WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE WORK ROLE: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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Abstract

UK Undergraduate students are increasingly expected to undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as part of their studies. The inclusion of formal work experience in the curriculum of study is often driven, from the University perspective, by a need to prove the 'value' of a degree by demonstrating employability in graduates. As a result, research into the impact of WIL often involves quantifying its effect on areas such as employment rates or academic attainment leaving students overlooked and the opinions of academics or employers taking priority. This thesis aims to redress the balance by exploring students' views of how they change in the work role as they experience WIL.

A constructivist approach to understanding the lived experiences of the students was adopted, informed by Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. The longitudinal study involved a group of students from two English universities, with three separate stages of data collection taking place. Stage 1 consisted of a questionnaire survey of first year undergraduates (n=644) from ten programmes across both institutions exploring their current and anticipated future views of a number of personal characteristics related to literature on employability. Fifteen of these students then completed self-characterisation sketches and semi-structured interviews at Stage 2 (second year). Eleven (of the fifteen) completed a second sketch and were interviewed again in Stage 3 (final year), and so were followed across the entire course of their studies. The Stage 1 analysis indicated areas for exploration in Stages 2 and 3, with the qualitative data from the sketches and interviews being analysed using Template Analysis and Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis (LQA). Template Analysis identified key themes about what was important to the participants, while LQA captured the changes which they felt were taking place and the conditions influencing these. Additional analysis of the sketches using Kelly's protocol resulted in case studies of individual participants and their journeys.

Stage 1 findings showed that social work students, in particular, rated themselves lower in a number of areas. It was also notable that all participants rated themselves highly already on the survey characteristics and expected these to increase further by graduation. Findings from Stages 2 and 3 uncovered a complex interplay of reasons underlying how participants felt about their workplace identity and how they thought it changed through WIL. For some, it was exposure to people and situations that they would not otherwise have encountered that was important while in others it was the opportunity to experiment in a safe place that promoted change.

This thesis finds that participants thought WIL had changed their views about their workplace role in two dimensions. Firstly, experiencing WIL might have changed their ideas about themselves and what type of job they were best suited to. Secondly, they might have changed their view about what the job was and what it involved. This demonstrated that WIL could help participants develop clearer ideas about who they were and what they wanted. Subsequently, this might have led to some temporary uncertainty and a change in career direction, which is in contrast to previous research which tends to see one of the purposes of WIL as being to encourage a steady rise in career decidedness across the course of a degree. This uncertainty may ultimately be helpful to the participants as it could lead to a better 'fit' with a job in the long term, even though it would be regarded as a 'failure' in university terms. Finally, this thesis contributes to the development of knowledge about WIL's influence on construal of self and job-role through the presentation of a new theoretical model.

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Glossary of abbreviations

CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
CLT	Central Limit Theorem
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education [survey]
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
GOS	Graduate Outcomes Survey
HE	Higher Education
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HRM	Human Resources Management
LQA	Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis
PCT	Personal Construct Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics)
SWE	Supervised Work Experience
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain the setting of the thesis. I will situate it within the current UK Higher Education environment, justifying why research in the area is needed, and begin to show how it integrates with existing knowledge about Work Integrated Learning (WIL). My motivation and suitability to undertake the work is then explored, including a short overview of my professional background. This discussion also contributes to my reflexive commentary on the research, which is presented fully in the conclusion (Section 10.2). The chapter closes with an overview of the thesis structure.

Some elements of this introduction, particularly the contextual discussion, have previously appeared in a peer-reviewed conference paper (McGrane, King, Burr, & McAdie, 2019, see Appendix 11). I wrote and presented the entire paper, with my co-authors' contributions coming in the form of suggestions and comments on drafts.

1.1 Context and background for the thesis

In English higher education the 'value for money' element of degree study has been under increasing scrutiny (Burnett, 2017) leading to an environment where the wider questions of how university education helps students to develop, the acquisition of graduate identity, and the process of 'becoming' a graduate have been in danger of being overlooked. Driven by an increase in tuition fees and the pressure from competition introduced by the lifting of the cap on student numbers (BIS, 2011) measures of employment outcomes as a way of assessing the 'value' of a degree have been prioritised over other ways of looking at the potential gains from degree study. The environment continues to evolve with the Augar review (Department for Education, 2019) representing the latest suggestions to address perceived 'skills shortages' in employees, through promotion of Further Education courses and apprenticeships for school leavers rather than the traditional undergraduate degree. This is not a situation unique to England or to Higher Education: although English tuition fees have been identified as the most expensive in the world (Kentish, 2017) the view that student development matters only if it leads to employment has also been seen in other countries and other sectors. For example there has been a large body of work in the Australian HE sector, which seemed to gain momentum after a similar change to funding arrangements was imposed in 2005 (Bates, 2008).

Of course, it is legitimate for employers and policy makers to concern themselves with questions about the value of degree study. Skilled graduates make a significant impact on economic development and on society more generally. However, it has been relatively common to conflate employability with the more measurable concept of employment and to assume that if graduates have a defined and measurable set of 'employability skills' this is sufficient to ensure employment. This in turn has led to an emphasis on the acquisition of these skills by graduates. As a result, when questions of how students develop during the course of their degree studies are considered, the principal emphasis has tended to be placed on employment outcomes (Holmes, 2013b) and the need to produce 'work ready' graduates. Most recently, this can be seen in the way institutions were ranked in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was supposed to assess

teaching quality. Instead, use of the terms 'employability' and 'employment' in provider submissions has been identified as being a key element in obtaining positive rating outcomes (Matthews & Kotzee, 2019).

One strategy which has frequently been suggested to encourage employment skills in graduates is Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Bates, 2008; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragnolini, 2004; Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2010), work experience taking place as a formally assessed part of the programme of study. In the UK an increased use of WIL in recent years has been strongly influenced by responses to the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) and the Wilson review (Wilson, 2012) which set out the importance of universities in developing graduates to meet the needs of employers and society (Rhodes & Shiel, 2007). As a consequence of these reports, the position has been taken that all students should be encouraged to take up placements in order to improve their employability and academic skills. As part of this, it has also been suggested that internships (shorter periods of work experience lasting months rather than a full academic year) should be developed and made more available to UK students to increase the flexibility of integration with academic courses (Wilson, 2012). Beyond the UK, there has also been clear interest in WIL as a way of developing graduate employability, often driven by similar agendas.

Although the existing work focussing on acquisition of skills through WIL is valuable there is a danger that the student is viewed in this discussion as someone who is merely participating in a transactional relationship, exchanging time in study developing a set of graduate attributes for the 'right' level of job and earnings (Tomlinson, 2018). As a result, the most important stakeholders in existing work have often been identified as employers, since they are the ones who either validate or invalidate the 'worth' of the degree by offering (or withholding) the crucial appointment to a job after graduation and whose 'needs' must be met. It has therefore been common for curricula (including curricula for WIL) to be designed specifically around module and programme learning outcomes which contribute to the explicit development of a set of predetermined graduate attributes seen as essential to employers (Basit et al., 2015; Bates, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011).

This approach of focussing on employers as the key stakeholders and then designing a programme intended to deliver what they believe they want is limited in two aspects. Firstly, due to the overriding priority given to the employer perspective, the voice of students is absent from much of the published research on WIL. This particularly true of research related to curriculum design (for influential examples of studies illustrating this approach see Crebert et al. (2004) and Jackson & Chapman (2012)). The view of the people best placed to explain and evaluate the lived experience of WIL is, therefore, ignored. As a consequence, there may well be benefits of WIL for the individuals and for organisations which subsequently employ them which are not captured or assessed by current approaches to policy and curriculum design. Secondly, when employers are asked what they require from graduates they have tended to focus on functional, measurable, business-orientated skills for understandable reasons. Not least of these is that, because it is difficult to know what else students might develop during WIL that could be of benefit to employers, they are unlikely to appreciate what else graduates may be able to offer. In summary, evaluation of the worth of the experience has been limited.

Graduates have been assessed against sets of generic skills, and employers are unaware of the full range of opportunities that may be afforded by employing them.

This thesis therefore investigates how the self-perceptions of a group of students who undertook WIL changed during the course of their experience, looking at this in a much wider sense than just their employment outcomes. Instead, the aim is to build a more holistic picture of their changing views about their identities through exploring their lived experience. Thus, knowledge about the impact of WIL is extended beyond the skills agenda and beyond the views of employers. There is potential to enrich curriculum design by deepening understanding of what happens to students during WIL and also to inform policy development around graduate skills and employment.

1.2 Motivations for undertaking the research

I am a Senior Lecturer in Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University in Newcastle, and have taught undergraduate business students for a number of years. I have had multiple anecdotal conversations with colleagues over time about how final year students were somehow 'different' after they came back from a sandwich year in industry, and this was something that interested me. They were generally thought to be more self-aware, harder working, and overall there was an accepted feeling from academics that students valued the university learning experience more in final year after their placement experience. Specifically, they would often talk to us about how they had not realised the value of the subjects and learning opportunities they were presented with in first and second year until they went on placement and could see the application in the workplace. Having acted as a placement tutor, it also seemed to me that students I visited on placement and saw after their return related and spoke to me very differently from first- and second-year undergraduates. Questions were raised for me about whether this was just due to a general increase in maturity that would have happened anyway (although it did not seem to be present in students who did not do a sandwich year) or whether the placement experience had actually had some other influence on them.

Alongside this growing interest about what was 'different' about students after placement, I have also experienced a strong strategic drive at Northumbria to ensure we give every student some type of 'real-world' experience as part of their degree. In common with other universities, and influenced by the changing HE environment set out above, the "Northumbria Graduate Characteristics" were developed. These were a set of attributes which we said every Northumbria graduate would have, and which underpinned the learning outcomes of all undergraduate and masters programmes (Northumbria University, n.d.). Based on debate around these and their value I was aware of the increasing focus on graduate 'marketability' and the role that work experience was expected to play in producing more employable graduates.

I therefore started the study with an interest in what might be happening to students as they experienced placement, and particularly what might be overlooked in the focus on attaining a list of specified graduate characteristics from study and work experience. As someone who was embedded in the research situation, with an understanding of the procedural aspects of WIL for students and also involvement in curriculum

design, I also felt I had some insights into the area that made me the right person to carry out the work and to add to knowledge in the area.

1.3 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 2 explores literature relating to WIL, including providing a definition of the term as it is used here. The impact of WIL on employability, academic performance, and skills is considered, as this has been an important driver for its use in Higher Education. A short overview of existing work on the development of graduate professional identity is then given, as this is relevant to an exploration of how students develop during the course of their studies. The chapter concludes with a summary of gaps in the literature and sets out the research questions to be answered in this thesis.

Chapter 3 gives the methodological framework for the study, explaining my philosophical beliefs and the claims I make about the knowledge generated.

Chapter 4 outlines the overall design of the study and explains how it was conducted in order to answer the research questions. As it is a multi-method longitudinal study the presentation of methods is split into two chapters, with the quantitative methods relevant to the first stage (a questionnaire with first-year students) explained here and the later qualitative methods presented in Chapter 6, after the results from the first stage are considered. Chapter 4 therefore presents details of the ethical approval gained, sampling and recruitment, and administration of the questionnaire in Stage 1. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of results from these data.

Chapter 6 is the qualitative methods chapter, explaining similar areas (ethics, sampling and recruitment, and details of the methods used) for the second and third stages of data collection which consisted of self-characterisation sketches and interviews with second and final year students.

Chapters 7 and 8 present the qualitative findings. Chapter 7 gives an overview of findings from Template Analysis and Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis (LQA). Chapter 8 is predominantly based on the self-characterisation sketches and contains three case studies of individual participants to provide illustration of some of the points coming from the Template Analysis and LQA.

Chapter 9 is a discussion of the overall findings, showing how the thesis answers the research questions and contributes to knowledge. The findings from all three stages of the study come together here to do this.

Chapter 10 concludes with a summary of the work done and also presents a reflexive commentary on the thesis as a whole.

Chapter 2: A review of existing work relating to Work Integrated Learning

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will provide background and context for the study by reviewing existing literature in the area and situating the research carried out within it. This introduction includes a brief explanation of how the review was conducted and the principal search methods used in order to give confidence that a good coverage of existing material has been achieved.

The next section looks at terminology and defines how and why Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is the phrase used in this thesis. Reasons why the impact of WIL should be researched come next, explaining the reasons why the area has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years and setting out the background to this research.

Three main themes are then explored in the remaining sections of the chapter. Each considers the potential impact of WIL on students utilising literature drawn from different but inter-linked areas. Firstly, published research related to the influence of WIL on employability, employment, and academic performance of students and graduates is reviewed. This is a significant area of study in its own right, with a large amount of predominantly quantitative work having taken place over the last 15 to 20 years motivated by the increasing need for universities to 'measure' the value they give to students in a mass higher education market.

Secondly, the question of what skills WIL might develop in students is considered. Again, this is a significant area of stand-alone study with an emphasis on development of characteristics such as pre-defined 'graduate attributes' as the output from degree programmes. As part of this section, foundations are laid for the preliminary quantitative research that was carried out. Chapters 4 and 5 present this work in detail.

Finally, the potential for WIL to impact on professional and graduate identity is discussed. As limited work exists currently on the role WIL may play in the development of identity, this section reviews more general work on how graduate identity may develop during the course of study.

Each of these three sections contains a short discussion of the key areas to take forward for further exploration. The review concludes with an overall summary setting out the gaps in the existing literature and developing the research questions from these.

The previously published conference paper mentioned in Chapter 1 (McGrane et al., 2019) further drew on some of the discussion presented here.

2.1.2 Carrying out the literature review

The literature search was predominantly conducted using the electronic library search facilities at Northumbria University to produce a comprehensive list of work in the area of WIL. Since this was my day-to-day location while carrying out the research, it was the most convenient search engine for regular use. The service was

very similar in nature and design to the search engine at the University of Huddersfield which was also used on occasion, particularly where an article or item was not directly accessible using Northumbria University resources. The library searches incorporated examination of results from many sources. However, key Social Sciences and Education databases were also explored separately. The British Education Index, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Scopus, Social Sciences Citation Index (Web of Science), and Zetoc were searched individually as these were considered to be the most relevant databases covering work in the fields of Higher Education and Social Sciences research.

The literature review used searches on a number of key words and phrases: work integrated learning; placement; work based learning; workplace learning; transition to work; student identity. Some of these terms, particularly 'placement', resulted in unmanageably large numbers of returns and they were therefore combined into more specific search combinations with terms such as development, professional identity, or higher education. One of the most useful results of these searches was a bibliography of articles on WIL which summarised journal articles published between 2000 and 2008 (Heerde & Murphy, 2009). This was extremely valuable, not just in identifying further work to be examined but also in giving confidence that the searches carried out resulted in a true overview of work in the area (since the majority of the works cited had already been identified by the independent search strategy).

The literature search was also expanded by looking at the reference lists of papers under examination, and at published research citing the most relevant and widely mentioned older papers such as Auburn, Arnold, and Ley (1991); Auburn, Ley, and Arnold (1993); Crebert et al. (2004); and Holmes (2001). These provided an overview of how themes in the research areas had developed or been reinforced by further studies over time. Detailed searches were also carried out in journals which contained a number of relevant articles, for example 'Higher Education Research and Development' and 'Studies in Higher Education' were looked at individually.

These searches resulted in the generation of around 250 article references and abstracts, which were filed and categorised using Endnote before being reviewed in detail. Mind maps were used to create a structure to summarise the main areas of existing research in the general area of WIL which were most relevant to the research questions under examination as papers were reviewed. This review process consisted of an in-depth reading of the materials found, informed by Wallace and Wray's (2011) guidance for critically analysing a text. A summary of each article was produced from this process and a judgement made about whether it should be used in the final review, using their suggested "Five Critical Synopsis Questions" which were:

- Why am I reading this?
- What are the authors trying to do in writing this?
- What are the authors saying which is relevant to what I want to find out?
- How convincing is what the authors are saying
- In conclusion, what use can I make of this?

(Wallace & Wray, 2011, p37)

One hundred and twenty-eight papers were identified as relevant by this initial review. A short critical summary of each was then produced and used as source material to inform the mind maps and subsequent writing.

2.2 Defining Work Integrated Learning

The review showed that many different phrases were in common use to describe work experience undertaken by either school or university students during the course of their studies. It is therefore useful to be explicit about what Work Integrated Learning means here, and to explain why this term was chosen in preference to the alternatives.

It was clear that other researchers in the area used a variety of terms depending on the authors and context when they talked about the concept of work experience undertaken by students during their studies. Although WIL was relatively widely used, it was a term which did not have a single clear accepted definition (Brown, 2010; Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). Words such as Supervised Work Experience (SWE) (Auburn, 2007; Auburn et al., 1991; Gracia, 2010) co-operative education (Atkinson, Rizzetti, & Smith, 2005; Garavan & Murphy, 2001; Katula & Threnhauser, 1999); internships (Barnett, 2012; Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2004; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008); and placements (Crebert et al., 2004; Little & Harvey, 2007; Moores & Reddy, 2012) were all used by authors in addition to WIL. Sometimes they were used interchangeably and sometimes with clear distinctions made between them. For example Auburn et al. (1991) and Arnold, Auburn, and Ley (1995) used the term SWE in papers based on work done through Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) funded projects, but then also used the term placements in later papers based on the same research (Auburn, 2007; Auburn et al., 1993). This may be because, as the authors identified in their first papers, they were writing at a time when many subject areas were moving towards a sandwich-based degree model whereas previously SWE had been far more common in vocational courses (to teach technical skills such as those required in Engineering or Medicine). As a result, there was perhaps a change in the everyday terminology in use taking place over the course of their work. Atkinson et al. (2005) referred to both Work Integrated Learning and co-operative education and suggested that co-operative education was a subset of WIL with the distinction being that co-operative education usually involved the accumulation of academic credits for the work experience undertaken. This was supported by Patrick et al. (2008) who agreed that WIL was an umbrella term for several different forms of work experience in their (Australian) National Scoping Study on WIL. In another Australian study, Smith and Worsfold (2014) took a slightly different view and said that WIL was simply a broad term which covered any 'real-world' experiences which were built into the curriculum. It would, therefore, also include activities such as mock law courts or simulated medical clinics alongside experience in the workplace. Other authors also talked about co-operative education without making these distinctions (Coll & Eames, 2004). Overall, while most authors offered their own definition there appeared to be little consensus over what each of these terms meant, how they interacted or what the differences between them were. The terminology chosen seemed to be influenced by the geographical location of the research under discussion, with WIL often used in work based in Australian institutions, internships and co-

operative education being popular in American studies and placements perhaps being the most widely used term in UK based research.

WIL was the term chosen for this thesis predominantly because of its generic nature, and the agreement among authors that it encompassed other terms such as work experience, placements, and co-operative learning. Its adoption therefore encouraged examination of work in all of these areas without excluding any particular form of student experience which was related to both curriculum and workplace. It further allowed for a broad view to be taken about what may influence student views of themselves in a work role. WIL is defined here as being any work-related experience which takes place as part of a structured Higher Education (HE) curriculum leading to a formal qualification, and which requires that students meet specific learning outcomes (drawing on Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). Thus, the influence of work experience taking place by students' own initiative (such as part-time or weekend work) was not examined, instead the focus was purely on the influence of experience which was required as part of the degree programme. However, having given this definition, which will be used to describe the primary research conducted in this study, it must be recognised that other authors have used a diversity of possible terms in their own work. Therefore, in order to avoid misrepresenting the original authors, in this review terms used in the published research under discussion (placement, SWE, internships and so on) will be retained.

2.3 Growth in WIL: the influence of the employability agenda

In terms of work done previously to look at the effects, advantages and disadvantages of WIL the need to improve students' employability skills was cited by many authors as a reason for conducting their studies. Of course, debate over the relationship between education and employment is not new. Over 30 years ago, Fitzgerald (1986) reflected on this in the USA (albeit from the perspective of worrying that Americans were becoming overeducated and therefore wasting their qualifications in jobs that did not require them). He raised many of the issues still under discussion now: what is the role of education; what do employers want; and how can graduates best be prepared for employment? As set out in the introduction, the UK government agenda in this area has been set out in publications such as the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) and the Wilson review (Wilson, 2012). In general, UK employers have been perceived as valuing placement experience (Moores & Reddy, 2012), in common with employers in other countries (Cook et al., 2004; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008). In Australia, a similar driver to the UK employability agenda has come from a change to funding arrangements imposed in 2005 which revised the criteria by which WIL courses were evaluated (Bates, 2008). Much of the subsequent body of work from the Australian sector has, therefore, presented WIL as a way of producing 'work ready' graduates to meet employers' needs (Brown, 2010; Freudenberg et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). Alternatively, it has been viewed as a way of developing skills in graduates which academic study alone has struggled to provide (Bates, 2008; Crebert et al., 2004). Griffith University seems to have been a highly influential source in terms of Australian research in the area with at least six papers (Bates, 2008; Crebert et al., 2004; Freudenberg et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008; Smith, 2012; Smith & Worsfold, 2014) reporting on work taking place at this single institution or involving staff members from it. While it appeared from an initial examination of the literature that Australia

was well developed in provision and examination of WIL it may therefore be that pockets of expertise were more localised.

Although there has not been such a clearly articulated Government agenda for universities to improve the employability of graduates beyond the UK and Australia other international work has also been influenced by a similar set of priorities. For example a study of 872 Spanish employers accepted uncritically that the purpose of HE was to meet employers' needs, and used this position as a basis for research to discover what these needs were in order to make recommendations about how they could be satisfied (Hernández-March, Martín del Peso, & Leguey, 2009). Knouse and Fontenot (2008) reviewed American research on internship experience and attempted to assess the value of this to students' job prospects, concluding that its main benefit was in making students more marketable to employers. In a study of Romanian graduates and employers, Nicolescu and Pun (2009) asserted that universities needed to provide a high quality 'service' to students and employers, making sure that students had the skills required by employers to ensure 'customer satisfaction' from both groups. Unsurprisingly, they found that those securing a graduate level job were more likely to be 'satisfied' with their university experience. Employability (defined as getting a job on graduation) was therefore a major influence in a large number of studies examining WIL and its variants, regardless of the local HE environment.

2.4 The impact of WIL on employment, employability, and academic performance

2.4.1 Distinguishing between employability and employment

One of the key drivers identified by many authors for the growth in WIL was the potential for impact on student employability. Employability has been acknowledged as a complex idea that is difficult to measure, with areas such as career development learning, job search skills, networking abilities, degree subject knowledge, generic skills, and emotional intelligence all being part of the concept (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jackson & Wilton, 2016). At its most fundamental level, employability was said to be about the individual being prepared for and able to carry out a job (Harvey, 2001) while a slightly more detailed definition was provided by Sin and Amaral (2016) who said:

> At its core, employability is about a person's ability to get a job, maintain a job or change jobs, an ability determined by individual characteristics and circumstances, as well as by broader external factors (social, institutional and economic).
>
> (Sin & Amaral, 2016, p99)

As touched on in this longer definition, employability goes beyond the skills and abilities of the individual and can, of course, also be impacted by characteristics such as gender, social class, race, and disability (Cranmer, 2006). Employment is not only determined by how employable someone is, but also by things like availability of opportunities, and recruitment and selection processes (for example, graduates from higher ranked institutions may be favoured either consciously or unconsciously) (Jackson, 2014b). However, in spite of the acknowledged complexity and the impact of factors beyond the control of the individual, it is relatively common in published work to conflate employability with employment. Measuring graduate employment rates through instruments such as the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey in the UK or

the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)/Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) in Australia has been assumed to provide an acceptable measure of the employability of graduates from an institution. Academic performance, in terms of the marks obtained in final year and the degree classification obtained, has also often treated as an indicator of employability. This was presumably because graduate employment rates or proportions of 'good' degrees awarded could be used objectively to compare HE providers and to measure their 'effectiveness' in developing employability in graduates. This has been crucial in an environment where the focus was on both graduates and universities seeking some form of competitive advantage (Gracia, 2010) and where what was seen as being important to graduates was that they got a job at the end of their degree. Reinforcing this, Tymon (2013) found that undergraduates at a UK university thought employability just meant getting a job, while Washer (2007) was dismissive of the argument that graduate employability was about anything more than having the skills required in the workplace. He pointed out that what mattered most to graduates was that their degree led to suitable employment. To get this they had to demonstrate that they had what employers wanted.

The existing work on employability may, therefore, be criticised on the grounds that a rather narrow perspective has been adopted. There appeared to be a tendency to assume that employability can be 'measured' by simply looking at academic grades or graduate employment rates. However in order to fully consider the impact of WIL on employability a wider view of the ways that work experience may affect students (and, as part of this, their employment outcomes) is required. It is important, as part of this wider discussion, to remember that employment and employability are not necessarily the same thing.

2.4.2 The impact of WIL on graduate employment

Graduate prospects for getting a job in their chosen field after graduation are not only important on an individual level but also for universities who have to be able to continue to 'sell' their product. Demonstrating the career advantages that a degree can offer is an important part of this (Jackson, 2014b). Given the resulting pressure for universities to prove the value of their degrees through employment/employability of graduates, it is therefore unsurprising that relatively extensive work relating to the potential effect of WIL on this area exists. One of the key questions underlying this has been whether undertaking WIL leads to a 'more employable' graduate, which has often been defined as someone who was more likely to gain the 'correct' level of job on graduation (Cranmer, 2006; Freudenberg et al., 2010; Jackson, 2014b). It was therefore common for such studies to attempt to quantify the effect of WIL. For example, was someone in a 'graduate level' job or not? What was their starting salary? Did these factors differ for students who undertook WIL when compared to those who didn't? In UK-based research such questions were frequently addressed through use of data from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey or HESA figures (Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight, 2001; Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Moores & Reddy, 2012). Some Australian authors adopted a similar approach utilising the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) or the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) which replaced it in 2015 (Jackson, 2014b; Jackson & Collings, 2017). Although limited work has been done outside the UK and Australia, a small amount does exist. Silva et al. (2016) looked at employability related to internships in Portugal, while Sin and Amaral (2016) looked at the same issues from an

employer perspective, asking whose role it is to develop 'employable' graduates and what is most effective in doing this.

Employment immediately post-graduation: the influence of WIL on securing a (graduate-level) job

A common approach taken in published work was to look at what happened to student employment immediately after graduation by splitting a sample into two groups, one who had undertaken placement and one who had not, and comparing the outcomes for each. At the most simplistic level, it was reported that while there was little discernible difference in overall unemployment levels between these groups immediately after graduation, placement students were more likely to be in a graduate-level job (Brooks & Youngson, 2016, analysing DLHE data for 1475 University of Huddersfield students to look at their circumstances six months after graduation). Using a very large sample of data drawn from the Australian Graduate Survey in 2011 and 2012 (a sample size of around 28000) Jackson (2014b) conducted a wide-scale analysis of what influenced the likelihood of graduates entering permanent full-time employment with WIL/work experience being considered as one possible explanatory factor among many. Data were drawn from undergraduate students across two years, with Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) results giving information on employment status while the Course Experience Questionnaire (undertaken by students of Australian HE institutions four months after graduation) supplied attitudinal data for the same respondents. Using these data graduates were classified as either employed full time or not employed/not in full-time employment. However, no consideration seemed to have been given as to whether the employment was at graduate level. Whether graduates may have chosen part-time work in preference to full time (e.g. due to personal circumstances) was also not considered. Confirming Brooks and Youngson's (2016) conclusion about overall employment levels, no effect on employment status due to having final year work experience was identified in this study.

In contrast to these conclusions Moores and Reddy (2012) found that WIL (in the form of sandwich placements) did make a difference to the overall employment status of 1507 Aston University graduates from a wide range of subject disciplines, although the significance of the relationship was relatively weak. Confirming the findings of Brooks and Youngson (2016), graduates who had done a sandwich placement were also found to be more likely to have obtained graduate-level jobs than those not undertaking one. Degree classification also appeared to be a possible factor combining with WIL to influence employment outcome in this work: students obtaining a 2:1 degree with placement experience were more likely to be in a graduate-level job than those without placement experience (Moores & Reddy, 2012). However, in the group with a 2:2 classification there was no statistical difference. It is useful to compare these results to Jackson's (2014b) conclusions about factors which influenced job status in Australian graduates: using logistic regression, she found that while WIL did not have an effect, other factors were significant predictors of full-time employment. These were graduating from a higher-level institution, studying part-time, subject specialism, and giving a higher rating for programme quality. However, no consideration seems to have been given to the possible interrelationships of some of these factors: for example, presumably graduates who had secured the job they wanted would be more likely to say their programme was better. Moores and Reddy (2012) also analysed data from one subject specialism separately in their study (Psychology) and found that WIL experience did not

influence whether this group were in work, in further study, or were unemployed 6 months after graduation. They also found there was no overall significant relationship with the level of job obtained i.e. that Psychology graduates with WIL experience were not more likely to be in a 'graduate level' position at this stage than those without. This perhaps reinforced Jackson's (2014b) finding that other factors, including subject specialism, have a stronger effect on employment status than undertaking WIL. What the existing work does seem to show is that the answer to whether WIL of itself leads directly to a better job on graduation is uncertain.

Employment immediately post-graduation: the influence of WIL on salary levels

In the UK, significant differences in starting salaries after graduation between students with WIL experience and those without have been identified, with placement graduates having higher salaries (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Moores & Reddy, 2012). It was suggested that graduates who had done a sandwich placement earned around £2000 more in starting salary than those without (Brooks & Youngson, 2016). However, it seems likely that this finding was distorted by variations due to subject specialism. This is acknowledged by the authors. Students from some subjects were more likely to undertake a placement, and some subject specialisms also had higher starting salaries than others, so a direct comparison was difficult to make. For example, Moores and Reddy (2012) were careful to limit their conclusions by pointing out the large number of business graduates (who generally earn more than other groups, and where the majority of students did placements) in their sample. Both Moores and Reddy (2012) and Purdie, Ward, McAdie, King, and Drysdale (2013) also made the extremely valid point that more 'employable' graduates (with higher skills and confidence to start with) may have been getting the placements and also the jobs: the higher salaries achieved may, therefore, have been influenced by other underlying contributory factors. Looking only at Psychology graduates from Aston University, Moores and Reddy (2012) found that WIL experience appeared to have no influence on salary levels within this group immediately post-graduation. While this is a single example, it does reinforce the idea that differences by subject specialism can make it difficult to generalise about whether WIL can lead to higher salaries in all cases.

Employment further beyond graduation: the influence of WIL on future employment

Attempts have also been made to look at the position for graduates at later time periods than the DLHE data allows. In addition to their analysis of DLHE statistics Moores and Reddy (2012) conducted an Alumni survey of Psychology graduates from 2003-2008, based on the same DLHE questions, while Wilton (2011) reported on a large survey of Business and Management graduates from 38 UK institutions gathered four years after graduation (9800 responses). Although numbers from each cohort in Moores and Reddy's (2012) study were not reported, the authors said that more recent graduates than historic ones were included in the responses (188 responses in total). They said that at the time of data collection graduates would be between eighteen months and six and a half years post-graduation.

Moores and Reddy (2012) found no significant difference between the opinions of placement and non-placement Psychology graduates about perceived career success at these later stages. However, graduates who had undertaken WIL were more likely to feel their career progression was going well i.e. was ahead of or

on schedule. This confirmed Auburn et al.'s (1993) much earlier finding that Psychology graduates with WIL experience were much more satisfied when they entered the workplace in their first job, as they felt they had made the 'right' decision: the authors hypothesised that this might be due to better informed choices being made. The placement group in Moores and Reddy's (2012) study were also more likely to say they were in a job where their qualification was a requirement, and more likely to be in a graduate level job. This was also true for the Business and Management students in Wilton's (2011) study when asked about their first job: this confirmed that graduates with WIL experience were more likely to have obtained a graduate-level job immediately after graduation.

However, it seemed that the effect of WIL was most marked closer to graduation (Moores & Reddy, 2012; Wilton, 2011). While Moores and Reddy (2012) reported on this in detail for only the most recent group surveyed (results 18 months after graduation), and did not give much information about those further into their careers, they concluded that the advantages WIL gave to graduate employment status dissipated over time. Wilton (2011) looked at students four years after graduation and agreed that, at this stage, the benefits of placement were ambiguous. It seemed that by this time the Business and Management placement group in his study had stagnated to some extent - they were more likely to be in the same job, whereas non-placement graduates had moved on and were more likely to be in a higher-level position (Wilton, 2011). Follow-up interviews with 25 of his survey group identified the WIL experience as useful, but salaries and job roles at this later stage did not show a clear distinction between those who had undertaken a placement and those who had not (Wilton, 2011). These findings were also supported by Jackson and Collings (2017) who explicitly considered the influence of WIL on graduate employment in Australia. They hypothesised that paid employment in final year could increase employment prospects. They then assessed whether this was as good as formal WIL in influencing employment outcomes using GDS or GOS data for 628 students who graduated in 2013 and 237 who graduated in 2015. Telephone interviews were also carried out with both groups. Measures for employment status were calculated rigorously in this study, so that students who were not actively seeking work were excluded. Underemployment (the state of being employed in less than a full-time role as a result of something other than personal choice) was also measured. In common with the UK authors, Jackson and Collings (2017) concluded that WIL gave a short-term gain for graduates since those who had undertaken it were more likely to have been employed immediately after graduation rather than having a gap between university and employment. Part-time employment in the final year had a similar effect to WIL on employment on graduation, although those completing WIL were less likely to be underemployed than those who only did part-time work.

On the basis of his findings about the stagnation of job role in the Business and Management students Wilton (2011) suggested that the non-placement group should actually be judged as doing better four years after graduation, since fewer were in non-graduate level jobs at this stage. Overall, while interviews in his study with a smaller sample of alumni supported the idea that placements enhanced development (and therefore employability), the data that could be measured around the quantifiable effect on careers did not. Similarly, Moores and Reddy (2012) concluded that WIL tended to offer a 'head start' rather than on-going benefits to

graduates and suggested that placement influence on job satisfaction after graduation was the most evident effect. In a possible link to this, Auburn et al. (1993) examined how a placement year might influence students' self-esteem, career decidedness and self-rated abilities, and hypothesised that placement students may graduate with more realistic expectations or better career decisions than non-placement students. Purdie et al. (2013) also found that placement students were more hopeful and confident of achieving goals. These areas could relate to the identified 'head-start' that has been described.

2.4.3 The impact of WIL on academic performance

A number of authors have attempted to look at the effect of WIL on students by quantifying it in terms of 'differences' in degree results between those who undertook the experience and those who did not (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Crawford & Wang, 2015; Duignan, 2003; Gomez, Lush, & Clements, 2004; Hejmadi, Bullock, Gould, & Lock, 2011; Mansfield, 2011; Reddy & Moores, 2006, 2012). The majority of these authors worked with secondary data (for example, assessment results) from participants on programmes including optional one-year sandwich placements. This allowed the students to be divided easily into two groups (placement and non-placement), and to compare differences in measures such as final year marks for each group. Although UK focussed and tending to draw from only one institution in each paper the large number of similar studies ensured a wide range of subject disciplines were examined in this body of work. These range from Human Psychology at Aston University (Reddy & Moores, 2006), through Surveying at Nottingham Trent University (Mansfield, 2011), to Biosciences at Bath University (Hejmadi et al., 2011). In a wider study, Brooks and Youngson (2016) sampled from six different subject areas including Business degrees at the University of Huddersfield. The consensus from this work was that students who undertook a sandwich year obtained better final year marks than those who did not. Gomez et al. (2004), in another study of Biosciences students (this time at the University of the West of England) found that placement could add as much as 4% to the final year overall academic score of the students included in their study.

One important question, which these authors acknowledged, is that of how to determine the effect of placement when multiple other factors could also influence final year results. For example, who undertakes placement? Is it more confident or more academically able students who either choose to take up placements or who are more likely to secure them in a competitive recruitment situation? Is it, therefore, students who would 'perform' better anyway who go on placement? If this is the case, then these factors are also likely to impact on academic performance. While almost all of the authors corrected for second year performance in looking at the differences in final year results it is clearly a complex area. This was illustrated by one of the largest and most widely cited studies of academic performance in relation to sandwich placements, where Reddy and Moores (2012) followed up their earlier work (Reddy & Moores, 2006) by looking at academic results for 6000 Aston University graduates from 2003-2009 across a wide range of programmes with an optional placement year. This confirmed many of the earlier conclusions from their research and that of others: they found that final year academic performance was better for the placement students, and that, for the group as a whole, there was a greater improvement in marks from second to final year for the placement students than for the non-placement students. However in contrast to Brooks and Youngson (2016), who

found that this applied across all of the subject specialisms they included in their study, Reddy and Moores (2012) said that results by degree group were more mixed. Although final year results were generally stronger for all students undertaking WIL than for those who did not, when adjustments were made to consider second-year results, the picture was less clear. When this was done, sandwich placement for some groups (e.g. Human Psychology, Computing Science and Chemical Engineering) showed a positive relationship with final year results while for others (e.g. Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Public Policy Management, and Business Administration) the difference seen could be interpreted as solely a 'carry-over' from second year where the placement group were already stronger. Gomez et al. (2004) found that the students in their study who undertook WIL already had higher academic performance in terms of HESA scores (i.e. results from previous study) on entry to university. This again supported the idea that there were pre-existing differences between the two groups before placement that influenced both the decision to undertake it and also final year results. However in a similar study of Accounting and Finance students at the University of the West of England Surridge (2009) concluded that while HESA score was an important predictor of final year performance it was not just the 'better' students (measured by academic attainment) who undertook sandwich placement. The decision to undertake placement was not correlated with second year marks in this study. Overall, therefore, it was difficult to draw unambiguous conclusions about the impact of placements on academic performance from a review of the existing quantitative work in the area.

In addition to looking at data on results Reddy and Moores (2012) also conducted wider analysis to look at other demographic variables that might impact on the effects of WIL. The conclusion reached was that while lower socio-economic groups, minorities, and women all benefitted from a sandwich placement (the placement groups achieved higher academic results than the non-placement groups) they only obtained results on a par with more advantaged students who did not do WIL. They suggested that placement did not 'level the playing field' for these groups although it did lead to an increase in academic performance within the sample. Again, this demonstrated the difficulty of isolating a 'placement effect' by measuring academic performance, when a number of inter-related variables were clearly influencing the outcome.

Overall, therefore, it seemed that while WIL could have an impact on academic performance and final year results it was much more complex than a straightforward single-factor effect due to the multitude of other influential elements acting on student development.

2.4.4 Characteristics of students who take up placement opportunities

One of the areas motivating interest in placement outcomes for a number of authors was the question of why, if WIL offered such clear benefits, significant numbers of students chose not to undertake it (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Hejmadi et al., 2011). In an attempt to answer this question, Bullock, Gould, Hejmadi, and Lock (2009) conducted interviews with Mechanical Engineering and Biology and Biochemistry students and found that less confident students were less likely to consider WIL. Those who had found transition to university difficult were less inclined to go for a further change, feeling that they needed to focus on academic challenges and not be distracted. This was supported by Reddy and Moores (2012) who, in

addition to their large-scale quantitative work, also reported on focus groups held to discuss student perspectives of the benefits of undertaking placement. They found that non-placement students talked about the danger of disruption to studies as a reason for choosing not to undertake it. The authors suggested that these may be students who had already found the transition into university difficult and were therefore reluctant to step out (to do a sandwich year) and back in again in case they lost the momentum gained from two years of continuous study. This again supported the idea that it was perhaps the more confident students who chose to undertake a placement year. Given the questions raised so far around the potential for employment outcomes and academic achievement to be influenced by a complex interrelation of factors rather than an isolated 'WIL effect' it is useful to consider research which has been done looking at reasons why students may choose not to take up WIL opportunities in more detail.

Bullock et al. (2009) aimed to look at placement learning outcomes based on a questionnaire with 136 non-placement students compared to 145 placement students in final year from Mechanical Engineering and Biology & Biochemistry programmes at a UK university, both groups being offered a one-year sandwich placement as part of their degrees. Post-placement students were found to be more confident in their skills and expected better academic results. However, the study also seemed to confirm that more able students were the ones who did placement (i.e. those with higher second year marks). Auburn (2007) analysed interviews with nine Psychology graduates (six to nine months into employment) to explore how they felt theory and practice were integrated for them as final year students, and how their placement experiences were used or drawn on in their final year of study. The author concluded that there was a tension between the new skills and confidence levels acquired through placement and the expectation from academics that the participants would continue to behave as passive learners. While it should be noted that the data were collected as part of an earlier study some 15 years previously, this supported Bullock et al.'s (2009) finding that post-placement students experienced increased confidence. It could be this which influenced their increase in academic performance. Bullock et al. (2009) also conducted related 'small group interviews' with students (the numbers who took part is unclear) and found that less confident students were not as likely to consider placement in the first place. As with Reddy and Moores (2006) it seemed that it was those who found transition to university difficult who were less inclined to go for a further change, feeling that they needed to focus on academic challenges and not be distracted. A further study by the same authors (Hejmadi et al., 2011) looked at reasons why students may have chosen not to do a placement through a study of Biosciences students in 2009-10, using group interviews with 74 pre-placement, 57 post-placement, and 25 non placement students. They again concluded that some students actively chose not to go on placement because they wanted to continue studies without a break. As in the previous paper, this could perhaps have been due to a lack of confidence, as this was found to be greater in the group who decided to undertake placement (for example, they said they were more comfortable asking 'stupid' questions indicating higher self-confidence). While this may not seem like a sensible position for students to take, a small amount of work does exist to suggest that a negative placement experience has the potential to impact seriously on academic performance (Duignan, 2003) so the students taking this view had valid concerns, particularly if they had already found the

transition into university difficult. It is clear that some students in these studies perceived placement as something that risked derailing their university studies (Reddy & Moores, 2006), and perhaps those doing a placement were the more confident students already (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Reddy & Moores, 2012).

2.4.5 Key points related to this literature

Several areas for exploration were raised by this discussion of existing work looking at the impact of WIL on employability, employment prospects, and academic performance. These point towards areas where further research could contribute to knowledge about the impact of WIL on students and their views of themselves at work:

- the research identified was predominantly quantitative and retrospective in nature and, as a result, tended to focus on the influence of WIL on measurable employment and employability outcomes such as the likelihood of undergraduates gaining a job after graduation (DLHE statistics, GDS/GOS), or the effects on final year academic performance and degree results. There was very little done from the student perspective, exploring how students constructed their identity as an employee, how this may have impacted on their employment prospects and academic achievement, and how it may have been affected by WIL experience;
- a question was raised in the literature (particularly Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Purdie et al., 2013; Reddy & Moores, 2012) about who chose to go on placement, and whether it may be the more confident, academically able, and secure students who took up such opportunities. These characteristics could also influence employability directly making the influence of WIL on outcomes hard to establish from the existing quantitative work;
- it is notable that the vast majority of literature examined looked at the benefits of a sandwich placement model of WIL, with only a small amount of distinctive research from Australia looking at the influence of final year part-time work on employment prospects (Jackson & Collings, 2017). Multiple other models of WIL exist and, given the suggestions from UK Government policy (Wilson, 2012) that more short-term placements should be used to develop student employability, research broadening the focus to look at different types of WIL may be valuable.

2.5 The impact of WIL on student skills

2.5.1 The view of graduates as 'skills deficient'

A further clear strand of work was found in the literature related to WIL, looking at how it had potential to develop student skills in a different way to academic study. In many cases, particularly in the Australian literature, it seemed that examination of this area was motivated by a view of students as being 'skills deficient' (Freudenberg et al., 2010; Jackson, 2010; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Smith, 2012), with the job of universities being to develop curricula that would redress this. This assertion naturally leads to a question about whose terms were being used to define the requirements for graduate skills and characteristics and who thought there was a deficiency. Unsurprisingly, given the context, many WIL studies have attempted to

identify and prioritise the needs of employers over other considerations. This has resulted in a relatively narrow view of skills development which has been criticised on the grounds of neglecting the question of 'graduate identity' and how this might develop (Holmes, 2001). It was also suggested that, in spite of all the work undertaken to meet their needs, employers reported less satisfaction with the skills of those they employed than in the past (Wilton, 2011) implying that this approach was perhaps not effective. In addition, while the placement process of itself was identified as valuable by employers (Moores & Reddy, 2012), the benefits in terms of student development from the perspective of those undertaking it were much less widely explored. As set out in the previous section, the impact on students tended to be assessed by measuring employment or academic outcomes rather than more developmental concepts. In studies of desirable outcomes from WIL programmes the stakeholders whose needs should be identified and met by the production of 'work ready' graduates have typically been identified as employers (for examples see Bennett, Eagle, Mousley, & Ali-Choudhury, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011; Cranmer, 2006; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Hernández-March et al., 2009; Nicolescu & Pun, 2009) or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (e.g. in Litchfield, Frawley, & Nettleton, 2010) but rarely as the students themselves. In addition, this top-down skills development approach to WIL has tended to lead to a focus in the literature on the need to design curricula which demonstrated the development of a specific skill set required by employers in graduates (Holmes, 2001). In both the UK and Australia, it was common to see this captured in a defined set of 'graduate attributes' for a set of programmes or an institution (Burke, Jones, & Doherty, 2005; Crebert et al., 2004; McIlveen et al., 2011; Muldoon, 2009; Washer, 2007). In the UK there has also been a clear expectation that the skills and attributes that a graduate in a discipline should have to make them 'employable' follow from Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject benchmarks and these should, therefore, be embedded in the curriculum (Rees, Forbes, & Kubler, 2007). A typical outcome from this approach can be seen in the Northumbria University "Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards" and the resulting "Northumbria Graduate Characteristics" which were mentioned in Chapter 1 (Northumbria University, n.d.). Ways of integrating skills into the curriculum have been examined (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Litchfield et al., 2010), as have ways of better integrating the placement experience into teaching (Atkinson et al., 2005; Auburn, 2007). However, little work has been done directly with students to explore the meaning and impact of WIL on their construal of their development as employees. Despite this, a discussion of the skills and attributes that WIL has been intended to foster in students, and a review of the small amount of existing work exploring the potential impact on graduate skills, is relevant here in order to explore what is already known about students' views and expected development through WIL.

2.5.2 Impact of WIL on student skills

'Desirable' student skills and characteristics

One of the most influential individual studies in the area of student skills development through the 'graduate attributes' model, with around 285 citations, came from Crebert et al. (2004). The research reported was based at Griffith University in Australia. As previously mentioned, this seemed to be one of the institutions at the forefront of developing curriculum design for WIL, with several other papers in the area also coming from

authors based there (Bates, 2003, 2008; Freudenberg et al., 2010; Smith, 2012; Smith & Worsfold, 2014). This research may, perhaps, have been influenced by a requirement for Australian universities to have clearly designed curricula for WIL programmes in order to meet government funding requirements (Bates, 2008).

Crebert et al.'s (2004) paper was about a project at the university which looked at how generic skills were developed in graduates, with work placements being only one contributor of interest. They described the development of the 'Griffith Graduate Project', which was about the acquisition of generic graduate skills in undergraduates, with the stated aim of making their transferrable skills more visible so that they could satisfy employer requirements. Based on two focus groups with graduates and employers and a survey of 664 graduates who had done work placements they stated that the attributes that graduates were expected to possess were:

- oral and written communication;
- problem solving;
- analysis;
- critical evaluation;
- information literacy;
- teamwork;
- undertaking independent lifelong learning;
- initiating and leading enterprises;
- assuming responsibility and making decisions;
- undertaking employment or further study nationally and internationally;
- demonstrating high ethical standards.

(Crebert et al., 2004, p. 163)

The authors suggested that one of the tasks of WIL was to encourage reflection and embed theoretical learning into a practical context to allow students to reinforce their skills in these eleven areas. They identified that most existing research at the time of writing looked at the academic value of the placement or employability benefits (in line with the previous discussion in this review), although they did not cite much evidence for this. They suggested that, as a result, generic skills development had been somewhat neglected.

In the years following Crebert et al.'s (2004) paper a number of other predominantly Australian authors also published research motivated by a desire to address the 'graduate skills gap'. They argued that there was a disjoint between employers and universities in this area coupled with disagreement over how 'soft skills' could or should be developed in graduates (Bates, 2008; Crebert et al., 2004; Jackson, 2010; Jackson & Chapman, 2012). It was common in these studies to attempt to develop a set of criteria and competencies required for graduates based on employer opinions, in a similar way to Crebert et al. (2004). In one of the more extensive pieces of work Jackson (2010) drew together conclusions from the previous 10 years of work in the area by carrying out a meta-study and summary of task requirements and personal characteristics that published

research said employers wanted and needed, particularly where they identified a skills gap. This provided an interesting and useful summary of work in the area. However, it was somewhat difficult to see what criteria were used to judge the quality of the studies included, and it seemed that all were given equal weight in developing the overall criteria. The list of characteristics resulting from the review of existing work was presented as a set of 20 skills in a second paper (Jackson & Chapman, 2012) and these are shown in Table 2.1 (the full papers contain considerably more detail in terms of definition of the areas). As can be seen, this had several areas in common with the earlier work of Crebert et al. (2004) although there were differences. For example, since Jackson and Chapman (2012) focussed on non-technical skills, the area of 'analysis' did not appear (although it could arguably be subsumed in 'core business skills') while there was more in their list about personal characteristics ('confidence', 'self-awareness').

Table 2.1

Skills required of graduates by employers according to Jackson and Chapman (2012)

Skill areas	
Critical thinking	Self-discipline
Problem solving	Performance
Decision management	Organisational skills
Political skills	Professional responsibility
Working effectively with others	Work ethic
Oral communication	Business principles
Leadership skills	Core business skills
Personal ethics	Innovation
Confidence	Formal communication
Self-awareness	Environmental awareness

In addition to identifying required skills, Jackson and Chapman (2012) also aimed to look at 'skill deficiencies' (in soft skills) in Australian Business School graduates. Views of employers and business academics about the 'performance' of recent graduates in the areas outlined in Table 2.1 were gathered through an online survey of 211 employees from 143 organisations and 156 academics from 38 Australian universities. Participants were asked to rate graduates against 45 'workplace behaviours' which were derived from the 20 skill areas shown above. Analysis focussed on identifying differences between employer and academic perceptions of these skills. For example, there was broad agreement about abilities in cognitive processes (which covered areas such as problem solving skills). However, decision-making abilities among recent graduates were rated lower by employers than academics. For Social Skills, both thought graduates were poor at conflict resolution but strong in working effectively with others. They were felt to be good at communication (verbal and in the area of giving and receiving feedback) but were rated as poor at public speaking, according to employers. Other areas were also explored, however what was perhaps most notable about this work is the way the student voice was excluded from the generation of opinions about what they 'should' be like in employment. The

emphasis was instead on an external evaluation of skills from the perspective of academics and employers. What they were measuring (observed behaviour) and how they were evaluating it is, therefore, questionable.

In a further paper motivated by questions of curriculum development Jackson (2014a) went on to discuss the role that WIL could play in developing work-ready graduates. She suggested that, in terms of employability skills, existing work tended to focus on what students acquired in terms of outcomes rather than where these skills might come from. As a result, this paper looked at what activities (classroom, placement, and assessment) best promoted or held back employability skills development. Data were collected through a survey of 131 undergraduate students undertaking work placements in 2012 at a single Australian university. This made the paper one of the few to assess skills from the student perspective. A range of faculties/subject specialisms were included, across all four years of degree programmes. Views of 10 skills areas and 40 behaviours from the university's employability skills framework were assessed by the survey instrument. These were based on the earlier work in Jackson (2010) and Jackson and Chapman (2012). Participants were asked what activities helped them to develop the ten skills, what was difficult, what was better learned in the classroom and what on placement. They were also asked to rate the importance of others in influencing this skills development: was it their lecturer, work supervisor, other placement employees, or classmates? Qualitative data were collected, with 'thematic analysis' used to categorise the results although quantitative measures were used to draw the majority of conclusions (for example, counting the percentage of students saying there was a negative impact on skills from particular areas). In general, participants felt skills were best learned by practice with classroom-based learning (for example, reflective activities) developing basic skill levels, which they thought they could then advance further in placement. However, participants also said that these classroom-based activities were not always taken 'seriously' by students due to the lack of consequences resulting from low engagement with them. They felt this meant the exercises perhaps did not display a true reflection of their abilities at this stage as a result.

