

## **Building Community**

**Can co-creating a cross-year  
social session with students  
help build a stronger sense of  
community on the BA  
Embroidery course?**



Fig 1, Antony Gormley, Field (1991)

## Course Context

**3-year Embroidery Undergraduate Degree.**

**47 total students.**

**Part of a wider textile course with Knit and Print where there needs to be parity.**

External Examiner Relevance: PRINT / KNIT / EMBROIDERY

**WORKING SPACE / COMMUNITY** Level 6 felt that the general studios were not fully utilised, and after experiencing the benefits of having a booked studio one day a week, they felt it would be beneficial to increase the number of days and also create fixed room bookings for studio/portfolio work across all year groups as it had only been implemented to final year students. Level 5 students were evidently struggling with wellbeing, and fixed rooms for studio days would help alleviate some of this. I would highly recommend that booked studio spaces were allocated to all year groups to provide a dedicated space for students to develop portfolio work, drape on the mannequin, create garment blocks etc. The dedicated studios would also work effectively as a community space that facilitates cohort peer-to-peer learning and wellbeing support.

Fig 3, External Examiner Report 24/25

**Why does this research project matter?**

**Community can positively impact course engagement.**

**Student mental health.**

**Creates a space that feels theirs and that they belong.**

**This allows for creative freedom and a space that safe for individuals.**



✓ BA2 25/26 – YOU SAID, WE DID  
YOU SAID, WE DID

AUTUMN TERM

**You Said**

moving form 16 weeks to shorter unit/ term – year group readjusting to the shorter term

Workload – expectations same amount of work?

**We did**

- Relational to the period of time, 8 weeks
- maintaining scheme of work to manage project

**You Said –**

For Final year, BA2 BA1 supporting Buddy system

**We Did**

- Emb Team to explore how could bring this in
- Suggested to use the white board to write ideas for community ideas.

**POSITIVE POINTS**

- Tambour and goldwork Sessions – overall positively received
- Enjoyed flexibility of a choice with selection
- V&A and Hand and Lock Visit – informative – supportive to aims for placements
- Design Sessions –focus on design processes has been impactful
- Emphasis on Industry Opportunities – very good
- Support for Placements – good

AUTUMN TERM

**POSITIVE POINTS**

- Settling well into third year
- enjoying this term.
- Enjoying being back in space together following placements / summer
- Study atmosphere is good
- Supportive tutor and helpful technicians
- Very useful tutorials

**You Said –**

Access to free basic materials

**We Did**

- Fabric bin – free to all Embroiderers
- Check Re-use Units Floor ten – by Stairs
- Basic Threads are provided
- Team exploring a SAMPLE SALE or SWAP SHOP Across
- Providing most things for everyone isn't realistic as each students needs can vary greatly
- Can sample economically in trial/ test, development using imitation, communicating

**You Said**

More cross year engagement

**We did**

- Paired tutorials to help students be aware of the practices and development of their peers.

**You said –**

More understanding on how to approach briefs

BA1 EMBROIDERY 25/26 – YOU SAID, WE DID  
YOU SAID, WE DID

AUTUMN TERM

**POSITIVE POINTS**

...ing course, ...n, content ...resting and ...ful

...less ...sition from ...ctions into ...tical hands on ...ning

...ying, Drawing ...ng and ...ialist ...ions

...ch Archive was ...ficial and ...ng was ...ctful

...ful course ...ning

**You Said: Community : Sharing Birthdays**

**We did**

- Intend to set up BA1 Access only to Padlet share social media handles for connection
- Encouraged to use Workshop Whiteboard: Space for ideas & community messages
- Encouraged to use whatsapp / social media to connect

**You Said | Work Placement Prep**

BA1 wants to be prepared for the BA2 internship

**We Did**

- BA1 advised to at the CV and cover le sessions.
- Currently availab Spring
- Can attend Pastora in for C.V. Cover L Support
- We will Enquire w Grad Futures to be accessed earlier

Fig 4, BA Embroidery, yrs 1-3, Rep Feedback Padlets



## Research approach and ethics

The format I've chosen is informal, conversational and student-led, it isn't about extracting data or producing quantifiable outcomes. Instead, I'm inviting students to contribute ideas, reflections, or simply engage in a casual conversation around what community means to them.

