Understanding the student experience. Establishing and developing student voice for distance education students

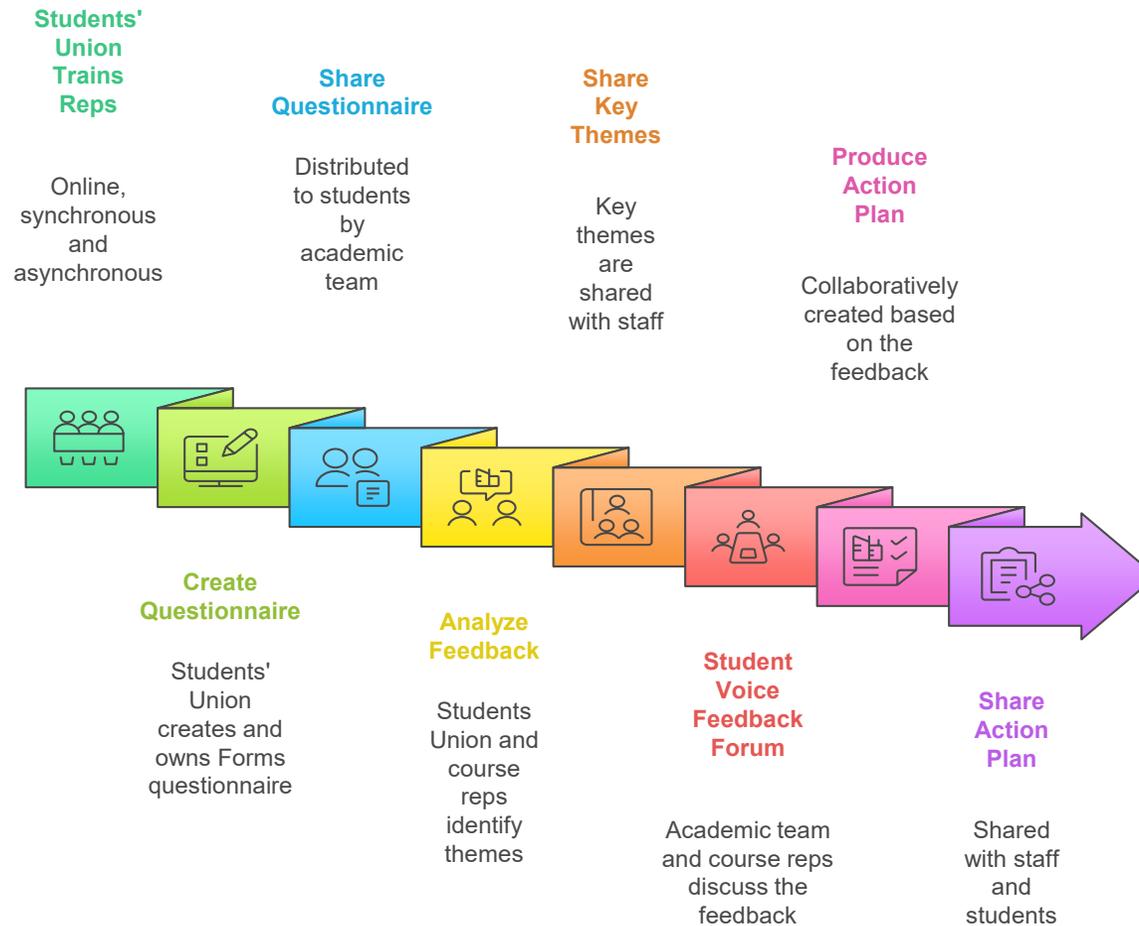Paul Blacklock – Senior Lecturer in Professional Development and International Education

University of Sunderland

Me

- Senior Lecturer in Professional Development and International Education at the University of Sunderland
- Programme Leader for MA Education (on campus and distance education). Previously led PGCE Education (distance education).
- Worked in education for 20 years and a recent career changer into academia
- Interest in student voice and sense of belonging as part of my Professional Doctorate research

Student voice at distance

Students' Union Trains Reps

Online, synchronous and asynchronous

Share Questionnaire

Distributed to students by academic team

Share Key Themes

Key themes are shared with staff

Produce Action Plan

Collaboratively created based on the feedback

Create Questionnaire

Students' Union creates and owns Forms questionnaire

Analyze Feedback

Students Union and course reps identify themes

Student Voice Feedback Forum

Academic team and course reps discuss the feedback

Share Action Plan

Shared with staff and students

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Course changes due to student voice

- Trainees are now given earlier feedback on their teaching from UoS staff on PGCE Education. This has changed after the last round of student voice feedback

- Reduced requirement for lesson planning evidence

- Increased flexibility for accessing subject specialist sessions (PGCE iQTS only)

- Reduced academic content on practice and theory module.

- Completing second school experience (PGCE iQTS only) at any point in the year

- Adapting frequency of seminars in semester two (PGCE Education)

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Questionnaire creation

- Co-creation with DE students

- Rovai (2002b) Classroom Community Scale. Sample of connectedness and learning questions).

- Open questions moved to interviews

- Student Voice preference as ranking. Six options: 1. Verbal feedback via Teams, 2. Feedback via a course representative, 3. Written feedback submitted via email, 4. Online discussion board dedicated to feedback, 5. Online survey (multiple choice, Likert scale), or 6. A combination of these methods

- Trailed questionnaire with feedback from TEL team, former DE student working in software development and member of University Ethics Committee

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Questionnaire reach

- All students studying at distance
- 305 responses from 61 different countries
- Ten areas of study including: teacher training, Law, Nursing, Business, Computing, Psychology and Engineering
- 166 interested in being interviewed

Initial Analysis

- Online survey and written feedback via email were the most popular choices by quite a margin.

- It is worth noting that feedback via a course rep was particularly unpopular. Put most commonly as 4th,5th,6th choice.

Next steps

- Semi-Structured interviews
- Co-creating student voice

Connect

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