

Title: *'A Futures Curriculum for the University of Birmingham'*

The future of higher education has become interestingly challenging to predict, particularly in this world of changing technologies coupled with the increasing influence of various actors that we would not have thought of two decades ago. Student participation and experience, among a variety of other things, will definitely go through an enormous transformation in the years to come.

For instance, in present time most, if not all, learning materials can be found online. The University of Birmingham works alongside CANVAS to ensure everything the student needs for each module is found on the Internet: from lecture slides, past examinations, and module guides to weekly readings, e-books, and an infinite amount of sources the student can pick through to learn from. Even assignments are no longer handed in physically, but through this Internet portal. The current way of teaching and learning electronically will be further developed and will, in the not so far future, be expected to replace all human contact.

Lectures will move to be streamed online. Professors will deliver the lectures to a computer, from their offices, to students watching from their preferred locations. Students will no longer have the need to be physically present in a lecture theatre. Videoconferences will replace seminars and it will not be surprising if a robot grades assignments or leads the modules.

Perhaps the most appropriate way to design each course would be to include as much virtual participation and Internet based resources as possible, as the use of physical textbooks, magazines, dictionaries, and others is already starting to be reduced ominously. Counter to this way of teaching is that the true social experience of university will most likely be lost. The interaction between students and faculty will be harder, yet not entirely impossible as there are several social networks available for this purpose.

Looking at the extreme end of the spectrum, and hopefully worst-case scenario, the possibility exists that higher education will come to cease to fulfill its purpose. Looking ahead, and considering all the technological inventions and advancements that are to come, what a university trains its professionals to do will no longer be needed as all such jobs will be done by intelligent machines. The development of machinery that can replace surgeons in an operating room is no longer a thought to be alarmed at, nor is the way intelligent machines that can do the work faster, more efficiently and accurately, are already replacing human labor.

To recapitulate, the technological revolution, that is yet to come, is what will determine the future of higher education and the way in which the learning experience will be shaped and designed, in order to meet the demands of the future generations.