I Belong

Dialogue Days:
Synthesised report, including manual, resources toolkit and case study report

January 2022

Introduction

The Dialogue Day manual provides step-by-step information about how to plan, deliver and evaluate Dialogue Days (DD). The programmes, activities and other materials can be found in the resources section.

Dialogue Days were developed as part of the Erasmus+ project – #Ibelong: Towards a sense of belonging in an inclusive learning environment.

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Introduction to the report and to Dialogue Days

This overarching Dialogue Day report provides information about Dialogue Days (DDs); the manual provides step-by-step information about how to plan, deliver and evaluate Dialogue Days (DD); and the resources toolkit provides you with ready to use activities and templates. The case study report illustrates how they were implemented in one institution, and provide a reflective account of the benefits and challenges.

DDs were developed as one of a suite of activities as part of the #Ibelong project. This is illustrated in the case study report. The manual draws upon the evidence from the evaluation of the Dialogue Days in the four universities, and the lessons learnt. The manual is underpinned by the resources toolkit which provides activities, templates, examples, guidance and training materials. By combining the guidance in the manual with the resources in the toolkit you should able to design, implement and evaluate DDs in your context, accommodating differences in institution, subject, student diversity, student numbers and mode of delivery.

What

Dialogue Days (DDs) bring together students and staff from a particular course or programme of study, and create a safe space in which to discuss diversity, belonging and success. These powerful conversations:

- Communicate and demonstrate institutional and/or programme commitment to diversity, belonging and success.

- Allow students to engage and learn about diversity, belonging and strategies to be successful in higher education and beyond.

- Enable academic staff to develop insight into the diversity of the cohort of students entering their programme.

- Improve student engagement and belonging, retention and success.

The impact will be that staff and students will better understand the extent and range of diversity within the student population, how this impacts engagement, belonging, retention and success, and ways in which aspects of curriculum organisation, contents, learning, teaching and assessment that can be developed, adapted or extended to become more inclusive of students' diverse backgrounds, expectations and future goals.

How

Dialogue Days can be delivered face-to-face, online or in a blended version; Dialogue Day 1 (DD1) is delivered at the start of Semester 1 for first year students, and Dialogue Day 2 (DD2) is delivered in the second half of Semester 2, again for first year students.

The first DD, at the time of transition into higher education, focuses on dialogue about diversity in relation to past experiences and expectations of the forthcoming HE programme of study, promoting interaction between students and with staff to develop belonging and thinking about how the course can support students to be successful.

The second DD, towards the end of the academic year, reflects on the first year experience of studying, belonging and succeeding in higher education, and empowers students to feel safe and supported in looking ahead to be successful in their second year of study, where there are increased academic demands and higher expectations of student autonomy.

In 2019-20 Dialogue Days were piloted in education programmes in four universities. DD1 was delivered face-to-face, and DD2 was delivered online. In 2020-21 DDs were delivered to other programmes in a range of disciplines, using mixed modes of delivery. Each year DDs were evaluated using Programme Evaluation tools (Thomas 2020).

Why

Dialogue Days provide a significant opportunity for diversity, belonging and success to be openly discussed in a safe environment, benefitting both students and staff. The activities and facilitation enable students and staff to acknowledge, identify and share experiences, expectations, challenges and successes. This demonstrates institutional and course commitment to recognising, valuing and discussing these issues, rather than ignoring or denigrating difference.

The candid conversations empower students to belong and succeed, and provide staff with insights to help them organise learning and support to be more inclusive of the students enrolled in the course. The activities themselves promote interaction, and contribute to the development of effective relationships and student identities – and belonging.

Timing

DDs are delivered during students' first year of higher education. DD1 is designed to be delivered near the beginning of the first semester, and DD2 towards the end of the second semester. The DDs need to be integrated into the students' core timetable.

Duration

Face-to-face DDs are intended to last for approximately half a day (4 hours); online activities take place over a period of about six weeks. Blended activities can be a mixture, but if possible should begin with a face-to-face session to build relations and trust.

Participants

The goal is for all students registered on a programme to participate, together with the staff that will teach and support them throughout their first year. Some second year students also participate to share their experiences.

Follow-up

The learning from the DDs should be used by staff and students in other #Ibelong interventions and more widely to create an inclusive learning environment.

Impact

The Dialogue Days were evaluated using a logic chain and three theories of change. Further details of the evaluation method is given in section 5, and the impact in the case study institution is discussed in section 7.

In the first year of implementation over 600 students participated in Dialogue Days across the four universities. In the short-term we expected students to benefit from DDs by (i) making friends, (ii) getting to know staff, (iii) gaining understanding about diversity and the importance and challenges of belonging and success; and (v) staff would develop understanding about the diversity of their students. All of these impacts were realised.

In the medium-term we expected that (i) staff would make changes to their teaching and support to make it more relevant to students; and (ii) that students would be more engaged with their learning and (iii) have a stronger sense of belonging. We have evidence that these outcomes were achieved. In the longer-term we expected this to contribute to improve retention and attainment. We have not been able to prove this due to the pivot to online learning and related consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the partner institutions have however made changes to learning and teaching to ensure it is more inclusive, acknowledging and engaging with diversity, and facilitating belonging and contributing to success.

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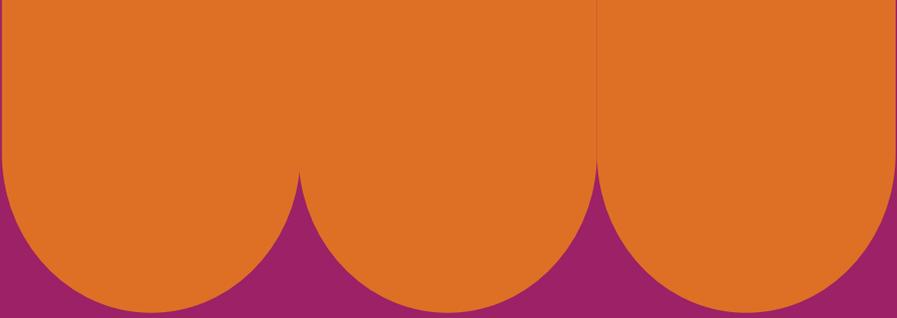
Aims, objectives and learning outcomes
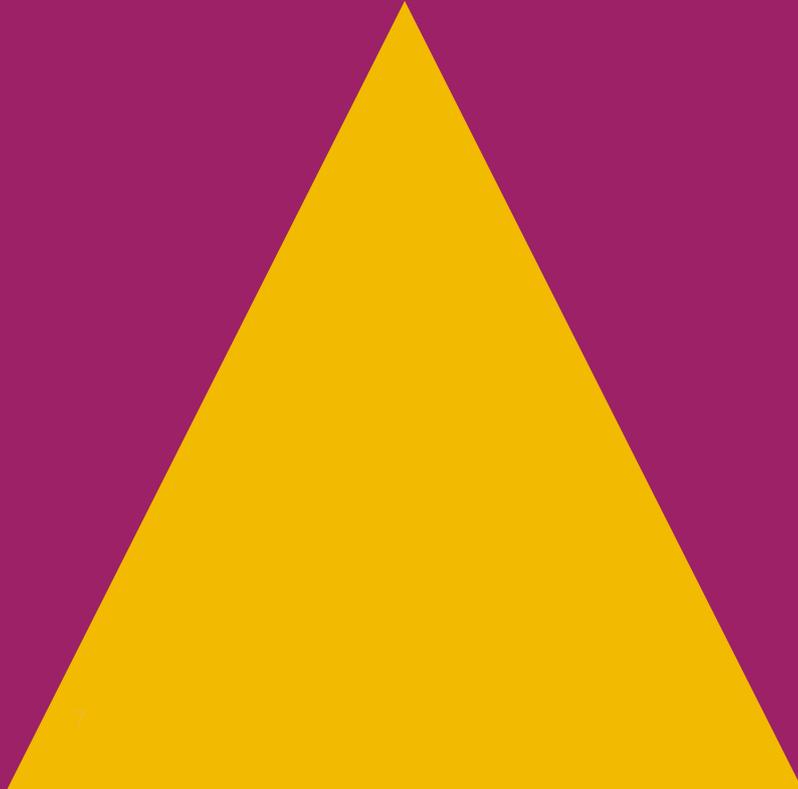
DD1 (beginning of semester 1): Diversity and transition into higher education

