Student Voice in Distance Education
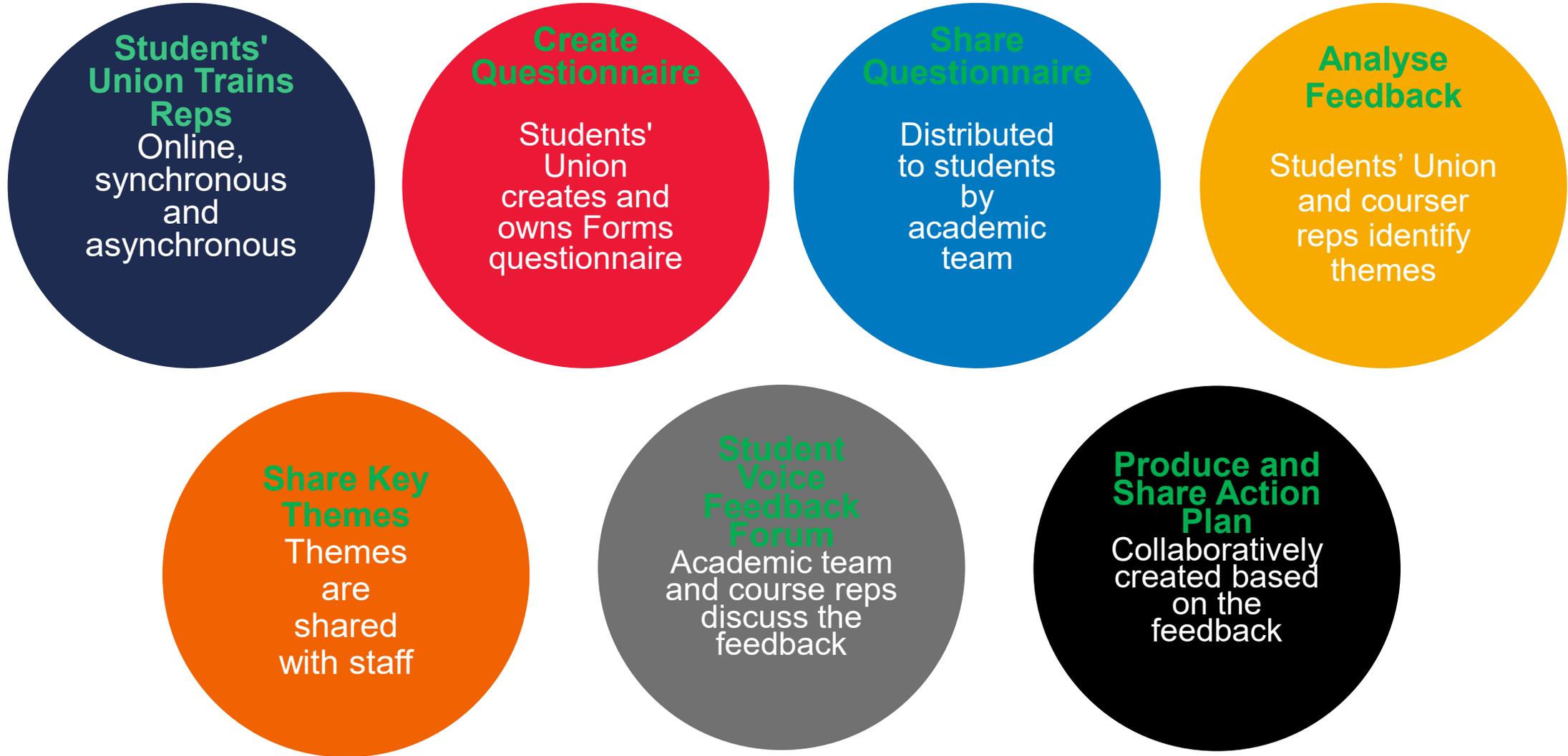
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Background

- 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

- Established Student Voice for our distance education students on PGCE Education, PGCE Early Years and PGCE iQTS (Primary and Secondary).

- Collaborate with the Students' Union Student Communities Co-Ordinator as an independent actor

- Students self nominate to be a course representative

- Students' Union trains course reps from across programmes

- Students' Union creates questionnaire using Forms

- This is shared by academic team with all students across programme twice per year.

- SU works with course reps to read through feedback and identify key themes

- Key themes are fed back to me and I share with staff

- Meeting is held with programme leads, course reps and me to discuss the feedback

- An action plan is produced and is shared with all staff and students

Student Voice

Students' Union Trains Reps
Online, synchronous and asynchronous

Create Questionnaire
Students' Union creates and owns Forms questionnaire

Share Questionnaire
Distributed to students by academic team

Analyse Feedback
Students' Union and courser reps identify themes

Share Key Themes
Themes are shared with staff

Student Voice Feedback Forum
Academic team and course reps discuss the feedback

Produce and Share Action Plan
Collaboratively created based on the feedback

- 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)

- 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

- 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.

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

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students learning across different forms of distance education

Initial themes

1. Strong preference for asynchronous feedback
2. Co-creating surveys to ensure relevance and buy-in
3. Anonymity and psychological safety
4. Course reps are not suitable for distance education
5. Close the feedback loop
6. Inclusion and parity of treatment

Student Voice

- How do you use student voice for distance education students where you are?

- Does this differ to how you use student voice for on campus students?

- Does the Students' Union (or equivalent) have a role in student voice?

- How do you then use feedback? Examples of success with this?

- How do you use or could technology be used to enhance student voice for DE students?

- How do you see student voice evolving in the future as distance education expands?