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Challenging assessment habits

Ways to make a difference to awarding gaps
Cath Caldwell, Siobhan Clay, Emily Salines

Enhancing teaching, learning and careers education in partnership with staff and students

Introduction

Is assessment a site of potential discriminatory practice?

We argue that without reviewing assessment design, content and format through the lens of social justice awarding gaps may remain.

Context

❑ UAL's story

❑ What is specific about art and design pedagogy and assessment?

❑ What has our journey been regarding differentials?

UAL's story and pedagogy

→ 20k students, over 4.5k staff, more than
100 UG course at 6 colleges and 12 sites

→ Creative methodologies and pedagogies

→ Assessment is portfolio and artefact based

→ 'The 'wicked problems' of the often
ambiguous and open-ended nature of learning
tasks in art and
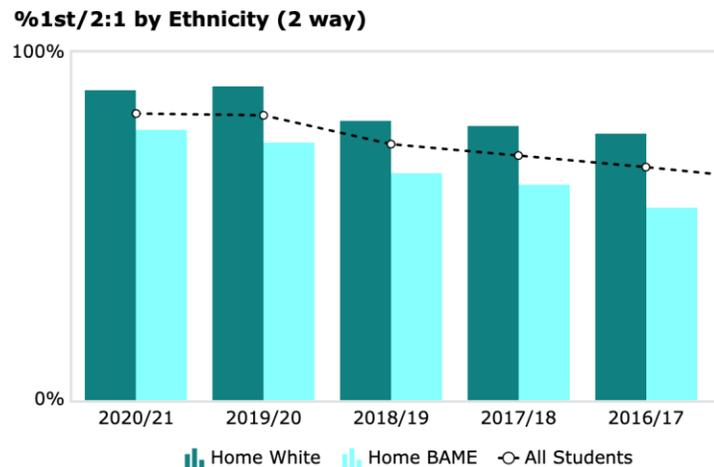design'   (Austerlitz *et al,* 2008)

Photo by Cath Caldwell, Stage 1 typography
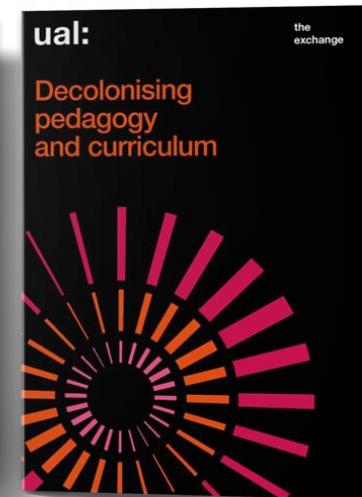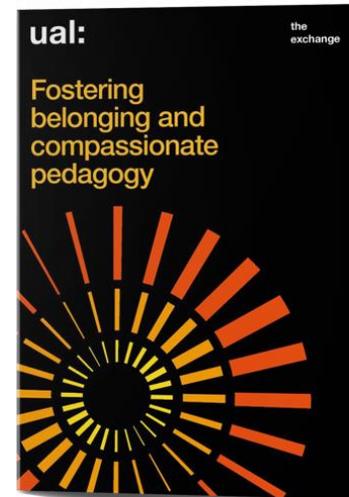
Addressing awarding differentials

→ Awarding gaps between Home White and Home B.A.M.E students and Home and International students

→ Academic Enhancement team's work

→Reduction in awarding gap at UAL

%1st/2:1 by Ethnicity (2 way)

Reduction of 10 percentile points (over last 5 years in Home White/Home B.A.M.E.)

What has our assessment journey been?

❑   How we started

❑   Drawing from sector practice and research

❑   Our approach

"If assessment shapes how and what students learn, as the literature suggests, and if we are committed to social justice within and through higher education, then surely assessment is key to the achievement of that social justice."

Jan McArthur, 2021

Can we design assessment for equity?

Picture by Alys Tomlinson, UAL

Formalising / conceptualising formative feedback and support for students who need it most

Photo by Ana Blumenkron Zertuche

The crit

Formalising / conceptualising formative feedback and support for students who need it most

→ Who is able to take advantage from the informal feedback structures in the studio?

→ How does our assessment framework unwittingly create disadvantage?

→ In other words, who are we designing our assessment for?

