



# University of Northampton

## Engaging with a Student Research Panel: A Pathway to Inclusivity and Co-Creation in EAP

Dr Qian Zhang

[Qian.Zhang@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Qian.Zhang@northampton.ac.uk)

Catherine Mitsaki

[Catherine.Mitsaki@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Catherine.Mitsaki@northampton.ac.uk)

ETH2425-0030

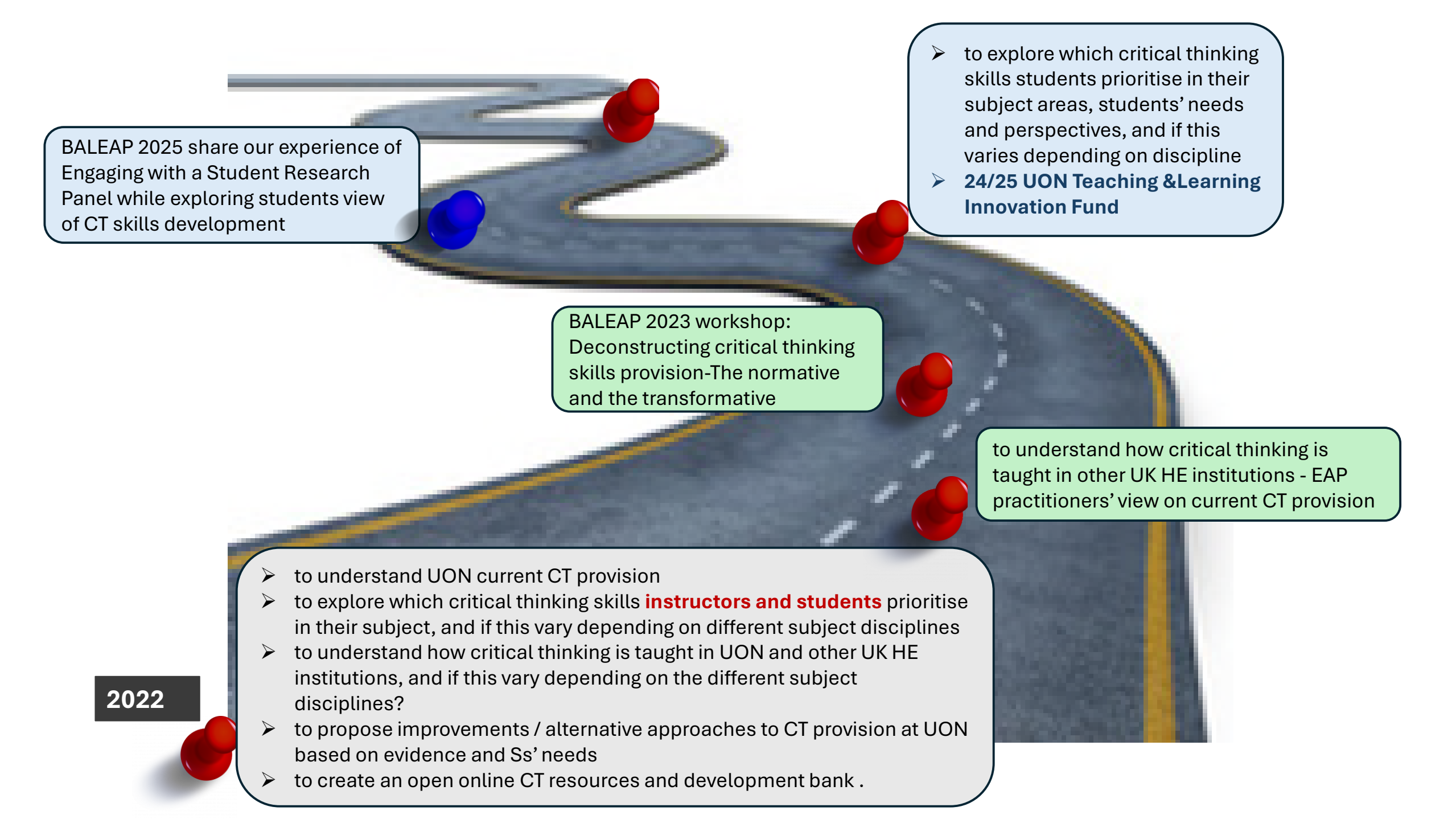
24/25 UON Teaching & Learning Innovation Fund



