eprg x spark x gatherings of pedagogical minor gestures

Our editorial vision, principles and guidelines for contributors A special issue guest-edited by the Experimental Pedagogies Research Group (EPRG), University of the Arts London.

Editorial team: Professor Mark Ingham and Dr Jonathan Martin, working with the EPRG collective

https://eprg.arts.ac.uk/spark-gatherings-of-pedagogical-minor-gestures/

1. Our editorial vision is to expand what pedagogical research can be

The Experimental Pedagogies Research Group (EPRG) is delighted to be guest-editing this special issue of *Spark*, bringing together contributions from the diverse communities of creative educators, practitioners, researchers, technicians, students and collaborators across the University of the Arts London.

Our special issue, *gatherings of pedagogical minor gestures*, sets out to recognise, explore and celebrate the sometimes overlooked, under-recognised and undervalued moments that 'make a difference' to teaching and learning. These might be small acts of care, moments of connection, unexpected encounters, experiments, interventions, collaborations, disruptions or tentative attempts to do things differently. They might be (smaller) events that transform a student's experience, open up a possibility, challenge an established assumption or simply make someone feel that they can belong. We are interested not only in what happens in educational environments, but also in how it happens. Our focus here will be to explore conditions for making pedagogical minor gestures possible, what we can learn from them and how we might communicate their significance to others.

Our ambition is to create an issue that is academically rigorous, intellectually adventurous, inclusive and accessible, while extending the possibilities of what an academic journal contribution might look, sound, feel and function like. This is intention grounded in inclusivity. **We are not abandoning academic research, rather expanding the ways in which academic research can be undertaken, articulated, experienced and shared.**

We recognise that research in a specialist creative university such as UAL takes many forms. It includes practice-based and practice-led research, research-creation, pedagogical inquiry, collaborative and participatory research, artistic research, critical reflection, theoretical investigation and other forms of situated and emergent knowledge production.

These different approaches are not peripheral to the University's research culture. They are central to it! Consequently, we intend for this special issue to reflect the multiple communities of research practice that constitute UAL, rather than privileging one particular model of academic writing or an established mode of research dissemination.

A vital consideration is about how we synthesise new forms of creative pedagogical research with this more traditional journal format. We must therefore investigate how the journal might develop its capacity to accommodate, encourage and make visible the richness of the research already taking place across UAL.

2. Why this matters to us by contributing to UAL's Education Strategy

Our editorial ambition directly supports UAL's Education Strategy, particularly:

Objective 9: Become the leading university for creative education.

The strategy commits UAL to:

- Harnessing expertise across its Colleges and Institutes to generate, share and apply new knowledge about how creative education works and why it matters
- Recognising the University's strengths in enquiry-led practice
- Developing the capacity of staff as practitioner-researchers
- Creating pathways through which research, knowledge exchange and enterprise insights can flow directly into curriculum design
- Showing and sharing impact at local, national and global levels

We see *Spark* as a vitally important vehicle for making these ambitions tangible.

If UAL is serious about becoming a leading university for creative education, it needs spaces in which its diverse forms of educational inquiry can be made visible, discussed, tested, challenged and shared.

As academics, practitioners and researchers we can all recognise that educational knowledge is generated not only through conventional written research papers, but also through making, doing, experimenting, collaborating, documenting, reflecting, questioning, extending and creating. This is particularly important in a university where practice-based and practice-led research are established and significant forms of knowledge production.

The EPRG therefore sees this special issue as an opportunity to:

- Make visible the pedagogical research and experimentation taking place across UAL
- Recognise staff and students as producers of educational knowledge
- Support practitioner-researchers in developing and communicating their work
- Encourage connections between research, teaching, learning and curriculum development
- Celebrate diverse forms of creative and critical inquiry
- Develop a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes academic contribution and scholarly communication

This is not an alternative to UAL's educational ambitions, but a research-led, practical articulation of how we might realise them.

3. What do we mean by academic rigour?

We anticipate that some contributors may wonder whether experimental, creative or non-traditional contributions can be considered sufficiently academic for publication in a university journal. Indeed, some of these questions have arisen and been explored in our workshops.

