

KU and PU are strengthening their futures capabilities and knowledge through an intensive Futures workshop

As part of the Erasmus+ ACCESS project, the Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC) delivered an intensive Futures Studies training programme in Nepal from 30 March to 3 April 2026. The programme was facilitated by Dr Juha Kaskinen, former Director of the FFRC, together with Kalpani Pavithra, Project Researcher, and was organised in collaboration with Kathmandu University and Purbanchal University.

The training was designed to strengthen institutional capacity in Futures Studies by introducing foresight approaches and demonstrating their relevance for addressing climate change and supporting sustainable development. Bringing together academics from a range of disciplines, the programme combined theoretical foundations with collaborative learning, enabling participants to experience Futures Studies as a practical approach for informing long-term decision-making.

The programme was implemented across two universities, engaging approximately 45 academic staff and researchers from disciplines including engineering, renewable energy, education, forestry, management, microbiology, and physics. This multidisciplinary participation enriched discussions by bringing together diverse perspectives on sustainability, innovation, and future-oriented planning.

Kathmandu University

The training commenced at Kathmandu University, where Prof. Sunil Lohani opened the programme by reflecting on the objectives of the ACCESS project. Around 15 participants attended the two-day training, representing the faculties of Renewable Energy, Engineering, and Education.

The opening sessions introduced the fundamental principles of Futures Studies, providing an overview of key concepts, approaches, and their practical relevance in academic and professional contexts. The presentations encouraged active dialogue, with attendees contributing thoughtful questions and reflections throughout the discussions.

The practical component centred on Climate Futures for Nepal, allowing participants to apply the concepts introduced during the morning sessions. Working collaboratively, they identified emerging signals through horizon scanning before organising these signals within a PESTEC framework. The

identified drivers were then assessed according to their potential impact and level of uncertainty, providing a structured basis for exploring future signals.

On the second day, the workshop progressed from identifying drivers of change to constructing alternative future images. Using the Futures Table, participants explored a variety of drivers with their alternative future status to develop multiple plausible climate futures for Nepal. Rather than attempting to predict a single outcome, the exercise encouraged participants to examine different possibilities and consider their implications for policy, education, and sustainable development.

The programme concluded with group presentations of the future images developed during the workshop. These presentations generated constructive discussion and critical reflection, highlighting how Futures Studies can support strategic thinking and collaborative problem-solving across disciplinary boundaries.

Purbanchal University

The second phase of the training took place at Purbanchal University on 2–3 April 2026. The programme opened with welcoming remarks from the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the ACCESS Project Coordinator, who introduced the trainers and acknowledged the importance of strengthening collaboration between the partner institutions.

Approximately 30 participants attended the sessions, representing engineering, forestry, physics, management, microbiology, and other academic disciplines. As at Kathmandu University, the programme combined theoretical sessions with practical workshops, enabling attendees to apply futures methodologies to climate-related challenges through collaborative exercises.

The workshop activities followed the same structured process, guiding participants from horizon scanning and identifying drivers of change to developing alternative future images. Working in interdisciplinary groups encouraged the exchange of perspectives and demonstrated how futures methods can support decision-making across diverse fields of expertise.

The programme concluded with a discussion involving the Registrar, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, and members of the ACCESS project team. Certificates of participation were then presented to all attendees, marking the successful completion of the training programme.

Evaluation and Reflections

A notable outcome across both universities was the consistently high level of engagement demonstrated by attendees. Despite the intensive nature of the programme, participation remained strong throughout the two-day sessions. Discussions were characterised by curiosity and a willingness to engage with unfamiliar methodologies, creating a collaborative learning environment that supported both individual and group learning.

Feedback from the evaluation indicates that the workshop-based activities were the most highly valued element of the programme (Graph 1). The opportunity to apply Futures Studies methods to real-world climate challenges enabled participants to translate theoretical concepts into practical experience. Collaborative group discussions and the exploration of alternative futures were consistently highlighted as particularly valuable aspects of the training.

The evaluation also suggests that the programme achieved an effective balance between conceptual content and practical application. Respondents generally considered the sessions appropriately challenging, while the learning objectives, training materials, and supporting resources were rated as clear, well organised, and easy to follow (Graph 7). Equally encouraging was the absence of any topics that participants considered unnecessary or irrelevant, indicating that the programme closely aligned with their expectations and professional interests.

