



DMU EDUCATION ACADEMY

FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION:

Inclusive and decolonising practice across curriculum, services and the student experience

Dr Hardeep K Basra
Head of Educational Development
De Montfort University

DMU EDUCATION ACADEMY



Purpose and outcomes

- To move from thoughtful critique to practical, shared action.
 - Notice: Identify where knowledge, power and assumptions are embedded in everyday practice.
 - Question: Ask who is centred, who participates confidently and who carries additional barriers.
 - Change: Redesign one practice now and name the wider conversation that must follow.
- **By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:**
 - **Identify practical change**

Opening prompt and workshop flow

- **Opening prompt:** Please write one word or phrase from the keynote that has stayed with you.
- **Private Reflection:** What do you treat as
 - normal
 - rigorous
 - good
 - professional

Where did these assumptions come from?

Who might they advantage or disadvantage?

What evidence would help me question them



Six connected sites of practice

Curriculum is one site. The student and staff experience is shaped across the whole institution.

CONTENT

Whose knowledge?

DISCOURSE

Whose language?

PEDAGOGY

Who participates?

ASSESSMENT

Who knows the rules?

SYSTEMS

Who faces friction?

BELONGING

Who feels expected?

Look across the connections, not only within individual roles.

Main activity: audit one real practice

At each table, choose one real artefact or process. Work with something small enough to examine and meaningful enough to change.

READING / EXAMPLES

A reading list, lecture examples or case studies

ASSESSMENT

A brief, criteria, feedback or formative task

PARTICIPATION

A seminar, group task or discussion format

WELCOME

A first email, induction or first appointment

DIGITAL

A VLE page, form, portal or automated message

SUPPORT

Tutoring, advice, library, placement or complaints process

Redesign Sprint: One practice, three questions, one change

Three audit questions

- What assumptions are embedded here? Consider prior knowledge, confidence, language, academic culture, digital access, cultural references and assessment literacy.
- Who is most likely to feel confident, visible or included?
- Who might feel uncertain, marginal, invisible or less able to participate?

Now Redesign

Examples of redesign

- Clarify academic guidelines and explain key terminology.
- Use inclusive language and reduce unnecessary academic jargon.
- Build in structured collaborative activities, peer feedback, intercultural discussion or a buddy system.
- Signpost academic skills and support services more explicitly.
- Deconstruct assessment and feedback so students understand what quality looks like and how to improve.
- Use a more diverse range of examples, voices, case studies and resources.
- Give time for composed responses, particularly for multilingual learners and students who need more processing time.



What is sense of belonging?

- A student' sense of “***being meaningfully connected, included, supported and able to exercise autonomy within their university and course community***” (Advance HE).
- A student's sense of belonging is the feeling that ***they belong and matter within the learning environment: that they are treated as equals, their voices are taken seriously, and their views are genuinely valued in relationships with staff and peers*** (QAA).

