Exploring the value of PGRs who teach (PGWT) in supporting undergraduate students' sense of belonging: A Student Staff Partnership Project

Miss Brenda Grant

MSc (By Research) Student, School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences

b.grant@hull.ac.uk

Brenda is an MSc (by research) student within the University of Hull's School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, having previously completed a BSc (Hons) in Sport Rehabilitation at the same university. Her main research interest focuses on the immediate management of sports injuries, with a particular interest in cervical spine injuries. Alongside her studies, Brenda works as a Clinic Supervisor at the Health, Injury and Performance Hub at the university, where she supports Sport Rehabilitation students in gaining valuable placement experience.

Catherine Lillie, SFHEA

c.lillie@hull.ac.uk

Teaching Enhancement Advisor

Catherine is a Teaching Enhancement Advisor at the University of Hull. She designs, develops and delivers teaching support for GTAs and those new to teaching as Module Lead for the 20 credit *Professional Practice in T&L in HE* module and the *Passport to University Teaching* workshop. She is the Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP), and scheme lead for the D3 strand of the University's experiential Fellowship scheme, DARTE. She is also the editor for the *Teaching Essentials* site, and co-lead of the national GTA Developers Network.

Dr Michelle Smith, SFHEA

Teaching Enhancement Advisor

Michelle.a.smith@hull.ac.uk

Michelle is a Teaching Enhancement Advisor at the University of Hull. She provides support to early career academics as scheme lead for the D1 and D2 cohorts on the University's experiential Fellowship scheme, DARTE, and as Module Leader for the *Educational Enquiry* module on PCAP. She co-organises the University's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference and leads workshops, projects and programmes within the Academy. She is currently leading an evaluating impact project using Theory of Change.

Miss Amy Tomlinson, SFHEA

Lecturer in Sport Rehabilitation

Amy.tomlinson@hull.ac.uk

Amy has been a Lecturer in Sport Rehabilitation at the University of Hull since 2018, teaching various undergraduate and postgraduate modules. Her research interests lie in pedagogy, specifically student expectations, compassionate education, and transition to HE. Amy is currently part of the Compassionate Community of Practice at the University of Hull, working to improve compassion and wellbeing within the learning environment. She is also part of the central organising team for the annual Higher Education Sport conference, providing a platform for the dissemination of research findings and good practice relating to learning and teaching in HE sport programmes.
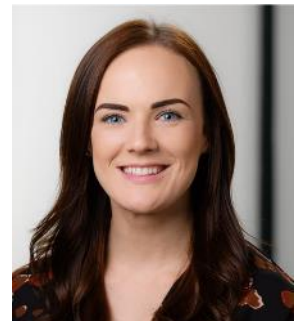
Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore the impact of interactions between undergraduate students ('students') and the postgraduate researchers ('PGWT') who teach them, on students' sense of belonging. Meaningful interactions between staff and students have been identified as a key aspect of students' sense of belonging. The unique space that postgraduates who teach occupy- both student and teacher- is widely recognized in the literature and through this dual role PGWT can provide a valuable bridge between students and academic staff. Due to the nature of their teaching - which is typically small group teaching characterised by proximity and informality - opportunities can arise for discussion of matters from the wider student experience beyond the curriculum. Activity-oriented focus groups were conducted with module leaders, PGWT and their students in the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Hull to explore each groups' perspectives, and the results were thematically analysed. Findings show that whilst students didn't explicitly recognize or use the term 'belonging', through resonance, rapport and academic enrichment PGWT created environments which aligned with definitions of belonging, including building meaningful relationships, contributing to the student experience, and creating informal spaces where students discussed both learning and personal matters. PGWT were relatable, providing authentic examples and being role models. Our findings suggest that being a teacher enables PGWT themselves to feel part of, and that they belong in, the University community. This research adds to the literature on students' perceptions of PGWT and provides recommendations for future practice.