Following from this, the workplace supervisor was felt to be the most important person in assisting with skills application in the workplace and classmates were said to be the least influential group. It would be interesting to know how the supervisor was thought to be an influence, and whether poor supervision could have a negative effect, but this was not explored in the paper. Some relevant comments about the importance of a supportive organisational culture in building confidence and enabling communication were made, particularly in respect to developing skills for communication and working with diverse others.

The conclusions of the paper returned to a discussion of student deficits, probably due to the aim to inform curriculum development: students needed to be prepared for industry expectations; students needed to understand professional values; students needed to identify skill areas for development through reflection. This resonated with Bates's (2008) description of how the drive for universities to focus on making clear economic contributions caused issues for curriculum development, with pressure for those involved in developing curricula to put more emphasis on the outcomes of the process than on the process itself. In this case, more emphasis was placed on what criteria students needed to meet at the end of the process than on

how they were changing and developing during it. As a result of this focus, there was very little exploration of how the students thought they were changing during WIL, for example there was mention of how students said that being 'taken out of their comfort zone' in WIL was a good thing in helping them to determine their career direction but this was not investigated further. However, in terms of what helped student development through WIL one of the areas identified as important was active engagement from the employer, which was thought to minimise stress and maximise learning opportunities for the individuals.

The final skills-focussed paper from Jackson and Wilton (2016) was potentially very relevant, as although it again set out to look at student competencies this included evaluation of how WIL influenced these. As in Jackson (2014a) data were collected from students rather than from other stakeholders. The co-author in this case was from the UK, allowing the authors to make comparisons between career management competencies required for students from each country although the paper established that there were very few significant differences between the two groups. The competencies examined were defined as "informed career goals, labour market understanding, job search skills, the identification of relevant learning opportunities and professional networking" (Jackson & Wilton, 2016, p267). These were said to provide a foundation for employability, and to increase graduates' self-efficacy.

Two samples of participants (N_{UK}=136, $N_{Australia}$=344) were surveyed using an established instrument (the DOTS career management framework). Students who had done a work placement generally reported higher self-awareness, seemed to have greater awareness of opportunities, and also better learning about decision-making and transition. However, they did not score significantly higher for their understanding of the graduate labour market. Again, the discussion emerging from the analysis concentrated on the implications for curriculum design as this was clearly Jackson's main interest across all of her publications, but it was suggested that the impact of WIL on career management competencies was not easy to measure.

In a further Australian-based paper, Bates (2008) set out how well-designed WIL should enable students to develop as professionals (in terms of knowledge, autonomy, and decision making). She also emphasised the need for pedagogy around WIL in which students were expected and encouraged to act as autonomous learners who constructed their own meanings from their social experiences. The paper analysed student experiences over 10 years on a one-semester course in Criminology and Criminal Justice and examined the learning and teaching which took place as part of this. Students were placed in the work environment for 100 contact hours and completed a reflective diary and work-based project, which were assessed. Weaknesses in the study were clearly the use of a single course and secondary data generated by the students for assessment purposes (e.g. from discussions and written submissions). However, the fact that qualitative student reflections on their learning and change processes were captured made this work distinct from other papers in the area of curriculum design. As previously established, it was much more common for this to take place from the perspective of employer 'needs' than from what was actually happening to the students. Another area of distinctiveness was the examination of a course which was not a sandwich placement: again, as previously discussed, much of the work related to WIL and placement looked only at this model.

Analysis of the data gathered summarised challenges the students identified and the learning that followed from these. Contrasting with work around employment and academic outcomes, what was of particular interest to this thesis was the capture of what students actually talked about when they talked about their placement learning. For example, they said that pre-placement work at university was often seen as something to be done alone, in competition with other students, whilst they came to see the workplace as a more collaborative environment where their colleagues were allies rather than competitors. While not clear-cut, this seemed to point towards changes taking place in construal of themselves and their role due to their work experience. However Bates's (2008) main interest was still on implications for curriculum design and identification of what should be included. This meant the conclusions of her work related to determining what should be present in a WIL curriculum in order to judge the usefulness of an activity in terms of its contribution to learning. These criteria were then applied to the programme.

Changes in students' self-esteem, career-decidedness and confidence

There was general acceptance in published work that increased career decidedness across the course of a degree was desirable, in order to ensure graduates had a clear career path ahead of them after completion of their studies (Arnold, Loan-Clarke, Harrington, & Hart, 1999; Bennett et al., 2008; Moores & Reddy, 2012). An area of interest in the literature around the impact of WIL on student skills and attributes was, therefore, the impact that it might have on career decidedness, self-esteem, and confidence. Work sponsored by the CNAA in the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted in a series of linked papers (Arnold et al., 1995; Auburn, 2007; Auburn et al., 1991; Auburn et al., 1993) which captured many of the ideas developing around this. Initially Auburn et al. (1991) surveyed 225 first year and 187 second year undergraduate Psychology students from seven different UK institutions. In contrast to much of the employability-focussed work that was reviewed in Section 2.4.2 where the data were predominantly based on students undertaking sandwich placements, these authors included participants enrolled on degrees with a variety of models of WIL. These ranged from a compulsory one-year placement through shorter durations and also an 'optional visits' programme (involving the students working in an organisation for one half day per week). They aimed to assess the impact of WIL on characteristics such as career decidedness and on self-rated abilities in areas such as self-confidence and study motivation. The authors also aimed to look at the differences in the same factors between one-year placement students and the sub-group undertaking shorter placements who spent one half day per week in their organisation. They concluded that the placement students tended to have higher career decidedness on entry to their final year than non-placement students and showed higher self-rated abilities in the areas examined. In the comparison between the one-year placement and visits groups, the students undertaking the sandwich placement seemed to gain more benefit from their experience as the group involved in the half day visits showed no improvement in their career decidedness or self-rating of ability whereas the placement group did. The authors suggested that this was because the 'visits' group were less able to participate fully in the work environment, with their experience involving considerably more observation and therefore less opportunities to apply their knowledge. This need to ensure students used WIL to make connections between academia and practice in order to learn was also emphasised in other, later, work (Brown, 2010) and

contrasted with the Wilson Review's call for more short term placements to be offered to students (Wilson, 2012). Trede and McEwen (2014) also described WIL as a "transition pedagogy", finding that it increased commitment and career decidedness. They asserted this, in turn, made it less likely that students engaged with WIL would withdraw from study as it helped them to confirm the choices they had made.

In later papers from the CNAA project authors it was unclear when exactly the data were collected, as this was not specified. It seemed that at least one further study had taken place, as the numbers involved in the surveys discussed in later papers were different to those in the 1991 report. In the next paper (Auburn et al., 1993) they began with a more general discussion, saying that while SWE had previously been seen as more useful for vocational qualifications, it was now being used more in academia. In this paper results from 291 Psychology undergraduates followed over an 18-month period as they moved from university to placement, back to university, and into employment were reported. Data were collected at three time points during this period. However, the sample did not represent a coherent group but were a mixture of first and second year undergraduates at the start of the study, meaning that comparisons were made between different groups at various points in time and only 48 students were tracked after graduation in the final stage of data collection. Overall, the authors concluded that placement experience did not have much effect on students' self-rating of abilities as they progressed. Instead, time was a more important factor, rather than experience: non-placement students might have taken longer to get there, but they developed the same skills eventually. Similarly, final year students who did not undertake a placement were clearer about career choices earlier than direct contemporaries who undertook placement (probably because they were closer to graduation). They found that students widened rather than narrowed their ideas when they went on placement and this was suggested as a good thing since better-informed students were more likely to make better career decisions. It also seemed that, from Auburn et al.'s (1993) study, Psychology students with placement experience were more satisfied when they entered the workplace in their first job, perhaps due to making better or at least better informed choices. Both proposals reinforced suggestions emerging from work discussed in the earlier sections about the impact of placement on student employment prospects, where it was established that placement students seemed to have greater confidence on graduation than those who had not undertaken a placement (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Moores & Reddy, 2012; Purdie et al., 2013). This conclusion was also backed up by Barnett (2012) whose interest was in how internships helped to develop realistic expectations about work. She examined this through a qualitative study of exit interviews with 59 American college graduates from a single institution and concluded that students adjusted their expectations based on their internship experience and this led to greater satisfaction in their first job role.

In the 1995 paper based on the CNAA work (Arnold et al., 1995) the numbers involved were different to the 1993 paper (it seems that six institutions were involved in the 1993 paper but seven in the 1995 paper so this may account for the discrepancy). However, the methodology employed was the same i.e. a survey capturing student views at three different time points across an 18-month period and tracking both first- and second-year students. Two hundred and seventeen Psychology undergraduates were involved in this study. Adaptations of three existing scales to measure how a placement year influenced students' self-esteem, career

decidedness, and self-rated abilities were used with the hypotheses that placement experience would lead to a greater increase in these areas than academic study alone. It was also hypothesised that these increases would themselves be due to other factors within the WIL experience (work challenge, work autonomy, and support from staff in the host organisations). The authors concluded that there was weak evidence to suggest that placement experience increased self-rated abilities (but not self-esteem or career decidedness) and there was a suggestion that work autonomy may have predicted changes in self-esteem and self-rated abilities. Other authors confirmed the view that the type of workplace experience was very important, and autonomy in the work placement experience seemed to be particularly influential in developing student skills (Jackson, 2014a; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Moores & Reddy, 2012).

Turning to more recent work looking at the potential effects of WIL on student self-esteem and other aspects of self-rated abilities, Purdie, McAdie, King, and Ward (2011) looked at the influence of placement on a number of student attributes, measured using established scales. A survey of 802 placement and non-placement students at the University of Huddersfield was carried out. Supporting the suggestions of Reddy and Moores (2012) and Brooks and Youngson (2016) they established that students who did WIL tended to have greater confidence than non-placement students, but the question of whether placement developed this confidence or whether they were the more confident students to start with remained. They also concluded that WIL was most effective if students had the opportunity to undertake multiple experiences to reinforce their learning, which contrasted with Auburn et al. (1991)'s view that short placements were of less value due to the difficulty of enabling autonomous workplace behaviour in this situation.

In a second paper based on the same data (Purdie et al., 2013), the authors examined the question of whether students who undertook WIL displayed differences in a number of psychological measures. Particular consideration was given to whether they were more hopeful and confident of achieving goals, and in relation to changes in goal setting and goal achievement. No differences were found to exist in the academic achievement of WIL and non-WIL students, in contrast to the results discussed earlier in this review (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Jackson & Collings, 2017; Reddy & Moores, 2012). However, some differences were identified in psychological measures, in particular it seemed that WIL students were more hopeful and confident of achieving goals, particularly in relation to goal setting and goal achievement. They were more likely to believe in their ability to succeed and hence have a higher chance of securing employment. This could explain some of the effects discussed earlier around graduates who had undertaken a placement having better employment outcomes. The authors said: "the effect is one of a more hopeful and confident adult, perhaps better equipped emotionally to face the challenges of the employment market and life beyond" (Purdie et al., 2013, p. 123), summing up why WIL is about much more than producing graduates who meet a set of pre-defined skills and characteristics.

Returning to Auburn's work, the final paper based on the CNAA project was published in 2007 and reflected an increased emphasis on employability in HE, which he suggested was a result of the Dearing report (Auburn, 2007; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). He started from the premise that SWE led

to an increase in employability skills but questioned whether the SWE experience was adequately evaluated. As a follow up to the earlier CNAA survey he analysed interview data from nine ex-students (six to nine months into employment): these were data collected in the early 1990s as part of the earlier study, not a new investigation. He then used discourse analysis to explore how theory and practice were integrated for them as students, and how their placement experiences were used or drawn on in their return to their final year of study. In evaluating the conclusions it must be remembered that the paper was published some 15 years after the data were collected, but the author concluded that students constructed meaning from their placement experiences in two ways. Firstly, they did this through personal development (acquiring new knowledge and skills) and secondly by how they fitted into the social learning framework after their placement experience. There was a perceived tension between new skills and confidence levels and an expectation from academics that they would continue to behave as passive learners.

One of the few papers exploring the perceptions of students of the impact of placement through qualitative research came from authors based at the Open University and Higher Education Academy (HEA) (Little & Harvey, 2007). Expressing similar concerns to Brooks and Youngson (2016), about a decline in students taking up optional placements since 1999 (based on HEFCE internal data), they conducted 82 interviews at seven HE institutions in late 2005, after the participants had undertaken a sandwich placement experience. Ten interviews with staff who manage placements were also carried out.

Remembering that these were all students who had chosen to do a placement, the analysis suggested that one of the criteria influencing the decision was to get insights into work and to make themselves more 'saleable' as graduates. Some also said they just wanted to get a break from study which provided an interesting juxtaposition to the findings of Reddy and Moores (2006) and Brooks and Youngson (2016), who suggested that those who chose not to do a placement might have done so because of concerns about the risk of disruption to their academic progress. In terms of skills, participants thought their communication and networking abilities had improved, as had their interpersonal, personal and intellectual qualities. Organisational skills, team working, and confidence were all mentioned as further areas where they had developed and they said they experienced changes in their approaches to learning (different behaviours and attitudes to lectures, for example). Overall, they felt more self-aware, more self-critical, and more confident after their placement experience.

2.5.3 Key points related to this literature

In summary, key points emerging from the literature related to the impact of WIL on student skills were:

- much of the literature around WIL and skills was motivated by a fairly narrow interest in curriculum design and delivery of specified graduate attributes;
- the 'stakeholders' asked to judge the impact of WIL on students, or to say what skills are required, were usually employers or academics and the student view (the voice of those actually experiencing WIL) was notably absent from most published work. Exceptions existed in the work of Little and

Harvey (2007), and Bates (2008), whose research participants were students. However the former study included only participants who chose to undertake a placement and did not consider those who did not, and the latter paper looked at students from only one course;

- several areas for further exploration emerged from existing research. For example, it seemed that career decidedness and confidence were linked to undertaking WIL (Arnold et al., 1995; Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Purdie et al., 2013; Reddy & Moores, 2012). Although it was unclear how much confidence was developed through WIL, and how much it was the case that confident students were more likely to undertake WIL in the first place, this may indicate a way in which placement changed student perceptions of themselves;
- it also seemed that the placement environment, role of the workplace supervisor, and the level of autonomy experienced influenced student development (Arnold et al., 1995; Crebert et al., 2004). However, the work conducted only suggested that this may be the case and further longitudinal exploration with participants as they experience the development process was, therefore, likely to be valuable.

2.6 Development of graduate professional identity

2.6.1 Reasons to consider identity

Although less work was published in this area, the question of how WIL might impact on student (and graduate) identity is an important one. As previously established, in addition to developing employability and skills, WIL was likely to influence students' views of themselves and their self-confidence and would therefore mean they learned about themselves as well as about working life (Purdie et al., 2013). Clearly some of the areas explored in the previous sections touched on issues of identity and how students saw themselves (such as in the discussion of increased confidence resulting from placement), however there appeared to be little focus on what the results might say about the individuals and their development. While there was little published related to the specific impact of WIL on the development of professional or graduate identity, a more general review of work in these areas is helpful to take forward.

2.6.2 Development of professional identity

Looking beyond the narrow focus on employment outcomes or curriculum design, it was clear that if the impact of undertaking WIL on student identity was to be understood there was a need to explore how undergraduates developed their identity during the course of their studies: how did they 'become' a graduate professional? Much of the existing work on professional identity development in students has been done in highly regulated areas such as teaching and medicine: this meant it tended to be motivated by the imposition of external models of professional identity by government policy makers or educators (Helmich et al., 2010, Weaver et al., 2011, Wilkins et al., 2011) rather than professional identity being seen as something intrinsic and about behaviour, beliefs and self-efficacy (Lamote and Engels, 2010, Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). There was, therefore, limited work which specifically looked at the formation of identity by the individual practitioner. Instead, more was revealed about how new professionals negotiated the process of 'fitting in' to

a highly regulated structure (Timoštšuk and Ugaste, 2010). However, there were two theoretical strands identified which challenged this approach, one applying Social Identity Theory to questions of graduate identity and the other relating to Leonard Holmes's work on graduate employability. Both are reviewed here in order to provide a theoretical framework for later discussions.

Social Identity Theory and graduate identity

While limited, a contrast to work assuming that becoming a graduate professional simply meant fitting into established structures was seen in a small number of publications which explored the broader changes in identity that were experienced by students during their programme of study (Hallier & Summers, 2011; Jungert, 2011; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Weaver, Peters, Koch, & Wilson, 2011). Using Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, Turner, 1975, Turner and Reynolds, 2012). Weaver et al. (2011) conducted 13 qualitative telephone interviews with first and third year undergraduate medical students in 2009 and asked what contributed to their sense of professional identity. Informed by Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory, they said that identity formation meant identifying with a particular group and, consequently, placements and being treated as professionals contributed to the participant's sense of professional identity. 'Apprenticeship: doing the work of a doctor' and 'part of the profession: feeling like a doctor' were key themes which emerged. These could be tentatively linked to some of the earlier discussion of the impact of workplace supervisors on the confidence of placement students (Arnold et al., 1995; Crebert et al., 2004; Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Was it this process of 'feeling' like a professional that was influenced by the behaviour and attitudes of other key people in the workplace?

Taking up the thread of Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory explored in Weaver et al. (2011), this was also used by other authors to look at the development of professional identity. This was based on a distinct underlying theoretical position and extensive work in the area exists (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975; Turner & Reynolds, 2012 being some of the key publications). The underlying principle of these theories is that people get their identity from being members of a group and that identification with the group is determined by how similar someone thought they were to the other members (Social Identity). Social Identity therefore comes from feeling that you belong to a group or category of people, and associate yourself with the attributes of that group. Once they identify with the group, people will gain self-esteem by seeing 'their' group more positively than others (Social Categorisation Theory) and the self-categorisation adopted at any one time can change depending on the context of the person. As part of this process an 'in-group' and an 'out-group' are defined, with the in-group containing those members who meet a set of key criteria defining an idealised group member (e.g., in Weaver et al. (2011), criteria related to the identity of the ideal 'doctor'). Individuals group themselves into and behave as if they are members of a shared social category with commonalities in interests or beliefs. They compare themselves and others against an ideal 'prototype' who is the imagined perfect member of that group.

Using this model to frame their research, Hallier and Summers (2011) applied it to research in professional identity development for Human Resources Management (HRM) students. They asked how final year students

constructed their identity as HRM professionals. HRM was of particular interest since the degree route into the profession was relatively recent and non-traditional, meaning there was a weak definition of what an HRM 'professional' actually was. A clear contrast could be seen here with the earlier work discussed (teachers, medical professionals) where there were clearly defined barriers and regulatory criteria to be met before someone could join 'the profession'.

The authors looked at how student ideas developed, changed, and were influenced over the course of their degree. Data were collected through interviews with 24 final year students and were analysed using grounded theory. While this approach may be criticised on the grounds that identity was explored at only one time point, with an expectation that students would be able to remember and articulate what changes took place over the degree programme, it was still extremely useful to hear about what they thought had changed and what had influenced this. Overall, it seemed that their identity (as an HR professional) was threatened in the early stages of their study, as their initial expectations were challenged and revised (for example, if their prior expectations of the profession were invalidated by the theories and examples they looked at in their studies). The authors found that identification with HR practice developed through work experience, to the extent of rejecting academic critiques of practice by final year. This was because when expectations were challenged, either the student changed or the challenge was rejected. If academic critique was rejected, this was usually because the practitioner perspective was valued over the academic, and placement was seen as exposure to 'reality' in contrast to the theoretical academic position. Academics were therefore used as what Social Categorisation Theory would say was the 'out-group' that the profession should be defended against as students came to see themselves as part of the 'in-group' of HR professionals. However for some students identity as an HR professional was rejected when their initial expectations (what they believed on enrolment that an HR professional should do and be) were proved false, and they became isolated from the main group. These students were found to be likely to reject the HR profession and choose a different career path on graduation.

A second but unrelated study using a similar approach came from a study of Swedish engineering students (Jungert, 2011). This was a longitudinal study of ten postgraduate engineering students, taking place over four and a half years.

Participants were five students from a 1999 cohort of graduates, and five from a 2000 cohort who all ultimately graduated between 2004 and 2007. Fifty-two interviews with the students were carried out across the course of their studies, and examined using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The author found that participants initially developed identities as students studying in their particular area (i.e. they transitioned from school or home life to self-identification as 'an engineering student'). This diminished over the course of the degree programme as they moved from thinking of themselves as 'an engineering student' to thinking of themselves as 'an engineer'. This meant they wanted to be seen as someone who had particular attributes they associated with this identity, e.g. analytical skills. In this conclusion similarities can be seen with the work of Hallier and Summers (2011), and particularly their emphasis on the move from being part of

an in-group comprising academic peers and the university community to being part of one which contained members of the chosen profession.

While not explicitly linked to Social Identity Theory, a further study of professional identity in marketing graduates (Bennett, 2011) confirmed some of the points made by these authors. Asking what influenced the professional identity development of marketing graduates, the author asserted that new graduates had a clear identity as a graduate but not yet as a professional. He questioned whether new graduates developed their identity specifically as marketers, or more widely as professionals aligned to their organisation. In terms of Social Categorisation Theory, this might be seen as asking which group the graduate identified with more strongly as their 'in-group'. Which took precedence in forming their professional identity? A sample of 194 graduates in Marketing (all working in an identified marketing role) from one UK university in 2007/08 were surveyed around 18 months after graduation to establish areas such as their level of commitment to the marketing profession and to their current organisation. While the issue of factors influencing which group the graduates identified with more strongly is not of direct interest here, the question of what affected development of a professional identity more generally is. Factors influencing this were found to be having a mentor, a defined appraisal process, a reward system based in marketing, and day-to-day activities being marketing focussed. So, broadly, the important influence was being immersed in a marketing culture at work and having other marketing-focussed people around rather than anything more generic. Similarly, organisational identity was more associated with being mentored by a general manager, and working with more general tasks. In this, similarities with previous work suggesting that a supportive work environment can be important in developing student views of themselves at work seem to be reinforced (Arnold et al., 1995; Auburn et al., 1991; Bates, 2008; Crebert et al., 2004).

Holmes's graduate identity model

Any discussion of professional identity for students, and the process of 'becoming' a graduate professional, cannot exclude the much-cited work of Leonard Holmes from Roehampton University (Holmes, 2001, 2013a, 2013b, 2015) and his graduate identity model.

In his work Holmes took a clear position from the outset against what he felt to be the increasing emphasis placed on a narrow definition of skills and the building of employability criteria on this rather than on the broader concept of 'graduate identity'. He suggested this accelerated after publication of the relatively recent (at his initial time of writing) Dearing report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). While he accepted that it was legitimate for employers and policy makers to concern themselves with issues of graduate employability as, ultimately, well-prepared graduates had a significant impact on economic development and on society more generally (Holmes, 2013a), he was concerned about what he saw as the over-emphasis on graduate employment outcomes. Throughout his published research, he therefore took issue with the position that the 'skills agenda' should be accepted uncritically as the only approach to employability, and pointed out that what employers actually wanted was not a narrow set of skills but employees who would perform in the right way for them (Holmes, 2001). He took particular issue with the

skills agenda because he said that skills were not observable: activity can be observed, but not skills, and we therefore tend to assess 'social practices' (which we interpret as skills) rather than performance (Holmes, 2001). In order to have understanding of and interpret performance we also need to know about who is taking the action and why: we construe it in different ways depending on this information. In addition, for Holmes, the skills agenda did not explain why significant numbers of graduates found the transition to suitable employment challenging (Holmes, 2015).

In his later papers (Holmes, 2013a, 2013b, 2015) the author concentrated on looking at how graduate skills were warranted, and how employability might be better framed using graduate identity. He suggested three possible models for how employability could be defined in this way (Holmes, 2013a). His proposal was that graduate employability could be seen as either:

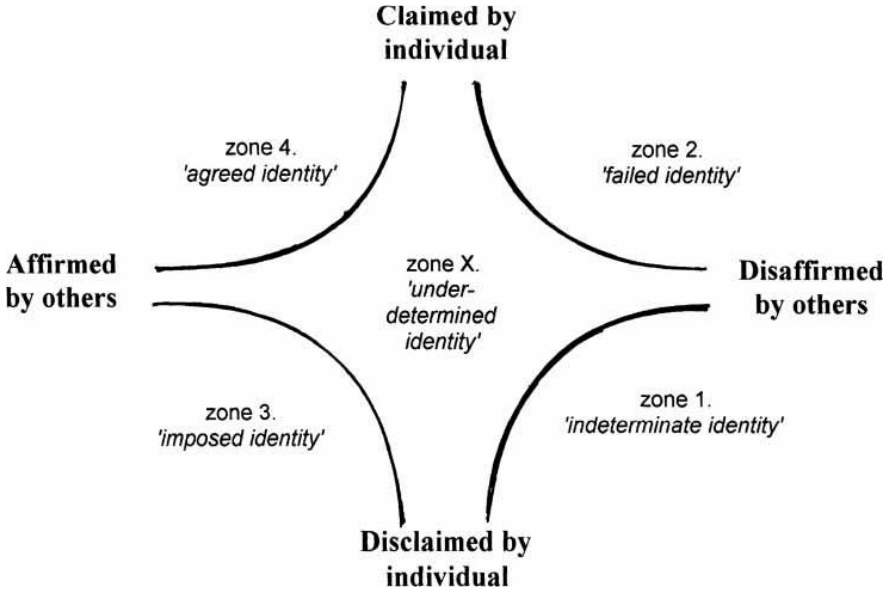
- possession of requisite skills (such as graduate attributes);
- social positioning (linked to cultural capital such as the quality of the degree awarding institution);
- processual (moving into employment is simply another stage on the journey of the individual, it is not something to be taken in isolation but is about the overall 'emergent identity' of the graduate, a socially constructed relationship which changes over time).

He took issue with the first model, pointing out that the process of becoming a graduate was complex, took place over an extended time period, and was negotiated both between the individual and those around them (Holmes, 2015). In addition, he asserted that existing research showed a weak relationship between attaining these skills, and employment outcomes. While the second model had relevance in the past, he suggested that it was becoming less influential with the move to a mass higher education system (Holmes, 2013a). He therefore favoured the third (processual) model of graduate employability. This meant that:

> … graduate employability can be considered as the always temporary relationship that arises between an individual graduate and the field of employment opportunities, as the graduate engages with those who are 'gatekeepers' to those opportunities, particularly those who make selection decisions. In presenting themself to a prospective employer, as a prospective employee, the individual is presenting their claim on being a graduate 'worthy' of such employment
>
> (Holmes, 2013a, p550)

Graduate identity was therefore dependent on two aspects: how the student saw and presented themselves, and how they were seen by others (Holmes, 2013a). A graduate identity model was proposed by Holmes based on these dimensions, suggesting that graduates moved between four categories: agreed identity, failed identity, indeterminate identity, or an imposed identity. A fifth category, under-developed identity, was also possible. Each of these could be claimed or not by the individual, and could be affirmed by others or not. So, for example, a graduate who identified as such but was disaffirmed by others (i.e. was not offered a graduate level job) would be in the 'failed identity' category. The model attempted to capture the non-static nature of graduate employability, and its relationship to both the identities felt to be valid by the graduate and by outside stakeholders. The model is presented in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1
Claim-affirmation model of modalities of emergent identity (Holmes, 2013a)



The later papers (Holmes, 2013b, 2015) presented the same model with some developmental discussion, and also three case studies which illustrated the way that graduates moved between the various zones depending on their personal feelings about their identity as graduates and their employment status.

In terms of the influence of Holmes's model on work related to graduate identity, many authors have cited it although very few have explicitly applied his ideas (for example, almost all of the work discussed in the section on professional identity above cites Holmes (2001)). Holmes himself has sometimes been critical of attempts to use his work in relation to employability. For example, Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) purported to draw on Holmes (2001) to illustrate links between graduate identity and employability. However, they did this through a survey of 105 East Anglian employers, asking them to rate the value of various graduate skills, values, characteristics, and other aspects of graduate experience they looked for. This resonated much more with the previously discussed work on skills and graduate attributes, and with the criticisms made of the use of an external perspective to judge the internal world of students and graduates. Unsurprisingly Holmes (2013b) made a robust critique of the association of his work with this research, feeling that it was much more in the tradition of seeing graduate employability as being about the acquisition of skills. This illustrated, however, the dominance of graduate skills when the question of how students might change and develop their ideas during university study was discussed.

2.6.3 Key points related to this literature

This section has provided an overview of existing work relating to how students develop their identities as graduate professionals. From this discussion, it is useful to note that:

- work relating to Self-identity and Self-categorisation theory, in particular the importance of identification with a social grouping, can inform discussion of how students see themselves. However the existing work tended to be fragmented, with a number of interesting but distinct studies conducted on groups from disparate subject specialisms, e.g. Weaver et al. (2011) in Medicine, Hallier and Summers (2011) in HRM;
- while Holmes (2013a) provided an influential and useful model for graduate identity there was no place for the role of WIL in his discussion of how this was warranted, as his focus was on students after graduation. It may be of interest to see if some of the same social constructions of identity can be seen in students undertaking WIL;
- other than the paper discussed from Hallier and Summers (2011) there was no work identified looking at the impact of WIL on student identity. Since it seemed that some of the emerging issues in previous sections (e.g. the importance of workplace responsibilities, supervision and relationships with colleagues) might have influenced self-esteem, confidence, and ultimately identity this is an area where additional research could be valuable.

2.7 Summary: gaps in knowledge and in the literature

While each section has presented an overview of gaps in the existing literature, it is useful to draw these together to give an overall summary here of the key areas that could be addressed by further research.

It is clear that several potential areas for exploration exist:

- much of the existing literature around WIL was motivated by a focus on employability, either measured as an impact on employment and academic outcomes or on attainment of a number of pre-specified 'graduate attributes'. This was usually retrospective in nature, using secondary data collected after students had graduated. There was little work found capturing how students change and develop as they undertook their degrees;
- as a result of the focus on measurable outcomes, the 'stakeholders' asked to judge the impact of WIL on students, or to say what skills are required, were usually employers or academics. The student voice was rarely heard in this work, even though they were the person best placed to judge any changes that were taking place;
- the literature suggested that career decidedness and confidence linked to WIL. However the question of whether this developed through placement, or whether it was the more confident and academically able students who chose to take WIL opportunities, was unanswered;
- it was notable that the vast majority of work identified looked at the benefits of a sandwich placement and little work was done with participants from other models of WIL, despite pressure

from Government for students to be offered a variety of experiences including shorter placements (Wilson, 2012). It was also unclear whether short placements had the same impact and value for students as longer ones;

- existing work relating to the development of graduate and professional identity through WIL was found to be limited and fragmented.

2.8 Development of research questions for the thesis

Given the gaps in knowledge identified, this thesis attempts to contribute to what is known about WIL by answering the following overarching research question:

> How does the experience of participating in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) shape and change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the work role?

This is intended to address the knowledge gaps in two significant areas. Firstly, the emphasis on *students' perceptions* contributes to knowledge by emphasising the voice of those experiencing WIL rather than employers or academics. Secondly, the exploration of *change* in these perceptions will give insights into the process as it happens. In addition to supplementing the existing largely retrospective studies this has potential to inform knowledge about the development of graduate identity as it takes place. There is also scope within the question for insights to be gained into the value of different models of WIL and into what influences the choice to undertake it.

The overall research question given above has been developed into three specific research questions, which each contribute to answering the overall question:

Specific Research Question 1:	What are students' opinions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university, and how do they think these will change in the future?
Specific Research Question 2:	What are students' construals of their individual work identities at later points during their studies?
Specific Research Question 3:	How has WIL influenced this?

Methods Chapters 4 and 6 explain how these questions have been answered.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

3.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I begin the process of explaining the research process for the thesis by setting out the methodology employed and describing the overall research design. Firstly, my philosophical assumptions will be explained because they influenced the study by shaping the research questions and the formulation of the problem. They also affected how I gathered and analysed data to answer these questions. The chapter therefore begins with an explanation and discussion of my personal beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and about what I claim in terms of knowledge of this reality (epistemology). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasised that in addition to setting out the research process it is also important to consider the role of the researcher within it. Philosophically, the fundamental question to be addressed is whether it is believed that they can ever be separated from the process. Are they seen as objective, and therefore able to remove their influence from the situation being studied, or as inextricably linked together with it? My discussion of my personal ontology and epistemology therefore contributes to the demonstration of 'reflexivity' in my research. This requires me to consider how my opinions and beliefs influenced or affected the way the research was done and its outcomes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Haynes, 2012).

After this discussion of my personal position my interpretive framework for the thesis is presented. I will use this section to set out the particular perspective I adopted and specifically the concepts and beliefs that define it, informed by the research questions.

The theoretical perspective of the research approach must be consistent with the philosophical assumptions which underlie it, but it should also inform the research design and particularly the choice of appropriate practices for analysis and knowledge generation (Creswell, 2013). Not least, this is required because my philosophical position opened my data to particular types of interpretations. The chapter therefore closes with an overview of the research design for the thesis, demonstrating how this developed from the interpretive framework adopted.

3.2 Epistemology and ontology

3.2.1 My philosophical beliefs

Before going on to discuss the philosophical framework used in this research it is important to set out my own personal views and opinions about the nature of reality and knowledge and to consider what has influenced these. Not least this is because I agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2018) that, when we talk about ontology and epistemology:

> Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways
>
> (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p16)

Considering my "personal biography" and my "set of ideas", I am undoubtedly influenced by my previous educational experience. A first degree in Mathematics and an MSc in Operational Research made me comfortable with the types of statistical work usually undertaken from a realist ontological and epistemological perspective. The traditional philosophical approach adopted in these forms of enquiry would usually be Positivist in nature, based on the assumption that reality has some irrefutable underlying nature that can be discovered through appropriate empirical investigation (Crotty, 1998). However, this training included very little consideration of the underlying assumptions made in treating knowledge in this way. My subsequent experience as a lecturer in higher education exposed my thinking to a very wide range of influences and made me reconsider my views of knowledge generation. Because of this subsequent experience, I find it impossible to accept that knowledge about people and their views and opinions can ever be treated objectively. I therefore see myself as making decisions about knowledge creation from a pragmatic standpoint, comfortable in using a number of methods to explore a research question depending on what is most appropriate.

Overall, therefore, I adopt a world view which encompasses a realist ontology (accepting that the world exists independently of human perceptions of it) and a limited realist epistemology (since all we can access is our observations, beliefs, and opinions of the social world as we interact with it our knowledge of it is imperfect) (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996). Not least this is because I believe adopting a completely realist ontology and epistemology would mean assuming a Positivist, essentialist position which would mean accepting that humans have a true underlying nature which can be discovered, depending only on appropriate research design and methods being adopted.

3.2.2 The philosophical viewpoint underpinning the research questions

One of the fundamental influences on the philosophical framing for this study was the research questions, and these therefore provide a starting point for discussion of the ontological and epistemological position taken.

As a reminder, the overall research question I aimed to address was:

> How does the experience of participating in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) shape and change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the work role?

Several points can be made about the structure and underlying world view evident in this question:

- The priority in the research was to understand the lived experiences and changing perceptions of my participants, rather than to uncover any underlying principles that might cause or predict their views. This is in line with Creswell's (2013) assertion that qualitative researchers are interested in exploring problems because they feel the need to understand something in depth, through interpretation and reflection;
- I believe that individuals have a choice in how they describe themselves and others. They do this in ways that help them to rationalise and make sense of the world as they experience it, through a

process of creating and adjusting constructs about it. Their history, experience, culture and context influence how they do this, meaning that each person's way of seeing the world is unique to them. This resonates with Burr's (2015) discussion of social constructionism, and that "what we regard as truth … may be thought of as our current accepted ways of understanding the world" (Burr, 2015, p5) and also with Chiari and Nuzzo's (1996) discussion of psychological constructivisms;

- My aim in the research was, therefore, to explore the individual ways in which my participants described and categorised themselves as employees. I expected that this would be different for each of them, and would be linked to their experiences and interactions with others. I acknowledged that the way participants saw themselves would change over time dependent on their prior and current experiences.

Implicit in the question was also the principle that I saw my role as researcher as being to explore jointly with my participants the ways in which they created knowledge about themselves as employees. I saw this knowledge as having been co-created through discourse and interactions between us in the research setting.

3.3 My interpretive framework: a constructivist approach

3.3.1 Constructionism and constructivism

Having considered my personal beliefs about knowledge creation and the world view implied by the research questions I decided that either a Social Constructionist or a Constructivist framework for the research would be appropriate. These approaches have much in common, in particular through the premise that knowledge comes from discourse and interactions between people (Crotty, 1998). In my research, this meant that knowledge about how my participants were changing would be constructed by us in partnership as they interacted with me and reflected on their experiences of WIL. Of course, this meant that the research process in itself had the potential to lead to changes in their self-perceptions. Since discussion with me in a research setting was likely to lead contributors to reflect on how views had altered or how skills had developed it was entirely possible that doing so would actively encourage change. This reinforces my assertion that my research approach was epistemologically relativist: 'real' measurement of characteristics in a work role was impossible and these were only partially 'knowable' by me, as they were in a constant state of change which could not be distanced from the participant's social world (which included their interactions with me).

Where constructivism and constructionism differ is in their view of how the individual world is created. For constructionists the emphasis is placed on collaboration, with knowledge being created through actions such as discourse between groups (Crotty, 1998). Individual understandings are therefore predominantly generated and negotiated through social contact between people and the world around them. In the constructivist viewpoint, while these social interactions still have a large part to play, the emphasis is on the internal process that takes place within the individual. More importance is therefore given to the unique set of individual constructions (Burr, 2015; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2015). Given that I set out to explore the constructions of my individual participants, I felt this meant that a constructivist theoretical framework was the more appropriate one for me to adopt. However within this overall frame there are a number of

constructivist approaches that could have been used: while they share the premise that knowledge is something which is created through human participation rather than 'discovered', they often differ in their view of whether an independent reality exists (Crotty, 1998).

3.3.2 Constructivist theories

Constructivism can be categorised in a number of ways, and it can be difficult to make clear unambiguous distinctions between the various schools of thought which are labelled as constructivist (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996; Young & Collin, 2004). Chiari and Nuzzo (1996) suggested that such theories could be divided into two groups, labelling them epistemological and hermeneutic constructivism. Raskin (2002) agreed with this approach, and stated that "Particular theories of constructivism can presumably be located within one category or the other" (Raskin, 2002, p4). Epistemological constructivism acknowledges the existence of an independent reality, while hermeneutic constructivism does not: instead knowledge is seen as wholly created through experience, discourse, and language (Domenici, 2007; Raskin, 2002). It is therefore clear that my own personal philosophy outlined above aligns more closely to the tenets of epistemological constructivism.

Within this approach, Young and Collin (2004) suggested that radical constructivism, social constructivism, and moderate constructivism are three theories commonly used. They situate Personal Construct Theory (PCT) within the 'moderate' category. Raskin (2002) suggested a very similar categorisation, differing only in the promotion of PCT to stand alone rather than in a 'moderate' group of theories. Having considered these various forms of constructivism, I decided that the most closely aligned to my own personal philosophy was PCT, and this will now be discussed in detail.

Personal Construct Theory (PCT)

Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955/1991) is a psychological theory of human understanding and is fundamentally a constructivist theory (Gergen, 2015). It is based around the concept of an individual possessing a unique and individual construct system which allows them to predict and explain events as they experience them, constructing and changing their understanding and anticipation of themselves as they do so (Butt, 2008). The individual construction of events (which is what I sought to understand) is emphasised (Butt, 2008). Kelly (1955/1991) provided a detailed exposition of theory setting out how events are explained and predicted using an individual's distinct construct system. He also developed methods for exploring this. My interest in PCT pre-dates the start of my PhD, with the result that it influenced my thinking and philosophical positioning from the very beginning of the work discussed here including my formulation of the research questions. However, I did not exclude the possibility of using other theoretical frameworks at the start of the study as is evidenced by my consideration of other potential frameworks I could have chosen. The influence of PCT is specifically visible in my view of the participants as individually constructing and changing their understanding and anticipation of themselves as employees while they go through the experience of University learning and, for many of them, undertaking some form of WIL. It was knowledge about these changes in their construal (if any) and what they thought had influenced this that I sought to generate in my research. It therefore followed that PCT methods featured strongly in my research design, although these

became more relevant in the later, qualitative stages of the study than in the initial quantitative data collection.

Kelly's (1955/1991) theory was grounded in the concept of 'constructive alternativism'. This addressed the epistemological question of what constitutes a 'fact' by asserting that we, as humans, are presented with an infinite amount of choice about how we categorise and describe the world around us (Butt & Burr, 1992). It therefore followed that views of the world are unique to the individual, as they are chosen by each of us on the basis of what we think fits best with (or makes sense of) our experience of it. In addition "*We assume that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement*" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p11, Kelly's italics) meaning that our views may change and adjust as we experience the world and, like a scientist, adapt our categorisations to better fit our view of it (Fransella, 1995).

The question for me as a researcher was then how to gain knowledge about the world views of others, in a system where we each have our own unique understanding and our access to the realities experienced by them is imperfect.

Kelly's (1955/1991) answer to this question was to firstly set out how our constructions of reality are organised. His theory asserts that this is done using our Personal Constructs, a hierarchical system of bipolar ideas we use to make sense of what we see. We do this by an active process of construing – creating, testing, and amending our construct system. It follows that when someone talks to us about an experience, we in turn gain understanding of their world through the interaction and our own process of construal – creating our own unique constructs about what they say (Butt, 2008) which may, in turn, lead them (and us) to further reflection and reconstruing. While knowledge is generated by the individual, we therefore acquire it in a research environment through a process of developing understanding of the constructs of others. To do this, PCT influenced research encourages the participant to reflect on and articulate their constructs, allowing the researcher some insight into their world view (Burr, McGrane, & King, 2017). It is important to emphasise that both researcher and participant are seen as being engaged in actively construing the research situation that they find themselves in (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). The idea of the researcher or therapist as an 'expert' who diagnoses and treats the client from a position of superior knowledge or power is explicitly rejected in PCT. As a consequence, those using it examine their own construal in the same way as they scrutinise the construals of others (Bannister & Fransella, 1986; Fransella & Dalton, 2000; Proctor, 2009), recognising both their influence on the research situation and the influence of the research situation on them. This means that PCT is intrinsically reflexive: knowledge created through research is seen as a construction of the researcher, based on her experiences and her personal values and opinions. These are influenced by the research as it takes place (Burr, 2015). As the researcher and participant interact, they are each seen as attempting to make sense of the situations they find themselves in and the research environment is as much one of these 'situations' as any other they experience.

My role as a researcher adopting a PCT approach was therefore to adopt methods which would enable me to gain access to the construal of my participants as they experienced WIL and to gain some limited, shared

understanding of their world through my own changing construal: to 'subsume' the construction processes of others into my own understanding (Fransella, 1995). Kelly (1955/1991) referred to this as the 'Sociality Corollary' and stated that "*to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person*" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p66, Kelly's italics). It is also important to note that while construal is something that can change through experience, there is no reason why it has to do so. In fact, depending on the constructs involved and the individual circumstances this may be a difficult and painful process resisted by the individual, particularly where 'superordinate' core constructs are challenged (these are constructs which are closer to the top of the hierarchy for an individual and are therefore more fundamental to their beliefs) (Fransella, 1995).

3.4 Design of the study

Having chosen an interpretive framework and underlying theoretical model for the thesis, I then needed to consider how to address the research questions practically. At the most basic level, it was important for the research to prioritise the opinions of students (given the focus in existing work on the views of universities and employers) and to include participants experiencing a range of WIL models (not just sandwich placements, which were over-represented in the existing work). Together with the philosophical viewpoint set out previously, these principles formed the starting point for the research design.

Due to the emphasis placed on the idea of exploring the meanings and influence of the 'change' students underwent as they experienced WIL, I decided to adopt a longitudinal approach to data collection. This was chosen in order to capture perceptions from the same individuals at more than one point in time. As Saldaña (2003) argued:

> we conduct a longitudinal study for two primary purposes: to capture through long-term immersion the depth and breadth of the participants' life experiences, and to capture participant change (if any) through long-term comparative observations of their perceptions and actions
>
> (Saldaña, 2003, p16)

A longitudinal study, following a small group of participants over the course of their university experience, was therefore chosen in preference to single instances of data collection with individual students in an attempt to capture the process of change as they experienced it. Longitudinal data collection had the clear advantage that, rather than asking for retrospective memories or views, the process of change could be looked at as it took place (Langley & Stensaker, 2012). In addition, the adoption of this approach allowed me to capture the participants' reflections on the individual changes that had taken place (consistent with my constructivist view that this was unique to each of them and was changing as they experienced WIL).

The study was therefore designed to incorporate three separate rounds of data collection over time. Stage 1 consisted of a questionnaire survey of a large number of first year undergraduates at selected programmes from two English post-92 universities, which are referred to as University A and University B in this thesis. A number of first-year volunteers were recruited from each university through the survey who then completed

self-characterisation sketches and interviews in second and final year. Table 3.1 gives a summary of the timeline for data collection which gives a broad overview of the process followed:

Table 3.1
Summary of data collection undertaken

Stage of research	Method(s) used	Participants	Time when data collection took place
Stage 1	Questionnaire	First-year students	January-May 2014
Stage 2	Self-characterisation sketch and interview	Second-year students	April-June 2015
Stage 3	Self-characterisation sketch and interview	Final-year students (either third-year students who had not undertaken a sandwich year, or fourth-year students who had).	May-June 2016 (third-year student group) October-December 2016 (fourth-year student group).

As can be seen from the table, the data collection strategy was somewhat complicated by the inclusion of students who undertook a sandwich placement (where they spent their third year of study in work rather than at university). It was relatively straightforward to choose timings for data collection in Stages 1 and 2, but more difficult in Stage 3. First-year students were recruited and surveyed once they had 'settled in' to university and had a chance to consider what the WIL aspects of their programme might entail (Stage 1). Second stage data collection then took place towards the end of the following year when many of them had already experienced some WIL or were just about to go on a sandwich placement. However, a decision about how to capture experience later in their programme required more consideration. Literature had identified the possible influences of age and maturity on the participants' views of themselves in a work role, which suggested that third- and fourth-year students may develop different perceptions purely due to the passage of time. The constructivist viewpoint adopted also suggested that the students would be constantly adjusting and refining their construal based on their experiences. However, given the research questions under investigation, it was felt that the most important influence on the students was likely to be the process of undertaking WIL and it was therefore crucial to design the study in such a way as to prioritise capturing experience of this. Data were therefore collected from students undertaking a three-year programme (without sandwich placement) at the end of their studies, just before graduation and after they had experienced all of the WIL placements on their programmes. Those on a four-year degree participated just after their return to study (again, straight after their WIL experience). This also had the advantage of shortening the time between the data collection for the two separate groups at Stage 3 as much as possible.

The choice of multiple methods (questionnaire, self-characterisation sketch, and interview) was made for a number of reasons. While it may seem to be at odds with the constructivist framework adopted to start with quantitative data collection methods, the use of a questionnaire with the first year group enabled a broad overview of the students' views about themselves close to the start of their course of study to be gathered. While a survey would normally be seen as fitting more closely to a Positivist philosophical viewpoint, with the

idea of testing theory through the collection of 'facts', its inclusion here is not intended to perform this function. Instead, it is part of a multi-method approach designed to capture a number of different perspectives on reality. This adds "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" to the research, resulting in "better ways to understand" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p29). It also provided a first point of contact with the participants and the opportunity to start a process of reflecting on what influence WIL might have on them which continued through more visibly PCT influenced methods in the later stages.

The use of multiple methods in this study might also provoke a question about whether the design should be viewed as fitting into a mixed-methods model. However, mixed-methods research often seems to be constrained by an expectation it will fit into one of a limited number of typologies, and has been critiqued by Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) as seeing the qualitative stage of a study as being secondary in importance to the quantitative work. This is the exact opposite of the position taken here as the quantitative work described in this chapter gave initial insights into areas for further exploration, while the later qualitative work in Stages 2 and 3 was seen as more central to answering the overall research question. In spite of the insistence on taxonomies in much of the theoretical mixed methods literature, it is also worth noting that Bryman (2006) established by examination of a number of published mixed methods studies that they rarely followed these rigid frameworks, leading to some methodological incoherence. When this confusion was added to the earlier critique, it became clear that mixed-method theory was not an appropriate model for this thesis and that adoption of multiple methods within an overall constructivist viewpoint was much more suitable. This is, therefore, the approach I adopted.

Chapter 4: Methods used to explore students' opinions on entry (Stage 1 data collection)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter follows the discussion of the overall research design presented in Chapter 3 by setting out in detail how specific Research Question 1 was addressed ('What are students' opinions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university, and how do they think these will change in the future?').

4.2 Recruitment and sampling strategy

4.2.1 Programmes targeted for inclusion

In order to answer specific Research Question 1 and to identify participants for the qualitative data collection stages a sample of students from both University A and University B were recruited during academic year 2013-14. The choice of programmes to target in Stage 1 was based on a review of the various models of WIL offered across all full-time undergraduate programmes at both institutions at that time, in order to gain an idea of the different models of provision offered. This was done by looking at the information provided on both university websites for 2013-14 entry for every programme. A total of 131 programmes at University A and 156 at University B were examined and details captured about what type of WIL was offered (if any), whether the WIL was compulsory or not, duration of the WIL experience, and academic credit available for completion.

This investigation in combination with the definition of WIL presented in the literature review (work experience which takes place as part of the formal curriculum of study) was used to develop a simple classification system for WIL into four distinct typologies. These were designed using the duration of the WIL placements and the level of integration evident between the experience and the course of academic study:

Type 1: Work placements were highly integrated within the programme of study, typically taking place across all three taught years of an undergraduate degree as several extended blocks of time spent in employment (and certainly in more than one year).

Type 2: WIL was clearly identified in the programme specification as a credit-bearing module (or modules) sitting alongside other assessed study units. It might have incorporated one or more short blocks of work experience or might take place as a day per week or number of hours over a single academic semester/year.

Type 3: The programme included a full year in industry ('sandwich degree'), normally the third year.

Type 4: No formally assessed work experience was evident in the curriculum.

Students following the first three types of WIL model were targeted in this research, thus excluding students who did not have the opportunity to undertake any WIL. This was because I felt that the question of how WIL influences self-perceptions could only be answered by working with participants who at least had this option open to them. In terms of accounting for the non-compulsory nature of some WIL offered, I decided to recruit

participants from programmes of Type 2 and 3 where the WIL was not mandatory wherever possible. My hope in doing this was that by the final stages of the study there would be diversity of experience on at least some programmes, with some students having undertaken WIL and others choosing not to. While the question of who chose to undertake WIL is not a central question to be addressed here, it has been established as a possible factor of interest in the literature surrounding the topic and participants from each group were therefore likely to illustrate different viewpoints and perceptions of WIL.