→ ## Aim

Allow students to engage and learn about diversity, belonging and strategies to be successful in higher education and beyond.

Enable academic staff to develop insight into the diversity of the cohort of students entering their programme.

Improve student engagement and belonging, retention and success.

→ ## The learning outcomes for students are to:

Better understand their own diversity and success.

Appreciate the importance of the diversity, inclusion and success of the cohort.

Recognise the role of engagement and belonging to success in HE.

Develop belonging with peers, staff, student mentors, the course and the university.

Identify and share anonymously diversity and support needs with the staff team.

→ ## Outcomes for staff are to:

Get to know the incoming student cohort. Learn about the diversity and support needs of their students.

Become confident discussing diversity, belonging and success.

Be ready to participate in the Team Teacher Reflection session and develop curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and support to maximise student success.

DD2 (end of semester 2): Deepening and extending belonging, and looking ahead to the next year of study

Aim

The aim of DD 2 is to deepen understanding of belonging, and look ahead promote success in the second year. DD2 reflects on the development of belonging and applies this to other students and other contexts. DD2 also reflects on the the first year experience of studying, belonging and succeeding in higher education, enabling students to look ahead and plan to be successful in their second year of study, where there are increased academic demands and higher expectations of student autonomy.

The objectives are to:

Allow students to engage and learn about diversity, belonging and strategies to be successful in higher education and beyond.

Enable academic staff to develop insight into the diversity of the cohort of students entering their programme.

Improve student engagement and belonging, retention and success.

The learning outcomes for students are to:

Recognise and celebrate their success and the success of others.

Develop a deeper understanding of diversity and belonging.

Gain understanding about being successful in the second year of the programme.

Identify individual and cohort support needs and how to achieve them either individually and collaboratively.

Outcomes for staff are to:

Appreciate what has gone well during the year for students, and identify gaps.

Understand why students feel like they belong, or don't belong within the learning experience.

Identify changes to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and support that need to be made to support students' success in year 2.

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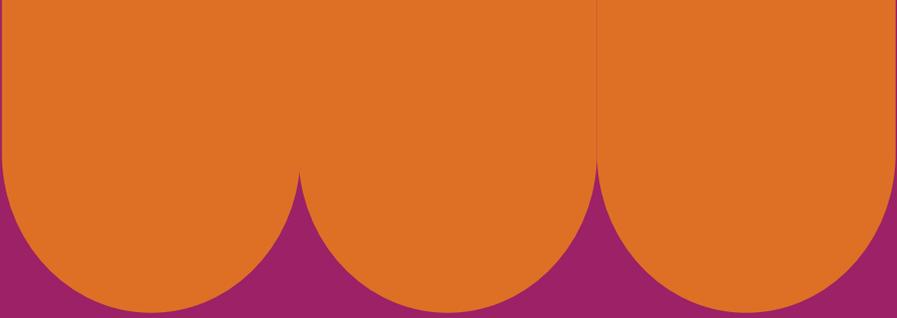
The underpinning principles of Dialogue Days

These underpinning principles have been derived from the evidence used to plan the initial-intervention, and through the experience and evaluation of the Dialogue Days.

1. DD1 is most effective during the first week of the academic year, as it provides useful opportunities for people to get to know each other.

2. 2. DD2 should be delivered towards the end of the year to prepare students for transition into the next year of study.

3. DDs need to be tailored and delivered to students in a specific course of study, rather than a generic module in a department.

4. The DDs need to be embedded into the teaching, both in terms of the timetable, and contents, making links to curriculum contents and across courses.

5. Teaching staff need to participate fully in the DDs.

6. The use of smaller groups (e.g. led by tutors or mentors) is a more effective way of promoting active engagement.

7. Community mentors add significant value-sharing their experiences, facilitating activities and starting to develop a link with the student group.

8. Using online learning or a blended approach allows the activities to take place over a longer period of time, allowing the issues to be addressed in more detail, embedding the learning into the course and intensifying the impact.

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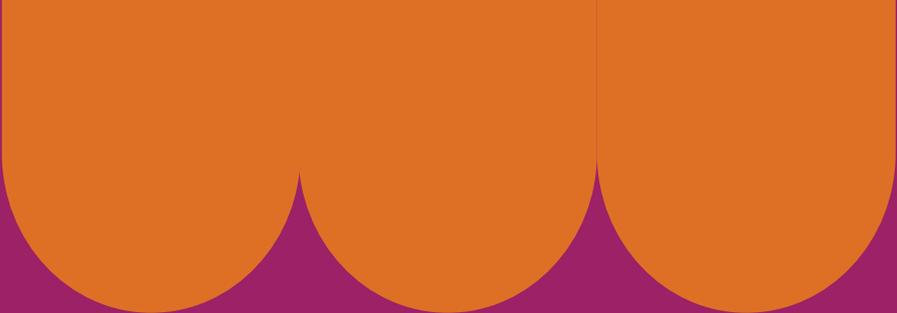
DIALOGE
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Programme

A programme agenda was designed for each Dialogue Day, tailored to the course, context and mode of delivery. Particular considerations for planning the agenda are:

- Number of students

- Mode of delivery (online, in-person or blended), and room layout for in-person delivery

- Number of staff and mentors able to participate

- Discipline and course of study, and how DDs can be connected to course contents and values.

DD1 programme

The key elements of the DD1 programme include:

A **welcome** to introduce the team and students to introduce themselves, and to state the institutional and course commitment to diversity.

An activity to create a **safe and confidential space** to discuss issues, including all participants knowing that they should only share what they feel comfortable sharing.

Staff and community mentors sharing **stories of diversity and success**

An activity or input, or both, on **understanding the role of belonging** in student success.