Photo by Cath Caldwell WIP show

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How can compassionate assessment help?

→ Pass/fail

→ Policies

→ Feedback

Belonging through assessment:
Pipelines of compassion
QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project 2021

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THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

LEEDS ARTS UNIVERSITY EST. 1846

Ⓠ QAA

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How do we decolonise assessment?

→ Exploration of the power relationships at play in assessment

→ How can our assessment approaches support pluralities of knowledge?

→ How can all students be seen and recognized through assessment?

Eloise Sherridan 2016
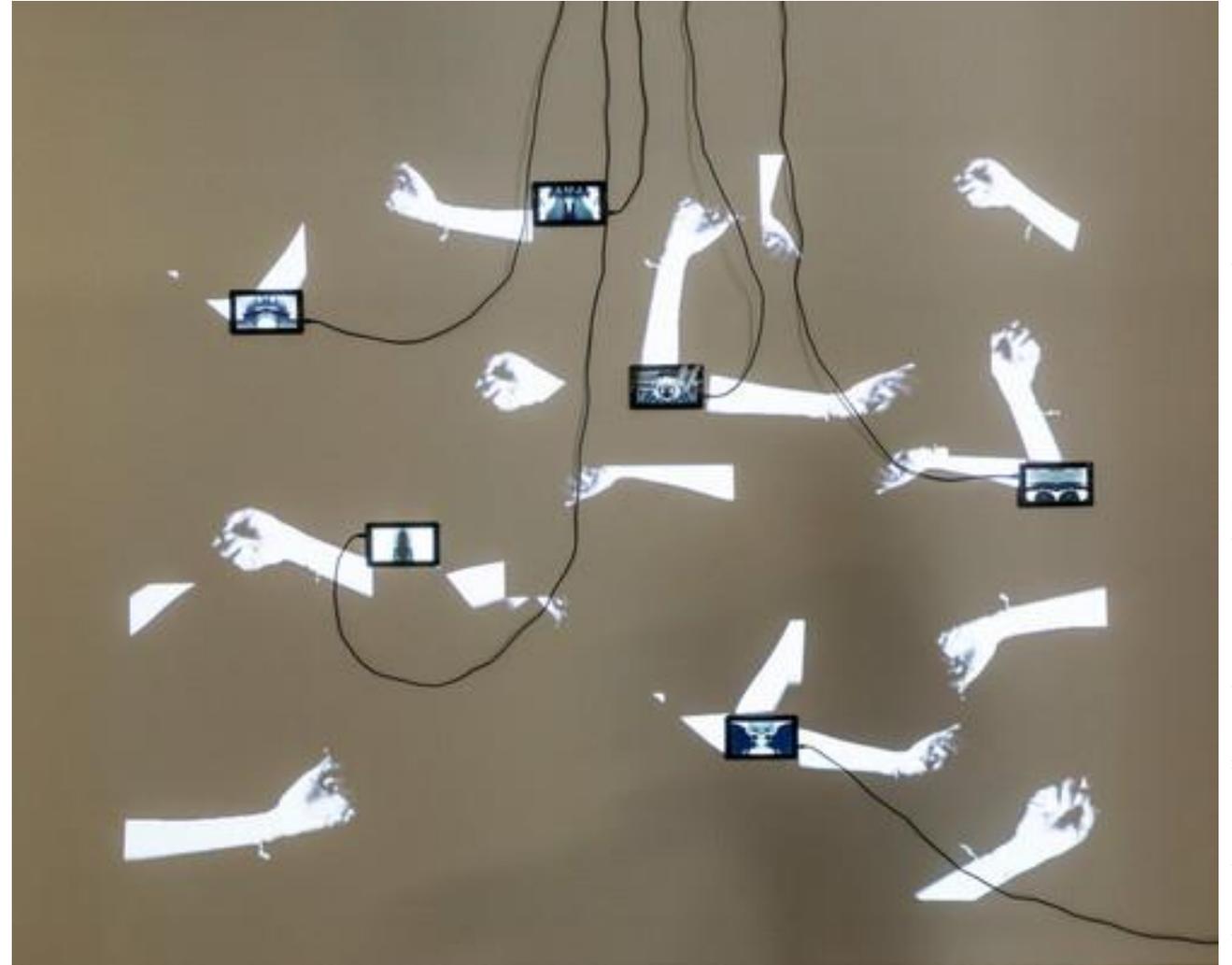
THE ROOM OF SILENCE
a documentary

Dr Gurnam Singh, Coventry University

Examples of practice

- ❑ Where have adjustments to assessment made an impact?

