



2025 NEAS CONFERENCE
Aerial UTS Function Centre - Sydney



The Need for Oracy in the Age of AI

Cathy Jones, Assessment Development Specialist

Pathways to Belonging

Our Role in Building Communities

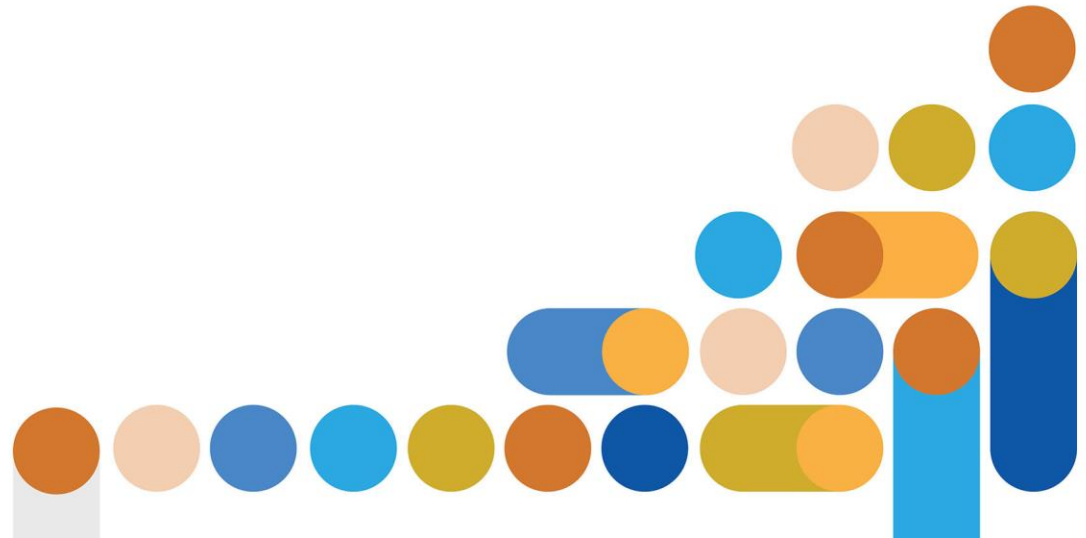
22-23 MAY
2025

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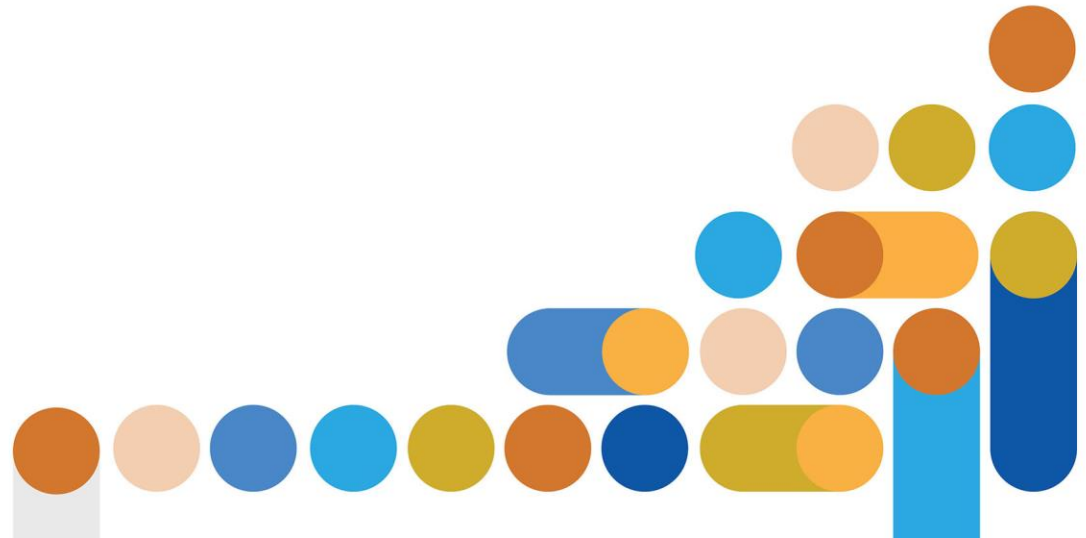
Issues

- (Mis)use of AI can be difficult to detect
- It is even more difficult, time-consuming and problematical to prove
- Undermines trust
- Undermines purpose
- Missed opportunities for students



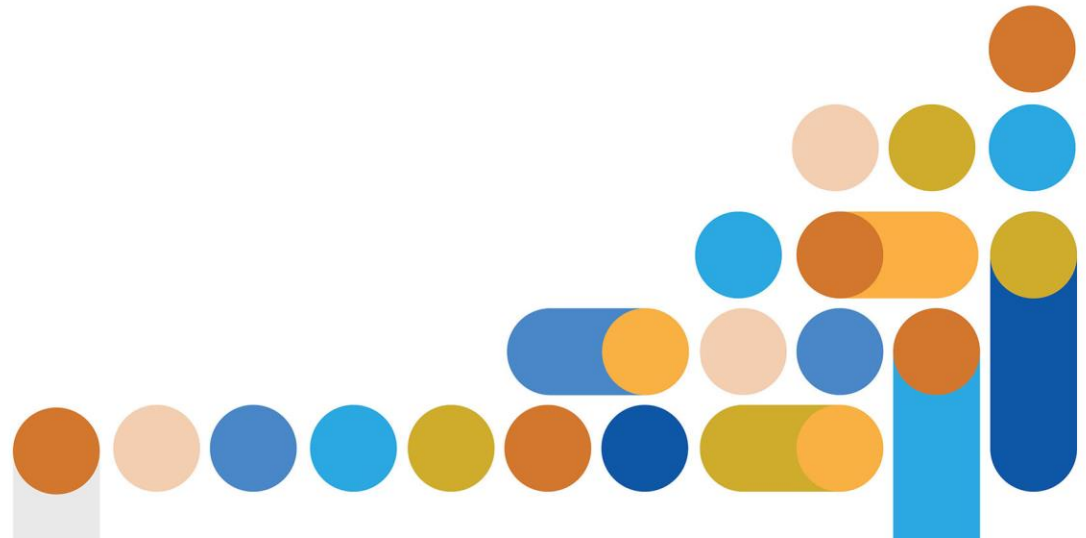
More issues

- Students must work out their chosen subject areas for themselves
- Able to both write and verbalise their knowledge and understanding
- AI can't do this for them
- AI knows nothing, teaches nothing and gives students nothing of worth



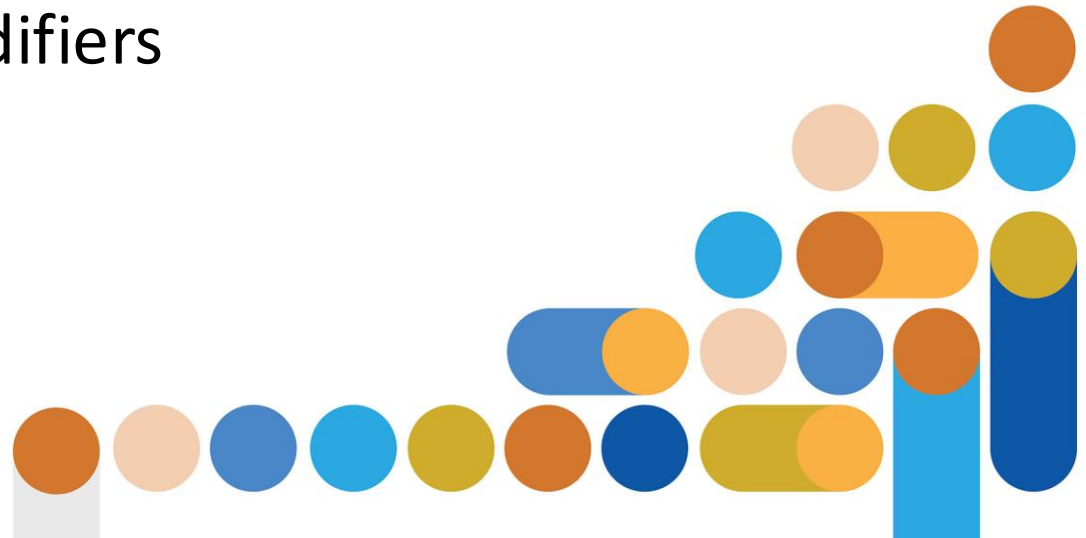
What does AI offer?