Our position is clear: **academic rigour is not synonymous with conformity to a single academic genre.**

A contribution does not have to resemble a conventional research article to demonstrate intellectual depth, methodological integrity, criticality or scholarly value. Creative practitioners are committed to making the best work it is possible to produce in any instance. Rigour is therefore expressed through different research practices and different forms of articulation. In the case of this special edition it might be demonstrated through:

- The careful observation and documentation of pedagogical encounters
- A critical engagement with relevant / associated ideas, concepts, theories or practices
- The development and articulation of a research question, provocation or proposition
- An explanation of the context in which a particular pedagogical experiment takes place
- An account of the methods, processes, relationships and decisions involved in such experimentation
- A critical reflection on what was learned, what changed or what remains unresolved
- The creative interpretation of research through visual, material, performative, sonic or textual forms
- An acknowledgement of the limitations, uncertainties and ethical considerations associated with the work

Different contributions will demonstrate these qualities differently. This is an approach of disciplinary rigour, as expansion of the field. A visual essay, a dialogue, a photographic sequence, a sound work or an experimental text can be every bit as intellectually substantial as a conventional academic paper. The important question for editorial review is what the contribution might enables its audience to understand, encounter, question or imagine.

We are interested in work that makes its thinking and processes available to others, not simply work that presents a finished conclusion. We therefore encourage contributors to experiment with the relationship between research, form and content. The form itself may be integral to the research rather than merely a container for communicating it.

4. What are we looking for?

We invite contributions that explore the relationships between pedagogical practice and minor gestures. We are particularly interested in developing contributions that address the various themes, which have emerged through EPRG meetings and workshops over the past two years and the ongoing research of the membership:

The overlooked and under-recognised: Small moments, encounters, actions or interventions that might otherwise go unnoticed but have a meaningful effect on someone's experience of learning

Care, connection and belonging: The gestures, relationships and conditions that enable people to participate, feel recognised, develop confidence and find a place within educational environments

Experimentation and risk: Attempts to do things differently, including unsuccessful experiments, unexpected consequences, uncertainty, improvisation and the productive possibilities of not knowing

Access, equity and inclusion: Pedagogical practices that challenge barriers, question established assumptions and create more equitable opportunities for learning and participation

Collaboration and co-production: Work made with students, colleagues, communities, technicians, external partners and others, recognising the multiple contributions involved in producing educational knowledge

Critical reflection and transformation: Moments that prompt us to reconsider our pedagogical assumptions, practices, relationships and responsibilities

The unfinished and emergent: Ideas, processes and practices that are still developing. We do not expect every contribution to arrive with a definitive answer or demonstrate a fully resolved outcome

An anecdote of a fleeting pedagogical moment. We all have stories to tell about what has happened to us or what we have done in our teaching and learning encounters. We would like to include some of these anecdotes within the edition. (Tell us yours!)

5. Forms of contribution: how might your research be expressed?

We actively encourage contributors to move beyond the expectation that an academic journal contribution must take the form of a conventional written article.

Possible forms include, but are not limited to:

- Practice-based and practice-led research expositions
- Visual essays, photographic sequences and image-based narratives
- Moving image, animation and video
- Sound works, audio recordings and podcasts
- Poetry, creative writing and speculative narratives
- Dialogues, conversations and interviews
- Transcripts and annotated exchanges
- Provocations, manifestos and propositions
- Un-essays, experimental writing and inconclusive texts
- Maps, diagrams, drawings and visualisations
- Documentation of workshops, performances, exhibitions and collaborative events
- Artefacts, material investigations and creative outputs
- Staff, student and co-produced contributions
- Combinations of text, image, sound, movement and other media
- Academic and reflective essays
- Anecdotes in written, visual or any other form of your choice

You may also propose a form that we have not anticipated.

We particularly welcome contributions in which the mode of presentation is inseparable from the pedagogical research itself. For example, a contribution about listening might take the form of an audio work; an exploration of belonging might be articulated through a photographic narrative; an investigation of collaborative learning might be presented as a dialogue; or an account of an

experimental teaching intervention might combine documentation, reflection and visual material. These are invitations rather than prescriptions.

6. Showing the process, not just the outcome

One of the distinctive ambitions of this special issue is to make visible the processes through which pedagogical knowledge emerges.

Academic publishing can sometimes privilege completed projects, successful interventions and polished conclusions. Yet much of the most valuable learning happens before we know what the outcome will be.

We want to make space for:

- What you attempted
- What prompted you to act
- What you noticed
- What surprised you
- What did not work as expected
- What changed along the way
- What you learned from others
- What remains unresolved
- What you might try next

We are not asking contributors to manufacture a success story. A failed experiment, an uncertain encounter or a question without an answer can be an intellectually valuable contribution, provided that it offers something for others to think with. We want to celebrate pedagogical research as a living, evolving and relational practice.

7. Guidelines for preparing a contribution

We deliberately want to keep the invitation open and avoid imposing a single template on contributions. Nevertheless, we ask contributors to consider the following questions when developing their work.