Table 4.1 summarises the initial planned groups of participants and programmes which were targeted based on the above criteria, and the final set which were used:

Table 4.1

Programmes targeted initially and those included in the study

Type of WIL	Initial programmes targeted	Programmes included	Reasons for changes
Type 1, short placements across all (or most) years of study	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy: placements in each year of study BSc (Hons) Social Work: placements in year 2 and year 3 at University B, all three years at University A	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy at University B only BSc (Hons) Social Work at both universities	No response from the programme leader for BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy at University A
Type 2, short placements in only one year of study, typically a few weeks in total	BA (Hons) Journalism: 4-week placement in final year was core at University A; University B had a 40-credit final year module although this could be a case study. BSc (Hons) Criminology/Criminology and Sociology/ Criminology and Forensic Science: core module in year 2 at University B, students in 3rd year at University A could opt to work 1 day per week in the voluntary sector.	BA (Hons) Journalism at both universities BA Politics at University B	The Criminology programme leaders at both institutions were very difficult to contact: however the programme leader from BA Politics at University B heard about the research and requested that his students be included.
Type 3: 'sandwich' degrees	BA (Hons) Business Management programmes at both universities: optional 1-year sandwich placement in year 3. BSc (Hons) Mathematics/Physics/Biology: Maths and Physics at University A, Biology at University B. These programmes had a 1-year optional placement.	BA (Hons) Business Management programmes at both universities. BSc (Hons) Mathematics and Physics at University A	No response from the programme leader for BSc Biology

4.2.2 Contacting the target groups

As discussed in detail in the later section on ethics, the programme leader for each of the student groups was first approached to gain consent for the students to be contacted and invited to participate in the study. This facilitated contact with the groups of interest as the programme leaders were able to arrange for a short introduction to the research to be provided to each group. However, this did mean that access issues led to some of the initial target groups listed above not being included in the research: if the programme leader was unresponsive after several emails and telephone calls the group was not contacted. The final sampling frame represents a good spread of WIL practice, which brings the desirable elements of diversity to the study.

4.3 Questionnaire design

As explained in Chapter 3 a questionnaire was chosen as the method of data collection in Stage 1 of the study in order to gather as wide a range of opinions as possible from across a number of undergraduate programmes, allowing the research to start from a broad perspective and then to narrow this in the later stages of the research, once possible areas of interest for further exploration had been identified.

The purpose of the questionnaire was, therefore, to gain demographic information along with a broad picture of the participants' backgrounds, knowledge and views at an early stage of their studies. Overall, the key guiding factor in the approach to the design of the questionnaire was to adopt an inclusive and exploratory perspective. A copy of the survey instrument can be seen in Appendix 1. No prior claims were made about the nature of students in the included groups and their self-perceptions on entry. The questionnaire collected demographic and background data such as age, what the participant was doing immediately before coming to university (full-time study, employed or other) and the amount of relevant work experience they thought they had prior to entry to their programme. Respondents were also asked to rate themselves according to a set of 21 personal skills and work-related characteristics which followed the broad categories identified as 'desirable' by existing research. They were asked to rate these 21 personal and work-related skills twice: once to give current valuations and then to rate them again imagining that they had just completed their degree programme. While a questionnaire of this type using measurement scales is usually more closely associated with a Positivist approach to research strategy, I felt that at this point in the process it would be useful to ask respondents to describe themselves in terms that they were already familiar with. The meant using terms describing the types of skills and characteristics that they would usually have been told university is intended to develop. Using this also provided a basis for the later, more in-depth stages of the research to build on information about how they classified themselves in a 'traditional' framework at the start of their programme of study. Acknowledging that there were no 'facts' but only individual meanings that were given to phenomena, it is important to stress that, at this design stage, the scales used in the questionnaire were not seen as providing objective measurement of the characteristics included. Rather, they gave a starting point to explore how each individual assessed themselves in traditional terms. Thus, for example, one participant might have 'rated' themselves as a 4/10 for communication while another might say they were 8/10. In the context of this research, I did not accept that this meant the first respondent was only half as good as the

second in this area: it was not an objective measurement of the skill, but rather an indication of their internal view of themselves. I also had no idea whether they all perceived the scale in the same way (one person's self 'score' of four may have been someone else's two or six, for example – and might also be different to my own interpretation). However what this approach did have potential to tell me was that the first participant would seem to feel they started with relatively low skill in the areas compared to others or to their future anticipated self, while the second seemed more confident and perhaps did not expect to change as much. If something like this emerged from the questionnaire as a 'difference' between groups, it would indicate an area to explore in Stages 2 and 3. The use of a broad approach to data collection at this stage also provided valuable information about possible diversity in the sample, allowing a more targeted approach to be taken to the research design in the later stages of work. Further information on the questions asked and their relation to the literature can be found in Appendix 2.

4.4 Data collection

The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of volunteers from one of the universities. Twelve first year undergraduate students (BA Economics, BA Travel and Tourism, and BA Business Studies) took part in this. These respondents were not part of the intended sampling frame for the live version of the survey but were similar in profile to some of the target audience i.e. first year undergraduates studying on a programme with a WIL element. Responses and feedback from the pilot study led to a small number of minor changes to the initial questionnaire developed, such as clarifying instructions for completion, but no significant changes were made.

The final questionnaire was then distributed to 644 first year undergraduate students from both universities between January and May 2014 using the online survey software Qualtrics. Before distributing the questionnaire I spoke individually to each group, they then received an email invitation with a personalised link to the survey. It was hoped that this face-to-face contact would increase the response rate to the survey but meant that mutually convenient times had to be arranged with programme leaders for each group. This meant the survey was distributed at different times to each programme rather than as a single release. In total 218 participants accessed the questionnaire from their email link, with 172 responses or partial responses received (a response rate of 26.7% usable questionnaires). A summary of the response rates is given in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2
Sample composition for Stage 1

University A or B	Programme	Date of meeting with students	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number started	Number usable (completed or partially completed)	Usable rate
A	BSc Social Work	20/01/2014	80	38	33	41.3%
A	BSc Physics	27/01/2014	23	8	6	26.1%
A	BSc Mathematics	04/02/2014	45	17	14	31.1%
A	BA Business Management	Individual seminar groups in w/c 3 March 2014	144	36	21	14.6%
A	BA Journalism	04/03/2014	33	13	12	36.4%
B	BSc Physiotherapy	06/03/2014	39	13	13	33.3%
B	BA Journalism	11/03/2014	42	9	9	21.4%
B	BA Business Management	Individual seminar groups in w/c 17 March 2014	155	43	33	21.3%
B	BSc Social Work	31/03/2014	64	34	26	40.6%
B	BSc Politics	30/05/2014	19	7	5	26.3%
OVERALL			644	218	172	26.7%

4.5 Dealing with ethical considerations

4.5.1 Gaining ethical approval for Stage 1

Full ethical clearance was gained for each stage of the data collection before it took place. This was slightly complicated by the need to work within two separate processes, since University A and University B both had their own systems for ethical approval. This was managed by obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant ethics committee at one university first, and then submitting a separate application to the second panel only after their approval had been gained.

Gaining ethical approval for Stage 1 of the study (the survey) was the most challenging part of the overall ethics process, given that a number of programmes were targeted for inclusion in order to meet the criteria of including students with a range of WIL experiences. Since the proposal was for participants to be asked to consider their self-perceptions and their expected development at university, there was also potential for this to encourage reflection on areas that they may not have considered previously. It was therefore important that adequate support was available to them in case any questions were raised for them about their future direction or development. In addition to providing details of university counselling services for the participants, programme leaders for each programme of interest were, therefore, also contacted for their permission to work with students before any data collection took place as they were likely to be the first point

of contact for any concerns. As explained above, this also allowed for an appointment to be arranged to speak to the students as a group to explain the purpose of the research before the questionnaire was distributed, in the hope that this would promote a higher response rate.

One of the ethics committees requested that, in addition to the programme leaders, the Directors of Research Ethics in every other part of that university should also be contacted for permission for the research to be carried out. Thus, in total, permission was gained from 14 individuals (in addition to the two ethics panels) before any data collection was done. If the programme leader did not respond to requests for contact the affected group of students were not included in the study.

4.5.2 Ensuring fully informed consent

Once full permissions had been gained from those with oversight, obtaining informed consent of participants was embedded into the research process. The first section of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) included questions giving explicit consent for participation. Without agreeing to this, respondents were unable to proceed. Given my dual role, as both lecturer and PhD researcher, it was particularly important that participants understood that the work was undertaken purely in my capacity as a research student and that their choice of whether to participate and responses given would have no impact on their results. To ensure this, other than in the pilot study, participants were recruited from groups of students I did not teach and who I therefore had no on-going relationship with. While it was not impossible that I would have formal contact with some of them later in their programme, for example as a dissertation supervisor, this did not happen. It was made clear to participants that taking part in the study had no influence on any dealings I might subsequently have with them in a professional capacity.

4.5.3 Data storage

All data were stored securely. Questionnaire data were collected via the Qualtrics package, which offered built-in security, and when results were transferred from this to SPSS they were stored in password-protected files on the Northumbria University server, accessible only by me. Data were anonymised with reference numbers before storage with the reference numbers stored separately to the data: this allowed tracking of respondents and for individual questionnaires to be extracted and reviewed in the later interviews while maintaining anonymity in the data set. Any paper notes or copies of results were stored in a locked cupboard in a locked staff office at Northumbria University.

4.6 Analysis of Stage 1 data

An analysis plan for the questionnaire designed to give an overview of the demographics within the sample (and possible areas of diversity) and to explore potential variation between different groups (by institution and by programme) was developed alongside the questionnaire. This set out the tests that were to be carried out and the reasoning behind them, and is shown in Appendix 3. The questionnaire data were analysed following this plan using SPSS 21. This included both univariate analysis which gave an overview of the demographic areas of interest and hypothesis testing to indicate possible differences between various groups. For the

avoidance of doubt about the purpose of this it is important to emphasise again that the 'testing' which took place was exploratory rather than explanatory in nature. This is because it was intended to provide an indication of where areas for further in-depth investigation might lie, rather than assessing the 'truth' of pre-conceived ideas and theories about the nature of the groups and any possible 'differences' between them. Overall, this approach fitted into Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view that there is no reason why qualitative researchers cannot use quantitative data: the central issue for consideration is what is being used and what claims about the knowledge generated are made. They suggested that purposive sampling and an emergent design (in contrast to attempting 'unbiased' research through obtaining a representative sample and objective methods designed to uncover underlying truths) could be used as part of an overall relativist epistemology, exactly as has been adopted here.

Once the initial analysis based on the prepared plan was completed, results were considered and further areas for exploration were identified. A supplementary analysis plan was then developed and this can be seen in Appendix 4. Further analysis of the data using this additional plan was also conducted using SPSS 21.

Results from both sets of analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Insights into first-year student views: findings from Stage 1

5.1 Introduction

As explained in the previous chapter, Stage 1 of this longitudinal study was carried out using a questionnaire designed to explore students' opinions of their skills and characteristics in a work role on entry to university, and to give some insights into how they thought these might develop over time. This chapter sets out the findings from that stage of work and explains how these were used to identify areas for further exploration in Stages 2 and 3. As the research was exploratory in nature, detailed theories about the respondents' opinions were not set out in advance of work commencing: instead, broad areas to investigate were set out and further hypotheses were developed in the course of the analysis. Details of these areas can be seen in the initial analysis plan presented in Appendix 3. Additional hypotheses added as the work progressed are given in Appendix 4.

This chapter provides an overview of the results from the analysis of the questionnaire data, and identifies the key points that were taken forward into Stages 2 and 3 of the study. Where necessary, subscripts have been used to identify the institution (A = University A, B = University B) or programme of study (MP=maths/physics, B=business, J=journalism, PL=politics, PH=physiotherapy, S=social work) of the groups. The first stage of data collection was intended to answer specific Research Question 1. Objectives for this specific stage of the work were:

- to establish a basis for further parts of the research study by exploring students' perceptions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university;
- to collect demographic and work-experience information from students in areas which may influence their construal of themselves in the work role;
- to investigate differences in these demographic factors and in pre-entry experience of work between student groups from a variety of programmes and from two different institutions (University A and University B);
- to recruit volunteers for later stages of the study.

5.2 Demographic profile of the respondents

Analysis of the data commenced with the preparation of some basic descriptive statistics, tables and graphs. In the interests of brevity these are not presented in full here. However, some key areas are highlighted in order to explore the demographics of the participant group and to begin to explore possible diversity between participants from the two institutions and the various programmes.

The 172 usable records obtained from the survey consisted of 98 from University A and 74 from University B. The number of responses from each programme is given in Table 5.1 together with a breakdown of enrolments in academic year 2013/2014 based on HESA data to allow for comparison between the sample and the population profile. The mathematics and physics respondents have been grouped together for this

analysis since they were selected as a single group of participants rather than as having separate programme profiles:

Table 5.1

Number and percentage (%) of respondents (including partial responses) by programme and institution

	University A		University B		Total	
	Responses	% responses (% enrolled)	Responses	% responses (% enrolled)	Responses	% responses (% enrolled)
Maths/ Physics	20	20% (6%)	0	0% (2%)	20	12% (4%)
Business Mgmt.	33	34% (69%)	21	28% (64%)	54	31% (67%)
Journalism	12	12% (4%)	9	12% (6%)	21	12% (5%)
Politics	0	0% (2%)	5	7% (1%)	5	3% (2%)
Physiotherapy	0	0% (3%)	13	18% (9%)	13	8% (6%)
Social Work	33	34% (16%)	26	35% (16%)	59	34% (16%)
Total	98	100%	74	100%	172	100%

Note. % enrolled figures are the percentage of full-time undergraduate students shown as enrolled on the respective programmes in 2014 by HESA. Source https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study

As can be seen, the proportional responses from each programme were not entirely representative of the overall undergraduate full-time student populations at each university with business students generally being under-represented and social work over-represented in the sample. This observation is merely noted: since the analysis did not seek to make positivist claims to knowledge, generalisable to the entire population, this was not an issue of concern for the study. However, it may be of interest to anyone wishing to assess the relevance of the conclusions drawn to a different environment, for example to a different university.

As Table 5.2 shows, there were also considerably more female respondents to the survey than males and this is another area where the sample profile differed to that of the overall population. While more female undergraduates were recruited by both institutions in the 2013/2014 academic year (around 55% female to 45% male) (UCAS, 2015) the proportion of females in the sample is much higher than this. However, again, due to the claims about knowledge generation being made in this thesis this was not an area of significant concern which needed to be addressed.

In order to examine the relationship between university and gender a chi-squared test for association was considered first. This is valid only if a maximum of 20% of expected counts are less than five (Field, 2013). However Table 5.2 had two cells (33.3%) which failed to meet this threshold when subjected to the procedure. The single 'prefer not to answer' respondent was, therefore, excluded from the data in order to avoid invalidating the test. Since this, in turn, made the table into a 2x2 matrix Fisher's exact test was used. This suggested that the proportions answering from each of the institutions in the sample were similar (p = .202).

Table 5.2

Responses and percentage (%) responses (including partial responses) by gender and institution

	University A		University B		Total	
	Responses	% responses (% recruited)	Responses	% responses (% recruited)	Responses	% responses (% recruited)
Male	41	42% (46%)	23	31% (45%)	64	37% (45%)
Female	57	58% (54%)	50	68% (55%)	107	62% (55%)
Prefer not to answer	0	0% (-)	1	1% (-)	1	1% (-)
Total	98	100%	74	100%	172	100%

Note. Percentage (%) recruited figures are the percentage of full-time undergraduate students who were placed at each institution in academic year 2013/14 according to UCAS. Source https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-reports-sex-area-background-and-ethnic-group/2015-entry-ucas-undergraduate-reports-sex-area-background-and-ethnic-group

Most respondents were from the UK, regardless of institution or programme of study, and the profile of responses broadly fitted the overall institutional distributions:

Table 5.3

Nationality and percentage (%) of respondents (including partial responses) by institution

	University A		University B		Total
	Responses	% responses (% enrolled)	Responses	% responses (% enrolled)	Responses
UK	88	90% (89%)	63	85% (86%)	151
EU	3	3% (2%)	4	5% (5%)	7
International outside the EU	6	6% (9%)	6	8% (9%)	12
Unanswered	1	1%	1	1%	2
Total	98	100%	74	100%	172

Note. Percentage (%) enrolled figures are the percentage of full-time undergraduate students at each university by domicile in academic year 2013/2014 according to HESA. Source https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he

Table 5.4

Nationality of respondents by programme of study

	Maths/ Physics		Business Mgmt.		Journalism		Politics		Ph'therapy		Social Work		Total
UK	19	95%	38	70%	19	90%	5	100%	13	100%	57	97%	151
EU	0	0%	4	7%	2	10%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	7
International outside the EU	1	5%	10	19%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	12
Unanswered	0	0%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2
Total	20		54		21		5		13		59		172

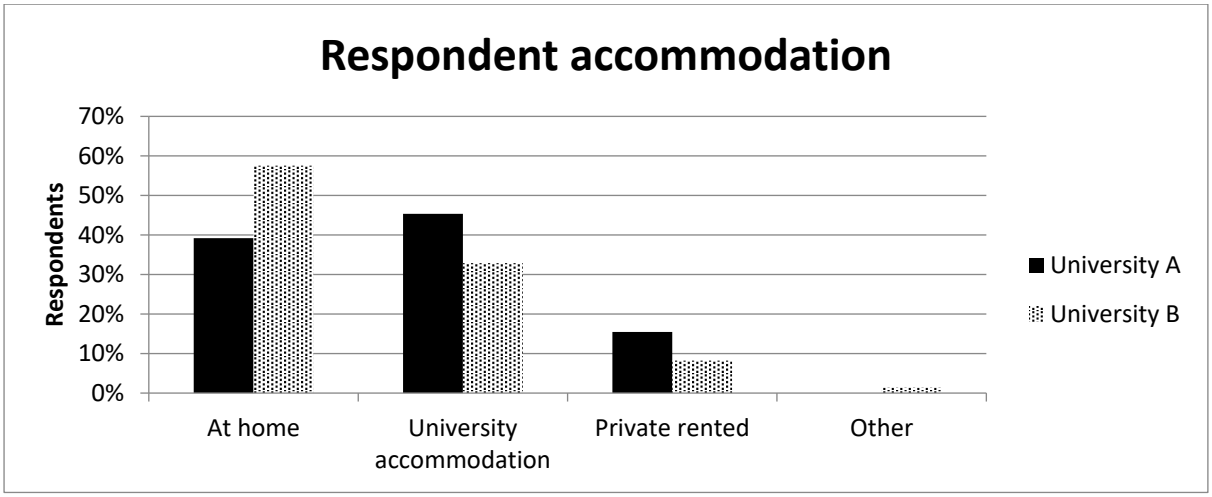
The small group sizes seen here again caused issues with expected values for chi-squared tests. Excluding those who chose not to answer the question, Table 5.3 had 33.3% (two cells) with expected value less than five while in Table 5.4 it was 72.2% (13 cells).

Testing was therefore carried out by combining all International respondents (EU and non-EU) into a single category. The number of programme categories was also reduced to two (social work and all others). Fisher's exact test for the resulting 2x2 matrices then showed that the two Institutional profiles were similar (p = .462), however the programme of study (social work or not) was significantly associated with Nationality (p = .021). From consideration of the expected values, it appeared that social work respondents were more likely to be from the UK than respondents from the other programmes examined.

It also appeared that participants from the two universities were similar in other ways. Results of comparisons between the two university groups, with groups again combined for testing in some cases to avoid small expected values, showed that regardless of institution most students identified as:

- coming straight from other study, with χ^2 (2, N=172)=3.961, p = .138;
- having variable amounts of relevant work experience, with χ^2 (3, N=172)=5.877, p = .118;
- knowing that WIL opportunities existed on their programme of study. Collapsing groups into a 2x2 matrix here still resulted in small expected values, with 25% (1 cell) having an expected count less than five. It was therefore necessary to use Yates's correction to Fisher's exact test, with χ^2 (1, N=170) = .020, p = .888;
- living at home or in university accommodation. For this test it was necessary to reclassify the single 'other' result as 'university accommodation' to avoid violating the test conditions in relation to small expected values. This was clearly acceptable from the textual answer given, resulting in χ^2 (2, N=170)=6.021, p = .049 making this the only case where there was a significant difference between the two groups. Examination of Figure 5.1 suggested that participants from University B were perhaps slightly more likely to live at home while University A respondents were more likely to be in university or private rented accommodation.

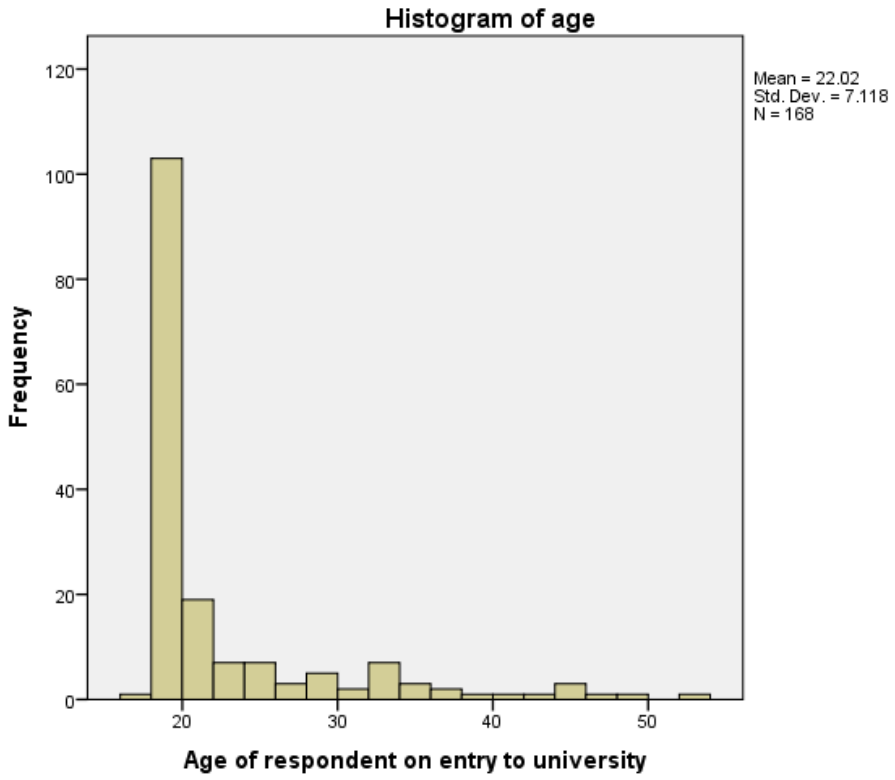
Figure 5.1
Respondent accommodation



Looking at further differences in the same areas by programme of study was problematic due to the small sample sizes, which invalidated the chi-squared test results in a number of cases. To avoid this, the six programmes were collapsed into two groups: one containing the social work respondents and the second containing everyone else (as was done for the test of association with Nationality described previously) as it was thought that the biggest differences would be between these two groups given their very different WIL models. Results show that social work respondents:

- had significantly different status before entry to that of other participants, χ^2 (2, *N*=172)=17.231, *p*< .001. It seemed that social work respondents were less likely to have come to university from another period of full-time study;
- were more likely to identify themselves as having a lot of relevant work experience before entry, χ^2 (3, *N*=172)=27.805, *p*< .001;
- were no different to other respondents in their awareness of WIL on their programme of study, with Yates's correction used as this is a 2x2 table with small expected values χ^2 (1, *N*=170) = .043, *p* = .835;
- were more likely to live at home than other groups of respondents, who were more likely to be in University accommodation, χ^2 (2, *N*=170)=43.336, *p*< .001.

Figure 5.2
Age of respondents



Note. This graph appears in a different style to the others because it has been produced in SPSS rather than Excel. This is due to Excel's inability to create a true histogram.

The overall mean age of respondents from University A (M_A=21.7, SD_A=6.496, n_A=96) was not significantly different to that for University B respondents (M_B=22.44, SD_B=7.899, n_B=72); $t(166) = .672$, $p = .503$, two-tailed.

However, when the average ages of students by programme of study were examined, significant differences were found. Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that Normality could not be assumed in all cases (maths/physics *S-W* = .634, *df*=19, *p*< .001; business *S-W* = .560, *df*=51, *p*< .001; journalism *S-W* = .553, *df*=21, *p*< .001; politics *S-W*=0.833, *df*=5, *p* = .146; physiotherapy *S-W* = .538, *df*=13, *p*< .001; social work *S-W*=0.866, *df*=59, *p*< .001) and the majority of sample sizes were small therefore an independent samples Kruskall-Wallis test was employed. This showed a significant result (*H*=50.692, *df*=5, *p*< .001), indicating that the age of respondents on entry to university differed across the programmes examined.

Further post-hoc pairwise analyses showed significant differences between maths/physics and social work (*p*< .001); journalism and social work (*p*< .001); business and social work (*p*< .001) and physiotherapy and social work (*p* = .005, one-tailed) respondents. The only group not to be significantly younger than the social work respondents were the politics group (*p* = .355, one-tailed). Median ages of the groups (on which the Kruskall-Wallis test was based) can be seen in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5
Median age of respondents by programme

	Median	*N*
Maths/Physics	18	19
Business Management	18	51
Journalism	18	21
Physiotherapy	18	13
Politics	19	5
Social Work	24	59

Table 5.6
Gender of respondents by programme

	Male		Female		Prefer not to answer		Total
Maths/Physics	11	55%	9	45%	0	0%	20
Business Management	26	48%	28	52%	0	0%	54
Journalism	10	48%	10	48%	1	2%	21
Politics	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	5
Physiotherapy	5	38%	8	62%	0	0%	13
Social Work	8	14%	51	86%	0	0%	59
Total	64	37%	107	62%	1	1%	172

The hypothesis that programme of study was related to gender was formally tested (Hypothesis 185 in the analysis plan). A chi-squared test excluding the single respondent who preferred not to answer the question and the five politics respondents (to avoid invalidating the test with small expected values) showed that the gender split was significantly different across the remaining programmes χ^2 (4, N=166)=21.185, p< .001. It would seem that significantly more females than expected (in a statistical sense) were found in social work than in the other programmes.

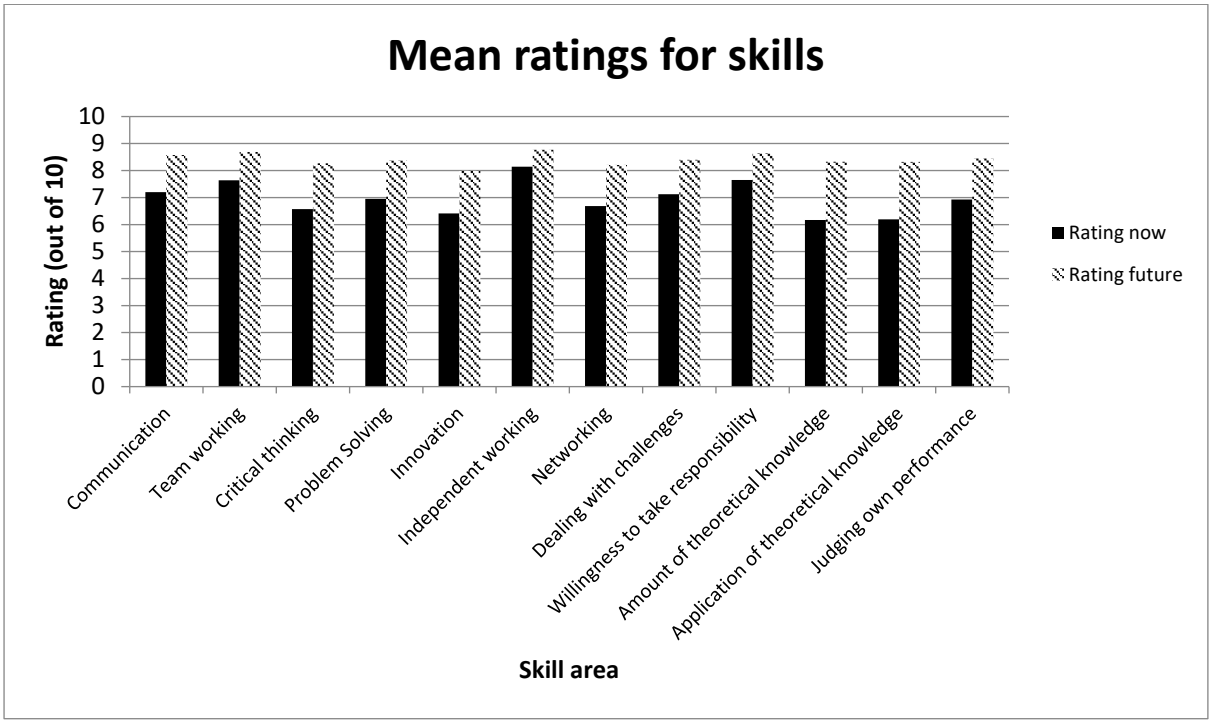
5.3 Current perceptions of skills and characteristics

5.3.1 Comparison of University A and University B respondents

Hypotheses 17 to 37 in the analysis plan (Appendix 3) were designed to examine whether respondents' current perceptions of their skills and characteristics differed by institution. In each of these tests the sample sizes were large enough (minimum N_A=90 and N_B=65) to allow Normality in the data to be assumed using the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) so two independent sample t-tests were carried out to compare the results from each university.

Results for Hypotheses 17 to 28, testing differences in the perceived skills of respondents at each university, are given in Appendix 5. The only area where a significant difference in these areas was identified was in the perception of skills in independent working (Hypothesis 22), where University B respondents rated themselves more highly than those from University A. The overall levels that respondents rated themselves at is also notable: this was a 10 point scale, yet every mean was well above the central point suggesting most respondents already felt their skills were good. Figure 5.3 illustrates the current overall rating of these skills from the entire group, and compares it to their expected future performance (this was also done more formally in tests for Hypotheses 59 to 70, discussed later). This provided a valuable starting point to see how participants construed their initial skills when looking back at these results in the later stages of data collection.

Figure 5.3
Comparison of current/future expected ratings of skills



Looking at the possibility that perceptions of characteristics might differ by institution (Appendix 5, Hypotheses 29 to 37) there was again only one area where a significant difference was apparent between respondents from the two universities. It seemed that career decidedness was lower at University A than at University B although it was not clear why that should be the only area where the two groups differed and, if anything, it was perhaps slightly surprising that this was the one that stood out. The literature might suggest a link between this area and other factors such as confidence. It is, therefore, somewhat surprising that associated differences do not also appear in these areas. However, while the University B respondents did seem to rate themselves more positively on areas such as confidence and self-belief as well the differences were not significant, so perhaps a combination of smaller factors contributed to the overall significant result. This illustrated the desirability for follow up stages of the study to be conducted by qualitative methods rather

than a further questionnaire, as there were some results here which required further input from the participants in order to determine 'why' they felt as they did about the area and what was influencing their feelings, as well as simple ratings.

A further point to note is that respondents seem to have been far more willing in these questions to rate themselves lower, with the mean results tending to cluster around the mid-point of the scale. This contrasted with the higher values obtained for the earlier questions. This could have influenced by the use of bipolar options and the request for respondents to position themselves between the extremes in these areas, rather than on a 'low to high' scale such as that used in previous questions. While this is merely an observation about the results, it did suggest that the elicitation of bipolar constructs in the later data collection might be valuable in helping lead to more reflective responses from participants.

5.3.2 Comparison by programme

The next set of hypotheses (38 to 49 and 50 to 58) looked at the same skills and characteristics by programme of study. Six programme groups were used: maths/physics; business; journalism; social work; physiotherapy; politics. In many cases this analysis was complicated by the small sample sizes which necessitated the use of tests of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk) to establish whether an ANOVA test could be used or whether the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was required. In each case in Appendix 5 the results from whichever test was appropriate to the particular sample (ANOVA or Kruskal-Wallis) is reported.

The areas where significant differences in perceptions of skills among respondents on the different programmes were found were in critical thinking, problem solving, current amount of theoretical knowledge, ability to apply theoretical knowledge and ability to judge own performance. Comparisons using the Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed significant differences in ratings of critical thinking between social work (M_S=5.853, SD_S=1.7271) and maths/physics (M_{MP}=7.532, SD_{MP}=1.4863), and social work and journalism (M_J=7.474, SD_J=1.2036). It is notable that the social work respondents rated themselves lower on this area (i.e. their perception of their skills was lower) than the other groups. This observation of lower self-ratings by social work respondents was also present in the question of problem solving skills. In this case, pairwise comparisons following the significant Kruskal-Wallis result ($H(5)=17.592$, $p = .004$) showed a significant difference between business and maths/physics respondents ($p = .004$) and social work and maths/physics ($p = .020$). It was perhaps unsurprising that the maths/physics respondents saw themselves as strongest in this area as it may be seen by them as more integral to their programme of study, however it is again notable that the social work respondents rated themselves lower than most other groups (in this case, the business respondents gave themselves the lowest mean rating).

Current levels of theoretical knowledge were rated differently by social work and business respondents ($p = .015$) and social work and maths/physics respondents ($p = .005$). Again, it appeared that the social work respondents rated themselves lower than the other groups in the study and, in general, it seemed that respondents on the more vocational programmes (social work, physiotherapy) rated themselves lowest in this

area. Perhaps they saw their study and skills as being more practice based than theoretical. This suggestion was supported by the results from the question on application of theoretical knowledge, where the significant differences were between social work and business respondents (p = .005) and social work and journalism respondents (p = .017). Social work and physiotherapy respondents again rated themselves lowest of the groups included.

In the final area in this section ('Judging own performance'), the Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed that there were significant differences between business (M_B=7.029, SD_B=1.3736) and social work (M_S=6.478, SD_S=1.7012), and journalism (M_J=7.794, SD_J=1.3549) and social work. Again, the social work respondents rated themselves lowest of the six groups for this skill.

Moving on to look at potential differences in views of characteristics by programme (Hypotheses 50 to 58), the only significant result in this set was in career decidedness: the original question asked how sure respondents were about the future job role they would take up on graduation. Perhaps not surprisingly, the significant differences were between physiotherapy and business respondents (p = .038), physiotherapy and maths/physics respondents (p = .001), and social work and maths/physics (p = .005) suggesting that respondents on more vocational degree programmes had a clearer job role in mind for themselves at this point (the start of their degree study). This is also evident from the mean scores. In the question scale from one to seven, a lower score represented more certainty: it is clear that the respondents who felt most sure about their future career were the physiotherapy group (M_{PH}=2.154, SD_{PH}=1.144), followed by social work (M_S=3.000, SD_S=1.539), journalism (M_J=3.833, SD_J=1.618), then business (M_B=3.979, SD_B=2.078). Maths/physics (M_{MP}=5.000, SD_{MP}=1.972) and politics (M_{PL}=5.000, SD_{PL}=2.828) were the least certain.

5.4 Perceptions of expected changes in skills and characteristics

5.4.1 Anticipated improvements over time

Tests of Hypotheses 59 to 79 examined the differences between respondents' ratings of skills and characteristics as they were at the point of data collection and as they expected them to be on graduation. Paired t-tests were used to make comparisons as the sample sizes were large enough to allow the CLT to be employed and Normality to be assumed. Detailed results are in Appendix 5.

Every test result was highly significant ($p < 0.001$) meaning that, in general, the participants expected their skills and characteristics in every area to improve significantly by graduation (even in cases where they already rated themselves highly on the scales). The areas showing the highest increases (highest mean difference and also highest t-values) were communication, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, networking, amount of theoretical knowledge, application of theoretical knowledge and judging own performance ($|t|>10$ in each case).

5.4.2 Influence of age on expectations of improvement over time

The next set of Hypotheses (80 to 121, see Appendix 5) asked whether there was a relationship between age and the rating of skills/characteristics both now and as they were expected to be on graduation.

Significant correlations were found between age and:

- critical thinking now ($r(150) = -0.166$, $p = 0.040$);
- theoretical knowledge now ($r(151) = -0.168$, $p = 0.038$);
- career decidedness now ($r(149) = -0.235$, $p = 0.038$);
- willingness to ask for help now ($r(150) = -0.296$, $p < 0.001$);
- willingness to ask for help in the future ($r(141) = -0.210$, $p = 0.012$).

Two things were immediately notable about these results. Firstly, all of the significant correlations were negative suggesting that the older participants actually rated themselves as being worse in these areas than the younger ones did. Secondly, only one 'future' area showed a significant correlation suggesting that the vast majority of future perceptions were not affected by age, even if the rating of current skills was different.

5.5 Other possible influences on ratings of current skills: status before entry and prior work experience

Test for Hypotheses 122 to 142 looked at whether respondents' ratings of their current skills differed according to their status before entry (either studying full time, in employment, unemployed, travelling, taking a break or other). Shapiro-Wilk tests of Normality were applied and in each case a decision was made on whether to use an ANOVA or Kruskal-Wallis test, as appropriate. Full results are in Appendix 5.

There were four significant results found in this set. 'Level of theoretical knowledge' gave a significant ANOVA result, however post-hoc testing showed no significant pairwise differences. There was also a significant difference apparent in 'ability to apply theoretical knowledge' where the Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed a significant difference between participants who were studying full time (SFT) (M_{SFT}=6.405, SD_{SFT}=2.0448) and those in the 'other' (O) category (M_O=4.480, SD_O=2.6511). Respondents identifying as 'other' gave a variety of backgrounds with the majority overlapping between groups e.g. college full time and also working. There was little to suggest any links between the members of the 'other' group that might have assisted in interpreting this result. 'Confidence' and 'decisiveness' also showed significant differences. In 'confidence' it was again the groups who were studying full time (M_{SFT}=3.144, SD_{SFT}=1.3338) and those in the 'other' category (M_O=2.000, SD_O=0.9428) who showed pairwise differences, with the means suggesting the 'other' group expected to feel more confident in a work situation than those who had come to university straight from other full time study. For 'decisiveness' no significant pairwise differences were found making it difficult to draw conclusions about this area.

The final set of hypotheses outlined in the analysis plan, 143 to 163, looked at the skill areas to identify whether previous work experience (specifically the question of how much work experience relevant to their

programme of study the respondents thought they already had) might have an effect on opinions. In all cases, ANOVA tests were used as sample sizes allowed the CLT to be applied. Results can be found in Appendix 5.

The only significant result here was found in 'willingness to ask for help' where the Tukey HSD post-hoc test showed significant differences between those who identified themselves as having no relevant previous work experience (M_{None}=3.833, SD_{None}=1.9370) and those saying they had a lot (M_{Lot}=2.743, SD_{Lot}=1.8525). Overall, therefore, it was difficult to draw clear conclusions about whether a respondent's circumstances before entry or their prior work experience had a significant effect on their opinions of their work-related skills.

5.6 Additional analysis

After the initial analysis reported above had been completed, two further questions were raised for exploration. Firstly, it seemed possible that some of the differences observed could have been due to underlying variation in the opinions of UK and international respondents in the sample influencing the results. The majority of international respondents in the sample came from business programmes: 74% (14 out of 19) international respondents were studying business, while 26% (14 out of 54) business respondents classified themselves as either from the EU or as being international outside the EU. Numbers on the other programmes were much smaller, with the closest proportion to the business sample being in journalism where 2 out of 21 respondents (10%) were from the EU. This disparity raised the possibility that the differences identified between business and other programme groups might in fact be due to differences in the make up of the student cohorts, rather than being about the programme of study.

Secondly, a question was raised by the clear differences in profile of the social work respondents in comparison to the other programme groups: could the differences seen in this group's perceptions of their skills actually have been due to underlying factors such as status before entry (social work respondents were less likely to have come straight from another full-time education course), work experience (they said they had more relevant work experience than other respondents), age (they were older), or gender (there were more females in the social work group)? Further tests were conducted to address these questions, and a supplementary analysis plan developed. The additional hypotheses developed are shown in Appendix 4 and the results of the tests are in Appendix 5.

5.6.1 Comparison of International and UK respondents

Significant differences identified in previous testing by programme (Section 5.3.2) suggested that business respondents rated themselves significantly lower than maths/physics respondents on problem solving skills and significantly higher than social work respondents in current amount of theoretical knowledge, application of theoretical knowledge and judging their own performance. They also had a relatively low level of career decidedness, although the only significant difference observed here was with the physiotherapy respondents.

In order to explore whether the nationality of the participants might be influencing these results, Mann-Whitney U tests were carried out to determine whether there were significant differences in the perceptions

of UK and International respondents: for the purposes of these tests, the two groups EU and International outside the EU were treated as a single set of respondents.

The only area where a significant difference was apparent in the results of these tests was in team working, where International respondents (Mdn_{INT}=7) appeared to rate themselves lower than UK respondents (Mdn_{UK}=8), U = 714.5, p = .001, r = .02. There was no overlap with the significant differences identified between the business respondents and groups from other programmes, suggesting that these were not being influenced by the more diverse national profile of these respondents. The conclusion that there is some form of variation by programme of study therefore stands.

5.6.2 Gender as a possible explanatory factor for differences in the programme groups

As shown in Table 5.6 and the associated discussion, there was an apparent difference in the genders of participants from the various programmes of study, with social work respondents considerably more likely to be female than respondents from other programmes. Independent sample t-tests were therefore carried out to compare the ratings of males and females in the various skills and characteristics (Hypotheses 186 to 206). The single 'prefer not to answer' respondent was excluded from these tests. Results are in Appendix 5.

Differences by gender were found in current opinions of critical thinking (t(153) = 3.356, p = 0.001), problem solving (t(154) = 2.521, p = 0.013), innovation (t(154) = 2.132, p = 0.035), adaptability (t(153) = -2.112, p = 0.036), self-belief (t(153) = -2.320, p = 0.022), and decisiveness (t(137) = -2.190, p = 0.030). Males rated themselves higher in critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation while females rated themselves higher in adaptability, self-belief, and decisiveness. This makes it difficult to reach a single conclusion about the impact of gender on opinions of skills and characteristics, although it can clearly be said to have some effect. However, it would not appear to be sufficient to explain all of the differences seen between the social work respondents and the participants from other programmes.

5.7 Summary of findings and points to take forward

5.7.1 Conclusions from the analysis

Demographic analysis of the questionnaire data showed that participants from University A and University B appeared to be relatively similar in terms of gender, nationality, previous work experience, knowledge about WIL opportunities, and age. This suggested that for the purposes of this research the two institutions could be treated as a homogenous group.

There appeared to be little difference in opinions of current skills between University A and University B respondents, and also between the UK and International respondents in the sample. However, when programme of study was examined, it seemed that the social work participants held 'different' opinions to other respondents. This could have been partly because they were older on average and were also more likely to say they had relevant previous work experience on entry. There were also proportionally more females in the social work group than in the groups from other programmes. Significant correlations were found

between age and rating of several skills and characteristics, and it was notable that where this was identified it was because older participants gave themselves lower ratings. Gender also seemed to be a significant factor leading to differences in opinions about personal skills and characteristics at work.

Table 5.7 summarises the conclusions from the various tests conducted, setting out where significant differences in opinions of current skills were identified and possible factors that could impact on these.

Overall, what this summary table shows is a complex picture suggesting that a combination of factors contributed to the respondents' perceptions of their current skills. Differences by age in areas such as perceptions of critical thinking and theoretical knowledge could be because these were more recent and immediate for younger respondents (who rated themselves more highly), or they could be linked to confidence and maturity. This illustrated the need for Stages 2 and 3 of the research to be qualitative in nature, to allow in-depth exploration of some of the areas emerging from the questionnaire with individual participants and, more importantly, to explore how and why opinions of skills in these areas change through experience.

Table 5.7
Summary of differences identified in skills and characteristics

Skill/characteristic	Social Work different to other programmes?	Difference by previous work experience?	Correlated with age?	Difference by gender?	Difference by status before entry?
Critical thinking	Yes – lower	No	Yes – negative	Yes – males higher	No
Problem solving	Yes – lower	No	No	Yes – males higher	No
Innovation	No	No	No	Yes – males higher	No
Level of theoretical knowledge	Yes - lower	No	Yes – negative	No	Yes – further tests inconclusive but employed perhaps lower
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge	No	No	No	No	Yes – between those studying full time before entry and those in the 'other' group
Judging own performance	Yes - lower	No	No	No	No
Confidence	No	No	No	No	Yes – between those studying full time before entry and those in the 'other' group
Adaptability	No	No	No	Yes – females higher	No
Career decidedness	Yes - higher	No	Yes - negative	No	No
Willingness to ask for help	No	Yes – more experience means more willing	Yes - negative	No	No
Self-belief	No	No	No	Yes – females higher	No
Decisiveness	No	No	No	Yes – females higher	Yes – further tests inconclusive but employed perhaps higher

Finally, in terms of test results, when participants were asked about how they thought things would change in the future, they generally expected their skills to improve by the time they graduated with significant positive differences present in all 21 areas examined. The largest increases came in theoretical knowledge, its application, critical thinking, and communication.

5.7.2 Points informing stages 2 and 3 of the study

Conclusions from Stage 1 of the research, presented here, offered two main areas which were used to inform the research design of Stages 2 and 3. Firstly, the survey results were used to inform the sampling strategy for the qualitative research (outlined in detail in the next chapter) as they illustrated some of the ways in which self-perceptions within the participant groups might have been similar and different. This in turn indicated possible areas where diversity in the sample was desirable. For example, it was established that respondents from the two universities were broadly similar in outlook however respondents from different programmes of study (and particularly respondents from social work compared to the other groups) seemed to rate their skills very differently. It was, therefore, more important to ensure social work respondents were represented in Stages 2 and 3 than to focus on which university a participant studied at when the sample composition was under consideration.

Secondly, the discussion of the results from the preliminary phase of analysis raised questions related to gaining understanding of the participants' views. In particular, questions emerged about the complexity of factors interacting to influence participants' views of themselves in a work role which are far better suited to in-depth exploration through qualitative rather than quantitative methods. For example, in general participants seemed to expect that their skills would improve over time: Stages 2 and 3 of the work offered an opportunity to explore participants' views of whether this actually happened in practice.

Chapter 6: Research design and methods used to explore students' opinions in second and final year (Stage 2 and 3 data collection)

In this chapter, the research design and methods used to generate data and answer the research questions set out for Stages 2 and 3 will be described. These followed from the initial aims of the study and were also informed by the outcomes of Stage 1 (detailed in Chapter 5), particularly in the sampling strategy employed.

6.1 Recruitment, sampling strategy, and participants

6.1.1 Stage 2

Analysis of the quantitative data from Stage 1 was used to inform the recruitment and sampling strategy for Stages 2 and 3, the qualitative work. In particular, the findings of the quantitative analysis (Chapter 5) indicated possible areas where diversity in the sample might be desirable. For example, it was established that students from the two universities seemed broadly similar in outlook. However, respondents from different programmes of study (and particularly students from social work compared to the other groups) appeared to see their skills in quite different ways. It was, therefore, more important to ensure social work students were adequately represented alongside the other groups than to focus on which university a participant studied at, in order to allow deeper exploration of possible different influences and viewpoints.

Seventy-eight volunteers (45% of the 172 questionnaire respondents) expressed an interest in taking part in the follow up work and supplied their names and email addresses as part of the survey data collected in Stage 1. I aimed to recruit 15 participants for Stage 2 (second year), with the hope that a minimum of 10 of these would continue to Stage 3 (final year). I felt that these numbers would allow for suitable diversity (different ages, programmes of study, modes of WIL experienced, for example) while remaining manageable, given that the planned data collection for Stages 2 and 3 consisted of gathering four separate items from each participant (a self-characterisation sketch and an interview, at two time points), to add to their questionnaire from Stage 1. If the number reduced from Stage 2 to Stage 3, as seemed likely, I also thought that an initial sample of 15 would allow for some natural dropout without unduly damaging the research. Clearly, however, this meant there was a need for some selection from the group of 78 volunteers. I considered two possible strategies for this: either researcher-selection (looking at the group of 78 and choosing a sub-set to target) or self-selection (contacting all 78 and then basing a decision on who to include once the follow up response rate was known). Given the likelihood that a number of questionnaire respondents may not have been able or willing to conduct further research as they had volunteered almost a year before this second contact was made I decided to proceed by contacting all 78 volunteers. The entire group were therefore emailed towards the end of their second year of study at a point where they were likely to be coming to the end of any assessment required for their programmes. This should have given the best chance of positive responses, given that the students would still have been 'on campus' but hopefully with more time available to participate. Three recruitment emails were sent to the entire group, one invitation and two follow-up reminders, over a period of about 6 weeks in April and May 2015. From this invitation process 18 potential interviewees came forward in total. Rather than sampling from this group, attempts were made to arrange interviews with all 18 of the volunteers,

expecting that not all would be able to participate. This proved to be the case, and 13 interviews finally took place in May and June 2015.

Alongside this recruitment process, I piloted the methods to be used with two volunteers who had trialled the questionnaire in Stage 1. Since no significant changes were made to the methods after this pilot, data from the two additional participants was added to the set of 13. The sample constitution in the final group of 15 participants taken forward for analysis therefore was:

Table 6.1
Participants in Stage 2 (overview)

	Business Management	Social Work	Journalism	Total
University A	4	5	1	10
University B	2	2	1	5
Total	6	7	2	15

Some of the groups included in Stage 1 were not represented here (politics, mathematics/physics and physiotherapy students were all missing). However, my aim to ensure diversity in the sample seemed to be achieved. In particular, the three different types of Work Integrated Learning categorised at the very beginning of the study were included here. Social work students had multiple placements strongly embedded in their programme of study (Type 1); journalism students had little or no formal placement embedded within their curriculum (Type 2); business students undertook an (optional) sandwich placement (Type 3). Since the social work students were identified as being the most 'different' group from the others in the results from Stage 1 one of the most desirable characteristics to explore was also represented in the sample. Table 6.3 (given later) includes more detail about each individual participant.

6.1.2 Stage 3

The strategy for Stage 3 recruitment was very similar to that for Stage 2, with an initial email inviting further participation followed by two reminders sent to the group of 15 participants. As explained in Chapter 4, where I provided an overview of the full research process, this happened either at the end of their third year of study (if they were undertaking a three-year programme) or close to the beginning of fourth year (if they had done a sandwich placement and were therefore on a four-year programme). Attempts were made to maintain relationships and to encourage the Stage 2 participants to stay engaged with the study in the time between the two rounds of qualitative data collection. An ideal opportunity was when interview transcripts were returned to them for review, at which point I updated them in very general terms about what was planned for the analysis of the data and reminded them that I would really like to speak to them again (with time frame). This received positive responses from a number of the participants. Table 6.2 shows the composition of the group who participated in Stage 3. Figures in brackets are the changes from Stage 2 (an indication of those who did not continue in the study):

Table 6.2
Participants in Stage 3 (overview)

	Social Work - three year programme	Journalism - three year programme	Business Management without placement - three year programme	Business Management with placement - four year programme	Total
University A	3 (-2)	0 (-1)	1 (0)	3 (0)	7 (-3)
University B	1 (-1)	1 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	4 (-1)
Total	4 (-3)	1 (-1)	1 (0)	5 (0)	11 (-4)

Only one of the four participants who did not continue in the research was completely uncontactable at this third stage of the data collection. Another participant had changed programme and a third had experienced an interruption to studies due to medical issues. Both of these participants were still invited to share experiences but declined to do so. The fourth participant arranged to be interviewed but then failed to attend the agreed appointment or to respond to subsequent communications. While it would have been ideal to capture even more of the disparate experience and views on potential impact that this sub-group of participants will have experienced, it was of course essential to balance this with a duty of care and respect for their rights not to be involved further. What is crucial is that the set of 11 final participants who were followed from first year right through to graduation in this study represent a cross-section of experiences of WIL. While this is a relatively small sample size, it should also be remembered that several pieces of data were collected from each of them allowing a multi-faceted picture of their self-perceptions to be constructed. Table 6.3 gives the profile of each participant in Stages 2 and 3.

