

Aegean College's Curriculum redesign with the Advance HE Transformational Change Academy

An approach to Curriculum, Inclusion and Ethical AI

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**Aegean College delivers programmes validated by the University of Essex, within a collaborative academic partnership that supports the assurance of academic standards, quality processes and programme-level development.*



The sector challenge

Across higher education, artificial intelligence, changing patterns of work, widening participation, student wellbeing concerns and persistent inequalities in outcomes are converging into a single curriculum challenge. Institutions are being asked to prepare students for futures that are more technologically mediated, professionally uncertain and socially complex, while also ensuring that learning remains inclusive, meaningful and equitable. In this context, curriculum redesign cannot be treated as a technical exercise in updating content. It becomes a question of educational purpose: what kinds of graduates should higher education help form, and how can curriculum, assessment and pedagogy make that formation visible, inclusive and sustainable?

This was the question that shaped Aegean College's participation in the Advance HE Transformational Change Academy from January to June 2026. The College used the Academy as a structured catalyst to move from fragmented enhancement initiatives towards an embedded, evidence-informed and scalable model of curriculum redesign, connecting uniquely human capabilities, ethical AI, inclusive pedagogy, authentic assessment, student belonging and future workforce alignment.

Institutional context: why inclusion had to be designed in

Aegean College's change project was developed in response to both external and internal drivers. Externally, rapid advances in artificial intelligence, the green and digital transitions, and evolving workforce expectations are reshaping what graduates need to know and be able to do. Internally, the College recognised the need to move beyond incremental enhancement towards a more coherent and institutionally embedded approach to curriculum and pedagogical transformation.

This ambition was shaped by the College's student context. Aegean College serves a diverse student population, including many under-represented and non-traditional learners.

Many students combine study with employment, experience financial pressures, return to education as mature learners or balance their studies with family and caring responsibilities. In the Greek context, access to public higher education is also strongly affected by unequal access to preparatory educational pathways, including privately funded after-school tuition. For some students, educational trajectory reflects unequal access to preparatory and financial resources rather than a lack of academic ability.

This matters because it changes how curriculum transformation is understood. For Aegean College, inclusion could not be positioned only as a student support issue, separate from teaching and learning. It had to be designed into the curriculum itself: into the clarity of expectations, the transparency of assessment, the relevance of learning activities, the accessibility of academic conventions, and the ways in which students are helped to connect their studies with professional identity and future opportunity.

The change challenge: why supplementary initiatives were not enough

Before the Change Academy, Aegean College had already begun to address themes such as ethical and responsible AI use, sustainability and circular economy principles, and the future of work through targeted seminars and workshops. These initiatives were valuable, but they also revealed a familiar challenge for higher education institutions: enhancement activity can remain peripheral if it is not embedded in core curriculum structures.

Workshops can raise awareness. Staff development can build confidence. Institutional conversations can create momentum. However, if these activities remain outside programme learning outcomes, assessment strategies, module content, quality enhancement cycles and student-facing guidance, their long-term impact may be limited.

The central change challenge was therefore not simply to add new topics to existing programmes. It was to translate strategic priorities into programme-level redesign. Ethical AI, inclusive pedagogy, authentic assessment, sustainability, employability and student belonging needed to become part of the architecture of learning rather than a set of parallel conversations.

The College's change project was therefore framed as a move from fragmented enhancement to embedded transformation.

The Change Academy as catalyst

The Advance HE Transformational Change Academy provided a structured space for this transition. It offered a reflective framework, challenge-lab input, peer dialogue and external expertise that helped the College move from broad aspiration to more operational curriculum planning.

The Academy process supported three important shifts.

First, it helped create a shared language. Terms such as ‘uniquely human capabilities’, ‘ethical AI’, ‘inclusive pedagogy’, ‘authentic assessment’, ‘student belonging’ and ‘future workforce alignment’ became connected within a single institutional change narrative.

Second, it helped make change visible. Programme mapping enabled teams to identify where objectives were already being addressed, where evidence was emerging and where further work was required.

