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UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

BUSINESS SCHOOL



Gender Equality, Diversity and Sustainability in Higher Education

Second Conference Programme • 24 August 2026

Sir Duncan Rice Library, 7th Floor

Conference Programme

Time	Session
09:00 - 09:50	Registration - coffee and cakes
09:50 - 10:00	Welcome from the Business School Professor Azizul Islam (University of Aberdeen - Director of the GAS centre)
10:00 - 10:45	Keynote Dr Rachel Shanks (University of Aberdeen - Interdisciplinary Institute: Director of Social Inclusion & Cultural Diversity)
10:45 - 11:00	The impact of climate change on women in higher education and beyond Dr Thereza R.S. de Aguiar (University of Aberdeen, Business School), Professor Shamima Haque (University of Dundee) and Dr Elham Moonesirust (University of Aberdeen, Business School)
11:00 - 11:15	Comfort break
11:15 - 12:00	Panel 1
12:00 - 13:30	Buffet Lunch
13:30 - 14:30	Parallel Presentation Session
14:30 - 14:45	Comfort break
14:45 - 15:30	Panel 2
15:30 - 16:00	Closure Dr Thereza R.S. de Aguiar (University of Aberdeen, Business School) and Professor Shamima Haque (University of Dundee)
16:00 - 17:00	Farewell networking

Organisers: Dr Thereza R.S. de Aguiar (University of Aberdeen, Business School) and Professor Shamima Haque (University of Dundee, School of Business).

Panel Sessions

Each panel session of 45 minutes long, which means maximum 30 minutes discussions and 15 minutes for Q&A. Due to limited time for panel sessions, we will focus on questions from the audience that are directly related to the panel discussions.

Panel 1 > 11:15 - 12:00

Title	Gender equality and diversity in career progression, gender pay gap and gender pension gap
Moderator	Professor Jing Cai (University of Aberdeen - The Business School Director of Staffing)
Panellists	• Professor Keith Bender (University of Aberdeen - The Jaffrey Chair in Political Economy at the University of Aberdeen and the Business School Director of External Engagement and Impact) • Ms Janine Chalmers (University of Aberdeen - Head of Organisational Development) • Dr Eva Pocher (University of Aberdeen - Education Lead for the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion committee at the Business School) - Online
Questions	1. How is Higher Education considering gender equality and diversity in career progression, payment and pension? 2. What can be improved? 3. How can this be achieved? 4. Can/should these issues be included as part of Athena SWAN requirements (in the UK context)?

Panel 2 > 14:45 - 15:30

Title	Gender equality and diversity and wellbeing in Higher Education
Moderator	Dr Naser Makarem (University of Aberdeen - Business School Equality and Diversity lead)
Panellists	• Ms Becky Choat (SWAN Scotland - Delivery and Development Manager) • Ms Lucy Drysdale (University of Aberdeen - Co-chair of the Neurodiversity Network) • Ms Dorry McLaughlin (CEO Scottish Autism) • Professor Alexandros Zangelidis (University of Aberdeen - Chair in Economics)
Questions	1. How do you perceive the intersection between gender equality and diversity and wellbeing in Higher Education? 2. What can be improved? 3. How can this be achieved?

Parallel Presentation Sessions

Two presentations sessions with a maximum 20 minutes for presentations and 10 minutes for Q&A for each accepted report. There will be facilities to present using PowerPoint. We are asking for presenters to send their presentation in advance to the conference email address (gedconference@abdn.ac.uk) so, we will have all presentations ready in the assigned rooms.

Venue: Meeting Room 1 > **Chair:** Dr Muhammed Bolomope

Topic: Gender Issues and Reporting

Time	Presenter	Co-Author(s)	Title
13:30 - 14:00	Dr Anastasia Aldelina Lijadi (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis - IIASA) Online presentation	N/A	Advancing Gender Equality in International Research Organizations: Lessons from the IIASA Gender Equality Report 2023- 2025
14:00 - 14:30	Ms Joana S. Tagoe (University of Aberdeen)	Supervisors: Professor Shamima Haque and Dr Thereza R.S de Aguiar	Shadow Report Analysis of a Case Study of a High Gender Pay Gap Financial Organisation

Venue: Meeting Room 2 > **Chair:** Professor Ignacio Canales

Topic: Global Gender Issue

Time	Presenter	Co-Author(s)	Title
13:30 - 14:00	Ms Benafsha Attar (Administrative Officer, University of Dundee; Incoming PhD Student in Management, King's College London)	N/A	Beyond Access: Rebuilding Futures, Belonging and Professional Aspirations Among Afghan Women in UK Higher Education
14:00 - 14:30	Ms Wei Liu (University of Aberdeen)	N/A	Caught Between Chopsticks: Gender, Confucianism, and the Accounting Profession

Parallel Presentation Sessions

Venue: Meeting Room 3 > **Chair:** Professor Azizul Islam

Topic: Sustainable Development and Access to Technology in Higher Education

Time	Presenter	Co-Author(s)	Title
13:30 - 14:00	Ms Nabila Kamal; (School of Business & Entrepreneurship Independent University, Bangladesh - IUB)	N/A	The Elephant in the Room: Is Tech-Led Business Education the New STEM for Women? Gendered Barriers in Developing Economies
14:00 - 14:30	Mr Sedat Coskun and Mrs Selin Coşkun (Manisa Celal Bayar University and University of Aberdeen)	Professor Audrey Paterson and Dr Bill Jackson (University of Aberdeen)	Sustainable Development Goals in Accounting Education: A Comparative Multi-Tool Text Analysis of Scottish University Curricula

Venue: Seminar Room 224 > **Chair:** Dr Elham Moonesirust

Topic: Wellbeing at the workforce

Time	Presenter	Co-Author(s)	Title
13:30 - 14:00	Dr Loliya Kagher (University of Aberdeen)	N/A	Fragmented Selves: How conditions like Uterine Fibroids, Endometriosis Challenge the Academic Roles, Identities and Organisational Trust of Women Lecturers in Nigerian Higher
14:00 - 14:30	Dr Thereza R.S. de Aguiar (University of Aberdeen)	Professor Shamima Haque (University of Dundee)	Disclosure on Gender and Neurodiversity in Higher Education

Speakers Bio

Organisers

Dr Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar

is a Senior Lecturer in Accountancy at the University of Aberdeen and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Her research interests are closely related to corporate social responsibility and social and environmental accounting, exploring issues such as gender, climate change, environment in financial statements and accounting education. Thereza has more than 16 years of experience of teaching and research in the UK.