Table 6.3
Participants (detailed profiles)

Participant (pseudonym)	Mature student (over 21 at the start of the programme)?	Relevant previous work experience	Status before entry	Programme	University	Gender	Continued to Stage 3?
Abby	N	Some	Studying part time and working	Social Work	A	Female	N
Amira	N	None	Studying full time	Journalism	A	Female	N
Anna	N	A lot	Studying full time	Business Management	B	Female	Y
Chloe	N	A little	Studying full time	Business Management	A	Female	Y
Connor	Y	A lot	In employment	Social Work	A	Male	Y
Gill	Y	Some	In employment	Social Work	A	Female	N
Harry	N	Some	Studying full time	Business Management	A	Male	Y
Jack	N	None	Studying full time	Business Management	A	Male	Y
Jenny	N	A lot	Employed then travelling	Business Management	A	Female	Y
Katie	N	Some	Studying full time	Social Work	A	Female	Y
Rosie	Y	A little	Studying full time	Journalism	B	Female	Y
Tom	Y	A lot	Studying full time	Social Work	B	Male	N
Tori	N	None	Studying full time	Business Management	B	Female	Y
Will	Y	A lot	In employment	Social Work	A	Male	Y
Zara	N	A little	Studying full time	Social Work	B	Female	Y

Note. 'Relevant previous work experience' and 'Status before entry' were self-identified on the questionnaire

6.2 Choice of methods

Following from my philosophical views about knowledge generation and my desire to gain insights into any changing construal of self experienced by my participants through WIL as I expressed them in Chapter 3, and the need for more understanding of why participants felt the way they did about the skills and characteristics that may be developed through WIL, I decided to draw on methods based in Personal Construct Theory (PCT) alongside semi-structured interviews for data collection in Stages 2 and 3. While interviews alone could have provided a suitable method for acquiring current constructions of the self and opinions about how such constructions are likely to be in the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) I felt that the diverse methods offered by PCT could add depth and richness to my understanding. PCT methods also offered the advantage of prioritising the 'voice' of participants, with meanings negotiated and agreed between researcher and participant as part of the process of data collection (Burr et al., 2017). Given the knowledge gap identified in Chapter 2 about the lack of student voice in much of the existing published work around the impact of WIL I felt this was an important point for my research methods to address.

6.2.1 Self-characterisation sketches

The first data gathered from participants came through an invitation to complete a self-characterisation sketch. These were developed by Kelly (1955/1991) and involve producing a short, individual description of the self. The principle is that by writing in the third person and following very specific instructions to write like "a friend who knew him very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone else could ever know him" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p242) the respondent is invited to be more open and reflective than they might be otherwise. The aim is that:

> The resultant sketch will reveal, in part, the participant's truth, her story. We are not in the business of content analysis, nor checking off constructs used. Rather, we are looking at how the person construes, how constructs are integrated, and what implications they are seen to have.
>
> (Banister et al., 1994, p87)

While intended initially to be used as a therapeutic tool, they have also been employed more widely as a research method beyond the clinical sphere: for example, Pope and Denicolo (2001) report on research using them to explore research students views of themselves, and also on a study gaining insights into teenagers' perceptions of drug culture. I chose them here as a method to gain insight into the participant's construal of themselves in a work role at two different points in time, and to assist in understanding how this might change through their experience of WIL.

Kelly (1955/1991) gave very clear instructions for how the writing of the sketch should be approached. These were adapted slightly in my research to encourage participants to describe themselves specifically in a work role when producing their piece, rather than giving a more general description of the self. The instructions given to participants can be found in Appendix 6. Participants in Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the study were sent these instructions with the email invitations to take part and were asked to return them before interview, to allow for some examination and identification of possible areas for discussion to take place before meeting.

However returning the sketch was not a condition of the interview taking place. Table 6.4 shows the participants who did and did not return sketches.

Table 6.4

Completion of self-characterisation sketches by participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Programme	University	Gender	Stage 2 sketch received?	Continued to Stage 3?	Stage 3 sketch received?
Abby	Social Work	A	Female	N	N	-
Amira	Journalism	A	Female	N	N	-
Anna	Business Management	B	Female	N	Y	N
Chloe	Business Management	A	Female	Y	Y	Y
Connor	Social Work	A	Male	Y	Y	Y
Gill	Social Work	A	Female	N	N	-
Harry	Business Management	A	Male	Y	Y	Y
Jack	Business Management	A	Male	Y	Y	Y
Jenny	Business Management	A	Female	Y	Y	Y
Katie	Social Work	A	Female	Y	Y	Y
Rosie	Journalism	B	Female	Y	Y	Y
Tom	Social Work	B	Male	Y	N	-
Tori	Business Management	B	Female	N	Y	N
Will	Social Work	A	Male	N	Y	N
Zara	Social Work	B	Female	Y	Y	Y

As can be seen, at Stage 2 nine of the fifteen participants returned self-characterisation sketches and at Stage 3 eight out of eleven did so. There was little indication from participants who did not complete the sketch about reasons for not doing it, other than one Stage 2 participant who said she would rather not complete it

due to dyslexia. If participants did not return the sketch in advance, they were asked to talk about themselves in similar ways at the start of the interview so that a verbal description was at least obtained. This provided a comparable starting point for discussion.

6.2.2 Interviews

Interviews at both Stage 2 and Stage 3 were semi-structured and drew on the self-characterisation sketch (where supplied) or an initial verbal description of the self given by the participant in the interview as a starting point. The topic guide, with its emphasis on discussing change that had taken place for the participants, can be seen in Appendix 7. The aim of conducting semi-structured interviews was to explore and gain understanding of the participant's individual world (Kvale, 2007) while allowing freedom to pursue areas which the participant (rather than the researcher) identified as interesting (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012). A semi-structured format also allowed for the individual constructions of the self in a work role to be explored, consistent with the constructivist view that this was unique to each of them.

Laddering was employed in the interviews as a method of gaining deeper insight into the construal of the individual. This is a technique which has been associated with Personal Construct Theory for some time, in particular as a way of eliciting higher order constructs from lower order ones (Caputi, Viney, Walker, & Crittenden, 2011). The basic premise is to ask 'Why?' – particularly why something is important to the respondent. In answering this question, further constructs are usually revealed (Fransella & Dalton, 2000). Salmon lines were also used in conjunction with the laddering probes in order to capture some ideas about the changes in construal that participants thought had taken place or that they expected to take place in future. This technique is based on Kelly's work and while being a very easy concept to understand is designed specifically to capture views of possible change (Salmon, 1988). Concepts (in this case work skills emerging from the self-characterisation sketch or interview) were simply placed on a line where one end represented a very low level of ability in the area and the other a very high level: the participant was questioned about where they thought they were now on the line, where they thought they were in the past (in this case, at the start of university study) and where they expected to be in the future (after graduation, in work). A discussion was then prompted around what had changed, why had it changed, and what role WIL had played in this (if any). One notable feature of Salmon's (1988) development of research using these lines is her assertion that we cannot assume our opinions of our learning are linear. We cannot say that as time goes on our rating of our skills should always be 'higher' or 'better' than it was in the past. Instead, developing richer understandings may lead us to to see increasing complexity in situations and problems and to rate ourselves lower now than we would have done previously. Her lines encourage participants to think about this and to articulate how and why their views have changed across time. While the ladders and Salmon lines were not analysed as independent data sets, the discussion prompted by them was a core part of the interviews.

6.3 Data collection procedures

As briefly mentioned earlier in the discussion of participants, data collection started with a pilot study. Two volunteers from the same group who had piloted the questionnaire in Stage 1 volunteered to help me test the methods for Stages 2 and 3. This involved them completing a self-characterisation sketch and completing an interview in exactly the same way as was planned for the other participants. The only change made after the pilot was that I prepared a piece of paper in advance with lines drawn on it ready for discussion of the Salmon lines, since I found it distracting to have to create these during the interview. As the pilots were successful, these participants' data were also included in the pool for analysis (with their consent).

Interviews took place either at University A or University B depending on the participant's location. At the start of each interview I provided the participant with the information sheet, reminded them of the purpose of the research, explained the recording and transcribing process, and reiterated points related to anonymity and confidentiality. Consent forms were then signed. It was particularly important to ensure the participant understood that I was carrying out the interview in my role as a PhD student, and that our interaction in this situation would have no bearing on any future relationship we may have as lecturer and student. I was aware, however, that the university setting might still influence the way the participants saw me and saw the research since the majority of interviews were carried out in classrooms (booked specifically for the purpose). These were spaces where they would be used to interacting with lecturers. I specifically thought about how this place and situation might influence the participant's responses and tried to mitigate the effects, for example in the way seating was arranged. In the most extreme case, the booked room contained a number of posters promoting the benefits of WIL ("students who undertake a placement earn £10000 more per year after graduation" being one example). I moved the interview to a staff office nearby on that occasion, in an attempt to avoid participants being led towards particular topics when we talked about what they thought might change for them after placement.

If a sketch had not been completed in advance the participant was first asked how they would describe themselves at work, and how they imagined they would be in a work role, and an attempt was made to note emerging constructs as they spoke. The majority of the interview time was then spent discussing and exploring constructs emerging from the self-characterisation sketches or this initial discussion stage. Ideally, I would have spent time on detailed analysis of the sketches before the interviews took place, however most participants who returned them did so only shortly before the interview making this infeasible. As a minimum, the sketches were read closely and possible constructs were highlighted in advance (this the first stage in Kelly's analysis protocol, which is discussed in more detail in Section 6.5 below). My ideas about emerging constructs were discussed with participants at the very start of the interview, providing a valuable opportunity for me to confirm my interpretation of their opinions about themselves at this stage.

In the Stage 2 interviews, the questionnaire (which had been completed around a year previously) was also discussed with the participant, as a way of prompting further discussion of any perceived change that had taken place.

The interviews then closed with thanks for participating and a recap of what would happen next, particularly that transcripts would be returned to the participant for approval and comment. At Stage 2, participants were also reminded that they would receive an invitation to take part in the final stage and given information on timings.

6.4 Dealing with ethical considerations

6.4.1 Gaining ethical approval for Stages 2 and 3

As in Stage 1 of the research full ethical clearance was gained before any data collection took place in Stages 2 and 3. Ethical clearance was again obtained from University B first, and then a subsequent separate application was submitted to University A. There was no need to contact Programme Leaders or Directors of Ethics again for consent to contact students as this had already been obtained for the full term of the study. However, they were updated with the outcomes of the Stage 1 work and informed of general timescales as a courtesy. As Programme Leaders were again a possible point of contact to deal with issues or concerns on the information provided to participants (as they had been in Stage 1) the update also allowed me to remind them that the research was taking place. No issues were raised by the Programme Leaders at this stage, although some interest was expressed in the initial results and some preliminary findings were discussed with the social work programme team at University A as a result of this contact.

6.4.2 Ensuring fully informed consent

An information sheet was supplied to participants containing details of the study and also setting out where further help could be obtained if necessary. Informed consent forms were completed by all participants at both stages of qualitative data collection. See Appendix 8 for the information sheet and Appendix 9 for the informed consent form. As in Stage 1, my role as a research student rather than a lecturer in this work was made explicit in this information and in other contacts with participants. The lack of connection between their choice to participate and any subsequent dealings I might have with them in a professional way was again emphasised. I did not teach any participant from Stages 2 and 3 and had no input to marking or assessment of their work. However due to the relationships built up through the interviews two of the participants contacted me informally after data collection had been completed to ask for advice about unrelated academic matters. I was happy to provide this for them in my usual professional role.

6.4.3 Data storage and anonymity of participants

All data were stored securely. Each participant was allocated a unique code number and the data were stored using these codes. In this thesis each participant has been given a pseudonym and the universities involved have also been anonymised, to make it harder to identify individuals. Genders were retained (i.e. female and male participants were given traditionally female and male pseudonyms) while ethnicity/nationality was masked by the use of non-culturally specific names.

Data such as the self-characterisation sketches were often returned by participants via email, sometimes typed into the body of a message and sometimes as a Microsoft Word attachment. These were anonymised with a

respondent code as soon as they were received, and while the emails were stored for later reference and audit trail purposes the sketch section or file was deleted from this as soon as it had been anonymised and saved. Paper copies of data, notes, and consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked staff office at Northumbria University.

Interviews were recorded using two digital voice recorders simultaneously to reduce the risk of data corruption. These were transferred to the Northumbria University server for secure storage as soon as possible after the interview took place and then the original versions were deleted. As the data were transcribed they were anonymised, again using codes and pseudonyms. This included coding any reference to individuals within the transcripts, not only the participant themselves but where work colleagues, lecturers or others were mentioned by name this was removed and a code inserted. Transcripts were returned to the participants for review and they were able to make any deletions or corrections they wished. In the Stage 2 interview data, two participants requested further anonymization or deletion of parts of the transcripts as they were concerned about the potential for identification. This was done. No changes were requested to the Stage 3 interview transcripts.

6.5 Quality in the research

It is important to set out the overall criteria by which the quality of research work presented is to be judged (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Johnson, Buehring, Cassell, & Symon, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Consistent with my overall constructivist approach it would be inappropriate for me to attempt to 'prove' that the research was reliable or valid in a positivist sense as I do not assume that my findings are independent of me as the researcher (Johnson et al., 2006). Instead my aim here is to establish that the conclusions I drew from the research process were trustworthy and believable (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I therefore put forward criteria for evaluation based on those set out by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Thus, the areas to be discussed are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these areas will be considered in turn.

6.5.1 Credibility

The credibility of this research is based on two aspects of the work. Firstly, I am an experienced university lecturer with some knowledge of the research environment and of the ways that WIL is used and discussed in Higher Education. For example, I have visited and supervised business placement students for a number of years, and my knowledge of this environment has informed my work. Secondly, the use of two methods of data collection (self-characterisation sketches and interviews) and also multiple analysis methods gives confidence that an in-depth exploration of the opinions of the participants has been captured by the work.

6.5.2 Transferability

I make no claims about the transferability of this research to situations outside of that examined in the study, for example I do not claim that my results are generalisable to all students undertaking WIL or even to groups related to my participants (e.g. all social work students). It is acknowledged that the conclusions drawn are taken only from a limited number of cases and thus it would be inappropriate for me to claim that the same outcomes apply to all. However the detailed 'thick description' I have provided of how I conducted the work, the research design and settings, and the participant profiles, should enable others to judge the applicability to their particular environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

6.5.3 Dependability

The procedures followed in the data collection and analysis have been set out in detail. This should demonstrate that the procedures followed have been "logical, traceable and documented" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p294). In doing so, the dependability of this research has been demonstrated.

6.5.4 Confirmability

I will describe the checks and collaborative procedures which I built into the process of data analysis as part of the discussion of my analysis methods in the next section of this chapter. These ensured that the findings of the research were not merely constructed by me in isolation but that they were also seen as relevant by my peers. Although the results reported are acknowledged to be shaped by my world view, this gives confidence that my interpretations of the data are understandable to others. In particular, the themes developed were transparent to, and understandable by, those 'outside' the research process. This demonstrates that the conclusions have been confirmed by independent scrutiny.

6.6 Analysis methods

I used several analysis methods in order to help me 'see' the data from different perspectives, leading to a richer and more credible interpretation of the participants' experiences than I would have achieved by a single method. Kelly (1955/1991) provided a very clear protocol for analysis of self-characterisation sketches and so this was employed specifically with these data. Template Analysis (King, 2004, 2012; King & Brooks, 2017) was used to develop overall themes from the participant accounts of their lived experiences of WIL, using both the sketches and interview transcripts as the data pool. Finally, Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis (LQA) (Saldaña, 2003) was used to explore the change taking place for each participant individually across their full set of data, from Stage 1 to Stage 3. Each of these methods will be discussed in turn.

6.6.1 Analysis of the sketches

Kelly's (1955/1991) protocol for analysis of self-characterisation sketches begins with an initial reading of the account, taking a 'credulous approach' to observing what is said and identifying any possible emerging constructs or areas for deeper exploration with the participant. As described above, this first stage was carried out before the interviews took place so that the results could be used to inform the interview discussions.

However given the short time scales between the return of the sketch and the interview taking place this was necessarily a superficial reading which was revisited in depth before full analysis took place. As part of the overall analysis after the interview this more in-depth reading of the sketch took place using techniques suggested by Kelly (1955/1991) to change perspective on what was being said, resulting in an in-depth view of the world view of the participant being gained (in this case, their view of how they fitted into the world of work). For example, the first and last sentences of the account were examined in detail as these are thought to provide particular insights into where the writer feels most confident (first sentence) and where they see themselves in the future (last sentence); repetition of terms can provide clues to constructs which are difficult for the participant to articulate; changing emphasis in the way a sentence or paragraph is read can lead to new insights. This process was carried out for each sketch. The individual questionnaire and set of two sketches, with analysis, were then compared and contrasted to build up a picture of the individual, their world view in relation to the work role, and changes that had taken place in this over time. Further informed by the analysis of the interview data this resulted in the production of eight case studies. Three of these, which illustrate how WIL impacted on the opinions of these individual participants, are presented in Chapter 8.

Quality checks were also carried out as part of this stage of the analysis. Two (anonymised) self-characterisation sketches, my completed analysis protocol, and the resulting case studies were looked at by a colleague and we discussed the process I had followed and the conclusions I had reached in detail. He had some familiarity with PCT methods (he had used repertory grid in the past) but it was also necessary for me to explain the purpose of the sketches, and my aims in using them with my participants. The completed case studies were also given to my supervisors for comment. I made no major changes to my analysis as a result, but the discussions were extremely useful in encouraging me to think more deeply about the processes I followed and the decisions about what to include that I made, and also to ensure that these were visible to others.

6.6.2 Template Analysis

Choice of method

Given the multiple sets of data available to me (two sets of self-characterisation sketches and two interviews from each participant) I felt I needed an analysis method which would allow me some structure while retaining the flexibility to alter and develop my ideas as the enquiry progressed. Given my emphasis on change in the participants and in my views of what aspects of WIL might influence them, the analysis method I employed also needed to be adaptable, with potential to sit alongside and add to the PCT methods employed. I felt that Template Analysis met these criteria: it is a flexible method which works particularly well for cross-case analysis, integrating the opinions of groups to form a hierarchical set of themes rather than looking at data on an individual level (King, 2004). I conducted the analysis in three separate stages. Firstly, the self-characterisation sketches from Stage 2 were used to produce a set of initial themes. I then produced an intermediate template by adding the second-year interview data to the pool and recoding. I constructed a

final template by including the final-year data (sketches and interviews) in the pool and amending my codes and themes once more.

Development of the template

It is permissible in Template Analysis to begin with a set of 'a priori' codes which can be applied to the data (King & Brooks, 2017). In this case, rather than developing such 'a priori' codes from the literature, I used the initial descriptions of the self identified in the sketches to develop a first set of themes. These are referred to here as the 'initial themes' rather than 'a priori' as they were not based on pre-existing knowledge about the research situation but were rather developed at an early stage from the initial data. Proceeding in this way also had the advantage of providing some limited insights into the self-perceptions of the second year participants before any interview discussion had happened. The first set of codes came from the highlighting process which took place between return of the sketch and interviews for each participant (as discussed in Section 6.3), providing a link to the initial read through and first impressions of the data. I was, however, conscious that subsequent readings might lead to further codes emerging and I was open to adding these. To cluster the codes into themes I used flip-chart paper and printed copies of sections of the sketches, manually sifting and organising the codes into groups. This allowed me to get close to the data at an early stage and to physically move the codes around, helping me to see links and possible emerging hierarchies. The clusters then provided first ideas for themes in the data. Once this paper-based clustering was completed I transferred the raw data to NVivo 11 and replicated the clustering process so that subsequent analysis could build on this. These themes developed from the initial sketches then formed a starting point for Template Analysis of the entire pool of qualitative data (sketches and interviews). These initial themes are presented in Table 6.5:

Table 6.5

Initial themes emerging from the self-characterisation sketches of second year participants (based on nine sketches)

Theme	Sub-theme	Brief Description
1. Emerging Relationships	1.1 Learning how to work with others	Team working vs working alone, working with clients or customers. Relating and interacting with these groups in a work role.
	1.2 Being judged	How I want to appear. How I think I would appear to others.
2. Conflicting Priorities	2.1 What comes first - work or home?	Work-life balance, socialising vs. working
	2.2 Organising work time	Managing work demands, managing workload (either for myself or for others)
	2.3 Idealism vs. Lived Experience	What I want to be able to do vs. what is achievable. Desire to do something 'constructive' in a job I enjoy and feel passionate about. Dealing with stress, frustrations and challenges to this and to my wider values.
3. Developing as a Professional	3.1 Ambition and achievement	Feeling a sense of achievement. Knowing I am doing a good job. Looking for development opportunities.
	3.2 Seeking a Direction	Uncertainty over 'place' and fit. Clarifying the right career path for me.

Intermediate themes: second year participants

Having completed the initial template, I then added further data in the form of the second-year interviews and sketches to the pool of data and coded this too. I started by coding two interviews, carrying out a detailed in-depth reading of the transcripts and highlighting codes. I then moved on to using the flip chart and paper method to organise the codes into themes again, so that at this early stage I could get close to the data and completely immerse myself in it.

The two interviews chosen for analysis in this way were from Zara and Anna. I wanted to begin by coding two transcripts which reflected different aspects of the data set, to reflect the diversity which was present and allow scope to extend and develop my initial themes in as many directions as possible.

Zara was the first participant I interviewed in the main study (rather than the pilot), and was a social work student at University B. She had previously completed a self-characterisation sketch and this meant that some time in the interview was spent discussing the sketch and verifying that my understanding of it was an accurate reflection of how she saw herself. She had come straight to university from school so at the time of the interview had work experience from her second-year placement but little beyond that.

In contrast, my interview with Anna was the final one I conducted in Stage 2. She was a business management student, also at University B, but (influenced by the questionnaire analysis) I felt it was more important to have interviews from the start and end of the data collection process, and from different programmes, than to vary the institution. Anna did not complete a self-characterisation sketch in advance, and again I thought this was likely to give a different perspective for development of the template as I had only asked her to describe herself in the interview rather than in a written sketch. She was participating in a work-based initiative at university where employers offered placements in supply chain management during university holidays from second year onwards, plus a third year sandwich placement and a job on graduation. At the time of the interview she had therefore done one short placement in the Easter holidays, and was looking forward to her third year which was going to be based in industry.

My initial feelings on reading these two transcripts together were that my interview with Anna was considerably 'richer' in content related to how she described herself at work. This could have been down to a number of reasons: for example because sections of the interview with Zara were taken up by me verifying my understanding of the sketch; because Anna was more open to the idea of talking about her skills at work; or just because I got better at knowing what to ask over time. However, this confirmed for me that they formed a useful place to begin development of my intermediate template.

I then coded the two interviews, showed them to my supervision team, and we discussed my first tentative ideas about the themes coming out of them. This reassured me that my analysis technique was capturing the necessary depth of information and I therefore continued my coding using the same principles. Once these two interviews were fully coded I again transferred the information to NVivo 11 and from this point onwards I relied more on it to organise my work. The quantity of data had become harder to manage on paper and I had also become more familiar with it as a tool meaning I did not feel quite so much need to physically interact with my data to develop ideas. The initial themes which came from the sketches alone were expanded and developed in order to provide a richer and more detailed set which represented the views of the larger group of participants (since not all had completed the sketches). The additional richness visible in these themes also reflected the exploration and discussion of emerging constructs which took place in the interviews. The intermediate template is presented in Table 6.6:

Table 6.6

Intermediate template. Themes found in the second-year data (based on nine sketches and fifteen interviews)

Theme	Primary sub-theme	Secondary sub-theme	Brief Description
1. Integrating learning	1.1 Seeing the value of theory		Seeing the application of university work and appreciating it as a result
	1.2 Applying knowledge in practice		The chance to learn by doing. Combining university learning, natural ability, and skills from previous life.
2. Nurturing Relationships	2.1 Learning how to work with 'others'	2.1.1 Managing differences	Seeing other people's points of view, empathy
		2.1.2 Leading	Being a role model, being firm vs. being laid back, influencing others
		2.1.3 Supporting	(Social Work) supporting clients by being understanding, valuing people
	2.2. Fitting in		Feeling comfortable/uncomfortable around work colleagues
	2.3 Networking		Building networks and contacts
3. Learning to manage time	3.1 What comes first - work or home?		Making time for family and friends
	3.2 Organising work time	3.2.1 Use of your time	Being effective, being efficient, being organised. Thinking ahead.
		3.2.2 Directing others	Setting targets
4. Growing confidence	4.1 Developing skills and abilities		Being adaptable, being confident
	4.2 Increasing certainty	4.2.1 Self-belief: look at what I can do	Sense of achievement
		4.2.2 Recognising limitations	Knowing what is not possible as well as what is
5. Finding your place	5.1 Knowing the profession	5.1.1 Is this the place for me?	Enjoying what you do vs. being frustrated by the job, feeling challenged
		5.1.2 Identifying opportunities	Knowing what is available to you and where you might be going
	5.2 Knowing yourself	5.2.1 Judging your performance	Knowing what you are good at, thinking critically

The first theme here, 'Integrating Learning', was one which came out of the interviews but was not really visible in the sketches: this covered the idea of applying knowledge in practice and taking university knowledge out into the workplace. 'Emerging Relationships' developed into 'Nurturing Relationships' to reflect a greater emphasis on managing this area by the participants rather than passively accepting what happened when they worked with others.

The theme of 'Learning to Manage Time' developed from 'Conflicting Priorities' in the intermediate template and this category was renamed to reflect this. After analysing the interview data, the codes relating to 'Idealism' were subsumed into a new category which was part of 'Confidence', as they were more about knowing the limitations of self and the role.

'Developing as a Professional' was split into two themes as this expanded in the interview discussion, and was broadly reflected by both 'Finding Your Place' (which developed from 'Seeking a Direction') and 'Growing Confidence' (which developed from 'Ambition and Achievement', plus a sense of an increasing sense of self-worth and self-knowledge in the participants as a result of undertaking WIL).

At this stage I also carried out further checks to confirm the quality of my findings. My aim in doing so was to check that my templates gave an adequate representation of what was said in the sketches and interviews and were grounded in the data (Ballinger, 2008). In order to assess this, I gave coded versions of two of the sketches and three interviews to the same colleague who had previously looked at my protocol analysis of the sketches alone. Data from one social work (sketch and interview), one business (sketch and interview) and one journalism (interview only) participant were provided for examination: the full data set was not used, as it was felt that this sample would be sufficient to identify any issues. My colleague examined my intermediate template and identified where he felt the coded sections 'fitted'. He also looked for anything that I might have 'missed' i.e. any codes that he thought could have been extracted from the data but had not been. We were broadly in agreement about the themes that the codes fitted into: 41 out of 55 items (75%) were coded the same and there appeared to be no clustering in the discrepancies i.e. they did not relate specifically to any of the participants or to any of the themes. Given this broad agreement and the lack of any pattern in the discrepancies I did not make changes to my intermediate template as a result of this discussion, although it was extremely useful in making me articulate some of the themes I had identified. I therefore continued in the same way for the remaining analysis.

Final Themes

I carried out a third set of analysis and coding after adding the data from final-year participants (both sketches and interviews) to the NVivo pool. This led to a further, final set of themes being developed which are presented in Table 6.7. The reasons for successively adding to the existing pool and capturing the overall themes at different time points rather than analysing these later data in isolation were that I felt the data formed a single progressing set which changed over time, rather than representing distinct separate groups (Saldaña, 2003). Given that the same participants were present in each stage, and that I viewed the second set of sketches and interviews as representing a continuation of the conversation from second year about the participants' development rather than an independent phase of data collection, it made sense to me to view the data as adding to and developing my knowledge about the change the participants were experiencing rather than sitting separate to it as it would if I were seeking insights into the views of independent groups. The final template therefore captures an overall picture of how the participants have developed as a group by the time of the final data collection. The findings presented in Chapter 7 are based on this template.

Table 6.7

Final template based on analysis of all second and final-year data (eight sketches and eleven interviews added to the data from the intermediate template)

Theme	Primary sub-theme	Secondary sub-theme	Brief Description
1. Integrating learning	1.1 Seeing the value of theory		Seeing the application of university work and appreciating it as a result
	1.2 Applying knowledge in practice		The chance to learn by doing. Combining university learning, natural ability, and skills from previous life.
2. Building and maintaining relationships	2.1 A natural ability or something learned through WIL?	2.1.1 Having instinctive 'people skills'	Something I have always had e.g. instinctive empathy for others
		2.1.2 Acquiring 'people skills'	Something I learned, because I realised I needed it to do the job well
		2.1.3 Learning about boundaries	Professional distance, developing this vs being too empathetic. Differences in professional practice from personal relationships
	2.2 Learning how to work with 'others'	2.2.1 Exposure to 'difference'	Working with people I would not normally meet: similar to me vs. different to me
		2.2.2 Developing new perspectives	Judging differently, changing my frame of reference. Asking what is going on/what causes something vs. accepting at face value
	2.3 What do they think of me?		Being judged by others – do they see me as a professional?
3. Making effective use of time	3.1 Managing time	3.1.1 Working independently	Setting my own deadlines and priorities vs. being told by others, working autonomously
		3.1.2 Directing others	Setting targets and delegating to other people
	3.2 Managing work	3.2.1 How much do I have to do?	Understanding what is 'sufficient' and working to that. Judging how serious 'getting it wrong' would be, and basing my effort on that.
		3.2.2 Is it my responsibility?	Within my remit vs. not up to me – in Social Work, learning to say no, understanding my limitations
	3.3 What comes first - work or home?		Making time for family and friends, making sure my work does not 'take over'
4. Judging performance	4.1 Developing self-awareness		'Finding out' what I can do and what can be improved. Knowing my limitations as well as what I am capable of.
	4.2 Seeking support	4.2.1 Asking stupid questions	Knowing when to ask for help, and being able to do this
		4.2.2 Using support structures	Knowing what is available and using it (e.g. supervision in Social Work)

Theme	Primary sub-theme	Secondary sub-theme	Brief Description
5. Growing confidence	5.1 Dealing with the unfamiliar	5.1.1 Proving I can cope	Coping with being 'thrown in at the deep end'. Proving to myself or others that I can do this
		5.1.2 Validation of a 'strange' role	'Strange' in the sense of new and unfamiliar. Using a new environment as an opportunity for reinvention – I can try being 'someone else'
	5.2 Increasing self-belief	5.2.1 Look at what I can do	Having a sense of achievement – surprising myself
		5.2.2 I am on the right path	I belong here, I can do this
6. Discovering the profession	6.1 Finding out about the job role: Is it what I think it is?	6.1.1 Testing or developing ideas about the job role	Strong vs weak existing ideas about the job. If I had strong ideas about it already, how is it different to what I thought it would be?
		6.1.2 Loyalty to the profession	Enjoying what I do vs. being frustrated by the job, feeling challenged. Doubts about whether I want to be part of this profession.
	6.2 Finding out about myself: what job suits me?	6.2.1 Is this right for me?	Questioning the choices I have made. Changing/broadening ideas to consider other options. Confirming my direction vs invalidating it
		6.2.2 Discovery of my 'place'	Realising what would be a good place for me - increasing career decidedness
	6.3 Finding out about myself: where do I 'fit'?		Having a clearly defined role, relating to others, being valued. Being part of the professional group, with the right to be there

As can be seen in this template, the themes have again changed and developed considerably, reflecting the increased richness of the analysis of the complete data set.

The first theme from the intermediate template, 'Learning to manage time' became more about using the time available well and was renamed 'Making Effective use of Time' to reflect this. The sub-theme 'Use of your time' expanded beyond being efficient and organised to cover autonomous working and prioritising work for yourself. As part of this, sub-themes around understanding the requirements of the job and taking responsibility were also developed.

The theme around relationships shifted in focus to be more about managing the relationships the participants already had (and was renamed 'Building and maintaining relationships' as a result). 'Learning how to work with others' developed considerably with a changed set of sub-themes reflecting the increased importance of 'Exposure to difference' as an influence identified by the participants. The sub-theme of 'Fitting in' on the intermediate template expanded and contributed to sub-themes in a new category of 'Discovering the profession'.

Codes from the sub-theme of 'Knowing the profession' within 'Finding your place' also moved to this new area, while 'Knowing yourself' moved into a theme of 'Judging performance'.

'Growing Confidence' remained as a high-level theme but the sub-themes were renamed, and new secondary sub-themes were developed to reflect the increasing importance of validation (proof from the self or from others) in developing self-belief.

As a final quality check, the templates and themes were discussed extensively with my supervision team. While no significant changes to the coding or groupings were made, I rethought the labels given to the themes (and my explanations of what they covered) several times, coming closer each time to a set that better expressed the concepts within them. This iterative process gave another layer of quality to the analysis, specifically ensuring that the themes developed made sense to people who understood my analysis process but who had not taken an active part in it.

6.6.3 Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis

While the thematic analysis outlined above signposted possible changes taking place in the group over time, I found it difficult to identify clearly any changes taking place and was concerned that the process and the possible influence of WIL on the participants was not being fully captured. I made several attempts to utilise both NVivo and manual methods to identify, compare, and contrast the codes and themes emerging from the different groups (particularly the social work and business participants who had appeared so 'different' in the quantitative analysis) but this did not lead to any clear outcomes. In addition, I felt that the central question of how WIL might be influencing any change taking place was not being addressed in sufficient depth. I therefore turned to an alternative method to complement the Template Analysis, Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis (LQA) (Saldaña, 2003), which was designed to explore individual changes across time. In this method a structured

form is used to examine a full set of longitudinal data from each participant in turn, considering a number of questions such as what changes are occurring through time, what conditions are influencing change, and when does change occur. In my data, this meant I looked at each individual one by one, using their questionnaire, sketches, and interviews as a set to take a full view of potential changes experienced from first to final year. I was particularly looking for changes that participants felt had been promoted by WIL. As this analysis progressed, ideas built up about change within the ponds (groups within the data) and within the overall pool. The analysis form used to carry out the process can be seen in Appendix 10. While this is broadly based on Saldaña's (2003) original, I made a number of design changes to the layout as I felt that it was important to capture a distinct view of what the individual changes were telling me about the ponds of data as well as about the individual. I also felt it was important to capture evidence for my developing ideas about the change process as the analysis progressed, so I added a section on the second page of the form to allow me to note any significant quotations or other thoughts as I immersed myself in the data collected from each individual. Each set of participant data was analysed in turn, leading to a cumulative picture of the change taking place in the groups over time to add a different perspective to the templates developed earlier. This involved looking at 'Descriptive Questions', 'Framing Questions', and 'Analytic and Interpretive Questions' for each participant.

The 'Descriptive Questions' consider what is increasing, decreasing, or staying constant for the participant over time (for example, practices or behaviours) alongside how perceptions of phenomena may have changed. This may mean changing self-awareness, what Saldaña (2003, p106) refers to as "learning and knowing in more sophisticated ways". Turning points, times when it seems that participants questioned their world view, are also captured in the section headed 'Surge Epiphany' on the analysis form.

'Framing Questions' come next and consider the context for change: when has change occurred and what conditions might have influenced it? The question of what is different about this participant's data when compared to the pool looked at already is also considered here, setting this participant's data against what is already known.

The 'Analytic and Interpretive Questions' follow from the previous two sets, with the aim of taking the answers to these and turning them into insights. Connections or relationships between actions or phenomena across time, as constructed by the participants or the researcher, are noted. They result in 'Preliminary Assertions' which are the propositions, findings, results, conclusions, interpretations, and theories about participant changes that can be made as the data analysis progresses.

Finally, when these questions have been considered for the full pool of data, the through-line of the study can be seen. This summarises the participant journey, makes meaning from the data, and "describes, connects and summarizes the researcher's primary observations of participant change" (Saldaña, 2003, p151),

A summary of the findings from this process, in the form of the 'Preliminary Assertions', is given in Table 6.8. These were taken from the second page of the analysis forms completed during LQA (Appendix 10). The relation to the themes developed through Template Analysis is also shown, as in many cases the LQA revealed similar areas of interest in the data. The difference in the LQA was to more explicitly capture how these areas were changing over time, allowing for more in-depth understanding of this to be added to the themes. As with the templates, the completed forms and the table below were discussed extensively with my supervision team and with colleagues as a quality check on my findings. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Table 6.8

Summary of areas identified from LQA relating to changes encouraged by WIL

WIL provides:	Description/what changed for the pool?	What did the analysis say about ponds (smaller groups)?	Contribution to themes identified in Template Analysis
A forum for testing ability and aptitude	WIL provided a test. Participants hoped/expected it would build confidence but it was also likely to challenge participants' views of their capabilities. Changes to how they saw their ability (self-belief) resulted from this.	It seemed to be more important to the female participants than the male ones	Theme 4 (Judging performance) 4.1 Developing self-awareness Theme 5 (Growing confidence), 5.1.1 Proving you can cope; 5.2.1 Look at what I can do
A safe place to experiment	WIL let participants try things out - new experiences, creativity - at relatively low risk to themselves. Encouraged 'trying on' and 'trying out' new behaviours. It was a chance for self-discovery and also reinvention.	Seemed to be more important to Business participants	Theme 5 (Growing confidence) 5.1.1 Proving you can cope, 5.1.2 Validation of a 'strange' role, 5.2.2 A sense of belonging.
Exposure to new experiences	WIL involved mixing with people, seeing things and places participants would not otherwise engage with. It therefore changed them by broadening their horizons.	Visible for both Social Work and Business but in different ways. Social Work more likely to be about challenging their predjudices; Business more about Social Class (either working with people perceived as 'higher' or 'lower' on the scale than you)	Theme 2 (Building and maintaining relationships), 2.2.1 Exposure to 'difference', 2.2.2 Developing new perspectives. Theme 6 (Discovering the profession) 6.3 Finding out about myself, where do I 'fit'?
Signposts to a possible career	WIL impacted on career decidedness. This linked to questions of place and what the participants felt the right place was for them to be.	Possibly more important to Social Work participants in final year. Questioned whether this was right for them when faced with the reality that they needed to perform as a professional.	Theme 6 (Discovering the profession) 6.1 Finding out about the job role: Is it what I think it is?, 6.2.1 Is this right for me? 6.3 Finding out about myself, where do I 'fit'?

Chapter 7: Findings from Stages 2 and 3

This chapter presents the findings from the Template Analysis and the Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis (LQA) carried out on the self-characterisation sketches and interview data. While the sections presented in this chapter follow the top-level themes found in the final template (Table 6.7), insights from the LQA (summarised in Table 6.8) are also integrated with the discussion. As explained in Chapter 6, this is because LQA gave additional depth to the themes in two ways. Firstly, it made it easier to see where there might be differences in the changes experienced by groups present in the data (e.g. between the social work, business, and journalism participants, the ponds within the data). Secondly, LQA made the specifics of when and where changes seemed to have occurred for individuals and what experiences may have influenced these more visible than Template Analysis alone. Findings from both methods therefore informed the material presented here.

Six overarching themes are presented: the first five (Integrating Learning, Building and Maintaining Relationships, Making Effective Use of Time, Judging Performance, and Growing Confidence) relate to skills and attributes the participants identified as being developed through WIL. The final and potentially most significant theme in the context of the research question, Discovering the Profession, sets out what they felt they found out about work and about themselves in relation to the job role.

To make the group which the participant belonged to visible, superscripts have been used in this discussion. B denotes a business student, J a journalism student, and S is used for social work. 'Interview 1' refers to the data collected in Stage 2 of the study (second year) while 'Interview 2' data were collected in Stage 3 (final year).

7.1 Integrating learning (Theme 1)

This theme is one which was predominantly discussed in the second year interviews and related to seeing the value of theoretical knowledge by applying it in practice. Unsurprisingly, this was something which was more prevalent for the participants in the earlier stage of their studies and by final year it seemed to have moved into the background more. Because it was not something that was identified by the participants as changing significantly over time it is the only theme which does not have clear links to the LQA. It seemed that, instead, placement was construed as something which allowed participants both to see the value of their knowledge and to use it to make them better practitioners in the early stages. While this was a relatively simple and time-limited theme, it is worth discussing how it was characterised by participants as it was clear that they saw WIL as something which could add to their university learning. For example, Zara^{S} explained how she thought the two areas, placement and university, complemented each other to lead to deeper learning:

> I just think it gives you that practical hands-on experience. Say if it was the course but with no placement, you'd have all the knowledge of your psychology, sociology, law, you'd do your three years and then you'd graduate, then you'd be a bit confused with like how you're going to apply it to practice. So I think the placement experience is definitely … well, one, it helps you incorporate knowledge into practice, but two, it helps you to develop yourself, your self-awareness, your confidence, assertiveness, how to approach new situations.
>
> (Zara^{S}, Interview 1)

Seeing the application of theories and ideas in practice also seemed to help participants to appreciate its usefulness and therefore construe their university learning in a different way. For some, there was a feeling that placement made the learning fall into place by giving it context and application outside the theoretical sphere. Zara[S] expressed it as being a process of "becoming what you've learnt, I guess" (Zara[S], Interview 2), going on to suggest that both knowledge and practice were required to become an effective practitioner. Other social work participants described how they took theories into the workplace, talking to colleagues about them and using them in a practical way to decide on actions. This was clearly a process that they saw continuing in their future working life:

> I think this year definitely ... the assessments that I was doing, it really pushed us more to think about more 'right how does that fit in?' 'research suggests this' so it seemed to all tie in a bit more on the job if you know what I mean. It made us really think about what I was doing more.
>
> (Connor[S], Interview 2)

Abby[S]'s explanation of what her practical experience had added to her existing knowledge from her studies expanded on this:

> Experience. You can do a lot in university. They can teach us as much as they want, but until you're in front of that person, you're really only learning about mental illness. You're learning about depression and everything in university, but until you've got that child in front of you telling you about it and that really develops and you become more passionate about it. You think this is a human being. It's not just theory, it's practice.
>
> (Abby[S], Interview 1)

In line with her more negative overall view of the social work course, Gill[S] was more critical of the usefulness of academic learning to practice and felt it was the applied skills that really mattered:

> The thing with social work as well, some people on that course, it's so academic, they do all of that, but when it actually comes to supporting people they fall flat on their face, and you need to get a balance on a course like social work because if you go and knock on somebody's door and start spouting theory at them and you can't talk to them, they're going to shut the door in your face.
>
> (Gill[S], Interview 1)

Placement was also seen as providing a feel for the real world in a way that was impossible for university, with the need to meet assessment requirements, to do:

> I guess so because some of the assessment I don't think is necessarily a reflection on how real journalism works because I don't think you can do that in a university setting. It's very much faster paced, and it's much more you just do it and you don't have to think too much about it. Obviously they make the assessment way too detailed when really you'd just be writing a piece and it would probably go to be published. Something that you might get fifty for in an assessment would be fine in a newspaper.
>
> (Amira[J], Interview 1)

So while the participants saw a role for WIL in helping to reinforce university learning, they also seemed to be developing constructs around which aspects of theoretical knowledge and practice were actually required in a day-to-day job.

7.2 Building and maintaining relationships (Theme 2)

This theme is about how the participants developed working relationships across their programme of study. Within this there were two sub-themes identified. Some of the participants discussed whether their ability to form relationships was something intrinsic that they already had, or something that WIL developed. This was captured in the first sub-theme. The second sub-theme looked at how the participants learned to work with people different to them.

7.2.1 A natural ability or something learned through WIL?

In the second year interviews relationship-building was predominantly (although not exclusively) mentioned by the social work participants. Some of this group construed themselves as always having had a natural ability to build relationships through instinctive empathy for others and felt this view had directly influenced their choice of degree. This was something that LQA identified as a 'constant-consistent' factor for them:

> I came in with the good ability to build relationships and part of the reason why I came on to do the course, because it was one of my strengths, an awareness of how important it is. Definitely, yeah. I don't really know if I could get any better at building relationships. Obviously there is improvement, but it's one of those things where it depends on you as well as to whether you're going to be good or bad.
>
> (Katie[S], Interview 1)

However, for others, placement experience helped them to recognise that they had the ability. Typical of this second group was Harry[B], who said placement made him realise that relationship-building was something he "was naturally quite good at because I'm that type of person" (Harry[B], Interview 2). For others, who did not see themselves as having instinctive people skills, their practical experience in a work role showed them the need to develop these. For them, WIL demonstrated the usefulness of the skill in helping to build trust and to get the best outcomes from those they worked with. Anna[B] explained something that changed for her on placement: she realised in order to be effective in her field (supply chain management) "you need to make sure that everybody is doing it the way you want it, and you can't get it just by telling people to do it" (Anna[B], Interview 1). Instead, in order to get what she needed from people, she had to do this by developing good working relationships.

There was not, however, a simple dichotomy between already having and simply acquiring the skill. Even those who identified themselves as having natural abilities in forming relationships talked about how work experience changed them and developed this further in a professional context. For some of the social work participants, this meant increasing their self-awareness about what was appropriate at work:

> I think building relationships, I guess it's quite different when you're building them with your friends and family and you've got to have a new sort of set of skills to build it with service users and people you don't know and you don't know in detail. I think you've got to really make that effort to communicate with them and build that rapport in a professional way.
>
> (Connor[S], Interview 2)

Although they may always have felt a natural empathy with others, building relationships with clients necessitated finding a balance between this and maintaining an appropriate professional distance. Zara[S] expressed her feelings about the difficulties this could cause: "it's not nice on a personal level, like you don't want to be sort of detached, you want to build them relationships, but if it's your job you have to I guess" (Zara[S], Interview 2). Will[S] also explained in a different way how placement experience gave him a new perspective on building up relationships with clients:

> In a way I'd been used to building up relationships with people which were useful for obviously that short period of time but when you build up a relationship with someone over a longer period of time you get to know a lot more about that person, about kind of their structures and their systems that are in place and gain a better understanding of perhaps what's the best way forward. And I just found that a lot more interesting, you got to know people on a much deeper level really and really got to understand the issues that they were facing in a lot more detail.
>
> (Will[S], Interview 2)

So for those who were not already aware of their people skills, it seemed that placement was a place that prompted reconstrual of what they had or of what they needed to have: in the LQA it was seen as a 'contextual-intervening condition' for them. For other participants, particularly in social work where building empathetic relationships was already thought to be a key attribute for those seeking to enter the profession, WIL was seen as a way of developing their ability to form appropriate professional as opposed to personal relationships.

7.2.2 Learning how to work with 'others'

The finding that participants saw changes in their abilities to build and maintain relationships through placement raised the question of what they thought might have influenced this, particularly if they had not identified themselves as having a natural ability already.

It seemed that placement helped this process by giving exposure to 'others', people who were 'not like me' (in terms of characteristics such as culture, age, or background) and who they would not have encountered otherwise. This developed understanding and empathy and made it easier to develop working relationships. In turn, this made the participants feel they were performing more effectively in their roles. For Harry[B], who came from a small town, university started the process of exposing him to different types of people and placement developed this further:

> So one thing that changed is, as I said before, I've learnt to communicate with people from whole different walks of life so I was put in situations where I have to talk to different people, different backgrounds …. I think that's improved a lot on my placement. I think it has improved as well being at University because obviously you do see a lot of different students to the students from where I was from in [home town], it's just a little town, I was in a village within a small town, so it's all the same people. Again you've got everything in common with them, everyone knows each other whereas when I come to University there's people from down south, up north, Ireland, Scotland, everywhere, foreign students and stuff. The tennis team had quite a few foreign exchange students on the team so I did learn, when I came to University, but then I think on my placement it's excelled again from … because it's totally different, as I didn't have anything in common with them ones.
>
> (Harry[B], Interview 2)

Talking about placement, he explained how this process continued for him by exposing him to even more diverse groups from:

> … older, like retired from office jobs, who were coming and just doing a bit of work and there was single mums and mums who couldn't afford to be, like they worked set hours so they could get back to see their children and get child care.

through to

> … someone who had been released from Youth Offenders who was trying to get into jobs, so obviously I had nothing really in common with him.
>
> (Harry[B], Interview 2).

In LQA terms Harry's placement experience and working with diverse groups was clearly something of a 'surge or epiphany' moment for him: an experience that made him change his world view by making him more confident about his ability to work with others. Being able to deal with and manage these differences was important to him and also to some of the other business participants, because it meant being more effective in their jobs. Having some understanding of peoples' circumstances and motivations meant being able to get the best from them and manage them more effectively. This positive experience from exposure to different people and different experiences could also be seen in Jenny[B]'s account of her sandwich placement in an automotive company:

> So I met some really good people who gave me really good advice, because I had a lot of dealings with the finance department it was kind of like 'How do I want to go into this?' or 'How do I do this?' and a lot of them helped me with my CV and things … I also got to see their partnerships and I got to go round the plants, where they build stuff, that was really cool to see the robots doing things and meet all these people who you wouldn't normally … it's really multi-national and you didn't realise how many people you speak to but I always spoke to German engineers and things like that. I had to speak to people that I never thought I would have to speak to. Lots of people thought I was an engineer and I was 'No!' [laughs] I was like 'No, I have no idea'. They'd be like 'So when you do this, this and this do you do this?' and I'm just like 'I don't know, I can ask someone who does.' It was really good, I really liked it. I miss it!
>
> (Jenny[B], Interview 2)

The idea of exposure to diverse groups of people further came through in discussions with several of the social work participants. For them, though, one of the aspects of their practice that they said they thought changed as a result of this experience was that of judging others (particularly clients). They said that work experience taught them to think more about what might lie behind situations and actions rather than taking things at face value, an important skill for them, and this helped them to build relationships. It seemed that WIL led to changes in their construal of the criteria they used to judge situations. For example, talking about a particular high-profile case which had been widely reported in the media, Connor[S] explained how he saw it differently now he had learned to think beyond initial superficial judgements of the people involved and the LQA identified this as an area that had 'increased-emerged' for him:

> And because of what I've understood, what I've learned and what I've been part of. It's changed us and I think it's given us the bigger picture. But I've always tried to do that, to understand what's going on, but if you're only, I suppose like the public, if you're only fed certain

> information, that's what you believe. That one side, I think. To see things like that example, I think it's, and I see actually, this is what's going on and it's a much bigger thing that's going on. You can't just take what you hear for granted. I think that's how I've changed, I think understanding what's been going on in peoples' past and unpicking things more.
>
> (Connor[S], Interview 2)

This point was reinforced by Gill[S] who said that for her:

> The social worker course changed completely the way I think about everything. You know, even watching Jeremy Kyle you would just think 'ugh, look at them' but now you're thinking 'why are they like that?' It's weird, it really is weird. You hypothesise about what's wrong with them.
>
> (Gill[S], Interview 1)

Finally, it should be noted that the setting and 'contextual-intervening condition' for this exposure to people 'different to me' may not necessarily have been placement. Instead it may simply be that, for most participants, this provided a good opportunity. In LQA terms it could even be seen as part of normal human development and social processes. This was illustrated by Chloe[B], who undertook a year studying in South East Asia as an alternative to a sandwich placement in work. She perhaps therefore had the most obvious cultural shift to deal with of all the participants. On her return, she also talked in similar terms to others about the value of having to understand and work with people from outside her normal contact group at home. She suggested that this had made her see herself as someone more understanding and tolerant of differences than she had been in the past:

> I think like I got a bit of culture shock, I tried to have the mind-set of like 'I know it's going to be different and it's going to be difficult, you've just got to get on with it.' My boyfriend went as well and he would like sometimes complain a lot about stuff and I would say, because Cheryl [lecturer], do you know Cheryl? She was saying like 'You're not going to change anything so there's no point in moaning on about it, you've just got to get on with it.' So just kind of getting on with it and thinking 'I'll be home next year.'
>
> (Chloe[B], Interview 2)

Going on to explain how she thought this had changed her attitude to work, she explained:

> All organisations have their own cultures and it's not like a country and it's not like the food's all different or anything but there's a lot of that at work as well, isn't there? You might have to do things that you don't really like or don't want to do or you think's pointless but you've just got to do it. There's no point in causing a fuss and getting annoyed, you've just got to accept things, you might not like something but just get on with it kind of thing.
>
> (Chloe[B], Interview 2)

For some of the participants, not just those undertaking traditional WIL, it therefore seemed that it was the exposure to 'others' that was the key driver of change in the way participants saw themselves rather than work experience itself.

