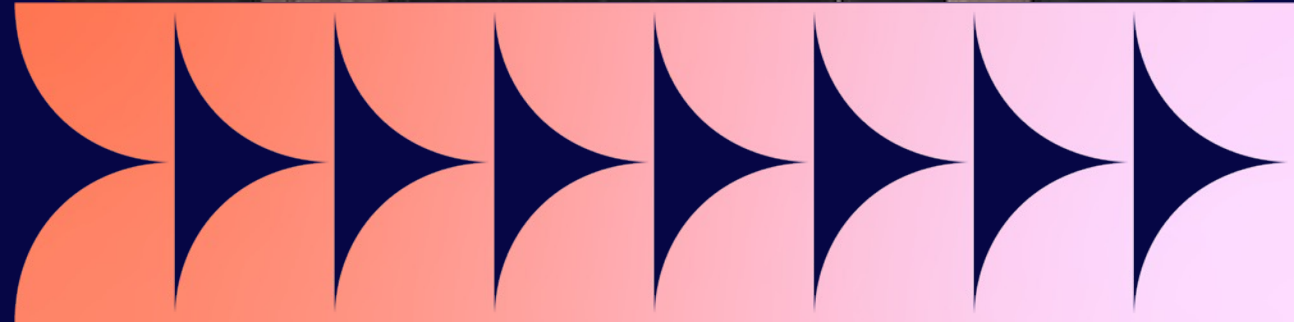# Welcome
we start @ 14.00

Informal coffee catch up: please introduce yourself: say hello, tell us where you are & what the weather's like!

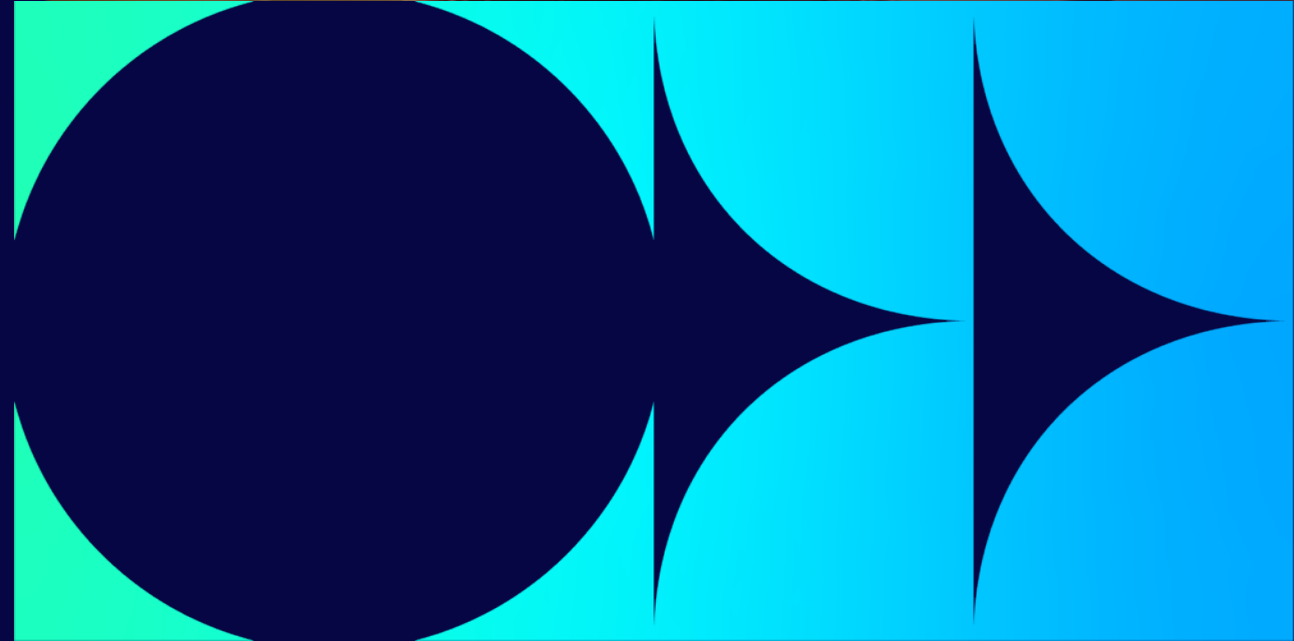on mic or in chat!