Keywords:

Background

Students belonging

Belonging is considered a vague and indefinable concept (Blake et al., 2022) of which there is no single definition (Garden et al., 2024). However, there are common themes in the conceptualisation of belonging which suggest that it is a process which is built and developed across a student's university journey, it is relational and dependent on the quality of relationships between peers and staff, and it is shaped by demographic factors and how students view their own identities (Garden et al., 2024). Belonging is unlikely to be uniform among students (Garden et al., 2024) and, along with confidence and sense of identity, is not static but likely to rise and fall over time (Blake et al., 2022).

Recent research by WonkHE and Pearson suggests there are four areas which form the basis for belonging: connection, inclusion, support and autonomy (Blake et al., 2022) with Advance HE's Student Needs Framework (Peck, 2023) highlighting that belonging and a sense of community are based on:

- Communal settings and community building
- Meaningful peer relationships
- Meaningful staff relationships
- Identifying with interests and institution
- Space and place

Key to both these conceptualisations are relationships between staff and students.

Staff-student interactions

In a sector-wide study of belonging and engagement, Thomas (2012) identified meaningful interactions between staff and students as one of the key aspects of students' belonging which could improve their retention and success. Higher education (HE) teaching requires 'constant exchanges and the dynamic interactions between staff and students' (Matos et al., 2022) and Gillespie (2005) described these interactions as a 'place of possibility' where students can be 'affirmed, gain insight into their potential and grow toward fulfilling personal or professional

capacities'. Other studies, including those involving PGWT, have found interactions can support students' learning, confidence, enjoyment and overall experience (Ball et al., 2020; Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2018; Revell & Wainwright, 2009). In exploring students' sense of belonging through building relationships with teachers, these interactions are therefore significant and warrant further exploration.

The role of PGWT

Small group teaching or practical sessions which are characterised by proximity and informality are spaces which can provide opportunities for undergraduate students to interact with their teachers and discuss matters from both within and beyond the curriculum (Cassidy et al., 2014). Commonly, postgraduate students who teach (PGWT) are employed to facilitate or lead such teaching sessions.

It is widely recognised that as part-student, part-teacher, and often with a proximity of age to their students, PGWT occupy a 'unique niche' or 'liminal space' (Muzaka, 2009; Winstone & Moore, 2017). This can mean that they are better able to identify with their students' position and engage in 'approachability and advocacy' with and for their students (Slack & Pownall, 2023), especially in the types of interactive teaching setting they are often involved with. PGWT are however often ill-equipped to deal with such interactions (Cassidy et al., 2014), as training and development typically focusses on pedagogical approaches and teaching skills (Muzaka, 2009; Park, 2004; Young & Bippus, 2008).

Whilst the benefits and challenges associated with PGWT have been explored over a number of years (Cho et al., 2011; Jordan & Howe, 2018; Muzaka, 2009; Park, 2002) there is a tendency to focus on the perceptions of PGWT and their employers. There is however a growing body of literature drawing from students' perceptions of PGWT (e.g. Ball et al., 2020; Dillard et al., 2024; Kendall & Schussler, 2012; Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2018). This study aims to add to this by exploring and comparing the perceptions of PGWT, their students and their academic colleagues.

Purpose of the study

Through exploring the nature of these interactions, we aimed to explore if there is a value in this 'intangible aspect' of PGWT's practice (Robertson et al., 2019), which

can be developed or enhanced to support undergraduates' sense of belonging. Through recognising the value of their role, PGWT may also themselves experience an enhanced sense of belonging. The aim of this study was therefore to explore the role and value of PGWT to the undergraduate student experience, beyond their teaching of the curriculum. We aimed to answer three main research questions:

- What role and impact do PGWT have in supporting undergraduate students' sense of belonging?
- How do PGWT see their role in relation to their students?
- How can Module Leaders support PGWT in their interactions with students?

In doing so, we aimed to create a set of recommendations to support PGWT to handle these conversations and provide guidance for those who work with and support PGWT. Throughout, the term 'students' will refer to undergraduate students.

