



Nurturing independence: Inspiring an entrepreneurial mindset to support 'transitioning through' undergraduate study

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the critical yet often overlooked transitioning that happens through an undergraduate degree and reflects on strategies to encourage ownership of the transformational opportunities embedded in students' undergraduate journey, whether those transformations are intellectual, cognitive, cultural, or personal. The structure of undergraduate degrees has traditionally been dominated by disciplinary content that builds incrementally towards a disciplinary identity. Yet, there is a gap here, between the traditional learning structure of tertiary education, and what must be demonstrated to employers as workplace readiness. Entrepreneurial skills in particular, are expected to be developed beyond the classroom in volunteering or part-time work for example, and these opportunities are not equally available. The changing demands of the global labour market require a reassessment of how degrees prepare students to navigate their learning opportunities effectively. By the time students engage in dissertations (extended independent projects in their final year), they are expected to have transitioned from 'regurgitators of content' to problem solvers and project managers, both integral to an entrepreneurial mindset. In part then, the independent project aims to aid student transition to an ambiguous and uncertain future. This paper reflects on planned courses for year two of a four-year degree, designed to deliver critical skill development that significantly transform students' understanding of learning, from a conforming focus on content and disciplinary trajectories to one where students practice creativity and leadership. Linking with the literature regarding successful transition to employment, we present a holistic framework for understanding the transition through the undergraduate degree towards a more certain future as students learn to develop and identify entrepreneurial and democratic skills.

Keywords: entrepreneurial mindset, democratic mindset, critical pedagogy, sustainability, transitioning

Introduction

This paper explores the critical yet often overlooked transitioning that happens through an undergraduate degree. While it is widely recognized that UK undergraduates need access to skills training to prepare them for an ambiguous and uncertain world (Hillebrand & Leysinger, 2023), specific needs vary at different stages of their journey. From an educator-perspective, the independent project students undertake in their fourth year of a Scottish undergraduate Honours degree is a showcase for future employers and a point where students need to apply various skills they have developed. But do we do enough in the preceding years to acknowledge this? Could we do more to build students' skills and encourage ownership as they orient

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towards decisions around topic, approach and method? Is there more that we can do to help students use their dissertation to showcase not just their content knowledge, but their work readiness and in particular, to foster confidence in a set of critical skills associated with entrepreneurship? Within these questions we also acknowledge that students increasingly are entering higher education as practiced rote learners, excellent in regurgitation but less proficient in autonomous learning (Meyer, 2002). We value the extensive pedagogic development at our own institution and beyond, including increasing awareness and use of action-oriented and experiential learning, designed in part to move away from rote learning and toward real-world challenges. Nevertheless, we also note that where students are caught in learning trajectories, (Year 2 builds on year 1 and is a pre-requisite for years 3 and 4), they can become absorbed with demonstrating their expertise around a content base with less opportunity to explicitly consider their skill development, and how this might add value to what they do after university.

By the time students engage in dissertations (extended independent projects in their final year), they are expected to have transitioned from 'regurgitators of content' to critical thinkers and creators, both integral to an entrepreneurial mindset (defined below). In our experience, the autonomous learning associated with a dissertation is a form of disruption for students practiced in performing through assessment in structured taught programmes. The dissertation stage represents the culmination of the transition to academic independence, where undergraduates are expected to demonstrate advanced expertise, creativity and innovation alongside transferable skills applicable to diverse professional contexts (Mantai & Marrone, 2022). In many cases, dissertations demonstrate an application of the skills and knowledge that students have amassed over the preceding three years. Moreover, they are expected to translate their academic achievements to employers less concerned with content, and more with aptitude and skills, and so, the changing demands of the global labour market require a reassessment of how degrees prepare students to navigate these roles effectively (McAlpine et al., 2020).

There is a gap then, between what the traditional learning structure of tertiary educators, and what must be demonstrated to employers (Ferrie & Scott 2021). At the University of Glasgow, structured into four Colleges which operate within centralized and local forms of governance, there are broadly speaking, two types of undergraduate degree programme. Professional degrees include Medicine, Law and Education, where the content and delivery of content is negotiated between University colleagues and a national body such as the Royal Society of Medicine. General degrees are typically four-year undergraduate degrees that do not have this level of external scrutiny (though may be accredited, for example Business Schools) and tend to follow the rule of: two pre-honours years where course grades determine whether a student can progress but not their degree classification; and two honours years where course grades determine each student's degree classification. In the General four-year degree, at the University of Glasgow, the structure of learning has traditionally been dominated by disciplinary content that builds incrementally towards a disciplinary identity. Within this model, students learn a canon and despite a criticality of learning being a major focus, there still remains a power dynamic between teacher and student; between canon and student that, to some extent, reinforces a Freirian pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970) – conformity rather than critical creativity dominates. Where skill learning exists, and Glasgow like many institutions has worked hard to build graduate attributes, and when students speak of what they have learned, they tend to draw on content rather than skills.

