

Navigating Alumni-University relationships through meaningful engagement with alumni voice

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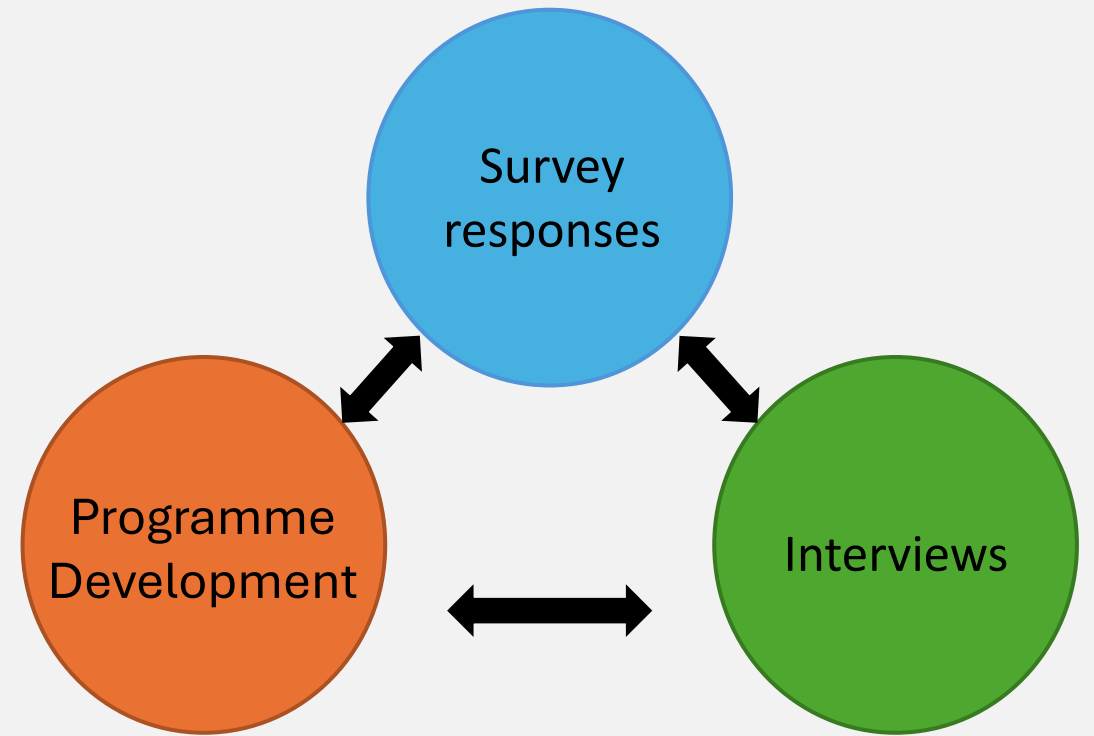
Motivation



- Alumni are a distinctive group within the UoE community, outside the immediate institutional framework
- Alumni can reflect on their experience from a distinct perspective and with greater candour, which can be essential for future programme development: **learning**, **belonging**, and **curriculum development**
- Project combined surveys and semi-structured interviews of medical school alumni investigating shared indicators for programme impact and satisfaction
- Reflection on how alumni voice is heard within UoE

PTAS project

- 3 online part-time PGT programmes in the Medical school (each running for 15+ years)
 - Biodiversity Wildlife and Ecosystem Health
 - Clinical Education
 - Global Health and Infectious Diseases
- No consistent alumni feedback at programme-level during this time
- Feedback is essential for future programme development



