

Health & Safety warning :

THE FOLLOWING SLIDES COME
WITH **ALOT** OF COLOUR!
YOU MAY WANT TO GRAB A PAIR
OF SUNGLASSES !



In-Reach><supports><Out-Reach

*Bridging the Attainment Gap for underrepresented students
in **Fashion** Higher Education*

My intervention focuses on students studying vocational Fashion BTECs in Further Education—an often-overlooked route into HE. I intend to pilot a project with two FE colleges: New City College in London (in person) and Carmel College in the Northeast (online).



WHY

My Equity & lived experience:

This project comes from my own journey working in Outreach and now leading on KE for Fashion @CSM, where I've seen how students from working-class and underrepresented backgrounds often feel like they don't fully belong in high-pressure creative spaces.

My Ethical responsibility as an educator:

I believe widening access isn't enough on its own; ethically, we need to support students once they arrive. This intervention responds to that responsibility by focusing on confidence, belonging, and staying on course — not just getting in.

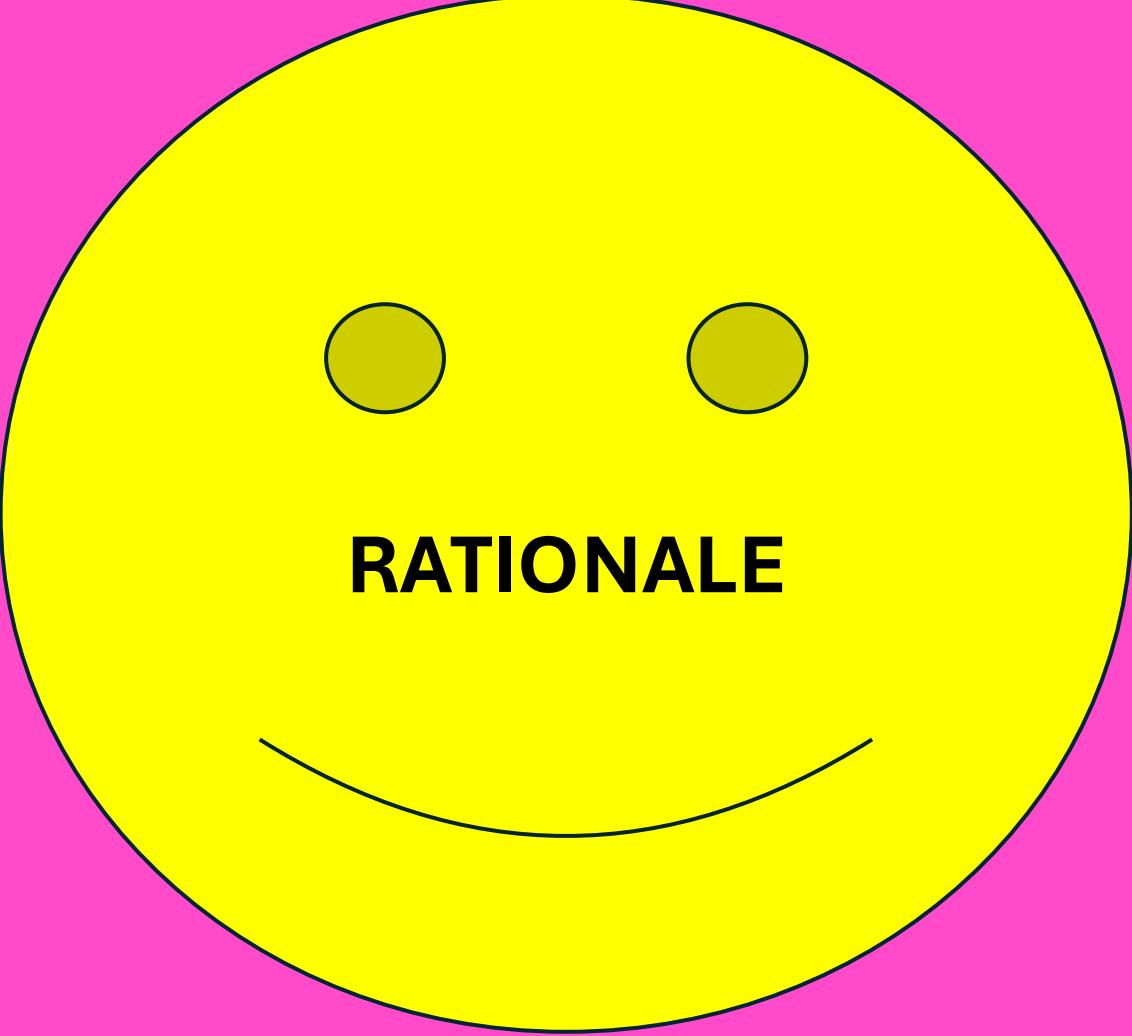
My Reflective practice:

Through this intervention. & action research, I'm reflecting on my own role and practice, listening to students and FE tutors, and using their experiences to shape more inclusive and realistic ways of supporting transition into Fashion HE & curriculum fit for ALL!