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As the paper progresses, we focus on 'transitioning through': helping students self-appraise their development, determine that they are investing not only in a successful degree outcome but their successful development as independent and critical learners, and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset that sets them up as 'work-ready' graduates. We explore and reflect on this support to transition through university by focusing on a suite of new courses that are designed to deliver critical learning moments – 'skill thresholds' - that significantly transform students' understanding of learning, from a focus on content and disciplinary trajectories to one where students select courses for the opportunity to develop themselves in terms of skills and characteristics (Kiley & Wisker, 2009). The courses are influenced by sectoral innovations around skill development and the sustainability agenda, and we will explore how the learning that fosters an entrepreneurial mindset can also serve to foster critical citizenship.

Building on a review of the literature regarding the skills required for successful transition to employment, and drawing from our efforts to produce a new suite of courses for year two students, rich in skill development, disruptive learning and 'awakening' moments, this paper aims to develop a holistic framework for understanding the transition to independence throughout the undergraduate degree. By outlining the interplay of skills, transformations, and thresholds at each stage, we seek to conceptualize how tertiary education can better support students in navigating these critical transitions.

Transitioning in and transitioning through

There is a wealth of literature on transitioning into higher, from secondary and further education. This work is critical to improve opportunities for all students, particularly those whose outcomes routinely fall below standard performances signaling structural issues are at play, for example, the attainment gap experienced by many students from minority ethnic backgrounds (Advance HE, 2024). Linked with poorer outcomes, students from minority ethnic groups also face diminished employment outcomes (UUK, 2016). Reasons forthcoming from the literature to explain why students struggle to transition successfully include deficiency theories (focus on individual failure, Conyers, 2002), bias theories (prejudice and discrimination, Cornish & Jones, 2013) and structural theories. Structural theories require close examination of the influence of oppressive economic, educational structures (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011) on institutional culture (Stuart et al., 2009), and involves measuring the attainment gap which persists after factors relating to individual students' 'deficiencies' (socio-economic status for example, though this is itself a structural issue, just one that lies beyond the ivory tower) are controlled for (McDuff et al., 2018). Once evidence is found (Duhs et al., 2019) of structural issues within, then oppressive practices must be sought and challenged through all aspects of learning and teaching. This is tough to do because academics are predominantly white and middle-class and even where we actively seek to be inclusive, what we perceive to be standard, can also be oppressive. It is this structural and institutional oppression that can limit the pedagogic paradigm and inhibit creativity, independence and criticality (Freire, 1970).

There is less work on transitioning through the undergraduate curriculum though those examining attainment gaps - the gap in the proportion of white and minority ethnic students achieving a 1st or 2:1 degree classification - are helpful. Duhs et al. (2019) outline their approach to making role models more visible, through reading lists for example that include non-academic work, work emerging from outside of the UK, US and Northern Europe, and providing scaffolded assessments allowing students multiple

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opportunities to practice or choose assessments. Transitioning through as a focus, allows us to think of the changing ways that educators can create learning opportunities, that include disciplinary content, and also enable progression towards independence and autonomous learning. That is, finding a space where all students can engage in critical pedagogy (Piacentini, 2025), co-creating a culture with students, of increased ownership and power-taking, to take risks and learn from failure (Greenwood & Edson Ferrie, 2025). These are familiar 'skills' to entrepreneurial scholars and practitioners.

From 2003 to 2023 the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland has used Enhancement Themes to strategically work with educators and students to shape the Higher Education Sector. Between 2014 and 2017, the theme was Student Transitions and this focused on transitioning into, through and out of study at university. As part of this work, Cheng et al. (2023) identified self-efficacy as critical to help them manage stress, as well as focus students' energy toward academic tasks. The report also signals the need for students to practice towards independent learning, and learning that builds up each student's employability. The work helps us think of skill-oriented programmes, but also consider the purpose with which skills are surfaced and harnessed to deliver future goals.

