UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

2026 European Learning & Teaching Forum

Impactful staff development for educational transformation

Lisbon, Portugal | 12 - 13 February 2026

#EUALearnTeach

Empowering Academic Staff for AI-Enhanced Learning: A Scalable Institutional Model for Sustainable Educational Transformation

European Learning & Teaching Forum 2026

Staff development for learning and teaching innovation

Agon Memeti, Ibrahim Neziri, Artina Kamberi
University of Tetova, North Macedonia

Higher Education at a Point of Acceleration

European higher education is undergoing a phase of **structural acceleration**, characterised by multiple, overlapping transformations:

- The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence across teaching, assessment, research, and academic administration
- Increasingly heterogeneous student populations with diverse educational backgrounds, expectations, and learning trajectories
- Profound labour-market shifts requiring transversal, adaptive, and digitally mediated competences

Together, these dynamics place **unprecedented pressure on universities** to continuously renew teaching and learning practices, rather than relying on periodic or incremental reform cycles.

Strategic Implications for Universities

In this context, several strategic implications emerge:

- Teaching quality can no longer be separated from digital and AI-related capability
- Pedagogical innovation becomes an **institutional responsibility**, rather than an individual or voluntary activity
- Academic staff capacity emerges as a **core strategic asset** for institutional competitiveness and educational quality

Universities must therefore move from viewing staff development as a support function to recognising it as a **central mechanism of institutional transformation**.

The Central Challenge

Academic staff are increasingly expected to:

- Integrate AI tools into curriculum design, teaching, assessment, and feedback
- Support personalised, flexible, and inclusive learning pathways
- Navigate the ethical, pedagogical, and epistemic implications of AI use in education

However, many institutions still lack:

- Coherent, institution-wide staff development models
- Structures that connect innovation to governance, recognition, and long-term sustainability

This gap frequently results in **fragmented adoption**, uneven pedagogical quality, and limited institutional impact.

Limitations of Conventional Staff Development

Conventional staff development approaches typically focus on:

- Isolated workshops or short-term training sessions
- Tool-oriented upskilling rather than pedagogical redesign

Such approaches rarely lead to:

- Deep or lasting pedagogical change
- Integration into everyday academic routines
- Collective institutional learning

As a result, innovation remains **episodic, individualised, and difficult to scale across the institution**.

Rethinking Staff Development: A Conceptual Shift

The proposed model is grounded in a fundamentally different understanding of staff development:

- From *training* → **capacity-building**
- From *individual competence* → **collective institutional capability**
- From *experimentation* → **embedded academic practice**

The aim is to transform AI adoption from a short-term technical initiative into a **normalised and sustainable academic practice**.

Student Attitudes Toward LMS and AI-Enhanced Learning

Table 1. Descriptive data on attitudes towards learning management systems and perceptions of AI

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. Error
ALMS [1]	678	20.00	100.00	77.37	18.14	-.699	.094
AILMS [2]	678	33.00	165.00	137.16	26.68	-1.087	.094
Valid N (listwise)	678						

[1] *Attitude towards learning management system*
[2] *Perception of AI in LMS*

Purpose of the Proposed Model

The model seeks to:

- Enable sustained pedagogical innovation at institutional level
- Integrate technological, pedagogical, and organisational dimensions
- Align staff development with institutional strategy, governance, and quality assurance processes

Ultimately, the model positions **academic staff empowerment** as the primary driver of effective and responsible AI-enhanced learning

Institutional Context

The model was developed and implemented at the **University of Tetova**, in response to:

- Limited and uneven AI literacy among academic staff
- Growing institutional pressure to modernise teaching and learning practices
- The absence of a structured, institution-wide framework for AI integration

The focus was deliberately placed on **systemic institutional change**, rather than individual excellence or isolated innovation.

