

Sam Illingworth, PhD

Full Professor of Creative Pedagogies · Edinburgh Napier University

s.illingworth@napier.ac.uk

sam.illingworth@gmail.com

samillingworth.com

theslowai.substack.com

[Google Scholar](#)

[ORCID](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

I build tools and programmes that help people evaluate AI output critically. I founded [Slow AI](#), a 12-month critical AI literacy curriculum with 10,000+ subscribers. 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 have given expert evidence to the Council of Europe, European Commission, and House of Lords Select Committee on AI literacy, human rights, and democratic governance. My current Leverhulme-funded research investigates how university students interact with generative AI systems.

BUILT

Slow AI: 10,000+ subscribers · 8 deployed AI literacy tools

ACADEMIC

125+ 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 (Course #1019972, 25 credits, The CPD Group). Monthly webinars combining theory, critical prompt exercises, and group dialogue. 10,000+ subscribers, Substack Bestseller.

Integrity Debt Audit

Web application for educators measuring whether assessments can be completed by AI. Scores across 10 evidence-based categories that distinguish human learning from AI-generated work. Returns detailed reports with specific redesign recommendations.

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.

Under Review

Tabletop role-playing game about peer review in the age of AI. Players take on the role of academic reviewers navigating papers that may be brilliant, AI-generated, or both. 3 to 5 players, 60 to 90 minutes.

AI Adoption Audit

Diagnostic tool measuring organisational AI maturity across 10 dimensions. 30 questions, instant results with downloadable PDF report. All scoring runs client-side.

Reading List Diversity Audit

Tool for educators analysing author geography and concentration patterns in reading lists. Paste DOIs, get instant structural diversity analysis. Based on Bird & Pitman (2020).

Free guides on Gumroad: [Keep Your Voice](#), [Getting Started with Claude Code](#), [A Gentle Guide to Reflection with AI](#), [7 Slow AI Prompts](#), [hAlku](#).

AI RESEARCH & EVALUATION

- **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. Four papers in development: literature review, qualitative interview study, survey of 7,000+ students (largest of its kind in the UK), and a perspective on conducting large-scale cross-institutional research.
- **GenAI in Higher Education: Redefining Teaching and Learning** (Bloomsbury, 2026, with Rachel Forsyth). Open access. Examines 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 AI literacy curriculum.** 12-month programme teaching professionals and educators when to use AI and when to refuse it. Focuses on evaluating AI output through close reading, identifying what AI systems omit, and building the judgement to know when human expertise should not be delegated. 190+ paid members.

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, Policy Connect** on net zero policy with Lord Teverson.
- **Written evidence to House of Commons Education Committee** on AI in education (2026). 38 paragraphs covering the deficit model critique, AI detection failure, teacher CPD, and cognitive erosion.
- **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 (25 credits)	2024 – present

EDUCATION

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

SELECTED BOOKS

GenAI in Higher Education: Redefining Teaching and Learning

Bloomsbury, 2026. Open access.

Bridging Scholarship and Practice in Higher Education

Routledge, 2025

Poetry and Pedagogy in Higher Education

Policy Press, 2024

Effective Science Communication

IOP Publishing, 3rd edition, 2024

A Sonnet to Science: Scientists and Their Poetry

Manchester University Press, 2019

SELECTED KEYNOTES & INVITED TALKS

Keynote: RCA AI Festival, Royal College of Art, London	Feb 2026
Keynote: Institute of Physics	Nov 2025
Keynote: UIREKA 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
Invited: Equity Unbound	Nov 2025
Invited: Barcelona Biomedical Research Park	May 2025
Invited: BERA: AI and Curriculum Making in Schools	Nov 2024
Invited: Stockholm Resilience Centre	Sep 2023
Invited: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (UK Gov)	May 2022
Invited: University of Edinburgh (x4)	2022–2025
Invited: Wellesley College (x2)	2022–2023

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 Inside Higher Ed Channel News Asia Times Higher Education

The Conversation BBC Science Focus

400 million media reach over the past three years. Written and presented for BBC. Featured by NPR (*All Things Considered*), Wired, BuzzFeed, Scientific American, Inside Higher Ed, 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

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 University. 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. Written and presented for BBC.