

# **Raising student voices via peer-to-peer feedback**

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# Overview

- Our contexts
- What we did
- What we learnt
- Closing thoughts

# Context: UCAE and ASP

University Centre for Academic English (UCAE)

Academic Success Programme (ASP): *Academic English workshops available to all registered international students*

End of course feedback surveys

- Non-response bias
- Courtesy bias

→ **Whose voices do we collect?**

*Typically, course evaluations only represent between 20 and 30% of an audience (Qualtrix complete guide to course evaluations, 2025)*

*“engaged and academically proficient students are over represented in survey statistics”  
(Standish and Umbach, 2019)*

→ **How do we create ‘safe spaces’ for honest feedback?**

# Context: MIE focus group leaders

**Intercultural Engagement module:** undertake a short-term project with opportunities to experience intercultural educational and/or community organisational practice

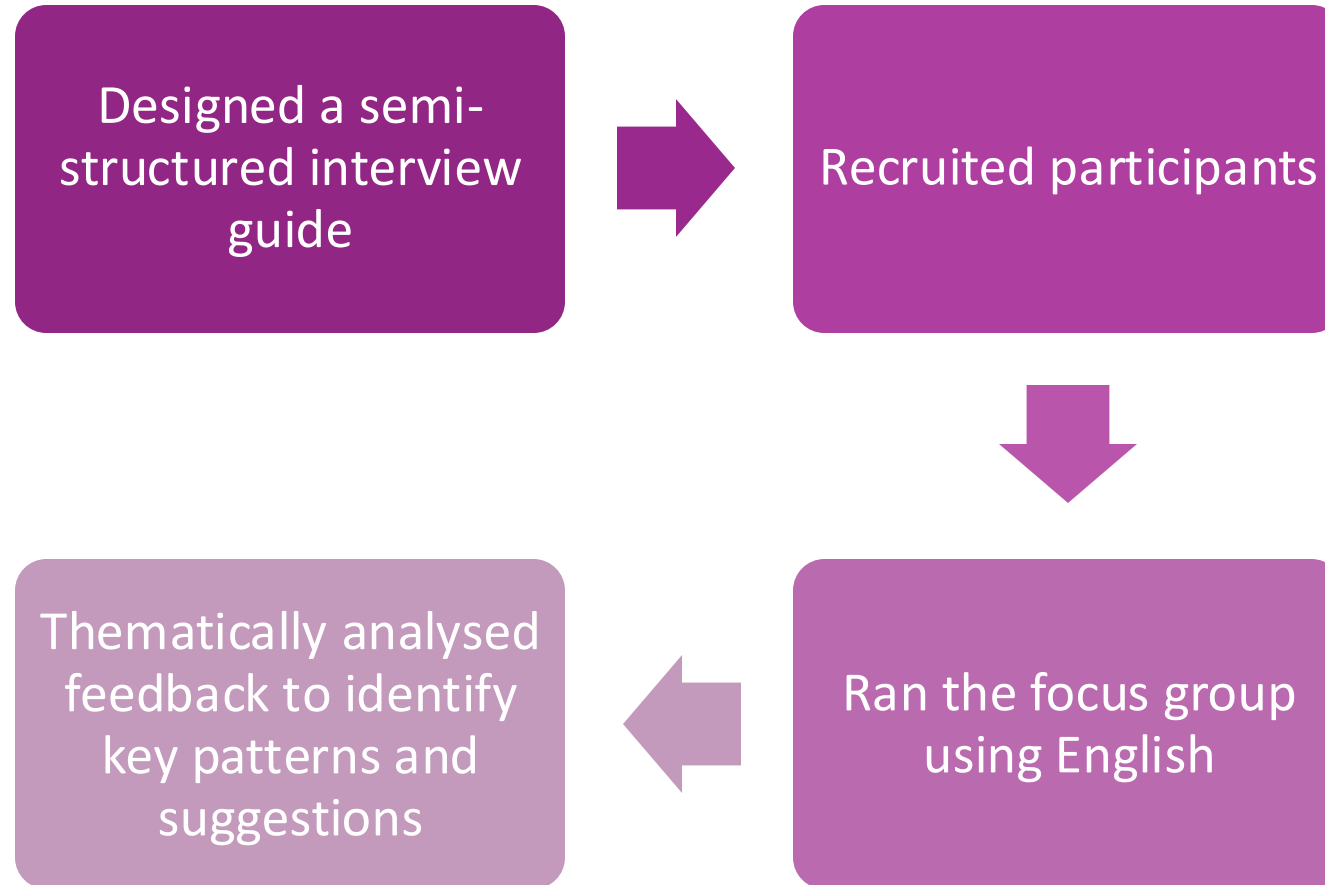
## **Chuning – why I chose this placement**