Method

Study Design and Context

This exploratory qualitative study used focus group interviews with three interrelated groups, PGWT, leaders of modules involving PGWT, and students on modules taught by PGWT. Focus groups have been described as a tool to provide deep insight into an under researched area and were considered the most appropriate methodology given their collaborative dynamic, promoting social interaction and discussion that can elicit powerful insights unlikely to occur through individual interviews (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

The study was developed as part of a student staff partnership project, a university-wide initiative aimed at empowering students and staff to improve their own experience and that of others through collaboration. During the year of data collection, the student staff partnership scheme invited projects concerned with fostering a sense of belonging through the student experience. The project proposal was approved in November 2023, and ethical approval granted by the University of Hull in March 2024. The research team consisted of three staff members and one Masters student who worked together to develop and run the project. Having a

student partner who was neither an undergraduate student or PGWT, reduced the risk of bias during data collection and analysis.

Participants

Participants for three focus groups were recruited from the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences (SSERS) at the University of Hull where small group teaching sessions are commonly taught by PGWT. Participants were purposively sampled due to being either: a student who had completed a module taught by a PGWT within the SSERS during trimester one of the 2023/2024 academic year, a PGWT who had taught a minimum of fortnightly on a module within the SSERS during trimester one of the 2023/2024 academic year, or the leader of a module taught by a PGWT within the SSERS during trimester one of the 2023/2024 academic year.

Student participants were verbally invited to participate by a member of the research team during a scheduled teaching session. Module Leaders and PGWT were invited to participate via email. Those who expressed interest received a participant information sheet at least one week prior to the focus group for their consideration. Student participants were made aware that their involvement would not affect their module or programme grades in any way.

Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured focus groups lasting up to 1 hour. Focus groups took place in a university teaching space and were facilitated by two members of the research team, including the student partner. For convenience, the student focus group took place at a time and date they were already on campus for scheduled teaching, and the PGWT and Module Leader focus groups took place at a time/date that was convenient to both the participants and research team.

Each focus group began by reiterating the purpose to participants, followed by obtaining both written and verbal confirmation of their consent to partake. Next, participants completed an anonymous free listing activity using the interactive digital presentation tool, Mentimeter, in order to promote engagement, guide discussion,

and provide participants with the opportunity to think about a topic broadly before having to provide specific verbal responses (Colucci, 2007). Participants were asked to list the types of student-PGWT interactions they had been involved in or were aware of, and the perceived impact of these interactions on students. Following this, the research team facilitated a discussion based around the Mentimeter responses.

Focus groups were audio recorded using the video management platform, Panopto, which allowed for both anonymous verbal responses and Mentimeter responses to be recorded. Panopto was selected due to its compatibility with university imaged computers, its transcription capabilities, and the ability to save recordings directly to the University approved, password protected cloud software accessible only by the research team. All transcriptions were crosschecked with focus group recordings for accuracy by the research team before data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

One member of the research team was a lecturer within the SSERS, and therefore was not involved with the student focus groups in order to reduce the impact of the potential student/lecturer power dynamic on focus group responses. Another member of the research team was a recent graduate from the SSERS and had crossed paths with some of the student focus group participants during their undergraduate study. This was considered a positive, as participants may have felt more comfortable sharing experiences. To reduce the risk of bias and maintain professional balance, at least two members of the research team were present at each focus group.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted on data from each individual focus group using NVivo software. Braun and Clarke's six phase process was employed in order to ensure a rigorous approach to analysis, which involved data familiarisation, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Clarke & Braun, 2021). This method was chosen for its flexibility as it is not tied to a specific epistemological or theoretical perspective, which makes it suitable for an under researched area and is considered an advantage within the diversity of pedagogic research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Phase one, data familiarisation, involved an iterative process of reading and re-reading the data whilst noting down ideas for coding. Phase two, generating initial codes, involved organising data from each focus group into meaningful and coherent groups. Phase three, searching for themes, involved combining codes from across the three data sets to form potential themes. Phase four, reviewing themes, involved quality checking to ensure that data was accurately represented within the themes and examining for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Phase five, defining and naming themes, involved ensuring that themes have a clear focus and developing theme names that accurately represented the data within. And phase six, producing the report, involved telling the story of the data in an analytical way with specific relation to the research question. All authors were involved in this process.

