

student validation. Future work should examine how these competences operate in actual courses and how learners themselves evaluate them, particularly in relation to accessibility and AI. “Version 1.0” is therefore an appropriate designation for a framework operating in such a rapidly changing technological environment.

Ultimately, the contribution of *e-DigCompEdu* is not that it tells university teachers which technologies they ought to use. It expands what counts as digital competence. A digitally competent teacher is not simply someone who operates platforms efficiently. Competence involves creating structures through which students can exercise autonomy, designing assessment appropriate to digital environments, identifying barriers to participation, questioning AI, protecting students and data, and deciding whether a technological intervention serves a pedagogical purpose at all.

At the same time, a mature model of online education should resist locating every failure of participation, communication or assessment in the lecturer’s design choices. Digital pedagogy is relational: its success depends upon institutional structures, competent teaching and meaningful student engagement alike.

Perhaps the most useful lesson of *e-DigCompEdu* is therefore also the simplest: genuinely digital education begins not when teaching uses technology, but when educators ask what that technology changes for the learner. I would add one further question: what does the same environment change for the lecturer? Online education expands access and pedagogical possibility, but it also redistributes visibility, responsibility and emotional labour. A framework for online higher-education competence is strongest when it recognises both sides of that transformation.

Carlos Heredia Chimeno
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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Attracting Attendance, Not Policing It: A Review of Patricia Olmos Rueda and Dolors Márquez Cebrián’s *Prevenió de l’absentisme*

Olmos Rueda, Patricia, and Dolors Márquez Cebrián. 2026. *Prevenió de l’absentisme. Claus per “atreure” l’assistència a la classe universitària i millorar la participació activa*. Claus Docents. Institut de Ciències de l’Educació, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. 57 pp. ISBN 979-13-992149-5-6.

University teachers tend to notice absenteeism first as an empty seat. It is therefore tempting to frame the problem in similarly visible terms: students attend or they do not, and the institutional response consists in recording, encouraging or requiring attendance. Patricia Olmos Rueda and Dolors Márquez Cebrián’s *Prevenió de l’absentisme*, the first volume in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona’s new *Claus Docents* series, begins from a more productive premise. Attendance is not simply something to be demanded from students but something teaching can make worthwhile. The authors distinguish occasional or structurally conditioned absence from habitual voluntary non-attendance and recognise that health, employment, family circumstances, transport and accessibility may lie beyond an individual lecturer’s control. They direct attention instead towards methodology, the organisation and communication of content, classroom dynamics, teaching materials, assessment and tutorial action. Their formulation is refreshingly clear: the objective is not to control attendance but to “attract” students towards the classroom by creating sessions in which they want to be present and participate actively (pp. 7–8). This changes the question from *How can we make students come?* to *What happens in our classes that makes being there educationally valuable?* It asks the teacher to examine the learning environment before converting absence into a moral diagnosis of the

learner. The guide reinforces this later by warning that coercive measures can produce little more than “presentisme” (p. 52).

The guide is deliberately practical. After establishing a vocabulary that includes accessibility, formative assessment, student engagement, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), generative AI and tutorial action (pp. 10–18), it asks lecturers to examine their own practice through a checklist organised around five dimensions: teaching methodology, assessment, teaching materials, relational climate and tutorial action (pp. 19–23). The questions are often disarmingly concrete: Are objectives and assessment criteria explicit? Are materials accessible and clearly organised? Is tutoring treated as part of teaching? Its strength is precisely that it does not insist on a single pedagogical model. Lectures are not declared obsolete, and active methodologies are not presented as inherently superior. Instead, the authors recommend selecting and combining methodologies according to learning outcomes, cohort characteristics, available resources and assessment (pp. 24–35). They explicitly acknowledge that the lecture remains useful for structuring complex conceptual material while emphasising that it can be made more interactive and combined with other practices (pp. 26–28). I find this pragmatism more convincing than accounts of “innovative teaching” in which innovation becomes an end in itself.

In Ancient History, a well-structured lecture can still be an extraordinarily effective way of constructing a chronological, conceptual or historiographical framework. Indeed, the proliferation of generative AI may paradoxically give this function renewed importance. Students now encounter not a scarcity of information but an unprecedented abundance of it: explanations, summaries and apparently authoritative answers can be generated almost instantaneously. In such an environment, the value of the lecturer lies increasingly not in being the primary source of information, but in selecting, hierarchising and connecting it. Expertise can provide a map through an otherwise overwhelming informational landscape, helping students to see both the larger structure and the pieces

of evidence that matter within it. A good lecture can therefore do something that becomes more, rather than less, necessary in the age of AI: reduce informational noise without reducing intellectual complexity.

