

Title: “I’m one of your students”: never judge a book by its cover

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Review their understandings of how students present themselves and behave in class.

Review their notion of inclusivity

Consider the extent to which we inadvertently overgeneralise and create false narratives based on perceived behaviour

Undertake simple actions to facilitate inclusion amongst cohorts of contemporary students

Session Outline

This session is designed to encourage delegates to reflect on what they really know about students today. How are their lives and experiences of being in HE different from ours? How do we accommodate these differences? Should we accommodate for these differences? We believe that the answer is ‘yes’. If we assume that the student experience largely mirrors ours, we are failing many students in our universities in very significant ways.

The workshop is situated within the growing interest in student narratives as a primary methodology for understanding current student experiences (e.g. O’Shea 2015; Pilcher 2017). These first person narratives help to explode our misconceptions of a contemporary student, in turn informing our teaching, learning and support practices. It centres on a film commissioned by the workshop host, and filmed and edited by a group of undergraduate students at the University of Roehampton. The film is designed to introduce and explore the lived realities of being a 21st Century student. Delegates will engage with the narratives and consider collectively how these student voices can help inform our student-facing work and that of colleagues.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

10 minute introduction to the film produced by students at the University of Roehampton: why was the film was produced and what were its aims? This section serves to introduce the exercise that forms most of the workshop.

30 minutes – small groups consider 6 student case studies. The groups are given a set of questions which explore the ways academic colleagues typically respond to students who presents in certain ways. They will reflect on the narrative they would create about the student's behaviour, if the behaviour were unmitigated by any explanation, and consider how this imposed narrative would impact on the treatment the student might receive. There will be enough time for each group to consider all 6 cases, but groups can focus on particular cases that strike a chord if they wish.

15 minutes – the groups share their thoughts about the students and how they would accommodate them/not.

10 minutes – Film presentation “I’m one of your students” a film made by University students to send a message about their lives to their tutors.

10 minutes - reconvene in groups to consider the implications of the film's content for our reactions/inactions/judgements on the case studies and to consider how we might want to adapt/change our/other's practices towards students in the light of what we've just seen. Participants will consider how they could develop a similar project for their HEI. The facilitators will share their experiences, including practical challenges they encountered and how they overcame them.

10 minutes – the groups share their reflections and any potential reactions the film and discussion may have triggered

5 minutes - conclusions drawing together outcomes from this group and from previous viewings of the film and workshops.

References

- O'Shea, S. (2015) “I Generally Say I Am a Mum First . . . But I'm Studying at Uni”: The Narratives of First-in-Family, Female Caregivers Transitioning Into an Australian University. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, Vol 8, No 4. 243-257.
- Pilcher, K. (2017) Politicising the 'personal': the resistant potential of creative pedagogies in teaching and learning 'sensitive' issues. Vol 22, no 8. 975-990