Change H.E.
e-zine

CHANGE HE
DATAQUBED

Welcome Note

Welcome to our second issue of the **Change H.E. e-Zine**! Over the past two months, our **Change H.E. Conversations** have explored two concepts important to change in higher education: **The Experience Economy** and **Information Governance**.

In February, **Craig Clark** guided us through **data governance** and **compliance** a foundation for trust and efficiency in university change. Compliance, he reminded us, isn't just about rules; it enables **safe**, **effective**, and **sustainable** transformation.

March's conversation with **Lisa Bondesio** from Alirity, highlighted what higher education can learn from retail, entertainment, and transport - sectors you wouldn't usually turn to gain insights from for change in higher educaiton. The student journey isn't just a process - it's an **experience**, and institutions that design with this in mind will stand out.

Lisa and Craig have provided two excellent articles in this issue, along with practical toolkit resources to help you apply these ideas in your institution.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together!

Su Kulkarni - Founder, Change H.E.

THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY & HIGHER EDUCATION

Our conversation with Lisa Bondesio was a wake-up call for higher education. She challenged us to think **beyond process efficiency** and instead focus on **experience design** - because, in the end, universities aren't just delivering education, they're delivering an experience.

One of Lisa's key messages was that students don't separate their university experience from the rest of their lives. They expect the same **seamless**, **intuitive**, and **responsive** interactions they get from brands like Amazon, Netflix, or Apple. If higher education doesn't evolve to meet these expectations, **students disengage** - sometimes subtly, sometimes completely.

We talked about rethinking how we design student journeys. It's not enough to focus on individual touchpoints - like registration, assessments, or graduation. We need to step back and see the whole experience through the student's eyes. Where are the pain points? Where does frustration build? Where do we unintentionally make things harder than they need to be?

During the conversation, one of the core themes that emerged was the importance of **human-centred design** in shaping transformational change, particularly in the student experience.

We delved into the contrast between **outside-in vs. inside-out** approaches when designing change in H.E. The outside-in model emphasises understanding the needs and perspectives of students, staff, and stakeholders before making changes. In contrast, the inside-out approach is more about transforming to meet the internal needs of a university and hoping the changes align with the needs of its students .

It was clear from the discussion that the most successful change initiatives consider both perspectives, ensuring that institutional changes are always rooted in an **understanding** of the **people they impact**.

An example that came up was Disney's approach to crafting **exceptional customer experiences**.

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"We should consider integrating student advisory groups as part of digital transformation projects to help focus on UX, system usability and expectations"

- Zeeshan Amjad
Head of Student Systems Development
University of Bedfordshire

Disney's model is an excellent case of consistency and attention to detail. **Every employee**, from the front-line staff to those in the back office, **is trained to deliver** the same **seamless**, **high**-**quality experience**.

This **consistency** is one of the key factors that make Disney stand out - it ensures that whether you're walking into the park, interacting with an employee, or experiencing a ride, the customer journey feels **cohesive** and **thoughtfully designed**. In a similar way, universities must ensure that every touchpoint in the student journey, **from recruitment to graduation**, reflects a **consistent** experience that aligns with the institution's values and objectives.

Another key point was the importance of **personalised student experiences**, and how emerging technologies like **AI** and **data analytics** are making this more achievable. Institutions can leverage data to understand student needs, preferences, and learning styles, enabling them to offer more tailored support and resources. The combination of **data-driven insights** and AI allows for real-time adjustments to be made in the student experience

creating an environment where **students** feel seen and **supported** at an **individual level**. This can range from **personalised learning pathways** to **proactive interventions** when a student shows signs of struggle.

The conversation also raised challenges around the integration of these technologies. While there is enormous potential, there are still hurdles, particularly around **data privacy** and the **ethical use of AI**. Universities need to strike a balance between personalisation and privacy, ensuring that they are using student data responsibly while also meeting the expectations for **personalised support** and **engagement**.

What was clear is that the Change H.E. Community supports a **shared commitment** to creating **student**-**centric cultures** across higher education institutions, one where the focus is always on understanding and responding to the needs of the student community to create the best possible student experience.

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY

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"Being consistent with your 'brand' values whether face to face or online can really help to embed your HE as one that is trustworthy and reliable."

- Tina Nettleton
Edgehill University

Experience: The New Differentiator in H.E.
Lisa Bondesio

Today's students expect more than degrees - they want experiences that matter. As the **Experience Economy** takes hold across all industries, higher education institutions must reimagine every touchpoint to stay competitive, relevant, and emotionally connected to their learners.

From Transactions to Transformations

The way we engage with organisations is undergoing a fundamental shift. Increasingly, value is no longer tied solely to products or services, but to the quality of experiences they provide.

