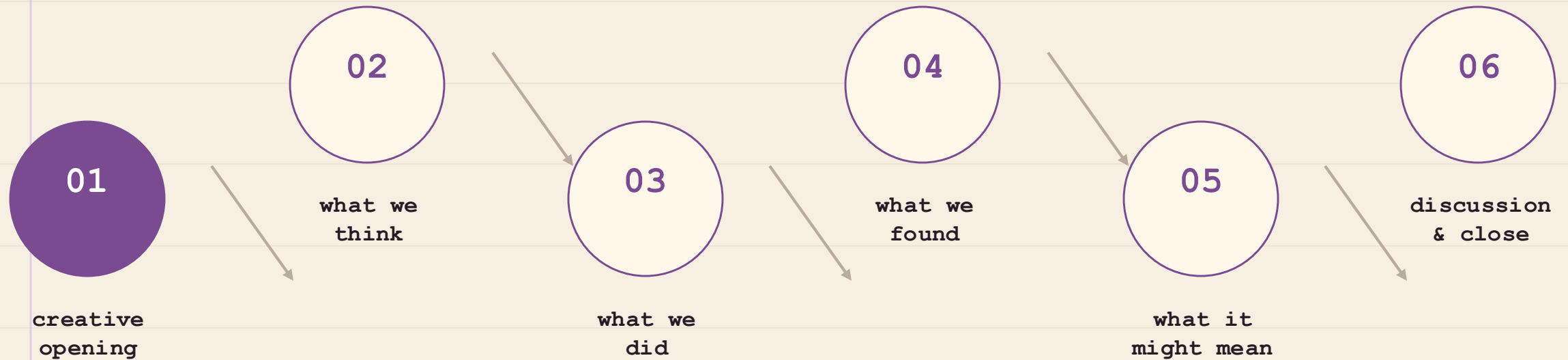

Humanising the Classroom: Co-Creating Teaching and Learning Through Staff-Student Inquiry

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UoM Teaching and Learning
Conference 2026

A short route through our student-staff partnership inquiry



01 / 3 MINUTES

Opening activity: one classroom moment

WRITE

Think of a teaching or learning moment that felt deeply human?

PAIR

What made it feel that way? Who held agency?

SHARE

What pedagogical conditions made this possible?



Building our shared understanding

WE NOTICED

- 01 Relationships frame engagement but students often do not know teachers or peers.
- 02 Participation can feel high-stakes and risky in large internationally-diverse groups.
- 03 Interaction with tutors, content and context is depersonalised (through a screen).
- 04 Pedagogy feels outcome-focussed not process-focussed.

WE WONDERED

- 01 How can we reduce distance between students, teachers and scholarship?
- 02 What low-stakes steps build confidence to engage with others?
- 03 How to create more person-centred interactions that are not about efficiency, but depth.
- 04 How do we connect both?

02

WHAT WE THINK

Responding to these classroom tensions, we conceptualise a humanising response through three interdependent dimensions

Imagination, creativity and emotion are treated as mutually reinforcing capacities, not discrete variables.

Our conceptual framework

IMAGINATION

Cognitive-relational

Narrative thinking, perspective-taking and first-person engagement might help learners move beyond the immediate classroom context and connect to their lived experience.

CREATIVITY

Applied-transformative

Problem-based learning, co-production and artefact creation might transform knowledge into action, create the conditions for ownership of learning, and generate new ideas.

EMOTION

Affective-motivational

Emotional connection, reflective practice and storytelling might anchor learning in meaning, intrinsic motivation and personalisation.

What we did: co-designed workshops with students

3

student workshops

≈40

students in total

Mostly

Education + PGT

+

UGT Maths, Chem Eng,
Economics & Mental Health
Nursing

01

Co-designed

Short workshop co-designed with students and led by Stina.

02

Asked

Current educational experiences; where imagination, creativity and emotion show up in learning, and where these are missing.

03

Tried out

Humanising activities with students, then reflected on what felt relational, creative or meaningful.

04

Next

Staff focus groups are planned - watch this space!

Patterns across the coding

WHAT RECURRED

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 01 | Autonomy + scaffold | Freedom works best when underpinned by clear expectations, criteria and support. |
| 02 | Relationship + interaction | Small groups, within a learning community, help students feel recognised. |
| 03 | Imaginative participation | Role play, scenarios, the arts and visual work deepen perspective-taking. |
| 04 | Practice + relevance | Engagement with placements and local partners makes theory feel useful and situated. |

Source: coded student workshop quotes

Student voices

IMAGINATION + ACCESS

"Arts-based approaches supported imagination and were accessible. They deepened learning and understanding, and helped create a comfortable environment for sharing."

EMOTIONAL LEGITIMACY

"I tried to include an emotional judgement in the conclusion of an assignment, but I received negative feedback on it. However, I like it when we do this in class."

Source: coded student workshop quotations

INTERACTION

"There is no interaction with the academic [in lectures], so I do not think this is very human. In seminars, there is more interaction and we can ask questions."

ASSESSMENT SAFETY

"Traditional assessments feel safer. They are predictable and provide good preparation for future academic work."

ENGAGEMENT

"Focusing on how something makes you feel can help with initial engagement."

Tensions and surprises

TENSIONS

01 Flexibility ↔ structure

Autonomy works best with guidance, criteria and contact.

02 Creative risk ↔ safety

New formats need rehearsal and technical clarity.

03 Emotion ↔ legitimacy

Reflection needs permission, framing and structure.

SURPRISES / OPENINGS

01 Structure can humanise

Predictability creates the safety to experiment.

02 Low-stakes creativity matters

Visual and scenario tasks build confidence first.

03 Practice must be relational

Partners and placements make learning purposeful.

Pedagogical implication: structure and safety give creativity and emotion room to flourish.

05 / IMPLICATIONS

What might this all mean

Implications for pedagogical design - practical ideas

01	02	03
Build community first	Consider encounter-first pedagogies	Create imaginative scaffolds
Begin with one low-stakes relational engagement.	Open with a quote, image, scenario or lived case.	Give a clear brief plus one creative choice.
Keep pairs or trios stable for the first few weeks.	Ask: what do you notice, feel and wonder?	Try role play, visual mapping or artefact-making.
State participation norms: pass, pause, ask for help.	Teach the concept, but locate within and revisit the example.	Debrief shifts in perspective, confidence and connection.

Implication: deeper learning is enabled when we enable community, encounter and imagination.

THANK YOU

Questions & conversation

What will you take back into your own classroom?

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