A collaborative activity to help students to work together and start to make friends and begin **feeling like you belong.**

An activity or input, or both, on **understanding diversity** and the **#Ibelong approach to diversity and success.**

Evaluation of the day (exploring short-term benefits indicators and unintended consequences).

Follow-on activities by course team should be included wherever possible; these can be delivered in tutor groups, online or in-person.

The elements should prioritise active engagement and students working together with peers, mentors and staff.

Example programmes and activities are provided in the resources section.

When we delivered the day in a blended format we used included an activity specifically about engagement and belonging online, which developed understanding and helped to foster responsibility in the group for each others' engagement and belonging.

DD2 programme

The key elements of the DD2 programme include:

A **welcome** that reminds people about the purpose of DDS and the ground rules, and encourages them to engage with more people.

Reflections on achievements so far and a **celebration of success.**

Activities to reflect on how **belonging** has changed over the academic year.

An activity or input, or both, on **understanding the role of belonging** in student success.

Activities to consider **diversity, race and discrimination.**

Activities looking forward to the **transition to the second year.**

Second year **mentors sharing their experiences** of second year.

An opportunity to **anonymously share** concerns and support needs about the next year.

Evaluation of the DDs (covering short-term benefits and medium-term outcome indicators).

The programme should prioritise active engagement and students working together with peers, mentors and staff, and making links between course contents, graduate attributes and DD learning outcomes.

Example programmes and activities are provided in the resources section.

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DIALOGE
DAYS

Evaluation

The #Ibelong project is being evaluated using Programme Theory evaluation tools, in particular logic chains and theory of change.[1] The three interventions (Dialogue Days – DDs, Team Teacher Reflection – TTR, and Student Community Mentoring– SCM) interact as a suite of activities to improve students' belonging, continuation and attainment.

In this manual the focus is on the evaluation of the Dialogue Days. The first step was to develop a logic chain for the DDs, which is shown in Fig. 1 below.

Dialogue Day activities → **Students get to know each other, and staff and students learn about the diversity of the cohort.** → **Increased understanding of diversity informs teaching, engagement and support.** → **Students' belonging, continuation and attainment improve.**

Fig 1: Diversity Dialogue Days logic chain

Three narrative statements provide further insight into how the DDs are expected to achieve their impact. First ,they are anticipated to develop understanding about diversity by students.

Second they are expected to directly develop relationships and a sense of belonging; and third the staff team will learn about the diversity of the cohort and use this to inform their teaching.

If students participate in the DD then they will develop understanding about diversity, belonging and success. If students have greater understanding about diversity and success then they will know that experiencing challenges is common and that challenges can be overcome. If they know that challenges are both common and can be overcome, then they will share their challenges and seek support. If they acknowledge challenges and seek support then they will be more likely to be successful – to persist in higher education during the first year, and if they persist for the first year then they are more likely to complete their course.

[1] Thomas, L. (2020) Using logic chain and theory of change tools to evaluate widening participation: Learning from the What works? Student retention and success programme, Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, vol. 22 no. 2, p67– 82

If students participate in the DDs then they will work with other students and get to know them and they will understand the commitment of the Faculty is for all students to belong. If they get to know some students early in their course in this Faculty then they will feel more comfortable and able to engage. If they engage more then they will experience a stronger sense of belonging. If they feel like they will belong then they will more likely to persist in HE.

If staff participate in the DD then they will develop understanding about the diversity of their students and how this might impact on their success. If staff have a better understanding of the diversity of their students, and insight into how they can be supported to be successful they can use this knowledge to inform their interaction with students and their teaching. If staff's teaching and interaction with students is cognisant of student diversity then students will feel accepted, engaged and like they belong. If staff make students feel like they belong, then they will be more likely to be successful.

The longer-term impact is related to improving student success (e.g. retention and attainment), by improving student engagement and belonging. Several intermediate outcomes and indicators of success are anticipated relating to students' appreciation of diversity of success, improved engagement and help seeking behaviour, and their increased The DD activities are designed to help students and staff appreciate the diversity of the group, recognise that diversity is widespread, promote engagement and increase a sense of belonging. The overall aim is to improve student retention and attainment in HE.

Evaluation template for Dialogue Days

The process of thinking throught the log-
ic chain and the theories of change was used
to complete the evaluation template, includ-
ing indicators, evidence soures and baseline
information in relation to short-term benefits,
medium-term outcomes and longer-term im-
pact. A blank EVALUATION TEMPLATE is pro-
vided in the resources section.

DD1 programme	Dialogue Days – IO1
Brief description – e.g. core character-istics and key principles	Dialogue Days (DDs) bring together students and staff from a particular course or programme of study, and create a safe space in which to discuss diversity, belonging and success. These powerful conversations: • Communicate and demonstrate institutional and/or pro-gramme commitment to diversity, belonging and success • Allow students to engage and learn about diversity, be-longing and strategies to be successful in higher educa-tion and beyond. • Enable academic staff to develop insight into the diversity of the cohort of students entering their programme. • Improve student engagement and belonging, retention and success. The key principles are: • Staff and students from a specific first year (level 4) pro-gramme are brought together at the start of the academic year and towards the end of the year. • The contents are embedded into the core curriculum, and participation by all students is expected. • A safe space is created for all aspects of diversity, be-longing and success to be discussed. • Sharing personal experiences is central to the process, but people only share what they are comfortable with. • Student mentors play an active role, sharing experiences and facilitating activities. • The emphasis is on active learning, promoting interaction and collaboration.
Impact narrative (theory of change)	If students and staff participate in the Dialogue Day, then they will get to know each other and learn more about diversity, belonging and success. If they have better relationships and understand more about diversity, belonging and success, then staff will make changes to teaching/support, and students will be more engaged in learning and support opportunities, and they will feel more part of the programme. If students are more engaged in learning, access support and feel part of the programme, then their belonging, continuation and attainment will improve.

Indicators & methods	Indicators	Evidence source	Details of any baseline
Short-term indicators, evidence and baseline	Students make friends Students get to know staff Students understand about the importance and challenges of belonging and success Staff understand more about the diversity of their students	Feedback from the session Focus groups with students and staff	Focus groups from previous year
Medium-term indicators, evidence and baseline	Staff make changes to teaching and support to make it more relevant	Staff focus group Course documentation	Course documentation from previous years
	Students are more engaged with learning and support	Staff focus group Student focus group	
	Students feel like they belong	Student survey	
Longer-term indicators, evidence and baseline	Students' belonging improves	Student survey	
	Students' continuation improves	Institutional data	Data from previous years
	Students' attainment improves	Institutional data	Data from previous years
	Learning, teaching and support is more inclusive	Staff and student focus groups Course documentation	Course documentation from previous years

The evidence was collected through feedback at the end of each DD (activity 10 in the resources section) and through focus groups with staff, community mentors and students (available on #Ibelong website), and via institutional data and evidence.