- ❑ How do we know?

- ❑ 3 examples

Example 1

→ Improving feedback

→ Emphasis away from
summative
to formative for learning

→ Scaffolding assessment

Inclusive
Assessment

Multimedia Installation by Lucrezia de Fazio, private view, Show 1

Asking student's to talk about assessment feedback

Example 2

→ Mapping student assessment journey across whole course

Inclusive Assessment

Example 2: impact

→ *The work that we've done together so far on assessment and feedback have been really good. They've all made really positive contributions to the way that we're doing stuff, and hopefully, ultimately, result in good scores in NSS and so on.*

There's still loads of things we can do, I think there's still improvements.'

Course Leader, UAL (October 2021)

International
Click to refresh this item

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
47%	51%	57%	63%	64%	69%

+22%

Home BAME
Current Year | Trends

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
53%	51%	57%	61%	67%	74%

+21%

Home White
Click to refresh this item

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
68%	70%	75%	78%	87%	86%

+14%

18
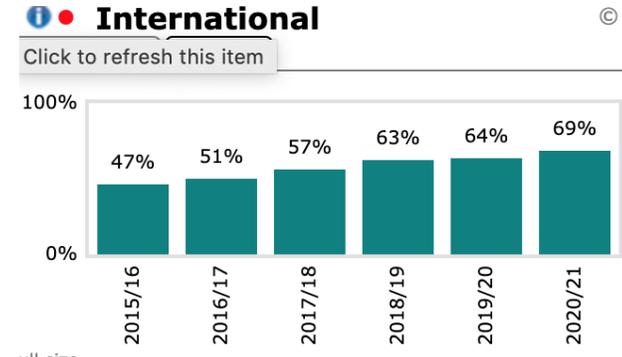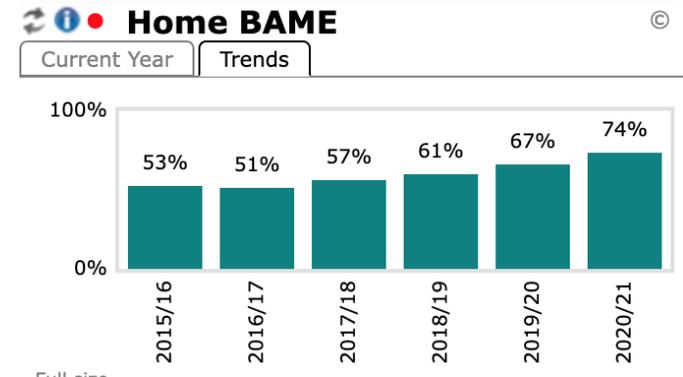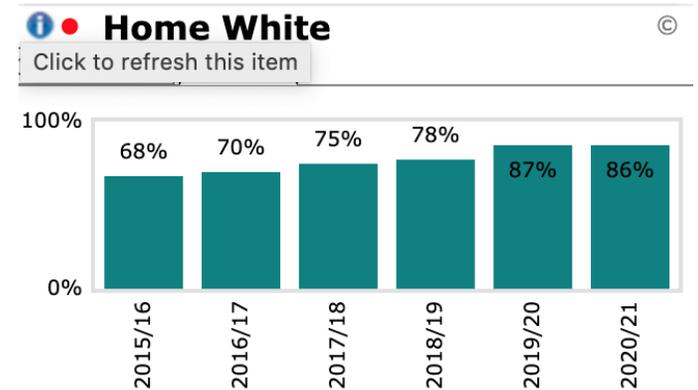
Summative assessment practice