Gap Between Current LMS Experience and AI Expectations

Table 3. Difference in student averages in LMS improvement with AI according to current LMS assessment

	ALMS	N	Mean of AILMS	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AILMS	>= 77.37	370	142.21	24.65	1.28
	< 77.37	308	131.08	27.79	1.58

t=5.524
df=676
p=.00

Model Overview

The model is:

- Practice-oriented rather than theory-driven
- Embedded within existing institutional structures and processes
- Designed to be adaptable across disciplines, faculties, and teaching contexts

It emphasises **learning through doing**, supported by digital infrastructures, collegial collaboration, and institutional recognition mechanisms.

Flagship Initiative 1: AI-Enhanced LMS

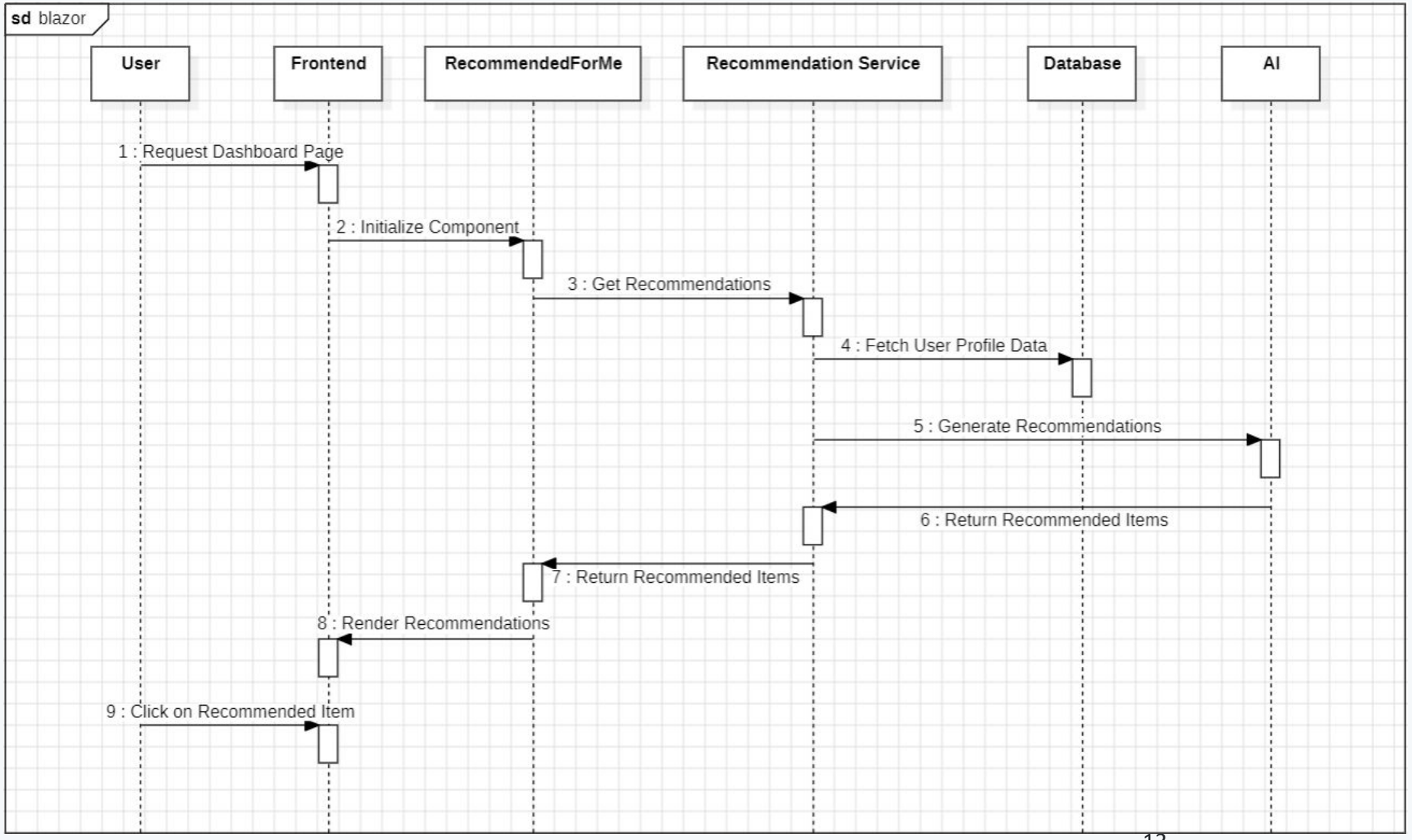
A central pillar of the model was the development of an **AI-powered Learning Management System**, built using Blazor technology.