She has published her work in interdisciplinary journals such as: Public Management Review, Gender Work and Organisation, Journal Business Ethics, Accounting Forum, Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal and Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space. In relation to the accounting profession qualifications and memberships, Dr de Aguiar is Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA), Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA) and ACCA Certified Accounting Technician (ACCA CAT).



Professor Shamima Haque

is a Professor of Accounting at the University of Dundee Business School. Previously, she held positions at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia, and the University of Aberdeen, UK. Shamima's primary research interest lies in the field of corporate social and environmental accounting and accountability and related disclosure practices. This includes a focus on carbon accounting, human rights, labor rights, and gender.

Shamima has published in a range of highly regarded peer-reviewed journals, including Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, Accounting Forum, Accounting and Business Research, Critical Perspectives on Accounting, Financial Accountability and Management, Journal of Accounting Literature and Gender, Work & Organization.



Keynote Speaker

Dr Rachel Shanks (she/her)

is the Director for Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity at the Interdisciplinary Institute, University of Aberdeen. She has been a law lecturer, employment rights advisor, trade union organiser and adult learning tutor. She is a Senior Lecturer in Education and conducts research on teacher induction and mentoring, children's human rights education, and school uniform and dress code policies.



Speakers Bio

Technical Committee

Professor Muhammad Azizul Islam

is Professor of Sustainability Accounting & Transparency, Chair in Accountancy, Director of Research for Accounting at the University of Aberdeen Business School and Director of the centre for Governance, Accountability and Sustainability. A Chartered Accountant (CAANZ), he is internationally recognised for his leadership in sustainability accounting research, focusing on issues such as corporate human rights, modern slavery disclosures, climate change accounting, and anti-bribery measures. He collaborates globally and has received major funding from bodies like ACCA, CPA Australia, and UKRI.



His award-winning research has been published in top journals and has influenced policy and public discourse, with features in major media outlets including the BBC, The Guardian, and Al Jazeera, The Times, Sunday Post, Conversation, The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, among many others. Aziz has earned multiple awards, including two Vice-Chancellor Excellence awards for research project (2022) and research impact (2023), was a finalist for the Green Gown Award (2022, 2023), and the Project of the Year category at the Times Higher Education Awards in 2023, and received the Scottish Fair Trade Award in 2022.

His research appears in internationally recognised high-impact journals, including Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, Critical Perspective on Accounting, British Accounting Review, British Journal of Management, European Accounting Review, Accounting Forum, Accounting, Organisation and Society, Journal of Business Ethics.

Dr Naser Makarem

is a Lecturer in Accounting at the University of Aberdeen. He holds a PhD in Accounting from the University of Aberdeen and has taught a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in financial and management accounting. He is actively involved in PhD supervision and research, with primary interests in financial reporting, particularly earnings management and financial disclosure practices.

More recently, his research has expanded to include non-financial reporting and gender-related issues in accounting. Prior to entering academia, Dr Makarem gained extensive professional experience in auditing, having worked with several audit firms.



Speakers Bio

Panelists - Panel 1

Professor Keith Bender

is the Professor of Economics to the Jaffrey Chair in Political Economy at the University of Aberdeen and the Business School Director of External Engagement and Impact.

His research mainly focuses on Labour Economics where he has published widely on a diverse range of topics on wage determination, unemployment and precarity, educational and skills mismatch, performance related pay and health and the (labour) economic dimensions of a Just Transition. He has also published a number of papers on gender issues both in Economics, but also in conjunction with other disciplines.

He has served a number of administrative positions within the Business School including Interim Head of School, Director of People, and co-chairing the School's Athena SWAN committee when it was initially awarded the Bronze award.



Professor Jing Cai

holds a Chair in Innovation, where her scholarly pursuits are centred around various facets of firm innovation strategy, dynamic capabilities, and innovation performance. Her academic journey includes the attainment of a PhD in Technology Management from the University of Sheffield and an MBA from the University of Science and Technology, Beijing. Notably, prior to her career in academia, she earned her first degree in Mechatronics from Tongji University, China, and worked as an electronic engineer.

Jing's scholarly contributions extend across diverse interdisciplinary domains within management, with her work featured in publications such as Research Policy, Long Range Planning, and the British Journal of Management.

Her current research interests are marked by a keen focus on open strategy and open innovation. Specifically, she explores how platform hub firms engage end users in the open strategizing process, emphasizing procedural transparency and inclusion to foster product development. Moreover, she is deeply intrigued by the dynamic perspective of the Attention-Based View and its far-reaching implications for firm strategy and performance. Additionally, Jing harbours a strong enthusiasm for enriching her expertise in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), its practical applications in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the intricate dynamics of AI-human interactions.

Her recent research project also examines female identity regulation and identity construction, extending her work on gendered organisational dynamics.



Speakers Bio

Panelists - Panel 1

Ms Janine Chalmers

is Head of Organisational Development at the University of Aberdeen.

Dr Eva Pocher

Shortly after the completion of the PhD in Economics at the University of Aberdeen in 2011, Dr Pocher joined the Employment Research Institute (ERI) at the Edinburgh Napier University as Research Assistant and subsequently worked as a Research Associate in the EU & Welsh Government project "Women Adding Value to the Economy" (WAVE) at the Cardiff University. From 2016 to 2021, she was employed as Lecturer in Economics at the University of Glasgow, teaching and coordinating courses at both undergraduate, postgraduate and MBA level. Dr Pocher also led the development of new courses and programmes, and acting as Undergraduate Convenor for year 1, 2 and 3 in Economics and as Undergraduate Assessment Officer in Economics.



In 2022, she joined the University of Aberdeen's Business School as Lecturer in Economics, teaching Macroeconomic Courses such as Labour Market Economics and Global Economy. Furthermore, Dr Pocher is currently the Senior Personal Tutor of the Business School, the UG Studies Coordinator in Economics, Go Abroad Tutor in Economics, Student Experience lead in Economics and the Education lead in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) committee at the Business School of the University of Aberdeen.

Her research interests are Labour Economics, International Labour Migration and Gender Pay Gaps.

