Sheffield Hallam University

Leading With Compassion in Digital Change: Supporting Staff Through AI-Related Anxiety and Uncertainty [abstract only]

PURVIS, Alison <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3581-4990>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

https://shura.shu.ac.uk/37512/

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

Citation:

PURVIS, Alison (2026). Leading With Compassion in Digital Change: Supporting Staff Through AI-Related Anxiety and Uncertainty [abstract only]. In: SEDA Spring Conference 2026, Liverpool, UK, 21-22 May 2026. [Conference or Workshop Item]

Copyright and re-use policy

See http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html

Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive
http://shura.shu.ac.uk

SEDA Spring Conference 2026 Proposal Form

Deadline: noon on Monday 26 January 2026

1.Name of lead presenter

Alison Purvis

2.Institution of lead presenter

Sheffield Hallam University

3.Names & institutions of additional presenters

N/A

4.Email address for correspondence

a.purvis@shu.ac.uk

5.Title of Proposal

Leading With Compassion in Digital Change: Supporting Staff Through AI-Related Anxiety and Uncertainty

6.Session type

Interactive Workshops (60 minutes)

7.Summary of session (no more than 75 words)

This interactive workshop explores compassionate leadership as a practical response to digital change and perceived threats from artificial intelligence in higher education. It introduces a compassionate approach to digital change that combines an AI Transparency Scale with values-led leadership dimensions to support trust, equity and staff wellbeing. Participants will reflect on how empathy, clarity and collaboration can be embedded into digital change processes, moving beyond compliance-driven approaches towards shared professional agency and sustainable educational practice.

8.Session outline (no more than 300 words).

This workshop supports participants in exploring compassionate leadership in the context of digital change, with a particular focus on artificial intelligence (AI) transparency. A compassionate practice model, integrated with the AI Transparency Scale (Purvis, 2025) provides a practice-informed approach to ethical AI leadership. The model is grounded in trust, dialogue and agency rather than compliance-led control.

Participants will begin by considering a recent experience of digital or AI-related change, focusing on the emotional responses generated in staff or students. This acknowledges effective educational development positions care, emotion and relationality as central to practice (Killingback et al., 20205).

The AI Transparency Scale will then be situated as a developmental and dialogic tool rather than a mechanism of compliance by using dimensions of Context, Acknowledgement, Relationship and Enablement (CARE) as a framework for exploration. By considering a live or recent digital initiative participants will identify where transparency is currently present, where it is absent, and where compassion may be required to make transparency possible. Groups will explore common tensions, including accountability versus trust, and clarity versus uncertainty. This approach uses relational leadership and people-centred principles for effective change (Biesta, 2015; Branson & Marra, 2019).

Participants will be encouraged to consider how a tool like the AI Transparency Scale might support staff-student partnership, ethical decision-making and academic integrity. Discussion will focus on how leaders can model transparency themselves and create psychologically safe conditions for honest dialogue (Kyambade et al., 2024).

The workshop concludes with plenary discussion and an invitation for individual identification of one concrete leadership practice and one structural or cultural barrier requiring attention.

Key issues explored in this workshop will include staff anxiety and fatigue, power and trust in transparency practices, equity and belonging in AI-related decision-making, and the role of educational developers in sustaining humane approaches to building digital confidence.

9. References

AI Transparency Statement: M365 CoPilot (Chat GPT-5 reasoning model, January 2026) was used to support early-stage idea organisation, exploration of workshop models, and drafting of text. This use of AI for developing corresponds to AITS 3 (Purvis, 2025). Full author control, editorial criticality, and responsibility remains.

Biesta, G. (2015). What is education for? *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 47*(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109

Branson, C. M. & Marra, M. (2019). Leadership as a relational phenomenon: What this means in practice. Research in Educational Administration & Leadership, 4 (1), 81-108. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2019.1.4

Kilingback, C., Tomlinson, A., & Stern, J. (2025) Compassionate pedagogy in higher education: A scoping review. (2025). *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, *22*(1). https://doi.org/10.53761/7yvrw787

Kyambade, M., Namuddu, R., Mugambwa, J., & Namatovu, A. (2024). I can't express myself at work: encouraging socially responsible leadership and psychological safety in higher education setting. *Cogent Education*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2373560

Purvis, A. (2025). Artificial Intelligence Transparency Scale (AITS) (Version 1). National Teaching Repository. https://doi.org/10.25416/NTR.28806449.v1