

Sam Illingworth, PhD

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I build tools and programmes that help people evaluate AI output critically. I founded [Slow AI](#), a 12-month critical AI literacy curriculum with 8,000+ subscribers and 0% paid churn. I design interactive applications that train users in AI output evaluation: distinguishing human from machine-generated text ([Bot or Not](#)), identifying hallucinated academic citations ([Dead Reference](#)), and stress-testing AI compliance culture ([Good Employee](#)). I advise the Council of Europe on AI literacy for human rights and democracy, and have given expert evidence to the European Commission, UK Parliament, and House of Lords. My current Leverhulme-funded research investigates how university students interact with generative AI systems. I use Claude daily in my own research and development workflow.

BUILT

Slow AI: 8,000+ subscribers, 0% paid churn · 5 deployed AI literacy applications · 1 published board game

ACADEMIC

100+ publications · 10 books · [2,500+ citations \(h-index 25\)](#) · [£450k+](#) research funding

AI LITERACY PRODUCTS — BUILT & SHIPPED

Slow AI Curriculum

12-month CPD-accredited programme for critical AI literacy. Monthly webinars combining theory, critical prompt exercises, and group dialogue. 8,000+ subscribers. 0% paid churn. Substack Bestseller.

Integrity Debt Audit

Web application measuring the gap between what organisations say about AI and what they actually do. 50 questions across five domains: policy, practice, transparency, training, accountability.

Bot or Not

Turing test variant. 192 passages from published authors and AI models. Users evaluate whether text is human or machine-generated. Trains pattern recognition in AI output.

Dead Reference

Hallucination detection trainer. 40 real and fabricated academic citations presented side by side. Users identify AI-generated references. Addresses citation fabrication in LLM output.

Good Employee

Interactive satire exploring AI compliance dynamics in workplace settings. Users navigate corporate AI policy and decide when to comply and when to resist.

AI RESEARCH & EVALUATION

- **Moltbook: AI agent discourse analysis.** Systematic analysis of 5,000 AI-generated comments from a social network of 150,000 autonomous AI agents (Butterflies). Developed coding framework for evaluating AI-generated social discourse. Examined how AI agents simulate community, empathy, and identity without human input. Submissions to *Nature* and *Nature Machine Intelligence*.
- **Investigating ChatGPT and AI experiences in UK universities.** Leverhulme Trust funded (£142,761, 2024–2026). Empirical research on how students interact with generative AI systems, including output evaluation behaviours and

trust calibration.

- **Generative AI in Higher Education** (Bloomsbury, 2026). Authored book examining AI integration in education, including synthetic empathy, AI anthropomorphism, and the psychology of human-AI interaction.
- **Synthetic empathy and AI attachment.** Ongoing research and public writing on the risks of simulated care in AI systems: how LLMs produce outputs that mimic empathy, why users form inappropriate attachments, and how to build critical distance. Core topic in the Slow AI curriculum.
- **Critical prompt design and output analysis.** Curriculum module teaching structured evaluation of LLM outputs: identifying hallucination patterns, bias markers, and confidence miscalibration. Tested across 12 monthly cohorts.

AI POLICY & GOVERNANCE

- **Expert Witness, Council of Europe** on AI Literacy for Human Rights, Democracy and Social Agency (2025–). Advising on how AI literacy frameworks should inform regulation and democratic participation.
- **Expert Witness, European Commission** on the impact of AI on scientific publishing and communications (2023).
- **Expert Witness, Westminster Education Forum** on next steps for AI in Education (2024).
- **Written evidence to House of Lords Select Committee.** Work cited in UK Government policy papers on AI in education.
- **Member, REF 2029 Sub-panel 23: Education.** Evaluating research quality across UK higher education.
- **Member, Royal Society of Edinburgh Education Committee** (2024–).
- **Member, Scottish Universities Working Group on Generative AI** in Curriculum and Assessment.
- **Chair, Science Foundation Ireland Discover Programme grant panel** (overseeing £24M+ in funding allocation).