# Overview

- Project background
- Co-creation, inclusivity and 'value-in-use'
- Why Student Research Panel?
- Our collaboration and co-creation journey
  - SRP interim focus group
  - our reflections
- Conclusion





BALEAP 2025 share our experience of Engaging with a Student Research Panel while exploring students view of CT skills development

- to explore which critical thinking skills students prioritise in their subject areas, students' needs and perspectives, and if this varies depending on discipline
- **24/25 UON Teaching & Learning Innovation Fund**

BALEAP 2023 workshop:  
Deconstructing critical thinking skills provision-The normative and the transformative

to understand how critical thinking is taught in other UK HE institutions - EAP practitioners' view on current CT provision

**2022**

- to understand UON current CT provision
- to explore which critical thinking skills **instructors and students** prioritise in their subject, and if this vary depending on different subject disciplines
- to understand how critical thinking is taught in UON and other UK HE institutions, and if this vary depending on the different subject disciplines?
- to propose improvements / alternative approaches to CT provision at UON based on evidence and Ss' needs
- to create an open online CT resources and development bank .

# Underpinning concepts

---



## Value for staff

- pedagogical innovation and deepened understanding of student needs
  - opportunities for reflection and shared learning
- (Matthews & Dollinger, 2023; Dollinger et al., 2018).



## Value for students

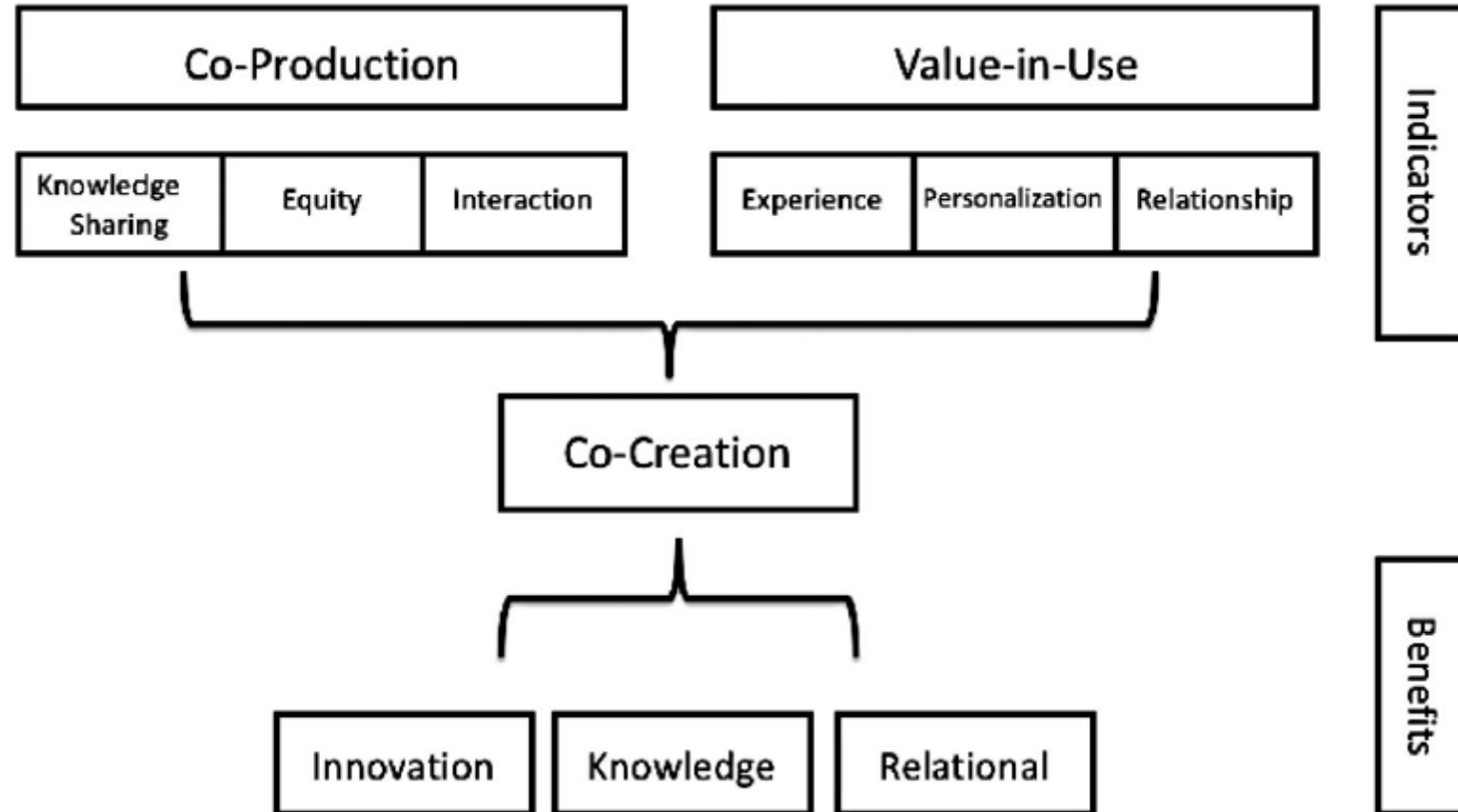
- personal and academic growth e.g., confidence, ownership, and voice (Dollinger, 2020a; Mercer-Mapstone & Clarke, 2018)
- inclusivity and empowerment when collaborations go beyond superficial involvement (Bovill et al., 2016)