What is the pedagogical minor gesture or encounter? What happened, or what did you notice? What makes this moment, action, experiment or relationship worth sharing?

Where and with whom did it happen? Give readers an understanding of the educational context. This might include a course, workshop, classroom, studio, online environment, collaborative project or other learning space. This can be in the form of a written or visual introduction, preface, prologue, epilogue…

Why does it matter? What did the gesture make possible? Did it change a relationship, open up a new way of thinking, create access, challenge an assumption or reveal something about how learning happens? Create an environment of care?

What were you trying to do? Explain the thoughts, methods, processes or questions that informed the work. These do not need to have been fully established in advance.

What did you learn? Reflect on the experience. What emerged? What might others take from it? What questions does it raise?

How does your chosen form contribute to the meaning? Why have you chosen to communicate your work through this particular medium or combination of media? What does this form make possible that another form might not?

What might happen next? From your perspective, now, what (if anything) can you foresee?

We welcome contributions that remain open-ended, speculative or unfinished. Consider what further possibilities your work might generate.

These questions are prompts rather than a compulsory checklist. Not every contribution will address them all, and contributors are welcome to develop their own questions and approaches.

8. Research integrity, ethics and accessibility

Experimental does not mean unconsidered. Creative does not mean without responsibility.

All contributions should demonstrate appropriate attention to research integrity, ethical practice and the people whose experiences, work or contributions are represented.

Contributors should consider:

- Consent and permissions where people, voices, images or identifiable experiences are included
- Appropriate anonymisation where necessary
- Copyright and permissions for images, audio, video and other materials
- The ethical implications of representing students, colleagues and collaborators
- The attribution of individual and collective contributions
- The use of AI-generated or AI-assisted material, where relevant, including transparency about its role
- Accessibility for different audiences and modes of engagement

Accessibility is particularly important to this issue. We want contributions to be encountered by as many people as possible.

Depending on the format, contributors should consider:

- Alt text or descriptive text for images
- Captions and transcripts for moving image and audio
- Readable typography, appropriate contrast and clear layouts
- Descriptions of visual, material or performative work where necessary
- Alternative ways of accessing the central ideas of a contribution

We recognise that different media have different accessibility requirements. The editorial team will work with contributors to consider how these might be addressed.

9. Our approach to peer review: distributed, collaborative and developmental

We regard peer review as an important pedagogical process in its own right.

Rather than treating review simply as a mechanism for accepting or rejecting work, we want to explore its potential as a collaborative process through which contributions can develop and improve. The constructive critique of pedagogic studio context is a useful way to think about developing work in preparation for sharing it with a larger audience.

Therefore we propose a **Distributed Peer Response** approach, reflecting the collective and participatory ethos of the EPRG.

Our principles are:

Collaborative: Contributors and reviewers are understood as peers engaged in a shared process of learning and development

Formative: Feedback should help contributors strengthen, clarify, extend or reconsider their work

Transparent: Contributors should understand how their work will be reviewed and how editorial decisions are made

Timely: Feedback should be offered within agreed timescales so that contributors can engage meaningfully with the process

Respectful: Different research traditions, forms of expression and ways of knowing should be approached with openness and intellectual generosity

Developmental: Review should recognise the potential of a contribution, not simply measure it against the conventions of an established academic genre

We will consider each contribution in relation to its intentions, chosen form, context, intellectual or creative contribution, ethical responsibilities and potential value to readers

Reviewers will be encouraged to ask questions that help the work become more fully realised on its own terms.

For example:

- What is this contribution inviting us to notice or think about?
- What is distinctive about the research or pedagogical practice?
- What might help the contributor communicate their intentions more clearly?
- How might the chosen form be developed to strengthen the contribution?
- What additional context, reflection or documentation might be useful?
- What possibilities does this work open up for others?

We will not expect a visual essay to behave like a conventional research paper, or a dialogue to conform to the structure of an academic article. We will, however, expect every contribution to offer something considered, meaningful and worthwhile to the collective understanding of creative education.

The editorial team will support contributors through this process, helping them develop their submissions and prepare work for publication. Our aim is not to make every contribution look the same. It is to help each contribution become the strongest possible expression of its own intentions.

We hope to publish these peer responses alongside the works submitted in this special issue. As a call and response, as in a refrain.

