

A case study examining Graduate Attribute implementation in a Higher Education Institute department and its Further Education college partners.

Transformative education or 'ticking the box'?

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Abstract

The development of Graduate Attributes (GAs) in higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world has contributed to its reorientation towards explicitly developing graduate level employability within a competitive globalised market (Kalfa and Taksa, 2015). Underpinning GAs is the contested view that such generic skills can be transferred outside learners' subject expertise (Hughes and Barrie, 2012; Barnett, 2012). Key proponent Simon Barrie argues that GA implementation requires institution-wide transformation; changing approaches to teaching, assessment, quality and stakeholder engagement (Barrie, 2004; 2006; Hughes and Barrie, 2012). However, numerous problems relating to GA implementation have been identified, including differing conceptual viewpoints (Barrie, 2004; 2012), poor management and inconsistent application (De la Harpe and David, 2012; Bond et al., 2017). Additionally, resistance to change, defined by Starr (2011, p.647) as, "...*negative actions and non-actions, ill will and resentment, and defensive or confrontational dispositions.*", was identified as a key hindrance to GA implementation by Jackson and Wilton (2016).

Currently, GA investigations have tended to debate the extent to which they develop personal, social and employability skills of young full-time undergraduate learners about to embark on their careers. This exploratory case study contributes to the field of knowledge by focusing on 'non-traditional' learners whose voice has yet to be considered within GA literature. It therefore gives voice learners who are mature, part-time and already employed within their chosen career sector (education), studying a degree either at an HEI or Further Education College (FEC). The study considers the extent to which such attributes hold relevance for their personal, academic and professional development needs.

The case study is framed through Barrie's (2006) identification of systemic factors involved in GA institutional transformation. These have been simplified to focus on four lenses for the study: conceptualisation, strategic implementation, facilitation and quality. Data was gained through a documentary search, interviews with HE and FE based managers and lecturers as well as a scoping questionnaire which informed learner focus groups from each of the institutions.

The study found that the featured HEI had faced GA implementation difficulties commonly identified in research based in Australia and New Zealand (Hughes and Barrie, 2010; Bond et al., 2017), thus contributing to the body of research suggesting that problems may transcend

national systems. Distinctively, the findings from within FEC settings revealed additional problems not identified in previous GA studies; policy clashes between the institutions, unaddressed training and support needs and conflicting dual roles for lecturers.

The study advocates the need for greater stakeholder involvement, including FEC partners, in GA formation to make them genuinely represent the ethos of an institution as was envisaged in their initial iteration (Bowden et al., 2000). In this respect, institutions need to give serious consideration to the appropriacy of such a policy for all undergraduates rather than just full-time learners. In terms of implementation, leadership grit and institutional resilience is required. This should acknowledge that genuine transformative change requires and a systematic, consistent and long-term approach which includes transparent reflective evaluation to inform future development. Further research emanating from this work will relate to policy implementation barriers between universities and their FEC partners as well as the extent to which HEI policies and education measurement metrics represent education values espoused by mature, employed, part-time learners.

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Chapter One: Research Overview

Organisation of the work

This chapter explains the case study's contribution to the GA field of knowledge through its focus on mature, employed, part-time learners and identification of specific issues facing FECs tasked with their delivery. It then evaluates the reflexive nature of this study, acknowledging how the author's context and past experiences influence the topic focus, scope, methodology and epistemological stance. Finally, key developments in GA research are critically evaluated, building on the findings of the previously assessed literature review (see appendix 1). Chapter Two explains the chosen methodological approaches, evaluating their effectiveness in terms of the research project's stated outcomes. Chapter Three presents the research findings from differing data sources: documentation review, interview, focus group and questionnaire which is then analysed in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five presents the conclusions of the study and recommendations for future policy and practice. The recommendations will propose developments to practice at three levels: institutional, departmental and personal professional practice. While the limited scale and scope of the research precludes generalisability, the findings aim to be relatable to other institutions investigating Higher Education in FEC partnership provision.

Contribution of this thesis to the field of knowledge

Based on BA (Hons) Education Level 6 students, lecturers and their managers, this case study explores the implementation of a GA policy in an English HEI and two FEC partner providers, focusing on perceptions of 'non-traditional' students not covered in previous GA studies. The case study university, a post-1992 Midlands-based institution, introduced GAs during 2012-13 to all undergraduate courses (HEI, 2014a), pledging that every graduate achieves them on successful completion of their undergraduate degree (HEI, 2015a). Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) and Oliver (2013) found that effective, institution-wide GA implementation requires managerial resilience, allocation of clear staffing roles for implementation and at least five years'

duration. This makes the study particularly pertinent as it comes at the end of the HEI's delivery plan (2012-17) in which the GAs were introduced and given prominence (HEI, 2011a).

Hughes and Barrie (2010) highlight the need for students to be involved throughout the GA development process, being one aspect of their eight systemic factors of GAs. However, the nationwide studies in Australia (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009) and New Zealand (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013; Bond et al., 2017) focus on analysing lecturer views and practices rather than student experiences. Indeed, Richards (2011) notes how students are often left out of studies of leadership and policy implementation even though they can provide clear evidence of the extent to which the espoused theory of an institution matches actual theory in practice (Argyris and Schön, 1978). Students are involved in smaller scale GA investigations (O'Connor, Lynch and Owen, 2011; Jones, 2013), but these are exclusively reliant on the participation of 'traditional' young full-time students. Such studies have therefore not considered the GA experiences of mature, employed and part-time students, a clear gap in the literature which this study addresses. Although termed 'non-traditional', such learners comprise just under a third of undergraduate enrolments in the UK (31%: 540,285 out of 1,740,540), thereby representing a substantial proportion of the overall student population (HESA, 2017). Furthermore, FEC based HE students account for almost 9% of the total UK undergraduate intake: 198,480 out of 2,299,355 (HESA, *ibid*). Daniels and Brooker (2014) highlight how GAs focus on future careers of young full-time students, meaning they may be considered less relevant for mature learners if already working in their chosen career as found in the HEI's part-time awards. Conversely, the argument that GAs potentially hinder personal identity development (Barnett, 2012; Daniels and Brooker, 2014) may have less relevance for mature learners.

This research therefore represents a distinctive study into the extent to which GA policy meets non-traditional student expectations and aspirations. Additionally, by focusing on these learners, the study also investigates the GA experiences of students studying HE in a Further Education context. This addresses an area which previous GA research into campus-based students has not covered. As a major HEI policy, the efficacy of this implementation process offers insight into future policy measures, being particularly relevant as the university has recently embarked on a new institutional strategy. In terms of contribution to GA research methodology, it adapts and Barrie's (2006) systemic features of GAs to create four lenses of analysis: conceptualisation, strategic implementation, facilitation and quality. The study argues that this approach provides a holistic framework for evaluating the effectiveness of GAs which could be utilised in larger scale studies of institutional effectiveness of implementing GAs.

Although GAs have remained the subject of this study since its proposal stage, as data has been collected, ongoing reflection has led to a shift in focus. Initially, the proposal was to compare attitudes between full and part-time learners as well as on campus and off campus ones, to help inform and improve my practice. However, it has been apparent during the data collection phase that the Gas are fading from prominence at the HEI, indicating that they may either be abandoned, changed or gradually fade without any official policy decision (as detailed in Chapters 3 and 4). The emphasis of the study has therefore now developed into investigating the effectiveness of the GA implementation process, considering how centrally led policies filter down to partner providers as well as the extent to which the needs of part-time learners are considered in policy formation. Its relevance lies in terms of analysing how policy has been formed, implemented and developed, emphasising the extent to which franchise partner FECs and mature, employed part-time learners have been included in the process. Any deficiencies in this process and practice will inform future university policy implementation and improvement; providing potential further research for a broader study into HE policy implementation within FE franchises and consideration of how to meet graduate expectations of part-time mature HE learners.

As this research includes HE provision within FE, there will be opportunities to disseminate findings at conferences organised by FE based institutions, the Society for Education and Training as well as academic articles for FE based journals such as the Journal of Further and Higher Education. The study would then contribute to possible future large-scale research on the implementation of GAs within off campus provision, both in terms of FECs and even with international partners. In a broader context, this study will also help to develop understanding of barriers to policy implementation between HEIs and their FE partners as well as non-traditional learners and might therefore be relevant to publications such as the Journal of Change Management.

Research question and objectives

This study investigates the effectiveness of a HEI's GA policy for part-time BA (Hons.) Education university and franchise college learners. It considers the HEI's reasoning for introducing GAs, the extent of implementation and their influence on level six students close to completion of their studies.

To achieve this, the study endeavours to answer the following question:

To what extent has a HEI institution met non-traditional learner expectations within a School of Education and two franchise partner colleges?

Given the extensive nature of Barrie's expertise in the GA field on an institutional and national basis (Barrie, 2004; 2006; Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Hughes and Barrie, 2010; Barrie, 2012), this research initially used Barrie's (2006) eight systemic factors of GAs to provide a framework for organising consideration of GAs: Graduate Attribute Conceptualisation, Stakeholders, Implementation strategy; Curriculum approach, Assessment, Staff development, Quality assurance, Student-centredness. Subsequent collation of data and reflection have simplified this model to focus on four key areas: GA formation, strategic implementation, facilitation and quality enhancement which have been used to create four overall research objectives:

- 1 Identify the purposes and processes of GA formation.
- 2 Analyse the effectiveness of GA strategic implementation.
- 3 Evaluate the appropriacy and effectiveness of GA facilitation.
- 4 Analyse the role of GAs in a Quality Enhancement process.

Influences of the author's personal teaching background

In line with guidance from practitioner-researcher advocate McNiff (2016) and Wellington (2017), the following section is a self-evaluation of how and the extent to which my personal role and background may influence the study. Wellington (ibid) notes how decisions are embedded in emotional reflexivity; personal background, experiences and context inevitably influence decision making throughout the research process; in this study, the researcher is embedded within the research area as an employee, colleague and teacher of the research subjects. Advocates of practitioner-led research strongly argue that this does not undermine its value as a means of evidencing personal and institution-wide change, as long as the author is as transparent as possible regarding their potential influences on the choices they have made throughout the research project, as explored in this section (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015; McNiff, 2016; Wellington, 2017).

The author's teaching background includes teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), ESOL/EFL Teacher Training, Initial Teacher Training and Education Studies Award Leadership. The experience of being a language teacher and teacher-trainer has instilled in my teaching practice the value of both rote-learning of core knowledge as well as the need to facilitate broader skills and personal development. I have much experience of observing trainee sessions, some of which were dominated by teacher-led recitation of facts and others grammar-free unstructured communication fluency sessions. This has led me to conclude that, when used exclusively, neither approach can be considered to meet the full needs of the learner. Drawing on my twenty years' experience as a teacher and lecturer as well as ongoing professional interest in education research, the current governmental emphasis on developing core knowledge (Gibb, 2015) has some merit, as development of higher level skills such as analysis and synthesis cannot develop without mastery of a solid basis of knowledge (Willingham, 2008). However, I also consider that there is still a need to actively develop broader skills than subject knowledge alone; knowledge acquisition works best when it enables learner autonomy rather than replaces it. In this respect, the DfE's (2016b) citation of Willingham's work as justification for knowledge-based teacher-led learning appears to misrepresent a more nuanced viewpoint from the researcher:

Just as it makes no sense to try to teach factual content without giving students opportunities to practice using it, it also makes no sense to try to teach critical thinking devoid of factual content.

(Willingham, ibid, p.10).

Indeed, discipline expertise of graduates should form only part of their development given that they may be working into the 2070's, making the value of any current knowledge somewhat limited. As a thought experiment, consider how limited would be the value of knowledge and understanding from the 1950's on any current academic discipline. Therefore, I consider the role of the lecturer to be more than just a subject expert, regarding such limited definitions as a part of the casualisation of educators. This narrow view of educators is also made clear in the HE Green Paper (BIS, 2015), with its frequent emphasis on the need to strengthen discipline expertise, but no mention of teaching qualifications for academics. Such a focus on knowledge echoes the rejection of concept dual-professional (qualified lecturer and subject expert) expressed in the schools' White Paper (DfE, 2016b), FE based Lingfield review (BIS, 2012a) and government response (BIS, 2012b). These have actively undermined teacher training, by making qualified teacher status (QTS) and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) optional for teachers in Academies, Free Schools and FECs respectively (DfE, 2016b; BIS 2012b). This deskilling of the teaching profession within FE came despite government funded research (BIS, 2012c) giving largely positive findings about the impacts of mandatory teacher training in the sector. The subsequent Lingfield review (BIS, 2012a) and immediate government response (BIS, 2012b) largely ignored its evidence, arguing instead that the paradigm of the discipline expert found in HE negated the need for general teaching skills development and qualification.

My personal stance is to highly value the concept of the dual-professional, considering that teachers and lecturers need to be both subject expert and expert teacher. In view of this, I am a Senior Fellow of both the FE based Society for Education and Training (SET) and HE specific Higher Education Academy (HEA) and have QTLS. Currently working at an HEI, I have been surprised and disappointed to experience similar lecturer resistance from some to free membership of the professional body, the HEA, as well as rejection of the need to be qualified as a lecturer or even engage in regular professional development. I am a strong advocate of a highly-qualified professional teaching workforce across all sectors. This inspired me to author my School of Education's response to the Consultation on the revocation of mandatory teaching qualifications in the FE sector, arguing in favour of preserving the right of FE students to be taught by qualified professionals. However, whilst the new qualifications are now voluntary, my consideration for developing a professionalised education work force has motivated me to write chapters for books for Teaching Assistants, Education Studies students and each of the three FE based Initial Teacher Training qualifications. An additional factor of influence is my

extensive experience of working on both sides of a partnership between the case study HEI and a FEC. This arrangement, where the FEC delivered the Foundation Degree and HEI the final year of the BA was the kind of arrangement typically encouraged in the 1990s and early 2000s (Lea and Simmons, 2012). However, this arrangement runs contrary to the subsequent policy direction of fostering competition between institutions, purportedly to encourage more innovative and efficient provision (BIS, 2012d; BIS, 2015; BIS, 2016). The ongoing survival of the partnership between the HEI and the FECs is a factor which I personally value; having initially been informed that the programmes would soon cease. That the partnership thrives runs in the face of the competition agenda, showing that there is a place for cross-institution collaboration. This personal value of the importance of educational collaboration was recently strengthened by a visit and subsequent study of Finnish approaches to education where the commodification of learning remains a largely alien concept within their successful education system (OECD, 2015a).

In terms of the research, therefore, these views and experiences may influence my standpoint towards GAs. This is because guidance of key GA proponents, Hughes and Barrie (2010) and Bond et al. (2017) argue that effective implementation requires more than discipline expertise. The holistic approach to education required, where learning entails broader skills than subject knowledge, has resonance with my own viewpoint as expressed above. Furthermore, whilst I understand concerns that GAs may narrow the curriculum due to their employability focus, I conclude that they would not necessarily have this impact. When high-level employability skills are considered, such as social, communication, cultural understanding and emotional intelligence, I do not see much difference between these aspirations and those of the 'rounded' student that critics of employability focused education advocate (Barnett, 2012). In short, I consider that high level employability attributes and holistic student development are synonymous, concurring with Rust and Froud (2011, p.31):

It is the central importance of critical self-awareness that means that our concerns about employability and concerns over the quality of learning should be recognised as essentially the same concerns.

Considering the above reflections, my views may influence this case study in terms of my pedagogical philosophy and experiences leading towards an unduly positive stance towards GA development. The opportunity for GAs to expand the role of the lecturer from sole imparter of knowledge to a broader facilitative is a potentially positive outcome.

Influences of previous research

A research dissertation was conducted during both my Degree and Masters qualifications. The former was a documentary analysis which focused on how a national newspaper's changing stance during coverage of an international crisis. This helped me to see how an institution can develop increasingly partial and biased stance over time. It highlighted the importance of researching documentation over a long duration to identify underlying and emerging themes as well as how evidence is utilised or ignored; a feature echoed in the approach taken in this study. The Masters research investigated the impact of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in Initial Teacher Training. This utilised a series of lecturer/manager interviews and student focus groups, informed by data analysis of VLE usage patterns, learner attendance and achievement data. This demonstrated the value to me of using a mixed methods approach, where quantitative data was used to inform interviews and qualitative analysis, as found in the current case study.

The research takes a what Coe (2017) defines as a pragmatic stance to knowledge, concurring with Hammersley's (1992) and Wellington's (2016) arguments against dividing research into dichotomous world views of positivism and interpretivism. Wellington (ibid) highlights numerous problems with a positivist view of objectivity, highlighting how modern scientific methodology acknowledges that aspects of research are influenced by the researcher; choice of subject, data collection tools and so on. Hammersley (1992) additionally demonstrates how all even so-called hard, numerical data, should not automatically be considered as quantitative evidence as it has been selected, collated and then interpreted through the lens of a researcher, thereby bringing about qualitative elements. In terms of my own background, therefore, being educated in humanities rather than sciences could have influenced my decision to tend towards using approaches typically found within an approach tending towards an interpretivist research paradigm. In addition to this, my area of practice - education - has been strongly influenced by such an approach since the practitioner-led research movement has gained credence within the professional community (McNiff, 2016; Wellington, 2017). Considering my career as a teacher and then lecturer, both my masters and this research therefore take an applied stance (Coe, 2017), where the key purpose of research is to examine and improve policy and practice. Therefore, with the current research focusing on policy implementation, perceptions and practice experiences, taking a case study approach is an appropriate means of gaining and understanding the implementation of this policy within an academic department and its partners.

In terms of development from the previous Masters research, I consider that there was a lack of focus caused by not structuring the research process effectively or organising interview responses. For these reasons, this research will try to adapt a clear research structure by using the Roller and Lavrakas's (2015) Total Quality Framework of qualitative research supported by an adapted model adapted from Barrie's (2006) systemic factors of GAs as a lens through which to organise and analyse data throughout.

Literature review

The following section analyses key developments in GA related literature since the 2014 assessed literature review (appendix 1). It is organised in terms of the research objectives relating to context and conceptualisation, implementation and facilitation and finally, their role in assessment and quality.

1 Context and conceptualisation

Spencer, Riddle and Knewstubb (2012) identify a multitude of terms with generally similar meaning to GAs, including variations of transferable or generic skills, qualities, capabilities and attributes. This study draws upon the key work of Barrie in this field (2004; 2006; 2012), so will use the same term throughout: Graduate Attributes (GAs). Concepts of GAs have changed, being initially envisaged as encompassing a broad balance of holistic social, citizenship and employability capabilities which articulated the distinctiveness of an institution (Bowden et al., 2000). However, Bridgestock (2009) found that their purpose had narrowed to focus on generic employability skills due to the ongoing reconceptualisation of education's purpose towards promoting economic gain in a competitive global market.

1.1 Globalisation and the commodification of Education

Becker's (1993) human capital theory claims a causal link between higher level educational development with economic gain. Jackson and Wilton (2016) illustrate how this link has been accepted by many governments, including the UK and Australia, to justify a global drive towards mass participation in HE. Creasy (2013) argues that in England, this has led to the state viewing itself as a purchaser of HE, measuring the value of its investment in terms of human capital development. Consequently, HE level study has increased by an average of 15% within Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations between 2000 and 2014 (OECD, 2015b). Though not directly comparable due to a differing timeframe and measurement of absolute rather than relative data, the UK appears to follow this trend, with the

percentage of HE participants between 1988 and 2012 rising from 15% to 47% (Farenga and Quinlan, 2016).

However, this massification of HE, has not met Becker's (1993) expectations in terms of leading to a corresponding rise in graduate level employment opportunities (Green and Henseke, 2016). Instead, graduates have encountered underemployment/over-education (working in non-graduate level jobs), unemployment and a reduction loss of salary premiums for graduates (Green and Henseke, *ibid*). Nevertheless, Kandiko and Mawer (2013), investigating a broad range of courses and institutions, found students were strongly focused on gaining a clear return for their financial investment. Jackson and Wilton (2016) concur, arguing that since fees have been transferred from state to the individual, parents and students view undergraduate study as an investment upon which the return is not just the qualification but also high salary employment upon graduation. However, Finn's small-scale study (2016) demonstrates how such attitudes are not held by all learners, finding that some female graduates do not value financial gain as a principle benefit of higher education. Although overall a graduate salary premium has been retained, this is not consistent for all graduate level study (Holland et al., 2013; Walker and Zhu, 2013). This means that some disciplines are considered to represent poor value for money in the English system where economic return is held as being the sole measurement of academic success (Holland et al., 2013). Green and Henseke (2016) further demonstrate that political initiatives to measure the value of education almost exclusively through subsequent financial gain are not limited to the UK but permeate the global HE sector as well. Therefore, in a competitive market, universities are expected to demonstrate to governments and prospective students that they offer a good opportunity of recouping their investment (BIS, 2015; BIS, 2016). Nevertheless, ongoing governmental intervention prevents a fully market operated system; policies such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfE, 2016a) proposing to define fee ceilings undermines full unfettered competition.

This increased use of various data metrics is a central theme of the HE White Paper: *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. (BIS, 2016), claiming it helps empower student choice through encouraging open and transparent competition. Browne and Rayner (2015) demonstrate how the use of such data sets, whilst ostensibly making universities more transparent to students, drive forward corporate performance management-based governance and associated hierarchical controlling managerialist structure. Browne and Rayner (*ibid*) conclude that this undermines academic freedom and autonomy, thereby undervaluing broader benefits of education not measured in

such a commodified approach as well as potentially leading to a negation of ethical concerns and professional integrity. Lea and Simmonds (2012) concur, though argue that such incursions of managerialism have not permeated HE to the extent of that found in FECs, where a culture of acquiescence rather than academic freedom is the established norm. However, O’Conner and Owen (2011) argue that cross-party moves towards HE marketisation have also changes the role of students; not only have they been redefined as customers, but effectively the grade focus has made them the be ‘products’ of HE output as well, with GAs effectively providing ‘packaging’ for prospective employers. Browne and Rayner (2015, p.292) concur, arguing that students are now “*consumers with rights...purchasing a service, experience and result.*”. This highlights the inherent dilemma for lecturers tasked with fairly assessing such customers who, supported by HEIs pushing for league table position, expect only the highest grades.

Jones (2003) and O’Conner and Owen (2011) argue that the commodification of education has changed the government/institutional relationship. Jones (2003) demonstrates how this has shifted responsibility for employment from the state to the university and individual. O’Connor and Owen (2011) further show how governments seek to maximise value for money in funding through tangible economic gains, a point explicitly made by the Minister of State for Universities and Science introducing the HE Green Paper, *Higher Education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*:

Now that we are asking young people to meet more of the costs of their degrees once they are earning, we in turn must do more than ever to ensure they can make well-informed choices, and that the time and money they invest in higher education is well spent.

(Johnson, BIS, 2015, p.8).

This is further reiterated in the ensuing White Paper:

We must ensure that the system is also fulfilling its potential and delivering good value for students, for employers and the taxpayers who underwrite it.

(Johnson, BIS, 2016, p.5).

Rich (2015, p.4) argues that such an approach influences governmental and university policy-making decisions towards those with clear, measurable outcomes: “*In an austere world driven by econometrics, what is hard to measure is hard to fund.*”. Current proposals for HE continue the strong promotion of a competition-based agenda, with the HE White Paper (BIS, 2016) aiming to enable easier market entry for private, profit-based providers and increasing

transparency necessary for free-market competition to promote choice through further quantifying the value of education. Alderman (2010), identifies the first example of league tables dating back to 1983 in America, which have since become key components of university strategies and marketing profiles (Alderman, 2010; PA Consulting, 2013). With the White Paper proposals, measuring teaching through the TEF (HEFCE, 2016) will add to the existing accountability procedures such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF, 2016), data metrics based on student experiences and outcomes such as the National Student Survey (NSS, 2015), Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (HESA, 2016), Key Information Sets (Unistats, 2015), and the United Kingdom Engagement Survey (Buckley, 2015).

Farenga and Quinlan (2016) and Green and Henseke (2016) strongly argue that judging education provision on economic gain alone is a narrow view which ignores evidence of broader personal and social gains from higher education. Nevertheless, despite HEIs' employability focus, both national (BIS, 2013; Universities UK, 2015) and internationally based surveys (Mourshed, Farrell and Barton, 2013) have demonstrated that there remain graduate shortages in some professions, but oversupply in others, leading to charges that universities are not responding effectively to employer needs. However, whilst agreeing with Universities UK's (2015) view that a lack of internationally agreed definitions of graduate level employment hinders analysis, Green and Henseke (2016), question the conclusion of such reports that the skills mismatch is due to universities inadequately preparing students for work. They counter that there is insufficient causal evidence to demonstrate that the graduates identified as being underemployed genuinely lack skills to do graduate level employment. Instead they argue that graduates experiencing this situation may alternatively reflect a lack of graduate level opportunities in the employment market for such positions.

Moves to quantify learning and the efficiency of HEIs' provision have met with considerable criticisms regarding their influence of narrowing the purpose of HE towards league table success rather than learning, development and inter-university cooperation (Alderman, 2010; By, Burns and Oswick, 2013). Rich (2015) criticises the underlying assumption that more data necessarily empowers, rather than obfuscates, choice. Indeed, Rich (ibid) argues they hold negligible utility given the limited extent students use and understand them, further noting that the time lag of several years between compilation of alumni data and publication for prospective students makes them unreliable anyway. Haigh, (2016, p.168) further contends that an obsession with measurement can make education lose its potential for personal development:

...there is a materialist commitment to output, demonstrable skill and competitive merit; a worldview that aspires to create an individualist, achievement –orientated meritocracy, which uses objective economic criteria to gauge the success of its products. This worldview is also one of the major obstacles to those who believe that education should be about personal development and transformative growth...

Green and Henseke (2016, p.11) concur, arguing that a lack of financial gain in some sectors should not justify their curtailment due to broader social gains demonstrated by graduate students:

Rather than the development of specialised professional skills, higher education's contribution to character formation, civic engagement and involvement in knowledge creation through the development of reasoning powers by critical investigation and independent research was traditionally the dominant role of higher education in (western) societies...there is robust evidence that higher education is associated with reduced crime rates, lower incarceration costs, lower welfare costs, enhanced health, reduced mortality, reduced calls on social medical expenditures, enhanced social trust, and increased civic participation.

Green and Henseke (ibid) therefore argue that if HE provision has to be quantified, it should include a broader range of benefits to give a truer measure of the 'success' of education.

In such a competitive environment, Daniels and Brooker (2014) criticise universities for concentrating on expensive marketing strategies rather than the student experience, with GAs being noted as one of their key tools of self-promotion (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Kandiko and Mawer (2013) found that a broad range of students primarily saw studying for a degree as a means towards gaining professional employment; GAs, with what is now an explicitly employability focus, therefore have the potential to offer an attractive alternative means of recruitment for HEIs struggling in the league table placings.

1.2 *Repurposing Higher Education towards employability development*

Williams et al. (2016) categorise graduate level employability in terms of human, social, cultural and psychological capital, which is perceived as being beneficial to developing positive economic outcomes. Jackson and Wilton (2016) highlight how this increasing focus on developing graduate employability is not just an expectation of governments but students and parents as well. Coetzee (2014) therefore argues that a central aspect of 'graduateness', as well as personal and ethical growth, should be the acquisition of relevant workplace skills, by creating a workplace culture within the university. Kalfka and Taksa (2013) summarise key arguments used by proponents of the employability agenda in HE such as the OECD. This focuses on the underlying human capital theory which claims a causal link between transferable education skills development, as recognised by quantitatively comparable credentials, directly correlating with economic success (Becker, 1993). Additionally, this argument connects educational achievement with personal social benefits emanating from career success (and exclusion for educational failures), therefore seeing education as being a driving force in upward social mobility for the poorest students.

Becker (1993) claims that investing in educational attainment for all is liberating and democratic as higher ability and therefore productivity will be automatically rewarded in the labour market. However, Kalfka and Taksa (2013) argue that the individual's personal context and network tend to have a major impact on personal opportunities in contrast to such economically rational concepts of purely meritocratic societies. They identify how cultural capital, defined as the extent to which an individual conforms with the existing culture of an organisation, works against simplistic assumptions that educational achievement automatically functions as an engine of social mobility. Farenga and Quinlan (2016) concur, undermining simplistic assertions of education empowering social mobility by citing extensive research which has repeatedly found not only correlation between higher socio-economic status and academic success but also greater employment opportunities for those with higher status with the same or lower qualifications. Green and Henseke (2016) conclude that if such a market-based solution had been effective, the increasing levels of graduate unemployment and underemployment should have only been temporary phenomena rather than representing long-term systemic issues. Rather, social networks (Kalfka and Taksa, 2013), and cultural capital – the extent to which an employee is compatible or contributes to an employer's ethos and established practices (Williams et al., 2016) - are considered to play a vital important role in career success as well as

the achievement of qualifications. Farenga and Quinlan (2016) therefore argue that HEIs tend to reinforce existing hierarchies, with highest paying employers only selecting from the top-ranking universities rather than examining the individual attributes of candidates.

Finn's (2016) qualitative research of female graduates also argues that linking qualifications, knowledge or skills acquisition to economic gain is over-simplistic, emphasising the importance of relationality - emotional attachments, personal relationships, family ties and social networks in determining post-graduate choices and actions. Indeed, Finn (2016) adds that such networks may also contribute to a lack of social mobility by hindering the economically rational choices envisaged by Becker (1993). Indeed, research by Vigurs, Jones and Harris (2016) further indicates a possible causal link between socio-economic background and the extent to which learners from low-income backgrounds participate in HE, with concerns over increased debt potentially exacerbating graduate outcome inequality. If this is the case, then current Government moves to enable increased fees for elite universities could further hinder social mobility with poorer students selecting cheaper options or not engaging in HE at all. Finn (2016) argues that rather than maximising financial reward, as is tacitly assumed by employability metrics, graduates, especially female ones, may value contributing to their close network in a variety of ways other than easily measurable financial gain: *"Success is often embedded in feelings of self-worth and gendered notions of making a difference or living a caring and connected life."* (ibid, p.11). Williams et al. (2016) also consider psychological capital with traits such as confidence, resilience and the ability to self-evaluate as being an important consideration of employability concepts. Finn (2016) therefore concludes that university attempts to intensify the collection of measurable data as demanded by the TEF may be unsuccessful where graduates are located in an area lacking graduate level opportunities; directing students towards financially highly rewarding jobs may not match the holistic needs of learners where employer demands clash with personal perceptions of their responsibilities. Given these additional factors which determine graduates' employment choices, university league tables based on models of measuring student development by their salaries are inaccurate and may also help to entrench the lack of social mobility which they claim to be working to alleviate.

Many progressive educationalists argue that the employability focus could narrow the purpose of education; inspired by the work Dewey, (1938) and Chomsky, (2003), McNiff (2016, p.21) argues that:

The aim of education is therefore not to get a job or produce people with employable skills but to enable mental, spiritual and physical growth; the aim of education is more education.

Said (1999), also inspired by Dewey, further drew on the works of classical Arabic scholars as well as Newman's (1853) seminal study, arguing that a university's purpose is to seek the truth, emphasising the need for universities to be an intellectual haven free from political influence:

...the place of education is a special province within the society, a place where freedom of inquiry and thought occur and are protected...To say that someone is educated, or an educator, is to say something having to do with the mind, with intellectual and moral values, with a particular process of inquiry, discussion, and exchange, none of which is as regularly encountered outside as they are inside the academy.

(Said, 1999, p.28-29).

Barnett (2000) concurs, arguing that a fundamental role of HE is not to deliver knowledge but to challenge established wisdom through research. Barnett (2012) further argues that employability focused learning undermines opportunities for intellectual freedom and personal growth, further adding that the difficulties in predicting future needs of a rapidly changing economy and society make it inherently flawed. Coffield and Williamson (2011) concur, considering that neither governments nor businesses can accurately predict employee skills requirements throughout their working lives. Therefore, an unchanging set of GAs, though aimed at enabling students to be work-ready, could actually undermine this as they represent HEI perceptions of present rather than evolving employment needs. Coffield and Williamson (2011) therefore argue that flexible employability development from education emanates from a broad-based curriculum focusing on opportunities for learner interaction.

However, Kettle (2013) finds that generally academics tend to support developing learner employability, though this may be due to extrinsic pressures of data metrics such as the Key Information Set (KIS) which emphasise graduate employability data as a means of informing course and university rankings. Nevertheless, Kettle (ibid) finds that academics' attempts at orientating their courses to develop employability have limited success, with Cranmer (2006) similarly finding students expressed concern regarding the adequacy of its coverage during their undergraduate experiences. Cranmer, (ibid) also finds that such an employability focus is considered important by students, viewing gaining a degree as being instrumental to enhanced employment prospects. A global study from Mourshed, Farrell and Barton (2013) and nationally based one (Universities UK, 2015) both evidence a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of skills shortage and graduate unemployment, indicating that higher education is still not fully delivering its re-orientated aim of employability skills development. Cranmer (2006) argues that more employer involvement in courses and opportunities for training and work experience are the

most effective means of developing employability. Specifically considering GAs, Cole and Tibby (2013) consider their development as forming an important, though by no means exclusive, role in HEIs' employability strategies. Jackson and Wilton (2016) note the importance of personal attributes of high personal esteem, resilience and self-efficacy which enable networking skills and a commitment to seek relevant professional development opportunities to enable appropriate career choices. Indeed, Yorke (2010) found that specific development of career management skills could lead to a short-term improvement in graduate employment rates – and therefore help a university's league table position. However, Yorke (ibid) also discovered that the effects of other valuable GA development such as communication and team-working skills would take longer to realise and therefore may not be prioritised by HEIs only focused on immediate league table gain. Ultimately though, a key issue in relation to GAs and employability is that they offer the learner no guarantee of a job, exposing universities to criticisms of potentially misleading or not meeting learner expectations (Daniels and Brooker, 2014).

Since the 1990s, HEI GA implementation has become increasingly common throughout the world, thereby emphasising generic employability focused skills development rather than specific discipline expertise within degree programmes (de la Harpe and David, 2012; Williams et al., 2016). The weight of GA research is Australian based (Bond et al., 2017), reflecting their origin and active governmental role in nationwide implementation since 1998 (Geale et al., 2015), becoming a mandatory HEI requirement in their Tertiary Education Quality Standards (DET, 2011). Although referred to as generic skills in the latest version, Australian, Scottish and New Zealand universities receiving government funding not only have to articulate such attributes, but also demonstrate how they are assessed throughout courses (DET, 2015; Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton, 2011; Hill, Walkington and France, 2016; Bond et al., 2017). The implementation of GAs in HEIs has been driven by such national agenda to boost competition and employability skills in Australasia, the European Union and North America (Barrie 2012; Hill, Walkington and France, 2016). In Europe, according to the European Commission, ongoing implementation of the Bologna Declaration (1999, cited EC, 2015) aims to increase the comparability and compatibility of higher education between institutions in order to promote competition, with the Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué emphasising employability as a key HE focus, to: *“equip students with the advanced knowledge, skills, competencies they need throughout their professional lives”* (2009, cited in Kalfka and Taksa, 2013, p.581). Tomlinson (2007) and Barnett (2012) acknowledge that such global trends have influenced UK institutions' adoption of such attributes. GAs have therefore been used in marketing campaigns to explicitly

or implicitly claim that HEIs develop students' employability and subsequent earning potential (Daniels and Brooker, 2014). However, through their opacity in terms of lack of agreed definition, purpose and measurement (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009), GAs potentially run contrary to the government-led drive towards increasingly detailed and purportedly transparent institutional competition to promote student choice (BIS, 2015; Browne and Rayner, 2015; BIS, 2016).

1.3 *Theoretical concepts of GAs*

Simon Barrie, whose work is considered by Austin (2012) to transcend national boundaries by posing questions relevant to all HEI institutions, has played a leading role in critically evaluating the impact of GAs. As well as institutionally-based studies (Barrie, 2004; 2006; 2012), this has also included nationwide research in Australia (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Hughes and Barrie, 2010), as well as consultant involvement in New Zealand's HEI graduate profile development team (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Barrie's work therefore plays a vital role in terms of understanding theoretical perspectives of GAs. Barrie (2004; 2006) identified four divergent approaches to GA implementation: precursory, complementary, translation and enabling. Each of these concepts faces issues in their implementation.

According to Barrie (2004; 2006), *precursory* GAs represent basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and are therefore conceptually flawed as they should have been attained prior to embarking on higher education; they do not represent the culmination of graduate level personal development. However, such an approach could have relevance in England, given the persistent failure to address literacy and numeracy skills in both schools and Universities (OECD, 2015b) as well as for part-time mature learners who may have met entry criteria based on workplace experience rather than academic acumen (Little, 2005; King and Widdowson, 2012). Barrie (2004) also identified an alternative approach where academics viewed GAs as being *complementary*, though subordinate, generic skills to their discipline, which should be taught and assessed separately. This contradicts two of the three principles established by Bowden et al. (2000); that GAs need to be articulated within the discipline context and require commitment from the whole academic team as well as Willingham's (2008) findings that skills development requires contextualisation based on a strong foundation of core knowledge. These first two approaches identified by Barrie distance the academic from responsibility for nurturing

their learners' development of GAs, an approach advocated by Muldoon (2009). Conversely, the *translation* approach considers the role of the tutor being directly involved in the facilitation of the learners' GA development. Here, the institutional GAs need to be translated into the subject discipline to develop the learners' ability to apply their attributes to their discipline expertise. Pegg et al. (2012) concur, emphasising the need for in-depth integration of employability skills throughout, carefully planned by course teams rather than viewing them as a separate issue. However, this approach has the danger of each discipline emphasising the attributes which best match their current practice, rather than facilitating change (de la Harpe and David, 2012). Finally, Barrie (2006; 2012) argues that *enabling* attributes should be considered as being the most desirable, where students have developed attributes which can be applied across disciplines.

1.4 Criticism of GA concepts

As well as concerns regarding GA potential to overemphasise the role of employability in education, criticisms include a lack of coherent theoretical underpinning which question the value and achievability of transferable generic skills. Su (2014) summarises GA utilisation as being generalist, where skills which can transfer across disciplines, or specifist, where they are embedded within the discipline context. However, Facione et al., (1995), Willingham (2008) and Hoffer (2011) found that a generalist approach to critical thinking skills development in one discipline do not necessarily lead to multi-disciplinary critical capability. Similarly, Green, Hammer and Star (2009) and Kalfka and Taksa (2013), contend that gaining high level cognitive skills in an academic discipline does not necessarily lead to their transfer into other aspects of an individual's life, thereby challenging a fundamental assumption of those with a generalist view of GAs. However, whilst conceding that such transfer does not necessarily occur, Mulnix (2012) argues that embedding critical thinking skills processes can help development of student application across disciplines. Indeed, Barrie (2012) argues that GA development should be both discipline specific as well as fostering opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning. Su (2014) concurs, citing evidence that while discipline specific contextualisation is important, some generic skills are transferable. Nevertheless, Barnett (2012) further argues that such generic skills development may hinder person-centred learning as well as failing to respond to rapidly changing global needs. Though not following Barnett's rejection of employability skills development, Daniels and Brooker (2014) share the concern of their potential narrowing of

purpose by hindering the development of personal student identity. They warn that graduate attributes may represent a pre-constructed and inflexible identity developed by the HEI, which quickly becomes outdated in the face of changing employer needs.

Daniels and Brooker (2014) therefore consider personal identity development and social interaction to be a key personal and employability skill required for responding to differing situations in life in general as well as the workplace: “*Students need to learn how they relate to themselves as students, as well as how they interact with, and are perceived by, their peers, mentors, tutors and lecturers.*” (ibid, p.69). However, whilst strongly criticising GAs, Daniels and Brooker (ibid) pragmatically accept that they are likely to remain and therefore advocate working with them to increase their effectiveness in developing student identity. Su (2014) concurs that GAs can limit personal development when applied in a purely top-down manner by a university as this tends to overvalue quantifying GA development for quality assurance requirements. Su (ibid) found that this leads to superficial student engagement: “*For the system-driven process focuses on the grand system itself, and may ultimately serve as a kind of imposed unity...*” (ibid, p.1211) which may be too rigid to respond to either student needs and interests or changing employer demands. Su (ibid, p.1214) therefore concludes that GAs need to be implemented in a student-centred, self-directed manner to empower learners’ development, with the institution providing a supporting structure:

If the paradigm shifted such that the task of higher education became to help students develop graduate attributes of their choosing, rather than to determine attributes for them to attain. The focus of managing strategies would be on how the attainment of graduate attributes could become a more reflexive and authentic practice directed by the students themselves.

O’Conner, Lynch and Owen (2011), also critiquing the tendency for GAs to be narrowly skills based, argue that GAs offer the opportunity to encourage reciprocal University and community engagement, by involving students in voluntary community (experimental reflective learning/research) projects for broader personal and professional development. They claim that such empowerment enables greater flexibility to meet changing market needs, but also to contribute to society as a whole.

2 *GA strategic implementation*

Tasked with informing national GA development in New Zealand, Spronken-Smith et al. (2013), used a multiple case-study research approach. A key enabler in GA implementation was found to be government-led statutory GA development, implementation, assessment and quality assurance found in Australia and New Zealand. While Australia and New Zealand appear to be developing GA programmes into more in depth graduate profiles, this does not appear to be the case in England. Without central policy steerage, GA and related implementation lacks an essential underpinning driver (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013), remaining at the discretion of the provider. Additionally, with the government's deregulation of teacher qualification requirements, emphasis on subject expertise and standardised, comparable measures of university performance appear to run contrary to the broader and difficult to quantify aims and outcomes of many GA programmes. Although transferable skills form part of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) subject benchmark statements, these are not statutory requirements for HEIs, stating that they do not: "...*interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.*" (QAA, 2015, p.3). The new White Paper and resultant legislation *Higher Education and Research Bill* (Parliament, in progress, 2017) focus on increasing competition through easing new commercial entrants to the sector and enabling fee increases subject to demonstrating high teaching quality quantified by various metrics such as NSS, KIS and UKES. Given the lack of current policy impetus, it therefore appears unlikely that England will follow the centrally-led Australian or Scottish policy drives, dating back to 1998 (Geale et al., 2015; Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton, 2011). Scottish universities are now required to incorporate GAs into all programmes and be able to demonstrate their achievement (Higher Education Standards Framework, 2015) and in New Zealand where GAs contribute towards the development of in-depth graduate profiles (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Graduate profile development does take place in England, albeit on a voluntary basis for HEIs, in the form of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) (HEA, 2017), which Kandiko and Mawer (2013) argue enables collation of additional learning outside the academic requirements of the degree. Nevertheless, unlike in New Zealand, institutional participation is voluntary and without government policy directive.

Nationwide reviews of GA implementation in Australia and New Zealand found the extent of change required to curriculum, assessment and teaching roles was often underestimated by management, resulting in inconsistency of purpose and practice both between and within

institutions (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Spronken-Smith et al., 2013; Bond et al., 2017). Acknowledging problems, proponents emphasise the need for time and inclusive reflective evaluation to successfully implement GAs (Oliver, 2013; Bond et al., 2017). Indeed, in the UK, Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton (2011) found that managerial support was lacking in terms of helping lecturers develop their role to include employability facilitation. Bond et al. (2017) concur, finding that successful implementation required a stable and long-term hierarchy of managerial intervention, with structural and procedural enablers facilitating whole staff awareness of the GAs as well as opportunities for staff to develop their implementation skills. Indeed, Oliver's (2013) longitudinal case study over six years of a university's GA implementation found that initial implementation was inconsistent; only through determined yet flexible managerial action were significant improvements to generic skills development made. De la Harpe and David (2012) conclude that implementation problems emanate from poor leadership which lacks change management capabilities. This results in a lack of academic ownership of the attributes, rewards for their development or effective training and resources to change cultural contexts.

Bridgestock, (2009) identified resistance from academics who feared that GAs potentially undermined the value of discipline expertise. Writing about the English experience, Barnett (2012) argues that imposing generic skills development across an institution stifles creativity, inquisitive learning and broader personal development. Barrie, Hughes and Smith (2009), in a nationwide review of Australian University GA practice, found that in many HEIs, implementation was ineffective, due to a lack of shared conceptual understanding, inconsistent application and assessment as well as staff resistance to change. Indeed, opponents of focusing education on generic skills development question the extent to which attributes such as critical thinking are transferrable across disciplines (Hirsch, 1999; Willingham, 2008; Hoffer, 2011; Barnett, 2012; Gibb, 2015).

There could be a tendency to resist change by academics against what McCaffery (2010) identifies as the growth of new-managerialism, known as New Public Management (NPM) in the public sector, where overtly business modelled leadership practices subverting perceptions of more democratically based organisations. Winter (2009), examining both English and Australian universities, argues that this has directed academics towards sharing a set of corporate values, often resisted by academics on the ground of defending a pedagogical or discipline specific professional identity which they feel runs contrary to profit and output focused models. Starr (2011) concurs, arguing that within higher education organisations there is a

strong tendency to actively or passively resist change, being seen to challenge existing power relations and personal professional identities:

Major change requires people to give up feelings of comfort, long-held values or beliefs, and established routines. It entails new thinking, extra time and effort. Individuals try to retain comfort and quell confusion through practicing caution, constraint and subversion, thus protecting the status quo.

(Starr, 2011, p.647).

Creasy (2013), however, argues that NPM has permeated further in FE, as there has not been a strong culture of academic autonomy from which to base resistance. In relation to GAs, Knewstubb and Ruth (2015) further contend that without consensus-based implementation, they can fragment managerial, lecturer and student relations due to contrasting perceptions of the purposes of HE, lecturers and learners.

Winter (2009) in a comparative study of UK and Australian HEIs, argues that encroaching NPM in both countries has led to HEI management being split between those who adhere to corporate business models (academic managers) and those who reject this imposition on traditional collegial approaches to governance (managed academics). Kligyte and Barrie (2014) however, firstly argue that collegiality is an ill-defined term relating to vague notions of consensual governance, discipline specific or behavioural norms. They reject claims that collegiality has declined at the expense of business based managerialism, arguing that notions of academic freedom, autonomy and intellectual consensus may rely on a nostalgic view of a past that never existed:

The fantasy of collegiality works by remembering through forgetting. It glosses over the inconsistencies in the historical realities of collegial practices, particularly in terms of the role afforded to the 'underclass' of the academy – women, academics from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and other marginalised groups, excluding the students altogether.

(Kligyte and Barry *ibid*, p.166).

While Holyoke et al. (2012) claim that collegiality is a hindrance to transformative change, Kligyte and Barrie (2014) argue that it is an enduring and idealised myth of this concept which empowers resistance to managerial-led change as a matter of principle rather than through reasoned evaluation. Richards (2011) also criticises academic culture, arguing that many neither want to lead nor take on responsibility for leadership themselves. Indeed, Holyoke et al. (2012, p.437) show that disparate academic cultures within HEIs lead to a tendency for academics to value, and be better rewarded, for departmental level contributions rather than a commitment to whole institution change: *“Many faculty, staff and administrators are often isolated and view themselves as independent contributors rather than an integral part of a large*

organisation". This isolation is compounded by an increasing performance management culture based on personal and measurable targets which may focus academics' contributions towards personal target achievement rather than whole university development (Holyoke et al., 2012). In relation to GAs, Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004) found lecturer opposition to GAs, which was largely generated by resentment to the principle of top-down policy imposition, rather than the concepts of the GAs themselves. Additionally, though Richards (2011) argues that academics resist change based on improving teaching experiences as being a distraction from their research interests. Specifically considering GAs, Bond et al. (2017) found that implementation was much more difficult in research focused universities. Indeed, Creasy (2013) argues that research should always remain the most important aspect of the HE academic's professional practice; a professional values which Winter (2009) argues contradict the demands of the corporate culture fostered by NPM. Winter (ibid) claims that this leads to either academic resistance to top down change or a split in professional identities between academic and managerial duties. Oliver (2013) additionally discovered that lecturer resistance to GAs had a practical basis where adherence to professional standards was also required, as this led to having to meet potentially divergent objectives.

By, Hughes and Ford (2016) however, reject what they consider to have become a commonly held view of change management posited by the influential leadership theorist Kotter, whose work *Leading Change* (1996, cited in By, Hughes and Ford, 2012) assumed that leaders and managers are change agents whereas non-managerial employees are to blame for resisting change. By, Hughes and Ford (ibid) counter that this not only makes unhelpful and false divisions between managerial and non-managerial responsibilities within an organisation, but crucially that resistance, rejection or failure to implement change can come from any level of an institution. Therefore, for GA implementation to have a chance of being effective it should involve all academic staff and avoid assuming that those in managerial roles understand and support GAs.

3 *GA facilitation*

3.1 *Gas and the role of the academic*

Cranmer, (2006), Yorke (2010) and Barrie (2012) concur that GAs need to be embedded within the curriculum rather than taught separately as advocated by Muldoon (2009). Whilst Yorke (2010) concedes that this poses a challenge to the lecturer in terms of delivering both discipline content requirements as well as developing these skills, Barrie (2012) argues that innovative teaching practices have demonstrated that this is achievable. Indeed, Oliver (2013) acknowledges that GAs can be problematic for courses also working towards professional standards, but highlighted the value of a clear university-led strategy to carefully illustrate common and additional areas of competence. Kettle's (2013, p.8) overview of successful case studies found that a key common factor was the ability to adopt flexible pedagogies involving close collaboration with employers to develop the curriculum and agree appropriate standards:

HE programmes need to incorporate a model of employability that not only includes subject knowledge and cognitive ability but has professional relevance, is performance orientated and facilitates learning for work as well as promoting personal values and engagement.

Therefore, for GAs to be successfully developed as part of an effective employability strategy, Pegg, Waldcock, Handy-Isaac and Lawton (2012) demonstrate that all lecturers must adapt their own practice to meet this increased demand. Nagarajan and Edwards (2014) concur, arguing that GA implementation requires the development of professional communities of practice, though this is a particularly challenging task given the current policy emphasis on competition rather than collaboration (BIS, 2012b; BIS, 2016).

Barrie (2006) emphasises the breadth of the professional role of the academic necessary for effective GA implementation; subject expertise, interdisciplinary understanding and ability to facilitate generic skills development of their students. Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) concur, emphasising the need for designated staff and academic groups with the specific role of developing GA within the institution's curricula. This includes contextual enablers; change agents who tailor the GAs to the specific needs and characteristics of the discipline as well as achievement enablers support students' GA development and achievement. Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton (2011) also found that students, lecturers and employers agreed on the need to develop generic skills such as critical analysis, team-working and problem solving. Nevertheless, they too found problems with implementation due to each of these groups having

differing conceptions of these GAs. They therefore advise negotiation between these groups to form a common understanding of these skills and how they can be developed. McCaffery (2010) supports such a broader role of the lecturer, arguing that a knowledge society does not require clear delineation of subjects and disciplines. This, however, appears to be running contrary to current government perceptions of the role of the educator which emphasises the overarching importance of subject knowledge (BIS 2012a; BIS, 2016; DfE, 2016b; Gibb 2017).

Prime Minister May Government's replacement of BIS with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy resulted in the DfE taking responsibility for all aspects of universities outside research, enabling greater similarities in policies across all education sectors (Johnson, 2016). Therefore, consideration of the DfE's vision of education is important given their new authority in the sector. Such a split was anticipated by Creasy (2013), who viewed this as being highly damaging to HE on the grounds that academics' teaching should focus on challenging existing knowledge rather than merely delivering it. The underpinning principle of GAs, which consider discipline knowledge to be of only limited short-term value compared with the development of lifelong generic transferable skills, directly contradicts the current government's vision of effective education. Secretary of State for School Standards, Gibb (2015) has explicitly and repeatedly lauded the works of anti-progressive American educationalist E.D. Hirsch's theory of cultural literacy. This envisages all school students learning a 'common core' of facts, which in the case of England, is selected by the DfE in a self-appointed role as guardians of culture and wisdom. Gibb (2016, p.1) clearly rejects the concept of generic skills development:

School curricula were increasingly rewritten to focus not upon subject content, but upon skills and dispositions...For me, the crowning glory of this dumbing down was the 2007 rewrite of the national curriculum, which systematically expunged any mention of subject content, replacing it with references to 'processes', 'concepts', and with an overlay of 'personal, learning and thinking skills' such as 'independent learning' and 'learning to learn'.

The answer, according to Gibb (2017, p.1), is therefore teacher-led delivery: "...*teacher-led instruction is more effective than child-centred, enquiry-based approaches*", criticising teachers for encouraging active learning when they: "...*allow pupils to debate and discuss ideas, design and carry out their own scientific experiments and analyse historical sources.*" Indeed, in the schools' White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE, 2016b) the then Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan declared that the government would embed a knowledge-based curriculum, though this undermines the claimed rationale of promoting competitive

educational autonomy through self-governance conversion of all schools. Lingfield (BIS, 2012a) echoes this purported importance of subject expertise over generic teaching qualification for FE lecturers as does the HE White paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*, (BIS, 2016) which similarly sees no need to promote HE teaching qualifications. Although this White Paper does not explicitly criticise generic skills development, the value of discipline knowledge is repeatedly emphasised. Furthermore, the central tenet of Hirsch (1999) which runs through school education policies (Gibb, 2015), that a lack of common core knowledge in disadvantaged groups reduces social capital and therefore limits opportunities, is also found in this policy document. Therefore, the direction of government policies appears to be directly against the central tenet of GAs which advocate transferable generic skills development.

However, Gibb's (2017) dismissal of his critics as being from progressive educationalists (and by implication, politically left-leaning) is undermined by considerable opposition from those within his own party as well. Introducing a highly critical report on government education policy by former Conservative Education Secretary Sir Kenneth Baker, university vice chancellor Sir Anthony Seldon (cited in Baker, 2016, p.2) dismisses the knowledge curriculum:

We are sleepwalking – Government, schools and universities – into the biggest potential disaster of modern times... We need to focus far more, if we are to prepare our young for tomorrow's economy, and to optimise its infinite possibilities, on active as opposed to passive learning, on technical entrepreneurial skills, on personal and collaborative skills that teach us how to live intelligent and fulfilling lives, and how to work and live harmoniously with others.

Similarly, this knowledge focus of education contradicts what actual business leaders, demand from their graduates, such as ethical and cross-cultural awareness skills which would enable rapid integration within the workforce (Farenga and Quinlan, 2016). Bodies such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 2015) still strongly advocate the development of broad based employability skills as typically espoused by GAs. Director-General Hall, criticising the traditionalist direction of governmental policy, citing evidence that 90% of respondents value cognitive and communication skills over discipline expertise:

The system must change, with more focus on developing the aptitudes and attributes that set young people up for success in both work and life. For the great majority of businesses, the attitudes and aptitudes of graduates for work are more important than the specific degree studied. Courses need to reflect this: universities can look to do more to help them prepare for the transition into work.

(CBI, 2015, p.4).

Therefore, although many academics have criticised the narrowing of Higher Education towards an employability focus on the grounds that it negates broader personal, social and emotional development (Coffield and Williamson, 2011; McNiff, 2016), these are the very values which appear to be shared by graduate recruiting businesses. Indeed, Rust and Froud (2011) argue that employability and academic skills represent a false dichotomy, with personal literacy; the ability to be critically self-aware being vital for both. Rich (2015, p.21) concurs with this need for the development of a broad range of social and emotional skills, stating:

Given that most graduate jobs do not require a specific degree subject and that most degree subjects do not guarantee a job, it is these soft skills that open doors for students and for which the employer is willing to pay a graduate premium.

Therefore, whilst government policy purports to emphasise the importance of education focusing on employability development, its knowledge-based assessment-led approach to education is in direct contradiction to what employers are actually demanding. Indeed, Rust and Froud (2011) argue that such instrumentalist and credentialist approaches are unlikely to be valued by businesses, thereby reducing graduate employability. Furthermore, a key component of Becker's (1993) vision lies in the ability of education to develop transferable generic skills required for a flexible capitalist employment market (Kalfka and Taksa, 2014). Therefore, although the central tenet of Becker's (1993) human capital link between educational investment and economic development work appears to remain publicly stated in the White Paper (BIS, 2016), the rapid expansion of HE has not been matched by government spending, resulting in a reduction in funding per learner (McCaffery, 2010). The moves away from direct government investment in universities, real terms budget cuts in schooling and absolute budget cuts in FECs as outlined in BBC Radio 4's *Colleges in Crises* (2015), suggest that the government vision for economic growth is moving away from education investment towards other measures such as expanding the role of the free market.

3.2 *GAs and the role of students*

Lea and Simmons (2012) note how Higher Education has been a feature of FECs since the 1950s, though its status has been in a state of constant confusion due to shifting legislative, organisational and funding arrangements. Whilst conceding that HEIs are by no means homogeneous and have some overlapping aspects with FE, especially when considering post-92 universities as featured in this case study, Creasy (2013) argues against greater HE

provision within FE, claiming that fundamental differences in their ethos undermine the ability of colleges to facilitate graduate level learning experiences. Creasy (ibid) justifies this stance on the grounds that students benefit from the selective, autonomous intellectual environment rather than the supportive, widening participation focus of FECs. Indeed, both Barnett (2000) and Creasy (2013) both argue that involvement in research is a fundamental value of HE and should not be separated with teaching. Both Creasy (ibid) and Feather (2012) argue that the permeation of NPM into FECs has increased teaching workloads to the detriment of research capability. Creasy (2013) therefore argues that where colleges are merely delivering knowledge, they are only superficially engaging in a credentialist approach to HE which denies its role in contributing to the evolving development of a knowledge society. Creasy (ibid) furthermore argues that FE lecturers tend to be less qualified than their HE counterparts, thereby impinging on the quality of discipline expertise imparted to learners. Burkhill, Dyer and Stone's (2008) survey of 17 FECs, concur that teaching FE in HE can be problematic due to the above issues, nevertheless counter that there are also potential benefits; smaller class sizes, greater student support and more varied and inclusive student-centred approaches to teaching.

Lea and Simmons (2012) show how the policy of encouraging cooperation between FECs and HEIs to increase provision has been overturned by the marketisation agenda which has enforced competition rather than collaboration; in this environment, the ability to impose a trans-institutional policy is hindered by the financial self-interest of each institution. Elliott's (2015) review of FE and HEI leadership research highlights how the Further Education sector has been marked with a mixture turbulent governance and chronic, long-term underfunding. Elliott (ibid) demonstrates how financial rather than pedagogical pressure to merge institutions and provision as well as centrally set educational targets have undermined the notion that FECs provide provision to meet specific local learning needs. Lumby and Tomlinson (2000, p.139) agree that some academics perceive that, *"...educational values have been sacrificed to rationalist forms of planning aimed at maximising income and output."*, though they argue that delineating a clear manager/academic split of values in FE is over-simplistic. Indeed, their case study found that many college principals may empathise with the problems facing FE academics but feel unable to divert sufficient time away from their managerial role. This lack of clear divergence of values according to roles is not surprising given a lack of clear delineation of managerial responsibility in FE found by Briggs (2001). Nevertheless, where there is a lack of shared values between leaders and academics, there is a tendency towards strategic pragmatism in the form of minimal compliance with change initiatives (Elliot, 2015) or active resistance (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000).

Richards (2011) emphasises the need for students to be actively involved in university policy formation otherwise they will not have ownership of their learning. Additionally, without their feedback, it is difficult to check that any institutional policy is actually being applied and having the intended outcomes. However, as already considered in relation to academics, the top-down nature of many GA policies has meant that students – full or part time - have not been actively engaged in the conceptualisation, implementation or evaluation stages. Studies relating to characteristics of part-time learners have found that they tend to be already employed, have lower entry qualifications, higher drop-out rates and lower achievements (Little, 2005; King and Widdowson, 2012; McVitty and Morris, 2012). Catering for the needs of part-time students therefore represents the antithesis of Rich's (2015, p.4) criticism of provision at some high-ranking universities:

In theory, universities could be admitting highly capable, independent learners and merely providing them with an amenable atmosphere for a few years. On graduation, the university gives the student a stamp of approval and takes credit for any personal growth or development they may have experienced. In reality, the student may either have taught themselves or simply acquired three years of life experience.

Nevertheless, Lea and Simmonds (2012) argue that following increasing government surveillance on their performance, HEIs have adapted a strong ethos of student support akin the FECs in order to raise their retention and achievement rates. However, Little (2005) found that the intense time constraints of part-time learners, often older with more family and work commitments, lead to an instrumentalist approach of focusing on the most basic components necessary for completion of the award. Time pressures of embedding GAs, as acknowledged by Pegg, Waldcock, Handy-Isaac and Lawton (2012), are exacerbated by the reduced contact time found in part-time awards. This means that Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton's (2011) findings that full-time learners were reluctant to take on GA development are likely to be more resonant for part-time employed mature learners. Where GAs are separately assessed as an additional option, as supported by Muldoon (2009), there is potentially an equality issue as part-time students do not tend to have the same amount of time as younger full-time learners (Rich, 2015). Further to this, where GAs are not explicitly assessed, then part-time students who tend to have external work/family pressures may see that this is something to be ignored as it does not impact on their degree classification. Finally, Little (2005) considers that part-time students who are already employed may consider explicit employability skills development to be a waste of time, holding a narrow view of employability being about gaining and maintaining employment rather than developing opportunities to enhance career prospects. Farenga and Quinlan (2016) also note that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be more instrumental in

their approach to studies, focusing on gaining the academic qualification with a range of social factors preventing full engagement in broader skills development initiatives. Therefore, unless GA initiatives are built in as a fundamental and assessed part of a degree, they will potentially further social inequalities across their student cohort; given such diversity of learners, the imposition of a single set of GAs for all learners is potentially problematic.

