

## 2025 Sino-British Vocational Education and Apprenticeship Development Conference

Join us for an insightful seminar aimed at exploring the comparative practices between China and the UK, leveraging British expertise in vocational education, skills training, degree apprenticeships, and digital education. It will expand Sino-British cooperation and broaden perspectives in professional development, curriculum design, practical teaching, and school-enterprise collaboration.

This seminar promises to be a valuable opportunity for educators, policymakers, and industry leaders to exchange ideas and forge new partnerships. Don't miss out on this chance to enhance your understanding and practice of vocational education.

### Featured Speakers:

- Helen Pain, CEO, RSC
- Xiao Xin, Vice President & Secretary General of the China Chemical Education Association of Chemical Industry (CEACI)
- Tanya Lawes, Head of Funding and Route, UK Department for Education (DfE) IfATE
- Xuejun He, Deputy Party Secretary and President of Nanjing Vocational University of Industry Technology
- Brian Oppenheim, Ofsted former HMI
- Stephen Vardigans, Senior Education and Skills-development Consultant
- Katie Dryden-Holt, Vocational Skills Programme Manager, RSC
- Danny Ho, Director, CSR Group

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| 09:00-09:20 | Registration, Science room  |
| 09:30-09:45 | <b>Welcome and opening address:</b> RSC CEO, Helen Pain   |
| 09:45-10:00 | <b>Opening address:</b> CEACI, Vice President & Secretary General, Xiao Xin   |
| 10:00-10:40 | <b>Keynote:</b> UK DfE IfATE, Head of Funding and Route, Dr Tanya Lawes, <b><i>A partnership approach to apprenticeships and technical education</i></b>  |
| 10:40-11:00 | Group photo & Tea break   |
| 11:00-11:40 | <b>Keynote:</b> Deputy Party Secretary and President of Nanjing Vocational University of Industry Technology, Xunjun He, <b><i>A landscape view on China's vocational education</i></b>                             |
| 11:40-12:20 | <b>Keynote:</b> Ofsted former HMI, Brian Oppenheim, <b><i>Effective leadership: leading teaching and learning</i></b>   |
| 12:20-13:30 | Working lunch   |
| 13:30-14:10 | <b>Keynote:</b> Senior Education and Skills-development Consultant, Stephen Vardigans, <b><i>An overview of a 9-year World Bank quality improvement project for selected colleges and universities in China</i></b> |

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| 14:10-14:50  | <b>Keynote:</b> RSC, Katie Dryden-Holt, Vocational Skills Programme Manager, <b><i>UK vocational education and accreditation intro</i></b>        |
| 14:50-15:00  | Tea break   |
| 15:00-15:30  | <b>Keynote:</b> CSR Group, Director, Danny Ho, Co-director, Rob Green, <b><i>The experience of being an accredited apprenticeship provide</i></b> |
| 15:30-16:10  | <b>Panel discussion</b>   |
| 16:20- 16:30 | Close   |

## Speakers:

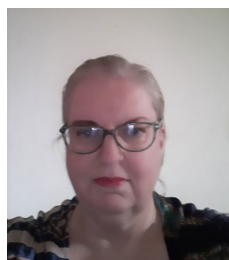


**Helen Pain** was appointed CEO of the RSC in 2021 and continues to be an influential advocate for the role that the chemical science community plays in making the world a better place through her leadership of an international publishing business and professional body. She is an appointed member of the Executive Board for the European Chemical Society (EuChemS). She is a Chartered Chemist and a Chartered Scientist, with a PhD in coordination chemistry from the University of Exeter. During her thirty-year career with us, she has developed an extensive knowledge of the chemical science community across both education and industry, and has led high-profile international campaigns to address inclusion and diversity in science and the role of the chemical sciences in tackling global challenges.



**Xiao Xin** is senior engineer, currently serving as the secretary general of the China Chemical Education Association of Chemical Industry (CEACI) and the secretary general of the National Petroleum and Chemical Vocational Education Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education in China. He has long been engaged in research and management of petroleum and chemical education. He has led the drafting of the "13th Five-Year Plan" and "14th Five-Year Plan" reform and development opinions for China's chemical education. He has also overseen the completion of

numerous national-level education and teaching projects as well as school-enterprise cooperation projects and has received multiple national teaching achievement awards.