Speakers Bio

Panelists - Panel 1

Ms Becky Choat

is is the Delivery and Development Manager at SWAN Scotland, an autistic-led charity supporting autistic women, trans individuals, girls and non-binary people across Scotland. She leads the organisation's training, consultancy and community programmes, working with universities, NHS services, public bodies and third-sector organisations to develop more inclusive, accessible and neuro-affirming practice.

As a late-diagnosed autistic woman and parent, Becky combines professional expertise with lived experience to explore the relationship between identity, gender, inclusion and wellbeing. Her work highlights how psychological safety, belonging, accessible environments and meaningful participation are fundamental to enabling people to flourish in education, health and wellbeing and employment.

Through both strategic consultancy and peer-led community development, Becky is passionate about ensuring that lived experience informs meaningful change, creating environments where diversity is recognised as a strength and wellbeing is embedded in everyday practice rather than treated as an afterthought.



Ms Lucy Drysdale

I am an Information Assistant at Sir Duncan Rice Library.

I'm keenly interested in neurodiversity and am particularly focused on dyspraxia due to having this condition myself.

I will be focused on welcoming people into the network, sharing research & resources, and any social media involvement.



Speakers Bio

Panelists - Panel 2

Ms Dorry McLaughlin

Dorry has been the CEO at Scottish Autism for seven years. She joined Scottish Autism from Viewpoint where she was Chief Executive for eight years. Dorry has worked in housing, support and care services for over 40 years including spells in local government and with the housing regulator in England. Although much of Dorry's experience before joining Scottish Autism has been around working with older people many of the issues autistic people face share a similar dynamic.



Dorry brings to Scottish Autism expertise in leading the development of innovative services which support people who often live with complex needs and who are marginalised and disadvantaged simply by being who they are or living where they live. Dorry is passionate about hearing the voices of everybody Scottish Autism supports and all autistic communities however they wish to communicate.

Professor Alexandros Zangelidis

of the University of Aberdeen, Business School, is an empirical labour and health economist with extensive expertise in quantitative methods, applying statistical and econometric techniques to analyse large and complex datasets.

His research has focused on issues related to well-being, socio-economic health inequalities, and the evaluation of healthcare policies, with recent work exploring the labour market implications of chronic health conditions, such as thyroid dysfunctions. Professor Zangelidis' research has had policy impact, leading to invitations to join advisory expert groups and provide testimony to the Scottish Parliament and Government.



Presenters Primary Reports

Dr Anastasia Aldelina Lijadi

Affiliation: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

Submission Title: Advancing Gender Equality in International Research Organizations: Lessons from the IIASA Gender Equality Report 2023- 2025

Science plays a critical role in addressing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, energy transitions, and population change. To effectively address these complex issues, research institutions must be able to attract, retain, and support diverse talent. My work focuses on advancing gender equality, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within international research organizations, using evidence-based approaches to understand workforce dynamics and identify opportunities for institutional improvement. The IIASA Gender Equality Report 2025 provides a unique case study of how a global scientific institution can monitor progress, identify gaps, and implement targeted actions to create a more inclusive research environment.

I do this work because I believe that equity and scientific excellence are inseparable. Research organizations achieve better outcomes when they benefit from diverse perspectives, experiences, and approaches. Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice; it also strengthens innovation, creativity, and the relevance of scientific knowledge. When barriers limit participation or advancement, institutions risk losing valuable talent and reducing their ability to respond to societal challenges. Understanding these barriers and developing practical solutions is therefore essential to building resilient and effective scientific organizations.

The IIASA Gender Equality Report 2025 demonstrates both significant progress and continuing challenges. In 2025, IIASA employed 470 staff members representing 61 nationalities and achieved near overall gender parity, with 243 men and 227 women. Recruitment trends were particularly encouraging, with women accounting for 59% of new hires. At the same time, women remained underrepresented in senior scientific and leadership roles, where men held 67% of management positions. These findings reflect patterns seen across the global scientific community and highlight the importance of sustained institutional action.

This research engages a broad range of stakeholders. Within IIASA, the findings support senior leadership, human resources professionals, managers, researchers, software developers, operational staff, and early-career scientists. Beyond the institute, the work is relevant to universities, research institutes, funding organizations, policymakers, and international organizations seeking evidence-based approaches to gender equality and inclusion. The ultimate beneficiaries are not only women and underrepresented groups, but the entire research community, which gains from more transparent systems, stronger collaboration, improved workplace culture, and enhanced scientific excellence.

A key contribution of this work is its focus on institutional systems rather than individual outcomes alone. The report examines representation, recruitment, career advancement, leadership, work-life balance, pay equity, and the integration of gender perspectives into scientific activities. By monitoring these dimensions annually, institutions can move beyond assumptions and identify where interventions are needed most. For example, the report



Presenters Primary Reports

documented a relatively small overall gender pay gap of 2.5%, demonstrating the value of continuous monitoring and evidence-based policy adjustments. Career progression data similarly helps identify where support mechanisms may be needed to ensure equitable advancement opportunities.

Importantly, the research has already contributed to institutional change. Over the implementation period of the IIASA Gender Equality Plan, the institute strengthened gender-disaggregated data collection, expanded awareness and training activities, enhanced inclusive recruitment practices, established mechanisms for consultation through the Forum for Gender Equality and Inclusion, and increased accountability through annual reporting. These measures have helped embed gender equality considerations into everyday institutional processes rather than treating them as standalone initiatives.

Looking ahead, the next stage of IIASA's work will focus on translating progress into lasting structural change. Priority areas include strengthening leadership pathways for women and underrepresented groups through mentoring, sponsorship, and leadership development; embedding DEI considerations more deeply into scientific research and stakeholder engagement; improving career development and recognition processes; fostering inclusive communication across a multicultural and multigenerational workforce; and expanding the use of data-driven monitoring to measure institutional progress and effectiveness. These efforts are particularly important given the institute's international workforce and its role in producing policy-relevant science for a global audience.

The significance of this research extends beyond a single organization. As an international institute with member organizations across Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, IIASA provides valuable insights into how research institutions can create more equitable and inclusive environments while maintaining scientific excellence. The lessons learned contribute to broader discussions on gender equality in science and offer practical examples that other organizations can adapt to their own contexts. By strengthening inclusion and removing systemic barriers, research institutions can better reflect the societies they serve and improve their capacity to generate innovative solutions to global challenges.