7.2.3 What do they think of me?

Following from the idea of participants identifying the importance of learning to appreciate differences between themselves and others, and to think about how they make judgements, is the converse of this. Participants talked about how building relationships was not only about how they saw others, but also how

they thought they themselves were seen. Participants demonstrated an 'increasing-emerging' awareness that they might be seen as the 'different' one and 'belonging' (to the workplace, profession, or particular circumstance they were in) was also perceived as something that needed to be managed in order to build effective working relationships. In the first interviews it was notable that a number of the social work participants set out their concerns over how they thought they were seen and the possible impact of this on relationship building at work:

> Building relationships, it's more than just you as a person, it's things you can't change, like your appearance and things like that. People are going to judge you, your gender, and things like that. Having someone who knows how to do all of the best approach things doesn't mean that someone's literally going to be able to relate to them. Accent as well, I find that that has a major impact on when you're working with people. If you're working with someone who's from a poor background and you sound really posh and you talk really posh and you can't use colloquialisms and things like that, they're not going to believe you. They're just going to think you're some snob, because I've had people say that to me before. I kind of step back and I think 'really, do I sound like that?' But then other people, I'll be working with them and they'll relate to me more because I can use proper language, so it's just choosing what language you use and when you use it.
>
> (Katie^{S}, Interview 1)

> … before I went on my placement, I thought to myself 'there's no way that adolescents are going to see me seriously. I'm only a few years older than them. They're going to think it's just a student, she's not important'. I thought they would not take me as serious as the teaching staff, or as a social work professional and they wouldn't want to work with me, but they didn't. They responded to me exactly the same way they would to teachers, because I had that authority. I had that power. They see me as professional, and that means I can work with them as a professional.
>
> (Abby^{S}, Interview 1)

Mature student Tom^{S} saw a different side to this when he felt his appearance meant assumptions were made about his level of experience:

> This woman says 'are you not qualified?' She says 'oh, I thought you'd been a social worker for years.' I thought 'why? Is that just because of my age? …. Everywhere I've been they've thought 'well he must be qualified because he's older' sort of thing.
>
> (Tom^{S}, Interview 1)

These reflections could, of course, have been influenced by the activities that the social work participants routinely undertook as part of their studies where they were expected to think about self-presentation and how they appeared to clients. However, worries over how they were perceived were not expressed only by early stage social work participants, suggesting that there was a wider concept to explore here. At least some of the business participants expressed anxiety over a perceived need to project an image which established their professionalism. For example Jenny^{B} discussed at length what she thought she should wear on placement to achieve this:

> Yeah, well I'm going to go in a suit … I want to feel like a grown up, so yeah it's really weird ... it's smart, you don't have to wear a full suit or anything like that, you can like wear a skirt and a shirt and things, but yeah it's weird, like here I put on my gym kit because I usually go to the gym, or I'll wear jeans and stuff whereas next year I'm going to actually have to be like 'no, I'm wearing a

> suit every day.' Because there's also people in the warehouse and stuff, and they're not going to wear a suit, and the engineers and stuff. It's very different perceptions like you don't think of an engineer in a suit but you think someone who works in finance in like a full-on suit, especially like guys, full suit and tie, it's really weird ... like I don't want to go into placement, like I'll get my hair cut because literally you have to because you're going to be around people who are a lot older than you, a lot more professional than you, people who have got a lot of experience, so I think it's very important to go in on your first day looking very keen.
>
> (Jenny[B], Interview 1)

After being asked why this was important, she responded:

> But I don't know, there's certain images that's just like that's what I want to look like, and I want to be professional because I think it's really important. Especially if you're client-facing. And my role isn't really client-based, but eventually I want to be in a client-based role, so even more so then that's really important because you're kind of representing the brand as well, it's not just you … Like if you turn up looking scruffy they're definitely going to be like 'what are you doing?' So definitely.
>
> (Jenny[B], Interview 1)

Clearly, she construed 'professionalism' in a particular way related to image and wanted to ensure she matched that.

One aspect of building and maintaining relationships that participants seemed to be prompted by placement to think about was, therefore, how they were seen and judged by others.

7.3 Making effective use of time (Theme 3)

While 'time management' is something that is often set out as being a desirable attribute in the workplace, participants offered some insights into how they perceived this concept and explained what it meant to them. For them, it was not simply about getting the job done: participants identified that managing time autonomously, prioritising work, and knowing their areas of responsibility were all aspects where they thought they had developed through WIL.

7.3.1 Managing time

One of the areas participants discussed in relation to placement was developing skills in managing time independently. In the LQA, something which 'increased-emerged' was that they thought they became better at prioritising work and deciding how much time to spend on tasks, and they said that university deadlines did not often allow this. Will[S] explained his opinion of the differences between university and placement work:

> I'd say because you're working more autonomously the pace was different. I'm used to a very frantic, fast pace which kind of forces you not to have to be organised, if that makes any sense because you don't have time not to be organised, you can't procrastinate because you haven't got the availability to do that. Whereas I think in that environment [talking about his placement] it was very different because you had a lot of time and you used the time in the way that you wanted to use it. So you would find yourself having to decide how much time to award to a certain piece of work and I found that very difficult.
>
> (Will[S], Interview 1)

While this feeling came through more strongly in second year from the social work participants like Will[S], who had already experienced the workplace and were able to describe the different ways they thought they dealt

with job-related tasks in comparison to university work, it was also seen in the construal of the business participants at this stage. They looked ahead to placement and expected to be placed in situations where they were responsible for setting and meeting their own deadlines:

> When I'm writing my assignments it's for me, I'm not helping anybody but me and I just need to get on with it and hand it in. At work other people depend on you to complete something and pass it on, and if you don't get yourself organised and do it you hold stuff up if you know what I mean. It's not about setting a deadline the way it is at uni, it's you having to organise it yourself so you get things done at the right time.
>
> (Jack[B], Interview 1)

One of the ways participants thought demands on time could be managed differently at work compared to at university was through delegation to others. However, this was an area where many of the business participants saw challenges in deploying the skill. While it was something they expected to need to do, there were no clear views of how best they would achieve it. For some, delegation meant being the type of person who organised everyone else's work as well as their own, working longer hours than their subordinates did as a consequence:

> If the manager had got in early and started doing it and sorted out what everybody needed to do then I think everyone would be more inclined to go 'oh I'll do my share now' whereas if the manager wasn't doing it everyone will be like, 'oh no, we're not doing that, we'll just pass it on'.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 1)

There were conflicting views about whether this was a good thing. Anna[B] was not impressed by the examples of delegation behaviour she saw on placement from those above her: she thought they "like to stay busy, they just want to be important, so a lot of the time to delegate work it's not really happening" (Anna[B], Interview 2).

There was, therefore, a perception of something to be learned from experience about how to manage time (both your own time and that of others). Perhaps it is sufficient to say that WIL led the participants to question the best way to do this, although their construal of how it could be managed did not seem to provide them with answers.

7.3.2 Managing work

Participants identified that in order to manage work effectively there was a need to realise what was achievable, and to set boundaries. However, there was some variation in the ways this was seen between the social work and business participants. For the social work participants, it was usually seen to mean putting in as much effort as possible to help clients. However, there was also a realisation that social workers were likely to be in an environment where it was difficult to do this in ways they would ideally like to, as there were so many environmental factors affecting the work. This contrasted with some of the business participants who saw abdication of responsibility as a valid choice, because for them there were far less serious perceived consequences to 'getting it wrong':

> The thing is as well, if you're going to work for somebody else and you're getting paid for an hour, fine, whatever I do I do, it's okay. If it's bad, well all they can really say is do better next time or, you know, you work around it. You have a bad day, nobody cares, everybody has bad

> days. At Uni, you have a bad day, that impacts how much you've done, how much you're thinking. It's your own work, you're working for a grade, nobody's paying you to do it, it's your grade at stake so somehow that pressure is a little bit different. So if you're working for an hour and you're not getting much done that pressure builds up and I think this is the biggest difference.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 2).

Recognising what was within their responsibility and what was not was also seen by many participants as being crucial to staying healthy (particularly in a profession such as social work), and this was something they thought had changed during WIL experience. How much to take on was seen as an area that had 'decreased-ceased' in the LQA of Abby[S]'s data:

> For me, I realise now that I need to say no. At this stage, to me, it's invaluable. If I didn't learn that and I went into a field of work, as a newly qualified social worker, and I said, 'yeah, I'm newly qualified, yes, yes, I'll do that', because I want to look good and I end up going off sick three weeks later, it's not fair on me, it's not fair on the company, it's not fair to my service users. So I've learned now to say, 'I can't do this'.
>
> (Abby[S], Interview 1)

This may be another area influenced by university training for professional life, as it was clearly an area that a number of the social work participants had thought about:

> Looking after myself, like I sometimes didn't know when to admit I needed to take time out but I think with practice I am getting better at that. That's definitely improving, in the working life you need to have a good understanding of your limits and when you should admit you need to stop.
>
> (Zara[S], Interview 1)

So one of the key aspects of time management that came out of the discussion with participants was about their feeling that WIL assisted them in gaining understanding of how much they needed to do, and also of their own limitations.

7.3.3 What comes first: work or home?

Another aspect of effective time management that was discussed by some of the participants (predominantly from business) was recognition of the need to consider how they could allocate appropriate amounts of time to home, work, and friends. Some construed the most important thing as making sure work did not take over, a view expressed by Jack[B]:

> I managed my time. So for example, I might know that I needed to stay late to finish something, but then I'd maybe go and get some food. But then I know I need to go to the gym to wind down and switch off. I've done eight or nine hours of work that day so that's fine. I can do what I want after that and make sure I do something to stop thinking about it. The night time I can do what I want.
>
> (Jack[B], Interview 2)

However, others felt that, for them, work took priority and needed to come before socialising. For example, Anna[B] admired how more senior colleagues balanced demands on their time by not leaving work behind in the office, and saw that as something to aspire to:

> So all of these people that I've worked with, they didn't have much time, but what they were very fantastic with, they made time, they organised their time. So they still ended up going to restaurants with their families and going camping and going … taking their kids to swimming lessons or, during the busiest period one of the Directors ended up packing up and going to Las Vegas for two weeks. He still was picking up the phones, it was just managing their time. You cannot give hundred percent to everything.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 2)

Tori[B] found this juggling of different priorities challenging:

> I had people down the phone saying 'I want this right now.' And I'd be like 'I'm in the middle of doing something' and they're like 'I need this right now' 'Oh god.' So I'd have to stop everything and just do it and then it got to a point when I was working, like well my hours were from half eight to half four, or I could come in from nine to five, but I ended up staying til later because I just couldn't fit everything in or I'd work through my lunch.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 2)

Overall, therefore, while this came through as an area of importance for the participants, two very different views could be seen. Some participants saw themselves as the type of person who completely separated work and home lives, leaving work completely behind when they were not there, while others felt they should ensure there was always time for work whatever else was happening. The fact that this sub-theme was mostly mentioned by the business participants provided an interesting contrast to the discussion of self-care and knowing your limitations which came through previously from the social workers: perhaps there was more awareness of the dangers of burnout in this group due to their training and experience. It should also be acknowledged that social pressure and desire to give me the 'right' impression may have played a part in these responses. The social work participants were possibly better 'trained' to talk to others (particularly academics) about their self-care strategies, while at least some business participants might have felt they needed to say they were the type of person who prioritises work in order to get ahead. It may therefore be that in talking to me about this, they projected what they thought I wanted to hear rather than an accurate reflection of their views.

7.4 Judging performance (Theme 4)

This theme covered two linked areas: firstly, it was about participants' views of how they learned to recognise where they were doing well and where they could improve, and secondly it was about knowing where they could get help to develop.

7.4.1 Developing self-awareness

It was clear in the discussion with many of the social work participants that reflection on both themselves and on their practice was something that they had come to see as a crucial part of their professional identity. Thinking about professional capabilities and how they were performing in the job role was obviously something that was part of their university training for practice and a number of them raised this as an area they had already given quite a lot of thought to: something which in the LQA was 'cumulative' rather than new for them. When asked about what she thought had changed for her from first year to second year, Zara[S] suggested:

> … in relation to self-awareness, like I wasn't good at knowing what I was doing well and what could be improved, but I think from feedback from tutors and my practice, and again developing my own self, I think that's definitely improved.
>
> (Zara[S], Interview 1)

While improving self-awareness was not mentioned explicitly in the same terms by the business or journalism participants, related areas were brought up by participants from both of these groups. For them, discussion tended to be more focussed on the idea of learning about what they thought they were capable of and their use of placement as a way to make this clear. Rosie[J] suggested that before undertaking work experience "I knew what I could do but I just didn't think even that was good enough" (Rosie[J], Interview 1), while Anna[B] talked about developing and adjusting her ideas as she came to understand that she didn't know as much as she thought she did:

> The way you perceive yourself changes and the more you see what's out there, the more you are able to realistically do it. I don't remember who said that but it's no good knowing because the more you know, the more you will know that you don't know so much.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 1)

Based on the views of these participants, it may therefore be that a perception of increasing self-awareness is something that placement could offer some participants even where this is not explicitly built into the programme of study (as it is through practice supervision for a group like social work).

7.4.2 Seeking support

The increase in awareness about abilities and performance led some participants to discuss where they thought support could come from in areas where they felt they needed help to develop, and this was something that the LQA showed as 'increasing-emerging'. Again, learning ways of using support structures effectively was something that many of the social work participants saw as being part of their training for the profession. It seems that WIL showed them how the support that was available could help them to develop:

> I've got a better understanding of what you can get from supervision [referring to practice supervision]. I think in the past I would have been just very accepting that this was a process, a certain structure that had to be done and, like I said, accepted it as a ticky box exercise whereas, from having those positive experiences, I can understand how much more value you can take from supervision. So definitely without doubt it's something that I've developed.
>
> (Will[S], Interview 2)

This was a perception that a number of the business participants also demonstrated, talking about how they learned to ask for support when they needed it. This came through particularly strongly for Jenny[B] who was working in the car industry and who was therefore faced with numerous unfamiliar terms and processes:

> So asking people things at [company name] was part of a big thing about the job because I had to know what was going wrong and what was being done about it. So you had to, like there was so much stuff I had no idea about, like I don't know how an engine works, I don't know how components fit together but I have to then go and find out and then go and speak to my Director and it was kind of like well you still have to go and find it. People aren't just there expecting you to ask because different things come up for them every day, different things come up for you so yeah. You have to make sure you are able to go ask for help I think.

(Jenny[B], Interview 2)

So while these may be development areas that were more foregrounded for the social work participants, perhaps because of training and university experience, they were also present for the other groups as something that came out of placement experience. Realisation of the need to reflect on and judge performance, and the ability to ask for help when you need it, were both areas where participants felt they changed during WIL.

7.5 Growing confidence (Theme 5)

Developing self-confidence was something mentioned by many of the participants in their accounts of what they thought placement gave them. This was particularly visible in the contrast between Tori[B]'s two interviews, with her expressing considerable uncertainty in second year over what she wanted to do after graduation:

> Yeah because one morning I'll wake up and I'll be like 'yeah, I know what I'm doing' and then another morning I'll be like 'I'm not sure' you know, because I lack confidence as well so that brings me down a lot, because I don't have the confidence in me …. It's like I do want to open up my own business, be a manager there … but it's like I don't have the confidence. I don't think I'd be able to do it because it's a lot of hard work …. and then sometimes I'm like I'll have my degree, I'll just go work for someone else. Then one morning I'll just wake up and be like, I can't do none of this, I'm too stupid for it.
>
> (Tori[B], interview 1)

By the time of her second interview, after placement, she said:

> A lot of my friends said that when I came back to University, a lot of them did say, 'You look more confident. You come across more confident, you're more open, you're willing to do things that you didn't do, you've come out of your shell basically.' And they actually did say 'It's due to the placement.' And it definitely is.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 2)

The question then was, where did those participants who identified it think this increase in confidence came from? Was it a case of WIL acting as a 'contextual-intervening condition', or was it something that would happen anyway, as part of their normal development? Two sub-themes are presented here which gave some insights into this. Firstly, it seemed that WIL was seen by some of the participants as forcing them into being creative and taking risks and, in that sense, it was a 'contextual-intervening condition' in the LQA, beyond what would have happened anyway. For some participants, this went as far as 'trying out' being someone completely different to their university persona while on placement. Secondly, self-belief was seen as developing through demonstrating capability in practice.

7.5.1 Dealing with the unfamiliar

Several participants described experiences where they felt they were 'thrown in at the deep end', put in an unfamiliar and slightly scary situation where they just had to cope with whatever came along, and suggested that these changed their views of themselves. This might have been something directly related to the job role, or about more generic situations such as having to give a presentation to a large audience or to senior

colleagues, or even having to travel alone to unfamiliar places. These were overwhelmingly described as positive experiences. Seeing they could cope in those unfamiliar situations built confidence by demonstrating to participants that they could deal with it, and changing their construal of their capabilities as a result:

> With this job it was like you've got no choice but to do it, which I think it makes it better in a way. You've got no choice but to do it because the job's forcing you, you're forcing yourself and you can do it. It's like if you can't do it, if you get the option of oh you can do it or you don't have to do it, you'll always go for the option of not doing it and if you never get a chance to do it, you'll never know if you can do it or not. So this job was like, you've got no choice but to do it because it's part of your role.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 2)

Tori[B] explained that her way of dealing with the uncertainty of these situations was to put on an 'act' while on placement, pretending to be confident until it became the reality:

> I was shy at first but I thought if I'm going to carry on being shy I'm not going to get anywhere. I just thought to myself that they don't exactly know me so if I just present myself as a loud, confident person then I'll get through it … Then with the conferences, because it was me and my manager that were doing the main things around the conferences, it was our job to go out and talk to people, our job to go out and promote NHS, it was my job to sort all the IT out so I was stood at the front most of the time. If I didn't have the confidence I wouldn't stand there. There were so many points that everyone was just staring at me and I was like 'Oh god' but I managed to do it. Just pretend because nobody else knows.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 2)

In LQA terms this categorised it within 'participant-conceptual rhythms', with participants going through cycles of action, identifying growth and development in phases related to how they were choosing to behave at work. Particularly for participants who expressed fears about how they would cope in a completely new environment, confidence then came from validation of the role they were playing:

> I'm not necessarily very confident, but when it comes to my work I can put this hat on and I can be very confident. A lot of people when I started my placement from university, my tutor, she was saying, 'you're not very confident in yourself and your own ability in things, that's going to have an impact. Do you think you can manage?' I said, 'well, yeah'. Then when I went out on the placement, she was like, 'oh actually, yeah you are really good'. I think I've got a very good ability to act.
>
> (Katie[S], Interview 1)

As the fear factor reduced and confidence increased, placement could also then provide a place to go beyond this 'act' by also trying out new and riskier (or at least less instinctive) ways of working in a further cycle of action, leading to a change in self-perception. Anna[B] explained how WIL experience made her worry less about working in a particular way:

> I would rate myself much higher on being highly adaptable to work situations. I think I like structure, I like rules but at the same time, I've developed to think outside the box and I am definitely much more relaxed about rules and following – something has changed this year and I can see that in my personal life as well as in university work. So I think in my next work placement I will be much more adaptable. I'll be able to take on a task without having so much structure to it and clear rules I have to follow. So yeah, I think that's improved. Definitely it's changed.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 1)

It therefore seemed that participants felt their confidence developed through key aspects of their WIL experience. Firstly they thought WIL forced them into unfamiliar situations and allowed them to see that they could deal with this, leading to changing self-perceptions. Secondly WIL gave opportunities to 'try on' different behaviours to see if they were effective in the workplace.

7.5.2 Increasing self-belief

Participants identified the importance of gaining validation from trying out new experiences and seeing success in making them realise what they were capable of. For many of them, seeing demonstrable evidence of their capabilities made them more confident about their abilities and their role.

As Anna[B] said:

> On the placement, I was challenged sometimes to the point that I thought I will not be able to do it but I did. Even if I failed it was okay because I did things that I could never imagine myself doing before. And then knowing that, over this year I kept improving. I think the confidence level of it was a big part of that.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 1)

Others said increased confidence came from being directly told that they were fitting in and doing a good job, with placement again providing the 'contextual-intervening conditions' for this to happen. Speaking about feedback from a more senior colleague in her placement organisation Abby[S] explained how this helped her see herself differently:

> She said, 'you'll be a brilliant social worker'. She was naming off all these skills and all these qualities that I had. I just sat there and thought, 'I can do it', you know? It's just a little pat on the back. A little well done.
>
> (Abby[S], Interview 1)

So it seemed that WIL could increase confidence by providing participants with scope to experiment: either testing their ability to cope with unfamiliar situations, or to prove themselves. Seeing that they were capable, and were also seen as capable by others, was an important validating experience.

7.6 Discovering the profession (Theme 6)

This theme was about a process of discovery that participants said they went through when undertaking WIL. This could have been about the job itself, finding out what it involved and what it was actually like in practice, and testing pre-conceived ideas about this. It could also have been about themselves, finding out if they were as suited to a role as they thought they were.

7.6.1 Finding out about the job role: Is it what I think it is?

This sub-theme captured the participants testing ideas and assumptions about the job role. It therefore follows that it was particularly relevant for the social work participants, who all said they had entered their programme of study with a clear view of what they would do after graduation (presumably influenced by the strongly vocational nature of their programme and the narrowing of choice implicit in starting a degree of this nature). One of the journalism participants (Rosie[J]) also had a similar clear career path in mind. This was quite

different from the business participants, who all said that they did not have a clearly defined job role in mind when they started their degree. Many went further by saying that they chose their programme precisely because they thought of it as having a more open nature than the alternatives. The second journalism participant (Amira[J]) was closer in attitude to this group. Since this sub-theme is about testing pre-conceived ideas about the job role it therefore follows that the discussion in this section is based predominantly on views from the social work participants, who were more likely to have these than participants from the other programmes.

All of the social work participants talked about ways in which the day-to-day job role they saw on placement was different from what they expected when they chose their programme of study. For them, WIL therefore allowed their pre-conceived ideas to be tested and refined. Tom[S] gave an example of how his ideas changed:

> I've still got the same aims but I think I've learnt since I started that you're restricted by a lot of policies, procedures and bureaucracy that seems to like hamper what you're doing, if you know what I mean? I'm following different policies and – and when I first started I thought it's more like a people profession, you get out meeting people, you can relate to them, empathise with people. But I was really surprised how much of it actually is not about meeting people, it's about paperwork and ticking boxes.
>
> (Tom[S], Interview 1)

On a basic level, it might be expected that this type of knowledge about the profession could be taught. It is highly unlikely that social work programmes are designed to send graduates into the profession expecting to focus exclusively on helping people without understanding the reality that the job involves a huge amount of record keeping and monitoring, and it may therefore seem surprising that this was something participants said they realised on placement. It seemed, however, that it was difficult for them to appreciate the world of work fully without being directly involved in it and their construal of the job therefore changed as they experienced it. Will[S] attempted to explain the differences between hearing about social work from university and actually participating in it on placement:

> I think university presents a very idealistic view of what practice is like versus the reality of practice. I found it quite - it can be quite difficult, it can be difficult as well because you're getting this information and it's so abstract, when you're here, and then when you're actually on placement you've got to, I think probably the hardest part is that you've got to pick up the organisational knowledge.
>
> (Will[S], Interview 2)

Unsurprisingly, it seemed that this process of finding out about the reality of the job could also lead participants to question whether their chosen profession was the right one for them. This seemed to be particularly relevant if it was not how they imagined it, leading to a 'decrease-cease' in certainty about their direction. An extreme example of this 'decrease-cease' could be seen in Gill[S], who considered changing programme at the end of her second year of study because she was disillusioned after finding that social work was not what she wanted it to be:

> I don't know, I'm halfway through the course now and I don't know if it's what I want to do anymore, having experienced it … I wanted to go into social work, it sounds all whimsical, but to

> make a difference to people, but from my experience of talking to people who actually work in the field and stuff now, you haven't got time to do that. It's a production line, you know, you don't have the time to spend with people because time means money, and they just want people through the system as quick as possible, which isn't what I was going into social work for.
>
> (Gill[S], Interview 1)

Overall, therefore, it seemed that the participants' view was that while university could provide knowledge about the world of work, in order to fully understand what it was like they needed to experience it: it was a key 'contextual-intervening condition' in the LQA. For them, this knowledge was felt to be something that could only come from placement. Based on the emphasis many of the social work participants placed on this, the challenge to existing perceptions might be particularly valuable for participants who thought they already had a clear idea what their chosen profession involved, helping them to test and refine their ideas.

7.6.2 Finding out about myself: What job suits me?

For several of the participants across all three programmes gaining 'real' experience of the workplace also led to development of their construal of themselves and what type of job was right for them. Using placement as a way of clarifying direction or discovering what type of job role would suit seemed to be particularly important for participants from a business background given that they often started their programmes with very little idea of what area they wanted to work in on graduation and had chosen a more 'generic' degree for that reason. Illustrating this, Tori[B] said she chose a general business degree because she had no idea what career path she wanted to follow and looked to placement to provide her with ideas:

> Yeah, that's what I'm hoping. I'll come out of the placement and I'll know what I want to do so I can like work towards it in my final year. Because I don't want to leave university and still have no idea what I want to do.
>
> (Tori[B], Interview 1)

For others, it seemed that university had given them some initial direction and they then used placement to confirm whether they were on the right path. Jenny[B] explained that she had little idea of what she wanted to do when she started university, but sought out a finance placement after enjoying the subject in first year and:

> I got to go out on an audit as well which was really cool, so it was an internal audit but you do it at dealerships … and I said to the guy is this similar to what you would do in a bigger company? And he was like similar process in terms of this is what you have to look at, you get a sample and things like that. And I just thought it was really interesting, and it made me think that this is definitely what I want to do.
>
> (Jenny[B], Interview 2)

In LQA terms, Jenny[B]'s 'increase-emerge' in certainty can be seen clearly here. Placement also led some participants to consider work areas that would not have been perceived as suitable previously, changing their construal of what could be right for them rather than just confirming what they already thought. Anna[B]'s experience provided an example of this. After starting her degree, she had decided to participate in a scheme intended to increase the number of graduates going into supply chain management (an area which suffers from under-recruitment). She explained how she thought WIL could demonstrate that this was a suitable career path to those taking part:

> How do you convince somebody? How do you show them that it's not like that without showing them from the inside? So that's why the NOVUS scheme started, to get some people interested beforehand and then giving them a go to try it. If they didn't like it, they can still come out. But it's just trying to get more people interested and also awareness.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 1)

However, this idea of placement playing a part in exposing participants to areas they had not previously considered and changing their ideas as a result was not only raised by the business participants. While discussing different areas within social work, Will[S] commented similarly:

> I could at least say now that there's other options which I've explored, I've enjoyed, I could potentially do that. So I've got three areas which now I could say okay, if I saw jobs for that I would think about those roles whereas before the placement I would never have considered working with learning disabilities at all. But now I've had a placement and it was something that I really enjoyed.
>
> (Will[S], Interview 1)

Although the social work participants generally said they started their programme with a clearer idea of what they wanted to 'be' on graduation than the other groups, many of them still identified placement as broadening their ideas about what was possible. For example, Connor[S] talked about deciding whether to try to specialise in working with children or adults:

> … because when I went into it I had the skills of working with adults in a social care setting and no experience of working with children. So I felt more comfortable working with adults. But then in my first year we had three individual day placements, one of which was working with the elderly and I really hated it, that was the only one I didn't like. It put us off adult social care a bit to be honest in the terms of as well placement. I was a bit confused then as to what I was going to go into and the career path that I was going to choose. I didn't want to in my third year to get stuck elderly care social placement. So I really wrote off adult a little bit. My second year placement was working with children in a school and I thought be open minded and think of the other side, children's social work, and then I went into placement that really informed my decision a bit more as to where I wanted to go.
>
> (Connor[S], Interview 1)

This widening of ideas led to less rather than more certainty in the construal of what specific role some of the participants saw themselves in: a 'decrease-cease' for many of them in the LQA. This meant that, instead of narrowing their focus, exposure to new possibilities made them say they were more uncertain about where they wanted to go as they could see multiple possible directions. More of the social work participants than those from other groups discussed going through this, but it was not exclusive to them: at least one of the business participants (Harry[B]) and both of the journalism participants talked about how they felt they had become less decisive about their ideal job role as they progressed through university, because their ideas widened. It may therefore be that 'career decidedness' for these participants could be judged to have gone down over the course of their degree and that this would not necessarily be a bad thing as it would be a consequence of broadening ideas.

7.6.3 Finding out about myself: Where do I fit?

One of the areas of anxiety expressed by participants around knowing the profession was about how they felt they would 'fit' within the workplace, and how they would find their place. For example, Anna[B] worried about how she would fit in with people who had different backgrounds to her:

> And the one thing in the work placement which I'm actually at the moment – I'm very excited to go but it's something that is on my mind, that I'll be surrounded by people – in supply chain, unfortunately, there's a lot of people who are from good families, from the kind of thinking higher profile families. I'm from a working-class background so I do feel out of place quite a lot …. Because I haven't seen it all, not as much as many people. I have not been brought up by – my mum was a chef and my dad is a car mechanic.
>
> (Anna[B], Interview 1)

Part of the difficulty expressed with perception of 'fitting in' was also about having a clearly defined role which was similar on at least some level to a 'real' job. For example, some social work participants discussed the difficulties inherent in having the label of 'student' attached to them while on WIL. This meant they were often thinking about how those around them saw their role and responsibilities. For others, undertaking placements provided opportunities to test out what was the right fit for them.

In the later interviews less anxiety about 'fitting in' was expressed: it seemed that perhaps this became less of a concern after the participants actually experienced the workplace and saw how people related to them. At this stage the discussion tended to be focussed on how placement provided reassurance and validation of their perceived 'right' to be in the workplace. This could come from incidents where they tested how they performed in the job role. For example, Zara[S] explained how seeing the difference she could make to a client motivated her:

> with one of my cases I had a really positive experience where the family were sort of stuck with what to do with their child who had a disability and they had no diagnosis and they didn't know what support was out there and then I came and I got a bit of support from my service and then I threw all these suggestions out and I did the assessment and then at the end she was just very grateful and I could see how her son had sort of thrived and changed thanks to our intervention. So that was really rewarding.
>
> (Zara[S], Interview 2)

Abby[S] also described how surprised she was to find that she was taken 'seriously' by the teenagers she worked with, and how this helped her to see herself in the professional role, when she had expected that:

> they would not take me as serious as the teaching staff, or as a social work professional, but they didn't. They responded to me exactly the same way they would to teachers, because I had that authority. I had that power. That developed my confidence, that they see me as a professional.
>
> (Abby[S], Interview 1)

While some of the social work participants said that academic study had caused them to doubt whether they had chosen the correct career path, being able to apply their practical skills on placement offered them a way of confirming that they were in the right place: as for Abby[S] above, placement acted as the 'contextual-

intervening condition' for change to take place. Katie[S] explained how WIL had impacted on her confidence and the difference between university and WIL situations for her:

> And that's when I'm actually getting results. When I'm helping people. When I'm writing my assignments, it's for me. I'm not helping anybody but me. Whereas when I'm in practice, the person's there, and I am doing things to help them there and then. I'm good at that. But assignments, not great, no.
>
> (Katie[S], interview 1)

So it seemed that gaining practical experience led to several outcomes for different participants' views of themselves at work. Placement may have reinforced their ideas about what type of job they wanted, particularly if their pre-existing ideas about what it involved were confirmed (their construal of themselves did not change significantly, and their construal of the job did not change). Alternatively, placement may have led them to consider new directions or options by showing them other possibilities to those they had previously considered (their construal of themselves did not necessarily change but their construal of the job did, and they therefore changed their view of where they wanted to go). For those without a clear career direction in mind before undertaking WIL, it might have helped to provide clarification of this (their construal of suitable job roles changed and developed). Or, in some cases, seeing that the job role was not right for them might have led them to reject the profession altogether (their construal of the job changed to such an extent that they felt they could not be part of it).

7.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has established two main areas for discussion. Firstly, while participants talked about many of the skills and characteristics (such as communication, time management, or working independently) that the literature around WIL and its purpose might have predicted, there is additional richness in exploring what they thought influenced change and development in these areas. Key points to take forward to the discussion from the first area are:

- participants felt WIL helped them to see the value and application of theoretical learning, changing their views of what it was important to know (Theme 1, Integrating Learning);
- exposure to 'difference' in terms of working with people who they would not normally encounter was an important feature which helped the participants to reconstrue the way they perceived and worked with others (Theme 2, Building and Maintaining Relationships);
- they perceived time management as not just about getting the job done, but also about using the time they had in the best possible way. For them this meant learning to work autonomously, knowing their limitations, and being able to balance work and home life (Theme 3, Making Effective Use of Time);
- their construal of knowing whether they were doing well at work was firstly that they needed to know what the required standard was (they needed to judge what was required), and secondly they had to be able to seek out appropriate support where needed (Theme 4, Judging Performance);

- in LQA terms WIL was seen as an important 'contextual-intervening condition influencing change', developing confidence by putting students in unfamiliar situations and allowing them to see that they could cope with this. It was also thought to provide opportunities to 'try out' new behaviours in a (relatively) safe environment, which encouraged some participants to experiment and take risks. Both of these practices encouraged reconstrual of how they saw themselves at work. (Theme 5, Growing Confidence).

The second broad area to take forward for discussion comes from Theme 6 (Finding Out About the Profession). While WIL led to increased career decidedness for some participants, helping them to focus their ideas towards a specific job role they wanted to go into on graduation, this was not true for many of them. One reconstrued the profession they had thought they wanted to enter to such an extent that they decided it was not suitable for them and rejected it as a result. In less extreme cases, WIL showed some participants that there were more options to think about than they had realised, leading to reconstrual of what would suit them best and increased uncertainty as they broadened their ideas. In LQA terms, WIL could either lead to an 'increase-emerge' or a 'decrease-cease' in certainty about career direction.

Chapter 8: Individual experiences of WIL

8.1 Introduction

The findings set out in the previous chapter came from two of the analysis methods used (Template Analysis and LQA). The third method employed, Kelly's protocol for exploring the views expressed in the self-characterisation sketches, led me to produce case studies of the eight participants who provided sketches in both second year and final year. Three of these, illustrating some of the diverse changes that took place in the individual views of the self at work, are presented in this chapter. Since a significant amount of the interview discussion was based on the ideas emerging from the sketches quotes from the interviews are also used here to provide depth and illustration of the individual participant's views.

Shorter versions of Connor's and Harry's case studies (entirely written by me) have previously appeared in a co-authored book chapter (Burr, McGrane, Sutcliffe, & King, 2019) and published conference paper (McGrane et al., 2019). A copy of the conference paper can be found in Appendix 11.

8.2 Connor: moving from certainty to doubt

8.2.1 Background

Connor was a male student from the UK who was 35 years old at the start of his programme of study and identified himself as having some relevant previous work experience in his questionnaire results. He had worked in a call centre before deciding on a career change, and initially spent a short time in adult social care before deciding to do a degree in social work in order to progress further in this area. His first placement, in second year, was in a school, while in final year he worked in local authority children's services (a 'statutory placement').

8.2.2 Connor in second year

Connor's first self-characterisation sketch and interview told something of a story of development and discovery. The placement seemed to have helped to move him from uncertainty to more idea of what area he wanted to work in and to have developed his ideas about himself in the profession. There was a growing realisation that he already had relevant skills (from previous work experience) that he could bring to a social work role. Initially he was unsure which area of social work he wanted to go into but more career certainty developed through his placement experience. His starting point for his first self-characterisation sketch was to express this uncertainty, saying clearly that "Connor as a social worker didn't know which area of social work he wanted to have his career in" (Connor, Sketch 1). In the interview he expanded on this explaining that, while he very much wanted to do something 'worthwhile' that would make a difference to others, he came into the course unsure of exactly what that would be. Based on his previous experience he had expected it to be with adults, however on a pragmatic level he perceived there to be more jobs in children's social work and so he targeted this for his second year placement (completed just before the first sketch was written) in order to 'try it out'. He explained: "I was open minded, and I thought, yeah, yeah, I'll give it a go, children terrify us but we'll see how it goes. It just opened up that area for me really and I was happy" (Connor, Interview 1).

Although he mentioned in both the first sketch and first interview that job opportunities were a key driver of his decision to try working with children in his second year placement, it seemed that the experience led him to change his ideas and to want to work with children for more reasons than just this. In terms of skills required for the role, he saw himself as quite a creative person and thought this was a valuable asset when working with children. He was also surprised by how much of his previous work experience (in a call centre) was relevant to the placement role and how many of the skills were transferable, identifying communication skills as being important in both roles and saying in the interview that:

> It really did surprise me. It surprised me that I picked up on the children's different communication styles and adapted my communications styles to meet theirs. It was going well and I think that's when I realised I was doing big positive things.
>
> (Connor, Interview 1)

Another area which came through from his first sketch was realisation of the responsibility involved in the work he had chosen which, to a great extent, came from being seen as a role model by the children he was working with:

> He found working with children very rewarding and saw himself as a positive role model in the childrens [sic] lives, however this made Connor feel a pressure of responsibility towards the children. Connor felt more responsible for his actions and the realisation of being a professional.
>
> (Connor, Sketch 1)

One of the aspects of this statement which merits discussion is that this was about how he saw *himself*, this view that he was a 'positive role model' was an internal one driven by his self-image rather than something that he had been told by others. In the interview he expanded on this by explaining how it came from the circumstances he was working in, with few male teachers or (in many cases) male adults being present in some children's lives meaning he felt he stood out to them. He therefore felt being male meant he got a particularly positive strong reaction from many of the children as it made him different to most of the other (female) staff in the school, which was very affirming for him but also led to him feeling a lot of responsibility. Linked to this seemed to be a developing understanding of how he was in the process of becoming a professional, with changing constructs about what being a social worker actually meant in reality. For example, while he identified one of the important aspects to him of a social worker as being the 'ability to make a difference' he said he would actually rate himself lower for this after his placement than he would have done in the past. This was because in the past he had less understanding of the role and of his skills, and this was something he had gained from WIL: "I didn't know what I was letting myself in for … and the way I think it's going to be might not be the way it's going to be. Yeah, a bit of self-realisation went on" (Connor, Interview 1)

8.2.3 Connor in final (third) year

In his second sketch, completed almost exactly a year after the first one, Connor talked about how he had accepted a graduate job in children's safeguarding with a local authority, to start after graduation. The tone of this sketch was less positive in many ways, and also contained far less personal description of how he expected to be in the role. An amount of anxiety about taking up a 'real' social work job came through strongly, and this

seemed to be linked to the final area he discussed in Sketch 1 where the responsibility and reality of what he was going to be doing seemed to have come to the forefront. This was probably understandable given he was about to face the transition from university into full-time work and was coming to terms with what this would mean for him.

Connor seemed to be torn between being happy to have secured a job in his preferred area of working with children, saying he "feels very lucky to have a job in social work in this current climate" (Connor, Sketch 2) and uncertainty over whether this was actually what he wanted to do. He knew from placement that within the local authority where he would be working there were retention issues and said that a lot of people from there moved out to other authorities or gave up social work altogether. There was also perhaps a suggestion that he felt he *should* feel happy, knowing that he was one of the fortunate ones who would be going straight into a job after graduation.

In contrast to Sketch 1 where his WIL experience seemed to have opened up new avenues for him and made him think about his capabilities differently, at this time point there seemed to be more of an element of pragmatic choice and strategic decision making in Connor's opinions of what placement had given him. There was no strong desire to work in any particular area or any clear changes in how he saw himself in the role. He felt that the job he had obtained was his because he had used the placement to get himself known in an organisation so that when an opportunity came up he was well placed to get it, rather than because of any particular aptitude or skills he had. His view of this was that his "initial plan seems to have pad [sic] off" (Connor, Sketch 2) and he further explained in the interview how set he had been on having a 'statutory' placement (i.e. in a statutory area such as child protection, adult safeguarding, or in mental health within the NHS). He wanted this because of the impact he felt it would have on his job prospects:

> It wasn't statutory [speaking about a different role he was offered and turned down] and I wanted statutory because I hadn't had a statutory placement and I wanted to be in a Local Authority because, for me, my, the way I was foreseeing things was that I wanted to be in a statutory Local Authority, they could see how I was working, apply for a job there, get a job there.
>
> (Connor, Interview 2)

When he talked about the role in his sketch it appeared to be in a slightly detached way (given that the sketch was designed to be self-descriptive) for example starting by saying he would be "taking up employment … as a social worker in children's safeguarding" (Connor, Sketch 2) rather than saying he would 'be' a social worker. It almost felt as if this was something which had happened to him rather than being a positive decision on his part, despite his clear strategic focus on getting this type of job. He felt he should be grateful to have a job, but now that he had got what he had worked towards he was worried both about the reality of the situation he would be going into and the responsibility he would have. He was understandably "nervous about having his own case load and the responsibility for people's lives which might make him anxious" (Connor, Sketch 2).

He was also conscious of the transition stage he was in from being a student to being a social worker, which added to his uncertainty over what he wanted. This anxiety was mitigated to some extent by the fact he was going to work in a familiar environment, but this also had negative aspects because he understood many of

the issues and problems in the organisation he was going to work with. He knew that a number of other social workers had chosen to leave because of these. In this case, it seemed that the second placement had reduced his career decidedness by giving him a strong understanding of the reality of the role. This had made him question whether it was something that he really wanted to do. Once the pressure to secure a job was gone, he was actively questioning the decisions he had made and the value of his degree to the profession:

> Working to timescales, filling out forms, talking to people, spend a lot of time in the office … After I got the job I thought 'do I want to be a social worker?' because I just thought, I don't know, I've done three years at University, did I really want to do three years to get this? I don't know.
>
> (Connor, Interview 2)

8.3 Harry: reinforcing existing ideas

8.3.1 Background

Harry was a male student from the UK who was 19 years old at start of his programme and came straight from other study to university. He was studying business management and identified on the questionnaire that he had some previous work experience on entry, which he subsequently explained consisted of part-time and summer work in a local shop near his home and on a building site. He did not have a sandwich placement for third year organised at the time of the first sketch and interview but was still looking/applying and expecting to do this. He subsequently spent his third year working in a management role in a hotel owned by a national chain.

8.3.2 Harry in second year

Harry seemed to move in his first self-characterisation sketch between describing himself as someone who would be fun to be around, who would see his staff as "more of friends than just staff members" (Harry, Sketch 1) but would also have the power to set targets and hand out rewards when these were met. There was clearly some conflict in his view of how he would want to behave in the work role, as he wanted people to enjoy being around him, and wanted his employees to see him as a friend and someone who was good to work with. However what this seemed to mean to him in practice was about his staff being rewarded for doing good work, and the social relationship would then naturally lead to this happening as they would want to please him. Harry expanded on this in the interview, and explained that his construal of this was very much influenced by a previous job he'd had, where he'd had a very good relationship with the owner of a shop he worked in:

> I always offered to do extra help when I've had fun. So I see them more as a friend. I used to work in a little village store, and it used to be like I was working with my friend when he was there. So then whenever he needed a favour I was always happy to do it. So I would always hopefully do that when I hopefully become a manager if I could replicate that and be more like friends with the people who were working with me.
>
> (Harry, Interview 1)

However in contrast to this friendly atmosphere he felt that things should be organised, and that social interaction should have a purpose: in particular he saw himself as someone who would make sure that "staff would know exactly what is required" and, therefore, "less time would be wasted" (Harry, Sketch 1). There

seemed to be a question raised in the sketch over whether his priority was for everyone to be happy or for him to get results, and whether these two things were compatible. On a personal level he said he would relax with his friends, not people from work, as he would need to get away from work to relax and be "refreshed for the week ahead" (Harry, Sketch 1). Although he wanted to be liked by his employees, he was concerned that this may lead to him being "to [sic] laid back and naïve to some members of staff therefore offering them liberties that they may not deserve" (Harry, Sketch 1). There was a hint in this that he recognised the style he preferred might not be practical.

Influences from his previous work experience where he would have been relatively young seemed to have been fundamental to forming his construal of how the ideal manager behaved and what he saw as an effective management style. In the interview it became clear that his boss in the village shop (who he enjoyed working for) was something of a role model of how he himself wanted to be as a manager, in contrast to experiences he had working on a building site. In the first interview he made very clear references to management behaviours he had seen in both situations, which he had learned from and would hope to adopt (or not) as part of his own management style, for example around team working. In particular being prepared to do the same work as everyone else was important to him in establishing credibility, and in describing himself in the sketch he said "he is caring and never would ask his staff to do something that he himself wouldn't be comfortable doing" (Harry, Sketch 1). Talking again about his boss in the village shop during the interview he explained:

> Whatever I did he would always help out, it never felt like he thought he was bigger or better to do something like that. Like he would always set the example, so I never felt like 'oh he's only given me this job because he's not going to bother doing it' or something.
>
> (Harry, Interview 1)

He contrasted this with the building site work:

> Sometimes we got asked to do things I didn't really want to do, and it was as if the other people weren't doing it, they were just giving it to us to do. And I hated that, like I lost all motivation for a while, and we worked with a bit of grudge and so I probably didn't work my best.
>
> (Harry, Interview 1)

Linked to the desire to be liked a paternalistic and caring attitude came across when he described himself at work. This could be seen as a development from his previous work experience where he would have been quite young: "As the week goes on Harry would increase contact with the staff they have in order to see how they are doing and if there was anything he could help them with" (Harry, Sketch 1). In his view, it also seemed to be his role to decide whether people could leave early and to hand out 'treats' and rewards for staff who did what he expected of them, which was perhaps another aspect of this paternalism. He seemed to expect to be very much in control of other people's work experience and to feel some responsibility for this: he could make the work environment 'fun' and 'sociable' and could help people build good relationships, but it was unclear how his own work experience would be determined. There was no mention of his own reporting lines, targets, or relationships in the sketch.

8.3.3 Harry in final (fourth) year

The second sketch was completed about eighteen months after the first, towards the start of Harry's final year at university. In the interim, he had worked for a year as a trainee manager at a hotel (part of a budget hotel chain).

First impressions of the second sketch were that minimal change had taken place in Harry's description of himself after his year's placement: for example, he started by saying he was a manager who "puts his staff first" (Harry, Sketch 2) demonstrating that this was still a fundamental part of his construal of himself in a work role. There was still a very strong desire to be liked and respected by the people that he supervised. His story of the ideal workplace that he expected to manage was of a happy place, where people enjoyed their job and there was fun and laughter. His role as the manager was to look after everyone and to make sure nobody was upset or unhappy. He took pride in this. However, he expected that there would be some pressure for him to maintain this atmosphere, and he seemed to have a lot of emotional investment in others' happiness: he "hates upsetting people as he always feels guilty thinking that someone may go home feeling they are useless or unwanted" (Harry, Sketch 2).

In contrast to the first sketch, ideas of reward and incentive were not mentioned until the very end and there was some reluctance to talk about disciplinary matters. It seemed that he would rather avoid conflict, sorting out problems with "informal" methods (Harry, Sketch 2) and he seemed to expect that he would be given the same level of respect he offered to his staff and that they would reciprocate his concerns about letting them down. He wanted everyone to leave work "holding no grudges against himself or the organisation Harry works for" (Harry, Sketch 2), and placement reinforced his views that people were motivated principally by enjoying their job. He explained that he'd seen it in the hotel: "… when they were enjoying being at work more so then they'd often offer to help out when it was tight ... I think it did motivate the team, people did enjoy being there and helping out" (Harry, Interview 2).

Another area in which Harry's perception of himself at work did not seem to have changed was in seeing himself as someone who would be able to do any of the work done by the people he managed. He still thought that by demonstrating this competence he would gain their respect: he would show his team "he can do the little jobs and doesn't feel above them at all" (Harry, Sketch 2). Further, he "has not just walked his way into a more senior role without getting 'his hands dirty' in the day-to-day roles first" (Harry, Sketch 2). In the interview it became clear that undertaking WIL had reinforced his already existing construal of how a 'good' manager looked and behaved. As a trainee in the hotel Harry had spent periods of time working in all the different areas (from cleaning rooms to washing dishes in the kitchen) and therefore felt he had 'earned' his place as a manager. This meant he thought that when he was operating in a management role he had the respect of the people he was supervising. Talking about having done a housekeeping role for eight weeks before going into his management position he explained:

> … when someone was saying 'oh you don't even know how to clean the room' some of the housekeepers look a bit annoyed at other managers thinking 'oh they don't know how hard our job is, they don't know what it includes, they don't understand it.' Whereas then I could say, so I

> understood why they'd done that then because when they were saying it to me they knew I was there in their shoes, training off themselves for eight weeks doing it.
>
> (Harry, Interview 2)

It therefore seemed that, based on the sketches, very little had changed for Harry in his construal of his expectations about himself at work. While WIL did not seem to have changed his core beliefs to any great extent, discussion of what had changed for him in the interview instead centred much more around confidence and the value of exposure to different types of people that had helped him to develop this. However, this seemed to come as much from his degree study as from WIL:

> As a person I think I've changed quite a lot. When I came I was a bit more used to my circle, I was more confident with the people I knew but then not as outgoing … I was always quite quiet in seminars, I didn't go and approach as many people whereas in the second year, this year … I'll happily go and talk to new people and stuff like that … Basically because now I'm subject to a lot bigger group or people and stuff, not just in my own little friendship group in my village.
>
> (Harry, Interview 2)

8.4 Rosie: 'becoming' a journalist

8.4.1 Background

Rosie was a 27-year-old female journalism student from the UK who identified herself as having only a little relevant previous work experience on entry. However in the course of the interview discussions it became clear that she had already built up fairly significant experience in the field before starting her degree (for example, she had been writing unpaid reviews for her local newspaper). Rosie's sketches were relatively short in comparison to Connor's and Harry's, however they still provided an interesting additional perspective.

8.4.2 Rosie in second year

Rosie's second year sketch appeared to be very focussed on what she saw as being valued in the profession, and what would help her to progress. In particular, she described herself as having a "strong list of contacts" and having a "strong reputation" (Rosie, Sketch 1). The interview discussion uncovered that she felt it was essential for a journalist to have contacts and to be known in the industry and building this up was a key priority for her:

> … it's completely for them whether they trust you or not and now I think because I've provided that over the years that if I can prove myself to be trustworthy and that I'm good at what I do then there's more chance that they're going to say yes [speaking about obtaining access for reviews/interviews].
>
> (Rosie, Interview 1)

There did, however, seem to be some ambivalence over how she thought she could build this crucial reputation. On the one hand she described herself as a valuable team member, but then also suggested that she "works best on her own" (Rosie, Sketch 1). Who she worked with (in terms of the organisation and clients) seemed to be important to her, although the discussion of herself and her behaviour (committed, hard-working) was kept relatively separate to the hypothetical employer that she saw herself working for. However there was some common ground in the two descriptions: in particular the reputation of the imagined company

was also mentioned as being very important (for example, they were described as a PR company "promoting some of the biggest artists in the world", Rosie, Sketch 1). It seemed, therefore, that she saw reputation and contacts as being crucial both on a personal and organisational level and having these was a fundamental construct about herself as a journalist. Ultimately, she described her future self as someone who was respected for her hard work and who was known in the industry through her contacts. She thought this would naturally lead to work with more and 'bigger' clients as time went on.

While this description was extremely interesting, the interview was crucial in shedding more light on what aspects of WIL she felt were relevant to developing this future self. This illustrated how even a short self-characterisation sketch (only 150 words in this case) could still provide a valuable basis for discussion, perhaps prompting ideas that would not have emerged otherwise. In particular, she provided detailed comments in the interview about what she thought the programme had added to experience she would have got simply by continuing the freelance work she had already started before coming to university. She discussed how she thought she was in the process of building her all-important 'reputation' alongside her studies and identified that her university tutors were key to helping her develop this. Firstly, they did this by adding depth to her knowledge of the profession, and building her credibility as a result:

> This course has given me the foundation for what I can work on …. because now I know far more than I did before I came to uni, before I was doing without any professional support, and I think that can only help what I'm doing going forward whether it's in a work experience placement or just professional and just going out on my own.
>
> (Rosie, Interview 1)

So this would seem to be an example of something that she felt academic study had given her that she could not have acquired by simply going out and 'doing' the job. She also felt her tutors had been instrumental in helping her to build her confidence and encouraging her to 'have a go', saying that previously:

> I didn't have the confidence, like I knew what I could do but I just didn't think even then that I was particularly good enough …. Yes I can write a 300 word review, but probably a twelve year old could write something like that.
>
> (Rosie, Interview 1)

Overall, it seemed that at this stage she saw university as supplementing the work she was doing anyway in an attempt to break into the profession: the support offered by tutors and the integration of practice alongside her studies appeared to be crucial to helping her develop the experience and reputation that she saw as essential for a professional journalist.