CURRENT POSITIONS

Full Professor of Creative Pedagogies Edinburgh Napier University, Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement	2021 – present
Visiting Professor University College Dublin	2025 – present
Founder, Slow AI Critical AI literacy newsletter and CPD-accredited curriculum	2024 – present

EDUCATION

PhD in Atmospheric Physics University of Leicester	2011
MPhys Physics with Space Science and Technology (First Class, 87%) University of Leicester	2006
MA in Higher Education Manchester Metropolitan University	2016

SELECTED BOOKS

<i>Generative AI in Higher Education</i> Bloomsbury, 2026
<i>Bridging Scholarship and Practice in Higher Education</i> Routledge, 2025
<i>Poetry and Pedagogy in Higher Education</i> Policy Press, 2024
<i>Effective Science Communication</i> IOP Publishing, 3rd edition, 2024 · Adopted by 523 institutions across 66 countries · 250,000+ downloads
<i>A Sonnet to Science: Scientists and Their Poetry</i> Manchester University Press, 2019

SELECTED KEYNOTES & INVITED TALKS

Keynote: Institute of Physics	Nov 2025
Keynote: U!REKA EduForum, VSB-TUO, Czechia	Apr 2025
Keynote: Brain to Machine Generative AI Conference, Learning Planet Institute	Feb 2025
Keynote: ARC Speaker Series, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, USA	Oct 2024
Keynote: European Geosciences Union, Vienna	Apr 2023
Keynote: European Science Engagement Association, Vienna	May 2019
Invited: Equity Unbound	Nov 2025
Invited: Barcelona Biomedical Research Park	May 2025
Invited: University of Edinburgh (x4)	2022–2025
Invited: BERA: AI and Curriculum Making in Schools	Nov 2024
Invited: Wellesley College (x2)	2022–2023
Invited: Stockholm Resilience Centre	Sep 2023
Invited: Falling Walls, Berlin	Apr 2020
Invited: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (UK Gov)	May 2022

Full list of 40+ invited engagements available on request.

MEDIA

BBC Radio 3 BBC Radio 4 BBC Radio Scotland NPR Wired BuzzFeed

Nature Scientific American Channel News Asia Times Higher Education The Conversation

BBC Science Focus

400 million media reach over the past two years. Written and presented for BBC. Featured by NPR (*All Things Considered*), Wired, BuzzFeed, Scientific American, and BBC Science Focus (*Instant Genius*).

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

- **Katia and Maurice Krafft Award** (2023), European Geosciences Union, for innovative engagement methods in the geosciences
- **Principal Fellow of Advance HE** (PFHEA, 2022)
- **LSE Higher Education Blog Fellow** (2024), one of six globally
- **Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation Scholar**, two years studying science and theatre in Japan
- **Fellow of the Young Academy of Scotland** (2022)

SELECTED FUNDED RESEARCH

Investigating ChatGPT and AI Experiences in UK Universities · Leverhulme Trust, 2024–2026	£142,761
Climate Consortium · NERC, 2017–2018	£119,000
The Imitation Game: AI in Analogue and Digital Games · AHRC, 2018–2020	£56,000
Carbon City Zero · Kickstarter / Laurence King Publishing, 2019–2020	£32,420

Additional grants from The Royal Society, EPSRC, Arts Council England, Advance HE, QAA, and others. Total: £450,000+.

EDITORIAL & SUPERVISION

Editorial: Chief Executive Editor, *Geoscience Communication* (Copernicus, 2018–). Editorial Board, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (Nature Portfolio, 2025–). Founder, *Consilience*, interdisciplinary journal with 86 volunteers across 6 continents. External Examiner, MSc Science Communication, University of Edinburgh.

PhD supervision: 4 completed: Dr Eleanor Dunn (UCD, 2026), Dr Tony Hall (MMU, 2020), Dr Maria Loroño (MMU, 2019), Dr Joanne Phillips (MMU, 2018). Current doctoral candidates at Edinburgh Napier. 5 external examiner appointments.

Grant reviewing: UKRI, AHRC, Swiss National Science Foundation, L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science, Science Foundation Ireland, Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Creative: Poetry and theatrical works performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and at Green Man festival. Published board game: [*Carbon City Zero*](#) (Laurence King Publishing). Written and presented for BBC.