GUS Academic Summit Berlin 2025 – Proposal

Title: Embracing Virtual Reality and Immersive Learning to Enhance Student Engagement and Soft Skill Development

Authors: Kerrie Wynn & Dr Amy Hogan, Arden University

As higher education institutions increasingly explore digital innovations to enhance student engagement and learning, Virtual Reality (VR) and immersive learning have emerged as powerful tools. Professionals across all sectors are progressively encouraged to be innovative and embrace digitisation to ensure that they keep up with the evolving digital world. This presentation will examine the impact of VR-based learning, focusing on the use of BodySwaps, an immersive simulation platform designed to develop students' soft skills through experiential learning.

Traditional learning methods often struggle to provide students with realistic, engaging, and interactive opportunities to develop critical soft skills such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving. BodySwaps leverages VR technology to place students in authentic scenarios where they can practice and refine their skills in a psychologically safe and supportive environment. Through AI-driven feedback, students can self-reflect and make improvements in real time.

This presentation will showcase findings from an ongoing study evaluating the impact of BodySwaps on student engagement and continuation outcomes. It aims to:

- **Demonstrate** how BodySwaps is used to enhance student learning through immersive role-play and feedback.
- **Share** preliminary findings on the effectiveness of VR on improving the student learning experience and the development of soft skills to positively impact continuation, engagement, and employability outcomes.
- **Highlight** positive findings of the initial pilot study, such as developing an implementation plan for 5000 users across distance and blended learning, and engagement with Bodyswaps' Innovator Partner Program (IPP).
- **Discuss** challenges and best practices in integrating VR into accessible curriculum design across multidisciplinary teams and engaging the wider HE Sector to share institutional insights for innovative practice.
- **Explore** recommendations for future adoption and scalability based on evaluation findings, such as developing innovative and authentic AI assessments, personalised learning pathways, and bespoke vocational modules aimed at raising graduate outcomes.

This presentation will provide valuable insights for educators, learning technologists, and institutional leaders interested in embedding immersive learning strategies to improve student engagement, progression, and success via flexible, accessible, inclusive, and impactful higher education.

Author Bios

Dr Amy Hogan is Head of Department for Distance Learning in the school of psychology at Arden University. She has 20 years international experience overseeing the development, delivery, and enhancement of distance and blended learning programmes. She leads the international partnership provision in psychology across multiple institutions in the UAE, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. As a Chartered psychologist and accredited executive coach, Amy is passionate about innovative digital pedagogies, and is currently a GUS Institute fellow researching virtual reality and immersive learning. Her research interests include usability, user experience, interface design, new media psychology, digital learning & gamification.

Kerrie Wynn is a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for BSc (Hons) Health Care Management at Arden University, with 15 years of experience in higher education across health and social sciences. A chartered manager, she specialises in leading programmes to enhance student outcomes, employability, and curriculum quality. Passionate about integrating technology into learning, Kerrie is a GUS Institute Fellow leading a multidisciplinary research project on augmenting soft skills in virtual environments. Her research focuses on the impact of VR, immersive learning, and AI in creating authentic assessments and future-proofing education to meet modern employer demands.