



Co-Creating Inclusive Digital Spaces: Amplifying student voice in online learning

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Who We Are

University of Edinburgh Mastercard Foundation Scholars
Program

850 postgraduate scholarships for African students
(2023–2030)

Most are online distance learners across Africa

Programmes: Digital Education Practitioners Network,
Online Distance Learning Scholars, WESAF Doctoral
Programme

We are staff and scholars – presenting together.

BELONGING DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT

Online learners often feel disconnected.

We co-created:

- Programme values
- WhatsApp code of conduct



THE CHALLENGE

- Online learning can feel transactional
- Students feel unseen and unheard
- Hierarchy shapes participation



Solution: Co-creation



STUDENTS AS PARTNERS



Listen



Co-create



Use



Reflect



Refine



Not for students; with Students

CASE STUDY ONE

Co-Creating Programme Values

The challenge: Shared values without a top-down approach.

The response: Students and staff built them together





What We Created

Positivity

Committment



Collaboration

Respect and
Inclusion



Integrity

Effective
Communication



“It felt like our programme.”

CASE STUDY TWO

WhatsApp Code of Conduct

Challenges: Tone. Silence. Uneven participation.

Action: Students co-created a shared code of conduct.

Result: Clearer expectations. Safer space. More human connection.

Insight: Rules didn't restrict engagement- they enabled it.

(Kahoots, scavenger hunts, check-ins)

Challenges & Tensions

HARD

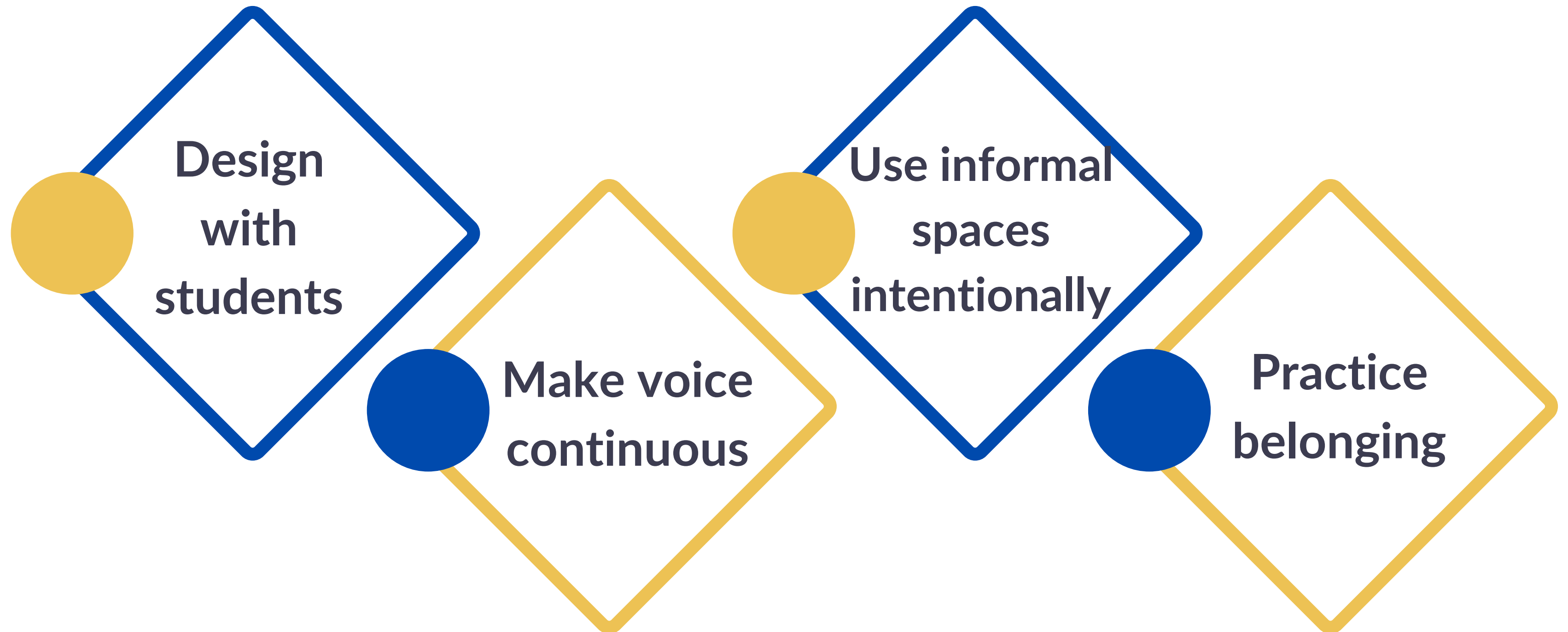
- **Time**
- **Uneven participation**
- **Power dynamics**
- **Tokenism risk**
- **Bandwidth issues**

HELPED

- **Clear purpose**
- **Trust**
- **Shared ownership**

What You Can Use

Participation becomes belonging when students see their voice in
Tomorrow
the rules and processes



CLOSING

Design Belonging. Don't Assume It.

When students shape the space, they belong in it. Student voice is not an activity. It is an ongoing design principle.





THANK YOU

For more information about the Mastercard Foundation
Scholars Program at the University of Edinburgh:
<https://edinburgh-global.ed.ac.uk/mastercard-foundation>



References

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