

selfdriven University

Community of Practice

The Soul of Higher Education – Charter

Mission and Purpose

The Soul of Higher Education Community of Practice (CoP) is a collaborative network of academics, professional staff, students, and partners dedicated to imagining and delivering a new future for higher education. Supported by the selfdriven Foundation's, this CoP seeks to rekindle the “soul” of higher education by reaffirming universities’ civic and humanistic purpose even amidst rapid technological and societal change. Our mission is to explore bold, holistic solutions that address structural, technological and cultural shifts in the sector, moving beyond surface fixes to true re-formation. By uniting diverse voices and breaking down silos, the CoP provides a space to share innovations, challenge outdated norms, and co-create actionable strategies for positive change.

Relationship to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

This Charter is to be read alongside the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the selfdriven Foundation (“the Foundation”) and The Soul of Higher Education Community of Practice (“the CoP”). The MoU defines the high-level relationship, shared purpose, and strategic commitments between the Foundation and the CoP.

This Charter provides the detailed governance structures, operational processes, and membership arrangements for the CoP. It is subordinate to the MoU in matters relating to the Foundation–CoP relationship. Where there is any inconsistency between this Charter and the MoU, the terms of the MoU shall prevail.

The Charter will be reviewed whenever the MoU is updated, to ensure continued alignment between the two documents.

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Values and Guiding Principles

All activities of the CoP are grounded in shared values that guide how we work together and the outcomes we seek. In accordance with our Foundation partnership, the CoP's charter explicitly includes these core values:

Holistic Education (Bildung)

We affirm that education's purpose is not merely job training but the full development of individuals as critical thinkers and responsible citizens. We draw on the ideal of Bildung – fostering personal and societal formation – to guide our vision.

Higher Education as a Public Good

We believe universities exist to serve society and advance the common good, not just private interests. Democratic values like free inquiry, inclusion, and civic engagement are central to our work.

Equity and Inclusion: The CoP is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strive to involve voices across different disciplines, roles, backgrounds, and especially those historically marginalized, ensuring all feel welcomed as equal contributors.

Innovation and Re-formation: We embrace bold innovation and “root-and-branch” re-formation of higher education structures and culture. The CoP encourages questioning of outdated models, experimentation with new ideas, and future-ready solutions anchored in timeless educational values.

Community Empowerment and Collaboration

Change should be driven by the community itself. We practice distributed leadership, open knowledge exchange, and collaboration over competition. Every member is considered both a teacher and a learner, and we openly share insights and practices to benefit the wider community.

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These values inform our decision-making and norms of behavior. Members are expected to uphold these principles and act with curiosity, caring, mutual respect, and trust in all CoP activities.

Confidentiality and Trust

We recognise that meaningful collaboration depends on a foundation of trust. In an era where artificial intelligence and digital technologies amplify both the opportunities and risks of information sharing, confidentiality is essential. Members commit to treating community discussions, shared resources, and sensitive insights with discretion, ensuring they are not misused or disclosed without consent. By safeguarding confidentiality, we create a safe space for candid dialogue, bold innovation, and the co-creation of knowledge that can advance higher education with integrity.

Membership

Open Membership

Membership in the CoP is open to anyone passionate about the mission and willing to actively contribute. Prospective members apply by briefly stating their interest in the CoP's mission and how they envision contributing to our collaborative work. The Coordinating Committee (see Governance below) will review applications and approve new members on the basis of alignment with the CoP's purpose and values. We welcome a broad range of stakeholders (educators, staff, students, alumni, community partners, etc.) to ensure a rich diversity of perspectives.

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Active Participation

By joining, members commit to being active participants in the community. This includes engaging in discussions, contributing to projects or working groups, and sharing knowledge or resources. While we recognize varying levels of availability, a minimum level of participation (such as attending community meetings or responding to communications) is expected. Members who remain persistently inactive or fail to participate in CoP activities may be considered for removal by the Coordinating Committee after due consideration and a fair warning. Active engagement is essential to keep our Community of Practice vibrant and impactful.

Code of Conduct and Removal

All members are expected to uphold the CoP's mission and values in their conduct. Respectful dialogue, openness to differing views, and constructive collaboration are fundamental expectations. The Coordinating Committee is empowered to remove members who violate the community's principles, compromise the mission, or bring the CoP or the Foundation into disrepute. Grounds for removal include unethical behavior, harassment, actions counter to the Foundation's values, or other serious misconduct. Removal is a last resort; it will be preceded by an opportunity for the member to respond or correct their behavior. This mechanism ensures the community remains healthy, safe, and aligned with our shared purpose.

