

Hi, my name is Professor Mick Grierson and I am research leader at the UAL Creative Computing Institute. I'm a professor of Computer Science, and I'm mostly interested in how we apply and use technologies to enhance people's lives, particularly in creative contexts. Most of my work with The Hub has been around designing and helping to manage the research process that we've been engaged in and working closely with Heart n Soul to make sure that everything that we do is being led by the voices and perspectives of the disabled communities that we're working with.

The majority of my career, I've spent in an academic environment. And academic environments are highly competitive often when they shouldn't be, but for whatever reason, they've become very competitive environments. People argue pointlessly about things that have almost no value whatsoever. I think that that's known, it's not controversial for me to say that.

So that's the environment I'm used to and I find it horrible. I don't like it at all, but you do it because of the values and the things you get that you can do. The Hub was brilliant because it was a total rejection of all of those kinds of politically instantiated metrics-driven, enforced competition approaches. It's very common for me to go to bed shaking at night from adrenaline, or to get a holiday for a week and spend the first three days on the beach shaking from adrenaline. That's a normal situation and The Hub, it was the opposite of that. I would go to The Hub and it would be like an oasis of calm. It would be a place where everybody was only interested in how everyone felt. So I'd go to The Hub and I'd go to the pod, which was a place where I could sit and rest

for a couple of hours and I would just rest there and I would wake up, and then we get some work done.

The focus on kindness was really important. The core values that were really present and everyone agreed to, allowed us to focus on these really important key words. And kindness is the one that stayed with me the most because it's the one which is most absent from the academic world. And as a working space, it was almost the perfect working environment. And if you asked me how I want my working environment to be, I would say I want it to be like that. I would say that meetings at academic institutions or any high-pressure environment naturally come with a pressure. But Heart n Soul meetings were never about that. Heart n Soul meetings are more like what, in our discipline, we call workshops, which is where you're working with people to understand what's going on. You're not delivering information and receiving information. You're exploring ideas and discussing them, and then having a cup of tea and having a chat and then thinking of coming back to it. It was much more like when I do research, often we use workshops as a mechanism for research. And when we do them, we try and make them like that as much as possible because that's how you get people to feel comfortable. But the Heart n Soul meetings, absolutely they were all like that ideal workshop scenario where everyone feels welcome. You can say what you feel without feeling that you're wrong and everything's allowed, as long as you're respectful to other people. And those sorts of guidelines, yeah, those sorts of ethical guidelines I think are absolutely essential. And they are now I've got to say, they're starting to creep into the academic workplace a bit more.