- Its developers claim it provides the answer to any question
- This claim is very far from the truth
- What AI gives is a response: *an* answer not *the* answer
- AI has no knowledge or experience, cannot tell right from wrong or truth from fiction



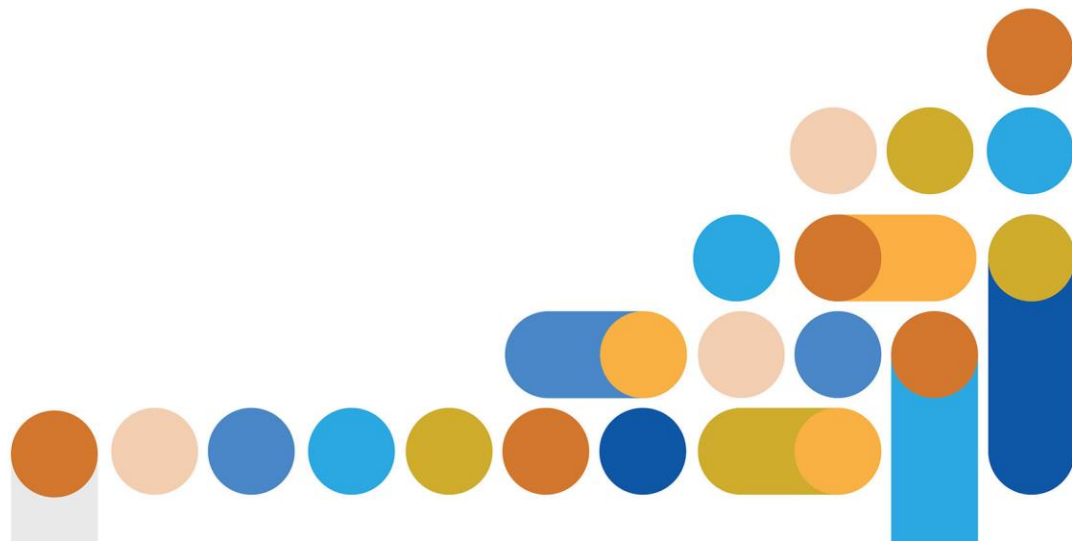
An exercise in form – internet ‘slop’

- AI responses are essential exercises in form not knowledge or creativity
- Grammatically correct sentences that read naturally
- AI builds sentences but does not construct meaning
- Bullet points summarising concepts and themes – no arcs of coherence
- Hyperbolic adjectives and superlative modifiers



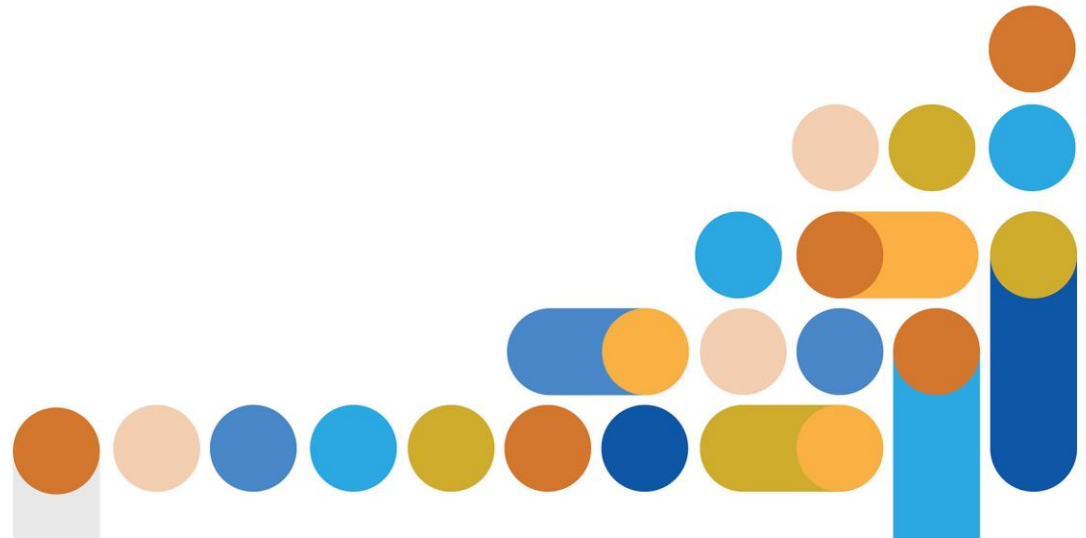
AI's tragic flaws

- This lack of argument, meaning or content is an inherent flaw of AI
- AI 'hallucinations'
- The euphemism for false information, quotes and references
- A response to a prompt might be right, wrong or utter nonsense
- Hallucinations aren't glitches or bugs
- Inevitable result of how AI works



Model collapse

- AI works by drawing its responses from existing online information
- More and more web-based content is being produced by AI
- One algorithmic hallucination leads to another
- AI is creating and feeding off its own misinformation
- A snake eating its tail



Searching for meaning

What can I help with?

"A trifle of stacked plates" meaning|

 Attach

 Search

 Reason

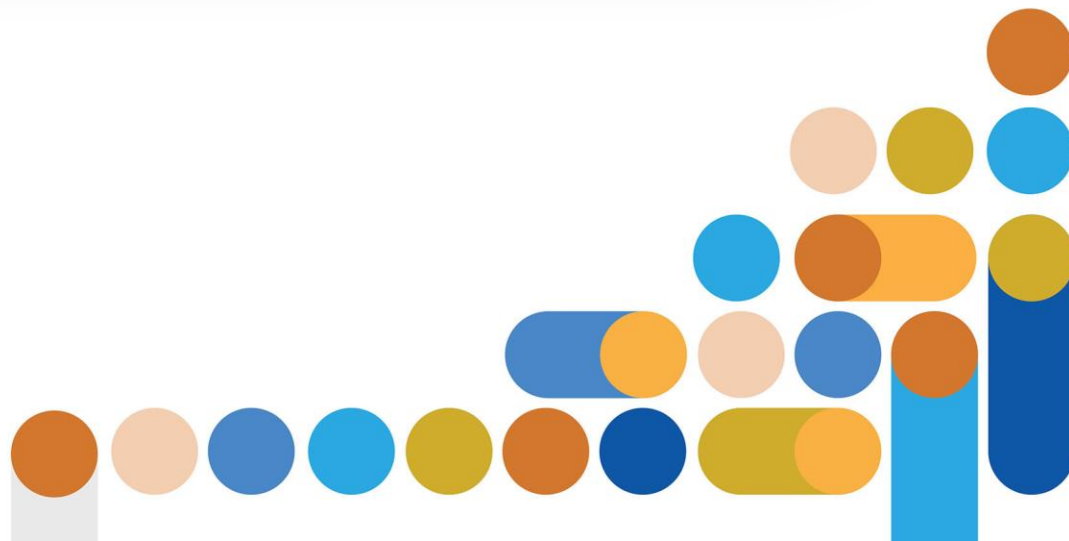


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That's a lovely and evocative phrase! "A trifle of stacked plates" suggests a few different but related ideas:

- **Small Quantity:** The word "trifle" often implies a small amount or something of little significance. So, a "trifle of stacked plates" likely means a small number of plates piled on top of each other. It's not a huge, imposing stack.
- **Neatness and Order:** The act of "stacking" implies a degree of order and tidiness. The plates are not scattered haphazardly but placed carefully one on top of the other.
- **Delicacy or Lightness:** Just as a culinary trifle is often light and airy, this phrase can evoke a sense of lightness or fragility in the image of the stacked plates. It's not a heavy or cumbersome pile.
- **Simplicity:** The image is quite simple – just a few plates stacked. This can suggest a lack of fuss or complexity.

So, in essence, "a trifle of stacked plates" paints a picture of a small, neat, and perhaps delicate or simple pile of plates. The exact nuance would depend on the context in which the phrase is used. For example, it could describe a few plates left on a table after a light meal, or a small display in a shop.

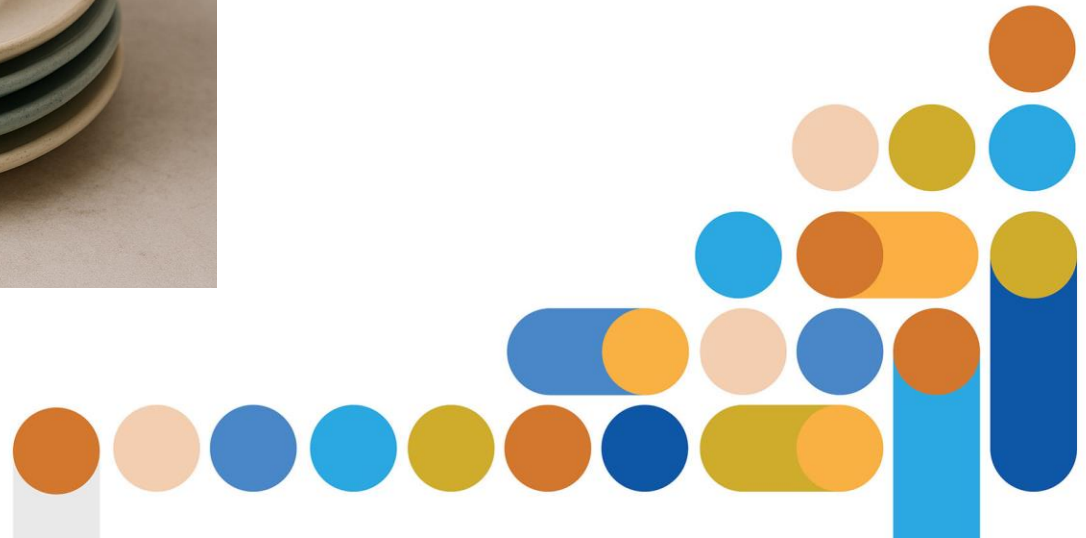


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Searching for meaning, part 2

What can I help with?