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Governance Structure

Coordinating Committee

The CoP is guided by a Coordinating Committee that provides strategic direction, coordination, and oversight of the community's activities. In the initial phase, the Coordinating Committee has been appointed by the selfdriven Foundation to jump-start the CoP's formation and ensure alignment with the Foundation's mission. This inaugural Coordinating Committee will serve a term of two years.

Composition and Roles

The Coordinating Committee consists of up to eight experienced members of the CoP, including a Chair and other officer roles as needed. The selfdriven Foundation will appoint two of its members to the Board. The Committee's role is to facilitate participatory governance, not top-down control. It coordinates community events, communicates with members, and ensures decisions reflect the CoP's diverse membership.

Elected Terms

After the initial two-year founding term, the Coordinating Committee will transition to a more democratic composition. Members of the Coordinating Committee will be elected by the CoP membership for staggered two-year terms, ensuring continuity and regular infusion of new voices. To maintain continuity and alignment with the broader Foundation approach, the Foundation will continue to appoint two members to the Committee through its own governance processes. This hybrid approach balances community-driven leadership with the Foundation's ongoing support and oversight role.

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Responsibilities

The Coordinating Committee's responsibilities include reviewing and approving membership applications, convening regular meetings (see Meetings below), setting community meeting agendas, overseeing working groups and sub-committees, and ensuring that CoP activities remain aligned with the stated mission and values. The Committee will also address any conflicts or issues within the community, and serve as a channel for communication between the CoP and the Foundation.

Sub-Committees

The Coordinating Committee is empowered to create sub-committees as needed to support the CoP's operations or special initiatives. Such sub-committees report to the Coordinating Committee and operate under the same values and rules as the broader CoP.

Accountability and Renewal

Coordinating Committee members are accountable to the CoP membership and to the Foundation for their performance. They will provide regular updates on their decisions and seek input from members on key issues, modeling the democratic ethos of the community. Coordinating Committee members (including the initial appointees) are subject to term limits (two terms) to encourage renewal and broad participation in leadership over time.

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Decision-Making Process

The CoP strives to practice consensus-based decision-making in line with its collaborative and inclusive spirit. Whenever possible, decisions on community matters (such as strategic priorities, creation of new working groups, or endorsement of a proposal) will be made through open discussion and consensus among those involved. The Coordinating Committee will facilitate dialogue to ensure all voices and concerns are heard, working toward agreements that everyone can support.

If genuine consensus cannot be reached after diligent discussion, the CoP will employ a formal voting mechanism as a fallback. In such cases, a supermajority threshold is required to move forward with a decision, reflecting our preference for broad agreement.

Specifically, at least 75% of voting members must support the proposal for it to be adopted when using a vote. This high threshold ensures that even when consensus fails, decisions have overwhelming support from the community, in keeping with our values of democratic participation.

All significant decisions, whether reached by consensus or vote, will be documented and communicated to the membership to maintain transparency. On issues directly impacting the Foundation or core mission alignment, the Coordinating Committee will also liaise with the Foundation to ensure no decision violates our shared values or agreements. In the rare event of a dispute between the CoP and the Foundation, both parties will seek a constructive resolution through dialogue or mediation, guided by an assumption of good intent and focus on shared goals.

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Working Groups

To advance its mission, the CoP will organize itself into several thematic Working Groups that delve into specific focus areas of interest to the community. These working groups (also referred to as collaborative inquiry groups) allow members to concentrate on particular challenges or topics in depth, prototyping solutions and developing insights that inform the broader community.

Initial Working Groups

Based on the interests expressed by members and the themes highlighted in our founding documents, the Coordinating Committee will establish the following initial working groups:

1. Institutional Strategy and Planning
2. Curriculum and Pedagogy Innovation
3. Technology and Digital Transformation
4. Community Engagement and Public Good
5. Equity, Inclusion, and Access

Supplementary Working Groups

New working groups will be formed upon an application to the Steering Committee endorsed by five members of the CoP. The Steering Committee will ensure the proposed group's alignment with the Mission of the CoP before approving.

Working Group Structure

Each working group will be formally structured with a Chair (or co-chairs) and a Secretary. Chairs convene meetings; secretaries keep records. The Coordinating

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Committee will appoint initial leaders for the first two years, after which members will elect their own leaders. Working groups are capped at around 10 members for effectiveness.

Meetings and Communication

Coordinating Committee Meetings: At least once every two months.

Community Meetings: Twice a year.

Working Group Meetings: Frequency set by each group.

Communication Channels: Supported by Foundation-provided platforms.

Teams, forums, or email lists, with shared online spaces for transparency.

Review and Amendments

The Charter will be reviewed periodically by the Coordinating Committee in consultation with members and the Foundation. Amendments may be proposed by any member and must be approved by consensus or supermajority vote. Updates to the MoU will trigger a review of the Charter to maintain alignment.