# Using Students in a Co-creative Process to Stimulate SoTL

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Goal: To tap into the transformative power of SoTL, through our collaborative project, **Students' University**, in which we bring teams of educational developers, students and instructors together as partners to consider how to promote the development, local-adaption, and implementation of evidence-based practices for increasing student-centered teaching and learning.

Explore
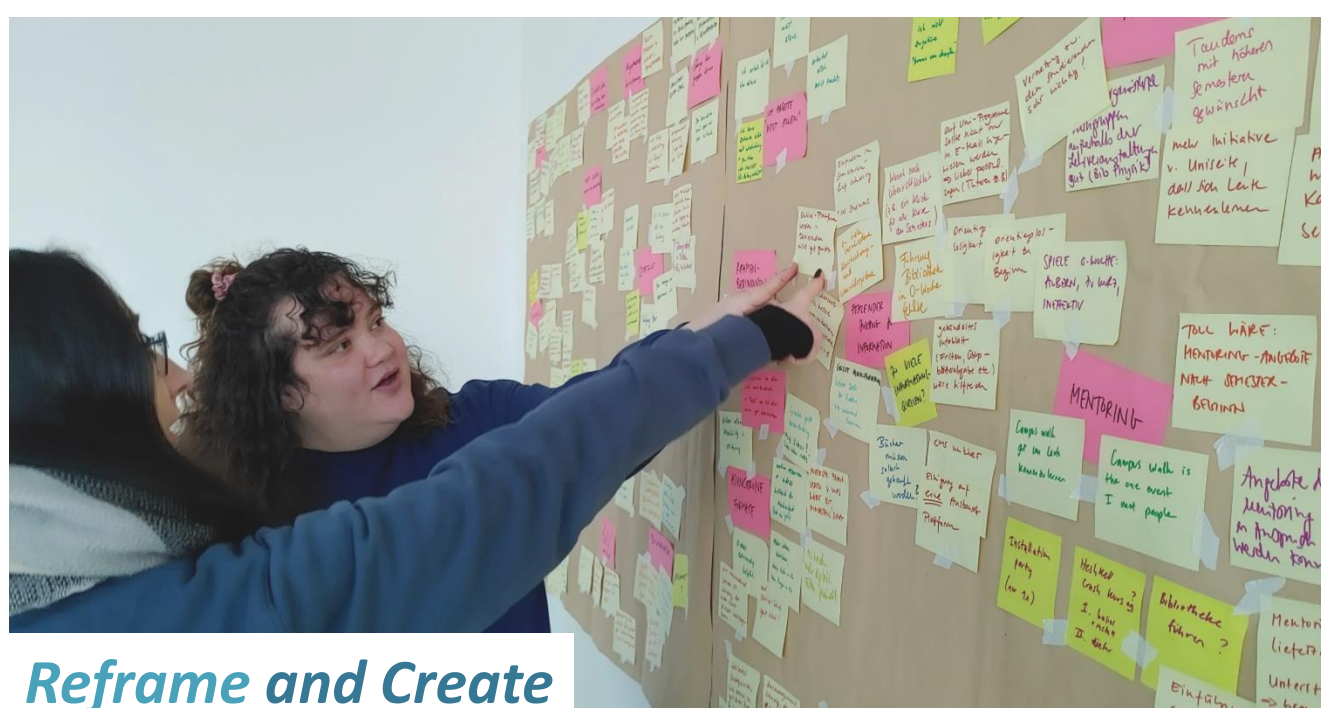
Reframe and *Create*

Catalyse

Students' University:

In our project, Students' University (StudentU), we bring together educational developers, instructors, and students in design teams to work collaboratively on so-called *"Learning Evolution Projects" (LEPs)*. Proposals for LEPs could come from any discipline, but the main theme had to be related to student participation (Cook-Sather et al, 2018.). Since Sept 2022, we have worked on four LEPs in four different disciplines ranging in scope from large redesigns of degree programs to small, single module interventions.

Design Thinking in Higher Education:

We use a human-centered Design Thinking (DT) approach for each LEP. DT's "bias to action" effectively unites our diverse team and ensures a shared the responsibility for implementing meaningful changes. Educational developers contribute their expertise in SoTL and facilitation skills, while instructors provide insights into course/program content, structure, and valuable teaching experience. Students serve as equal partners, actively participating in adapting and tailoring solutions to suit the local context. Our collaborative, step-wise approach leverages the varied perspectives and experiences within the team, while also relying on SoTL evidence to inform our choices.
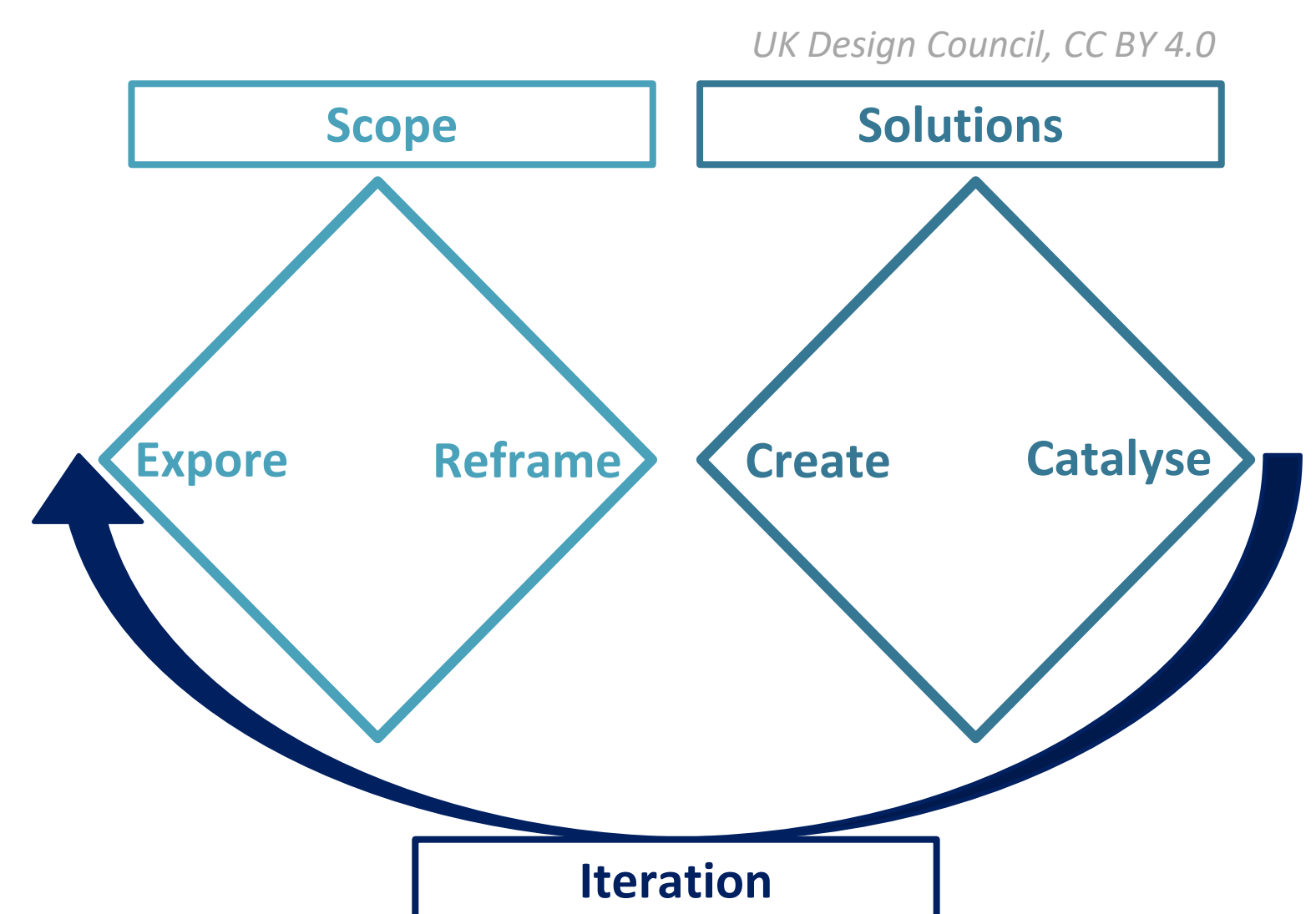
➡ *Explore*
gather insights from different perspectives, both within and beyond the design team, and the SoTL literature

➡ *Reframe* and *Create*
refine the scope, consider specific questions, and propose multiple "prototype" solutions

➡ *Catalyse*
prioritize which solutions to develop, establish plans for implementation, and determine mechanisms for feedback and iteration

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Scope	Solutions
Expore Reframe	Create Catalyse

Iteration

LEP 1: Supporting incoming Computer Science students' transition to university

➡ **Explore:** Interviews with 1st-semester students and online survey of higher-semester students about challenges as an incoming student.

➡ **Reframe and Create:** Four common challenges identified: pace and complexity; self-doubt and expectations; social interactions and meeting new people; and study skills.

➡ **Catalyse:** Normalize the challenges through curated stories about how all students experience difficulties (derived from student statements); followed by social belonging intervention, based on the work of Yaeger et al. (2016)

LEP 2: Redesign interdisciplinary program for North American Studies

➡ **Explore:** Prompted student-reflections about the NA Studies program followed by a facilitated focus group discussion.

➡ **Reframe and Create:** Theme arose around the interdisciplinarity of the NA program; is the program only multi-disciplinary, i.e., two programs in parallel but not explicitly connected?

➡ **Catalyse:** Workshop with instructors and students from all six disciplines in the NA program, focused on re-designing three mandatory, interdisciplinary courses; results of the workshop were used for a re-accreditation strategy paper.

Conclusions and Outlook:

Bringing cross-status teams of students, instructors, and educational developers together through a Design Thinking (DT) approach, we effectively introduced SoTL findings and thereby enabled real change in the student experience; the process itself is an example of increased student participation.

Furthermore, StudentU has established DT as a suitable method for a more inclusive curriculum design. Training in DT is now be integrated into the professional development opportunities provided to all instructors at the Freie Universität Berlin through the Dahlem Center for Academic Teaching.

References:
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Want to learn more? Check out our recent paper (30.Oct 2023)