A comparison of the pre- and post-training responses demonstrates a clear improvement in participants' understanding of Futures Studies concepts and methodologies (Graphs 2 and 3). This increase in self-reported knowledge suggests that the programme successfully strengthened futures literacy and equipped attendees with practical tools that can be applied within teaching, research, and institutional planning.

Overall satisfaction ratings were consistently high across all aspects of the programme, including the relevance of the content, the expertise of the facilitators, the quality of interaction, and the learning experience (Graphs 4–6). These findings indicate that the participatory approach adopted throughout the training supported effective knowledge exchange and contributed positively to the overall learning experience.

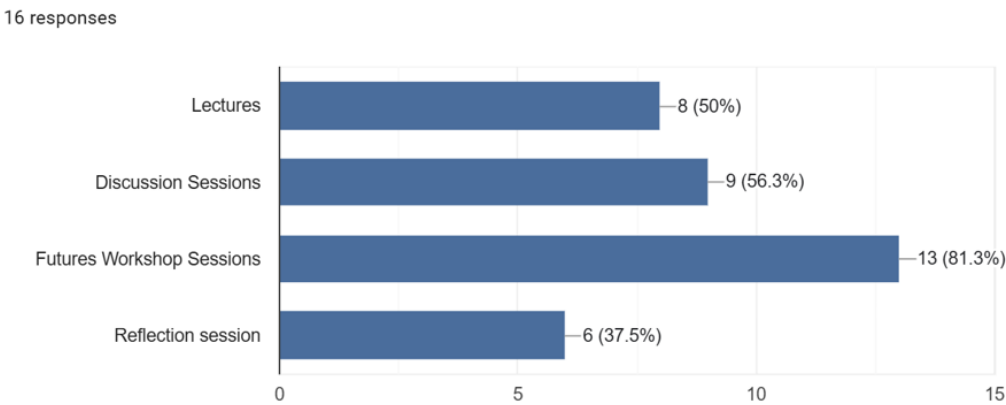
The most common recommendation for future programmes was to extend the duration of the training and provide additional opportunities for collaborative workshop activities. This feedback reflects both the relevance of the subject matter and participants' interest in developing a deeper understanding of Futures Studies and its practical applications.

Concluding Remarks

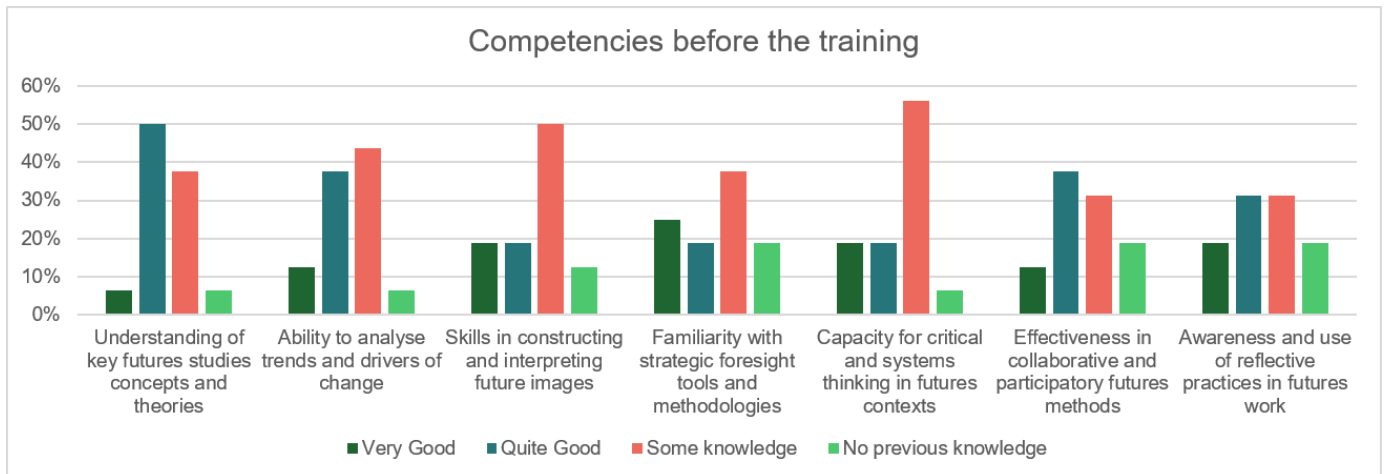
The Futures Studies training programme contributed directly to the objectives of the ACCESS project by strengthening institutional capacity and promoting futures literacy within Nepalese higher education institutions. Through a combination of theoretical learning and practical application, the programme equipped university staff and researchers with foresight methodologies that can be integrated into teaching, research, and strategic planning.