Key features include:

- Personalised learning recommendations tailored to student behaviour and progress
- Adaptive assessment mechanisms supporting formative learning
- Learning analytics enabling feedback, reflection, and evidence-informed teaching

The LMS operates not merely as a content-delivery platform, but as a **space for pedagogical innovation and experimentation**.

AI-Enhanced LMS Architecture



Pedagogical Role of the AI-Enhanced LMS

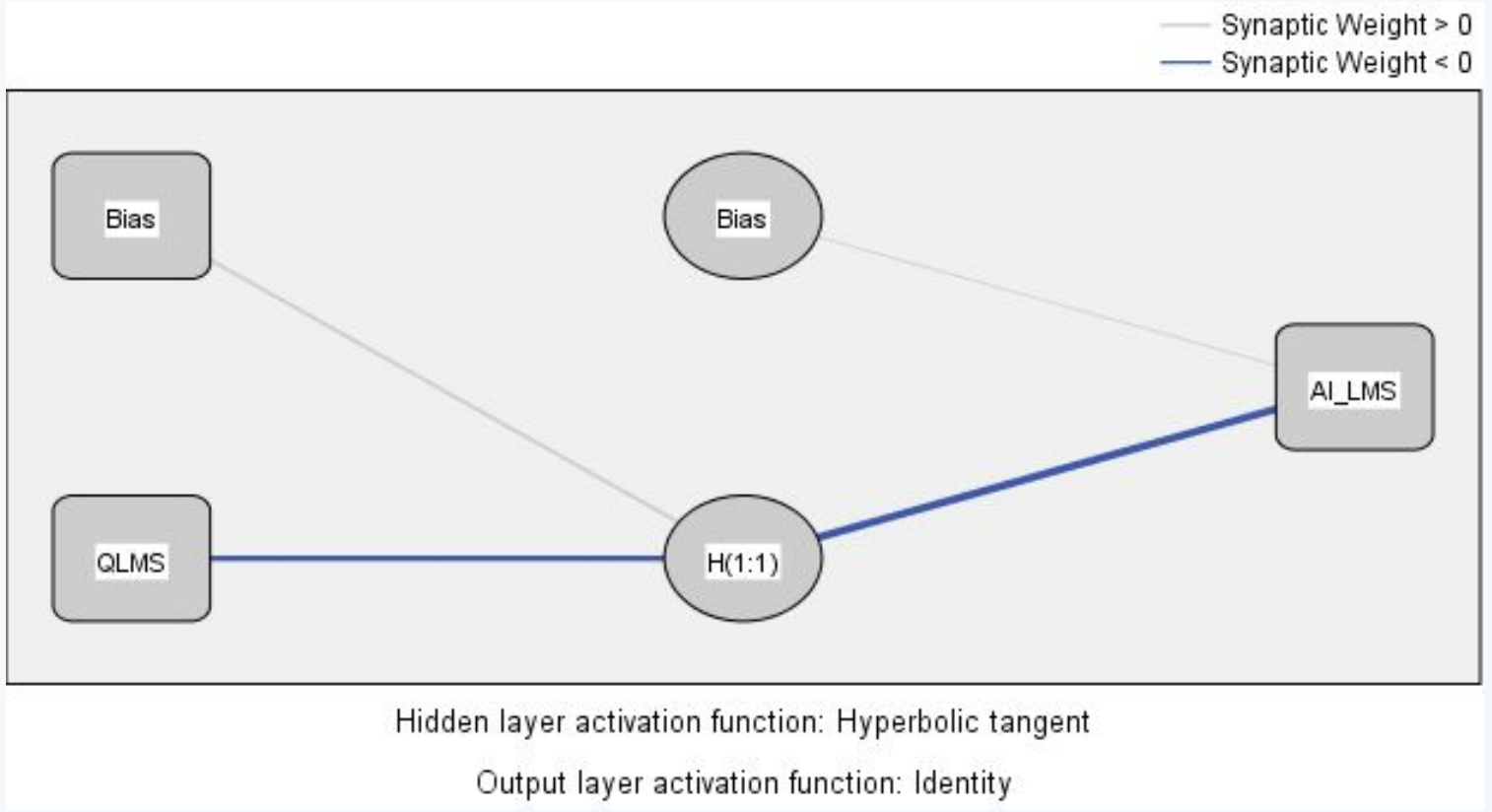
From a pedagogical perspective, the LMS supports:

- Continuous formative assessment and feedback loops
- Differentiated learning pathways aligned with student needs
- Data-informed teaching decisions grounded in learning analytics

For academic staff, the LMS provides a **safe, structured environment** to experiment, reflect, and iteratively improve teaching practices

Relationship Between LMS Experience and AI Acceptance

- r = **0.314**
- p < **.001**



Academic Staff as Co-Designers

A defining feature of the model was the positioning of academic staff as:

- Active co-designers of AI-supported learning scenarios

This co-creation approach resulted in:

- Stronger ownership and engagement
- Better alignment with disciplinary epistemologies and teaching cultures
- A higher likelihood of sustained and meaningful use

Pedagogical relevance was ensured by grounding innovation firmly within **disciplinary practice**.

Flagship Initiative 2: RARS Platform

The **Research Access and Resource Sharing (RARS)** platform, initially developed to support research collaboration, was repurposed to facilitate:

- Cross-disciplinary pedagogical exchange
- Sharing of teaching resources, course designs, and learning activities
- Documentation and dissemination of innovation outcomes

RARS thus functioned as a **knowledge infrastructure for staff development**.

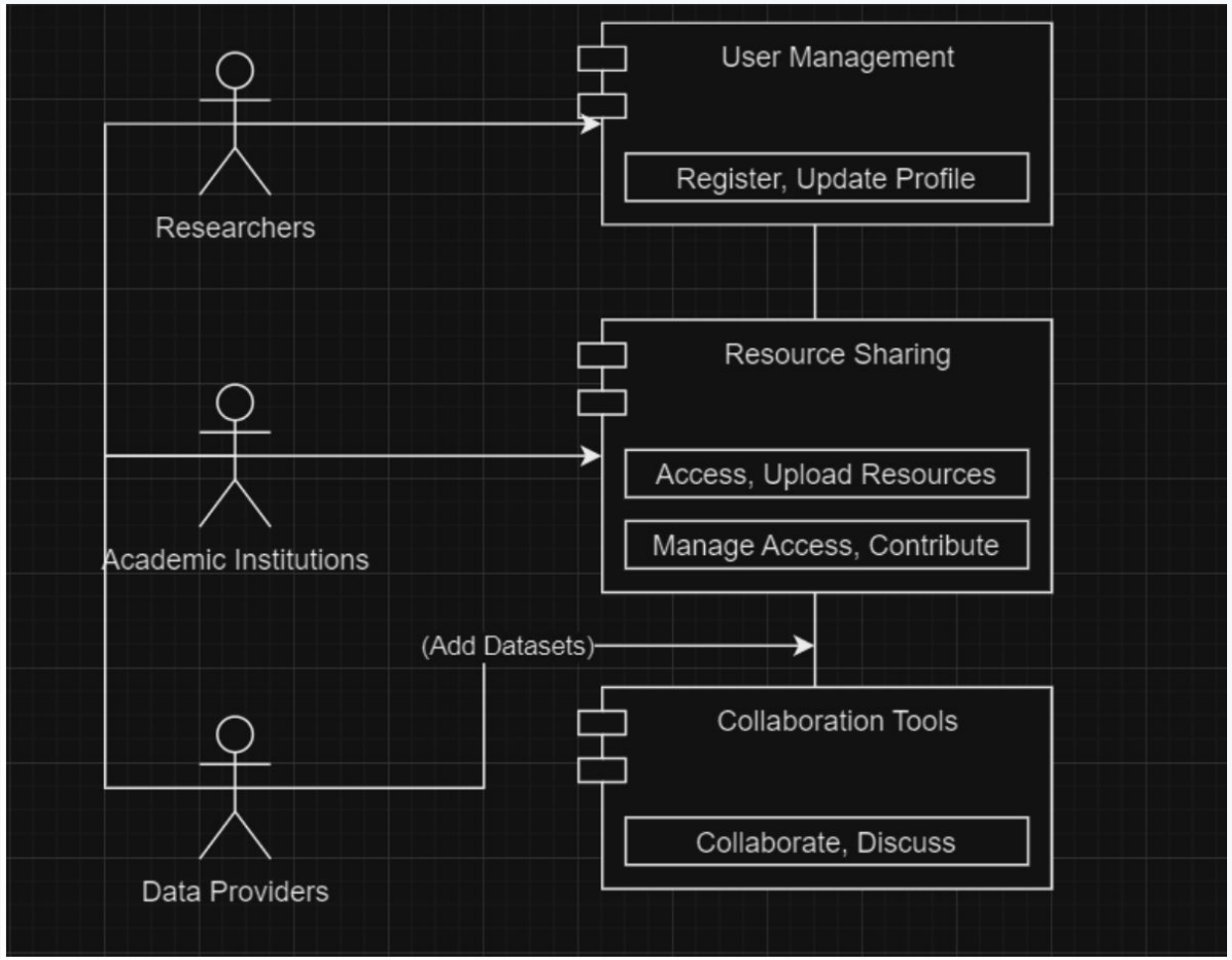
RARS as an Institutional Learning Mechanism

