

# Mess-ups in Higher Education

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**Presentation type** - Pre-conference workshop

### **Abstract:**

Failure is an indicator of trying out innovative ideas and practices. Everyone who has dared try out new ways of teaching, new assessment events, new project briefs, knows that trying out new ideas is risky. Training wheels and safety nets can be reassuring for learners, but when it comes to exploring uncharted territories, there is no way to play safe. Evidence shows that many record holders in home-runs in Baseball simultaneously have some of the highest numbers of strike-outs; evidently, to “swing for the fences” can lead to both high success and high failure. Celebrating failure, however, is antithetical to the culture of measuring higher education with metrics of success. A “success bias” is prevalent in how academics present themselves in Vitae and promotion applications, and in the research outputs that are selected for presentation and publication. This pre-workshop at HERDSA 2019 is a call for honesty, generosity, and humility. A call for sharing our most embarrassing and disconcerting, upsetting, perplexing, and awkward failures in Higher Education. Spaces like this have gradually been created such as the global movement of <https://fuckupnights.com> and the creativity exercise of writing your “CV of Failures”<sup>1</sup>. This pre-workshop calls for brave academics to send us their biggest mess-ups and we will select a collection of the worst failures and mistakes. Naturally, the session will include a facilitation of learning and dealing with mess-ups to become a better academic -and a better person. Topics of failure include all of the subthemes listed in HERDSA 2019 as a way to cover as much ground as possible (disciplines, aspects of teaching and learning, academic life, collaboration, assessment, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes Hausofer [https://www.princeton.edu/~joha/Johannes\\_Hausofer\\_CV\\_of\\_Failures.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/~joha/Johannes_Hausofer_CV_of_Failures.pdf)

Attendees to this workshop will experience a renewed sense of humility and confidence, they will question the increased emphasis on success metrics, and overall will reflect on their own successes and failures in their academic careers. We intend to facilitate an experience of generosity where attendees learn from each other to more productively take risks in their future academic ventures.