Results

A total of 11 participants were recruited for three focus groups, including one group of students who had been taught by a PGWT (n=4), one group of PGWT (n=3), and one group of Module Leaders who had regular PGWT involvement in their modules (n=4). The PGWT recruited here were mainly involved in small group (<20) practical teaching on modules within the SSERS, but did occasionally contribute towards seminars and assessments. Teaching responsibilities varied from assisting Module Leaders, leading individual tasks within a session, and leading full sessions.

Following thematic analysis, three themes were identified and developed relating to the impact of PGWT on students' sense of belonging: resonance, rapport, and academic enrichment. Student, PGWT, and Module Leader perspectives relating to each theme are presented separately. Compelling verbatim quotes that accurately represent the data are included to add authenticity.

Resonance
This theme reflects the perception of resonance between students and PGWT, particularly feelings of relatability and inspiration that may improve students' sense of belonging within the learning community.

Students perceived PGWT to be more relatable than traditional lecturers, as although they have teaching responsibilities, they are still engaged in formal learning, with one student stating *'it's almost like we're more equal'*. Students found it inspiring that someone who they considered relatable was able to answer questions and help them, providing confidence that knowledge acquisition was achievable. It was suggested that PGWT may be better able to see both sides of learning and teaching, and may be more understanding of and compassionate towards current learning challenges given their more recent undergraduate experience than most lecturers:

'I think they're a bit more relatable to me because they're only one step or two steps ahead of me, whereas lecturers may have graduated a long time ago' (Student).

PGWT also commented on the relatability of being a recent undergraduate, and suggested that this may help students interpret challenging topics:

'I only went through that same module about four or five years ago, so I kind of knew the content from there and how I interpreted it, which meant I could relay that to students in more of a student manner' (PGWT).

As many PGWT engage in part time work within the profession alongside their studies and/or have extensive placement experience, students valued the chance to discuss career pathways and receive insights applicable to current practice. They particularly valued being able to have these conversations informally whilst completing tasks in a teaching session, rather than at an organised careers talk. There was a sense that PGWT were more empathetic to undergraduate student career concerns and provided more career inspiration than lecturers given their close proximity in academic journey.

PGWT reported that sharing examples of times in which they hadn't been particularly successful seemed to be relatable for students, who engaged well in these discussions and were keen to question PGWT on ways to avoid or overcome these situations. They also commented on the inspiration students seemed to gain from discussions around research activity. PGWT reported having discussions about their undergraduate dissertation projects and current postgraduate research with

students, recalling that students felt comfortable to ask for guidance and supervision support having been able to relate to interest in a similar topic at a similar level.

Module Leaders noted that students are often interested in and inspired by the academic journey of PGWT, specifically how and why they pursued advanced degrees. They explained that this interest helps students to better understand the pathways available to them and the potential benefits of continued education:
'Some of them are interested in the journey in terms of progressing from undergrad right the way through to a PhD and then maybe working as a staff member here' (Student)*.*
Module Leaders also highlighted the value of PGWT as relatable role models, making students feel that achieving similar success is possible:
'I think it gets them thinking, if they could do it, potentially I can do it. So that's really good, you know, it breaks down a lot of barriers' (Module Leader).
This was reported to be particularly valuable for local students, where module leaders have noticed that seeing someone from a similar background succeed in the field motivates students to believe in their own potential and take their studies seriously.
'You can see a bit of a light switch go on in their head. They're like right, so this guy was where I was a few years ago, and now, he's teaching at university, or doing a PhD' (Module Leader).

Rapport
This theme reflects the perception of rapport between students and PGWT, particularly the building of relationships and comfort in a learning setting, which may improve students' sense of belonging within the community.

Students reported finding it easier to discuss course-related content with a PGWT, suggesting that these conversations helped to increase confidence in their theoretical knowledge. They discussed being able to talk to the PGWT about topics that they may not want to discuss with the module leader, with one student stating *'You can have that educated conversation a bit easier with the postgrad than you can with the lecturer'*.

This was confirmed by the PGWT, who also reported feeling that students were more comfortable asking them questions about certain topics:

'It's almost that they didn't feel comfortable enough to ask the actual lecturer, because they didn't want to indirectly oppose what the lecturer was saying' (PGWT). Module Leaders also agreed, suggesting that students may find PGWT less intimidating, and may also be more comfortable with the closer age gap between PGWT and students compared to Module Leaders and students:

'I suppose that as the PGWT are a lot younger than me, you maybe would expect that the students would be a bit more comfortable and a lot more likely to ask somebody who is only a few years older than them' (Module Leader).