"a remembered analogy of forgotten metaphors" meaning



Search



Reason



Deep research



Create image

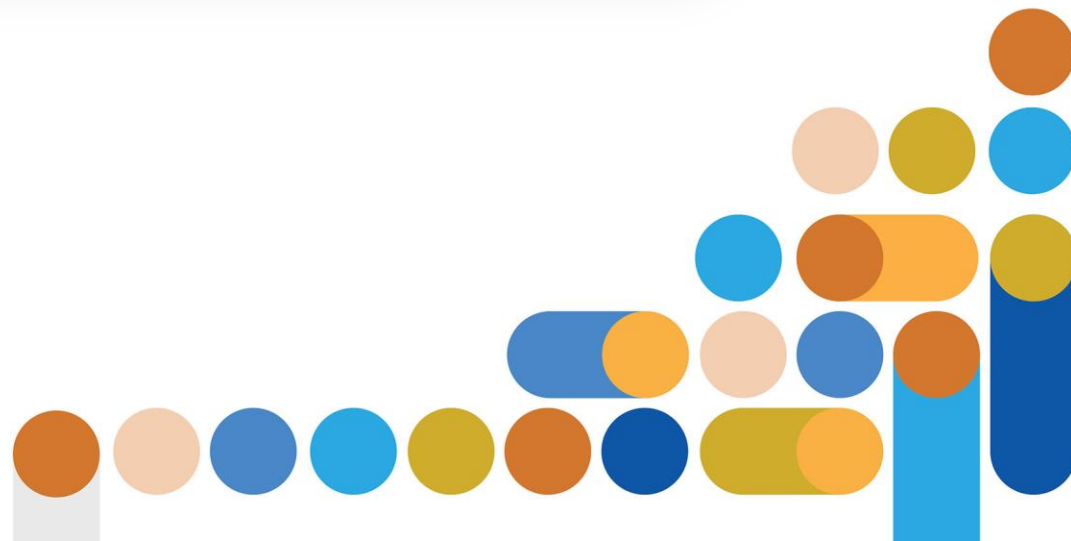


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That's a beautifully paradoxical and thought-provoking phrase! Let's break down "a remembered analogy of forgotten metaphors":

- **"Remembered analogy"**: An analogy is a comparison between two things to explain or clarify something. A "remembered analogy" implies that this comparison was once known or used and is now being recalled.
- **"Of forgotten metaphors"**: A metaphor is a figure of speech where a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. 1 "Forgotten metaphors" suggests that these comparisons were once vivid and meaningful but have faded from common usage or individual memory. They might have become clichés, lost their original impact, or simply been forgotten over time.

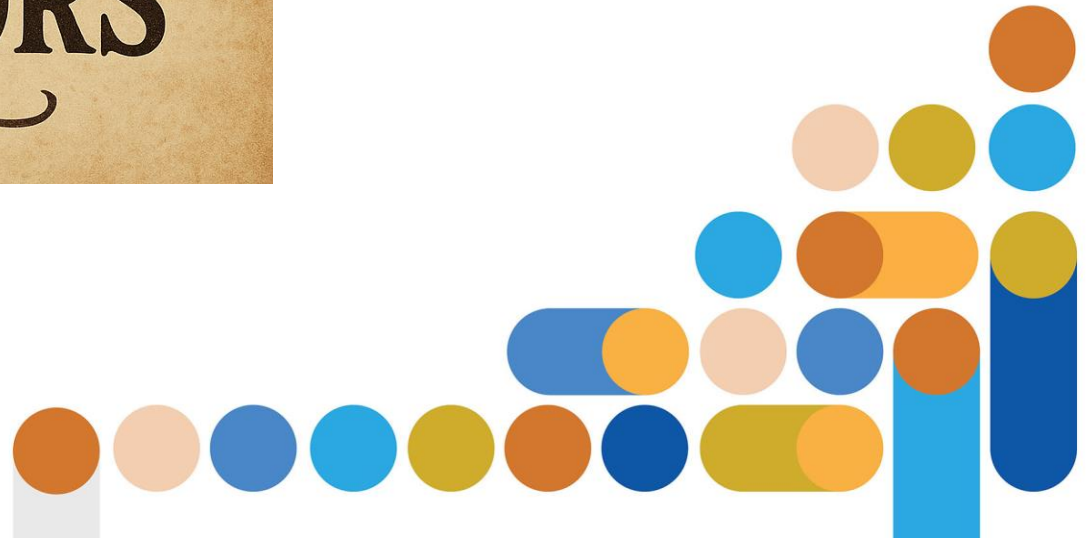
— A —
**REMEMBERED
ANALOGY**
— OF —
**FORGOTTEN
METAPHORS**
— —

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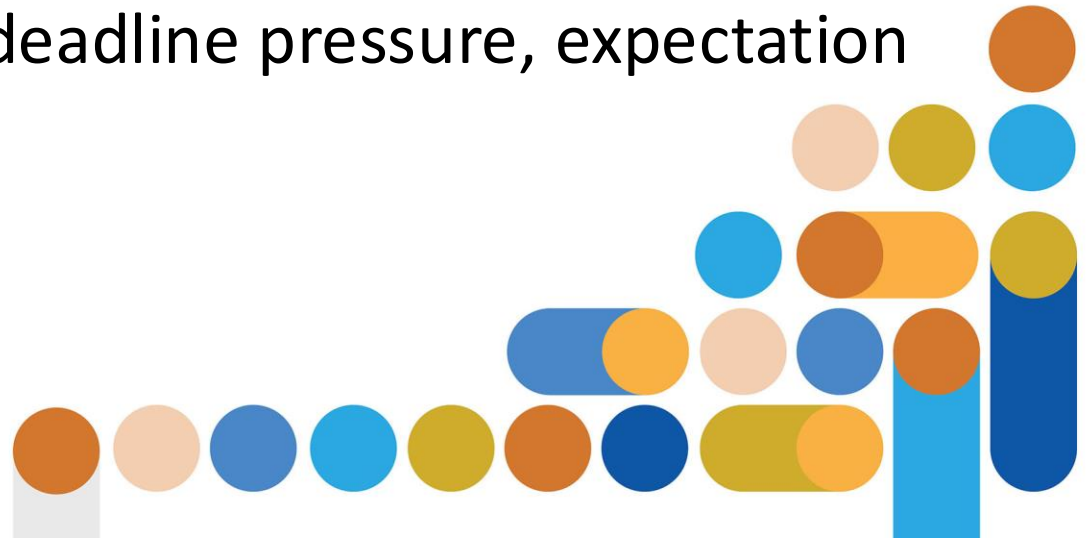


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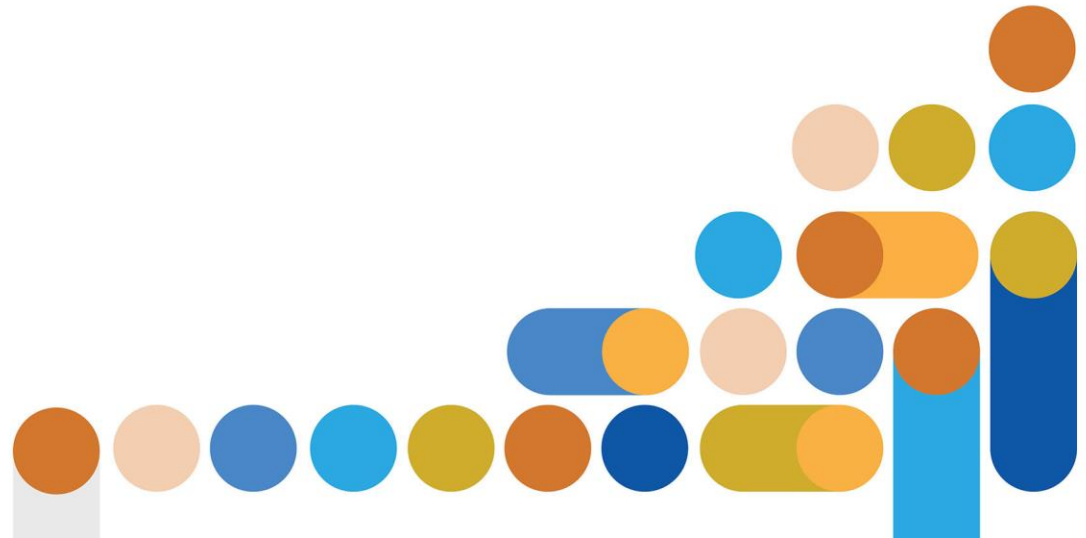
Writing is Hard

- Writing is hard your first language. Harder in a second, third, fourth, etc.
- Easy to forget in the monolingual world of anglosphere education
- Writing is taught differently in different contexts
- Writing about a subject you know well is difficult
- Writing about a subject you are learning, deadline pressure, expectation
- Incentive for generative AI easy way out



But it isn't Meant to be Easy

- There are no quick fixes
- Writing is cognitively and linguistically demanding
- Complex interplay of cognitive and linguistic processes
- If you aren't writing, you aren't thinking and you aren't learning
- What university is for?