Third, it helped connect transformation with existing institutional processes. The project was aligned with Periodic Review and programme revalidation, creating a formal route for embedding change rather than treating the Academy as a stand-alone initiative.

The Challenge Labs provided a structured space to examine sector evidence on AI, assessment, inclusive pedagogy and student co-design, and to consider how these debates could inform Aegean College’s own curriculum redesign work. Discussions drew on recent sector reports on AI and the future of universities, changing assessment practice, co-designed assessment enhancement and emerging pedagogical innovation (Carden & Freeman, 2025; Walker, 2025; Hughes et al., 2025; Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2024). These inputs helped Aegean College move from broad strategic priorities towards more concrete programme-level actions, including the review of learning outcomes, the redesign of authentic assessments, the embedding of responsible AI use and greater attention to inclusive curriculum design, student clarity and belonging.

The seven-objective framework

The project was organised around seven objectives. These were not used simply as a checklist, but as a practical design framework for curriculum renewal.

The first objective focused on embedding uniquely human capabilities, including curiosity, ethical judgement, critical thinking, adaptability, communication and civic responsibility. This objective responded to the recognition that, in an AI-rich environment, graduates will need capabilities that are durable, transferable and not easily reducible to automation.

The second objective focused on strengthening workforce and Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body alignment. This ensured that curriculum redesign remained connected to future professional expectations and external reference points where applicable.

The third objective prioritised active, practice-based and authentic assessment. This was particularly significant in the context of generative AI, where conventional assessments may no longer provide sufficient evidence of individual understanding, professional reasoning or ethical judgement.

The fourth objective focused on inclusion and equity, recognising that transparent curriculum design, accessible assessment and embedded support are central to student success.

The fifth objective connected learning with career pathways and professional identity. This helped students understand not only what they were learning, but why it mattered for future professional contexts.

The sixth objective focused on staff capability and ethical AI confidence. Sustainable curriculum change depends on staff feeling able to design, teach and assess in ways that are inclusive, digitally informed and educationally purposeful.

The seventh objective focused on scalability. From the outset, the project was designed not as an isolated pilot but as a model that could inform future programme redesign across Schools, campuses and levels of study.

Together, these objectives created an institutional framework for scalable learning: coherent enough to guide change, but flexible enough to be interpreted differently across disciplines.