Students valued the opportunity to converse with PGWT in different environments such as on placement, and suggested that this allowed them to build a better rapport by getting to know them on a personal level. Students also reported that building the relationship in a different environment made it easier for them when returning to the classroom.

PGWT highlighted the significance of interactions taking place in between formal teaching sessions, noting that conversations within these gaps are '*some of the best'*. They also explained that their interactions with students can be more informal without the Module Leader present, and feel more like student-student conversations than PGWT-student:

'I feel like it depends what relationship the students have with the lecturer that's there and how they act, because sometimes it can be a little bit more formal, and then if it's just me on my own, it can be a bit more informal' (PGWT).

Module leaders explained how student-PGWT interactions increase in frequency across the trimester as students become more familiar with the PGWT. This results in an increased number of questions being directed towards the PGWT and engagement in more informal conversations, particularly at the start and end of teaching sessions:

'As the students are warming up, once the PGWT knows them it might be, what have you been up to? What did you do this weekend? How are you? That kind of thing.

And then a little bit of friendly banter about what they're doing, you know' (Module Leader).

In addition to benefitting students, the rapport developed between students and PGWT also benefits the PGWT themselves, who reported an increased sense of belonging within the institution:

'You walk around campus and know the sport staff but that's about it. Whereas when you end up seeing maybe a second-year student that you taught, you can just say hi as you're passing by, and it's just a bit more of a familiar face in the department around campus' (PGWT).

Academic Enrichment

This theme reflects the perceived academic enrichment experienced as a result of student- PGWT interactions. Specifically, the additional support received, improved engagement, and overall enhanced academic experience which may improve students' sense of belonging within the community.

Both students and Module Leaders described how the presence of PGWT within practical sessions allowed for additional support and interactivity. Students valued the ability to ask more questions, have more regular discussions, and have more opportunities to '*bounce ideas off'* an individual with subject knowledge, which they felt had helped them to engage with creative tasks and gain deeper understanding. Module leaders noted that having PGWT present doubled the amount of one-to-one time students received and meant that there was more interaction more of the time, which they found particularly beneficial when teaching complex topics.

'If it's just one lecturer, it can be hard for them to split their time between the groups, so yeah, I found them [PGWT] beneficial' (student).

'I can only spend so much time with them, I was on my own with 20 students on a difficult module to teach practically and theoretically. A lot of students in the past said that they had to spend time waiting for someone to answer a question, but with the help of the PGWT that was 100% better' (Module Leader).

Students also discussed the increased amount of personalised feedback received when PGWT were in their sessions, which helped them to correct mistakes, gain confidence, and improve their overall performance.

Both students and Module Leaders commented on how PGWT provide learning reinforcement by offering additional explanations and perspectives on the material being taught. Students felt that this helped them to better understand theoretical content and apply it in practical settings and real-world scenarios. Module leaders noticed how the variation in language, teaching style and methods helped to reach students who may struggle with the lecturer's approach, and suggested that this improved overall engagement. They reported that previously disengaged students had demonstrated significant improvement, particularly by engaging in extracurricular activities and preparing more effectively for assessments.

Although students and Module Leaders commented on the positive impact of PGWT on engagement, PGWT themselves discussed the challenges around achieving this. They explained how it can be exhausting to create and maintain an engaging atmosphere with some groups, particularly when attendance is poor. They also explained how it can often be hard to '*break the silence*' at the start of sessions, but once engagement starts, students are usually happy to contribute answers to questions even if they may be incorrect. PGWT felt that engagement was largely driven by them, and commented that '*they [students] wouldn't go out of their way to engage unless we were pulling them in*'.

Module leaders felt that PGWT enhanced the quality of teaching sessions overall, leading to greater student enjoyment and a better learning experience. They described student-PGWT interactions as '*universally positive*' with one Module Leader commenting:
'*There's not been a single negative interaction, a single situation where a PGWT has made the job harder or made the teaching environment less effective*' (Module Leader).

