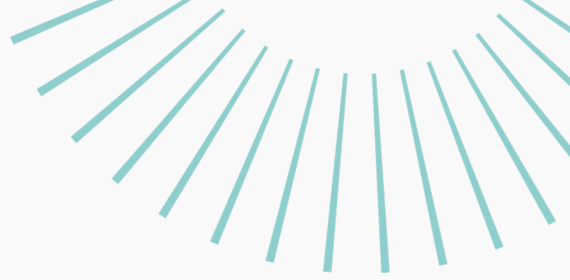# ual:

the exchange

How do we create belonging in creative educational spaces?

Liz Bunting & Vikki Hill
Presence and Belonging in Digital Education
15 December 2021

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Session outline

→Share context of Enhancement work at UAL

→Introduce belonging

→Explore the design of our podcasts

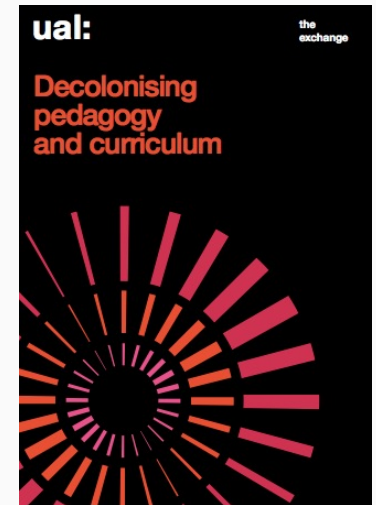→Myth busting

→Implications for creative educators

→Next steps

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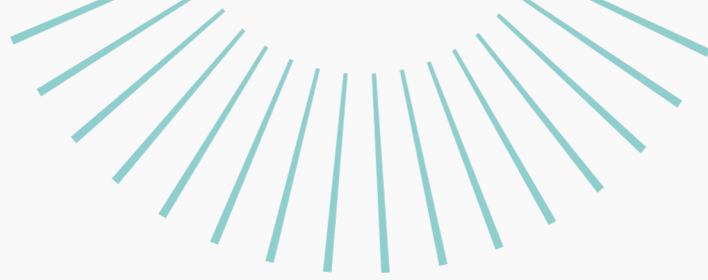the exchange

Fostering belonging and compassionate pedagogy

the exchange

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Enhancing assessment for equity

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Decolonising pedagogy and curriculum

https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning-exchange/resources/aem-and-attainment-resources

Belonging

→ *'To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin'* (bell hooks, 1994:13)

→ *'Belonging or being fully human means more than having access. Belonging entails being respected at a basic level that includes the right to both co-create and make demands upon society'* (john a powell, 2019: 37)
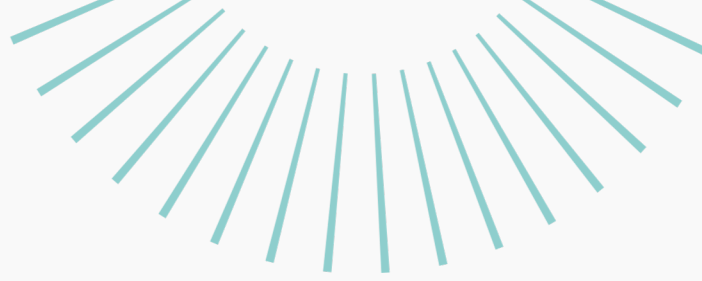
Belonging in HE

→ Liz Thomas' (2012) HEFCE funded *'What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme'* report found that feelings of isolation and not 'fitting in' (i.e. unbelonging) were the most common reasons for students to consider withdrawal from undergraduate study.

