



# Understanding what Belonging looks and feels like to members of the MQ community

Claire Flood, Olivia Zen-Aloush, Sarah Conlon, Carolina Morison and Jindri De Silva  
Macquarie University, Widening Participation Unit, Sydney, NSW 2109

## Exploring belonging

Working with the Widening Participation Unit (WPU) we set out in S1, 2020 with a quest to understand and comprehend the sense of belonging within the MQ community by its members.



We integrated our anthropological skills within the project by

- Recruiting Participants
- Analysing and editing responses
- Utilising critical thinking
- Applying ethical practice

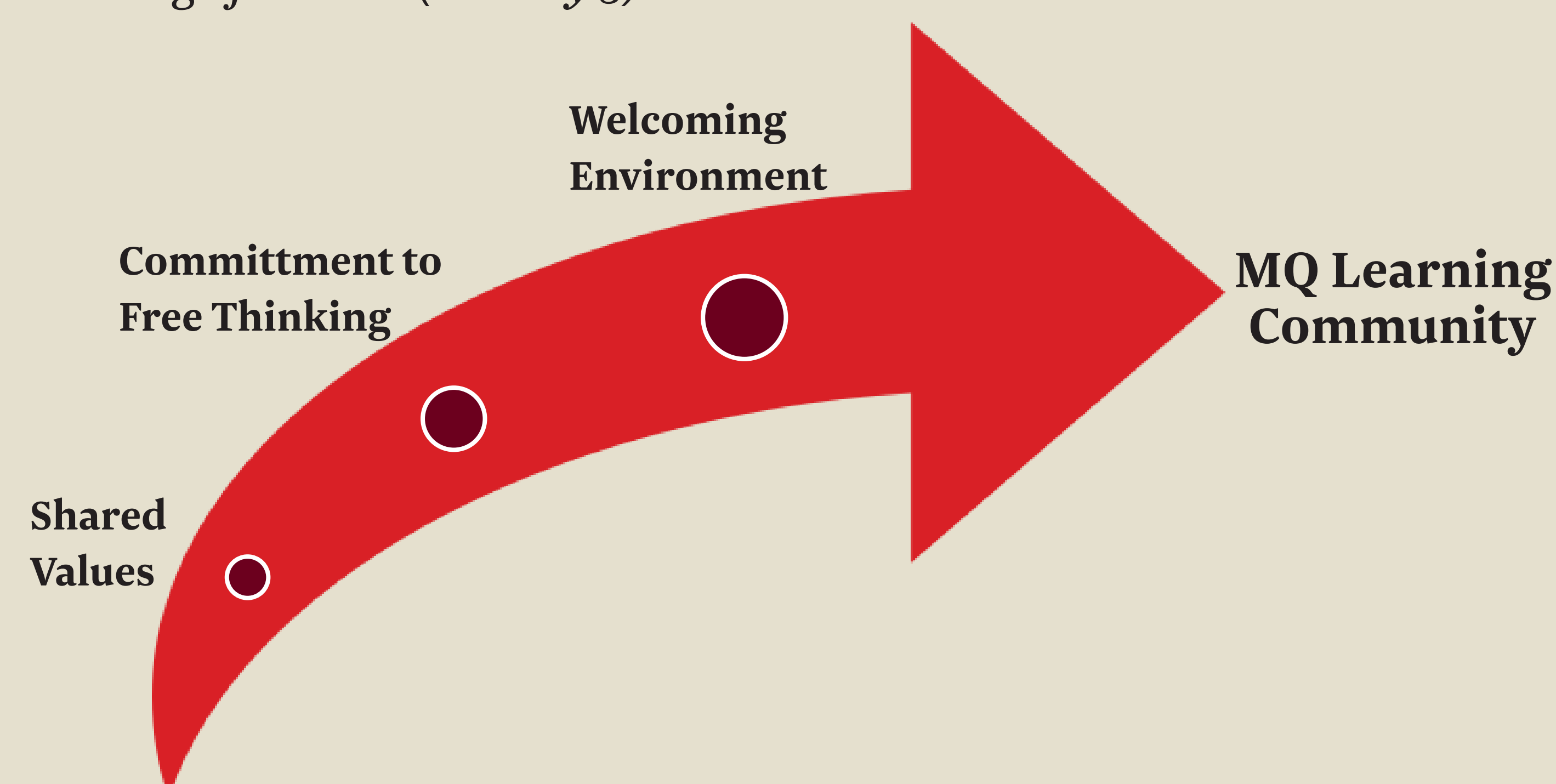
## What we learned from the MQ community

Belonging is a natural human desire (Osterman, 2000), individuals long for a deep connection with others that makes them feel safe, comfortable and included. The survey results demonstrated that belonging is an extremely significant factor in individuals' everyday lives in numerous ways as it...