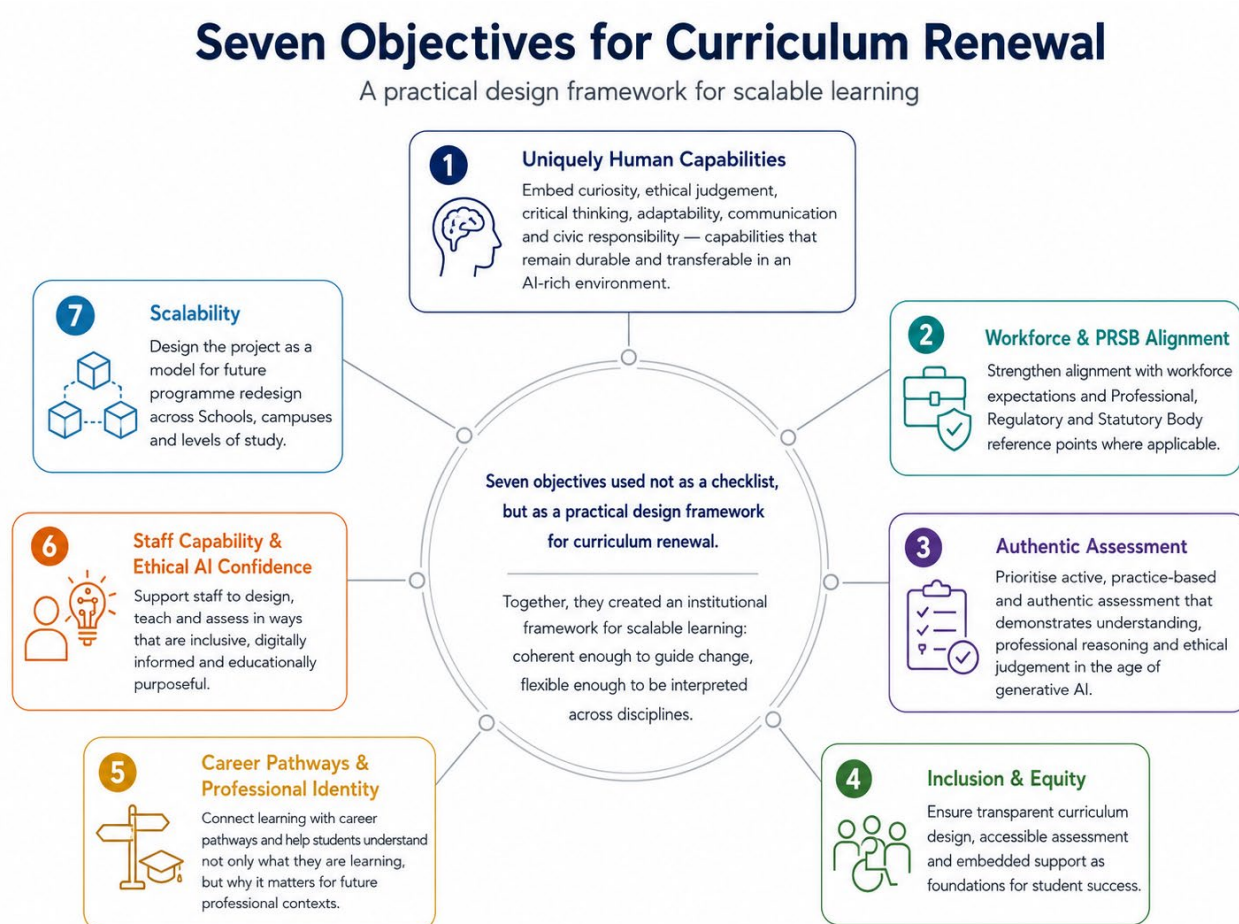


Figure 1. Aegean College's curriculum redesign framework

Programme-level evidence: coherence with disciplinary variation

The programme mapping exercise was a turning point because it translated the seven objectives into visible programme-level evidence. It showed that different disciplines were engaging with the same institutional framework in distinctive ways.

In MSc Rehabilitation Science, the work included the retitling of the generic route to Neuro Rehabilitation, the addition of digital health and tele-rehabilitation, responsible AI and research integrity learning outcomes in research methodology, podcast and authentic assessment in the Pain module, and strengthened communication, advocacy and public health dimensions.

In BSc Biology, the mapping identified responsible AI use in academic writing and research, alongside sustainability, bioinformatics and data science, genetics ethics, environmental remediation, clinical resource use, biodiversity and sustainable biotechnology.

In BSc Chemistry, the project supported the embedding of green chemistry, the sustainability impact of materials, food production sustainability, life-cycle analysis, industrial ecology and responsible AI use in research.

In BSc Business Administration, the focus included ESG, sustainability, digital transformation, AI and the future of work across leadership, human resource management, operations, project environments and business ethics.

In BSc English Language Teaching, developments included digital and distance education, educational software, responsible AI use in research, and authentic outputs such as presentations and podcasts.

In BSc Clinical Speech and Language Science, the mapping showed new modules and revisions related to digital skills, inclusive practice, communication disorders in older adults, ethics, clinical linguistic analysis and ICT-related professional practice.

In MSc Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, changes included updated neuroanatomy outcomes, clinical placement and case conceptualisation, ethics and reflection, responsible AI use in research methodology, and person-centred rehabilitation planning.

In BSc Computing, mapping remained under development, with expected alignment around ethical AI, digital transformation, authentic computing practice and staff capability.

This disciplinary variation was an important finding. It showed that meaningful transformation does not require every programme to do the same thing. Rather, it requires a shared institutional framework that enables each discipline to ask: what forms of knowledge, judgement, practice and responsibility do our graduates need, and how can these be made explicit in curriculum and assessment?