Interview method

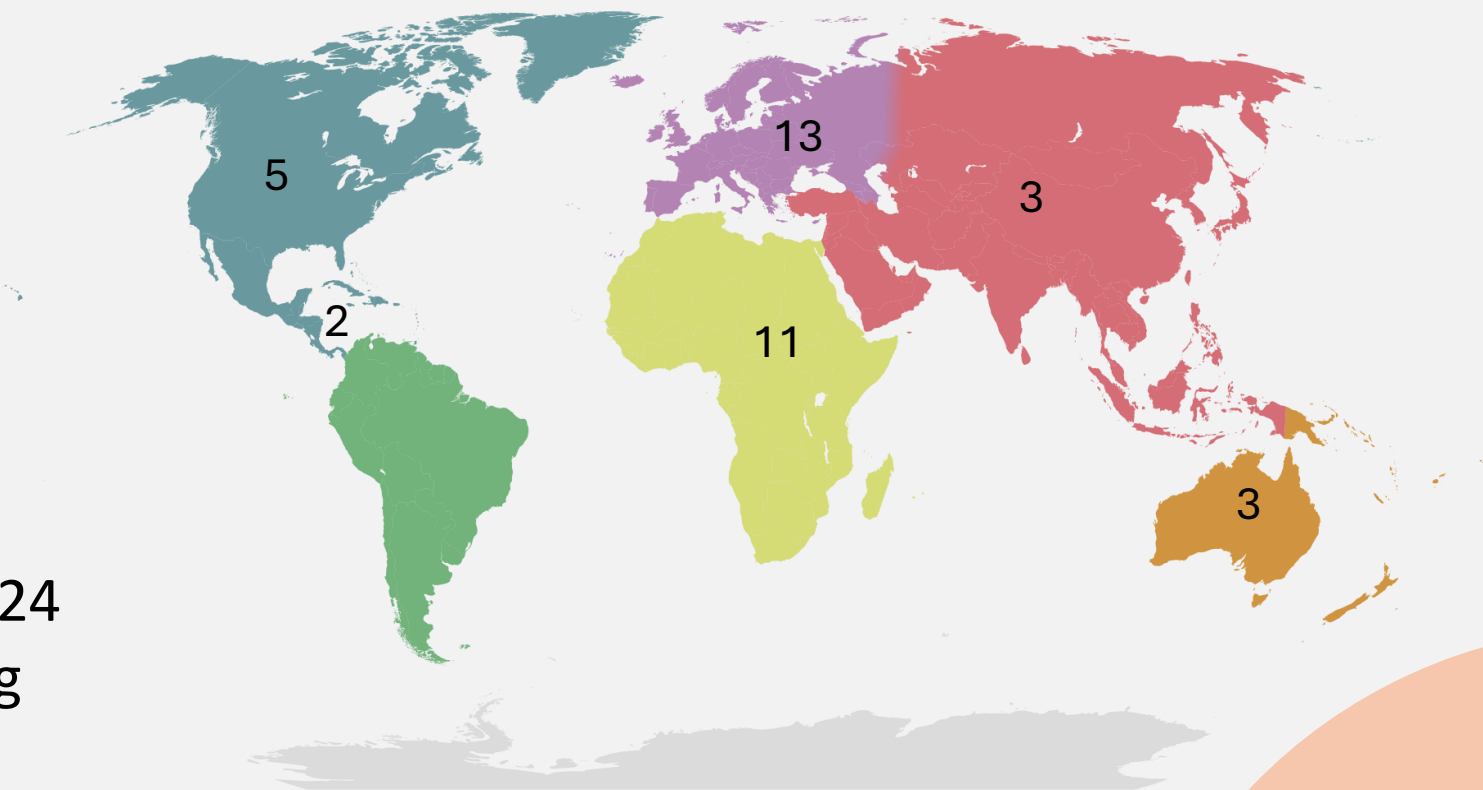
- Alumni were for interviews invited from the three PGT programmes
- Semi-structured interviews based around 4 key themes
- Interviews conducted by academic staff not associated with programme of study
- Conversation style interview, duration ~1-hour



Participants

General participant:

- 37 Participants:
 - BWEH – 13
 - ClinEd – 13
 - GHID - 11
- Mean age: 43
 - Range: 29-63
- Graduated between 2011-2024
- Many worked full-time during studies (or have caring responsibilities)
- Global cohort



