

Dear Dr. Walter Pearson and Dr. Katherine Lyons,

We wish to submit a conceptual article entitled “Conceptualising and building trust to enhance the engagement and achievement of under-served students” for consideration by The Journal of Continuing Higher Education.

We confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

In this paper, we report on the significant relationship between student-instructor trust and course performance within online higher education. This is substantial because students who reported high levels of trust in their instructor tended to achieve higher course grades than those with lower trust levels. We explore the factors (performativity, casualisation of teaching staff, neoliberalism, non-traditional student identities and the digital divide) which influence the development of trust as well as the role of trust on engagement and attainment of academic goals.

We believe that this manuscript is appropriate for publication by The Journal of Continuing Higher Education because it promotes effective practice and contributes to the ongoing transformative agenda of higher education.

Online learning plays an increasingly important role in the participation of historically under-served students in higher education. Yet, pedagogic gaps and deficiencies are highlighted in digital learning environments. We suggest that policymakers, higher education institutions and practitioners alike draw upon relational factors to enable under-served students to persist in higher education contexts. Despite the strategic consequences of student trust on student outcomes and experiences, relatively little attention has been focused on trust within online higher education or understanding its antecedents thoroughly. Conceptualising trust will assist universities to become more inclusive environments for all students and to intentionally foster empowering educational experiences.

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript.

Sincerely,

Ameena L. Payne