Answers

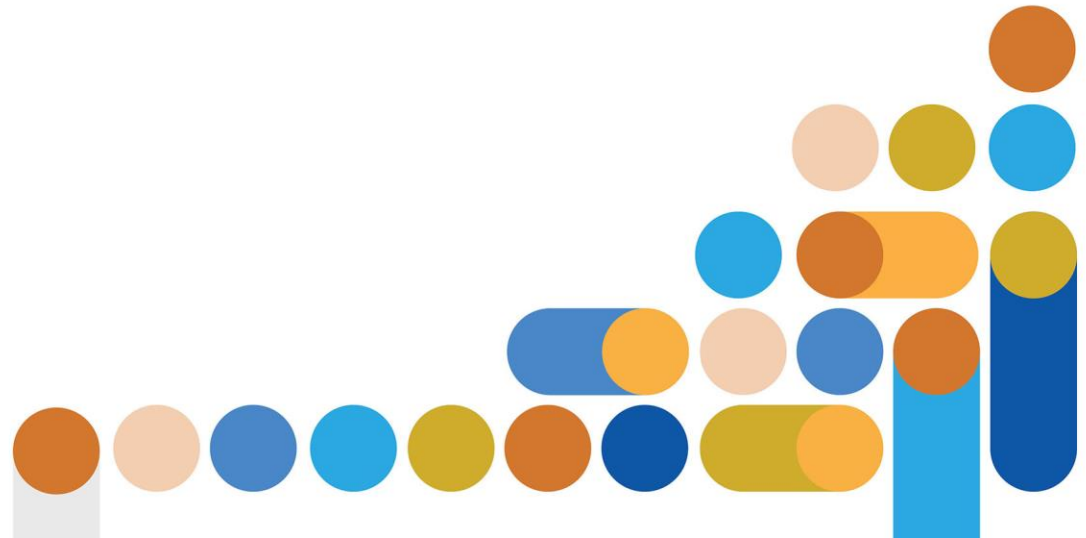
- The AI genie is out of the bottle
- What are the skills we need to nurture?
- Test developers need to rethink assessment strategies and construct definitions
- Alternatives to complement written assessments
- Revive the viva
- **The Need for Oracy**

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The fourth “R” of education

“Articulating ideas, developing understanding and engaging with others through speaking, listening and communication”

The Oracy Education Commission, UK

"Parents want it, the economy demands it, democracy needs it, teachers welcome it and our children deserve it. The time for oracy for every child is now."

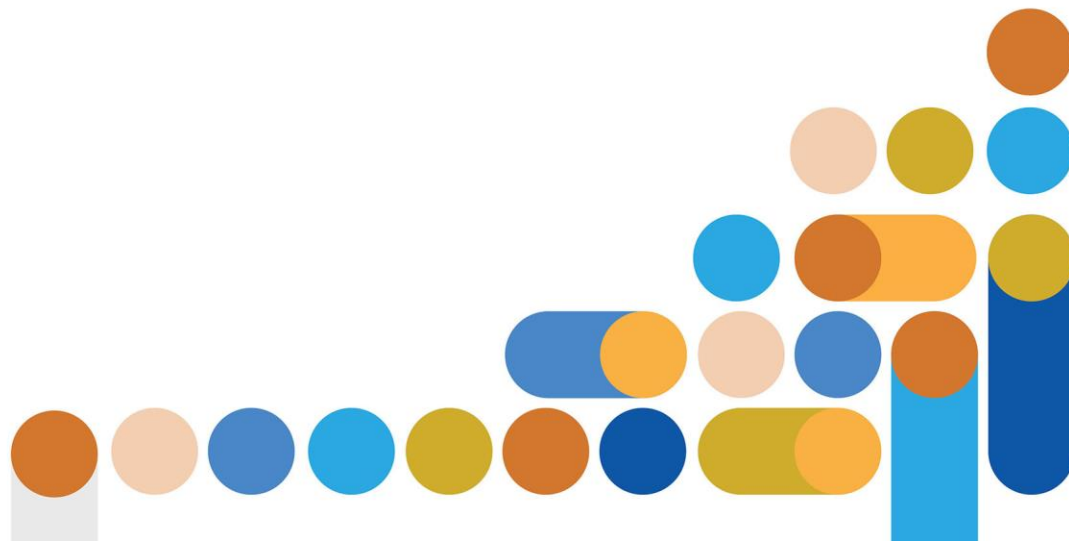
Geoff Barton, Chair

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ChatGPT, What is Oracy?

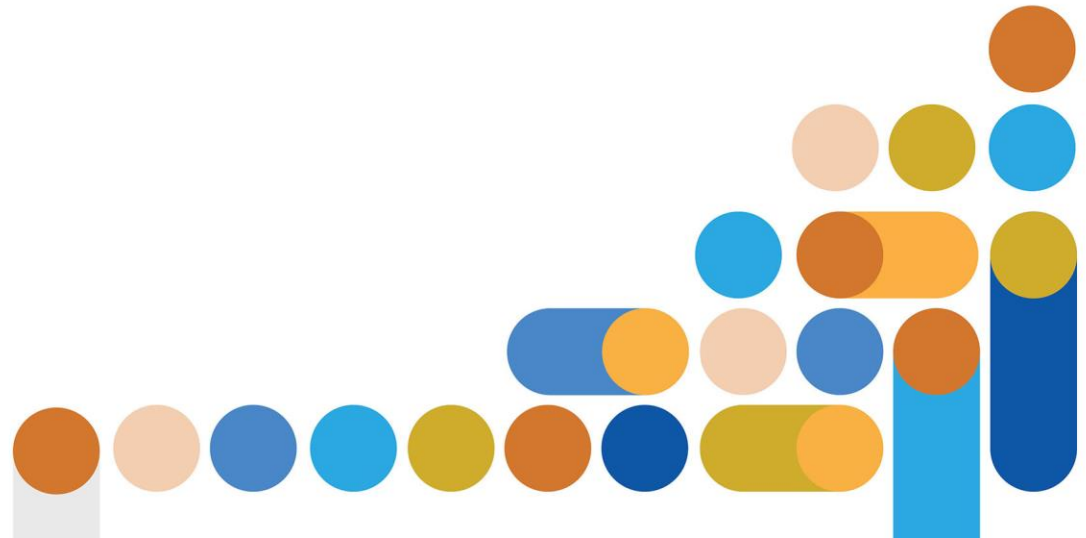
- Oracy is the ability to express oneself fluently and effectively in spoken language, encompassing speaking and listening skills

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ChatGPT, Why is Oracy Important?

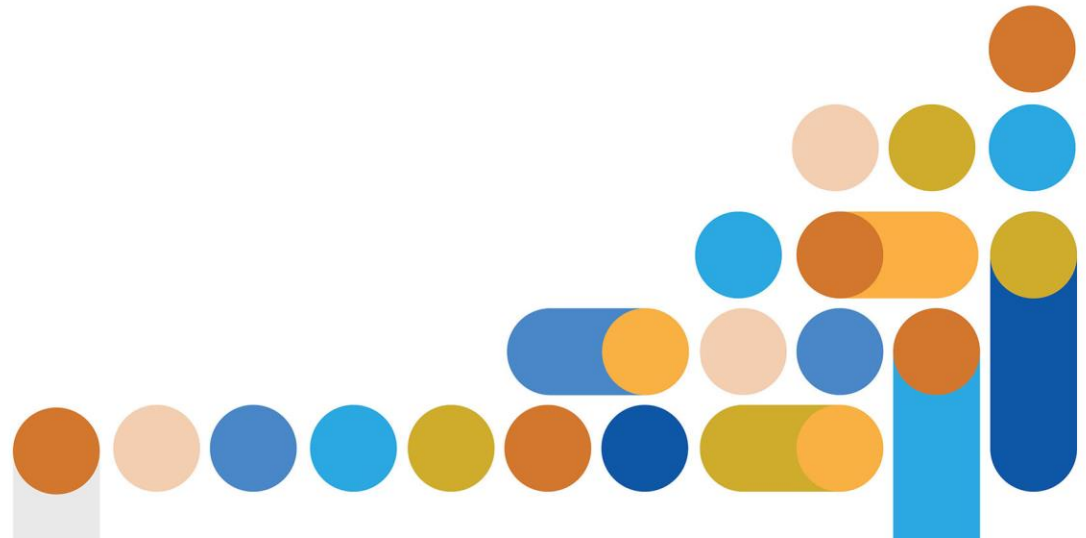
- Oracy is important because it enhances communication, critical thinking, and social interaction, enabling effective participation in personal, academic, and professional contexts

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ChatGPT, Why is Oracy Important to HE?

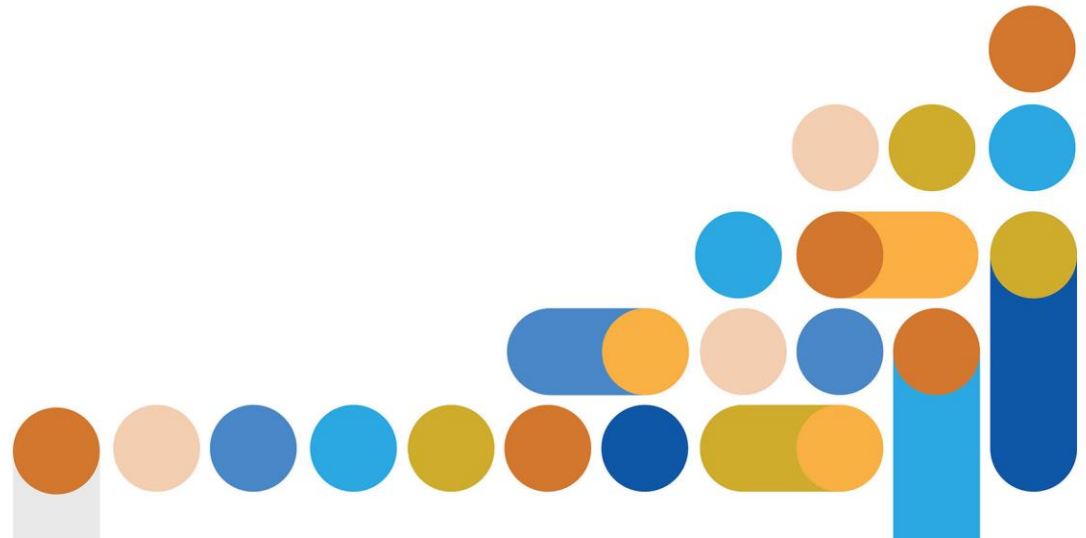
- Oracy is crucial in higher education as it fosters academic discussions, collaboration, and the ability to articulate ideas clearly, preparing students for professional and societal engagement.