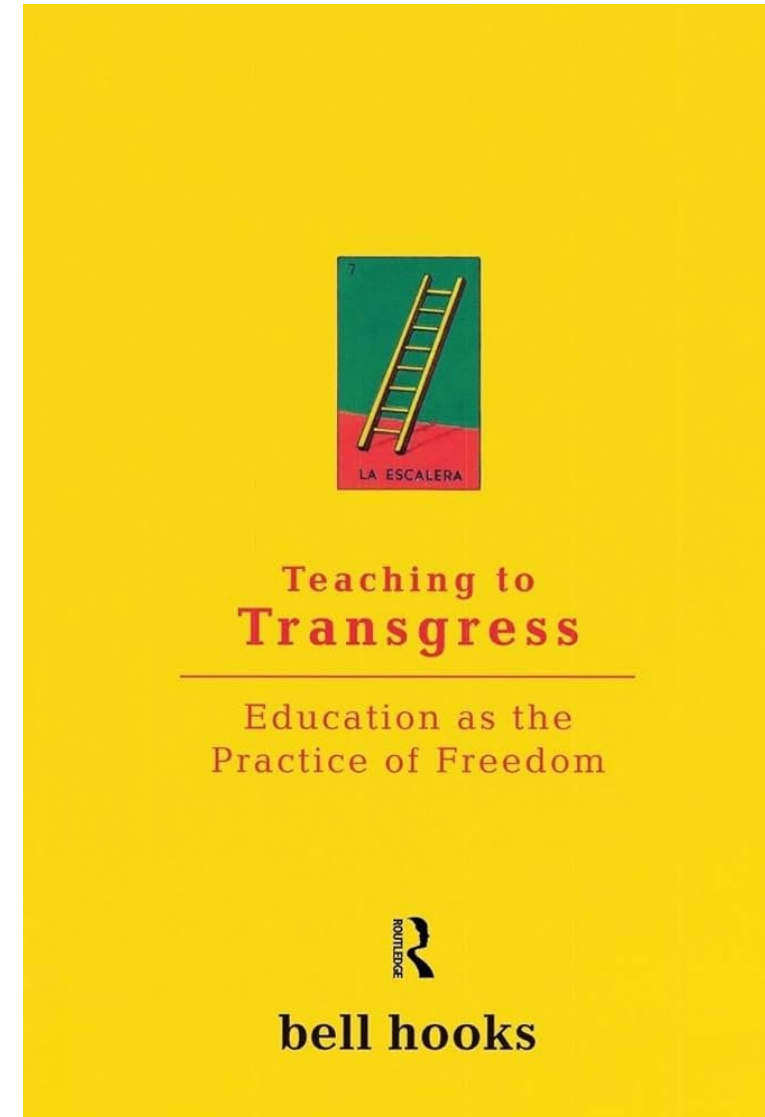


Fig 5

**Research project:**

**Can co-creating a cross-year social session with students help build a stronger sense of community on the BA Embroidery course?**

**Participant Information Sheet**

**About this study**

As part of a PgCert at UAL, I'm running a small research project, more importantly, I want to explore how students might shape informal, cross-year ways to connect that feel natural, fun, and useful and ultimately aims to build a strong, energetic and creative community on our embroidery pathway.

**What's this about?**

I've noticed there aren't many chances for Embroidery students from different years to connect casually. This project asks: Can we co-create informal social spaces that help build a stronger sense of community on the course?

It doesn't have to be one specific "event" or room, just a way for students to feel more connected across year groups. What that looks like is completely open. The point is: what kind of social connection do you want, and what would make it feel worth showing up for?

**What does it mean to take part?**

You can get involved in whatever way feels comfortable:

- Add ideas via Padlet, quick poll, or in-person chats
- Join a social session (when it happens, it may not be this term!)
- Share anonymous feedback afterwards

This isn't being pre-designed; I'm inviting your input to help shape it. Nothing will be formal, assessed, or performance based.

**Will it be anonymous?**

Yes, all your feedback is anonymous. No names, no emails, no identifying info will be used. If I refer to any of it in my PgCert work, I'll only use general reflections or anonymous quotes.

**Do I have to take part?**

No! It's voluntary. You can be involved in all communication methods, take part in just one bit or none at all.

Fig 6

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

**1 CAN CO-CREATING A CROSS-YEAR SOCIAL SESSION WITH STUDENTS HELP BUILD A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON THE BA EMBROIDERY COURSE?**

**2 ABOUT THIS STUDY**

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**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?**

No! It's totally voluntary. You can do just one bit or none at all and change your mind any time.