Through RARS, pedagogical innovation became:

- Visible and accessible beyond individual courses
- Transferable across faculties and disciplines
- Embedded in collegial and collaborative learning processes

This shifted staff development from isolated learning events to **institutional knowledge accumulation and reuse**.

RARS Platform: Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing



Development Formats and Learning Design

Staff development was delivered through a **blended and flexible learning design**, including:

- Hands-on, practice-based workshops
- Asynchronous learning resources supporting self-paced engagement
- Peer mentoring and informal communities of practice

This design respected different levels of digital readiness and reduced barriers to participation.

Institutional Recognition and Incentives

To ensure engagement and sustainability, innovation activities were:

- Linked to performance appraisal and professional development pathways
- Publicly recognised within the institution

Early adopters were encouraged to:

- Share practices internally
- Present experiences in national and European forums

Innovation was explicitly framed as **legitimate and valued academic work**.

Addressing Resistance to Change

Resistance to change was addressed through:

- Discipline-specific AI examples grounded in teaching practice
- Identification of early adopters as faculty “champions”

These champions acted as:

- Peer mentors
- Cultural translators between innovation and academic identity

Change was framed as **collegial, gradual, and evolutionary**, rather than imposed.

Bridging Digital Capability Gaps

The model introduced **scaffolded learning pathways**, progressing:

- From basic AI awareness and confidence-building
- To advanced pedagogical integration and course redesign

This approach reduced anxiety, fostered inclusiveness, and supported **gradual and sustainable competence development**.

Ensuring Sustainability

To avoid project-based fragility, the model was:

- Embedded into annual staff development planning cycles
- Linked to institutional KPIs and quality assurance processes

This ensured continuity beyond individual initiatives and short-term funding cycles.

Evidence of Impact

Observed outcomes include:

- Increased staff confidence and willingness to experiment pedagogically
- More diverse, engaging, and adaptive learning activities
- Improved student participation and formative assessment outcomes
- Strengthened cross-disciplinary collaboration

Importantly, pedagogical innovation became **normalised rather than exceptional**.

Conclusion: From Experimentation to Transformation

This case demonstrates that **AI-enhanced learning is not primarily a technological challenge**, but an institutional and pedagogical one.

Sustainable transformation requires:

- Strategic investment in academic staff capacity
- Integration of technology, pedagogy, governance, and recognition
- A cultural shift that positions innovation as core academic practice

By repositioning staff development as an **institutional engine of change**, universities can move beyond adaptation and enable academic staff to **lead the future of learning and teaching**.