

The sound of wellbeing

Using soundscapes to nurture online student wellness

Conrado Silva de Farias
Kara Johnston
Digital Education Team, Heriot-Watt Online

“Research underscores the power of caring relationships in education and the influence on students’ feelings on their ability to learn.”

(Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2005, 2010 cited in Owusu-Ansah & Kyei-Blankson 2016 pg1)

“Soundscapes featuring these components [flowing water and birdsong] have also demonstrated the potential to reduce the physiological and psychological indices of stress, facilitate recovery from cognitive fatigue, and increase positive emotional states.”

(Buxton et al., 2021; Ratcliffe, 2021 cited in J. Smalley et al. 2022 pg3)

Fostering a sense of belonging

- Our aim: to embed wellbeing resources thoughtfully within the journey of a course.
- Context: importance of connection for distance learners.
- Online students have limited pastoral care.
- 2024 Postgraduate Experience Survey (PTES) shows longing for community.

“The opportunity to meet with other students to share ideas, form study groups etc could be further developed.”
Edinburgh Business School student (PTES survey)

Pause & reflect - take a sound walk

- Currently within 7 courses within Business and Organisational Psychology MSc programme.
- Pause and reflect module strategically placed midway within a course.
- Audio content scaffolded in context with other resources.
- Current constraints: learning platform has to 'see' audio.

Is there appetite for it?

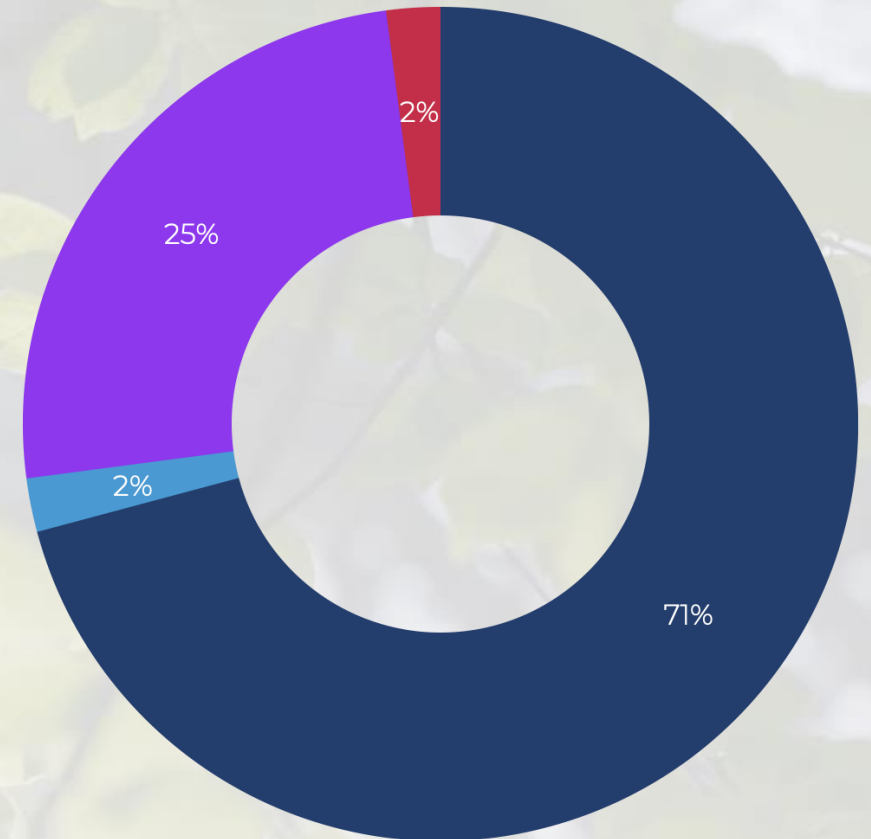
The question presented to students:

Did you enjoy the pause and reflect module/content related to birdsong, and would you like to see more content like this in your courses?

Mentimeter voting

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ● I enjoyed it, and would like to see more content like this in my courses | 34 |
| ● I didn't enjoy, but could see the value for other students on the course | 1 |
| ● I enjoyed it, but I'm not interested in seeing more content like this in my courses | 12 |
| ● I didn't enjoy, and would rather not see content like this in my courses | 1 |
| Number of votes | 48 |

Data collected between 4 May 2023 - 19 Nov 2024



Sound fostering wellbeing

Atlantic Forest Biome. Brazil, July 2023

Setting the Scene

Urban Green Spaces and Health, a publication by the WHO

By Catharine Ward Thompson and Eva Silveirinha de Oliveira

- **Psycho-physiological Stress Reduction Theory**
- **Attention Restoration Theory**

Which Elements of Soundscapes?

- Flowing water
- Birdsong

The Recordings

- Location
- The equipment used
 - Parabolic Reflector
 - Zoom H3-VR



Plans

- Students share their Soundwalks
- Further research

TAKEAWAYS

1. Explore ways to embed student wellbeing within course design.
2. Certain natural sounds can positively impact those under stress.
3. Consider joining us in advancing research in this area.