Example 3

→ Introducing decolonised assessment principles

→ Separating high stakes performativity at degree shows from summative assessment in UG Fine Art.
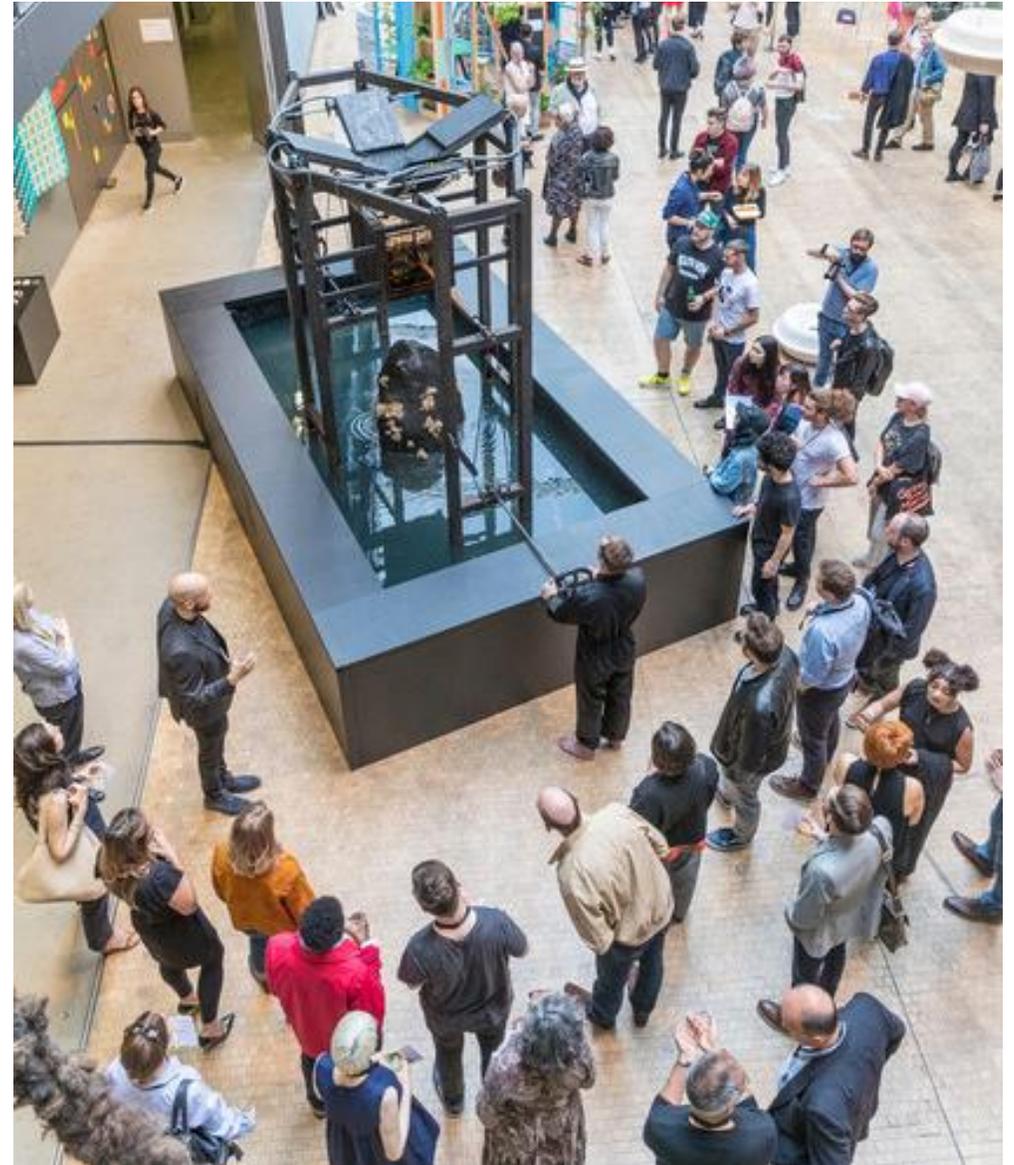
Mixed media installation by Tom Lellouche and Leo Nataf, private view, Show 1

Rethinking summative assessment

→ Impact on underrepresented groups has been sustained.

→ Awarding gaps have shifted in certain areas, such as this example.

Mobility vehicle by Grace Hinton, private view, Show 1

How does assessment affect unit outcomes?