This concept - known as the **Experience Economy** - is rooted in the work of **Pine & Gilmore**, who describe an evolution in economic value from goods to services, and now to experiences.

The driving forces?

Personalisation, engagement, and emotional connection.

Put simply: it's not just about what people buy or use anymore, but how it makes them **feel**.

The University as an Experience Brand

The higher education (H.E.) sector is far from immune to this shift. Universities are now competing not only on academic performance, but on the richness and relevance of the student experience.

Experience is not a bonus - it's fundamental

Students expect more than course content. They want a journey that's seamless, personal, and emotionally engaging - from their first website visit to graduation day.

> "
>
> *"The people having the experience are human. A human-led approach to design is essential"*
>
> - Lisa Bondesio

What Makes an Experience-Led Institution?

Experience-led organisations understand that loyalty and satisfaction come from meaningful interactions, not just efficiency. Here's how universities can apply this thinking:

People-First Design - Digital transformation must be **human-centred**. It's not just about the tech, but how well it serves real people. Platforms should feel intuitive, not overwhelming.

Emotional Connection - Storytelling, shared values, and personalised communication all build emotional resonance. Institutions that connect on this level will stand out in an increasingly crowded market.

Ethical Use of Data Data enables personalisation, but **trust is non-negotiable**. Students value relevance, but not at the expense of privacy. **Transparency** and **respect** are key.

Seamless, Multi-Touchpoint Journeys - Whether online or in-person, every interaction must feel **connected** and **easy**. Tools like service blueprinting can help map and refine these journeys.

Visionary Leadership - Without strong leadership and a clear vision, transformation risks stalling. Universities must move from reactive fixes to a proactive, strategic approach.

Time for a Mindset Shift

Traditionally, many universities rely on retrospective tools like the **National Student Survey (NSS)** to gauge satisfaction. But feedback loops like this can be too slow to respond to emerging issues.

Instead, institutions should design experiences that encourage **ongoing**, **real-time engagement**, helping them stay **agile** and **connected**.

THE NEW IMPERATIVE

The Experience Economy isn't a trend...it's a **new reality**. Higher education faces a unique challenge: balancing cost, accessibility, and innovation while still delivering emotionally engaging, student-centred experiences. From application to alumni support, every touchpoint should be **deliberately crafted** to enhance satisfaction, retention, and success. The future belongs to institutions that design with empathy, lead with purpose, and never forget: **experience is everything.**

> "
> *"It's not just about digital systems. It's about how you make people feel."*
>
> - Lisa Bondesio

5 Ways to Apply the Experience Economy in Your University

1

Map the Full Student Journey
Run a co-design workshop with students to map their digital and in-person touchpoints - from first enquiry to graduation - and identify pain points to improve.

2

Tell Stories That Stick
Use student testimonials, staff spotlights, and alumni journeys in your communications to build emotional connection and a sense of belonging

3

Audit Your Digital Interfaces
Review portals, apps, and websites with real students. Is it intuitive? Is help easy to find? Use feedback to simplify and humanise the experience.

4

Be Transparent with Data
Create a simple data-use statement and share how student data is helping improve their experience. Build trust by involving students in data governance conversations.

5

Start with One Signature Moment
Choose one part of the student journey (e.g. onboarding or graduation) and redesign it to be truly memorable and student-focused - not just functional.

THESE THREE WORDS

In our conversation with **Lisa Bondesio**, we explored how higher education can learn from other industries that have mastered the art of customer experience. One key takeaway? **Student experience isn't just about services** - it's about how everything fits together to create a **seamless**, **engaging**, and **supportive journey**.

From retail to entertainment, the most successful organisations design their experiences around three essential principles and what student experience should be: **Consistent**, **Connected**, and **Co-Designed**. If universities want to meet rising student expectations, they need to embed these principles into everything they do - from recruitment to enrolment to graduation.

CONNECTED

Silos are the enemy of experience. Students navigate multiple systems, services, and teams throughout their journey, and when these don't communicate, frustration sets in. Universities must design experiences where information, people, and processes are seamlessly linked - so students don't feel like they are starting from scratch every time they need help.

CO-DESIGNED

Students aren't just service users; they are partners in shaping their own experience. The best experiences are built with - not just for - the people they serve.

Universities need to listen, involve, and actively collaborate with students to create systems and services that truly work for them.

CONSISTENT

A great student experience isn't left to chance. Students should receive the same level of clarity, support, and service across departments. If one part of the university runs smoothly while another is confusing or inefficient, trust is lost. Institutions need to remove friction points and ensure students don't face a 'postcode lottery' of support.

By focusing on consistency, connection, and co-design, universities can move beyond transactional interactions and create experiences that feel intuitive, supportive, and engaging - just like the best brands and organisations students encounter elsewhere in their lives.