## Value for institution

- cultural change, student satisfaction, enhancing institutional responsiveness, and academic quality
  - support by structures and leadership
- (Dollinger et al., 2020b; Mercer-Mapstone & Clarke, 2018).

# Underpinning concepts



Indicative model of value co-creation in higher education (Dollinger et al, 2018, p. 224)

# What is the SRP?

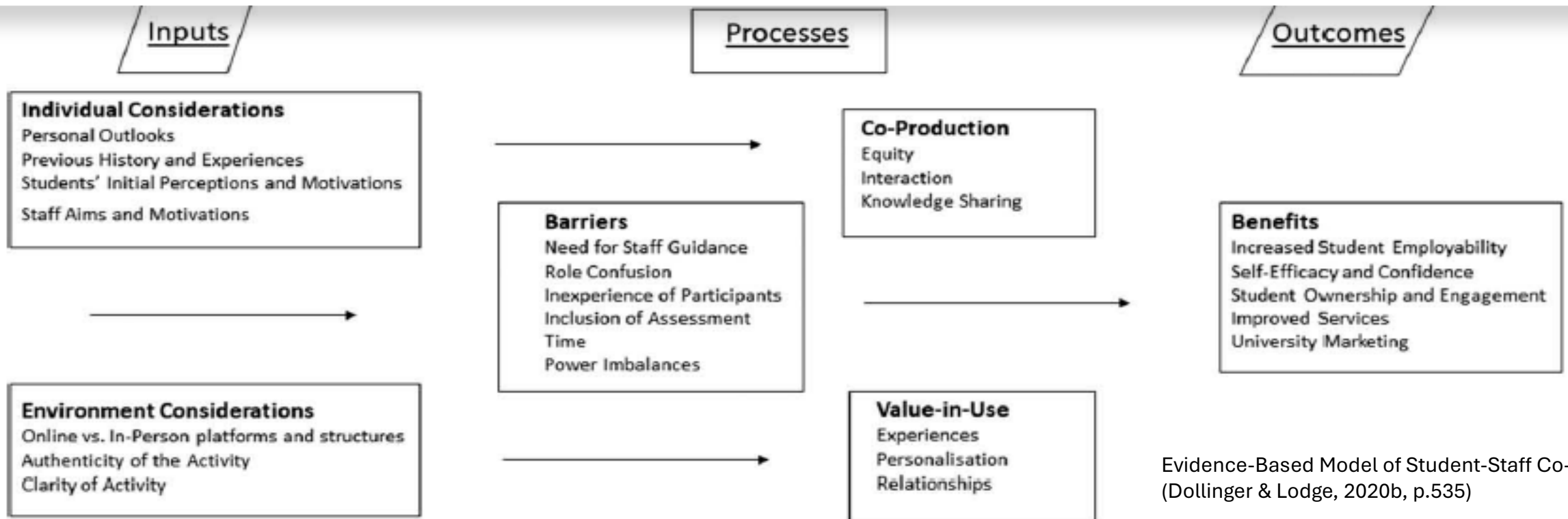
- A group of 6 undergraduate, postgraduate, home and international students from a diverse range of backgrounds, across all 3 faculties at UON
- It acts as a diverse focus group actively engaging in the research process
- Group = panel – consider them experts in students views & experience (they provide insights we lack)