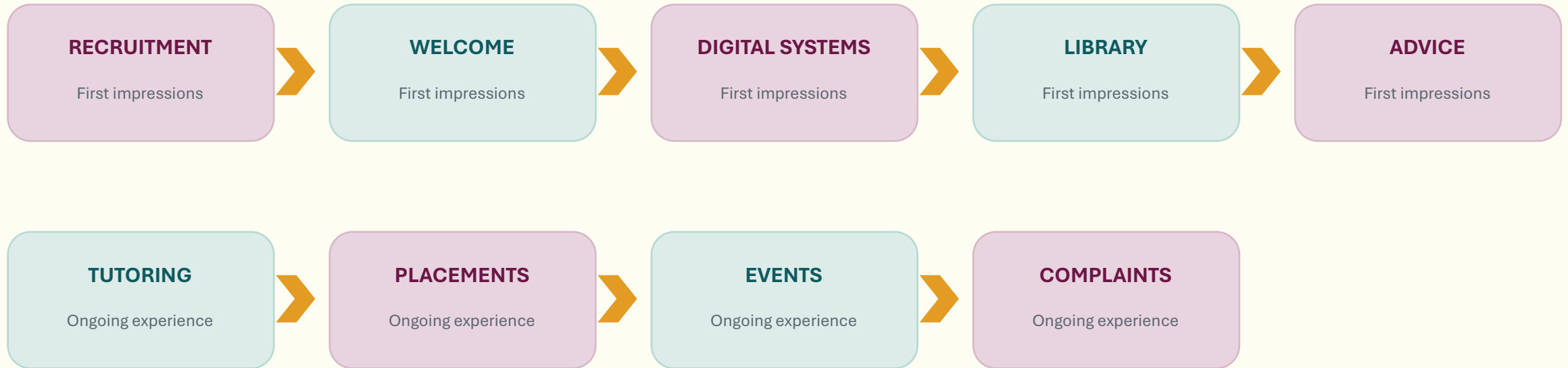
Why belonging matters

- Belonging shapes whether students feel expected, respected, connected and supported.
- It influences confidence, help-seeking, engagement, continuation and wellbeing.
- Belonging is formed through teaching, assessment, communication, support, space and everyday interactions.
- For widening participation students, belonging may be experienced unevenly across transitions and touchpoints.
- Small, repeated experiences often matter more than one-off interventions.

Belonging is not an add-on: it is designed through the student experience.

Beyond curriculum: the whole journey

Professional services shape access, trust, navigation, dignity and belonging at every touchpoint.



Audit question: where do our processes assume confidence, fluency, time, money, familiarity or willingness to disclose?

Name one touchpoint | 3 mins

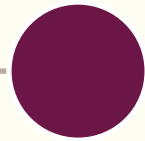
Belonging is built through moments

Choose three moments. What does each currently communicate and what could change?



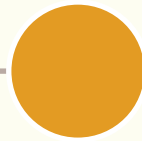
FIRST EMAIL

Am I expected?



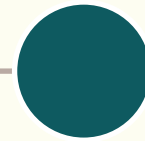
FIRST SESSION

Can I participate?



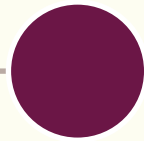
FIRST TASK

Do I understand?



FIRST FEEDBACK

Can I improve?



**FIRST SUPPORT
CONTACT**

Will I be heard?

For each moment: 1. What is communicated? 2. Who feels expected and welcomed? 3. What small design change would strengthen belonging?

Belonging conversation | 5 mins

Activity : belonging across the student journey: 10 mins

- **In mixed groups, map where belonging may be built or broken across:**
 - Pre-arrival
 - Induction
 - First 6 weeks
 - Assessment point
 - Wobble point
 - Onward transition
- **Capture on the worksheet:**
 - What signals “you belong here”?
 - What creates uncertainty, distance or friction?
 - Where do academic and professional services practices matter most?
 - What is visible to students — and what remains hidden?

Possible personas and prompts

- **Example personas**

- Commuter student
- First-in-family student
- Disabled student
- Mature student with caring responsibilities
- International or estranged student

- **Questions to ask**

- Where might this student feel expected and welcomed?
- Where might institutional processes unintentionally exclude?
- What assumptions are built into timetabling, assessment or communication?
- What could one team do now — and what needs wider collaboration?

Activity : from insight to action

Identify one action for academic staff and one for professional services under each heading.

Connection

How will students build relationships with peers, staff and their course community?

Inclusion

What in the curriculum, environment or communication signals “you belong here”?

Support

How will students know where to go, who to ask and what happens next?

Autonomy

How can students exercise choice, agency and confidence in navigating university?

Plenary share-back

- **Each group shares:**
 - One quick win you could implement soon
 - One action that would need cross-team collaboration
- Be as concrete as possible: what, who and when?



Action planning: three horizons

Name ownership and timescale. Separate personal action from collective change.

NOW

Within two weeks

One small, deliverable
change

OWNER: _____

WHEN: _____

NEXT

Before the next delivery

One planned redesign

OWNER: _____

WHEN: _____

TOGETHER

Programme / service / institution

One conversation or issue
to escalate

OWNER: _____

WHEN: _____

NOTICE. QUESTION. CHANGE.
**Decolonising and inclusive practice does not begin with
perfection.**

**It begins with changing the everyday practices through which
students and staff experience the university.**

One action I will take.....

Thank you