Preliminary findings



- **Motivation:**
 - Being able to work simultaneously was a draw across programme
- **Impact:**
 - Completing these programmes influenced continued professional development
- **Experience:**
 - Opportunity for global interactions (peer and staff)
- **Satisfaction:**
 - Generally positive but alumni felt empowered to mention challenges and possible improvements

Participant reflections – Sense of belonging

Themes:

- Global network
 - Students have created their own networking groups

*"...[My coursemates] are open to interdisciplinary work, and so that made me feel like... I belong to a big family here... I **belong to a global family...**"*

- ClinEd #2



Participant reflections – Sense of belonging

Themes:

- Global network
 - Students have created their own networking groups
- Pride in the university
 - Alumni travelled to Edinburgh to attend graduation

*“I feel a connection [to the university]... I'm trying to buy some alumni clothing because **I'm very proud of the fact that I'm a University of Edinburgh alumni.**”*

-ClinEd #4



Participant reflections – Sense of belonging

Themes:

- Global network
 - Students have created their own networking groups
- Pride in the university
 - Alumni travelled to Edinburgh to attend graduation
- UoE reputation

“I completed a programme [at] the University of Edinburgh because of the reputation of the university, because it opened a lot of doors for me which I didn’t expect...”
- BWEH #1



Participant reflections – Sense of disconnection

Themes:

- Alumni do not feel like there is a place for them at the university after they graduate

*“I believe that university community is students, staff, and alumni. So, **if we are part of that community, what is plan available for us as alumni**, mainly for those who did distance programme?*

- GHID #6

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Participant reflections – Sense of disconnection

Themes:

- Alumni do not feel like there is a place for them at the university after they graduate
- Are alumni seen as valuable to the university? Or just as a statistic?

*“The shift I would most value is the one from **alumni as data points to alumni as continuing partners** in the life of the programme.”*

- Dr. Avita Rath, ClinEd Alum



Participant reflections – Sense of disconnection

Themes:

- Alumni do not feel like there is a place for them at the university after they graduate
- Are alumni seen as valuable to the university? Or just as a statistic?
- Alumni want to continue to be involved with the university

*“[Contact with the university] will be really valuable... [The] University.... can be an open gate for collaboration with Edinburgh staff in that subject area. But, **if no one knows what [alumni] are doing outside, it means the intention was to teach people and [let them] go, but no[t] reconnections.**”*

- GHID #6



Participant reflections – Opportunities

*It's really nice to catch up and even highlighting what is happening on our life... **How [does the] University pick [which] work [to] post on the website, saying, 'We are happy to see our alumni have been working in this'.***

- GHID #6



Participant reflections – Opportunities

Themes:

- Alumni feedback at the programme-level

*"Dialogue feels **most meaningful when it stays connected to the programme community** rather than only to broad, university-level alumni communications"*
- Dr. Avita Rath, ClinEd Alum



Participant reflections – Opportunities

Themes:

- Alumni feedback at the programme-level
- Online alumni want community
 - Possibility to increase collaboration

"...[B]uild a community of [and] for the alumni, ...[there is] so much value in an alumni network for people to connect and reach out and find similar interests... and collaborations."

- ClinEd #8



Participant reflections – Opportunities

Themes:

- Alumni feedback at the programme-level
- Online alumni want community
 - Possibility to increase collaboration
- Alumni want to support/be a part of creating these continued connections

[H]ow do you engage alumni who are not working with you directly? You know that they can make impact on global network. So those are [the] kind[s] of questions for me. Is that possible? Then, if it's possible, **what do we need to do?**

- GHID #6



Conclusions

- Alumni continue to have a strong sense of being a part of the university
 - Participants were very appreciative of being asked for feedback even 10 years later
 - Alumni want a relationship where they matter
 - Lack of systems to capture rich experience
 - There is an opportunity to have meaningful relationships with alumni
 - Ideally their relationship is with the programme/school - but this needs to be prioritised and time allocated to it
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Thank you!

Thanks to our Alumni co-authors

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Any questions?

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