## Roles and responsibilities

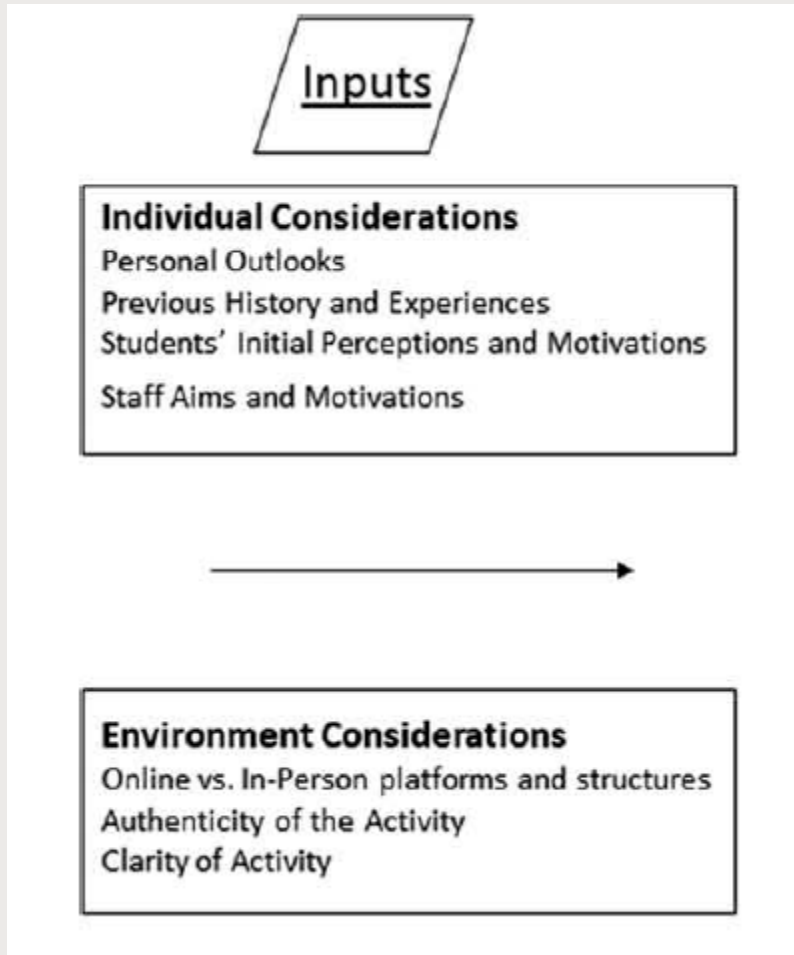
| Tasks                  | Research team responsibilities   | SRP responsibilities  | Shared responsibilities   |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Planning</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define purpose and scope of the panel.</li> <li>- Set timelines and deliverables.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attend training sessions and engage in planning discussions.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboratively set objectives and expectations.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Training</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Train students in research methods, tools, and ethics.</li> <li>- Build capacity for data collection and analysis.</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn and apply research techniques.</li> <li>- Take initiative to deepen understanding.</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify areas for additional training or resources together.</li> </ul>                           |
| <b>Participation</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate collaboration and encourage equitable participation.</li> <li>- Provide ongoing mentorship and guidance.</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively participate in discussions and tasks.</li> <li>- Contribute ideas and unique perspectives.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foster a productive and respectful working environment.</li> </ul>                                 |
| <b>Data Handling</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guide students in ethical data collection and management.</li> <li>- Manage data analysis and oversee quality and integrity of data.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting data collection.</li> <li>- Ethical approach and recruitment of potential participants.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work together to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection and analysis.</li> </ul>    |
| <b>Communication</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Act as a primary point of contact for questions and guidance.</li> <li>- Provide regular feedback.</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate proactively about progress and challenges.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain open communication and regular updates between staff and students.</li> </ul>             |
| <b>Deliverables</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review and refine final outputs (e.g., reports, presentations).</li> <li>- Lead dissemination efforts where needed.</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contribute to creating outputs such as reports or presentations.</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate on producing final deliverables and ensuring they meet the project's goals.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Time Management</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor progress and address delays or obstacles.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete tasks within agreed deadlines.</li> <li>- Manage time effectively alongside</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set realistic timelines and adapt to challenges as a team.</li> </ul>                              |