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ChatGPT, Why isn't Oracy Important Anymore?

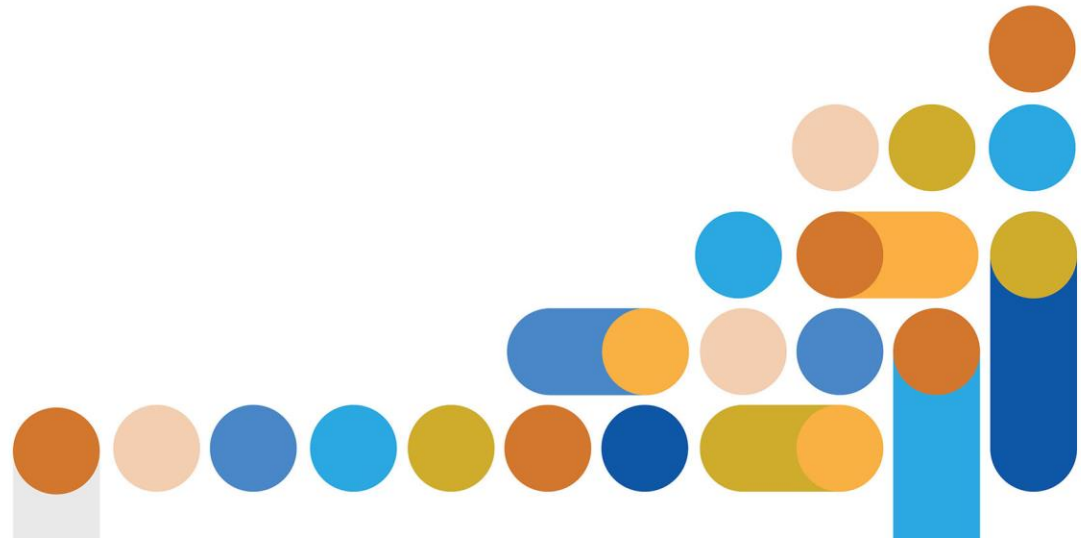
- Oracy may seem less emphasized today due to the rise of digital communication, self-paced learning, and a focus on written and technical skills over verbal interaction in some contexts.

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The AI Hallucination

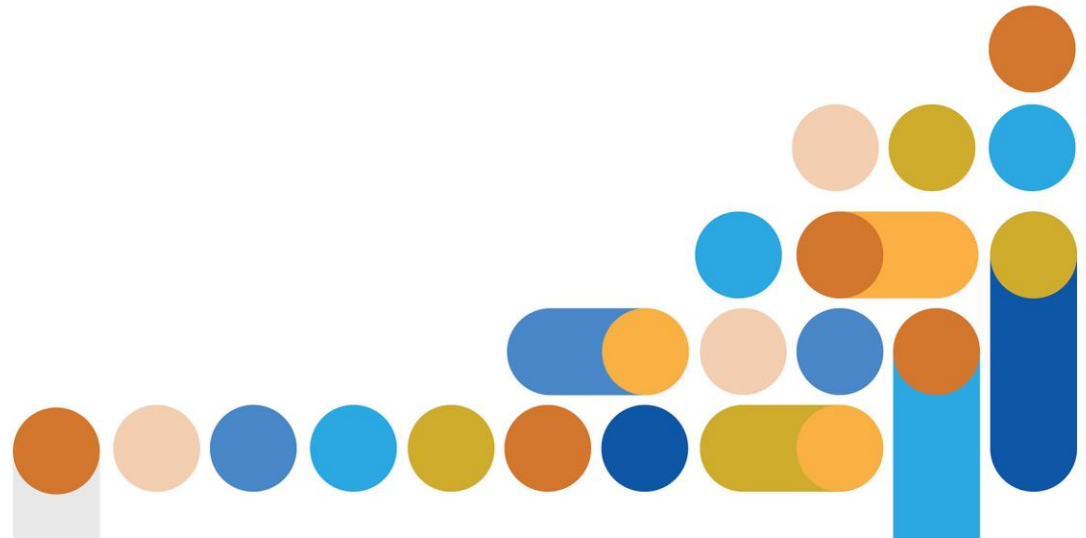
- 'Intelligence' may be a misnomer
- Degenerative AI

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Oracy in LANGUAGECERT Academic



Listening

40 min



Reading

50 min



Writing

50 min

30 questions

Part 1: Listen to 7 unfinished dialogues & choose the appropriate completion or continuation from the three-option multiple-choice responses

Part 2: Listen to 5 conversations & answer 2 three-option multiple-choice questions for each one

Part 3: Listen to a monologue & fill in 7 gaps in a note, message pad or form with no more than 3 words each time

Part 4: Listen to a group discussion/debate & answer 6 three-option, follow-up multiple-choice questions

Each part is played twice.

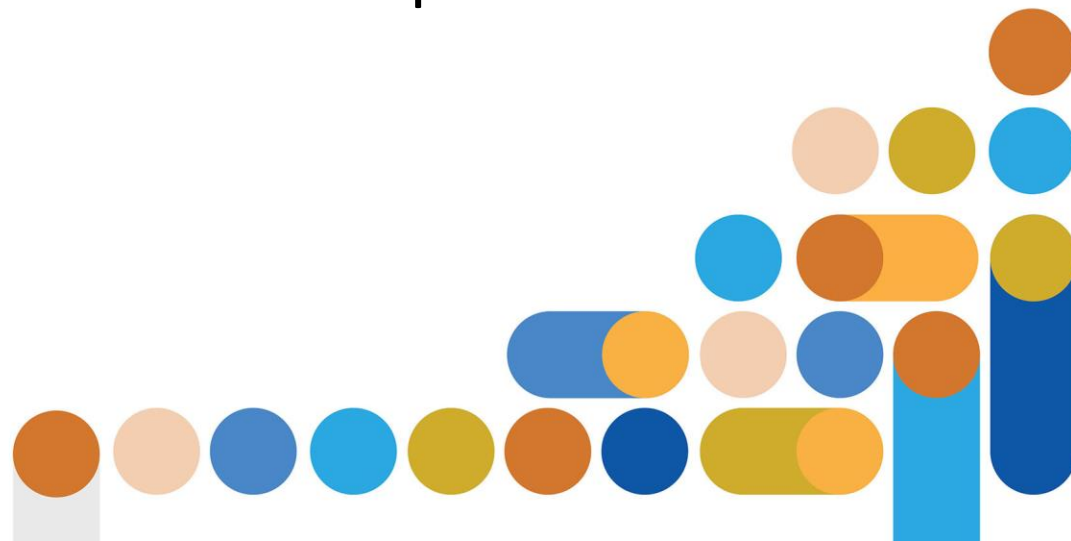
- Register
- Formality
- Range of accents
- Group discussion

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Oracy in LANGUAGECERT Academic

→ **Listening**
40 min

→ **Reading**
50 min

→ **Writing**
50 min

 **Speaking**
14 min

4 parts

Questions/role-play/read aloud/presentation

Part 1: Give & spell name & give country of origin. Answer up to 5 questions on different topic areas

Part 2: 2 situations are presented by the interlocutor. Candidates are expected to respond to questions and initiate interactions

Part 3: Read a given text out loud & answer several questions about the text

Part 4: Candidates are given 1 minute preparation time. Prepare, deliver a presentation in response to a given stimulus by the interlocutor & talk for 2 minutes. Answer related questions

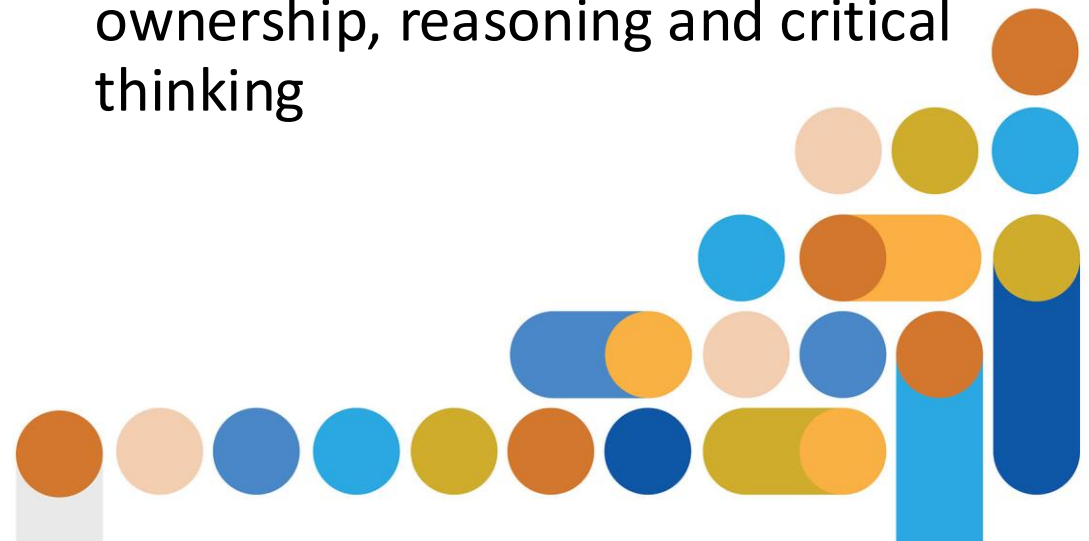
- 1:1 facilitated by human examiner
- Overall mark for task fulfilment and communicative effect awarded by examiner and double weighted
- Range of speaking skills in variety of academic domains
- Follow-up questions prompt ownership, reasoning and critical thinking