**5 IS THIS JUST FOR RESEARCH?**

I'll reflect on this process for my PgCert, but the real aim is to explore something that could continue. If students find value in it, the idea is that this could grow into something that lives beyond the project, shaped by you, for you. This is about building a social, creative and supportive course community together.

Thanks for reading! If you have any questions or ideas, please email me at the address below.

Ellie Sweeney (BA Embroidery course tutor)  
e.sweeney@fashion.arts.ac.uk

Fig 7

# Data Collection Methods

light-touch,  
conversational  
more aligned with the tone of the project.

Methods:  
Informal chats

Padlet board

Whiteboard

My own written reflections and observations

Questionnaire (if an event was to go ahead)



Fig 8



Fig 9

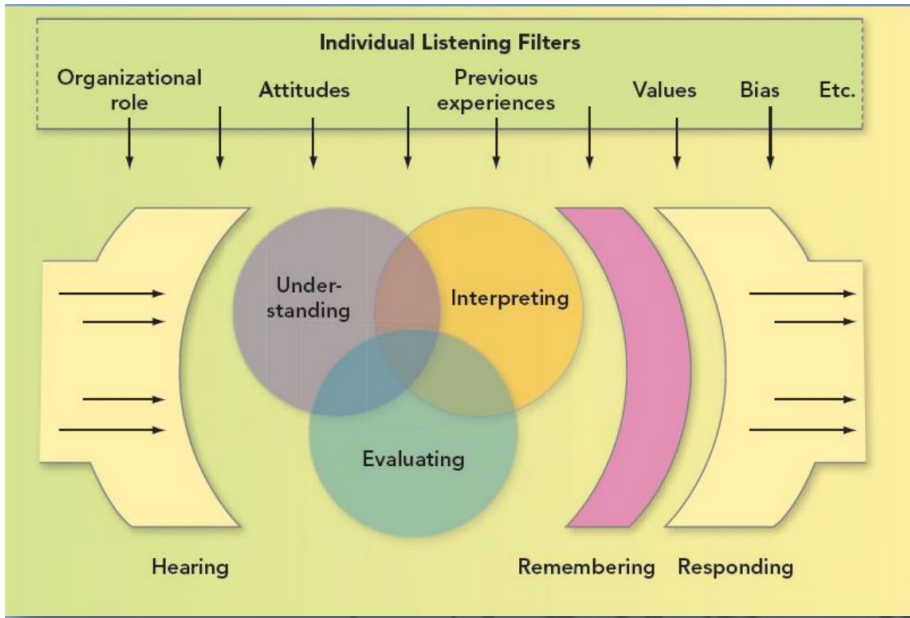


Fig 10

# Data Collection Methods

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Informal chats

Padlet board

Whiteboard

My own written reflections and observations

Questionnaire (if an event was to go ahead)