4 *GAs and quality assurance*

Based on findings from a nationwide evaluation of GA implementation in Australia (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009), Barrie (2012) argues that effective GA implementation can only be achieved through fundamental change to the learner experience. This therefore entails whole-scale institution-wide changes to teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment and quality systems, thereby radically reforming the role and purpose of the academic. In terms of analysing GA implementation across institutions, Barrie and Hughes (2010, p.327) identify eight systemic factors: *“Conceptualisation, Stakeholders, Implementation strategy, Curriculum approach, Assessment, Staff development, Quality assurance and Student-centredness.”* Bond et al. (2017) summarising developments from their previous nationwide research in New Zealand (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013) agree with Hughes and Barrie's (2010) emphasis on GAs needing to be explicit throughout course programmes and contextualised towards the discipline to clearly articulate how they are relevant to learners and their subject. Furthermore, they concur that explicit links between GAs and Learning Outcomes and assessment are essential to motivate student engagement.

Yorke (2010), a key proponent of employability development within higher education, also agrees with Hughes and Barrie's (2010) view that GAs can only be effectively implemented through wholesale change throughout the organisation:

If institutions are serious about developing graduate attributes or employability (with their implications for interaction between students), then the challenges posed by assessment have to be addressed. A commitment to the development of graduate attributes or employability implies for many subject disciplines, a preparedness to rethink curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

(Yorke, 2010,
p.10).

Bond et al. (2017) also emphasise the need for GA implementation to represent a major transformation of the institution as well as the academic role rather than an add-on or optional extra. Nagarajan and Edwards (2014, p.22) concur, arguing:

In the real world, graduates report that they face situations where they need to integrate their professional skills and technical skills.

They therefore strongly advocate evaluative data to inform ongoing implementation and development of the attributes within the institution.

However, in terms of providing a tool for national quality assurance, Donleavy (2012) and Daniels and Brooker (2014) challenge the role played by GAs within the national quality standards in Australia. They consider that this role is hard to justify when each university has chosen their own set of attributes. Daniels and Brooker (2012) highlight key differences of attributes selected, as well as whether and how they are prioritised, meaning that their use for national measurement is compromised through the lack of comparability of non-uniform approaches. Rich (2015) supports development of a standard GA framework across English universities as has been achieved in Scotland (Butcher, Smith, Kettle and Burton, 2011). However, Rich (2015) argues that it is unrealistic and undesirable for all students to develop these GAs to the same level, as the extent to which these skills are required differs between employment sectors. He therefore argues that each course should explicitly demonstrate from marketing through to assessment the extent to which students are expected to achieve each skill. Although finding the exercise useful for ensuring consistent engagement and coverage throughout the university, Oliver (2013) highlights problem of mapping GAs to curriculum, as effective completion is time consuming, involving a whole team approach and supported by change-managers. Where optional modules are concerned, the difficulty of ensuring that GAs are effectively covered with each of the differing combinations could have a limiting effect on choice.

Chapter Two: Research methodology

Overview of the study

This chapter explains the research paradigm, methodology and tools utilised in the study as well as providing a reflective evaluation on the extent of their appropriacy in relation to its aims and objectives. As a study of experiences of GA policy implementation, it does not attempt a quantitative measurement of effectiveness but rather seeks to discover key strengths and challenges of current GA approaches through triangulation of the differing stakeholder viewpoints and documentary evidence. The research design utilises aspects of Roller and Lavrakas's (2015) Total Quality Framework which provides an overarching framework organised around delivering credibility, analysability, transparency and usefulness for qualitative research.

Research Aim

To what extent has a HEI institution met non-traditional learner expectations within a School of Education and two franchise partner colleges?

Throughout the data collection and analysis stage, these have been used to inspire four overall research objectives:

- 1 Identify the purposes and processes of GA formation.
- 2 Analyse the effectiveness of GA strategic implementation.
- 3 Evaluate the appropriacy and effectiveness of GA facilitation.
- 4 Analyse the role of GAs in a Quality Enhancement process.

Research paradigm

The following section discusses research paradigms in relation to this case study. Research paradigms are the framework within which a researcher operates according to their ontological stance, representing: *“a way of thinking about a subject and proceeding with research that is accepted by people working in that area.”* (Newby, 2014, p.46). Kumar (2011) highlights positivism and interpretivism as representing differing approaches to gaining and understanding knowledge. Wellington (2016), however, argues against dividing approaches to education research into distinctive paradigms as they oversimplify approaches which could be more realistically considered as being on a related continuum. Both Hammersley (1991) and Wellington (2016) therefore argue that research should therefore be considered in terms of tendencies rather than rigid and delineated paradigms.

Research with positivist tendencies, emerged from the development of rigorous scientific methods. This approach attempts to identify not just correlation of phenomena, but causality as well (Newby, 2014), through systematic reduction and isolation of variables to ascertain an irrefutable causal factor in outcomes (Silverman, 2013). This approach therefore aims to identify general truths about the world, with detailed recording and dissemination of methods enabling the replication by peers to demonstrate the reliability of the findings. Wellington (2016), however, notes that positivism is more an aspiration than a realistically attainable process, given the impossibility of human designed experiments attaining truly objective and value free research. Wellington (ibid) therefore identifies key criticisms of adopting this approach in education. Firstly, positivist emphasis on the need to follow purportedly scientific methods can lead to uncritical adoption of techniques into unsuitable contexts. Secondly, tending to be hypothesis driven it limits the potential for educational inquiry into areas lacking definite answers. Thirdly, the emphasis on finding causality is problematic when considering the difficulty of isolating the manifold variables relating to individuals in the real-world environment of a classroom. Wellington (ibid) argues that this potentially limits our ability to understand perceptions and attitudes; key aspects of humanity which, ultimately, is the focus of education research.

Basit (2010) considers the value of how we experience the world (phenomenology) as being broadly linked to the interpretivist research paradigm. This includes concepts of attitude, belief, and feeling; areas where the variables of humanity render seeking absolute truths both unlikely and according to more extreme advocates, irrelevant (Kincheloe, 2003). Such approaches

typically favour qualitative description, observation and personal reflection as is proposed in this study. Research approaches tending toward interpretivism thus tend to take a more nuanced, person-centred, context and time-bound view of reality through their focus on views of phenomena rather than testable and replicable findings. This emphasises the importance of the research context, participants and researcher's background within this paradigm, valuing the discoveries about a specific time and situation rather than a generalisable truth (Wellington, 2017). Within this interpretivist paradigm, Newby (2014) summarises modernism as an attempt to define a reality through a specific theoretical lens, whilst post-modernism takes an explicitly anti-positivist stance by denying the possibility of finding a single explanation for any phenomena. This means that the purpose of research is not to prove or disprove hypotheses as found in a positivist stance, but through exploration: "*an unfolding and evolutionary process where the goal is not specified at the start.*" (ibid, p.45). Taking this acknowledgement of researcher subjectivity further, critical theory explicitly acknowledges their political stance, justifying this rejection of positivist objectivity by arguing that research can be used actively to improve the world: "*...to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.*" (Horkheimer, 1982, cited in Newby, 2014, p.43). In contrast, Mulnix (2012, p.466) strongly argues against such activist stances, demonstrating how they undermine the intellectual principles of critical thinking:

Critical thinking, as an intellectual virtue, is not directed at any specific moral ends. That is, it does not intrinsically contain a set of beliefs that are the natural outcomes of applying its method. For instance, two critical thinkers can come to hold contrary beliefs despite each applying the skills associated with critical thinking well and honestly. As such, critical thinking has little to do with what we think, but everything to do with how we think. Accordingly, any model of critical thinking that asserts that there are definite ends at which critical thinking aims—in terms of what we should or should not believe, or how we should or should not behave—is deeply suspicious.

Indeed, even though Barnett (2012) advocates the need for critical action, this should only follow from rigorous application of critical approach to knowledge and self-awareness.

Whilst there are clear differences between positivism and interpretivism, when defined as distinctive paradigms, there are also areas of commonality, which Hammersley (1991) argues are broader than readily admitted by advocates of each these ontological stances. Indeed, Wellington's (2017) rejection of the notion of such a delineation, demonstrating how they are essentially differing positions within a continuum of research methodologies; some form of researcher data interpretation is always required regardless of underpinning approach (Hammersley, 1991; Silverman, 2013; Wellington, 2017). Regardless of approach selected, it

remains the researcher's ethical duty to fully acknowledge their background and how this may influence the study (BERA, 2011). In this respect, while the positivist approach may seek to explain how such potential biases are overcome to make the study as objective as possible, the interpretivist approach may embrace subjectivity by arguing that with multiple perceptions of the truth, subjective viewpoints are nevertheless relevant for improving practice in practitioner-led research (McNiff, 2016).

In the case of this research, where the researcher is also practitioner, this influence has been clearly identified (see Chapter One), meaning an acceptance that there is a strong element of subjectivity inevitable when the researcher investigates their own practice. In view of these issues, adopting a stance tending towards positivism would not be suitable for this research due to its small-scale nature, qualitatively based documentary analysis and focus on human values of perception and attitudes. Additionally, Ashley (ibid) warns that a single case study cannot lay claim to generalisable truths; the case study is not longitudinal in the sense that data collection has not repeatedly taken place over a substantial period of time. However, it contains longitudinal elements given that documentary evidence and reflective content of the interviews cover a period of five years since implementation.

Interpretivist approaches tend to negate the possibility of replication, meaning that they lack reliability (Newby, 2014). This is because the unique context of every small research project, featuring numerous human and environmental variables, makes replication of findings unobtainable. Defined as where, “...the outcomes of measurement are stable over time, always assuming that other things remain the same.” (Newby, p.129), reliability is unlikely to apply to small-scale, short-term research such as in this case study. However, Basit (2010) argues that without a high degree of reliability the validity of any study will be compromised. Given these issues, such a positivist definition of validity is an unrealistic goal for this research, with findings based on a specific cohort, context and time that cannot be replicated nor generalised.

Therefore, validity in the positivist sense will not be achieved through the qualitative research methods in this study. Instead, the research aims to be internally valid; providing insight which is useful for improving understanding of the practitioner's professional context. Newby (2014) argues that in such cases, the research should therefore aim for credibility, by the researcher being able to holistically evidence the robustness of their research methodology. McNiff (2016) highlights the benefits of this approach as it encourages researchers to work collaboratively with participants to mutually find solutions to problems. Therefore, the relevance of this study lies in the value of the findings in terms of informing policy implementation at the HEI and its FE

franchise partners as well as the researcher's own partnership liaison role, recommendations which may be translated into the context of other HEI and FEC partnerships. Whilst the knowledge gained from this study is not replicable, there will be value to other HEIs in terms of transferable understanding of potential policy implementation issues both within a HEI as well as where they have FE Franchise partners. While acknowledging that a researcher can never be truly objective in their stance, from a personal viewpoint, I concur with Mulnix's (2012) rejection of doctrinaire based research. This view has formed from my previous study of history and current professional role which involves analysing education policies; dogma and ideology should never be a substitute for evidence to inform human development. Therefore, given the focus on perceptions and attitudes through utilisation of research tools largely associated with qualitative research and small-scale nature, this study tends towards taking an interpretivist stance.

Research framework

Qualitative research experts Roller and Lavrakas (2015) emphasise the need to demonstrate credibility through incorporation of a transparent quality structures. They advocate an agreed framework for qualitative researchers in order to emulate internationally accepted scientific standards within quantitative research. The research will therefore endeavour to be transparent in its organisation and interpretation of data as expounded by Roller and Lavrakas (2015). Their Total Quality Framework (TQF) focuses on four key concepts: credibility, analysability, transparency and usefulness. Credibility relates to the extent of completeness and accuracy of data gathering; the extent to which data gained is representative of the target population. To aid consideration of this, the research is following their advice of keeping a reflective diary throughout the data collection stage (appendix 2). This enables ongoing reflection on potential influences on the reliability of data gathering which informs continuous developments to practice in terms of meeting the research objectives. Analysability relates to how data is processed and validated. To support this, Roller and Lavrakas (2015) consider three types of triangulation: data (between groups), method (interview, focus group and content analysis) and investigator triangulation. This study aims to use these through data gathering from a range of stakeholders, utilisation of a variety of research methods as well as involvement of colleagues in the interview process. This methodology section therefore aims to fully explain and justify all

choices made in-depth, with comprehensive appended evidence enabling independent verification or challenge to the author's interpretivist analysis.

Approaches to data collection

Research credibility and internal validity

Through their acknowledgement, and in the case of critical theory, celebration of researcher subjectivity, Newby (2014) identifies how the interpretivist paradigm has been closely linked to action research and case study methods. McNiff (2016), advocating action research, argues that it enables focus on addressing specific issues or critical incidents in a structured manner. Rather than observing and measuring practice, action research makes direct interventions to resolve a specific practical issue, the impact of such changes to practice is measured to enable a cyclical and reflective approach to development. However, as this study is based on the impacts of policy implementation, it will be taking a case study approach by observing current practice from which future recommendations will be made. The methodology for this case study research follows a qualitative approach which Newby (2014) considers appropriate for research into perceptions and attitudes rather than quantifiable numerical data. This approach further allows the researcher to develop a flexible and pragmatic methodological approach which, according to Kumar (2011), entails responding to information from participants in an ongoing basis as well as acknowledging where compromises are necessary in data gathering processes due to practical considerations of the researcher. Ashley (2017) further emphasises how case studies can have internal validity for the researcher in terms of helping them understand underlying rational for processes, actions and attitudes.

Newby (2014) highlights two key approaches to data gathering: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative approaches are strongly aligned with, though by no means exclusive to, notions of the positivist paradigm, having: *"...a precise idea of how truth can be determined using a combination of statistical analysis and logical deductive reasoning to draw out inferences from the evidence presented."* (Newby, 2014, p.47). This approach therefore entails a claim to researcher neutrality, objectivity and adherence to consistent and robust procedures accepted within positivist orientated research communities to produce reliable, valid, replicable and

generalisable research. Conversely, qualitative data tends to focus on how and why phenomena occur, often utilised for ascertaining attitudes, feelings and perceptions which can be difficult to gain through quantitative means: *“Qualitative research embraces the complexities of human thought and behaviour”* (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015, p.v). This enables consideration of numerous potential explanations for phenomena, so can be useful means of identifying possible creative solutions to problems (Newby, 2014). It therefore tends to be more aligned with perceptions of the interpretivist paradigm, where researcher bias is considered to be always present in terms of choice of research topic, methods and analysis (McNiff, 2016). However, even when considering the potential of researcher bias in all research, Newby (2014) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015) concede that the qualitative research will struggle to have the same validity as quantitative data-based approaches. Nevertheless, they both emphasise the need for the qualitative researcher to evidence the credibility of their work through a structured approach to organising and undertaking research throughout all of its stages. This use of a clear and transparent structure also enables opportunities to take a more flexible approach to data gathering from numerous sources: *“...qualitative approaches assemble the evidence from whatever source is relevant and identify patterns and order and use inductive reasoning to suggest what the causes are.”* (Newby, 2014 p.48).

A mixed methods approach takes a pragmatic view of the above stances, arguing that neither is intrinsically better than the other; appropriacy is dependent upon the research aims (Hammersley, 1992; Wellington, 2016). However, Newby (2014) identifies a positivist criticism of this holistic approach; without using agreed processes, the researcher could select a mixture of processes to suit their subjective standpoint. Silverman (2013) concurs, suggesting that it can foster unreliable data selection where the researcher switches data sets rather than trying to resolve any analytical difficulties they face. Nevertheless, Roller and Lavrakas (2015) highlight the importance of flexibility, arguing that it is only during the process of research that key, unforeseen, issues emerge. In view of the benefits of flexibility for ongoing reflection and development, as well as the opportunity to gain data from a broad range of sources, this research takes a mixed-method approach, though with an emphasis on qualitative data.

Newby (2014) identifies case study and action research as key approaches to practitioner-led research. Case study is considered to be an in-depth analysis of a specific circumstance to try and identify patterns, variations in practice as well as processes at play. A key purpose can be to challenge assumptions of practice as well as evidencing the extent to which general observations apply to specific cases, thereby identifying potential factors which create variance

from the norm. Hammersley (2012) considers case studies in terms of explaining and theorising. With explaining case studies, the specifics of the context are particularly important, compared with theorising studies which emphasise finding generic factors which can be compared to show how findings contribute to overall theory evidence or development. Thus, whereas the first uses theory to interpret data, the second aims to further theory itself. Hammersley (ibid) argues that both are useful, albeit incompatible approaches due to their differing aims. Indeed, with this case study, the focus relates to being an 'explaining' case study, where the emphasis is on understanding processes at one institution and its partners; findings will not have empirical generalization or even theoretical inference over GA implementation within FE partners. However, findings from the study are intended to be a starting point for further investigation of the theorising kind in terms of university/partner relationships as well as partner HE provision which would aim at providing inference regarding the nature of policy implementation of HE in FE provision.

Research environment

This case study takes place within both the researcher's professional role and the students' own setting. Newby (2014) argues that this can have the advantage of minimising influences of unfamiliar environments on the participants. However, he also warns that choice of research tools will still have an impact on findings. In this respect, the researcher acknowledges that, whilst taking place within their familiar environment, participants will not be fully at ease as the proposed interviews and focus groups do not represent normal classroom activities. Therefore, the researcher intends to allow time for participants to settle at the beginning of interviews as recommended by McNiff (2016), with some general questions about work role and only give more steerage later on to ensure that the key topics are covered. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) argue that such groups can be useful for developing spontaneous responses which build on each other's viewpoints, but warn that the interviewer must ensure that everyone has opportunities to contribute viewpoints. To help enable this, the focus groups will be small of around five learners to enable better management of responses and the interviewer actively sought responses from those who had not contributed.

Case study context

The Case Study HEI is a Midlands based post-1992 university. Its five-year plan for 2012-2017 (HEI, 2011b) was to enter the Guardian league table top 50 universities. It has made moderate gains in this direction, but is unlikely to achieve this target by the end of this plan's lifespan. The GAs were introduced as being a key part of this plan, with a pledge that:

We will put students at the heart of everything we do and work with them to provide an excellent student experience, which supports them in achieving their academic and personal goals.

(HEI, 2011b, p.12).

The case study HEI's GAs aim to equip graduates with more than discipline expertise, purporting to develop their ability to apply generic skills, attitudes and abilities to a variety of non-discipline specific contexts, with the explicit intention of improving graduate employability (HEI, 2015a). While earlier definitions of GAs related to broad-based personal, social and ethical development (Bowden et al., 2000), many later iterations have an employability focus, including the case study HEI as stated in its television advertisement (HEI, 2015a):

You'll offer a set of attributes that prospective employers will value and respect. As well as being highly employable, you'll also be enterprising and entrepreneurial...

Such concepts of transferable employability-related skills are typically found in GAs around the world (Jones, 2001; de la Harpe and David, 2012), representing part of the response to governmental drives to make employability skills development a core purpose of HE (Buckley, 2015). This research focuses on stakeholders' perceptions of GA implementation, in relation to espoused university institutional aims and policy as well as their own concept of what it means to be a graduate. Level 6 learners at the end of their studies have been selected as, according to the university GA pledge (HEI, 2015a) and Barrie's (2004; 2006) definition of GAs, they should have achieved or be close to achieving the full GAs prior to graduation.

Based on HEI/FE franchise content analysis and stakeholder feedback, this study considers the extent to which the attributes are valued, to what extent and with what consistency learners have experienced GA development and whether there are fundamental problems in implementing the HEI's attributes into partner FE franchises. Its purpose is to analyse perceptions of GA value for part-time learners and other relevant stakeholders (such as lecturers and Award Leaders) based in the HEI and FEC franchises. The case study HEI has eight franchise partner providers of the Foundation Degree in Education and of these, two run

the final year BA programme. One is located in the North of England and the other the East Midlands and will be referred to as College A and College B respectively. Both have considerable experience delivering HE programmes within this FE context and have consistently recruited a cohort of learners for the award. Both colleges have worked in partnership with the university for since 2009, gaining responsibility for full teaching delivery in 2012. The direct HEI provision is divided into two locations. One is based on the main HEI campus and the other is at an Outreach location shared with another FEC. This FEC is not a franchise partner on either the Foundation Degree or BA Education top-up course. These groups will be referred to as HEI campus and HEI outreach respectively.

Research Participants

The scope of the study is limited to part-time level 6 School of Education (SOE) learners and other key stakeholders such as lecturers and managers within the case study university and its two franchised FEC partners. For the purpose of this study, stakeholders are defined as:

- 70 Level 6 part-time SoE mature learners in HEI provision: 40 from the main campus, 30 from the outreach campus;
- 39 Level 6 part-time SoE mature learners at two FE franchise institutions;
- 31 Level 6 full-time SoE on campus learners;
- 5 Level 6 lecturers: 2 HEI based and 3 FE based;
- 4 HEI and 2 FE managers.

Employers are also relevant stakeholders (Barrie, 2006) though this is beyond the scope of the current study. This is because the research focus relates to differing experiences within HEI and FE institutions rather than between employers, though future research may investigate the extent to which employers value GA development.

Sample Target Population

The groups identified have been chosen as they are part-time learners within the University and partner colleges to enable comparison of perceptions within the differing environments. Level 6 students on SoE courses have been chosen as they should be close to or have already achieved the GAs if the HEI's policy has been effectively implemented. Similarly, course tutors and managers are involved to contribute to research objectives relating to the conceptualisation and implementation of the GAs. Munn and Drever (2004, p.14) recommend that: *"the more varied your population, the larger the number needed if you are to be confident about extrapolating from the sample to the population"*. In this respect, the study takes a pragmatic approach to gaining data from the participants. All learners in the aforementioned group have the opportunity to participate in the questionnaire, with a selection of learners participating in focus group interviews. This is due to the need to balance time resource availability of the researcher with a need to be able to gain a credible spread of data, as advocated by McNiff (2016). Silverman (2013) notes that just as quantitative researchers may take purposive

samples for practical time management considerations, similarly quantitative approaches should limit interviews to gaining sufficient, rather than complete, data required to inform their studies.

Wellington (2016) explains that variances in samples are normal in qualitative data collection and therefore should be transparently acknowledged. This section therefore illustrates such issues faced in selecting the focus groups and interviewees. Gibbs (2017) highlights a problem of focus groups being that volunteers tend to be the most confident and articulate, meaning that data is not gained from others in a group who may already feel marginalised. This was an issue in the case study where there was a limited number of volunteers willing to participate in all but one of the locations, making selection based on the few willing to participate rather than a representative (in terms of personal/employment characteristics) or proportionate sample from each group. At one provider, there were six volunteers willing to join the focus group which was permitted as it added breadth to the sample. However, on reflection it is apparent that this meant that the focus group in College B has a much larger proportion of the whole class (50%) compared with others; HEI Main campus focus group only represents 10% of the total number of participants. By only gaining data from a small self-selecting proportion of the group, there is a danger that their views may not necessarily be representative of the group as a whole. Indeed, those volunteering to give up time may also be more enthusiastic learners than the general population. However, by conducting the focus groups after the questionnaire, it was possible to consider the extent to which espoused viewpoints of the focus group represent overall views of the cohort. In terms of duration and word-count, the focus groups are broadly similar, meaning that no group dominates in terms of quantity of data as this could skew the analysis towards findings from one provider. The HEI Outreach group interview did take longer (appendix 5.3.2), but this is due to the group having two rather quiet members and the interviewer considered that it was important to be able to give extra time for all learners to have the opportunity to express themselves.

Mears (2017) argues that the interviews process should ideally consist of two to three interviews of around 90 minutes over a time period of several weeks. Mears (ibid) argues that interviewees are often reluctant to divulge more in depth feelings in a single interview, leaving such data to be largely descriptive, lacking insight and not challenging any accepted social consensus. This case study did not adapt this approach on pragmatic and ethical considerations. Academic participants were very busy professionals; asking to give up more time for multiple interviews could have put unnecessary strain on their workloads and therefore counter BERA (2011) consideration of ethical practice. In order to mitigate the limitations of

engaging in a single interview, interviewees were sent the questions in advance to give them time to reflect on their answers as well as invited to make further contributions via email or a further interview. One interviewee engaged in a subsequent interview (appendix 5.1.6) and another sent further information following the interview (appendix 5.1.1). The researcher also teaches on the award featured in this study and intended to interview all other academic staff teaching on it due to their importance to the study in terms of their role in delivering and assessing as well as their small number making this a practical undertaking. This was achieved, with all staff participating in interviews. These were undertaken on a one to one basis with the exception of College B who opted for both interviews to be done together as they did not have time to be interviewed separately (appendix 5.2.4). However, BERA (2011) emphasise the need for consent to participate in research to be voluntary and it was therefore felt that this was a reasonable request. Ideally such variables should be minimised to enhance reliability of findings, but where they are unavoidable they should be transparently acknowledged, including how data might have been impacted (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). In this case, the differing approach had the potential limitation on the reliability of findings as the interview was in a differing format to the rest. In turn, this affects validity (Basil, 2010) as the variation could lead to different data, such as if an interviewee did not feel that they could express themselves fully due to the presence of a colleague. As is common in practitioner-led research, the researcher has worked with all of the lecturers for several years. Wellington (2016) highlights that such social networks may benefit research where they enable a more forthright exploration of a topic than could be found in more positivist approaches where the observer deliberately attempted to position themselves as a detached outsider. Wellington (ibid) also warns how researching within one's own organisation may lead to reticence to criticise an organisation to a fellow insider. However, the forthright interview responses (appendices 5.1; 5.2) demonstrate how this concern was not realised in the research, with interviewees being not afraid to answer questions critically. Therefore, whilst acknowledging these methodological drawbacks, the researcher considered that the concerns were outweighed by the value of gaining data from all lecturers on the course. In terms of the duration of the interviews there is quite a large variance of between 21 and 46 minutes (appendices 5.1; 5.2). However, this is to some extent explained by the differing roles and experience working in or with the HEI.

In terms of manager interviews, the selection was a necessarily pragmatic due to the researcher's junior role within the organisation limiting access to management and senior management. Wellington (2016) argues that such an opportunistic approach is a key part of

practitioner-led qualitative data collection where it is accepted the researcher is not separate from the researched. Wellington (ibid) that this is both an advantage and disadvantage of practitioner-led research; the researcher's personal relationships within the organisation enables access to interviewees whilst also potentially limiting contributions from those outside their personal social network. To try and overcome this danger of researching within an echo chamber -only collecting data from those with potentially similar viewpoints – the researcher gained data from a mixture of colleagues who were known and not known prior to the commencement of the interview. Nevertheless, in terms of scope, the aim was to be able to gain information from those with personal experience of the GAs whose role had a particular focus in relation to each the study's learning outcomes which the table demonstrates has been achieved:

The education course statistics relate to the level six students only, as these are the target population for this research. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer for ease of viewing, since this is not a quantitative study; further accuracy has little meaning where the sample size is small. The total population of full and part-time level 6 Education students was 140, of which 70 responded to the questionnaires (50%), meaning that views from half of the cohort have not been represented. However, as a voluntary survey (in line with BERA 2011 ethical guidance), such a response rate is considered to represent a reasonable sample of the overall population (Munn and Drever, 2004). There are two anomalies to this - the HEI Outreach and College B responses. At the HEI Outreach there were questionnaire distribution problems due to the university lecturer ignoring the researcher's instructions. In line with Burton and Bartlett's (2009) recommendation for gaining high responses by completing questionnaires in class, the questionnaires were supposed to be given to the Student Representative as outlined in Chapter 2. Instead, the questionnaires were given at the end of class for returning the subsequent week, leading to the group having the lowest response rate (appendix 4.3.2). Conversely, College B's response rate was over 90%. Such differences could lead to viewpoints from these locations being under and over-represented respectively, so this will be considered in terms of analysing overall viewpoints. Although full-time learners were more likely to respond (61%/48%), overall the majority of respondents were mostly part-time (51/70=72.8%). This is different to the university population overall where just under half of the university population are part-time learners. In the year the GAs were formed this was (appendix 10.1) almost half (49.4%). This data is also given for 2010-11 and 2013-14. In 2013-14 the proportion is similar (48.4%). No further annual reviews have been published since then. Therefore, although the part time/full time split is not representative of the university as a whole,

it is clear that part-time students play a significant role in the university as well as the partnerships.

Data from the annual reviews (HEI 2011a; HEI 2012) highlight that the university has a high proportion of learners who are older than traditional post-compulsory education 18-21 students, with between 63 and 66% of learners being outside this age group. Unfortunately, for this project, the questionnaire did not break down the age range in a similar way, meaning that data is not directly comparable. There is only a 20-30 category so the number of those aged between 22 and 30 has not been obtained which represents a missed opportunity to compare school and university wide data. However, 51% were over 30, with part-time students tending to be older than the full-time learners. Given that ages 22-30 have not been counted, the education sample could therefore be broadly similar to that in the university overall. Either way, it is clear that there is a majority of university and education students who are mature learners rather than being directly from school and are therefore likely to have had considerable workplace experience as typically found by Little (2005) and King and Widdowson (2012). The university data does not show how many of these learners are already employed in their career choice sector, but this high percentage of older learners would suggest that this could be a high proportion (appendix 10.1). Of the Education student respondents, there was a clear difference between part-time and full-time learners, with 46/51 (90%) being in paid employment in the education sector compared with 3/19 (16%).

Research tools

Documentary analysis

Wellington (2016) and McCulloch (2017) highlight how documentary evidence can provide a historical context to research by providing insight into developments to an institution's espoused policy throughout the timeframe studied. The following section therefore explores the importance of documentary analysis to this case study, as well as justifying the selected scope and approach to their analysis.

McCulloch (2017) notes that documentary analysis involves publicly available material as well as new documents gained from researcher requests. This research utilises Wellington's (ibid) framework for critically analysing documents which emphasises the need to consider authorship, audience, intentions content and context. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) advise that documentary analysis can provoke further research through not just their contents but whether there are significant omissions. In this respect, they will be what Wellington (2016) terms as complementary; a secondary source alongside the questionnaire, which help to contextualise the data gained from interviews and focus groups. This by no means infers that they represent the 'truth' as they are embedded in the culture of the institution at the time, prepared for specific audiences rather than for objective research and will be framed by the ontological standpoints of its author and contributors: "*documents...should not be accepted as unmitigated truth and literal recordings of events that have taken place...*" (Basit, 2010, p.155). Nevertheless, these can still be useful for helping to form questions and prompt memories for participants, especially those in managerial positions as well as challenge or provide verification of their views (ibid).

This research has extensively searched publicly available information from the university as well as the franchise partners relating to GA strategy. In addition to general searches using the search engine provided, the research has also systematically researched documents relating to Barrie's (2006) GA factors. This means that documents relating to the recruitment, teaching, learning, assessment and quality have been examined for evidence of GA development and implementation. In respect to consideration of how implementation relates to GA literature, documents where there is no mention of GAs are also relevant as they may indicate where strategy diverges from established research-based implementation practices by not considering

GAs within their remit. For this study, a range of documentary evidence has been used such as promotional material, wall displays, policy documents and training presentations which have been appended where they are not, or no longer, accessible within the public domain. In addition to the aforementioned benefits, historical and current documentation from the emergence of the GAs will provide a vital evidence base to consider the objectives of the study adapted from Barrie's framework (2006) which relate to GA formation, implementation and evaluation. This not only includes university documentation, but also information from the franchise colleges as well to ascertain the extent to which colleges were involved in Barrie's stages of GA development. In line with Basit's (2010) advocacy of using them to help triangulate data, university GA related documentation will be analysed in conjunction with the interviews of managers who were present during their development and implementation stages.

Questionnaires

Munn and Drever (2004) highlight key benefits of using questionnaires; potential to encourage more open responses through opportunities to be anonymous, efficiency of data organisation when using closed questions as well as potential to increase reliability of findings through ease reaching a large proportion or even the whole of the target population. Tymms (2017) categorises the purposes of questionnaires in terms of exploratory work, describing a population, contributing to a control in a quantitative focused study and as a means of gaining feedback. In this qualitative focused case study, the questionnaire is a means of scoping questions for subsequent in-depth interviews and therefore would relate to the exploratory category. Burton and Bartlett (2009) highlight how distribution is a key consideration with questionnaires, considering online, postal face to face and paper-based distribution. Online surveys have the twin benefits of promoting anonymity as well as automatically collating data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). However, online response rates have been found to tend to be lower than paper-based versions (Munn and Drever, 2004; Tymms, 2017), with responses being further prejudiced by the likelihood that responses would only be gained from those who are more technologically literate (Silverman, 2013). Basit (2010) concurs, arguing that such low response rates undermine the reliability and therefore validity of any data collected; where surveys are only completed by a small minority, they are unlikely to reasonably represent the views of the population as a whole. This has also been found at the research HEI and franchise colleges, where paper-based module feedback forms have been reintroduced to boost response

rates. The researcher considered that the whole population of the research, 140 learners, was not too great either to have to select a sample or to be able to collate hand written paper-based responses. This judgement was based on extensive piloting and reflection (appendix 2) which revealed that time taken to collate data was not unduly onerous. Piloting questionnaires in advance of the research is essential in order to verify that data gained helps the researcher understand the extent to which they have set the correct research objectives as well as whether the data gained actually is relevant to those objectives (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). In this study, the questionnaire went through five iterations (appendix 2), initially following supervisor feedback, research panel feedback as well as a further three cycles of piloting with groups of learners who were not part of the research population. To make the piloting exercise most useful in terms of ascertaining the extent to which it provided relevant data to meet the research objectives, similar students were chosen in terms of being part time HEI and FE based, but with a different, though related subject, BA (Hons.) Early Childhood Studies. The piloting and reflection process enabled improved clarity of the questions and layout as well as greater alignment of the questions to the research objectives.

Munn and Drever (2004) highlight limitations of questionnaires, noting that there can be a tendency towards gaining only superficial and descriptive information. Participants may be unlikely to write detailed answers to open questions and it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which they are thinking in-depth about responses. Indeed, being essentially a one-way process, questionnaires lack the opportunity to rephrase or clarify questions to check understanding, meaning that questions may be misunderstood (Tymms, 2017). Furthermore, opportunities to prise out more important detail as can be undertaken with interviews may also be missed (McNiff, 2016). This lack of flexibility means that the scope of data is limited as it is not possible to pursue further areas of interest if and when they arise, again highlighting the need for extensive piloting to take place prior to delivering the questionnaire (Tymms, 2017). However, by following the questionnaires with focus group interviews the research will be able to seek further clarification or explore new areas based on the findings from this initial scoping questionnaire.

Munn and Drever (2004) highlight leading principles of effective questionnaire design; being attractive to look at, easy to understand and reasonably quick to complete. The latter two considerations are also important from an ethical perspective, in terms of the BERA (2011) principle of participants having voluntary informed consent and that participating in research should not be so time consuming as to be to the detriment of the participant. Additionally,

Burton and Bartlett (2009) highlight the need for careful organisation of questions, arguing that the researcher can gain greater response rates by starting with quick to answer fact-based questions followed by more difficult open questions about perceptions. This advice was adhered to with the questionnaire initially asking basic questions about the education role of the participant (appendix 2.3). Whilst open questions may enable more in-depth data as respondents are free to write in detail, there are also drawbacks. Basit (2010) notes that open questions responses are more difficult to organise and analyse than simple pre-coded (closed) questions. Munn and Drever (2004) further note that responding and analysing these are time-consuming for both respondent and researcher respectively. The number and extent of open questions were therefore carefully considered and reformed during the piloting process to ensure that response times were not unduly long and that the researcher considered that the questionnaire was providing sufficient data which contributed to meeting the research objectives (appendix 2).

Focus groups and Interviews

Wellington (2016) highlights the importance of interviews and focus groups in terms of their ability to explore attitudes, perceptions and reflections in order to help develop understanding of any situation. Mears (2017) and Gibbs (2017) concur, arguing that they are essential for understanding the quality of experiences or the significance of events or situations. Gibbs (ibid) adds that because data collected is subjective personal opinions, they are not useful for testing hypothesis, but rather help to develop understanding about perceptions and attitudes. In this respect, Gibbs (ibid) argues that they perform a useful role in this research in terms of helping to understand differences between the espoused policy and understanding of its implementation in practice. Silverman (2013) argues that the role of the interviewer is to give the interviewee time and space to reflect and explore their own perceptions and attitudes. Silverman (ibid) and Wellington (2016) both highlight the importance of both pre-preparation of potential questions but that this should not mean that the interviewer dominates the process.

In this respect, the organisation of questions in relation to the research objectives aims to enable the interviewer to keep the interviews relevant to those aims, with the few deviations wasting little time. This follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of analysis which systematically organise collection and analysis of interview-based data: data familiarisation,

generating initial codes, identifying underlying themes and finally, producing the report. Basit (2010) highlights three key approaches to interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, noting that these are not separate entities but represent different elements of a continuum. The structured interview has clear utility for large-scale research projects through its reduction in variables enabling a more quantitative approach; same questions in the same order and run to a strict time-frame. However, with regard to this project, whilst asking identical or similar questions for different groups is useful in gaining comparable data to enable coding (Wellington, 2016), the small-scale negates the need for broadly quantifiable data. Basit (2010) advocates use of semi/unstructured interviews in research as this; where the focus is on human interaction this approach generates: *“in-depth qualitative data and non-generalisable findings, which are pertinent to the specific context”* (ibid, p.110). Additionally, Silverman (2013) highlights the value of semi or unstructured interviews in gaining insight into participant experiences and feelings, with Cresswell (2014) adding that these help respondents engage in a shared experience rather than the interviewer dominance engendered by the structured approach. Unstructured interviews are suitable for highly sensitive subjects, by potentially empowering the interviewee to fully explore their feelings and where the interviewer may feel that allowing a good deal of irrelevant material may enable them to help the interviewee build up to facing the sensitive issue (ibid). However, the focus of this research regarding GA implementation is not considered to be such a personally sensitive subject and the importance of keeping interviews/focus groups focused on the GA implementation cycle, as represented by the case study objectives, outweigh any potential benefits of broader interviews. If a freer rein were allowed, the time taken to cover all of the GA systemic factors as well as allowing for irrelevant discussion would be prohibitive. As the focus in this project is on an exploration of values and attitudes, these may require follow up questions, clarifications and restatements to engage the interviewee in more in-depth responses. Such a semi-structured approach is beneficial, helping to provide space for interviewees to explore their own feelings and experiences.

Silverman (2013) highlights differing modes of interview/focus group, including face-to-face, telephone, online (email, video conferencing), each of which have differing advantages and limitations. Face to face interview has been selected for this research as the researcher does not consider travelling to meet participants is not prohibitive, with the partner colleges being within a reasonable travelling distance to the HEI. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) further consider that such a face to face approach can be more amenable to developing interviewer/interviewee rapport to enable more in-depth responses. Basit (2010) concurs, noting how such an approach

provides the opportunity to build up rapport with interviewees. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) also note that it can increase credibility by reducing response bias of focus groups giving socially acceptable answers such as acquiesce with the interviewer (agreement) or satisficing (reluctance to answer in depth). Such a semi-structured approach will help to facilitate both comparability of answers as well as the opportunity for original contributions from participants.

Basit (2010) and Gibbs (2017) differentiate the concepts of group interviews and focus groups, explaining that in the former the interviewer is a controlling focus point who answers which questions, whereas in the latter the interviewer takes on the role of discussion facilitator. Under this definition, this research uses a focus group approach with the aim of encouraging more open debate and discussion between the learners. Gibbs (ibid) argues that focus groups can help to co-construct new knowledge amongst the group and therefore be potentially more beneficial than interviewing on an individual basis. Cresswell (2014) emphasises the importance of the interviewer not dominating proceedings, including interjecting with their own views and opinions, as this may strongly influence or even hinder their responses. Gibbs (2017) highlights the need to attempt to give all participants an equal opportunity to contribute. This is because dominant interviewees may take over the discussion and impose their viewpoints as well as discouraging others from articulating contrasting viewpoints, resulting in unrepresentative data. During the focus group the facilitator ensured that every participant had the opportunity to contribute by asking quieter participants directly if necessary, to prevent one or two participants dominating proceedings. This issue only arose in one interview and resulted in the focus group lasting a little longer to allow quieter participants to articulate their views (appendix 5.3.2). To try to prevent either interviewer or interviewees dominating responses, the researcher listened, transcribed and reflected on each interview prior to undertaking the next one. This reflective process helped to develop the researcher's interviewing techniques on an ongoing basis to try and reduce any such problems in subsequent interviews (appendix 2.5.4). As well as this, by keeping focus groups to a small number of around five learners, it is easier for the researcher to manage the conversation in terms of ensuring every learner has the opportunity to participate. Were they to involve greater numbers, it would be more time consuming to enable everyone to speak fully, thereby contradicting BERA's (2011) guidance on minimising detriment to the participant through taking too much of their time.

The staff interviews were carried out between 4th May 2016 and 1st February 2017 (appendices 5.1; 5.2). The long duration between first and last interviews was due them being dependent on participants' availability. However, this time frame has enabled consideration of ongoing

developments to GA policy throughout this study. In contrast, for the student focus groups, it was important for them to take place within a similar time frame during the final term of their final year in order to capture their perceptions of GAs as close to finishing the course as possible. Therefore, these were carried out as close together as could be arranged within the constraints of my employment and class times; the first focus group was on 4th May 2016 and the final one on 23rd June 2016 (appendix 5.3).

Silverman (2013, p.208) adamantly proclaims that: *"It goes without saying that your interviews should always be recorded"*, though Hammersley (2010) and Basit (2010) contend that not using audio recording also has merits; participants may be less likely to be open with their views where they know that they are being recorded. Nevertheless, Hammersley (2010), Silverman (2013) and Basit (2010) concur that recording enables repeated listening for further analysis as well as retaining a verbatim record of responses. Hammersley (2010) demonstrates that within qualitative research, such verbatim transcription is typically considered to be a more robust form of data collection than taking field notes. This is because such a record allows independent scrutiny by academic peers, allowing them to consider alternative interpretations. Video recording could provide additional paralinguistic features, such as body language (Cresswell, 2014). However, this approach has been rejected as participation may be less likely due to a reluctance to being filmed in this manner. Reflecting on my own previous experiences of interviewing without recording, taking field notes was a distraction for the interviewer and interviewee and I found this to be an impossible task to take meaningful notes whilst conducting an interview. Both interviews and focus groups were therefore audio-recorded subject to having obtained prior written permission from the participants (appendix 5).

One option considered was outsourcing transcription to private contractors to save time on what could be considered a menial task. However, having transcribed in full the first interview and reflected on the process, it was considered that all further interviews would continue to be transcribed in this way by the researcher (appendix 5). This was due to the view that the benefits in terms of research insight and reflection far outweighed the negative impact of time taken (appendix 2.5.4). In listening to each interview, the researcher was able to note ideas for future interviews, making amendments to questions. As this is no quantitative data is sought from the interviewing process, ongoing reflection and development of research approaches is considered a key strength of practitioner-led research (McNiff, 2016). The transcription process also enabled the researcher to begin challenging their own prior assumptions about the outcomes of the research, reflect on the appropriateness of the original aims and form views on how

these needed to be reformed as the emerging data was shifting the focus of the work, and ongoing and reflective approach to analysis favoured by McNiff (ibid) and Silverman (2013). Finally, from a practical and point of view, as a full-time employee, transcribing interviews offered a means of the researcher continuing to advance their project even with such 'menial' work at times when work had mentally drained cognitive ability to read or write analytically; in the case of this researcher the need for continuous forward momentum in the project has been psychologically essential in achieving its completion.

Hammersley (2010) notes that transcribing interviews is also subject to decision-making from the researcher which may influence interpretations. Hammersley (ibid) identifies the need for the researcher to choose whether to transcribe the full interviews, represent verbal and non-verbal features of language such as intonation, non-word elements such as laughter, pauses, physical gestures as well as include the interviewer's words. Silverman (2013) provides transcription symbols to identify differing intonation patterns, which can be particularly useful for analysing meaning from nuanced answers or where interviewees may be reluctant to disclose opinions. However, these have been rejected as the researcher considers that interviewees were forthright in their opinions leaving few areas of ambiguity, meaning that such additional features would add little information in return for a high input of time given the length and number of interviews transcribed. Indeed, Silverman (ibid) advises that such approaches may not be necessary as that the primary concern should be to ensure sufficient time is given to at management and analysis rather than trying to attain a 'perfect' transcription. Therefore, arguing that there is no single correct answer, Hammersley (2010) and Silverman (2013) concur that such pragmatic decisions are the prerogative of the researcher made on the basis of the research needs.

This research, in line with the Roller and Lavrakas's (2015) TQM approach, attempts to be as transparent as possible with data in order to enable the reader to evaluate how data has been interpreted. Therefore, the full transcript of each interview has been included (appendix 5). Apart from intonation and physical gestures, other elements such as pauses and laughter have been included into the transcript in order to try and give as full a picture as possible of attitudes being expressed. As the interviews are not video recorded, physical gestures have not been included as this would have been very difficult to note at the time. Though this means perhaps some of the nuance in answers may be lost, the researcher considers that sufficient meaning can be gained from words, intonation and where necessary rephrasing questions for clarification

in cases of ambiguity. Nevertheless, Hammersley (2010) argues that given these decisions, no transcription is ever an objective reflection on what occurred, but to some extent a construction of the researcher. Similarly, just as Basit (2010) warns on the subjectivity of documentation, interviewer choices and questions, Hammersley (2010, p.20) adds that interviewee responses are not representations of truth, but only the participants' self-perception, or what they want to be seen as their self-perception at the time of the interview:

Equally important, we must not treat transcripts as sacred and infallible texts. Even strict transcription of the words spoken does not guarantee to tell us what someone was meaning to say or what they were doing. We have to interpret the words, and in doing so we will and should draw on our experience of observing the events concerned (where available), fieldnote descriptions of them, general background knowledge, and so on.

Whilst this is clearly a weakness in terms of the objectivity of any qualitative study using interviews, by transparently illustrating these decisions, the researcher shows acceptance of the limitations of this approach.

Approaches to data analysis

Within qualitative data analysis, Basit (2010) highlights disputes between those advocating a clear framework for analysis prior to the commencement of research and those in favour of an ongoing, developmental approach. Basit (ibid) outlines three approaches to reading qualitative data: literal, interpretive and reflexive. Literal focuses on specifics such as the structure, order and specific words used. Interpretive uses inference to construct meaning from this data, using empathy to understand participants' viewpoints. Reflexive highlights the need to consider the researcher's role in the data in terms of how they have influenced both its collection and interpretation. Wellington (2016) concurs, demonstrating how this rejection of absolute positivism is recognised in scientific research; chaos theory highlights how tiny variables can have a massive impact on outcomes and quantum theory recognises the impact of the observer on what is being observed. As a practitioner-researcher, whose teaching role is directly linked to the GA focus of the study, it is clear that I do have a strong influence on this aspect of the analysis and therefore this study follows a reflexive approach.

In this study, scoping questionnaires have helped to frame the interview/focus group questions, which in turn have been amended on an ongoing reflective basis throughout the researcher's journey. This also helps to ensure that the data being collected fulfils the needs of the research objectives, as advised by Basit (2010). Transcription was deliberately undertaken as close to the recording as possible, concurrent with the reflective log so that initial reflections were recorded. The transcriptions have been revisited several times, as recommended by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), to help develop ideas before undertaking the next interview/focus group. Data coding used an adapted form of Barrie's (2006) framework, due to its significance within the research field as previously discussed as well as its influence on the study's research objectives.

McNiff (2016) differentiates data and evidence, arguing that the former refers to all information collected and the latter the information which is relevant to answering the research questions. However, to enhance the credibility of the work, Roller and Lavrakas (2015) highlight the need for transparency. Therefore, whilst the role of the researcher may be to select evidence, in order to gain more credibility, it is important that this selection is verified by engaging with peers and making all data gained available for this process. McNiff (2016) advocates this peer validation as a means of helping to overcome the subjectivity of the practitioner-researcher by enabling differing viewpoints to be considered. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) concur with this

approach, adding that such critical friends should have subject knowledge, be rigorous and have an understanding of the research process. To enact this, the research will be made available to colleagues throughout the process to engage in a reflective discussion about findings, interpretations and evaluations.

The scoping questionnaire is designed to be brief, as verified through the piloting process, with only ten questions, in order to encourage broad participation. Of these questions, three are open and seven are closed, with a final option to add further comment if required. Limiting the number of open questions also made data collection and organisation manageable for the researcher, an essential consideration noted by Kumar (2011). Whilst questionnaires have a tendency to be considered more related to qualitative data interpretation (Hammersley, 1992), this is not an underpinning factor within this interpretivist study. So while the questionnaire contains seven closed questions, quantitative data analysis is not centrally important to the study. Therefore, closed questions will be numerically analysed to give an indication of strength of differing opinions as a means of informing subsequent interview/focus groups rather than providing hard data upon which claims to knowledge can be made.

Roller and Lavrakas (2015, p.51) claim that interviewing is a key component of qualitative research, enabling the researcher to explore perceptions and attitudes in depth: “...to gain a rich, nuanced understanding of the ‘thinking’ (i.e. motivation) that drives behaviour and attitude formation...”. The use of a semi-structured approach combines the benefits of gaining comparable responses, with the freedom to empower interviewees of an unstructured approach. As responses are open, it will be essential to be able to identify and interpret patterns in the data to understand common and lesser themes. Newby (2014, p.658) defines such coding as:

The process of identifying concepts or themes from text, speech or behaviour [which]...links together similar words, ideas, actions or behaviour and progressively seeks to build them into an interpretative hierarchy.

In order to achieve this, Newby (ibid) advocates utilising a coding frame to help process this data. For this research, Barrie’s (2006) conceptualisations of differing approaches has been simplified around the four study objectives to graduate attribute implementation will form the basis of this concept map.

Silverman (2016) considers validity to refer to the credibility of the researcher’s interpretation of data, gained through sufficient scope of data as well as a willingness to openly discuss contradictory findings. McNiff (2016) advocates peer data validation – critiquing validity of claims prior to formal peer review process, though this is rejected by Basit (2010) as being

pointless unless the participants are involved in every stage of the project from design to final analysis. However, Basit (ibid) does suggest that the researcher may summarise outcomes to help check that participants' viewpoints have been accurately understood by the researcher. In this research, the Roller and Lavrakas's (2015) TQF requirements do advocate data validation, in concordance with McNiff (2016). From previous experience of interviewing the researcher concurs with this viewpoint, reflecting that it often enables not just confirmation but also the opportunity to explore issues further with additional recollections.

Ethical considerations

This section has been organised as recommended by Wellington (2016), by considering ethics in terms of methods, analysis and findings.

As consistent with the empowering nature practitioner-led approaches (McNiff, 2016), this research focuses on areas directly within the researcher's own professional capacity. The relationship of the researcher to the participants can be summarised as follows:

- colleagues at the same institution his employment in the researcher's academic school;
- colleagues at the same institution outside the researcher's academic school;
- colleagues from partner institutions running a course for which the researcher is award leader;
- students directly taught by the researcher as personal tutor;
- students taught by others under his award leadership.

Newby (2014) highlights the importance of considering ethical issues throughout the research process. In particular, BERA (2011) highlight the need for voluntary informed consent as well as honesty in selecting, analysing and reporting data findings. Whilst by no means precluding dual role research into the practitioner's own practice, BERA (ibid) warn that it poses serious dilemmas in relation to the ability of the researcher to address these issues effectively.

In conceptual terms, McNiff (2002) defends the underlying principle of practitioner-led research on the grounds of valuing critical engagement in one's own practice. McNiff (ibid) argues that ongoing self-evaluation throughout the process, as represented by a reflective diary in this research (appendices 2.4; 2.5.4), helps the practitioner-researcher to reflect on and develop ethical practice. Practitioner-led research builds on consideration of critical reflective practice and development being a key aspect of the professional's role (Argyris 1991; Facione, 2015). Specifically, investigation of one's own professional practice is commonly considered a key role of the educator, not only by McNiff, (2016) but also other seminal thinkers such as Schön (1991) and Brookfield (1995) and is additionally central to the Higher Education Academy professional standards (HEA, 2011). These urge members to: "*Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.*" (ibid, p.3). In view of this, the researcher therefore considers that researching their own practice is a legitimate and even crucial aspect of their

professional role. Nevertheless, there remain ethical considerations in relation to the specific approaches to research which are now considered.

Newby (2014) highlights strategies to encourage participation in an ethical manner, including the need to assure confidentiality and to promote the benefits of the activity. To help achieve this, the purpose of the study as well as participant rights were highlighted both in the questionnaire as well as the signed consent forms distributed prior to conducting the interviews. These consent forms were designed in accordance with the British Educational Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2011) and gained prior approval from the HEI's research and ethics committees (appendices 2.3; 2.5). Questions about personal characteristics were avoided as they were not important for any of the research objectives, with the exception of age as this relates to a key characteristic of part-time learners according to King and Widdowson (2012). Although the questionnaire is designed to be anonymous, this in itself does not guarantee anonymity, either through revealing details of their characteristics such as gender or personal details in responses (Munn and Drever, 2004). In this respect, the questionnaire did not ask about gender as this would have negated anonymity for men due to the small number of men in each of the classes.

Burton and Bartlett (2009) highlight the advantage of educational researchers having a 'captive audience' in terms of respondents already being in one location – the classroom. This approach, paper based and located within the classroom setting has been chosen for the questionnaires as it was considered that a high response rate was important for gaining views from as higher proportion of the research population as possible given the small size of this population to help develop the reliability of findings. Such views can then be explored with the much smaller focus groups to triangulate data and ascertain the extent to which views espoused by these smaller groups are representative of the overall population. However, using this approach entailed addressing ethical issues around anonymity and voluntary participation. Preserving anonymity was important, especially for the class for which I am also the lecturer, to ensure that learners would not feel pressurised into responding so that their responses were genuinely voluntary in line with BERA (2011) guidance. Therefore, each class the Student Representative distributed and collected questionnaires, with the researcher, or other lecturer not being present. By delegating collection, students could be confident that the researcher would not view any answers prior to submission. Furthermore, as all written communication on the course is electronic, their handwriting is not recognisable, thereby negating Munn and Drever's (2004) warning about this undermining anonymity in questionnaire responses.

Written permission to conduct confidential interviews and focus groups has been gained from participants along the lines of BERA (2011) guidelines. This means informing potential participants of the research intent and methods used as well as the right to withdraw from the study at any time. For practical considerations, as made clear in the consent form, any data gained may still be confidentially used for research purposes, a point which was made clear to participants. This is in line with the awarding HEI's ethical guidelines and was approved at proposal stage by their ethics committee. A concern could be raised over the extent to which participation was voluntary on the basis of the researcher's professional role potentially unduly influencing this choice. In response to this, the researcher does not hold a managerial role so does not have any line manager responsibility for any of the HEI or partnership staff in the sample group. Although Award Leader, this is an organisational and academic role rather than a managerial one; partner staff are fully managed and employed within their own institutions. Nevertheless, the focus group for the researcher's class was run by colleagues so that there would be no perceived benefit in terms of their course progress of participating. Furthermore, it was made clear that analysis of this data would not be carried out until after all course grading had been completed to avoid any perceptions of gaining advantage through participation. In line with recommendations by Kumar (2011), the interviewers were trained first to understand the semi-structured approach being taken. This enabled investigator triangulation of the research approach, in order to retain a broadly consistent approach to interviewing within all of the focus groups as advocated by Roller and Lavrakas (2015). This was verified during the transcribing process where the researcher considered that the interviewers had adhered to guidance, allowing time for contributions and ensuring that all members of the group participated. This meant that the quality of data received was broadly similar in terms of questions asked and equality of opportunity to contribute.

Further precautions regarding interviewee anonymity are advocated by Silverman (2013) warning that the researcher should take steps to avoid participants being revealed through contextual details revealed by the researcher or information given by themselves. As a precaution therefore, use of anonymity extends to partner institutions, referred to as College A and College B, to help encourage openness. Furthermore, specific job titles have not been used, as within many organisations, this would probably enable the name of the participant to be discovered. Generic titles such as 'lecturer' and 'senior manager' have therefore been used to counter this issue and contextual details limited. Furthermore, as gender could be a revealing feature, any gender references will be removed in both the transcriptions and

subsequent data presentation and analysis; where repetition of job role is avoided, 'they' or 'their' is used.

McNiff (2016) concedes that practitioner-researcher invariably influences findings, she rejects the notion that all such influence is necessarily negative. McNiff (ibid) further argues that such involvement can play a mutually beneficial role in terms of developing critical thinking and self-awareness. However, interviewing my own learners also potentially conflicts with BERA's (2011) guidance on the necessity of taking care to gain and report data as accurately as possible. In this respect, participants may feel pressured into acquiesce/satisficing responses due to the potentially unequal power dynamics of practitioner/researcher and interviewee/student with what they consider to be their lecturer's views, or conforming to socially acceptable responses within the focus group, thus making the data gained unreliable and therefore lacking validity (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). On this issue, they also recommend not revealing the specific hypothesis or researcher viewpoints as this may cause bias in responses. Additionally, Newby, (2014) identifies benefits of already knowing participants, with pre-established rapport encouraging responses, there is also potential for the practitioner as interviewer to dominate proceedings, thereby potentially producing incomplete and skewed data. The reflective log after each interview helped the researcher to reflect on any instances where neutrality was compromised, with the aim of reducing such incidents for future interviews. This meant trying to avoid using leading questions as well as stating agreement. Highlighting where these occurred enabled the researcher to reduce such incidents in future interviews/focus groups to minimise their potential impact on data.

Reflection on changes to plan and their impacts on the study

Roller and Lavrakas (2015) advocate the need to identify changes made to the original research design and its actual implementation. Silverman (2013) concurs, arguing that ongoing analysis of data as it is collected enables reflection and improvement of the original proposal. In order to preserve its credibility, these changes need to be evaluated in terms of their potential impact on the scope and nature of data gained as well as how this may have limited or enhanced the reliability of conclusions. In this respect, the research has evolved as a result of the data gathering process. Both interviews and documentary evidence have revealed that the GA policy at the university is fading from prominence (see Chapter 3). Because of this, the researcher considers that, whilst personal professional development is always important, this should no longer be the focus of the study as there is limited value in wholesale change to practice to align with a policy which may or may not remain in place at the HEI. Instead, the research has revealed important issues in terms of policy creation, implementation and evaluation, which, although originally an aspect of the work, has now become its main focus. Evaluating how a policy has been implemented with partner colleges will be more beneficial to the practitioner and university as a whole to learn how future policies can be more effectively implemented, especially in relation to off-campus provision. This has led to changing the title and objectives of the research to reflect the different prioritisation. Furthermore, following supervisor feedback and personal reflection, the data collection and analysing process has resulted in ongoing view and evaluation of objectives, leading to a gradual simplification from thirteen to four. This has been achievable as the emerging data has enabled the researcher to interpret four clear areas of consideration, as introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

In terms of full interview transcription, this has been mostly upheld throughout, though there are a few exceptions, which for transparency, have been explained within the transcript along with an indication of the time in which they occurred. These minor omissions such as interruptions from other people during the interview (appendix 5.1.3) as well as one student group where they drifted from the interview focus to complain about some students in their class (appendix 5.3.3). In this case, it is clear that the discussion was not relevant to the research so has been omitted from transcription. Finally, as interview transcripts were being written, it became apparent that some comments made by the interviewee would be likely to reveal their identity. Therefore, identifying features such as references to specific roles, gender and names of colleagues have been removed.

Chapter Three: Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents research findings from documentary analysis, questionnaires and interviews. The data is organised using a framework based on an adapted and simplified version of Barrie's (2006) Systemic factors of GAs as highlighted in Chapter Two, enabling the mixed-methods data to be organised in relation to the four research objectives. This enables full consideration of the GAs, from conceptualisation to evaluation.

Objective One: Identify the purposes and processes of GA formation

1.1 Initial concept of the [HEI] Graduate

According to the three senior managers interviewed, a set of attributes known as the 5 As (Adaptable, Articulate, Altruistic, Authentic and Aware) developed by the School of Business were the forerunner to, and helped inspire, the GAs (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 234-245; Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 37-41; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 455-456). These were seen by the incoming Vice Chancellor (VC) who stated he was keen to develop a set of attributes:

One of the things he was really impressed about was the fact that we had already developed the 5 A star attributes for our business graduates...what they had done was directly transferred into the [HEI] Graduate Attributes.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 37-42).