→ To have any traction, these values must be built into assessment processes and given recognition in grading or they will slip through
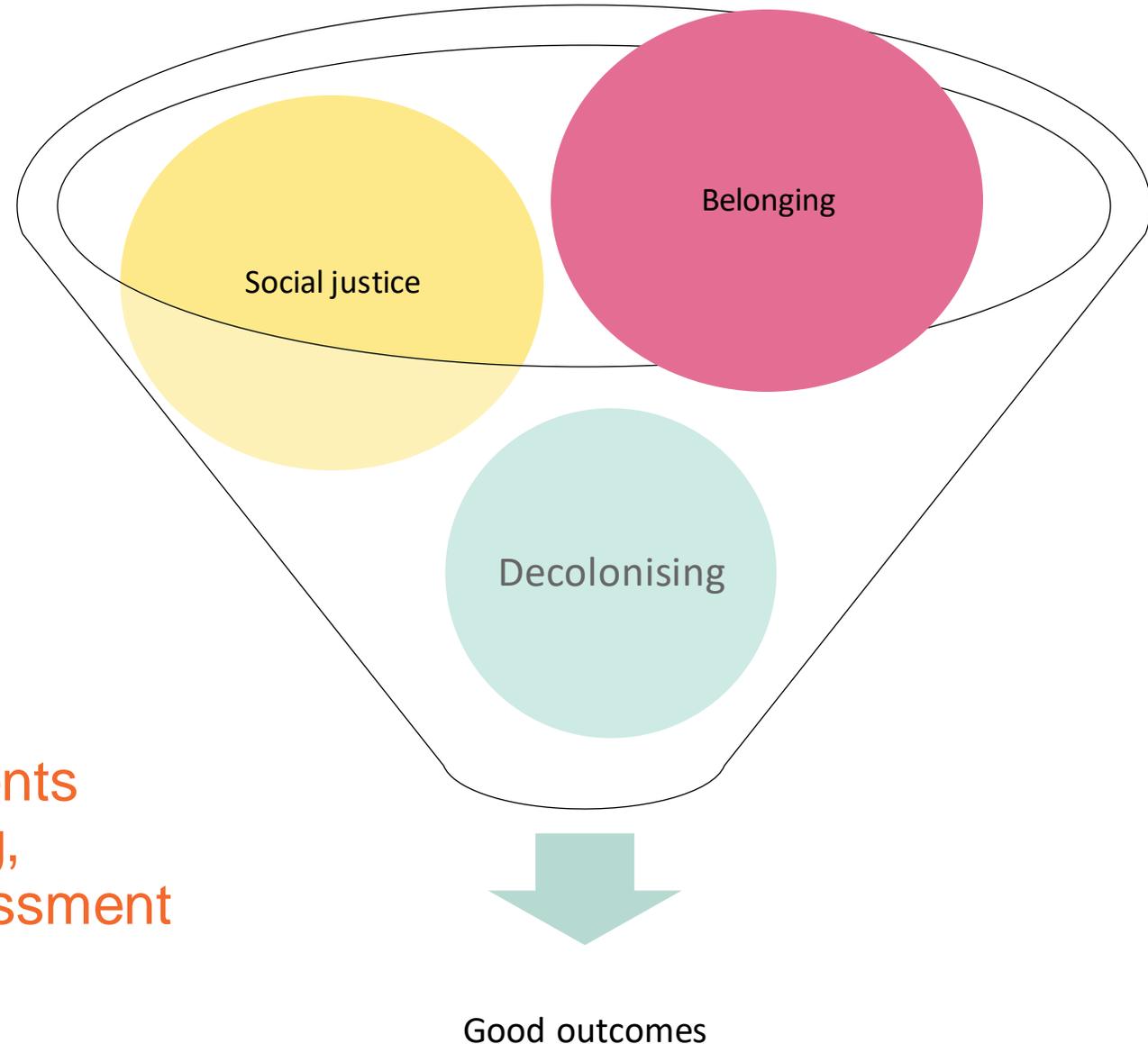
The funnel represents practice of learning, teaching and assessment

Belonging

Social justice

Decolonising

Good outcomes

Summary/provocation

❑ Work on decolonising assessment and needs to be undertaken to reduce Awarding gaps.

❑ Going through the motions of curriculum interventions and reapproval is not enough without an overhaul of assessment habits.

❑ If universities want to take on more students, then they must make an ethical commitment to assess them equitably, rather than willingly enter cohorts into under-resourced assessment processes.

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References and links

With thanks to all staff and students who contributed and gave permission to share their work and ideas

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