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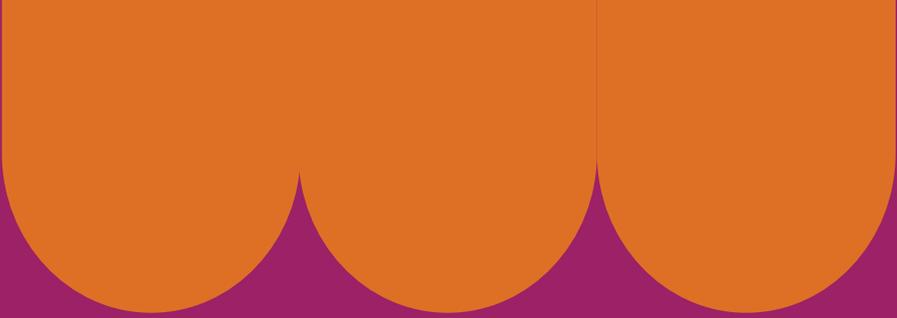
Resources

This section provides resources to support planning, delivery and evaluation of Dialogue Days, including programmes, activities, materials and evaluation templates.

6. 1 Programme for in-person DD1

This programme was initially designed deliver the DD a large group of students in a lecture theatre, by a small staff team and a group of community mentors. The key elements can be adapted to suit your context.

When?	What?
9.00-9.30	**Welcome:** About #Ibelong, Purpose of the day, introductions, institutional commitment to diversity. Get everyone to introduce themselves. **Activity 1.**
9.30–9.45	**Safe and confidential discussions:** Ground rules to ensure it is a safe and confidential space. **Activity 2.**
9.45 -10.00	**Stories of diversity and success:** Staff and mentors will share their experiences of diversity and success. **Activity 3.**
10.00–10.20	**Diversity and success:** Input on understanding diversity, and the #Ibelong approach to diversity and success. **Activity 4.**
10.20–10.45	**Student diversity and success:** Reflection on how students have been successful in the past, and what might help them in the future. **Activity 5.**
10.45 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 11.40	**Understanding belonging:** The importance of engagement and belonging to success, the things that make people feel like they belong - input and sharing photos and experiences. **Activity 6.**
11.40 – 12.30	**Feeling like you belong here:** Interactive activity about belonging where students start to make friends. **Activity 7.**
12.30 – 12.45	**Review, reflect, summarise and share:** Review, reflect and summarise from today, and share with the group. **Activity 9.**
12.45 – 12.50	**Snowballs and aeroplanes:** Use this opportunity to share anonymous information with the programme team about diversity and success. **Activity 10.**
12.50–13.00	**Evaluation:** Feedback about the day including short-term indicators. **Activity 11.**

6.2 Programme for blended DD1

The first part of the day was delivered online to students by the core team, after the break the students worked in tutor groups. This can be done in-person or online.

Online

When?	What?
9.00-9.30	**Welcome:** About #Ibelong, Purpose of the day, introductions, institutional commitment to diversity. Get everyone to introduce themselves. **Activity 1.**
9.30–9.45	**Safe and confidential discussions:** Ground rules to ensure it is a safe and confidential space. **Activity 2.**
9.45 -10.00	**Stories of diversity and success:** Staff and mentors will share their experiences of diversity and success. **Activity 3.**
10.00–10.20	**Diversity and success:** Input on understanding diversity, and the #Ibelong approach to diversity and success. **Activity 4.**
10.20–10.45	**Student diversity and success:** Reflection on how students have been successful in the past, and what might help them in the future. **Activity 5.**
10.45 – 11.00	Break

In tutor groups

When?	What?
11.00–11.30	**Understanding belonging. Activity 6.** Do make use of the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgT-GQvwZ9k, or staff facilitating the session share their experiences of belonging or not belonging.
11:30 –12.10	**Belonging online:** This activity is intended to help students to understanding engaging and belonging online, and foster group responsibility for engagement. **Activity 8.**
12:10 –12.20	**Snowballs and aeroplanes:** Use this opportunity to share anonymous information with the programme team about diversity and success. **Activity 10.**
12.20-12.30	**Evaluation:** Feedback about the day including short-term indicators. **Activity 11.**

Possible follow-up activities to be shared with tutors and discussed and subsequent meetings:

Activity 9: Review, reflect and summarise and Activity 7: Feeling like you belong here!

6.3 Activities for DD1

Activity 1: Introductions

The aim is to introduce students to each other and get them talking to each other. There are many activities that you can find to do this. Here are some suggestions, but your choice will depend on the number of students and the time you have available – and personal preference.

1.1 Introductions in a large group
- Introduce yourself to at least 3 people sitting near you.
- Include: your name, where you're from and something interesting about yourself.
- Depending on the group size you can invite people to introduce each other to the wider group

1.2 Two truths and a lie
- Each person shares two truths and one lie about themselves.
- The others have to guess which is which.
- This can be done by initially by staff in a large group, and the answers revealed at the end of the session

1.3 Human bingo
- Prepare a list (e.g. 10–15) of 'characteristics', such as speaks another language, has relocated more than 100 miles, has an older sibling at university, has never been abroad, has more than one pet, is vegan, knows the off–side rule, can juggle, etc etc.
- Give the group 15 minutes to talk to each other and find someone with each of these characteristics.
- The winner is the person who has ticked of the most characteristics.

Other activities can be found online:

https://www.ef.com/wwen/blog/teacherzone/great-esl-icebreakers-and-warmups/

If you are delivering this activity online you can invite everyone to introduce themselves in the chat, and invite some people to introduce themselves to the whole group. Alternatively you can split into breakout rooms and ask your mentors to facilitate one of the activities above.

Activity 2: Safe and confidential space: Ground rules for discussion

The aim of this activity is to create a safe and confidential space for students, mentors and staff to discuss diversity, belonging and success. If time permits you can ask the group to generate some rules, but if time is short, you can use the list below, asking students to discuss whether these ground rules are sufficient to enable people to discuss diversity, and making suggestions for changes or additions.

1. Respect the confidentiality of everyone, and do not repeat things outside of this room.

2. Respect the views of everyone in the room.

3. Avoid bad or offensive language.

4. Turn off mobile phones.

5. Don't talk over people.

6. Give everyone a chance to speak and develop their ideas, especially those who are quieter.

7. No secondary conversations.

8. Don't use phones, tablets, laptops, etc during the conversation.

9. Stay focused on the topics being discussed.

10. Please be honest and share as much as you feel comfortable with.

In a large group we asked student to write important changes on a piece of paper and hold it up in the air to be collected.

Online you can use a poll to vote for the rules, or use the chat box to generate rules or for amendments and additions.

**Write important changes on this piece of paper
and hold it up in the air to be collected.**

Activity 3: Diversity, resilience and success

The aim of this activity is for staff and mentors to share their stories of diversity and success, and for students to feel more able to engage with staff and mentors, to imagine themselves and successful, and to begin thinking about their own future journeys in higher education. The following guidance was prepared for staff and students talking about diversity and success. The guidance was shared in advance, and supported people to talk about their experiences.

Diversity can be interpreted very broadly, as we are all different and have had different journeys to and through higher education.
There is no right or wrong way to talk about diversity and success; we are only asking for 5 minutes.