Although the Senior Manager agrees with the other managers interviewed that the GAs were developed from these 5 As, they were unsure whether they were still in use (appendix 5.1.1, line 236). However, the Quality Manager (appendix 5.1.4, lines 455-456) and Faculty Education Manager (appendix 5.1.3, lines 37-41) claim that the 5 As were made obsolete shortly after their launch, being rapidly replaced by the GAs. The confusion regarding the 5 As' status is further indicated by the ongoing presence of posters advertising them around the Business School in greater number and prominence than those of the current GAs (appendices 3.3.2-3.3.4). This lack of clarity regarding when policies end or are replaced is a theme throughout these findings, with such overlap hindering effective implementation.

All senior managers interviewed agree that the initiative for GA development came from the Vice Chancellor (VC) and Senior Management Team (SMT), making this a top-down policy initiative, as typically found by de la Harpe and David's (2012) survey of Australian GA implementation. The first mention of the formation of a specific set of skills for graduates from the HEI found in publicly available documentation was from the then new VC in the 2010-11 Annual Review (HEI, 2011a). Mentioning a commitment to enterprise, the VC states: *"Perhaps most importantly, it [the review] also demonstrates our ability to create '[HEI] Graduates' – individuals well-equipped for success in the 21st Century global economy."* (ibid, p.5). The [HEI] Graduate was subsequently defined in the 2012-2017 plan (HEI, 2011b) and reorganised for the website and promotional material (as discussed in the Objective 2, Strategic Implementation). The claimed purpose of the [HEI] Graduate here was to enable a student-centred institution: *"We will put students at the heart of everything we do and work with them to provide an excellent student experience, which supports them in achieving their academic and personal goals."* (HEI, 2011b, p.12).

Whilst meeting student needs was the publicly espoused rationale for GA development, the documentary search revealed no evidence that they were created as a response to student demand thus echoing Su's (2014) and Jackson and Wilton's (2016) and findings. Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) emphasise the role of central government directives in New Zealand as an underpinning driver for GA development. However, for the case study HEI, there was and still is, no similar nationally based GA policy requirement. Instead, the HEI's GA drivers related to the quasi-marketisation of higher education encouraged by successive English government education policies (BIS 2011a; 2012d; BIS 2016; DfE 2016a), emphasising the need to compete with other HEIs and FECs:

- New phase in the University's development
- Justifying increasing costs of a degree
- Meet/counter a period of unprecedented change – fierce competition/growing student expectations
- Improve standing in NSS/League tables

(Staff training presentation, appendix 3.1.3, slide 27).

A competitive environment is problematic when attempting to impose a policy with franchise partners who are also competitors; Briggs (2001) found managers and middle managers were reluctant to collaborate with colleagues at other providers due to concerns that doing so would undermine their own institution. Indeed, although GAs have an espoused student focus (Barrie,

2004), only one of the HEI's stated purposes relates directly to students: "*Commitment to excellence and improving the student experience*" (appendix 3.1.3, slide 27).

Instead of responding to student-led demand, the language used in the University Plan (HEI, 2011b) therefore demonstrates adherence to governmental HE policy priorities as articulated in the HE White Paper of the time, *Putting Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011a). Whilst not mentioning GAs specifically, this argued for the development of Student Charters to articulate 'consumer rights' for students through a clear statement of what they could expect from their HE study. The HEI adhered to this proposal through the creation and ongoing retention of a Student Charter (HEI, 2013a; 2015b; 2016a). However, this aspect of the paper was not taken up in the Government post-consultation response (BIS, 2012d), which favoured a more exclusive reliance on Key Information Set (KIS) data instead, a purportedly quantitative direction recently emphasised within the impending Teaching Excellence Framework (BIS, 2016).

1.2 *Employability focus of GAs*

The 2011-2012 Annual Review (HEI, 2012) stresses that GA implementation is not about transforming the student experience as espoused by leading GA advocates such as Barrie (2006) and Spronken-Smith (2013), but more about acknowledging employability related work already carried out at the university:

We already have a reputation for producing graduates that are well equipped for success in the world of work. The [HEI] Graduate further underlines our idea of what a successful 21st Century graduate should be.

(HEI, 2012, p.5).

The [HEI] GAs are explicitly designed to focus on employability (appendix 3.1.3, slide 20), which is one of the 3 Es as well as receiving repeated mentions in the online GA explanation (HEI, 2017) and the 2012-17 plan (HEI, 2011). The 2011-12 Annual Review (HEI, 2012) and television advert (HEI, 2012, appendix 6.2.7) emphasise their value to employers as well as students:

The [HEI] Graduate makes a promise to employers that every [HEI] University graduate will be well rounded, relevant and more than able to contribute to the world and the world of work.

To students it promises a set of skills and a degree that prospective employers will value and respect.

(HEI, 2012, p.5).

By having this emphasis, none of these pronouncements indicate any attempt to make the GAs distinctive to the university, running contrary to the collective expression of university values advocated by Bowden et al. (2000) cited in the HEI training (appendix 3.1.3, slide 4). This generic employability focus was also understood by managers and lecturers involved with GA delivery (2016, HEI Lecturer, appendix 5.1.6, lines 8-9; FE College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 26-27; HEI Outreach Lecturer, appendix 5.1.5, lines 6-10). College A's Assistant Principal summarises one of the key benefits of GAs is that they offer a means of developing a broader range of employability focused transferable skills in addition to discipline expertise (appendix 5.2.1, lines 38-48). However, whilst the employability focus is clear to all interviewees, there was no consideration of the GAs representing graduate level employability skills (appendix HEI Faculty Education Manager, lines 298-314; 229-242; HEI Quality Manager lines 188-189). Instead, they tended to consider them as representing general basic employment skills:

And is employability a graduate attribute? Cos it's not actually. Employability is just being able to get a job, but a graduate attribute to me is much more about cognitive aspects, about well what sort of skills and behaviour do you have when you are a graduate as you're going through the course? And it might actually be something that's very specific to your course so what your graduate attributes might be for an education award might be different to what they would have in [the interviewee's subject area].

(Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 198-194).

This contrasts with to Barrie's (2012) emphasis on the need for Gas to represent the culmination of graduate development.

1.3 Relationship of [HEI] GAs, Three Es and [HEI] Eight Plus Two

1.3.1 Overview of concepts

The HEI has six graduate attributes (GAs), 3 Es (*Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurialism*), a set of assessment skills referred to as the [HEI] 8, and four values. The following evidence presented demonstrates a lack of basic awareness by senior managers, lecturers and students of some or even all of these elements as well as a lack of coherent vision

from those responsible for implementation and delivery as to how these different concepts relate and interact.

In setting out the Graduate Attributes, the VC explained their vision of graduates being a combination of intellectual skills, personal skills and the 3 Es:

I believe that higher education is a learning process that places the student at or near the cutting edge of the subject and whereby a range of key intellectual skills (e.g. synthesis, analysis and critical appreciation of knowledge) and key personal skills (e.g. oral and written presentation skills) are acquired alongside an understanding of the skills of employability, enterprise and entrepreneurialism and that this thereby fits a graduate and postgraduate for a range of activities including employment, self-employment, further study or caring responsibilities.

(HEI University Plan, 2011b, p.4).

Although not explicitly articulated here or within any of the other documentation found during this research, this appears to refer to the subsequent system of three sets of skills operating at the university; the [HEI] 8 ('intellectual skills') (Appendix 8.3), the GAs ('personal skills') and the 3 Es. In addition to this, the then new VC set out four values of the university, replacing those made by the predecessor. With a new VC starting in 2016, new values have again been implemented, suggesting a link between VCs and values rather than them representing underlying institutional character. Despite a complete change of values, the GAs, 3Es and [HEI] 8 have remained unchanged, therefore indicating that university values and learning skills and attributes are unconnected. This runs contrary to guidance from Bowden et al. (2000) that GAs should represent the underpinning ethos of the institution; where values have completely changed this should be reflected in a change to the attributes.

1.3.2 GAs and the [HEI] 8

[HEI] 8	[HEI] GA
Knowledge and understanding	Discipline Expert
Learning	Lifelong learner
Enquiry	
Analysis	
Problem solving	
Communication	Communication (Teamwork not covered in the [HEI] 8)
Application	No direct match
Reflection	Reflective (Critical not covered in the [HEI] 8)
No direct match	Global citizen
	Professional

The [HEI] 8, also known as '8 plus 2' are a set of cognitive skills which are mapped onto each module's learning outcomes, with the overall award needing to demonstrate coverage of all of these 8 core skills. The 'plus 2' represent the opportunity for subject areas to add two skills to represent specific needs of their course (Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 123-126). This manager states that the [HEI] 8 had been embedded for a long time, around 12-15 years, underpinning all formative assessments, with the GAs and 3 Es being subsequently added rather than serving as a replacement (ibid, lines 57-66). By retaining the [HEI] 8 in the assessment process it was not clear whether or how the newly imposed GAs should relate to assessment of learning (ibid, lines 65-72). In programme validation procedures, GAs only have to be linked to the module content, with the [HEI] 8 being mapped against assessment learning outcomes at each level of the course to demonstrate progression. Furthermore, there is no requirement to mention the 3 Es within the validation process, an approach which contradicts guidance from employability and GA experts which recommend that such strategies should be embedded throughout all quality processes (Pegg et al. 2012; Barrie, 2017). Without linkage or mapping to learning outcomes or being a mandatory part of any validated assessment, there is no clear university-wide approach for the Personal Tutor to follow in terms of assessing GA development, the only guidance found in the documentary search being:

Professional Development of the Tutee

Personal tutors should aim to assess the progress of the students towards achieving the [HEI] Graduate attributes through the Personal Development Planning, this may include assistance with curriculum vitae, referring to career advice and advising about other development opportunities.

(Personal Tutor Policy, 2016, p.9).

The training guidance (appendix 3.1.3, slide 8) as well as Personal Tutoring policy concur with Barrie's (2004) view that that GAs must be formally assessed, otherwise students will not value them. However, as a result of policy layering rather than replacement, GAs are not directly linked to summative assessments.

According to the Quality Manager (appendix 5.1.4, lines 123-126), the [HEI] 8 were based on QAA descriptors of what students should be capable of at each level. They therefore consider that these should have been adapted to form GAs rather than them forming an additional layer of a teaching and learning, claiming it is confusing for both staff and students (ibid, lines 81-84). Indeed, since assessments are mapped to the [HEI] 8, the

Quality Manager considers them to be more important to the learners, “...as they tell them what they have to do to get a degree.” (ibid, lines 123-125). The Senior Manager also suggested this at the time of GA inception, but was overruled by the new VC who supported the creation of a distinctive aspect of attributes:

...it was stimulated by the new Vice-Chancellor..., I had a sort of informal meeting, and [they] said ‘Do we have a [HEI] Graduate Attributes?’ and I said, ‘Sort of’ cos we’ve the 8 plus 2[HEI8] learning outcomes which in a way align with that, but they have a slightly different purpose in that they are outcomes and they are part of the formal quality regime...[I] talked to the VC about it and really you could interpret the 8 as a form of attribute, graduate attribute, em, [they weren’t] entirely convinced by that but in the final outcome in terms of the top six, high level attributes, I made sure that they did map against the eight.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 9-15).

With the [HEI] 8 remaining part of the formal assessment quality mechanisms, the creation of GAs and 3 Es, by implication, lay outside them. The staff training presentation on GAs (HEI, 2013) does not mention the [HEI] 8 and the documentary search has not found any guidance on how the two concepts map or relate. The following illustrates the extent to which they cover similar themes; as suggested by the Senior Manager above, but rejected by the VC (appendix 5.1.1, lines 9-15), the HEI 8 and GAs could have been amalgamated to create a simpler set of attributes which informed learning outcomes.

The Senior Manager (appendix 5.1.1, line 45) considers GAs to be a more holistic articulation of the culmination of their graduate development rather than a fundamental aspect of their teaching and learning curriculum:

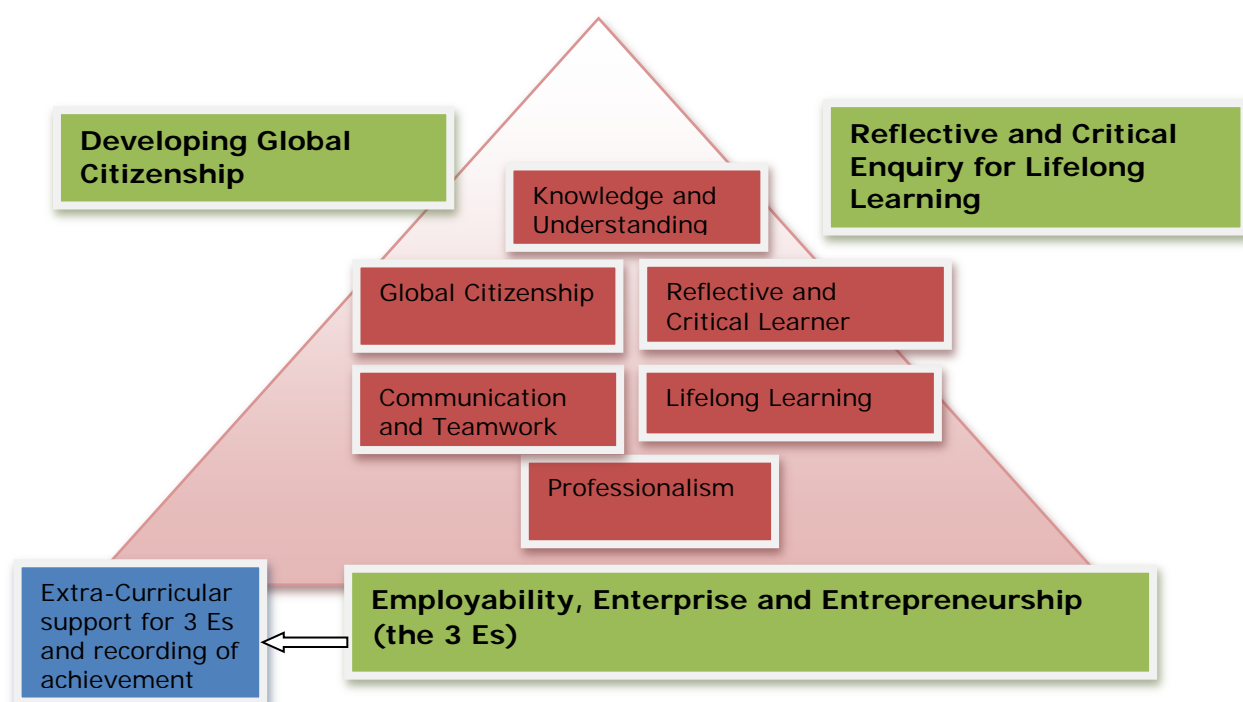
So I looked at whether we could produce something around what we would expect our graduates to come out with in terms of more generic attributes rather than very specific course related outcomes.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 13-14).

This suggests a conceptual difficulty in terms of how GA implementation could be enforced on staff where they lack a clearly differentiated purpose or position within assessment quality measures. The layering of three skills sets rather than replacement or amalgamation has caused conceptual difficulties and ensuing problems with implementation amongst staff and students alike, whether campus or college based, full or part-time. Indeed, whilst all of the lecturer interviewees and the majority of students had heard of the GAs, none of the students or partner lecturers/managers had heard of the [HEI] 8, even though these articulate the overarching skills which graduates are required to achieve (Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 345-349).

The document search has found no specific guidance of how the 3 Es relate to the GAs, though it appears that the VC envisioned them having primacy over the other aspects of the [HEI] Graduate: “...specifically the particular emphasis on the 3 Es of employability, enterprise and entrepreneurialism.” (HEI, 2011b, p4). Indeed, enterprise, was also considered one of four core values of the university, with entrepreneurial skills mentioned as one of the values (HEI, 2011b). Though this is no longer a core value of the HEI, the 3 Es remain current on the website. The plan also gives the first publicly available iteration of the [HEI] Graduate including a list of nine statements representing skills and attributes that all HEI graduates will attain on successful completion of their course, with the second of these listing the 3 Es (HEI, 2011b). These nine statements were reorganised in a subsequent student leaflet under six graduate attribute titles, a format which is mostly the same as the current online presence (appendix 6.2.1, HEI, 2016) where, the 3 Es make two appearances. Under the attribute of ‘Professionalism’, this is solely defined as: “*be prepared to be work-ready and employable and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.*” After the list and respective definitions of the six GAs, the 3 Es additionally have a whole page to themselves. However, no explanation is given as to how they link to the six attributes, the [HEI] 8 assessment skills, university values or why they are both within and outside of the six GAs. The Faculty Education Manager considers that the 3 Es were added to the GAs as a response to poor data metrics rather than espousing the ‘unique’ qualities of the HEI (appendix 5.1.3, lines 65-71). Whilst this context may have had an influence, the Senior Manager states that the 3 Es were introduced at the new VC’s insistence (appendix 5.1.1, line 54): “...you know each VC comes in with something, [their] mantra was the 3 Es...”.

Figure one: diagram illustrating the HEI's GAs and 3 Es



Source: Staff training presentation, HEI, 2013, slide 11

Figure 2: Enabling GAs and translation-level attributes



Source: Barrie, 2012, p.87

Ostensibly, the HEI's diagram (Figure 1) resembles that of Barrie's (2012) work for the University of Sydney (Figure 2), including many similar GAs. However, there are also quite clear differences in terms of hierarchy, organisation and content. In Barrie's (ibid) model, the attributes inside the triangle are *translation* attributes; means of translating discipline knowledge into generic graduate level attributes and are led at Faculty, rather than University, level. Outside this are three *enabling* attributes, representing the overarching common education goals of the university. These enabling attributes represent the culmination of graduate level development of the 'translation' attributes. This gives an explicitly stated hierarchy defining the graduates' attitude or stance towards knowledge, the world and themselves. In the HEI's model, no explanation is given regarding whether there is a hierarchy or not. This issue is further confused by their changing order in subsequent guidance and marketing material (HEI, 2011b; 2015a; appendices 3.2.1; 3.1.3; 3.2.2).

Barrie (2012) highlights the importance of GAs within discipline expertise; GAs have to be tailored to and developed through the subject area. However, the HEI appears to have knowledge and understanding (later changed to *Discipline Expert*) as an attribute in itself. This suggests that other attributes are separate to discipline expertise rather than being considered as integral to it. In this respect, they appear to replicate aspects of what Barrie's (ibid) research found to be ineffective GA concepts. These are precursor GAs (pre-undergraduate basic skills) and 'complementary' GAs, which are separate skills rather than being embedded in subject expertise attribute development. In addition to this, there is basic confusion over the organisation of the HEI's attributes. The role of the 3 Es appear to sit outside the GAs, as well as forming part of the explanation of *Professionalism*. Additionally, outside are *Developing Global Citizenship* and *Reflective and Critical Enquiry for Lifelong Learning*. Given that these also relate to specific GAs as well, *Global Citizenship* and *Reflective and Critical Learner*, it is not clear why these should be outside the triangle. Of these three elements outside the GA triangle, only the 3 Es were retained as a separate entity in subsequent documentation.

1.3.3 GAs and the 3 Es

The HEI managers interviewed considered the 3 Es to be problematic both in terms of their relationship with the GAs and [HEI] 8. They considered that there has been a lack of clear definition for each of the terms:

I think there was confusion – employment, entrepreneurship, enterprising. The overlap in trying to find a definition for each of these is quite difficult and I think some people felt that the 3 Es were the Graduate Attributes.

(Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 56-58).

The 3 Es caused some real difficulties in the university I mean for a start nobody actually ever defined what we mean by entrepreneurship. There are all sorts of potential definitions but nothing's really stuck.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 69-72).

The central role came from, the sort of kick that led to all the activity that I've just described came from [the then VC's] sort of commitment and drive to develop the 3 Es. Which everybody found very confusing. Enterprise, Employability and Entrepreneurship. What's the difference? I don't know!

(Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 125-128).

The first mention of the 3Es found in the documentary search is within the 2012-2017 University Plan (HEI, 2011b). However, it is not clear how this relates to the previously approved, *Student Employability and Enterprise Policy* (HEI, 2009). Although nearly ten years old and therefore predating the GAs and 3 Es, the documentary search has found no newer versions and this policy remains available on the HEI website. According to this policy, the university has already adapted a definition of employability, though the other two aspects remain undefined:

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

(Booth, 2003, cited in HEI, 2009).

However, the document search found no mention of this policy elsewhere, indicating that there is no espoused connection between the HEI's employability policy and its employability-based GAs and 3 Es, evidencing a lack of central policy coordination. Indeed, none of the interviewees mentioned the *Student Employability and Enterprise* strategy (HEI, 2009) during interviews and when questioned over this, even the Employability Group Member had no recollection of it even though they were at the centre of the HEI's employability development working group (appendix 5.1.2, lines 116-120). Therefore, whilst marketing itself as an employability focused HEI, there is no evidence of this strategy having any links to its own employability policy. That three senior managers are not aware that the university has an official definition, as well as the consideration that it is not found anywhere in relation to other university documentation on this subject, suggests that this policy is no longer currently in

practical use at the university even though it is still live on the site. Such lack of clarity in staff understanding key employability related terms espoused by HEIs is a common occurrence, resulting in incoherent policy implementation, according to Sewell and Dacre (2010).

The only guidance found relating to these terms are provided for students on the leaflet and web-page. However, the simplistic, informal and grammatically dubious manner of these appear to be more of a marketing tool than a precise definition required for informing learning objectives and assessments (appendix 6.2.4):

Employers value Enterprising people for the fresh thinking they bring to the workplace... From Oprah Winfrey and J. K. Rowling to Bill Gates and Richard Branson, the world is full of entrepreneurs. And, just like Steve Jobs of Apple fame, entrepreneurs 'Think Different' [sic].

None of these celebrities has any recognisable connection to the institution; the failure to highlight successful alumni in its own promotion material appears to be a declaration of failure. Apart from this, the document search found no guidance for lecturers which defines these terms, advises on their implementation as graduate level attributes across subject areas or how they might develop through levels 4, 5 and 6. In view of this lack of guidance, it is not clear how lecturers are expected to design and implement the GAs into their programmes.

The relationship between the GAs and 3 Es remains unclear on the public facing website as well. They are mentioned as part of the *Professional Attribute 'Pledge'*, though only two of them, 'being enterprising and entrepreneurial' are still also found under the *Reflective and Critical* attribute's examples. In addition to this, they are found below the GAs in the list online again. As with the GAs, the 3 Es are described simplistically as '*life skills*'. This explanation not only fails to define the terms in depth but also does not show how they link each other or to the GAs (appendix 6.2.2):

Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship:

It's not enough to stand head and shoulders above other candidates in the job market.

It's just as important to know how to turn your own ideas into exciting and viable opportunities. That's why, as a [HEI] Graduate, you will not only be highly Employable, but also Enterprising and Entrepreneurial. We call these life skills 'The Three Es'.

The Faculty Education Manager identifies the 3 Es as being particularly problematic due to a lack of clear definition or explanation of their relationship with the GAs:

Employability, enterprise, entrepreneurship. They caused enormous difficulty...if you look at the surveys of students they have real difficulties either in identifying them...actually

remembering what they are and more importantly working out whether they are part of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes or something else, something extra, or something that's had its time or whatever. Nobody quite knows what they stand for but I think they still exist as part of our strategic plan and it is very confusing unfortunately...It's not clear to me. It's certainly not clear to the students and I don't think it's really been explored as to what their relationship is.
(appendix 5.1.3, lines 83-90).

The Senior Manager differentiates the GAs and 3 Es as follows: *"So there is an overlap but I would say that the [HEI] attributes are more than just employability – they are intellectual skills as well rather than pragmatic skills that you need to get a job."* (appendix 5.1.1, lines 60-62). However, this brings into question the purpose of the [HEI] 8 which the VC appeared to refer to as being key intellectual skills (HEI, 2011, p.4). The 2011-12 Annual Review (HEI, 2012, p.5) outlines the GAs and 3 Es, but again there is no indication of how they relate or should be applied:

Outlined in the 2012-17 University plan, the [HEI] graduate is our promise that every [HEI] university graduate will leave us with real world skills and attributes beyond academic knowledge. Skilled in the 3 Es of Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurialism, they will possess both the attitude and ability to make their mark in the world.

No additional information is provided in the training slides (appendix 3.1.3) to explain how they connect and the interviews of senior and middle management and lecturers demonstrate a lack of understanding as well:

Well I've never quite understood that. I've always thought that the 3 Es were the umbrella of the [HEI] Graduate but I might be wrong.

(Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 118-119).

The HEI Outreach Lecturer agrees that it was never made clear how they connect to the GAs and that they never received any guidance or training on this issue (appendix 5.1.5, lines 98-112), a sentiment echoed by HEI Lecturer A:

...to be honest you end up with too many things going on and I think it just starts to get confusing - do we really need all three?

(appendix 5.1.6, lines 205-207).

A review of the publicly available documentation shows that there is inconsistency in the naming of the attributes, their presentation and organisation, as well as a lack of clarity in terms of their position within teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Indeed, in terms of justifying their introduction, the training presentation cites skills which are not central to the named GAs (staff training, HEI, 2013, appendix 3.1.3, slide 20): *"[Students will] Develop skills and attitudes that can enable a culture of identifying opportunities, risk taking and innovation."* On the webpage,

Teamwork is a GA, but upon clicking the link the explanatory page is entitled *Communication and Teamwork*. As well as this is *Reflective and Critical*, meaning that it is not clear whether there are six or eight GAs. Whilst *Communication and Teamwork* and *Reflective and Critical* may be related concepts, they are hardly synonymous concepts, so it is not clear what benefit is derived from joining them together. The online presence (HEI, 2017a) rephrases each of these definitions into pledges for each of the attributes, though there is guidance for what the student should do if they feel these pledges have not been met.

1.4 Translation or precursory GAs?

Barrie (2006) and Bond et al. (2017) emphasise the importance of GAs enabling graduate level achievement rather than representing precursory basic skills development. Indeed, Nagarajan and Edwards, (2014, p.15) discern conceptual differences between skills and attributes, with the latter emphasising the ability to apply across a range of scenarios:

Although skills and attributes are often used interchangeably they have different meanings. Skills are typically practical such as communication, time management and teamwork. Graduate attributes are usually broader than skills and include qualities such as loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity.

In the case study HEI's online definition and explanation of the GAs (HEI, 2017), there is very little indication of the graduate level expectations advocated by Barrie (2006), indicating a misconception of how they should be articulated. Jackson and Wilton (2016) differentiate standard and graduate levels of expectations of employers. From this perspective, the examples given for the *Professional* GA are typical in terms of its informal tone and espousal of generic employability expectations, with only '*having good leadership skills*' being considered by Jackson and Wilton (ibid) as a graduate level attribute:

- Being reliable, willing and honest
- Paying attention to detail
- Having integrity
- Being self-motivated and competent
- Showing respect and being polite
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Having good leadership skills
- Listening to others

(HEI, 2017a).

Explanations of the other attributes are similar in approach, where neither definition, list of examples or pledge give indication of graduate level development. However, although titled as attributes, the limited further guidance available emphasises basic skills development. This begins with the VCs initial explanation of intellectual skills, personal skills and the skills of employability, enterprise and entrepreneurialism (HEI University Plan, 2011b, p.4.). As highlighted in 1.3 of this chapter, although employability is defined as a clear purpose of the GAs, guidance and staff understanding of this appears to be based on a narrow definition of gaining a job and basic work skills, akin to Barrie's (2004) *precursory* skills rather than following graduate level *enabling* employability as articulated in its own *Student Enterprise and Employability Policy* (HEI, 2009). This is illustrated in the staff training presentation, which focuses on placements or students gaining their first job rather than maintaining or enhancing their careers (appendix 3.1.3, slide 23). Indeed, the Quality Manager highlights how another local college also uses an aspect of the university's approach by adopting the 3 Es for themselves, again undermining the concept that these are graduate level attributes:

They had the 3 Es, we had the 3 Es...the same as we did exactly so I was wondering if they came from somewhere else completely and we'd both got them from somewhere else.

(appendix 5.1.4, line 110, lines 112-113).

The FE Assistant Principal agrees with the Quality Manager, that the GAs are neither particularly distinctive nor representative of uniquely graduate level development.

I don't think these are unique to [HEI]. In fact, the wording is almost the same in all of them, including what we're delivering to the 16-18 framework as well with slight tweaks, and our other university partners have their versions, but when you water them down you've got pretty much the same themes coming out.

(appendix 5.2.1, lines 93-96).

However, the Assistant Principal highlights the college's role in developing employability in a broader sense – helping employed mature learners from an area with a low skills base to access HE for career enhancement (appendix 5.2.1, lines 16-21). As well as the GAs being similar to other universities, the College B Lecturer argues that they are similar to their experience working in schools and colleges:

Having come from a school background, both of us look at developmental pathways of students all the time so it feels like a natural thing for us to be teaching transferable skills alongside core knowledge. I think for us it wasn't anything new, it wasn't anything different – it's there as part and parcel of the way that we teach that we're forever developing to put in place strategies exercises and feedback to look at a student's all round growth not just the academic growth and not just the learning for the assignments so I think for is it would be

something that we're doing anyway regardless of being given a list of graduate attributes by [HEI] University.

(appendix 5.2.4 lines 14-20).

The College B lecturers therefore consider that the GAs are more relevant to younger learners, viewing employability as basic skills for gaining employment and concluding that their students already tend to possess many of the skills (appendix 5.2.4, lines 35-43). However, Lecturer, College A doubts whether they represent graduate level skills, but are more resonant with responsible citizenship in general:

Cos they're such a generic good set of skills to have. They're almost like the ten commandments you can't go wrong with them can you? Of course you want to be professional, of course you want to be reliable, you know these things are not just about being a graduate, they're about being a rounded citizen as an adult in our society and as part of that you have responsibilities to get a job and be self-reliant and able to contribute to society by getting a job and paying your taxes. So you know I wouldn't say they were just for graduates, they are almost like, to be a grown up these are asset of skills you need. But for a lot of our students they're already very grown up so some of them are a bit patronising.

(appendix 5.2.3, lines 47-54).

Additionally, there are also potential problems within these examples as well, such as repetition of expectations between attributes; '*Listening to others*' is not only a key aspect of being *Professional*, but students are also advised that, '*being a good listener*' is a part of *Communication and Teamwork*. As well as being separately articulated within the 3 Es, *Enterprising* and *Entrepreneurial* also form part of the explanation of the *Reflective and Critical* GA as well as twice within the *Professional* one:

You'll also know what it means to be enterprising and entrepreneurial in order to make the most of life's opportunities and how to deal with its challenges in a calm and considered manner.

When you graduate, you will be work-ready and employable, and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.

(HEI, 2017).

Given that these terms have their own separate definition under the 3Es, their prominence within the GA definitions may relate to them being the then VC's favoured themes rather than aiding a logical understanding of the role of either the GA or 3Es for students' development. Furthermore, some of the definitions contradict common academic understanding of their concepts. The *Reflective and Critical* GA includes *challenging convention*, *thinking creatively*, *creating opportunities* and being *enterprising and entrepreneurial*. This contradicts critical thinking research which argues that creative thinking is a separate cognitive skill requiring a suspension of rational logic; to achieve this, a critical approach could actually hinder rather than

support creativity (Mulnix, 2012; Facione, 2015). Under the *Discipline Expert* GA, students are advised about *knowing how to solve specific business problems* and *knowing how to apply your skills to solve non-familiar business issues*. By explicitly focusing on business, these have limited value to those working outside this discipline and therefore undermine the cross-disciplinary nature of GAs advocated by key proponents (Barrie, 2006; Bond et al., 2017).

Considering the above discussion, it is clear that the publicly available information on the HEI's GAs are highly problematic for many reasons. They do not consider the GA in terms of graduate level achievements, have questionable definitions of the concepts they are espousing and repeat some of the ideas for no clear reason. Both Barrie (2004) and Hoffer (2011) are highly critical of GA statements where there has been a lack of analytical consideration of how they are defined. Without such clear definitions from the HEI, this contributed to students', tutors' and managers' confusion in terms and/or lack of understanding of the GAs within the University's teaching, learning and assessment strategy, as evidenced in subsequent interviews discussed in subsequent sections.

1.5 Stakeholder participation in the formation of GAs

From a Faculty Education Manager's point of view, consultation on GA formation was widespread:

...there was also a working group which I was a party to which helped to develop these so yes, I was consulted a lot and there was a lot of consultation I was aware of in the wider university.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 42-43).

It is not clear how this manager defines consultation, but for those beyond this working group, it appears to have been about receiving information rather than contributing to GA formation:

The initial working group was very closed. The implementation group was essentially saying this is what you've got to do...Well it's not really right is it? [Laughs]. It's difficult in a university because everybody's got an opinion and you know the trouble is if you make things too wide then you get so many different opinions that it becomes unworkable so I can understand that they wanted to bring this in. [But] I don't think there was enough consultation...And I think also people became onside simply because it was the political thing to do.

(Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 218-238).

Indeed, the Senior Manager concedes that consultation was limited due to time pressures:

It was mainly university based and that in retrospect it should have been a bit wider than that but it was a very tight timescale.

(Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 160-161).

While the training uses Bowden et al.'s (2000) definition which emphasises a consensual representation of the whole university community, the evidence gained from documentation and interviews suggests that, other than Senior Managers selected by the then VC, key stakeholders were not involved in the formation of the GAs. This aligns with Clanchy and Ballard's (1995) findings that GAs tended to emerge quickly based on ad hoc discussions of senior managers. Jones (2009) agrees that this is a typical approach to GA conceptualisation, noting that stakeholders are less likely to embed a strategy which they have not been involved in creating. Knewstubb and Ruth (2014) concur, arguing some lecturers resent externally imposed additional requirements on their teaching as well as the assumptions made by management about defining the character and ethos of their institution.

The common reason given by the managers for the lack of meaningful consensus building is that there was a sense of urgency to implement the GA, driven by the new VC and the university's mediocre league table standings (69th in the 2011 Guardian league table). The first mention of a distinctive [HEI] Graduate from the then new VC's annual review (HEI, 2011a) makes no mention of launching of a broad-based consultation process either within the university nor with external stakeholders such as employers. This contradicts practice recommended by employability experts such as Kettle (2013) and Yorke (2010) who emphasise the need to regularly consult employers to develop and enhance employability strategies which meet employer needs. The HEI Outreach Lecturer concurs with the view that those below SMT level were not invited to contribute to formation. Nevertheless, the HEI Outreach Lecturer considers that this might still have been a productive approach if it had been used as a means to start a debate with the intention of reforming them following discussion and piloting. This is because an open consultation without any framework could have been problematic given the number of potential stakeholders in the process (appendix 5.15, lines 12-23). However, the HEI Outreach Lecturer is highly critical of the university management not subsequently engaging in debate and reform once they had been launched, arguing that this sent a message to staff that the policy was short-term, not valued and therefore not requiring significant attention (ibid, lines 23-28). The [HEI] Graduate was fully defined in the 2012-2017 five-year plan, under the title 'Partnership with Students', but there is no indication of any consultation having taken place (HEI, 2011b) even though the espoused rationale for the GAs is to place students at the heart of the university. This runs contradictory to the findings of O'Connor, Lynch and Owen (2011) and Su (2014) who advocate that full student engagement can only occur when they are involved in discussions regarding GA creation, interpretation and renewal.

GA formation therefore appears to have been limited to a few senior managers at the HEI; there is no documentary evidence that partner colleges were involved in their development. This is further supported by College A's Assistant Principal (appendix 5.2.1, lines 77-81) and the HEI Lecturer, who was manager for Higher Education provision at a college at the time: "...*they weren't even presented to me in a formal process.*" (appendix 5.1.6, line 192). This lack of partner engagement is echoed by the Quality Manager, due to what they term a parent-child relationship. The Quality Manager considers this attitude led to a missed opportunity as the vocational experience of partners could have played an important role in their formation (appendix 5.1.4, lines 144-154), a view also held by the Faculty Education Manager:

I don't think any of the partners were ever involved in that. I think they knew about it but didn't understand what it was all about.

I: And yet they're delivering the Graduate Attributes.

I know they're supposed to be, but are they ticking the box again you know? I think that's one of the problems if you bring in something like this, it really needs to be thought through very carefully with the consequences, particularly when you've got lots of partners and these things weren't considered.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 269-275).

This view that colleges could have played a role in GA formation is supported by the Assistant Principal's emphasis on their college's ability to support employability enhancement, especially amongst mature learners in the local community:

Yes – it's our purpose for being really. So we attract the kind of students that really most of the time wouldn't really consider HE in a traditional sense in a University. Going into [Northern city] might be a step too far for some people, but where there's education on their doorstep and there are degrees that relate to what they do or aspire to do quite soon, then it feels achievable.

(Assistant Principal, lines 28-31).

The Faculty Education Manager considers that some Faculty and School managers were reluctant to accept all of the GAs and 3 Es, with *Global Citizen* and *Entrepreneurialism* in particular being resisted by areas which felt it had little relevance with their students' needs. Nevertheless, the implementation strategy was for all areas to deliver all of the attributes as well as the 3 Es (appendix 5.1.3, lines 71-82).

Objective Two: Analyse the effectiveness of GA strategic implementation

2.1 *Marketing and GAs*

In the staff training presentation (appendix 3.1.3, slide 4), Bowden et al.'s (2000) concept of GAs is cited, meaning that the GAs should represent a unique underlying ethos of the university. However, this does not make any claim to representing the distinctiveness of the university, nor does it explain how the chosen attributes specifically represent it. Instead, a key reason given for introducing GAs was to follow what other universities were doing (appendix 3.1.3, Slide 6; Senior Manager, (appendix 5.1.1, lines 15-16; Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 10-12; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 14-15). As well as the introduction of GAs not being original, the Senior Manager did not consider the HEI's specific GA choices to be distinctive:

I don't think we started with that intention. It's just to be explicit about the sort of education we provide and what we expect students to come out with. I suppose the 3 Es tried to encapsulate that, but then again I would doubt that any university would say that they have very clear USPs [Unique Selling Points]. There's very few, it was a mix of things I suspect, we mix things differently, but the ingredients are essentially the same – it's the combination.

(Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 103-107).

The Quality Manager (appendix 5.1.4, lines 28-31) concurs that the HEI's GAs are not unique, considering them to be not only similar to other HEIs, but also colleges as well, indicating that they may not necessarily even represent graduate level attributes. Indeed, the actual attributes selected do not appear to be particularly distinctive being commonly found within GA and employability literature (Barrie, 2004; Donleavy, 2012; Jackson and Wilton, 2016). Similarly, the accompanying 3 Es are found articulated in the same order by the Scottish Quality Assurance (SQA, 2016) as well as the University of Aberdeen (2016). However, although not considered unique, the Quality Manager did consider that GAs might have been well-suited to the University due to its vocational background linking directly with the employment focus of the GAs (appendix 5.1.4, lines 186-172), a view of 'teaching' universities also held by Spronken-Smith et al, 2013.

The Senior Manager considers the GAs to be important for developing the university's identity, claiming: "*It's a part of our brand, it's what we're about, what is our promise as it were to students.* (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 232-233)". In contrast, the Quality Manager argues that their lack of distinctiveness with others mean that they do not create a memorable

brand (appendix 5.1.4, lines 29-31). However, the GAs were considered to be central to the HEI's marketing strategy when they were created. The Annual Review 2012-13 (HEI, 2014a) under the subheading "*The [HEI] Graduate comes to TV!*", notes how the GAs were the feature of the advertising campaign (appendix 6.2.7) "*...to engage prospective students, impress potential business partners and inform our current staff, students and stakeholders.*".

Conversely, the Faculty Education Manager considers the campaign to have been problematic:

We had to run them past the advertising standards agency because we included I think the word guarantee somewhere along the line and what was it we were actually guaranteeing?

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 8-10).

Indeed, since the GAs are not strongly linked to quantifiable measurements, use of the terms 'pledge' and 'promise' without being able to verify achievement could be considered hard to justify and contradicts the Senior Manager's view that they were more holistic and represented a statement of intent. Such overreaching claims resonate with Daniels and Brooker's (2014) criticism of GAs, who argue that they may intimate promises of employment on graduation which are not upheld. Additionally, the term Graduate Attributes was changed to the [HEI] Graduate for marketing simplicity, but, confusingly for stakeholders, both terms remain in use:

I think it's been a bit muddled. I like to have the word attributes in it. It's been shortened to the [HEI] Graduate which is confusing to students cos, [we're all HEI] Graduate, aren't we anyway? So I think there was a bit of mixed messaging with that.

(Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 258-259).

The Quality Manager considers that they are ineffective as a marketing tool due to their lack of presence to potential students:

Try to find them on the website! They're not easy to find, therefore, is it really something that's being sold? You know, if you just go on the website [goes to computer] they don't appear...If you just go onto the homepage it's not there. It's not on the A-Z [list of university links] so how can it be a marketing tool if it's not there?

(appendix 5.1.4, lines 157-160).

Indeed, although the high-profile TV campaign and interviews show that this was perceived as a marketing strategy, there is very little influence that it succeeded in influencing the respondents' choice of provider according to the interviewees and questionnaire responses (Appendix 10.7.9, discussed later in this section). Considering whether they have succeeded in forming a unique image of the university the Faculty Education Manager states:

Unfortunately, I don't. I don't think they've succeeded at all really. If you ask any applicants who come for interview 'have you heard of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?' I've never had one who's said yes so obviously it hasn't got out there in the wider world in terms of a marketing campaign

to potential students and it's really unfortunate that in some areas of the university, not in our faculty, some areas of the university the knowledge of the of the attributes among the student population is as low as I believe 44%, so a large majority of students don't even know they exist...clearly it hasn't worked in terms of making us distinct to the outside audience or indeed the inside audience.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 19-27).

The Senior Manager recalls how there was pressure to develop and publicise the GAs to staff in time for open days, reflecting that, "...*the launch of it could have been better in that sense...*" (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 155-156). The Faculty Education Manager concurs, highlighting how the implementation was rushed with staff being trained on a Thursday for delivery at a Saturday open day, making the early launch counter-productive:

We went to the main talk, something in business, something in sport and health and something – well it was three different faculties and at the end of it I said, 'Now what have you learned?' 'I've learned they do these [HEI] Graduate Attributes and shove them down your throat!' Cos we'd heard it on four occasions – everyone did their talk and that was their script – everyone did exactly the same thing - then we went to Psychology, then we went to Health or whatever and they all said exactly the same thing. You poor lad – he hadn't a clue what the courses were all about but that there was something called the [HEI] Graduate and he was completely fed up with it.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 328-342).

This perceived failure in terms of their marketing value is supported by Course Leader from College A who doubted whether the students would have been aware of them prior to joining the course (College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, line 40) as well as the questionnaire responses (Q10, appendix 10.7.9). No learners stated that they were a leading influence in determining their university choice and only 3 out of 70 responses stated that they had any influence. 16/70 had heard of them at the time of recruitment but felt they had not influenced their decision in any way, meaning that the majority of learners, 51/70, had not heard them at the time of recruitment, even though this would have coincided with the GA advertising push.

Donleavy (2012) notes how priorities can be implicitly or explicitly made in the way that GAs are described, organised or listed. However, the available documentation does not show a consistent prioritisation of the GAs (appendix 6.2). The initial iteration of nine places *Knowledge and Understanding* (currently referred to as *Discipline Expertise*) at the top of the list, and this is also the case for the student pamphlet (appendix 6.2.1), implying that this is the priority. Additionally, in the staff training presentation, *Knowledge and Understanding*, is shown to be the top skill within the GA triangle, with *Professional* at the bottom. However, in the web presence, *Discipline Expertise* is the final GA, with *Professional* being the first assuming standard English reading (left to right, top to bottom). Although the training appeared to show the 3 Es as being

overarching attributes (appendix 3.1.3, slide 11), they are listed below the GAs online and come after the GAs on the pamphlet. Additionally, there is inconsistency within the webpage, with the *Teamwork* GA then being titled *Communication and Teamwork* in its explanation. Furthermore, within the HEI prospectus (HEI, 2015, 6.2.8) *Knowledge* (rather than *Discipline Expertise*) is mentioned first, then *Reflective and Critical*, then *Global Citizen* and the 3 Es with the other attributes not mentioned. Therefore, the organisation of the GAs does not give a clear marketing message in terms of whether any of the GAs are prioritised.

2.1.1 Physical Presence

Investigating displays around the main campus building revealed a lack of up-to-date GA promotion. Out of 20 undergraduate course related displays, only three featured GAs (appendix 6.2.9). Two of these had a poster branded for the business school and just one had tailored the GAs to the course content and levels, emulating Barrie's (2004) *translation* approach to GAs. There were no other large posters for any of the other schools. Conversely, six displays featured business specific attributes, including three displays of the Business School '5 As' (*Adaptable, Articulate, Altruistic, Authentic* and *Aware*) which, as established in section 1.1.1 above, were the short-lived forerunner to the GAs in 2011. There were no posters/displays of the GAs at the Outreach campus. HEI Lecturer A stated that there were GA posters at the beginning of the attributes but they no longer have much of a presence on campus or on the website (appendix 5.15, lines 28-30), a view to which the Senior Manager concurs adding that it no longer features in Open Days for recruitment (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 222-225). Indeed, there was a generic statement about the GAs found in every school prospectus (appendix 6.2.8), though no evidence was found of schools following a *translation* approach (Barrie, 2004) to tailor them in any way to demonstrate how they related to their own particular subject. Furthermore, in the 2016-2017 prospectus (HEI, 2016), there are no references to GAs at all. The GAs are still covered by a single slide (appendix 7.2) within the School of Education open day presentation, though the 3 Es have never been mentioned here throughout the duration of the policy, an omission consistently found in other SoE documentation relating to GAs.

GA promotional material was not sent to partners (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 174-175), indicating that the policy was not considered in terms of whether or how it would be

implemented within colleges. However, both partner colleges in the case study took the initiative and developed their own GA promotional material. In College A, this has resulted in some inconsistencies with the original university GAs. Although using the university logo, they have changed the GA *Discipline Expertise* to *Subject Expert*. As well as this, they have made several changes to the examples given for each attribute. Under *Lifelong Learner, Develop English and Maths Skills* has been added, reflecting these subjects' importance in terms of FE government agenda following recommendations from the Wolf Review (BIS, 2011b) and therefore Ofsted inspections which they face. Therefore, their display shows how the GAs have to some extent been adapted to meet their perceived needs as a provider, though they have not given discipline specific examples. Additionally, they have a large poster displaying a range of academic skills, some of which resonate with the GAs and others which are separate. According to the Assistant Principal, this was to capture the mixture generic skills advocated by the multiple HEIs which they work with at the institution (Assistant Principal, lines 82-89). Partner B has its own set of generic skills as well as the university GAs. This is a list of ten skills forming a 'Skills Promise', which, as with the HEI GAs are explicitly employability focused:

...you can be sure that when you complete your course, you'll not only have an industry recognised qualification, you'll be job ready with the transferable skills you need to make an impact on your chosen industry.

(College B 'Skills Promise', 2016, appendix 3.3.5.2).

Indeed, the College A lecturer would have liked promotional material from the University for the GAs but never received any (appendix 5.2.3, line 123-128). As with College A they have therefore made their own, but this is only found within their own classrooms as the rest of the building has posters promoting the college's own *Skills Promise* (lines 337-350).

2.1.2 Online presence

Online presence of the GAs and 3 Es is limited. They are only found when using the terms in the search engine rather than through links from key student and lecturer homepages. There was no presence of GAs and 3 Es from the university homepage, enrolment page, students' welcome page, or from their online portal. A search for Graduate Attributes takes the reader to this site with a subordinate link to the 3 Es. The Academic Skills support pages have a web page entitled [HEI] Graduate Attributes and Skills, but there is no information other than the TV

advertisement and a message stating that the page is under construction. For staff, there is no link to GAs on their intranet home pages or when searching the term on this site and despite their employability focus, there is no mention of them on the Careers site. The Student Union has a [HEI] Graduate page, but this is only revealed through a search rather than from the homepage and comprises of a blank page apart from a message stating that there are '*no current news articles*' (appendix 3.4.1). A search was performed on the Outreach (university provision) college as well as College A and B, using the terms '[HEI] Graduate' and 'graduate attribute', as well as variants of the 3 Es. No information about the GAs/3 Es was available from any of these websites, meaning that information about them can only be delivered by the college lecturer or from the university. This suggests that information about the GAs is difficult for both lecturer and learners to find, and guidance on how they should be implemented or personally achieved is non-existent.

2.2 Implementation across the HEI and its partners

The adoption of the GAs across the university was agreed in October 2011 by the Academic Board (appendix 3.1.3, slide 27). The GAs were promoted by the new VC in 2012, being trumpeted as one of the most important developments at the university in the introduction to the 2011-12 Annual Review (HEI, 2012, p.3):

Perhaps most significantly, the year saw the introduction of 'The [HEI] Graduate' - our pledge that every [HEI] University Graduate will leave us with real world skills and attributes beyond academic knowledge.

The stated intention, according to the training (appendix 3.1.3 slide 2) was that all undergraduate courses would undertake the GAs, with detailed mapping of where they were covered and assessed, acknowledging that assessment was a key ingredient to success. It also determined that they should be differentiated, to transparently show how they would be delivered and assessed at each level, though no guidance for achieving this has been forthcoming in the documentary search. In addition to this was a two-tier approach, with six courses specifically championing the GAs. These were drawn from each of the Faculties within the HEI. The case study School of Education was not involved in this project. These courses reformed their curriculum around 30 credit modules and also included GA based portfolios where the GAs would be assessed at each level (ibid, slide 15). The interviewees agree that the stated intention to expand this approach across the whole university never took place. They

have mixed views about the effectiveness of these GA Champion programmes. The Faculty Education Manager thinks that these worked well in their area:

...it was very good, very effective and there were lots of programmes that were put on, lots of discussion and lots of definitions and so forth and lots of interrelationship, interaction between those various groups.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 262-266).

However, the Faculty Education Manager thought the problem was that this good practice never spread and others were allowed to continue their established approaches with just minimal compliance through mapping to the GAs:

...the idea was that they'd run it for a year or two, learn from the experience, and extend it to the rest of the university. That last bit never happened, so many programmes...just tick the box yeah we think we do that, that's good enough.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 174-186).

The Faculty Education Manager emphasises that resistance was not just from lecturers but management as well who made no attempt to change the culture within their departments (appendix 5.1.3, lines 193-197). Specifically, some rejected the concept of insisting that students were enterprising:

...there's a lot of areas of the university where being enterprising is probably not a good thing...in health sciences and I was told [by] a panel member 'we don't want our nurses to be enterprising, we want them to do things the way they are taught to do it'.
(ibid, lines 74-75).

These findings therefore resonate with By, Hughes and Ford's (2016) review of managerial resistance to change; it was not simply from lecturers, but occurred throughout differing managerial strata as well (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 229-230).

The Quality Manager considers that the failure of the Champion programmes in some areas, rather than prompting a change of implementation approach, led to effective abandonment of attempts to embed the GAs in-depth across the institution in favour of basic mapping of current practice (appendix 5.1.4, lines 237-256). Indeed, the Champions disbanded once this mapping process had been completed, meaning that there was no central push for anything further than surface level implementation:

They [the Champions] used to meet regularly. Once every handbook and course had kind of adopted the approach they decided they didn't really need to be champions any more so that sort of fizzled out and they decided they didn't need to meet any more.

(Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 104-106).

Whilst the success of these programmes is contentious, the Faculty Education Manager considers the real failure of GA implementation was in not following them up as initially planned. They blame this on senior management losing interest in them and moving onto different issues (appendix 5.1.3, lines, 189-190). This view is supported by the Senior Manager's experience, who remembers being pushed by the executive to move onto other issues (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 311-312). Indeed, the former VC clearly states that GA implementation resulted in a review rather than the transformation of practice advocated by Barrie (2012):

To support this critical venture [GAs], our internal structures and product portfolio underwent a significant review to ensure they are truly fit for purpose.

(2011-12 Annual Review, HEI, 2012, p.3).

The Faculty Education Manager considers that this failure to expand enabled other courses to simply map existing curricula to the GAs:

...there were areas of the university that were never engaged, never going to go along with it and they felt any excuse not to do it was satisfactory clearly attention wasn't on them anymore and they just didn't bother.

(Faculty Education Manager, lines 189-193).

The HEI Outreach Lecturer (appendix 5.15, lines 264-266) considers that this resistance may be due to ongoing initiatives which are never fully implemented:

We have no discussion about a shared understanding about what goes on and then people then lose heart and they become disillusioned and they become cynical because it's initiative in, initiative left, initiative forgotten and then another initiative comes in – you can't really expect people to do that.

The HEI Outreach Lecturer cites a recent drive towards embedding *Problem Based Learning* as well as a new observation programme in the academic year 2015-2016, both of which have not been mentioned in the following year.

Nevertheless, the Senior Manager considers that whilst the speed of introduction prevented consultation, ultimately the GAs have been a success (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 219-222):

Like Marmite isn't it? I think those were the issues; about speed, linked to the broader curriculum changes. I guess they could be more consultation but I think on balance, I might be deluding myself here, I think as it's gone on people have seen more the value and it's something you can talk about.

The Senior Manager thinks that they should be highlighted more in teaching and learning activities; noting how in one subject area, Sport, had particularly pushed GAs, differentiating per level as well as explicitly highlighting coverage during each lecture (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 239-248). However, as there is no central drive to adopt this practice throughout all university provision, the success of the GAs could only be partial due to the acknowledged inconsistencies of implementation.

The GAs were included in the SoE prospectus (2013, appendix 3.2.8), though in line with other HEI prospectuses, this just was a generic statement occupying a single page. In the SoE there is no articulation of the GAs at each level in contradiction to the agreed implementation strategy (appendix 3.1.3, slides 21-23), though this graded approach has been taken by colleagues in Sports and Exercise (appendix 3.3.1). The author is not aware of any training or meetings since joining the HEI in 2011 where the GAs have been discussed, a view supported by the HEI Outreach Lecturer, (appendix 5.15, lines 239-241). During course validation, the researcher attempted a detailed mapping process of the curriculum and GAs but was told by the panel that this needed to be reduced to a basic diagram just showing that they had been covered, thereby contradicting the initially agreed implementation strategy.

The 2013 university training mentions that partners were expected to implement the GAs (appendix 3.1.3, slides 28-29). Overall, the Faculty Education Manager considers that they can be applicable for all courses, albeit differentiated to meet the needs of each subject area:

They are not all applicable to the same extent but we didn't feel that there was any student coming out of the university who should not be exposed to some extent to at least to all of them to some extent.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 113-121).

The Faculty Education Manager also argues that they should apply equally to part-time learners, though evidencing their achievement could be through mapping work experience rather than curriculum content (appendix 5.1.3, lines 123-128). However, there is no specific guidance on how this should be achieved. Additionally, there does not appear to have been consideration given as to how the University GAs could be implemented in partners with either multiple HEI partners or with their own institution's GAs, as found in partners A and B respectively in this study. With a variety of HE providers, the College A Assistant Principal feels the necessity to develop student attributes in general rather than just the HEI specific ones (appendix 5.2.1, lines 139-145). The Senior Manager considers that having multiple attributes

within the partner colleges must be problematic: “*So how do they manage that then?*”, considering that “*The students must be absolutely confused*” (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 201 and 204). Although the HEI training stated that the Partnerships department would support GA embedding with the HEI’s partners, the documentary search has revealed no central support. Indeed, the *UK Partnerships* brochure (HEI, 2014b) does not mention the GAs at all, and the *International Partnerships* (HEI, 2013b) brochure only briefly mentions GAs for one of its partners, and here it appears to be suggesting that they are just mapped to existing practice:

[HEI] University and [Austrian provider] have very similar philosophies, and students from both clearly identify with the industry focused, globally aware attributes of the [HEI] Graduate. UK partnerships brochure no mention.

(ibid, 2013b, p.18).

Furthermore, interviewees from both featured partner colleges revealed that they had received no training, nor publicity material from the university other than the student leaflets given by their Award Leader.

2.3 GA training

According to the staff training presentation (3.1.3, slide 28), partners would be able to access [HEI] Graduate Employability Programme materials, but would otherwise: “*follow the same process as for on-campus awards*”. The documentary search has not found any evidence of these resources and a further search through the website has not found any further information other than the central GA page. The university training presentation also claimed that there would be university-led workshops for partner organisations, but there is no documentary or interview-based evidence of these having taken place. No partners interviewed were aware of any such materials or events. The university has an A-Z list of Teaching and Learning Resources, but this does not contain any mention of the GAs (HEI, 2017d). GA implementation at partners was supposed to be further supported by Programme Advisers, Partnership Managers, Head of UK Partnerships and a Professor of Enterprise (appendix 3.1.3, slide 29). As far as can be ascertained from staff interviews of employees who have been at the HEI since the inception of GAs, the only training was the presentation (ibid). This is not available online and those joining after this time period have not received any training on the GAs. This includes induction;

GAs tend to have been discovered through word of mouth between colleagues or at validation stages where mapping is a requirement.

Aside from the training presentation of 2013, there has been no evidence found of subsequent training sessions or online guidance for tutors to help them understand the concepts as well as how to embed the attributes. The GA launch appears to have been dictated by the need for them to be shown at the first university open day of the year:

There was a big, big push towards the [HEI] Graduate to get it out in time for the next open day. It literally was a training session in one of the lecture theatres over in Ashley on the sort of Thursday afternoon before they go out on Saturday and [a Senior Manager] in charge 'we've got to push the [HEI] Graduate'.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 327 to 332).

Since the GAs do not feature as part of induction training this means that any new staff after this date have not received training in what they are and how they should be implemented.

Furthermore, the Quality Manager is not aware of any training being offered to partners (appendix 5.1.4, lines 403-418), a view supported by the lecturers and FE managers interviewed. College A Assistant Principal did not receive any training or guidance on defining the GAs in terms of requirements for each level (appendix 5.2.1, lines 160-165). Finding out about the GAs has therefore been left to the initiative of the individual, with HEI Lecturer A describing how they found details of the [HEI] 8 in an old handbook and 3 Es from the website rather than through induction or subsequent training opportunities (appendix 5.1.6, lines 201-218). Finally, a web-link to a best practice model of the GAs is also not available (appendix 3.1.2). This means that awareness of the GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8 are not actively embedded in staff induction, training and development, with staff awareness only developing from peer groups or necessity when confronted with quality documentation.

Although the College A Assistant Principal does not recall the university ever providing any training, staff teaching HE level have been informed of the GAs through the college's own staff development. (appendix 5.2.1, lines 212-220). The Assistant Principal concedes that facilitation of additional skills building in addition to discipline expertise is not easy especially as some of their lecturers, even if on full time contracts, only deliver HE for a few hours per week (ibid, lines 221-222; lines 228-232). This issue is raised by Lea and Simmons (2012), who highlight difficulties faced by FE based lecturers when having to adapt to work across a diverse range of academic levels. The Assistant Principal helps them to understand where their provision could map with the attributes (ibid, 222-224). At College A, the Course Leader supports the Assistant Principal's statement that staff were made aware of the GAs through college induction process

as well as at a staff development day (College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 157-160). The Senior Manager did not consider GA delivery to be too much of a problem with part-time lectures, arguing that this would be developed by full-time members:

Presumably if they're only in for two days they're just delivering rather than fully involved in the planning process. I assume they just, they receive the materials and just take them on.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 209-210).

However, this approach would appear to undermine the transformational change required of lecturers advocated by Hughes and Barrie (2010) where they are expected to have not just disciplinary expertise, but also the ability to nurture and develop attributes within and across disciplines. Furthermore, this information delivery role of the lecturer also contrasts with Creasy's (2013) view that the academic be at the forefront of creating knowledge as well.

None of the lecturers or the Assistant Principal at College A, had heard of the 3 Es or [HEI] Eight (appendix 5.2.1, lines 341-344), indicating a lack of in-depth awareness given that they are also mentioned within the Professional GA. However, whilst the College B lecturers had awareness of the 3 Es, they conceded that they found it difficult to link the Education course to concepts such as entrepreneurialism (lines 64-66). They consider that they go beyond the Professionalism GA, which they see as being basic employability skills which they would expect all learners to have (since the students are already employed) (lines 80-84). They consider that the 3 Es can engage the learners once they have achieved the GAs (College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 72-78). Crucially though, regardless of how staff interpreted the 3 Es, none of the students interviewed had heard of them (appendix HEI Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, line 337; Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, lines 398-400; College A, line 323; College B, line 318).