Ultimately, advancing gender equality is not merely an organizational objective; it is an investment in the future of science. Inclusive institutions are better positioned to attract talent, foster innovation, inform evidence-based policy, and address the interconnected challenges facing humanity. Through continued monitoring, engagement, and action, research organizations can create environments where all individuals have the opportunity to contribute, succeed, and make an impact.

Presenters Primary Reports

Ms Wei Liu

Affiliation: University of Aberdeen

Submission Title: Caught Between Chopsticks: Gender, Confucianism, and the Accounting Profession

Research Overview

When do gendered professional inequalities begin? This study argues that they begin not at the workplace door but in the cultural processes that shape professional aspirations during and even before higher education. Taking the Chinese accounting profession as its empirical site, we examine how three interconnected Confucian values, collective harmony (he), filial piety (xiao), and the gendered division of labour (nan zhu wai, nü zhu nei), function as a coordinated cultural system that channels men and women toward fundamentally different professional horizons from the earliest stages of career formation.

We draw on in-depth interviews with 52 participants across three groups: 25 currently practising accountants, 12 former accountants who changed careers, and 15 individuals who studied accounting at university but chose never to enter the profession. This three-group design allows us to observe the cultural system at different points in the professional life cycle, from the threshold of entry through active practice to departure. The third group is particularly significant for higher education: these are graduates whose educational choices were shaped by cultural expectations, and whose subsequent decisions not to practise reveal how the cultural system operates within the HE experience itself.

Our findings show that filial piety and gendered division interact to produce differentiated career horizons at the point of university subject choice, channelling daughters toward “stable” professions and sons toward ambitious ones. Gendered division and collective harmony then regulate professional identities in the workplace, casting successful women as exceptions rather than as evidence for change. The full system sustains itself by rendering culturally shaped constraints as personal preferences. From these interlocking patterns we develop the “chopsticks” metaphor: just as a single chopstick cannot grasp, no single cultural value can account for the gendered outcomes we observe.

Why This Research Matters

Gender equality strategies in higher education, including frameworks such as Athena SWAN, have made important progress in identifying and removing barriers to women’s advancement. These frameworks share a common and reasonable assumption: that inequality consists of obstacles blocking women’s professional trajectories, and that removing those obstacles will enable progress. Our research reveals a mode of inequality that this assumption does not fully capture. The Confucian cultural system we analyse does not primarily prevent women from pursuing professional ambition; it shapes what women come to regard as desirable and appropriate in the first place. This is a constitutive mode of inequality in which culture configures the professional subject rather than constraining the professional agent.

This distinction matters for HE because the constitutive process begins during the educational stage. Our data show that parental guidance informed by filial piety directs daughters into accounting for its modesty and predictability, while directing sons into the same field for its career advancement potential. By the time students arrive in business



Presenters Primary Reports

Why This Research Matters cont.

school classrooms, their professional aspirations have already been culturally configured along gendered lines. If HE institutions and business schools treat these aspirations as given starting points rather than as products of cultural processes, their career guidance, curriculum design, and equality initiatives risk inadvertently reinforcing the very patterns they seek to change. The 15 participants in our study who completed accounting degrees but never entered the profession illustrate this risk vividly: their educational investment was shaped by cultural expectations that the HE system neither recognised nor addressed.

Who We Engage With and Who Benefits

Our research engages with multiple communities within and beyond the HE sector. The primary participants include practising and former accountants as well as accounting graduates whose trajectories illuminate how cultural values operate at the intersection of education and professional life. Beyond these participants, the study speaks to accounting educators, business school leaders, and HE policymakers seeking to understand why gender disparities persist in professional pipelines despite increasing female enrolment. It is also relevant to those working with accreditation and equality frameworks such as Athena SWAN and Advance HE, particularly where these frameworks are applied in culturally diverse institutional contexts. Our use of Confucianism as an indigenous analytical lens, rather than applying Western theories to Eastern settings, offers a model for developing culturally sensitive approaches to gender equality that researchers and practitioners in other non-Western contexts may find transferable.

How This Research Makes a Difference

This study contributes in three ways. First, it provides a systematic analysis of how three Confucian values operate as a coordinated and self-reproducing cultural system shaping gender inequality across the professional life cycle, from educational choice through workplace experience to career departure. Second, it demonstrates the analytical power of indigenous cultural frameworks for understanding gendered professional outcomes, responding to calls within both accounting scholarship and management research for genuinely context-sensitive theorisation. Third, the chopsticks metaphor offers a conceptual tool that directs attention to the interaction among cultural values, to the precision with which cultural systems constitute professional subjects, and to the self-reproducing dynamics through which such systems maintain themselves.

For higher education, the most pressing implication is that equality interventions focused on removing workplace barriers will be insufficient if the cultural processes shaping aspirations upstream remain unexamined. HE institutions in culturally diverse contexts would benefit from creating pedagogical spaces in which students can recognise how cultural narratives have shaped their professional self-understanding. Accreditation frameworks that currently centre on barrier removal could be enriched by attending to the constitutive dimension of inequality, asking not only what prevents women from advancing but what shapes what women come to want. Our research suggests that making this cultural shaping visible, rather than treating gendered aspirations as natural starting points, is a necessary first step toward more effective and culturally informed gender equality practice in higher education.

Presenters Primary Reports

Ms Nabila Kamal

Affiliation: School of Business & Entrepreneurship Independent University, Bangladesh - IUB)

Submission Title: The Elephant in the Room: Is Tech-Led Business Education the New STEM for Women? Gendered Barriers in Developing Economies

Background & Significance of the Research

Business schools within higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping contemporary and future business practices. As the rate of female participation in the workforce increases, business schools now need to go beyond their traditional role of developing skilled business graduates and foster an environment in which women can thrive. Nevertheless, the presence, voices, and lived experiences of women in business schools vary relative to those of their male counterparts (Miotto et al., 2019).

Gender disparity in business schools remains a global phenomenon. In developed economies, gender disparity in academic positions in business schools has improved but remains far from parity. For instance, a review of gender disparity in business schools across Latin America, the United Kingdom and Europe suggests that more women are being appointed to faculty positions than a decade ago (Kleyn, 2025). While gender disparity in business schools in developed economies is gradually showing signs of improvement, the same cannot be said for developing economies. Empirical analysis of gender disparity in business schools of developing nations has become crucial, considering the deep-rooted historical inequalities in access to education and the unique social and technological context of these countries (Rashid, 2016).