- To explore how students interact with AI-supported academic tools in real contexts.
- To gain hands-on research experience through a small-scale, student-centred project.
- To understand how universities design and deliver academic support services.

## **Shiyu – why I chose this placement**

- A practical and supportive way to refresh academic research skills
- To improve my spoken English and intercultural communication skills
- To explore how academic support services can better serve international students

# Focus groups: what we did



# Focus groups: challenges and what we learnt

	Challenges	What we learnt
1	Difficulties with participant recruitment – limited sign-ups at first.	Wider outreach strategies are needed to improve participants.
2	Participants sometimes drifted off-topic.	Gentle facilitation helps manage off-topic responses.
3	Occasional silence or limited responses.	Prepared prompts + flexibility reduce silence and support engagement.
4	One participant's accent was hard to understand in real-time.	Real-time clarification builds mutual understanding across accents.

# Gen AI focus group: key findings and recommendations

## Key Insights

- Unclear AI usage policies cause confusion and anxiety among students.
- Cultural bias in AI outputs limits inclusivity and relevance for non-Western students.

# Gen AI focus group: key findings and recommendations

## Our Recommendations

- University should develop clear, detailed, and discipline-specific AI usage guidelines.
- Embed AI bias awareness and mitigation strategies into cross-cultural communication and writing courses.



# ASP focus group: key findings and recommendations

## Key Insights

- Students appreciated **the range and practicality** of workshop topics
- Timing and mode (mostly in-person) were inconvenient for many
- Students wanted more **tailored support** for specific academic challenges

# ASP focus group: key findings and recommendations

## Our Recommendations

- **Offer more flexible formats**, including online and short video options
- **Create themed workshops** based on specific student needs (e.g. critical writing, citation)
- **Collaborate with student hubs or societies** to reach more international students

# Our closing thoughts

## → Whose voices do we collect?

Focus group participants provided new perspectives that we at UCAE would have found difficult to reach → (e.g. most had not heard of UCAE or ASP!)

- What platforms do we use to contact students for feedback? (in-person, email, social media?)
- What incentives do we offer for feedback?

# Our closing thoughts

## → How do we create 'safe spaces' for honest feedback?

Generally, leaders perceived that participants felt able to be honest during focus groups. However, perceived hierarchy of roles meant focus group leaders might not always report back very critical opinions.

- Is a 'neutral intermediary' possible?
- Is a 'neutral intermediary' beneficial or does an established relationship enable more honesty between those giving and receiving course feedback?
- How do we equip student reps (or similar) to collect and report back feedback, particularly where cultural backgrounds and expectations may differ?

# References

Qualtrix (2025) *The complete guide to course evaluations*. Available at: <https://www.qualtrics.com/en-gb/experience-management/industry/course-evaluations/> [accessed 20.6.25]

Standish, T. and Umbach, P.D. (2019). Should We Be Concerned About Nonresponse Bias in College Student Surveys? Evidence of Bias from a Validation Study. *Research in higher education*, 60(3), pp.338–357.