You might like to consider:

- Challenges you faced in getting into higher education, either real barriers such as qualifications or finance, or the views of others such as friends and family.
- Challenges you experienced in HE, including academic, social, practical and financial issues.
- Ways in which you anticipated or experienced differences in relation to other students studying with you.
- Ways in which you overcame any of these issues.
- What you have achieved through higher education.
- How you feel about these experiences.
- Tips or reflections for new students.

If you are delivering this session online you can either pre-record the contributions, or ask people to join the session live.

Background information

The Edge Hill University is part of a European Erasmus project, working with partners in the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal and Malta, to implement and evaluate three interventions designed to improve the belonging and success of a diverse student population into their course of study.

The interventions are:

1. Dialogue Days, which facilitate dialogue between students and staff to develop understanding about diversity, to foster student belonging and to contribute to the success of all students within a specific programme of study
2. Team Teacher Training, for staff teaching on the selected programme to work together and develop a more inclusive curriculum to promote student belonging and success.
3. Peer Community Building, which facilitates peers to lead learning communities to promote belonging and improve academic engagement and success.

The aim of this Dialogue Day is to develop insight and understanding amongst students and staff about diversity and success. Understanding diversity and success will:

- Communicate and demonstrate institutional and/or programme commitment to diversity and success.
- Allow students to engage and learn about diversity, resilience and strategies to be successful during their study.
- Enable academic staff to develop insight into the diversity of the cohort of students entering their programme.
- Improve student engagement and belonging, retention and success.

Activity 4: Understanding diversity and the #Ibelong approach to success

Feedback suggested that students would appreciate an understanding of diversity, and the link between diversity and success, to provide a context to the session. This is because initially students thought diversity only referred to ethnicity.

One approach is to ensure your staff and student stories are diverse, but this can be complemented by doing one or more of the following.

- Providing data about the characteristics of the student population on your course or at your university or college.
- Asking students to discuss and identify different aspects of diversity.
- Sharing and discussing definitions of diversity*.
- Using the Sun Identity activity in the Community Mentors toolkit.

* The UK Office for Students' mission is 'to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers'. According to Universities UK, 'the term 'equality and diversity' describes an approach that values difference and treats each individual fairly and with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying'.

The #Ibelong approach to success is informed by notions of equity, and being colour or diversity brave. This information can be shared as an input.

Equality involves treating everybody in the same way, and this can be contrasted with equity, which is about achieving comparable outcomes.

EQUALITY   **EQUITY**
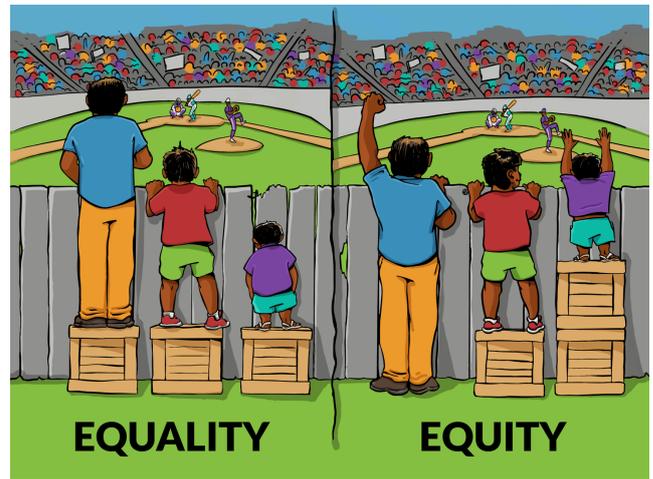
Within the #Ibelong project we have drawn upon the idea of being colour-brave, as opposed to colour-blind, as discussed by Mellody Hobson:

https://www.ted.com/talks/mellody_hobson_color_blind_or_color_brave?language=en

Given our view of diversity, we have tended to reframe it as 'diversity brave', in other words acknowledging and talking about difference, and addressing issues arising, rather than ignoring diversity and difference. We can use the diversity lens to improve the experience for all students.

EQUALITY   **EQUITY**   **LIBERATION**
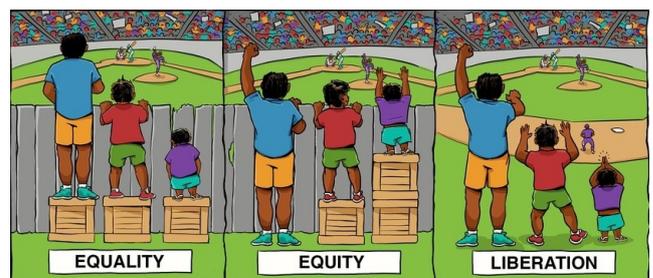
This approach reflects our commitment to being inclusive, rather than devising specific interventions for individual students, and frequently improves the experience for all students.

Activity 5: Diversity, resilience and success

The aim of this activity is to help students to reflect on how they have been successful in the past. It is presented here as written activity, but it can be adapted and delivered in different formats, for example sharing tips in the chat box.

Congratulations! You are successful because you are here, but you will all have had different journeys to get here. The aim of this activity is to build on your successes to date to help you to be successful in your undergraduate journey.

Think about and note down your answers:

What have you achieved to get here?

What are you most proud of achieving?

What strategies did you use to achieve this outcome?

What difficulties or challenges did you overcome?

How did you overcome these challenges?

Share your tips for success with at least one other person.

Activity 6: Understanding belonging

This activity is intended to help students understand more about the importance of belonging, and to reflect on what makes them feel like they belong. It involves some input and some activities.

Input:

What we already know:

- If students feel like they belong in higher education they are more likely to be successful.
- Belonging comes from 'being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others... feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the [group]... it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy. (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25)

You can watch this short film on Youtube about belonging: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgT-GQvwZ9k. This is particulary useful if you are online as it helps to have different types of inputs.

Discuss with others (or use the chat function) what makes you feel like you belong, consider:

- Feeling like you belong with friends or family
- Feeling like you belong at school or college
- Feeling like you belong in a new situation, such as a new job, a social situation where you don't know people, volunteering or joining a new group

You can use photos on your phone or other images to share trigger discussion and share ideas.

If you are doing this activity online you can use the chat function, a poll or a word cloud to get input from students and help generate some discussion.

Input:

What we already know:

- Belonging in higher education is an outcome of:
- Supportive peer relations.
- Meaningful interaction between staff and students.
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners.
- An HE experience which is relevant to current interests and future goals.
- Belonging is nurtured through engagement in academic, professional and social activities.
- Some students find it easier to engage and belong than others.

Activity 7: Feeling like you belong here!

The aim of this activity is to split students into groups with mentors to encourage them to work together to think about belonging. By working together they will start to make friendships, which will often endure, and they will be thinking about their relationship with the place in which they study. The photos can be used later (in DD20 to prompt reflections on belonging and the student journey.

Your Community Mentor will take you around the campus. We want you take photos to demonstrate some of these emotions.

1. Safe
2. Accepted
3. Valued
4. Included
5. Encouraged
6. Like yourself
7. Supported
8. Respected
9. Cared for
10. Successful
11. Marginalised
12. Excluded
13. Lonely
14. Outsider
15. Uncomfortable

You can share phones between a group.