Interestingly, students were clear that they had found it valuable to have a PGWT within their teaching sessions overall, however commented that they hadn't thought of this as directly impacting their feelings of belonging.

Discussion

This exploratory study aimed to explore the role and impact of PGWT for undergraduate students' sense of belonging. Whilst students themselves didn't explicitly use the term 'belonging', the findings identified three areas - resonance, rapport and academic enrichment - where PGWT's contributions create teaching and learning environments which align with Peck's (2023) aspects of belonging.

Approachability and relatability are commonly cited attributes of PGWT (e.g. Ball et al., 2020; Muzaka, 2009; Slack & Pownall, 2023) and findings from this study indicate that PGWT were able to use these benefits to create rapport and resonance with their students, which increased over the trimester. The nature of the teaching PGWT were conducting, including placements and practical sessions, enabled PGWT to get to know their students on a personal level which then continued into the more formal classroom environment. Through creating and sustaining these meaningful relationships with and between students (Peck, 2023), PGWT could support students' learning by creating environments where students felt more comfortable to contribute their thoughts and discuss both academic and non-academic topics.

Students, PGWT and Module Leaders all recognised that students found it easier to have conversations about course-related content with PGWT than with academic staff due to their near-peer status and the opportunities for conversation afforded by the teaching setting. PGWT saw their role in relation to their students as providing a bridge between them and academic staff, a view which was shared by both groups. The 'unique niche' or 'liminal space' (Muzaka, 2009; Winstone & Moore, 2017) which PGWT occupy, being both teacher and student, enabled them to relate to their students and to inspire them, which had clear benefits for students and Module Leaders in terms of motivation, engagement and learning. Their sharing of their academic journey (including study successes and challenges) and their role modelling of career options contributed to students being able to identify with their interests (Peck, 2023), providing further motivation for their studies. The contributions PGWT made to taught sessions also benefitted Module Leaders

through spreading the workload and enabling more students to have 1-1 input. Through this PGWT contributed to creating communal settings and community building (Peck, 2023) for and between both groups.

Whilst this study was focussed on undergraduate students' belonging, an emergent theme was that being involved in teaching supported PGWT's own sense of belonging in the institution. Being a PhD student can feel like a lonely and isolated time (Cantor, 2020) but having a teaching role gave the PGWT in our study an identity and purpose beyond their research, and enabled them to build meaningful relationships with others, through which they felt part of a campus and departmental community, aligning with Peck's (2023) conceptions of belonging.

Recommendations
The findings from this and other studies (e.g. Ball et al., 2020; Goodwin et al., 2023) show that there can be value for all parties in providing supported teaching opportunities which enable PGWT to work closely with students. We recommend that training and development for PGWT should include how to manage interactions with students and their role in supporting learning so that the benefits of these encounters are maximised. Our findings relating to the role that teaching has in supporting PGWT's own sense of belonging could also be explored further with the potential to contribute to the body of work on the benefits that PGWT's work with students has.

Building on previous calls to 'treat GTAs as colleagues' (Slack & Pownall, 2023), Module Leaders can support PGWT in their interactions with students by actively involving them in the design and delivery of the module over a sustained period of time. Providing guidance to PGWT on how to escalate and discuss any sensitive issues which might be divulged by students during informal interactions would ensure that interactions are handled appropriately. This has the potential to enhance the value of these interactions, thereby further supporting students' sense of belonging and community, whilst also capitalising on the unique position which PGWT occupy.

Whilst this was a small-scale study, it could be repeated across other academic disciplines and teaching settings to further explore perceptions of PGWT and highlight the value and role they have in students' - and their own - sense of belonging.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare that this study was conducted in the absence of any relationships that could be considered conflict of interest.

References

Akyıldız, S. T., & Ahmed, K. H. (2021). An overview of qualitative research and focus group discussion. *International Journal of Academic Research in Education*, *7*(1), 1-15.

Ball, V., Joyce, A., & Mills, C. (2020). "They just have more of a vibe of being 'one of us'": undergraduate law student perceptions of PhD tutors. *The Law Teacher*, *54*(3), 327-348.