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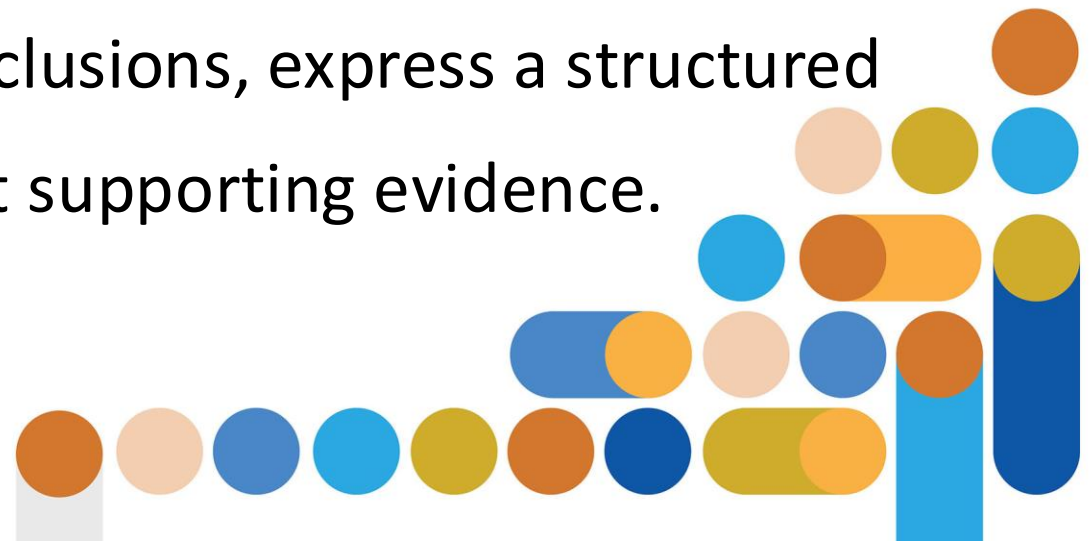


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Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is at the very centre of the nexus of verbal reasoning, academic writing and independent thinking. In essence, critical thinking is about ‘the argument’. Identifying, analysing and evaluating the explicit or implicit message — and the supporting evidence — communicated in speech, writing or any form of media. The flip side of the critical thinking coin is the ability to come to one’s own conclusions, express a structured and well-reasoned perspective, and present supporting evidence.



Benefits of Oracy

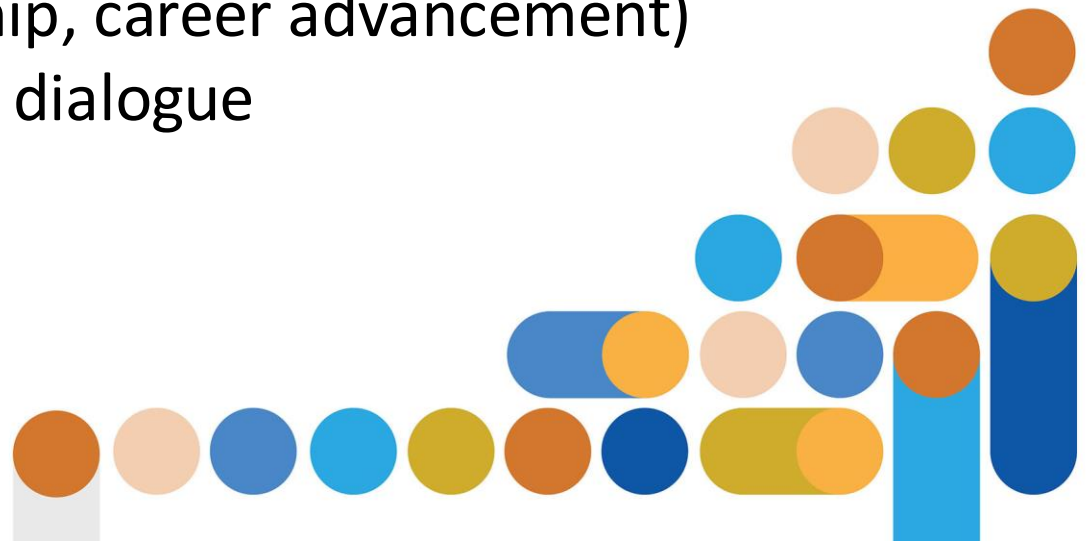
- Academic success (improves retention and learning)
- Supports literacy
- Promotes collaborative learning
- Boosts critical thinking
- Improves confidence
- Develops social skills, including empathy
- Fosters creativity
- Professional advantages (workplace, leadership, career advancement)
- Promotes inclusion and engenders respectful dialogue
- Enhances emotional expression

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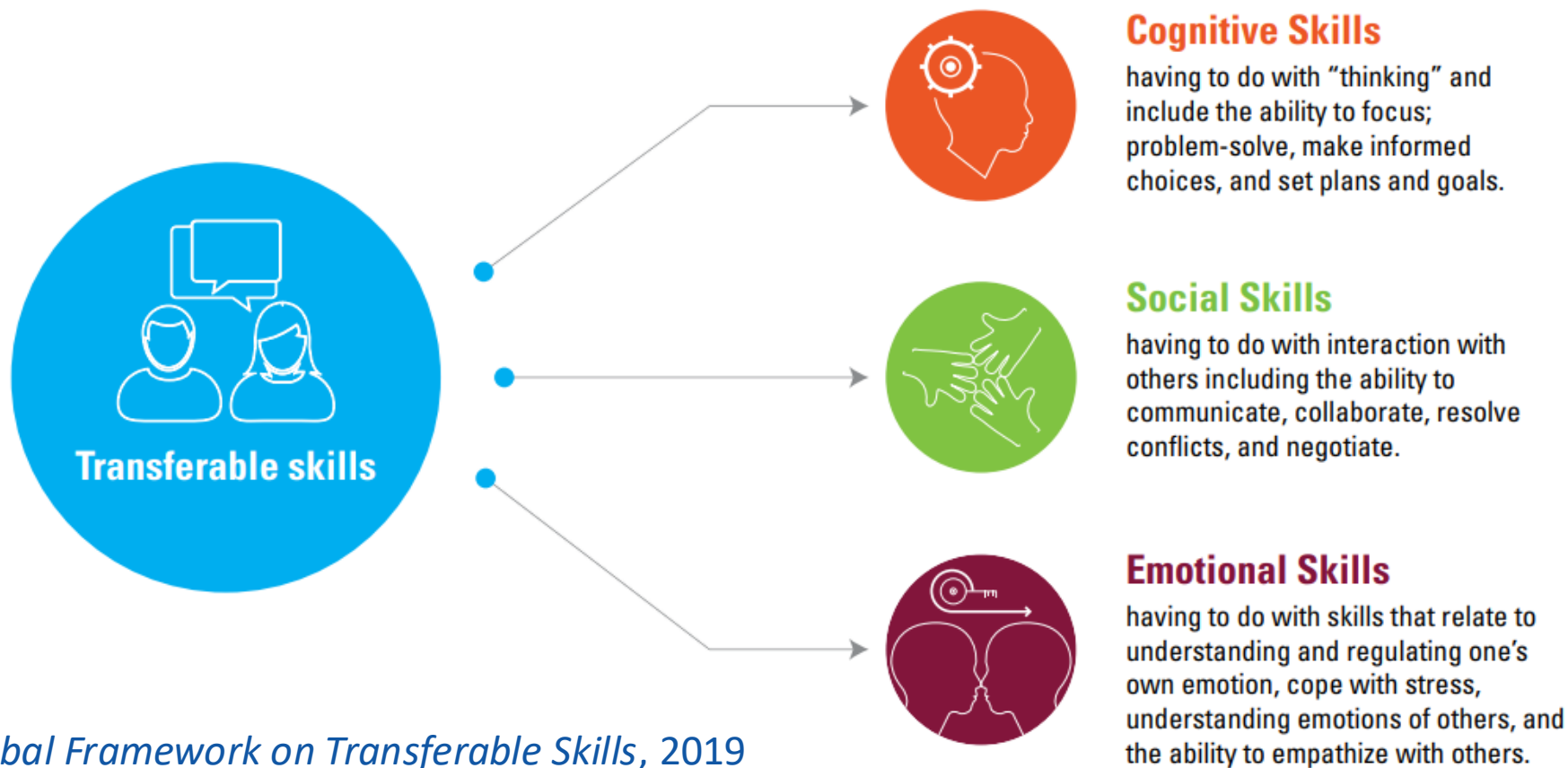
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A Wider Set of Transferable Skills | 'Magic Glue'



