

Creating communities of practice: learning from a UDL project to engage students with academic reading

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Today

- Project overview
- Researcher's reflections: the fortress of academia and the "Covid-bomb"
- Case studies and group discussion: communities of practice



Reading as an environmental barrier

Educational background and expectations, learning differences (e.g. dyslexia), and time-poverty all impact on a student's ability and willingness to read



A technological solution to the environmental barriers:

- adding accessibility tools to module Resource Lists to enable multi-modal reading



Spreed - speed read the web

Offered by: spreed.launchrock.com

★★★★★ 713 | [Productivity](#) | 👤 82,883 users



NV Access

Empowering lives through
non-visual access to technology



Staff focus groups revealed attitudinal barriers

“There are problems with the tools”

“I need to be a super user”

“Where’s your evidence?”





Attitudinal (emotional?) barriers

“The spoken word is a different set of skills to following a novel being read aloud - is there any research on this?”

The fortress of academia

‘HEIs continued to replicate [the] status quo, and whether unwittingly or purposefully, erected barriers that blocked participation from individuals or groups who differed from those traditional students who excelled with predictable, inflexible, “one-size-fits-all” curriculum and instruction’.

Bracken & Novak, eds. (2019), p.1



Is the fortress changing?

Pokorny & Warren (2016, pp.1-2) also discuss how global challenges and reforms to HE are challenging the idea of the fortress, e.g. marketisation, consumerisation, league tables, widening participation agendas, etc.

These issues require a greater focus on how students learn, not just what knowledge is held in the fortress.



Emotional barriers

Ashwin et al (2016, pp.55-56) argue that emotional or personal barriers can impede reflective teaching practice.

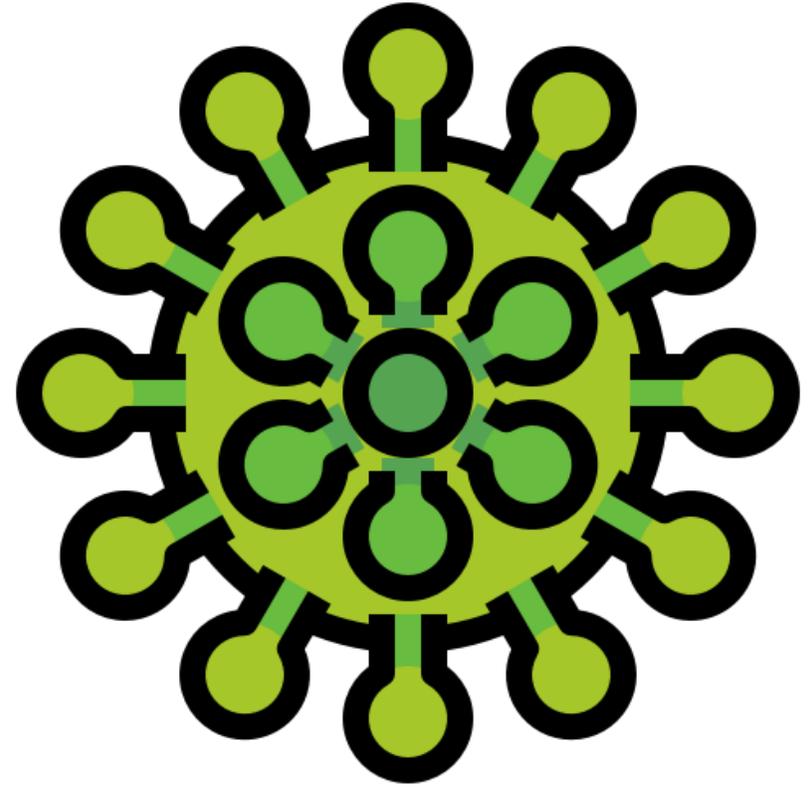
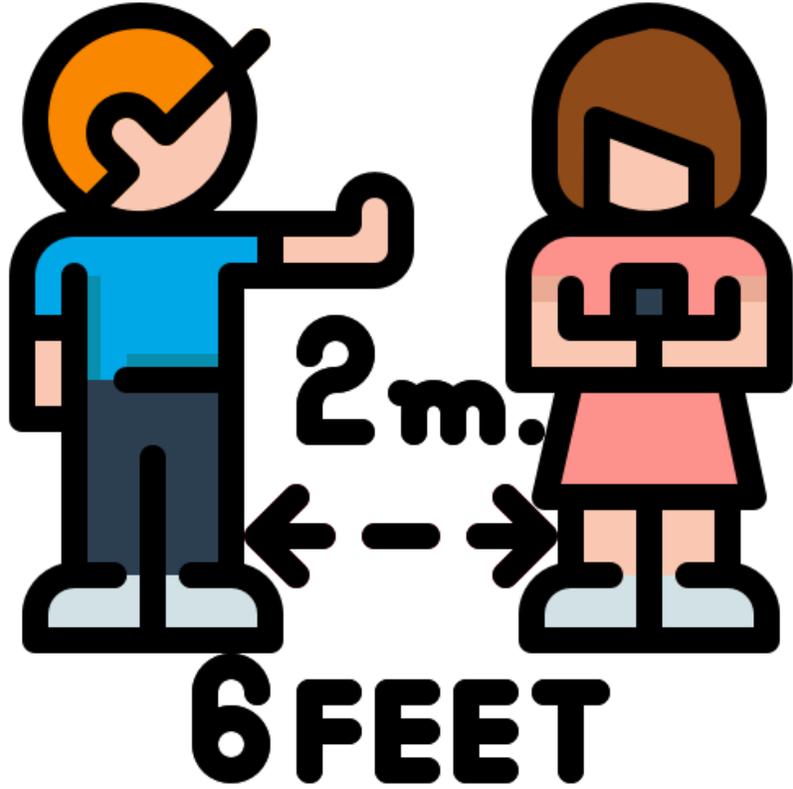
We need to recognise that reflection is both an emotional and an intellectual exercise.