**Tanya Lawes** is Head of Funding and the agriculture and hospitality routes at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). Throughout her long career in education she has been involved in major policy reforms, specialising in assessment and quality within technical education and apprenticeships. She has been an advocate for improving the experience of learners, ensuring technical education provides the very best opportunities for all. Tanya established IfATE's apprentice panel in 2017 – a fantastic group of current and recent apprentices that use their experience to shape skills policy. She led the introduction of flexibilities in response to Covid 19, working closely with employers and assessment organisations so thousands of apprentices could complete their end-point assessment, be recognised for their achievements and move on with their careers.



**Xuejun He** is a researcher and holds a doctorate. He is the former Party Secretary of Nanjing Vocational College of Science and Technology. Currently, he serves as the Deputy Party Secretary and President of Nanjing Vocational University of Industry Technology, and is the Vice President of the China Chemical Education Association of Chemical Industry (CEACI).



**Brian Oppenheim** was one of Her/His Majesty's inspectors for nearly nine years. He is now an Ofsted inspector. Brian is a lead inspector for primary, secondary, special and

independent school inspections. He also leads on initial teacher training and early career training inspections. Before joining Ofsted, Brian was director of school improvement for Cambridge Education where he was also chief inspector for the inspection of British schools overseas. He has been working with Ofsted for over 30 years as an inspector and an accredited trainer. Brian was director of inspection for Prospects Learning and was a principal inspector in a local authority. He taught design and technology for many years in inner-London schools where he was also an inspector for the subject. His experience includes training, inspection and consultancy roles. He has worked extensively overseas including the Middle East, South East Asia, the USA, Europe and South America, as well as throughout the UK. Brian has led professional development programmes for schools especially in relation to teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Brian's education expertise includes school improvement, leadership and management, and evaluation as well as design and technology. Brian has qualified teacher status and holds an enhanced DBS disclosure.



**Stephen Vardigans** is an independent, senior education and skills-development consultant. Mr Vardigans was born and educated in the UK and holds BSc. and MSc degrees in Engineering, and Post Graduate qualification in Education. He worked in industry and higher education in the UK, and then in education and skills development with major international development organisations in many countries. Over the past 10 years he has worked on a World Bank-supported technical education and skills development project in China. This focused on the development of modern pedagogy, competency-based curricula, teaching/learning standards and inspection procedures across 20 colleges and universities. He retains an active interest in the development of technical education institutions in China and is a visiting professor for the Guangzhou Light Industry Senior Technician School.



**Katie Dryden-Holt** graduated from the University of Birmingham with a degree in biochemistry in 2007. She then became secretary to Prof. Steven Ley at the University of Cambridge, gaining insight into academic research needs. In late 2008, Katie joined the

Royal Society of Chemistry as an Assistant Editor, later transitioning to the Membership team. By 2013, she was promoted to Membership Recruitment Supervisor, focusing on growing and engaging the Society's membership. In 2017, Katie became the Professional Registration Specialist and later Vocational Skills Programme Manager, overseeing professional awards and vocational pathways. She introduced apprenticeship accreditation and contributes to education policy. Katie also serves on various boards, supporting national apprenticeship standards and vocational education. She founded the Science Apprentice Conference and is involved with the Institute for Cancer Research's Technician Career Pathways Strategic Advisory Board.



**Danny Ho** began his career as a research chemist at Pfizer Pharmaceutical where he has worked for 7 years. This was then followed by a period in academia to pursue his PhD studies at the University of Cambridge. With experience gained from both industrial and academia settings, Danny joined CSR in 2015 to help develop and expand CSR's portfolios of science apprenticeships and promote them across a diverse range of science employers. In his current role as the Funding and Data Director at CSR, Danny plays a role in the strategic financial management and planning of the organisation. He also serves as a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry's panel of apprenticeship accreditation assessors. In this role, he actively participates in the assessment of training provider's accreditation applications, contributing to the continuous improvement of science apprenticeship programs across the chemical science sector.



**Rob Green** has 8 years' experience in industrial biology and 18 years' experience in education, including delivery management, quality assurance and qualification design. Rob started his career as a DNA Analyst for the Home Office in Wetherby. Later he became senior molecular biologist and training manager at TDL Genetics. In 2005 he became curriculum manager for molecular biology and forensic science for a Midlands based college. Whilst undertaking this role, Rob established and founded CSR. Rob has also worked for Oxford and Cambridge RSA examining board as a qualifications

manager. He was responsible for the country's first forensic science apprenticeships at the Laboratory of the Government Chemist. Rob holds work-based qualifications in assessment in the workplace and internal quality assurance and is currently working towards a post graduate qualification in Educational Assessment at the University of Cambridge. Rob is married with two children. In his spare time, Rob coaches the junior rugby teams at Aston Old Edwardians Rugby club.