This distinction became particularly tangible in teaching work that Isaías Arrayás Morales and I developed during the 2025–2026 academic year in first-year Ancient History at the UAB. Our project, *Veus oblidades a l'Antiguitat: docència inclusiva i pensament crític en temps d'intel·ligència artificial*, similarly sought to move beyond a predominantly transmissive model. In the principal continuous-assessment exercise, *Vida sota la Llei: de Babilònia a Roma*, students used generative AI to explore the lives of socially situated fictional individuals in Hammurabian Babylonia and Republican Rome before testing the resulting narratives against primary sources and specialist scholarship. The educational value lay precisely in the models' failures: students encountered legal and social simplifications, anachronisms and omissions ranging from religious practice to military logistics and the complexities of recruitment and citizenship. AI made historical information easier to generate, but historical reasoning no easier. Olmos and Márquez's insistence that classroom presence must provide something that materials alone cannot reproduce (pp. 42–43) is especially persuasive when that “something” is understood not as privileged access to information but as guided intellectual activity.

The same experience makes me particularly receptive to the guide's concern with accessibility and explicit structure. Olmos and Márquez define didactic accessibility broadly, encompassing physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional and communicative barriers, and connect it directly with UDL (pp. 10, 14). Their logic is anticipatory: teaching and assessment should be designed from the outset for learner diversity rather than requiring later adaptations whenever a student does not fit an assumed norm. Their recommendations for materials include clear organisation, explicit steps, estimated times and multiple formats (pp. 42–44). These can appear to be minor design decisions, but in my own

teaching they have become increasingly important. Much university assessment assumes invisible competences surrounding the disciplinary task itself: students must identify what matters in lengthy instructions, estimate time, divide work into manageable stages, recognise misunderstanding and know how to seek assistance. From a neurodiversity-informed perspective, I have become increasingly reluctant to treat these executive and communicative demands as if they were indistinguishable from academic rigour.

This principle also shaped the project with Arrayás. The activities were designed with flexibility of formats and rhythms and with explicit attention to neurodivergent profiles; our preliminary observations suggested greater continuity, tutorial interaction and sustained engagement. These observations do not demonstrate that flexibility caused the outcomes. They do, however, reinforce a point sometimes lost in discussions of academic standards: clarity and flexibility are not synonyms for reduced expectations. Students still had to document AI interactions, compare generated claims with primary and secondary evidence, identify bias and produce extended historical argument. Inclusion changed the structure around the difficulty; it did not remove the difficulty itself.

Assessment is perhaps the area where the convergence is strongest. *Prevençió de l'absentisme* defines formative assessment as a continuous process intended not simply to grade but to identify difficulties and allow students and teachers to adjust their strategies, with feedback, self-regulation and flexibility at its centre (p. 11). The authors advocate integrating assessment into course planning, aligning it with learning outcomes and methodology, making rubrics or assessment guides available from the outset and providing feedback during rather than solely after learning (pp. 36–40). This corresponds closely to changes I have been making in my own teaching: planning guides, intermediate submissions and opportunities to discuss work while it remains modifiable. Feedback delivered after final submission may explain a grade; it cannot improve the work already completed. In the Ancient History project, some

students left the assignment until the last moment and consequently failed to incorporate feedback, while others struggled to integrate primary and secondary evidence into sustained argument. When assessment is complex and analytical, the architecture surrounding the assignment matters almost as much as the final instructions.

The guide is equally persuasive in its treatment of relationships. Its section on classroom climate recommends creating spaces in which students can contribute without fear of humiliation, responding respectfully to incorrect interventions, showing genuine interest and combining proximity with academic expectations (pp. 45–47). Tutorial action is moved from the margins of university teaching towards its centre: tutoring is not merely a set of office hours awaiting students sufficiently confident to use them, and the authors even advocate proactive contact when a student stops attending (pp. 48–50). This matters from an inclusive perspective. A support system that depends entirely upon students independently recognising a problem, formulating it clearly and initiating contact already assumes particular executive and communicative capacities.

At the same time, relational teaching requires institutional conditions. Learning names, noticing disengagement, initiating contact and offering individualised feedback are desirable practices, but in large cohorts they consume labour. A sustainable culture of pedagogical care cannot depend solely upon lecturer goodwill. There is also a less frequently discussed cost to this increasingly demanding conception of good university teaching. Considerable time may be invested in redesigning activities, providing feedback, adapting materials and supporting students, while end-of-semester evaluation can compress that complex labour into numerical scores and short comments. Student feedback is indispensable, but it is not an unmediated measure of pedagogical quality, and reductive or strongly negative evaluations can be experienced as judgements on professional competence rather than as one form of evidence among others. The guide itself notes that difficult classroom relationships can contribute to teachers' emotional exhaustion (p. 45); its

concern with wellbeing might therefore be extended to the evaluative environment surrounding teaching. Caring for student participation cannot be sustained indefinitely if the emotional sustainability of those providing that care is ignored.

One of the guide's most stimulating claims also requires an inclusive qualification. In its treatment of teaching materials, the authors ask lecturers whether their class provides anything that the available materials cannot provide independently, arguing that presence should support experiences difficult to reproduce through materials and that materials should "prepare" and "complement", rather than duplicate, the classroom (pp. 42–43). I strongly agree with the underlying principle. Yet making attendance valuable should not mean making non-attendance punitive. There is a difference between creating a richer intellectual experience through participation and withholding essential learning from students who cannot participate synchronously. A student who misses a seminar inevitably misses the experience of participating in that seminar; this need not mean losing access to the conceptual foundations required to continue learning. The best interpretation of "value-added" attendance is therefore not scarcity but activity: shared time should be used for intellectual processes that genuinely benefit from dialogue, feedback, uncertainty and collaboration.