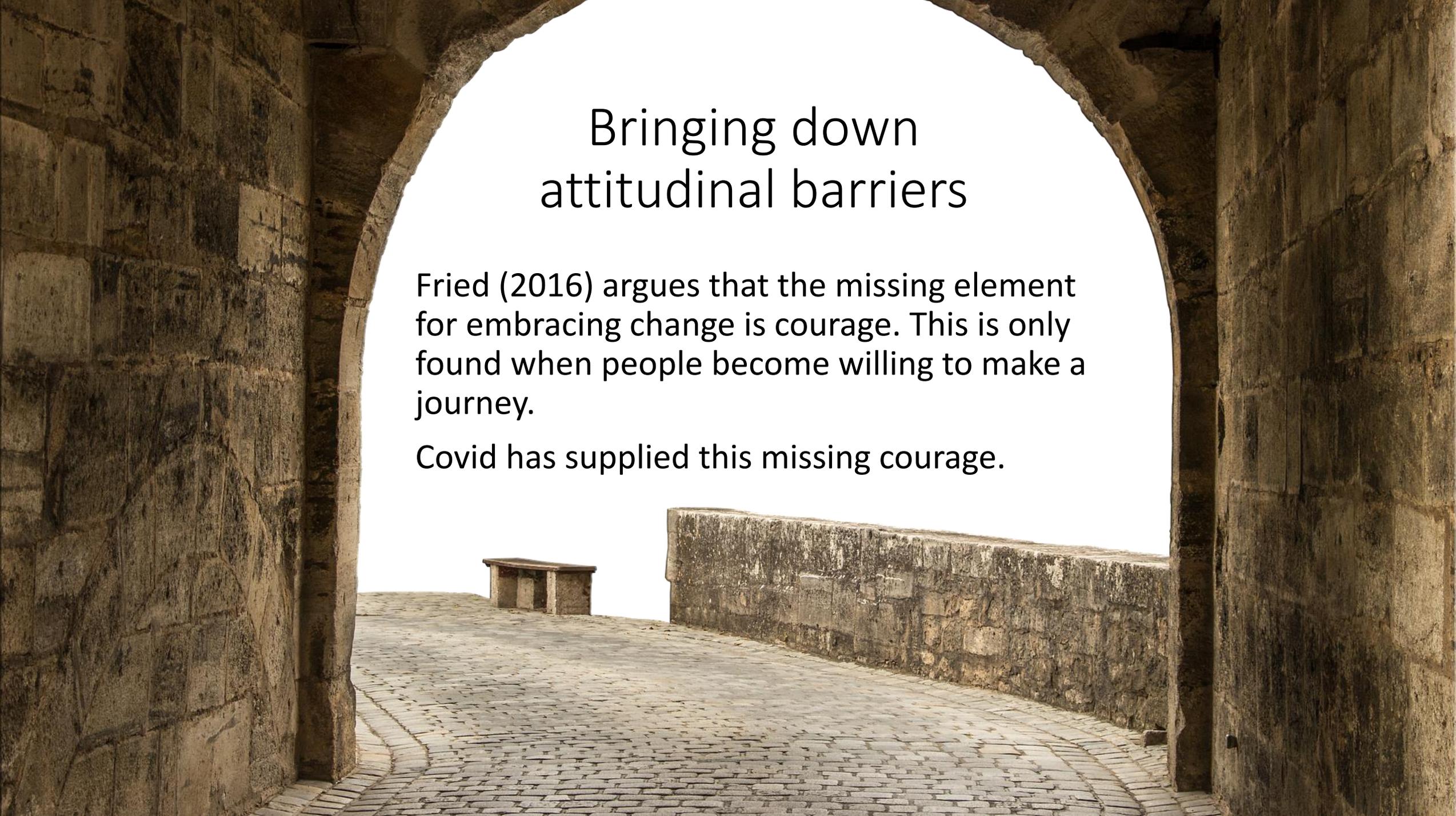
Battering rams and bombs: developing communities of practice

Our initial research caused some disturbance to the fortress, but Covid has lit a fuse underneath it with 'the digital pivot' (Salmon, 2020; Lanclos 2020)





Covid and the community

A photograph of a stone archway leading to a cobblestone path and a stone wall. The archway is made of dark, textured stone blocks. The path is paved with light-colored cobblestones and leads towards a low stone wall on the right. In the distance, there is a small stone structure. The sky is bright and clear.