Equity: Informed by my outreach background, addressing barriers to belonging in Fashion HE

Ethics: Supporting students beyond access, recognising responsibility for confidence, retention, and wellbeing.

Reflection: Using student and tutor voices to reflect and improve inclusive transition practices.



RATIONALE

Personal and professional insight:

I chose this intervention because my work in Widening Participation and my current role, which has shown me that access alone doesn't guarantee belonging or success.

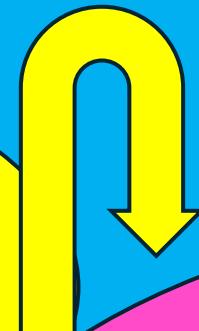
Grounded in trusted practice:

Reading Jackie McManus's work on class and inequality in art education reflects what I've seen in practice, and her thinking has strongly shaped how I approach this project. (I worked with Jackie for many years).

Reflective and practical change:

Using action research (McNiff), I want to reflect on my own role and create realistic, ethical support that improves transition from FE to Fashion HE
McNiff made action research feel doable, relevant and directly connected to my values as an educator

**Final questions/
reflections for
myself:**



*What might be my overall research question?
Purpose? Why ? How?
What do I want to achieve from this research?*

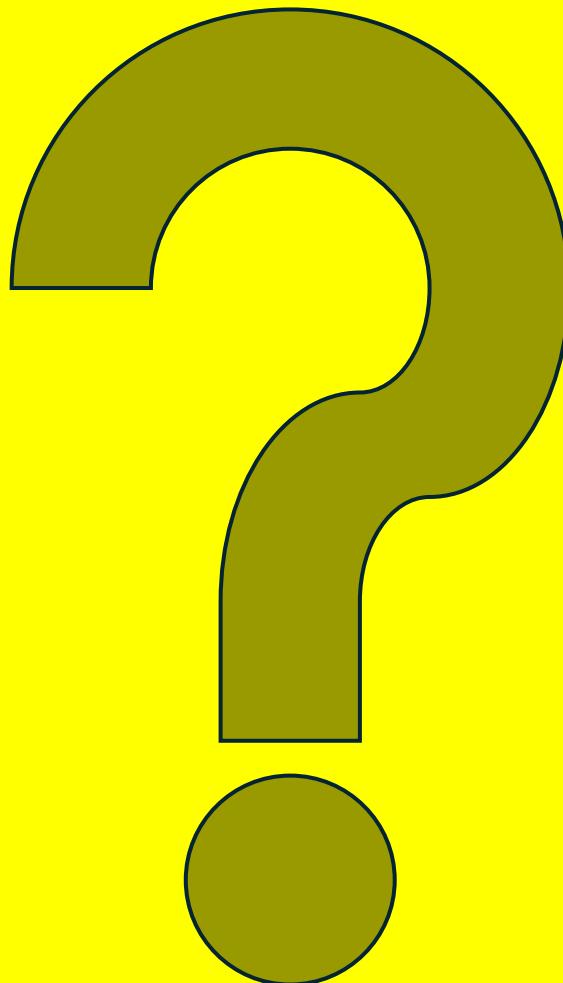
**A balanced education/ pedagogy for all –
Does CSM offer this? How can my
Intervention help with this?**





Research Methods:
What, Why & How ?

What



QUESTIONNAIRES

Questions for FE Tutors:

- 1 From your perspective, what are the biggest challenges your students face when transitioning from a vocational FE Fashion course into HE?**
- 2 In what areas do you feel your students are least prepared for HE-level expectations, financial? Pedagogy? Independent learning?**
- 3 What changes or additions to the FE curriculum do you think could better prepare students for HE studies in Fashion?**
- 4 How could collaboration with university staff or students support your learners' confidence or understanding of HE pedagogy? 121 visits, talks, students or tutors, more knowledge on courses?**
- 5 What kinds of pre-BA sessions, resources, or experiences would you find most valuable for your students?**
- 6 Is there anything you would like universities (such as CSM) to understand about vocational-route students and their strengths/needs?**

Questionnaire for FE students progressed to HE

1 What felt most challenging when you first arrived in, HE after your FE course?

2 Were there any aspects of the HE curriculum, projects that felt unfamiliar? or teaching style that surprising or different to FE?

3 Did you experience any feelings of being “behind,” out of place, or unsure of what was expected? If so, can you give examples?

4 Do you know what Imposter syndrome is? At any point did you feel this? would you like to give examples?

5 What types of support (from FE or university) would have helped you feel more confident starting your BA?

6 Are there any skills, knowledge areas, or experiences you wish you had been introduced to earlier in FE, that might have helped you prepare for HE?