All lecturing staff interviewed considered that the university should provide clear guidance and training for the partners for the GAs, with the College B lecturers (appendix 5.2.4, lines 94-97) arguing that it would send out a clear message of their importance (appendix 5.2.4, Lines 187-190). College lecturer A contrasted this lack of engagement with another university who works with the college, noting that online training is available for partners and useful (appendix 5.2.3, lines 122-131). College B lecturers stated that they never received any training but would have found it useful in order to understand their purpose as well as how to deliver them at HE level. Confirming this lack of availability of training, a search of the university's teaching guidance and *Technology Enhanced Learning* page found no reference to GAs (HEI, 2017e). Without this they have interpreted them as they see appropriate (College B, appendix 5.2.4, lines 183-203),

leading to inconsistencies in interpretations and practice, reflecting phenomena found by Jones (2009). Therefore, it is clear from the above that the partner FECs have not been supported by the university in terms of training or resources to implement the GAs.

Objective Three: Evaluate the appropriacy and effectiveness of GA facilitation

3.1 *Curriculum: transformational change or minimal compliance?*

The GAs were initially to be fully embedded within six *Champion Programmes* delivered within year-long modules throughout each level (appendix 3.1.3). Since the initial pilot, the Champion Programmes have not been expanded. The Faculty Education Manager considers that a benefit of the GAs has been to:

focus members of staff's minds on the need to do more than teach their subject and that's a good thing...and certainly in some areas it's expanded staff's view of the need to ensure that students are equipped with the skills necessary to go to a wider world.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 17-30).

There is currently no web-based guidance/toolkit available to support embedding the GA into the curriculum, unlike such nationally based resources developed for New Zealand (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Instead, an existing cross-university generic volunteering module was slightly adapted with the purpose of helping courses address the GAs (Employability Group Member, 5.1.2, lines 24-39). However, this was just 15 credits, which contradicted the concurrent HEI policy of moving all awards to 30 credit modules. Additionally, whilst these generic GA based module templates were created for levels 4 and 5, the level 6 module was never completed, though as this should represent the culmination of graduate development, this stage would be considered the most important (Barrie, 2012). Indeed, although according to Employability Group Member the intention was for each course to adapt these templates to ensure [HEI] GA delivery, this was not consistently adhered to (appendix 5.1.2, lines 45-53). In this respect, none of these modules were adapted within the case study school.

The Faculty Education Manager highlights a problem with the GA curriculum where students enter university provision after level 4. According to the training (appendix 3.1.3, slides 21-23), the GAs are supposed to be differentiated at each HE level, in line with expert recommendations such as Spronken-Smith et al. (2013). The Employability Group Member also supports this, saying that each course handbook was supposed to have clear guidance at each level:

Every single subject award handbook was supposed to have that within it. Still is, should have. And that at level 4 there was supposed to be a specific module which the course leader could point to and say that's the main [HEI] Graduate Attributes module.

(appendix 5.1.2, lines, 90-92).

However, no university guidance is given for how to implement the GAs at each level, and no such structure is evident in School of Education handbooks. Furthermore, there is no university guidance on how students entering at levels 5 and 6 should be accommodated in order to achieve the GAs. The Faculty Education Manager considered that the GAs were undermined by the Quality department and senior management accepting mapping GAs to existing local and international provider's foundation programmes. This meant that students only needed to engage with the GAs for a year at university to be deemed as having achieved them to the same extent of others who had done them for three years (Faculty Education Manager, lines 138-148). This approach therefore contrasted with the role of GAs being to foment major curriculum change as advised by Hughes and Barrie's (2010) review of national Australian GA research findings. The acceptance of minimal compliance, where teams could 'mark their own homework', was made clear to university lecturers in the staff training presentation:

Most staff teams felt they had already facilitated to some extent the [HEI] GAs in their programmes, many felt this had previously often been only implicit; they welcomed the opportunity to consider in some depth precisely where the [HEI] GAs sat in their programmes of study and, in particular, how they were assessed.

(appendix 3.1.3, slide 16).

The training presentation (ibid, slides 21-23) gives an outline of examples of how GAs might be embedded at each level of undergraduate study. Ideas included CV writing, engaging in work placement, setting up a new society and volunteering. However, while these may represent opportunities for full-time campus-based students, all of these ideas appear to focus on a narrow understanding of employability being about gaining any job rather than gaining, maintaining or enhancing graduate level employment within a sector as advocated by Butcher et al. (2011). Thus, no guidance is offered relating to activities relevant to those already in full-time employment who wish to enhance their career prospects. Given this low bar of *precursory* (Barry, 2004) entry level basic skills rather than graduate level skills, a common theme throughout the interviews has been to consider that students are already achieving the GAs to a great extent either through work experience, placements or existing course content:

I think it's not much different to what we've always historically done to put across different skills I think. It's just putting a different badge on it, but it gives it a focus I think and I think that is useful.

(Assistant Principal, appendix 5.2.1, lines 174-176).

Similarly, HEI Lecturer A did not consider a need for GAs to alter the curriculum, arguing that they would be covered throughout the course (HEI lecturer, lines 112-117). However, a difficulty with this approach is that it may fail to consider the GAs in terms of graduate level

development; evident throughout the interviews are examples of students 'achieving' aspects of the GAs but without consideration as to whether they actually represent graduate level achievement:

'Do you do any volunteering?' 'I don't do any volunteering.' 'Are you sure about that?' 'Well only helping out at the old people's home on Saturday morning.' 'Well isn't that volunteering?' 'Do you go on the Duke of Edinburgh' 'Oh yes I've led a group...' And I've asked people 'Do they do work?' A lot of students say no they don't work and then when you get chatting they say 'oh when I was at KFC I...' 'You were at KFC?'...now think about what you're doing and how you're doing it and what it means and how you're getting messages across etcetera and then you could fill in the various boxes.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 300-317).

Therefore, a combination of managerial acceptance of minimal compliance through mapping, as well as a failure of management and staff to consider employability in terms of graduate level employment, helped make GA implementation more of a mapping exercise than a genuine renewal of the HEI's curriculum offer.

3.2 Compare teaching and learning strategies for embedding GAs.

The training does not give guidance for partner implementation only stating that work will be done to embed them in the final slides of the presentation (appendix 3.1.3, slides 28-29). GAs are not mentioned in the HEI's *Observation of Teaching Policy, Guidelines for Observers, Observation templates* (HEI, 2016g), *Placement and Practice Policy, Procedure for a Student Appeal*, (HEI, 2015-16 and 2016-17, HEI, 2016b). Similarly, there is no mention *Student Behaviour and Fitness to Study Policy* even though GAs relate to behaviour considered appropriate for the university and employment (HEI, 2016b). Furthermore, they are not mentioned in the *or Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme*, meaning there is no guidance on students can achieve the GAs at all levels when joining the university late, how they should be taught or how previously developed attributes could be mapped/identified (HEI, 2015 and 16, HEI, 2016b).

According to the HEI Outreach Lecturer, GAs were 'relatively straightforward' (appendix 5.15, line 132), though had some difficulty with *Global Citizen* (ibid, lines 141-154). The full-time Award Leader considered that the attributes were being covered within the course, with placement opportunities developing employability as group activities to build up teamwork (HEI

Lecturer, appendix 5.1.6, lines 43-48). The College A HE Course Leader thought that professionalism was a natural part of the course as the students were already in practice (College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 121-123). However, *Lifelong Learning* was a difficult GA to embed, considering that this depended on the individual student's attitude to learning (ibid, lines 103-108). As well as this, teaching critical thinking was considered difficult, especially without exemplars from the university (ibid, lines 127-129): "...it can be difficult to teach it without clear-cut examples, guidance and being able to picture them at different levels.". This view echoes the research of Mulnix (2012), Facione (2015), who argue that critical thinking is difficult to facilitate and therefore has to be carefully and systematically developed by lecturers. The College A HE Manager also considered *Teamwork* difficult due to poor attendance of some students (appendix 5.2.2, lines 136-139). They also do very little direct input on the GAs, aside from an overview at the beginning of the course. Following that they are lecturer claims that they are informally covered throughout the ordinary teaching and learning process, with the lecturer drawing out links to them where relevant (ibid, lines 223-232).

The lecturers at College B consider that the GAs fit in well with the reflective modules in each year of study, but struggle to cover them in depth throughout the rest of the curriculum (College B Course Leader/College B Lecturer, lines 26-31). What is particularly problematic for the College B lecturers is that they also have their own set of 12 attributes at their college, such as Maths and British Values (ibid, lines 107-114). The college expects the HE lecturers follow their own attributes on its lesson plans schemes and observation processes (ibid, lines 143-155) which has so many requirements that they feel it is an exercise in compliance:

A: 7,000 words per session we have to fill in [laughs].

B: Needless to say, it's quite similar most times!

(ibid, lines 152-153).

They considered that their learners already had them for the most part, due to their role as TAs (ibid, lines 315-317), with their role being to raise awareness that they possessed these attributes if necessary. However, these lecturers considered that *Reflection* and *Lifelong Learning* were their focus within their provision (ibid, lines 306-311). This reflects the research of De la Harpe and David (2012) who found that a problem with GAs is that they will be individually interpreted at faculty, school and lecturer level which leads to inconsistent facilitation and development.

None of teaching staff interviewed were hostile to implementing GAs but did have differing opinions in terms of how valuable they thought they were. The HEI Outreach Lecturer considered them to be equally valuable for all students, with part-time ones being able to draw

upon their employment experience (appendix 5.1.5, lines 48-53). The HEI Outreach Lecturer justifies this view by arguing for a broader approach to employability than just finding a job, as advocated by Rust and Froud (2011), in order to help part time students to enhance their careers (ibid, lines 53-61). The Assistant Principal considers part time students may respond to GAs better due to their awareness of the necessity of a broad range of skills for employment:

...our young students might be almost less interested in it than a mature student, a part-time student is perhaps more aware of the benefits of those things you know what graduate attributes represent really... they are more aware of how important it is to develop good communication skills or be innovative and those sorts of things.

(appendix 5.2.1, lines 63-65, 68-70).

However, FE based staff considered that there were limitations in terms of their value to their students. HEI Lecturer referring to students in general thought:

I don't think the [HEI] Graduate Attributes will be something they're particularly getting excited about, I don't think they will necessarily see them as meeting aspirations if I'm honest.

(appendix 5.1.6, lines 14-15).

Furthermore, when considering the part-time students specifically, HEI Lecturer considered that they tended to feel detached from the university experience, *"I don't think they feel like university students"* (appendix 5.1.6, lines 103-104). This represented a clear failure of the GAs to instil the concept that they represented the distinctive experience of the HEI as advocated by Bowden et al. (2000). However, the lecturer also considers that *Lifelong Learning* was not appropriate for full-time students as they had not yet developed their careers whereas part-time learners have become more focused on entering teaching than previously. Overall though, the lecturer thought that GA development had taken place, where they considered many aspects of them fitted in well with the full-time placement modules (ibid, lines 172, 176). College B lecturers considered that their group had developed a strong team-work ethos, but that explicitly referring to the GAs would be patronising for older learners (lines 52-63). Nevertheless, HEI Lecturer A, recalling when they worked for a partner college, outlined how they attempted to implement the GAs:

When there was first a big drive towards it I sort of made sure that the leaflets were given out to the students. I had a dedicated higher education classroom and I had them up in that classroom and when the initiative came out I did make a concerted effort to make sure that our students understood it and roll it throughout the award because obviously when it came out it was very focused on the first year.

(appendix 5.1.6, lines 52-56).

3.3 *Student perceptions of gradueness*

The part-time students considered the degree had a value in terms of a broad approach to employability; gaining, maintaining and enhancing their careers. Gaining a degree opened up job opportunities where this was a requirement, entrance to teacher training or push for higher pay, role and status within their own organisation (College A, appendix 5.3.3, SA, SD, SB, SC, lines 65-75). Two interviewees considered that as mature students they had a much clearer focus than full-time students on how they wanted the qualification to help their career (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SA, SD, lines 36-43). Alternatively, two students (College B, appendix 5.3.4, SB, SD, lines 38-45) expressed a credentialist approach, where Becker (1993) notes education can be driven by the qualification outcome rather than development through educative processes:

...it's getting the piece of paper that I need for them to be able to pay me for the work that I've been currently doing for the last five years at the pay that I'm not getting [laughs].

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SB, lines 38-41).

Other than this, though, their perceptions of employability, moving from passive employees to becoming change agents, tended to be more representative of graduate level expectations than found in the university GA guidance as well as considerations of the staff interviewees:

...when I started I was teaching assistant I didn't have many responsibilities, didn't particularly understand my role, I wasn't very employable ...I've got a better job now that's more secure. I've got more responsibility, I'm given more responsibility at work compared to other people who have the same job role as me and I feel that's because I have the will to express those things employers want to see.

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SF, 249-256).

Two learners considered the ability to engage in and utilise evidence-based practice had improved their standing within the organisation:

I do feel more prepared in the field of work say if I am working in my school and if the head teacher asks me to do research as in can you verify if intervention is actually working.

(Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SD, lines 34-39).

Another has found the confidence to take on a managerial role:

...they asked for non-teachers to join a stronger management team so I've joined that and I've actually got confidence and we have meetings every week. And I've actually had confidence to go in and kind of put some things forward which they're coming into force actually.

(College A, appendix 5.3.3, SB, lines 88-92).

Just two interviewees thought that their role had not changed, one felt that being a volunteer (College A, D, lines 82-52) limited opportunities and the other found that their TA role was so strictly defined at the school that their professional development was being hindered (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SB lines 76-99).

In the questionnaire responses, the majority of the students considered that the GAs mostly represented their view of what it meant to be a graduate, 41/70, 23/70 partially and no respondents considering that they did not resonate at all (appendix 4.7.6). However, the part-time students' views of what it meant to be a graduate showed many differences with the university view as espoused by the GAs and 3 Es. Prior to consideration of GAs, when asked in an open question allowing more than one answer about their perceptions of gradueness (appendix 4.6). There was resonance with 4 of the 6 attributes for part-time learners; *Professional, Communication and Teamwork, Reflective and Critical and Discipline Expert* gaining 35 responses compared with just 1 for *Lifelong Learner* and none for *Global Citizen* (appendix 10.6.1). The full-time group shared their value for *Communication and Teamwork and Discipline Expert*. Similarly, *Global Citizen* and *Lifelong Learner* were not identified as what they perceived to represent gradueness (appendix 4.6.2). Additionally, in relation to the 3 Es, there was only one response, from each of the groups confirming the lack of awareness of these found in the focus groups (appendix 4.6.1; 4.6.2). In both cases *Employability* was considered as a skill gained, with none of the 70 respondents referring to *Enterprise* or *Entrepreneurialism* (4.6.1; 4.6.2) indicating that whilst these may have been priority concepts for the previous VC, they were not considered as being an aspect of education graduates' development. Students' perceptions of gradueness were also compared with the web-based guidance on the GAs, which gives examples of skills within each attribute (4.6.3; 4.6.4). Few student responses corresponded to the HEI's perceptions of graduate skills. The exception to this was motivation, which is given under the *Professional* GA, gaining 12 responses. This suggests that the HEI's definition of skills which contribute to attribute development are not shared by education learners, regardless of their study location or status. This also further evidences the lack of graduate level expectations in the HEI's GA definitions.

There were several attributes which the students strongly valued yet which did not correspond with the University's concept of gradueness (as represented by the GAs and 3 Es). The overwhelming skill that the part-time learners felt they had developed on becoming a graduate was the ability to manage time effectively, with over half (27/51) identifying this from an unprompted open question (4.6.5). This relates to King and Widdowson's (2012) identification

of the need for part-time learners in general having to carefully to manage work, life and study as students in employment. Furthermore, as mostly female students, the identification of time management skills resonates with Finn's (2016) study of female students tending to have a multitude of responsibilities outside their study. Indeed, in comparison, the full-time students did not especially identify this, though both organisation was highlighted by both groups as being an important development (4.6.5; 4.6.6). Another outstanding feature of the responses from the part-time students were words generally relating to 'grit' or 'resilience': commitment (7), dedication (9), determination (4), desire to complete (1), hard-working (6), perseverance (3), resilience (5) in addition to the 10 already mentioned identifying motivation. This is also identified by the full-time students, but proportionately to a much lesser extent with around 9 responses. This indicates that part-time students see gaining a degree to have been both a practical development in terms of time management but also a character-building exercise, valuing this gain more than academic values as articulated by the HEI. This means that, in terms of the group examined, whilst the university's concept of graduateness has some resonance with part-time learners, there are many aspects which they do not relate to and conversely areas important to them which the university has not represented in its GEs and 3 Es such as character development, confidence and resilience. In the follow-up focus groups where perceptions of what it means to be a graduate came to the fore, discussions relating to increased personal confidence and standing within the workplace dominated. In the focus groups, the part-time learners also spoke strongly about how gaining a degree was giving them increased confidence (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB and SD, lines 34-39, Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SB, line 165, College A, appendix 5.3.3, all respondents, lines 32-53, College B, appendix 5.3.4, SA, lines 21-23):

It's given me a lot of personal satisfaction. I feel more confident at work and I think possibly teaching staff take me slightly more seriously than they would have done before.

(Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SC, lines 23-24).

Although confidence is not an [HEI]GA, it was linked to the discipline expertise, professionalism and lifelong learning attributes as they felt that increased professional knowledge was having a positive impact on their role and status within their workplace:

I feel really proud that I've achieved something that I never thought I would. You know we start off with a certain background thinking that things aren't possible, but knowing that you've achieved it gives you a great sense of pride and I've realised how much I love learning and I don't think I'm going to stop there.

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SB, lines 30-33).

This was particularly important for one student who had overcome resentment from colleagues about undertaking a degree (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SE, lines 113-125). When discussing their increased confidence, this was important to several students who had not performed well at school (College B, appendix 5.3.4, SC, SF, lines 52-60). As is characteristic of a course which starts with a Foundation Degree, the entry requirements for the part-time course are lower than typical HE courses, meaning that the cohort will have students with low academic qualifications but relevant work experience. Several learners also considered that HE level study provided a good role model for their own children as well as pupils that they taught at school (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SA, lines 44-66). This again indicates that a key value held by part-time students related to the character building aspect of graduate study rather than specific academic skills or knowledge. As expected for the younger, less likely to be employed full-time learners, time-management was much less of a priority with their primary considerations. Their considerations -communication, teamwork, professionalism and subject knowledge are more closely related to the GAs, confirming the interviewees' views that considered them to be more aligned to the needs of younger full-time learners.

3.4 Awareness of GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8

In terms of cross university awareness of the GAs, the university surveyed its on-campus students in its 2013 Student Viewfinder Survey (Appendix 4.8). The original question is not available so cannot be compared directly with the questionnaire responses. However, these findings did show that a large proportion of students were not aware of the GAs, with fewer than half recognising them in two of the faculties (ibid). The education students were asked about their awareness of the GAs within the questionnaire (Q5, appendix 4.7.1-4.7.3), with additional questions about 3E and [HEI] 8 awareness within the focus group interviews. Most learners (67/70) were aware of the existence of the GAs. Two of the three unaware learners had joined from other universities for the final year. There was also no awareness of the 3 Es or the [HEI] 8 from any of the learner focus groups (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, lines 329-353; College A, appendix 5.3.3, lines 317-332; College B, appendix 5.3.4, lines 317-337). This indicates that within the education courses, students are entirely unaware of two of the HEI's three strategies related to learning, thereby demonstrating defects in the implementation and quality assurance processes. Ostensibly, this would therefore indicate that there is greater GA awareness within the SoE groups than across the university as a whole, but caution must be expressed with this claim given the variables of time likely differences of question.

However, although awareness of their existence was high, ability to recall individual attributes was very limited across all provision; only 10 learners were able to recall all six, 14 unable to recall any of them and the average recollection being less than half (2.6 out of 6 attributes, appendix 4.7.1). The exception to this was College B, which had much higher levels of recognition. However, this data is problematic as, on visiting the location for the interview after the questionnaire, it was discovered that there was a large GA display in the room which may have enabled them to copy down the 'correct' answers. Nevertheless, five respondents did not recollect them all suggesting that not all learners copied, and when questioned during the interview they claimed not to have looked at them (College B, appendix 5.3.4, lines 81-86). Indeed, during the interviews with lecturers and students there did appear to be a stronger awareness of GAs at this institution, suggesting that any copying was limited if at all and that their responses retain a reasonable degree of validity. On average, part-time learners were able to recall twice as many of the GAs (3/1.5) than the full-time learners and still score higher even with College B's responses removed (1.8/1.5). Therefore, part-time learners appear to have more awareness of the GAs even though they have much less direct input from tutors (30

compared with 72 hours per 30 credits), indicating that a more concerted attempt at GA implementation has been made with these learners. There was some variance in levels of recollection amongst respondents, though with such low numbers it is difficult to make claim to statistical significance. However, the GA *Discipline Expert* was recognised the least with only 18 respondents naming it (compared with 26-36 for the others.), being the least recalled across both part-time and full-time learners.

In general, student responses towards the GAs were positive in both questionnaire and focus group data. In the questionnaire, there were 219 comments most of which were positive and just 25 negative (Appendix 4.7.4) an attitude also supported within the student focus group interviews (for example, College B, appendix 5.3.4, lines 313-316). There was concern from part-time students that the GAs were more relevant to younger learners, considering that they were already mostly achieved by those already in professional employment; some interviewees considered the *Lifelong Learner* attribute to be inappropriate for mature students as by returning to education they were automatically achieving this (HEI campus, appendix 5.3.1, lines 283-293; College A, appendix 5.3.3, SC, lines 129-135). This view supports the previous analysis of gradueness (3.3) which suggests that these learners valued character building and time management over some of the university's perceptions of gradueness. This is further supported by examples from Q6 response to GA development:

This course has increased my self-confidence. I am looking towards the future. School are supporting me in the straight into teaching programme.

(Appendix 4.4.4.1).

A common response was that they felt they were already achieving the attributes through employment and the lecturers were just helping them to identify where these were occurring. The exception was the university provision at the Outreach location where interviewees did not consider they had been covered at all in class-time. In line with Oliver's (2013) findings regarding lecturer attitudes, College A students (appendix 5.3.3, lines 159-169) considered that greater linkage to professional standards and the Post Graduate Certificate of Education would be of more use given their career trajectories; professional standards are in place for TAs, Primary and Secondary school teachers and FE based lecturers.

Although strongly advocated by Bosanquet (2010) as a vital GA, Nagarajan and Edwards (2014) highlight that the *Global Citizen* attribute is often inadequately resourced and therefore not developed into meaningful experiences for students. This view was echoed in the questionnaire responses, where many considered this to be outside their normal workplace role

(HEI Campus, appendix 5.3.1, SA, lines 46-48). This was the attribute perceived to be the least developed in the self-assessment by all learners (Appendix 4.7.5) as well as being the most popular one to remove (Appendix 4.7.7). However, rejection of this was by no means universal, with some part-time interviewees considering that it had been useful in terms of broadening their understanding of the world as well as their own work (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SC, lines 313-317; HEI Main Campus, appendix 5.3.1, SA, lines 52-59; College A, appendix 5.3.3, SD, SB, lines 109-115):

I think *Global Citizen* to start with I did struggle to use that one, but I think this year, looking at the module *Doing Education Differently* – different countries and things, that really helped bring out about how you really do need to look at the wider world and how that is impacting on your job role. I suppose that is for any role that you do for any job, you know you brought home how important it is to look at why people are doing the things they do and why you do need to be a global citizen today.

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SF, lines 179-184).

Global Citizen has had a big impact for me personally, understanding wider issues and being able to filter, they all filter into each other, but within my own job role it's really opened my eyes up to how different teaching methods and styles and differences in individuals all of this needs to be touched upon in order to get the best out of the individuals so yes I found it really beneficial.

(College B, *ibid*, SA, lines 190-195).

The students identified *Discipline Expertise* and literacy development as attributes gained from their degree (Campus, appendix 5.3.1, lines 18-25; Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, lines 166-169). Development of this attribute was linked to increased authority at work, which supports Willingham's (2008) findings that core knowledge empowers higher level skills development:

I've more up to date knowledge of education than people that I work with who have been doing it for twenty years. It's really good.

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SB lines 61-64).

I think, whether it's the people I'm working with this year I don't know but I feel that they've listened to me a little more than they used to because I've obviously got the underpinning knowledge to back up any suggestions I make rather than plucking them out of thin air.

(Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SC, lines 26-29).

...much higher up people come to us for our opinions and to ask what's happening at the moment with that. You're the first port of call rather than the head who should be!

(College B, appendix 5.3.4, SB, lines 211-214).

The interviewees considered that the *Reflective and Critical* attribute had been developed on the course. This was generally considered to have had a positive impact on their employment

situations (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, all students, lines 121-130; Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SB, SD, SE, lines 170-200; College A, appendix 5.3.3, SD, 339-440):

I think especially with Doing Education Differently, where we could look at other countries how they manage things I thought that was really beneficial for me, because then you could be a bit more critical of education here and you know why do we get it right in some places, why do we get it wrong. How does policy change, what, how that impacts on work. That'll give us a really good background knowledge into what decisions are made for schools and why governments make decisions.

(Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SE, 172-177).

However, for one learner academic development had made them aware of the limitations of the role, making them want to leave their role as TA (Outreach SB, lines 101-105).

Just as lecturers have been encouraged to map the attributes rather than use them to frame their curriculum, the College A HE Manager considers that students have taken a similar approach of minimal compliance:

– I think they just see it as a paper exercise to be honest. I don't think they've got that necessarily inner drive to think that I must develop those six areas and I will be a rounded professional at the end of it. I think they're maybe seeing it as a tick list of criteria.

(appendix 5.2.2, lines 48-55).

The student focus groups demonstrate inconsistencies in terms of the importance lecturers placed on GAs as well as means by which they were taught. Without any clear guidance from the university of the school, lecturers have been able to take their own approach to GA facilitation. Overall, there appears to have been a more explicit coverage of the GAs within the partner FECs than university provision. At the main campus provision, coverage was considered to be very much implicit and embedded:

I think it's like a hidden agenda to be honest, I think it's like a hidden tick list and you're not actually aware you're achieving these until [researcher] would mention it would be a good point to mention in your assignment the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and I think oh hang on I've done that and I've done that.

(Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB, lines 63-66).

I would say it's embedded in the curriculum and you throughout, during the course you develop those skills. I didn't enrol in this course with the aim of becoming a more globalised citizen but I am now more aware that I can because of this knowledge I developed.

(ibid, SD, lines 68-70).

Nevertheless, this was different to their experience at the partner FECs, where most of the interviewees found that they had been explicitly taught through direct reference to them in

reflective modules (Main campus, all interviewees, appendix 5.3.1, lines 85-96). However, one student considered that they had not been mentioned at all at their previous partner FEC (ibid, SB, line 97). The university students at the Outreach campus did not consider that the GAs had been explicitly covered at all as students entering university provision at this stage had not heard of the GAs before (Outreach, SE; SB, lines 216 and 218). This means in respect to these students, the university may have been failing to meet its pledge with regard to GA development, though due to their broad definition, the HEI could argue that they had been implicitly developed. The HEI main campus students agreed that the course was covering the GAs, though not always explicitly apparent during teaching they became more aware of this when directed to reflect on them in assignments (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB, lines 63-76). These students were positive about how they had been implemented in class, with comments such as:

...the attribute then may have developed in one assignment might be different than yours so that's very individual opportunity for if it comes from your reflection then I think it's been well applied.

(ibid, SD, lines 112-114).

The group felt they had different experiences of the GAs with some having them explicitly taught throughout, including giving consideration of them in assessment and another provided not placing much emphasis on them (ibid, all interviewees, lines 89-97).

Objective Four Analyse the role of GAs in a Quality Enhancement process

4.1 GA assessment

The university Senior Manager considered that GA assessment was important for the university:

What was very striking about the Australian model was well the fact that all Australian universities have to do it, I think as part of their funding agreement don't they, is the very clear statement that if you don't assess them then students don't take them seriously (Senior Manager, lines 24-26)...so the message that Barrie and, we took very seriously as a university if we don't take on board evidence based practice and what they were saying is assessment is key. Then we took the opportunity at that point to use that evidence from Australia to say ok we'll try and embed them in the assessment process as part of this overall process which I think theoretically is right...

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 115-118).

The value of GA assessment was also reiterated in staff training presentation (appendix 3.1.3, slide 8) which asserted that: *"If GAs are not assessed they will not be taken seriously by students or teachers"*. Furthermore, it was made clear that they should not be seen as additional or optional, but as a core aspect of university provision:

GAs are deemed to be important insofar as they should make clear to a range of stakeholders what are the core learning outcomes of a university education: this transparency will be increasingly important in the post-2012 competitive landscape.

(appendix 3.1.3, slide 8, 2013).

The intention was to record and assess GA achievement using an online portfolio where students would 'badge and tag' experiences where they had developed GAs (appendix 3.1.3, slide 7). This would be led by the six *Champion Programmes*, though rather than demonstrating how GAs could be implemented in challenging circumstances, they tended to be in areas already embedding employability strongly in their curriculum:

...the courses that came forward to be champions were courses that already did a lot of that anyway, so drama for example were very much engage practically in performance and direction and so it wasn't hard for them to do that.

(Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 45-48).

The intention was to enable students to keep record of their development, enable monitoring from lecturers and also provide evidence for employers and the government of achievement. However, in spite of these efforts, without a direct connection to the existing [HEI] 8, the GAs

were not firmly integrated into assessment practice from their very inception. In contradiction to the training slide's claim that they represent core learning outcomes, the GAs are not linked to whole course aims or module assessment learning outcomes. Instead, all learning outcomes are required to be mapped to the [HEI] 8 forming a mandatory aspect of the university module descriptors. Module descriptors are the publicly available document for each module which are required to be linked in every module handbook as well as each module's Virtual Learning Environment. However, despite their importance, until May 2017 there was no public online presence for the [HEI] 8, or how they are defined at each level, so it is unsurprising that neither students nor FEC lecturers had heard of them. In May 2017, without consultation, the university released an optional set of generic assessment criteria at each level which could be used by any award (HEI, 2017f). These focus on the [HEI] 8, using them as the central criteria, with grading dependent upon the extent to which these are achieved. Additionally, new assessment criteria have been developed:

The University's generic assessment criteria draw together the university eight learning outcomes into three groups and adds a further criterion relating to professional requirements.

With the addition of an extra criteria, it is not clear whether this will result in a name change to make the [HEI] 8 more numerate. Nevertheless, there is no mention throughout either the explanation or the criteria themselves of the GAs, indicating that they have no formal role in the university's summative assessment process.

This weak link between GAs and assessment was compounded by difficulties facing some of the *GA Champion* awards. GAs were embedded into the assessments of the six *Champion* programmes, however the Quality Manager's experience of the way that this process had been implemented resulted in lower attainment. Firstly, there was inconsistency in assessment practice standard policy was to have one assessment per 15 credits, but for the GA portfolio the chair of the implementation group said that they had to have five or six, "...so *where was the rationale behind that? It was nonsense.*" (appendix 5.1.4, lines 255-256). These multiple assessments lead to higher failure rates:

The worst ones were actually the ones where we've had to embed them into a module and we've had big problems with those modules. You know we had huge failure rates in business because of graduate attributes...regulations not talking to people who were implementing this.

(appendix 5.1.4, lines 237-240).

The Senior Manager concedes that the link between GAs and assessments may not be effective: "*I'm not sure if it's working...I think a weakness of it is I'm not sure the students are*

aware [of a link between GAs and HEI Eight], some are I think." (appendix 5.1.1, lines 119 and 124).

This weak link between GAs and assessment was further compounded by a problematic online portfolio system (Quality Manager, lines 241-244). Described as an '*absolute nightmare*', it was also only available on campus, meaning that partners were excluded from a leading part of GA implementation (appendix 5.1.4, lines 262-264). The Quality Manager thinks that it was restrictive as it encouraged learners to only think about the GAs in specific modules rather than holistically throughout the whole programme. This view echoes Barrie's (2006) assertion that GAs should not be covered separately in a *complementary* approach, but holistically within a *translation* or *enabling* approach. They state that the online system has now been abandoned and the university as a whole no longer uses Pebblepad. According to the Quality Manager, these flagship modules had problems caused by failure to amalgamate the [HEI] 8, GAs and 3 Es into one set of assessment attributes: "*...we had over 50% failure rate on one module which meant that they couldn't progress*". Without this, actually trying to assess them all limited assessments to surface level coverage:

I think what it might have done is actually constrain some of the developments we had because we were trying to force in graduate attribute sort of language at the same time as trying to hit the learning outcomes. I think we'd have been a lot better if we'd have redesigned our learning outcomes which were developed from, because we had this eight plus two model, if we'd have had those redesigned where we were looking at graduate attributes I think that would have been a lot better. Whereas as it was we were trying to map onto two or three different things.

(appendix 5.1.4, lines 45-51).

So when GAs were implemented, the [HEI] 8 remained in place for assessment, but although the training and Personal Tutor guidance states that GAs should be assessed, there is no clear guidance as to how this should be achieved: "*...nobody quite knows whether we should be going just for the [HEI] Graduate Attributes or the 3 Es or the 8 or the 8 plus 2 or a combination of all of them.*" (Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 99-101). The HEI Outreach Lecturer also highlights problems with the lack of guidance, arguing that the GAs required a maturity model to show how students should develop at each level. Although this was the original intention according to the training, no guidance was given on these and it was not made a validation requirement. The HEI Outreach Lecturer claims that he spoke to management about developing this approach, but it was not pursued (appendix 5.1.5, lines 36-42). The Faculty Education Manager (appendix 5.1.3, lines 201-210) considers that the acceptance of mapping rather than clear assessment of the GAs has been a critical failing in their implementation,

meaning that it allowed both students and areas of the university to continue existing practice without engaging with the GAs:

I don't think anybody actually assesses the [HEI] Graduate Attributes per se, nor could you say that a student could pass their degree but fail the [HEI] Graduate – the other way round. And again I think that could be seen as a weakness in that if we're going to do a job properly because students only really start paying attention when you start talking about the assessment so too if the [HEI] Graduate Attributes were assessed then students would pay a lot more attention to them. It's beneficial to them, but they don't see the benefits until after they've graduated unfortunately so if we made it compulsory it would be better to do that and again that was a part of the project that we didn't get round to doing to finishing and it's almost died a death. Like I say there were some parts of the university which never fully engaged. It was never really assessed I don't think, though it should be.

However, whilst accepting some difficulties that some awards may face, the Faculty Education Manager considers that GAs should apply to all students (Faculty Education Manager, lines 113-118).

The Quality Manager argues that the GAs should be integrated with the [HEI] 8 assessment skills. This is because at the moment there are too many skills/attributes to consider. Furthermore, they consider that the GAs as they stand are so broad that any student can achieve them to some extent without specific consideration: “*I think it's become a bit of a tick box thing now.*” (appendix 5.1.4, line 97). The Assistant Principal also thinks that GAs could be linked to learning outcomes but is concerned that this could make them over-complex (appendix 5.2.1, lines 268-270). As well as this, the Assistant Principal does not think a separate, additional portfolio would be appropriate given the time pressures faced by part-time students; an optional approach where some could achieve more than a degree would be prejudicial against part time employed learners who would not have the time to complete them (ibid, lines 276-282). Indeed, although the training stated that assessment of GAs was essential, there was no corresponding requirement to reflect GAs in module learning outcomes; the Quality department instead insist that learning outcomes demonstrate how they meet the '[HEI] 8'. This lack of connection with learning outcomes has a negative impact how they are perceived by tutors and students, effectively downgrading their status:

I think we assess to see if they've utilised them, but I think that's where it stops. I don't think we really look at assessing the depth of their application and understanding of it...they like to focus on the actual learning outcomes rather than explicitly the [HEI] GAs. So often it ends a little bit of a tag on the end from the students' perspective.

(College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 272-286).

HEI Outreach Lecturer argues that GAs should be clearly integrated into the assessment processes. In particular, *Teamwork* is a GA and yet group assessments are not mandatory

aspects of course curricula (appendix 5.1.5, lines 363-374). College A lecturer concurs, arguing that clear linkage of the GAs and assessments would help to raise their profile with the students (ibid, lines 157-159). Indeed, GAs are, however, part of the Personal Tutor policy, with one of the tutor's role being to (HEI, 2015c, p.3):

Assess your progress towards achieving the [HEI] graduate attributes, which will make you ready for the world of work.

Lecturers are therefore expected to regularly discuss and track GAs progress within their role as personal tutor (HEI, 2015c, p.6):

Where appropriate to the level of the award, monitoring that the student is making satisfactory progress towards the achievement of the [HEI] Graduate.

Content of tutorials: Although this may vary between discipline areas and levels, it should be made explicit to students through specific statements written in handbooks. It is suggested that where this is relevant, a discussion around elements of each student's engagement with the [HEI] Graduate curriculum delivery should be a regular topic of discussion.

However, given that it is the [HEI] 8 rather than the GAs which are tied to learning outcomes and that awards are able to be validated without GAs differentiated across award levels, it is not clear how student GA progress can be measured; there is no guidance on what is deemed satisfactory or what the consequences if progress is judged unsatisfactory, no evidence of standardisation or moderation of these attributes' development across the award. In further guidance relating to the tutee's development, the tutor is to 'assess the progress' towards GA achievement through Personal Development Planning. The examples of how this might be achieved are assisting CV writing, signposting to career advice and giving a reference, actions which do not relate to skills enhancement let alone graduate level development (HEI, 2015c). The guide then gives an example of how a tutorial to discuss evidencing the GAs, but then does not illustrate how this can be achieved:

Student D is in the final year of her degree programme, the Personal Tutor is going to discuss how to evidence the [HEI] Graduate Attributes with the tutee, during the discussion the tutee speaks about her concerns about employment and careers options- the Personal Tutor refers the student to the Careers Centre who offer her assistance with writing a CV, interviewing skills and job searches.

(HEI, 2015c, p.21).

As with the earlier guidance, signposting the tutee to the careers centre and helping to write a CV is not evidence of developing graduate level skills. Finally, the guidance appears to be incorrect when guiding students as to what they can expect from their tutor (ibid p.7):

How to develop your [HEI] graduate attributes such as team working and technical skills.

'Technical skills' may possibly relate to the *Discipline Expertise* graduate attribute but is not a term found anywhere in the document search. It is also not clear why team working alone and none of the other skills are specifically mentioned within the document.

The students interviewed considered that the GAs were not directly assessed on the BA, though some had experienced some informal assessment at one of the partner FECs (that does not deliver the BA) during their Foundation Degree at their partner college. Campus students thought that GAs needed to be clearly stated within the learning outcomes otherwise they would not focus on them (Campus, appendix 5.3.1, SD, lines 224-225). Otherwise, there was generally a lack of enthusiasm for formal assessment of the GAs, for several reasons. Firstly, several respondents thought that it would be patronising or unsuitable to be measuring their professionalism as employed mature students (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SB, SD, lines 286-295), viewing this to be about basic employability skills as expounded by the HEI rather than higher level ones appropriate for graduate level employment. However, they did concede it might have a place for younger full-time students (ibid, SC, SB, SD, SE, lines 318-327; SB, line 293) or as a self-assessment reflective tool at the beginning and end of the course (ibid, SC, SD, SE, lines 488-503; ibid, SD, SE, lines 488-499). Several students argued that this was important as GAs should be a means of self-identifying personal development needs (Campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB, SD lines 112-118, Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SE, line 292, College B, appendix 5.3.4, SA, lines 203-206): "*I think it's too personal on this course to link them to the learning outcomes of the assignment.*" (ibid, SB, lines 290-291). All College B students favoured informal approach through the reflective portfolio modules (ibid, line 296). One student doubted whether they could be quantifiably measured in a valid way (Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SB, lines 476-487). Finally, some students considered them to be superfluous, arguing that completing the degree was sufficient evidence of achievement (Campus, appendix 5.3.1, SC, lines 231-234).

4.2 GAs feedback

Within the HEI's assessment policy, under *Seven Principles of Effective Feedback*, GAs are only mentioned once, appended, within the 18 pages of guidance:

Be developmental, progressive and transferable to new learning contexts

The dialogue and understanding that emerges from the feedback should be applicable both to the current debate and also contain elements that are able to be translated to a range of current and future learning situations. As the student progresses through their learning journey they should be developing a more sustained and sophisticated approach to their learning, culminating in the expression of the graduate attributes appropriate to their level and subject specialism.

(HEI, 2016c, p17).

However, there is no mention of GA guidance for partners in the *Monitoring of Assessment in Partner Institutions* (2016d). Furthermore, there is no guidance given on what feedback would be appropriate for GA development or criteria upon which any feedback should be based. Most of the student focus groups did not consider that they had received formal feedback on their GA process (Campus, all learners, lines 189-196). One student thought that they had been mentioned in feedback, though this was disputed and none considered that they had received detailed guidance on the extent to which they had been achieved (College A, appendix 5.3.3, SA, SB, SD, lines 197-205). Although sceptical of whether feedback on GAs could be given as a quantitative, they do consider that GAs should be explicitly mentioned in formal assessment feedback:

- C: It's in the module handbook, but not in the learning outcomes.
- D: So does it really matter if we put it there or not? It is not in the learning outcomes.
- B: That's probably why we're not so aware of it. I was focusing on the assignment like outcomes like rather than achieving the graduate attributes.
- D: ...Yes, but when your feedback comes as in oh you have put many apostrophes, it doesn't mention anything about the attributes throughout the whole entire year.

(Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB, SC, SD, lines 216-218).

Therefore, the lack of GA based feedback reported by the students undermined their perceived importance as identified in Barrie's studies which found that what is not assessed is not valued by learners (Barrie, 2004; Barrie, 2006; Barrie, 2012).

4.3 GAs and Quality documents/policies

Although the QAA have not visited the university for a major report since before the GAs were implemented (QAA, 2010), they visited College A shortly after their launch (QAA, 2013). This review highly praises the use of the [HEI] Graduate for developing employability, an issue which was a key theme of the inspection:

The College has an effective structure in place to support and promote employability for students, and this is backed by the requirements of its awarding body for the '[HEI] Graduate' attributes to be embedded within any course undergoing validation....Students are highly regarded by their employers who value the quality and relevance of the education being delivered at the college. Similarly, students have become more confident in their work as a result of what they have learned at the college.

(ibid, p.3).

The QAA (ibid) also considered that the attributes were an in-depth part of teaching and learning, a consideration not fully supported by the staff interviews:

5.2 There is a structure for supporting and promoting employability, with key senior personnel working closely with higher education and careers staff both at the college and the awarding bodies...The attributes are heavily focused on making students employable and the College is ensuring that the attributes are built into its teaching and learning.

(ibid, p.43).

However, whilst the QAA may have found encouraging evidence of the GAs being embedded into curricula, the role of GAs within quality assurance and enhancement procedures appears to be limited. The GAs do not feature in key publicly available quality policies and procedures (available for 2015-16 and 2016-17; HEI, 2016b). There is no mention of GAs in the 2015-18 *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy* (HEI, 2015d), *Academic Award Regulations or General Regulations for Students* (HEI, 2016e). GAs are explicitly mentioned once within the *HEI Students' Charter*, being given as a responsibility of the student rather than a pledge from the university: "As a student you will...play an active role in your learning by committing yourself to acquire the attributes of the '[HEI] Graduate'" (HEI, 2013a; 2015b; 2016a, p.2). Nevertheless, the GAs are not specifically mentioned as responsibilities of staff or the university to deliver, though some aspects of them are alluded to, claiming that the university will: "Equip you with the skills, attributes and capabilities to enhance your future career and lifelong learning." (HEI, 2013a; 2015b; 2016a, p.2). Nevertheless, by making this a student responsibility for acquisition, it contradicts the advertising campaign, online presence and 2011-12 Annual Review (HEI, 2012) where the GAs are described alternately as a pledge or promise from the university to students and employers (TV advertisement, appendix 3.2.7; 2011-12 Annual review, HEI, 2012;

website, HEI 2017a). This student responsibility also contradicts key principles of student charters as outlined by Aldridge and Rowley (2011) that statements of university commitments should be transparently measurable – something that the GAs lack of connection with assessment are not. However, in a contradictory approach to GAs the 3 Es are explicitly promised as a university responsibility: “Your university will: Produce graduates with subject specific knowledge and skills who are employable, enterprising and entrepreneurial.” (HEI, 2013a; 2015b; 2016a, p.3). Therefore, given that FE partner staff and students are unaware of the 3 Es (as discussed previously in section 3.4), the HEI is not fulfilling its promise regarding its commitments to the 3 Es.

The Quality Manager notes that from a Quality point of view, the QAA requirements should underpin any GAs:

Graduate attributes are often dictated in many respects by our framework. So you know we have a framework which we have to follow in terms of QAA where we have certain types of behaviour at certain levels. Therefore, those in many respects are your graduate attributes... so your level descriptors from the QAA are really what graduates should do.

(appendix 5.1.4, lines 24-45).

Indeed, given the emergence of updated subject benchmarks from the QAA (QAA, 2015), from a national standpoint, these represent the expectations for any education course and therefore have greater importance than any university policy. Similarly, the HEI employability strategy *The Student Enterprise and Employability* (HEI, 2009) predates the GAs and 3 Es, but has not been updated since to incorporate them or changes to the labour market or subsequent benchmarks. The lack of renewal process within the HEI's GAs therefore mean that they are failing to keep up with sector expectations, contrary to the guidance of Rust and Froud (2011).

The Faculty Education Manager identified a key problem with GA implementation was an inconsistent approach being taken at programme validation where on-campus *Champion Programmes* were expected to fully embed GAs whilst partners could just map them:

I said to them...you've got to undertake the [HEI] Graduate Attributes otherwise as they graduate from you the exact same programme is different if you like to a student here and yet you've done exactly the same programme. And all they did was to map their current curriculum onto the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, so they simply said we do that in that module, we do that there that's fine it's all done. But we weren't allowed to do that on campus. So we had to actually build activities and specific items in the agenda curriculum in order to say most definitely this is something very different from what we would normally do in the curriculum.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 151-158).

This management decision enabled nominal GA achievement without curriculum change, meaning that students completing only one or two years at the university would still achieve them (ibid, lines 160-161). The Faculty Education Manager considers that this undermines the value of the GAs: ‘...it demeans to me the fact that you’ve got something distinctive on campus.’ (ibid, line 170). The HEI Outreach Lecturer concludes that the mapping process for both the GAs and the [HEI] 8 is now a paper exercise for all programmes rather than having a meaningful impact on curriculum design, considering this to be a missed opportunity. Indeed, supporting this view, the Assistant Principal at College A states that GAs were not mentioned at a recent validation event (appendix 5.2.1, line 317-323).

However, GAs are part of the Annual Monitoring process (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 290-291), though the Quality Manager considers that while these show GA coverage, they do not particularly articulate graduate level development:

- I: How does it know that this pledge is upheld?
A: Because they are so broad that you can’t not do them.

(appendix 5.1.4, line 301).

The Quality Manager, with Annual Monitoring responsibilities did not consider this to be a meaningful process with regard to GAs, considering them to be poorly completed and lacking in focus on graduate level skills (appendix 5.1.4, lines 182-186): “And I’ve never seen any filled in very well. And I saw 110 reports last year!” (ibid, line 417). This is unsurprising as guidance for this is limited to two sentences within the ten-page Annual Monitoring Guide:

2.14 Section 10: [HEI] Graduate Attributes

This section is for you to reflect on how successfully the [HEI] Graduate Attributes have been embedded into the curriculum, and how this has contributed to student performance. You should comment on each attribute, and you should consider how the team is planning to develop the attributes further.

(HEI, 2016f, p.6).

This coverage appears to consider the GAs as a separate entity, whereas a more holistic approach could have asked for them to be considered throughout other sections such as teaching strategies, assessment, placement, work-based learning and employer engagement. Given this lack of direction, HEI Lecturer A thought that annual monitoring was more of a compliance activity regarding GAs than about demonstrating graduate level skills development:

I think if there was nothing in there, there would be, you would be kind of sent away to put something in it nowadays, but I wouldn’t say any measurement of quality is done to be honest.

(appendix 5.1.6, lines 177-188).

A similar approach is taken with the Module Monitoring form where GAs form a single box to complete rather than being considered throughout the teaching and learning cycle. Furthermore, since GAs are not part of student surveys or assessments, the only evidence for this section is the Module Leader's viewpoint, which the Quality Manager considers to be 'a low bar' for compliance (appendix 5.1.4, line 319). Indeed, HEI Outreach Lecturer confirms that there is no attempt to measure GA provision at the college (HEI Outreach Lecturer, appendix 5.1.5, lines 144-153) nor incorporate them within their college's quality framework (ibid, lines 323-355). They do complete the GA section of Annual Monitoring (HEI, 2016f), though have never received feedback from the university regarding the effectiveness of their implementation (HEI Outreach Lecturer, appendix 5.1.5, lines 344-348). College B acknowledged that GAs were part of the quality process insofar as they had to comment on them each year at annual monitoring. However, they did not see this as a developmental process, both in general as well as relating to the GAs in particular. They argued that the process they are told that they have completed the form incorrectly but did not feel that they had guidance on how they should do it and also considered that any feedback they gave was not responded to (College B, appendix 5.2.4, lines 281-295). Therefore, in terms of partnership provision, although the HEI training stated that Programme Advisors would take a key role in GA implementation (appendix 3.1.3, slide 29), there is no system enabling this to take place. GAs do not form any part of their PA report template and there is no specific guidance for PAs regarding how they should help partners embed the attributes (HEI, 2016b).

4.4 GAs and Feedback from Students

None of the students reported having being asked about developing or renewing the GAs (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, lines 258-276). The Senior Manager (appendix 5.1.1, line 287) notes that theoretically students could complain if they felt that they had not developed the attributes, though the Quality Manager states that this has never happened in their experience (appendix 5.1.4, lines 361-362). The Assistant Principal at College A (appendix 5.2.1, lines 258-262) thought that GA implementation was inconsistent within the organisation, being dependent on the extent to which individual managers or lecturers implemented, a feature commonly found in failed implementation in the national surveys by Hughes, Barrie and Smith (2010) and Spronken-Smith et al. (2013). This meant that the college has no record of the extent to which individual students were progressing with their attributes (Assistant Principal, appendix 5.2.1,

line 265). However, the Assistant Principal was concerned that GAs should not be implemented as an additional portfolio/assessment as that part-time employed learners would not have time to engage in extra work (ibid, lines 276-280).

4.5 *GA Evaluation*

The HEI does not appear to have a systematic approach to evaluating the extent of implementation or impact of the GAs. Although the launch of the [HEI] Graduate was considered to be the most important aspect of the 2011-12 review (HEI, 2012), they were not mentioned in the VC's 2012-13 introduction, with GAs only being referred to in relation to the HEI's recent television advertising campaign (HEI 2014a, p5). Instead, the focus was on the creation of new international partnerships, yet no connection was made between these and the *Global Citizen* GA indicating that they were already moving of the agenda of the Senior Management Team. This lack of prominence and failure to connect with new policies indicates a lack of the long-term focus on policy required for successful GA implementation (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). An initial 'Evaluation of Progress' in the staff training presentation (appendix 3.1.3) gave details of how many staff and learners were involved in the pilot, but no feedback regarding its initial impact, but made no attempt to demonstrate a causal link, or even correlation, between the policy and its stated aim of boosting employability ratings. The document search has found only one evaluation of GA development within the HEI Annual Reviews, taking place in the 2013-14 Annual Review (HEI, 2014a). Indeed, this is the only evaluation of the University's 2012-17 plan within any of the annual reviews to date. The review considers that progress against its target of ensuring that the GAs are delivered in all undergraduate programmes has been 'good' – the highest rating out of four levels of achievement:

The [HEI] Graduate was mapped against all on-campus undergraduate awards for commencement in the 2012/13 academic year. Mapping against all off-campus undergraduate [sic] will be delivered by the end of the academic year 2012-13.

(HEI, 2014a, p.4).

However, this evaluation process is not transparent, with no information provided regarding upon what criteria such ratings were achieved or who made the judgement. Furthermore, this statement shows how mapping of GAs is therefore considered synonymous with delivery of GAs as well as how partnership arrangements were considered less of a priority to on campus delivery. This also show how partnership arrangements are behind those on campus. With no

further review, it is not clear from the documentation available whether all off-campus awards were mapped against the GAs.

GAs were included for one year only in the Student Viewfinder Survey (appendix 4.1.2), which is a feedback survey for on-campus undergraduate students not taking the National Student Survey. The Senior Manager acknowledges that this was question limited and did not consider development, achievement or satisfaction with delivery of them (appendix 5.1.1, lines 285-287). The results of this were mixed with overall 'awareness' of GAs being 51%, consisting of 59.9% for level 4 and 41.1% for level 5. Awareness was also inconsistent across faculties, between 43.6 and 66.5% (appendix 4.1.2). This shows that even with such a low bar as 'awareness', rather than evidence of in depth understanding or development no faculty area was able to achieve over two thirds recognition. The Faculty Education Manager notes that the survey demonstrated that the pledge made to students guaranteeing GA acquisition was not being upheld:

Well only 40% of [a Faculty] even know about them, so how can they end up with all of the attributes and say 'we've done all that' when they don't even know what they're doing?

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 295-296).

The Senior Manager thought that awareness was around 70-80% but also acknowledges that testing awareness this was no guarantee that they 'were getting what they are paying for' (appendix 5.1.1, lines 285-287). However, in spite of the failure to achieve close to full awareness, this question was deleted from subsequent surveys. The Quality Manager considers that this was due to management moving on to other policy priorities (appendix 5.1.4, lines 361-362).

The university has introduced a new module survey, Evasys. Although the Senior Manager thinks that GAs should be included here, they are not mentioned in this new module evaluation:

Now you mention it, and I have seen the survey tool. Yes, I think it should be in there. If we're serious about continuing with it then it should be embedded in most of our survey instruments otherwise how do you know how you're doing within it.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 308-310).

This means that currently none of the student feedback mechanisms have any questions relating to GAs, thereby contradicting O'Connor, Lynch and Owen's (2011) and Su's (2014) advocacy of the importance of using the student voice in GA development. On an institutional level, this demonstrates how a policy has been imposed by senior management without an ongoing mechanism to gain feedback on its effectiveness from the students for whom it is

supposed to benefit. Without this, any developments to the policy will be based on managerial perceptions of need rather than the actual experiences and feedback from the stakeholders affected thereby demonstrating a lack of critical engagement with policy development.

4.6 GA Development and Renewal

All of the interviewees considered that current GAs policy and practice should be changed or developed. The Quality Manager considers that they are too fixed, not giving subject areas enough flexibility to adapt them to the specific needs of their learners:

And although they should have been perhaps tailored, we haven't been allowed to tailor them enough. Because we've been told 'no these are the ones and you map on to it' not 'these are the umbrellas, you use it to develop courses'.

(appendix 5.1.4, lines 196-197).

This approach is found in the [HEI] 'Eight plus Two' model where areas may add two extra skills which they feel are particularly suited to their area. The HEI Outreach Lecturer considers that they cover most key areas, though considers Global Citizen to be problematic. However, rather than abandoning this the HEI Outreach Lecturer considers that it should be covered more effectively due to the Brexit vote:

We're going to be even more isolated, all our potential employees are going to be more isolated in the global market if we don't place a higher value on global awareness, global understanding and understanding of other cultures, functioning, what skills and attributes you need to function in another culture.

(appendix 5.1.5, lines 74-77).

Similarly, the HEI Outreach Lecturer considers that entrepreneurialism, whilst not being obviously connected to many areas is also important in terms of changing the ways that employees view their outlook on work in order to make changes (HEI Outreach Lecturer, lines 98-112). However, this definition is closer to what Sewell and Dacre-Poole (2010) term intrapreneurialism – the ability to be innovative within an institution. The Employability Group Member, whilst considering the GAs to be mostly relevant, argues that the 3 Es are problematic, instead proposing that the implicit reference to ethics found in *Global Citizen* should be further emphasised (appendix 5.1.2, lines 229-234). Additionally, they argue for an increased focus on building self-confidence due to the non-traditional background of many of the HE students (appendix 5.1.2, lines 244-256). This aligns with the expressed value of gaining a degree from the part-time students' questionnaire responses where confidence and character development was seen as key personal developments (See 3.4). College A lecturer A considers the GAs generally appropriate for their students, emphasising the value of *Reflective and Critical* in their development. They also considered that *Global Citizen* inconsistently delivered, with more emphasis on this in the Education course compared with the Early Childhood Studies one. The

lecturer thought that *Lifelong Learner* needed to be articulated differently so that its focus was away from achieving the degree to broader career development (College A Lecturer, appendix 5.2.3, lines 75-81). However, the College B lecturers thought that the GAs lacked relevance for the learners found within their provision, where they considered it a distraction for mature, employed learners (ibid, lines 264-268).

This research has not found any evidence of strategies to renew and develop graduate attributes within the HEI. No lecturers or students have been asked to give feedback on them and there are no online opportunities to do this on the GA webpage (College B, lines 213-224). The college-based interviewees considered that an opportunity to contribute would be useful (College B, lines 223-224). Course evaluations are based on the National Student Survey so do not ask about GAs. Similarly, neither Student/Staff Representative meetings nor module evaluations ask about GAs. Interviews with Senior Managers revealed that there does not appear to be any process for their renewal and there is doubt about their continuation:

And I asked [Senior Manager] a couple of weeks ago whether the [HEI] Graduate Attributes were still something that we were supposed to be talking about, were still relevant and [they] said: "Well I haven't been told they weren't" so that's where we are.

(Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 130-132).

However, as illustrated previously, the GAs are gradually losing significance within the HEI, in terms of their online and documentary presence. The Faculty Education Manager notes how they were part of the departing VC's *Designing the Future Plan* (HEI, 2016), but have not been mentioned in any new documentation. This appeared to suggest a radical change of policy which would entail a 'degree plus' approach where the GAs would be assessed separately by employers. The Faculty Education Manager is disparaging of this approach for its reliance on unqualified business people assessing:

One of the things that bothered me about the design the future [the new university plan] ...[was that] the [HEI] Graduate would have two – it was published at one point on the website – would have two elements to their award. They would have the academic element...where they would get their degree and they would have something else that was assessed by business - a certificate or licence or whatever that was assessed by business...but you can't have a situation where you have people in business...coming in and assessing students. I mean what happens if somebody gets their degree...and failed their graduate bit because a boss says you're not employable. That student then is never going to get a job or you could have the opposite situation where a student gets a 2:2 degree for example but five star graduate something or other – it's completely incongruous.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 214-227)

Since this policy disappeared from the website, there has been no publicly available evidence of it returning in any form.

The Senior Manager is not aware of any changes or having been asked to give feedback on them (appendix 5.1.1, lines 328-339), but strongly supports their continuation:

Although we're a 'Connected University', globalisation is about connectedness, I think it does fit, you know. So yes I'd hope it has a long future with the recognition that things do change.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 336-344).

The Faculty Education Manager (lines 61-69) agrees that the current GAs should be retained, considering that adding to them could make them less manageable. However, they consider that a change of implementation approach is necessary:

I don't think they should continue in their current form, because the practice is too disparate across the university and we've never got to the bottom of the problems of partnerships doing the same curriculum but not the [HEI] Graduate but I think we ought to rethink the [HEI] GA.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 279-281).

The Faculty Education Manager considers that GAs should use a paper-based university portfolio system which would focus on extra activities outside the standard curriculum: "*Cos you've got the situation at the moment where students can basically avoid the [HEI] Graduate and still come out with all of those attributes and tick all the boxes.*" (Faculty Education Manager, lines 279-293). The manager was not sure if would need to be assessed, though did feel it should be regularly monitored. However, the manager considered that this would be optional and would not impact on whether a degree would be awarded or not. The employability focus would remain, with the portfolio being based around generic interview questions. College A, lecturer A did not consider that the GAs needed to be changed, but that assessment should be more explicit. This could take the form of a short reflective piece of writing in each module considering personal achievement as well as future development needs, including targets for their next assessment (College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 162-168).

The Quality Manager and HEI Outreach Lecturer agree that the GAs need changing to amalgamate the GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8 into one simplified, yet stratified for each level, framework (appendix 5.1.4, lines 438-454; HEI Outreach Lecturer 213-227). The Quality Manager adds that these should be in line with QAA expectations (appendix 5.1.4, lines 438-454) and focused on developing student behaviour to emulate that of what successful students do at each level (ibid, lines 462-491). This simplified strategy should then be consistently applied throughout the whole university:

Some universities have actually solved this by saying these are the attributes that we wish our students to have and they will appear amongst all the documentation, so quite a simple plan

but they run through everything, whether it's modules, whether it's programmes, whether it's extra-curricular activities or whatever so everybody sees how that picture builds up.

(ibid, lines 101-105).

