

**Compassionate pedagogies**

**Rationale**

Compassionate pedagogies place "the notion of the students’ well-being being at the core of the university mission"(Gibbs 2017). It is a holistic term that frames student wellbeing as a natural concern of teaching staff and reasserts the intrinsic connection between student wellbeing and learning, and the classroom as an appropriate context for addressing this. Authors such as Gibbs emphasize the importance of a teacher establishing an appropriate relational context to allow learning to take place (Gibbs 2014), this aligns with the perspective that learning requires a balance of security or psychological safety (Edmundson 2014) and challenge (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Compassionate pedagogies can be considered part of a cognate group including empathy (on the curriculum in nursing and health courses), and emotional labour (in education and youth services and social work). The phrase itself is a broad umbrella term used to describe a range of approaches that address the social and emotional aspects of learning. Different disciplines draw on a range of research and different paradigms to explain affective aspects of learning. So the rationales, and research evidence presented are diverse, drawing on literature as varied as neurology, psychology, ethnography, business, psychotherapy and computing.

Gilbert (2019) defines compassion not as an emotion but as a cognitive process involving 2 distinct phases; "noticing distress or disadvantaging of oneself and/or others and doing something (smart) to reduce or prevent that." He maintains that focusing on underlying psychosocial processes of group behaviour benefits students and draws on ethnographic research examining eye gaze and interaction patterns. His work suggests that exploring group work processes collaboratively supports development of skills that allow for effective group learning required for success at university.

Gilbert's approach to compassionate pedagogy is a holistic one that combines various classroom practices including; student voice work, students as researchers (micro ethnographers), students as reflective practitioners, enquiry based learning and embedded subject specific academic study skills. This draws on research on group behaviour (effective and non-effective) & ways to influence communication of other group members. More equitable group engagement is directly correlated with improved group decision making and improved higher quality communication (Gilbert 2014).

**Benefits**

Gilbert's interventions combine instruction into group dynamics and collaborative research into micro skills of compassion with student led, small group academic subject based activities; together this appears to eradicate the BME attainment gap.

* Creates space in curriculum and validates this as a legitimate area of academic study
* Raises awareness of para linguistic features- eye contact patterns, cf dysfunctional and high functioning groups
* Provides instruction - specific hints as to what to do to improve
* Provides (tutor supported) opportunities for practice and reflection
* Co-opts student group to research, reflect and gain ownership over this set of practices.
* The student group is made jointly responsible for monitoring and improving the quality of their intergroup communication and behaviour.
* All students are required to pay close attention to mechanics and processes of group communication This appears to offer 'a way in' to students who experience exclusion

[Compassion in HE Blog](https://compassioninhe.wordpress.com/)  looks at Embedding and Assessing Compassion in the University Curriculum. It includes a range of videos demonstrating techniques and interventions and practical resources with worksheets and resources such as Negative behaviours checklist, and Assessment Criteria for Interpersonal Discussion Skills. One activity that seems particularly successful in engaging students in reflection by asking them;

1. What do I do in this seminar/group work to develop my fellow students’ social and learning experiences that they most value in me?
2. What do my fellow students do in this seminar/group work to develop my social and learning experiences that I most value in them?

Research by Gilbert (2012) indicates the benefits of such inclusive classroom practices in addressing the BME attainment gap; through supporting all students to engage compassionately students become responsible for monitoring, reflecting on and developing their own group work. It seems attention devoted to reflecting on individual and group engagement and positive framing of this approach, acknowledging challenges and working supportively to success, creates a more inclusive context for study and frees up student attention to devote to their studies. This approach has been successfully applied in a range of contexts across HE. See the webinars in the resources and blog for contacts to national group of staff interested in this field.

**Resources**

The Micro Ethnography of Compassion in University Student Group/Team Work

**Theo Gilbert**

[**The Micro skills of Compassion in Group Work** - webinar slides January 2019](http://rushingtoyoga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TG_MBL-webinar-slides-for-24.1.19.pdf)

[YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz–VmCsEaY)

Facilitating Cross-Cultural Teamwork   
**Norton Bertram-Smith**

[**Embedding Micro Skills of Compassion** - webinar 2: facilitating cross-cultural teamwork](http://rushingtoyoga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Introducing-Micro-Skills-of-Compassion.pdf)

[**Embedding Micro Skills of Compassion** - YouTube video February 2019](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ttoxbsGL58&feature=youtu.be)

A Conversation on Embedding Compassion into Higher Education

[**Strategies of active seminar-based learning** - YouTube video March 2019](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2VCH5_Yuxk&feature=youtu.be)

**Dr Jo Esra**, University of Exeter

[**The Promise of Virtual Reality to Enhance the Human Condition** - YouTube video April 2019](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFZ25WvNKb8&feature=youtu.be)

**Andrew Marunchak**, University of Hertfordshire

Sharing Experiences of Teaching Compassion to Specialist Community Public Health Nursing students  
[**Compassion in specialist community public health nursing (SCPHN) practice** - YouTube video May 2019](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjLMhZMVCIk&feature=youtu.be)   
**Ann Pettit**, Anglia Ruskin University

[**Embedding the compassionate micro skills of communication into Higher Education  
Curriculum level 4 undergraduate students** - YouTube video June 2019](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs-fgmNDyF0&feature=youtu.be)  
**Dr Caroline Harvey**, University of Derby

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**References**

**Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990)**. Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper Perennial.

**Gibbs G. (2014)** Fear & anxiety are the enemies of learning [SEDA Special](https://www.seda.ac.uk/resources/files/publications_174_25%20Fear%20and%20anxiety%20are%20the%20enemies%20of%20learning.pdf)

**Gibbs, P., (2017)** The Pedagogy of Compassion at the Heart of Higher Education Springbok Editors: Gibbs, Paul (Ed.)

**Gilbert, T.  (2012)** Enhancing inclusivity in the Higher Education discussion group: Strategies for employability, internationalisation and assessment in a UK university. In M. Thornton & G. Wankede (Eds.), Widening participation and social cohesion amongst diverse, disadvantaged and minority groups in higher education. Mumbai: Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

**Gilbert, T. (2018)** Assess compassion in Higher Education? Why and how would we do that? University of Hertfordshire [**LINK Journal (online)**](https://www.herts.ac.uk/link/volume-2,-issue-1/assess-compassion-in-higher-education-how-and-why-would-we-do-that)

**Turner Y., (2009)** “Knowing Me, Knowing You,” Is There Nothing We Can Do? Pedagogic Challenges in Using Group Work to Create an Intercultural Learning Space Journal of Studies in International Education Vol 13,2

**Vertegaal, Roel & Ding, Yaping. (2002)**. Explaining effects of eye gaze on mediated group conversations: Amount or synchronization?. Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work. 41-48. 10.1145/587078.587085.

Google account of project Aristotle What is the key ingredient of most innovative teams? [**https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/**](https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/)

**Building a psychologically safe workplace TEDxHGSE**

Amy Edmundson, Professor of Leadership and Management at Harvard Business School

[**TED talk -** psychological safety - necessary for moments of learning - YouTube May 2014](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8&feature=youtu.be)

Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, or questions, concerns or mistakes. (Edmundson 2014) Based on research examining whether better patient care teams make fewer mistakes. High learning - high performance - interdependence and uncertainty