Live Session Abstracts

Keynote Presentation

Student voice: A formative or summative measure of quality?
Dr Camille Kandiko Howson, Imperial College London

It is more important than ever to hear from our students, but this past year has made it more challenging. How are students experiencing education at a distance? What are their concerns, and how do they voice them from afar?

And in the middle of a pandemic, the student voice has become a political hot potato in England. The Department for Education expressed concerns around the primary vehicle for student feedback, the National Student Survey (NSS) last Autumn and called for a review by the Office for Students. A recent report back said everything is fine.

What will be the future of the NSS as a measure of quality? How will it be used to hold institutions to account? And how can the student voice be used to enhance students' experiences as their learning is occurring?

Measuring the quality of learning and supporting students

Understanding mental health and wellbeing among university students through student-staff collaborative research
Dr Alina Apostu, Dr Marcus Jackson, Dr Jane Cronin-Davis and Hamzah Niaz, St Georges’ University of London

Students as partners, agents of change or research collaborators has been discussed extensively in published literature. In this presentation we discuss an initiative called the Student-Staff Partnership Grants. The aim of SSPGs is to harness the joint insight, ideas and energy of our staff and student body to enrich and enhance the educational and wider university experience for students at St George's. This will be followed by a case study SSPG project that garnered students' views on mental health resources and they accessed these. The study was prompted by results from an internal student experience survey.

Staff perceptions of NSS benefits and challenges
Dr Melita Panagiota Sidiropoulou and Dr Lucy Sharp, The University of Portsmouth

This presentation will explore benefits and challenges associated with the National Student Survey, as perceived by course leaders at the University of Portsmouth. Ethical and other considerations for the leadership/management of HEIs will be analysed. It will be investigated whether external student surveys bring their intended benefits, and whether these surveys are associated with negative consequences that conflict with the core pedagogical values of a university. This presentation will also explore the consequences of a misalignment of approaches/views/vision between management, which promotes surveys,
and staff, who have a major responsibility to increase response rates, and whose actions affect student satisfaction.

**Truly understand the meaning of quality learning**  
*Richard Bryan and Karen Muir, Qa Research*

This presentation will focus on cognitive testing of surveys to ensure that questionnaires designed are interpreted correctly, hence minimising bias, and that they accurately capture the changing priorities of students. The presentation will discuss what ‘quality of learning’ actually means in light of changes to the university funding model and the current pandemic. It will provide an overview of Qa Research’s experience of undertaking cognitive testing for the UK Engagement Survey and Postgraduate Research and Taught Experience Surveys and highlight the strategic significance of cognitive testing prior to launching a student survey.

**Parallel Workshops**

**Using Survey Superheroes to gather student opinions**  
*Amy Holden, Brighton Students’ Union*

Brighton SU’s Survey Superheroes are a panel of students who are paid to complete surveys and are asked questions on different topics such as how student life and their learning has been impacted by the pandemic. During this session, you will see how we use Qualtrics, examples of surveys sent to our Survey Superheroes, and how our reports have influenced our lobbying work during the pandemic. At the end of the session, we will be producing a report live, allowing delegates to input to analysis and see our process.

**How to be a survey whisperer: Using cognitive interviewing to co-design a Module Evaluation Questionnaire**  
*Alan Donnelly and Caroline Heaton, Sheffield Hallam University*

This workshop will explore the use of cognitive interviewing as a methodology for co-designing a module evaluation questionnaire with students. By assessing the ways in which individuals mentally respond to survey questions (Willis, DeMaio & Harris-Kojetin, 1999), a survey tool can be developed which maximises the likelihood of a shared understanding of the meaning and purpose of questions and enhances the accuracy and reliability of results. An overview of a project at Sheffield Hallam University will be shared with participants, who will be invited to test the methodology and consider how the practice might be applied in their own context.

**Listening to the student experience**  
*Victoria Salmon, University of the Arts*

This workshop will focus on the experiences of BAME students at Central Saint Martins, using clips recorded as part of a research project which developed into a participatory sound installation for the UAL Attainment Conference (London, 2018). The clips include experiences of unconscious bias, institutional racism, social inequalities and cultural insensitivities. How attuned are we to listening? Can the format in which material is presented help promote greater understanding of the BAME student experience? How has
this research had impact? Participants will explore such questions uploading reflections, ideas and resources to a digital wall.

**The BAME student experience gap**

**Using module evaluation results to explore the BAME student experience gap**  
*Dr Natalie Holland and Dr Elena Zaitseva, Liverpool John Moores University*

The black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) experience gap has been recognised for some time in UK higher education. This presentation will provide an example of how institutional data, such as module evaluation comments, can be used to explore the differences in the narratives of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Content analysis and text mining has been used to analyse a vast institutional dataset containing over 68,000 comments from students from five ethnic groups. This ongoing piece of research will detail the methodology, interim results and open up discussion with delegates regarding the wider implications of these findings for the sector.

**The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS): Measuring BAME vs White students’ perspectives on the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum**  
*Dave S.P. Thomas and Professor Kathleen M. Quinlan, University of Kent*

Existing sector-wide student surveys do not illuminate the BAME student experience gaps captured in qualitative research and recent de-colonise movements (e.g. Peters 2018). We adopted a ‘race-focused’ approach (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014) to conceptualise and construct a new set of four scales for assessing students’ experiences of the cultural sensitivity of their curricula. We validated these scales with 262 students, yielding 19 items addressing four factors (Diversity Represented, alpha=.87; Positive Portrayals, alpha=.81; Challenge Power, alpha=.88; Inclusive Classroom Interactions, alpha=.83). The survey revealed significant differences between BAME and White students’ perceptions of their curricula, helping to explain gaps in students’ engagement.

**Using ethnodramas to initiate and sustain dialogues about race and everyday racism in Bristol Dental and Medical School**  
*Dr Patricia Neville, University of Bristol*

The latest figures from Advance HE reveal that medicine and dentistry programmes in the UK record better BAME representation and a narrower attainment gap than most UK degree programmes. However, exploratory qualitative research conducted at Bristol Dental and Medical School has highlighted how microaggressions and everyday racism are regularly encountered by students from minority backgrounds. Inspired by feminist and critical race theory, we pursued the creative approach of ethnodramas to share the experiences of BAME students in professional healthcare programmes. This presentation will outline how we created these ethnodramas and the ethical, methodological and logistical challenges we encountered along the way.