8.4.3 Rosie in final (third) year

Rosie's second sketch was also short (140 words) and echoed her first in many ways with discussion of how she is a "hard worker who is also a team player" (Rosie, Sketch 2). What initially stood out was that she seemed to very much be writing about herself as a student rather than a professional (e.g. she started by saying she was a "third year journalism student" rather than 'a journalist' or anything similar). This suggested that she was not quite yet able to visualise herself fully in the profession and raised questions for me about

how she thought she would 'become' a journalist. There was something of an element of wishful thinking about her description of where she wanted to be in the sketch, talking about an imagined perfect job and being somewhere that she "longs to work" (Rosie, Sketch 2). In some places, she appeared to be trying to affirm her role, believing "she will not settle for anything less than her ideal/dream job, ideally based in London or Manchester" (Rosie, Sketch 2). There also seemed to be something of the 'outsider' in her description, speaking of herself as wanting to be 'within' the profession but not being there yet. Some areas of the sketch could be read almost as a job reference, and she said very little that could be construed as negative. For example, she closed with "I believe she would be a great addition to any media or PR related team" (Rosie, Sketch 2), and this perhaps reflected her preoccupations at the time the sketch was written when she was job-hunting. Overall, she expressed a very strong desire to work as a journalist, and saw herself moving into this role, but there seemed to be some underlying uncertainty over whether she would get there. She believed she had the ability to do it, and also had experience which demonstrated her skill, but in terms of actually getting a graduate job and seeing herself as a professional she did not seem to have a clear direction in mind. This contrasted with the relative optimism of Sketch 1, where she seemed to anticipate herself as a member of the profession much more clearly.

Rosie's second interview shed more light on to the areas brought up by her sketch, and particularly the idea of how she might 'become' a professional journalist. The discussion also illustrated how her opinions of the integration of study and practice had changed. In contrast with the sketch, she was more positive in the interview, describing the variety of experience and contacts she had built up. However, unlike the first interview she seemed to see less value in the degree programme, feeling that being a journalist was all about 'doing it' and acting on her own to gain work (as she had already been doing alongside her studies). For example, talking about work experience she had gained she suggested this gave her an advantage over other students:

> … because I write for two main websites and I've started my own third, I know the sort of quality of content they want and how regular they want them. I'm used to sticking to deadlines and meeting certain criteria and things.
>
> (Rosie, Interview 2)

In contrast to Interview and Sketch 1, where she identified the importance of her university tutors in encouraging and supporting her, at this stage she appeared to place much more emphasis on self-reliance. She seemed to feel she had got all of her experience through her own actions and therefore it was going to be entirely down to her to secure more freelance work in future. This perhaps explained the ambivalence over identity which came across in her sketch. She felt that contacting agents, companies, and websites and pushing herself forward for writing jobs came entirely from her own initiative and had very little to do with her studies. When asked what she thought had changed during the course of the degree, it was notable that she talked about her work experience rather than anything to do with the programme, in contrast to Interview 1 where she was more inclined to talk about how the degree study had supported her:

> I just think that, certainly at that point, I'd only done local media stuff, where they just needed the coverage so there was no chance of facing rejection and over the course of this course, as I

> started writing for the websites and things, I pitched ideas and it was a case of I faced rejection but I'd also be able to compromise as well ... Now I've got the contacts to look into the features that I can do.
>
> (Rosie, Interview 2)

She seemed to have become considerably more self-reliant in the year between the two data collection points, and saw the contacts and the reputation that she identified as important as being established through her own efforts alone, to the extent of questioning whether the degree was of value at all:

> In terms of, if I had to go like back three years, I think 'Would I have to do a degree to get where I am now?' No, I don't think I would … I think certainly because I was active on social media, those two writing jobs that I have now would have come about anyway … in terms of building my career, I can't say it's particularly been a great benefit because I'd already built up the connections.
>
> (Rosie, Interview 2)

So, for Rosie, it seemed that the biggest change in self-perception from second to final year came from a construal that she could 'do it anyway', without the academic study. Work experience for her was something she would have built up regardless of whether she did the degree. From second to final year she changed her views about the integration of work into her studies, to the extent of suggesting that the degree was irrelevant to where she hoped to be in a future job role.

Chapter 9: Contributions to knowledge and method

This thesis set out to answer the overall research question:

> How does the experience of participating in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) shape and change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the work role?

Three further specific research questions were developed which contribute to this:

Specific Research Question 1:	What are students' opinions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university, and how do they think these will change in the future?
Specific Research Question 2:	What are students' construals of their individual work identities at later points during their studies?
Specific Research Question 3:	How has WIL influenced this?

This chapter answers the research questions through discussion of the findings presented in Chapters 5,7, and 8 in relation to what is already known, illustrating where a contribution to knowledge has been made. Since the thesis has also demonstrated how Kelly's (1955/1991) self-characterisation sketches can be used to explore changing opinions over time and suggests minor modifications to Saldaña's (2003) LQA template a further section sets out the contribution made to methods.

9.1 Students' opinions on entry

As established in the literature review (Chapter 2), one of the gaps in existing knowledge about the impact of WIL on students was a lack of research done from a student perspective. The first specific research question to be addressed was therefore designed to capture broad opinions from students at an early stage in order to provide a foundation for later exploration of how these might change through WIL.

One of the findings from Chapter 5, the analysis of the questionnaire data gathered from first-year students, was that there appeared to be significant variation in the opinions of the participants' skills according to three main areas. These were programme of study (predominantly Social Work compared to other groups), gender, and age. It is important to emphasise that the diversity found was in self-perceptions of a number of skills and characteristics. Since there was no intention to assess the participants' 'true' abilities in the research it was impossible to say whether (for example) the females in the sample group were actually more adaptable than males in a work situation. However, they rated themselves higher in this area and this has implications for some of the aspects of employability discussed in the review of existing work.

While graduate employment was some time in the future for these participants at the time of data collection, the securing of placement opportunities was not, particularly for the social work respondents. The social work group from University A were just about to take up their first placements while those from University B would have been applying for theirs at this time. Students on programmes with an optional sandwich placement would have been around six months away from applying for opportunities so questions of how they might

present themselves to employers at this time, particularly in terms of the competencies they might have claimed, were particularly relevant to them. The variations found in how they described themselves in relation to work skills could affect their 'marketability', an area that Chapter 2 established was important in securing employment (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Nicolescu & Pun, 2009). How a student presented themselves to a potential employer was also established as an intrinsic aspect of the graduate identity 'claimed by the individual' (Holmes, 2013a), and there were clear differences seen here in the way that males and females, older and younger students, and social work students, saw themselves at the end of first year. This adds depth to the discussion in Section 2.4.1 of how characteristics such as gender and age can impact on employability (Cranmer, 2006; Sin & Amaral, 2016). Gaining a job on graduation was shown to be about a complex mixture of factors, and it seems likely that similar influences would be seen in students applying for WIL opportunities. Washer (2007) asserted that what was most important for graduate employment was demonstrating to employers that the applicant had the skills required to do the job. It seems possible, therefore, that variation such as that seen here in opinions of skills could affect either the WIL that someone chose to apply for, or the way that they described themselves at interview. Those with a higher opinion of their skills could, therefore, already have something of the "competitive advantage" prioritised by Tymon (2013). This is particularly relevant given that the areas included in the questionnaire for this thesis were developed from skills and characteristics which employers had said they looked for (Arnold et al., 1995; Crebert et al., 2004; Jackson & Chapman, 2012). For example, Jackson and Chapman (2012) found that employers and business academics had similar views of business school graduates 'cognitive skills', an area which included critical thinking and problem solving. Given that, in this study, the self-assessment of males in these areas was higher than that of females there is a possibility that males would be seen as more 'employable' (they might have spoken more confidently about their abilities at interview, or have been more positive in applications, for example). Age was also significant, with older respondents likely to rate themselves lower for critical thinking. Since it seems that certain groups (including women) have benefitted more from placement (Reddy & Moores, 2012) it may be particularly valuable for students from these categories to pursue WIL opportunities. However, they may also be at a disadvantage when it comes to securing these. Knowing that the starting point in terms of self-perceptions of some skills is lower for women and older students may point towards a need for work to be done with these groups to ensure they are not disadvantaged when seeking placements. This could, perhaps, be done by emphasising the areas where they felt they were stronger (e.g. adaptability, self-belief and decisiveness for female participants here) rather than assuming a single model will fit all students. While this thesis is not specifically about who chooses to undertake placement, these aspects also resonate with the suggestion that it may be those who already have advantages in terms of confidence and prior academic attainment who choose to do placements where a choice exists (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Bullock et al., 2009; Reddy & Moores, 2006).

As discussed in the summary at the end of Chapter 5, one of the other areas uncovered by the quantitative analysis was a very clear expectation from participants that their skills would improve over time (while the average ratings were already relatively high, all participants expected them to improve further by graduation). Respondents who gave themselves lower current ratings also expected to come up to the same average level

as everyone else by graduation. In common with authors discussing the need for graduates to 'acquire' skills (Cranmer, 2006; Jackson & Wilton, 2016), this suggested they had a somewhat linear view of progression, moving from a lower to higher level of ability across the programme of their degree. This fits with the view of the university role as being to develop higher-skilled, 'work-ready' graduates (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011). One of the contributions made by this study is to explore whether, at later stages, students felt they had experienced this straightforward linear progression.

9.2 Participant self-descriptions

The literature review provided insights into the skills and characteristics that employers and academics thought were important for graduates. This section will look at what the participants in the study talked about when they discussed themselves in the work role, comparing and contrasting what they felt they developed during WIL with what the literature based on skills and characteristics required by other stakeholders said they 'should' develop. Through this, specific Research Questions 2 and 3 will be answered.

9.2.1 Place and situation: Being forced out of your comfort zone

One of the key aspects of change in the participants which was found in the qualitative data was the idea of an expanding world view, with WIL providing a catalyst for this. Often this came from exposure to people and situations that would not have been encountered otherwise. In many cases, the participants' construal both of themselves and of others changed as a result. This ties in with Auburn. Ley and Arnold's (1993) finding that one of the benefits of WIL for the psychology students in their study was a widening of ideas about the world of work. Theme 2 here showed how WIL changed participants' construal of themselves at work by exposing them to people they would not normally meet, while at least some of the growing confidence identified in Theme 5 came from stepping out of 'the comfort zone', with participants' opinions about what they were capable of changing as a result.

WIL as a place to experience diversity

Theme 2 set out the importance of exposure to people 'different to me' in changing participants' views of themselves at work. From realising that they could use their people skills at work, to learning to work with people from diverse backgrounds, this seems to have made them more empathetic and also more confident about building relationships at work. Turning to the categories identified in the literature, this idea of exposure to 'strangers' and learning to work with 'unfamiliar' types of people could perhaps be seen as contributing to team working (Crebert et al., 2004) or working effectively with others (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). However, these categories did not seem to capture the full influence of WIL identified by some of the participants when they talked about who they worked with on placement and how this changed their self-perceptions. In contrast to the position taken in the literature, most of them did not talk in terms of developing a skill that could then be utilised in employment, although some of this could be seen in Anna^{B}'s description of needing to develop strategies for good working relationships in order to manage others effectively. Instead, they spoke about the role new experiences played in broadening their ideas about themselves and their view of where they 'fitted' at work. While Jackson (2014a) identified the importance of a

supportive organisational culture in developing student communication skills, saying that otherwise students who worked with colleagues from diverse backgrounds did not perform as well, her conclusion came from a relatively negative perspective. The suggestion in her study was that low communication skills were one of the 'skills deficits' in graduates that needed to be managed in order to help students to perform their work role effectively. Where students came up against diversity in the workplace she felt this had to be carefully managed as a consequence, to ensure positive outcomes. While exposure to diversity through WIL may help to develop students in ways that improve their communication skills the participants here seemed to see it in a much more positive way. In particular, they said it led to a broader world view and a better ability to work with others by enabling them to meet people they would not have encountered otherwise and to understand them better. Although part of the impact from this was on areas such as their communication skills it appeared to be more fundamental to self-perception than just about becoming better at 'doing' something. It seemed like the participants identified an improvement in communication skills as a natural consequence of a change in the way they saw themselves. This is illustrated by Harry[B]'s discussion of how he became more confident in communication due to meeting people from diverse backgrounds. Although he talked about how this experience improved his communication abilities he identified that this came from seeing himself as a more outgoing type of person overall, someone who could fit in easily with others. This perhaps resonates with Bates's (2008) finding that participants in WIL saw the workplace as a more collaborative environment than university. It also suggests that an increase in skills may not have come from something that could be taught, but rather was about practical exposure to new experiences.

WIL as a place to experiment

A further aspect of exposure to 'difference' which seemed to have influenced the participants' construal of themselves in the workplace was the idea of validating abilities and identity through experimenting in a safe place. This came through particularly in Theme 5. An increase in confidence and self-belief was evident for participants such as Tori[B] as a result of her experimentation with new behaviours, particularly those she perceived as risky. For her, and also for other participants such as Katie[S], the opportunity to construe themselves in new ways was fundamental to their changes in self-belief. While Jackson and Chapman (2012) talked about confidence as an important characteristic that employers looked for in graduates, it was not clear what was meant by this: even when looking at examples of behaviours that would indicate confidence they described graduates demonstrating "self-confidence" and "self-efficacy". It was not particularly clear what this might mean for the individual. The descriptions from the participants here shed some light on this, and to how it might develop through WIL rather than in other arenas. In particular, validation of behaviours and attitudes either by trying them out to see if they were comfortable, or to see if they were accepted by others, was a key driver of change in self-perceptions. WIL allowed participants such as Tori[B] to behave as someone different in the workplace, and to see how she felt about this. One of the important things participants identified about WIL in this regard was its transient nature: unlike a permanent graduate job, if the new identity was judged to be ineffective or uncomfortable, they knew it could be discarded after the placement was over with no long-term consequences for their employment.

Participants using WIL to 'act out' a new character echoes another therapeutic technique used in PCT: fixed role therapy. In this, the self-characterisation sketch is rewritten by a therapist to construct a 'new' identity for the client. The client then adopts this persona for a time-limited period (usually two weeks), with support. The aim is that the experience provides a "good, rousing, construct-shaking experience" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p412). He challenged the idea that the personality was fixed and unalterable, and instead the technique encourages the client to see it as a construction which can be changed (Butt, 2008). The intention is that the person undertaking the new role experiences the world from a different perspective, experimenting to see whether different behaviours and attitudes 'fit' (Epting, Gemignani, & Cross, 2005).

While the sketches were not used in this way here, it is fascinating to find that they have uncovered some of this behaviour in the participants without prompting and it seems that WIL provided an opportunity for them to change their self-perception unconsciously through a similar process of reconstrual through experimentation with a 'new' identity. Tori[B]'s interviews provided the strongest example of this: it was obvious that she had made a conscious decision to 'try out' being someone else while on placement, and this was fundamental to the changes she experienced in her view of herself at work.

9.2.2 Working independently

The literature around desirable graduate skills appears at first glance to have a clear mapping to Theme 3 (Making effective use of time). However, again, closer examination suggests that the way the participants talked about how they had changed their views of time management adds depth to the discussion of the skill area as it was set out in the literature. While time management was given as part of organisational skills by Jackson and Chapman (2012), and Crebert et al. (2004) identified the importance of exposing students to 'real-world' experience in order to improve abilities in the area, they did not really go beyond this in exploring what improving skills in time management meant. Going beyond a definition of time management as simply the ability to 'meet deadlines' (Crebert et al., 2004), the participants here felt that it was not just about making sure things got done at a superficial level, but was also related to learning to use the resources they had available to them more effectively. This meant that working independently was related to this, with WIL playing a part in helping them see themselves as someone who could prioritise and set goals without always looking for direction from others. This adds to Auburn et al.'s (1991) finding that the opportunity for autonomous working was an important aspect of placement for students experiencing WIL, illustrating how it could link to areas such as "assuming responsibility and making decisions" (Crebert et al., 2004, p153), or 'self-discipline' and 'organisational skills' (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). For some of the participants here the opportunity to take responsibility for work, set their own deadlines, and decide how much time to spend on tasks changed their opinion of their abilities to self-manage their work. This, in turn, made them see themselves as being more effective at managing time and managing work tasks more generally.

9.2.3 Understanding of the 'ideal' role

Increased career decidedness and certainty about direction on graduation was something that the literature suggested was an advantage that WIL could offer students (Auburn et al., 1993; Bennett et al., 2008; Moores &

Reddy, 2012). In common with the views of the participants as they were on entry (from the questionnaire), career decidedness was something that seemed to be very much expected to progress from uncertainty to certainty in a straightforward way. It seemed to be accepted that by the time of graduation students should have a clear direction in mind: in terms of their view of themselves in the work role, they should have a strong image of what that would be as it would help them move straight into graduate-level employment. However, what the findings here showed was that this change may not be linear. Some participants such as Jenny[B] and Anna[B] did seem to follow this pattern and the 'expected' progression could be seen coming through for them in the findings of Theme 6, in the discussion of 'What job suits me?'. Coming into their business degrees with limited ideas about what job roles they saw themselves in, they said that university experience had helped them to narrow this down (to working in finance and in supply chain management respectively) and WIL then gave them the opportunity to try out this role and confirm that it was right for them. For Tori[B], it was more about developing the confidence to try out a new job role to see what suited her as even by the end of second year she said she had little idea of what she wanted to do. However, a straightforward increase in career certainty leading to a smooth transition to employment was not present for everyone. As illustrated in Connor[S]'s case study, WIL could actually lead to increased uncertainty as participants became aware of other opportunities that they had not previously considered. For Connor[S] this meant a change in how he saw himself at work, from being suited to working with adults to seeing that he wanted to work with children. Connor[S] also seemed to demonstrate more doubt about himself as a social worker at the end of his degree programme than at the beginning, identifying that now he knew more about the profession he was questioning whether it was right for him. These doubts were also present for Gill[S], to the extent of rejecting a social work career all together.

The questioning of role could be something that was influenced by the type of degree: it seemed that perhaps the participants from the more generic degree programme (business) tended to increase in certainty, while those from the most vocational programme (social work) were more likely to have their pre-conceived ideas challenged. WIL was therefore more likely to increase uncertainty or to change ideas for participants from the social work programme. However even for those who expressed clearer ideas about their job role as time went on, such as Anna[B], there was scope for development and change in opinions. This could particularly be seen in her comments about how she would not have understood her aptitude for supply chain management without experiencing it 'from the inside', as it was not something she would have considered based on academic study alone. Although she was on a vocational programme, Rosie[J]'s case study also showed movement from uncertainty and a lack of confidence to having a clearer picture of the role she saw herself in (journalism) so it does not seem to be a case of everyone on general degrees narrowing their ideas while those on vocational degrees widened theirs. Instead, one of the key roles for WIL seemed to be in making participants consider areas they would not have done otherwise: for some this meant a small change in direction (e.g. Connor[S] deciding to work with children, Anna[B] choosing supply chain management) whereas for others it led to a much larger reconstrual of the 'right' place for them.

In terms of the literature and the discussion around measuring employment outcomes, this increased uncertainty might well be judged as a failure on the part of the university. If a degree is seen as training for employment and the measure of success is for students to get their degree and go straight into a graduate-level job (Brooks, 2012; Moores & Reddy, 2012) then anything that made them change or question their direction would possibly be seen as a negative outcome. However, the findings here suggest that reduced career decidedness could be a positive aspect of WIL, if it resulted from graduates developing their construal of the work role that suited them best. If the consequence of this was that they reconstrued the work role as not being right for them at all, and changed direction as a result, this is surely an indicator that WIL ultimately led to better-informed and better-prepared graduates.

9.2.4 Remaining themes and their links to the literature

Two relatively small themes remain to be discussed (Theme 1, Integrating learning and Theme 4, Judging performance). Each of these contained links to the literature, suggesting the participants and the other groups treated as the key stakeholders in previous work had similar opinions about their importance. They are discussed here briefly for completeness and to acknowledge that they were identified as areas where the participants felt that WIL had helped to change or develop their ideas.

Integrating learning

The concept of 'integrating learning' (Theme 1) has a clear relationship to areas such as applying theoretical knowledge (Bates, 2008; Purdie et al., 2011). However, what is most interesting about this area in the context of the question relating to how students change their opinions over time is that the participants here did not really identify any change in their views of the skill area. If anything, it seemed to become less important to them over time and was something that tended to be talked about in the earlier interviews. Where changes in construal did take place, they seemed to be about awareness of the aspects of theory which were of value in working life, rather than this impacting a great deal on participants' opinions of themselves in the work role. This suggests that while it may be an area prioritised by employers, it is something that relatively short periods of work experience, early in the programme of study, can develop in graduates. Alternatively, it may be something that students think more about in the early stages of their degrees because of the way their studies are structured. It is possible that early modules emphasise the 'real world' applications of the material being taught in order to engage students or to prepare them for taking the skills out into placement, with more challenging theory kept for later stages.

Judging performance

Theme 4, Judging performance, was a further area that the literature identified as important for graduates, and could be linked to both Jackson and Chapman's (2012) 'self-awareness' and Bates's (2008) 'ability to judge own performance'. While for many of the social work participants this seemed to be something promoted as much by their university experience as by WIL, since they were expected to undertake reflective activities as part of their programme, it also seemed to be relevant for others. Perhaps linked to increasing confidence,

WIL appeared to encourage participants to assess their abilities and to be more willing to ask for support where it was required.

9.3 WIL and models of identity

9.3.1 Existing models

Turning to the literature on identity, two models with potential to be useful were discussed in Chapter 2. Firstly, looking at the findings through a Social Identity Theory lens (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975) means looking for the 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' identified by the participants. This way of seeing changing identity was illustrated by Rosie[J]'s case study. She moved from seeing herself as a student in second year, valuing and idealising her tutors as people who had helped her to do things she could never have managed by herself, to questioning the value of her degree in final year. Strong commonalities can be seen here with Hallier and Summers's (2011) study of HR students, with the move for some of their group from associating themselves as HR students to HR professionals, with a consequent rejection of 'academia'. Rosie[J] seems to have gone through a similar transition. While in her second self-characterisation sketch she described herself as a 'journalism student' her idealised vision of where she saw herself in future was very much as a professional, and the related interview showed how she expected to 'become' this through practical experience. By contrast, it is difficult to see who Connor[S]'s 'in-group' and 'out-group' were: his uncertainty over whether the job he was moving into, in children's' safeguarding, was right for him came across in his slightly distanced description of himself in the job role in his sketch and his questioning of whether he wanted to 'be' a social worker at all.

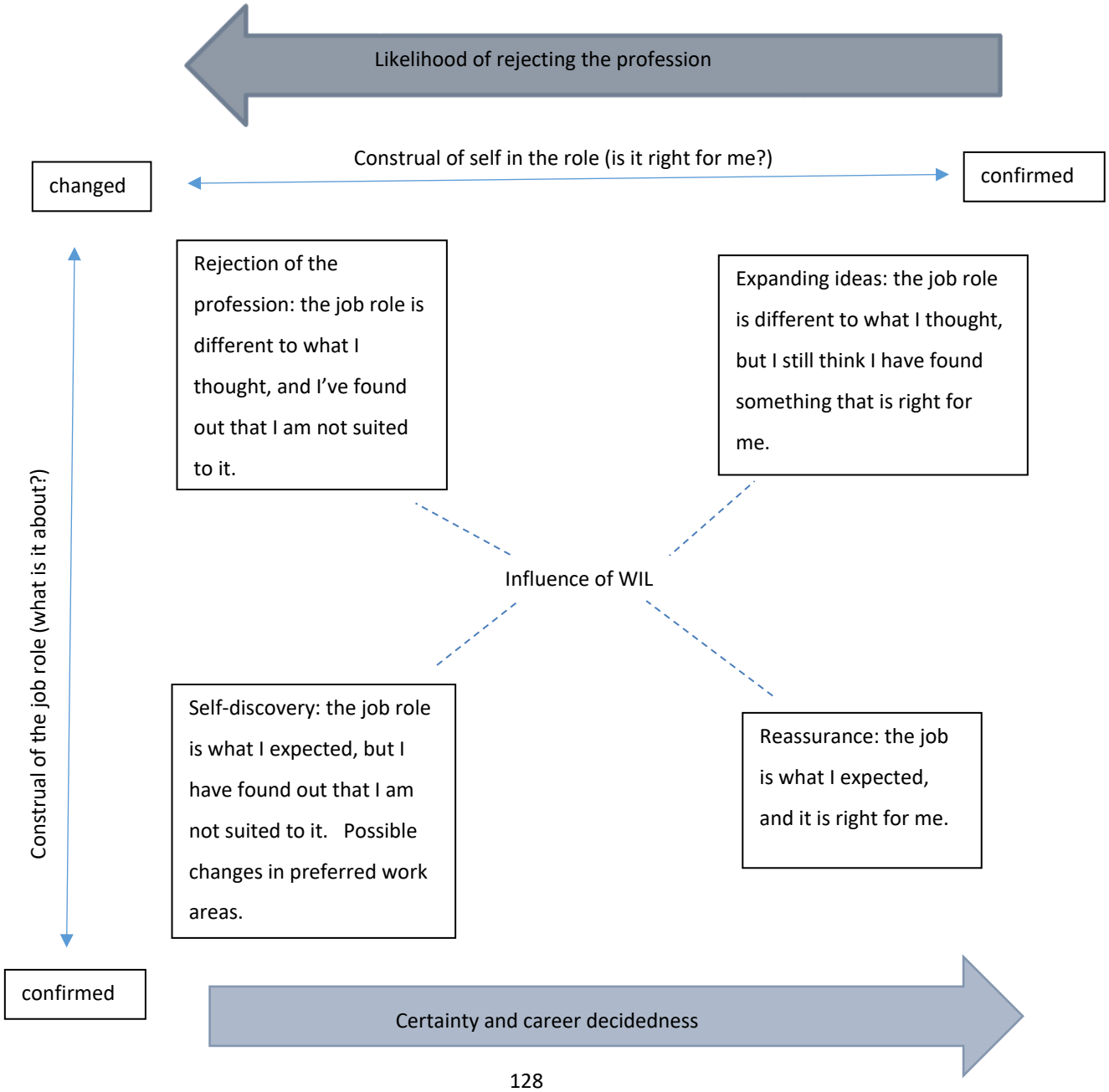
In the wider thematic analysis, links can be made to the area of 'Finding out about the job role: is it what I think it is?'. Depending on how participants felt about this, they might either confirm their construal of the job role and therefore come to associate themselves with the professional group (e.g. Will[S] or Anna[B]) or might realise that the job role was not what they expected (Gill[S] or Tom[S]). This, in turn, might lead them to see themselves in the role, to change their ideas about the 'best fit' for them, or to reject it altogether.

Moving to Holmes's (2013a) Claim-affirmation model of emergent identity, one of the areas that came through most strongly for the participants here was the idea of validation in the role. In common with Holmes's (2013a) findings, being seen as a professional by others seems to have been important to developing self-belief and confidence that the role was the right one for them. For example, this can clearly be seen in Abby[S]'s comment about how being taken 'seriously' by the teenagers she was working with helped her to see herself as a professional, because they did. The 'claims' to identity made by the participants were also seen as important, particularly in the idea of using WIL as a place to experiment. By 'claiming' different identities in this relatively safe space, it was possible for participants to move into Holmes's (2013a) 'agreed identity' or 'failed identity' categories.

9.3.2 A new model: WIL as a catalyst for change

While the models discussed above are relevant and help to cast some light on to the changes taking place for individuals through WIL, they do not really capture all of the important aspects uncovered in the thematic analysis. In particular, they do not illustrate the two key axes of change that seemed to be present for the participants. Firstly, WIL could lead their construal of the job role to change. If they went into WIL with a clear idea of what they thought the job was about (as happened for many of the social work participants), these ideas may well have been challenged by their experience. Secondly, WIL might lead their construal of whether the job was right for them (their 'fit') to change, and they may then have altered their ideas of the ideal job role for them as a result. These two dimensions and the possible combinations of change are illustrated in Figure 9.1:

Figure 9.1
A model of WIL's influence on construal of self and job-role



As can be seen, the two areas ('Construal of the job role' and 'Construal of self in the role') can either be confirmed or changed by WIL experience. Confirmation of the role being 'right for me' is likely to lead to higher career decidedness, while changes in this are likely to lead to uncertainty. The likelihood of rejecting the profession also increases with doubt about whether the role is 'right for me'.

If the areas on both axes were confirmed, the student would experience 'reassurance': they would have high career decidedness and be unlikely to change direction (they would be unlikely to reject the profession) as WIL would have validated their choices. Someone like Jenny[B] would be in this area: she used WIL to test whether her ideas about a job in finance were correct, and whether she was suited to working there. Finding that they were, she was then confident that she wanted a graduate job in the area. In terms of Social Categorisation Theory, this would possibly mean coming to see the professional group as the 'in-group'. In terms of the drive for graduate employability, this is the category where everyone 'should' end up: confident that they understand the role and that they have chosen wisely.

The other area on the right of the model, where ideas about the self do not change but ideas about the job role do ('Expanding ideas'), occurs where someone adjusts their construal of the job and its requirements, but this does not alter their construal of it being 'a good fit' for them. Anna[B], who had not originally considered a job in supply chain management but came to see it would suit her skills through WIL, would fit into this category. Again, in terms of employability, this would be seen as a relatively positive outcome: the graduate has a clear idea where they are going and what is right for them even if they have changed direction slightly.

If the construal of the self in the role changes during WIL, this suggests that the participant has realised they are not suited to the job they imagined in the initial stages. At the extreme, where the construal of the job role and the construal of suitability for the individual both change, this may lead to 'Rejection of the profession'. In Social Categorisation Theory, this would mean not associating yourself with the professional group, and possibly seeing them as an 'out-group', different to you. Gill[S] and her move away from social work into a different degree would be an example of this. Her view of what social work was changed, and she realised it was not the right place for her to be. Judging this according to employability criteria, this would be seen as a failure. Students in this category would probably have low career decidedness and would be seeking a new direction. However, it could be argued that this is also a positive outcome from WIL. Particularly in an area such as social work, surely it is better for students to realise at an early stage that the job role is not right for them than to find this out only after moving into a graduate job.

In a less extreme way, it may be that while the construal of suitability for the job role changes the view of the profession does not ('Self-discovery'). Connor[S] provides an example of this. While his view of social work as a job did not really change, WIL changed his ideas about his skills and abilities and about what was right for him. This led him in a new direction within the profession, deciding to work with children rather than adults, but also led to some uncertainty about whether he had made the right choices. Again, while this reduced career decidedness might be seen negatively in employability terms, clear positives can be seen in the role WIL can play in helping students to know what is right for them.

Of course, it should be acknowledged that change in the way presented in the model is not guaranteed. While four possible outcomes are illustrated, the axes of change represent a continuum. So someone like Harry[B], with his relatively unchanged construal of self or of the work role, may well sit closer to the centre of the model with neither his opinions of the job role or about whether it is suitable for him changing significantly.

9.4 Contribution to methods

While the principal contribution made by this thesis is to knowledge about what changes take place in student opinions of the self during WIL, there have also been contributions made to methods through the use of two novel approaches to answering the research questions. A short discussion of how they each developed and my views about their usefulness is therefore presented here.

9.4.1 Self-characterisation sketches

As discussed in Chapter 6, while self-characterisation sketches were originally developed by Kelly (1955/1991) for use in a therapeutic sphere they have since been used in a limited way beyond this. In this thesis, the method was adapted slightly with the instructions changed to reflect the focus on self-perceptions in the work role. The findings and this discussion have demonstrated that using self-characterisation sketches in this way can provide valuable insights into the opinions of the participants. In particular, I felt that this method allowed me to get an initial insight into the participant's world view without asking specific questions to begin the discussion. While the possibility that what they said could have been influenced by the way I asked them to write or by their perceptions of me and what they thought I 'expected' them to say, this allowed them freedom to speak in their own terms about what they felt was important to their image of themselves at work. In PCT terms, this would be part of the Sociality Corollary which states that "*to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another he may play a role in a social process involving the other person*" (Kelly, 1955/1991, p66, Kelly's italics). The sketches helped me to gain understanding of my participants' constructs, and therefore indicated areas for further exploration in the interviews that followed. Without these, I feel I would almost certainly not have considered some of the areas which were uncovered. Specifically, I am not sure I would have found out that Harry[B]'s view of himself (what PCT would categorise as his core constructs) remained relatively unchanged or what had influenced Connor[S]'s change in construal of his preferred work role from adult to children's' social worker. I also found Kelly's (1955/1991) protocol for analysing the sketches through multiple readings from different perspectives extremely valuable in drawing out possible meanings that I would not have considered otherwise. It was also fascinating to find that some of the participants used WIL to undertake something close to fixed-role therapy.

In terms of limitations of the method, the therapeutic focus meant that the instructions I used were designed to draw the writer of the sketch towards more positive than negative language: for example, asking them to write 'as it might be written by a friend who knows you very intimately and very sympathetically'. This tended to mean that the descriptions of the self found in the sketches were almost all positive, and there was little negative content to balance this. In some cases, such as Rosie[J]'s second sketch, the participant seemed to be close to treating the writing like a job application, emphasising her positive attributes. While the interviews

were used to elicit the opposite poles of a number of these emerging constructs, a useful further development of the method could be to review the instructions for the sketches and to develop them in a way that would allow a more balanced insight into the opinions of the writer.

9.4.2 Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis

LQA was employed in this thesis to supplement the Template Analysis of the interview and sketch data. I adopted this additional analysis method because I was struggling to capture the changes that were taking place over time in the participants and in the themes through Template Analysis alone. LQA encouraged me to look at each participant account in turn, thinking about what had changed for the individual and adding to the overall picture of change as I went along rather than looking for common themes or ideas across the whole data set. While I do not think LQA alone would have been sufficient to uncover the findings I have presented, it provided a useful additional perspective on aspects of the data and integrated well with the other analysis methods. In particular, LQA encouraged me to read the participant accounts in a different way to Template Analysis. For example I found the process of looking for specific 'contextual-intervening conditions' (things which had happened and had encouraged change) very helpful in identifying aspects of WIL which each participant felt had been particularly influential for them.

In order to capture this additional perspective and to combine the LQA findings with the Template Analysis I made some small alterations to Saldaña's (2003) suggested form for LQA. I added areas to capture my developing ideas about the individual 'ponds' in the data and to note any 'evidence' in the way of quotes that I might have wanted to return to later. These made my write-up and integration with the findings of the themes considerably easier to work with and I would recommend them to others planning to use LQA. The amended form used for LQA can be found in Appendix 10.

9.5 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has discussed the findings of the analysis in the context of what was already known about the influence of WIL on student opinions of their identity in the work role and has explained the contribution to knowledge and to methods made by the thesis. The next and final chapter will go on to explain how this discussion has addressed the research questions posed.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising several key areas. Firstly, following from Chapter 9's discussion of the findings and contributions to knowledge and methods made, I explain how I have addressed the research questions. This is followed by an overall commentary reflecting on the research process and my place within it. While reflexivity has been demonstrated in several places throughout the thesis, this discussion will signpost where it has taken place and also summarise my thoughts. Limitations of the work have also been indicated at appropriate points throughout, and these are also brought together and summarised here. Dissemination of the findings from the research has begun, so a short overview of the published work from the thesis follows this. Finally, ideas for further work are presented.

10.1 Addressing the research questions

Three specific research questions were developed from the literature and all have contributed to answering the overall research question. Each of these will, therefore, be examined in turn. A final section in this part of the discussion explains how they came together to address the overall question.

10.1.1 Students' opinions of skills on entry

The first specific research question to be examined was:

> What are students' opinions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university, and how do they think these will change in the future?

This was answered using a quantitative survey of students from a number of programmes at University A and University B. The programmes included were targeted because of the varying models of WIL used in the programmes of study, from a whole-year sandwich placement to shorter periods of professional work experience gained while still studying and attending university. This choice of sampling frame addressed the gaps in the literature which were identified in Chapter 2 in two ways. Firstly, the focus on students as the participants in the study ensured their voice was heard: as shown in the literature review this was a departure from the majority of previous published work which emphasised the opinions of academics and employers about student skills. Secondly, the focus in the literature tended to be on the impact of sandwich placements so the more inclusive sample used here had the potential for the impact of different placement models to be explored.

Chapter 5 set out the findings from this stage of the research (Stage 1) while Chapter 9 provided a discussion of them in context. In answer to specific Research Question 1, it was found that:

- participants from all programmes (first year students) had a relatively high opinion of their abilities in all of the skills and characteristics that were included in the questionnaire, scoring themselves towards the top of the rating scales used;
- their expectations of these skills and characteristics in the future were higher i.e. they thought they would improve in all areas before graduation.

Further areas of interest were also identified by the analysis of the survey data and, while these do not explicitly contribute to answering the first research question, they were used to inform the sampling strategy used in the later stages of the study. The additional key findings were that:

- respondents from both universities gave similar ratings for their skills;
- social work respondents appeared to rate themselves lower than other groups in the areas examined;
- there were some differences in the opinions of males and females, with males rating themselves higher in some areas (critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation) while females rated themselves higher in others (adaptability, self-belief, and decisiveness).

10.1.2 The influence of WIL on construal of individual work identity

The second and third specific research questions were linked, and the discussion of how they were addressed is, therefore, combined. The two questions were:

> What are students' construals of their individual work identities at later points during their studies?
>
> and
>
> How has WIL influenced this?

These questions have been answered through a qualitative study of second- and final-year students, using self-characterisation sketches and semi-structured interviews. The resulting data were analysed using Kelly's (1955/1991) protocol for the sketches, with Template Analysis and Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis utilised to generate findings from the pooled sketches and interview data. These stages of the research again addressed the gap in the literature relating to the lack of student voice in existing published work, by encouraging them to articulate their views and opinions. In addition, longitudinal data were gathered meaning this differed from the existing research which mostly used retrospective secondary data (for example, DLHE statistics). This addressed a further identified gap in the literature. Drawing on the earlier results, the sample included social work, business, and journalism students to ensure the diversity of opinions about skills identified in Stage 1 was captured.

The key finding related to participants' construals in second and final years was that while many of the categories identified by participants showed links to the types of skills and characteristics that were set out in the literature (for example by Crebert et al. (2004) and Jackson and Chapman (2012)) they tended to speak about them in quite different ways. When they talked about areas such as relationship building, communication or confidence this was not in terms of skill building or becoming better at 'doing' something. Instead, they identified how their ideas about themselves and about the workplace changed through their WIL experience and this in turn meant they had better skills and understanding.

The key aspects of WIL that seemed to promote this change were that, while it gave practical, 'real' experience and exposure to people and situations that might not have been experienced otherwise, it also provided a

relatively safe place to experiment. WIL as an activity 'forcing' participants out of their comfort zone seemed to be particularly beneficial for many of them. This was seen most clearly in Tori[B]'s description of how she decided to use placement to try out being 'someone else', but elements of this behaviour were also present for a number of the other participants.

10.1.3 Addressing the overall research question

Combining the answers to the previous sections provides insights into the overall research question which was:

> How does the experience of participating in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) shape and change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the work role?

Overall, WIL appeared to have potential to change the participants' construal in two ways: firstly, they might change their ideas about themselves and what job suited them and, secondly, they might change their ideas about what the job was. While the literature tended to present one of the purposes of WIL as being to encourage a steady increase in career decidedness across the course of a degree it seems this may not be the case. For some participants, WIL affected their career decidedness to such an extent that they withdrew from their programme. For others, it prompted questioning of direction. A model capturing WIL's influence on construal of self and job-role has been developed and was presented in Section 9.3.2.

10.2 Reflexivity and reflection on the research process

As set out in my discussion of PCT in Section 3.3.2, Kelly (1955/1991) saw both the researcher and the participant as being involved in a process of actively constructing the research situation. As such, reflexivity is an intrinsic part of the process meaning that while conducting the research I questioned my 'ways of doing', acknowledging the influence I had on the research situation and that the research situation had on me (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

It therefore follows that I have spent some time thinking about my own construction processes as well as trying to understand the construction processes of others. Having introduced reflexivity in Chapter 3, I will conclude here by articulating where my reflexive practice (my reflections on my construction process) is particularly evident in this thesis.

10.2.1 The influence of my background, previous experiences, and role as a lecturer

As discussed in Chapter 1, my role as a lecturer at Northumbria University influenced my decision to undertake this study and prompted my initial interest in the question of how students were influenced by the experience of undertaking WIL. I have acknowledged that I started the research with a particular set of views and opinions, and it has been important for me to recognise these and to think about how they might have influenced my findings.

I knew from the beginning of the study that I brought existing ideas to my framing of the investigations and to the questions I was asking, and I have considered the impact this may have had on the research. This can be seen, for example, in my discussion in Chapter 1 of how my work experience led me to think initially that placement 'changed' students in some way. Reflection on my findings as I generated them (including some challenging discussions with my supervisors) helped me to think about how this encouraged me towards particular interpretations of the data and to consider alternatives. For example, as the research progressed, I was conscious that I might be expecting to find 'differences' in participants between second and final year 'caused' by WIL and this could stop me from perceiving other explanations. As Saldaña (2003, p17) cautioned: "Be careful: if you go looking for something, you'll find it". Reflection and discussion helped me to be open to the possibility of change in my participants but also to be open to the possibility that WIL may not have had an influence at all. One example of the consequences of this can be seen in my discussion of Harry's case study (Section 8.3) and my finding that his construal of himself in the work role had actually changed very little as a result of WIL.

I also realised as the research progressed that, despite my attempts to present myself only as a PhD student to my participants, it was impossible for me to fully step out of the 'lecturer' role and the behaviour this engendered. This was particularly evident in one of the Stage 2 interviews, where a social work participant disclosed an interaction with her workplace practice educator which had upset her. I stopped the recording device, made it clear I was stepping out of the 'researcher' role, and confirmed with her that she had received support with this issue (from her programme leader). We then resumed the interview. However, this made it clear to me that however much I thought I was acting purely in one role, it was impossible for me to entirely forget my construal of myself as a 'lecturer' with a duty of care to students.

10.2.2 How the research was designed

Symon and Cassell (2004) suggested that critical reflection on the choices made in terms of research design as a study progressed is an important part of reflexivity. In Chapter 3 I explained how my previous disciplinary background might have led me to prefer some methods over others. In Chapters 4 and 6 I set out how the research was designed at each stage and explained my decisions about this explicitly. A research journal, recording my initial impressions of each interview and my developing ideas as analysis progressed, helped me to reflect on the choices I made and the reasons for them during the course of the research. This journal informed the discussion in these chapters. My choices were also discussed with my supervision team and with peers, helping me further to question 'why' I was designing the research in particular ways.

At each stage I reflected on the results of the analysis and considered the implications for the next stage of work. For example, the additional analysis of the quantitative survey data was conducted as a response to the initial results, in order to further explore interesting 'differences' that seemed to be apparent between groups. In Section 5.7.2 I also reflected on the results of Stage 1 and described how this informed the design of Stage 2, showing how this helped me to be open to what the research was telling me and to adapt to this rather than acting rigidly according to a predesigned plan.

10.2.3 Epistemological considerations

Epistemological reflexivity required me to consider how my views about the nature of knowledge impacted on the research process (Dowling, 2006; Symon & Cassell, 2004). I set this out in detail in Chapter 3, reflecting on my philosophical beliefs, making these clear, and showing how they influenced my methodology. I considered how my research questions defined my study and informed the knowledge generated and looked at alternative viewpoints to investigate them. In reflecting on my philosophical views and assumptions about the world and about knowledge generation I have, therefore, demonstrated the role epistemological reflexivity played in my research design.

My choice of multiple methods to explore the opinions of my participants also assisted my reflexivity, particularly given my limited realist epistemology. Since I believed that it was impossible for me to unambiguously 'know' the participants' worlds, it was important for me to consider how my interpretations were formed and to explore other possible viewpoints. The use of Template Analysis, Kelly's protocol for the analysis of self-characterisation sketches, and LQA helped me to apply a variety of interpretive frameworks to my data. These, in turn, helped me to question the conclusions I reached and to consider alternative explanations. In the qualitative analysis I found Kelly's (1955/1991) protocol for analysing the self-characterisation sketches particularly helpful in prompting me to consider alternative interpretations of the participants' accounts. Practices such as rereading the sketch while changing emphasis and looking for sequence and transition (looking for the stories which appeared in the sketch and comparing/contrasting them) encouraged me to see other possible interpretations beyond my initial impressions.

10.3 Limitations of the study and ideas for further work

As discussed in Section 6.5, where the quality of the research was discussed, this study has used only a small sample from two universities in the UK meaning no claims to wider generalisability of the results have been made. However, the research design has been presented in detail to allow others to judge the applicability of the results to their situations. It is important, however, to acknowledge some further limitations.

Firstly, my study was limited by the need to work within a self-selecting group of participants. While I tried to ensure a diversity of experience and opinions was represented within the sample, I have no way of knowing whether this was the case. It is possible that my final group of participants were those who were particularly engaged students or had an interest in exploring what WIL meant to them. Further research with other groups or at other institutions may be valuable to confirm the findings.

Secondly, it was impossible for me to know how I was perceived by my participants. While I made efforts to ensure I identified myself to them only as a PhD student (for example by using my University of Huddersfield email address for contact whenever possible) they would have been aware that I was also a lecturer. The fact that I was older than the majority of them and may perhaps have been seen as more 'expert' may well have influenced what they said to me. It is possible that they gave me 'socially desirable' answers in some cases, particularly in final year where they would have been used to taking part in discussions about how to present

themselves in interview situations. It is also possible that the activity of reflecting on their opinions about work might have changed their views. These limitations were mitigated to some extent by the use of self-characterisation sketches as one method of data collection, as these allowed the participants to speak about their views of themselves in a job role without any intervention from me. However, it could not be removed completely. As identified in the discussion of the contribution to methods made by the thesis in Chapter 9, further work developing the use of self-characterisation sketches as a research method could be valuable. This should consider the instructions given to participants to see if they can be encouraged to provide a more balanced view of the self (negative as well as positive). Since some participants seemed to use WIL as a type of fixed-role therapy instinctively, it might also be valuable to introduce this more formally into future research. Perhaps students preparing for placement or employment could be encouraged to adopt 'different' behaviours (for example, being more outgoing, or trying new experiences) for a short period and then reflecting on how this experience changed them. This could be particularly valuable for students who are unsure about taking up placement opportunities, perhaps addressing some of the questions raised in the literature about how to encourage more of them to do WIL (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Hejmadi et al., 2011).

Finally, in terms of limitations, I acknowledge that the discourse around student fees and the value of a degree was changing even while the research was being conducted, with political debates continuing around tuition fees in England. The Augar review (Department for Education, 2019) with its emphasis on widening access beyond school-leavers, accountability of HE providers, and the role of both degree apprenticeships and Further Education providers operating in Higher Education may well lead to further changes in the role and importance of WIL. This means that while my thesis is relevant to these participants, at this point in time, findings may change if and when context and circumstances alter. However, my core findings relating to how students think WIL changes their construal are likely to be robust. Again, future research may be valuable as a way of assessing whether similar changes are seen at other times or in different models of provision such as in degree apprenticeships.

10.4 Dissemination of the findings

Given the subject matter of this thesis, the findings are relevant to a variety of audiences.

Firstly, there is potential to inform Higher Education practice and knowledge. Some of the initial findings arising from Stage 1 were discussed informally with the programme team for social work at University A, and they have expressed an interest in seeing any resulting publications. To take this further, a paper in a high-quality journal specialising in HE research such as Studies in Higher Education is being considered.

Following from the contribution to methods discussed in Chapter 9, two book chapters have been co-authored with my supervisors (Burr et al., 2017; Burr et al., 2019). I contributed sections about the use of self-characterisation sketches in qualitative research to these chapters, drawing on some of the work presented in this thesis to demonstrate how they can be used as a research method beyond their therapeutic application.

A third possible audience for the research findings is scholars in the area of identity. A peer-reviewed conference paper was presented to the Identity stream of the British Academy of Management conference in September 2019 and I am currently developing this further to prepare it for submission to the journal Management Learning. A copy of the paper can be found in Appendix 11. I was the principal author of this paper, with my supervisors' contribution consisting of comments on the draft (in addition to their ongoing guidance on the research overall). I also delivered it at the conference as sole presenter.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Work integrated learning and self perceptions regarding the work role: a longitudinal study

Section 1: Information about the study

Thank you for your interest in this survey. Here is some background information which you should read to ensure you are informed about the purpose of the study and what will happen to the answers you give. Once you have read this you will be asked to confirm your consent to taking part in the research.

I am a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield and also a lecturer at Northumbria University. This survey is designed to gather some information from first-year students at [University A and University B] about their pre-entry work experience and their views of how undertaking work placements as part of their courses will influence their development. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

I am interested in the views of students studying on one of a number of courses at either the [University A or University B]. You have been invited to respond because you are a member of this group. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to stop answering the questions at any time. Should you wish to withdraw your responses please contact the researcher before 1 February 2014 (details below) and this will be done at the point of analysis.

Write up and data reporting of the results will be for aggregated groups of responses, meaning no-one will be identifiable from the answers they give. All data collected are confidential and will be secured on a password protected database in a restricted access location. Only the researcher will have access to these data.

There is an opportunity for participation in further work which will involve taking part in interviews in your second and third years of study to see how your ideas have changed over time. It is expected that this will involve a maximum commitment of two hours of your time in each year, if you decide to participate. If you are interested in taking part in this further research the last question in the survey asks for your name and email address to facilitate this, however giving your details here does not commit you to taking part in the later stages: you would be asked for consent again before any further research is carried out. You are also free to leave this question blank and your completely anonymous responses will still be very valuable.

Should participation in the research have caused any distress or concern, depending on your location please contact either:

[Details of counselling services at each university were given here]

In addition to these sources of support if the survey raises any concerns for you about employment or

placements both universities have dedicated placements staff along with careers advice services who will be able to discuss any issues with you. Your programme or course leader will be able to direct you to the most appropriate source of advice.

Thank you once again for contributing to my research

Angela McGrane u1351349@hud.ac.uk or angela.mcgrane@northumbria.ac.uk

Section 2: Consent form

Question 2.1

I understand the purpose of the study	
I understand my responses will be kept confidential	
I understand that I will not be identified by name, or by my responses in any subsequent publications i.e. my responses will be kept anonymous	
I understand that I have the right to withdraw my responses from the study and that this can be done by contacting Angela McGrane before 1 February 2014	
I understand that I can access further information about the study from Angela McGrane and have been provided with her email addresses for this purpose.	
I understand that should the study cause concern or distress I can contact the [University A] or [University B] counselling service (depending on my location) and I have been given the details for this.	
I would like to participate in this research project and I consent for my answers to be included in the study.	

Note: The respondent had the choice to 'agree' or 'disagree' with each statement above. If they did not 'agree' in every case they were diverted to the path below. They could not proceed beyond this point without agreeing to all of these statements, however they could return to read the initial information again or could exit.

Question 2.2

Thank you once again for your interest in this study. Unfortunately without your confirmation that you fully understand the purpose of the study, have all the required information and consent to your answers being used you cannot proceed further.

If you wish to exit the survey please indicate this below. If you do not want to exit, go back and review the information provided and your consent choices by clicking the back arrow below. Once you have provided consent, you will be able to continue.