The collaboration between the Finland Futures Research Centre, Kathmandu University, and Purbanchal University established a strong foundation for continued cooperation in Futures Studies. The positive evaluation results, sustained participant engagement, and interest in further training demonstrate the value of integrating participatory foresight methods into higher education. These outcomes provide a solid basis for future capacity-building initiatives within the ACCESS partnership and support the project's broader goal of fostering innovative and climate-resilient approaches to sustainable development.

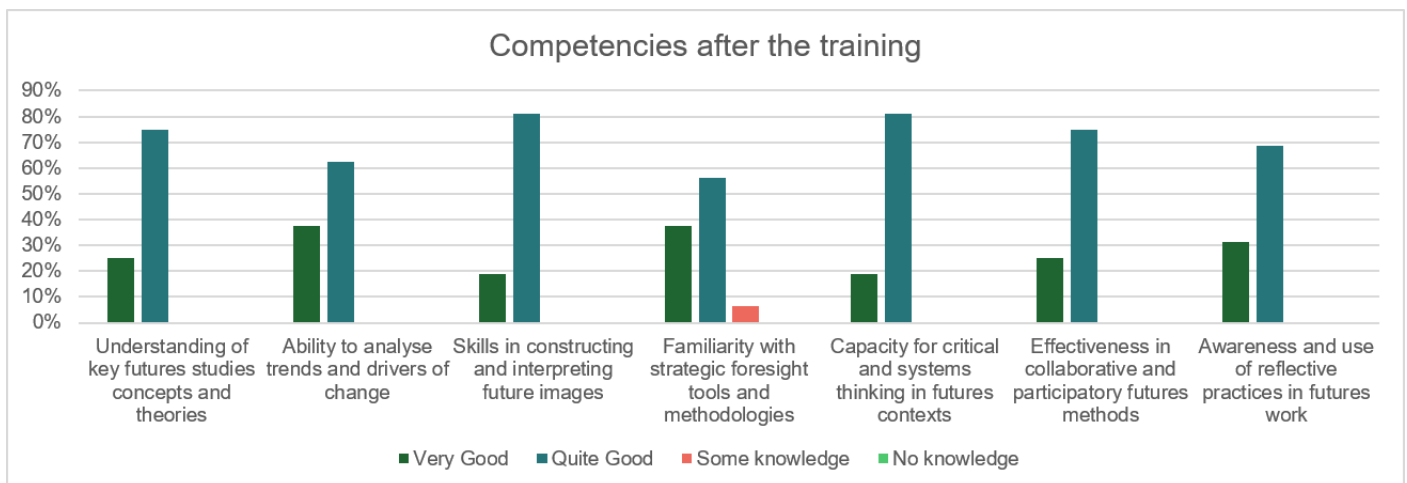
Some of the key results of the post-training feedback are presented in the graphs below.



