



# Evidence for Enhancement

## The Challenge of Community and Belonging

Year 2, 2019-20

Building communities of learners and supporting students to feel they belong in their university learning environment underpins many areas of our pedagogic thinking and practice. This is particularly evident in discussions of retention and success where the lens and language of community and belonging frame discussion of students' resilience in the face of academic and social challenges, and their confidence to seek support.

Institutional interest in belonging has been reinforced by National Student Survey questions on feeling part of a learning community, working with others and, more specifically, being represented and listened to by the student association.

Yet, as concepts and as drivers of practice, such terms can be problematic. Used uncritically, they imply a common understanding of what it is to 'belong' and who is (or is not) part of a given 'community'. Too often perceptions of student community are based on an imagined full-time, young, time-rich student. Yet students – and their relationship with the university – are more diverse and complex than this.

How can we move to understand belonging in a way that recognises the diversity and hybridity of individual and group identities? What aspects of belonging and community are salient, at what points, and to whom?

Here we highlight a series of projects from Edinburgh Napier that explore belonging and community from different perspectives. Together, they highlight the importance of recognising a multiplicity of student voices and interests. Most importantly, they highlight the implications of this diversity for our action, challenging us to think holistically about learning and teaching, the use of campus space, and how we create opportunities to hear and respond to less powerful and less visible student voices.

**DLTE**

Department of  
Learning and  
Teaching  
Enhancement

# Bleedin' Saor

## A Bloody Big Project

Bleedin' Saor (A Bloody Big Project) is a major design and media project led by staff and students at Edinburgh Napier University. The project responds to the Scottish Government initiative to provide free, accessible sanitary products for all girls and women in schools, colleges and universities. The media and design strands address period poverty and the social and cultural stigma surrounding menstruation. The project is a live work-related learning initiative for students building their project management, teamwork and creative skills on a campaign for real social change.

The design team have researched and developed marketing, campaigning and business models and products that promote and support women and young girls' access to sanitary provision. Media (TV & Film) students are producing a documentary film around period positivity, the significance of the Scottish Government initiative on ending period poverty and which links Scottish and international contexts. The project has engaged with stakeholders and contributors from across Scotland and included a research and filming trip to Uganda in June 2019.



### Contact

Dr Kirsten MacLeod

[k.macleod2@napier.ac.uk](mailto:k.macleod2@napier.ac.uk)

# Film Club

## Exploring Language and Culture through Film

This is a student-led project designed to:

- promote student belonging by engaging in a fun, educational activity of watching a film together;
- enrich/supplement the students' learning of languages and cultures;
- create a space for the discussion of the film's content and message.

The initiative ran from January to April 2019, with four different films (in German, English, French and Italian) selected by the students, in the Bainfield social room.

The funding was used to buy DVDs, pizza and refreshments.

Feedback was sought through questionnaires with participants and a focus group interview with the organising team. The organising students commented positively on the experience they had gained. Students generally felt that the process of watching a film, having a break in the middle, and a discussion at the end did create a sense of community. They are keen to keep exploring films from less well-known cultures, and are planning further screenings and events during the current year.



### Contact

Sibylle Ratz

[s.ratz@napier.ac.uk](mailto:s.ratz@napier.ac.uk)

Mabel Victoria

[m.victoria@napier.ac.uk](mailto:m.victoria@napier.ac.uk)

Sylvain Blanche

[s.blanche@napier.ac.uk](mailto:s.blanche@napier.ac.uk)

# Graphic Design Reading Room

How is community built within a cohort of students? Our intuition is that it must form authentically within the student body. As staff we can organise activities *ad infinitum*, but a community cannot be imposed, it must belong to its members. You can take a horse to water but you can't make it feel like it belongs to a learning community.

The Graphic Design Reading Room project is allowing us to test this intuition by monitoring the effect on perceptions of community produced by facilitating the students to create

their own, extra-curricular space within the learning environment. The project was co-developed with Graphic Design students who planned and specified their ideal space to be furnished using the mini-project funds. The students have created a 'reading room' space with sofas and shelving to store programme specific resources (magazines, books, material samples etc) all held in collective student ownership. Students can use the reading room to consult materials, find inspiration, and as a relaxing and social 'third' study space.



## Contact

Peter Buwert

[p.buwert@napier.ac.uk](mailto:p.buwert@napier.ac.uk)

# Lab Stars

## Creating a Sense of Belonging in our Lab

Digital Media and Interaction Design students began to make a home for themselves in lab d35. This happened naturally over time as they chose to work in the space together. We decided to help nurture this natural community building. The Lab Stars' project aimed to consult with the students about how they felt this sense of belonging could be enhanced.