1. Creates a sense of comfort and security
2. Builds confidence
3. Keeps us connected
4. Inspires and encourages

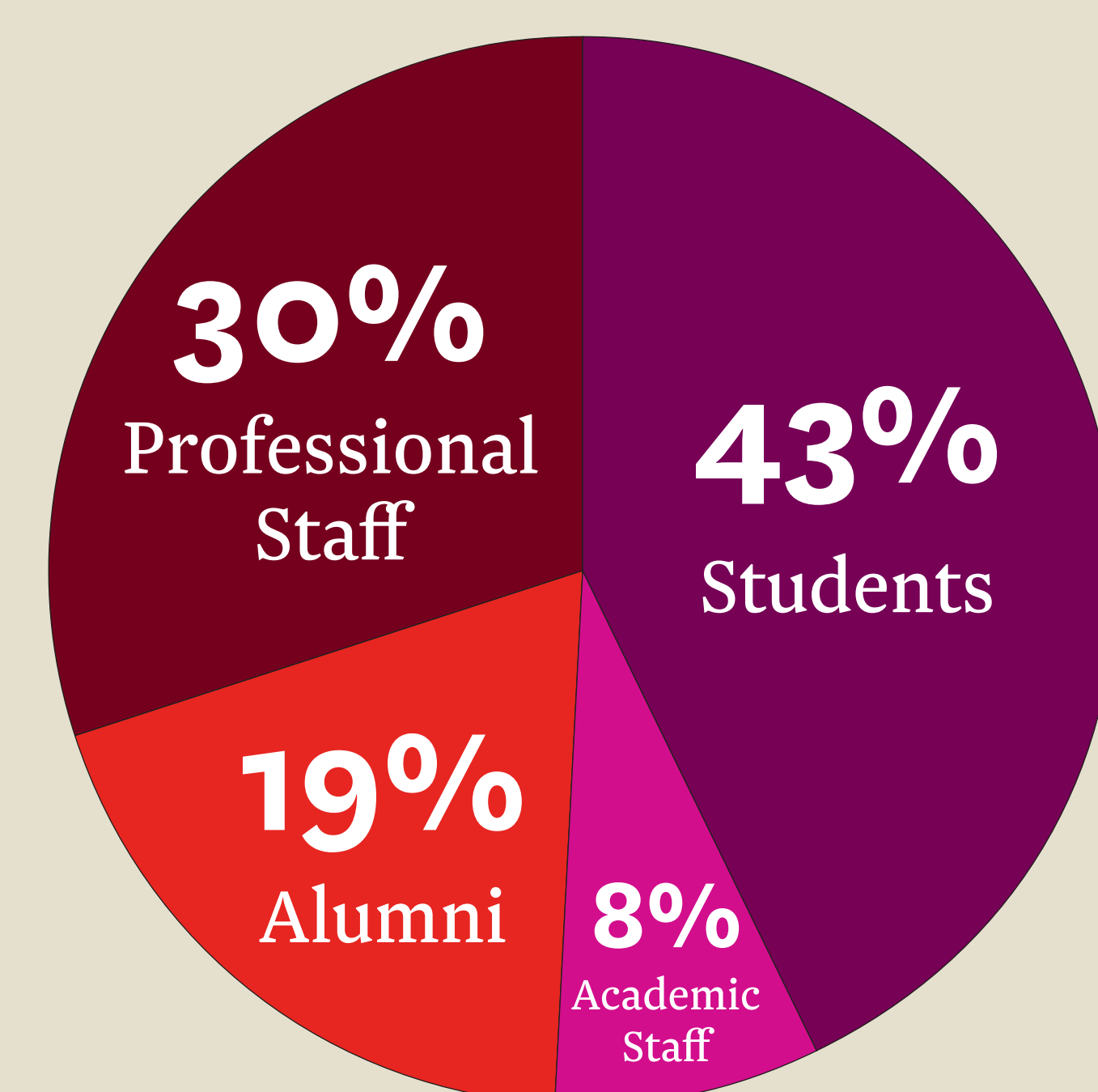
## What makes us the MQ community

The University is committed to inclusion and the opportunity to participate in transformative learning. *"Our capacity to achieve and maintain a culture of caring for the wellbeing of all members of the community"* Our University : A Framing of Futures (Priority 3)