The value of an entrepreneurial mindset

Shepherd et al. (2010) defined entrepreneurs as able to identify whether an opportunity exists, to imagine and create novel remedies, and to mobilize around the opportunity drawing usefully on resources to manage uncertainty and to secure success. It is of interest to Governments because it is linked to job creation (Martin et al., 2013; Nabi et al., 2017; Cui, 2021) which in turn nurtures national growth, and reduces the dependency on state-funded employment (such as civil service, education, health). An entrepreneurial mindset is broader since the same skillset is now applied to a wider sphere and refers to a continual learning and growth. Having an entrepreneurial mindset can be understood as having the skills to yield financial, cultural or social benefits (Ho et al., 2018; Cui & Bell, 2022).

Drawing on Gupta and Govindarajan's (2002) observation that an entrepreneurial mindset can be founded on past experiences including learning, Cui and Bell (2022) explored the relationship between entrepreneurial education activity, having the intention to be entrepreneurial, wanting to foster entrepreneurial behaviours, and actually engaging in entrepreneurial behaviours. They concluded that having the opportunity to create and act-through problem solving in the classroom (Kuratko et al., 2021) was a strong indicator that students would develop entrepreneurial intentions which in turn would encourage behaviours. The challenge for universities, is to foster an entrepreneurial mindset, making space for students to take power, to give themselves permission to take risks while also operating within structures and institutions. While this work may be embedded in disciplinary learning, in line with graduate attributes, all students need support for entrepreneurial skill surfacing and in turn, enhancing employability. Within the literature there is a strong link to courses that deliver learning around entrepreneurship (Cui et al., 2021) that allows students to opt in (or out), and may link more easily to some disciplines (business?) than others, rather than institution-wide initiatives that attract all students. Where a university has created opportunities for all, it can be said to offer an entrepreneurial culture (Hidayati & Satmaka, 2018).

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Adopting a culture that can reach all disciplines is tough. Bernstein (2006) argues that different higher education disciplines have different epistemic structures. Some subjects, often Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) -based are vertical – where knowledge is hierarchical. Gaining threshold understanding is necessary before moving on to a more complex concept (e.g. physics demands knowledge of superior forces before introducing other neglected forces in dynamical systems – you study how fast a ball rolls down a slope in the absence of friction, then you add friction back in). Often, subjects such as this encourage mastery (i.e. high test scores) which can be achieved by learning to the test. Other disciplines are more horizontal in structure; these disciplines encourage breadth of learning over mastery and tend to fall into non-STEM subject areas. In many instances, students are able to transition through years 1 and 2 of their undergraduate degrees using the principles that have served them well as learners in their final years of secondary education: STEM students perform well in subjects that encourage mastery, while non-STEM students perform well in subjects that encourage more breadth. These repetitive, regurgitative approaches to learning often work sufficiently well in the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) that is the focus of years 1 and 2.

Advancing scholarship and pedagogical insights mean that most students are exposed to excellent teaching that works to move quickly from rote learning to critical engagement, but students, secure in their belief that they know how to be a successful learner (based on school performance) can take time to appreciate that new skills are needed. In Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence is working to dismantle rote learning in schools, and we do see some students flourish in classrooms that encourage critical engagement. Still, the diversity of our student body means that some students join from more regimented education systems (for example, South Asia). For these students, educational success becomes harder to maintain as the learning outcomes move beyond the initial stages of Bloom's taxonomy towards application, critical analysis, innovation and creation of knowledge (where the final year dissertation encompasses all of these). Indeed, increasing stress is a common experience of students as they migrate through year 3 towards their independent project and the enormity of autonomous decision making and knowledge production is overwhelming.

Developing an entrepreneurial culture that reaches all students, therefore seems to be a critical initiative for higher education institutions. Even if it does not produce more entrepreneurs, it should aid transitioning, as students build skills that enable the critical thinking, creativity, innovation, problem-solving and power-taking demanded by the final years of undergraduate study.

The value of a democratic mindset

The narrative around both skill-growth and the entrepreneurial mindset should trigger questions about what education is for. We are keen in this paper to avoid the dead-end of thinking that higher education should service economic growth, criticized often because it assumes that growth is beneficial and possible, while it obfuscates other benefits of doing and learning such as self-sufficiency and well-being. While an entrepreneurial mindset has been linked to economic growth, it is also linked with social and cultural gain. We argue that the independence associated with entrepreneurialism can also be linked to the critical thinking celebrated within liberal education that aims to develop personal accountability and public (perhaps global) citizenship, both needed for healthy democracies.