# A process model?

- adopted as our starting point
- based on the underpinning principles and data from 10 cases of student-staff collaboration
- shows parameters rather than process



# What we have learned @ UON

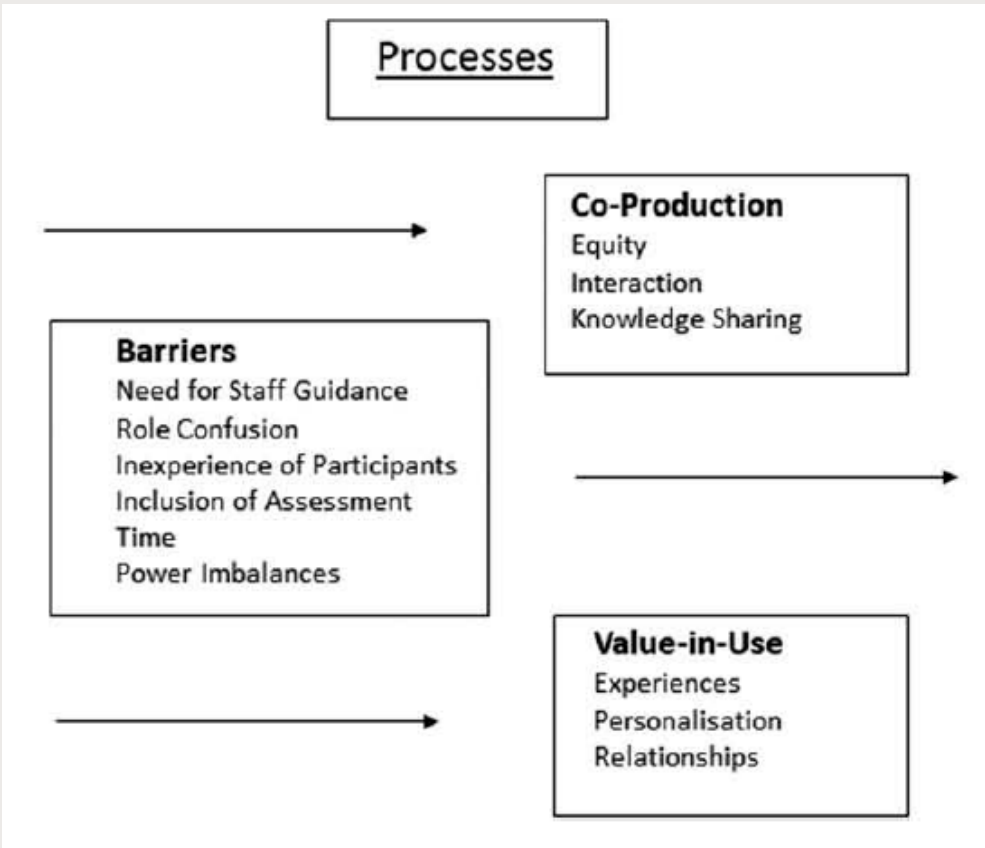


Before embarking on this venture...

- ✓ recruitment: criteria – student body representation, team-work experience, time management and communication styles
- ✓ students' initial motivations: project is for students, interested in critical thinking skills, gain research experience and references, get paid
- ✓ flexible f2f and online – dedicated channels of communication established
- ✓ clarity of activity: aims, roles and responsibilities
- ✓ bottom-up process
  - collaborative planning and decision-making
  - not prescriptive – let the SRP evolve, work the dynamics and establish micro-environment

# What we have learned @ UON

...during the process



- ✓ detailed induction & fieldwork training
- ✓ exposure to research tools
  - SRP own meetings to figure out how to approach participants
  - delegated responsibilities
  - took initiatives
  - corrective action taken
- ✓ desk research training
  - conducted desk research
  - SRP coordinated research to cover more grounds
  - evaluated findings
- ✓ desk research report
- ✓ first brainstorming meeting
  - SRP Padlet with ideas on the one-stop CT development source
  - in the process of developing criteria for inclusion

# What we have learned @ UON



## Outcomes


### **Benefits**

Increased Student Employability  
Self-Efficacy and Confidence  
Student Ownership and Engagement  
Improved Services  
University Marketing


...during the process (interim outcomes)

- ✓ evidence of transferring skills to studies and the workplace
- ✓ evidence of gradually increased confidence
- ✓ evidence of independent thinking and decision-making
- ✓ high levels of engagement
- ✓ gradually taking ownership of the project i.e., using 'our source' instead of 'the source'