The contemporary business world is being fundamentally shaped by AI and other technologies. To ensure that business education remains relevant in this era of technology, business schools must embrace current trends and revamp their curriculum accordingly (Utoware & Amaiya, 2014). Since the onset of the digital pivot, accelerated by challenges of recent years, business schools have been restructuring their curricula (ACBSP, 2026). This restructuring includes the integration of emerging technologies such as blockchain, cloud computing, and data analytics, alongside their business implications. Consequently, academics must also refresh their teaching strategies and deepen their understanding to incorporate essential digital skills (Rajaram, 2023). Moreover, the advent of AI-based chatbots has facilitated new forms of academic dishonesty (Memarian & Doleck, 2025). To ensure academic integrity, students should be trained on the ethical use of AI, while academics must be equipped to detect AI-generated misconduct (Chan, 2025). Moreover, academics should also be trained on tech-enabled teaching, grading, and other relevant practices (Eneye et al., 2025). Hence, it is inevitable for academics in business schools to be trained on technology.

However, the digitalisation of education has not effectively addressed entrenched gender disparities, especially in developing countries (Achrekar et al., 2026). Women have historically been disadvantaged in access to technology and digital literacy (Rashid, 2016), rendering female students and academics vulnerable to discrimination in tech-led business education. Addressing the gender disparity in business schools is even more important because, whereas gender disparity in STEM has been grabbing academic and policy-level attention, for business schools this is not the case; rather, gender disparity in business schools has been termed 'the elephant in the room' (Flynn et al., 2017, p. 26).

Presenters Primary Reports

Background & Significance of the Research cont.

This study argues that addressing the elephant in the room is now becoming inevitable with the integration of technology and AI in business education. This is particularly critical in developing economies, given the growing significance of technology and women's historical disadvantage in technological access (Rashid, 2016). Hence, this study aims to explore the challenges faced by female students and educators in technology-driven business programmes within higher education institutions in Bangladesh (a South Asian developing economy).

The study is based on the following research questions:

- In what ways is the emergence of AI and other relevant technologies affecting women in Business Education?
- How are women in Business Studies coping with changes in business education due to AI and similar technologies?
- How do the lived experiences of these women differ from those of their male counterparts?
- How can higher education institutions develop specific policies and pedagogies to address these challenges?

Methodology & Pilot Study

As the research is at the development stage, a pilot study has been conducted. Based on the feedback from the pilot study, the interview checklist is being revised. The pilot study was conducted on female students and educators in two business schools in Bangladesh. With the revised interview checklist, female educators and students from business schools in both public and private universities will be interviewed. This will ensure that the sample will cover diverse socio-economic and institutional contexts. Thematic analysis with NVivo will be employed to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. In a future study a quantitative approach can be used to develop and test hypotheses based on the qualitative data.

Conclusion

It is anticipated that the insights from this study will help relevant policymakers develop policies, pedagogies, and training acknowledging the challenges experienced by female students and educators, ensuring sustainable implementation of tech-enabled business curricula.

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Presenters Primary Reports

Ms Benafsha Attar

Affiliation: Administrative Officer, University of Dundee and incoming PhD Student in Management, King's College London

Submission Title: Beyond Access: Rebuilding Futures, Belonging and Professional Aspirations Among Afghan Women in UK Higher Education

Introduction

The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 resulted in unprecedented restrictions on women's educational participation. Girls have been denied access to secondary education and women have been excluded from universities, making Afghanistan the only country in the world where girls and women are systematically barred from secondary and higher education (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2026).

The United Kingdom has become an important destination for Afghan women seeking educational opportunities. However, gaining access to higher education is only the beginning of the educational journey. Existing research has predominantly focused on educational access, barriers and disruption among refugee populations (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Morrice, 2013). Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding how displaced women experience university life after admission, particularly regarding belonging, identity formation and future aspirations.

This ongoing study explores the experiences of Afghan women studying in UK universities, with particular attention to belonging, identity reconstruction and professional aspirations. In doing so, it contributes to contemporary discussions concerning gender equality, diversity, inclusion and refugee participation within higher education.

Why Am I Conducting This Research?

This research was motivated by a desire to move beyond narratives that portray Afghan women solely through experiences of exclusion, vulnerability and educational loss. While these realities remain important, such perspectives can unintentionally obscure the agency, resilience and aspirations demonstrated by women pursuing higher education despite significant adversity (Koyama, 2015).

Existing scholarship has made important contributions to understanding barriers to educational participation among refugee populations (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Morrice, 2013). However, less is known about how Afghan women navigate higher education once access is achieved and how participation contributes to the reconstruction of identities and future pathways.



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Why Does This Research Matter in a Wider World Context?

Higher education institutions increasingly emphasise Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), widening participation and social responsibility agendas (Ahmed, 2012). However, meaningful inclusion requires more than providing access to education; it also requires understanding how students experience belonging, engagement and progression throughout their educational journeys (Thomas, 2012).

Globally, forced displacement continues to affect millions of people, with women often experiencing intersecting forms of inequality associated with gender, migration, ethnicity, religion and educational disruption (UNHCR, 2024). Understanding the experiences of Afghan women within UK higher education therefore contributes to broader conversations concerning gender equality, social justice, refugee inclusion and sustainable educational development.

Literature and Conceptual Background

Research consistently demonstrates that refugees face substantial barriers to higher education, including financial constraints, interrupted educational trajectories, language challenges and difficulties obtaining recognition for prior qualifications (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Morrice, 2013).

For refugee women, these challenges are frequently compounded by gendered inequalities and displacement-related vulnerabilities (Koyama, 2015). Consequently, much of the existing literature focuses on educational exclusion and structural barriers. While this work remains valuable, it often positions refugee women as recipients of support rather than as active agents shaping their own futures.

Recent scholarship suggests that higher education should also be understood as a site of identity formation, belonging and future reconstruction. Belonging has been identified as a key factor influencing student engagement, wellbeing, persistence and academic success (Strayhorn, 2018). Similarly, Thomas (2012) argues that a strong sense of belonging is central to student retention and participation within higher education.

For displaced populations, belonging may be particularly significant because forced migration frequently disrupts identities, communities and future plans (Ager and Strang, 2008). Universities can therefore become spaces in which students rebuild confidence, establish new networks and develop alternative futures.

