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Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA)

Annual Conference 2025

University of Aberdeen, MacRobert Buildings

19 November – 21 November 2025

Call for submissions

Education: Open to all?

We invite researchers and practitioners working in Scottish, UK and international contexts to share their insights under the theme of *Education: Open to all?* While education is widely regarded as a fundamental right, it remains inaccessible to many due to socio-economic disparities, cultural differences, geographical isolation, and systemic inequalities. Building on previous SERA conference themes of reconnection and the challenges of living in a fragile world – as well as the work across the SERA networks – this conference seeks to examine how inclusive modalities can shape learning environments that enable individuals to realise their full potential, regardless of background or personal circumstances.

Expanding access to education requires critical engagement with key issues, including education policy and politics, interdisciplinary research and practice, technology integration, transformative curriculum perspectives, inclusive teaching and assessment practices, critical pedagogies, and key insights about professional, community and vocational learning. SERA Conference 2025 aims not only to provide a platform for discussing the challenges but also to foster new dialogues and collaborative approaches that contribute to more equitable and accessible educational futures.

The following guiding questions from practical, conceptual, and empirical perspectives offer a starting point for all potential delegates:

- What are the key barriers – social, economic, political, or systemic – that prevent education from being open to all?
- How can education systems be reimagined to address issues of exclusion, marginalisation, and inequality?
- What historical and philosophical perspectives can inform contemporary efforts to make education more inclusive and accessible?
- How can themes and concepts such as citizenship, community-focused learning, lifelong learning, and sustainability contribute to creating equity?
- How can shared knowledges, partnerships, and diverse forms of learning – such as vocational and community-based education – support equitable access and challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge?
- How can digital learning, technological advancements, and artificial intelligence support or hinder education and assessment within and beyond formal settings?

- How can research – including innovative methodologies and ethical approaches – contribute to reform and action towards inclusive and equitable educational opportunities?
- What pedagogical practices best support adaptability, access, resilience, and equitable learning opportunities for diverse learners?

SERA 2025 CONFERENCE STRANDS

Key organising strands for this year's SERA conference will include:

- **Globalisation and Education:** What are the implications of an increasingly interconnected world on education? How does globalisation – from global citizenship, to increased levels of migration, to the impact of international league table rankings – impact contemporary education? How might different theoretical perspectives and paradigms create openings for new questions, new forms of research, and offer critical insights for our increasingly globalised education systems?
- **Policy and Politics of Education:** How might policy at global, national, and local levels shape education and lifelong learning? How might educational actors (regardless of sector) respond to, and inform policy directions? How might new partnerships enhance or inhibit educational initiatives and the mobilization of research? What challenges do policy and politics in education pose and how might we respond?
- **Curriculum and Transformation:** How might perspectives on curriculum help us engage with a constantly changing and increasingly diverse world? How can curriculum balance the needs of diverse learners with the demands of policy mandates and standardised testing? What does decolonisation of the curriculum look like, and who defines it? Where is the balance between decolonising historical narratives and creating new, inclusive educational paradigms?
- **Education and Technology Integration:** How might the infusion of new technologies impact learning experiences in/out of formal educational settings? How can technology integration promote creativity, collaboration and address disparities in access to quality education? How can virtual reality and augmented reality

classrooms enhance and inhibit access to educational opportunities? What are the potential threats and ethical dilemmas associated with AI and machine learning in education?

- **Education for Sustainability:** What part can education play in supporting ecological flourishing through equity? How might we learn to live peacefully with one another within the limits of the Earth supporting us? How does education respond to the challenges of climate change, global health issues and social crises?
- **Inclusive Education:** How do we embrace diversity? What are the challenges associated with the proposition that education is for all? What policies and initiatives are being implemented to specifically support neurodiverse students and those from migrant and refugee backgrounds? How do we acknowledge and challenge specific examples of marginalisation in education, as evidenced by gender divides and hate crimes?
- **Educational Equity and Access:** How might education reach out to all? How might education respond to the challenge of competition, distribution, and access to educational services supporting our communities? What spaces, resources, initiatives and providers are needed to create more equitable and accessible educational futures?
- **Professional, Community and Vocational Learning:** What new challenges in workspaces and practices are impacting on professional, community and vocational learning? How is knowledge generated and shared in occupational and professional contexts and across professional boundaries? How does community education and learning foster wider inclusion, lifelong learning, and social cohesion of communities?

The conference will accept individual papers, symposia, short presentations, poster and rapid thesis presentations, as well as suggestions for roundtable discussions, workshops and performance/arts-based sessions. See below for more detail on each of these different formats.

Individual papers

Individual papers require a 250-word abstract. Please note that authors must identify the strand (see above) that their abstract addresses. Abstracts should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title of paper;
- author name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address;
- 4 keywords.

The abstract should be structured to cover:

- aims;
- methods;
- main findings;
- conclusions.

Each paper will be allocated a 20-minute slot (Fifteen minutes to present with five minutes for questions). Please note: you are allowed to submit as many abstracts as practical but normally each person is limited to two presentations within the conference.