Once you have your photos you should each choose one that best represents 'Belonging at Edge Hill University' or 'Not belonging at Edge Hill University'.

Think of a title for your photo.

Prepare a brief explanation of how the photo makes you feel like you belong at Edge Hill University.

Provide an email address to send the photos to. Make sure you share this guidance with community mentors too, so that they can assist students.

This can be organised as a follow-on activity for online or blended delivery.

Ask students to take a photo of something that makes them feel like they belong, or don't belong during induction week, on the course or at the university. They need to create a title and brief explanation for each photograph and email it to you.

Activity 8: Belonging online

This activity is intended to help students to understand engaging and belonging online, and foster group responsibility for engagement. Provide some introductory comments about the importance and challenge of engagement and belonging online. Talk about the importance of supporting and enabling each other to engage.

Watch the 3 min video: https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=4183# Alternatively you can use this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0mVa7d08tg

Divide the group in two. Group 1 is asked to discuss why people might find it difficult to engage and belong online and what would help them to engage. Prompt by drawing out what the barriers are, and there are a number of suggestions in the video and related resources, such as introductions, either via video or blog; sharing hopes, expectations and fears for the course; creating a 'place' online in which students can 'meet; synchronous online tutorials where students can meet and interact together; and collaborative group work activities to be completed by students working together that can be used to stimulate discussion.

Group two should observe the discussion, noting down ways in which the discussion develops, what is good practice, and what stops people participating. After 10 minutes, switch some people in to the discussion, and others out to observe. Ask those who have observed to put into practice their learning about an effective discussion.

After a further 5-10 minutes close the discussion, and then ask the whole group to consider what has been learnt about discussion and dialogue and how this can be translated into engagement in online learning.

Activity 9: Review, reflect and summarise

The aim of this activity is to help students reflect on the session and think about what they have learnt, and what they may do moving forward. You can adjust the contents to reflect the focus of your DD.

On your own, review and think about what you have written on the sheet today, what you have heard and what you have discussed with peers.

You can use these reflections to facilitate discussion with the whole group, or in a tutor group session, or at DD2.

Please note down:

My definition of diversity has changed / stayed the same because:

In the past I have been successful by:

Possible ways in which I can develop a sense of belonging in HE might be (think about making friends, interacting with staff, developing academic skills, getting involved in non-academic activities):

A challenge for me in higher education might be:

Staff and mentors could help me by:

Activity 10: Snowballs and aeroplanes

This final activity is designed to provide students with an opportunity to anonymously share information with the staff team.

On a separate piece of paper please write the following information to be shared with your programme team:
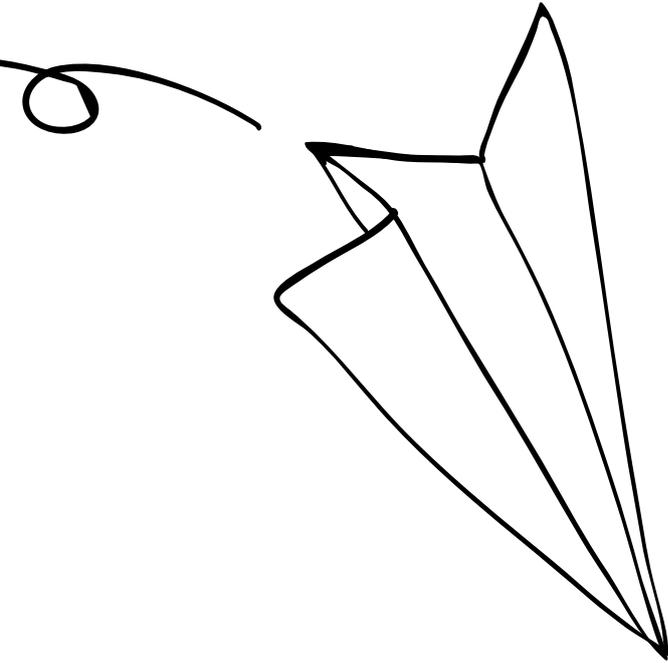
Only include your name or any other details if you want to.

Make this separate sheet into a snowball or an aeroplane and sending it to the front of the room.

If you are delivering the DD online you can use a message board for people to post their answers, but ensure the settings are anonymous. It may also be useful to provide students with your email to encourage them to get in touch. We received lots of really useful information through this activity about the things students were concerned about. The topics were grouped into themes and shared with personal tutors. Some students provided names and details of specific concerns or support needs; we ensured that these students were followed up quickly, as they now feel that they have told the university or college about these issues.

"I want you to know this about me… "

_____

_____

_____

_____

"You can support me to be successful by…"

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity 11: Evaluation of the Dialogue Day

These questions/activities can be used to evaluate the DDs.

1. Please choose a word or phrase to describe the event (word cloud)

2. How would you rate the event, where 1 = very poor and 6 = excellent? (poll)

3. What have you learnt from the event? Free text or word cloud or similar Or: How much have you learnt, where 1 = very little and 6 = very large amount (poll)

4. What will you do differently as a result of attending? Free text

5. What would you improve about the event? Free text

6.4 Programme for on-line DD2: Deepening and extending belonging, and looking ahead to the next year of study

These activities were developed to be delivered online over a nine-week period. The resources section provides notes on the activities and resources we used and developed. Alternatively you can select some of these activities to build into an in-person DD. Make sure you include the toilet roll challenge (week 3) as this provides a good opportunity for students to work together.

Week	Learning outcome	Activity
1	To understand the purpose of the #Ibelong online activities To develop a deeper understanding of belonging	1.1 Watch introductory video. 1.2 Review the photos from DD1. (a) Identify the photo that most makes you feel like you belong. Paste the photo or its identifier into the forum and explain why it captures your sense of belonging. (b) Post comments on the forum about how your sense of belonging changed when the university stopped teaching on compus and moved to on-line teaching. (c) Think about any ways in which these on-line activities could support you to feel more connected to each other. Post any ideas on the Forum.
2	To develop a deeper understanding of belonging in relation to yourself and others	2.1 Watch the belonging video and noted down keywords about what belonging means to you and what belonging means to others. Post comments on the forum about: a). What belonging means to you. b). How you feel when you belong. c). How people can feel when they don't feel like they belong d). What makes you feel like you belong to your programme e). What you feel like you belong to your university

Week	Learning outcome	Activity
2	To develop a deeper understanding of belonging in relation to yourself and others.	2.2 Prepare a short video or blog (2 mins or 750 words) about a situation where you were uncertain about fitting in and belonging and how this situation developed. We would like to use some of these resources with next year's first years. If you would like to be anonymous you can use audio only and photos, or you can put yourself as a silhouette. You can try interviewing each other to create a short film. When you have prepared your video please store it somewhere and paste the link on the forum; a good system is https://wetransfer.com/. You can send the file to yourself, and paste the link into the Forum.
3	To help others develop a sense of belonging.	3.1 Watch the short video about the #Ibelong project. Think back to the Dialogue Day at the start of the academic year (https://ibelong.eu/activities/dialogue-days/)on the second day of term, and post on the forum your thoughts about the day: (a) What did you like? (b) What did you not like? (c) What would you recommend doing differently next year? 3.2 Think about what advice you would like to give next year's first years about belonging and post some ideas on the forum. 3.3 Watch the toilet roll challenge video from Mountain Lane Primary School; the text also explains how the staff made the video. (There are plenty of other examples if you search for toilet roll challenge on the internet). Your job is to create a video clip of you catching a screwed up ball of white paper – not a toilet roll – smoothing it out, holding it up so it can be read, screwing it up again, and throwing it out of shot. On the paper you need to write a piece of advice either directly for first years, or how staff can support them better.