This study is also informed by intersectionality theory. Crenshaw (1991) argues that multiple dimensions of identity intersect to shape experiences of privilege and disadvantage. Afghan women navigate higher education simultaneously as women, migrants, refugees, students and, in many cases, members of ethnic and religious minority groups. These intersecting identities shape both opportunities and challenges within university environments.

Despite growing scholarly interest in refugee education, there remains limited research examining how Afghan women in UK universities experience belonging, aspiration and professional development after gaining access to higher education. This study seeks to address that gap.



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Methodology

This ongoing study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design informed by interpretivist and intersectional perspectives (Crenshaw, 1991). Data were collected from Afghan women currently studying, or who had previously studied, at UK higher education institutions. Multiple qualitative methods were used to gain rich and contextual insights into participants' experiences. These included semi-structured interviews, open-ended written responses, and informal online conversations conducted through digital communication platforms. The use of multiple forms of qualitative engagement enabled participants to share their educational journeys, experiences of belonging, aspirations, challenges and future goals in ways that were comfortable and accessible to them. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes across participants' accounts. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, were maintained throughout the study.

Preliminary Findings

REBUILDING FUTURES THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

Initial responses suggest that participants view higher education as more than an opportunity to obtain qualifications. Rather, university education is perceived as a pathway towards rebuilding futures disrupted by displacement.

Participants described aspirations to pursue professional careers and contribute meaningfully to society. These findings resonate with research suggesting that higher education can function as a mechanism for social integration, identity development and future reconstruction among displaced populations (Ager and Strang, 2008).

BELONGING AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Preliminary responses indicate that belonging is a gradual process rather than an immediate outcome. Participants described adapting to new educational environments, developing confidence over time and establishing connections within university communities.

These findings support existing research demonstrating the importance of belonging for student engagement, wellbeing and educational success (Strayhorn, 2018; Thomas, 2012).

SUPPORT SYSTEMS AS ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of support networks, including academic staff, mentors and student services.

These observations align with previous research highlighting the significance of institutional support in facilitating successful participation and progression among refugee students (Morrice, 2013; Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

How Is This Research Making a Difference?

Although preliminary, the findings offer several implications for higher education institutions. First, they suggest that universities should move beyond access-focused approaches and consider how students experience belonging, progression and professional development. Second, they highlight the importance of mentoring, culturally responsive support services and career development opportunities. In doing so, the study contributes to broader debates concerning gender equality, diversity and inclusion by providing evidence that can inform institutional policy and practice (Ahmed, 2012).

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Significance and Contribution

This study contributes to ongoing discussions concerning refugees in higher education, gender equality, diversity and wellbeing. While previous research has largely focused on barriers to educational access (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Morrice, 2013), this study shifts attention towards what happens after access is achieved.

Specifically, it explores how Afghan women rebuild aspirations, negotiate identity and imagine future professional pathways through participation in higher education. In doing so, it challenges deficit-based narratives and highlights resilience, agency and future-making among displaced women.

Conclusion

Access to higher education represents only one stage in the educational journeys of displaced women. Preliminary findings suggest that higher education may also function as a space for identity reconstruction, aspiration formation and professional development. Consistent with theories of belonging and integration (Ager and Strang, 2008; Strayhorn, 2018), participants' experiences highlight the importance of supportive and inclusive educational environments.

By moving beyond questions of access and examining how women rebuild futures through higher education, this research contributes to contemporary debates concerning gender equality, diversity and sustainability in higher education and offers insights that may help universities develop more inclusive and equitable practices.

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Submission Title: Fragmented Selves: How conditions like Uterine Fibroids, Endometriosis Challenge the Academic Roles, Identities and Organisational Trust of Women Lecturers in Nigerian Higher

Project Description

Despite growing awareness of fibroids and endometriosis and their impact on social and role identities, work and family life, the existing literature on their occupational and work-life impacts remains startlingly limited in certain cultures and is predominantly conducted in the global North and other high-income settings (Krsmanovic, A., & Dean., 2022; Giudice et al., 2023; Begho, A., & Waterman, 2023; Goosby et al., 2025). Most critically, there is a near-total absence of empirical research on the intersection of these conditions and the lives of female academic professionals in Nigeria. The impact of fibroids/endometriosis on identities (Sefah et al., 2023) and organisational trust cannot be adequately understood without considering the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, professional identity, socioeconomic status, institutional power, and cultural context. This pilot study aims to explore narratives from female academics with such conditions to generate contextually grounded evidence that genuinely promotes the well-being, professional participation, and inclusion of all academic members in such spaces.

Nigeria is one of the largest nations on the African continent, with an estimated population exceeding 200 million. Conditions such as uterine fibroids and endometriosis represent a significant yet under-addressed public health concern (Gbadegesin et al., 2021). Nigerian women experience a disproportionately high biological burden of these conditions, and they do so within a healthcare landscape characterised by significant resource constraints, limited specialist gynaecological services, entrenched cultural stigma surrounding reproductive and menstrual health, and pervasive institutional silence on women's health needs. Despite these intersecting challenges, women show resilience in the workplace and strive to maintain social and role identities.

Hence, this study aims to understand the challenges, barriers, and coping mechanisms experienced by female academics as they navigate these health concerns in higher education in Nigeria. There are about 270 higher education institutions in Nigeria, comprising 62 federal universities, 63 state universities, and 149 private universities (Punch, 2023). Consequently, based on 2022 data, there are about 17,300 female academic staff in Nigerian universities (Ode, 2022).

Aim

Understanding how reproductive health-related crises shape female academics' identity and how this informs organisational trust within higher education institutions in Nigeria.

Objectives

- Identify the impact of conditions such as uterine fibroids and endometriosis on the identities of female academics within higher education institutions in Nigeria
- Highlight barriers and organisational trust concerns identified by these female academics within higher education institutions in Nigeria because of the effects of conditions such as uterine fibroids and endometriosis

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Objectives cont.

- Provide recommendations to advance institutional reforms and cultural change to promote greater inclusivity and professional development for female academics in Nigeria.

Outcomes

1. Advance female academic roles as change agents through targeted interventions, including mentorship, networking, and partnerships.
2. Promote cultural reshaping by advancing knowledge and demonstrating culturally rich frameworks and business practices that highlight the intersections of identity and organisational trust in academic spaces.
3. Inform institutional reforms to promote well-being, professional participation, and inclusion and equality by revealing the barriers these women face.