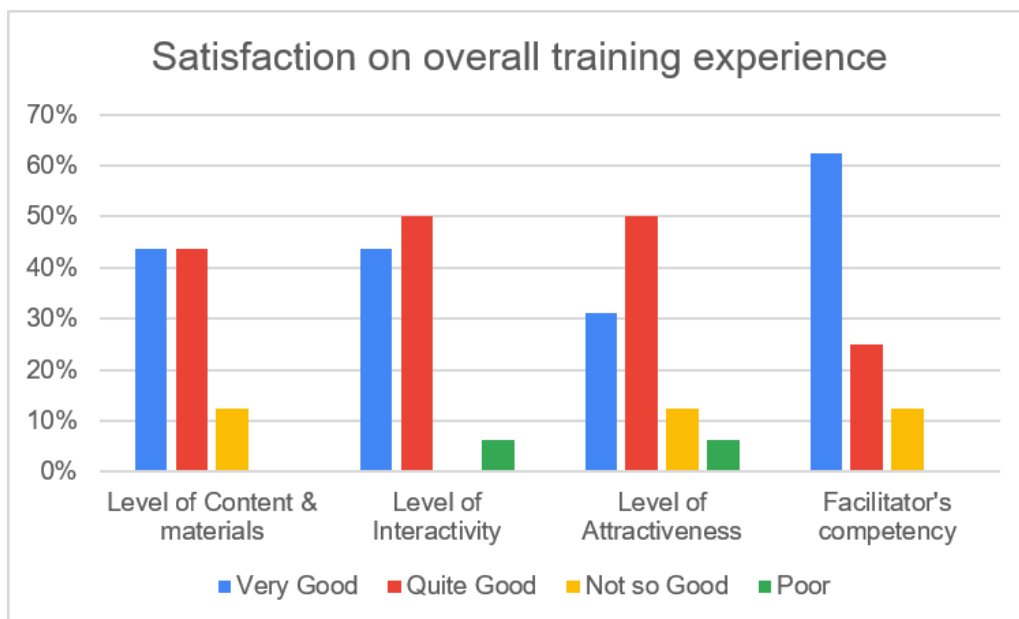
Graph 1: The most useful elements of the training sessions selected by the participants



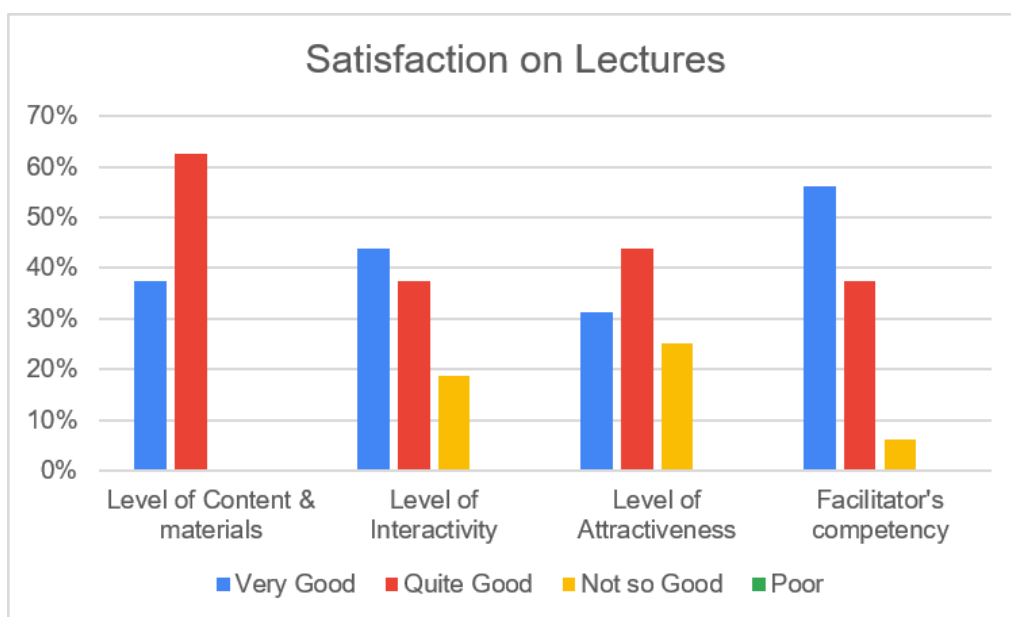
Graph 2: Level of competencies before the training sessions