I wish to exit

Section 3: Information about you

Question 3.1

Which institution are you studying at?

- [University A]
- [University B]

Question 3.2
Please choose the name of the course you are studying

BSc (Hons) Mathematics, Physics or Biology	BA (Hons) Business with or Business Management	BA (Hons) Journalism	BSc (Hons) Criminology, Criminology and Sociology or Criminology and Forensic Science	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	BSc (Hons) Social Work

Question 3.3
Which of these statements most closely matches your status in the year before you started this course?

- Studying at school or college full time
- In employment
- Unemployed, travelling or taking a break from work
- Other - please give a description below

Question 3.4

What age were you when you enrolled on your current course?

- Age in years
- Prefer not to answer

Question 3.5
Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

- Prefer not to answer

Question 3.6
How much experience of work (paid or unpaid) in areas relevant to the course you are studying do you have already?

- None
- A little (a few hours or days, under ten days in total)
- Some (over ten days in total, but not at the level of a full time job)
- A lot (I have been employed in the area or have other experience gained over more than 12 months)

Note: If 'none' was selected the respondent skipped the next two questions and went directly to question 3.9

Question 3.7
Was this work experience gained through (select all which apply):

- A full time job
- A part time job
- A school or college work experience programme
- A specific role at school or college
- Voluntary work
- Other unpaid work

Question 3.8
Still thinking about previous work experience relevant to your study programme, which of these statements do you agree with (tick any and all which apply)?

- My work experience was planned specifically to help me decide whether to do a degree in this area
- I did work experience before applying to enhance my chances of getting a place on this course
- I decided to come and do this degree because I already had work experience that was relevant
- My work experience had nothing to do with my decision to study this course

Question 3.9
Are you from the UK or overseas?

- I am a UK student
- I am an EU student
- I am an International student from outside the EU

Question 3.10
Are you aware that your current course of study includes the opportunity to undertake Work Integrated Learning (a placement or other work experience)?

- Yes
- No

Question 3.11
How influential was the opportunity to do work experience on your decision to study on this specific course?

- Highly influential - I would not have chosen to study here if there was no work experience element
- Slightly influential - I would prefer to study on a course with work experience included but it was not essential for me
- Not influential at all - I would have chosen this course regardless of work experience opportunities

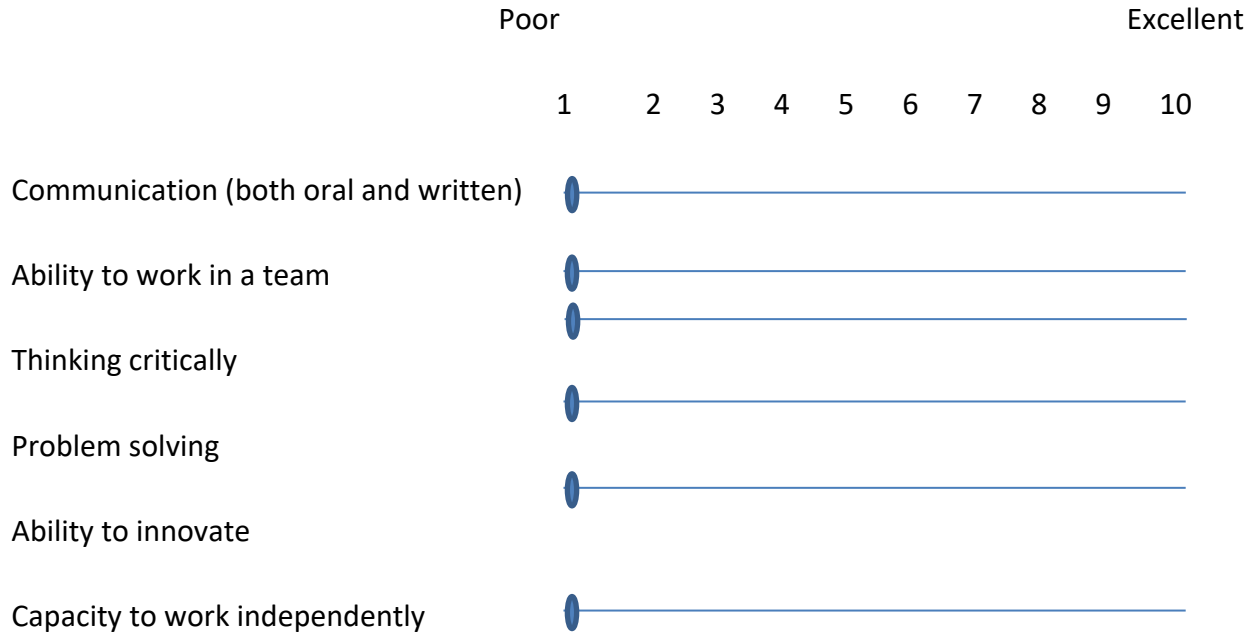
Question 3.12
Where are you living whilst at University?

- At home, in my permanent residence
- In university accommodation
- In private rented accommodation during term time
- Other – please specify

Section 4: How you see yourself now

Question 4.1

How do you rate your skills in these areas now?



Question 4.2

Imagine yourself in full time employment today. How good do you think your skills in these categories would be?

Question 4.3

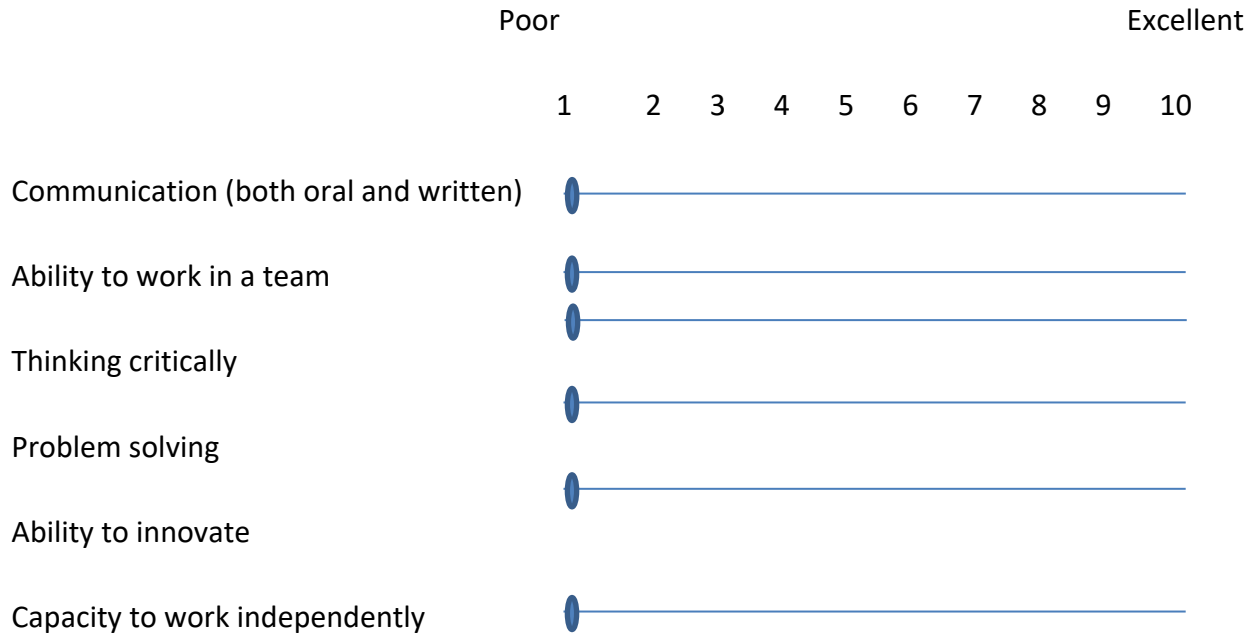
Here are a number of personal statements. Please choose a position which you feel most closely describes you now. Are you the type of person who ...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Has little confidence at work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Has lots of confidence at work
Is highly adaptable to new work situations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is anxious about new work situations
Is well informed about possible careers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Lacks knowledge about possible future careers
Is unsure about what career they want on graduation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Has clear career plans
Is uncomfortable asking for help	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is willing to ask for help
Can accept constructive criticism	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Finds it difficult to accept criticism
Is able to express opinions openly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is reluctant to express opinions
Believes in their ability to succeed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is unsure about their ability to succeed
Makes decisions easily	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is indecisive

Section 5: How you see yourself in the future

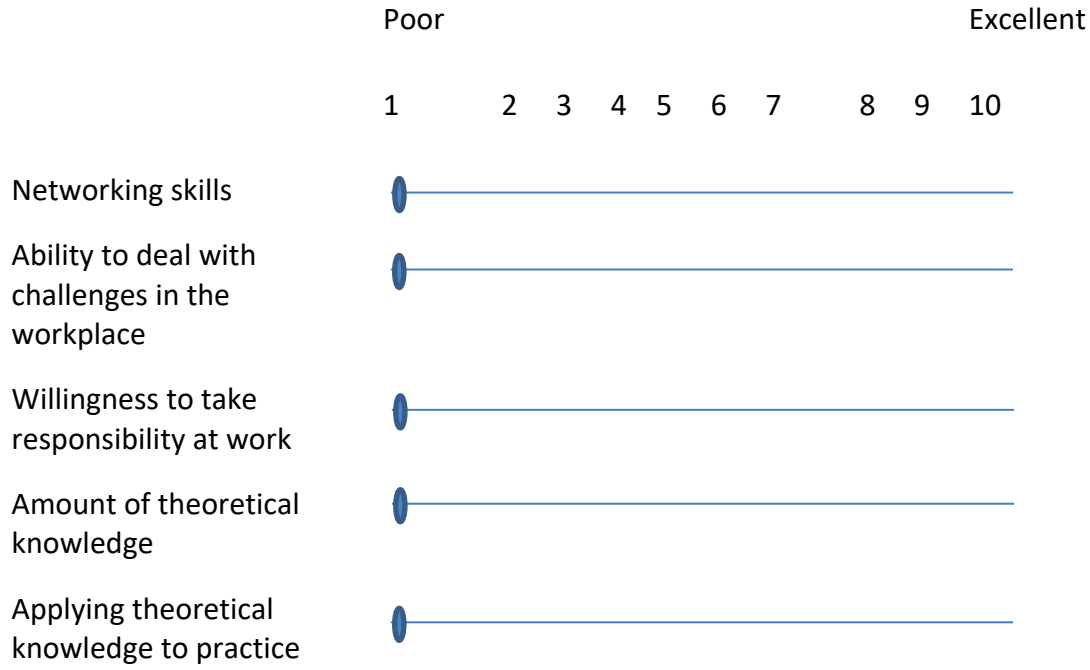
Question 5.1

Now imagine yourself after graduation, in your first job. How good do you expect your skills to be in these areas then?



Question 5.2

And again, after graduation and in your first job, please rate yourself on these.



Judging your own performance in a work situation

Question 5.3

The personal statements are repeated here. This time, please choose a position which you feel will most closely describe you in the future, after graduation. Will you be the type of person who ...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Has little confidence at work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Has lots of confidence at work
Is highly adaptable to new work situations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is anxious about new work situations
Is well informed about possible careers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Lacks knowledge about possible future careers
Is unsure about what career they want on graduation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Has clear career plans
Is uncomfortable asking for help	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is willing to ask for help
Can accept constructive criticism	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Finds it difficult to accept criticism
Is able to express opinions openly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is reluctant to express opinions
Believes in their ability to succeed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is unsure about their ability to succeed
Makes decisions easily	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Is indecisive

Section 6: Participation in further research

Question 6.1

There will be follow up interviews taking place in years 2 and 3 of your studies to see how your views about your work identity change over time.

If you would be willing to be contacted as part of this follow up study please give your name and university email address here.

If you do not want to be contacted, leave this section blank.

Your name

Your university email address

Question 6.2

Thank you once again for completing the survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and no attempt will be made to identify you from the answers you have given.

Remember that if completing this questionnaire has raised any concerns for you, there are services available to help:

[details of University A and University B counselling services were here]

Your programme or course leader will be also able to direct you to appropriate sources of advice about work placements and careers.

Appendix 2: Relationship between the questionnaire and the literature

Questionnaire areas, items, and reasons for inclusion

Section	Area/focus	Rationale	Relevant literature
1 (Qu1)	Information about the study	Explain the purpose of the study and supply contact information for participants	
2 (Qu2-Qu3)	Consent form	Participants must confirm they are aware of the purpose of the study and their rights before they proceed. If they 'disagree' with any of the statements they are thanked and the survey ends at this point.	
3 (Qu4-Qu15)	Demographics, background and previous experience	Their background and previous experience will influence their construal of themselves in the work role. This may be very different across the various student cohorts e.g. Social Work students may be older/have more relevant work experience than Business Students on entry. This section is therefore intended to capture a snapshot picture of the student profile on entry to give an idea of where they start from.	My ideas about what is relevant or may become relevant in the future (my construal of what influences their construing). These are based on my experiences, my broad views developed from the literature, and also on informal conversations with programme leaders whilst designing the research programme.

Section	Area/focus	Rationale	Relevant literature
4 (Qu16-Qu18)	Current opinions of their skills and characteristics	Generic skill development is an area identified by authors conducting research with graduates (e.g. Auburn (2007), Crebert et al (2004)) as one which is crucial to employers when they discuss what they are looking for in graduates. Whilst the intention here is not to directly investigate the development of 'employability skills', the participants' *assessment* of their current level of skills, and how they think this will change and develop during their university study is relevant. It is part of how they will present themselves as an employee in the future and forms part of their views about themselves as employees. Although mentioned less in the literature than skills other personal characteristics such as the ability to deal with challenges or to work alone (autonomy) are also relevant to their views about themselves as employees. These are identified by authors conducting studies after graduation (see above) as ones which graduates say developed over the period of their academic studies and work experience (where this took place).	Work from Arnold, Auburn & Ley (1995), Auburn (2007), Auburn, Arnold & Ley (1991), Auburn, Ley and Arnold (1993), Bates (2008), Crebert et al. (2004), Purdie et al. (2011) – see next table for links to specific questions.

Section	Area/focus	Rationale	Relevant literature
5 (Qu19-Qu21)	What they think these same skills and characteristics will be like on graduation.	Looking ahead to their expectations of their future selves – how do they think these same skills and characteristics will develop across the time of their academic study? Same questions are repeated to allow for direct comparison between how they see themselves now/how they expect to be in the future with a hypothesis that they will see their 'future self' as more skilled.	As above.
6 (Qu 22)	Invitation to participate in future stages of the study.		

Relationship between questions on skills and characteristics and literature

Question/part	Area that academic study and/or WIL may develop	Skill or characteristic	Authors identifying these areas
Qu 16 (1)	Communication	S	Crebert et al. (2004) – communication
Qu 16 (2)	Ability to work in a team	S	Bates (2008) – participation in collaborative work Crebert et al. (2004) – team work
Qu 16 (3)	Thinking critically	S	Crebert et al. (2004) – critical thinking
Qu 16 (4)	Problem solving	S	Crebert et al. (2004) – problem solving Purdie et al. (2011) – problem solving abilities
Qu 16 (5)	Ability to innovate	S	Crebert et al. (2004) – innovation
Qu 16 (6)	Capacity to work independently	S	Arnold, Auburn & Ley (1995) – work autonomy
Qu 17 (1)	Networking skills	S	Purdie et al. (2011) – networking abilities
Qu 17 (2)	Ability to deal with challenges in the workplace	S	Arnold, Auburn & Ley (1995) – ability to cope with work challenge Bates (2008) – ability to deal with 'real life' challenges
Qu 17 (3)	Willingness to take responsibility at work	S	Bates (2008) – able to take responsibility

Question/part	Area that academic study and/or WIL may develop	Skill or characteristic	Authors identifying these areas
Qu 17 (4)	Amount of theoretical knowledge	S	Purdie et al. (2011) – level of theoretical knowledge
Qu 17 (5)	Applying theoretical knowledge in practice	S	Bates (2008) – application of theoretical knowledge in practice
Qu 17 (6)	Judging your own performance in a work situation	S	Bates (2008) – ability to judge own performance
Qu 18 (1)	Confidence at work	C	Crebert et al. (2004) – confidence Also related to self esteem (Crebert et al. (2004), Purdie et al. (2011))
Qu 18 (2)	Adaptability	C	Crebert et al. (2004) – adaptability
Qu 18 (3)	Level of knowledge about career options	C	Arnold, Auburn & Ley (1995), Auburn, Arnold & Ley (1991), Auburn, Ley and Arnold (1993) – career decidedness Bates (2008) – identification with a profession Purdie et al. (2011) – chance of gaining employment
Qu 18 (4)	Career plans	C	Arnold, Auburn & Ley (1995), Auburn, Arnold & Ley (1991), Auburn, Ley and Arnold (1993) – career decidedness Bates (2008) – identification with a profession Purdie et al. (2011) – professional behaviour
Qu 18 (5)	Asking for help	C	Crebert et al. (2004), Purdie et al. (2011)) – self esteem. Included here as an indicator related to self esteem.
Qu 18 (6)	Accepting criticism	C	Crebert et al. (2004), Purdie et al. (2011)) – self esteem. Included here as an indicator related to self esteem.
Qu 18 (7)	Expressing opinions openly	C	Crebert et al. (2004), Purdie et al. (2011)) – self esteem. Included here as an indicator related to self esteem.
Qu 18 (8)	Belief in ability to succeed	C	Purdie et al. (2011) – self efficacy.
Qu 18 (9)	Decision making	C	Purdie et al. (2011) – self efficacy

Appendix 3: Analysis plan for Stage 1

Work integrated learning and self perceptions regarding the work role: a longitudinal study

Analysis plan for Stage 1 of the study

The overall research question for the PhD is:

How does the experience of participating in Work Integrated Learning shape and change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the work role?

Three further specific research questions have been developed to assist in articulating the detailed work to be undertaken in the PhD more clearly. These are:

1: What are students' opinions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university, and how do they think these will change in the future?

2: What are students' construals of their individual work identities at later points during their studies?

3: How has WIL influenced this?

The first stage of data collection is intended to answer specific Research Question 1 above. Objectives are:

- to establish a basis for further stages in the research study by exploring students' perceptions of their individual work skills and characteristics on entry to university;
- to collect demographic and work-experience information from students in areas which may influence their construal of themselves in the work role;
- to investigate differences in these demographic factors and in pre-entry experience of work between student groups from a variety of programmes and from two different institutions (University A and University B);
- to recruit volunteers for later stages of the study.

Questions for this analysis related to meeting these objectives:

1. What is the demographic profile of respondents (institution, course of study, age, gender, accommodation type, nationality)?
2. What were respondents doing before entry to university (did they come straight from school or do they have work experience)?
3. How relevant do respondents think any previous work experience is to the programme of study?
4. Did previous work experience influence respondents' choice of course?
5. What do they think their current and anticipated future levels of skills and characteristics in a work role are?
6. For questions 1-4, do these variables differ by programme of study or by institution ([A or B])?
7. Do current perceptions of skills and characteristics differ by programme of study or by institution?
8. How different are their current and anticipated future levels of skills and characteristics in a work role? How much change do they think there will be, and which are the most significant areas of expected development?

9. Is their perception of their current skill levels and characteristics associated with age, and do these differ according to their status directly before entry or the relevance of any work experience before entry?

Analysis methods

To address questions 1-5 above univariate descriptive analysis of questionnaire responses to give an overview of the respondents will be carried out i.e. production of tables, graphs, summary statistics as relevant related to: institution; course of study; status before entry; age; gender; existing work experience; nationality; awareness of WIL opportunities on course of study; influence of WIL opportunity on choice of course; place of residence; views of skills and characteristics. Answers to questions 3.1-5.3 on the questionnaire will be summarised.

Simple bivariate descriptive analysis of the same responses by programme of study and institution using cross tabulations and graphs will also be carried out, this will contribute to answering question 6 above.

Simple comparisons (tables, graphs, summary statistics) will also be produced to compare current and future perceptions of skills and characteristics, contributing to answering question 7.

Further basic bivariate descriptive analysis of skills and characteristics (current and anticipated future) against age, status before entry to university and relevance of work experience will be carried out to inform answers to questions 8 and 9.

The remainder of questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 will be answered by use of inferential statistics and hypothesis testing. See below for a summary of the hypotheses to be tested and the tests to be used:

Question	Related hypotheses	Data type under test	Statistical tests to be used
Do the demographic variables examined differ by institution ([University A or B])?	H1-H7: There is no association between status before entry/gender/existing work experience/ nationality/awareness of WIL opportunities on course of study/ influence of WIL opportunity on choice of course/place of residence and institution ([University A or B]).	Qualitative, categorical	Chi-squared test for association
	H8: There is no difference in the age of respondents from [University A or B]	Quantitative, ratio scale	Two independent sample t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)
Do the demographic variables examined differ by course of study?	H9-H15: There is no association between status before entry/gender/existing work experience/ nationality/ awareness of WIL opportunities on course of study/ influence of WIL opportunity on choice of course/place of residence and course of study.	Qualitative, categorical	Chi-squared test It may be necessary to combine groups e.g. by using type of WIL (continuous throughout course/sandwich placement/small amount in final year only) to avoid invalidating the test with expected values < 5
	H16: There is no difference in the age of respondents by course of study	Quantitative, ratio scale	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).
Do respondents' current perceptions of their skills differ by institution ([University A or B])?	H17-H28 There is no difference between respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance at [University A or B]	Quantitative, interval scale (1-10)	Two independent sample t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)

Question	Related hypotheses	Data type under test	Statistical tests to be used
Does respondents' current construal of their personal characteristics in a work role differ by institution ([University A or B])?	H29-H37 There is no difference between respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness at [University A or B]	Quantitative, interval scale (1-7)	Two independent sample t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)
Do respondents' current perceptions of their skills differ by programme of study?	H38-H49 There is no difference between respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance by programme of study	Quantitative, interval scale (1-10)	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).
Does respondents' current construal of their personal characteristics in a work role differ by institution?	H50-H58 There is no difference between respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness by programme of study	Quantitative, interval scale (1-7)	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).
Are the respondents' current and future perceptions of their skills different, and if they are where are improvements (or reductions) expected?	H59-H70 There is no difference between respondents' current and future perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance.	Quantitative, interval scale (1-10)	Paired t-test or Wilcoxon signed rank test depending on sample sizes

Question	Related hypotheses	Data type under test	Statistical tests to be used
Are the respondents' current and future perceptions of their characteristics in a work role different, and if they are where are improvements (or reductions) expected?	H71-H79 There is no difference between respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness and that for their anticipated future self.	Quantitative, interval scale (1-7)	Paired t-test or Wilcoxon signed rank test depending on sample sizes
Is respondents' perception of their current skill levels associated with age?	H80-H91 The correlation between respondents' perceptions of their current skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance and their age is zero.	Quantitative, interval scale (skills) and ratio scale (age)	Significance test for Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
Is respondents' perception of their future skill levels associated with age?	H92-H103 The correlation between respondents' perceptions of their expected future skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance and their age is zero.	Quantitative, interval scale (skills) and ratio scale (age)	Significance test for Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient

Question	Related hypotheses	Data type under test	Statistical tests to be used
Is respondents' perception of their current characteristics in a work role associated with age?	H104-H112 The correlation between respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness and their age is zero.	Quantitative, interval scale (characteristics) and ratio scale (age)	Significance test for Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
Is respondents' perception of their future characteristics in a work role associated with age?	H113-H121 The correlation between respondents' construal of their future confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness and their age is zero.	Quantitative, interval scale (characteristics) and ratio scale (age)	Significance test for Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient
Do respondents' perception of their current skills in a work role differ according to status before entry to university?	H122-H133 There is no difference between respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance according to their status before entry.	Quantitative, interval scale	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).
Do respondents' perception of their current characteristics in a work role differ according to status before entry to university?	H134-H142 There is no difference between respondents' construal of their future confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness according to their status before entry.	Quantitative, interval scale	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).

Question	Related hypotheses	Data type under test	Statistical tests to be used
Do respondents' perception of their current skills in a work role differ according to relevance of previous work experience?	H143-H154 There is no difference between respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance according to relevance of previous work experience.	Quantitative, interval scale	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).
Do respondents' perception of their current characteristics in a work role differ according to relevance of previous work experience?	H155-H163 There is no difference between respondents' construal of their current confidence/ adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness according to relevance of previous work experience.	Quantitative, interval scale	Kruskall-Wallis non-parametric ANOVA (group sizes are likely to be too small for parametric testing, but parametric ANOVA can be considered as an alternative if sample sizes permit).

Appendix 4: Additional analysis plan

Additional Hypotheses

These were added after consideration of results emerging from the first analysis plan.

Do respondents' current perceptions of their skills differ depending on whether they are UK or International students?	H164-H175 There is no difference between UK and International respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance	Quantitative, interval scale (1-10)	Two sample independent t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)
Does respondents' current construal of their personal characteristics in a work role differ depending on whether they are UK or International students?	H176-H184 There is no difference between UK and International respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness	Quantitative, interval scale (1-7)	Two sample independent t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)
Is the gender profile of respondents different across courses?	H185: There is no association between course of study and gender	Qualitative, categorical	Chi-squared test It may be necessary to combine or exclude groups e.g. the single 'prefer not to answer' respondent to avoid invalidating the test with expected values < 5
Do respondents' current perceptions of their skills differ depending on gender?	H186-H197 There is no difference between male and female respondents' current perceptions of their skills in communication/team working/critical thinking/problem solving/innovation/independent working/networking/dealing with challenges/willingness to take responsibility/amount of theoretical knowledge/application of theoretical knowledge/judging own performance	Quantitative, interval scale (1-10)	Excluding the single 'prefer not to answer' respondent: Two independent sample t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)
Does respondents' current construal of their personal characteristics in a work role differ depending on gender?	H198-H206 There is no difference between male and female respondents' current construal of their confidence/adaptability/level of career knowledge/career decidedness/willingness to ask for help/ability to accept criticism/ability to express opinions/self-belief/decisiveness	Quantitative, interval scale (1-7)	Excluding the single 'prefer not to answer' respondent: Two sample t-test or Mann-Whitney U test (dependent on sample sizes)

Appendix 5: Detailed results from Stage 1

Results for hypotheses H17-H28, testing for differences in the perceived skills of students at each university

Hypotheses - [University A and B] students do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H17: communication	M_B=7.433 M_A=7.072	SD_B=1.3619 SD_A=1.5543	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=1.515, *p* = .132 (two tailed)
H18: team working	M_B=7.870 M_A=7.412	SD_B=1.5400 SD_A=1.7042	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=1.734, *p* = .085 (two tailed)
H19: critical thinking	M_B=6.653 M_A=6.521	SD_B=1.5736 SD_A=1.8309	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154) = .471, *p* = .638 (two tailed)
H20: problem solving	M_B=6.840 M_A=6.989	SD_B=1.2536 SD_A=1.6113	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)= -.627, *p* = .532 (two tailed)
H21: innovation	M_B=6.501 M_A=6.330	SD_B=1.6078 SD_A=1.7213	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155) = .635, *p* = .526 (two tailed)
H22: independent working	M_B=8.382 M_A=7.938	SD_B=1.0584 SD_A=1.7067	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=2.005, *p* = .047 (two tailed)
H23: networking	M_B=6.876 M_A=6.608	SD_B=1.5874 SD_A=1.9668	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=0.945, *p* = .346 (two tailed)
H24: dealing with challenges	M_B=7.109 M_A=7.121	SD_B=1.6249 SD_A=1.6940	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=- .045, *p* = .964 (two tailed)
H25: willingness to take responsibility	M_B=7.694 M_A=7.682	SD_B=1.7548 SD_A=1.7718	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155) = .041, *p* = .967 (two tailed)
H26: amount of theoretical knowledge	M_B=6.382 M_A=6.064	SD_B=1.7842 SD_A=2.1290	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=1.015, *p* = .312 (two tailed)
H27: application of theoretical knowledge	M_B=6.440 M_A=6.023	SD_B=2.0284 SD_A=2.1219	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=1.241, *p* = .217 (two tailed)
H28: judging own performance	M_B=7.219 M_A=6.713	SD_B=1.5334 SD_A=1.7024	N_B=67 N_A=90	t(155)=1.921, *p* = .057 (two tailed)

Characteristics by institution

Hypotheses - [University A and B] students do not differ in perceptions of current characteristics:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H29: confidence*	M_B=2.727 M_A=3.078	SD_B=1.2347 SD_A=1.3088	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154)=-1.692, *p* = .093 (two tailed)
H30: adaptability	M_B=3.652 M_A=3.633	SD_B=1.5038 SD_A=1.6177	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154) = .071, *p* = .943 (two tailed)
H31: level of knowledge about careers	M_B=3.262 M_A=3.652	SD_B=1.6132 SD_A=1.4468	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154)=-1.574, *p* = .161 (two tailed)
H32: career decidedness*	M_B=3.262 M_A=3.900	SD_B=1.9306 SD_A=1.9200	N_B=65 N_A=90	t(153)=-2.038, *p* = .043 (two tailed)
H33: willingness to ask for help*	M_B=2.864 M_A=3.389	SD_B=1.7443 SD_A=1.8032	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154)=-1.822, *p* = .070 (two tailed)
H34: ability to accept criticism	M_B=3.167 M_A=3.078	SD_B=1.5351 SD_A=1.7497	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154) = .330, *p* = .742 (two tailed)
H35: ability to express opinions	M_B=2.970 M_A=2.922	SD_B=1.6358 SD_A=1.5304	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154) = .186, *p* = .853 (two tailed)
H36: self-belief	M_B=3.091 M_A=3.267	SD_B=1.5858 SD_A=1.6131	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154)=- .677, *p* = .499 (two tailed)
H37: decisiveness	M_B=3.652 M_A=3.656	SD_B=1.6314 SD_A=1.4075	N_B=66 N_A=90	t(154) = .017, *p* = .987 (two tailed)

* reversed questionnaire scores have been analysed in each of these cases to maintain the logic of the table and to make interpretation easier. This is because on the questionnaire for these questions the left hand pole was a 'negative' statement and the right a 'positive' statement while in the other items the opposite was true. The use of reversed scores means in each case here a lower score indicates the respondents rated themselves more highly (were closer to the positive statement) on the area regardless of the direction of the original question.

Comparison by programme

Hypotheses - students on different programmes do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H38: communication	M_{MP}=7.195 M_B=7.083 M_J=7.453 M_{PL}=7.500 M_{PH}=7.523 M_S=7.166	SD_{MP}=1.9315 SD_B=1.5618 SD_J=0.9924 SD_{PL}=1.0000 SD_{PH}=1.3242 SD_S=1.4763	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=1.394$ $p = .925$
H39: team working	M_{MP}=7.058 M_B=7.508 M_J=7.679 M_{PL}=8.375 M_{PH}=8.008 M_S=7.698	SD_{MP}=1.6688 SD_B=1.8921 SD_J=1.0097 SD_{PL}=0.6292 SD_{PH}=1.7428 SD_S=1.6224	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=5.833$ $p = .323$
H40: critical thinking	M_{MP}=7.532 M_B=6.552 M_J=7.474 M_{PL}=7.375 M_{PH}=6.669 M_S=5.853	SD_{MP}=1.4863 SD_B=1.7365 SD_J=1.2036 SD_{PL}=1.7500 SD_{PH}=1.4436 SD_S=1.7271	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$F(5, 150)=4.768$ $p< .001$
H41: problem solving	M_{MP}=7.884 M_B=6.533 M_J=7.358 M_{PL}=7.625 M_{PH}=7.100 M_S=6.692	SD_{MP}=1.6249 SD_B=1.5295 SD_J=1.0410 SD_{PL}=0.8539 SD_{PH}=1.0677 SD_S=1.4482	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=17.592$ $p = .004$
H42: innovation	M_{MP}=6.753 M_B=6.440 M_J=7.095 M_{PL}=6.375 M_{PH}=6.177 M_S=6.085	SD_{MP}=2.0375 SD_B=1.6842 SD_J=1.4924 SD_{PL}=1.3769 SD_{PH}=2.0503 SD_S=1.4635	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$F(5, 151)=1.337$ $p = .252$
H43: independent working	M_{MP}=8.216 M_B=7.852 M_J=8.500 M_{PL}=7.750 M_{PH}=8.185 M_S=8.232	SD_{MP}=2.1383 SD_B=1.5332 SD_J=1.0355 SD_{PL}=0.8660 SD_{PH}=1.2890 SD_S=1.3781	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=4.754$ $p = .447$
H44: networking	M_{MP}=6.953 M_B=6.748 M_J=6.767 M_{PL}=7.250 M_{PH}=6.808 M_S=6.554	SD_{MP}=1.5956 SD_B=2.1776 SD_J=1.3711 SD_{PL}=0.8660 SD_{PH}=2.1618 SD_S=1.7036	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=1.357$ $p = .926$
H45: dealing with challenges	M_{MP}=7.579 M_B=7.298 M_J=7.344 M_{PL}=7.500 M_{PH}=7.108 M_S=6.648	SD_{MP}=1.9205 SD_B=1.6740 SD_J=1.6589 SD_{PL}=0.7071 SD_{PH}=1.9063 SD_S=1.5297	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=6.541$ $p = .257$

Hypotheses - students on different programmes do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H46: willingness to take responsibility	M_{MP}=8.047 M_B=7.821 M_J=7.367 M_{PL}=8.250 M_{PH}=7.262 M_S=7.618	SD_{MP}=1.7545 SD_B=1.7867 SD_J=1.9312 SD_{PL}=0.8660 SD_{PH}=2.3528 SD_S=7.750	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=2.360$ $p = .797$
H47: amount of theoretical knowledge	M_{MP}=7.179 M_B=6.638 M_J=6.844 M_{PL}=7.625 M_{PH}=5.854 M_S=5.208	SD_{MP}=1.9722 SD_B=1.8427 SD_J=1.2292 SD_{PL}=0.7500 SD_{PH}=1.9645 SD_S=2.0624	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=22.288$ $p< .001$
H48: application of theoretical knowledge	M_{MP}=6.642 M_B=6.708 M_J=7.011 M_{PL}=7.375 M_{PH}=5.977 M_S=5.278	SD_{MP}=2.1355 SD_B=1.7561 SD_J=1.7169 SD_{PL}=1.0308 SD_{PH}=2.1642 SD_S=2.2097	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$F(5, 151)=4.073$ $p = .002$
H49: judging own performance	M_{MP}=6.673 M_B=7.029 M_J=7.794 M_{PL}=7.875 M_{PH}=7.138 M_S=6.478	SD_{MP}=1.9585 SD_B=1.3736 SD_J=1.3549 SD_{PL}=1.0308 SD_{PH}=2.0036 SD_S=1.7012	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=54	$H(5)=11.660$ $p = .040$
H50: confidence now	M_{MP}=2.947 M_B=3.021 M_J=3.222 M_{PL}=2.250 M_{PH}=3.231 M_S=2.760	SD_{MP}=1.4327 SD_B=1.3931 SD_J=1.3956 SD_{PL}=0.9547 SD_{PH}=1.4806 SD_S=1.0606	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)=3.806$ $p = .578$
H51: adaptability now	M_{MP}=3.316 M_B=3.542 M_J=3.444 M_{PL}=2.750 M_{PH}=3.923 M_S=3.860	SD_{MP}=1.6684 SD_B=1.5704 SD_J=1.5038 SD_{PL}=0.9574 SD_{PH}=1.1875 SD_S=1.6289	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)=4.637$ $p = .462$
H52: level of knowledge about future careers now	M_{MP}=4.000 M_B=3.729 M_J=3.722 M_{PL}=3.250 M_{PH}=2.923 M_S=3.120	SD_{MP}=1.5275 SD_B=1.4981 SD_J=1.7758 SD_{PL}=0.9574 SD_{PH}=1.5525 SD_S=1.4518	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=51	$H(5)=7.608$ $p = .179$
H53: career decidedness now	M_{MP}=5.000 M_B=3.979 M_J=3.833 M_{PL}=5.000 M_{PH}=2.154 M_S=3.000	SD_{MP}=1.9720 SD_B=2.0781 SD_J=1.6179 SD_{PL}=2.8284 SD_{PH}=1.1435 SD_S=1.5386	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=18 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)=24.129$ $p< .001$

Hypotheses - students on different programmes do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H54: willingness to ask for help now	M_{MP}=3.947 M_B=3.271 M_J=3.556 M_{PL}=2.500 M_{PH}=3.231 M_S=2.740	SD_{MP}=2.0131 SD_B=1.7227 SD_J=1.8222 SD_{PL}=1.7321 SD_{PH}=1.5359 SD_S=1.7935	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)$=9.259 p = .099
H55: ability to accept criticism now	M_{MP}=3.158 M_B=3.000 M_J=3.111 M_{PL}=1.750 M_{PH}=2.846 M_S=3.280	SD_{MP}=2.0073 SD_B=1.5845 SD_J=1.5297 SD_{PL}=0.5000 SD_{PH}=1.4632 SD_S=1.6787	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)$=4.642 p = .461
H56: ability to express opinions now	M_{MP}=2.947 M_B=3.042 M_J=2.333 M_{PL}=2.500 M_{PH}=3.462 M_S=2.920	SD_{MP}=1.7151 SD_B=1.4869 SD_J=1.3284 SD_{PL}=1.0000 SD_{PH}=1.7134 SD_S=1.6517	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)$=3.835 p = .573

Hypotheses - students on different programmes do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H57: self-belief now	M_{MP}=3.368 M_B=3.271 M_J=2.444 M_{PL}=2.000 M_{PH}=3.692 M_S=3.220	SD_{MP}=1.7705 SD_B=1.6209 SD_J=1.2935 SD_{PL}=0.8165 SD_{PH}=1.4936 SD_S=1.6325	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)$=7.627 p = .178
H58: decisiveness now	M_{MP}=3.368 M_B=3.604 M_J=3.611 M_{PL}=2.750 M_{PH}=4.385 M_S=3.640	SD_{MP}=1.8622 SD_B=1.4103 SD_J=1.6499 SD_{PL}=0.9574 SD_{PH}=1.3868 SD_S=1.4675	N_{MP}=19 N_B=48 N_J=19 N_{PL}=4 N_{PH}=13 N_S=53	$H(5)$=6.852 p = .254

Students' ratings of skills as they are now and as they expect them to be on graduation

Hypotheses - participants do not differ in perceptions of current and future skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H59: communication	M_{Now}=7.199 M_{Future}=8.577	SD_{Now}=1.4693 SD_{Future}=1.3139	N=147	t(146)=12.395, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H60: team working	M_{Now}=7.637 M_{Future}=8.690	SD_{Now}=1.6445 SD_{Future}=1.3014	N=147	t(146)=9.873, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H61: critical thinking	M_{Now}=6.573 M_{Future}=8.266	SD_{Now}=1.7038 SD_{Future}=1.4021	N=146	t(145)=12.713, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H62: problem solving	M_{Now}=6.949 M_{Future}=8.371	SD_{Now}=1.4653 SD_{Future}=1.4094	N=147	t(146)=11.472, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H63: innovation	M_{Now}=6.413 M_{Future}=7.990	SD_{Now}=1.6841 SD_{Future}=1.6629	N=147	t(146)=11.564, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H64: independent working	M_{Now}=8.142 M_{Future}=8.773	SD_{Now}=1.4714 SD_{Future}=1.2358	N=147	t(146)=5.994, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H65: networking	M_{Now}=6.684 M_{Future}=8.206	SD_{Now}=1.8561 SD_{Future}=1.6193	N=145	t(144)=11.337, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H66: dealing with challenges	M_{Now}=7.122 M_{Future}=8.395	SD_{Now}=1.6657 SD_{Future}=1.5118	N=147	t(146)=9.452, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H67: willingness to take responsibility	M_{Now}=7.651 M_{Future}=8.642	SD_{Now}=1.7944 SD_{Future}=1.4073	N=146	t(145)=7.569, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H68: amount of theoretical knowledge	M_{Now}=6.171 M_{Future}=8.327	SD_{Now}=1.9830 SD_{Future}=1.6685	N=146	t(145)=13.282, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H69: application of theoretical knowledge	M_{Now}=6.191 M_{Future}=8.318	SD_{Now}=2.1086 SD_{Future}=1.6677	N=146	t(145)=12.506, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H70: judging own performance	M_{Now}=6.926 M_{Future}=8.450	SD_{Now}=1.6931 SD_{Future}=1.3816	N=145	t(144)=11.609, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H71: confidence*	M_{Now}=2.938 M_{Future}=2.322	SD_{Now}=1.3195 SD_{Future}=1.5710	N=146	t(145)= -4.598, *p*< .001 (two tailed)

Hypotheses - participants do not differ in perceptions of current and future skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H72: adaptability	M_{Now}=3.658 M_{Future}=2.603	SD_{Now}=1.5863 SD_{Future}=1.7635	N=146	t(145)= -6.994, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H73: level of knowledge about careers	M_{Now}=3.410 M_{Future}=2.410	SD_{Now}=1.5210 SD_{Future}=1.7032	N=144	t(143)= -6.367, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H74: career decidedness*	M_{Now}=3.545 M_{Future}=2.124	SD_{Now}=1.9148 SD_{Future}=1.6111	N=145	t(144)= -9.885, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H75: willingness to ask for help*	M_{Now}=3.130 M_{Future}=2.027	SD_{Now}=1.8014 SD_{Future}=1.4429	N=145	t(144)=-7.485, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H76: ability to accept criticism	M_{Now}=3.118 M_{Future}=2.375	SD_{Now}=1.6408 SD_{Future}=1.7133	N=144	t(143)= -5.965, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H77: ability to express opinions	M_{Now}=2.917 M_{Future}=2.159	SD_{Now}=1.5833 SD_{Future}=1.5351	N=145	t(144)= -5.940, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H78: self-belief	M_{Now}=3.200 M_{Future}=2.290	SD_{Now}=1.5925 SD_{Future}=1.6241	N=145	t(144)= -6.514, *p*< .001 (two tailed)
H79: decisiveness	M_{Now}=3.621 M_{Future}=2.483	SD_{Now}=1.4723 SD_{Future}=1.4677	N=145	t(144)= -8.700, *p*< .001 (two tailed)

* reversed scores have been used

Note: low scores are better results for H71 H79

Relationships between age and the rating of skills/characteristics now and as they were expected to be on graduation

	Hypotheses - there is no correlation between age and:	Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient	N	Result
Now	H80: communication	.022	153	*p* = .785 (two tailed)
	H81: teamwork	-.018	153	*p* = .826 (two tailed)
	H82: critical thinking	-.166*	152	*p* = .040 (two tailed)
	H83: problem solving	-.071	153	*p* = .381 (two tailed)
	H84: innovation	-.020	153	*p* = .809 (two tailed)
	H85: independence	.047	153	*p* = .564 (two tailed)
	H86: networking	-.071	153	*p* = .385 (two tailed)
	H87: challenges	-.013	153	*p* = .875 (two tailed)
	H88: responsibility	-.006	153	*p* = .942 (two tailed)
	H89: theoretical knowledge	-.168*	153	*p* = .038 (two tailed)
	H90: teamwork	-.129	153	*p* = .111 (two tailed)
	H91: judgement performance	-.044	153	*p* = .593 (two tailed)
Future	H92: communication	-.032	143	*p* = .707 (two tailed)
	H93: teamwork	-.014	143	*p* = .868 (two tailed)
	H94: critical thinking	-.064	143	*p* = .447 (two tailed)
	H95: problem solving	-.031	143	*p* = .711 (two tailed)
	H96: innovation	-.008	143	*p* = .928 (two tailed)
	H97: independence	-.028	143	*p* = .741 (two tailed)
	H98: networking	-.090	142	*p* = .284 (two tailed)
	H99: challenges	.025	143	*p* = .771 (two tailed)
	H100: responsibility	-.005	143	*p* = .949 (two tailed)
	H101: theoretical knowledge	-.102	143	*p* = .225 (two tailed)
	H102: teamwork	-.057	143	*p* = .497 (two tailed)
	H103: judgement performance	.018	142	*p* = .835 (two tailed)

	Hypotheses - there is no correlation between age and:	Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient	N	Result
Now	H104: confidence	-.147	152	*p* = .071 (two tailed)
	H105: adaptability	.058	152	*p* = .477 (two tailed)
	H106: informed careers	-.075	150	*p* = .360 (two tailed)
	H107: career decidedness	-.235**	151	*p* = .004 (two tailed)
	H108: ask for help	-.296**	152	*p*< .001 (two tailed)
	H109: accept criticism	.108	152	*p* = .187 (two tailed)
	H110: express opinions	-.013	152	*p* = .878 (two tailed)
	H111: self-belief	-.098	152	*p* = .232 (two tailed)
	H112: decisiveness	-.038	152	*p* = .645 (two tailed)
Future	H113: confidence	-.008	143	*p* = .927 (two tailed)
	H114: adaptability	.137	143	*p* = .104 (two tailed)
	H115: informed careers	.068	143	*p* = .418 (two tailed)
	H116: career decidedness	-.112	143	*p* = .181 (two tailed)
	H117: ask for help	-.210*	143	*p* = .012 (two tailed)
	H118: accept criticism	.083	141	*p* = .325 (two tailed)
	H119: express opinions	.050	142	*p* = .552 (two tailed)
	H120: self-belief	.005	142	*p* = .954 (two tailed)
	H121: decisiveness	.047	142	*p* = .575 (two tailed)

Differences in students' ratings of their skills now according to status before entry (studying full time/in employment/unemployed, travelling, taking a break/other).