7 Do you feel there is a class divide or cultural divide within HE/CSM? If so, how does it affect you or your peers?

8a As a student, do you feel there are spoken or unspoken expectations around how students should dress or present themselves within your course or in critiques?

Have you ever felt judged, supported, or misunderstood because of how you dress or present yourself?

8 Do you feel your background, culture, or personal identity is recognised and valued within your design work and creative practice on the course?

For example, do you feel encouraged to draw from your own experiences, or have you ever felt pressure to adapt your work to fit certain expectations?

WHY ?

Questionnaires allowed accessible, reflective participation from both FE tutors and FE→HE students, enabling voices that may feel less confident in interviews to contribute ethically and anonymously (McNiff, 2017; BERA, 2024).

Structured open questions supported clear, manageable analysis, drawing on Corman's (2013) use of simple analytic prompts, suitable for a small-scale Action Research cycle.

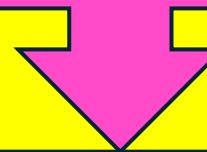
HOW



X2 FE Tutors

X1 London FE College

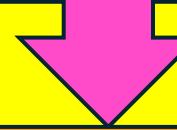
X1 Northen FE College



X2 HE students

X1 from London FE college

X1 from Northen FE college



In the end:

Interviewed

X4 FE Tutors

X3 CSM students

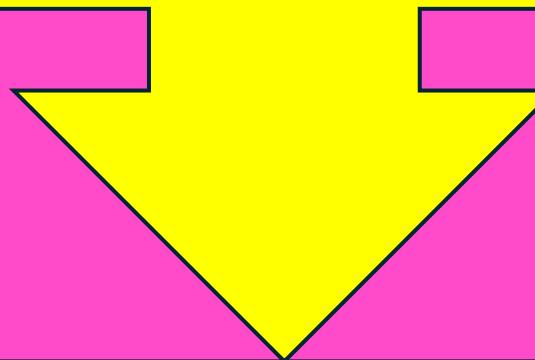
References & Literature

Action Research & Methodology: McNiff (2017); Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) – informed iterative planning, reflection, and participatory approach with FE students.

Ethical & Interview Guidance: BERA (2024); Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) – ensured interviews were ethical, sensitive, and meaningful.

Data Analysis: Kara (2015); Corman (2013) – structured qualitative analysis and clear, replicable methods.

Widening Participation & Creative Education: Bhagat & O'Neill (2011); McManus (2009); NSEAD & Warwick Commission – contextualised social justice, underrepresentation, and FE-HE transitions.



Impact on Project: Literature guided design of questionnaires, informed reflection on student needs, supported ethical handling of sensitive data, and reinforced focus on meaningful interventions for FE students



Findings.....

The biggest challenge was the sudden jump in independence

Clearer explanations of what was expected in HE would have really helped

“There’s a particular ‘CSM look’ that feels more accepted. It affected my confidence in critiques.”

In FE there was a lot more structure and regular guidance,

I felt like I had a huge gap in ability with my peers as a lot of them had more developed skills

I wasn’t always sure how to understand or use the feedback.

Students often find independent learning particularly challenging when transitioning to higher education.

When it comes to design processes, understanding HE methodology from idea generation to design development and beyond

Exposure to HE environments through campus visits or collaborative projects can normalise the experience and make the transition feel less intimidating.

Live briefs that encourage them to develop ideas independently, discuss and share ideas and collaborate with others

Some students have no idea of the expectations of a HE course and find it difficult to cope with the demands

Use of language, more academic so that the curriculum aligns more effectively starting at FE level.

Summary of Findings:

Leading to actions needed:

Barriers & Challenges

Finance – Many students choose local study to avoid debt.

Independence & Self-directed Learning – Adapting to less structured HE environment.

Imposter Syndrome & Feeling “Behind” – Students struggle with confidence.

Dress & Presentation Expectations – Unspoken norms affect confidence in critiques.

Cultural & Class Divides – Impacts group work and peer collaboration.

Support & Solutions

Aligned Project Work – FE projects mapped to HE expectations.

Mentoring & Workshops – Small group or 1:1 support to build confidence.

Inclusive Practices – Awareness of unconscious bias & valuing student backgrounds.

Practical Guidance – Time management, research, presentation, and independent study strategies.

“There’s a particular ‘CSM look’ that feels more accepted. It affected my confidence in critiques.”

The findings revealed three consistent patterns across tutor and student responses



Overall, the findings suggest that widening participation must move beyond access alone. To support attainment and retention in Fashion HE, institutions need to embed belonging, transparency, and cultural awareness into everyday teaching practice.



- <Scale FE-HE alignment through inclusive, industry-linked project work to develop skills and confidence. Intervention
- <Embed reflective, independent practice in FE curricula to bridge gaps and support underrepresented students. Intervention
- <Strengthen UK fashion and textiles sector via collaboration, domestic production, and applied learning. Through my KE work!