

Keynote Abstracts

Keynote Address Steve Fuller, Professor of Sociology, University of Warwick, Thursday 13th September 2007.

‘Is there a place for the critical intellectual in academic leadership?’

I shall argue that academic leaders – by which I mean senior administrators at universities – are uniquely placed to function as critical intellectuals in society at large. However, it requires that they stop thinking of themselves as line managers in companies whose shareholders lie outside the university’s walls. I shall highlight four areas where such critical intellectual leadership is required today: (1) a measured critique of the adoption of metrics to assess research and teaching; (2) a defence of the freedom and integrity of academic work, perhaps even against the expressed wishes of academics themselves (i.e. the point of tenured appointments and financial cross-subsidization); (3) a commitment to maintain and replenish the university’s infrastructure (i.e. reverse the current trend towards short-term contracts); (4) a proactive policy of inserting academic standards into non-academic arenas, e.g. in the evaluation of products, treatments, schools, credentials and training programmes.

Steve Fuller is Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick. He is most closely associated with the interdisciplinary research programme of ‘social epistemology’ which is the title of the journal he founded in 1987 and the first of his fifteen books. His recent books include: *The Positive Power of Negative Thinking* (Icon, 2005) and *The Knowledge Book: Concepts in Philosophy, Science and Culture* (Acumen, 2007).

Keynote Address Gráinne Conole, Professor of E-learning Open University, Friday 14th September 2007.

‘Students learning in a modern context’

What does learning in today’s technology - enhanced environment mean? Is learning as an activity fundamentally changing? How are new communicative channels and increased social dimensions possible through web 2.0 technologies impacting on the way students work and learn? And what does this mean for the role of the teacher and institutions in terms of how they support students? The presentation considers these questions and reports on findings from current research evaluating how students are actually using technologies and what this research tells us about the ways in which patterns of learning might be changing.

Gráinne Conole is Professor of E-Learning in the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University. Her research interests include the use, integration and evaluation of Information and Communication Technologies and e-learning and the impact of technologies on organisational change.