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Programme:

13.45 – 14.00	**Coffee and Registration**
14.00 – 14.05	Welcome - Padlet: https://padlet.com/azumahcarol/open-university-iunvesq5ii5xfrti
14.05 – 14.20	Keynote: Creating Sticky Learning Spaces, Dr Carol Azumah Dennis
14.20 – 14.35	The emotional labour of online course discussion forums: insights from an autoethnography, Dr Lucy Rodriguez-Leon
14.35 – 14.50	The Thinking for Myself Project: creating an online environment that enables undergraduate distance learners independent thinking, Dr Sarah Lightfoot
14.50 – 15.05	**Break**
15.05 – 15.20	Wellbeing of distance education students: The importance of their work and family, Dr Philippa Waterhouse
15.20 – 15.35	Concurrent (Full-time) students in Education Studies (Primary), Dr Carolyn Cooke and Dr Lore Gallastegi
15.35 – 15.55	Group activity: Head, Heart and Hands
15.55 – 16.00	Closing Comments

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There is an intimate link between a sense of belonging and academic success (Cousin and Cureton 2012; Tomas 2012). Put plainly, if we want to see better degree attainment and a reduction in the awarding gap, we need to create learning spaces to which students feel they belong.

As Pulwar (2004) so powerfully explains, there is a distinction between occupying a space – being included - and belonging to it. I am mindful here of Douglas's (1966) anthropological conception of 'rubbish' as matter out of place.

50 narratives @ 50

Dennis & Clifton (2022) Images of identity and belonging

What personal, professional and academic trajectories surround participation in Postgraduate Study?

Buoyant Literature about retention / withdrawal but:

- undergraduate
- Full-time
- Bricks and Mortar university
- Normative construction of 'the student'

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Usher (2001) offers a series of cautionary tales about research. In one such instructive, the researcher in the narrative guise of a detective draws upon her powers of deep penetrating observation and highly developed reasoning to unlock the secrets ensconced in the labyrinthine data library. A truth emerges, but not from true method. It is instead derived from a serendipitous stumbling across rather than discovery. We equivocated between theory and data, sometimes reading up from data to theme, other times reading down, recalling what others have written (MacLure, 2008), listening for echoes and resonances.

- Beyond their encyclopaedic value of providing a realistic reconstruction of a life as lived, photo-elicitation interviews also have a projective value.

- This goes beyond the capacity to record objects, persons, and situations. Interpretations and responses can acquire multiple and unpredictable meanings. Below their 'surface content,' they can become charged with highly subjective meanings and values that can ultimately be opened up only through *'the projective interpretation by the native'* (Collier and Collier, 1986: 108).

Statement One: adult learners traverse multiple identities: some they actively seek out; others are driven by a sense of need or obligation

Statement Two: to belong is a fundamental need: it is only by through 'belonging' that fully embrace a sense of fulfilment that emerges from being with others

Statement Three: whilst working at a physical distance it is possible to create safe and enduring environments in which digital pedagogies flourish and learning prospers

Statement Four: despite their pervasiveness, online spaces can give rise to feelings of disconnection and disorientation, the 'support from people who really are interested in what you're doing' makes a decisive difference.

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what I hinted at with the [image provided] was this negotiation of space and the relationship ... I had a lot of arguments [with my partner] about ... my availability and about my tendency to duck out of life when a deadline was approaching and not being available ....

