

FUTRE – Facilitator’s Handbook

FUTRE: Futures Unfolding Through Relational Ecologies

This handbook supports facilitators in running FUTRE workshops in a way that is consistent across settings and tools.

FUTRE is *platform-agnostic*. It can be facilitated using digital workspaces (for example Miro) or analogue materials (poster paper, post-its, markers). Any references to what participants “see” should be understood as what is made visible in the shared workspace.

The handbook is not intended for participants.

1. Core facilitation stance

Hold this thought throughout the FUTRE process:

Imagination varies environments, while affordances emerge through action.

How FUTRE understands affordances (for facilitators):

In FUTRE, affordances are understood as *real possibilities for action* that emerge from the relationship between people and their environments. They are not beliefs, expectations or imagined possibilities but changes in what educators can practically do under given conditions.

Participants may imagine boldly, including futures that feel uncomfortable or fantastical. Your role is to continually guide them back to:

- conditions in the environment
- everyday professional action
- decisions, responsibilities and constraints

Do not treat beliefs, expectations or narratives as affordances. Treat them as signals that an *action-level question* needs to be asked.

2. The workspace as a method support

The shared workspace is an instantiation of FUTRE, not the method itself. It should help to:

- externalise collective thinking
- scaffold movement between method phases
- support facilitation without requiring theoretical explanation

Key properties to maintain (digital or analogue):

- A clear progression that suggests *temporal unfolding*, not prediction
- Distinct zones corresponding to *methodological phases*, not tasks to be rushed

- Action-oriented prompts that keep attention on *what individuals can do* under given conditions

Do not over-explain theory. Let the structure and prompts do the theoretical work for you.

3. Phase-by-phase facilitation guidance

Phase 1: Look Around – Mapping the current learning ecology

What participants see in the workspace:

- A mapping area for the current learning ecology
- Categories such as: People, Tools, Platforms, Spaces, Rules & routines and Expectations
- Nested layers (class, social, world environment) representing the environments that need to be considered

Your role:

- Encourage description, not evaluation
- Slow participants down if they jump to judgement or solutions

Useful prompts:

- “Describe how this works on an ordinary day.”
- “Who interacts with whom, using what, and where?”
- “What routines or rules shape the flow of the day?”

Redirect if needed:

- From opinions → conditions: “Where does that expectation come from in practice?”
- From solutions → environment: “What in the system makes that necessary?”

Phase 2: Signals & Provocations – Introducing possible future conditions

Purpose of this phase: In Phase 2, participants begin to explore how foreseeable and possible technological, social or organisational changes might affect the environments that they mapped in Phase 1. The focus is on how environments could change, not on evaluating technologies or predicting outcomes.

Participants work from *inputs provided by facilitators or invited experts*, which may include short presentations, examples, signals of change or provocations drawn from current research, policy debates or technological development.

What participants see in the workspace:

- A small set of prompts or inputs framed as possible future conditions

- Sorting or clustering zones (for example: familiar / uncomfortable / hard to imagine)

Your role:

- Help participants connect the inputs to the environments they have already mapped
- Promote imaginative engagement while keeping attention on environmental change
- Reassure participants that discomfort and uncertainty are expected and productive

Key message to repeat:

These inputs are not predictions. They help us explore how environments might change.

If participants resist the inputs:

You don't have to agree with this, just explore what it would change in the environment.

Avoid debating likelihood or desirability. Focus on how changing conditions may reshape everyday practice.

Phase 3: What Actions Become Possible?

What participants see in the workspace:

- An action-based prompt about what becomes possible, difficult, or constrained
- Sentence starters using verbs
- A reminder not to focus on beliefs or attitudes

Your role:

- Enforce action language
- Translate inward talk into outward action

Action-based sentence starters (use as prompts):

- Teachers can now...
- School leaders must now...
- Learners are no longer able to...
- Decisions that once involved people now involve...
- Some actions become slower, riskier or more constrained because...

Redirect gently:

- “What action does that feeling or belief change?”
- “What becomes easier or harder to do?”
- “Who has to act differently because of this?”

If technology dominates the conversation:

What does this change in day-to-day work?

This phase is where affordances should become visible as *changes in action possibilities*.

Phase 4: A Day in the Life – Scenario development and synthesis**How Phase 4 works conceptually:**

Phase 4 builds directly on the material generated in Phases 1–3. Participants work back through the mapped ecology, the explored future conditions and the identified changes in action possibilities in order to *outline* a coherent future scenario.

The structured workspace supports this synthesis, but the scenario itself is not yet finalized here.

What participants see in the workspace:

- An area for gathering and clustering key elements from earlier phases
- Prompts that foreground everyday routines, tools, decisions and responsibilities
- A small *reality check* prompt to test plausibility

Your role:

- Help participants trace connections between conditions and actions identified earlier
- Encourage them to select, prioritise and combine elements rather than add new ones
- Keep attention on ordinary professional life, not exceptional events

Helpful nudges:

- “Which of these changes most strongly shape a normal working day?”
- “What follows from this condition in practice?”
- “Which actions, decisions or responsibilities define this future most clearly?”

Important clarification:

The *writing, scripting or performing* of the scenario is not a separate method phase. It is the *output and consolidation* of Phase 4 and may take place away from the structured workspace, depending on how the scenario is to be shared with others.

Key reminder (if needed):

The scenario illustrates conditions for action. It is a way of communicating what has emerged, not an additional analytical step.

Phase 5: Second Pass – After ‘we’re done’

This phase is intentional and critical.

What typically happens:

- Participants feel finished
- Obvious ideas are exhausted
- Cognitive and social pressure drops

Your role:

- Hold the space
- Invite one more stretch

Use one targeted prompt:

Add one detail that makes this day uncomfortable.

- “Include a decision that no longer feels fully human.”
- “Add a trade-off you would prefer to avoid.”

Reassure participants that unfinished ideas are welcome.

4. Common drift patterns and responses

Engaging constructively with uncertain futures is not something that most of us are accustomed to doing in our daily work. Participants in futures and foresight workshops will sometimes slip into common roles where the focus is more on current matters than matters of the future. We call this "drift", i.e. their minds drift from the forward-looking perspective to the current. Facilitators need to be aware of drift and offer subtle nudges back to the future perspective when needed.

Here are some common signs of drift and how a facilitator can respond to them.

Drift	What it looks like	Facilitator response
‘Imagined affordances’ drift	“People believe they can...”	“What in the environment allows that action?”
Solutionism	Jumping to fixes	“Let’s stay with the tension a bit longer.”
Tech determinism	Tech as driver	“How does this reshape judgement and responsibility?”
Fantasy without grounding	Sci-fi leap	“What systems would have to exist for this to work?”
Cynicism / shutdown	“This will never happen”	“Assume it did—what would it change in practice?”

5. Timing guidance (flexible)

- Phase 1: 15–20 min
- Phase 2: 10–15 min
- Phase 3: 20–25 min
- Phase 4: 20–30 min
- Second pass: 5–10 min

If time runs short, shorten reporting out. **Do not cut the second pass.**

6. What successful facilitation looks like

You know FUTRE is working when participants:

- speak in verbs rather than opinions
- notice trade-offs and constraints
- disagree productively
- describe futures that feel plausible but unsettling

7. Closing the workshop

Avoid summarising or resolving tensions. Close by keeping the futures open.

A useful closing line:

These scenarios are not answers. They are better questions we can now ask together.

This handbook will be updated iteratively based on pilot observations.