Symposia

Proposals for self-organised symposium are welcome. A symposium is a planned event lasting 60 minutes with between two and four individual contributions on a theme. If you are thinking of organising a symposium and are looking for collaborators, please get in touch with our network leads for advice. Symposia organisers are free to decide on how their symposium is run. They should provide a chairperson who will introduce the session and highlight relationships amongst the contributions. Symposia organizers should also provide a discussant to offer a critique of the whole symposium. The contact person identified on the proposal must act as a link between the conference organizers and other contributors. Proposals should include:

- title of symposium;
- name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address of the symposium organiser;
- name of chairperson/discussant;
- an outline of 200 words describing the purpose of symposium and relationship between papers.
- symposium presenters;
- 250-word abstracts for each paper in the symposium, including: title of paper, name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address, 4 keywords.

Each abstract should be structured to cover

- aims;
- methods;
- main findings;
- conclusions.

Short presentations

A short presentation is an engaging and highly visual presentation of 15 slides for a maximum of 20 seconds each (300 seconds or five minutes in total). The format keeps presentations concise and fast-paced and is useful when wanting to highlight key points, pose questions, present evocative insights, and/or share research in-progress efficiently.

Short presentation proposals require a 250-word abstract. Please note that authors must identify the strand (see above) that their abstract addresses. Abstracts should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title of paper;
- name(s), affiliation(s), contact
- email address;

- 4 keywords.

The abstract should be structured to cover

- aims;
- methods;
- main findings;
- conclusions.

Please also note the following details if your abstract is accepted: Short Presentations will be held on the 27 November.

Poster Presentations

Submissions to the individual poster category require a 250-word abstract. Please note that authors/designers must identify the strand (see above) that their abstract addresses.

Abstracts should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title of paper;
- author name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address;
- 4 keywords.

An indicative structure for the abstract might include:

- aims;
- methods;
- main findings;
- conclusions.

Please also note the following details if your abstract is accepted: posters should be prepared in advance and brought to the conference by the presenter/designer. Posters should be no larger than A0 paper size. Posters will be displayed in a public area during the conference and presenters will be invited to an interactive session on the 27 November to present their posters.

Rapid Thesis Presentations

Rapid Thesis Presentations provide the opportunity for people who are currently completing, or have recently completed, an undergraduate, Masters or doctoral level thesis, to share their research in a friendly and supportive environment. Presenters will be asked to present their dissertation or thesis verbally in three minutes to an audience with the help of one static PowerPoint slide

Submissions to the Rapid Thesis Presentation category require a 250-word abstract.

Abstracts should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title of paper;
- author name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address;
- 4 keywords.

An indicative structure for the abstract might include:

- aims;
- methods;
- main findings;
- conclusions.

Please also note the following details if your abstract is accepted: Rapid Thesis Presentations will be held on the 27 November.

Workshops and Round tables

Workshops and round tables will be scheduled as 60-minute events. Proposals for workshops should include the design and delivery of a learning activity that engages participants directly both in experience and subsequent reflection. Workshop proposals can centre on the analysis of a research methodology/approach or a teaching and learning method. A descriptor of 250 words should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title;
- name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address for the organiser
- 4 keywords;
- rationale and/or theoretical background;
- aims and methods of the proposed activity.

Proposals for round tables will indicate the theme to be discussed by a range of stakeholders sharing a range of views and experiences. Cross-cutting themes that are of interest to a range of educational stakeholders are welcomed.

Performance/Arts-based Sessions

Performance/arts-based sessions will be scheduled as 60-minute events. A performance-based or arts-based session aims to involve participants to work experientially to explore and to reflect on a particular theme. All forms of activities are welcome: e.g., spoken word poetry, narratives or oral storytelling; art forms, including painting, drawing, sculpture; drama and dance; walking and fitness; digital multimedia presentations, and more. A descriptor of 250 words should include:

- strand (best fit from the list above);
- title;
- name(s); affiliation(s), contact email address for the organiser;
- 4 keywords;
- aims of the session and the proposed activity;
- indication about spaces, any special equipment that might be required and maximum number of participants.

Prizes and awards

Estelle Brisard Award. This award is presented on an annual basis to the best research paper written by an early career researcher based in Scotland. The cash prize of £250 is presented at the annual conference. Further details can be found on our webpages and through posts on our X account. To apply, please send your name, email address, area of research, course, university and title of your paper to sera.conference@gmail.com.

Best poster/rapid thesis/short presentation. Three prizes of fifty pounds are awarded at the SERA conference for the best poster, best rapid thesis and best short presentation. A panel composed of SERA executive members will review the entries and winning entries will be announced during the conference.

SERA Submission Dates

- Call for proposals opens Monday 24 March 2025
- All proposals to be sent to sera.conference@gmail.com by Friday 9 May 2025.
- Peer review of abstracts will be completed by the end of June 2025.
- Notification of acceptance will be given on or before week beginning 14 July 2025.

SERA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION ARRANGEMENTS

SERA Conference registration will open from early-May 2025 and will be available at

<https://www.sera.ac.uk/conference/how-to-book/>