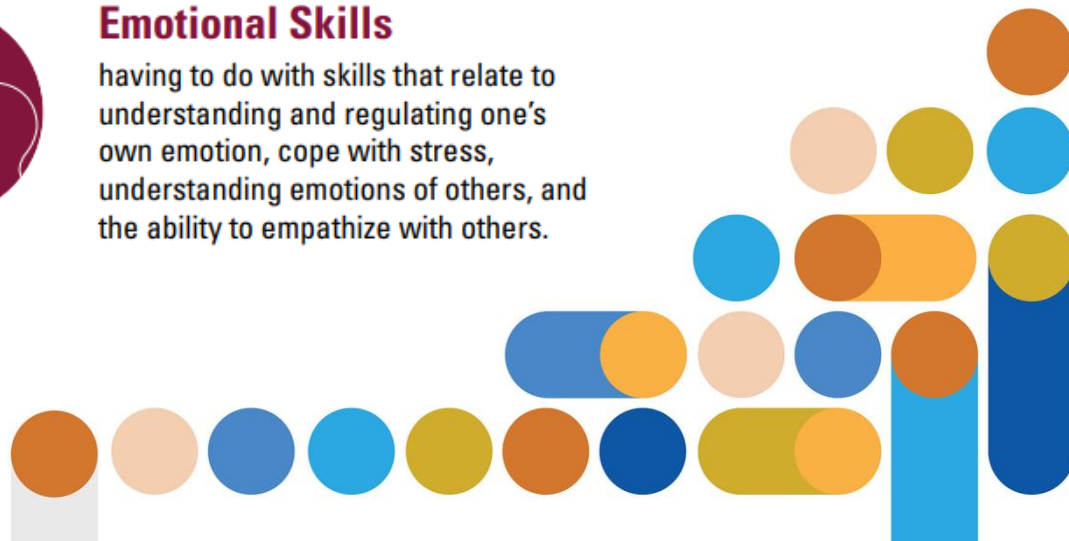
UNICEF, *Global Framework on Transferable Skills*, 2019

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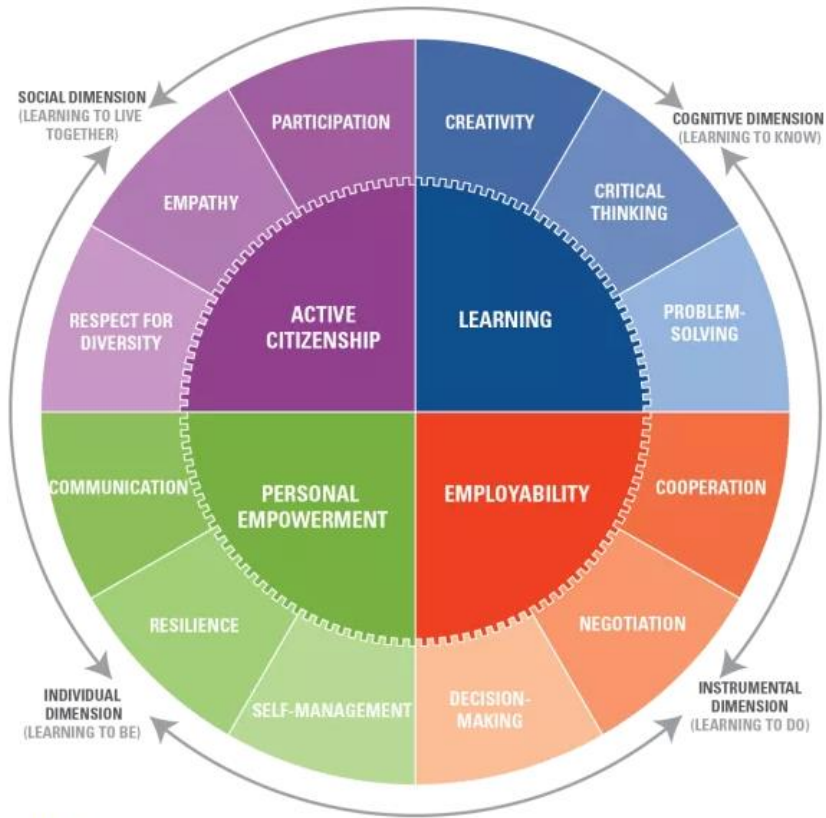
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Unlocking the Value of Transferable Skills



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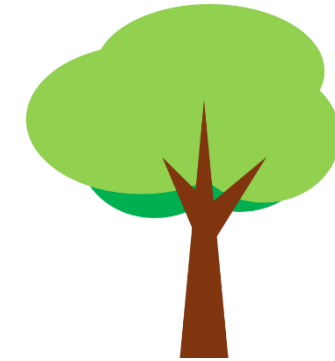
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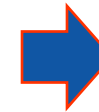
Education



Knowledgeable Society

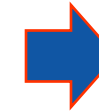


**Employment &
Entrepreneurship**



Economic Development

Personal Empowerment



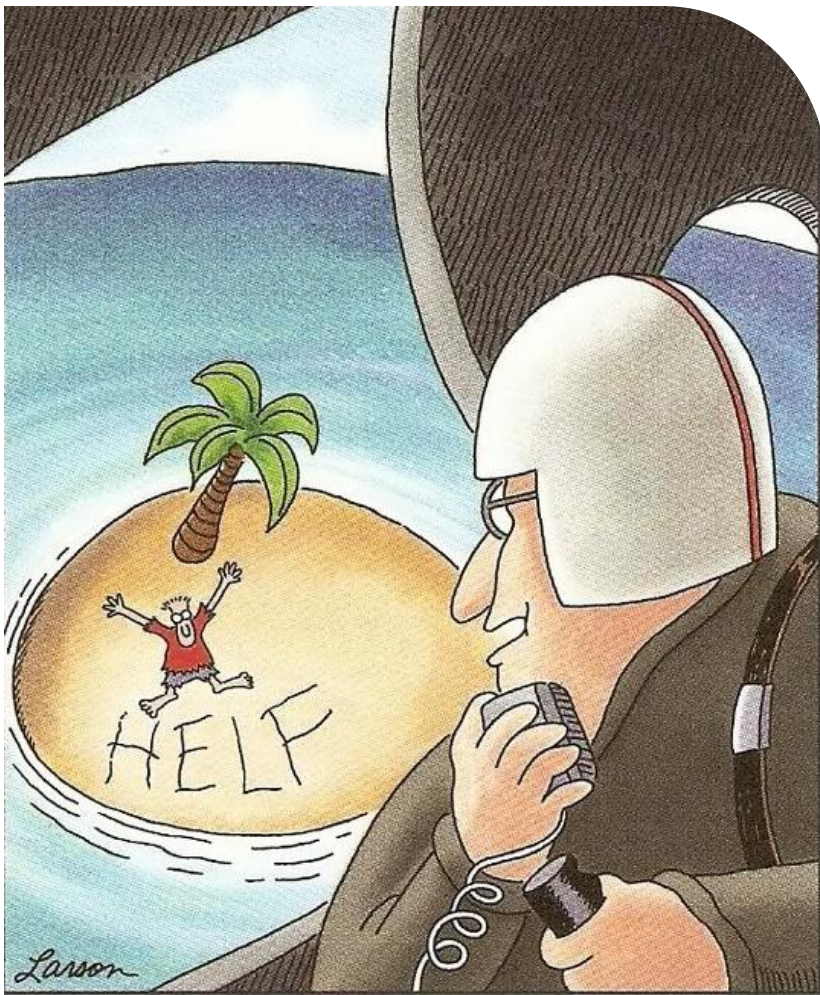
**Wellbeing, Inclusion,
Life Choices**

Active Citizenship



**Social Cohesion, Peace,
Stability**





“Wait! Wait! Cancel that. ... I guess it says ‘helf.’”