**Lowest uptake – Padlet board**

**Medium engagement – Whiteboard**

**Highest – In-person Conversations**

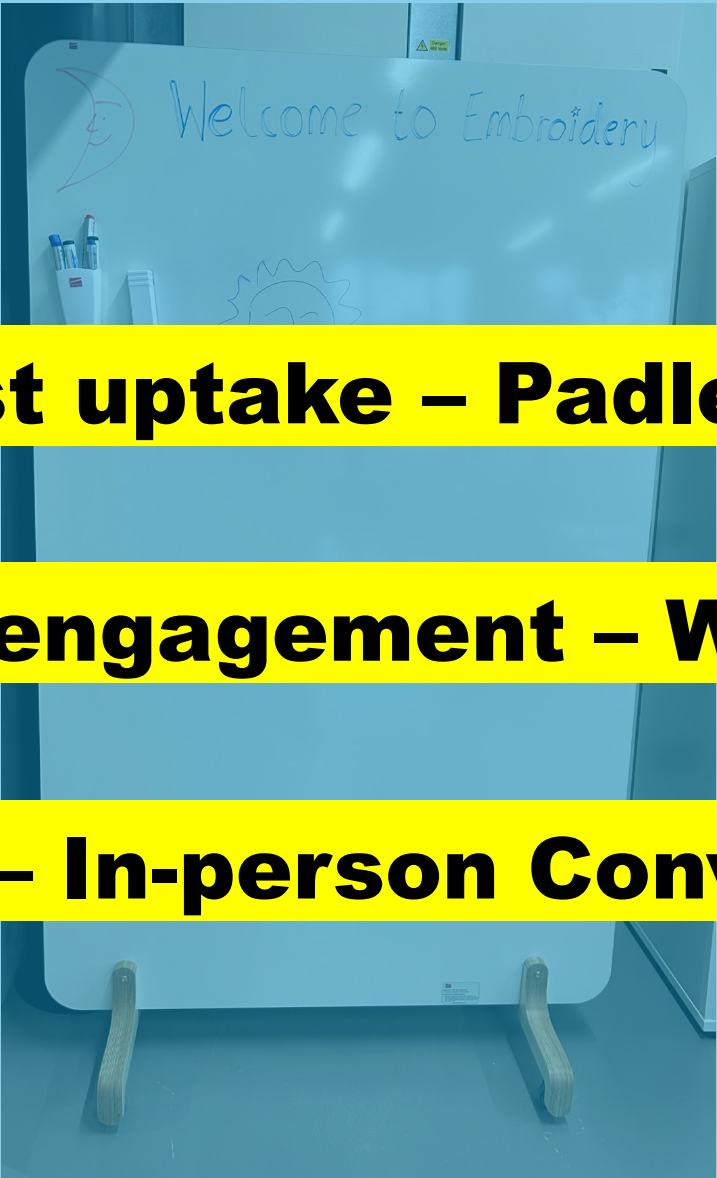


Fig 8



Fig 9

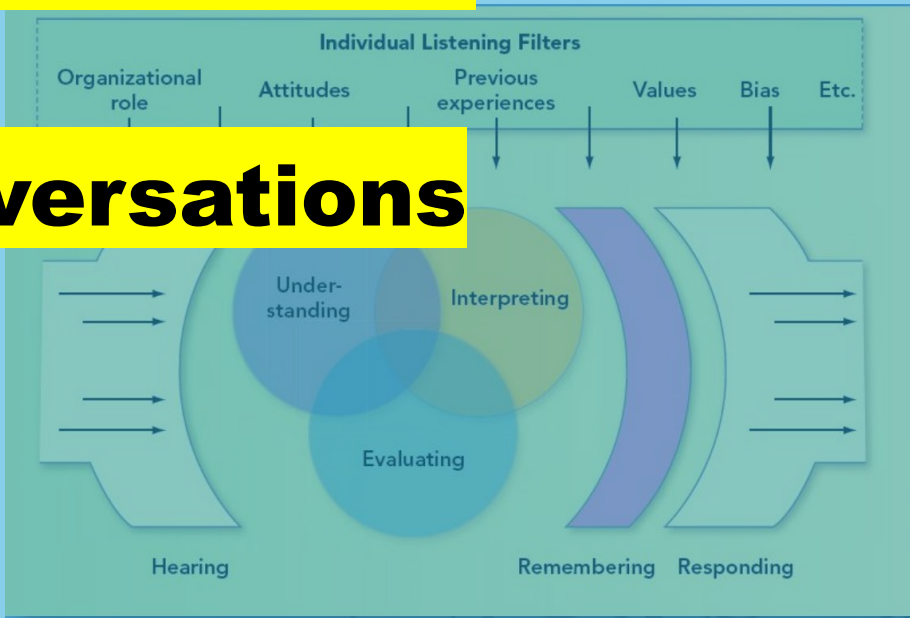


Fig 10

## Emerging Themes

### PEER VISABILITY

### SOCIAL INTERACTION & BELONGING

### OWNERSHIP OF SPACE


 [redacted] /student/  
a month ago  
I think one way to build community could be to have regular course exhibitions. We don't have a large course so it should be possible to just use the walls in uni. But we just put some of our favourite pieces up at the end of a project or term, and then invite other year groups to view them and allow for feedback. Or maybe we work together to put up an exhibition. Our course doesn't really have any community events like a regular university course.

