

## Introduction

These conference proceedings present a digest of the reflective and intellectually enriching conversations that took place during the conference on '***Teaching and research in a contemporary university: challenges, solutions, and perspectives***' (Białystok, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021). This conference was the culmination of the second round of one-month internships for academic staff from Ukrainian higher education institutions, organised by the Faculty of Education of the University of Białystok, with the aim of improving their teaching and research competences. Our work together confirms the growing understanding in our field – in Europe and elsewhere – that academic teachers 'can only continue to act as professionals if they are engaged in further professional development throughout their entire career' (Klink, 2017). This ongoing professional development is particularly important for working and teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, across all fields, in that today's educators need to be well-equipped to meet the unfolding, intersecting challenges of their time with confidence and resources: from displacement caused by climate change and war to the social divides exacerbated by the pandemic, to intensifying waves of migration.

Although the conference topic may imply that we are able to somehow separate teaching from research, we argue that the research-teaching nexus better serves today's students as a cohesive whole – or wholes – within which the two pursuits nurture and inform one another in a continuous dialogue. This nexus has been well studied in the literature to date (e.g., Duff and Marriott, 2017; Healey, 2005; Huang, 2018), however this body of knowledge fails to include perspectives from Ukraine and its universities. Thus, our conference was uniquely and powerfully fruitful in that it centred on these perspectives, enriching our collective understanding of the nuances of the research-teaching nexus.

This conference – and the papers it yielded – also served to highlight and platform the hopes and challenges of Ukraine's higher education sector at this important point in history. Attended by more than 40 academics, this confer-

ence represented diverse fields of study (from engineering to the Arts), which is essential in any effort to piece together a full picture of the Ukrainian higher education landscape.

The core conference theme was explored and expanded *via* discussion of the following issues: internationalisation in higher education; learning *via* a screen; employing the visual arts in higher education; legal issues in higher education; time for change; and teaching and learning processes. It is these sub-themes which will loosely form the basis for the following proceedings – featuring the most promising of the papers generated from these discussions, some of which we were able to send to a professional proofreader for a final polish after they were reviewed. Ultimately, however, the contents and language of these pages are the responsibility of their authors.

As we compile these proceedings at the end of our 2021/2022 internship, the people of Ukraine are facing the aggressions and violence of invading Russian forces in their streets, communities, and homes. We stand in full solidarity with our friends, neighbours, and colleagues from Ukraine. Our hope is that academic collaborations such as these will form part of an ongoing, tangible connection of solidarity between peoples. We also hope that in these troubled times this book is also the hopeful step to re-entry toward human activity free from bomb attacks, shellings, and suffering.

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## References

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