Call for Papers for Special Inaugural Issue of *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*

Debating the status of Theory in Technology Enhanced Learning Research

**Guest Editors**

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**Background**

In 2020, Lancaster University’s Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning will launch the peer-reviewed, online open-access journal *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*. Intended as a vehicle for critical commentaries, review articles and empirical studies, the journal will further expand the many discussions already happening around the Centre and wider community: in seminar series, debates and residential courses.

Our Inaugural Special Issue will focus on **theory**—a contentious matter. Occasionally disparaged as obscure, or alienating, it seems fair to say that **theory** has never been as deeply embedded in Technology Enhanced Learning as it is in many areas of the social sciences. Technology Enhanced Learning is often viewed as a ‘practical’ field, with ‘theory’ negatively counterposed against methodological innovation, ‘evidence’ or ‘best practice’. The Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning conspicuously foregrounds theory in our Centre identity: with **Criticality, theory and research** positioned as one of our three main research themes. Yet we recognise that this is a contentious decision; that we are swimming against the stream of how research in the field is often undertaken and conceptualised elsewhere. As a Centre heavily focused on capacity-building, including through our long association with one of the field’s largest Doctoral Training programmes, we are also aware that theoretical concerns are a stumbling block for many novice researchers: even those inclined towards theory may struggle when getting to grips with the vocabularies, or using theories in their own research. Many come to openly wonder whether doing so is really worth the effort.

We intend that our Special Inaugural Issue will host a lively debate about these issues. How can theories (whatever they are) help us think differently about technology enhanced learning (whatever that is)? To what extent is research in the field “theoretical” (or should it be)? Which theories might influence our scholarship (and how)? How do theories come to gain or lose prominence within the field (and how do researchers make choices about which theories to use)? How important is theory for contributing to our objectives (or when weighed against other priorities)?

The Inaugural Special Issue will not project a single point of view on these issues. Our concern is to provide a space for debate and reflection, not to reach consensus or advocate for the editors’ own points of view (we often disagree!). Iconoclasm, contrarianism and angular arguments are quite welcome. We aim to carry a range of paper formats: supporting different styles and different lengths as appropriate to particular pieces (see under ‘paper types’ below). We do hope that authors will strive to write as accessibly as possible—to enable a range of researchers, including those at doctoral level, to engage with their arguments and to support further debate within the community. Yet, ultimately, we aim to provide maximum flexibility to contributing authors, enabling them to bring into the open a range of important issues that often seem relegated to the margins when research is moulded for final publication.

Reflecting the diversity of the Technology Enhanced Learning field, we will be pleased to welcome the contributions of authors from different host disciplines and geographical locations, and at a range of career...
stages. While many contributions will doubtless come from established scholars, we are also hoping to attract contributions from newer researchers in the field—including PhD students.

Whether you have a long-established association with the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning, or have received this Call for Papers as it cascades through our extended networks, we encourage you to consider contributing!

Scope of papers
As we have explained above, we specifically welcome a wide variety of papers. We do not, therefore, wish to prescribe the kinds of content papers might contain. However, when bringing forward the idea for the Inaugural Special Issue we were immediately keen to host pieces that:

- Argue about the contribution of theory to technology enhanced learning research—in the past, present and/or future.
- Focus on particular theories: perhaps by advocating or criticising the theory (or its use) across the field, or by providing worked examples.
- Examine the different roles that theory might play in research.
- Compare and contrast different theories, or reinterpret previous findings through a new lens.
- Document experiences of learning about and/or using particular theories.
- Consider how theories might be used with (or communicated to) different stakeholders.

However: we shall consider all proposals on their merits. Surprise us!

Paper types
We envisage that papers might come in a range of lengths and formats. When submitting your proposal please indicate the kind of paper you wish to contribute using the categories below.

- Synthesis papers (6,000-12,000 words).
- Standard papers (4,000-8,000 words).
- Commentaries (2,000-4,000 words).
- Book reviews (1,000-3,000 words).

If your work might not fit one of those categories then we may still consider it, but please explain your reasoning when submitting your proposal.

Content types
As well as the more typical journal context (text, tables and still images), we are also happy to invite authors to provide multimedia content: including, but not limited to, audio, video and interactive content. The main stipulation is that all content incorporated in the main paper must go through the peer-review process. If you have content that, for some reason, you feel cannot be peer-reviewed then we may also be able to include it as supplementary material on the journal website (where it will be labelled as “not peer-reviewed”).

Process and Dates

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 July 2019</td>
<td>Outline proposals due Please submit provisional title, abstract (around 200 words), authors and affiliations, and approximate intended length by email to Brett Bligh [<a href="mailto:b.bligh@lancaster.ac.uk">b.bligh@lancaster.ac.uk</a>]</td>
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<td>5 August 2019</td>
<td>Authors receive notification of acceptance and initial editorial comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 November 2019</td>
<td>First drafts of papers due. Submit via journal website (details will be confirmed to authors later).</td>
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<td>9 December 2019</td>
<td>Peer reviews returned and authors notified of decision</td>
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<td>3 February 2020</td>
<td>Revised manuscripts due. Submit via journal website</td>
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<td>17 February 2020</td>
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<td>2 March 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March 2020</td>
<td>Authors receive typeset versions for checking</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 April 2020</td>
<td>Publication of Special Inaugural Issue</td>
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