Fig 11

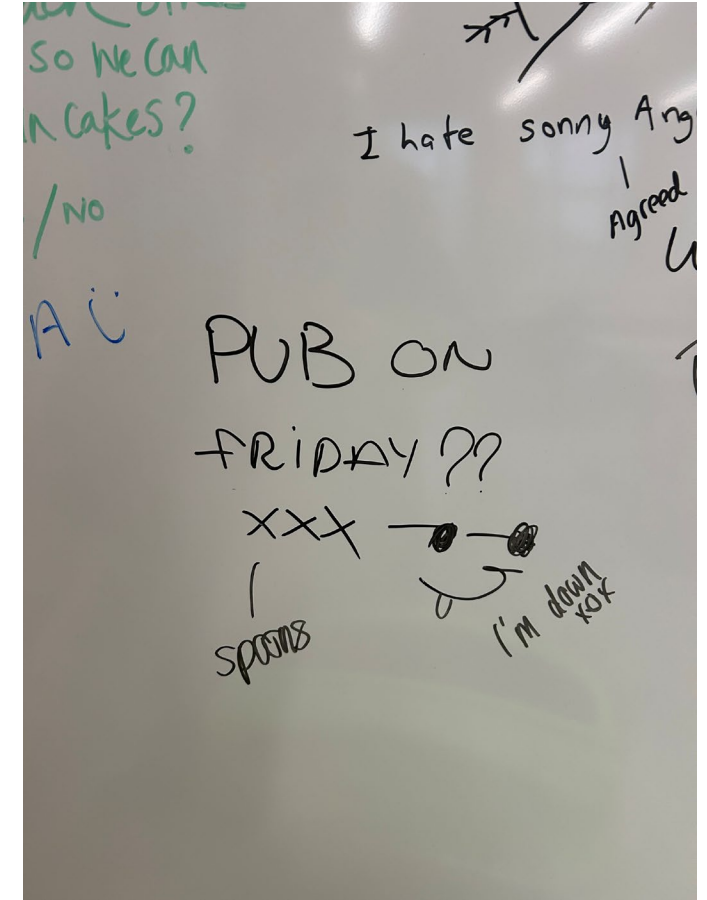


Fig 12





**EXHIBITION (END OF NOV)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> year end of project  
exhibition**

**Cross Pathways (print, knit,  
embroidery)**

**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years were  
invited to support**





## FUTURE CRAFT EXHIBITION

*(This questionnaire is optional and anonymous – please answer any questions you feel comfortable with)*

1. What year are you in?

☐ Year 1 ☐ Year 2 ☐ Year 3

2. Did you speak to someone from another year group today?

☐ Yes ☐ No

→ If yes, any thoughts about meeting people from other years? (Optional)

3. What did you enjoy or find interesting about the exhibition?

4. Did anything surprise you or give you ideas for any future work?

5. Did the exhibition make you feel more connected to the course or your peers?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

→ Why or why not?

6. What kind of spaces or events would help you feel more connected with students from other years?

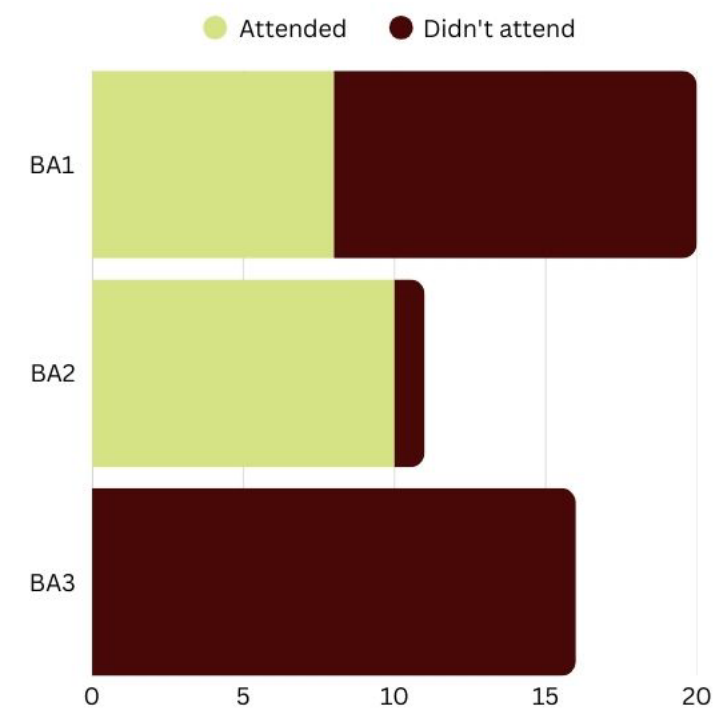
*(e.g. casual hangouts, group tutorials, skills sharing, cinema nights, pub...)*