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Submission Title: Disclosure on Gender and Neurodiversity in Higher Education

Context

Neurodiversity includes a range of conditions such as dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyscalculia, autistic spectrum and Tourette syndrome (Clouder *et al.*, 2020; Volpone & Hennekam, 2026). The following paragraphs give an overview of the literature on neurodiversity in management studies and at university campuses.

Neurodiversity in management studies

Many organisations including BIG4s, Microsoft, SAP, Ford and JP Morgan have started programs to support neurodiverse workforce, highlighting increase in employee engagement, productivity and quality (Austin & Pisano, 2017) since neurodiverse employees bring “different perspectives, different ways of thinking, and different ways of being” (Krzeminska *et al.*, 2019, p. 455). However, despite these opportunities, there are still very little understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace from a practice-based perspective (Adu *et al.*, 2025; Volpone & Hennekam, 2026). For example, neurodiversity contribution to corporate boards and corporate performance as well as how to enhance neurodiverse workforce and reduce of turnover (Adu *et al.*, 2025; Rolnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024). Moreover, few studies in this area apply qualitative methods (e.g. interviews and observations) with a clear theoretical framework (Adu *et al.*, 2025; Rolnik-Sadowska & Grabińska, 2024).

Management literature has also explored corporate disclosure on diversity and showed that organisations tend to neglect relevant aspects of diversity, such as disabilities and intersectionality (Ghauri *et al.*, 2021). A study also illustrated “diversity washing” on social media disclosure to highlight disparities between organisational discourses and practices (Edema-Sillo *et al.*, 2025). Other studies have highlighted the potential to apply visual elements to report on diversity (Momin & Chong, 2023). Finally, very few studies explored neurodiversity reporting and the implications of gender to such reporting practices (van Rijswijk & Curşeu, 2026).

Neurodiversity on campus

The literature on neurodiversity in Higher Education (hereafter HE) presents different approaches to students and academics. In terms of students’ experiences, studies found that students face negative emotional experience at universities (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). This is due to a variety of factors such as difficulties to access learning tools, stigma and challenges to navigate and socialise in an unfamiliar environment with cultural differences and spaces with over-stimulation (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). These difficulties lead to high levels of anxiety, isolation and rejections, affecting students’ perceived identities (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). HE responses to these challenges tend to emphasise on disclosure/diagnosis, adjustments and pastoral care.

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Neurodiversity on campus cont.

It also involves teaching and learning approaches (including assessments) as well as technological support (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). Examples of challenges faced by neurodiverse students during teaching activities are: long lectures without breaks, reliance on written materials and lack of members of staff knowledge about neurodiversity (McDowall & Kiseleva, 2024).

However, studies show that many students prefer to not disclose their conditions and when disclosure happen, members of staff are resilient to act on the information about disabilities and closed to engage with students' parents (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, very little is done to change teaching and learning approaches to emphasise strengths of neurodiverse students (Clouder *et al.*, 2020). In addition, support provided to neurodiverse students can emerge from several areas in HE so, there is a lack of a consistent approach and support that embraces demands from specific disciplines. Finally, there is a lack of attention for successful completion of HE studies and transition into university (living needs, organisational and academic skills) and into work (career preparation goals) (McDowall & Kiseleva, 2024).

With regards to academics, the literature highlights the underrepresentation of neurodiverse members of staff in academia (Mellifont, 2023) and the fact that neurodiversity is commonly treated outside of the scope of Equality and Diversity (E&D) (Sarchet, 2024). Studies also emphasises negative misconception of neurodiversity in academia that centres on the medical model rather than a social model that seeks to recognise, adapt and include differences between neurotypical and neurodiverse as opposed to medical treatment (Mellifont, 2023).

Support to neurodiverse academics include accommodations to recruitment criteria, lectures (e.g. use of pre-recorded lectures to dyslexic lecturers) and attendance to events such as conferences (e.g. provision of rest rooms) (Sarchet, 2024). Despite neurodiverse academics' unique aptitudes (e.g. problem solving, focusing on a subject and creative perspectives), they remain silent to their conditions and/or face lack of support, stigma, discrimination and microaggression. Strategies used by neurodiverse academics include non-disclosure, proven competence to combat stigma, self-advocacy and self-accommodations (Sarchet, 2024). These strategies demand time and energy which live neurodiverse academics in disadvantage if compared to their neurotypical counterparts (Sarchet, 2024).

Research gaps and questions

The above literature shows a lack of research on neurodiversity disclosures in higher education sector. Moreover, there is a lack of studies on intersectionality approach that brings together gender-related disclosures on neurodiversity. Considering these gaps in the literature.

This research aims to explore the following research questions:

- How do UK ancient universities disclose information on neurodiversity?
- To what extent do these disclosures adopt an intersectional approach by integrating the relationship between neurodiversity and gender?

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Methodology

This research involves a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Joffe & Yardley, 2004) of the 2024/25 annual reports of UK ancient universities and information on neurodiversity found in these universities' webpages in July 2026. Ancient universities considered in this study are:

- University of Aberdeen
- University of Edinburgh
- University of St. Andrews
- University of Glasgow
- University of Oxford
- University of Cambridge

Results

Only one university mentioned neurodiversity in their annual report (University of Aberdeen). Disclosure on neurodiversity was more evident at the universities' webpages. However, only one university explored intersectionality between neurodiversity and gender (University of Glasgow). Disclosure on neurodiversity and gender was included at the neurodiversity hub and presented the following themes:

- Presentation and symptoms
- Stress and anxiety
- Perceptions and interactions
- Further reading/other resources

It is also important to highlight some initiatives found about neurodiversity during our analysis, such as:

- Neurodiversity networks (University of Aberdeen and University of Glasgow)
- Neurodiversity societies (University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow)
- Neuroinclusion Hub – information to support neuroinclusion (University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow)
- Neurodiversity training for researchers and academics (University of Cambridge and University of Edinburgh)
- Neurodiversity, Organisations, Work and Intersectionality Lab (University of Edinburgh)
- Physical accessible guide (University of Glasgow)

Relevance of this study, value and potential impact

This study is relevant to increase awareness of the lack of disclosure on neurodiversity, especially with regards to its intersectionality with gender. It can help universities to improve their neurodiversity support to academics and students. It can also guide advocacy groups and policy makers on neurodiversity disclosure practices that requires their attention.