Bringing down attitudinal barriers

Fried (2016) argues that the missing element for embracing change is courage. This is only found when people become willing to make a journey.

Covid has supplied this missing courage.



Case study 1: Fiona and the Kindle

Take a few minutes to read the case study and add any reflections to the chat

Student responses:
“how do you feel about reading for your course?”



47% don't have enough time to read



30% said reading is hard



35% felt nervous about understanding



18% felt unsure about what to read



30% felt unsure about how much to read



BUT 47% also said they enjoy reading

Student responses: accessibility tools



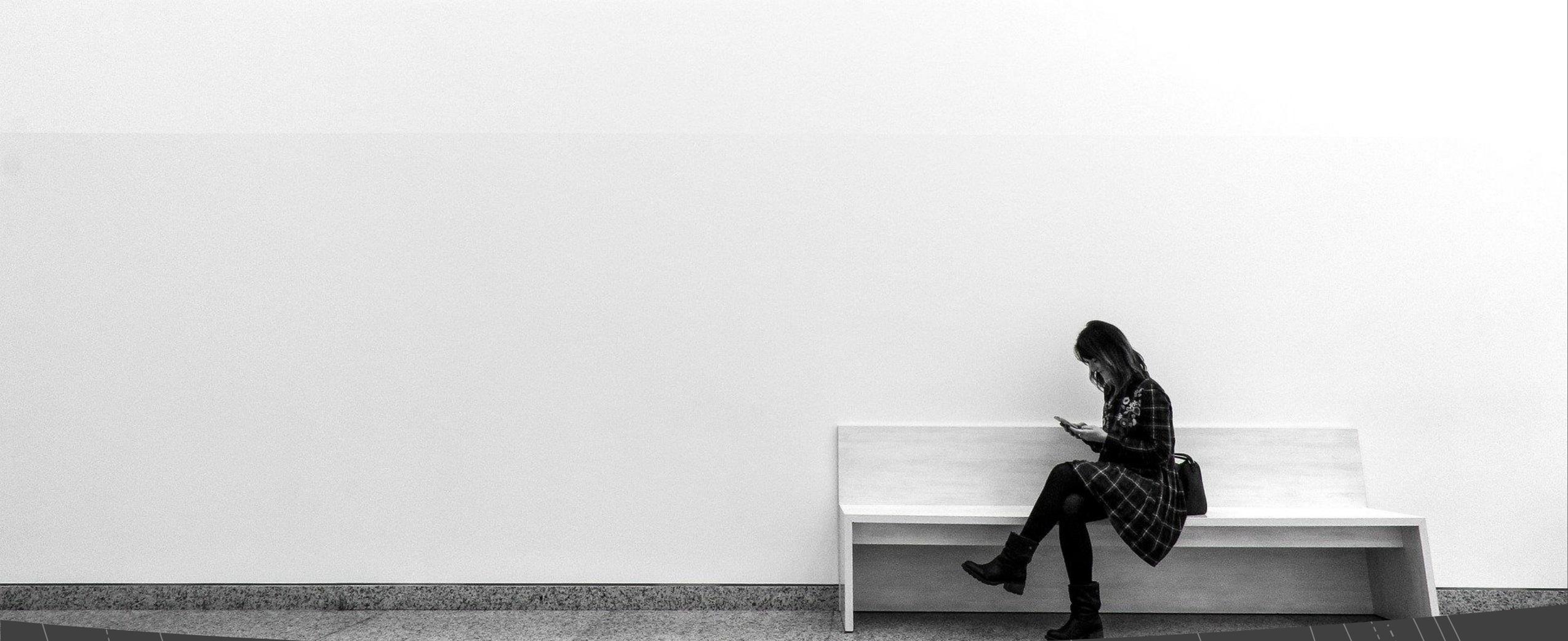
24% said they'd definitely noticed accessibility tools in their Resource Lists; 24% weren't sure



One student used NV Access and said **“It has helped me to gain more knowledge for the uni [sic] that I was reading up on”**



52% would definitely try audiobooks if they were available and another 18% might



Case study 2: research informed pedagogy

Take a few minutes to read the case study and
add any reflections to the chat

New resource list



Resource Lists

[Home](#) [My Lists](#) [My Bookmarks](#) [Feedback](#) [Log In](#) ⓘ

Tools to help with reading

[View & Export](#) ▾

[+ My Lists](#)

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Reading online

There are lots of strategies and methods to engage with reading. You may prefer to curl up with a print book in the library, scroll through an ebook on your laptop in a cafe, or set up a Text to Speech player while you cook at home. You may find that you want to read different items in different ways at different times - there is no one way of reading, so feel free to experiment to find what works for you.



Where next?

- More exploration of accessibility tools
- Talking to Sage around audiobooks
- Publishing
- More training/playing with/embedding digital skills and confidence
- Monitor pedagogic impact of curriculum changes

Any questions?

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