

#LTHEchat

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LTHE Chat 341: Superpowers for Level 7 Learning

Posted on [October 24, 2025](#) by [Gustavo Espinoza](#)

Join us on [Bluesky](#) with guest Professor David T Evans [@david-t-evans.bsky.social](#) on **Wednesday 29th October 2025 at 20:00 GMT**

Superpowers? I understand not everyone in Higher Education appreciates the notion of ‘superpowers’ in relation to academia. I adapt it, playing on a term proposed by Emilee Wapnick (2019; 2021), regarding the superpowers of multipotentialities.

Transitioning students

My novel session focused on [Superpowers for Level 7 Learning](#). The audience, healthcare students transitioning into post graduate studies or returning for subsequent years. I used the term ‘superpowers’ to ignite their curiosity, combat the oft-present ‘imposter syndrome’ and, hopefully, inspire them into a love of curiosity (enquiry) in learning.

Level 7 is ‘hard’

At the start of each academic year, I ask students two questions. “What do you understand by level 7?” and “how do these studies differ from what you did at level 6?” The typical answer is “level 7 is just harder!” That begs the question: *how* harder? What do they mean by ‘hard’ and ‘harder’? They reply “Well, deeper; more analytical; you’ve got to read more; sleep less; long words; my boss sent me; it’s just *harder*!”

To be fair, no one can blame them. How often do teachers explore intricacies of academic descriptors with students? We embed descriptors into learning outcomes, but how often do we spend time clarifying what the descriptors mean or how to achieve and demonstrate them? Confusingly, several descriptors span levels 6, 7, 8 but with additional and weightier meanings. For example, we talk in terms of critical / analysis, synthesis, reflection, evaluation, complexity. *So how would a new post graduate student know how hard is hard, in relation to those descriptors from levels 6, through 7, to 8?*

The three superpowers

Like other professional post-grad students, ours on health programmes are already working in advanced and ever-increasing roles of seniority, collaborating multi-professionally, often with leadership decision-making responsibilities. So, exploring superpowers, I wanted to elaborate on three I consider most important, running throughout their learning. I encourage students to unpack, embrace and develop these skills further, as key aids to maximising learning potential and increasing academic outputs. The superpowers are **criticality in learning, reflexivity** and **academic citizenship**. Of course, there are more, but I postulate that these three underpin so many others, the ‘mastery’ of which is essential for their post graduate learning and success.

Unpacking superpowers

The [Adobe Express resource](#) accompanying this blog contains the video of my on-line session. The presentation was on an Induction Day for post grad students in health. My session followed an excellent presentation, delivered by an Academic Skills Tutor, demonstrating a wide range of skills and resources for learning. Keen not for my delivery to be a repeat of that person’s work, I honed in exclusively on qualities of these learning superpowers, exploring how they underpin studying at level 7, forming its essence, the under-utilisation of which would be detrimental for further learning potential.

The three superpowers, I suggest, work best in synergy one with the other. To elaborate further:

Criticality in thinking: Like Thomson (2025), I clarify why I use the term “criticality”, not the more traditional “critical”. One reason is that many students often associate “critical” with making a criticism or judgment on something, which often implies negativity. Then I examine three core aspects of criticality in thinking, for the learners’ use. 1) At the heart of it all: **enhancing decision-making**. 2) As a higher-level cognitive skill: **improving problem-solving**, and 3), for greater ideas synthesis, **sharpening analytical abilities**.

Reflexivity: Health Care Professionals (HCPs) are expected to be experts in critical reflection, especially, as Donald Schön promoted (1983, cited in Holton, Robinson and Caraccioli, 2025), *in* practice as well as *on* practice. But the notion of reflexivity is often new to many HCPs. At level 7, reflexivity situates them in the wider or meta-domains of their clinical, professional, personal, academic and leadership roles, all informed by research, with an imperative to disseminate.

Boosting (wider / associated) **Academic Citizenship**. Traditional academic citizenship in Higher Education includes university engagement, peer review, fellowships and research / outputs. For students, studying but not working in HE, the wider or associated notions involve further collaboration and networking across their professional arenas. For example, students share their higher-level cognitive skills for advancement of (work / professional) fields of practice. Essentially, they share such advancements through collegiality, bridging the gap between academic and multi-professional peers, especially through publishing, promoting (e.g. via social media) and performing their studies to wider strategic audiences.

How might talking in terms of academic superpowers aide students in their studies?

This blog has outlined a personal view on promoting the notion of “superpowers” for academic learning at level 7. Clarifying three core superpower skills that underpin post graduate learning, I have opened up the skills for scrutiny, demonstrating their relevance to ignite learner curiosity, combat ‘imposter syndrome’ and, hopefully, inspire students into a love of curiosity (enquiry) in their learning. This light-hearted play on ‘superpowers’ has serious overtones, to empower students through their studies and advance their further professionalism.

Resources

Superpowers for Level 7 Learning – in health care and advanced practice, full Adobe Express page, with video: <https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/fhJz7cgNuC1M6> **Prezi only version:**https://prezi.com/view/wLToiyDTiderlxeCpvhI/?referral_token=JlSMvPlnB3FN

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Guest Biography

[David Evans](#) has been interested in the notion of 'superpowers' since he first realised he was as multipotentialite, on watching Emilee Wapnik's TEDtalk, in 2019! His career trajectories include nursing, the Roman Catholic priesthood, then teaching nurses and allied health professionals, especially on matters of sexual health and well-being, for almost 36 years. He is passionate about life-long learner development, especially – in the case of health care professionals – how transformative learning enables them to ask of themselves "What difference can I make?"

David became a [National Teaching Fellow](#) in 2014; appointed an OBE "for services to nursing and sexual health education" in 2017; PFHEA and Professor in Sexualities and Genders: Health and Well-being, 2018; a Queen's Nurse in 2022, and Fellow of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland *ad eundem* in 2023. David was a finalist in the 'University Educator of the Year' category, Student Nursing Times Awards 2025 #SNTA25; he is a [professor at the University of Greenwich](#), in the School of Health Sciences.





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