Hypotheses - students with different status before entry do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H122: communication	M_{SFT}=7.180 M_{IE}=7.072 M_{UTB}=8.086 M_{O}=7.540	SD_{SFT}=1.4182 SD_{IE}=1.4034 SD_{UTB}=1.9074 SD_{O}=2.0282	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153)=1.064$ $p = .366$
H123: teamwork	M_{SFT}=7.651 M_{IE}=7.471 M_{UTB}=7.257 M_{O}=7.480	SD_{SFT}=1.5385 SD_{IE}=1.7904 SD_{UTB}=2.9331 SD_{O}=1.7675	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3) = .257$ $p = .968$
H124: critical thinking	M_{SFT}=6.737 M_{IE}=6.163 M_{UTB}=6.500 M_{O}=5.720	SD_{SFT}=1.5526 SD_{IE}=2.0532 SD_{UTB}=2.5153 SD_{O}=2.0596	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=3.461$ $p = .326$
H125: problem solving	M_{SFT}=6.927 M_{IE}=7.038 M_{UTB}=6.857 M_{O}=6.610	SD_{SFT}=1.3431 SD_{IE}=1.8311 SD_{UTB}=1.9739 SD_{O}=1.9468	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153) = .204$ $p = .893$
H126: innovation	M_{SFT}=6.401 M_{IE}=6.308 M_{UTB}=6.614 M_{O}=6.490	SD_{SFT}=1.6547 SD_{IE}=1.9285 SD_{UTB}=1.7131 SD_{O}=1.7104	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153)=1.524$ $p = .211$
H127: working independently	M_{SFT}=8.001 M_{IE}=8.154 M_{UTB}=9.071 M_{O}=8.590	SD_{SFT}=1.4998 SD_{IE}=1.4258 SD_{UTB}=0.6921 SD_{O}=1.8592	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3) = .449$ $p = .930$
H128: networking	M_{SFT}=6.741 M_{IE}=6.213 M_{UTB}=6.971 M_{O}=7.680	SD_{SFT}=1.7753 SD_{IE}=1.7094 SD_{UTB}=2.5915 SD_{O}=1.9764	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=6.412$ $p = .093$
H129: ability to deal with challenges	M_{SFT}=7.065 M_{IE}=7.250 M_{UTB}=7.271 M_{O}=7.220	SD_{SFT}=1.6103 SD_{IE}=1.6950 SD_{UTB}=2.2507 SD_{O}=2.1102	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153) = .153$ $p = .927$
H130: willingness to take responsibility	M_{SFT}=7.587 M_{IE}=7.775 M_{UTB}=7.943 M_{O}=8.480	SD_{SFT}=1.7208 SD_{IE}=1.5369 SD_{UTB}=2.7796 SD_{O}=2.0373	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=4.882$ $p = .181$
H131: level of theoretical knowledge	M_{SFT}=6.442 M_{IE}=5.750 M_{UTB}=6.457 M_{O}=4.690	SD_{SFT}=1.8778 SD_{IE}=2.0246 SD_{UTB}=1.4234 SD_{O}=2.9153	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153)=3.176$ $p = .026$
H132: ability to apply theoretical knowledge	M_{SFT}=6.405 M_{IE}=6.042 M_{UTB}=6.300 M_{O}=4.480	SD_{SFT}=2.0448 SD_{IE}=2.0826 SD_{UTB}=1.3342 SD_{O}=2.6511	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153)=2.820$ $p = .041$

Hypotheses - students with different status before entry do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H133: ability to judge own performance	M_{SFT}=7.005 M_{IE}=6.650 M_{UTB}=8.029 M_{O}=6.100	SD_{SFT}=1.5856 SD_{IE}=1.7869 SD_{UTB}=1.2958 SD_{O}=1.9143	N_{SFT}=115 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$F(3, 153)=2.406$ $p = .069$
H134: confidence	M_{SFT}=3.144 M_{IE}=2.583 M_{UTB}=2.429 M_{O}=2.000	SD_{SFT}=1.3338 SD_{IE}=1.0180 SD_{UTB}=0.9759 SD_{O}=0.9428	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=11.465$ $p = .009$
H135: adaptability	M_{SFT}=3.730 M_{IE}=3.375 M_{UTB}=3.286 M_{O}=3.200	SD_{SFT}=1.4890 SD_{IE}=1.6632 SD_{UTB}=1.9760 SD_{O}=1.7512	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=3.207$ $p = .361$
H136: level of career knowledge	M_{SFT}=3.649 M_{IE}=3.167 M_{UTB}=2.429 M_{O}=3.100	SD_{SFT}=1.5353 SD_{IE}=1.3406 SD_{UTB}=1.5119 SD_{O}=1.7288	N_{SFT}=113 N_{IE}=24 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=6.182$ $p = .103$
H137: career decidedness	M_{SFT}=3.820 M_{IE}=3.250 M_{UTB}=3.143 M_{O}=2.900	SD_{SFT}=1.9596 SD_{IE}=1.9167 SD_{UTB}=1.9518 SD_{O}=1.7288	N_{SFT}=113 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=4.121$ $p = .249$
H138: willingness to ask for help	M_{SFT}=3.288 M_{IE}=2.875 M_{UTB}=2.571 M_{O}=3.300	SD_{SFT}=1.7130 SD_{IE}=1.8252 SD_{UTB}=2.2254 SD_{O}=2.4518	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=2.769$ $p = .429$
H139: ability to accept criticism	M_{SFT}=2.865 M_{IE}=3.708 M_{UTB}=2.857 M_{O}=4.100	SD_{SFT}=1.5284 SD_{IE}=1.6280 SD_{UTB}=1.8645 SD_{O}=2.1318	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=6.642$ $p = .084$
H140: ability to express opinion	M_{SFT}=3.063 M_{IE}=2.750 M_{UTB}=2.000 M_{O}=2.500	SD_{SFT}=1.5212 SD_{IE}=1.7258 SD_{UTB}=1.4142 SD_{O}=1.6499	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=5.810$ $p = .121$
H141: self-belief	M_{SFT}=3.216 M_{IE}=3.458 M_{UTB}=2.143 M_{O}=2.700	SD_{SFT}=1.5748 SD_{IE}=1.6676 SD_{UTB}=1.5736 SD_{O}=1.6364	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=4.752$ $p = .191$
H142: decisiveness	M_{SFT}=3.703 M_{IE}=4.000 M_{UTB}=2.571 M_{O}=2.700	SD_{SFT}=1.4869 SD_{IE}=1.5036 SD_{UTB}=1.1339 SD_{O}=1.5670	N_{SFT}=114 N_{IE}=25 N_{UTB}=7 N_{O}=10	$H(3)=9.065$ $p = .028$

Differences according to previous work experience

Hypotheses - students with different levels of previous relevant work experience do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H143: communication	M_{None}=7.033 M_{Little}=7.467 M_{Some}=7.096 M_{Lot}=7.371	SD_{None}=1.5223 SD_{Little}=1.5072 SD_{Some}=1.3738 SD_{Lot}=1.5668	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .817$ $p = .486$
H144: teamwork	M_{None}=7.281 M_{Little}=7.800 M_{Some}=7.643 M_{Lot}=7.771	SD_{None}=1.5793 SD_{Little}=1.6847 SD_{Some}=1.6214 SD_{Lot}=1.7349	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .821$ $p = .484$
H145: critical thinking	M_{None}=7.067 M_{Little}=6.379 M_{Some}=6.421 M_{Lot}=6.379	SD_{None}=1.5892 SD_{Little}=1.5630 SD_{Some}=1.8590 SD_{Lot}=1.7871	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=34	$F(3, 152)=1.571$ $p = .199$
H146: problem solving	M_{None}=7.224 M_{Little}=7.000 M_{Some}=6.526 M_{Lot}=7.034	SD_{None}=1.4205 SD_{Little}=1.3718 SD_{Some}=1.5434 SD_{Lot}=1.4477	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153)=1.867$ $p = .138$
H147: innovation	M_{None}=6.707 M_{Little}=6.645 M_{Some}=5.991 M_{Lot}=6.363	SD_{None}=1.6655 SD_{Little}=1.4866 SD_{Some}=1.5181 SD_{Lot}=1.9638	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153)=1.674$ $p = .175$
H148: working independently	M_{None}=8.007 M_{Little}=8.336 M_{Some}=8.157 M_{Lot}=8.034	SD_{None}=1.7207 SD_{Little}=1.2018 SD_{Some}=1.4037 SD_{Lot}=1.5351	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .361$ $p = .781$
H149: networking	M_{None}=6.557 M_{Little}=6.979 M_{Some}=6.649 M_{Lot}=6.777	SD_{None}=1.6516 SD_{Little}=1.9552 SD_{Some}=1.7948 SD_{Lot}=1.9350	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .368$ $p = .776$
H150: ability to deal with challenges	M_{None}=7.288 M_{Little}=7.221 M_{Some}=6.794 M_{Lot}=7.243	SD_{None}=1.6536 SD_{Little}=1.5530 SD_{Some}=1.7396 SD_{Lot}=1.6639	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .852$ $p = .468$
H151: willingness to take responsibility	M_{None}=7.883 M_{Little}=7.485 M_{Some}=7.630 M_{Lot}=7.720	SD_{None}=1.8314 SD_{Little}=2.0598 SD_{Some}=1.5551 SD_{Lot}=1.6712	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153) = .336$ $p = .799$
H152: level of theoretical knowledge	M_{None}=6.614 M_{Little}=6.061 M_{Some}=5.696 M_{Lot}=6.511	SD_{None}=2.0661 SD_{Little}=1.8503 SD_{Some}=1.9858 SD_{Lot}=1.9418	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153)=1.991$ $p = .118$
H153: ability to apply theoretical knowledge	M_{None}=6.521 M_{Little}=5.942 M_{Some}=5.804 M_{Lot}=6.594	SD_{None}=2.1523 SD_{Little}=1.9242 SD_{Some}=2.1975 SD_{Lot}=1.9484	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153)=1.495$ $p = .218$

Hypotheses - students with different levels of previous relevant work experience do not differ in perceptions of current skills in:	Means	Standard Deviations	N	Results
H154: ability to judge own performance	M_{None}=7.007 M_{Little}=6.961 M_{Some}=6.855 M_{Lot}=6.906	SD_{None}=1.7260 SD_{Little}=1.4822 SD_{Some}=1.6612 SD_{Lot}=1.7407	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=33 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 153)=0.977$ $p = .068$
H155: confidence	M_{None}=3.333 M_{Little}=2.594 M_{Some}=2.894 M_{Lot}=2.800	SD_{None}=1.2623 SD_{Little}=1.3880 SD_{Some}=1.1274 SD_{Lot}=1.3460	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152)=2.295$ $p = .080$
H156: adaptability	M_{None}=3.619 M_{Little}=3.531 M_{Some}=3.702 M_{Lot}=3.686	SD_{None}=1.6072 SD_{Little}=1.7224 SD_{Some}=1.3338 SD_{Lot}=1.7111	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152) = .087$ $p = .967$
H157: level of career knowledge	M_{None}=3.762 M_{Little}=3.688 M_{Some}=3.457 M_{Lot}=3.000	SD_{None}=1.5271 SD_{Little}=1.5748 SD_{Some}=1.5450 SD_{Lot}=1.3926	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=46 N_{Lot}=34	$F(3, 150)=1.827$ $p = .145$
H158: career decidedness	M_{None}=3.952 M_{Little}=3.290 M_{Some}=3.574 M_{Lot}=3.629	SD_{None}=2.2191 SD_{Little}=1.9008 SD_{Some}=1.7784 SD_{Lot}=1.8643	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=31 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 151) = .709$ $p = .548$
H159: willingness to ask for help	M_{None}=3.833 M_{Little}=2.969 M_{Some}=3.021 M_{Lot}=2.743	SD_{None}=1.9370 SD_{Little}=1.5757 SD_{Some}=1.6351 SD_{Lot}=1.8525	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152)=2.929$ $p = .036$
H160: ability to accept criticism	M_{None}=3.214 M_{Little}=3.219 M_{Some}=3.000 M_{Lot}=3.057	SD_{None}=1.7184 SD_{Little}=1.7913 SD_{Some}=1.4446 SD_{Lot}=1.7813	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152) = .179$ $p = .911$
H161: ability to express opinion	M_{None}=2.976 M_{Little}=2.781 M_{Some}=2.957 M_{Lot}=3.029	SD_{None}=1.5537 SD_{Little}=1.6604 SD_{Some}=1.4289 SD_{Lot}=1.7403	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152) = .153$ $p = .928$
H162: self-belief	M_{None}=3.190 M_{Little}=3.156 M_{Some}=3.191 M_{Lot}=3.229	SD_{None}=1.6415 SD_{Little}=1.5050 SD_{Some}=1.6237 SD_{Lot}=1.6643	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152) = .011$ $p = .998$
H163: decisiveness	M_{None}=3.429 M_{Little}=3.844 M_{Some}=3.745 M_{Lot}=3.629	SD_{None}=1.4839 SD_{Little}=1.5680 SD_{Some}=1.5247 SD_{Lot}=1.4569	N_{None}=42 N_{Little}=32 N_{Some}=47 N_{Lot}=35	$F(3, 152) = .542$ $p = .654$

Additional analysis: differences between UK and international students.

Hypotheses - UK and International students do not differ in perceptions of current characteristics in:	Medians	N	Results
H164: Communication	$Median_{UK}$=7.1 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1054.5, *p* = .166
H165: Team working	$Median_{UK}$=8.0 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 714.5, *p* = .001
H166: Critical thinking	$Median_{UK}$=7.0 $Median_{INT}$=6.8	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1219.0, *p* = .654
H167: Problem solving	$Median_{UK}$=7.1 $Median_{INT}$=6.5	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1015.5, *p* = .111
H168: Innovation	$Median_{UK}$=6.3 $Median_{INT}$=6.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1291.5, *p* = .916
H169: Independent working	$Median_{UK}$=8.2 $Median_{INT}$=7.5	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1079.5, *p* = .212
H170: Networking	$Median_{UK}$=7.0 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1207.5, *p* = .577
H171: Dealing with challenges	$Median_{UK}$=7.3 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1074.5, *p* = .202
H172: Willingness to take responsibility	$Median_{UK}$=8.0 $Median_{INT}$=7.5	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1153.5, *p* = .396
H173: Amount of theoretical knowledge	$Median_{UK}$=6.2 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1111.0, *p* = .281
H174: Application of theoretical knowledge	$Median_{UK}$=6.3 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1080.0, *p* = .213
H175: Judging own performance	$Median_{UK}$=7.0 $Median_{INT}$=7.0	N_{UK}=138 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1183.5, *p* = .492
H176: Confidence	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=3.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1002.0, *p* = .094
H177: Adaptability	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=4.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1053.0, *p* = .169
H178: Level of knowledge about careers	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=4.0	N_{UK}=135 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1134.0, *p* = .406
H179: Career decidedness	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=4.0	N_{UK}=136 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1281.5, *p* = .954
H180: Willingness to ask for help	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=3.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1033.0, *p* = .139
H181: Ability to accept criticism	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=4.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1295.5, *p* = .974
H182: Ability to express opinions	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=3.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1094.5, *p* = .252
H183: Self-belief	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=3.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1257.5, *p* = .808
H184: Decisiveness	$Median_{UK}$=3.0 $Median_{INT}$=3.0	N_{UK}=137 N_{INT}=19	*U* = 1101.5, *p* = .269

Additional analysis: Differences by gender

Hypotheses - male and female students do not differ in perceptions of current characteristics in:	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Results
H186: Communication	M_F=7.178 M_M=7.219	SD_F=1.4775 SD_M=1.4919	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=-0.053, *p* = .958 (two tailed)
H187: Team working	M_F=7.738 M_M=7.365	SD_F=1.4869 SD_M=1.9114	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=-1.420, *p* = .158 (two tailed)
H188: Critical thinking	M_F=6.209 M_M=7.172	SD_F=1.6883 SD_M=1.6596	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=3.356, *p* = .001 (two tailed)
H189: Problem solving	M_F=6.690 M_M=7.316	SD_F=1.4197 SD_M=1.5363	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=2.521, *p* = .013 (two tailed)
H190: Innovation	M_F=6.185 M_M=6.784	SD_F=1.5982 SD_M=1.7878	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=2.132, *p* = .035 (two tailed)
H191: Independent working	M_F=8.291 M_M=7.821	SD_F=1.2108 SD_M=1.8618	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(82.704)=-1.767, *p* = .081 (two tailed)
H192: Networking	M_F=6.639 M_M=6.911	SD_F=1.8616 SD_M=1.7794	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=0.925, *p* = .356 (two tailed)
H193: Dealing with challenges	M_F=7.094 M_M=7.184	SD_F=1.5629 SD_M=1.8461	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=0.312, *p* = .755 (two tailed)
H194: Willingness to takeresponsibility	M_F=7.778 M_M=7.598	SD_F=1.5669 SD_M=2.0487	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(93.785)=-0.534, *p* = .595 (two tailed)
H195: Amount of theoretical knowledge	M_F=6.028 M_M=6.554	SD_F=2.0554 SD_M=1.8953	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=1.658, *p* = .099 (two tailed)
H196: Application of theoretical knowledge	M_F=6.118 M_M=6.400	SD_F=2.1194 SD_M=2.0978	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=0.865, *p* = .388 (two tailed)
H197: Judging own performance	M_F=6.895 M_M=7.040	SD_F=1.6447 SD_M=1.6626	N_F=99 N_M=57	t(154)=0.567, *p* = .571 (two tailed)
H198: Confidence*	M_F=2.936 M_M=2.982	SD_F=1.2852 SD_M=1.3160	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=0.345, *p* = .730 (two tailed)
H199: Adaptability	M_F=3.316 M_M=3.830	SD_F=1.5495 SD_M=1.4899	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=-2.112, *p* = .036 (two tailed)
H200: Level of knowledge about careers	M_F=3.468 M_M=3.544	SD_F=1.6044 SD_M=1.4024	N_F=96 N_M=57	t(151)=0.254, *p* = .800 (two tailed)
H201: Career decidedness*	M_F=3.772 M_M=3.574	SD_F=1.9035 SD_M=2.0268	N_F=97 N_M=57	t(152)=0.630, *p* = .530 (two tailed)
H202: Willingness to ask for help*	M_F=3.106 M_M=3.351	SD_F=1.7989 SD_M=1.8175	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=0.934, *p* = .352 (two tailed)
H203: Ability to accept criticism	M_F=3.181 M_M=2.895	SD_F=1.5927 SD_M=1.7184	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=-1.230, *p* = .220 (two tailed)
H204: Ability to express opinions	M_F=3.053 M_M=2.754	SD_F=1.5955 SD_M=1.5033	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=-1.216, *p* = .226 (two tailed)
H205: Self-belief	M_F=2.807 M_M=3.394	SD_F=1.5535 SD_M=1.6414	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(153)=-2.320, *p* = .022 (two tailed)
H206: Decisiveness	M_F=3.333 M_M=3.819	SD_F=1.6195 SD_M=1.2864	N_F=98 N_M=57	t(137.457)=-2.190, *p* = .030 (two tailed)

Appendix 6: Guidelines for completion of the self-characterisation sketch

Guidelines for completion of the self-characterisation sketch

This method of eliciting constructs was developed by George Kelly (Kelly 1955/1991). Although it may seem like an unusual way of starting a conversation about Work Integrated Learning, it will give me valuable insights into your views of yourself as an employee and if a follow-up interview is conducted it will also give us a very useful basis for the discussion.

If you want to know more about self-characterisation sketches and their uses I have given some background information at the end of these instructions.

Here is what I would like you to do:

Write a character sketch of [your name] as you think of or imagine yourself in a work role, ideally in the type of role you think you would like to take up after graduation (e.g. social worker, journalist, policy expert, manager, physiotherapist). Write just as if you are the central character in a play. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knows you very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone ever really could know you. Be sure to write it in the third person. For example, start out by saying "[your name] as a [social worker, journalist, policy expert, manager, physiotherapist etc.] is ....."

This piece of writing can be as long or as short as you want it to be: I expect it to take you no more than 15 minutes to write. The main thing is not to put too much thought into 'polishing' it before you send it to me, just write it and send me the first draft (even if it contains grammatical and spelling errors).

Additional background information

If you are interested in knowing more about self-characterisation sketches or about Personal Construct Theory (the overall area) you may find these a useful starting point.

The original work is Kelly, G. (1955/1991). The Psychology of Personal Constructs. New York: Norton. Reprinted London: Routledge.

Additional information can be found in the online Internet Encyclopedia of Personal Construct Psychology at http://www.pcp-net.org/encyclopaedia/self-character.html or in many other textbooks, for example:

Butt, T., & Burr, V. (2004). Invitation to Personal Construct Psychology (2nd ed.). London: Whurr.

Appendix 7: Interview topic guide

Topic Guide

1. Introductions and consent

Introduce myself and the project:

- Thanks for participating previously and for volunteering for interview;
- My situation as PhD student, stage of study;
- Outline again purpose of study to follow students and establish changes in views due to experiencing WIL.

Clarify consent and data protection (refer to information sheet):

- Explain voluntary nature of participation;
- Explain right to stop interview at any time while in progress or to withdraw responses afterwards;
- Ensure participant has my contact details and information on additional support services, as per information sheet;
- Explain & ask for consent to digital recording, explain what will happen to the recordings (secure storage, transcription without identifying details, no identification in report stages).

Outline the interview process:

- Timing (around 1 hour);
- Will discuss their previously completed questionnaire and self-characterisation sketch;
- Will use additional tools/models to help me to understand their views.

2. Discussion of constructs emerging from self-characterisation sketch

Several constructs will be identified in advance for each participant, and are therefore likely to be different in each interview. Typical exploratory questions to be used are:

Laddering to begin discussion and possibly elicit more constructs:

Questions such as:

- Why is this important?
- Can you give me an example of where it might be used?

Use of Salmon lines to look at constructs in detail:

- Using a Salmon line, can you tell me where you think you are now in relation to this construct? (the opposite ends of the lines represent extreme positions e.g. poor skill in this construct v. excellent skill in this construct)

- And where do you think you were a year ago?
- Look at questionnaire, if relevant to this construct, and remind them what they said a year ago.
- What has changed?
- Why has it changed?
- What helped?

- What hindered?
- Where do you think you will be on graduation?
- Why will it be different/not different?
- What will help?
- What might be more challenging?
- IF WIL is not discussed, ask about it – why haven't they mentioned it? Has it been an influence?

3. Closing comments and summary

- Thanks for participating
- Reminder they have information sheet with contact details
- Information about any follow ups, sending transcripts
- Information about Stage 3 study, what it will involve (same as this process) and invitation to participate

Appendix 8: Participant information sheet (Stage 3 version)

University of HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Work Integrated Learning and self perceptions regarding the work role: A longitudinal study

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a study about work experience as part of university degrees, and the effect it may have on your views of yourself as an employee. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?

I am a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield and also a lecturer at Northumbria University. The data collection you are invited to participate in here is for the final stage of my PhD study.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the views of students studying on one of a number of courses at either [University A] or [University B] and to see how they change over time. This part is designed to gather some information from final year students at both institutions about how their views of undertaking work placements as part of their courses has influenced their development during their time at university.

Why I have been approached?

You have been asked to participate because you previously took part in an interview with me in 2015 and agreed to be contacted again now.

Do I have to take part?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. Participating in the earlier stage of the study does not commit you to being interviewed now. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw at any time before data analysis starts without giving a reason.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be invited to complete a self-characterisation sketch (a short piece of writing about how you think you are seen currently as an employee, from the viewpoint of someone who knows you very well). Once I have received this you will be invited to a follow-up interview to discuss it with me, this will take about an hour of your time. If you decide not to complete the sketch I will still invite you to participate in the interview as it would still be very valuable to me.

Will my identity be disclosed?

All information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would need to pass this information to my PhD supervisor (Professor Nigel King).

What will happen to the information?

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to these data. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report in addition my PhD thesis. Your anonymity will be ensured in any results reported, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

You will also be sent a transcript of the interview and will be given the opportunity to remove any data you do not wish to be used in the analysis.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:

Name: Angela McGrane

E-mail: u1351349@hud.ac.uk or angela.mcgrane@northumbria.ac.uk

Should participation in the research have caused any distress or concern, depending on your location please contact either:

[University B counselling service details were here]

or

[University A counselling service details were here]

In addition to these sources of support if the survey raises any concerns for you about employment or placements both universities have dedicated placements staff along with careers advice services who will be able to discuss any issues with you. Your programme or course leader will be able to direct you to the most appropriate source of advice.

Appendix 9: Informed consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Work Integrated Learning and self perceptions regarding the work role: A longitudinal study

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research ☐

I consent to taking part in it ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason ☐

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) ☐

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Northumbria ☐

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided. ☐

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report. ☐

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant: Print: Date:	Signature of Researcher: Print: Date:

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Appendix 10: LQA forms. Blank copy and an example of a completed version

Longitudinal Qualitative Data Summary

Participant Code: _____

Characteristics to note e.g. what pond/pool of data does this participant belong to?					
Increase Emerge	Decrease Cease	Surge Epiphany	Cumulative	Constant Consistent	Idiosyncratic/Missing
Contextual/Intervening conditions influencing and affecting changes above					
Differences above from previous data summaries					
Interrelationships					
Changes that oppose/harmonise with human development/social processes				Participant/conceptual rhythms	

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Preliminary assertions as data analysis progresses</td><td rowspan="2">Through-line (in progress)</td></tr>
<tr><td>About the pond</td><td>Overall</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Key quotations</td></tr>
</table>

Longitudinal Qualitative Data Summary

Participant Code: MS9

Characteristics to note e.g. what pond/pool of data does this participant belong to?

Journalism [redacted] . 18 at start of course, no previous work experience.

Increase Emerge	Decrease Cease	Surge Epiphany	Cumulative	Constant Consistent	Idiosyncratic/Missing
Contacts – and seeing yourself as fitting in – "fitting in" to the workplace Knowing what type of role would suit her. Knowledge of what workplace is like in reality.	Ability to judge how well she's doing (more less certainty) judges self vs. looks for judgement by others. Certainty over whether she wants this as a career. (or what area - choice/variety making it hard).	"forcing herself" to do things e.g. approaching strangers for interviews.	Struggling with "confidence in [her] ability"	a "people person" is repeated - sees this as being very important to the job (confident, friendly, personable)	No previous experience at all - first to say this although doesn't come through in interview.

Contextual/Intervening conditions influencing and affecting changes above

Placement environments (variety) - contrast between small + large organisations - exposure to different types of journalism environments + practice.

Differences above from previous data summaries

Influence of variety, seeing where she "fits best".

Interrelationships

Placement influencing where she sees herself 'fitting' and what would be right for her.

Changes that oppose/harmonise with human development/social processes

Would confidence/knowledge of best choices for her develop naturally as she reflected on them while course progressed?

Participant/conceptual rythmns

Uncertainty over what she wants (work area) recurs.

Preliminary assertions as data analysis progresses		Through-line (in progress)
About the pond	**Overall**	
Quite different to MS4 in terms of awareness/ knowledge (not mentioned by extent of MS4) - prob. due to previous work experience? Also more wide ranging in terms of where she sees opportunities (more influenced by course perhaps? Online journalism/freelance work is barely mentioned).	More about awareness of opportunities + chance to try out 'scary' things to prove yourself + build confidence.	Headlines emerging:- ① Placement is somewhere to experiment: 'try on' new roles, test your abilities, see what you can (or can't) do. ↓ self belief vs. self doubt ② Allows you to find your place and 'fit in'. Where do I belong? ③ Have I made the right choice? Testing this. exposure to experience + reality of the job. ④ Uncertainty can increase with greater awareness.

Key quotations

I1 lines 33-41 - informal nature of placements on course
Increasing uncertainty (I1 lines 71-81, 106-109, 112-118
confidence (I1 lines 224-232), forcing yourself to do things (lines 249-254)
finding out what it's like in practice (lines 378-383)
Decrease in judging effectiveness (504-506)

Appendix 11: Peer-reviewed paper presented to the British Academy of Management conference, 2019

Work Integrated Learning and Development of Graduate Identity

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Abstract

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is increasingly promoted as a tool to encourage skills in graduates that academic study alone may struggle to provide. However the role it can play in influencing graduate identity is often overlooked, as it is seen more narrowly as something which is only useful in leading to employment.

This paper attempts to redress the balance. The development of professional identity in graduates is explored in three short vignettes taken from a larger longitudinal study of student experiences of WIL. These draw on both self-characterisation sketches, a method for describing the self developed by Kelly (1955/1991), and on interviews which took place with students in both second and final years of study. Findings are discussed and contrasted with both Social Identity Theory and Holmes's model of emergent graduate identity and illustrate the diversity of effects on identity that may be experienced by students during the course of their studies.

Keywords

Graduate identity; Work Integrated Learning; Professional development

Track

Identity

Word Count

6255

Introduction and context for the study

In English higher education the 'value for money' element of degree study is under increasing scrutiny (Burnett, 2017) leading to an environment where questions of graduate identity development and the process of 'becoming' a graduate are in danger of being overlooked. Driven by an increase in tuition fees and the pressure from competition introduced by the lifting of the cap on student numbers (BIS, 2011) measures of employment outcomes as a way of assessing the 'value' of a degree are prioritised. This is not a situation unique to England or to Higher Education: although English tuition fees are identified as the most expensive in the world (Kentish, 2017) the emphasis on student development mattering only if it leads to employment is also seen in other countries and other sectors. For example there is a large body of work in the Australian HE sector, which seems to have gained momentum after a similar change to funding arrangements imposed in 2005 (Bates, 2008).

Of course it is legitimate for employers and policy makers to concern themselves with issues of graduate employability as, ultimately, well-prepared graduates have a significant impact on economic development and on society more generally. However employability is a complex idea that is difficult to measure, with areas such as career development learning, job search skills, networking abilities, degree subject knowledge, generic skills and emotional intelligence all being part of the concept (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007, Jackson and Wilton, 2016). At its most fundamental level, employability is about the individual being prepared for and able to carry out a job (Harvey, 2001), meaning that it can also be impacted by characteristics such as gender, social class, race, and disability (Cranmer, 2006). It is, therefore, inextricably linked to identity and individual attributes including the construction of the self. It also needs to be acknowledged that employment is not only determined by how employable someone is, but also by things like availability of opportunities, and recruitment and selection processes (for example, graduates from higher ranked institutions may be favoured either consciously or unconsciously) (Jackson, 2013). However it is relatively common to conflate employability with the more measurable concept of employment and to assume that if graduates have a defined and measurable set of 'employability skills' this is sufficient to ensure employment. This means that when questions of how students develop during the course of their degree studies are considered the principal emphasis tends to be placed on graduate employment outcomes (Holmes, 2013b) and the need to produce 'work ready' graduates.

One strategy which is frequently suggested to encourage employment skills which academic study alone struggles to provide is Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Bates, 2008, Crebert et al., 2004, Freudenberg et al., 2010). This is defined as work experience taking place as a formally assessed part of the programme of study, for example as sandwich placements, professional practice, or internships. In the UK an increased use of WIL has been particularly driven by responses to the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) and the Wilson review (Wilson, 2012) which set out the importance of universities in developing graduates to meet the needs of employers and society (Rhodes and Shiel, 2007). The position is taken that all students should be encouraged to take up placements in order to improve their employability and academic skills and that internships (shorter periods of work experience lasting months rather than a full academic year) should be developed and made more available to UK students to increase the flexibility of integration with academic courses (Wilson, 2012). Beyond the UK, there is also a clear interest in WIL as a way of developing graduate employability, often driven by similar agendas.

Although existing work focussing on acquisition of skills through WIL is valuable, the question of what else the experience may offer students and particularly the effect on identity in the work role is under-explored due to the emphasis on measuring employment outcomes. The particular area of interest in this paper is therefore to explore what happens to views of identity in students who undertake WIL, looking to build a more holistic picture of their development across their programme of study and expanding research on the impact of WIL beyond the skills agenda.

Graduate professional identity

Looking beyond the narrow focus on employment outcomes, it is clear that if the impact of undertaking WIL on student identity is to be understood there is a need to explore how undergraduates develop their identity during the course of their studies: how do they 'become' a graduate professional? Much of the existing work on professional identity development in students is done in highly regulated areas such as teaching and medicine: this means it tends to be motivated by the imposition of external models of professional identity by government policy makers or educators (Helmich et al., 2010, Weaver et al., 2011, Wilkins et al., 2011) rather than professional identity being seen as something intrinsic and about behaviour, beliefs and self-efficacy (Lamote and Engels, 2010, Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). There is, therefore, limited work which specifically looks at the formation of identity by the individual practitioner. Instead, more is revealed about how new professionals negotiate the process of 'fitting in' to a highly regulated structure (Timoštšuk and Ugaste, 2010). However, there are two theoretical strands which challenge this approach, one applying Social Identity Theory to questions of graduate identity and the other relating to Leonard Holmes's work on graduate employability. Both are reviewed here in order to provide a theoretical framework for discussion of later case studies illustrating the experiences of three individuals.

Social Identity Theory and Graduate Identity

While limited, a contrast to work assuming that becoming a graduate professional simply means fitting into established structures is seen in a small number of publications which explore the broader changes in identity that are experienced by students during their course of study (Hallier and Summers, 2011, Jungert, 2011, Timoštšuk and Ugaste, 2010, Weaver et al., 2011). Using Social Identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, Turner, 1975, Turner and Reynolds, 2012) Weaver et al.(2011) look at how medical students compare themselves to the identity of the 'ideal doctor'. Hallier and Summers (2011) consider the process that Human Resource Management (HRM) students go through in order to see themselves as a professional (which, in some cases, may mean rejecting this identity), although their work is limited by collecting retrospective views from final year students only. In contrast, Jungert (2011) conducts a longitudinal study of postgraduate engineering students over four and a half years to explore how their views of themselves change. The HRM students describe moving through stages where initial expectations were challenged and revised (for example, if their prior expectations of the profession are invalidated in their degree classes), through identification with practice developing through work experience, to the extent of possibly rejecting academic critiques of practice by final year (Hallier and Summers, 2011). Similarly, Jungert (2011) describes how his participants transition from self-identification

as an ‘engineering student’ to thinking of themselves as ‘an engineer’. In both cases, it seems that what appears to influence the change in identity is a challenge to expectations: when this happens either the student changes or the challenge is rejected. If academic critique is rejected, this is usually because the practitioner perspective is valued over the academic, and placement is seen as exposure to ‘reality’ in contrast to a theoretical academic position which has previously been accepted. Academics can, therefore, be used as what Social Categorisation theory would say is the ‘out- group’ that the profession should be defended against as students come to see themselves as part of the ‘in-group’ of HRM professionals or engineers. However for some students identity as a professional is rejected when their initial expectations (what they believe on enrolment that a professional should do and be) are proved false, and they become isolated from the main group. These students are likely to reject the profession and choose a different path on graduation, although it is unclear what form this may take (Hallier and Summers, 2011). In contrast to work suggesting that one of the desirable outcomes from WIL is that students should develop high career decidedness and be ready to step into a profession on graduation (see, for example, Brooks and Youngson (2016); Cranmer (2006); Jackson (2014); Reddy and Moores (2006)), it seems possible that students may undergo a process of questioning identity, leading to an increase in uncertainty over future direction in graduates. An area of interest for this paper is therefore to explore which groups students most strongly identify with and also where they feel they are likely to ‘belong’ on graduation.

Holmes’s Model of Graduate Identity

Holmes (2013a) suggests three possible models for how employability can be better defined in terms of graduate identity. His proposal is that Graduate employability can be seen as either:

- possession of requisite skills (such as graduate attributes);
- social positioning (linked to cultural capital such as the quality of the degree awarding institution);
- processual (moving into employment is simply another stage on the journey of the individual, it is not something to be taken in isolation but is about the overall ‘emergent identity’ of the graduate, a socially constructed relationship which changes over time).

He takes issue with the first model, pointing out that the process of becoming a graduate is complex, takes place over an extended time period, and is negotiated both between the individual and those around them (Holmes, 2015). In addition, he asserts that research shows there is a weak relationship between attaining these and employment outcomes. While the second model had relevance in the past, he suggests that it is becoming less influential with the move to a mass higher education system (Holmes, 2013a). He therefore favours the third (processual) model of graduate employability. This means that:

> … graduate employability can be considered as the always temporary relationship that arises between an individual graduate and the field of employment opportunities, as the graduate engages with those who are ‘gatekeepers’ to those opportunities, particularly those who make selection

> decisions. In presenting themself to a prospective employer, as a prospective employee, the individual is presenting their claim on being a graduate 'worthy' of such employment
>
> (Holmes, 2013a)

Graduate identity is therefore dependent on two aspects: how the student sees and presents themselves, and how they are seen by others (Holmes, 2013a). A graduate identity model is proposed by Holmes based on these dimensions, suggesting that graduates move between four categories: agreed identity, failed identity, indeterminate identity, or an imposed identity. A fifth category, under-developed identity, is also possible. Each of these can be claimed or not by the individual, and can be affirmed by others or not. The model attempts to capture the non-static nature of graduate employability, and its relationship to both the identities felt to be valid by the graduate, and by outside stakeholders. The model is presented in figure 1 below:

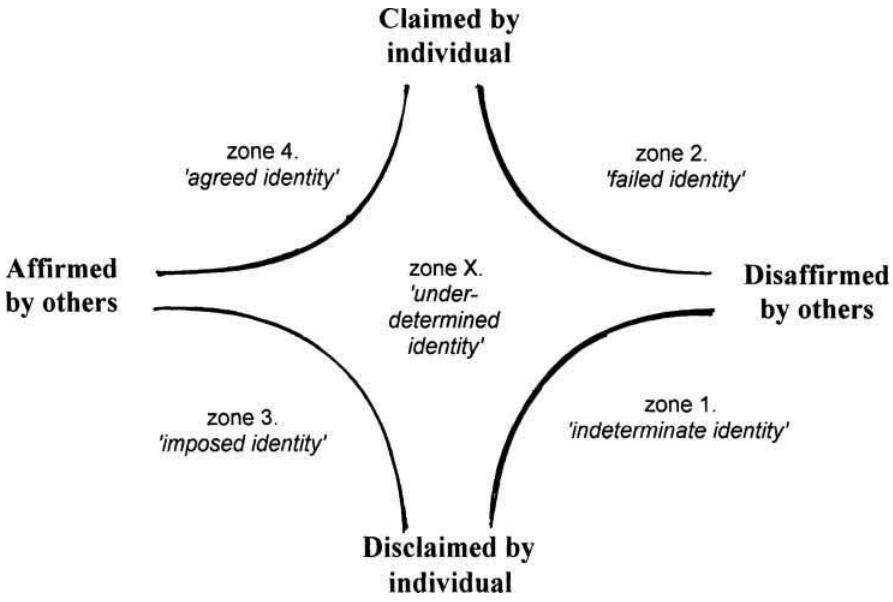

Figure 1: Claim-affirmation model of modalities of emergent identity (Holmes, 2013a)

In terms of the influence of Holmes's model to work on graduate identity, many authors cite his work although very few explicitly apply his ideas. There is clearly an opportunity for further exploration of how graduate identity develops over time drawing on this research.

Approach to the research

Theoretical framework adopted

The priority in this research is to understand the lived experiences and changing perceptions of undergraduate students as they progress through their studies and, in particular, to look at how professional identity development takes place. The research therefore explores

graduate identity through individual categorisations, resonating with Burr's (2015) assertion that "what we regard as truth … may be thought of as our current accepted ways of understanding the world" (Burr, 2015) and also with Chiari and Nuzzo's (1996) discussion of psychological constructivisms. The way participants see themselves will change over time dependent both on their prior and current experiences and the contexts and environments they experience, so the study adopts a constructivist viewpoint. While constructivism can be categorised in a number of ways, and it can be difficult to make clear unambiguous distinctions between the various schools of thought which are labelled as constructivist (Chiari and Nuzzo, 1996), the work is particularly influenced by the particular variation of constructivism seen in Personal Construct Theory (PCT) (Kelly, 1955/1991). This theory is based around the concept of 'constructive alternativism'. The epistemological question of what constitutes a 'fact' is addressed by asserting that we, as humans, are presented with an infinite amount of choice about how we categorise and describe the world around us (Butt and Burr, 2004). We organise our world-view using an individual network of bipolar constructs, and undertake a process of sense-making by assessing how and where our lived experiences fit into this (Butt, 2008). In PCT, it therefore follows that views of the world are unique to the individual, as they are chosen by each of us on the basis of what we think fits best with (or makes sense of) our experiences of it.

Data collection

Drawing on PCT as the theoretical framework, with the aim of exploring the changing construal of students across time, this paper draws on some of the findings from a longitudinal study of undergraduate students from a number of programmes at two UK universities with the aim of illustrating the changes in identity that take place for three individuals.

Initial data collection and recruitment for the study took place through a questionnaire survey of first year undergraduates from a number of courses, chosen to reflect a variety of WIL models. While detailed results from this stage of the work are not presented here, the information gathered in the questionnaire about perceptions on entry has been used to form a complete picture of change in the participants over the entire course of their degree. The principal focus in the work discussed in this paper is the qualitative research that took place with second and final year students using self–characterisation sketches, a method developed by Kelly (1955/1991) to explore construal by production of a short, individual description of the self. The principle is that by writing in the third person and following very specific instructions to write like "a friend who knew him very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone else could ever know him" (Kelly, 1955/1991) the respondent is invited to be more open and reflective than they might be otherwise. The aim is that:

> The resultant sketch will reveal, in part, the participant's truth, her story. We are not in the business of content analysis, nor checking off constructs used. Rather, we are looking at how the person construes, how constructs are integrated, and what implications they are seen to have.
>
> (Banister et al., 1994)

Each participant was invited to write two sketches at different time points during their studies. The first was towards the end of the second year of study and the second either towards the end of third year (for those on a three year programme) or at the start of fourth year (for participants who had done a sandwich year). In each, students were asked to describe themselves in a work role using a slightly adapted version of Kelly's instructions. The sketches were then analysed and used alongside semi-structured interviews with the same participants to explore changing constructions of identity.

A large number of the questionnaire respondents had volunteered to be contacted for follow-up research, and from this group fifteen second-year students were chosen to reflect a variety of WIL experiences. More emphasis was placed on ensuring diversity by course rather than on the institution of study because the initial (quantitative) survey suggested that this was a far more important differentiating factor. The sample included participants on courses offering optional whole-year sandwich placements (Business), a number of compulsory short periods of professional work experience (Social Work), and also more informal and ad-hoc assignments and internships (Journalism). Eleven of these original fifteen participants continued to the second (final year) stage and data are therefore available from them across their full period as a student. The reason for classifying the later group of participants as 'final year' rather than 'third year' is that some (who undertook a sandwich placement) were on a four-year degree programme. The detailed sample composition at each stage is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Participant group

	Business Management	Social Work	Journalism	Total
University A	2 (2)	2 (1)	1 (1)	5 (4)
University B	4 (4)	5 (3)	1 (0)	10 (7)
Total	6 (6)	7 (4)	2 (1)	15 (11)

(Note: numbers in brackets represent the numbers taking part in final year data collection)

The sketches have been analysed according to a specific protocol designed by Kelly (1955/1991) to reveal the 'story' of the participants. Following this analysis the questionnaire, sketches, and interview transcripts were used to carry out longitudinal qualitative analysis (Saldaña, 2003) for each individual, examining the journey of each participant over time, which "describes, connects and summarizes the researcher's primary observations of participant change" (Saldaña, 2003). Case studies of each of the individuals and their views about the changes in self-construal of identity they have experienced were produced from this analysis. Three of these, chosen to illustrate diverse aspects of the development journeys that some of the participants undertook during their course of studies, are presented here in the form of short vignettes.

In the following discussions names and some minor details have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants. The university that participants attended has also not been identified, in order to make it more difficult to identify individual respondents.

Vignettes illustrating facets of identity development

Amira: Claiming identity

Amira was a Business Management student. She felt that she had no relevant work experience before starting at university, having come straight from college to her degree.

Of all of the participants, Amira's story most clearly demonstrates the potential for placement to provide a transformative experience, changing completely her view of herself at work and leading to development of a new identity. In second year, she expressed very little certainty or knowledge about future career directions, and struggled to see herself in any job role. There had clearly been strong influences from her family background: she had originally wanted to study a different degree subject but this would have meant moving away from home, and her father had discouraged this leading her to choose a general business degree instead. This meant that when we spoke in second year, her work identity was still nebulous and she expressed a clear lack of confidence in her abilities saying:

> Yeah because one morning I'll wake up and I'll be like 'yeah, I know what I'm doing' and then another morning I'll be like 'I'm not sure' you know, because I lack confidence as well so that brings me down a lot, because I don't have the confidence in me …. It's like I do want to open up my own business, be a manager there … but it's like I don't have the confidence. I don't think I'd be able to do it because it's a lot of hard work …. and then sometimes I'm like I'll have my degree, I'll just go work for someone else. Then one morning I'll just wake up and be like, I can't do none of this, I'm too stupid for it.
>
> (Amira, interview 1)

This illustrates a recurring theme present throughout Amira's first interview: a lack of confidence, leading to doubts in her ability and her 'place', and uncertainty over where she belonged. Her 'in-group' and 'out-group' in a work-identity sense were very hard to distinguish as she was situated so firmly in zone X of Holmes's graduate identity model ('under-determined identity'). Unsure of her place, seeing little opportunity for her to 'claim' a workplace identity, she struggled to see where she might go or even what type of experience she needed to help her to develop.

In contrast to this uncertainty and lack of identity, her final year interview tells a story of reinvention. Having taken up a one-year sandwich placement managing training, events, and other administration for a large department in the NHS she took the opportunity to be someone different from the shy student of interview 1, saying she realised that in her placement situation "nobody knows me so just be who I want" (Amira, interview 2). She saw it as an opportunity to take risks with her identity and to experiment with being someone else. Having said in interview 1 that she was nervous about even taking part in the research, because of the need to speak to a stranger about her views, by interview 2 she is someone who has decided that when she needs to go to London for work she has the confidence to go out by herself:

> You finish work at four or five o'clock, three o'clock and it's like 'What do I do for the rest of the day? I'm finished for the day.' So I thought 'Just go out and go shopping' and it wasn't actually bad, just to go out by yourself and find your

> way around and then get back
>
> (Amira, interview 2)

This view of herself as a confident and independent person was clearly helped by the team she worked with, who had been happy to support her development: the 'affirmation' from colleagues that "you've fitted in really well, that you're fulfilling our demands and you've learnt, you've picked up skills and fitted into the team a lot quicker than we thought you would have" (Amira, interview 2) has been crucial for her. Additional validation of her new, confident persona has come from university friends on her return to study:

> A lot of my friends said that when I came back to University, a lot of them did say, 'You look more confident. You come across more confident, you're more open, you're willing to do things that you didn't do, you've come out of your shell basically.' And they actually did say 'It's due to the placement.' And it definitely is.
>
> (Amira, interview 2)

The increased confidence also led to the development of clearer plans for the future: having decided that she wanted to pursue a career in banking (a possibility that had been mentioned in interview 1 but that she had not followed up when applying for her first degree), she was making plans to study for a Masters qualification in a different city after graduation. Aided by her placement experience, she was clearly in the process of defining and claiming her identity as a confident and capable graduate.

Mark: Questioning identity

Mark was a mature student from the UK. He had worked in a call centre before deciding on a career change, and initially spent a short time in adult social care before deciding to do a degree in Social Work in order to progress further in this area. His first placement, in the second year of his degree, was in a school. In third year he undertook a statutory placement in local authority children's services.

Mark's sketches and interviews tell something of a story of questioning his professional identity, particularly towards the end of his course of study. While it is clear throughout that he expected to be a Social Worker, there are questions over which Social Work category he 'fitted' within, and which professional groups he associated himself with. Having started his degree identifying with the field of adult Social Work, he undertook a placement in children's services in second year to broaden his experience. He "was open minded and I thought, yeah, yeah, I'll give it a go, children terrify us but we'll see how it goes. It just opened up that area for me really and I was happy" (Mark, interview 1). Although he mentioned that job opportunities were a key driver of his decision to try working with children in this first placement, it seems that the experience also led him to change his ideas and to want to work with children for more reasons than just this. In terms of the identity he brought to the role, he saw himself as quite a creative person and thought this was a valuable asset when working with children. He was also surprised by how much of his previous work identity (in a call centre) was relevant to the placement role and how many of the skills were transferrable. For example he identified "communication skills" (Mark,

sketch 1) as being important in both roles and saying in the interview that:

> It really did surprise me. It surprised me that I picked up on the children's different communication styles and adapted my communications styles to meet theirs. It was going well and I think that's when I realised I was doing big positive things
>
> (Mark, interview 1)

It is also clear that he has been affected by being seen as a role model by the children he is working with:

> He found working with children very rewarding and saw himself as a positive role model in the children's lives, however this made Mark feel a pressure of responsibility towards the children. Mark felt more responsible for his actions and the realisation of being a professional
>
> (Mark, sketch 1)

One of the aspects of this statement which merits discussion is that this is about how he saw *himself*, there was an internal pressure and responsibility here to 'act' as a role model and, in common with Amira, it seems to be about a process of claiming an identity which the placement allowed him to gain validation for from others (in this case, the children who he identified as having few male role models allowing him to play this part). Linked to this is a developing understanding of his professional identity, with a stronger sense of what being a Social Worker actually meant in reality and he thought "the pressure and the responsibility came out because there was just me and it all begins and ends with me with what I do". (Mark, interview 1).

A further development of his professional identity can be seen in final year. At this time, Mark had secured a graduate job in children's safeguarding to be taken up after graduation. His tone at this point was much less positive in many ways, and he reflected further on challenges to his professional identity coming from a pressure of responsibility, expressing an amount of anxiety about taking up a 'real' Social Work job and trying to "fit in with the team" (Mark, interview 2). The responsibility and reality of what it meant to be part of the Social Work profession, rather than participating as a student, seems to have come to the forefront. This is understandable given he was about to face the transition from university into full time professional work, and was dealing with what this would mean for him. There was also a suggestion that he *should* feel happy, knowing that he was one of the fortunate students who would be going straight into a job after graduation.

There seemed to be an element of pragmatic choice and strategic decision making in his situation rather than a strong identity rooted in association with the Social Worker 'in-group'. The job was his because his "initial plan seems to have pad [sic] off" (Mark, sketch 2) and he used the placement to get himself known in the organisation so that when a job came up he was well placed to get it. However, when he talked about the role, his attitude appeared to be relatively passive, for example saying he would be "taking up employment" (Mark, sketch 2) as if this is something which has happened to him rather than being a positive decision on his part. It almost seems as if he felt he was claiming the 'Social

Worker' identity falsely. He felt he should be grateful to have a job, but now he had what he worked towards he is worried both about the reality of the situation he will be going into and the responsibility he will have. He was understandably "nervous about having his own case load and the responsibility for people's lives which might make him anxious" (Mark, sketch 2).

In this case, it seems that placement has actually reduced career decidedness by giving Mark a strong understanding of the reality of the role, making him question whether it was something that he really wanted to do. It is questionable whether his professional identity on graduation is something that he chose or that was being imposed upon him by circumstances and opportunities. It seems that he was closer to Holmes's (2015) category of a graduate who is in Zone 3, with an 'imposed identity' placed upon them (albeit by his circumstances and the options open to him as much as by other people).

Connor: Static identity

Connor was another Business Management student, and he had (like Amira) come straight from other study into university. However in contrast to her story of reinvention, Connor's data show the potential for deep-rooted construal of identity to remain unchanged by placement experience. In second year, it was clear that Connor's previous work experience (part-time and summer work in a local shop near his home and on a building site) had had a very strong influence on how he saw his identity as a manager of others and his construal of what the 'ideal manager' might look like. In particular, it had strongly affected his view of what his preferred 'in-group' and 'out-group' were, with movement between describing himself as someone who would be fun to be around, who would see his staff as "more of friends than just staff members" (Conor, sketch 1) but also as someone who would set targets and hand out rewards when these were met. Across all of the discussion there was clear conflict in his view of his workplace identity: he wanted people to enjoy being around him, and wanted his employees to see him as a friend and someone who was good to work with. However what this seemed to mean to him in practice was about his staff being rewarded for doing good work, and the social relationship (and fact they are all part of the same in-group) leads to this happening as they want to please him. Connor expanded on this in the interview, and explained that his views were very much influenced by a previous job he had held, where he had a very good relationship with the owner of a shop he worked in:

> I always offered to do extra help when I've had fun. So I see them more as a friend. I used to work in a little village store, and it used to be like I was working with my friend when he was there. So then whenever he needed a favour I was always happy to do it. So I would always hopefully do that when I hopefully become a manager if I could replicate that and be more like friends with the people who were working with me.
>
> (Connor, interview 1)

However he recognised that this may not be the way that everyone else sees things: although he wanted to be liked by his employees, he was concerned that this may lead to him being "to [sic] laid back and naïve to some members of staff therefore offering them liberties that they may not deserve" (Connor, sketch 2). There is a hint here that he

recognised the style he prefers, where everyone he works with is in the 'in-group', may not be practical.

Further influences from his previous work experience also seem to have been fundamental to forming his view of how the ideal manager behaves and what he sees as an effective management style. This gives a clearer idea of the identity he would like to claim for himself. It is obvious that his boss in the village shop (who he enjoyed working for) is something of a role model of how he himself wanted to be as a manager, in contrast to experiences he had working on a building site. He makes very clear references to management behaviours he had seen in both situations, which he had learned from and would adopt (or not) as part of his own professional identity, for example around team working. In particular being prepared to do the same work as everyone else was important to him in establishing credibility, and in describing himself he said "he is caring and never would ask his staff to do something that he himself wouldn't be comfortable doing" (Connor, sketch 2). Talking again about his boss in the village shop during the second-year interview he also said:

> … whatever I did he would always help out, it never felt like he thought he was bigger or better to do something like that. Like he would always set the example, so I never felt like 'oh he's only given me this job because he's not going to bother doing it' or something
>
> (Connor, interview 1)

This contrasts to the building site work:

> sometimes we got asked to do things I didn't really want to do, and it was as if the other people weren't doing it, they were just giving it to us to do. And I hated that, like I lost all motivation for a while, and we worked with a bit of grudge and so I probably didn't work my best
>
> (Connor, interview 1)

It might be expected that these views of the ideal manager identity would change with the experience of more 'professional' work on placement. During his sandwich year Connor worked as a trainee manager at a hotel. Surprisingly, however, it seems that minimal change has taken place in Connor's construal of the ideal workplace identity after this experience. Describing himself in a future work role, his fundamental position was still that he would be a manager who "puts his staff first" (Connor, sketch 2). This was still very much a core part of his beliefs about himself. Above all else, there was still a very strong desire to be liked and respected by the people that he managed. His story of the workplace he hopes to manage was of a happy place, where people enjoy their job and there is fun and laughter. His job here would be to look after everyone and to make sure nobody is upset or unhappy, and he would take pride in this. However he identified that there would be some considerable pressure for him to maintain this atmosphere, and his identity still seemed to be rooted in having a large in-group. This would come with a lot of emotional investment in others' happiness: he "hates upsetting people as he always feels guilty thinking that someone may go home feeling they are useless or unwanted" (Connor, sketch 2). There appears to be no 'out-group' for him and instead it was all about:

> … talking to your work team and getting along with them, seeing the difference

> from when they actually wanted to be there to when there was a bit of animosity then I felt that was one of the other key skills, to get the team on your side and get the team working together
>
> (Connor, interview 2)

Ideas of reward and incentive were not mentioned until the very end of the final year interview, and there was also some reluctance to talk about disciplinary matters. He would rather avoid conflict, sorting out problems with "informal" methods (Connor, sketch 2) and he seemed to expect that he would be given the same level of respect he offered to his staff and that they would reciprocate his concerns to avoid letting him down. He wanted everyone to leave work "holding no grudges against himself or the organisation Connor works for" (Connor, sketch 2)

In common with the first sketch he expected to be able to do any of the work done by the people he managed, and that they would all see each other as comrades. He thinks that by demonstrating this competence he would gain their respect: he would show his team "he can do the little jobs and doesn't feel above them at all" (Connor, sketch 2). Further, he "has not just walked his way into a more senior role without getting 'his hands dirty' in the day-to-day roles first" (Connor, sketch 2). In the second interview it became clear that the placement had reinforced his already existing world view: as a trainee in the hotel Connor spent periods of time working in all the different areas (from cleaning rooms to washing dishes in the kitchen) and therefore felt he had 'earned' his place as a manager. This meant that when he was operating in a management role he had gained the respect of the people he was supervising.

In terms of Holmes's model, Connor is possibly closest to the 'Agreed identity' area: there is certainly a strong element of him claiming an identity for himself, although whether this is affirmed by others (or likely to be affirmed in the future) is perhaps open to debate.

Concluding remarks

The three vignettes presented above give a variety of views about the impact of WIL on the participants' views of their developing identities in the work role. It is clear that for each of them, their identity has developed in significantly different ways across the course of their studies. From Amira's increasing confidence and certainty about her abilities, through Mark's questioning of his place and identity as a Social Worker through to the relatively unchanging nature of Connor's fundamental construction of himself as a member of a supportive and friendly in-group of colleagues, it is obvious that the simplistic view of WIL existing only to provide skills development for employability misses a rich parallel story of change and growth. A longitudinal study such as this one has the potential to add considerable depth to understanding of how WIL can help students to shape their identity as employees.

It is also worth noting that the process of changing identity may not be easy or entirely positive, in contrast to work on developing graduate skills which tends to assume that with the right inputs, the right 'work ready' graduate will emerge from the process. In only one of the stories presented here (Amira) does WIL play its 'expected' part in moving the participants towards this place. Even though Mark is a clear success story in terms of

gaining the ‘appropriate’ job at the end of his degree studies, WIL has led to some uncertainty in his direction and a questioning of whether the identity being imposed on him by this opportunity is actually the one he wants and is suited to. It could be argued that, particularly in a field such as Social Work, this reflection on the suitability of place and identity is no bad thing.

Connor’s story provides a further challenge to the view that WIL can influence graduates in the ‘correct’ way. While it is clear that he has gained confidence and experience from his placement, the fundamental principles that he bases his workplace identity on seem to emerge unchanged from the experience.

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