

Call for Proposals: 7th Issue of XJTLU Research-led Learning Story Collection
Theme: Beyond the Project - Reimagining PBL through the CARDS Lens in an Age of Complexity

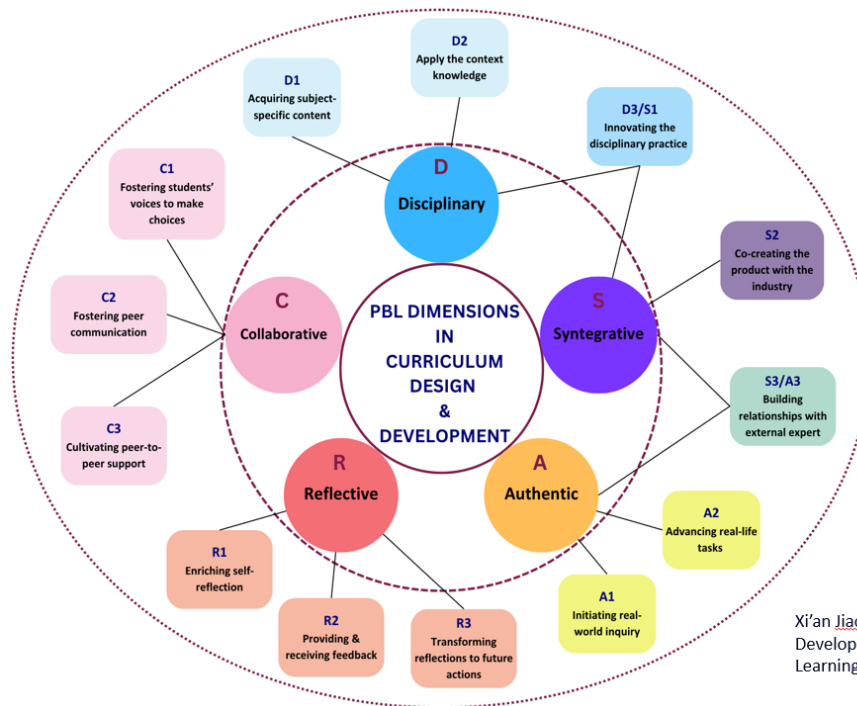
In an era marked by climate crisis, AI disruption, and societal fragmentation, higher education faces a profound challenge: how to prepare learners not just with knowledge, but with the capacity to navigate ambiguity, co-create solutions, and act with ethical agency. Project-Based Learning (PBL) has long promised such transformative potential, but too often remains confined to “doing projects” rather than cultivating deep, integrative, and socially responsive learning.

At Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), we have been developing and testing the CARDS framework, a five-dimensional lens (Collaborative, Authentic, Reflective, Disciplinary, Syntegrative), not merely as a checklist for module design, but as a provocation: *What if PBL were less about deliverables and more about developmental journeys? Less about simulation and more about real-world entanglement?*

For the 7th issue of the *Research-led Learning Story Collection*, we invite educators, students, researchers, and partners to submit narrative-driven, critically reflective accounts that interrogate, extend, or reimagine PBL through the CARDS framework. We are especially interested in stories that move beyond technical implementation to explore:

- How PBL can make room for multiple voices and forms of knowledge, not just textbooks or experts, but also students' ideas, community know-how, and ways of understanding the world from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- How to balance deep subject expertise (“D”) with cross-disciplinary connections (“S”): When does bringing in other fields enrich learning, and when might it risk making things too shallow?
- Whether “authenticity” (“A”) risks instrumentalizing education, or can instead foster ethical engagement with real-world stakeholders.
- How collaboration (“C”) can be designed to avoid free-riding and power imbalances, and instead cultivate mutual accountability.
- The role of structured reflection (“R”) in helping learners make meaning from complexity, failure, and ambiguity, not just “what we did,” but “who we became.”

This is not a call for best practices alone. From K12 education to higher education, we welcome critical failures, unresolved dilemmas, student-led redesigns, and even proposals to revise or challenge CARDS itself. What does PBL look like when it centers care, decoloniality, sustainability, or AI literacy? Can CARDS evolve to support those visions?



CARDS Characteristics:

- C (Collaborative) – Collaborative Dimension: Learner-centered, emphasizing social learning.
- A (Authentic) – Authenticity Dimension: Bridges classroom learning with real-world societal needs.
- R (Reflective) – Reflective Dimension: Supports cyclical learning and fosters metacognitive skills.
- D (Disciplinary) – Disciplinary Dimension: Moves beyond knowledge acquisition to interdisciplinary application, demonstrating both disciplinary depth and expansiveness.
- S (Syntegrative) – Integrative Dimension: Breaks down disciplinary silos and enables university-industry collaboration.

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University Educational Development Unit's CARDS Framework for Project-Based Learning Course Design, 2024

Submission Guidelines

- Submit a 150-200 word proposal by March 12th, 2026
- Include: title, abstract, author(s) with affiliations, and a brief note on how your story engages with the CARDS dimensions (critically or constructively)
- Collaborative submissions (e.g., staff + students, university + industry/community partners) are strongly encouraged
- Full narratives (i.e. 3,000 - 5,000 words) will be due May 29th, 2026
- Use this link for proposal submission <https://v.wjx.cn/vm/O9Ni7Rd.aspx#>
- RLL Story Collection website (i.e. guidelines & previous issues): <https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/study/departments/academy-of-future-education/educational-development-unit/research-led-learning-story-collection>

Important Dates:

- Deadline for Proposals and Expressions of Interest: 17:00, March 12th, 2026
- Notification of Acceptance: March 20, 2026
- Full Manuscript Submission: June 1, 2026
- Expected Publication Date: August 2026

Why This Matters

As global higher education grapples with relevance, equity, and future-readiness, XJTLU's experiment with CARDS offers a distinctive contribution, one rooted in the rapid educational innovation yet open to global dialogue. Your story could help shape the next generation of PBL theory and practice.

We seek not just projects, but pedagogical courage.