

Unlocking Potential: Human-Centred Design in Higher Education

Kishan Rama, Product Design & UX Manager: Multichoice

Kishan Rama's presentation, "The Cultural Compass: Unlocking Potential – Human-Centred Design in Higher Education," explored how a deep understanding of human behaviour and culture can transform user experiences in academic environments. Drawing on his multidisciplinary background in media, digital banking, and education, Rama emphasised that "people aren't pixels"—effective design begins with empathy for users' diverse needs and contexts.

The presentation challenged common myths in academia, such as the assumptions that users are all tech-savvy or that accessibility is optional. Rama argued that accessibility is a fundamental, ethical, and legal requirement that benefits everyone. He demonstrated how poor UX decisions based on false assumptions can lead to failed projects and disengaged users.

Rama also introduced practical, low-cost UX tools—such as lean research, participatory design, and paper prototyping—that help institutions improve user experience even with limited resources. He further explored principles from behavioural science, such as loss aversion, social proof, and the power of defaults, showing how these insights can guide more effective and engaging digital design.

Ultimately, the presentation called for a cultural shift toward human-centred, inclusive, and research-informed design in higher education. By prioritising accessibility, empathy, and collaboration, universities can build digital and physical experiences that are not only functional but also meaningful and equitable for all users.