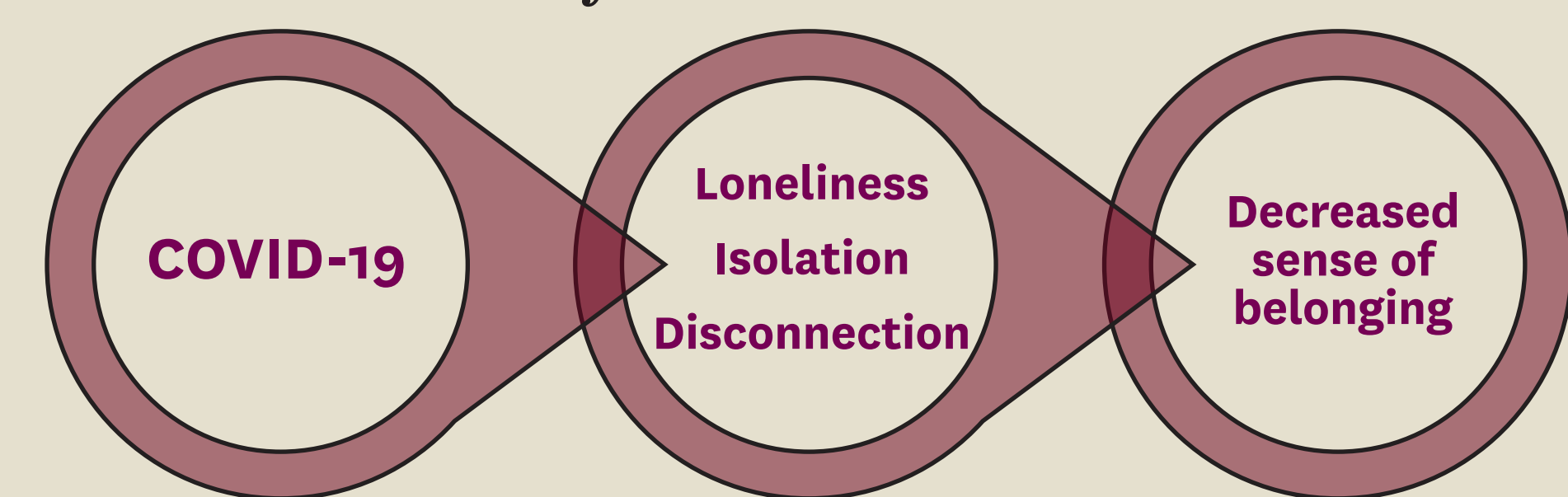
Despite our diverse backgrounds and upbringings, MQ university brings us all together! The MQ community is more than just the campus! Being a member of the MQ community is about supporting each other in our learning and working journeys, recognising our differences and coming together to support each other to encourage others to enhance their education!

## Program participants



## What has Covid taught us about belonging?

The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged our experience of belonging within the MQ community. The increased loneliness and isolation expressed through participant responses demonstrated that this time has created new opportunities to engage with others, highlighting a newfound appreciation of belonging within the community.



*"COVID-19 has affected me. it's made me miss campus and friendly faces. I definitely took being able to sit in a cafe and study for granted..."*

MQ Student

## Belonging in 1 word by participants



MQ is *"a safe space for people to flourish, find their feet, set new boundaries and pioneer new ways of thinking and operating in the world, and importantly, feel supported and encouraged to do so"*

MQ Professional Staff

## References

Osterman, K.F., 2000. Students' Need for Belonging in the School Community. Review of Educational Research, 70(3), pp.323-367.  
Macquarie University, Our University: A Framing of Futures [mq.edu.au/our-university/](https://mq.edu.au/our-university/)