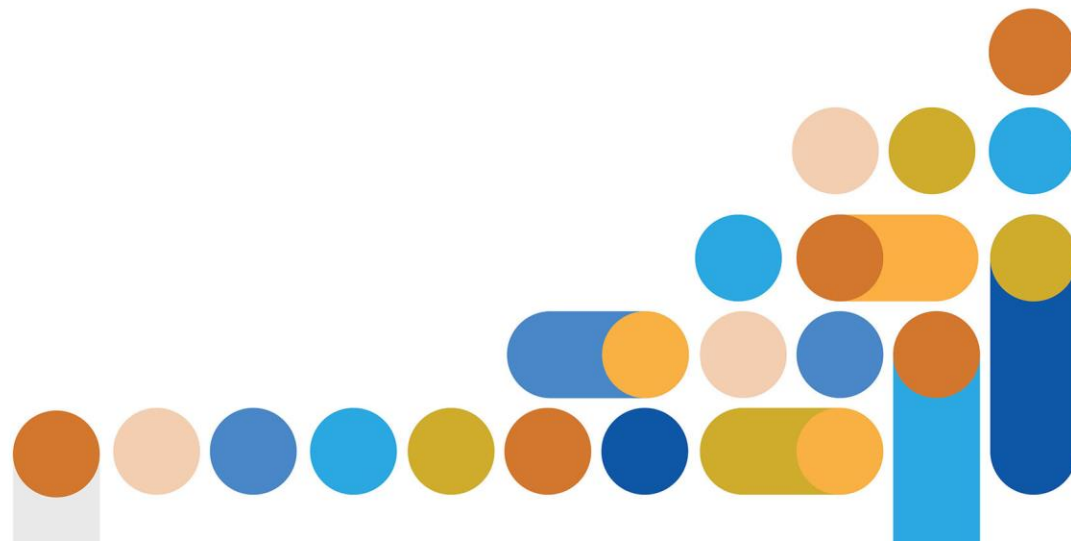
Literacy is important...
but so are other
literacies, e.g. critical
thinking, problem solving
and empathy

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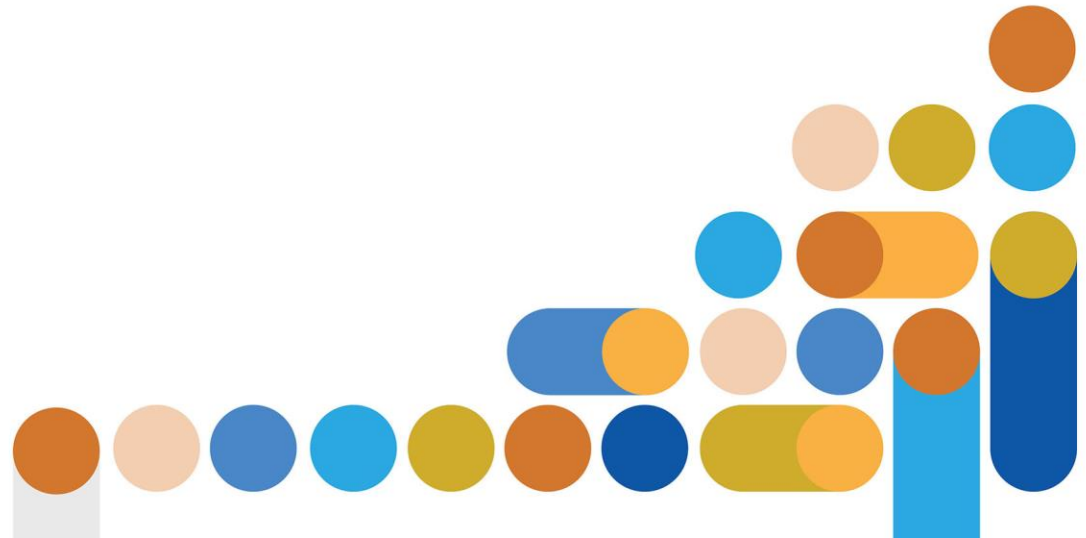


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More Issues

- Students must work out their chosen subject areas for themselves
- Able to both write and verbalise their knowledge and understanding
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Learner Journeys

Knowledge of languages is the doorway to wisdom
Roger Bacon, Philosopher and Scientist

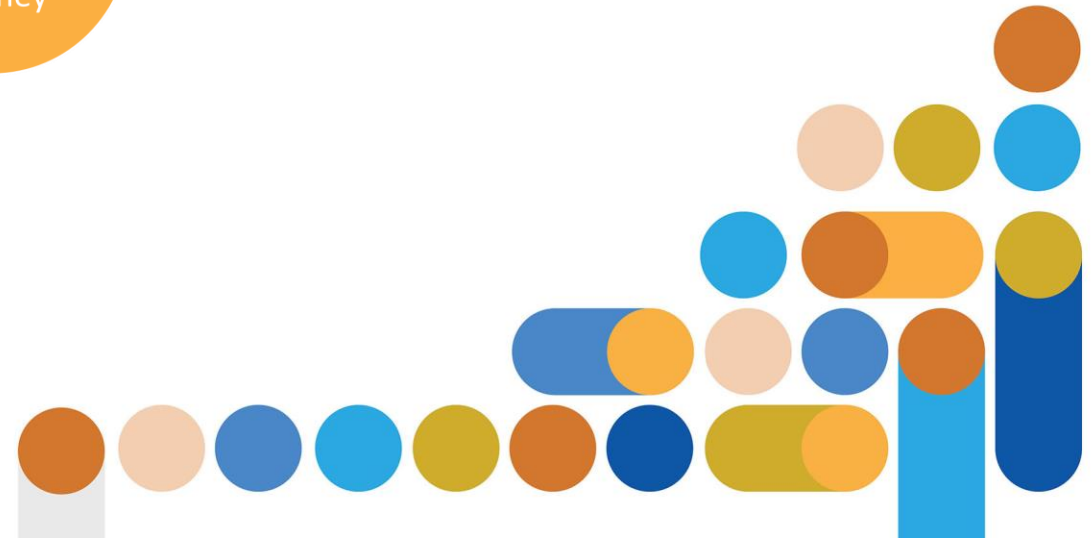


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Transferable Skills at a Key Intersection



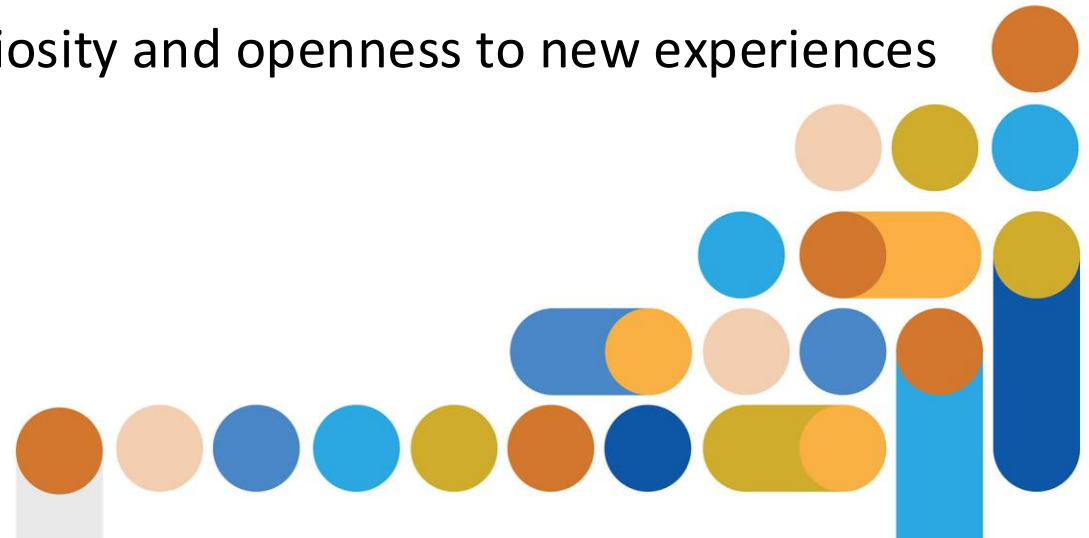
- Cognitive flexibility and problem solving
- Personal growth and resilience
- Emotional intelligence and communication
- Cultural awareness and identity
- Curiosity and openness to new experiences

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Domain Nomads Navigating Shifting Sands



Flexible, mobile and versatile to move between different fields, sectors, disciplines and industries

Agile, adaptive and lifelong learners equipped to navigate personal, academic and professional lives

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Radical Kindness:

caring for the souls of one another in our practice

- Not a deficit position – nurturing what language learners already have, acknowledging the linguistic knowledge and transferable skills language learners bring
- Not critiquing international students
- All voices must be valued equally – fostering confidence and pride in authentic voices, regardless of linguistic background
- The value of international students is reciprocal – education is about empathy, not about being ‘othered’
- This is about respecting one another’s humanity – being seen and treated as human

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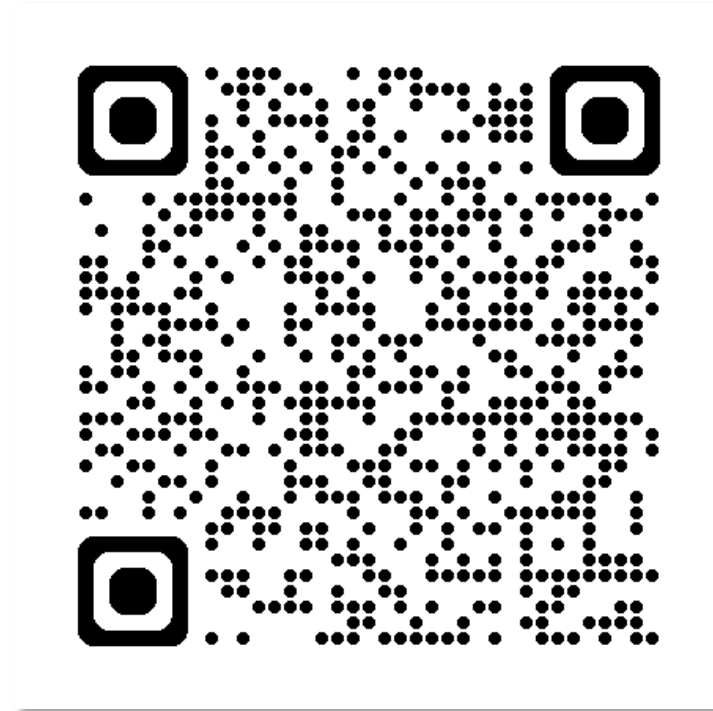
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Thank You!



catherine.jones@peoplecert.org



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