7. Any other thoughts or ideas about community on the course?

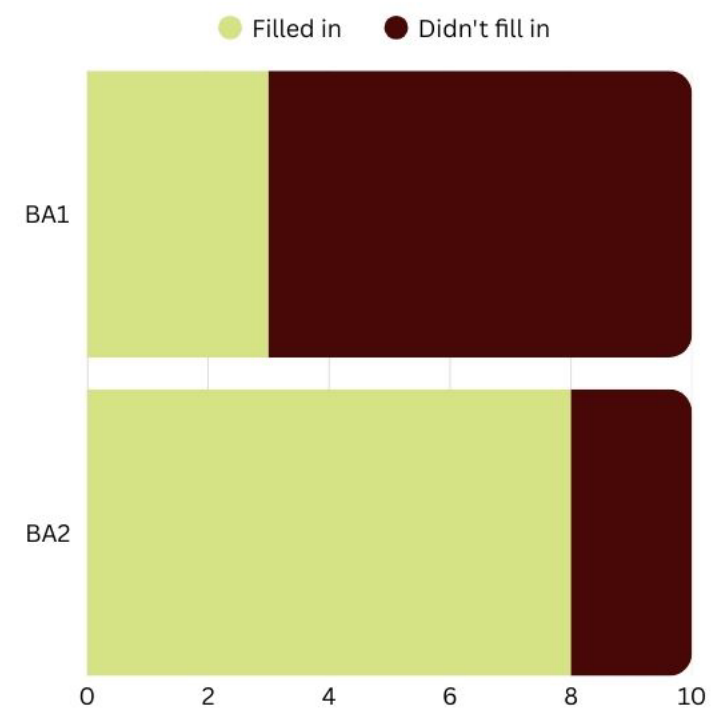


Fig 14

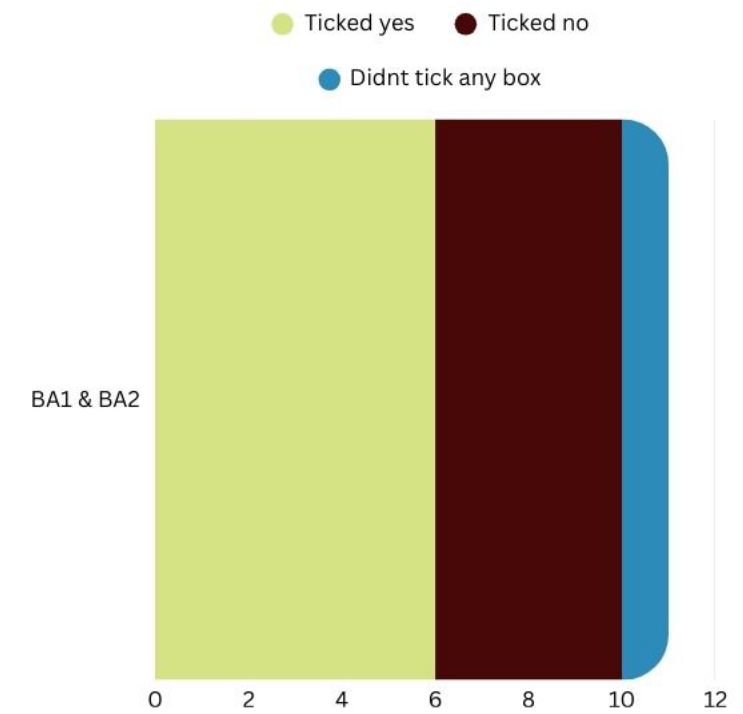
Amount of Embroidery  
BA students that  
attended:



Questionnaires filled  
in:



How many students  
spoke to someone  
from another year  
group?