The [HEI] 8 are already differentiated by level so would provide a framework for development throughout the duration of the degree. This would also avoid the potential issue of a student potentially scoring highly with their GA grades if assessed but doing poorly with their degree (or visa-versa). However, no consideration is given to how students joining at level 5 or 6 would be accommodated. The HE Manager (College A, appendix 5.2.2, lines 298-290) agrees with the need to include GAs within assessment learning outcomes, especially due to their employed part-time students being assessment focused due to time pressures: *"...they do focus on the learning outcomes they don't want to widen the experience and pay attention to the [HEI] GAs specifically. But I think there is scope to link them to the learning outcomes."*

In terms of the actual specific GAs themselves, most interviewees considered that they offered a reasonable scope of coverage, though College B Course Leader considered that a GA based around mindset, character, grit and resilience (lines 237-231) would be particularly useful to reflect what part-time employed mature students require to complete a degree:

I think that's probably as important as most of the others that are sitting there at the moment, especially when you're looking at mature students, some of whom have got a family, a job, juggling goodness knows what, that resilience and that ability to bounce back after setbacks or just sometimes the whole thing, being able to take that value judgement, this time I can't get a first because of things. But I think that resilience, grit, whatever it's called is important and maybe should be incorporated.

(College B, Course Leader B, lines 236-242).

Since 2016, the HEI has a new VC. With the new Vice Chancellor arriving in 2016, a new plan is in the process of being launched, before the termination of the old one and without a published evaluation of the extent to which the 2012-16 plan met its objectives. With these developments, the continuation of GAs within the university seem to be in doubt, as confirmed by the senior manager:

But at the moment it isn't a priority I think, other things are a priority. Again, I'm not sure where the VC stands on it. (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 310-311)... Not sure where that fits in [with the new 'Connected University' strategy. It's a question that we need to address as part of SLT and I'll be doing that. VC's are very influential, they can determine things if that's not a priority then I guess it could just drift, carry on, it's embedded, but not used as a selling point.

(appendix 5.1.1, lines 325-328).

Indeed, the Quality Manager (appendix 5.1.4, lines 382-385) thinks that the GAs will gradually fade, especially with the emphasis on data metrics required for the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (BIS, 2016), suggesting potential academic streaming (ibid, lines 387-394). The Quality Manager suggests that an emphasis on university return to stating 'values', as found in the university plans, which they consider to be less onerous than implementing GAs (ibid, lines 425-431).

The Senior Manager considers that they could be tweaked to incorporate the latest developments in the sector, though they had concerns that this would be unpopular with staff due to the need to recalibrate their mapping process (appendix 5.1.1, lines 330, 333). Furthermore, there is no evidence of GAs playing an important role in the publicly launched strategy, which has been launched prior to the termination of the previous 2012-2017 plan. Since 2015-2016, all university modules have had to use an agreed handbook template. In this initial template, there was a requirement to list which GAs would be developed in the module. However, as an indication that the policy is being erased, in the current 2016-2017 template, all references to GAs have been removed. However, the Employability Group Member considers that they will continue in one form or another, due to the vocational basis of the university and the need to continue pushing an employability agenda:

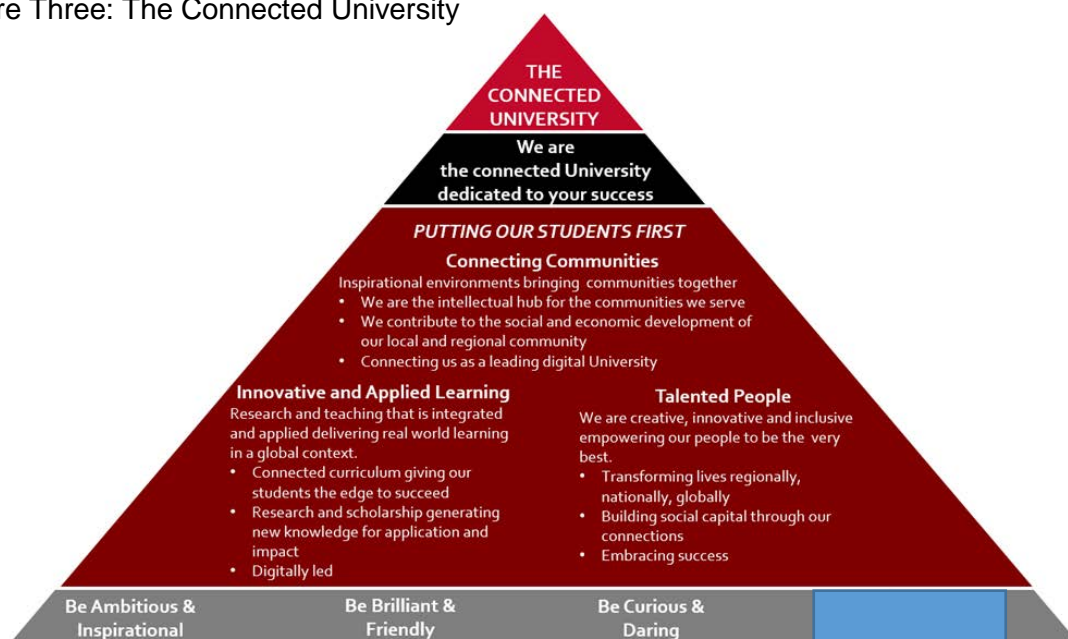
I don't think there's any doubt that employability, acquired learning, work-related experience applied research, you know, the vocational kind of practical aspects of what we do. That, I think that will always be, it's even more clear that that is the priority for us. Whether they'll be called the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, maybe the name will change, maybe they'll be reviewed and the attributes will be slightly revised. Maybe we'll find another way of doing it, but there's going to be something, there'll have to be something spelled out to students this is how we are making sure that your experience here supports your learning through the application of that learning in practice. So, so I don't think there's any, I'm not doubtful of the currency of them inherently. It's just that fashions change so the names might change or the way it's packaged might change but I suspect there'll be something.

(appendix 5.1.2, lines 213-222).

GAs are part of the current teaching and learning strategy (HEI, 2015f), but only in the employability section rather than throughout all six categories, thereby contradicting the Senior Manager's view that their implementation would follow research based evidence of experts such as Barrie (2012). This theme has the aim: *To deliver a curriculum focussed on employability, enterprise and continuing professional development*. The 3 Es have now become two with entrepreneurialism replaced with continuing professional development (the latter presumably representing the 'lifelong learning' GA). The strategy also claims that the GAs will be extended

in several ways. The first means is to amend them to reflect 'data literacy needs of potential employers', with numeracy also being added. It is not clear how the GAs would be amended to reflect these, but the reference to potential employers does show that employability not being considered in terms of career enhancement for those already in employment. The second means of development is to expand them into all courses, something which the annual review claimed had already occurred back in 2013 (HEI, 2013). The final means is to extend them into post-graduate awards, which would infer that graduates joining Post-Graduate courses from other universities will be able to attain within one year what would take four years for existing students. However, no final version of this draft has been released so it is questionable whether the GAs will be expanded or even continued in their current form.

Figure Three: The Connected University



HEI (2016g) Source: Joint University Management Committee August 2016

The University has now embarked on a new strategy called *The Connected University*. This represents the third set of values since 2010, each change following the appointment of a new VC. As can be seen, there is no mention of any role for GAs within this structure. As with the previous set of values, there is no explanation given of how they relate to the GAs. In line with Spronken-Smith's et al.'s (2013) emphasis on the long-term nature of university change requiring solid structures as well as resilience and character within the organisation, the HEI

Outreach Lecturer cautions about constantly changing sloganeering which is not followed up by consistent, long-term implementation:

The statements that we make around the university or particularly around the faculty...makes some quite profound statements, but they're not lived out in the way that we actually, we as staff behave or model that or have any training or it is modelled to us...I think half the problem with things like that is that next week there could be another great saying that somebody comes up with almost like advertising, you know just to capture your imagination and to get them enthusiastic or fired up with something but actually it means nothing if it's not built into the culture of the organisation.

(HEI Outreach Lecturer, appendix 5.1.5, lines 118-131).

4.7 *Summary of results*

This results section has shown how the HEI's GA policy encountered difficulties throughout its conceptualisation, implementation, facilitation and assessment and quality processes. They were created without in-depth stakeholder involvement leading to lack of consistent engagement from sections of the HEI who felt that they were not appropriate. This view had justification in terms of the lack of coherent teaching learning and assessment strategy that they helped to create. By not replacing or subsuming the existing [HEI] 8 or clearly explaining the relationship between the GAs and 3Es or developing clear graduate level definitions, the GAs were conceptually flawed from the beginning. In terms of implementation, serious attempts to embed them were abandoned after encountering initial problems within the Championship (pilot) programmes. Rather than learning from these initial mistakes, the HEI accepted minimal compliance in terms of teaching, learning, assessment and quality requirements and moved onto introducing new initiatives. However, given this lack of institutional resilience, the HEI would appear to demotivate enthusiastic adopters as without rigorous enforcement, those who 'tick the box' are able to move from initiative to initiative without effectively transforming their practice.

Chapter Four: Analytical Discussion

Analytical discussion: Introduction

This chapter analyses the implications of the findings in Chapter three in relation to the case study HEI and its partners. Additionally, it will discuss the broader implications of the study for HEIs working with FE partners and meeting the needs and expectations of their part-time students. The chapter therefore considers GAs in relation to the marketisation of HE, managerialism and GA implementation, inclusion of FE partners in HEI policy making and engaging the student voice.

GAs and the marketisation of HE

Becker (1993) contends that education is the key to growing national economies in a competitive global market-place and has strongly influenced English education policy regardless of the political control (Leitch, 2006; DfE, 2010; BIS, 2015; BIS, 2016). In what has been recognised as a watershed speech (Perry et al., 2010), the then Labour government Minister Callaghan (1976) identified the need for political control of education to ensure taxpayer value for money, leading to measures to standardise and therefore enable the quantification of education (Coffield and Williamson, 2011). This need to consider education success in terms of financial reward remains, though government moves to push the cost of higher education onto the student means that the increasing use of data metrics serve to inform individual choice in a competitive market (BIS, 2016). GAs have a somewhat contradictory role within this context of marketisation and competition; whilst they have come to represent a repurposing of education towards Becker's (1993) education for employment agenda, their focus on generic skills makes quantification of their impact difficult, running contrary to the need to create a transparent market through comparative data. This dichotomy will be discussed in the following section, with specific reference to the case study HEI.

The changing of the focus of GAs from representing a collective ethos of an institution (Bowden et al., 2000) to solely developing employable graduates, supports the overall repurposing of education towards employability, the success of which is measured largely in terms of financial reward (Kalfka and Taksa, 2013). The narrow employability focus of GAs was found at the HEI, meaning that their underlying influence came from business-based models. This is evidenced by the VC's admiration of the business school's 5 As as well as the VCs own insistence on the business focused 3 Es of employment, enterprise and entrepreneurialism (Senior Manager,

appendix 5.1.1, lines 234-245; Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 37-41; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 455-456). However, although the GA policy was aimed at promoting employability to demonstrate value for money, the documentary search and interviews have found no evidence that the HEI engaged with actual businesses in the developmental process, even though they are one of the stakeholders in Barrie's (2006) systemic factors of GAs. This failure to engage is typical of HEIs, countering best practice recommendations for HEI employability development which emphasise the need for employers to play a collaborative role throughout conceptualisation and implementation (Pegg et al., 2012; Kettle, 2013). Therefore, even within their narrow employability focused remit, potential employers were not included in consideration of what graduate employability should be and how it could be achieved.

The GAs in the case study HEI were a top-down reaction to the competitive HEI environment, where the poor graduate level employability statistics were contributing to its weak league table position and therefore posed a threat to its financial viability in a competitive market (Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 65-70). The 2012-17 plan (HEI, 2011) strongly valued league table position, making a secure top-50 ranking one of its twelve objectives, a focus typical of many universities concerned about the potential impact of loss of students and therefore income resulting from a poor standing (Rich, 2015). Therefore, although Bowden et al.'s (2000) academic and student-centred definition of GAs was used within the staff training presentation (appendix 3.1.3, slide 4), the actual GAs focused instead on promoting increased employability as an outcome for degree study fees. GAs were therefore seen as a quick-fix promotional tool to make the university attractive to applicants in the face of unflattering data. Coffield and Williamson (2011, p.3) argue that such branding exercises have been an unwelcome outcome of marketisation:

...managers feel compelled to adopt such market mechanisms as branding in order to seek advantage over competitors...[turning] school against school, college against college and university against university.

They claim that this approach is a waste of resources and damaging to education as it precludes a collaborative approach to learning and development. This view resonates with Hoban et al.'s (2004, p.11) findings on academic resistance: *"...the concept of graduate attributes has been taken on reluctantly as the unwanted child of a union across the business, government and education sectors..."*. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the imposition of a set of GAs without consulting FE partners has led to students facing a confusing array of

attributes where the college also has its own set, making them a distraction for lecturers and students (College B, appendix 5.2.4, lines 107-114).

GA and employability related literature has tended to emphasise the importance of all students achieving all attributes on a roughly equal basis (Barrie, 2006; Universities UK, 2015):

Graduates in every discipline pick up a diverse array of 'employability skills', including problem-solving, critical analysis and entrepreneurial skills. However, the provision of these is not, as far as we can tell, evenly spread... The provision of these skills is important, not only to graduates but to the wider economy.

Universities UK (2015, p.1).

However, Rich (2015) counters that this view is unrealistic and unnecessary as not all jobs require the same skills even at graduate levels. Rich (ibid) therefore argues that courses should transparently show the extent to which each attribute will be developed. Nevertheless, in line with key GA research (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Spronken-Smith, 2013; Coetzee, 2014), clear assessment of GAs was seen to be essential at the HEI at its conceptualisation stage. Cole and Tibby (2013) concur, highlighting the need for employability development to be explicitly measured through transparent means of assessment. Nagarajan and Edwards (2014, p.14) go further arguing that even clear linkage to assessment may not be enough, claiming that GAs need to be actively and explicitly integrated throughout students' learning experiences:

...mapping graduate attributes does not ensure that they are taught explicitly. If not made explicit, the students may focus on obtaining the required marks or grades and remain unaware of, or disinterested in, the graduate attributes which may have been implicit in assessment tasks and criteria.

At the case study HEI, the importance of assessment was also recognised in the staff training presentation (appendix 3.1.3) and was initially integral to the *Champion Programmes'* assessment as well as being advocated in the Personal Tutoring policy (HEI, 2015). However, the failure to replace or amalgamate the [HEI] 8 with the GAs fundamentally undermined GAs' role in assessment within the curriculum as each module learning outcome is linked to the [HEI] 8 not the GAs. As the Quality Manager argues (appendix 5.1.4, lines 122-123), it is still the [HEI] 8 that form the basis of assessments, so it is those that are more important to the students. Even though college lecturers and students had not heard of them, these skills formed the basis of all of their assessments so are fundamentally more important. The primacy of the [HEI] 8 has been confirmed by the new generic assessment criteria which make no mention of the GAs (HEI, 2017f). This left no clear quality mechanism for other staff or students to understand how GAs actually should be assessed. The HEI therefore undermined its own policy at its outset by not insisting that GAs be explicitly linked to learning outcomes in

assessments. The lack of engagement in the GAs from the quality department meant that there was no mechanism to evaluate which programme areas were actively delivering them, which teachers as well as the extent (if at all) that students had engaged with them; they were largely unaccountable other than minor self-declared mapping and evaluation at validation and review stages.

Su (2014, p.1210), summarising key GA implementation literature, underlines the importance of taking a co-ordinated approach to GAs, finding that: *“It is important to align the learning goals, the curriculum used, the teaching itself and the forms of assessment used to ensure the development of the desired attributes”*. However, the lack of a university-wide framework for GA development by level runs contrary to GA guidance (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013) as well as the university’s initial implementation plan (appendix 3.1.3), giving no framework for lecturers to build their curriculum or for learners to work towards. Such frameworks were developed for some courses (Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 77-84), but no processes were implemented by the quality department to ensure this approach was replicated consistently throughout the university. Without clear or consistent implementation guidance or standardised approaches to assessment or transparent means of measuring student engagement across the university, the role of the GAs within quality processes was destined to be limited. Cole and Tibby (2013) highlight the need for employability to be audited as part of an ongoing quality improvement cycle. However, the HEI’s approach of course mapping, identifying where GAs are ‘met’ does not concentrate pedagogy on actual skills development or encourage staff to take a reflective and developmental approach to employability facilitation. In this respect, whilst the HEI can demonstrate that every GA is to some extent covered in every course, the very broad nature and lack of definition at each level of study makes this inevitable. Crebert et al. (2004) argue that transparency is vital as, without this, both students and employers are being potentially misled. Indeed, the case study HEI makes GA achievement a pledge/promise/guarantee to all students and employers. However, in this respect, this ‘promise’ and ‘pledge’ can only relate to a guarantee that the generic skills are covered explicitly or implicitly, but not that they are developed to graduate level.

Evaluation of the GAs was very limited, with only one student survey of awareness being completed as well as one evaluation of course mapping (appendix 4.1.2). This runs counter to findings of Barrie (2012), Oliver (2013), Hill, Walkington and France (2016), all of whom acknowledge serious initial problems with implementation necessitating ongoing evidenced based approach to renewal and development. Hill, Walkington and France (ibid) further argue

that effective implementation can be achieved through triangulation of a multitude of data to overcome weaknesses in individual approaches. As well as GA embedded assessment data, this should include ongoing student self-assessment as well as employer and post-graduate evaluations. For future policies to succeed, a robust evaluation process needs to be in place and regularly implemented to evidence the extent to which policies are succeeding. With a new VC, the institution has embarked on a new *Connected University* strategy before the 2012-2017 plan has finished. As with the previous 2007-2012 five-year plan (HEI, 2011b), there is no publicly available evaluation, suggesting that the lack of GA evaluation is part of a wider failure to engage in institutional level reflection and improvement.

Without such in-depth evaluation of GAs, finding a causal link to the policy implementation and league table positional change is problematic due to the number of variables used to calculate not only the university's performance, but also its performance relative to its HE competitors. Additionally, Rich (2015) notes there is a data lag between graduation and table compilation so potentially more time is required to evaluate any impacts of GA implementation. Nevertheless, current evidence does not show a correlation between the policy's introduction and the HEI's employability and overall league table positions. Indeed, the university initially fell from the high 60s in 2011 to nearly 100th in 2013 (Guardian 2011; 2013) with the latest results (Guardian, 2017) shows that it has returned to virtually the same position as when the GAs were introduced. This represents a failure for the HEI's 2012-2017 plan (HEI, 2011), which envisaged a top 50 ranking. Furthermore, considering the specific employability measure of graduate level employment after 6 months, this has fallen from 63% in 2011 to under 60% currently (Guardian 2011; Guardian 2017). Therefore, all that can be concluded is that there is no evidence of the GA policy having a transformative impact on the university.

Sewell and Dacre-Poole (2010) highlight the importance of quality departments creating and reviewing clear definitions of terms used such as employability, enterprise and entrepreneurialism in order to provide clear focus throughout the institution when attempting implementation. This has not occurred at the HEI, where there has been no central drive to either renew or promote the existing definition for employability or to clearly define the other concepts as well as the GAs. Rust and Froud (2011) highlight how employability is often erroneously viewed as being limited to gaining employment, making strategies based on this view inappropriate for graduates. Although still present on the website (HEI, 2017a), within the Personal Tutoring Policy (HEI, 2017g) and annual monitoring guidance (HEI, 2016f), this study has found that the GAs and 3Es are gradually fading from the University's curriculum focus. So

whilst no official announcement has been made regarding their future, they no longer play a role in advertising campaigns, no new posters or leaflets have been produced and they do not feature in the prospectus. Furthermore, they have been removed from student feedback surveys and module handbook templates. They are also not mentioned with in the new *Connected University* strategy (HEI, 2016).

According to advocates of GAs, successful implementation requires reviewing and reforming all policies throughout the institution in order to develop a coherent ethos (Hughes and Barrie, 2010; Spronken-Smith et al., 2013; Bond et al., 2017). However, as has been highlighted above, for the purposes of speedy implementation, the GAs were introduced without widespread consultation so therefore lacked widespread engagement at their inception. By not including a broad range of relevant stakeholders, opportunities to make them more relevant to learners and employers were missed. Furthermore, from the onset there were fundamental flaws due to the failure of the implementation team to clearly define the GAs in terms of outcome requirements at each HE level, to demonstrate how the GAs and 3 Es related, or rather, to integrate these concepts together and to replace or integrate the existing [HEI] 8 assessment outcomes. Asking staff to duplicate this work for the GAs was unlikely to be consistently applied given the difficulties of tying assessments to two sets of HEI based criteria as well as potential further requirements of professional bodies (Bond et al., 2017). That these issues have not been addressed, even when identified by key managers suggests that the HEI currently lacks effective processes to evaluate and develop its own policies. Instead, when they are found to face problems, the HEI appears to move onto the next idea or policy rather than engaging in an in-depth review and evaluation of how practice can be improved. This approach may lead to a minimal compliance approach where managers and lecturers follow new policies to the minimal extent in the expectation that they will soon drift away and be replaced by the next top down initiative.

Managerialism and GA implementation

The conceptualisation stage of the HEI's GAs were driven by the VC and supported by the Senior Management Team (SMT) without opportunity for broader input. The research findings strongly suggest that stakeholders outside the Senior Management Team were not invited to contribute to their formation (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 160-161; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 144-154). There has been no evidence found of employer, student, union or partner contribution to the conceptualisation process. As such, this policy was an example of a top-down imposition of policy from Senior Management identified as part of a long-term trend towards business-based managerialism within universities (Said, 1993; McCaffery, 2010; By, Burnes and Oswick, 2013). This also follows de la Harpe and David's (2012) study of 16 Australian universities' GA implementation which found that it tends to take place through a top-down managerialist approach. This runs contrary to guidance from Hill, Walkington and France (2016) following Clanchy and Ballard (1995) and Bowden et al.'s (2000) concept of GAs representing the overarching ethos of a university, by emphasising the need for stakeholder engagement to develop successful implementation: *"Graduate attributes are an orientating framework of education outcomes, which a university community agrees its graduates should develop as a result of successfully completing their studies"* (Hill, Walkington and France, 2016, p.223). This shows that without broader consultation, key university concepts of gradueness are left to a select few, making it unlikely that GAs are unlikely to meet the needs and expectations of a diverse student population or employers.

The business orientated 3 Es, imposed from above and with a direct focus on only one area of university provision, business, meant that they were unlikely to become universally accepted across the institution. In particular, *Enterprise* and *Entrepreneurialism* met with resistance from some managers (Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 56-82), a factor not helped by the lack of clear definition from the university of these terms. Given this lack of direction from senior management, it is unsurprising that managers have little clear understanding of what the 3 Es mean in the context of the HEI, let alone how they could be implemented (Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 71-82; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 54-72; HEI Outreach Lecturer, lines 98-112).

As a post-92 teaching-based university, the case study HEI was well placed to develop GAs effectively (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013; Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.4, lines 144-154). However, factors of failure identified by Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) apply to this case study

HEI: a lack of external drivers, over-reliance on champions, poor resourcing and unclear structures. Whilst the policy was imposed from above, implementation was essentially left to holistically develop, without the strong leadership recognised by GA proponents as being a key driver of successful implementation (Barry, 2012; Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Furthermore, this research has found that there was an additional and, ultimately, fundamental factor hindering successful implementation; a lack of clearly explained and coherent approach to its teaching and learning strategy discussed previously. This lack of coherence was recognised by the managers interviewed, but within a managerialist system they felt unable to challenge the flawed strategy. Sewell and Dacre-Poole (2010) have found such conceptual vagueness to be common in HEIs, arguing that a lack of clarity negatively impacts any attempt to implement university-wide strategies to facilitate them. Sewell and Dacre-Poole (ibid) also consider that entrepreneurial concepts should be limited to those aiming to set up their own independent business. They argue that this has a limited role with undergraduates lacking the funding or business acumen to initiate their own business upon graduation; intrapreneurship is more relevant, where a creative and risk-taking individual works within an organisation. Additionally, they demonstrate that many employers value new recruits' teamwork abilities and cultural awareness above innovation and individuality. Given the role of the part-time students, all of whom already work within educational organisations (mostly as Teaching Assistants), intrapreneurial, teamwork and creative skills would be relevant for their career development. This conceptual difficulty, aided by a lack of subsequent senior managerial drive to fully embed the GAs, enabled inconsistencies and selectiveness in the application of the GAs and 3 Es (as discussed in objectives three and four in this chapter), a phenomenon also found in GA implementation studies by Barrie, Hughes and Smith (2009) and De la Harpe and David (2012).

The espoused rationale for this top-down reactive approach to policy formation is due to time constraints. This rationale replicated Perry et al.'s (2010) findings about education policy in general and also GA implementation studies (Clanchy and Ballard, 1995; Sumsion and Goodfellow, 2004). This literature illustrates how such initiatives are often driven by a claimed sense of urgency and crises management. This is then used to justify, or excuse, hastily made top-down policy creation and implementation in cases where leaders consider action to be politically more expedient to doing nothing. Nevertheless, such emphasis on speed over the application of reflective critical thinking, runs contrary to the guidance of Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) and Oliver (2013), where successful conceptualisation and implementation require a slower, more systematic and inclusive approach. Indeed, this need for speed meant that key

stakeholders appear to have been excluded from the process, a crucial element of any meaningful employability strategy:

The contemporary employability development agenda is predicated on a perceived understanding of which graduate skills, attributes and capabilities are valued. This can only be determined through engaging with business, professions and employers.

(Kettle, 2013, p.5).

Though the GA policy was largely imposed from above, actual implementation lacked resolution or resilience, enabling managers responsible for implementation to be strategically pragmatic; surface level adherence to policy without underlying change (Eliot, 2015). As well as favouring broader involvement in the conceptualisation stage, Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) and Oliver (2013) emphasise the need for time, around five years, to fully implement GAs, contrasting with the HEI's plan for the policy to have been mostly met within a year (HEI, 2012). This was an unrealistic goal if GA implementation was to be anything other than a shallow marketing ruse; for one recruitment cycle at least, the GAs were central to the HEI's marketing strategy (HEI, 2013). However, due to their hasty introduction it appears that even this was not effective, with prospective students being given the same information repeatedly with the effect of deterring recruitment (Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 328-342). The speed of implementation therefore also hindered their launch, with lecturers unable to contextualise the GAs into any meaningful way to show their relevance for their discipline area. The lack of engagement with partners in the formation stage also meant that they were not included in the launch, helping to explain their lack of influence on partnership students. This reflects a key criticism of GAs where they have been imposed by senior management (Donleavy, 2012; Su, 2014); those tasked with implementation have little intrinsic motivation to engage with more than minimal compliance.

Kligyte and Barrie (2015) dismiss the collegiate approach of consensual collective organisation as being something of a myth and considering of the HEI's GAs, conceptualisation was very much led the then VC. However, in terms of implementation, a lack of senior management oversight after the initial year of imposition meant there was little pressure on managers and staff to adopt a centralised approach or make large-scale changes to practice. Whilst such intellectual freedom could be supported in a more collegiate approach, the practical upshot has been inconsistent practice and a tendency towards minimal compliance rather than a genuine attempt to embed the GAs throughout university curricula. This effectively left practice as it was previously, as long as both the quality department and lecturers were prepared to map existing practice to the minimal compliance standards. Nagarajan and Edwards (2014) warn that such

'ticking the box' typically occurs where mapping becomes the GA process rather than forming a small part of broader and explicit GA implementation. Indeed, in interviews with managers, lecturers and students alike, this phrase was repeatedly used to describe the process (Quality Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 227-228; Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, line 486).

Knewstubb and Ruth (2015) found resentment amongst staff at the additional workload caused by GA implementation, arguing that it negatively impacted on their ability to do other aspects of their work. However, By, Hughes and Ford (2016) counter the assumption that it is ordinary workers form the focus of resistance to top-down policy implementation, finding that management can be equally obstructive. While the research found no evidence of direct obstruction of their implementation, considering the lack of consultation compounded by incoherent guidance and a lack of ongoing interest at institutional level, it is hardly surprising that GA implementation has been both inconsistent and tending towards a minimal compliance mapping approach. Indeed, management appear to have tacitly tolerated such minimal engagement from their inception, as evidenced by acceptance even in initial training of staff claims that many awards were already covering the GAs (appendix 3.1.3, slide 16):

...there were areas of the university that were never engaged, never going to go along with it and they felt any excuse not to do it was satisfactory clearly attention wasn't on them anymore and they just didn't bother.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 189-191).

This is further evidenced by the early abandonment of the pilot programmes in favour of mapping of university programmes and the quality department allowing partner provision continue existing practice without curriculum change (ibid, lines 171-185). Given that GA implementation should radically change the role of academics (Hughes and Barrie, 2010), the emergence of resistance, albeit mostly passive, is in line with Starr's (2011) conclusion that resistance arises where changes question academics' personal and professional identities.

Oliver (2013) highlights the importance of refining policy following feedback from GA piloting programmes. Although some attempt at forming a developmental community of practice appears to have been attempted in line with Nagarajan and Edwards (2014), this was abandoned following the pilot programmes (Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 100-106). However, with the HEI, findings from these were not used to inform GA practice throughout the institution, which instead accepted and then adopted an approach of minimal compliance. Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) emphasise the need for clear management structure and responsibilities in relation to GA implementation; something De la Harpe and David (2012)

also found lacking in their study of GA implementation. In this case after a flurry of initial activity Senior Managers, moved onto other priorities without evaluating the impact of the policy they had just introduced:

I think the focus of those who were in charge of the [HEI] GAs turned to other things – they didn't see the project through to its formal conclusion.

(Faculty Education Manager, appendix 5.1.3, lines 188-189).

The Senior Manager accepts that their priorities have moved elsewhere (appendix 5.1.1, lines 311-312), though this may not have been a problem had there been a firm implementation structure delegating responsibility as well as clear guidance for implementation, facilitation and assessment in place found in successful GA institutions (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013). Without ongoing managerial support and enforcement, in-depth and consistent implementation of the attributes in the face of varying levels of enthusiasm was unlikely to happen. The Faculty Education Manager summarises how the GA implementation descended from innovative pilot courses to minimal compliance, with the acquiescence of the university quality processes:

But those [pilot] programmes, the idea was that they'd run it for a year or two, learn from the experience, and extend it to the rest of the university. That last bit never happened, so many programmes do what London [institution] did – just tick the box yeah we think we do that, that's good enough.

(appendix 5.1.3, lines 183-185).

Indeed, given the above conceptual and strategic issues, GAs have a limited role within the course curriculum of both full and part-time curricula in the case study Education courses, with explicit reference to them only found within validation documentation and monitoring forms. At validation, only mapping to the GAs was required, so there has not been an incentive for the staff to transform curriculum towards the HEI GAs. From the inception of the GAs, there appears to have been managerial reluctance to drive through a programme of transformational change led by GAs. There was awareness of resistance to moving to a 30-credit module (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 217-221) and it appears that enforcing a GA centred curriculum as well was deemed to have been too disruptive if imposed at the same time. Therefore, there was a weakening of GA implementation where it was accepted that GAs were being covered to some extent in existing practice without in depth scrutiny of such claims (Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 48-53). This led to the acceptance of mapping existing practice to the GAs rather than using the GAs to form the basis of new programmes, rather than mandatory implementation of the generic modules which were never even completed. Once mapping alone was accepted then it was easy for programmes both

within the university as well as external partners to claim they were meeting the attributes. Without further guidance on how these should be met and assessed at each level, this made the mapping exercise easy as the GAs alone are so general that connections could be found within most programmes. However, this undermines Barrie's (2004) fundamental principles of GAs being that they should represent the progressive development of graduate level skills rather than simple mapping to general concept of them.

Furthermore, the HEI did not provide clear guidance on how partners should implement the GAs, leaving this to Programme Advisers but not including this on their visit requirements documentation, meaning that there was no prompt or extrinsic motivation for them to comply and discuss these during visits. Additionally, as a vocationally based university, there does not appear to have been clear guidance, as recommended by Oliver (2013) on how programmes also meeting professional standards should illustrate shared and additional skills development requirements. Indeed, with the university itself giving non-graduate level guidance on the GAs in its website (HEI, 2016), this has helped to lead to programmes taking a surface approach to GA achievement as they do not have guidance on what graduate level means and they have quality process which accept surface level adherence to them. The result of this is that there has been little extrinsic motivation for award leaders and lecturers make major structural changes to their curriculum because of managerial acceptance of a surface level approach.

Implications for HE policy delivery within FE settings

Although representing a substantial proportion of the university population (appendix 4.1.1), there is no evidence that partner colleges were involved in the conceptualisation stage of the GAs. FECs have extensive experience of enhancing employability skills of their mature learners within their local communities which is what the university required to boost its league table position (Assistant Principal, appendix 5.2.1, lines 16-25). Given that their focus is on vocational education, they could have played a key role in their conceptual development based on their understanding of developing general employability but also graduate level on their HE programmes. Furthermore, as a heavily regulated sector (Lea and Simmonds, 2012; Creasy, 2013), FECs such as the partners featured in this study, would have been able to advise the HEI on how to robustly and consistently implement and audit top-down policies.

GA proponents emphasise the need for thorough training programmes for all staff when implementing GA or employability-based policies consistently (Butcher et al., 2011; Hill, Walkington and France, 2016). However, the HEI's approach to training staff in implementing GAs has been very limited for HEI staff, with no evidence being found for any attempt at training partner college lecturers. Nevertheless, the partner colleges are doing more to inform lecturers of the GAs than the university itself, by attempting to comply with a policy imposed from above, is in line with a managerialist compliance culture within FE (Lea and Simmonds, 2012; Creasy, 2013). Evidence from the Assistant Principal and AL and FE based lecturers all stated that they were made aware of the GAs at their college induction and that they had been mentioned in staff development meetings (appendix 5.2.1, lines 211-224; College A HE Manager, appendix 5.2.2, lines 157-165). Though short of the in-depth training required for wholesale change, it still represents a greater attempt to implement university policy than the university makes itself. That the colleges have taken the initiative on this in spite of a lack of guidance from the HEI supports the Quality Manager's view that the HEI should develop a more equal partnership which involves its further education colleagues in developing employability strategies (appendix 5.1.4, lines 144-154).

Key proponents of GAs emphasise their transformative nature throughout the institution, including a more demanding cross-disciplinary role of the lecturer, capable of facilitating generic skills development (Hughes and Barrie, 2010; Oliver 2013). However, this approach is problematic for HE delivery in FE due to the casualisation of the workforce meaning that lecturers may only have responsibility for a few hours worth of HE teaching per week, an issue

identified by Green, Hammer and Star (2009). Even where the lecturer is full time, HE provision may not form the majority of their workload (Assistant Principal, appendix 5.2.1, lines 228-232). In these scenarios, the commitment to embedding extra policies such as the GAs for the few hours taught per week at HE level is questionable. This problem is further compounded by conflicting FE and HE policies (College B lecturers, appendix 5.2.4, lines 107-114). It is clear in the case study that no prioritisation of institutional policy has been agreed and interviews with HEI managers showed little awareness of the problem. Without central guidance from the HEI, FE lecturers have been left to try to implement overlapping policies. College A works with other HE providers, some of whom have their own attributes, meaning that it is difficult for them to promote multiple approaches without confusing both students and staff. In the case of College B, by having its own attributes, the lecturers are forced to try and map both sets together to meet the needs of both institutions (ibid, lines 109-114):

- B: We've also got the skills, what is it called, the *Skills Promise*...
- A: Which is another 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, we've got 12 from that. We have to put those in every lesson...We're trying very hard to get our heads round it cos we've got 12...
- B: All of those tend to sit within the graduate attributes so...
- A: We have linked your six with our twelve, and then within our lessons, on our lesson plans we signpost which ones we're focusing on because to be honest throughout most of our session we kind of run through most of them most times and so we're in negotiations with...
- B: We've got British Values, E&D [Equality and Diversity], maths, English and everything.
- A: We've got to embed English and maths in every lesson.
- B: We haven't got a piece of paper big enough to fit all of those on as well.

The failure to engage FE partners throughout the GA process was therefore a missed opportunity to the detriment of both the HEI and FECs. For the HEI, valuable experience of FECs in developing employability focused programmes was not exploited. For the FECs, the GAs could have helped them to create a distinctive HE environment within their institutions; King and Widdowson (2012) identified that a lack of HE identity was a key problem for students within FECs. By failing to consider the FECs, HE in FE students have been left with a confusing array of overlapping skills lists. Given these conflicting requirements for the FECs, it is hardly surprising that there is a lack of in depth development in order to try and adhere to both institutions' demands; as lecturer B colourfully articulates: *We all dance round a mushroom, don't we?* (appendix 5.2.4, line 353).

The role of student voice in HE policy making

The University Plan, *Securing Successful Futures* (HEI, 2011), justified the implementation of the [HEI] Graduate as a means of ensuring that it made: “...*students at the heart of everything we do.*” (ibid, p.2 and p.12). However, they were not included in the conceptualisation process; had this happened, they may have helped to create a set of attributes more closely aligned with their perceptions of gradueness and more appropriate to their needs. Such consultation could have avoided the narrow focus of employability aimed at young, full-time learners, a group which does not even represent the majority of learners (HEI, 2012). Students joining the university are faced with several lists of values, skills and attributes: three differing sets of Core Values since 2010, GAs, 3 Es, [HEI] 8 (Plus 2), Five As and most recently *The Connected University*. This lack of clarity at inception has unsurprisingly led to confusion of purpose amongst both managers and staff as well as a lack of awareness of students and FE lecturers in the sample group.

As well as being generic, the HEI's GAs did not have a clear emphasis on one theme to create an overarching hierarchy as a unique selling point (USP) for the institution; by having 6 GAs and 3 Es there was no single clear focus or issue likely to resonate with potential students. This contrasts with other universities, who have made claims relating to an overarching theme to market what they claim to represent a unique experience. For example, University College London claim to be a global university (UCL, 2017) justified by its international connections rather than any comparative evidence. The case study HEI's failure in this respect is clear, having almost no influence on education students' decision to study at the university (appendix 4.9), further evidenced by the lack of even basic awareness of them in the cross-university survey (appendix 4.1.2). Indeed, the HEI's current claim to be a *Connected University* (HEI, 2017), focused on digital literacy may finally represent an attempt at articulating a more coherent USP to prospective students. However, this appears to represent another layer of policy; there is no guidance as to how this relates to the GAs, 3 Es or [HEI] 8.

Unlike McNiff's (2016) critique of reframing education towards employability development, the findings show no evidence of outright hostility to the GAs from staff or students. Respondents tended to be positive about the idea of not only an employability focus for graduate education, but also the idea of having a set of attributes to summarise their degree achievement. Knewstubb and Ruth (2015) found that GAs were considered by lectures as impinging on their ability to conduct research and therefore had a negative impact their research output.

Nevertheless, in line with Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004), Jones (2009) and Knewstubb and Ruth's (2015) findings, where there was resistance from staff it related to the top-down nature of imposition and lack of consultation, lack of training or guidance to implement them as well as confusion, for those who had heard of them, over their apparent lack of coherence with the 3 Es and [HEI] 8 (see coverage of objectives one and two above).

In terms of the extent to which the GAs meet stakeholder perceptions of graduateness, there appears to be a general consensus from managers, lecturers and students that they articulate key aspects of employability skills. However, there was considerable evidence that they did not necessarily represent graduate level employability skills, a key factor emphasised by Rust and Froud, 2011 and Barrie, 2012. This lack of emphasis on the graduate level is supported by the university's own explanation of the attributes (HEI, 2017) which gives examples relating to any level of job rather than Barrie's (2012) view that they represent the culmination of the process of undergraduate study and development. Barrie's research (ibid) found that for any successful implementation, stakeholders need to have a shared understanding of the concepts that they are either responsible for facilitating or developing. Given the confusion and lack of even basic awareness of the GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8, this basic premise of GA implementation has not been achieved by the HEI. Furthermore, whilst the *Champion Programmes* attempted to develop a GA framework at each level of study (Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 86-93), this was not refined then enforced by quality processes to become consistent practice throughout the university. Furthermore, though catering for almost half of all learners, no partners were involved in the initial pathfinder courses, meaning that potential problems of partner implementation were not identified and addressed at an early stage. Similarly, only full-time courses were used meaning that there was no attempt to consider how GA implementation would work with part-time learners.

As has been shown, the university has a consistently high proportion of part-time learners as well as learners older than the typical 18-21 age range (HEI, 2012). Although statistics specific to the university have not been found, King and Widdowson (2012) note that such students are more likely to be employed and are studying to enhance their careers rather than start them. Furthermore, the GA focus on basic employability skills may also have little value to even 'traditional' students who have gained employment during their studies. In this respect, the HEI's GA formation, by not considering the specific and atypical intake of its own students, has failed to create a distinctive definition of itself to market to new students or use to motivate existing ones. This runs contrary to their purported inspiration from Bowden et al. (2000, also

cited in the staff training presentation, appendix 3.1.3) thereby limiting their relevance to a large proportion of university students. Therefore, given that the university employability problem was not about students finding employment, but about enabling graduate level employment, an opportunity was missed to support students and lecturers define, understand and develop application of the high-level employability skills required to achieve this.

The limited guidance available to students and staff on the GA and 3E concepts is inadequate for developing facilitation strategies or providing a framework for self-directed learning. In terms of employability development, the web-based GA guidance takes a narrow view of employability which is conceptualised as being about gaining employment through the acquisition of low level basic skills such as 'being polite' and 'punctuality'. This appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding of GA principles, as espoused by Barrie (2006), which focus on the necessity of GAs being about graduate level skills acquisition rather than what he defines as *precursory* basic skills as those expounded in the HEI's GAs. Employability experts Yorke (2010) and Cole and Tibby (2013) emphasise the need to give consideration to maintaining and enhancing graduate level employment opportunities; an approach already espoused in the university's *Student Enterprise and Employability Policy* (HEI, 2009). That such an integral part of GA implementation was ignored shows a lack of policy connectivity. Similarly, the fact that this policy has not been updated for so long means that it is not maintaining relevance by responding to rapidly changing employability needs caused by technological developments as identified by the parliamentary Science and Technology Committee (STC, 2016a; 2016b).

While there appears to be little outright hostility to the GAs, an exception to this was the *Global Citizen* attribute which appears to have less value to students than the others regardless of whether they are full or part-time (appendices 4.7;4.8). Overall, there is a strong link between gaining a degree and developing employment prospects, but this does not translate into considering employment opportunities in a more international sense. The 3 Es were not known at all by partner lecturers and neither on or off campus learners had heard of them. The managers considered that some courses had found them problematic, considering them not to be applicable to some subject areas. Indeed, in the School of Education, these appear to have been ignored altogether, with implementation, limited as it is, being entirely focused on the GAs. The above demonstrates that both university and education students differ from the 'typical' university student covered in GA research as far as has been found in the literature review. Significant proportions and even in cases the majority of the university's students are older, part-time rather than full-time, educated in partner institutions and may already be employed in

the sector of their choice. However, despite this, the focus of the GAs at the institution has been towards the traditional young full-time graduate gaining their first job within their chosen sector. Whilst the existing GAs were not rejected by most respondents, the part-time students have also articulated other factors which they consider to represent their gradueness. In this respect, their views were more distinctive than the full-time learners whose key values echoed the GAs in relation to teamwork, communication, reflective and critical skills (appendices 4.3.2; 4.3.2; 4.3.6). For the part-time learners, the overarching consideration from the questionnaire was development of time-management skills. Whilst not generally considered to be a graduate level attribute in its own right, it is understandable given their context (appendices 4.3.1; 4.3.3; 4.3.5), echoing findings of King and Widdowson (2012) on the time pressures of part-time students. Their part-time course has less than half the face to face input of the full-time approach, therefore requiring greater independent learning. Time-management in these overwhelmingly female groups could also be important due to social responsibilities outside work and study as found in Finn's (2015) consideration of female graduates. As well as this, evidenced in the questionnaires and interviews, the part-time students across providers talked of resilience and pride in their achievement, reflecting on their achievement as mature students often from non-academic backgrounds (Main campus, appendix 5.3.1, SB; SDD, lines 34-39; Outreach, appendix 5.3.2, SC, lines 23-24; College A, appendix 5.3.3, SC, line 32; College B, appendix 5.3.4, SA, lines 21-23). This expressed gradueness in terms of the degree having enabled them to gain confidence in both their abilities as an academic, but also as professionals within their workplace. Therefore, the different circumstances of part-time learners have resulted in alternative priorities and perceptions of graduate development. Indeed, Hill, Walkington and France (2016) and Su (2014) argue that ongoing student input into GAs formation and development make them more meaningful. Su (ibid) emphasises the importance of student ownership as a means of developing their sense of self; while ongoing top-down support for GA implementation and evaluation is essential, the ability to be flexible in delivery is also advocated. Therefore, if GAs are to represent all of the students' needs, then part-time learners need to be fully considered during their formation, implementation, evaluation and development.

Summary

This academic discussion has found that the university's GA strategy was flawed in every aspect of its implementation. Their conceptualisation was not due to student demand but based on the decisions of a few senior managers under the guise of needing to act quickly. This meant that from the outset, the students for whom the policy was supposed to benefit, did not play a role in their formation, resulting in the GAs representing a narrow managerial vision of gradueness rather than what employers actually needed or students wanted. Underpinning this hasty imposition was the failure to remove or adapt existing policies in order to form a coherent approach to developing employability skills. This resulted in an incoherent set of objectives – GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8 which even senior management have difficulty understanding. In this respect, the lack of clear university-led definitions of the GAs and related strategies at every level hindered serious consideration of them as being a framework for transferable skill development. Without this guidance, this incentivised a surface level 'box-ticking' approach. This study demonstrates the need for policy formation to be interactive; introducing one policy should necessitate careful review, adaption or removal of related policies. Failure to do this results in the confusion of fading or overlapping policies as seen at the case study HEI which resulted in difficulties in implementation from the beginning.

As even proponents of GAs have shown, failures, inconsistencies and lecturer reluctance to become involved are to be expected when implementing what should be a radical strategy. However, at the case study HEI, genuine attempts to implement the GAs in depth through the pilot *Champion Programmes* were abandoned following initial difficulties. Instead of reflecting, adapting and developing strategy with the help of stakeholder engagement, the HEI effectively abandoned serious attempts at implementation and was satisfied with minimal compliance – 'ticking the box'. This case study has shown the importance of institutional resilience in the face of difficulties; policies are unlikely to be an initial success and it is only through implementing a transparent reflective learning cycle can they be developed to become effective. Failure to do this could lead to a continual stream of policies which are imposed with great fan-fare, adopted by some enthusiastic staff but then allowed to fade as the next idea is introduced, thereby reducing their motivation for future innovation.

This discussion has shown that partner colleges and part-time learners need to be given more of a voice in policy formation. HEIs should interact with their FE partners in the policy formation stage, both to draw from their experience of employability development and policy compliance

as well as to clearly agree whether and to what extent HEI based policies will be applied. The failure to do so with the GAs resulted in a lack of training, guidance, management structure or understanding of how to implement them in the face of similar or related FE based generic skills development policies. Additionally, HE in FE learners form a substantial proportion of not only this HEI's intake but also nationally. In this case study, the content of the GAs was aimed solely at young undergraduates aiming to gain employment rather than mature employed learners seeking to enhance their careers. HEIs therefore need to give more consideration to how such so-called 'non-traditional' students can be engaged in policy formation and development in order for HEIs to be better able to meet their specific needs. The discussion in this chapter has therefore raised many issues in relation to meeting the employability development needs of part-time learners as well as difficulties of policy imposition within FE partners. The final chapter therefore focuses on suggestions to improve practice within the HEI, which may also be useful for other HEIs who operate FE based franchises.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

Overview of the significance of the findings

This chapter considers key implications of the GA implementation process at the HEI in terms of informing future institutional policy formation, implementation and evaluation. It will be argued that the key consideration for the HEI is to develop institutional resilience through adherence to a robust quality cycle when implementing new policies. Consistent and effective changes to practice take time and require clear implementation strategies, role responsibilities as well as transparent and comprehensive means for evaluating and improving practice (Bond et al., 2017). This includes acceptance of setbacks and failures as a learning tool rather than being a signal to abandon the idea and move onto a new initiative (Oliver, 2013). In view of this, any future strategies need to give more consideration to implementation within FE partners, including greater opportunities for collaboration in the formation stage, support for policy delivery and scrutiny of practice. This case study has also shown how part-time mature learners, as major stakeholders within the organisation have differing needs to traditional learners, which should be considered and addressed throughout policy creation, implementation and evaluation. This chapter is organised along the lines of the four research objectives with a summary reflect upon its contribution to the field of knowledge, personal development areas as well as potential directions of further research.

Overarching recommendation: Implement a transparent and reflective policy cycle

1 Formation

GA formation at the HEI was flawed in key areas: incoherent content and failure to remove previous overlapping policies, lack of transparent evaluation, lack of stakeholder engagement in their creation, and managerial acceptance of minimal compliance rather than rigorous implementation. The GAs were introduced and strongly driven by the then new VC as a flagship strategy, but there has been no evidence found that this was a response to an in-depth evaluation of the specific needs of the university. Evidence from managerial interviewees rather points to this being a case of policy borrowing, copying other international and national universities, to try and quickly replicate their performance in key metrics such as league tables

(appendix 3.1.3, slides 6-8). Whilst emulating competitor strategy may provide useful ideas for development, it should not be assumed that any single policy is the causal factor in their success. A university's employability rating will be the culmination of many factors, not least graduate level opportunities in their local region, so policy borrowing alone is unlikely to succeed in emulating the success of the institutions from which it came (Kettle, 2013). Furthermore, by creating, or copying, a set of generic statements, there was no evidence of them articulating distinctive features of the HEI as recommended by Bowden et al. (2000) and therefore correspondingly little consideration of how would benefit specific needs of the organisation.

To overcome this lack of contextualisation when borrowing policies from more successful universities, the HEI needs to engage in thorough and meaningful consultation, with key stakeholders actually having genuine input into policy formation. The interviewees noted that this option was precluded by a perceived need for speed of implementation due to a crisis in league table ranking. Perry et al. (2010) recognise this crisis based justification where a sense of urgency is deemed to require rapid top-down change rather than thoughtful evidence-based evaluation. Indeed, it was this speed of implementation which contributed to the GAs being flawed from their inception; a lack of coherence in terms of their relationship with the 3 Es and [HEI] 8 as well as a failure to link, update or replace related policies. Where time genuinely is imperative, a top-down presentation of plans may be helpful to organise a discussion, whilst still enabling meaningful contributions from stakeholders. However, without this, opportunities to both improve the initial idea into a coherent teaching and learning strategy as well as to develop ownership of the GAs throughout the university and employers at an early stage were lost.

Oliver's (2013) case study, whilst regarding Australian full-time learners, has relevance to this HEI as it shows how management can respond to policy implementation difficulties through engagement with a cyclical and reflective quality enhancement process. This approach accepted failure as part of the implementation process, allowed policy to be reflected upon, renewed and developed. Oliver (ibid) found that this enabled tangible gains to be made, rather than allowing a policy to drift and be gradually supplanted (though not fully replaced) by subsequent policies. This highlights the importance of GAs being part of the overall quality process, including undergoing a clear quality cycle for renewal and improvement of both concepts, implementation and assessment. This research has demonstrated that the HEI's GAs, as well being conceptually incoherent, were then fundamentally undermined in terms of institution-wide implementation by an acceptance within quality procedures of surface level adherence to the policy through simple mapping and minimal commentary during the review

processes. This contradicts the national policy implementation studies (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Spronken-Smith et al., 2013 and Bond et al. 2017) who demonstrate the need for GAs to be part of clear and robustly managed structures throughout the university, covering teaching and learning, assessment and quality enhancement. Cole and Tibby (2013) concur, highlighting a four-stage quality cycle for developing HE level employability: discussion and reflection to create a shared point of reference, review and mapping, action based on the review and evaluation. A simple evaluative model such as this would help to underline the importance and longevity of any policy for contributing to institution-wide improvement.

Effective GA implementation requires a long-term, transformational process, rather than a marketing strategy or quick fix for improving key performance indicators. In this respect, management needs to accept that policy needs regular, systematic and transparent review and development to help foster successful institution-wide implementation over the long term. This requires regular and transparent evaluation of the effectiveness of policy implementation as well as long-term SMT commitment to enable managers to have long-term responsibility for any policy implementation rather than being drawn away to whatever the next new idea might be. There is no evidence of ongoing engagement with regards to potentially updating them to meet employer needs. Given the rapidly changing needs of businesses, as identified by the parliamentary Science and Technology Committee (STC, 2016a; 2016b) and Baker (2016), where automation and artificial intelligence are revolutionising employer needs and job roles, an ongoing evolutionary employability agenda is essential for the HEI to help its graduate succeed in the employment market place. By making GAs part of the assessment process, this would help to demonstrate their importance by making them explicitly part of any placement-based assessments.

2 *Stakeholder involvement*

2.1 *Students*

By using generic concepts for formation rather than following Bowden et al.'s (2000) community-based concept, the GAs which emerged were based on the perceived needs of traditional full-time learners rather than representing the actual student population of the HEI. As a teaching-led HEI, with strong vocationally based recruitment from within the local community, a large section of the student community is formed from a combination of non-traditional factors. Rather than being full-time and straight from compulsory education, the majority have at least one of the following non-traditional elements as identified by King and Widdowson (2012); part-time, employed, mature, low entry qualifications and based in a partner provider. Therefore, student participation in policy formation, evaluation and renewal is vital to help develop policies which represent the diversity of the whole student population, rather than managerial perceptions of a student stereotype. Daniels and Brooker (2014) highlight the importance of employability strategies being open to student feedback. With the GAs, this only took place once in a one Student Viewfinder Survey but was then dropped (appendix 4.1.2), meaning that the GAs are therefore not currently embedded into any of the HEI's feedback mechanisms. GAs, or any subsequent strategy, should feature in both modular and course feedback with questions targeted at ascertaining perceptions into the extent of their development and future development needs as well as whether the purported GA focus within each module were actually being delivered.

2.2 *Staff and partners*

The interviews revealed mixed levels of enthusiasm for the GA policy as well as passive minimal compliance, both of which contributed to uneven implementation of the policy. The lack of initial contribution to their formation combined with only short-term managerial oversight has enabled the GAs to gradually fade from academic staff agenda. In terms of partners, this research has shown that they were expected to implement a policy for which they had no input in the formation and then were given no guidance or support resources to help them enact it. Considering their number and importance, they need to be directly involved in any policy for

which they are expected to implement. Equally, the university needs to clarify and agree exact requirements of partners for any policies as an integral aspect of the validation processes. Where there are contradictory or overlapping institutional policies between the HEI and FE partner, validation should clearly state which approach is to be followed as a part of the validation agreement as well as the consequences should the agreement not be adhered to. This decision then needs to be enforced through application of the HEI's quality processes, including the Programme Advisors who have responsibility for liaising between college and the HEI. Indeed, in line with King and Widdowson's (2012) findings that FE lecturers struggled to create an HE culture within their institutions, a clear advocacy of validating HEI's GAs alone would help to create such an identity. Furthermore, where GAs represent genuinely graduate level achievements (Barrie, 2004), they would help to overcome Creasy's (2013) criticism of FE lecturers solely delivering knowledge by explicitly promoting a more holistic HE level development. Without giving students a single HE GA focus, FE lecturers will face the dilemma of having to work towards divergent policies, thereby resulting in a tendency towards minimal compliance to each institution without making genuine changes envisaged by the policy.

2.3 Employer engagement

Pegg et al. (2012) emphasise the importance of consulting employers throughout formation, implementation and evaluation and renewal of any employability strategy. Kettle (2013, p.5) concurs:

...the contemporary employability development agenda is predicated on a perceived understanding of which graduate skills, attributes and capabilities are valued. This can only be determined through engaging with business, professions and employers. Such a dialogue informs higher education firstly about how it can prepare graduates for working life and secondly about how working life might be enhanced through learning provision.

Whilst the HEI's employability rating was seen as a cause for concern and justification for GA development, the top-down approach to their creation meant that employers were not consulted in the GA/3E formation. Indeed, there is no evidence that the GAs/3 Es had any relation to the University's employability strategy, which, formed in 2009 and still apparently current, has been neither updated nor clearly integrated into staff policies, training or quality monitoring (HEI, 2009). This means that, contradicting Pegg et al. (2012), employers were not involved in a strategy to develop the kind of employees they required. Universities UK (2015) highlight the

need for universities to liaise with employers when developing any employability related strategy, arguing that generic skills and attributes tend to have differing industry or occupation-based interpretations. Mourshed, Farrell and Barton (2013, p.18) concur, stating: “*Employers, education providers, and youth live in parallel universes. To put it another way, they have fundamentally different understandings of the same situation.*” They advocate the need for students, educators and employers to have much closer working relationships in order to develop mutual understanding and beneficial opportunities for employability development.

Were GAs to be continued at the HEI, there should be greater opportunity for all stakeholders to have input into their development. In consideration of broader policy formation and implementation in future, a perceived need for rapid action should not override the need for wide-ranging consultation and input into their development. Furthermore, the lack of guidance regarding GA implementation meant that, contrary to Bond et al.’s (2017) findings, there has been no consideration given relating to how the GAs should work within courses which feature sector specific accreditation/professional bodies. Additionally, where FECs are already delivering their own attributes agreement needs to be reached regarding which are applied. Given the HE level of the course, the HEI’s graduate level attributes should take precedence.

3 *Implementation*

Where learners were aware of the GAs, the findings show general approval for their ethos and general support for the idea of providing a framework for celebrating what becoming a graduate entails. Many of these identified the GA link to employability, but rather than holding McNiff's (2016) view that it narrowed the curriculum, thought it to be a positive benefit to their higher education experiences. Similarly, lecturers responsible for delivery did not display hostility to employability focused education. In view of this, GAs could potentially play a supportive role in the students' undergraduate experience, however it is also clear that at present there are significant barriers hindering their implementation at institutional, FE franchise college and subject level. Therefore, in order to play a significant and positive role in terms of the student experience and development, they will require a renewal of managerial drive within the HEI. The current gradual fading of this policy does not provide tangible benefits to students and adds to the burden of staff in terms of compliance. Therefore, this research considers that a clear decision needs to be made on whether to formally end or revitalise the policy.

At present, assessment outcomes need to be linked to the '[HEI] 8' with the GAs mapped to the award by module. Barrie (2012) argues that online mapping of the differing subject curriculum to GA can also be used as part of the consultation process to raise awareness and prompt discussion of how they should be interpreted in each discipline as well as the extent to which they feature in differing modules as well as the course overall. However, simple mapping of each subject alone is ineffective, encouraging minimal compliance rather than genuine engagement with the GAs. As highlighted in the literature review as well as the university's own training (Hughes and Barrie, 2010; Spronken-Smith et al.; 2013; appendix 3.1.3) all agree that to be effective GAs need to be explicitly assessed. The GA statements only apply to the graduate, there is no clear pathway explaining how they should be explicitly embedded throughout the course or how the undergraduate develops them. The GAs should therefore be graded for each level to illustrate how they build to represent genuinely graduate level attributes. At the HEI, Sports and Exercise has already done this (Senior Manager, appendix 5.1.1, lines 244-249; appendix 3.3.1), but it is not common practice throughout the HEI and there is no HEI standard guidance from which these could be contextualised by each subject area.

However, there are differing viewpoints regarding how GA assessment should be enacted. Coetzee's (2014) approach to GA measurement could be problematic due to its reliance on the accuracy of self-assessment, though they could be a useful tool for the students to engage in

order to promote personal reflection and development. Alternatively, university-wide standardised separate generic skills tests could attempt to quantify GA achievement though it is highly questionable whether a single assessment could accurately measure the ability to apply such a complex range of skills. Furthermore, any such assessment could distract academics from discipline teaching towards assessment-led teaching in preparation for the test. Additionally, this leaves the potential dilemma identified by the Faculty Education Manager (appendix 5.1.3, lines 211-225) of a learner passing one element, such as discipline-based assessments, but failing the skills test. Failing one test would devalue achievement of the other by bringing into question the student's progress over the course of the degree. Another alternative is to make GAs an optional extra. However, Barrie (2012), describing this as the *complementary* approach, opposes such approaches, finding that separating skills development and discipline expertise is ineffective, a view also upheld by Facione (1995), Willingham (2008) and Hoffer's (2011) research. Furthermore, there are ethical and practical grounds for opposition to this approach. Assessing separately is potentially divisive and even discriminatory, with part-time learners unlikely to take on the extra work requirement as well as undermining the value of the standard degree. Additionally, such a separate approach adds extra burden to academics. Indeed, any approach to GAs which require substantial extra input at the delivery phase are impractical for part-time learners who receive far less direct input for their awards. In the case-study HEI, part-time learners receive less than half the face to face input hours of their full-time peers, thus requiring additional self-study time which makes extensive specific GA input impractical. Rather than these options, if there is clear integration of the GAs into assessment learning outcomes, which Bond et al. (2017) highlight as a key indicator in GA success, GAs would then be more likely to be embedded within the learning and assessment process. Furthermore, by being assessed within the subject context there would be more incentive for lecturers to contextualise them to the needs of the discipline as well as motivation for learners to engage with them more fully as they contribute to their final classification. Such transparent linkage between GAs and assessment need to be consistently applied at validation, with clear guidance on what is expected and then upheld by the panel. The teaching and learning strategy is therefore at present confused, with three sets of overlapping yet differing statements; GAs, 3 Es and [HEI] 8. The HEI therefore needs to develop a clear and coherent teaching and learning strategy which is articulated to both lecturers and students and has a clear and enforced role throughout the teaching and learning cycle, from induction to appraisal.