Week	Learning outcome	Activity
3	To help others develop a sense of belonging.	If you don't have access to a phone or laptop to film on you can work with others and contribute ideas about challenges, support and interesting shots. Upload the link to your clip onto the Forum. As previously We Transfer can be used www.wetransfrer.com.
4	To develop a deeper understanding of belonging – apply learning about a sense of belonging to your professional practice/future graduate career.	4.1 Think about what makes people you will work in the future belong. (Try to make this as specific as possible to your course, for example, we asked education students to think about what makes primary school children either feel like they belong or don't belong at school. 4.2 Find and watch some relevant videos. 4.3 Make suggestions about how to build belonging in your future workplace on the Forum, or develop a resource that you can use in your future professional role.
5	To recognise and celebrate success this year	5.1 Watch the videos from mentors about things that are proud of this year. 5.2 Post on the forum what you achieved this academic year – what are you most proud of? 5.3 Post ideas about you can individually or collectively celebrate your success this year
6	Understanding about being successful in the second year of the programme Planning individual and cohort support	6.1 Watch the Community Mentors' video about how to be successful in Year 2. 6.2 On the forum: (a) Identify some challenges you or others might experience in Year 2, think about the academic work and assignments, your placements, and your wider life (responsibilities such as family and employment, financial issues, other interests and commitments, where you will live, etc etc.) (b) Make some suggestions about how you'd like to be prepared for Year 2 and supported to be successful.

Week	Learning outcome	Activity
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES – OPTIONAL FOR THE WHOLE COHORT OR A SUB-GROUP		
7	Planning how to be successful in Year 2 through collaboration	Belonging and success in year 2: Creating communities of learners 7.1 Read the article second year students 7.2 Identify ways in which peers could support each other to belong and be successful in year 2; think about things such as: (a) Making friends and developing belong to the course (b) Independent learning and assessments (c) Professional practice (d) Wider student experience 7.3 Volunteer to develop some interventions for year 2.
8	Planning how to be successful in Year 2 through collaboration	Planning an induction for all second year students 8.1 Read about induction for first years (a) Identify what makes a good induction (b) Identify what makes a poor induction 8.2 Think about the #ibelong approach to diversity, belonging and success, especially being diversity brave. 8.3 Work to develop an induction activity or event for second year student peers.
9	Planning how to be successful in Year 2 through collaboration	Peer support in year 2 10.1 Read about the ways in which peers can support each other to be successful, e.g. peer learning, learning communities, etc 10.2 Discuss and plan an activity to promote peer support in year 2

DD2 activities and resources

Week 1 activities and resources

The course team developed an introductory video (recorded on a phone) to remind them about the #Ibelong programme, and to tell them about the DD2 programme. You can draw on the DD1 resources and the DD2 programme to support this.

The photos from DD1, and the captions, were compiled into a single file for the students to review. They selected photos (either their own or another) and talked about how belonging has changed. The facilitator replied to the comments and asked further questions to promote dialogue.

Week 2 activities and resources

We used a YouTube video about belonging, or you can ask your Community Mentors to prepare a video. Depending on which videos you have used already, you could select one of these:

- What does belonging mean to you?
- Vamba
- George

Week 3 activities and resources

This activity contributes to students thinking about how belonging relates to others, and contributes to revising DD1 and resources for future DDs.

Information about #Ibelong is available here and a reminder about what DDs are is available here.

The toilet roll challenge works well online as well as in person. These videos illustrate the challenge and explain how to do it.

- Mountain Lane Primary toilet roll challenge
- Ermine Primary Academy toilet roll challenge

You may find other examples that are more appropriate to your discipline.

An example of our community mentors video is available here (this needs to be on #Ibelong site). The students are asked to watch this video in week 6.

Week 4 activities and resources

The aim of this session was to help student see the value of the learning beyond their undergraduate experience, and relate their learning to other contexts. YouTube offers lots of videos about belonging in different contexts. Below are two generic work-related videos and two about primary education.

- Belonging not just fitting in
- Belonging in the workplace (BAME recruiters)
- Building a belonging classroom
- Primary school children learning about diversity and belonging

You will need to tailor the resource development activity to your course. You may want to give students some ideas or examples.

- Ideas about how to create a sense of belonging in the workplace
- More ideas about how to create a sense of belonging in the workplace

Week 5 activities and resources

This week the focus is on celebrating success. This was identified by the community mentors as an important thing to do. To support this our mentors developed a video about their successes, and shared it with the group. You could challenge your students to actually do something to celebrate their successes and post about it on the forum. You can time this tie in with half term/reading week or similar.

Week 6 activities and resources

Our community mentors developed a video (based on the toilet roll challenge) about their tips on how to be successful in year 2. We used this fun video to encourage students to think about the challenges they might experience in year 2 (in the spirit of being open about issues rather than ignoring them). The provided staff and tutors with information to enable them to better support students in year 2.

You can either use our video, or encourage your community mentors to create a similar video.

You can use the course forum for posts about what students are concerned about and how they can be supported to be successful, or you can use the snowballs and aeroplanes approach (activity 10), adapted for online use.

Week 7,8,9 activities and resources

These activities are designed as opportunities for students to co-create co-curricular interventions to support diversity, belonging and success in year 2. You can divide the cohort into groups and assign them a topic, or you can ask for volunteers to work on each of these topics.

Week 7 activities and resources

This newspaper article summarises research at Liverpool John Moores about the success of second year students.

this mirrored the views of our second year students about their experiences. We then asked our students to think about strategies to overcome these challenges, and challenges identified in week 6.

Week 8 activities and resources

The aim here is to create an induction activity for second year students to help them adjust to life in the second year. There is very little published about this, despite the concerns that students have moving into this year.
These research-informed article provides some insights:

- https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/fragmented-transitions-moving-2nd-year
- https://ses.leeds.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/1772/transition_into_second_and_final_year_of_undergraduate_study_good_practice_guide_faculty_of_biological_sciences.pdf

And there are quite a few student vlogs, e.g.:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FYAL4FPe3u
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixha-sUuvxPg

Encourage students to think about the #Ibelong approach to diversity, belonging and success, as discussed in activity 4.