Student Interview CEd #2
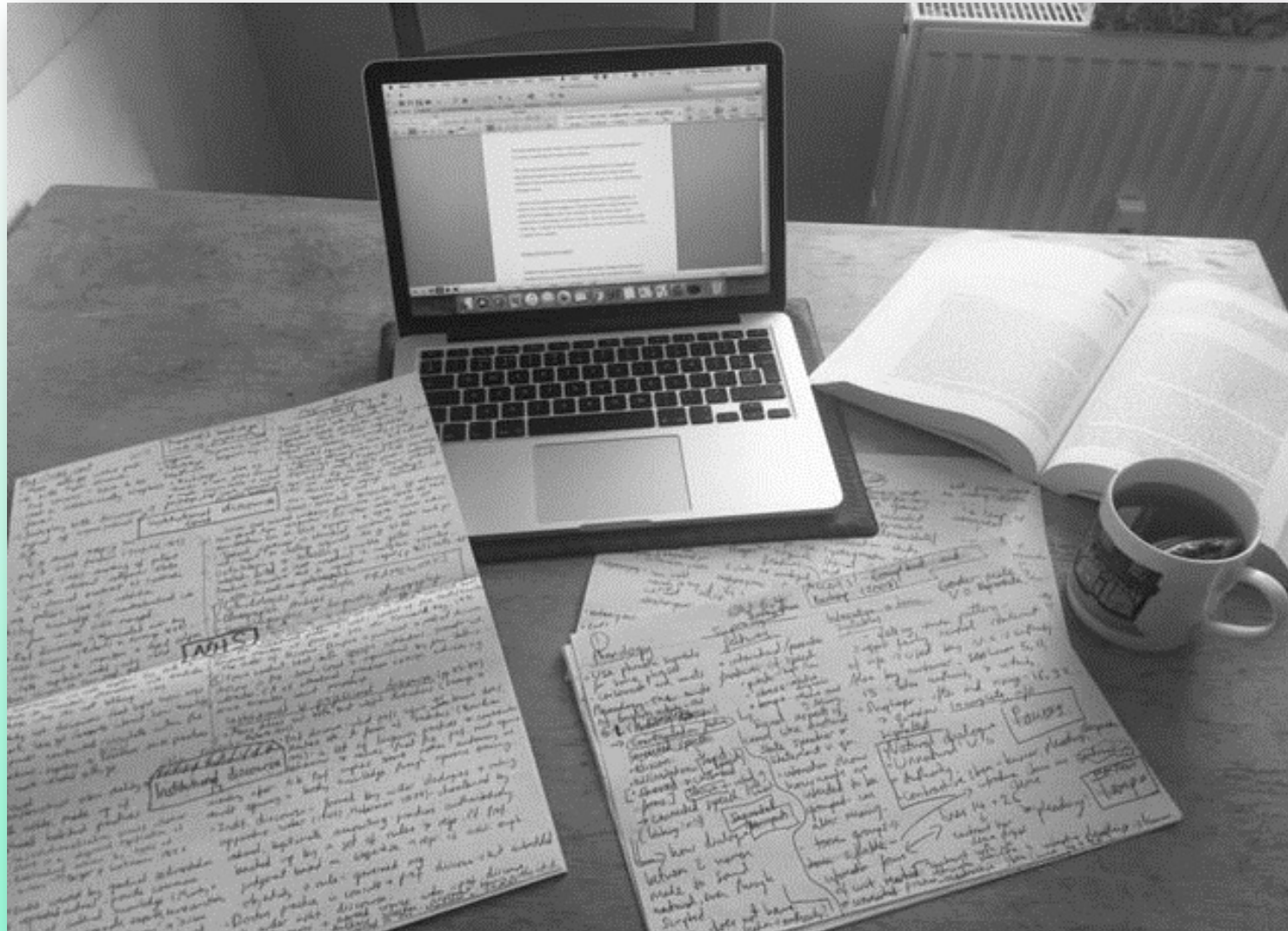
identities are often woven together. It is the attempt at weaving incommensurate identities together that creates collision – particularly if you feel trapped and unable to navigate between competing demands on who you are and where you belong.

I've heard so many amazing stories about [the university from] those who did their undergrad ...   did their masters ... now doing their PhD. They, you know, consider it like part of their family pretty much, because it's been such a large part of their life for years and years.