4 Policy Review and evaluation

Change management across an organisation as large as a university requires organisation, patience and resilience. The HEI needs to develop this for future strategies as it appeared to abandon in-depth policy implementation in the face of initial problems with the pilot *Champion Programme* courses, resulting in acquiescence with partner, manager and lecturer reluctance to change practice. In this respect, implementation took the worst aspects of managerial and collegiate approaches to university development as identified by Kligyte and Barrie (2012); top-down imposition of policy from executive followed by a reluctance to meet challenges or resolutely learn from and develop implementation approaches following early set-backs. Additionally, these pilot *Champion Programmes* were selected on the grounds that they were already employability focused, meaning that little would have to be done to incorporate the new policy (Employability Group Member, appendix 5.1.2, lines 41-44). Conversely, to demonstrate meaningful change, these *Champion Programmes* should have been taken from areas with a diverse range of students and courses with the lowest employability rankings which could then model how even the most difficult programmes could be adapted. The acceptance of mapping, for both external and internal awards, effectively ended serious attempts at consistent university wide implementation of GAs as well as losing any opportunity for institutional change. Given that the institution was languishing within the league tables and that the management was committed in its five-year plan to make improving this standing a key objective, the acceptance of passive mapping also therefore negated the opportunity for the wholesale transformation to practice that a university in its position required. Whilst partners and lecturers could blithely argue that they were meeting GA requirements by producing a grid showing content against the GAs, the lack of change to their approaches entailed in what became a paper exercise negated the opportunity for wholesale development of practice that the league table data metrics show are required.

The University needs to develop a mechanism for regularly reviewing and developing policies so that they are not only up to date with sector requirements and expectations, but also are coherent in terms of their relationship with other policies within the organisation. Spronken-Smith et al. (2013) highlight the need for clear managerial structures for implementation. Following the original pathfinder projects, the university has not designated GA champions or any clear leadership structure for their implementation. Furthermore, an example of this is the employability policy (HEI, 2009), which none of the interviewees referred to when discussing

employability either from lack of awareness or consideration that it was relevant and yet this remains an official policy. Given the employability was taken to be a value of the university, part of the GAs and also one of the 3 Es, the failure to review and update this within eight years suggests a lack of coherent policy reviewing process.

This research has shown that the GAs appear to be fading as a university policy and yet they remain present in on the website and as a requirement for some aspects of university practice. This problem started with their inception, where they have had to compete with other unconnected teaching and learning policies. Since then additional ideas have been introduced; over the 2015-16 year, Problem Based Learning was introduced and all modules were expected to demonstrate where this took place but without an explicit connection to the GAs. Additionally, a new observation policy was introduced (HEI, 2016g) using observation guidance and templates which did not mention the GAs. In the 2016-17 academic year, neither of these policies have been mentioned again – whether to promote or report their demise. Instead, in 2016-17 lecturers are being urged to embrace digital technology as part of the new *Connected University* strategy, though with no connections being made to the GAs. This research has therefore shown that a problem the HEI faces when implementing any policy is of layering – where old policies gradually fade rather than be formally removed and replaced. With every year bringing new initiatives without evaluating or ending old ones results in a lack of clarity for lecturers. This hampers implementation, resulting in inconsistencies of application. Furthermore, understanding of the lack of enforcement effectively incentivises minimal compliance as teams are able to wait for the next policy to subsume the previous one. Therefore, the institution needs to show character for the sake of clarity in informing its staff when a policy has ended and transparently evaluating its achievements to inform future improvements.

Furthermore, the HEI should take a rigorous evidence-based approach to policy evaluation. Somewhat ironically perhaps, it appears that the HEI has a *Research Based Teaching Projects* site still live, though in keeping with the problem highlighted above, this has not been updated since 2007 (HEI, 2017b). As was demonstrated in the documentary search, evaluation of GAs was limited to one survey of basic awareness (appendix 4.1.2), meaning that ongoing evaluation of policy development was not enacted. Lessons learned from such research should inform more effective future policy implementation processes, helping to develop an institution which does not only seek to borrow from competitors but could also learn from itself: a learning institution. Finally, when introducing new policies, the HEI also needs to take a systematic

approach to reviewing related policies so that, together, they form a coherent approach. For example, the introductions of the employability-based GAs should have prompted a review of employability policy as well as those relating to teaching learning and assessment. Any changes should then be clearly communicated, illustrating how the policies relate to each other.

Summary

This study has shown that GAs cannot be considered to be an effective 'quick fix' to problems with a HEI's data metrics, either as a marketing tool or as a means of boosting employability ratings. Therefore, prior to deciding whether to create a set of GAs, it should be considered whether the institution is prepared to undertake wholesale and long-term change. If not, then introducing GAs without sufficient consultation, resources or resilience will not have a meaningful impact on transforming practice but will rather add another layer of paperwork for compliance. To create effective GAs, genuine broad stakeholder involvement is required to help make them more distinctive and therefore meaningful for the 'academy' of students and lecturers, as well as employers. In having such an articulation as originally recommended by Bowden et al. (2000), there would be more reason for employees and the full range of students to be genuinely engaged in their implementation and achievement. Any future policy should not just think about how it will be transposed into partner setting, but actually use partners and their students in the consultation process. To help make a policy appropriate and effective, it should represent the needs of all students and not a selected group. However, consultation is not enough, as without robust and clear structures then workplace pressures and new priorities can easily take over, meaning that 'ticking the box' replaces commitment to a whole-university ethos. Therefore, unless senior management is willing to commit to a long-term implementation process, with the structures and resources to support, policy layering will continue to have a detrimental impact on institutional improvement. Continuation of this approach will only serve to demotivate enthusiastic early adopters whilst simultaneously rewarding the 'box tickers' intent on continuing existing, and by league table standards, unsuccessful, practice.

Contribution to knowledge

This study has discovered that problems in GA implementation at the HEI also give insight into broader problems of policy creation, implementation and evaluation. It has clearly shown that problems identified in GA formation and implementation cross international boundaries and that successful implementation is neither simple nor possible over a short amount of time. Issues leading to failure identified by even by proponents in Australia and New Zealand (Hughes, Barrie and Smith, 2009; Bond et al., 2017) have a clear resonance with the experience of the English case study HEI; top-down conceptualisation, a failure to perceive the breadth of change required throughout the organisation and weak implementation lacking clear structure and resilience against setbacks. Uniquely, this study has also found additional difficulties with GAs for part time and FEC based learners. Therefore, findings from this study may have transferable value for other practitioners involved in HE provision within FECs or part-time learners.

For HEI based managers working with FE partnerships the outcomes of this study may enable reflection on how HEI policy can better involve FE partners throughout the policy implementation and development cycle. Similarly, for FE managers tasked with liaising with HEI partners, the impact of policy overlap between institutions found in this study could inspire calls for greater involvement in HEI policy making as well as underlining the importance of clear delineation of policies in order to ensure that FE based lecturers have clear rather than conflicting responsibilities. This is essential if they are to develop a distinctive HE culture within the FEC in order to help overcome criticisms of such provision identified by King and Widdowson (2012) and Creasy (2013). The matters because the study has shown that both within the case study HEI and nationally, part-time students are an important part of the overall graduate body.

In spite of the significance of part time and FEC based HE learners, the case study found little evidence that their specific needs were considered in policy formation, implementation or evaluation. In the case of the HEI, this resulted in a GA policy which only partially met their needs as mature, experienced and employed learners. Furthermore, the previously assessed literature review as well as the literature update found in chapter one, has shown an imbalance in research towards full-time 'traditional' learners meaning that part-time based literature on GAs and employability appears to be underrepresented. This means that a group acknowledged to be vulnerable to lower levels of retention, achievement and progression (Little, 2005; King and

Widdowson, 2012) are not benefiting from the insight that research and evidence informed policy could bring to overcome these difficulties.

Personal development as a researcher

The initial proposal was intended to focus on identifying development points to improve the researcher's own professional practice in terms of delivering the HEI's GAs. However, as identified in chapter three and discussed in chapter four, it is apparent that the GAs are becoming another layer of fading policies within the HEI and therefore the direct practical benefit of improving GA implementation within my practice is limited. Nevertheless, on reflection, engaging in this study has benefitted my professional practice in several ways.

Firstly, although the GAs are no longer prominent within HEI policy, the need for developing employability based attributes of undergraduates has not disappeared. The study has therefore given me insight into the importance of developing broader skills throughout their studies. I have therefore developed a flipped approach to learning where core knowledge is covered in directed study, so that class time focuses on reviewing this knowledge and then utilising it in skills development based activities which require teamwork, communication and higher order thinking skills (Kahn, 2014). Whilst the above covers similar generic skills to the GAs, the study revealed a lack of understanding or value for the *Global Citizen* GA. However, given the international challenges faced by Brexit as well as literature sources from academics and businesses alike arguing for the need for graduates to have global awareness, or inter-cultural empathy (Bosanquet, 2010; Butcher et al., 2011; Nagarajan and Edwards, 2014), it is clear that this GA is important to develop even if they are not currently valued by the learners. Therefore, as a project for my Teaching Excellence Fellowship gained at the HEI, I have initiated an international collaborative project to one of the course modules. This includes a partnership with a Finnish university as well as the opportunity for students to work with educators from around the world. The initial results of this are positive with many students taking up the opportunity to collaborate with educators from around the world and initial, informal feedback is positive about this development.

In engaging in regular reading and writing to inform and develop this study, I have gained a broader understanding of the education sector as a whole, which has enabled me to write chapters for five books during the course of my studies on this award, with two more planned in

the near future. Research for this case study has directly informed chapters on diverse topics such as assessment, critical thinking, comparative education and education policy formation. This has now given me the confidence to begin contributing to academic journals, as will be discussed in the following section. I have also benefitted from membership of a sector related professional bodies, being one of the first members of the Institute for Learning and now its successor, Society for Education and Training, the University and College Union and the Higher Education Academy. Following completion of this study, I intend to further my professional development through membership of the Society for Research in Higher Education. This will help me to further improve my professional expertise as a researcher as well as gain access to valuable research information and networks to help me develop a research base for my career.

Potential areas for future research

This case study has considered the extent to which a GA policy has been implemented within a School of Education, revealing broader issues of university-wide implementation strategy. The paucity of research relating to HE delivered in FE contexts is an opportunity for further investigation into this area which could enable better consideration of part-time/FE based HEI students' needs as well as how policies and courses should be adapted to improve retention achievement and progression. Notwithstanding the impact of funding cuts on reducing overall FE provision, HE provision in FE is supported by government in the latest HE Bill, along with the encouragement of new universities, as a means of increasing competition within the sector (DfE, 2016). Given this renewed policy commitment, research into HEI and partner relations could reveal important insight into how this relationship is managed and how it could be improved.

Although not an initial consideration of the project, the research has also raised the opportunity of investigating issues relating to gender within part-time and FE based higher education. As a predominantly female group, consideration could be given to recruitment; whether this reflects a sector-based gender numerical inequality or if the course is failing to recruit potential male students. As well as this, the balance of the groups would enable a study into female-based study within the context of HE in FE and/or part-time HE learners. This could give valuable insight into pressures faced and coping mechanisms developed by learners to achieve their degree, as well as feedback from those who discontinue studying, thereby enabling possible changes to practice to further support these groups of learners. Additionally, the majority of these learners are Teaching Assistants with many facing whole class teaching and other professional responsibilities. This study has found that the majority valued graduate education in terms of improving their practice and the experiences of those they worked with; gaining a degree had a high personal and professional value albeit not necessarily a high financial reward. However, their status for university data metrics is as low-paid non-professionals, thereby representing a 'failure' in terms of data metrics for employability. Therefore, a study in relation to their professional practice and recognition in data returns further questions the accuracy and appropriacy of basing definitions of graduate level employability on financial returns alone.

Whilst awareness and understanding of the university's mixed learning strategy of GA, 3 Es and the [HEI] is limited, what is clear from the interviews and focus groups is the enthusiasm to

engage in discussions about personal and professional development throughout undergraduate study. This suggests that there is a value in encouraging lecturers and students to articulate and discuss personal and professional development, even if top-down imposed definitions of gradueness have a limited match with the student and lecturer perceptions. Therefore, further research could consider how course development in the SoE could build in greater student involvement in curriculum construction and evaluation to better represent the needs of its varied student population. In this respect, there is also a need for greater research both within the institution and nationally regarding the barriers facing part-time learners as well as identifying successful practice for this group in order to bring their attainment in line with full time learners.

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Appendices

1.0 Literature Review

Doctor of Education (EdD)

Module 5: Developing an effective initial literature review.

This work has already been assessed.

Graduate Attributes: A study into stakeholders' perceptions of their implementation and utility.

Word count: 10506

Introduction

Key features of graduate attributes include the ability of the university graduate to apply generic skills, attitudes and abilities to a variety of non-discipline specific contexts (Barrie, 2004). Since the 1990s, the adoption of graduate attributes by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) has become increasingly common throughout the world (de la Harpe and David, 2012). Such explicitly stated attributes aim to equip the graduate with more than discipline expertise. Graduates should be able to adapt, develop and utilise a variety of personal skills as well as make ethically based judgements for the promotion of social benefit (Bowden et al., 2000). In English HEIs, adoption of these attributes remains voluntary, whereas Australian government funding and quality assurance policies have effectively necessitated their implementation (Donleavy, 2012). At a governmental and institutional level, subsequent funding for research on attributes has enabled the development of a considerable body of literature to be amassed regarding this Australian experience, which will be utilised to complement the emerging studies within English universities. Barrie's work is featured in this study due to his prominence in this field as a researcher responsible for developing and critically evaluating Australian implementation policies nationally (Barrie, Hughes and Smith 2009, Hughes and Barrie, 2010) and at institutional level for the University of Sydney (Barrie, 2004, 2006).

Chapter One gives an overview of purposes for the introduction of graduate attributes as well as key drivers of their growth. These include the development of a globalised economy and the quasi-marketization of education facilitated by associated moves to promote consumer choice and public accountability through standardised outcomes of quality measurement (Ball, 2008). Challenges emanating from differing perceptions of purpose, approaches to formation, implementation and evaluation of graduate attributes will be investigated in Chapter Two. According to Hughes and Barrie (2010), effective implementation can only be achieved through fundamental change to the learner experience. This entails whole-scale institution-wide changes to teaching, learning, curriculum, assessment, and quality systems, thereby radically reforming the role and purpose of the academic (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009).

This work uses the term 'graduate attributes' to encompass the concept of summarising and promoting holistic learner achievements. According to Spencer, Riddle and Knewstubb (2012), other terms with generally similar meaning include variations of transferable or generic skills, qualities, capabilities and attributes. Such diversity of terminology is also reflected in the lack of either an internationally recognised or discipline-specific definition, which may be a source of

some of the difficulties experienced in their interpretation, implementation and evaluation (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009).

Chapter One: Drivers of Graduate Attributes

1.1 *Context and Concepts of Graduate Attributes*

An early Australian Higher Education Council (HEC) definition of graduate attributes focuses on the overarching concept that graduate attributes are about encouraging learner achievement above that of discipline knowledge: "...the skills personal attributes and values which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study, and representing the central achievements of higher education as a process" (1992, p20 cited in Barrie, 2004).

Bowden et al. (2000, Executive Summary) expand this by adding considerations of developing ethical responsibility, the learners' post-graduate future as well as an articulation of the unique character of an institution. Although Bowden et al.'s definition is commonly cited by university institutions, Donleavy's (2012) analysis of every Australian university found that rather than articulating the uniqueness of the learning experience, they tended to focus on similar principles regardless of institutional context or tradition. Discipline expertise and critical thinking were universally articulated and were complemented with other attributes such as communication skills, ethical conduct/responsibility, global perspective/citizenship, and team-working.

The justification for graduate attributes being necessary to develop traditional discipline-based education runs contrary to the view that past approaches to university studies entailed a broad education (By, Burnes and Oswick, 2013). They argue that universities have always endeavoured to develop a range of desirable graduate qualities; according to the 'Bildung' concept of nineteenth century European universities, learner and tutor development was based on a mutual desire to further knowledge and understanding. Similarly, both Barrie (2004) and Donleavy (2012) argue that the concept of development of a broad range of skills has been traditionally a part of Australian university culture. Crebert et al. (2004) add that independent living skills gained from traditional university campus experiences form part of the broader skills development of learners. Indeed, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) acknowledge that even the 'traditional' university approach in English HEIs comprises of more than discipline expertise: "The English higher education tradition has particularly stressed the autonomy and independence of both learners and institutions, more than some other national traditions..." (BIS 2011a, p.33). Therefore, to some extent, graduate attributes could be considered as being an explicit articulation of what has been implicitly part of the university academic experience.

Jones (2001) argues that emergence of these attributes as espoused by institutional policy has not emerged from learner demand nor academic agreement, but as a result of external pressure from governmental funding and business lobbies to provide greater employability focus to university courses. Taken together, these concepts strongly relate to definitions of employability-related soft skills as summarised by Andrews and Higson (2008), demonstrating how graduate attributes appear to have been largely formed by employer interests, as articulated in a series of reports arguing a causal link of education to employment and economic gain (Crebert et al. 2004, CBI and NUS 2011). Such reports adhere to Becker's (1993) large-scale global longitudinal studies that highlighted a correlation between education and earnings, a relationship still found in an analysis of national graduate and non-graduate earnings (BIS 2013). The only addition to these skills not strongly related to business demands relate to attributes articulating a commitment to ethical action or social responsibility (Donleavy 2012). Bosanquet (2010) adds that recently, global perspectives/citizenship have entered the language of graduate attributes, in acknowledgement of globalisation and governmental promotion of the need to compete in a globalised economy, sentiments found in UK policy from both the Labour government in the Leitch Review (2006) and the current coalition (DfE 2010, 2011).

1.2 Globalisation

Bridgestock (2009) argues that the purpose of education has been narrowed towards promoting economic gain: "Education and training have recently been reconceptualised through human capital theory as primarily economic devices and essential to the participation in the global economy." (ibid, 2009 p.31). This articulates Becker's (1993) conclusion that human capital is more valuable than other forms of capital in developed economies. Becker found that overall, levels of educational achievement strongly correlates to financial and health benefits to individuals across a broad range of societies. Becker therefore surmised that education is instrumental in delivering post-industrial economic growth through its ability to deliver scientific innovation which improves productivity and therefore wealth. Becker acknowledges the influence the 'Chicago School' of orthodox economic theorists such as Milton Friedman in aiding what he describes as the human capital revolution throughout the world, evidenced in the acceptance of the contention that education inherently promotes social mobility in government reports and white papers of the major political parties (Leitch, 2006; DfE, 2010; DfE, 2011).

However, for education to fully serve this purpose it has to overcome entrenched social hierarchies and unequal access to resources and infrastructure (Coffield and Williamson, 2011). Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) further argue that a broad range of social problems for both rich and poor are actually caused by the physical and psychological effects of income inequality rather than a lack of education or specific levels of poverty. However, their reliance on attaching causation to a variety of correlating evidence opens their hypothesis to similar related criticisms of monocausality also held against Becker's methodology (Liebig, 2012). Nevertheless, critics of the implementation of human capital theory such as Coffield and Williamson (2011) and Robinson (2010), while valuing education as a positive contributory factor to the economy, argue that the link between education and economic gain is oversimplified. Coffield and Williamson argue that governments have seen investment in education as being a panacea for all of societies' problems and therefore held educators at fault when problems such as decreasing social mobility, unemployment and underemployment remain.

The implementation of graduate attributes in Higher Education Institutions is growing throughout the world, driven by international agenda in the European Union, America and Australasia (Jones, 2001; Hoban et al., 2004; and Hughes and Barrie, 2010). Donleavy (2012) argues that in Australia, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act (2011) makes them a key factor in securing university accreditation, with their absence automatically being considered a risk factor. In Europe, according to the European Commission (2010), the Bologna Declaration (1999) aimed to make Higher Education: "...more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents", with graduate attributes being a means of helping to promote this agenda. In the UK, Tomlinson (2007) acknowledges that such factors have influenced UK institutions' adoption of such attributes. However, in terms of governmental policy, moves towards more in-depth Student Charters were considered (BIS, 2011b), though the postponement of the Higher Education White Paper has delayed any national legislation. Green, Hunter and Star (2009) argue that universities appear to have largely accepted their reorientation towards vocationally centred education, and many have therefore adopted graduate attributes to help achieve this goal. The extent to which these have actually aided such a transition though has not been consistent between and within institutions (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009).

1.3 *Towards a Marketisation of Education*

The focus of attributes on developing employability, defined as an ability to gain, maintain and enhance employment (Glover, Law and Youngman, 2002), appear to support Becker's (1993) contention that education is the key to growing national economies in a competitive global market-place. Such a view has been central to UK education policy since at least 1988 regardless of the political party in control (Whitty, 2008; Leitch, 2006; DfE, 2010). In the UK, Universities along with Further Education colleges, are now explicitly classified as private-sector organisations (BIS, 2011a). Current government policies appear to be aimed at continuing the drive towards encouraging free-market competition in education, though without completely relinquishing control to a fully market-based approach (Whitty, 2008; Coffield and Williamson, 2011). Ball (2008) identifies this as a gradual encroachment of the public sector, with each move opening up further opportunities for private enterprise. Such moves are in line with an overall global trend, along the minimal government free-market principles identified by Sandel (2009). Sandel argues that profit-driven business, along with market mechanisms, are encroaching into traditionally non-profit areas such as schooling, health and other public services, with potentially negative ethical consequences.

In order to promote competition, rather than collaboration in Higher Education, institutions have been given some freedom to set differing charges, a development of the principle that students would pay for their education introduced by the previous government: "...universities will be under competitive pressure to provide better quality and lower cost" (BIS 2011a, p.2) which BIS claims will also reduce government expenditure. Increased student fees are justified due to graduates commanding higher salaries: "...the beneficiaries of higher education would need to make a larger contribution to its costs" citing the need for economic austerity to reject his advocacy of government investment in education. Rich (2011) illustrates that this is a narrow perception of who benefits from Higher Education; businesses are able to pick the cream of the graduates without paying for their training. Tomlinson (2008) and Rich (2011) also argue that this assumes that individuals make rational choices based on logical analysis of cost versus benefits of entering into Higher Education. Rich demonstrates the fallacy of this, with popular trends, poor career guidance and the unpredictability of business employment impacting on the decision-making process. O'Connel (2011, p.116-117) adds that graduate underemployment, in terms of non-graduate or part-time employment, as well as unemployment is a serious issue. This means that insufficient numbers of students are reaching the student-loan repayment

threshold, so student fee increases have achieved a short-term spending cut at the expense of greater graduate and public long-term debt (Tatlow, 2011).

The government hopes to increase provision, or at least competition, by removing regulatory barriers to entering the Higher Education sector, also arguing that this will help to make Higher Education cheaper (BIS, 2011a p.5). However, Tomlinson (2007) found that such expansionist aims in the UK led to student concerns about a reduction the value of their qualifications due to increased graduate supply. From the learners' point of view, Tomlinson (2007; 2008) found that the addition of graduate attributes is seen as a means of helping them stand out from other graduates in a time of mass Higher Education. However, as these are being adapted more and more world-wide, this advantage will presumably diminish while the additional workload for students and academics will remain. Crebert et al. (2004) argue that the development of more complex attributes as a result of increasing demand could be difficult for universities to facilitate and students to achieve, potentially demoralising learners. Rich (2011) further warns that this market-based approach is inefficient as courses are provided according to fashionable learner demand or as Robinson (2010) and Coffield and Williamson (2011) claim, based on assumed future business demand that we cannot accurately predict. Such concerns would question Becker's (1993) link between Higher Education and increased earnings; though he notes that similar concerns in the 1970s were soon overcome.

There has been a political consensus to move towards marketisation initiated by the 1988 Education Reform Act which continues to the present day, though this does not indicate the creation of a fully free-market system and the ensuing loss of political influence over education (Whitty, 2008; Coffield and Williamson 2011). Therefore, governmental control remains in place, through legislation, regulation, fee caps, funding and quality assurance mechanisms. Thus, the present coalition government has repeated contention of Callaghan's Ruskin speech (1976), that funding brings the right to governmental control in the guise of accountability as professionals cannot be trusted to develop students which will bring in a good economic return on investment. Identified by Perry et al. (2010) as a seminal moment in defining education policy direction, this view is echoed by the current government: "But in return, we want the sector to become more accountable to students, as well as the taxpayer" (BIS 2011a, p.2). The impression of a vigilant government ensuring value for money for the taxpayer, identified as an international phenomenon by Jones (2001), is currently somewhat diminished by the current reduction of funding level for Higher Education. Nevertheless, graduate attributes are able to play a role in the somewhat divergent policy aims of promoting a free market: "putting financial

power into the hands of learners makes student choice more meaningful” (BIS 2011a, p.5), while still retaining governmental control.

As well as linking education studies with developing employability skills, a further purpose of introducing graduate attributes has been for marketing purposes to attract students, their parents, employers and professional bodies, as Coffield and Williamson (2011, p.3) note: “...managers feel compelled to adopt such market mechanisms as branding in order to seek advantage over competitors...[turning] school against school, college against college and university against university.” Coffield and Williamson (2011) argue that this drive towards marketisation of education has led to an unhealthy focus on marketing and branding institutions rather than focusing on provision of high quality learning opportunities. In this respect, the extent to which graduate attributes are merely a marketing tool, or a genuine attempt to transform an institution’s approach to learning, can be ascertained by the depth of their contribution to internal quality policies, staff training and the overall learner experience.

1.4 *Education for Employability and Social Mobility*

The term 'employability' emerged in the early twentieth century, but its usage in government policy rapidly increased in the 1990s and is now used in the context of meeting the challenges globalisation through developing knowledge-driven economies (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006). Earlier definitions of employability tended to be fairly narrowly focused on the individual (Bridgestock, 2009). The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) initially defined them as: "the possession by the individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers (1999, Bridgestock 2009 p.1) whereas the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing report, 1997) focused on personal basic communication skills. Bridgestock notes that graduate attributes now consider the value of team-working but argues that self-management of career development should be included as well. Supporting Becker's human capital concept (1993), Bridgestock argues that the benefits to the individual of successful career management promotes their overall well-being as well as the opportunity to rise to the best of their ability, resulting in increased economic productivity on a national level as well. This concept appears to have been incorporated into the NUS and CBI's (2011) vision of employability and therefore could be featured in future articulations of graduate attributes.

Ball (2008), and Coffield and Williamson (2011) note that, both in the UK and globally, the main purpose of education is being directed towards preparing learners for employment, with governmental reports and subsequent policies from both major political parties emphasising the need for education to develop employability skills in order to enable the UK economy to compete in a competitive global market (Leitch, 2006; DfE, 2010; BIS 2011a). Tomlinson (2008) argues that such policy is based on aspects of human capital theory (Becker, 1993), claiming a direct relationship between education expansion and economic development as well as social and individual benefits, the latter of which has been used to justify the introduction and increase towards market rates of tuition fees (BIS, 2011a).

Tomlinson (2008) argues that attempts to foster widening participation and ensuing social-mobility are problematic in terms of its potential to devalue the acquisition of graduate qualifications. Tomlinson summarises a credentialist interpretation which argues that gaining of qualifications is more about gaining access to social groups for cultural and economic advantage, creating a race to gain more and more qualifications to join and remain in a sector, rather than actual skills to improve ability to perform the job. McCaffery (2010) acknowledges

this potential for professions requiring higher level qualifications acting as a barrier to entry to employment, though the removal of the mandatory qualifications for teachers in the education sector appears to be an exception to this trend (Lingfield, 2012). Becker (1993) acknowledges that earnings might be influenced by credentialism but contends that the overarching earning value of Higher Education is gained through development of flexible skills, a concept from which the content of graduate attributes have developed. Nevertheless, Tomlinson (2007; 2008), Robinson (2010) and Coffield and Williamson (2011) cite research which questions the simplicity of Becker's (1993) link between education and economic growth as well as the capacity for the labour market to utilise increasing numbers of graduates (Rich, 2011).

Tomlinson (2008) found that many students perceived a credentialist view, considering Higher Education study as having a clear return for them in terms of greater access to networking opportunities and professional employment, rather than just better knowledge and skills. Tomlinson also found that students had a strong desire to achieve high grades in order to gain positional advantage within the graduate market, a perception backed by the Association of Graduate Recruiters (2013) who find that over 80% of their members only recruit classifications of 2:1 and above. However, they also perceived the problem of a saturated graduate market and feeling that the increase in Higher Education graduates meant employers could not distinguish between the value of qualifications. The students in a traditional university setting studied by Tomlinson nevertheless supported Bourdieu's (1983) contention of the value of their institutional capital, through its tradition, social networks, and reputation with employers as being more important than practical vocational skills gained at newer universities.

The purported need for this reorientation towards market-based approaches is used to justify education policy requiring universities to change: "Institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work" (BIS 2011a, p.4). Moreau and Leathwood (2006) argue that this view has been influenced by economic analyses showing the drift of manufacturing towards emerging economies and for post-industrial economies such as our own, to become knowledge driven. At governmental level, this view has recently become more nuanced, with Cable (2012) initiating the formation of a governmental industrial strategy. This acknowledges that high-technology and value manufacturing industry still has major potential in the UK, noting the continued success of German manufacturing.

King and Widdowson (2012) argue that an employability focus in Higher Education is important for all learners; not just young learners seeking employment, but also adults seeking to sustain

or develop careers. Moreau and Leathwood (2006) and Bridgestock (2009) note that even when graduates gain employment, linear career progression through single organisations is in decline, with multiple-employer, flexible working and part-time work becoming the norm. Therefore, students expect value, not just in terms of financial investment but also the personal opportunity cost of time set aside from earning or leisure (King and Widdowson, 2012). Graduate attributes, by focusing on developing generic employability skills for lifelong learning, appear to promote this agenda. In consideration of the pace of technological change, subject expertise appears to be devalued in comparison to the development of generic skills, a concept articulated by University of Tasmania's explanation of their graduate attributes:

It is no longer sufficient for graduates to simply acquire disciplinary knowledge to guarantee them a job at the completion of their degree. Employers expect their recruits to be able to function efficiently in an ever-changing work environment. (UTAS, 2013, p.2):

This cross-party consensus of a policy drive towards focusing the purpose of education toward the achievement of individual employment and national competitiveness, as explicitly advocated by Leitch Review (2006) and the Higher Education white paper (BIS, 2011a) has been contentious. Moreau and Leathwood (2006), argue that the focus on employability has not only redefined education, but also views of unemployment, or underemployment, with the responsibility moving from the state to the individual – concluding a reversal of the post-war consensus which held that a social duty of government was to provide full employment (Jones, 2003). This could be considered further evidence of Sandel's (2009) analysis of the withdrawal of the state's responsibilities in return for an increase in the role of the market, even though BIS's (2013) own findings demonstrate that financial benefit to the government in terms of increased taxation revenue alone outweighs public investment.

According to the CBI and NUS (2011) survey of businesses, such broader skills of self-management, teamwork and problem-solving were among the most high-rating levels of dissatisfaction with graduate performance, only being beaten by a lack of business and customer awareness. As with the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) previously, this suggests that universities are still failing to deliver the employability skills required by businesses. Harvey (2001) counters that, basing education policy on such surveys makes a large assumption that businesses are able to accurately perceive the skills they require. Robinson (2010) argues that economic instability make such predictions inaccurate. Furthermore, Harvey's research found that recruitment was often based on an organisation's historical precedent and prejudices, arbitrary and limited variables and the personal instinct of the recruiter, rather than the specifics of the qualification gained. Indeed, although the latest findings by BIS (2013) show that

graduates still have an earnings premium on non-graduates, in line with Becker's (1993) expectations, there are many inequalities with regard to the extent of this benefit relating to subject or institutional choice and gender, with females tending to be the greater overall beneficiary of extended education.

Coffield and Williamson (2011, p.4) strongly challenge the concept that education should demonstrate immediate commercial returns and therefore be focused on work skills, arguing that it narrows learning away from enlightenment values of active and democratic participation in society:

Employability is an ugly word for an ugly idea that learners should willingly accept the responsibility of constantly updating their skills in the hope that an employer will one day recognise their constant struggle to remain fit for employment by offering them a job, any job.

Robinson (2010) concurs that gaining a degree is no longer enough to progress to a high paying professional employment, though argues that problems of education and society are more deep-rooted than purely focusing on perceptions of skills deemed to be useful for employment. Robinson argues that the whole education system needs radical reforms as it is crushing the creativity and ability to think critically which graduate attributes aim to achieve. Robinson criticises education policy which enforces an academic and vocational divide, an approach which has been reinvigorated through recent government policy (DfE 2010; 2011). Coffield and Williamson (2011) argue that this is not only based on misguided assumptions of what learning encompasses, but furthermore undermines the ability of education to promote employability anyway by failing to develop well-rounded learners. In this respect, what By, Burnes and Oswick (2013) describe as the traditional Humboltian view of university's purpose being a community of scholars and students in search of truth not only contrasts with the current work-based focus, but ironically promotes the stated critical and creative skills that many graduate attributes aim to achieve.

Nevertheless, such views run counter to not only government and business lobbies, but also many students. A joint CBI and NUS report (2011, p.12) argued that all universities should develop graduate employability skills defined as: "a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy." Students facing large debts may seek courses that appear to be the most likely to bring quick financial return through enhanced employment prospects; improved job opportunities being the strongest reason given for going to university NUS/CBI (2011, p.7).

However, Tomlinson (2007) writing before the global financial crises noted that many graduates found it difficult to utilise their qualifications initially, finding non-graduate employment - a phenomena which has now intensified in the current economic climate (Rich, 2011). Indeed, Harvey (2001) noted that students perceived broader attributes to be the key factor in career success. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2008) found that many students no longer directly linked academic achievement to career success so were looking beyond discipline expertise towards broader skills in order to meet flexible workplace demands.

1.5 Graduate Attributes and International Quality Assurance

A key principle of fostering a market-based approach is to facilitate the ability of the consumer to choose the most suitable product to meet their needs and resources. In order to achieve this, they must have access to easily comparable information to make a rational and informed choice. In this respect, European Union initiatives such as the Bologna Process (DEST, 2006), which, 'prioritises quality assurance, uniformity and comparability of degrees' clearly supports this drive. Such moves towards easily comparable academic products is noted by Jones (2001) in Australia and Andrew and Higson (2008) throughout Europe. The promotion of more transparent information is now being facilitated at a national level within the English academic system through the implementation of national university league tables, informed by data from sources such as the National Student Survey and Key Information Sets, and graduate destinations surveys (BIS 2011a; 2011b). This is claimed to help deliver a student-centred approach, with student feedback helping to inform performance measures (BIS, 2011a). Currently in England, graduate attribute programmes do not play a role in this process on a national level. However, in Australia, national policy in terms of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Act (2011) states its intention to audit the contribution of institutional graduate attributes to quality processes against the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the universities' own mission statements (TEQSA, 2012). Indeed, this means that in Australia at least, universities are judged on the extent that graduates are actually developing their espoused attributes (Bath et al., 2004), which is currently not embedded into the UK Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code (2011). Donleavy (2012) demonstrates that at Australian national policy level, graduate attributes have become all but mandatory for HEIs in Australia, with public funding imperilled if they have not been implemented. The development of graduate

attributes at universities therefore presents opportunities for imposing governmental control through national quality assurance measures and attached funding opportunities.

For English Higher Education, national policy appears to be in favour of Student Charters which potentially have a far broader scope in terms of rights, responsibilities and legal implications for the institution and learner (BIS, 2011a). In apparent contradiction to its overarching agenda of deregulation (BIS, 2010), the government promoted the idea of all universities having student charters (BIS 2011a, p.10): “We consider the publication of a student charter to be best practice and we will review the extent to which they are adopted and in the light of this consider whether they should be made mandatory in the future”. These aspirations are elaborated further by the Student Charter group report for the department (BIS, 2011b). The group comprised of universities which already operated such charters and the NUS. It argued that each university should have one, firstly to perform a similar role to graduate attributes in terms of ensuring consistency between departments within an institution, but additionally to explain the rights and responsibilities of students. Nevertheless, with the postponement of an updated Higher Education Act (Morgan, 2012) there no longer appear to be imminent plans for a top-down approach to encouraging the implementation of charters, let alone institutional graduate attributes. English policy therefore appears to be simultaneously more ambitious yet less potent than its international competitors.

While the justification for graduate attributes has focused on the need to provide a flexible workforce as recognised by governmental policies, Bridgestock (2009) criticises the English means of measuring employment success of graduates. It still focuses on the immediate attainment of traditional full-time graduate level posts which BIS (2011a) acknowledges are in decline. Harvey (2001) argues that such an approach to measurement represents poor methodological procedure as it attempts to link data to a concept, rather than the other way round. Bridgestock argues that graduate destination surveys are therefore crude when used to determine the ‘employability’ of provision as there are numerous variables which could impact data, such as the overall state of the industry or sector within which they have graduated. Harvey adds that further variables include employer perceptions of differing quality of Higher Education organisation as a whole rather than individual learners’ development. Bridgestock further claims such measurements are therefore counter-productive, leading to institutional careers services only supporting people while they are studying, rather than providing a lifelong service to benefit their whole career development. Finally, Harvey argues that by measuring institutions purely on short-term employment measures, responsibility for employability is shifted

from the individual to the university and would also link to a shift away from post-war conceptions state responsibilities for providing full employment (Jones, 2003).

Chapter Two: Graduate Attributes in Practice

2.1 *Role of Stakeholders*

Barrie (2006) identifies interrelated features which determine the formation and extent of successful implementation of graduate attributes: conceptualisation, stakeholders, implementation strategy, curriculum approach, assessment, staff development, quality assurance and student-centeredness. Without clear policy direction regarding graduate attribute implementation in English Higher Education, institutions have made their own choice with regard to whether and how they adapt them. Clanchy and Ballard (1995) found that while the development of graduate attributes had sometimes emerged following reflection on the institutions' traditions, others appeared to have arisen quickly based on ad-hoc discussions. Barrie (2004) concurs, arguing that lists of attributes had been compiled based on popularity or perceived importance without in-depth critical scrutiny of their interpretation. Donleavy (2012) adds that such alacrity could have been influenced in Australia at least by the threat of losing government funding if attributes were not in place. Hughes and Barrie (2010) note that key stakeholders in the process of forming graduate attributes include not only academics and their learners, but also employers and professional bodies. In this respect, the formation of graduate attribute appears to go beyond the concept of summarising the values of the organisation, by including external influences into their formation.

However, while the link between governmental and business desire to create employable graduates has already been discussed, it is not always clear the extent to which other stakeholders have been involved in the decision making. BIS (2011b) emphasises the role of learners in a higher education institution as being a joint venture. However, while the literature reviewed in this work mentions the importance of student consultation and feedback, there is no strong evidence presented regarding direct student involvement in the formation of graduate attributes. In contrast, de la Harpe and David's (2012) study of 16 Australian universities found a tendency for top-down imposition, reflecting a general change in managerial influence on university policy identified by Said (1993) and further articulated by McCaffery (2010) and By, Burnes and Oswick (2013). The latter argue that the government facilitated expansion and

marketisation of universities changed their power dynamics; collegiality has been diminished at the expense of greater senior management control of decision-making. However, Jones (2009) found that where attributes had been imposed by senior management, there tended to be resistance to implementation in the form of minimal compliance within their professional practice.

2.2 Implementation and assessment

Governments, businesses and universities have underestimated the difficulties of reorientation Higher Education towards delivering employability skills (Green, Hunter and Star, 2009). In relation to graduate attribute promises, Green, Hunter and Star therefore argue that institutions are regularly failing to deliver what they promise students and employers, a view supported by studies such as the CBI/NUS survey (2011). De la Harpe and David (2012) concur with Hughes and Barrie's (2010) Australian national survey findings which found that Australian universities were still struggling to effectively implement graduate attribute strategies on an institutional level, even though many of these policies had emanated as far back as the 1990s. De la Harpe and David (2012) summarise problems of implementation as including a poor leadership understanding of change management. This has resulted in a lack of academic ownership of the attributes, rewards for their development, or effective training and resources to change cultural contexts and pedagogical practices. Bennett, Dunne and Carre (1999, cited in Barrie, 2004) suggest that United Kingdom universities had also inadequately utilised attributes due to a lack of theoretical underpinning, clarity and consistency.

Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004) noted that top-down imposition of graduate attributes tended to generate resistance from academics. This could be seen as a broader scepticism of the managerialist approaches which McCaffery (2010) identifies as being brought in to respond to government funding pressures. Although overall HE funding increased in England during the Labour government (1997-2010), the rapid expansion of provision has meant that universities are expected to teach more students with fewer resources per student. This call for efficiency has led to attempts to develop more business-like models of leadership and accountability away from former collegiate environments, which McCaffery found had provoked resentment from those more used to a collegiate atmosphere. Indeed, Said identified this as a global phenomenon back in 1993, arguing that the imposition of professionalism against traditional collegiate amateurism of the intellectual academic weakened their ability and even duty to challenge hierarchies in the pursuit of deeper understanding. As a centralised quality tool,

graduate attributes could therefore be identified as part of this concentration of power by senior management teams identified by By, Burnes and Oswick (2013), and resisted by those opposed to standardised approaches to academic endeavour.

A danger of graduate attributes is that their generic statements may simplify complex concepts such as critical thinking and make unfounded assumptions of their transferability out of disciplinary context (Hofer, 2011). Barrie (2004) found that academics had conflicting views of their overarching purpose, as well as qualitatively different individual interpretations of their institution's attributes. This problem was also identified by Bennet et al. (2002, cited in Crebert et al., 2004) in the UK. De la Harpe and David's (2012) research also demonstrated that these divergences in their interpretation remained, not only in terms of individual viewpoints, but also based on the specific context and traditions of the discipline. For example, while Facione et al. (1995) and Hoffer (2011) strongly support universities' espoused claim to develop critical thinking skills, they contend that such skills development is, at present, not necessarily achieved. Hofer argues that differing levels of ability to think critically may be achieved, but that many students do not engage beyond a basic level. Furthermore, they argue that skills such as high-level critical thinking are commonly attained without Higher Education, arguing that most individuals are simultaneously capable of high level critical thought in some areas yet not others. Indeed, they contend that gaining high level skills in an academic discipline does not necessarily lead to a transfer of these skills to other aspects of an individual's life, an issue also considered by Green, Hunter and Star (2009). In this respect, there appears to be a strong challenge to the central tenet of graduate attributes; that the development of these attributes in one discipline also brings transferability to general life and career skills experiences.

De la Harpe and David (2012) found that the failure to effectively implement graduate attributes was not currently due to outright hostility of academic staff, with the majority of those sampled supporting the idea of developing graduate attributes at their institution. However, Barrie (2004) found that academics tended to view them in terms of four divergent categories: precursory, complementary, translation and enabling. The first viewpoint considers the attributes to be basic fundamental study skills which are required prior to becoming a discipline expert; literacy, numeracy, IT and library skills, thereby contradicting the espoused purpose of graduate attributes being achieved through the process of Higher Education experience (Barrie, 2004). Other academics viewed them as being complementary, though subordinate, generic skills to the discipline which should be taught and assessed separately. This contradicts two of the three principles established by Bowden et al. (2000); that graduate attributes need to be

articulated within the discipline context and require commitment from the whole academic team. This echoes previous studies of developing critical thinking and study skills in university learners which found that embedding was more effective than separation (Facione et al., 1995).

Therefore, the first two approaches identified by Barrie distance the subject tutor from responsibility for nurturing their learners' development of graduate attributes. Conversely the translation approach, considers the role of the tutor being directly involved in the facilitation of the development of the learners' graduate attributes. Here, the institutional graduate attributes need to be translated into the subject discipline in order to develop the learners' ability to apply their disciplinary, though this has the danger of each discipline emphasising the attributes which best match their current practice, rather than facilitating change (de la Harpe and David, 2012).

Barrie (2006) argues that the most effective stage of implementing graduate attributes is 'enabling', where graduates are able to apply their discipline expertise across subject boundaries and towards meeting challenges outside the context of their learning. In this respect, Barrie follows Clanchy and Ballard's (1995) view that transferable skills development is most effective when taught and learned in the context of the discipline. For this to occur, Hughes and Barrie (2010) argue that fundamental institutional change is required, to the extent that the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies as well as teacher training opportunities must have the graduate attributes as their focus. Spencer, Riddle and Knewstubb (2012) agree that a fully embedded approach to teaching, learning and assessment is required, with attributes mapped across curricula, and redefined for each discipline. Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004) found this can only be effectively implemented through a consensual and collegial approach, though De la Harpe and David (2012) argue that implementation of attributes cannot be expected to arise from lecturers alone but must also be driven centrally through effective systems and support which should be centrally funded by the institution.

Jones (2009) found that the context of subject discipline determined the priority of their coverage, rather than a consistent approach to their implementation a phenomenon supported by de la Harpe's and David's (2012) broader survey. This implies that regardless of the managerial priorities of attributes identified by Donleavy, academics have been tending to support of attributes which they felt were closely related to their view of the epistemology of the discipline, rather than engaging in a whole-scale revision of their pedagogy. Jones, considering the work on Argyris and Schön (1974) on theory in use and theory in action, found that there was a fundamental gap between the teachers' espoused notion of the role of attributes in their practice and their actual practice when observed; they were more adept at talking about the

merits of attributes in line with institutional policy than actually incorporating them into their practice. Alternatively, they suggest that formation of a learning community approach attained by Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004) could help to develop a deeper consideration of how graduate attributes can be facilitated through teaching and learning. Jones concludes that attributes that academics felt had been imposed externally and therefore outside the traditions of the subject from management tended to be resisted due to historical contexts of the discipline as well as a lack of organisational clarity about implementation. Jones and Hughes and Barrie (2010) argue that with divergent viewpoints from academics, effective implementation of graduate attributes will be difficult.

De la Harpe and David (2012) found that academics' personal values of attributes and were not transferred into how they perceived their practice due to a lack of confidence in ability to facilitate broader skills. Although their survey only referred to espoused beliefs and was not supported by observations of actual practice, they further found that there were influencing demographical factors which affected perceptions of ability to deliver attributes. Women, academics with work experience and those in possession of teaching qualifications tended to have higher confidence in their ability. De la Harpe and David therefore emphasise the need for staff-training at individual level, implementation of effective reward schemes for engagement with the attributes. As well as this, they advocate strong management to lead a whole systems and curriculum review to avoid discipline-centred uneven application of graduate attributes. However, this proposed radical shift in the role of the lecturer, requires skilful facilitation of the development at a broad range of skills in addition to discipline expertise. This runs contrary to the casualization of the workforce identified by McCafferey (2010) and the advocacy of experts without teaching qualifications (Lingfield, 2012).

2.3 The Role of Graduate Attributes in Curriculum Development

Hoban et al. (2004) illustrate differing approaches to implementing graduate attributes; mapping, external assessment, separate provision and integrated provision. Mapping is considered to be a two-fold process, where the graduate attributes are firstly identified within the existing curriculum. Hoban et al. claim that this then enables gaps in curricula to be identified and changes made so that all courses can evidence achievement of the attribute. Bath et al. (2004) argue that this has the benefit of explicitly recognising opportunities for graduate attribute

development to all stakeholders, including students and employers. However, Spencer Riddle and Knewstubb (2012) note that the declared curriculum does not necessarily evidence what is actually taught, learned or assessed, and therefore there could be a temptation with such a process for tutors unwilling to make large-scale changes to exaggerate existing links so that required changes to content and pedagogy are kept to a minimum. Donleavy (2012) argues that such mapping can lose sight of the holistic vision of learning that the attributes are intended to develop, reducing the implementation to a managerial exercise in compliance rather than genuine change. Hughes and Barrie (2010) further criticise mapping, arguing that it tends to lead to graduate attributes not being effectively assessed and therefore having low student and staff value. However, Spencer, Riddle and Knewstubb (2012) argue that mapping may be robust, as long as it is more than a basic linkage of curriculum to attributes; teaching content, assessments and student feedback on their learning should also be used to ensure coverage. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that all such processes are not definitive and at best can only represent a snap-shot of the learner experience.

Alternatively, Muldoon (2009) demonstrates that graduate attributes can be delivered, and assessed, separately from the core disciplinary provision through non-accredited professional training, voluntary or part-time paid work. Muldoon's small-scale research found that part-time casual work was useful for developing employers' perceptions of students' employability as well as the learners' self-perception of their abilities above the obvious financial benefit. Crebert et al. (2004) caution that the utility of such placements depends on the placement's educational value, the tutor's perception of its utility and its relationship to their future careers. Nevertheless, they also found positive outcomes in terms of the learners' perceptions of the skills developed through work placement during university, in terms of networking opportunities. However, while placements might improve grades through developing a more professional approach to work and study, King and Widdowson (2012) found that in the UK mature students in work achieve lower grades due to time pressures.

Separation, in the form of a portfolio of evidence advocated by Muldoon (2009) might be easier to implement than an integrated approach, as it only requires an addition to provision, rather than its integration. However, a danger of such an approach is that it may diminish the need for involvement of all academics, enabling a dereliction of responsibility for their implementation (Hoban et al., 2004). Bath et al. (2004) further claim that opportunities for overall curriculum development could be lost. There are also problems in terms of the learner experience,

potentially encouraging what Tomlinson (2007) considers an instrumentalist approach to achievement of the requirements for learners' Curriculum Vitae rather than genuine engagement with the attributes. If graduate attributes are implemented separately, they might also be considered as being optional, potentially devaluing the standalone degree. Further to this, such optional engagement could have the effect of creating a two-tier system, with those attaining the extra being given a higher value. This could impact negatively on mature learners, especially those studying Higher Education in Further Education colleges, whom King and Widdowson (2012) found were more likely to have work and family commitments and be from poorer backgrounds than full-time campus-based students. In terms of a pedagogical approach, Facione et al.'s (1995) work on the promotion of critical thinking skills found strong evidence to support embedded tuition rather than separate tuition. Finally, Crebert et al. (2004) reject taking a separate approach, arguing that attributes can only be learned in context. Though they agree with Facione et al.'s (1995) contention that generic skills do not necessarily transfer, they argue that with work placements and tutor facilitation of opportunities learner reflection, such transfer through situated learning can be achieved.

Hoban et al. (2004) identify an integrated approach as being the most problematic in terms of implementation, though potentially producing the most meaningful returns in terms of developing a whole university approach to teaching and learning. Integrating graduate attributes requires each discipline to rewrite not just curriculum content but also pedagogical approaches. Hoffer (2011) considers that epistemology, the nature and justification of human knowledge, to be a vital part of developing such skills. Hoffer therefore argues that consideration of the progression of epistemological thinking is essential to Higher Education courses. Therefore, graduate attributes need to be developmental, differentiated with pathways towards their final achievement. While such an approach is taken by some universities, this is by no means universal. An integrated and developmental approach, represents fundamental change in terms of the responsibilities of not only students but their teachers therefore requires support of academic staff in order to deliver successful implementation. Bridgestock (2009), while supportive of the integration of graduate attributes, acknowledges the potential for discipline specific knowledge to be lost if the former is over-emphasised in a curriculum. Crebert et al. (2004) argue that it is unrealistic for universities to promise that graduates will achieve all of the stated attributes; instead they should only guarantee that they will provide them with the opportunity to develop these skills.

In the case of Higher Education delivered in Further Education establishments, King and Widdowson (2012) discovered that some FE staff found it difficult to establish a distinctive Higher Education culture whilst immersed in the context of their Further Education institution. While the Independent Review of Professionalism in Further Education (Lingfield Review, BIS, 2012) advocated merging the FE and HE sectors, the lack of official response to his final report, in contrast to the interim one, suggests that this does not represent the current government's direction of travel. The continuance of separate yet intertwined sectors therefore suggest that this difficulty for HE lectures in FE setting may continue; where both institutions have developed purportedly unique graduate, or learner, attributes, lecturers and learners may have difficulty establishing primacy of attributes or understanding how their experience is distinctive.

2.4 Assessment of Graduate Attributes

Bowden et al. (2000) acknowledge that assessment of graduate attributes is challenging, with approaches ranging between non-assessment, separate assessment, use of generic critical thinking tests and mapped assessment fully embedded assessment. Jones (2001) questions the extent to which the inherent social idealism of such attributes can be learned, let alone assessed, through the academic curriculum. Harvey argues that measuring graduate attributes is difficult as there are no standard definitions and it is not clear the extent to which graduates already possessed them or have developed without the university's support. Knight and Page (2007) and Green, Hunter and Star (2009) argue that such graduate attributes are difficult to evaluate due to them being vague or general aspirations, though they still argue that if no attempt is made they will not be taken seriously by students or teacher. Thompson et al. (2008) add that they cannot be considered valid if they are not a part of the assessment criteria. Hughes and Barrie (2010) concur, arguing that assessment plays a major, though not exclusive factor in successful implementation of graduate attributes.

Hoban et al. (2004) argue that psychometric tests can be used before engagement and on completion of course, with the difference in grades enabling measurement of students' progress in developing critical thinking. This has the advantage of potentially providing quantifiable and easily comparable data between disciplines within an institution and between institutions on a national or even international scale. However, the validity of such tests is contended Bath et al. (2004), arguing that national generic pre-entry and post-graduation tests would be abstract and not give credit for ability to apply attributes within the discipline. Effectively they would only be testing transferability, but not application within the discipline studied. Thompson et al. (2008)

note that the national imposition of such generic entrance and exit tests designed by the Australian Council for Educational Research was attempted by the Australian government but was unsuccessful due to validity issues of such generic tests.

Nevertheless, alternative generic tests are currently under consideration in Australia based on using source data to analyse information to select the 'correct' answer (Donleavy, 2012). However, Donleavy argues that such tests are severely limited, with dubious validity attributes such as critical thinking, and missing out others such as ethics or team-working abilities/communication. Having such a standardised approach also clearly contradicts the student-centred approach found by Bowden et al. (2000) where the best institutions enabled learners to demonstrate achievement in manners most appropriate to the individual.

Bowden et al. (2000) found that assessment of attributes was most effective when undertaken in the context of the discipline. Hughes and Barrie (2010) concur, arguing that separation decontextualizes them, leading to educators and some students having a low perception of their value, effectively enabling both to opt out of engagement. Bowden et al. (2000) add that progressive feedback on graduate attribute development is also essential, and this could be missed without on-going assessment. Therefore, if teaching and learning strategies are to be changed, it follows that graduate attributes should be seen as central to an institution's assessment policies Barrie, Hughes and Smith (2009).

Hughes and Barrie (2010) consider mapping graduate attributes to existing assessment strategies as insufficient, as they may become more of a procedural necessity for the institution rather than an element of learning which engages the students. Bath et al. (2004), while advocating mapping within quality systems, also warn that in itself it is not enough to ensure delivery of the espoused attributes. They argue that checklists may have little more than administrative value and when mapped on a modular basis, the duration of teaching and assessment is too short to effectively develop the learners' graduate attributes. Many institutions have assessment strategies which are inappropriate for this task as they are based on the historical approaches to assessment used by the discipline. Such strategies, termed 'signature pedagogies' by Hughes and Barrie, often focus on subject knowledge rather than the application of this expertise towards critical thinking and other skills required of graduate attributes. Donleavy (2012) questions the value of mapping, but takes a more pragmatic stance, arguing that mapping has become so engrained in institutional practice that it is better to consider how to use them effectively rather than rejecting the approach altogether. Hughes and Barrie therefore argue that effective assessment of graduate attributes can only take place

when learners are fully aware and engaged through negotiation of the assessment process and that graduate attributes are central to this rather than separately assessed or mapped to the existing programme. As well as advocating radical changes of approaches to teaching and learning, such an approach necessitates a radical reorienting of institutional and disciplinary assessment processes.

2.5 Institutional Quality, Evaluation and Renewal

The operationalization of graduate attributes, where the theory is transferred to a measurable outcome, is clearly difficult, given the wide variety of outlooks and practices illustrated. Hughes and Barrie (2010), Donleavy (2012) and Hoban et al. (2004) note that graduate attributes have had limited value in many of the institutions where they have been introduced. De la Harpe and David (2012) argue that quality systems have often avoided engagement with academic staff in their development of how attributes should be integrated in to their professional practice.

Donleavy's sector-wide research in Australia found that institutional listing of attributes in a non-alphabetical order appeared to impose a hierarchy of the importance of attributes. However, these espoused values were not necessarily borne out in their prevalence within institutional policy documentation. This indicates that institutions' senior management implicitly valued their attributes unequally and sometimes in contradiction to the claimed prioritisation. Therefore, the uniqueness of an institution is likely to be reflected in a university's senior management's levels of attention to particular attributes. However, if this hierarchy of attributes is not explicitly made clear to learners then they are not serving to inform them of the purported aspirations of the university, let alone the actual learning experience.

Negative attitudes at both institutional and academic level may lead to minimal compliance rather than engagement with the process of adopting graduate attributes: "For some, the concept of graduate attributes has been taken on reluctantly and suspiciously as the unwanted child of a union across the business, government and education sectors." (Hoban et al. 2004, p.11). Alternatively, de la Harpe and David (2012) found that many academics actually valued the importance of graduate attributes, but their willingness and confidence to deliver them were consistently lower regardless of the attribute considered. This means that graduate attributes are often ineffectively, or at least not consistently, implemented and evaluated within many institutions; a phenomenon not helped by implicit agendas at each level of the institution to favour differing attributes (Donleavy 2012, Hughes and Barrie, 2010). Hughes and Barrie argue that without coherent implementation policies at institutional level, the impact of these on

learning becomes reliant on the enthusiasm or otherwise of the individual lecturer. In this respect, Donleavy argues that graduate attributes should be integral to student surveys, curriculum development and other quality assurance and improvement processes. Hughes and Barrie further argue that clearly assessed graduate outcomes enable learners to evidence their achievement of these attributes to employers and allow institutions to convince government funding bodies.

Conclusion

The proposed research into stakeholder perceptions of graduate attributes aims to add to what is only an emergent body of literature about them within the English Higher Education system. Unlike Australia, England has not had national graduate attributes research or implementation policies, but rather they have evolved on a more ad-hoc basis with policy papers, with no firm plans for mandatory implementation (BIS 2011a; 2011b). In this respect, the research is important in order to ascertain whether English universities might be facing similar issues to those already experienced in Australia. While this research will not be nationally based, but small-scale, it hopes to consider issues raised at institutional level will contribute to the body of literature in this country to inform future broader-based studies.

This review has shown that the adoption, implementation and evaluation of graduate attributes is neither simple nor unproblematic. Hoban et al. (2004) and Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004) identify staff development as being a key issue in relation to an institution's ability to implement graduate attributes if they are going to be embedded throughout the curriculum. The research will therefore consider the extent to which academics consider that the implementation of graduate attributes necessitates the need to radically alter their approach to teaching as suggested by Hughes and Barrie (2010).

Donleavy (2012) claims that link between graduate attribute development and international, national and institutional quality assurance policies could be seen as maintaining political influence on Higher Education in place of the traditional means of influence through public funding. The research will therefore evaluate how quality policies of the institutions studied facilitate the implementation of graduate attributes. In terms of curriculum, this means consideration of whether implementation is institution wide, or piecemeal, as well as whether they are considered to be embedded into the disciplines or given separate consideration. This analysis will be aided by the definitions of stages of implementation described by Barrie (2006;

Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009), quality approaches highlighted by Bath et al. (2004), as well as consideration of Donleavy's (2012) research into their public presentation and policy documentation. This analysis of espoused institutional policy will then be compared with stakeholder views to identify areas where policy and practice either relate or diverge.

Hughes and Barrie (2010) articulate a central dilemma relating to the effective implementation of graduate attributes. While graduate attributes may claim to represent the underlying values of an institution, in order to implement them effectively requires the imposition of a more standardised approach to teaching, learning, and assessment, which is not an easy task on disparate individual groups, schools and faculties. Donleavy (2012) further considers that the adaption of such unified approaches to education as the implementation of graduate attributes may imply, potentially lead to a loss of creativity and inquisitive learning, where employability was considered a useful by-product rather than the rationale for study. Academic resistance to implementation and student scepticism of engagement with graduate attributes includes concern that discipline expertise will be reduced and devalued, as well as a reluctance to engage with extra work they may entail (Hughes and Barrie 2010).

