The FYE Soft Cell: Spaces for Participatory Reflection

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This round table has been designed to carve out a physical space for participants to reflect, both on the conference experience and on their practice in engaging first year students. The presenters recognise, from personal experience, that participants of conferences are often not able to access a creative space during the proceedings in which to process and explore key issues and themes in a reflexive and responsive manner. The facilitation of discussion during this round table is intended to be multifaceted, open ended and directed by the participants. It should be seen as an innovative way of reflecting, exploring and debriefing key issues and experiences from a conference participant positioning. A variety of mediums for expression will be utilised (in accordance with venue capabilities), for instance, discussion circles, web logs (blogs), and an assortment of resource to prompt and support constructive reflection.

Discussion Outline

The area will be organised into a series of creative spaces designed to allow participants to move in and out of activities as they determine appropriate. The two presenters will design and facilitate the creative spaces in such a way as to promote reflection, exploration and debriefing of key issues and experiences from the positioning of the conference participants. Creative spaces may include:

- Discussion circles
- Laptop computers to contribute to blogs, wiki entries and the like
- Writing, panning and illustration spaces
- A wall of words and ideas
- An audiovisual presentation of prompt ideas, drawn from relevant literature and evocative images relating to first year student engagement

A photographic journal will be used to record the outcomes and processes (where participants wish to have their reflection documented).

This round table is, by its nature, responsive to the space and context in which it is located, and the particularities of the approach can be altered to fit venue specifications.

The purpose of this round table is to provide opportunities for conference participants to engage in cognitive-reflective processes, exploring themes and key issues in a reflective and responsive manner. At its close, this roundtable will have produced a number of artefacts of participant learning which occurred at the conference. Further, it will have allowed headspace for participants to grow ideas, collaborations and imaginations, to better engage students in their first year of higher education.