Week 9 activities and resources

The aim of this activity is to encourage students to organise peer support or learning communities to support each other with their learning experience, and to plan some activities. For example:

- https://www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers/changemakers-projects/learning-community-belonging
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euhtX-UgBEts

6.5 Evaluation planning template

Name of intervention and IO number	Descripiton		
Brief description – e.g. core characteristics and key principles			
Impact narrative (theory of change)			
Indicators & methods	**Indicators**	**Evidence source**	**Details of any baseline**
Short-term indicators, evidence and baseline			
Medium-term indicators, evidence and baseline			
Longer-term indicators, evidence and baseline			

07

Edge Hill University
Case Study

DD2 activities and resources

This section provides a brief overview of the experience of delivering DDs at Edge Hill University, and how they connected to the other #Ibelong outputs.

In the first year of implementation we worked with a large cohort of around 400 students studying the primary education programme. Initially we struggled to engage the wider staff team, and so we had to find alternative ways of sharing details about the cohort with the team (see for example activity 10). But, as colleagues started to see the value of the work we were doing, they became more involved. We delivered the DDs in Primary Education the next year, and had engagement from many of the academic team members. The Community Mentors played a very important role, sharing their experiences of studying the course, and designing and delivering the sessions. The large cohort meant that the first Dialogue Day took place in a tiered lecture theatre, which was difficult to engage students. We therefore had to develop a range of ways of engaging students, such as reflection, discussions in pairs and small groups, activities with mentors, and sharing information anonymously. With hindsight this would have been improved by using some of the tools we developed and software we utilised when we delivered DDs online and in a blended format.

Converting the DDs to an online format was initially challenging, especially as the lockdown happened a week before the in-person DD2 was to be delivered. Developing the programme into a curriculum delivered via Blackboard was effective, but engagement was patchy. An experiment with live delivery was very disappointing, and so was scrapped. The longer time period however provided us with opportunities to deepend students' understanding of diversity and belonging, and link it to their professional practice. In subsequent years, with stronger staff buy-in the programmes were more effectively built into the student experience.

The University already had a mentoring system in place, and the primary education mentors were very effective. We were able to utilise this structure and involve the existing mentors as community mentors in the #Ibelong project. They were very actively involved in designing and delivering the DDs, and attend the first #Ibelong meet-up to share their approaches and learning with the wider project team and delegates from Europe. The mentors were actively involved in developing online resources for the DDs, and also providing online information, guidance and drop-in sessions. The programme was able to help these mentors develop more understanding about diversity, belonging and success, which will support them in their future careers as primary teachers. Moving forward the importance of diversity was embedded into the recruitment and training of Community Mentors.

While fewer staff initially engaged in the #Ibelong project, this improved over time. The online Team Teacher Reflection session went well, and staff saw the benefits of the #Ibelong work on their students. In addition, the project work was endorsed and promoted by two influential senior leaders, which encouraged wider staff engagement. In addition, two staff development sessions using the TTR resources were held for a wider group of university colleagues, and several reports about the project were disseminated internally and externally. In year 2 of the #Ibelong project we were invited to work with a number of courses in the Faculty of Education, and staff engagement was good. Staff engaged with the work, and embedded it into their programmes, and made additional requests for the #Ibelong team to support them and engage directly with students.

The evaluation of the #Ibelong project was hampered by the pivot to online learning, but there are indicators from staff and students that the project has been effective in achieving its goals of improving students belonging. This may not have translated into improvements in continuation due to other factors. The #ibelong project is well-known within the Faculty of Education and the University (and the UK HE sector).

Staff are interested in using the activities within their courses, and attendance at training is good. Spin off activities have been developed, such as the 'Just ask me if I'm OK' initiative, building on the ideas of being diversity-brave and talking about the challenging issues.

The evaluation demonstrated that students had enjoyed the experience, and they had developed their understanding of diversity, belonging and success. The collaborative activities enabled students to get to know each other and make friends.

"I think the main idea is that I have made a lot of friendships, and now feel a lot more comfortable than I did when I was getting ready to move in here. I have adapted well, and understand the key idea of being social in the first few months of moving in. I have tried to get myself out there as much as possible and I have tried to extend myself to ensure I get the possible experience out of my time at university."

Students noted that the activities helped them to get to know others. These friendship groups have sustained and supported students, e.g. through the struggles of online learning:

"I've settled in to university quite well so far and have been resilient by keeping up with work while being at home and only coming in to uni 2 times a week. I've found the online work hard at times, but I have managed to work it out with the help of people in the group."

In the medium term staff did make changes to their practices, through the implementation of the 'Just ask me if I'm OK' initiative, and through embedding #Ibelong into first year teaching in future years. Indeed one member of staff used it as case study for an academic programme she was studying. It is difficult to assess whether students were more engaged and more able to seek support, but we do have feedback of students feeling more comfortable with their diversity and success challenges. This is evidenced by feedback from mentors about students seeking them out to discuss issues touched upon during the DDs, and by the positive response to the 'snowballs and aeroplanes' activity.

In the first year we ran the snowballs and aeroplanes activity with a large group, and we received 226 responses. 23 students identified serious issues and included their name and a request for support (this is just over 10%). The issues raised primarily related to anxiety, caring responsibilities and employment obligations, academic skills and competence, specific learning differences, self-confidence and shyness. 9 students provided their name but wrote positive comments, including looking forward to the course and offering to support other students. 160 students (over 70%) identified issues and ways in which they would like to be supported to be successful. These included quite serious issues relating to anxiety, caring responsibilities, and concerns about their ability to be a good teacher. Others noted nervousness, shyness, the need to be organised and challenges with commuting and car parking in particular. Frequent ways to be supported included: to be friendly, to ask if I'm OK even if I look OK, to be patient, to explain things simply, to be available to offer support and to provide academic guidance with assignments, presentations and developing confidence/public speaking. In the second year the responses went directly to tutors; of those shared back to the #Ibelong team, very similar themes emerged, which are illustrated by these comments:

- I would like you to know that I can be shy and unorganised but you can help me by involving me in discussions and being patient with me.
- I'm very anxious and quiet in new situations and around new people. You can help by knowing I'm not being rude or lazy it just takes me a bit of time to become comfortable and confident.
- You should know that I like learning visually and I like to ask questions when learning to ensure I am doing the task correctly. You can help me by having regular check-ins and knowing that I struggle getting information to stay in my brain.
- i'd like you to know that i sometimes overthink and get anxious about assignments You can help me to be successful by explaining and giving an estimated time of how long it should take.

- I like you to know I get quiet on certain days. You can help me by knowing I'm not upset, angry or annoyed with anyone, it's just extra hard on those days.
- I am an introvert. You can help me by asking me questions directly to include me in a conversation.
- I'd like you to know… that I sometimes struggle to make friends You can help me be successful by… being friendly and approachable.
- You should no that I am not very confident in my English ability. You can help me to be successful by giving me advise on different ways I can go about improving my English skills.

In the longer term we do not know if the project impacted on continuation and attainment due to other a range of changes happening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the feedback suggests that the three participating programmes will continue to embed activities around diversity, belonging and success. Dissemination through the learning, teaching and assessment committee in the Faculty and University have encouraged wider adoption too. Staff engagement is always a challenge when implementing change, but effective interventions tend to result in wider staff engagement.

I Belong