Nevertheless, Tomlinson (2008), CBIS/NUS (2011) and de la Harpe and David (2012) demonstrate that an orientation towards developing employability skills through attributes is not necessarily resisted by other stakeholders. Even though their role in the formation of attributes appears to have been limited, there is a desire amongst teachers and students to try to enhance employability skills during university study (de la Harpe and David). The research will therefore facilitate the articulation of attitudes and perceptions towards graduate attributes of learner, teachers and other stakeholders such as employers. This aspect of the work will be underpinned by Barrie's research into academic perceptions (2004; 2006; Hughes and Barrie, 2010), due to the breadth and depth of the institutional and broader national coverage of the work.

Hughes and Barrie (2010) argue that fundamental change to the role of the teacher is required if graduate attributes are to be genuinely at the heart of an institution. However, their research into Australian staff development found that this was rarely the case, with lecturers being provided with little more than basic training or toolkits from which to work from which often lacked in-depth consideration of the development of overarching teaching and learning strategies. In order to ascertain and compare academics' perceptions, Barrie's framework of graduate attribute implementation (2004; 2006) will be used as it enables the researcher to codify responses in order to aid the development of meaningful and comparable data. Further

to this, research into perceptions of graduate attributes by Crebert et al.'s (2004) on students, Tomlinson's (2007; 2008) on students and employers and De la Harpe and David's (2012) into student and teacher perceptions are relevant in this respect. The small-scale approach taken by these studies also offer pertinent methodological approaches for this study in terms of their approaches to data collection through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Hughes and Barrie (2010) argue that few universities can convincingly prove that their graduates actually possess these attributes. Bowden et al. (2000) and Barrie, Hughes and Smith (2009) strongly advocate the full integration of graduate attributes within the discipline rather than the separate approach advocated by Muldoon (2009). Therefore, the research will consider institutional approaches to assessment of graduate attributes as well as student and employer perceptions of the extent to which these have become developed within the individual. In the literature reviewed, there was very little evidence of processes or stakeholder contribution to the evaluation and amendment of attributes. Therefore, the research aims to investigate what procedures, if any, are in place for graduate attribute renewal.

What is clear from this review of literature is that the complexity of the purpose, practice and evaluation of attributes suggests that senior management teams should not assume that they can be implemented quickly, effectively or cheaply. In view of the difficulties evidenced in Australia (Barrie, Hughes and Smith, 2009; Donleavy, 2012), the proposed research is justified in terms of facilitating an evaluation of the extent to which these issues are repeated or overcome within the English university studied. This includes the extent to which stakeholders are involved in their implementation, facilitation and assessment. In terms of providing a new area of study, this research proposes to investigate how attributes are renewed. Failure to investigate the effectiveness of their implementation leaves the possibility of both students and employers being misled (Crebert et al., 2004).

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2.0 Piloting and Reflective Journal

2.1 Introduction (25/04/2016)

The following reflective diary is intended to be an ongoing concurrent record of my research in practice. The value of such a diary is advocated by key theorists working within the interpretivist paradigm as offering additional qualitative data in the form of enabling in-depth reflection on action in order to continually develop and improve approaches to research (McNiff, 2016, Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). This differs from a tendency found within the positivist paradigm where methods are expected to follow standard research frameworks and remain static throughout the researching period (Newby, 2014).

The author's ontological standpoint is one of respect for both positions, in terms of the benefits that they offer for differing research aims. In the positivist model, which necessitates methods to be replicable in order to make generalised knowledge claims, it is clear that a rigid research framework is a necessity (Basić, 2010). However, in the case of this research which does not make claims to generalisability, such an approach is not necessary. Indeed, McNiff and Roller and Lavrakas highlight benefits of an ongoing approach to developing research methods as playing an important role in the development of the researcher practitioner's reflexive, reflective and ability. Furthermore, Roller and Lavrakas hold that completing a reflective diary can for an important part of their Total Quality Framework which this research is attempting to follow. This is because such small-scale qualitative research as this cannot make claims to generalisability, it must attempt to be transparent to the reader in its methods of research, analysis and evaluation. Indeed, aspiring to full transparency of methodology within one's research is therefore an aim which would appear to unite the differing paradigms of research.

2.2 Piloting

2.2.1 *Piloting purpose* (26/04/2016)

McNiff (2016) strongly advocates peer validation of research where viewpoints of fellow professionals are sought in order to prove one's work and review findings throughout the research process rather than following publication. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) make piloting a key aspect of their TQF so this forms the first part of my ongoing reflective diary. In terms of developments to date, there has already been substantial peer input into the proposed scoping

questionnaire, having first been through a formal approval process as part of the ethical review and then following input from my tutor, with the third version gaining approval prior to running the pilot. Basit and Roller and Lavrakas recommend that piloting may need to be cyclical with where a research tool is tested, amended and retested. Both highlight the need to avoid familiarity with the research tool by ensuring that differing groups are used in each cycle of the process. Therefore, the first stage of piloting will take place with a group today, with options for me to undertake revised pilots with other groups following amendments if required. In line with standard piloting recommendations (Newby, Roller and Lavrakas), the piloting group will not be included in the final research sample. I will therefore be using Early Childhood Studies students, who fall within my area of work but do not constitute the research sample which focuses on BA Education students. Nevertheless, in line with McNiff's advocacy of open and collegial development of practice, findings from the pilot may be of interest to the Early Childhood Studies lecturers and the team as a whole so will be made available for open discussion.

2.2.2 Piloting aims (27/04/2016)

The piloting of the scoping questionnaire has several aims in line with the Roller and Lavrakas TQF approach being used. Firstly, it aims to check for clarity; whether the students understand the questions and whether the design is appropriate and easy to follow. The extent of students' understanding of the questions should be clear from the extent to which they respond to the questions appropriately. Incorrect following of instructions or irrelevant answers could indicate a problem with the questionnaire rubric. However, as well as analysis of their answers I will also engage with discussion on student and practitioner views of the questionnaire. This will use Brookfield's lenses to inform the questionnaire development; theory, practitioners, students and the self. In this case the questionnaire has been informed by numerous literature sources as already mentioned but also Munn and Drever's (1993) book which solely focuses on questionnaire design, implementation and evaluation. The students' tutor will ask them for their opinion of the survey and if they have any ideas for its improvement and I will discuss with her their feedback as well as her own reflections to help inform any decisions I make to change the tool.

2.2.3 Piloting procedures (27/04/2016)

The questionnaire will be paper based and distributed during class. This is to try and enable a higher participation rate than may be gained from online surveys. This follows recent changes to practice at our institution where online module feedback surveys have been abandoned due

to low response rates. Following a pilot of paper-based module feedback questionnaires the resultant increase in response rate was such that this has been rolled out across the university. On the basis of this success I will also be using paper-based questionnaires. A potential ethical problem with this relates to either actual or perceived pressure to complete where the practitioner and researcher are one and the same within the class; not only may the respondents feel obliged to complete a survey, but their answers may reflect what they perceive the lecturer wants to find. Such potential pressure is highlighted in BERA (2011) where they emphasise the need to try and ensure that participation is genuinely voluntary. In this pilot these potential problems of compliancy may be lessened as it is not my own class that will be completing them, though they may be still present if they feel that participation is being promoted by their tutor. To try and lessen this effect, the pilot questionnaires will be handed out at break time and will be collected by the Student Representative to ensure that the tutor is unaware of who has or has not participated. While this may result in a lower participation rate it should help to ensure that genuine voluntary consent for participation is upheld. These proceedings have been discussed and agreed with by the tutor and Student Representative. The piloting process also enables an opportunity for learner feedback on the questionnaire itself, so I have prepared some questions about the questionnaire for the learners to consider, gaining feedback through post it notes. This links to Brookfield's reflective lenses (1995) by involving all stakeholders in the reflective process.

2.3 Questionnaire final version (Version 5) (05/05/2016)

The following questionnaire relates to [HEI] Graduate Attribute development during your BA Education course. Responses will be used to inform an Education Doctorate study into these attributes. Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary and should take around 10 minutes. In line with [HEI] University ethical policy, completion of this questionnaire indicates participatory consent for data usage.

1 How old are you? *(please tick one option)*

20-30 years ☐

31-40 years ☐

41-50 years ☐

51-60 years ☐

61+ years ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

2 In which education sector(s) do you work? *(please tick all the options that apply)*

Early Years ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Further Education ☐ Other (please explain)

0 Please tick the answer closest to your current role in education:

...I work full-time in education (paid employment) ☐

...I work part-time in education (paid employment) ☐

...I work part-time in education as a volunteer ☐

...I do not currently work in education, but undertook a placement during my course ☐

4 What skills and qualities do you consider are required to become a university graduate?
(Please answer in the space provided below)

5 [HEI] University pledges that all its graduates develop a specific set of skills/qualities called the [HEI] Graduate Attributes. **From memory only** in the space provided below, please try to list as many of these [HEI] Graduate Attributes as possible.

6 The table below lists and explains the [HEI] Graduate Attributes.

Please do not change your answer to Question 5.

Rate 1-4 the extent to which you consider you have achieved these attributes during your course.

1= fully achieved

2= mostly achieved

3= partially achieved

4= not achieved.

[HEI] Graduate Attribute	University description	My rating (1-4)	<u>Important:</u> Please briefly explain if and how your course has had any impact on your rating of this attribute
Professional	When you graduate, you will be work-ready and employable, and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.		
Global citizen	When you graduate, you will have an understanding of global issues, including sustainability, and their place in a globalised economy.		
Teamwork	When you graduate, you will be an effective communicator and presenter, able to interact appropriately with colleagues. You'll have developed the skills of independence of thought and social interaction through teamwork.		
Lifelong learner	When you graduate, you will be technologically, digitally and information literate. You'll be able to apply the [HEI] Graduate Attributes to your life experiences, for life-long learning and life-long success.		
Reflective and critical	When you graduate, you will be able to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis. You'll be a problem solver and a creator of opportunities.		
Discipline expert	When you graduate, your knowledge will be at the forefront of your chosen field.		

- 7 To what extent do you think the above graduate attributes represent your personal view of what it means to be a graduate? Tick **one** sentence:

The graduate attributes fully represent my view of what it means to be a graduate _____
 The graduate attributes mostly represent my view of what it means to be a graduate _____
 The graduate attributes partially represent my view of what it means to be a graduate _____
 The graduate attributes do not represent my view of what it means to be a graduate _____

- 8 Using the table below, please indicate whether you think the university should retain or remove specific [HEI] Graduate Attributes.

	Professional	Global citizen	Teamwork	Lifelong learner	Reflective and critical	Discipline expert
Retain						
Remove						

- 9 If you think the university should remove, amend or add to the [HEI] Graduate

--

Attributes, please explain your views here:

- 10 *Please tick the answer closest to your experience of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes*

Before I enrolled on my education course...

...I was aware of the [HEI]GAs and they were a leading influence in my choice of Course _____
 ...I was aware of the [HEI]GAs and they partially influenced my choice of course _____
 ...I was aware of the [HEI]GAs but they did not influence my decision to join this course _____
 ...I was not aware of the [HEI]GAs _____
 ...I was not aware of the [HEI]GAs and had not heard about them until now _____

2.4 Questionnaire Reflections

2.4.1 *HEI Main Campus Part time*

Response rate: 20/40. Good to see that most questionnaires were fully completed with responses indicating that respondents understand the questions well. As planned, questionnaires were distributed at an extended break, with anonymity protected by the Class Representative collecting them on my behalf. As all of their work is submitted electronically, I also do not recognise their handwriting, so anonymity has been preserved. Most of the learners appeared to recognise the Graduate Attributes even if they could not recall them. This contrasts with the pilot Early Childhood Studies group, where around half did not have any knowledge of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes at all. This indicates an area for future research being to investigate why so few learners had any awareness within this area.

2.4.2 *HEI Provision (Outreach)*

Response rate: 7/30

This response rate was the lowest. It transpired that the lecturer has not followed instructions to complete ask respondents to complete questionnaires during break time but had instead distributed them at the end of the session to bring back the following week. This only resulted in one response. The researcher was later able to cover a lesson and distribute the questionnaires as per practice illustrated above. However, only 7 learners attended this session (one online), meaning that only a limited number of responses could be captured. In discussion with the students it transpired that this was typical attendance as the course was now operating on a more informal basis as research projects were being completed. This meant that it was unlikely that the researcher would be able to gain further significant responses from this group.

2.4.3 *College A*

Response rate: 10/26

There was a higher proportion of respondents here who did not complete all of the questions. This makes data collection difficult, especially where there are partial responses to the questions, especially in relation to self-assessing their own GA development. Where this has been the case, all of the response to that particular question has been discounted. This is so that responses can be compared on a like for like basis. and otherwise data would not be accurately representing the correct number of responses for each option within the question.

2.4.4 College B

Response rate: 12/13

This had the highest level of responses. What was striking was the much higher ability to name the Graduate Attributes in this group than any of the others. This needs further investigation in the group interview to verify whether this is genuine or other factors which could have influenced their answers, such as a poster of the graduate attributes within the classroom.

2.4.5 Overall reflection

Overall, I feel vindicated by my decision to use a paper-based questionnaire format. Although data collection has been much more time consuming than online approaches such as Qualtrics, this is countered by a response rate of close to 50%. This is a higher response rate than typically found in online surveys, though this still means that around half of the sample's population's views have not been represented in this study. Furthermore, the decision to work through the student representative but to get the questionnaires completed within class time appears to have been successful gaining a reasonable number of responses. Also, by removing the tutor from the process, it is considered that students did have a genuine choice about participation and were not implicitly coerced into completion; some chose not to respond and those who did not are not known to the tutor. The one instance where this approach did not take place and the questionnaires were just handed out resulted in only 1/30 responses; well below the requirements for a meaningful response.

2.5 Interview questions and reflections

2.5.1 Lecturer/Manager questions

Could you tell me something of your role within the University?

1 Identify the espoused purposes of forming GAs at the HEI.

Why were the GAs created at the University?

What do you think is the rationale for the university graduate attributes?

Do you think they are equally relevant for all students?

Do you think they have the same purpose for part-time students already employed within their chosen discipline?

To what extent do you consider the GAs meet or do not meet graduates' aspirations?

(State GAs at this point)

Professional

global citizen

teamwork

life-long learner

reflective and critical

discipline expert

To what extent do you consider these represent *graduate* level skills?

2 Investigate the extent of stakeholder participation in the formation of GAs

Did you have any role in the creation of the GAs? If so, please explain.

Can you describe the consultation process for implementing the GAs?

To what extent were partner colleges, employers, full time and part time students involved in this process?

3 Compare espoused strategic processes of how the GAs have been implemented in HE and FE institutions

What do you think are the benefits/challenges and limitations of implementing the graduate attributes?

Are there any specific challenges for implementing the GAs within our FE partner colleges?

Some partners work with several HE providers, entailing more than one set of attributes or have their own college-based attributes. What guidance is given to these providers for ensuring that the [HEI] Graduate Attributes are delivered?

What guidance is given to colleges where they also have their own student attributes?

How are the GAs promoted across the university and within partner colleges?

What training/support has been offered to staff for implementing the GAs?

What training/support has been offered for partner colleges?

4 Compare how GAs are embedded into the focus course full-time/part-time curricula

What is the role of graduate attributes within the course curriculum?

5 Compare teaching and learning strategies for embedding GAs

What do you consider is your role (if any) in facilitating GA development?

How do the 3E's relate to the Graduate Attributes? (Employability, Enterprise, Entrepreneurship)

How do these relate to the School of Education?
Business also have the 5 As – how do these relate?
What about the '[HEI] Eight' – are these for students or lecturers? Do these relate to the GAs?

6 Assessment

How does the university assess GAs?
Does the university expect all students to achieve the GAs equally regardless of discipline, or consider that different disciplines may emphasise some of the attributes over others?

7 Analyse the role of GAs in the QA process

The university pledges that all graduates achieve all of the attributes. How does it know that this pledge is upheld?
How is the quality of GA provision measured within the HEI?
How is the quality of GA provision measured within the university partner colleges?
How is GA attainment monitored?
How does GA attainment data feed into QA and QI processes?
How is GA data fed back to course teams?
How (and when) do you monitor whether GA commitments are delivered in practice?
In 2013 there was a cross-university survey on GAs – has this continued?
How do policies and practices redress a student complaint in the event that they feel the GAs are not being implemented?

8 to identify strategies for ongoing GA renewal and development

Has GA policy developed since their creation? If so, how and how effective has this been?
Is there a procedure for stakeholder feedback about the GAs?
Is there a procedure for reviewing/updating these and how effectively is this implemented?
What is your view of the future of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?
Do you have any further thoughts about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?

2.5.2 FE lecturer/manager questions

FE Lecturer Questions/FE Manager

Do you want to start by telling me about your role, so what you currently do in terms of university courses at the college how much experience you have.

Graduate Attribute conceptualisation

In what ways is achieving a degree valuable for your students' futures?

What do you think is the rationale for the university graduate attributes?

Did you have any role in the creation of the GAs? If so please explain.

When did you first hear about the Graduate Attributes

To what extent do you consider the GAs meet or do not meet your graduate (your graduates') aspirations? (Show GAs at this point)

Would you change any of the attributes? If so, what and why?

Strategic implementation of the graduate attributes

What do you think are the benefits/challenges and limitations of implementing the graduate attributes?

Has the university provided you with opportunities for GA implementation training?

If so, have you undertaken any GA training? How effective was this?

Has the university provided you with support to implement the GAs?

If not, should the university provide training. If so, what should this cover?

Please explain if there are any specific benefits/challenges and limitations of implementing university graduate attributes in an FE institution?

Does your college also have a set of learner attributes?

If so, how are the two sets of attributes facilitated?

What is the physical presence of GAs around the HEIs/FE franchises?

What is the online presence of GAs on the University/FE franchise websites?

Curriculum approach

Compare how GAs are embedded into the focus course full-time/part-time curricula

What is the role of graduate attributes within the course curriculum?

Are GAs mapped to the curriculum? Why? Why not? If so, how?

Facilitation of graduate attributes

Compare teaching and learning strategies for embedding GAs

What do you consider is your role (if any) in facilitating GA development?

How confident do you feel about facilitating GA development? Please explain your answer.

Can you give examples?

To what extent do you feel the course is developing the university graduate attributes?

Why/why not?

How could GA teaching and learning activities be developed? (lecturers/students answer)

Assessment of graduate attributes

Do you assess the GAs?

If so how, and how effective do you consider this?

If not, can you explain why?

Do you have any suggestions to improve/implement GA assessment?

What relationship, if any, would you see between the GAs and professional standards (HLTA/ETF/Teachers)

Quality assurance and improvement

How is the quality of GA provision measured within the HEI and its partners?

How is GA attainment monitored?

How does GA attainment data feed into QA and QI processes?

How is GA data fed back to course teams?

How (and when) do you monitor whether GA commitments are delivered in practice?

How do policies and practices redress a student complaint in the event that they feel the GAs are not being implemented?

Has GA policy developed since their creation? If so, how and how effective has this been?

Have you had opportunity to contribute to developing the (university) Graduate Attributes?

Is there a procedure for stakeholder feedback about the GAs?

Is there a procedure for reviewing/updating these and how effectively is this implemented?

What can you tell me about the 3 E's at [HEI] University? [Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.]

What about the '[HEI] Eight'?

Do you have any further thoughts about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?

2.5.3 Student focus group questions

Graduate Attribute Conceptualisation

In what ways do you think achieving a degree will be valuable for your futures?

What personal and professional skills and qualities do you hope to gain from completing your degree at [HEI] university?

To what extent do you feel you are achieving these aims? Why?

To what extent do you consider the GAs meet or do not meet your graduate (your graduates') aspirations? (State GAs at this point)

Professional

Global citizen

Teamwork

Life-long learner

Reflective and critical

Discipline expert

Curriculum

What do you consider to be your lecturer's role in your GA development? How effectively have they achieved this? How could this be improved?

Are there any attributes you think the course is most effective at developing? Why?

Are there any attributes you think the course is least effective at developing? Why?

Assessment

How have GAs been assessed on your course? How effective is this?

How do you think it could be improved?

The university pledges that all graduates achieve all of the attributes. To what extent do you consider your class has achieved the all of the GAs. How do you know this?

To what extent do you consider that you have achieved the GAs?

What relationship, if any, would you see between the GAs and professional standards (HLTA/ETF/Teachers'?)

Quality assurance and improvement

What opportunities have you had to give feedback about the graduate attributes?

Have you had opportunities to contribute to the development of the Graduate Attributes?

Student centredness

Would you change any of the attributes? If so, what and why?

Does the university expect all students to achieve the GAs equally regardless of discipline, or consider that different disciplines may emphasise some of the attributes over others.

What do you consider to be your role in your own GA development?

How effectively have you achieved this? How could this be improved?

Are there any teaching/learning/assessment activities which you consider have contributed to your GA development? Please explain.

Have the GAs had any impact on your workplace development?

What can you tell me about the 3 E's at [HEI] University?

What about the '[HEI] Eight'?

Do you have any further thoughts about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?

2.5.4 *Interview Reflective diary excerpt*

Interviewee background

The interviewee is currently working at the university as a lecturer full-time within the School of Education. However, the lecturer as experience delivering the part-time education award within College A so was a useful source of information for considering how GAs are delivered within Further Education.

Transcription

One decision to take was whether to pay for transcription or do it myself. For the first interview, I decided to complete the transcription myself. This was so that I could see if there were benefits to transcription in terms of aiding the reflective process as well as timing how long it would take. The interview itself was less than twenty minutes, suggesting that in terms of face to face time, my research proposal interview schedule would be reasonable. Transcription was – as expected – much longer, taking around four hours to complete. However, I did find this to be most beneficial to my practice as a researcher in several ways. Firstly, whilst listening to the transcript, I had many ideas for the research project, in terms of initiating analysis of findings as well as some tentative potential recommendations. Secondly, listening to my questions has enabled me to reflect and further develop questions to ask further interviewees. This ongoing developmental approach would be problematic in a positivist approach as it is imperative that questions are standardised in order to be able to fully compare and, as far as possible, quantify responses. However, in this research the emphasis is on a developmental yet transparent process, enabling changes to approaches on the condition that there is no attempt to generalise findings and that all such changes are transparent. Thirdly, transcribing the interview myself helps me to identify areas where possibly the interviewee would have had more to say with further questioning/time allowed for response. This means that if possible and where willing, interviewees will be able to give further responses to important questions. Finally, a crucial benefit of transcribing – being a slow process for a non-touch typist as myself is that it gives my time to reflect on my own performance as an interviewer. This process has enabled me to identify several flaws in my approach which I will attempt to rectify after each interview. My initial reflections and developmental objectives are detailed below.

Reflections on my role as an interviewer.

Whilst listening to the recording I have highlighted areas where I performed poorly as an interviewer. This is mainly due to dominating procedures in various ways meaning that the interviewee may not have been able to fully respond to the questions. I found that quite often I did not allow enough time for the interviewee to respond (e.g. lines 12-14). I was afraid of silence and felt the need to keep talking. This was wrong as silence does not necessarily mean non-comprehension – it could also mean that the interviewee is thinking in detail about their responses. I also interrupted occasionally. This should only be done, reluctantly, where the interviewee is moving away from the focus. Finally, there were quite a few occasions when I didn't ask follow up questions. This indicates that I wasn't actively listening, but rather waiting for the next opportunity to intervene with the next question on the list. Having taken a semi structured approach I need to ensure that interviewees are therefore given as much time as needed to respond to questions, carefully listen to their responses in order to formulate questions more flexibly.

3.0 Graduate attributes: Documentary evidence

3.1. Implementation Strategy

3.1.1 Teaching support

[redacted] University is committed to providing opportunities for all our students to gain the [redacted] Graduate Attributes. Key to this is being able to apply their knowledge through experience in real work situations. For the majority of students, paid work in their discipline will not be accessible until after graduation. Volunteering and community practice offer a huge diversity of opportunities linked to subjects or not.

The ADU will work with you to provide information and guidance to your student cohorts and to develop your curriculum to facilitate the integration of volunteering and community practice. We will support you to identify and develop:

- the curriculum regarding volunteering and community practice (Awards, modules etc)
- subject related volunteering and community practice opportunities,
- community-based projects and research,

Penny Vincent currently teaches the Volunteering: Social Action and Change option module offering 15 credits at levels 3 to 7, for reflection on at least 40 hours of voluntary work in an academic context. She can work with you to adapt this module for your students or even to integrate it into your course.

If your curriculum already provides robust opportunities for work experience such as placements, internships, live briefs and community projects we would encourage you to signpost students to volunteering to widen their experience.

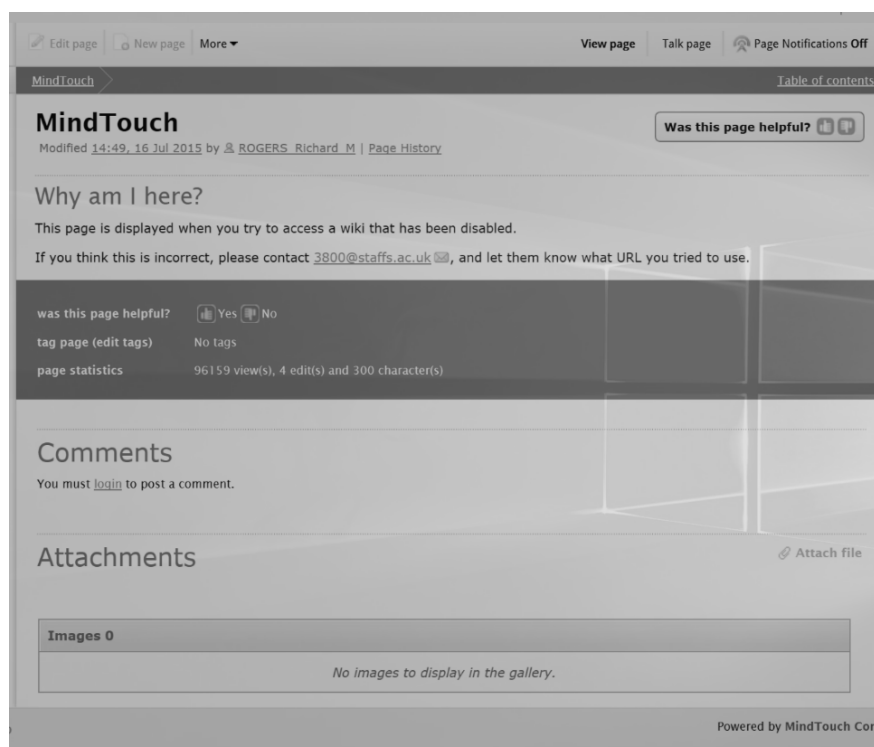
InVOLved is the student volunteering scheme managed by the Student Union. It provides access to over 250 quality-checked voluntary work providers, training, DBS checks and recognition for students.

N.B. staff can also register with InVOLved for their own voluntary work!

[http://www.\[HEI\].ac.uk/support_depts/adu/\[HEI\]_graduate/](http://www.[HEI].ac.uk/support_depts/adu/[HEI]_graduate/) Contacted 14/01/2017

3.1.2 [HEI] Graduate Attributes Best Practice Module

Site not available:



3.1.3 HEI (2013) Staff Training

Slide 1

The [HEI] Graduate

Executive Pro-Vice Chancellor

Director of Academic Policy and Development

Slide 2

Structure of Presentation

- Graduate Attributes: the context
- Implementation of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes (SGA) across all level 4 undergraduate programmes being delivered in 2012-13 and the mapping of the SGA at levels 5 and 6 for delivery in 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively
- The [HEI] Graduate Employability Programme (SGEP) – the innovative pilot programme that forms a key part of the delivery of the [HEI] Graduate
- Next Steps for UK partner institutions

Slide 3

Graduate Attributes: the context

Slide 4

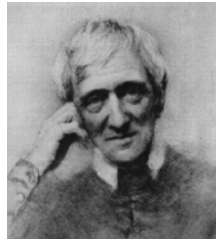
What are Graduate Attributes?

Graduate attributes are commonly understood as an articulation of

"...the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future." (Bowden 2000)

Slide 5

What's New?



John Henry Newman(1853)
Idea of a University

A University training...is the education which gives man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them...It teaches him to go straight to the point, disentangle a skein of thought... It prepares him to fill any post with credit and to master any subject with facility.

It shows him how to accommodate himself to others. He is at home in any society;...he can ask a question pertinently;...he knows when to be serious and when to trifle, and he has a sure tact which enables him to trifle with gracefulness and to be serious with effect...

Slide 6

Graduate Attributes: some current trends

- An increased interest in the development and embedding of Graduate Attributes (GAs) within Universities
- GAs are deemed to be important insofar as they should make clear to a range of stakeholders what are the core learning outcomes of a university education: this transparency will be increasingly important in the post-2012 competitive landscape.

Slide 7

Graduate Attributes: some current trends

- Universities have always endeavoured to develop desirable qualities in their graduates. BUT in recent years there has been an increased focus on articulating graduate attributes explicitly rather than implicitly
- For many universities, however, GAs have been viewed as a set of additional learning outcomes rather than learning outcomes inherent in core university learning and teaching experiences.
- "Such responses, while making such outcomes more explicit, typically focus on a limited range of decontextualised skills and are consequently perceived by students and educators as having little to do with the type of learning normally associated with higher education" (Hughes and Barrie (2010))

Slide 8

Graduate Attributes: some current trends

- Increasingly recognised that there is a need to demonstrate the achievement of these important GAs through assessment.
- If GAs are not assessed they will not be taken seriously by students or teachers, in addition:
 - Employers value GAs and often seek information on these achievements from applicants
 - Governments expect evidence of GA achievement because of links made with the knowledge economy, innovation and national well-being
 - Assessment of GAs supports students and teachers in their monitoring and development

Slide 9

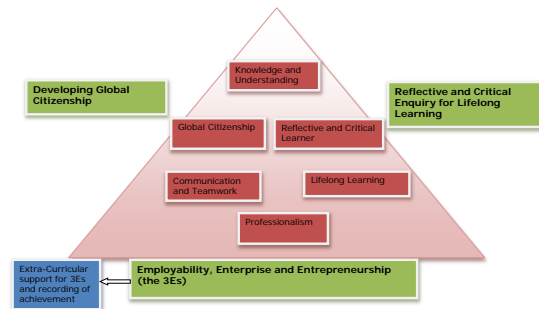
Implementation of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes

Slide 10

The [HEI] Graduate

The [HEI] Graduate represents a set of qualities that the University passionately believes is necessary for success in the 21st century. The [HEI] Graduate is a reflective and critical learner with a global perspective, prepared to contribute in the world of work.

Slide 11



Slide 12

The [HEI] Graduate will:

Discipline Expertise:

- Have an understanding of the forefront of knowledge in their chosen field

Professionalism:

- Be prepared to be work-ready and employable and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial

Global Citizenship:

- Have an understanding of global issues and of their place in a globalised economy

Communication and Teamwork:

- Be an effective communicator and presenter and able to interact appropriately with a range of colleagues
- Have developed the skills of independence of thought and (when appropriate) social interaction through teamwork

Reflective and Critical Learner:

- Have the ability to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis
- Be a problem solver and creator of opportunities

Lifelong Learning:

- Be technologically, digitally and information literate
- Be able to apply [HEI] Graduate attributes to a range of life experiences to facilitate life-long learning and life-long success.

Slide 13



Slide 14

**EMPLOYABILITY
ENTERPRISE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Each student at Staffordshire University will develop a set of skills and attributes necessary for success in the 21st century. So, when you graduate your qualities will be recognised by employers, making you a highly-sought after prospect as 'The Staffordshire Graduate'. The Staffordshire Graduate is a reflective and critical learner with a global perspective, fully prepared to contribute in the world of work.

The Staffordshire Graduate will:

- Decision Explorer:** Have an understanding of the business of knowledge within their chosen field.
- Problematologist:** Be prepared to be workfully and employable and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.
- Global Citizenship:** Have an understanding of global issues and of their place in a globalised economy.
- Communication and Network:** Be an effective communicator and presenter and able to interact appropriately with a range of colleagues.
- Team:** Have developed the skills of independence of thought and future experienced social interaction through teamwork.
- Reflective and Critical Learner:** Have the ability to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis.
- Be a problem solver and creator of opportunities.**
- Learning Learning:** Be technologically digitally and information literate.
- Be able to apply Staffordshire Graduate attributes to a range of life experiences to facilitate life-long learning and life-long success.**

During their placement year, The Technology students, Chris Goring, James Trow, Martin Lomas and Mike O'Brien, as part of the University's SPREAD project, are engaged in a series of projects. They all have a passion for their subjects and their skills are being used to help businesses and communities.

Being Employable involves the development of a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment. These include the capability of being effective in the workplace and the potential to be those responsible for the benefits of themselves, the workplace, the community and the economy.

Being Enterprising involves a set of skills and attitudes that can enable a culture of identifying opportunities, creating, risk taking and innovation. It can involve many activities – for instance organising an event, planning an internet trip or involvement in a social enterprise. Equally it can be about finding new solutions to old problems in your workplace, conducting a piece of research in a resourceful way, starting a new society or being involved in a community project. Employers value enterprising people.

Being Entrepreneurial involves students using enterprise skills to create new businesses or doing them in a new way. There is considerable support for those wishing to do so across the University. However, being entrepreneurial is not just about business skills or creating new ventures. It is a way of thinking and behaving relevant to all parts of working and the learning in terms of discipline, actions, skills and capabilities, to come up with new ways of doing things well and the flexibility to change career direction.

The development and delivery of the Staffordshire Graduate attributes are integral to the University's strategy and are a key part of its mission. This document has been created to provide an overview of the attributes and the way in which they are being developed. For more details, please visit the website at www.staff.ac.uk/graduate.

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Implementing the [HEI] Graduate

Academic Board decided in October 2011 that all undergraduate programmes:

- should be structured normally on the basis of modules of 30 credits with normally no more than two 15 credit modules per level
- should demonstrate in detail at each level how the [HEI] Graduate Attributes would be addressed through the curriculum.

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Implementing the [HEI] Graduate

- A University Standing Panel (USP) considered proposals made by Programme teams. The Programme Specification, approved by the Faculty, included a detailed mapping of where in the curriculum the [HEI] GAs are located and assessed
- Most staff teams felt they had already facilitated to some extent the [HEI] GAs in their programmes, many felt this had previously often been only implicit; they welcomed the opportunity to consider in some depth precisely where the [HEI] GAs sat in their programmes of study and, in particular, how they were assessed.

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The [HEI] Graduate Employability Programme

Slide 18

'[HEI] Graduate Promise'

- Marketing Materials/video/prospectus
- Open days
- Leaflets
- Film (Advertising Standards Agency)
- Mantra – VC, staff, stake holders
- University USP

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[HEI] Graduate Curriculum

- 6 Champion UG Programmes
- Subject relevant - some consistency
- 15 credits of subject related curriculum
- Level 4 and Level 5 – generic outline.
- Embedded in a year long module (15/30 credits)
- Core to UG Programmes

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Student Opportunity

- Develop a key set of employability skills
- Develop reflective practice
- Undertake work experience/work integrated learning within the curriculum so as to develop vocational identity and build job-related networks.
- Develop skills and attitudes that can enable a culture of identifying opportunities, creativity, risk taking and innovation.

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Level 4

- Employability Skills/Reflective Practice
 - Interactive student centered skills workshops
 - Attendance at internal/external co-curricular events
 - Teamwork presentation exercise
 - CV development
 - Personal development statement as part of a reflective portfolio

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Level 5

- Engaging in work related study
- Skills workshops
 - Working in the workplace
 - Enterprising/Entrepreneurial/Intrepreneurial mind-sets, behaviours and Innovation and Risk-taking
 - Developing Citizenship, personal and corporate responsibilities
 - Further CV development

Slide 23

Level 5

- Attendance at internal/external events
 - negotiated in teams
- Group presentation on learning relating to aspirations & development of career skills.
- Engage in and reflect on a work related experience.
 - Work placement
 - Volunteering experience
 - Social enterprise project
 - Existing part time work
 - Organising an event or series of events
 - Setting up a new club/society

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Assessment

- [HEI] Graduate ePortfolio
 - Pebble pad
 - Records learning Experiences
 - Uses Badging and Tagging to Identify [HEI] Graduate Attributes
 - Assimilation and accumulation of learning experiences as evidence of attainment is achieved automatically and incrementally.
 - Used to self-direct personal development whilst providing evidence for seeking employment upon graduation.
 - Links to HEAR

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Where we are now

- Pilot - 70 staff, 700 level 4 students
- Structured Induction Programme
- [HEI] Graduate Experience (STAGE)
 - Resource bank
- University Calendar of Events
- Cross-university programme coordination
 - Professor of Enterprise
- [HEI] Graduate ePortfolio
 - eLearning Facilitators
 - Student employability ambassadors-advisers

Slide 26

Developments - 2012/13

- Sharing of good practice/problem solving during the Pilot
 - [HEI] Graduate Forum
- Workshops for partner organisations
- Level 5 – bringing together Unitemps, SU, Creative Communities Unit, volunteering
- Level 6 – development of [HEI] Graduate module on Entrepreneurship

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Why are we doing it?

- New phase in University's development
- Commitment to excellence and improving the student experience
- Justifying increasing costs of a degree
- Meet/counter a period of unprecedented change
 - fierce competition for students/growing student expectations
- Improve standing in NSS/League Tables

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Next Steps for UK Partner Institutions

- Move to 30 credit framework
- [HEI] mapping exercise
- Consideration of [HEI] Graduate Employability Programme materials
 - as part of Programme Review
 - if scheduled for 2012/13 or 2013/14)
 - Other programmes - follow the same process as for on-campus awards
 - Faculty validation process
 - University Standing Panel – Partner college representation where relevant

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Next Steps for UK Partner Institutions

- University Support
 - Programme Advisers
 - Partnership Managers
 - Head of UK Partnerships [Name withheld]
 - Professor of Enterprise [Name withheld]
- Questions?

3.2 [HEI] Graduate Attribute Marketing and Guidance

3.2.1 GA Student leaflet (no longer available)



“Each student at [redacted] will develop a set of skills and attributes necessary for success in the 21st century. So, when you graduate your qualities will be recognised by employers, making you a highly-sought after prospect as [redacted]. The [redacted] is a reflective and critical learner with a global perspective, fully prepared to contribute in the world of work.”

Discipline Expertise:

Have an understanding of the forefront of knowledge within their chosen field.

Professionalism:

Be prepared to be work-ready and employable and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.

Global Citizenship:

Have an understanding of global issues and of their place in a globalised economy.

Communication and Teamwork:

Be an effective communicator and presenter and able to interact appropriately with a range of colleagues.

Have developed the skills of independence of thought and (when appropriate) social interaction through teamwork.

Reflective and Critical Learner:

Have the ability to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis.

Be a problem solver and creator of opportunities.

Lifelong Learning:

Be technologically, digitally and information literate.

Be able to apply Staffordshire Graduate attributes to a range of life experiences to facilitate life-long learning and life-long success.

EMPLOYABILITY ENTERPRISE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

During their placement year Film Technology students: Chris Goudy, Anthony Thane, Martin Lomax and Tom Down set up Humanoid Productions Limited as part of the University's SPEED business start-up scheme. They all graduated with a first-class honours and their film company is going from strength-to-strength.



Being Employable involves the development of a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment, have the capability of being effective in the workplace and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Being Enterprising involves a set of skills and attitudes that can enable a culture of identifying opportunities, creativity, risk taking and innovation. It can involve many activities – for instance organising an event, planning an overseas trip or involvement in a social enterprise. Equally it can be about finding new solutions to old problems in your workplace, conducting a piece of research in a resourceful way, starting a new society or being involved in a community project. Employers value enterprising people.

Being Entrepreneurial very often involves using enterprise skills to create new businesses and bring them to market. There is considerable support for those wishing to do so whilst at University. However, being entrepreneurial is not just about business skills or starting new ventures; it is a way of thinking and behaving relevant to all parts of society and the economy in terms of mindsets, actions, skills and capabilities, to come up with new ways of doing things well and the flexibility to change career direction.

The development and delivery of the [redacted] Graduate attributes is an ongoing process that the University is undertaking in partnership with its students.

This document has been Equality Impact Assessed for all protected characteristics – visit our website at [redacted] for more details.

3.2.2 HEI GAs Publicly Available web presence

[Alumni](#) [Current students](#) [Current staff](#)

[Courses](#) [Student Life](#) [International](#) [Research & Business](#) [Faculties & Schools](#) [About Us](#) [Q](#)

What are they?

Your degree isn't just about securing that all-important academic qualification. It's about gaining the life and work skills employers respect and help you stand out in the job market.

We call these skills 'attributes' and we've gone to great lengths to embed them into all our courses.

Learn more about these attributes

Professional

Global Citizen

Teamwork

Life-long Learner

Reflective and Critical

Discipline Expert

In this section

- [Graduate Attributes](#)
- [Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Student and Graduate Profiles](#)
- [Our Pledge To Employers](#)
- [Watch Our Pledge](#)

3.2.3 University description of the Graduate Attributes

Professional

We'll encourage you to be professional in everything you do.

We'll help you to become a good time manager and encourage you to meet deadlines. Most important of all, we'll show you how to develop that can-do approach that employers look for.

You'll also know what it means to be enterprising and entrepreneurial in order to make the most of life's opportunities – and how to deal with its challenges in a calm and considered manner.

Examples of being professional include:

- Being reliable, willing and honest
- Paying attention to detail
- Having integrity
- Being self-motivated and competent
- Showing respect and being polite
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Having good leadership skills
- Listening to others

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

When you graduate, you will be work-ready and employable, and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.

Global Citizen

With today's global economy, it's not surprising that many university graduates forge successful careers overseas.

Depending on the degree you take, we'll aim to equip you not only with the skills to succeed in the UK, but also in the increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Regardless of your degree we'll ensure you'll be ready to embrace the opportunities that the world has to offer.

You'll respect diversity, different cultures and different ways of working – and you'll have an understanding of the global issues that affect us all.

Examples of being a global citizen include:

- Understanding global issues from different perspectives
- Recognising the opportunities that the wider world offers
- Learning from and respecting different cultures
- Accepting different ways of working
- Valuing diversity and the importance of sustainability

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

When you graduate, you will have an understanding of global issues, including sustainability, and their place in a globalised economy.

Communication and Teamwork

Succeeding in life isn't just about being able to work independently. It's about being able to work effectively alongside your customers, colleagues and peers.

As a graduate, you'll be an effective communicator and presenter.

You'll also understand the significance of being a great team player. You'll respect other people's views and, when the time comes, know how to get the best out of colleagues.

Examples of good communication and teamwork include:

- Having enthusiasm
- Being reliable and dependable
- Communicating clearly and effectively
- Being a good listener
- Showing initiative Respecting the views of others
- Being respectful and supportive
- Staying calm in a crisis

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

When you graduate, you will be an effective communicator and presenter, able to interact appropriately with colleagues. You'll have developed the skills of independence of thought and social interaction through teamwork.

Life-long Learner

When you become a graduate, we hope you'll remain a life-long learner.

You'll understand that to succeed in life, you'll need to be at the top of your game and be willing to seize every opportunity to advance your knowledge.

Technologically, digitally and information literate, you'll know exactly how to access the learning opportunities that are necessary for life-long success.

Examples of being a life-long learner include

- Appreciating that knowledge doesn't stand still
- Understanding the importance of keeping up-to-date with the latest approaches and technology
- Identifying learning opportunities – and taking advantage of them
- Having an inquiring mind and a thirst for knowledge
- Being open to new ideas and opportunities
- Taking responsibility for your own learning

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

When you graduate, you will be technologically, digitally and information literate. You'll be able to apply the skills and attributes to your life experiences, for life-long learning and life-long success.

Reflective and Critical

We'll give you the knowledge and confidence to challenge conventional wisdom, think creatively and find refreshingly original solutions.

You'll have the ability to consider why certain approaches worked, why others failed – and how things could have been done differently.

When combined, you'll understand how to tackle challenges from different angles – and call on your analytical abilities to both create and discover new opportunities.

Examples of being reflective and critical include

- Challenging convention
- Thinking creatively
- Evaluating information
- Creating opportunities
- Reaching well-considered decisions
- Being enterprising and entrepreneurial

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

When you graduate, you will be able to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis. You'll be a problem solver and a creator of opportunities.

Discipline Expert

All our courses are designed to ensure you'll graduate with considerable knowledge and skills in your chosen discipline.

Depending on the course, your expertise will be developed through lectures, seminars and tutorials; by conducting independent research, meeting industry experts and honing your skills using our cutting-edge facilities.

You could also take advantage of study trips, relevant work-placements, volunteering or being involved in a community project.

Our links with industry, commerce, the public sector and the professions mean we're always up-to-date with the latest standards to ensure you graduate as a discipline expert.

Examples of being a discipline expert include

- Keeping up-to-date with the latest standards and requirements
- Having an understanding of the latest thinking in your chosen field
- Being knowledgeable in your subject area
- Being competent in applying your knowledge and skills
- Knowing how to solve specific business problems
- Knowing how to apply your skills to solve non-familiar business issues

3.2.4 The 3Es

Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

It's not enough to stand head and shoulders above other candidates in the job market.

It's just as important to know how to turn your own ideas into exciting and viable opportunities. That's why, as a Graduate, you will not only be highly Employable, but also Enterprising and Entrepreneurial.

We call these life skills 'The Three Es'. See what they mean:

EMPLOYABLE

Being Employable means having the skills, knowledge and personal attributes to catch the eye of employers. It means understanding how to be effective in the workplace and successful in your chosen career – for the benefit of yourself, your colleagues, the community and the wider economy.

ENTERPRISING

Being Enterprising means having the attitude, initiative and ability to recognise opportunities and the confidence to make the most of them. It can mean finding new solutions to old problems, discovering a more resourceful way of tackling a challenge, organising an event, or having the vision to start a new society or service. It could also mean volunteering or getting involved in a community project. Employers value Enterprising people for the fresh thinking they bring to the workplace.

ENTREPRENEURIAL

Being Entrepreneurial involves using your skills to bring that new business idea, venture, product or service to life. It can mean being prepared to take risk in order to achieve success.

Every year we help promising new graduate businesses to get off to a great start through our various support schemes.

But, it's not just about having business skills. It's also a way of thinking and behaving.

From Oprah Winfrey and J. K. Rowling to Bill Gates and Richard Branson, the world is full of entrepreneurs. And, just like Steve Jobs of Apple fame, entrepreneurs 'Think Different'.

3.2.5 *Pledge to Employers*

The [HEI] Graduate for Employers

The [HEI] isn't simply a pledge to current and future students that everyone graduating from [HEI] University will possess more than academic knowledge.

It's also our pledge to employers that any [HEI] graduate will be well-rounded, relevant, professional and more than ready to contribute to the world and to the world of work.

With the confidence to think independently, they'll have the enterprising spirit to recognise opportunities. They'll be well prepared for what you want from them – and also to exceed those expectations.

In short, they'll meet the requirements for that graduate-level job – and have the attitude and drive that could make a real difference to your business.

Our [Careers Centre](#) can help you find the right [HEI] University students and graduates for full-time, part-time and temporary roles.

3.2.6 *The [HEI] Graduate Pledge Transcript*

[http://www.\[HEI\].ac.uk/study/\[HEI\]graduate/pledge/](http://www.[HEI].ac.uk/study/[HEI]graduate/pledge/)

At [HEI] University we promise better. The [HEI] Graduate is our pledge that now every single [HEI] University graduate will leave us with much more than academic knowledge. They'll also possess the kind of attitude, attributes and skills that they need to make their mark on the world. We promise that every [HEI] Graduate will be prepared for life beyond our four walls, for what employers will want from them and also be prepared to exceed those expectations. They'll be driven. That means they'll have the confidence to think independently and the enterprise, the foresight and even the entrepreneurial flair to identify and create opportunities for their own success. The [HEI] Graduate will also be professional, they'll have a global perspective, an understanding of the world and their place in it and more importantly, an understanding of their ability to change it. But this isn't just a commitment to our students. It's also a promise to employers that a degree from [HEI] is more than an academic qualification – it's actually a promise in itself. It's a guarantee that any [HEI] graduate is well rounded, relevant and more than ready to contribute both to the world and the world of work.

3.2.7 [HEI] University Graduate Pledge TV Advert

[http://www.thedrum.com/news/2012/11/22/\[HEI\]-university-reveals-new-tv-and-cinema-initiative-created-plain-english](http://www.thedrum.com/news/2012/11/22/[HEI]-university-reveals-new-tv-and-cinema-initiative-created-plain-english)

Advert released November 2012

DEC ► 2012

The [REDACTED] Graduate comes to TV!

As part of our commitment to the [REDACTED] Graduate programme, our Marketing and Public Relations department launched a TV advertising campaign on ITV Central West. They created the campaign to engage prospective students, impress potential business partners and inform our current students, staff and stakeholders. Running initially for six weeks, the air time was specifically chosen to support the peak time for traditional applications, support our Semester 2 recruitment drive, attract mature students, and engage with a broader audience. It appeared in a good number of prime time slots against some of the biggest programmes on TV, including X Factor, I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here, Coronation Street and the News.

HEI Annual Review 2012-13, p4

3.2.8 GAs in the School of Education Prospectus (HEI, 2015)

— THE —
 **GRADUATE**

our graduates
MAKE THE WORLD WHAT IT IS.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

You'll find

graduates all
around the world
– in successful
careers across
business,
commerce,
industry, media,
the arts and the
professions.

Every one of them has left the University fully equipped; not simply with the academic qualifications, skills and experience to hit the ground running in their chosen career, but with a good idea of what's expected of them in the real world.

Study at  and we'll help you to develop the skills and qualities necessary for success in the 21st Century.

By working together, we'll aim to equip you to become  – an individual with the knowledge, personal attributes and expertise that employers look for, and the ability to stand out in the job market.

With a thorough understanding of your chosen field, you'll be a reflective, critical learner with a truly global perspective. Work-ready and highly employable, you'll also fully understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial – essential skills whether you go into employment or start your own business.

When you graduate from  University, you'll also be in some very good company. Our graduates have gone on to become leading names in industry, successful stage and TV actors, coroners, lawyers and computer games designers.

Some have made their name in media, health, HR, science and sport. Others have been employed in the production of Hollywood blockbusters. While others have used the skills and knowledge they gained with us to set up successful companies.

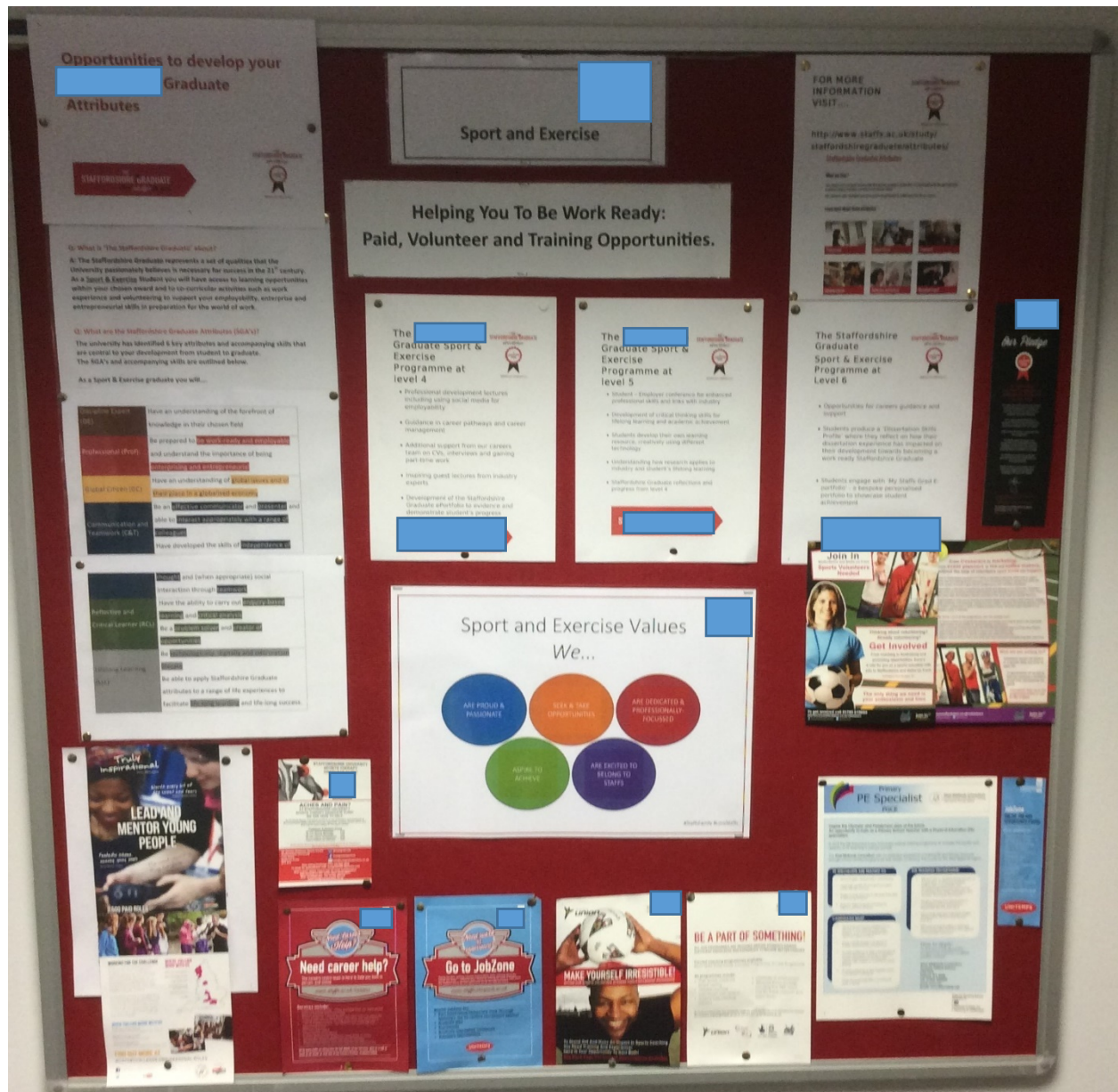


3.2.9 School of Education Open Day GA Slide



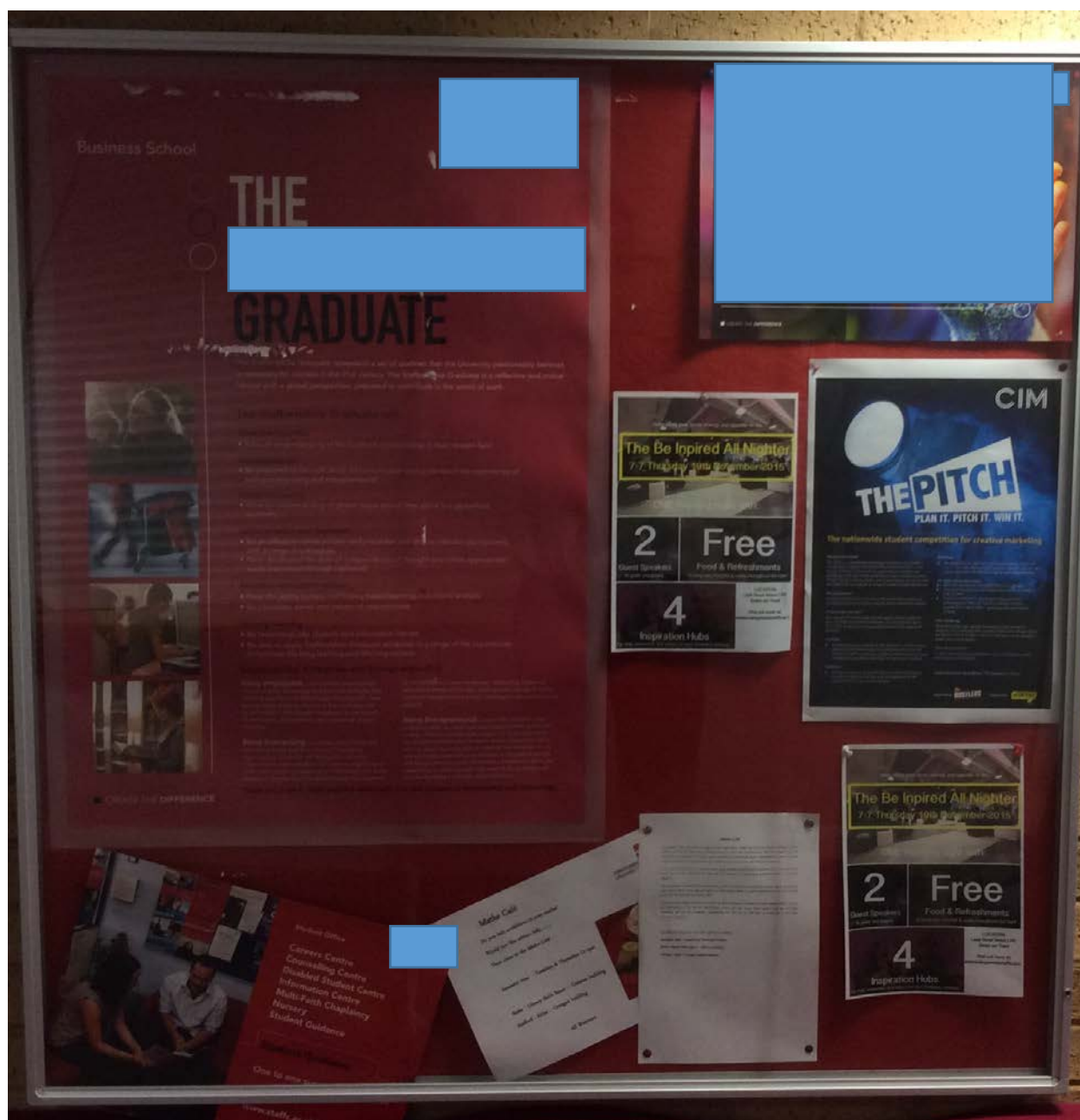
3.3 GA based wall displays

3.3.1 Sports and Exercise (HEI)



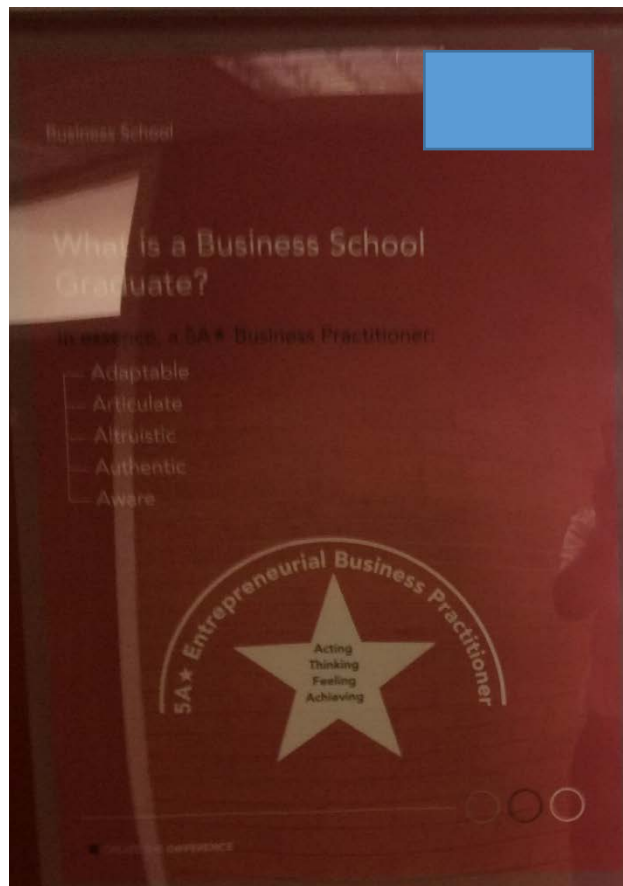
This includes an overview of GA expectations at each level of undergraduate study.