When thinking about fostering a democratic mindset, we are focusing on development of the human being, and the transformational potential of education drawing on the human development paradigm (Nussbaum, 2010). Building on Socratic ideas of democracy, we hold that society must be constituted of citizens who have independence of thought, a curious nature and who are practically capable to offer collective security and act critically to power. Education must leave space for creative problem solving, for practising failure, for having the freedom to imagine, and the space to practice harnessing imagination. Imagination is a key skill in critical thinking: we cannot do better if we cannot first imagine it and in turn, we do not suspect those in authority of mis-using power unless we can imagine their (un/intended) deceit or corruption. Imagining is questioning.

In turn, education can transform a person from being helpless, or served, to being self-sufficient and independently capable. One mechanism by which this is achieved is to ensure that the classroom meets the real world, either through the 'capture' of reality within the classroom, or the ease in which learning can be applied outwith the institution. For example, if involved in an activity that generates and evaluates evidence around inequalities where the classroom opens-up the opportunity for compassion, how does this endure beyond the course (Piacentini, 2025)? How might the student consider their own positionality (Greenwood & Edson Ferrie, 2025), exploring to what extent they feel they need to/want to develop skills of compassion further? And to what extent might they feel ready to apply such learning, perhaps guiding them to particular forms of part-time work? Linked to the earlier idea of triggering entrepreneurial behaviours, we consider triggering socially beneficial behaviours, and this often requires collaboration.

Team-working is something of an issue in the higher education classroom when productivity is linked to assessment and students are graded. Here we question whether we can create the benefit of practicing to work with others without running the risk of a group being impacted negatively if a member or two disengage and fail to contribute. We return to the roots of democratic practice and the adage that you can't have tried everything, if you haven't tried asking for help, and that cooperative activity (Dewey, 1899) may be a better descriptor than team-working. In this form of learning we can practice self-reliance within team-working structures if positioned as co-operative activities, where finding and evaluating the evidence draws on expertise of more than one person, but the central argument or pitch (submitted work) is the work of each individual thus allowing them to draw on positionality and practice accountability (Rousseau, 1979). Good citizenship comes from both having accountability and recognizing others as valuable leading to the will to collaborate with others as allies. Drawing on the reforms of John Dewey (Dewey, 1899), we may evaluate our learning spaces as educationally successful if learners "take charge of their own thinking and engage with the world in a curious and critical spirit" (Nussbaum, 2010, p.64). To manage this, we need learning spaces that allow learners to do, not just think. Figuring things out, raising questions, having (some) control over the learning trajectory and problem solving are key elements to such an education. As argued, these skills are also the hallmarks of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Sustainability

While it may feel quite a leap of topic, sustainability is increasingly the focus of higher education conversations. The launch of Times Higher Education's (THE) Impact Rankings in 2019 delivered a way to

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assess Universities' success in achieving the United Nation's (UN's) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Ranking methodology (THE, 2024) focuses on four key fields: Research, Stewardship, Outreach, and Teaching. A strong performance in the teaching category is more likely if an initiative is designed to be accessible to all students, and in turn, this would influence the future behaviours of alumni as they take lessons around sustainability into future careers. There are tensions between economic growth and sustainable futures and the UN's targets set by the SDGs aim to avoid planetary collapse by ensuring economic development is sustainable (Liu et al., 2023; Sinha et al., 2020).

The theme of sustainability is not only important to THE and universities globally, but to students, as the project aims to champion the capabilities of future generations (Ahmad et al., 2023). As such, educational responses need to be able to draw on all the skills associated with an entrepreneurial mindset (imagination, creativity, innovation, leadership, problem solving, strategizing, action) and all the commitment of a democratic mindset (accountability, collective action, compassion). Drawing on the theme of sustainability allowed us to reflectively consider whether surfacing relevant skills but not sufficiently signaling that these were strong indicators of an entrepreneurial or a democratic mindset, may then fail to produce relevant behaviours. Ultimately, we reflected that there were synonyms, such as 'self-starters' or 'leaders' that removed the connotation of commerce, freeing students and educators to consider educational opportunities that could produce world changers.

After reflecting on the importance of an education that develops an entrepreneurial mindset, a democratic mindset, an awareness of global challenges such as sustainability and that delivers 'work-readiness' for its students, we devised a new educational framework for our university: the 'Curriculum for Life'. We will outline the Curriculum for Life (C4L) which has been designed to meet the threshold for an educational model that both develops an entrepreneurial and democratic mindset, with the aim too, of helping students transition, mindfully, through their undergraduate degree.