→ *'who can achieve belonging and where is always tied to issues of power and inequality [within society]'* (Vanessa May, 2013 p.154)
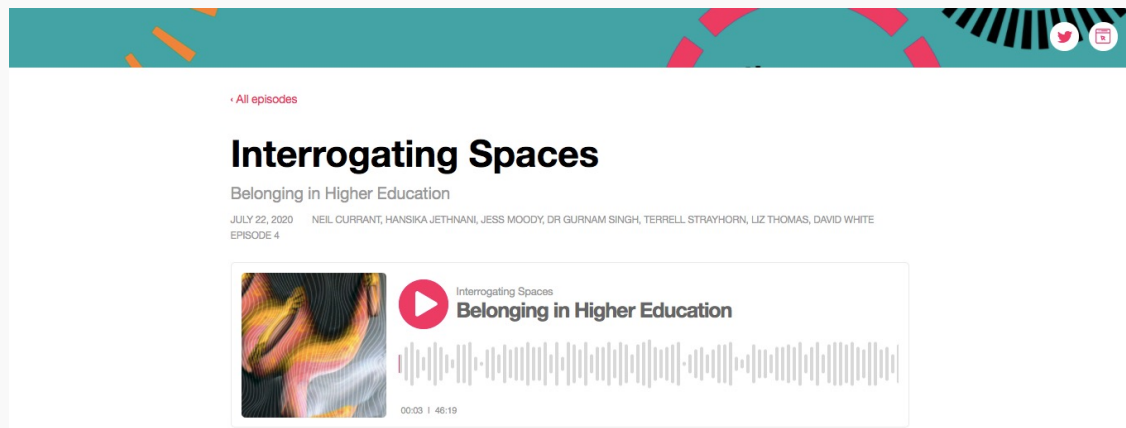
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Podcasts

→ **Listening**

'We think we listen, but very rarely do we listen with real understanding, true empathy. Yet listening, of this very special kind, is one of the most potent forces for change that I know' (Carl Rogers, 1980)

https://interrogatingspaces.buzzsprout.com/683798/4671476-belonging-in-higher-education

Benefits of podcasts

→**Dialogic**
From a critical pedagogy lens, dialogue is key to developing transformative relationships.

→**Asynchronous**
'*synchronous learning is biased'* as it ignores difference in time zones, can be culturally unaware, is problematic for those with families, is elitist when involving audio-visuals
and relies on linguistic capital (Bali and Meier, 2014).

→**Affective**
Corradi Fiumara reminds us that, *'If we were apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse, we might, perhaps, promote a different sort of co-existence'* (Fiumara, 1990, p. 57).

→ **Addressing epistemic and procedural needs**
Deneen and Boud's (2014) study on epistemic, procedural and pragmatic resistance highlighted the different needs that academic staff bring with them to educational development.

Mythbusting nurturing belonging 1

→Myth 1: Peer relationships are paramount for belonging

"It surprised me that the sense of belonging was more impacted by the student/staff engagement (quality of relationship) than the student/student" (workshop participant)

Mythbusting nurturing belonging 2

→Myth 2: Extra-curricular social events are a priority in fostering belonging

"[I was surprised by] the complexity of the commuter student experience. Belonging [is] less likely to be a feeling that resonates for this portion of the cohort as a result of prioritising academic engagement over social and institutional non-academic opportunity engagement" (workshop participant)

Mythbusting nurturing belonging 3

→Myth 3: Peer relationships are paramount for belonging

[I found it surprising] that BAME students in particularly may have had a negative experience before coming to university in prior education settings" (workshop participant)

Belonging and Compassion: Implications for Creative Educators

Deneen and Boud's (2014) exploration of epistemic and procedural needs, in this section we present practical ideas for changes to practice.

Listening and understanding

'Love the idea of being steered away from a 'neo-liberal' version of caring and putting 'soul' into our teaching.'

Planning and curriculum

One team member observed, *'Never assume 'one size fits all'
regarding the students' needs.'*

Assessment and feedback

Course teams wanted to support students to bring their heritage, identity and experience into their creative work and to do this by ensuring students have autonomy in choosing topics of personal interest (Currant, 2016).

Communication

'Gurnam Singh's ref to 'un-belonging' evoked how important belonging and trust are. I think being prepared to share and take risks, as we are asking students to do, is one of the keys. The complexity of how we read situations, the social cues is really challenging. Critical reflection, self-reflection really helps.'
(Staff workshop participant)

Structure/ agency

Belonging online is more difficult now as the current policy of encouraging students to attend has created a divide between those attending and getting more contact time with the staff and interaction with other students, vs those who are interacting solely online and feeling isolated. (Staff workshop participant)

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What next?

QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project – Belonging through assessment: Pipelines of compassion

https://belongingthroughassessment.myblog.arts.ac.uk/

Pass/fail assessment in HE

https://interrogatingspaces.buzzsprout.com/683798/9644305-pass-fail-assessment-in-arts-higher-education

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Thank you!

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