

CALL FOR BOOK CHAPTERS

Dismantling The “Good Student” Myth: Rethinking Engagement, Inclusion, And Success In Higher Education

Co-editors Dr Pratibha Ram (King’s College London, UK) and Professor Sin-Wang Chong (University of St Andrews, UK) invite scholars and researchers to contribute chapters to this edited volume, developed for the Routledge Research in Higher Education series.

Book overview

Higher education has long operated around an implicit yet powerful ideal: the “good student.” Students are frequently expected to be articulate, confident, visibly engaged, academically resilient, and successful within standardised systems of assessment. Speaking regularly in class, asking questions, contributing confidently to group activities, performing successfully in presentations and examinations, and displaying professionalism often become proxies for engagement, capability, and academic success. Yet these expectations are far from neutral. The “good student” is a socially constructed and institutionally reproduced archetype that privileges particular ways of learning, communicating, participating, and demonstrating competence while marginalising others. Students who learn differently, participate quietly, experience disability or mental health challenges, are neurodivergent, come from under-represented backgrounds, or navigate unfamiliar institutional cultures may encounter systems that reward conformity rather than diversity. This edited volume places the “good student” at the centre of scholarly analysis. Rather than asking why some students fail to engage, it examines how higher education defines engagement, participation, capability, and success, whose behaviours are recognised and rewarded, and what happens to students who do not or cannot embody these expectations. It considers how institutional, cultural, pedagogical, and assessment practices reproduce the ideal, and how class, culture, prior educational experience, race, economic resources, disability, neurodivergence, and mental health shape access to institutionally valued forms of participation and success. The volume also asks whether silence, withdrawal, disengagement, or refusal might represent something other than student deficit, and how hidden curricula communicate who belongs and what successful participation should look like. Ultimately, it seeks to shift the conversation from fixing students towards critically examining and redesigning the systems that define, recognise, and reward them, advancing more inclusive understandings of participation, assessment, belonging, capability, and student success.

Potential Themes and Topics

We welcome chapter proposals that address, but are not limited to, the following themes. Contributions can be conceptual chapters, empirical research, mixed-methods studies, qualitative research, and quantitative research. Each chapter should engage clearly with the central concept of the “good student” by identifying how the ideal operates within the context being examined, critically analysing the assumptions, structures, or practices through which it is constructed, performed, or unequally accessed, and explaining the consequences for students, educators, institutions, or higher education systems.

Theme 1. Constructing the “Good Student”

This theme explores how higher education constructs the “good student” through institutional expectations surrounding participation, confidence, visibility, professionalism, academic behaviour, and engagement. It invites contributions that examine how particular participation cultures become normalised, how classroom visibility and verbal contribution are privileged, and how silence, listening, and less visible forms of learning may be misrecognised. Chapters may also consider the role of the hidden curriculum, student identity, performative participation, digital engagement, student voice, belonging, educational recognition, and broader learning cultures in shaping how the “good student” is defined and sustained.

Theme 2. Performing the “Good Student”

This theme focuses on how assessment, feedback, employability agendas, curriculum design, and institutional performance cultures reproduce the “good student” ideal. Contributions may examine how assessment cultures, presentations, examinations, participation grading, and other forms of academic performance privilege particular behaviours and capabilities. The theme also invites work on performativity, academic resilience, wellbeing, student anxiety, neurodiversity, and disability, alongside approaches that challenge narrow performance expectations through Universal Design for Learning, authentic assessment, inclusive assessment, and other more flexible ways of recognising student learning.

Theme 3. Accessing the “Good Student”

This theme examines who is able to embody the “good student” ideal and why access to institutional recognition is unevenly distributed. Contributions may explore how widening participation, social class, cultural capital, race and ethnicity, first-generation status, international student experience, disability, neurodiversity, mental health challenges, gender,

and intersectionality shape students' capacity to understand, access, and perform institutionally valued forms of engagement and success. The theme includes themes on belonging, hidden expectations, and structural inequality, particularly where these reveal how apparently neutral standards of academic success may advantage some students while making others less visible or less readily recognised.

Theme 4. Dismantling the “Good Student” Myth

This theme focuses on reimagining higher education beyond deficit-based models of students. Contributors are invited to develop conceptual models, pedagogical innovations, institutional redesign, assessment reform, and policy interventions that create more equitable systems of learning and recognition. Relevant areas may include inclusive pedagogy, curriculum redesign, institutional transformation, assessment reform, student partnership, educational leadership, policy, organisational change, educational innovation, AI and future learning, and alternative student success frameworks. The central aim is to move beyond helping more students fit the existing “good student” ideal and instead consider how the structures defining participation, capability, engagement, and success might themselves be redesigned.

Submission Guidelines

Interested authors are invited to submit a chapter proposal of no more than 500-750 words. Please include the purpose or central argument of the chapter, the methodology where applicable, the expected contribution to higher education scholarship and/or practice, and an explicit explanation of how the chapter engages with and helps to interrogate or dismantle the “good student” myth.

Please include the following in your proposal

- Chapter title
- Author name(s), affiliation(s), and contact details
- Proposal of 500-750 words
- Selected theme from the four themes listed above
- Five to eight keywords
- A short author biography of 100 words

Please submit proposals using this link [Routledge Research in Higher Education series: Call for book chapter – Fill in form](#)

Selected proposals will be invited to submit a full chapter of 5,000-8,000 words (including references), prepared in accordance with APA 7th edition referencing guidelines. Please note that the book project is subject to review by the publisher and that acceptance of abstract may not mean acceptance of your full chapter. We look forward to receiving insightful contributions that advance critical debate and help shape approaches to higher education.

Indicative Timeline

- Submission of chapter proposals for review: 1 December 2026
- Decision and feedback on chapter proposals: 28 February 2027
- Submission of draft chapters: 30 May 2027
- Decision and feedback on draft chapters: 30 August 2027
- Submission of revised chapters: 30 October 2027
- Book submitted to production: Spring 2028

For questions about this project, please contact Pratibha Ram – pratibha.ram@kcl.ac.uk, indicating “Routledge Research in Higher Education” in the subject of the email.

About the co-editors

Dr Pratibha Ram (King’s College London, UK) <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/dr-pratibha-ram>
Professor Sin-Wang Chong (University of St Andrews, UK) <https://sinwangchong.com/>