Where citizenship and the foundations of entrepreneurialism differ is in the latter: there is a will to dominate (a market). In citizenship the enterprise is collaborative. In the classroom that is tough because students are conditioned to compete for grades, recognizing that grades are a form of tariff that may be convertible into employment, income and security. The trick is to unlearn the idea that students are in competition, and this requires some imagination to learn that there are enough A grades for all. It is not enough to tell students this, but to encourage them to live it, and this will feel risky to them. We hope the answer is to have courses that are low risk in two ways. First the courses are low risk because they represent 10 or 20 credits of a 480-credit degree plan. Second, they are low risk because they sit outwith a learning trajectory. The courses do not limit students' access to honours courses, nor does future learning depend on their understanding of current material. They are designed to give students an educational reprieve from disciplinary content, in order to practice and develop their democratic and entrepreneurial mindsets.

Curriculum for life (C4L)

Curriculum for Life emerged from the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy that launched just as the Covid-19 pandemic was closing physical classrooms and 'pivoting' the world into remote and often isolated

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working and learning spaces. In 2022, four workstreams were created to implement the strategy and one of these was focused on Curriculum Transformation. The focus on implementation provided not just space for, but expectation that, emergent ideas would be design-led. That is, purposefully considering the spirit of the Learning & Teaching Strategy, the reality of our current offer to students, and what could be learned from pedagogical literatures (many produced by colleagues in our institution), as well as educator experience and expertise. The Transforming Curricula workstream was co-chaired by the Dean of Learning & Teaching of one of the four Colleges in our ancient institution, and a pedagogical expert based in our Academic and Digital Development Unit (both co-authors). The workstream also includes a Learning & Teaching Strategy Manager and the Associate Dean from a second College, now College Lead (the other co-authors). The initial conception of Curriculum for Life was developed by imagining the 'art of the possible' against 'competitor research' throughout 2023 and early 2024 before moving on to a more concrete phase in 2024.

Having a small team was critical, allowing us to identify time (around eight days over the summer 2024) to hide away, and employ our own version of entrepreneurialism as we strategized, envisioned, created, and joyfully built our ideal offer that we hoped would be universally recognized as adding value. This time was taken, rather than given. We each had complex diaries to manage and no workload allocated to these focused days, but we had to disrupt our ways of working, in order to create something different. Having a small team necessitated working with a lot of different actors (within and beyond our institution, across and beyond the UK) to test our thinking, and we were open to these conversations critically shaping our plans. We were open to failure and chose to create the best plan we could with the greater risk of critical feedback, than limit our vision to fit 'neatly' with existing structures and expected ways of working. We started to realize the possible, not just consider the art of it! By August we had a White Paper, a 14-page manifesto delivered to the University's Learning & Teaching Committee. The Paper opens:

What if every student at the University of Glasgow had the opportunity to engage in a curriculum that contains opportunity for work-related and experiential learning, that explores and addresses societal challenges such as climate action, sustainability and social justice? The Curriculum Transformation workstream propose an embedded opportunity that is predicated upon learning beyond the core discipline and enables students to develop and demonstrate skills for the future workplace through an inclusive, accessible Curriculum for Life (C4L). (Curriculum Transformation Team, 2024, p.2)

There are five aspects of our plans, stated in the paper, that have fueled University-wide support and each link explicitly to developing not just entrepreneurial or democratic mindsets, but also behaviours. The first is to connect students to, and make space for the challenges that they are keenly aware of such as climate change and sustainability. The second to establishing an entrepreneurial and democratic culture, including all learners in the question of what is education for? The third is disruption, providing space for, and signaling to students that there is an opportunity to learn differently, taking risks, working with others and testing solutions. The fourth aspect is explicitly surfacing entrepreneurial and democratic mindsets and finally, the fifth aspect involves students linking their development as a person to the learning opportunity by adopting one or more characteristics and becoming a change maker, a social innovator, a creative leader and/or global citizen. These five elements are unpacked further here.

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The first relates to the course themes. To become part of the Curriculum for Life courses have to relate to societal challenges, with the SDGs at the forefront of our minds. We wanted students to connect with the research and academic practices that contribute to our Impact Ranking.

The second relates to establishing an entrepreneurial culture, and in turn, establishing what is distinct about a University of Glasgow degree? Borrowing from McDuff et al., (2018), the aim is for Curriculum for Life to be an institution-wide initiative, so that positive change systematically reaches all degrees, and all students, creating a hallmark of a University of Glasgow degree. That is, it is, by design, inclusive.



Figure 1 IDEA: A cohesive programme identity for Curriculum For Life (C4L) courses.