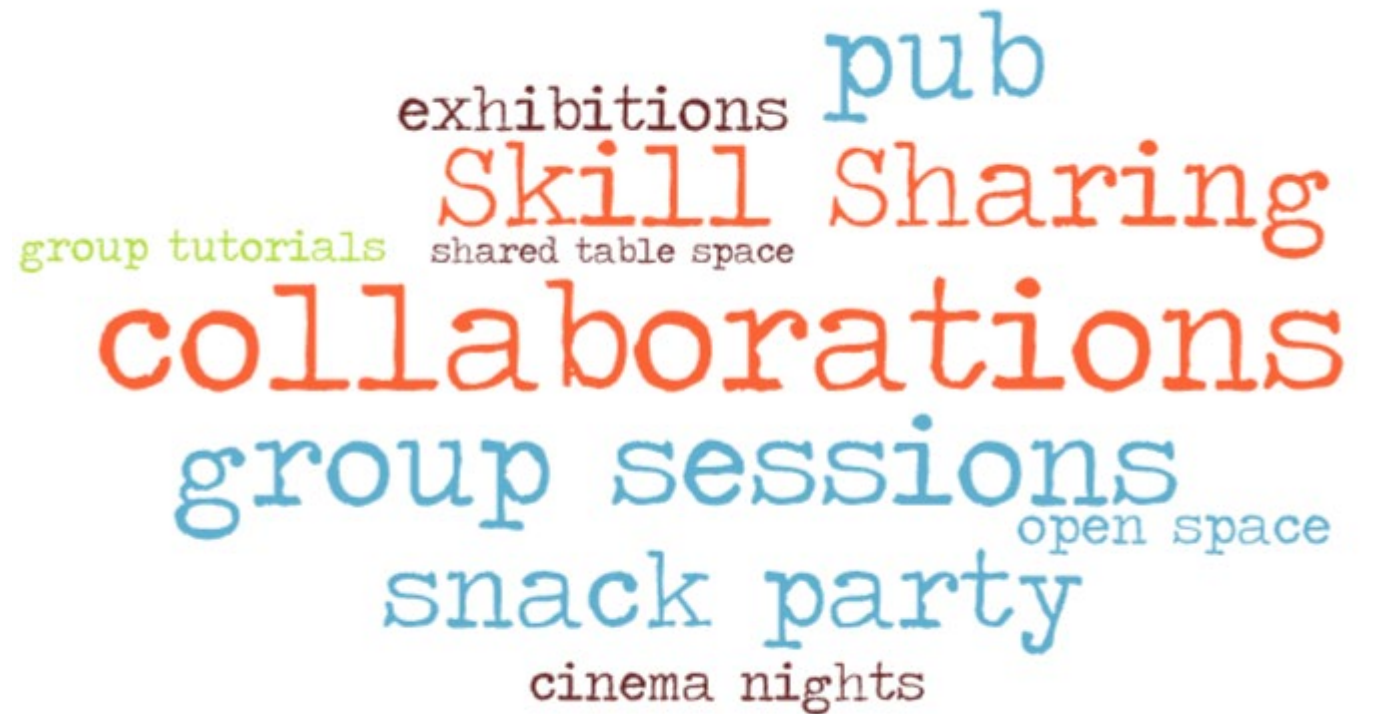


## Suggestions, Reflections and Moving Forward

**This research is still very much underway and ongoing.**

**opportunity for me to work on the delivery and nature of sessions that are already in place.**

**Alumni talk has been organised**



A word cloud featuring various activities and concepts. The words are arranged in a cluster, with 'collaborations' being the largest and most central. Other prominent words include 'Skill Sharing', 'group sessions', 'snack party', 'cinema nights', 'open space', 'exhibitions', 'pub', 'group tutorials', and 'shared table space'. The words are in different colors (blue, orange, green, brown) and fonts, creating a dynamic and organic shape.

exhibitions pub  
Skill Sharing  
group tutorials shared table space  
collaborations  
group sessions open space  
snack party  
cinema nights

Fig 16



**Thank you,  
any questions?**



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## Image References:

### Slide 1:

Fig 1, Antony Gormley, Field (1991)

### Slide 2:

Fig 2, Dalia Nation, BA Embroidery (2022), own image.

Fig 3, External Examiner Report 24/25, screenshot.

### Slide 3:

Fig 4, BA Embroidery, yrs 1-3, Rep Feedback Padlets, screenshot.

### Slide 4:

Fig 5, bell hooks teaching in Transgress, source: [Princeton University](https://www.princeton.edu/).

### Slide 5:

Fig 6, ARP information sheet, own document

Fig 7, ARP information poster, own document

### Slide 6:

Fig 8, Community whiteboard, own image.

Fig 9, Community padlet page, screen shot.

Fig 10, The Heurer Method diagram, Source: [Taylor & Francis Online](https://www.taylorandfrancis.com/)

### Slide 8:

Fig 11, Community padlet page, screen shot.

Fig 12, Community whiteboard, own image.

### Slide 9:

Fig 13, Textile Exhibition, own image.

### Slide 10:

Fig 14, Exhibition questionnaire, own document

### Slide 11:

Fig 15, Data graphs created on Canva, own document.

### Slide 12:

Fig 16, Word cloud created on Canva, own document.

### Slide 13:

Fig 17, Question mark graphic, Source: [Arena](https://www.arena.com/)