Programme Mapping Across the Seven Objectives

*Pilot programmes are shown in green. Ongoing programmes are shown in light blue.
Objective 7 is being developed across the whole project and is therefore shown as a project-wide ongoing status.*

Programme	01 Human capabilities	02 Workforce alignment	03 Authentic assessment	04 Inclusion & equity	05 Career pathways	06 Staff capability & ethical AI	07 Scalable model
1 MSc Rehabilitation Science	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	 ONGOING
2 BSc Business	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3 BSc English Language Teaching	✓		✓			✓	
4 BSc Clinical Speech and Language Science	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5 MSc Neuropsychology with Cognitive Neuroscience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
6 BSc Biology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7 BSc Chemistry		✓	✓		✓	✓	
8 BSc Computing						✓	

SEVEN OBJECTIVES KEY

- 1 Embed uniquely human capabilities
- 2 Strengthen workforce and PRSB alignment
- 3 Prioritise active, practice-based and authentic assessment
- 4 Enhance inclusivity and equity
- 5 Support career pathways and professional identity
- 6 Build staff capability and ethical AI confidence
- 7 Develop a scalable and transferable redesign model

HOW CHANGE IS BEING EVIDENCED

-  Updated module learning outcomes
-  Revised assessment methods to support inclusivity and responsible AI use
-  Reduced reliance on 100% coursework where appropriate
-  More original and authentic assessment methods

Figure 2. Programme mapping across the seven objectives.

Overall, change is being evidenced through clearer module learning outcomes, more inclusive and authentic assessment design, stronger attention to responsible AI use, and a more explicit connection between curriculum, employability and professional practice. The mapping also points to more balanced assessment structures, including movement away from over-reliance on 100% coursework where this was evidenced and appropriate.

Taken together, these changes suggest that the project is moving curriculum redesign beyond isolated module updates. The emerging pattern is one of greater coherence, where learning outcomes, assessment, responsible AI, inclusivity, workload and professional identity are becoming more visibly connected. At the same time, the mapping shows that coherence does not mean uniformity: each programme is interpreting the seven objectives in ways that are meaningful for its own disciplinary and professional context.

Design principle 1: Wellbeing by design

One of the strongest design principles emerging from the Change Academy process was the importance of Wellbeing by Design. This means treating wellbeing and belonging not only as matters for student services, but as features of curriculum, assessment and institutional design.

For Aegean College, this principle was especially relevant because of its student population. When students combine study with work, enter higher education through varied pathways,

or have uneven prior access to academic preparation, curriculum clarity becomes a matter of equity. Assessment design, workload distribution, feedback practices, transition support and explicit expectations can either enable or inhibit belonging.

Wellbeing by Design therefore reframed student support as part of the learning environment (Strayhorn, 2012; Thomas, 2012; Tinto, 2012). The question became: how can programmes be designed so that students understand what is expected, see the relevance of their learning, experience assessment as transparent and purposeful, and feel that they belong within the academic community?

This principle positioned curriculum as a site of inclusion.

Design principle 2: Anticipatory support

A second important design principle was Anticipatory Support. Rather than relying only on students to seek help once difficulties have escalated, anticipatory approaches use timely information, student engagement data, early indicators and proactive communication to support students earlier (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

For Aegean College, this principle connects strongly with the project's focus on under-represented and non-traditional learners. Student success should not depend solely on whether a student knows when to ask for support, whom to ask, or how to navigate institutional systems. Institutions can design more proactive mechanisms that identify risk, respond earlier and reduce avoidable barriers to continuation and success.

Anticipatory Support also complements curriculum redesign. If assessment expectations are clearer, academic support is embedded, feedback is timely and programme teams have better visibility of engagement patterns, then intervention can become more educationally meaningful and less reactive (Yeager & Walton, 2011)

Together, Wellbeing by Design and Anticipatory Support helped connect curriculum redesign with student belonging, engagement and success.