The third relates to distinction too: what makes Curriculum for Life courses different from the content-focused disciplinary learning? Each course must align to IDEA: our framework for C4L (see Figure 1). The primary aim is to avoid C4L courses becoming disciplinary-focused, introductory courses, but instead become courses that ensure students interact across disciplines (in the way societal challenges require); disrupt their ways of knowing and learning (to facilitate growth); enhance their 'disciplinary humility' (Tripp & Shortlidge, 2019); and apply their learning to societal challenges. Interaction signals that a lecture/tutorial mode of presentation may not be sufficient for students to cooperate, collaborate and work together. Disruption is not only about challenging the kinds of learning students do, but also how educators teach. It could include using different kinds of assessment or bringing in non-academic experts into the teaching team, for example. Enhance perhaps relates neatly with a democratic mindset, of understanding our power to collaborate and affect change, but this self-awareness is also critical for an entrepreneurial mindset which requires sound identification of resources and this includes people who can help. Apply is perhaps the most obvious theme for entrepreneurialism, and seeks to understand problems holistically, prototyping evidence-based solutions and testing to improve success.

The fourth design element of C4L that we believe will foster entrepreneurial and democratic mindsets is skills surfacing. To be recognized as a C4L course, educators must demonstrate an elevated focus on the development of future skills through their course (i.e. a focus on skills at the design stage alongside the academically-oriented learning outcomes). This signaling that learning within a university can be skill-focused rather than content-focused is a form of disruption, particularly for students on General degrees but perhaps also for their teachers.

Related to this, the fifth element unique to C4L is about surfacing characteristics. These characteristics: change maker, social innovator, global citizen and creative leader, will enable students to create their own identity by amassing points in a particular characteristic profile through their engagement with C4L courses. Characteristics are a device we innovated to help students understand their positionality in relation to the educational choices that they are making, and in turn, may help them present their value to employers. The characteristics, see Figure 2, align to existing University strategies and have been rated highly by students who have worked with us throughout the process, usually as interns so that we could pay them for their expert views. These characteristics also align strongly to the skills and attributes associated with entrepreneurial and democratic mindsets. Each course is assigned a number of points that are to be aligned with particular characteristics. For example a 10-credit course has 5 points; a 20-credit course has 10 points. To be recognized as a C4L course the course design must demonstrate alignment to at least one characteristic, though most early courses have identified one primary characteristic that is assigned most points and at least one additional secondary characteristic that is assigned fewer points.