DATA PROTECTION AS A CORE ENABLER OF CHANGE

In any change initiative, data protection plays a critical role, yet it's often viewed through the lens of compliance something that's a necessary but burdensome task. **Craig Clark**, a seasoned expert in data protection who was a key speaker at the **February Change H.E**. **Conversation**, argues that this perspective is a mistake. According to Craig, data protection isn't just about ticking boxes; it's a cornerstone for building trust within change initiatives, especially within the higher education sector.

Universities handle vast amounts of personal data daily, from student records to staff details and sensitive research information. If mishandled, this data can quickly **erode** the **trust** of students, staff, and external stakeholders. Without a **robust data protection strategy**, any transformation project risks failing before it even begins.

One of the most compelling points Craig makes is the need for data protection professionals to be **integrated** into the early stages of any change project.

Too often, universities leave data protection considerations to the tail end of a transformation process, viewing compliance as a final check before implementation. This retroactive approach, according to Craig, is not only risky but also inefficient. By the time compliance is added at the end, the project may already have incurred costly delays or encountered legal risks.

A key issue Craig addresses is '**purpose limitation**,' a concept that many organisations, including universities, sometimes overlook. Universities often collect personal data for specific purposes - such as student enrolment or research - but, over time, the same data may be repurposed without clear justification. This, Craig warns, opens the door to legal challenges and, more importantly, damages the trust of those whose data is being used.

For change makers, it's essential to ensure that data collected for one purpose isn't repurposed for another without proper justification. Clear communication about how and why data is used is critical for maintaining transparency and avoiding potential legal pitfalls. Leaders must embed this understanding of purpose limitation into the DNA of any change program to ensure data handling remains ethical and compliant.

Craig identifies several common mistakes that often derail change initiatives in the context of data protection. One of the most prevalent misunderstandings is the belief that GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) is **simply about** obtaining **consent**. While consent is an important legal basis for processing data, it's only one of several grounds under the regulation. Change leaders need to understand and leverage the full spectrum of **legal bases for data processing**, including legitimate interests, contractual necessity, and legal obligations.

Another common pitfall discussed in the Change H.E. Conversation is treating data protection **purely** as **an IT issue**. While IT departments play a crucial role in securing systems and ensuring compliance, data protection is much broader. It involves every department within an organisation, from governance to staff training. Change leaders must ensure that the responsibility for data protection is shared across all levels of the organisation, rather than being siloed within IT.

Our Change H.E. Conversation with Craig resulted in three practical steps, that all HEIs can use to build a solid foundation for their projects, ensuring that data protection becomes a core enabler of the transformation rather than a hindrance.

Read on to see what these practical steps are followed by an excellent article by Craig Clark himself.

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"Its not just about doing the thing (data protection) right. Its about doing the right thing."

- Paul Murtagh - Data Protection Officer University of East London
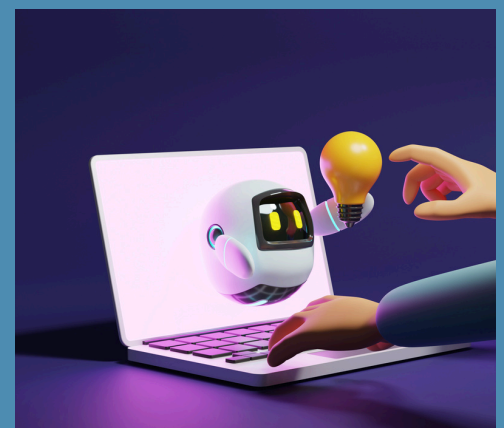
3 PRACTICAL STEPS TO ENSURE DATA GOVERNANCE IN CHANGE

1

Conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) Early: These assessments are essential tools for identifying potential risks related to personal data processing. Carrying them out early in the project helps mitigate risks before they become problematic.

2

Embed Data Protection into Project Governance: Data protection should be woven into the fabric of the project's governance structure. It should be part of the decision-making process from the beginning, rather than an afterthought.

3

Train Staff to Recognise Risks: Instead of relying solely on policies, change leaders should ensure staff at all levels are trained to recognise potential data protection risks. This creates a culture of awareness and responsibility throughout the organisation.

COMPLIANCE COMPASS
by Craig Clark

When I introduce myself as the new Data Protection Officer on a project, I typically get one of two reactions:

1. "Oh, we're already compliant, so you have nothing to worry about."
2. "Oh great, while you're here, here's everything we need help with!"

The first group sees data protection as a barrier; the second fears getting it wrong. My approach? I pretend data protection law doesn't exist - at first. Instead, I ask two questions:

1. What are you trying to achieve?
2. Why are you trying to achieve it?

These questions help shape compliance strategies that work with the project, not against it. Data protection law is principle-based, allowing more flexibility than people assume. Here are key ways it can actually reduce compliance burdens in change projects.