# SRP focus group: learning experience



"I've seen how to collect data, perform desk research, and critically evaluate sources. So it's really opened my eyes and you know in future I'll, I'll bring these skills into my my dissertation and also in my my work." (SRP3)




"Doing the desk research... I learned something new... it makes me question if I actually have critical thinking." (SRP2)




"I had to go search what do we do in desk research and how do we analyse the results... How do we sort out the data? How do we take the data we need out of the resources we're trying to find... It was a learning curve." (SRP1)

- evidence for learning on the job
- evidence for linking learning to academic development


# SRP focus group: challenges



"Ethics was a big problem when he started, so we got stamped quite a lot in what we can and can't do."(SRP1)




"If they're (not) interested to complete the survey, it's more challenging one because I'm introvert...but it is also the most rewarding one because it is like I need to go out of my zone, my comfort zone." (SRP5)




"I didn't realise how restrictive it was... I thought you could just bribe people with pizza." (SRP4)

- lack of research ethics knowledge
- fieldwork challenges


# SRP focus group: collaboration



"I didn't really think that teamwork was that important before. I kind of just thought I can do things by myself... And now even at work, I'm more focused on, OK, how can I collaborate with other teachers..." (SRP4)




"I learned to listen more and improve collaboration skills... it was a turning point." (SRP3)




"I didn't anticipate this much teamwork... it's been the key in this research." (SRP1)

- shift in perspective on collaboration
- gained transferrable skills


# SRP focus group: ownership and voice



"It's not just like, oh, you're voicing your opinion and then just make it into something, but it's also about how **blending it** as well with others opinion and just working together to create the resources.."(SRP2)



"...everybody contributed very well and was listened to and everybody's ideas were taken into consideration and **decisions were made as a team**, not individual basis." (SRP4)



"**We kind of put into perspective** how much effort goes into like making something or even writing a paper like realise it entailed this much..." (SRP5)

- building collective voice
- ownership of research process, early stages of building ownership of the outcome

# Value for students

## 1. Empowerment & Ownership

- ✓ Students feel their voices matter and they are contributors to change
- ✓ Builds agency, confidence and self-efficacy

## 2. Skills Development

- ✓ Gains in research, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking
- ✓ Develops real-world, transferable skills

## 3. Learning and Professional Identity

- ✓ Students begin to see themselves as researchers, collaborators, and future professionals
- ✓ Encourages metacognitive strategies



# Value for staff

## 1. Fresh perspective

- ✓ Students bring unique insights into the learning experience, challenging assumptions and enriching understanding.

## 2. Professional Development

- ✓ Encourages reflective teaching, innovation, and openness to shared authority in the learning space.

## 3. Improved Pedagogy

- ✓ Co-created content or approaches lead to better alignment with student needs, enhancing overall teaching effectiveness.



# Conclusion: moving forward

- Student Research Panel is innovative
  - ✓ it transforms the research process into a collaborative effort that directly involves the primary stakeholders – the students and
  - ✓ it brings fresh perspectives towards meaningful learning experiences.
- Co-creation is not a static set of components, but a dynamic and situated experience which
  - ✓ unfolds over time through phases
  - ✓ involves trust-building, mutual learning, and identity transformation
- Process resembles the characteristics of a Community of Practice, with
  - ✓ the periphery / students gradually assuming decision making power and
  - ✓ the experts / staff as consultants
- Future models could foreground the developmental trajectory of such partnerships and how co-creating evolves over time

# References

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2016). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16(2), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690>

Dollinger, M., Lodge, J. & Coates, H. (2018) Co-creation in higher education: towards a conceptual model, *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 28:2, 210-231, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2018.1466756

Dollinger, M., and Lodge, J. (2020a). Understanding value in the student experience through student–staff partnerships. *Higher Education Research and Development* 39 (5): 940-952.

Dollinger, M., and Lodge, J. (2020b). Student-staff co-creation in higher education: an evidence-informed model to support future design and implementation. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 42 (5): 532-546.

Matthews, K. E., & Dollinger, M. (2023). Student voice in higher education: the importance of distinguishing student representation and student partnership *Higher Education* 85 (3): 555-570.

Mercer-Mapstone, L., & Clarke, A. (2018). A partnership approach to scaling up student/staff partnership at a large research-intensive university. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 2(1), 19–38.