10. What makes a contribution suitable for Spark?

We will consider submissions in relation to the following shared editorial principles:

1. **Relevance:** Does the contribution engage meaningfully with pedagogical practice, creative education or the idea of minor gestures?
2. **Intentionality:** Is there a discernible question, proposition, encounter, exploration or intention informing the work?
3. **Critical and creative engagement:** Does the contribution offer something to think about, experience, question or learn from?
4. **Research integrity:** Are the processes, contexts, relationships and ethical considerations appropriately acknowledged?
5. **Communication:** Does the chosen form enable readers to engage with the contribution and its ideas?
6. **Accessibility:** Has consideration been given to how different readers and audiences might encounter the work?
7. **Generative value:** Does the contribution open up further thinking, dialogue, experimentation or possibilities for pedagogical practice?

These principles are intended to support consistency and fairness without prescribing a single research methodology or mode of expression.

11. The role of the EPRG: a collective editorial practice

The EPRG was established in 2020 as an invitation to colleagues across UAL to explore experimental pedagogies, creative education and the relationships between research, practice and learning. From its inception, the group has understood itself as a collective: open, porous, inclusive and evolving.

We do not understand experimentation as novelty for its own sake. Rather, it involves appreciating that which already exists, exploring its possibilities, questioning its contextual value, making its assumptions visible and considering what else might become possible. This ethos informs our approach to editing *Spark*.

Although Professor Mark Ingham and Dr Jonathan Martin are leading the guest editorship, the intellectual and creative ambition of the issue is collective. We want to draw upon the knowledge, experience and diverse research practices of the wider EPRG community.

We recognise that producing an issue of this kind involves considerable practical and editorial responsibilities. We are committed to working constructively with the existing *Spark* editorial and production processes, appreciating the extensive developmental work that has sustained the journal over the past decade.

Our intention is to contribute to its continuing development, not to diminish what has already been achieved. We see the opportunity to guest-edit this issue as involving responsibility to demonstrate what a creative, inclusive and experimental approach to academic publishing can offer UAL. We believe in the capacity of UAL to improve the lives and wellbeing of those who are part of it; but that ongoing efforts are required to realise this value.

12. Our invitation

We invite you to contribute something that matters to you.

It might be a small moment that has stayed with you, a teaching experiment that changed your understanding of learning, a collaborative encounter, an act of care, a moment of resistance, a creative intervention or something that you are still trying to understand.

You do not need to have a fully formed academic paper.

You do not need to have a successful outcome.

You do not need to know in advance exactly how your contribution will look.

You do need to bring something that you think is worth sharing, exploring and developing with others.

We are interested in what happens when we pay attention to the seemingly small things that make a difference. We are interested in what becomes visible when we look again at our pedagogical practices. And we are interested in how, by gathering these gestures together, we might develop new understandings of creative education.

What might we learn from the things we usually overlook?

What might become possible if we share not only what we know, but also what we are trying, imagining and becoming?

This special issue is an invitation to experiment with those possibilities. We want *Spark* to be a space in which the diverse research cultures of UAL can meet, encounter one another and generate new ways of thinking, making and sharing pedagogical knowledge.

Professor Mark Ingham and Dr Jonathan Martin, on behalf of the Experimental Pedagogies Research Group (EPRG), University of the Arts London.

Please upload your content to this Expressions of Interest (MS Form) site:
https://forms.office.com/e/vaxMHKN9u



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Post Script **anecdote**

In post-qualitative inquiry, the anecdote moves far beyond traditional qualitative views of anecdotal evidence and instead, we re-imagined it as an active, affective force rather than a static piece of data to be coded or categorised.

The word comes from the Greek *anekdoton*, meaning 'unpublished,' famously used by the 6th-century Byzantine historian Procopius in his *Secret History*, which contained private or scandalous stories about Emperor Justinian. Over time, the term shifted to mean any short, entertaining tale.

As in art: A small narrative incident, as depicted in a work of art, esp. a painting; the work of art itself. Also: the depiction of such incidents.

As minor gesture: an almost-unperceived, subtle shift or action running counter to majoritarian consensus, institutional norms, and neurotypical expectations. It operates at the fringes of perception to open-up new modes of relation, alternative socialities, and potential variations before a formal policy or conscious decision even takes shape.

An anecdote functions as a minor gesture, as a small, seemingly fleeting or peripheral occurrence that carries enough affective force to reframe a situation, unmoor rigid assumptions, and set new patterns of relation in motion.

As in Micro-events with Macro-impacts, an anecdote zooms in on a minor event moment (a glance, a stray remark, a peculiar habit) to illustrate a larger truth. Similarly, a minor gesture operates in the background of everyday life, such as walking past a friend who quietly picks up a piece of litter, or a subtle non-verbal cue that diffuses tension in a meeting, repositioning how people move together without needing force or a mandate.