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Submission Title: Sustainable Development Goals in Accounting Education: A Comparative Multi-Tool Text Analysis of Scottish University Curricula

Higher education institutions are expected to equip students with the skills and competencies required for sustainable development and to educate future accounting professionals in a way that enables them to address environmental and social impacts alongside economic and financial issues (Cho & Costa, 2024). In contrast, some policy approaches to sustainability in higher education appear to prioritize the economic dimension, while social and environmental issues remain more limited (Hong & Hardy, 2022). The progress reports of PRME-signatory business schools indicate that engagement with the SDGs is advancing slowly and that the reported connections often remain weak and superficial (Weybrecht, 2022). Sustainability content in accounting programs has been found to be limited, uneven and variable in terms of scope and depth (De Silva & Nilipour, 2025). In addition, studies in the literature indicate that engagement with the SDGs is largely concentrated on a limited number of goals that can be most easily associated with business (Twyford et al., 2024). Nevertheless, students' professional orientations and the emphasis placed by professional bodies on technical issues may make it difficult to incorporate sustainability into accounting education (Hazelton & Haigh, 2010). On the other hand, Gray (2013) argues that merely adding sustainability to the curriculum is not sufficient; the conflicts between the traditional understanding of profit and growth, and environmental and social sustainability should also be discussed critically. Complementing this critique in terms of the scope and depth of the curriculum, Botes et al. (2014) recommend integrating sustainability education throughout compulsory accounting courses and offering a separate elective course in the later years of undergraduate study or at the postgraduate level for deeper, interdisciplinary examination.

Despite these limitations, it has been argued that accounting research can assume an enabling role in achieving the SDGs (Bebbington & Unerman, 2018) and calls to advance this research agenda have been reiterated (Bebbington & Unerman, 2020). At the same time, the accounting and accountability literature examine how gender is represented and constructed through narratives and visuals in organizational reporting, as well as how certain identities are rendered visible or invisible (Senn et al., 2025). Similarly, the visibility of the SDGs in course descriptions and learning outcomes in higher education has been empirically measured through semantic matching (Prior et al., 2025), and multi-label classification methods have been developed for the automatic mapping of open educational resources to the SDGs (Yao et al., 2024). However, to the best of our knowledge, the extent to which gender equality is represented in accounting curricula has not been systematically examined. Course descriptions, aims, and learning outcomes are an important source in this respect because these texts reflect the educational priorities that institutions explicitly declare to their students and society. This study addresses this gap by comparatively examining the visibility of the SDGs in the accounting curricula of universities in Scotland using three different text-mining tools.



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The research aimed to determine how all 17 SDGs, including gender equality, are represented in the accounting curricula of universities in Scotland and which goals stand out. Within this scope, the descriptions, aims, and learning outcomes of a total of 309 accounting courses, comprising 221 undergraduate and 88 postgraduate courses offered at 13 Scottish universities in the 2024–2025 academic year, were manually collected from the universities' official catalogues and preserved in the form in which they were published. The courses in the dataset, which consisted of a total of 65,462 words, were classified into 15 accounting sub-disciplines by two independent subject-matter experts in a process separate from the SDG analysis. The course texts were then examined using three different analytical tools capable of automatic matching in order to determine which of the 17 SDGs they were associated with. This process, referred to in the study as SDG mapping, means identifying which SDGs are visible in the course descriptions, aims, and learning outcomes and matching the texts with the relevant SDGs. For this purpose, KnowSDG, which is based on expert-defined keywords (Borchardt et al., 2023), OSDG, which combines machine-learning predictions with ontology-based textual evidence (Pukelis et al., 2022), and Aurora, a BERT-based deep-learning model (Vanderfeesten et al., 2022), were used. The combined use of three methodologically different tools was intended to reduce dependence on the assumptions and potential biases of a single classifier. The analyses were conducted separately for each of the 15 sub-disciplines and for undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Since the indicators produced by the three tools were based on different computational logics, the outputs were not combined into a single common score. It was taken into account that different SDG classification systems may display different methodological characteristics, biases, and error patterns (Yao et al., 2024). Therefore, in this study, patterns supported by more than one tool were evaluated as stronger findings, whereas results observed in only one tool were recorded as tool-dependent signals and interpreted with caution.

The results show that SDG representation is highly uneven. Across the full sample, the strongest common signals across the tools were concentrated on SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 4, Quality Education; SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production; and SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The main supporting values were identified as 44% in Aurora and 26.3% in OSDG for SDG 8; 41.6% in OSDG and 16.08% in KnowSDG for SDG 4; 23% in Aurora and 20.98% in KnowSDG for SDG 12; and 23.4% in OSDG and 11.19% in KnowSDG for SDG 16. These results indicate that sustainability content is concentrated around quality education, employment and economic growth, responsible consumption and production, accountability, and institutional integrity. The comparison across levels indicates that employment- and practice-oriented goals, particularly SDG 8 and SDG 12, stand out in undergraduate programs, whereas SDG 9, SDG 16, and SDG 17, which are associated with governance and innovation, are more prominent in postgraduate programs.

Gender equality displays a different pattern. SDG 5, together with SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, and 14, is one of the seven goals that received values close to zero across all three tools in the overall sample. The absence of a meaningful common signal for SDG 5 persisted across all 15 sub-disciplines and at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The convergence of the three tools on the same pattern of low visibility strengthens the interpretation that the finding points to a systematic gap in the published curriculum texts rather than to the technical characteristics of a single classifier. Ultimately, gender equality is not meaningfully visible in the information relating to the course curriculum examined.

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This finding provides empirical and curriculum-based evidence for discussions of gender equality in higher education. According to institutional theory, regulatory pressures, the pursuit of legitimacy and reputation, and academic and professional norms may, over time, lead universities towards similar sustainability practices (De Villiers et al., 2025). Within this framework, a common pattern concentrated around goals closely related to business, as well as systematic curriculum gaps concerning certain SDGs, can be observed across the sample compiled from 13 universities. Although SDG 5 is defined as a stand-alone goal in the United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015), gender equality does not find meaningful expression in the curriculum texts examined.

The study offers stakeholders involved in accounting and business education a transparent and replicable method for evaluating and comparing curricula. The findings reflect only published course texts and do not directly demonstrate classroom practice. At the conference, how gender equality and other underrepresented social SDGs can be incorporated more meaningfully into business school curricula will be discussed. The study provides a contemporary contribution from the Scottish context to the intersection of gender equality, diversity, and sustainability themes.

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