Generative AI provides a striking example. Although it occupies only a small part of *Prevençió de l'absentisme*, it is integrated into the guide rather than quarantined as an academic-integrity problem. The conceptual section presents generative AI as a possible didactic resource capable of supporting reflection, experimentation and content creation, while insisting upon honest and effective use (p. 15). The checklist asks whether AI-generated material is used so that students can assess its truth or quality (p. 21), while the section on teaching materials proposes asking AI for a summary and then validating it or analysing generated responses critically (pp. 43–44). This is remarkably close to the approach developed with Arrayás, where AI-generated narratives

became source-like objects requiring interrogation rather than answers to be accepted. If a generative system can produce a competent summary in seconds, the university classroom gains little by competing with it in the production of another summary. Its value lies in teaching students what to do with such answers: scrutinise them, compare them with difficult evidence, recognise silence and distortion, formulate better questions and defend alternative interpretations. The guide's emphasis on critical thinking, including the ability to distinguish rigorous information from misleading or manipulated content, is therefore particularly timely (p. 17).

There are nevertheless places where greater caution would improve the guide. Its treatment of "learning styles and/or learning patterns" draws primarily upon Vermunt and Donche's more sophisticated model of learning patterns, but the repeated language of adapting teaching to "styles" risks evoking a much less defensible tradition of fixed learner typologies (pp. 15, 19, 37). Universal Design is more useful when it encourages multiple routes into learning and removes unnecessary barriers than when teachers attempt to classify students into stable types. A similar caution applies to some of the guide's closing formulations. "Action generates motivation" is pedagogically suggestive, but absenteeism is too multicausal for motivational principles to become universal laws. To the authors' credit, the guide itself repeatedly acknowledges this complexity and concludes by reminding readers that there are no immediate or magical solutions (pp. 52–54).

Ultimately, the contribution of *Prevençió de l'absentisme* is that it transforms a complaint familiar in university corridors—"students no longer come to class"—into a question about teaching design. Its argument is strongest when attendance ceases to be treated as the outcome to be maximised and becomes one indication among others of whether students perceive meaning and possibility in the learning environment. The work that Arrayás and I conducted in Ancient History reinforced for me how productive that shift can be. Flexibility did not require intellectual simplification, and the use of AI did not

require abandoning historical method. What changed was where the difficulty was placed. Instead of making students spend unnecessary effort deciphering the structure of the task, the activity attempted to concentrate difficulty where a university History course ought to place it: in asking good questions, evaluating evidence and constructing defensible interpretations.

For teachers of Antiquity, that may be the guide's most productive lesson. Students do not need to attend university simply to receive information that exists elsewhere. They may have good reason to participate when teaching gives them opportunities to interrogate evidence, compare interpretations, expose uncertainty, revise their reasoning and receive feedback while there is still time to use it. Generative AI makes that distinction more urgent rather than less so. When plausible information and polished prose are increasingly abundant, the value of university teaching lies more clearly in what students learn to do with information, evidence, technologies and one another. Olmos and Márquez begin with absenteeism, but the larger question raised by their guide is more fundamental: what, in 2026, do we believe a university class is actually for?

Carlos Heredia Chimeno
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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Learning Antiquity or Feeling Antiquity? A Review of Marvin Rees, *Entstehung, Angebot und bildungsrelevante Lerneffekte des Digitalen Spiels ›Discovery Tour: Ancient Greece‹*

Rees, Marvin. 2026. *Entstehung, Angebot und bildungsrelevante Lerneffekte des Digitalen Spiels ›Discovery Tour: Ancient Greece‹*. Traces. Public History and Heritage Studies 3. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg. 289 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-162505-8.

Historical video games invite an apparently simple educational expectation. If students can walk through a reconstruction of Athens, visit Delphi or listen to Leonidas describe Thermopylae, they should be able to learn about ancient Greece in ways unavailable through a textbook or lecture. Ubisoft's *Discovery Tour: Ancient Greece* (2019), developed from *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (2018), seems almost designed to test this proposition.

Marvin Rees's *Entstehung, Angebot und bildungsrelevante Lerneffekte des Digitalen Spiels ›Discovery Tour: Ancient Greece‹* does precisely that, but its importance lies in refusing to reduce the question to whether the game is historically "accurate". Rees reconstructs the production of the *Discovery Tour*, analyses the historical representation it offers and, most importantly, tests empirically what participants actually learn from it. The study therefore separates three propositions often collapsed in discussions of historical games: a digital environment can contain substantial historical information; it can create a persuasive sensation of encountering the past; and it can produce measurable historical learning. These things are related, but they are not the same.

This distinction gives the book an unusually effective structure. Rees examines