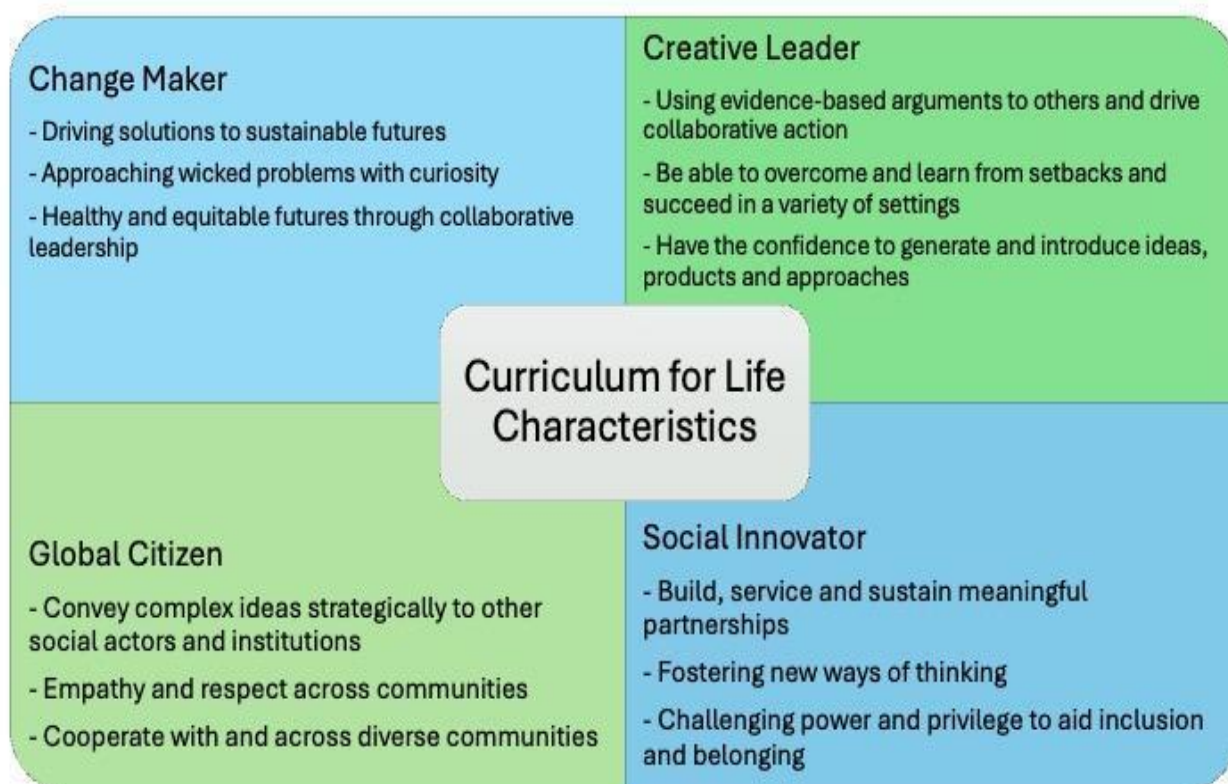


Figure 2 Characteristics applied to each C4L course to enable students to connect their positionality with their educational ambitions.

While students may see characteristics as course descriptors at the start of their engagement with C4L courses, it is hoped that they will recognize that their own identity could be shaped by the characteristics, and in turn, this could help them make informed and mindful educational choices as they transition through year 2 and into honours courses. We hope that this will form a kind of entrepreneurial or democratic intent, that Cui and Bell (2022) identified as the precursor to behaviour. We also hope that it will help students recognize the power that they have to take control of their education, as they 'do' and don't just think, a few years ahead of their independent project or dissertation.

This reflective paper has tried to map out how we have designed a programme that permits our institution to reliably declare itself as offering both an entrepreneurial and a democratic culture. In the next academic year, six courses will be piloted and through that academic session a pipeline of new courses will be evaluated and developed. The evidence that our vision has worked, will come through student testimony. Figure 3, presented within our conclusion, maps the theory of change, and our goals. Our intention for the C4L is that every student will engage with C4L in the future. The extent to which they will engage is yet to be determined as we enter our pilot year, but by reimagining the aims of an undergraduate degree at our ancient, traditional university we recognise the value in taking risks as educators. Perhaps this is also the entrepreneurial mindset at play as we transition into a new hallmark of a university degree?

Conclusion

The paper delivers a critical reflection on our new model for successful transitioning through the undergraduate programme and how we hope to foster an entrepreneurial and democratic mindset to support individual development towards independence. Independence, in this context, goes beyond merely adapting to independent study and autonomous learning; it involves encouraging students to recognize and 'own' the transformational opportunities inherent in their undergraduate journey, whether those transformations are intellectual, cognitive, cultural, or personal (Baker & Lattuca, 2010; White, 2024). By fostering this sense of ownership early in their journey, we propose that skill-focused courses will play a critical role in promoting independence as a core competency for students (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Drawing on this point, we have explored how 'building independence' can be explicitly built into learning and as an intended learning outcome, giving students the opportunity to expect and invest in this transition.

There is still a lot of work to do. In 2025/26 we will pilot six courses generated from three of our four Colleges and develop the pipeline for new offers so that we can, in time, reach all students. We close then, not with a conclusion, so much as a further reflection on how we measure success. For the C4L programme to be deemed a success, the transformative learning value should reach beyond individual courses. Figure 3 is an early attempt to capture what we hope to see. Better transitioning through the undergraduate curriculum is not just about meeting the demands of each level and adapting to the new or heightened challenges of each new level, but to students open to disruption. For students to graduate as creative leaders, social innovators, global citizens or change makers, they must have space to practice taking power,

acknowledging their own accountability as investors in their futures, from work futures to democratic futures. Figure 3 showcases our intent and the impact we hope to see on students as they transition through from year 1 to graduation.