Student Interview CEL #1

Student success, bounded in programme terms, is charted from the moment of registration to the moment of certification or withdrawal. These narratives suggest a frame that slips beyond that defined by the institutional programme from learning desire to learning fulfilment, which may involve registration, withdrawal and either re-registration or the fulfilment of learning desire in unexpected, unanticipated and unpredictable ways.
Dennis & Clifton, 2021
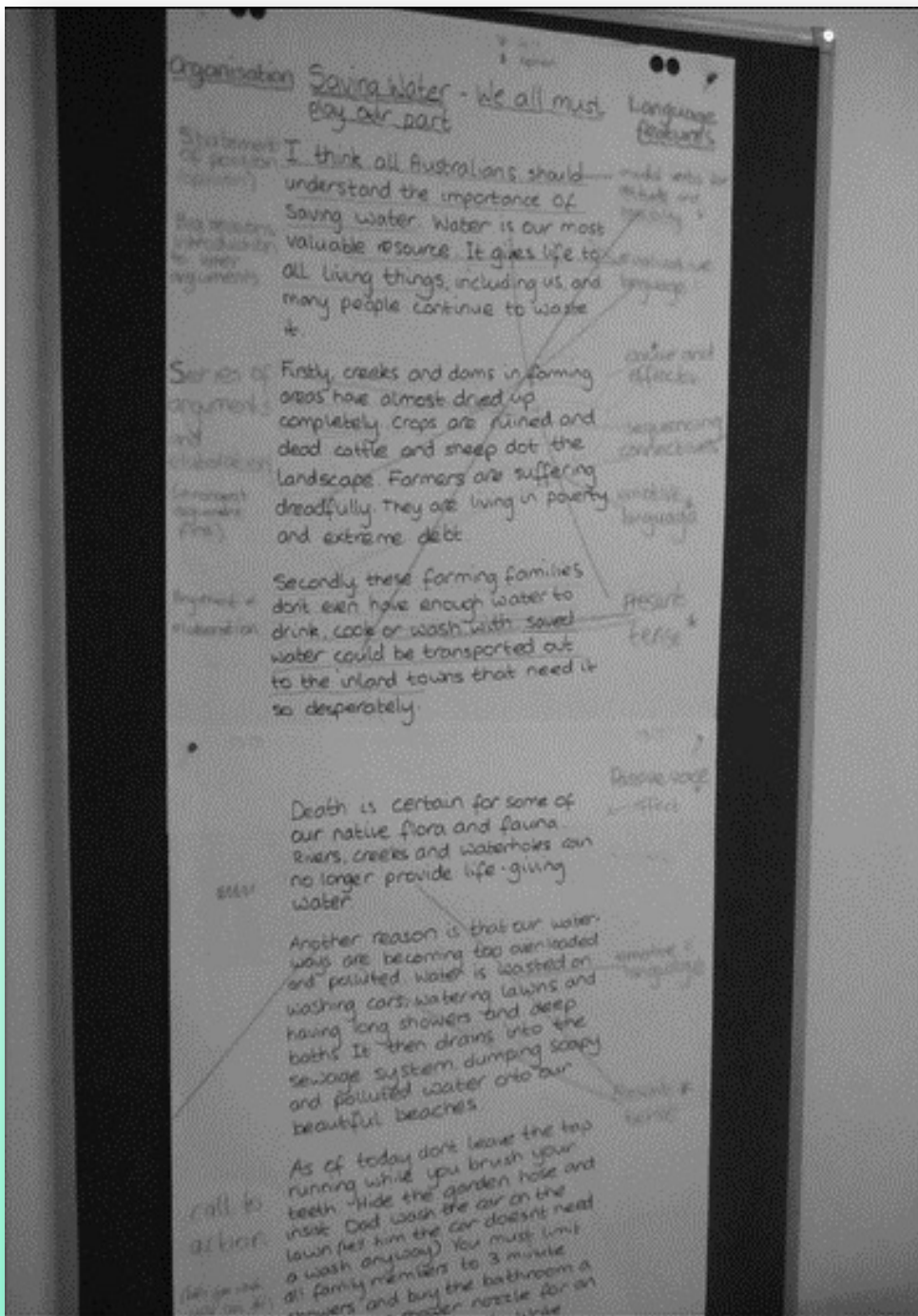
It's a completely different experience because obviously, [in a bricks-and-mortar University] you're interacting with people, you're going to lectures in theatre rooms and tutorials with your professors and … sitting at home at your desk or at your dining table, or any other space that you can find in your household to do stuff was a new experience.

Student Interview CEd #7

… online learning does not exist outside of a physical realm. It is part of a material world of movement, placement and practices. It involves (extends) the body and the person whether they are inspired, bored, lonely or engaged. Despite its online nature, there is nothing virtual about CC#7's learning. Despite having an incomplete MA, there is nothing incomplete about the impact postgraduate study has had on CC#7.

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Teachers and learners are making sense of a whole lot of different kinds of information all the time and trying to find a coherence to them and sometimes in those situations you are the learner, sometimes you're the teacher ... sometimes you're ... all those things in the space of about three minutes

The shift from analogue - stable, fixed and knowable, to the digital - shifting, unstable and ambiguous – gives rise to radical uncertainty. The disaggregation of voice, presence and body – renders the taken for granted familiarity of the pedagogic exchange strange and exotic. This reshapes the pedagogic encounter. In the digital university the ontological security of a lecture hall and everything that accompanies it, is thrown into doubt. Dennis & Clifton, 2021

comments or questions?

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