Blake, S., Capper, G., & Jackson, A. (2022). *Building Belonging in Higher Education*. https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2022/10/Building-Belonging-October-2022.pdf

Cantor, G. (2020). The loneliness of the long-distance (PhD) researcher. *Psychodynamic Practice*, *26*(1), 56-67. https://doi.org/10.1080/14753634.2019.1645805

Cassidy, A., Dee, J., Lam, V. K., Welsh, A., & Fox, J. (2014). Teaching assistants thrive in a collaborative team: A TA development case study. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, *7*(3).

Cho, Y., Kim, M., Svinicki, M. D., & Decker, M. L. (2011). Exploring teaching concerns and characteristics of graduate teaching assistants. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *16*(3), 267-279.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Colucci, E. (2007). "Focus groups can be fun": The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. *Qualitative health research*, *17*(10), 1422-1433.

Dillard, J. B., Sadek, K., & Muenks, K. (2024). Undergraduate perceptions of graduate teaching assistants: competence, relatedness, and autonomy in practice. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *43*(1), 32-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2215169

Garden, C., Watchman Smith, N., Naughton, C., Skelton, F., Calabrese, P., Hunter, L., Haddow, C., & Azam, F. (2024). Student Belonging Good Practice Guide.

Gillespie, M. (2005). Student–teacher connection: a place of possibility. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *52*(2), 211-219.

Goodwin, E. C., Cary, J. R., Phan, V. D., Therrien, H., & Shortlidge, E. E. (2023). Graduate teaching assistants impact student motivation and engagement in course-based undergraduate research experiences. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *60*(9), 1967-1997.

Jordan, K., & Howe, C. (2018). The perceived benefits and problems associated with teaching activities undertaken by doctoral students. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *23*(4), 504-521. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1414787

Kamberelis, G., & Dimitriadis, G. (2005). Focus groups: Strategic articulations of pedagogy, politics, and inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 887-907). Sage Publications Ltd.

Kendall, K. D., & Schussler, E. E. (2012). Does instructor type matter? Undergraduate student perception of graduate teaching assistants and professors. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, *11*(2), 187-199.

Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland journal of higher education*, *9*(3).

Matos, M. d. M., Iaochite, R. T., & Sharp, J. G. (2022). Lecturer self-efficacy beliefs: an integrative review and synthesis of relevant literature. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *46*(2), 225-245. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1905155

Muzaka, V. (2009). The niche of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs): Perceptions and reflections. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *14*(1), 1-12.

Nasser-Abu Alhija, F., & Fresko, B. (2018). Graduate teaching assistants: how well do their students think they do? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *43*(6), 943-954.

Park, C. (2002). Neither fish nor fowl? The perceived benefits and problems of using graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to teach undergraduate students. *Higher Education Review*, *35*(1), 50-62.

Park, C. (2004). The graduate teaching assistant (GTA): Lessons from North American experience. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *9*(3), 349-361.

Peck, E. (2023). *Student Needs Framework*. AdvanceHE. https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/AHE%20Framework%20of%20Student%20Needs_1695312109.pdf

Revell, A., & Wainwright, E. (2009). What Makes Lectures 'Unmissable'? Insights into Teaching Excellence and Active Learning. *Journal of geography in higher education*, *33*(2), 209-223. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260802276771

Robertson, A., Cleaver, E., & Smart, F. (2019). *Beyond the metrics: Identifying, evidencing and enhancing the less tangible aspects of higher education*.

Slack, H. R., & Pownall, M. (2023). 'Treat GTAs as colleagues, rather than spare parts': the identity, agency, and wellbeing of graduate teaching assistants. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *47*(9), 1262-1275.

Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, *100*(1-99), 1-102.

Winstone, N., & Moore, D. (2017). Sometimes fish, sometimes fowl? Liminality, identity work and identity malleability in graduate teaching assistants. *Innovations in education and teaching international*, *54*(5), 494-502.

Young, S. L., & Bippus, A. M. (2008). Assessment of graduate teaching assistant (GTA) training: A case study of a training program and its impact on GTAs. *Communication Teacher*, *22*(4), 116-129.