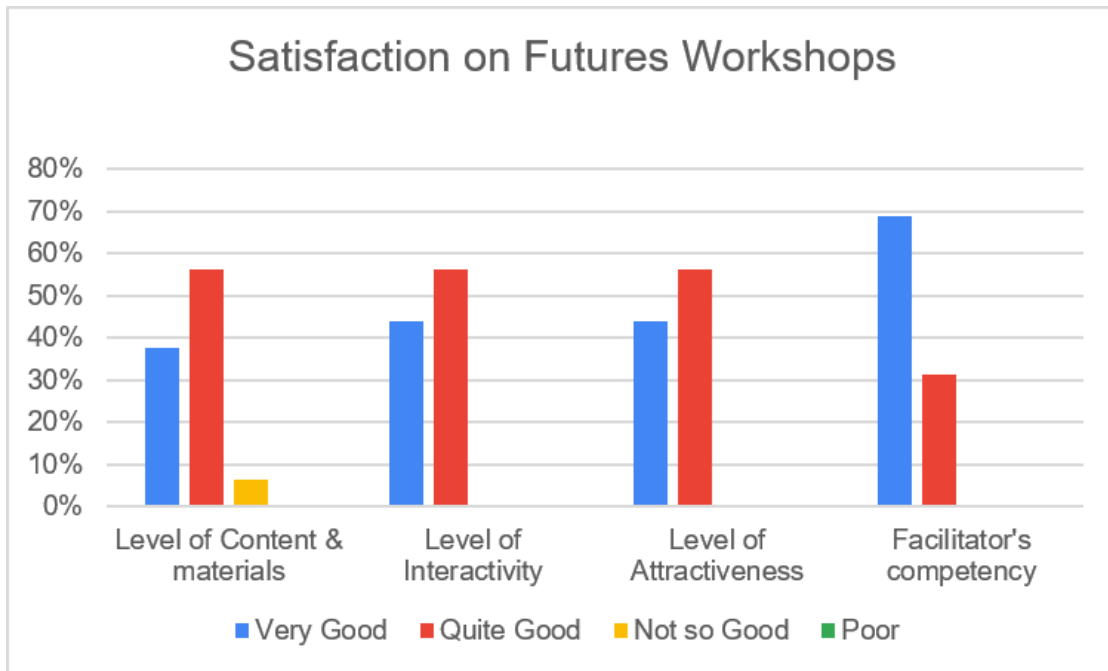
Graph 3: The level of competencies after the training sessions



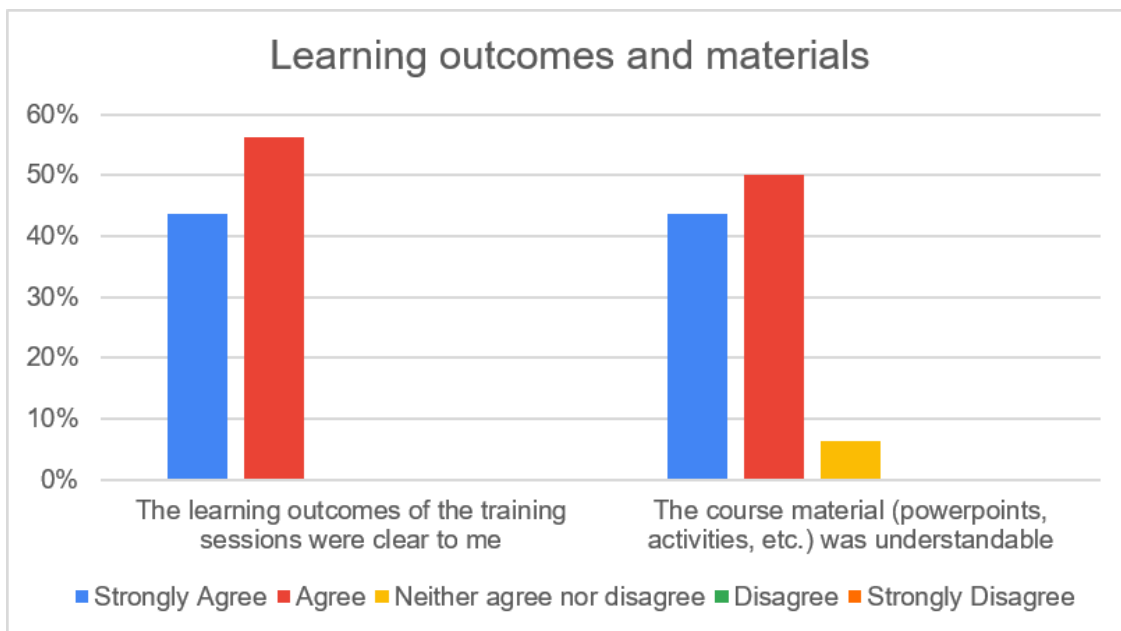
Graph 4: Level of satisfaction with Overall training experience



Graph 5: Level of Satisfaction with Lectures and Discussion Sessions



Graph 6: Level of Satisfaction with Futures Workshop sessions



Graph 7: Level of agreement with the Learning Outcomes and Materials