

This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.  
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

## Service design approach to the annual degree programme review practices

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

<https://charteredabs.org/events/ltse2020/#1539940653814-a16ee616-d5c3>

VERSION

AM (Accepted Manuscript)

LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Newton, Radka, Ksenija Kuzmina, and Diane Sloan. 2020. "Service Design Approach to the Annual Degree Programme Review Practices". figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/11843916.v1>.

Theme 6. Outside of the box education

Showcasing unique solutions that improve student retention, attainment and progression.

**Service design approach to the annual degree programme review practices**

**Radka Newton, Ksenija Kuzmina, Diane Sloan**

**Abstract:**

This research paper addresses the challenge faced across the education sector of how to design, organise and maintain a quality educational experience in HE. The findings are based on a two-year research project in Lancaster University followed by a 10 months investigation in four other UK Universities. The paper shows how applying service design approach to programme review empowers student voice and creates a conduit to incorporate more empathetic and human-centered view of student experience. Service design has been successfully adapted from commercial setting to the improvements of public sector, including patient experience in the NHS and to enhance citizen engagement with gov.uk services. The paper provides a critical review of the suitability and adaptability of serviced design to the HE context and it reflects on its benefits as well as challenges connected with the problematised framing of HE as a service sector.

**Main:**

The research paper demonstrates how partnering with students to co-design a solution to student engagement can be approached using service design methodology. We present the outcomes of a research project that has been based on a two-year enquiry carried out initially in Lancaster University Management School on MSc Management programme and now extended more broadly in the UK HE sector with the involvement of more than 150 students and 20 staff. The Lancaster pilot can demonstrate excellent outcomes of direct interest to delegates: including a significant increase in student participation in careers support due to the major redesign of the support, improved assessment profile of the programme, revision of module sequence to achieve more gradual and logical learning, and increased student agency that has resulted in student-led initiatives improving the programme brand. Additionally, students have reported a great sense of community and enhanced respect and trust between students and programme team. The initiative was promoted as best practice at the teaching committee as well as highly commended by AMBA accreditation.

The paper addresses gaps traditional degree programmes reviews that are carried out through collation of individual courses feedback from students and staff, other forms of feedback reported at exam boards and sporadic questionnaires about student experience. Some programme reviews also draw from NSS and PTES surveys that are, however, hard to attribute to specific programmes. Such review mechanisms, however, fail to provide a holistic insight into programme quality and student and staff experience of the delivery and focus predominantly on metrics.

Acknowledging this and the current debate of students as customers, we will contribute to practice through demonstrating to delegates that it is more productive to reframe the learning journey in terms of the service-dominant logic (Lusch et al., 2008). Such a reframe of students as co-designers of their experience further offers an opportunity to explore service design as a human-centred problem-solving approach to address some key issues on degree programmes such as lack of student engagement with careers provision, overassessment, increased students' anxiety in certain periods of

delivery, lack of business engagement, etc. After reviewing existing and interdisciplinary alternatives, service design was selected as an approach that can offer a new lens, assessing the student experience as a user experience (Pavlov and Hoy, 2019; Kuzmina et al., 2017) where the student can be understood as an actor, a beneficiary, and ultimately a co-producer (Kuzmina et al., 2012) of the service we provide as academics and is also a partner in the value co-creation of the knowledge, moving away from the narrow definition of student as customer (Guilbault, 2018).

The research method critically reviews traditional service design methods such as persona profiling, customer journey mapping and ideation and offers possible adaptations to the HE context in order to provide a complementary human-centered framework to the current post-hoc feedback collection. The research outcomes confirm that this approach enhances student engagement in the co-creation of their experience and positively impacts on their sense of belonging. The benefits for the programme teams that were concluded from the staff perception mainly point of the improved ability to focus on programme issues more effectively addressing those fail points that really matter to student experience, hence saving effort and resources.