Emerging impact

Although full implementation will continue beyond the formal Change Academy period, early evidence of change is visible across several areas.

At the level of learning outcomes, programmes have begun to introduce or revise outcomes relating to responsible AI use, sustainability, clinical and professional reasoning, digital practice, rehabilitation planning, ethical decision-making and research integrity.

At the level of assessment redesign, there is movement towards podcasts and vodcasts, case-based tasks, research proposals with AI declarations, authentic professional scenarios and review of assessment load. These developments are important because they help make student thinking, decision-making and professional judgement more visible.

At the level of inclusive pedagogy, the project has increased attention to transparent expectations, assessment clarity, workload, embedded support and the needs of under-represented and non-traditional learners.

At the level of professional relevance, programmes are making stronger links to PRSB expectations where applicable, workforce needs, career pathways, digital health, sustainability, ESG and the future of work.

At the level of staff capability, the project has created a clearer development agenda around responsible AI, inclusive assessment, feedback, curriculum innovation and shared practice.

Perhaps most importantly, the project has supported an emerging cultural shift: from isolated curriculum updates towards a shared institutional model of future-oriented, inclusive and professionally relevant curriculum design.

Barriers and leadership learning

The project also generated important leadership learning.

Staff workload and change fatigue were significant considerations. Sustainable change cannot depend on exceptional effort or temporary enthusiasm. It must be integrated into existing academic processes. For this reason, the project was deliberately aligned with curriculum review via Periodic Review and revalidation rather than added as a parallel initiative.

Variation across disciplines also required careful leadership. Ethical AI, sustainability, inclusion and authentic assessment do not have identical meanings in business, computing, biosciences, health sciences or language education. The mapping process showed the importance of shared principles combined with discipline-specific interpretation.

Uneven readiness was another challenge. Some programmes already had mature examples of change, while others required further support and documentation. Rather than treating this unevenness as a weakness, the project used it as evidence of where institutional support needed to be targeted.

Finally, there was a risk of fragmentation. Without a common framework, individual workshops, staff development sessions, module revisions and assessment changes can remain disconnected. The seven-objective framework and programme mapping exercise helped create a shared language for coherence.

What other institutions can learn

Other institutions can learn that sustainable curriculum transformation is most effective when it begins with educational purpose rather than technology adoption alone. AI can prompt useful change, but the deeper institutional task is to decide which human capabilities graduates should develop and how these can be made visible through curriculum, assessment and student support. The Aegean College case also suggests that inclusion should be designed into the curriculum itself, through clearer expectations, transparent

assessment, manageable workload, meaningful feedback and embedded support. At the same time, institutions need a shared framework to create coherence, while allowing each discipline to interpret change in ways that fit its own professional and academic context. Transformation is also more likely to last when it is connected to existing quality processes, such as curriculum review, revalidation and staff development, rather than treated as a separate initiative. Finally, scalable change depends on programme teams owning the evidence of what has changed, linking authentic assessment with ethical AI and designing systems that anticipate student need earlier rather than responding only after difficulties have escalated.