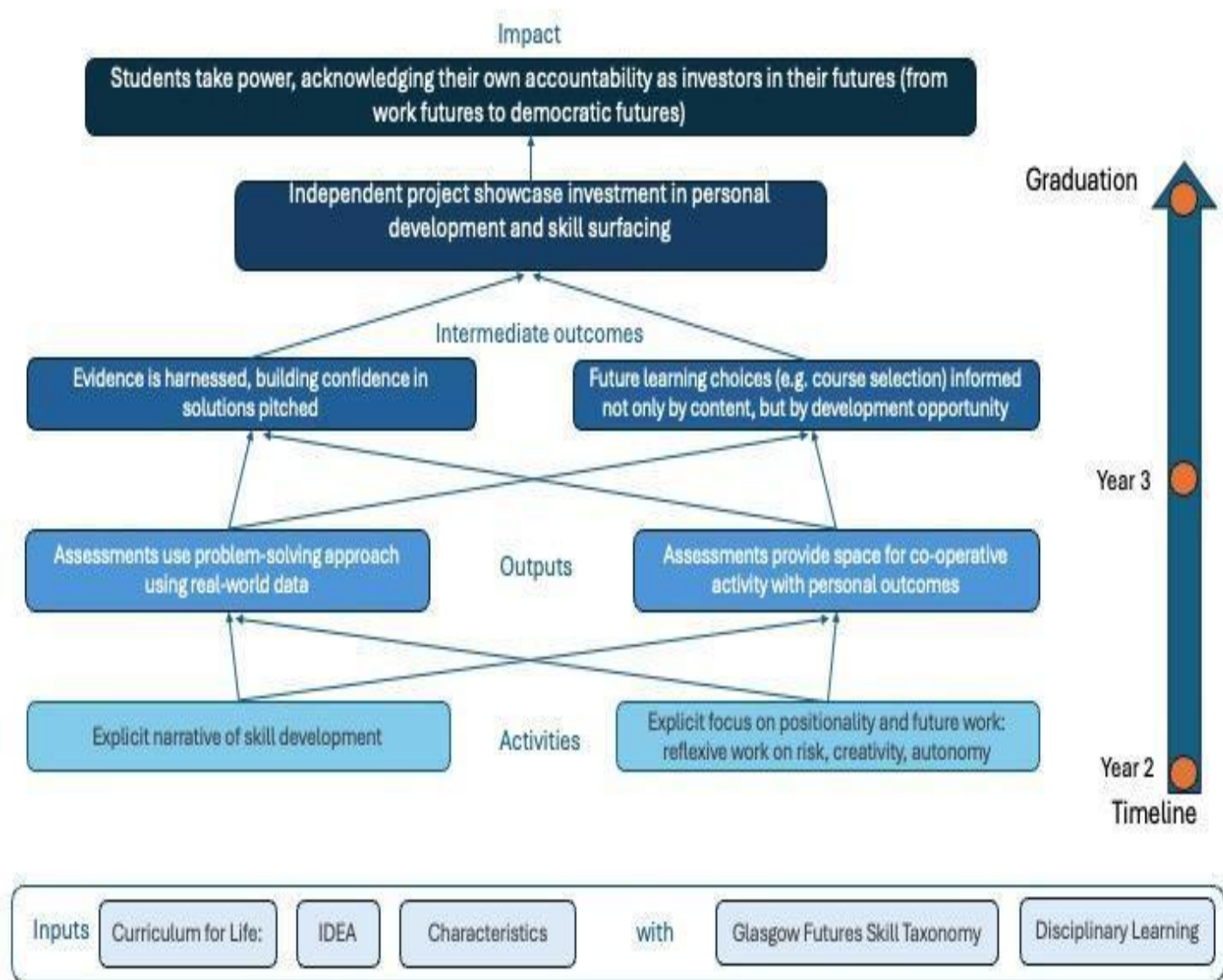


Figure 3 Theory of Change – Curriculum for Life implementation towards independent futures

Biographies

Jo Edson Ferrie is Professor of Sociology and has been the Associate Dean for Skill and Method in the University of Glasgow's College of Social Sciences since 2023. Jo was formerly the Deputy Director for Training at the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences. Jo is a scholarship researcher exploring how to teach research methods better, and also continues her research around human rights realization in Scotland.

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Michael McEwan is Senior Lecturer in the Learning and Teaching Centre at the University of Glasgow. His support of academic colleagues as they develop as teachers is underpinned by 20 years of publishing cutting edge scholarship. Recent publications examine maths anxiety amongst students of statistics, interdisciplinary project-based learning, and authentic approaches to curriculum design.

Ashley Lewis-Cole is the Learning and Teaching Strategy Manager and is co-lead of the Transforming Curricula workstream that has developed Curriculum for Life. Ashley has completed pioneering work around the COIL: Collaborative Online International Learning programme at Glasgow, creating mobility and international experiences that transform learning opportunities for students at the University of Glasgow.

Maureen Bain held the role of Dean of Learning and Teaching in Glasgow's College of Medicine, Veterinary & Life Sciences until very recently, when she took the role as Associate Vice Principal: Curriculum. Professor of Comparative Anatomy and Histology, her expertise in action-oriented learning and experiential (authentic) assessments has impacted across the University.

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