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A case study of flexible study routes completed by students in the School of Education, University of Sunderland investigating factors that support student retention

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# Overview

- Factors that enable student success through flexible study programmes with a focus on sense of belonging.
- Literature compared to School of Education flexible study options.
- ‘Online student retention is an ongoing issue of concern in higher education’ (Anderson & Rivera-Vargus, 2020; Hachey et al., 2022; Murphy & Stewart, 2017; Rawal & Razak, 2022, cited in Jones 2023, p12).
- ‘There is extensive literature on student retention, but relatively little of it is concerned with distance learning.’ (Amrane-Copper et al 2023, p30).
- Policy environment

# Sense of Belonging

- Research suggests that sense of belonging can have an impact on student outcomes, particularly retention and attainment.
- Zach Healey's (2017) 'Activating student voice and leadership within distance communities and online education' article highlights there is a lack of research in this area but what there is suggests if students do not feel connected to their institution, they are more likely to drop out.
- Of the research that is available, Allen and Seaman (2013) and Thomas, Herbert and Teras (2014) in Stavredes and Herder (2019) discuss that the ability of a student to create a connection with the institution improves retention.
- Student Voice and sense of belonging for flexible learning students at the University of Sunderland