Fourth year student, Celina McTavish, led a 'design sprint' for a group of students who typically use the lab to discover what they wanted to do with the space, before creating some mock-ups of what it might look like. The students overwhelmingly decided that they wanted to make

the lab more homely and they wanted to provide activities that they could do while they were waiting for their projects to render (the curse of high quality media!). To date, we have added an 'inspiration station' with books, art materials and games, plus plants and wall boards for them to communicate with each other. The students are using the materials while they are in the lab, and we have also found that lecturers are adding to the shelves – so we are building a library of interesting things for further inspiration.



### Contact

Fiona Stewart

[f.stewart2@napier.ac.uk](mailto:f.stewart2@napier.ac.uk)

# Recruit, Retain and Prosper

## A Strategy for Men in Nursing and Midwifery at Edinburgh Napier

Currently the nursing workforce is about 10% men, midwifery less still and the male student nurse population at Edinburgh Napier is about 6–7%. It is also known that men are at a higher risk to leave nursing earlier than women both as students and as employees.

As there are fewer opportunities for men to make social and professional relationships with other men in their years of study, we wanted to have concentrated social events that were open to men in all years and also staff nurses and lecturers.

We organised a series of social events on and off campus focussing on bringing men in nursing together.

The aim is to:

- reduce the number of early leavers of male student and staff by strengthening relationships
- create an environment that is seen to be open to, and supportive of, male students in nursing and midwifery such that we could hopefully recruit more males to the programme going forward.



### MEN INTO NURSING AND MIDWIFERY SOCIAL EVENTS

Edinburgh Napier University's men in nursing network is hosting a series of social events for Spring 2019. Join us for a drink and an informal chat about men in nursing and midwifery.

#### **6-10 May, 12noon - 1.00pm**

► Teas and coffees, Sighthill Campus (ground floor foyer)

#### **17 May, 11am - 1.00pm**

► Coffee at The Coffee Club, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh (open to Edinburgh Napier University nursing students and NHS staff)  
RSVP: [men-in-nursing-rie.eventbrite.co.uk](http://men-in-nursing-rie.eventbrite.co.uk)

#### **11 June, 7.30pm - 9.00pm**

► Get together at The Beehive Inn, Grassmarket, Edinburgh  
First drink on us!  
RSVP: [men-in-nursing-beehive.eventbrite.co.uk](http://men-in-nursing-beehive.eventbrite.co.uk)

For more information contact: Andrew Waddington [a.waddington@napier.ac.uk](mailto:a.waddington@napier.ac.uk)

### Contact

Andrew Waddington

Kev Head

[malenursesandmidwives@napier.ac.uk](mailto:malenursesandmidwives@napier.ac.uk)

# Building an Inclusive Programme

## Scottish Ethnic Minority Law Students and Understanding Barriers to Engagement

Since 2013, the number of Scottish ethnic minority (SEM) students entering the Edinburgh Napier LLB programme has risen from 13.5% to 29% of the Year 1 intake. In October 2018, we identified a key challenge to enhancing student engagement with this group of students. SEM students believe they face barriers to entering legal education and, by extension, the legal profession. In turn, students advised, that these perceptions impact on their legal studies and engagement with learning. In collaboration with Year 4 SEM LLB students, we invited SEM LLB students across all cohorts, to

participate in a series of workshops and roundtables. Year 4 SEM students led on the communication and development of the focus group topic guide. Through their work, SEM students became engaged and actively involved. As a result, in 2019–20 a significant number of SEM students lead on various law student bodies (Law and Mooting Society and the Mediation Society).

Based on the information gathered from SEM students we are integrating in to 2019–20 presentations from prominent SEM lawyers.



### Contact

Dr Richard W Whitecross  
[r.whitecross@napier.ac.uk](mailto:r.whitecross@napier.ac.uk)





# Community and Belonging through Free Improvisation

This project involves a group of staff and students from the music programmes coming together to make freely improvised music in a variety of ways. Thanks to the support of this funding, we were able to employ two 4th-year audio engineers from the BA Popular Music programme to record and produce the music performed by the group. We have produced 90 minutes of music that will be released as two albums over the course of 2020. The music was conceived, performed, recorded, edited, and mixed in a truly collaborative way in which each

member of the team (regardless of their status within traditional university hierarchies) had equal opportunity for input, influence and decision-making. Student participants report a range of benefits of being involved in the project, including: changing perceptions of what university is really for, the development of dialogic relationships with educators, that their voice matters, that they feel trusted, improvements to mental health and wellbeing, and the evaporation of hierarchies (at least in the context of this project).



## Contact

Dr Zack Moir

[z.moir@napier.ac.uk](mailto:z.moir@napier.ac.uk)