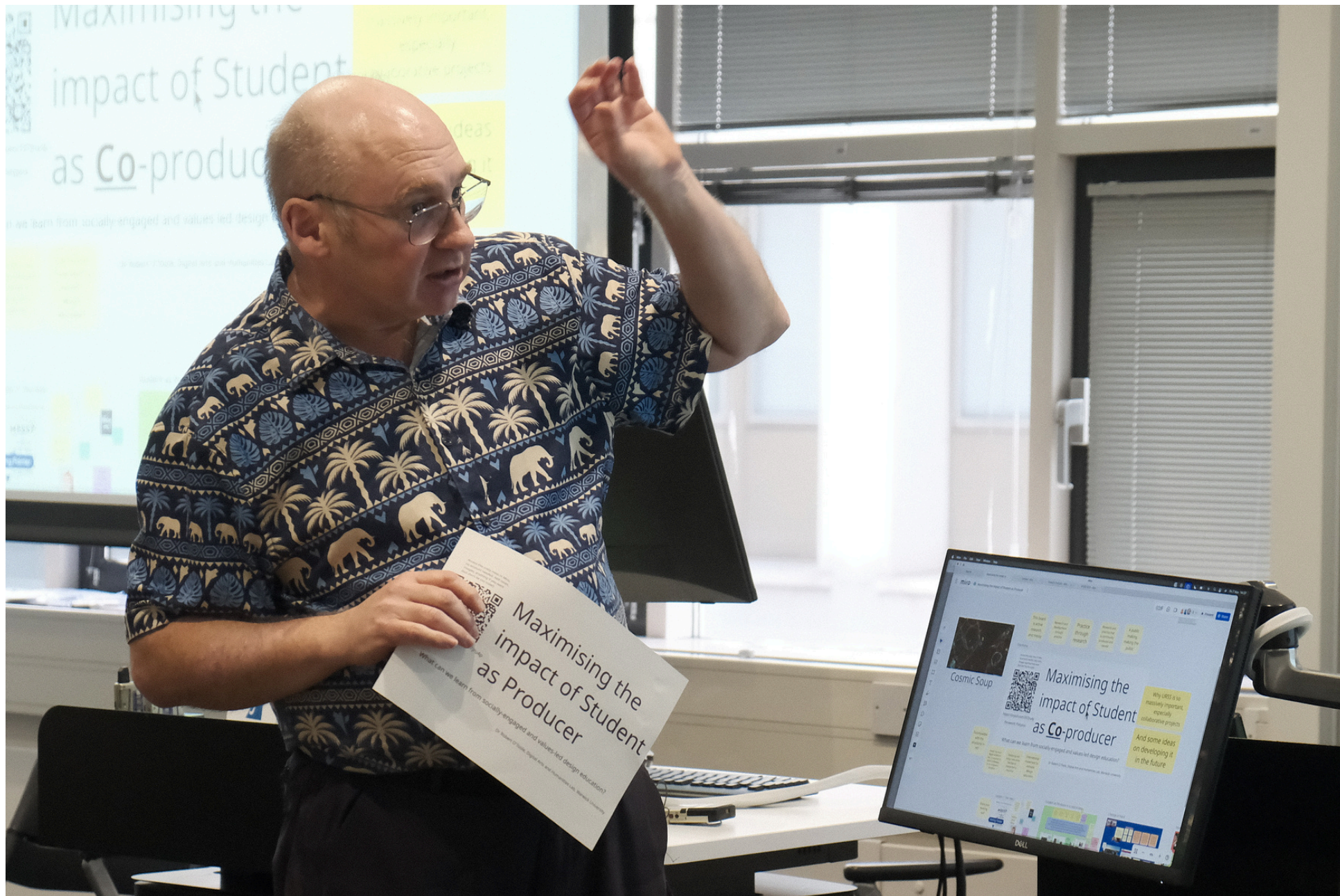


Figure 16 - Robert O'Toole delivering final remarks

Conclusion

This symposium brings together colleagues across University of Warwick and beyond for a dedicated discussion on project-based learning and undergraduate research. Particularly, the symposium champions the role of students as active producers of knowledge through research and inquiry, advancing a 'whole-of-university approach' to educating for sustainability (Mcmillin & Dyball, 2009).

LoCoR model offers a replicable and scalable approach for transforming isolated student projects into collective, evolving bodies of knowledge that benefit students, staff, and society. The symposium affirmed that student research is both a pedagogical practice and a cultural movement. LoCoR's co-creative approach aligns with global shifts towards open, inclusive, and interdisciplinary education. By enabling students to build upon the research of others, Warwick is pioneering a model of collective inquiry that may shape the future of project-based learning across higher education.

The LoCoR team continues to invite collaborators to join the initiative, extending Warwick's leadership in redefining research culture from the undergraduate level upward.

06 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



The LoCoR Symposium 2025 was made possible through the intellectual generosity, collaboration, and shared commitment of colleagues and students across and beyond the University of Warwick.

We extend our sincere thanks to all keynote speakers, student panellists, and session contributors for advancing the conversation around student research and research-led education. We are particularly grateful to Professor Rebecca Freeman (DPVC, Education), Dr Jane Webb (Head of School for Cross-Faculty Studies), Wendy Hunt (URSS), Professor Elena Riva (IATL), Dr Maryam Masood (WMG), Emma Barker and Dr Fiona Farnsworth (IATL), Professor Paul Taylor (University of Leeds, BCUR), Emmanuel Okpaluba (Jaguar Land Rover), Yvonne Budden (Warwick Library), Dr Fraser Logan (IATL), and Dr Robert O'Toole (Arts, Humanities and Design Education). Their contributions connected Warwick's work to national and sector-wide conversations on undergraduate research, open practices, interdisciplinarity, and research culture.

We are especially indebted to the student co-creators and panellists from GSD and WMG, whose reflections embodied the central principle of LoCoR: that students are not merely recipients of knowledge, but active producers of it. We also thank the wider group of student participants who engaged through focus groups, co-design workshops, and model development activities. Their voices have shaped this initiative at every stage. We also thank Haoxi Ou for generously contributing as the symposium photographer, documenting the event and helping preserve the collective memory of this important milestone for the LoCoR initiative.

We also acknowledge the Warwick Education Fund for enabling this initiative. The Fund's support has allowed LoCoR to contribute meaningfully to Warwick's Education Strategy and Research Culture agenda, foregrounding student research as a sustainable, collective, and institutionally embedded practice.

Finally, we thank all attendees, staff, students, and external partners — whose engagement transformed the symposium into a space of dialogue, shared inquiry, and collective ambition. The LoCoR Symposium represents not a conclusion, but an ongoing commitment to strengthening student research at Warwick and beyond.

The LoCoR Project Team

February, 2026

**UNIVERSITY
OF WARWICK**



The LoCoR Project Team

Feng Mao

Bing Lu

Gioia Panzarella

Jianhua Yang

Jason Adams

Surangi Jayakody

Chloe Barker

Elena Sokola

Naveera Abhayawickrama,

Madison Bracher