Understanding Your Lawful Basis

Every organisation needs a legal reason - "lawful basis" - for processing personal data. Choosing the right one can streamline compliance.

One common mistake? Seeking consent when it's not necessary. Consent can be withdrawn at any time - if that would break your process, it was the wrong choice. Instead, consider:

- **Public interest**: If the project impacts a learner's education.
- **Contractual necessity**: If it involves employee data.
- **Legitimate interest**: If processing supports business operations.

Choosing the wrong lawful basis can lead to extra work and confusion later. Getting it right from the start means less admin and fewer compliance headaches down the line.

"Users sometimes think just because data is no longer in spreadsheets and is now in a system/application, data protection is IT's problem."

- Rosie Dowen - Project Delivery Manager
University of Bradford

Using Data Minimisation to Save Costs & Improve Accuracy

More data means more compliance challenges. The **data minimisation** principle in GDPR helps by ensuring organisations only collect what's essential. This reduces storage costs, improves data quality, and simplifies compliance.

I often see projects over-collecting data 'just in case' - a habit that creates more risk than reward. Instead, teams should ask: **What's the minimum data we need to achieve our goal?**

Answering that question early helps prevent security risks and keeps processes efficient.

Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) as Problem-Solving Tools

DPIAs get a bad rap as bureaucratic hurdles, but done right, they're invaluable. They help identify risks early and apply practical solutions. Below are common risks in change projects and effective controls:

RISK	KEY CONTROL
Unauthorised access	Role-based access controls (RBAC) & multi-factor authentication (MFA)
Outdated software vulnerabilites	Automated patching & vulnerability scanning
Weak encryption	AES-256 encryption for data at rest and in transit
Inadequate network security	Firewalls, IDS/IPS, and network segmentation
Poor hardware disposal	Robust destruction policies for data and devices
Cloud misconfigurations	Regular security assessments and vendor due diligence
Lack of logging & monitoring	Comprehensive logging & security monitoring

Embedding Privacy by Design into Change Projects

Privacy by Design isn't just a buzzphrase - it's a proactive way to ensure compliance without creating last-minute obstacles. By considering privacy from the outset, projects can avoid expensive redesigns and delays.

Some simple ways to embed Privacy by Design:
- Use data protection checklists at project kick-off
- Get IT and legal teams involved early
- Review data-sharing agreements before signing them
- Train staff on secure data handling

By making data protection part of the project's DNA, it becomes a natural enabler rather than an afterthought.

Making Data Protection Work for Your Project

When done well, data protection doesn't slow projects down - it streamlines them. It prevents unnecessary complexity, reduces risk, and ensures long-term compliance. A well-thought-out approach to data protection isn't about saying 'no' - it's about finding a way to say 'yes' responsibly.

I'm an information governance specialist with 10+ years' experience helping universities, schools, and councils improve data protection, compliance, and security. I've trained over 13,500 people, built AI governance frameworks, and helped organisations go from "no assurance" to "high assurance" in under a year. My approach is pragmatic, outcomes-focused, and built to support real change.

Contact Craig@ccinfogov.co.uk
Clark Company Information Governance Services - https://www.ccinfogov.co.uk/
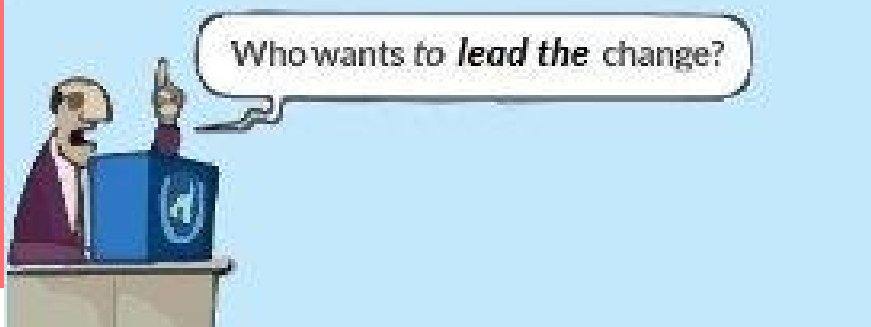
> *"It's important for staff to know that the Information Governance Office is here to help. Those who've worked with us before know the process isn't as daunting as it seems - but when people assume it's difficult, they avoid reaching out, creating a cycle of hidden data practices."*
>
> *Ellie Sheppard -*
> *Information Governance*
> *King's College London*

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More Change H.E. Conversations!

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Have ideas for future discussions? Want to share your story or lead a conversation? Email: suhasini.kulkarni@dataqubed.com.

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