What Other Institutions Can Learn

Seven principles for scalable, inclusive curriculum transformation

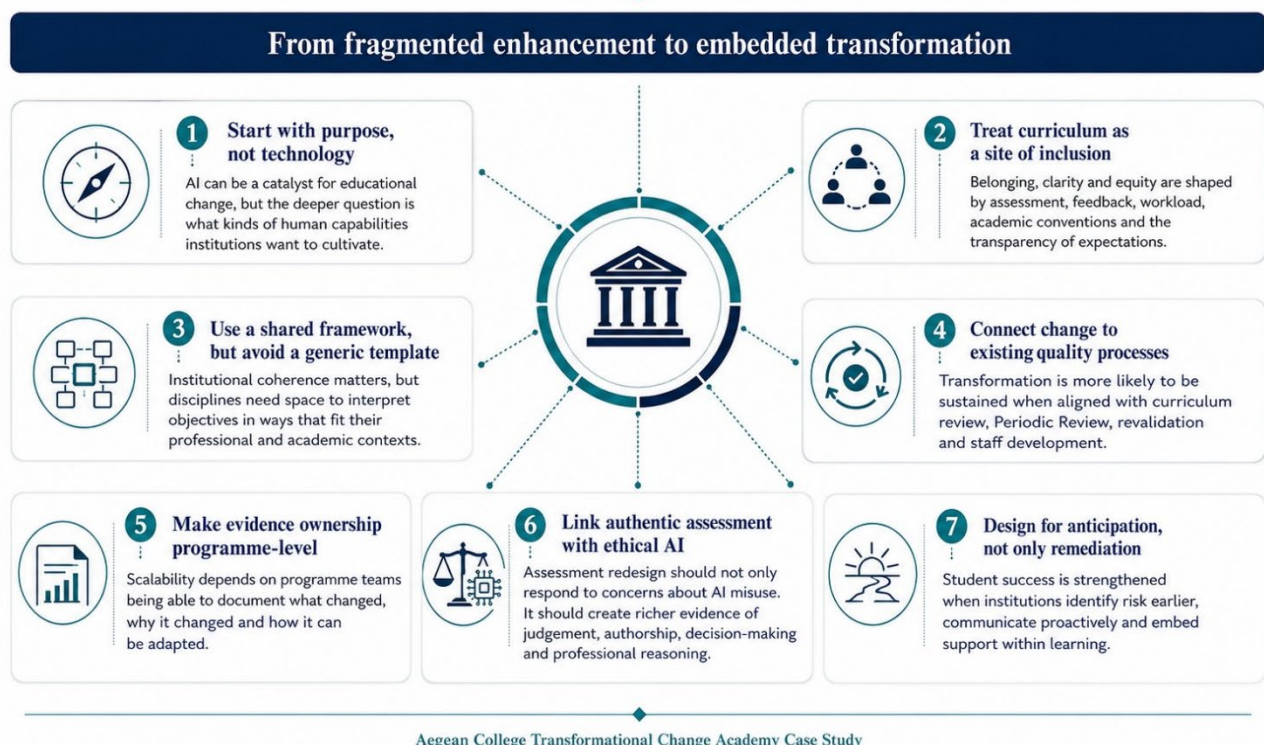


Figure 3: Principles for scalable inclusive curriculum transformation

Next steps

The next 6–12 months will focus on consolidating evidence and preparing for wider institutional adoption.

Priorities include completing objective-to-module mapping for all pilot programmes; ensuring each pilot programme has at least one revised or newly articulated learning outcome linked to human capabilities, AI, sustainability, inclusion or professional practice; reviewing or redesigning at least one core assessment or learning activity per pilot programme; documenting staff development in responsible AI, inclusive assessment and curriculum innovation; improving student-facing clarity around assessment expectations and

professional relevance; gathering qualitative staff and student feedback; and creating an institutional guidance template with case examples for future Periodic Reviews and programme redesign cycles.

These next steps are designed to ensure that the project does not remain a one-off Advance HE Academy output, but becomes a mechanism for scalable institutional learning.

Conclusion: towards scalable institutional learning

Aegean College's participation in the Advance HE Transformational Change Academy has not produced a finished model of transformation. Nor was that the aim. Its value lies in how it has helped the institution move from fragmented enhancement to embedded transformation.

The most important outcome is not a single redesigned module, assessment or learning outcome. It is the emergence of a shared institutional approach to curriculum transformation: one that treats AI as a catalyst for educational purpose, **curriculum** as a site of inclusion, **assessment** as evidence of judgement, and **staff development** as a condition of sustainable change.

For Aegean College, the next phase is to continue embedding this work through quality enhancement in the wider portfolio via Periodic Review, programme revalidation and programme-level evidence ownership. For the wider sector, the case illustrates a broader lesson: future-ready higher education will not be built through technology adoption alone. It will depend on the capacity of institutions to design learning environments in which students develop the human capabilities, ethical confidence, professional identity and sense of belonging needed to act responsibly in complex futures.

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