3.3.2. Business School Display (HEI)

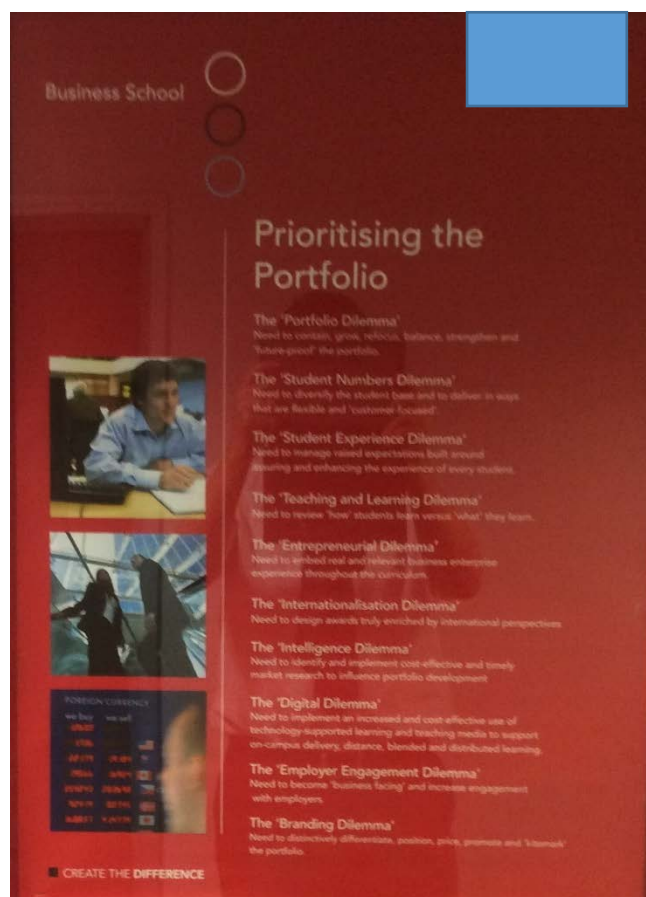
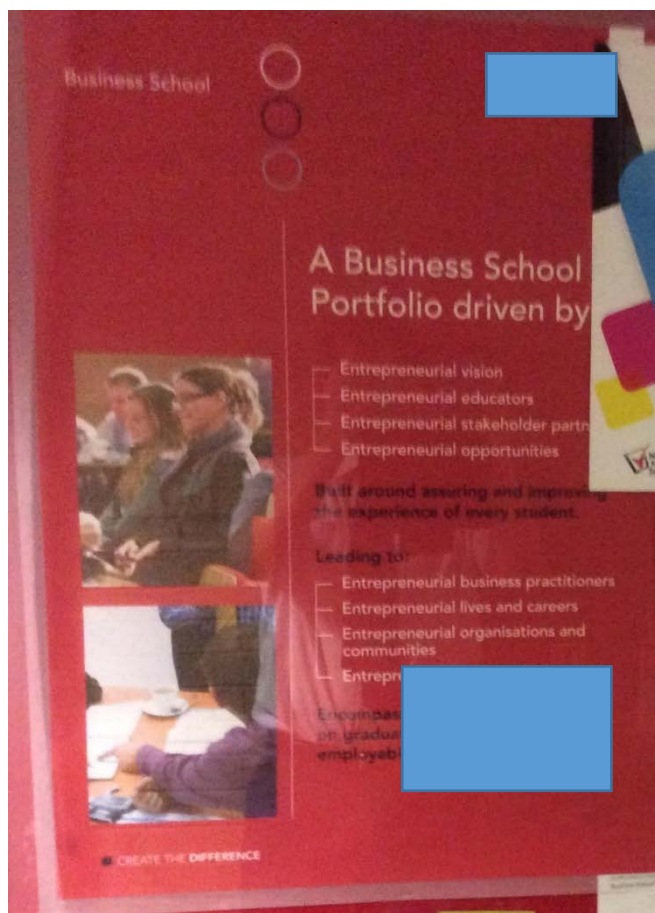


GA University Poster labelled for the business school. This was found twice in the building. No such posters found for other schools.

3.3.3 The 5 As (HEI Business School)



3.3.4 Business School Portfolio



Out of 20 undergraduate displays in the building, only 3 featured the GAs. Additionally, 6 displays featured other business-related attributes, including the 3 displays for the 5 As which were the forerunner to the GAs.

There are no GA wall displays at the HEI outreach campus.

3.3.5. FE Franchise based wall displays

3.3.5.1 College A

Large wall poster designed by College A to promote the GAs



Large wall poster designed by College A to promote HE attributes



3.3.5.2 College B

College B's Core Values and Skills Promise

OUR CORE VALUES...

VALUE 1

THE CUSTOMER IS OUR FOCUS

We place our customers at the heart of everything we do

Learners will

- Support each other
- Feel proud to be a Burton and South Derbyshire College learner
- Work hard and take responsibility for their own learning journey

Staff will

- Recognise and reward good performance
- Support colleagues in their efforts to focus on the learner
- Offer consistent support, ensuring high standards are maintained across all departments

Leaders will

- Acknowledge and reward good performance
- Establish and communicate standards and expectations
- Strive to create a safe environment, where everyone is treated fairly

VALUE 2

CONSISTENTLY ACHIEVING

We strive to help everyone to achieve their maximum potential

Learners will

- Feel valued and supported by staff and peers alike
- Aim high and strive to do their best
- Feel able to ask for help and support

Staff will

- Do their utmost to help learners achieve their maximum potential
- Set good examples, behaving professionally at all times
- Focus on the individual's needs, giving support and guidance

Leaders will

- Continuously review systems to ensure the best support is in place, allowing everyone to achieve their potential
- Lead by example, setting high standards
- Listen to feedback and take appropriate action to meet the changing needs of the College

VALUE 3

VALUED & RESPECTED

Our culture is one where every individual is valued and shown respect

Learners will

- Abide by and endorse College rules
- Be courteous to others
- Take care of their environment

Staff will

- Treat learners as individuals, with individual needs
- Demonstrate good behaviour, being punctual and courteous
- Be supportive and loyal to colleagues

Leaders will

- Spend time with learners and staff
- Share information when appropriate, in a timely and consistent manner
- Encourage transparency, honesty and integrity, leading by example

→ To ensure you are getting the most from your programme of study, it is essential that you are stretched and challenged within the classroom or placement environment.

→ This stretch will mean our tutors and lecturers supporting you to achieve your maximum potential. This may, at times, take you out of your comfort zone and may require you to do things that are new or that you find challenging.

→ This is a healthy part of your studies and should be grasped with both hands as an opportunity to exceed within your chosen vocational or academic pathway.

SKILLS PROMISE

THE SKILLS PROMISE

Get rewarded with the future that you want. Our Skills Promise means you can be sure that when you complete your course, you'll not only have an industry recognised qualification, you'll be job-ready with the transferable skills you need to make an impact in your chosen industry.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

In addition to your qualification, you will also gain a variety of skills and qualities that will give you a head start in your career and make you stand out when applying for jobs.

BE SUCCESSFUL

BE SUPPORTED

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

SKILLS PROMISE

- TEAM PLAYER
- SELF CONFIDENT
- GOOD COMMUNICATOR
- AMBITIOUS
- JOB READY
- GOOD PROBLEM SOLVER
- SHOW INITIATIVE
- PROFESSIONAL
- CREATIVE THINKER
- IT LITERATE
- ENTREPRENEURIAL
- STRONG LEADER

College B's Skills Promise and Graduate Attribute Display



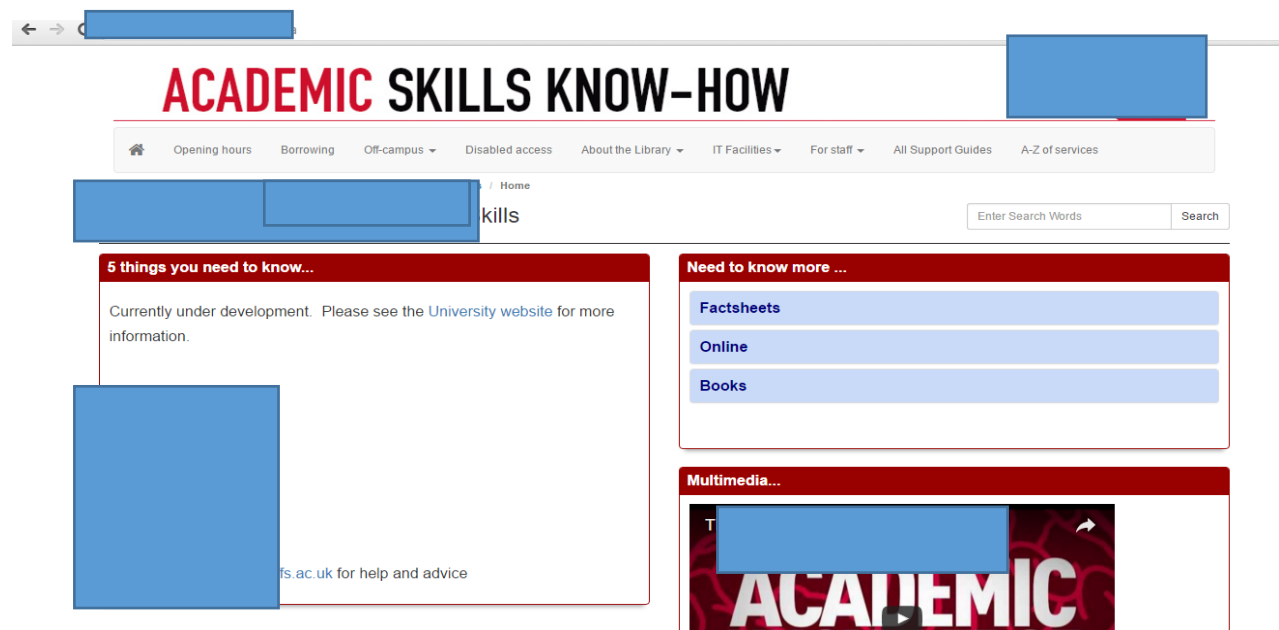
3.4 Defunct GA webpages (HEI)

3.4.1 HEI Student Union



Accessed 1st October 2016: [https://www.\[HEI\]sunion.com/saps/15093/#](https://www.[HEI]sunion.com/saps/15093/#)

3.4.2 HEI Student Academic Support



3.5 Current University Plans (2016)

3.5.1 Comparison of actual [HEI] graduate attributes and 2012-17 plan

Order of presentation of the [HEI] Graduate Securing Successful Futures 2012-2017 plan	Order and presentation of [HEI]GA leaflet (no longer available)	Explanation given in [HEI]GA leaflet (no longer available)	Website GA order of presentation and [HEI] Graduate Attributes	[HEI] Graduate Pledge (available online)
1 Have an understanding of the forefront of knowledge in their chosen field	1 Discipline expertise	Have an understanding of the forefront of knowledge in their chosen field	6 Discipline expert	When you graduate, your knowledge will be at the forefront of your chosen field.
2 Be prepared to be work-ready and employable, and understand the importance of being entrepreneurial	2 Professionalism	Be prepared to be work-ready and employable and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial	1 Professional	When you graduate, you will be work-ready and employable, and understand the importance of being enterprising and entrepreneurial.
3 Have an understanding of global issues and of their place in a globalised economy	3 Global Citizenship	Have an understanding of global issues and of their place in a globalised economy	2 Global Citizen	When you graduate, you will have an understanding of global issues, including sustainability, and their place in a globalised economy.
4 Be an effective communicator and presenter and able to interact appropriately with a range of colleagues confidently	4 Communication and Teamwork	Be an effective communicator and presenter and able to interact appropriately with a range of colleagues	3 Teamwork/ Communication and Teamwork*	When you graduate, you will be an effective communicator and presenter, able to interact appropriately with colleagues. You'll have developed the skills of independence of thought and social interaction
5 Have developed the skills of independence of thought and,		Have developed the skills of independence of thought and (when appropriate) social		

where appropriate, social interaction through teamwork		interaction through teamwork		through teamwork.
6 Have the ability to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis	5 Reflective and critical learner	Have the ability to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis	5 Reflective and critical	When you graduate, you will be able to carry out inquiry-based learning and critical analysis. You'll be a problem solver and a creator of opportunities.
7 Be a problem solver and creator of opportunities		Be a problem solver and creator of opportunities		
8 Be technologically, digitally and information literate	6 Lifelong learning	Be technologically, digitally and information literate	4 Lifelong learner	When you graduate, you will be technologically, digitally and information literate. You'll be able to apply the [HEI] Graduate attributes to your life experiences, for life-long learning and life-long success.
9 Be able to apply [HEI] Graduate attributes to a range of life experiences to facilitate life-long learning and life-long success		Be able to apply [HEI] Graduate attributes to a range of life experiences to facilitate life-long learning and life-long success.		

*Referred to as 'Teamwork' on the GA web page, then 'Communication and Teamwork' in the specific attribute explanation page.

Note that there no mention of the '3Es's in the University plan

3.5.2 Draft Teaching and Learning plan

This plan has 6 strategic themes:

- 1) Developing confident and capable learners
- 2) Providing challenging and supportive teaching and learning
- 3) Raising attainment and achievement
- 4) Developing employability
- 5) Delivering innovative learning and teaching
- 6) Supporting a diverse population of students

GAs are only mentioned in one of them, employability:

1. Developing employability	To deliver a curriculum focussed on employability, enterprise and continuing professional development	Review and extend [HEI] Graduate attributes to reflect data literacy needs of potential employers	Improvements in DLHE scores and in NSS responses on personal development
		Review and extend [HEI] Graduate attributes to reflect numeracy needs of employers	Improvements in DLHE scores and in NSS responses on personal development
		Extend [HEI] Graduate principles to all courses	[HEI]G for postgraduate and other courses by end AY2016-17
		Provide, through curriculum, work experience opportunities for students	For all FTUG courses from AY2016-17

3.5.3 Assessment mapping

Here is an example showing mapping of learning outcomes to the [HEI] 8. GAs are not included anywhere in the module descriptor.

Learning Outcome	
1. DEMONSTRATE SYSTEMATIC UNDERSTANDING THAT EDUCATION TAKES PLACE IN AN EXPANDING VARIETY OF FORMS WHICH DIFFER IN LOCATION, APPORACHES AND STYLES	Knowledge & Understanding
	Learning
2. EVALUATE AND MAKE CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS REGARDING EDUCATION MODELS FROM INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS, RELATED TO THE POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION PROVISION WITHIN THE UK	Analysis
	Application
3. EVALUATE AND ANALYSE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHAGES TO EDUCATION AS A RESULT OF DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES AND HOW THIS IMPACTS UPON THEIR EDUCATIONAL SETTING	Analysis
	Application
	Reflection
4. TO FORM A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS AND HOW THIS IMPACTS UPON THE LEARNING JOURNEY	Analysis
	Knowledge & Understanding

3.5.4 [HEI] 8 plus 2 Course Mapping by level

Curriculum maps (BA Education Course)

You will progress through three academic levels on the programme and the Learning Outcomes for the BA (Hons) Education at each level will enable you to demonstrate:-

Common learning outcome headings	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Knowledge and Understanding	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key concepts, philosophies, political, economic and social of education.	Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the main theories and research appropriate to the holistic development of children, young people and adults, including meeting individual needs.	Demonstrate a systematic understanding of key aspects, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline.
Learning	Develop lines of argument and make sound judgements to challenge and evaluate appropriate education studies literature through research, showing a willingness to accommodate new ideas.	Understand the limits of your knowledge, (theory to practice) in relation to education and care organisation and management, and how this influences analysis and interpretations based on that knowledge.	Demonstrate an understanding of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge.
Enquiry	Present, evaluate and interpret complex data (qualitative and quantitative) appropriate to the diverse range of education studies.	Demonstrate knowledge of the main methods of enquiry within education studies and demonstrate application of the key principles of Information Literacy.	Deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry and initiate and carry out projects.
Analysis	Evaluate and interpret the diversity, complexity and changing nature of education and educational policy.	Use a range of established techniques to critically analyse the management processes and procedures for educational settings.	Describe and comment upon current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship and critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements.

Problem Solving	Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems.	Evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems and propose solutions to problems arising from analysis.	Develop appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions – to a problem and use decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
Communication	Communicate relevant ideas and findings reliably through written and oral means both individually and within groups, using structured and coherent arguments.	Communicate effectively independent points of view, information and arguments precisely and convincingly in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively.	Communicate and analyse information, ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
Application	Undertake further training and develop new skills that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within relevant vocational organisations.	Apply underlying concepts and principles of personal responsibility and decision making that will enable the student to assume significant responsibility both within the educational, vocational sector and outside the context in which they were first studied.	Apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding and devise and sustain arguments, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline.
Reflection	Demonstrate qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment, management or further training including the use of ICT resources for producing written material and research.	Demonstrate new and existing qualities and transferable skills such as organising own learning, time management, collaboration and increasing levels of autonomy in familiar and unfamiliar situations with open mindedness, necessary for employment or further training.	Manage their own learning, exercise initiative, personal responsibility and demonstrate the learning ability, qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment or further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

4.0 Questionnaire data

4.1 Questionnaire context

4.1.1 Overall HEI population

Source Annual review	Figures for year	Full time total # and % of total	Part time total	Main campus FT	Main campus PT	Main campus	Outreach FT	Outreach PT	Outreach campus	Other UK Partners F/T	Other UK Partners P/T	Other UK Partners total and %	Student age % 21+ years
2010-11	2010-11	12,407	11,893	6753	3884	10637	50	144	194	947	3555	4502 (30%)	63
2011-12	2011-12	12,407	11,893	6,902	4,720	11,622	39	191	230	985	3577	4562 (28%)	66
2012-13 p14	2012-2013	12,022	11,255	6,605	4,525	11,130	32	172	204	1047	35320	4567 (29%)	+
2013-14	2011-12*	12,407	11,893	6,902	4,720	11,622	191	39	230	985	3577	4562 (28%)	66%
2014-15	No annual review												
2015-16													

No Annual review found after 2013-2014.

*Published before 2012-13 figures available

+ No % in pie chart, though appears to be around 66%

Website: only 2011-2012 figures available: [http://www.\[HEI\].ac.uk/press/facts/index.jsp](http://www.[HEI].ac.uk/press/facts/index.jsp)

4.1.2 *University Survey*

Staff email (to management only).

A whole university survey of the [HEI] Graduate was taken in 2013 and presented to the [HEI] Graduate Forum 26th November 2013. [Name redacted, Employability Manager]

View my online talks: [www.\[HEI\].ac.uk/careerstalksonline](http://www.[HEI].ac.uk/careerstalksonline)

[This website is no longer available]

My blog: [http://\[Name redacted\].wordpress.com](http://[Name redacted].wordpress.com)

[This website is no longer available]

1. Awareness of [HEI] Graduate Attributes: SVS 2013: by Faculty and School

The following tables are drawn from the Student Viewfinder Survey 2013 which covers level 4 and level 5 students. The overall awareness response for all Level 4 and 5 students is 51%. The responses by level are as follows:

Level 4 – 59.9%

Level 5 - 41.1%

This variation is understandable insofar as level 4 students were exposed to the [HEI] Graduate from an early stage in their engagement with the University (including open days and induction programmes). In addition, over 700 Level 4 students were involved in the [HEI]GEP.

The tables below indicate that students' awareness also varied significantly between Faculties and between Schools within Faculties. It should be noted that in terms of the latter some of the highest awareness scores correlated closely with those Schools that contained one or more 'employability champion' ([HEI]SGEP) awards.

Awareness of the [HEI] Graduate

Faculty	% of respondents aware of the [HEI] Graduate Initiative
FACT	43.6
BEL	66.5
HS	48.9
CES	52.4

FACT			
A &D	F,S&V	J,H&SS	Faculty
39.9	58.2	32.0	43.6

BEL			
BS	ED	LW	Faculty
44.4	73.3	66.7	66.5

HS			
N&M	PS&E	SWAPH	Faculty
37.2	54.4	46.5	48.9

CES			
COM	ENG	SCI	Faculty
46.9	48.9	60.9	52.4

2. Development of [HEI] Graduate Attributes 2013-14

- Joint Students Union and University Campaign to increase students' awareness of [HEI]GA
- Programmes to provide compelling examples of how the [HEI]GAs are being delivered to be used in marketing material
- Review of Personal Tutoring – [HEI]GAs to be included
- Further development of badging and tagging of attributes and skills
- [HEI] graduate surgeries and partnering between programmes
- Discussion with Programmes being revalidated in 2013-14 around development to raise emphasis on [HEI] GAs
- Promote wider use of ePortfolio
- Include on agenda of all Programme Committees
- Monitoring of progress and future planning through the Annual Monitoring Process

4.2 Questionnaire: sample size and respondent background

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

4.2.1 Overall Questionnaire Respondents and response rate

Part-time (PT) and full-time (FT) students.

PT respondent total	PT total course population	PT overall response rate %	FT respondent total	FT total course population	FT overall response rate %	PT and FT respondent total	PT and FT course population	Overall response rate
51	109	48	19	31	61	70	140	50

Course population defined as students enrolled at the time of questionnaire distribution. There is just one full time class, as detailed above.

4.2.2 Part-time HEI Provision (Main Campus and Outreach campus)

HEI main campus	Total class population	% response rate	HEI provision in FE	Total class population	% response rate	Total HEI responses	Total HEI Course population	Overall HEI response rate %
22	40	55	7	30	23	29	70	41%

4.2.3 Respondents' personal and professional background

4.2.3.1 Sample population age: Questionnaire question 1 (Q1)

Age range	PT number	PT percentage of responses %	FT number	FT percentage of responses %	Overall number	Overall percentage of respondents %
20-30	19	37	16	84	35	50
31-40	10	20	3	16	13	19
41-50	20	40	0	0	20	29
51-60	2	4	0	0	2	3
61+	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.2.3.2 Respondents' education sector (Q2)

Education sector	PT responses	PT responses (%)	FT responses	FT responses (%)	Overall responses	Overall %
Early Years	6	12	4	21	10	14
Early Years/Primary	6	12	3	16	9	13
Primary	26	51	11	58	37	53
Secondary	9	18	1	5	10	14
Further Education	2	4	0	0	2	3
Other	2	4	0	0	2	3

4.2.3.3 Respondents' employment status

Employment	PT students/% of status	FT students/% of status	Total # (% of total)
Full-time (paid)	34 (100)	0 (0)	34 (49)
Part-time (paid)	12 (80)	3 (20)	15 (21)
Volunteer	4	6	11 (16)
Placement	1	10	11 (16)

4.2.3.4 Employment status and age

Employment/Age	20-30 (%)	31-40	41-50	51-60
Full-time (paid) and % of age group	14 (40)	5 (38)	14 (70)	1 (50)
Part-time (paid) and % of age group	4 (11)	4 (31)	6 (30)	1 (50)
Volunteer and % of age group	7 (20)	3 (23)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Placement and % of age group	10 (29)	1 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total students of age range total	35	13	20	2

4.3 Student graduateness perceptions and awareness (Questionnaire Q4)

4.3.1 Part-time student views of graduateness coinciding with GA and 3E definitions

Key: Main Campus PT, University Outreach, College A, College B

Graduate attributes

Professional	Global citizen	Teamwork (and communication)	Lifelong learner	Reflective and critical	Discipline Expert
professional, professional, professionalism, profession, professional, professional in approach, professionalism, professional, experience		teamwork, collaborative learner, team work and communication communicate with others, peers and tutor, communication skills, communication and teamwork skills, communicator, communication skills - verbal and written	lifelong learner	reflective, reflective, reflective, reflective, reflective thinker, self-reflection, critical thinker, reflective learner, reflective, reflective and critical problem solver, reflective practitioner, reflective, reflective practitioner	knowledge of your subject/role within education, academic knowledge, keeping up to date with latest standards/technology, have a deeper understanding of knowledge in my field/education, well versed in literature

3Es

Employability	Enterprise	Entrepreneurship
be aware of your skills and attributes to be employable once the course is over.		

4.3.2 Full-time student views of gradueness coinciding with GA definitions

Graduate Attributes

Professional	Global citizen	Teamwork (and communication)	Lifelong learner	Reflective and critical	Discipline Expert
professional professionalism professional		teamwork co-operative, teamwork, teamwork team worker teamwork teamwork communication communication skills communication		being reflective	subject knowledge, subject knowledge, knowledge of subject knowledge already to develop upon, knowledge and understanding in the subject

3Es

Employability	Enterprise	Entrepreneurship
employability, employability skills, employable		

4.3.3 Part-time student views of gradueness coinciding with GA descriptions

Professional

Being reliable, willing and honest	Paying attention to detail	Having integrity	Being self-motivated and competent	Showing respect and being polite	Maintaining a positive attitude	Having good leadership skills	Listening to others
			Motivation, motivation, self-motivation, be motivated, motivation, self-motivator, motivational, being motivated, motivation, strong intrinsic motivation to succeed and learn self-motivate				

Global citizen

Understanding global issues from different perspectives	Recognising the opportunities that the wider world offers	Learning from and respecting different cultures	Accepting different ways of working	Valuing diversity and the importance of sustainability
			adaptable	

(Communication) and Teamwork

Having enthusiasm	Being reliable and dependable	Communicating clearly and effectively	Being a good listener	Showing initiative	Respecting the views of others	Being respectful and supportive	Staying calm in a crisis
			good listener		broad minded, open minded. open minded respecting other points of view		

Life-long learner

Appreciating that knowledge doesn't stand still	Understanding the importance of keeping up-to-date with the latest approaches and technology	Identifying learning opportunities – and taking advantage of them	Having an inquiring mind and a thirst for knowledge	Being open to new ideas and opportunities	Taking responsibility for your own learning
	IT skills		willingness to learn	curious mind Openness to new approaches	CPD

Reflective and critical

Challenging convention	Thinking creatively	Evaluating information	Creating opportunities	Reaching well-considered decisions	Being enterprising and entrepreneurial
	creativity in thinking differently 'outside the box'				

Discipline expert

Keeping up-to-date with the latest standards and requirements	Having an understanding of the latest thinking in your chosen field	Being knowledgeable in your subject area	Being competent in applying your knowledge and skills	Knowing how to solve specific business problems	Knowing how to apply your skills to solve non-familiar business issues
				Confident to solve problems	

4.3.4 Full-time student views of gradueness coinciding with GA descriptions**Professional**

Being reliable, willing and honest	Paying attention to detail	Having integrity	Being self-motivated and competent	Showing respect and being polite	Maintaining a positive attitude	Having good leadership skills	Listening to others
			motivation, motivation, motivation				

Global citizen

Understanding global issues from different perspectives	Recognising the opportunities that the wider world offers	Learning from and respecting different cultures	Accepting different ways of working	Valuing diversity and the importance of sustainability

(Communication) and Teamwork

Having enthusiasm	Being reliable and dependable	Communicating clearly and effectively	Being a good listener	Showing initiative	Respecting the views of others	Being respectful and supportive	Staying calm in a crisis
			listening skills				

Life-long learner

Appreciating that knowledge doesn't stand still	Understanding the importance of keeping up-to-date with the latest approaches and technology	Identifying learning opportunities – and taking advantage of them	Having an inquiring mind and a thirst for knowledge	Being open to new ideas and opportunities	Taking responsibility for your own learning
					CPD

Reflective and critical

Challenging convention	Thinking creatively	Evaluating information	Creating opportunities	Reaching well-considered decisions	Being enterprising and entrepreneurial
	creativity				

Discipline expert

Keeping up-to-date with the latest standards and requirements	Having an understanding of the latest thinking in your chosen field	Being knowledgeable in your subject area	Being competent in applying your knowledge and skills	Knowing how to solve specific business problems	Knowing how to apply your skills to solve non-familiar business issues

4.3.5 Part time student responses not related to GAs or 3Es

academic writing

analytical

conscientious

confidence and self-belief of abilities, confidence to ask for help

commitment, commitment, commitment, commitment, commitment to course, being

committed

commitment

consideration

dedication, dedication, dedication to your subject, dedication, dedication, dedication,

dedicated

dedication, dedicated

determination, determination, determination, determination

desire to complete

devotion

disciplined

focused

good attitude

hardworking, hard work, hard-working, hard worker, hard working, hard working

hunger to learn

interested in topic studied, interest in the subject

interpret academic writing

literacy writing skills, basic literacy, good literacy levels and, writing ability, reading, literacy

skills command of the English language

maths skills

organisational skill, organisation, organisation, organisation, organisation, organisational,

organised, organisation, organisation, organised, organised with

work/school/home/education, organisational

passion, passionate, passion for learning

patience

positivity, positive

perseverance, perseverance, perseverance

prioritising
research techniques
time management, time management, time management, time management, time management, time management, time management, manage time, time management, time keeping, effective time management - strict on self, time management, time management, time management, time keeping time management, time management skills, time management, time management skills, manage time effectively, time management, effective time management, time management, time-management time management, time management, time management skills.
reading wider
research and understand your course
resilience, resilience, resilience, resilience, resilience
responsibility, responsible, responsibility for learning
relevant qualifications
rigour
well-rounded individual
work independently

4.3.6 Full-time responses not related to GAs or 3Es

academic skills

attendance of lectures

attitude, attitude, positive attitude to learning

commitment

confidence

dedication, dedication, dedication, dedication, dedication to the course

determination, determination

flexible,

hardworking

intellect,

organisation, organised, organisation, organisation, organisation in order to get assignments done

patience, patience

passion, passion on topic being studied, passion

persistence

reliable

time management, time management

transferable skills

willingness to learn

4.4 School of Education Student awareness of GAs (Questionnaire Q5)

4.4.1 GAs Identified by students

GA	Professional & rank (1= most 6 = least recognised)	Global citizen	(Communication) and Teamwork	Lifelong learner	Reflective and Critical (*)	Discipline expert
Identified by # part time students (out of 51)	29 = 2 nd	31 = 1 st	18 (26) = 5 th (4 th)	29 = 2 nd	20 (27) = 5 th (4)	17 = 6 th
Identified by % of part time respondents	57	61	35 (51)	57	39 (53)	33
Identified by # full time students (out of 19)	4 = 5 th	5 = 3 rd	7 = 1 st	7 = 1 st	5 (7) = 3 rd (1 st)	1 = 6 th
Identified by % of full time students	21	26	37	37	26 (37)	5
Total identified by all respondents and rank	33 = 3 rd	36 = 1 st	25 (33) = 5 th (4 th)	36 = 1 st	25 (34) = 5 th (3 rd)	23 = 6 th
% recognition	47	51	36 (47)	51	36 (49)	33

Less than half recognised – even with College B

*7 responses only identified ‘reflective’ as a GA rather than ‘reflective and critical’

6 respondents could not identify any of the GAs. Two respondents explained:

“I can't remember any of them.”

“I do not know I did my Foundation Degree at [another] University”

Global citizen most recognised GA, though they had just completed a module on comparative education which was strongly linked to this.

As with gradueness perceptions, little identification of critical thinking.

Discipline expert also not identified – though question whether this should be a GA as conceptually these are supposed to be ‘more than’ subject knowledge.

4.4.2 Erroneous GAs

20/70 respondents (29%) had ideas which are not any of the GAs, though all of these responses relate to the explanation of the GAs given by the university.

- 5 identified technology: ICT (X2) and technologically advanced/competent (X2).
- 1 stated being creative

4.4.3 3Es stated as GAs

- 5 skills for employment/employability
- 1 entrepreneurial

Note: the total is more than 20 as some respondents identified more than one GA incorrectly.

4.4.4 Written Self-evaluation of GA development (Questionnaire Q6)

4.4.4.1 Professional

Professional	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more knowledge helps me to be more professional and reflective • managing work, studying and family commitments has furthered employability • Probably altered from 4. (<i>Not enterprising and entrepreneurial otherwise would be higher</i>) • the FDED has mostly contributed to this (3 year course) • On equal par (education wise) colleagues i.e. a graduate • It has provided me with a deeper understanding of why academic knowledge is important to employers. • Gained knowledge of how to provide effect support. • Knowledge has increased confidence able to talk to peers and colleagues. • I think my age will impact upon future employment and the management I work for will determine how creative I can be. • The qualification has good reputation and helps when looking for jobs. Module 6.3 p2 explored my entrepreneurial skills. • The course provides you with information on education not paperwork, assessments, curriculum, staff management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I still have to develop confidence and get a full time job before I can feel that I have fully achieved this • (<i>Not enterprising and entrepreneurial otherwise would be higher</i>) • Teaching is taught through doing not reading
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This course has increased my self-confidence. I am looking towards the future. School are supporting me in the straight into teaching programme. • Enabling me to get two positions within two different schools • Keeping organised with modules and reading. • Reflection on personal and professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More relevant to younger students - I've been working for years.

Professional	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
College A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge of legislation and curriculum issues Analysing what has been written 	
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. I am already employed and do this. Made me work ready/employable [Module] 6.1 Respecting differing views I can be employed as an unqualified teacher now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have to do this in my job
HEI Full time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The course has helped me become a work-ready individual in this field Placements It has made me more confident Placement allows us to develop professional attributes Gaining knowledge on an area I am considering as a career Work experience modules Attended more school settings My course has given me more in depth knowledge building on foundations I already had It has given me confidence in my ability as a professional educator My course has improved this as I have been on numerous placements which have made me professional Gave me the knowledge - understanding in depth of role By offering professional placement modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have previously developed these skills Didn't have placement in last uni so not sure how to manoeuvre the workplace

Global citizen	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As course only 1 year have not covered global issues in depth • To fully achieve this I need to keep up to date with changes in society/education • Course has ensured I am more in touch with global and national current affairs • Doing education differently module • Partially achieved due to the Doing Education differently course [module]. • Still require support - tutor provides much information. • Module dedicated to international education systems. • Issues are always changing • Certain modules have required an awareness of how different countries see education. • Global issues are highlighted in lectures. • Doing education differently has shown importance of globalisation. • Same understanding - more than before the course but the world is a big place! • An improvement on knowledge of issues that affect education at international and national level. • Touched upon this in course. 	
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly enjoyed this topic. Allows you to see education in this country through a different lens. • I have explained the education system of Scotland but feel like I could know more about other countries. • Doing Education Differently looked at the education system from another country. • Understanding through literature • I have gained a much better understanding and become more interested in global issues. 	

Global citizen	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
College A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not much emphasis on global issues, mainly European
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised new issues • Module- changes in education • Gave understanding in different education systems • Module 6.3 contributed to improving knowledge in this area. • 6.3 [Doing Education Differently] • wider reading carried out on this course • understanding different cultural views • Looked at other countries and how what they do impacts on us. • Module 6.3 contributed to improving knowledge in this area. 	
HEI F/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm bad at remembering things like this however this course has given me baseline understanding v. through modules • Doing ed differently • Some modules allow us to explore other countries • Frequent discussions about current issues • By emphasising the need to keep up to date with current affairs • I feel that I am more interested in what is happening in global education identifying similarities and differences • Broader knowledge as used research from course to make me aware of global issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not understand global issues • I don't think my course has contributed to this • Not really sure on any global issues • I don't understand • Haven't done anything on this in last uni • I don't understand this one

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced my teamwork as more respected due to knowledge • Group discussions and peer activities have helped to become more confident and a better team player • Working with unfamiliar students during course and sharing research increased this year • Given more confidence in my ability to communicate in a team of unfamiliar people. • Very independent learner course has ensured peer and team-work too • Some opportunities in class has contributed. • Peers and colleagues valid and professional discussion • Confidence in my opinion • The modules have required constant discussion with peers and colleagues for information and advice. • I have taken part in group talks and delivered presentations. • Self-study - has given ability to critically research to high level. Presentation skills good. • I feel independent with my ideas but some managers make it hard to utilise! • I gained confidence and skills which I share with peers. Peers comment on my skills. • Confident due to peer assessment and team work tasks 	
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already done this through work. Worked collaboratively within our phase team and at uni • I have had the confidence in my own work and have guided others through it • Gained confidence • Working in groups, developing knowledge and opinions • I'm not a great team worker and never have been - personality thing! What I have learnt is mainly through work. 	

	Generally positive	Generally neutral or negative
College A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed presentation skills • To develop working relationships throughout the school • Course 	
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations in front of group • Manage a team effectively • Discussions, debates, action skills sets • This is something that I do on a daily basis • Being supportive of other colleagues • We do lots of work in communities of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It hasn't helped at all
HEI F/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at placement has helped me develop this skill. • Classwork placement • Also made me more confident • Throughout the degree, we were able to express our views in a variety of ways • I feel more confident now due to attending placements • Attending more educational settings for placements • Having previously worked for many years I was already an effective communicator but my course had made me delve further into my communication • Working with classmates - performing presentations • Teamworking in placement and in university has helped me to develop this skill. • Had to do group projects/tasks in both uni's • Group study/tasks. Help/support from peers • Made me more confident to take part in team work activities • By giving us presentations for assignments 	

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant to my present role, but not personally interested in technology • I have learnt new skills, how to use blackboard, e-books etc. • Being reflective, critical analysing with an open, broad mind will be carried on into career • I would like to believe that this is true but if not regularly used could lose these skills • Course has relit a love of learning to be continued • Not fully technologically • Range of literature and accessed, presented assignments and Tunitin, PWT etc. • Learnt how to use my laptop and software effectively • More aware of research materials available online • Used ICT skills to compare tasks and assignments • Looking at the need for IT skills for learners shows important links to globalisation. • I know ICT is my weakness and I'm not as up to speed as I should be • A range of ICT resources have been used: word, ppt, pallet. Research materials abound via internet and twitter • Technology has been used throughout. 	
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly learning in life. This course demonstrates that lifelong learning is paramount to our careers in the teaching profession. • Through other courses I have picked up a high standard within ICT and this course has further helped. • I have enjoyed many aspects of the learning process. • unsure (off the top of my head) of what they are • I've been learning and studying all my life this course is a natural progression on a long path! 	

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
College A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To combine to develop these skills • Course has relit a love of learning to be continued 	
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing Education Differently • the use of technology on this course has improved, as everything is done online. • having the desire to continue knowledge • Always ongoing - keep reading always. • By attending the lectures we are continuing to learn all of the time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None as due to a disability I can use technology proficiently because I have to • can already apply the attributes to everyday reflections
HEI F/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resources provided have given me more opportunities to learn. • Has helped me from the assignments I've had although already had knowledge. • Assignments, presentation, posters • My literature has improved • I have had plenty of literature throughout the course • Suggested reading for each module • My course has given me a lot to learn in this area and I feel I have improved immensely. • By teaching me how to embrace information and to research topics of interest • Differences in uni tech tools make it difficult to have a standardised knowledge • Gave me the motivation to carry on learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only some aspects of technology are used, so cannot be literate • I feel that this could still be developed on my behalf • I'm unsure that the [HEI]GA will be 'lifelong'!

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved reflection skills by looking at my assignments and reflecting • Laterally these skills have been applied to my future career prospect choices. • Learnt reflective models. Completed reflective models • All modules from the course • All modules have allowed for this. • All assignments a feedback given • Still need to work on more in-depth critical analysis • Learned how learners learn, assimilate and progress. • More confident to put ideas forward to my employers, but still feel critical analysis needs further work. • This inquiry - based and critical analysis has been used throughout the course using lit. • I am much better at reflection - able to critically analyse and push my own agenda. • Much more so now than before commencing unit • Developed critical analytical skills and this is reflected in my grades. Peers look for advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel I need to yet still develop my critical reflective writing • I hope I would be able to do this but tend to lack confidence and self-belief • Look at this however still not fully confident.
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing deeper reflection: Understanding the motivation behind it and why it is beneficial in practice. • Throughout this course I have written a reflective learning journal helping me to stay reflective. • Definitely more as a reflective practitioner. • Through research and assignments 	

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
College A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assignments have required critical analysis and reflection on practice • to continue to develop reflective skills • course 	
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do this regularly however this course opened me to new methods • PDP • I am able to reflect in and on my practice • 6.1 • Definitely will be doing this • Reflect upon modules and current practice • Completed lots of modules on this. • Module 6.1 	
HEI F/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have developed these skills through assignments • Through assignment support. • Assignment, reflections • The course has helped with this • Yes, due to research done in modules, reflecting on own practice and dissertation • Had practice on reflections • Reflective modules/assignments • My course has made me understand the importance of reflection and do it more often now • Encouraged to constantly reflect on my experiences and how to improve • Some modules and assessments have got us to be more reflective and critical • I think critically and it's exhausting • Course focussed a lot on reflection and allowed me to be confident • By offering reflective modules 	

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
HEI P/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will help me in my role • Most definitely as I have gained a wealth of knowledge in the last 3 years • Taking a degree and my previous holistic background will give great opportunities when I start my next degree. • I would like to think so but am aware that this is an ongoing process • The course has really helped with this however due to change in role I feel less knowledgeable • Extremely knowledgeable in the setting. • Teaching training • Further research is already improving my employability status. • As I have researched in great detail into my field and reflected. • Yes this is already apparent in current setting. Very up to date. • I will be well informed but keeping up to date easily slips • Greater knowledge about issues affecting education and my practice. • Yes, been able to apply my interest throughout this course. 	
HEI P/T Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing, never fully aware of everything. Need to be aware of impacts on policy and the bigger picture. • My knowledge in the arts and in education will fuel me into an Art teaching career • Continue to learn as I progress in my career. • Development of knowledge, need more understanding of a teacher's role. (will gain in PGCE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not after BA! I'd have to go further to call myself an 'expert' e.g. an M.A.

	Generally positive responses	Generally neutral or negative
College A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of assignments has required Knowledge of current legislation and literature • To combine to develop knowledge 	
College B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel this course has kept me well informed. • Always trying to be current in my field • Again wider reading and research I had to do on this course. • Understanding student barriers within subject area and improving practice. • I know lots more but the field is so great you can Always find out more • Getting all of the modules in on time 	
HEI F/T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the lovely teachers, modules and experience. • Placements • The course has improved my knowledge overall. • Yes I have studied this to gain more expertise in subject area. Could be more specific though to careers throughout. • Have a strong knowledge on what I would like to pursue now I am closer to finishing the course • Knowledgeable experienced lecturers • I would hope so • My degree is perfectly suited to my chosen career • I am already able to use my knowledge on placement and will continue to do so in the workplace • Only just starting to develop an idea of what my chosen field is • By offering extensive knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This course has helped me become more disciplined. [misunderstood discipline for behaviour rather than subject expertise]

4.5 Numerical Self-evaluation of GA development (Questionnaire Q6)

In question 6, respondents were also asked to self-evaluate their GA development, with 1 representing full achievement and 4 non-achievement.

Total responses: 70 of which 5 were incomplete. Only complete responses were included (65)

Part time learners: 51 respondents, 3 incomplete, 48 responses considered.

Therefore, a score of 48 for any attribute would represent students perceiving complete achievement of an attribute and 192 no achievement of an attribute.

4.5.1 Part time learners

GA	Overall responses	Rank in order of perceived achievement	Average response (1-4)
Professional	81	4	1.68
Global citizen	113	6	2.36
Teamwork	72	1	1.5
Lifelong learning	80	3	1.67
Reflective and critical	86	5	1.79
Discipline Expert	76	2	1.58
Overall GA perception (1-4)	1.76	Total divided by 48 respondents X 6 GA	

Overall responses indicate positive perception (=less than 2) regarding all GA development apart from global citizen = over 2 average. Overall perception of GA development positive (= less than 2).

4.5.2 Part time HEI

GA	HEI (main campus)(22 complete respondents)	Rank in order of perceived achievement	HEI (outreach) 6 complete respondents	Rank in order of perceived achievement	Overall HEI	Rank in order of perceived achievement
Professional	38	4	10	1	48	3
Global citizen	53	6	16	6	69	6
Teamwork	28	1	13	4	41	1
Lifelong learning	37	3	13	4	50	4
Reflective and critical	41	5	11	3	52	5
Discipline Expert	32	2	10	1	42	2
Overall perception (1-4)	1.73	n/a	2.03	n/a	1.80	n/a

4.5.3 Part time FE

GA	FE A (8 complete responses)	Rank in order of perceived achievement	FE B (10 complete responses)	Rank in order of perceived achievement	Overall FE	Rank in order of perceived achievement
Professional	18	4	14	2	32	3
Global citizen	22	6	20	6	42	6
Teamwork	17	2	14	2	31	2
Lifelong learning	15	1	13	1	28	1
Reflective and critical	17	2	15	4	32	3
Discipline Expert	18	4	17	5	35	5
Overall perception (1-4)	2.23	n/a	1.55	n/a	1.85	n/a

4.5.4 Full time learners

19 respondents, 1 incomplete, 18 responses considered.

GA	Overall responses (18 complete responses)	Rank in order of perceived achievement	Average response (1-4)
Professional	37	2	2.06
Global citizen	51	6	2.83
Teamwork	30	1	1.67
Lifelong learning	40	5	2.22
Reflective and critical	37	4	2.06
Discipline Expert	35	3	1.94
Overall GA perception (1-4)	2.13	n/a	n/a

4.5.5 Combined HE and FE

GA	Overall responses (65 complete responses)	Rank in order of perceived achievement	Average response (1-4)
Professional	118	3	1.82
Global citizen	165	6	2.52
Teamwork	102	1	1.57
Lifelong learning	120	4	1.85
Reflective and critical	123	5	1.89
Discipline Expert	111	2	1.70
Overall GA perception (1-4)	739/390	=	1.89

4.6 GAs and Student perceptions of graduateness

Student views about extent to which [HEI] GAs represent personal view of what it means to be a graduate (Questionnaire Q7)

Location	Fully	Mostly	Partially	Do not	No response
Main Campus	2	14	6	0	0
Outreach	0	1	5	0	1
<i>Total university (P/T)</i>	2	15	11	0	1
College A	2	6	2	0	0
College B	0	9	3	0	0
<i>Total college (P/T)</i>	2	15	5	0	0
<i>Main campus F/T</i>	1	11	7	0	0
Overall total (70)	5	41	23	0	1

4.7 Retain GAs (Questionnaire Question 8)

	Professional	Global citizen	Teamwork	Lifelong learner	Reflective and critical	Discipline expert
All part time (47 responses)	47	39	47	46	47	43
Full time (18 responses)	18	13	18	17	18	16
Total	65	52	65	63	65	59

4.8 Remove/Add GA comments (Questionnaire Question 9)

Part time

	General comments	Remove GA	Add GA
Part-time	Don't really understand this option. You should have perseverance/dedication and time management.	Global - the English programmes of study apply to myself	
	More focus maybe [on Global citizen] I don't feel I have enough knowledge from attending uni to feel a global citizen, based on one module.	Teamwork' and professional are both very 'work' based. I don't feel they can be achieved in the classroom.	
	These two are obvious, to be reflective and critical is a basic skill to complete any single assignment and have a decent grade. At the end of a course there should be a degree regarding a discipline.	I think this needs re-wording to be more understandable. I don't think I'm at 'the forefront of knowledge' because I am still learning. Knowledge, I think, cannot be gained only from this course. I will need more experience also, I don't think this attribute is actually needed at all. Professional and global could cover it.	
	All the current attributes serve purpose.	The top 4 are the main attributes that most teachers/graduates will [have], the other two you study/research and become them.	
	It is difficult to clarify how your newly acquired knowledge is at the forefront of your chosen field. Life-long learning should already be embedded for anyone starting out on a work-related course.	Discipline 'expert' at BA level is perhaps a bit conceited and depends in my view on the individual. Some people will be more expert than others. I'd like to think all graduates will have acquired the above, but some perhaps develop through life experience and employment.	
		Professional - enterprising and entrepreneurial - seems way too ambitious for every individual - I am not that driven.	
		Global citizen - do not consider we should all fit into same categories	
		As the BA is only for one year it is difficult to cover global issues in depth.	

Full time

	General comments	Remove GA	Add GA
Full-time	If want to keep, need to be more involved in pupils learning	I don't really see how Global Citizen is relevant	Employability, experiences attitude
	If you're a discipline expert there's nothing more to really learn. So will you still be a lifelong learner?	I don't feel like I know anything about Global Citizen	Add a need to attend lectures. A lot of people do not show up and still never get penalised.
	I think all are important but some are more relevant than others depending on age or previous knowledge		for the lifelong learner attribute there should be more focus on learning for personal development independent of meeting standards
	The global citizen attribute isn't explained very well. Therefore, I am unsure if it applies to me or not.		

4.9 Influence of Graduate Attributes on decision to join the university (Question 10)

	Part-time	Full-time	Main campus	Off campus	Overall
I was aware of the [HEI] GAs and they were a leading influence in my choice of course	0	0	0	0	0
I was aware of the [HEI] GAs and they partially influenced my choice of course	3	0	2	1	3
I was aware of the [HEI] GAs but they did not influence my decision to join this course	11	5	11	5	16
I was not aware of the [HEI] GAs	28	13	22	19	41
I was not aware of the [HEI] GAs and had not heard about them until now	9	1	6	4	10

5.0 Interview Transcriptions

5.1 University manager and lecturer interviews

5.1.1 *HEI Senior Manager*

Date: 04/07/2016

Duration: 44:06

The Senior Manager interviewed has broad ranging responsibilities for teaching, learning and quality within the organisation. The senior manager was working at the HEI prior to the inception of the graduate attributes.

1 *I First of all, could you just tell me something about your role within the university?*

2 A: Ok. [Senior Manager], the title tells you what it is, responsible for [withheld to preserve

3 anonymity] side of that so that's it really and part of the research agenda as well.

4 *I: So – very broad remit there.*

5 A: Broad yes. So, can you tell me something about the creations of, the creation of the

6 graduate attributes

7 *I: Why were they created?*

8 A: I think it was stimulated by the new Vice-Chancellor at the time [withheld], I had a sort of

9 informal meeting, and he said 'Do we have a [HEI] Graduate Attributes?' and I said, 'Sort

10 of' cos we've the Eight plus Two [HEI Eight] learning outcomes which in a way align with

11 that, but they have a slightly different purpose in that they are outcomes and they are

12 part of the formal quality regime. So I looked at whether we could produce something

13 around what we would expect our graduates to come out with in terms of more generic

14 attributes, rather than very specific course related outcomes and that was quite

15 interesting. Looking at other institutions and not only in the UK but also internationally

16 so, you know, quite a few UK institutions were saying that at the end of your course of

17 study, you know we would like you to get these things and it was very loose and it didn't

18 say very much, and it was a statement of intent but wouldn't say how you would get

19 them so I don't know if [local university] changed it but they had something, the [local

20 university] Graduate Attributes - we expect our students to come out with these but

21 didn't actually say how they got it. And a number of institutions seemed to do that so I

22 thought, what's happening in Australia who are clearly the leaders in that field and the

23 work by people you mentioned like Barrie and others provided some food for thought, in

24 particular, what should be covered and also how you should deliver them and what was

25 very striking about the Australian model was well the fact that all Australian universities

26 have to do it, I think as part of their funding agreement don't they, is the very clear

27 statement that if you don't assess them then students don't take them seriously. So you

28 could say, you know, we want to be international or a critical thinker. Fine, but really to

29 get a grip on it and to get students to see them as valued, then they have to be

30 assessed. So that's the starting point really. I don't know if that's...

31 *I: Yes, no that's, I think there's a couple of issues there that, one is that we already have*

32 *the [HEI] Eight and then the Graduate Attributes...*

33 A: ...came on top of that...

34 *I: Was there a thought of combining the two somehow or was it always seen that these*

35 *serve different and specific purposes?*

36 A: I thought of, and talked to the VC about it and really you could interpret the eight as a

37 form of attribute, graduate attribute, em, he wasn't entirely convinced by that but in the

38 final outcome in terms of the top six, high level attributes, I made sure that they did map

39 against the eight. Not the plus two because those are optional but certainly the eight, so

40 they weren't totally different but they were at a sort of meta-level if you see what I mean

41 so that was, they do relate to them and some of them don't – global citizenship isn't

42 among the eight, disciplinary expertise, which is the first one on the list isn't it, but is

43 implicit clearly, referring to discipline outcomes and the idea that it's about long term,

44 sort of attributes – lifelong learning. That's explicit in six high level attributes.

45 *I: So would those six be considered more holistic than the [HEI]Eight?*

46 A: Yes, yes they are. I've got a diagram somewhere which shows where they are in terms

47 of the main attributes and there was this discussion about how many should there be,

48 you know I think some institutions just have three, usually about Global Citizenship is

49 there, and something about discipline, sometimes broken down slightly more. So that's

50 where it came from going back to 2012 Academic Board. I'll check that out.

51 I: *That would be great thank you. And you have the 3Es's as well – where do they sit in*
52 *relation to the six, because I know when I talk to some teachers they see them as a sort*
53 *of umbrella term - these 3Es's and then the six underneath – you say the six are above*
54 *them or?*

55 A: Yes, it's interesting isn't it? The old I mean the previous VC was keen to have, you know
56 each VC comes in with something, his mantra was the 3Es's which you know, good
57 about employability – really important for our students, but it does, you can talk like
58 many of the things like critical thinking, all that, are part of being employable, employed,
59 employable. I think there was confusion – employment, entrepreneurship, enterprising.
60 The overlap in trying to find a definition for each of these is quite difficult and I think
61 some people felt that the 3Es's were the graduate attributes. So there is an overlap but I
62 would say that the [HEI] attributes are more than just employability – they are intellectual
63 skills as well rather than pragmatic skills that you need to get a job.

64 I: *So would you say it's employability and social life skills?*

65 A: Yes, though I think that that's a bit of a tension that we find in lots of these definitions
66 because ultimately we want our graduates to get jobs and then you start to get to that
67 debate well these are sort of skills that employers are looking for you know, but
68 disciplinary skills, very clearly that's an important attribute in its own right. It isn't
69 necessarily an employability skill but the way you achieve those through critical thinking,
70 through team working is you know so it's an interesting overlap.

71 I: *Thinking back on the definitions of graduate attributes some of the earlier ones*
72 *emphasised those social and lifeskills...*

73 A: Yes...

74 I: *...whereas later ones were on employability, so would you say what the approach you*
75 *took was trying to bridge those?*

76 A: Yes, I think it was really. They're not new and I've done a number of presen[tations], I'll
77 let you have the PowerPoint slides on this and I usually start with a picture of John
78 Henry Newman, who was, he's become quite popular again cos he wrote a book called
79 *the idea of the university* [*The Idea of a University*], that was late nineteenth century
80 saying what is university education for. And there's a passage in there which you could
81 actually say describes graduate attributes, so I'm saying it's not new. The question of
82 what university education is for is a perennial one and I see the articulation explicitly in
83 graduate attributes which has its manifestation of trying to answer that question, you
84 know. So there is an interesting hysterical, historical, hysterical! Historical precedent
85 around that which is worth looking at you know. So yes I think there is a difference
86 between that in terms of the more generic skills that you need to be successful and
87 whatever you do, not necessarily focused on employability although clearly, [£] 9,000
88 fees maybe things have swung around a bit more towards that.

89 I: *Thank you yes. I suppose that concept of university being more than transference of*
90 *knowledge it's I suppose one of the arguments at the time of graduate attributes being*
91 *brought in was that was to push that argument and it's interesting you say that has been,*
92 *that university academics have been aware of this...*

93 A: ...Yes true..

94 I: *...perhaps longer than government ministers have.*

95 A: I think so yes. And I think since 2012 there are more universities now. I think there are
96 very few you wouldn't find something about the Portsmouth graduate, or the Plymouth
97 graduate.

98 I: *One of the other purposes of the graduate attributes has been to promote the*
99 *uniqueness of the university. I think you mentioned earlier Keele University they try and*
100 *have some sort of green theme...*

101 A: ...they do.

102 I: *...although evidence suggests that I think we come above them in the green league*
 103 *tables...*

104 A: *...we do*

105 I: *...but they've certainly pushed that in their graduate attributes. To what extent, I*
 106 *suppose there's two questions, to what extent was the intention to create a unique set of*
 107 *graduate attributes that articulated uniqueness of the experience here?*

108 A: Interesting point. I don't think we started with that intention. It's just to be explicit about
 109 the sort of education we provide and what we expect students to come out with. I
 110 suppose the 3Es tried to encapsulate that, but then again I would doubt that any
 111 university would say that they have very clear USPs [Unique Selling Points]. There's
 112 very few, it was a mix of things I suspect, we mix things differently, but the ingredients
 113 are essentially the same – it's the combination. We've tried to, at one time we tried to
 114 make sure that they were embedded in the curriculum, not an add on. It is, was, is quite
 115 different then. We did that much to everybody's horror, it was linked to credits, so every
 116 programme/course went through a very quick revalidation around the 30 credit structure
 117 but at the same time – I'm sure you're aware of this – the graduate attributes we mapped
 118 into that curriculum and indicated where they were assessed and how they were
 119 assessed.

120 I: *And so that was back to your point about what is not assessed is not valued.*

121 A: Exactly so the message that Barrie and, we took very seriously as a university if we don't
 122 take on board evidence based practice and what they were saying is assessment is key.
 123 Then we took the opportunity at that point to use that evidence from Australia to say ok
 124 we'll try and embed them in the assessment process as part of this overall process
 125 which I think theoretically is right, technically I'm not sure if it's working – maybe you'd be
 126 in a better position...

127 I: *I was going to say, when we do assessments we have to map them to the [HEI] Eight*
 128 *but assessments aren't mapped to the graduate attributes, certainly not in module*
 129 *descriptors, it is the [HEI] Eight so I supposed they are indirectly linked because if you're*
 130 *saying the [HEI] Eight are linked to the graduate attributes then it would be through that*
 131 *process.*

132 A: Yes, it would be. I think a weakness of it is I'm not sure the students are aware. Some
 133 are I think. I mean you've talked to students.

134 I: *Quite a few, I mean it depends on the programme, I was doing my piloting on another*
 135 *programme and 50% said they hadn't heard of the graduate attributes. Most of the*
 136 *students had heard of them, it was only the occasional who had come in from other*
 137 *universities for the final year were a little bit hazy. They were aware of the six, but the*
 138 *3Es's not so much and certainly the [HEI] Eight, they hadn't really picked up on so...*

139 A: I think that's more of a staff, you know when you're writing your module descriptors,
 140 course documentation, that's what is an internal thing isn't it? I'm just wondering
 141 [Research academic] did a research project on this theme, part of the VC's research
 142 grant, she did...

143 I: *...I know there was a questionnaire sent out or I've seen a survey done in was it 2013*
 144 *which was the whole university, the extent to which they'd heard...*

145 A: Oh yes, yeah.

146 I: *I think some faculties scored around 80% and others around 50 so there was kind of...*

147 A: Yes, it was one of the VC's research grants and I'm sure she did three, three surveys,
 148 one on staff, one students and one on employers. I think the employer one was not very
 149 well, because you know employers haven't heard so it was very short questions. Let me
 150 see. If I get it now you can have it [finding files on computer 16:30-17:10]. It was on the
 151 [HEI] Graduate employability programme It was awards who, I think [she] did cover
 152 graduate attributes in those reports. As a specific aspect it was about 3Es mainly. From

153 that point of view, it was a bit narrow I'd have thought. Ok I'll forward. You carry on
 154 anyway.

155 *I: So just going back to the formation then, so you say it was the VC was very much*
 156 *driving this and then was there a consultation process with staff and students?*

157 A: Yes, there were more with staff I think and we did have, I'm just thinking back now, I
 158 think it was done more through the committee structure rather than open consultation.
 159 We asked the ADLTs [Assistant Dean Learning and Teaching] to, in their faculties to
 160 develop and it was done quite quickly so.

161 *I: Did they feed into the process?*

162 A: Yes.

163 *I: Were changes made from the original?*

164 A: Yes. And clearly the intention was to try and get it out very quickly – I think it was for
 165 open days – something fairly distinctive to say about the university so I think the launch
 166 of it could have been better in that sense but again I'll try and have a look for some of my
 167 documents and see exactly what was done.

168 *I: Oh that would be great thank you. So I think we've said. Yes, so did, was it through the*
 169 *faculty structure, were partners involved in this process, like say partner colleges?*

170 A: It was mainly university based and that in retrospect it should have been a bit wider then
 171 that but it was a very tight timescale and of course partners are on board and they do
 172 map them now I mean it's been a slowish process particularly with overseas partners but
 173 the colleges I think have, well you might have a different view.

174 *I: Well actually it has challenged my assumptions because I did assume that they would*
 175 *be involved less but actually they do seem to be quite enthusiastic, both teachers and*
 176 *students.*

177 A: Oh students as well – oh ok.

178 *I: With the six. With the [HEI] Eight and 3Es they haven't heard of but the six generally I*
 179 *would say they've been fairly positive. They see it as a kind of peg to hang things on.*
 180 *So it's self-esteem and self-confidence which is important I think for a lot of the full-time,*
 181 *er part-time learners, mature learners, they, I think quite a lot of them have been quite*
 182 *positive about it.*

183 A: Oh good.

184 *I: One thing I guess relating to that is the visible presence of the graduate attributes. So*
 185 *we've got some posters, was that pushed out to the colleges do you know?*

186 A: I suspect not, cos most of the communications, speak to [Manager] who is the UK
 187 partnerships manager to ask her what. I actually don't think it's been done in a
 188 systematic way.

189 *I: So I know a very small sample size of two [partners] I know they basically made their*
 190 *own posters and things so I was just wondering if...*

191 A: Oh really? We should do that really. I wonder what their posters are like. Have you
 192 seen them?

193 *I: They're not bad – I've taken photos. They are, they haven't said anything, they have just*
 194 *cut and paste and then put it in their own. I mean actually relating to that one of the*
 195 *partner institution has their own attributes for their college students apart from the, so*
 196 *how do you see that process working?*

197 A: It could be mixed messages – it depends how close they are you know. Having said
 198 before that they are quite similar if you look at them. Yes, I'd like to see them before I
 199 could comment. Hopefully they would be complementary.

200 *I: I think that's what the teacher said that there are similarities.*

201 A: But could be confusing for students if they see their college's one, for, I mean HE is 20%
 202 of what they do at most so. Presumably what they've got students doing HNCs outside
 203 our offer.

204 I: *That's right and I think one of the teachers said their policy goes to all students – they*
 205 *have ten attributes. Some of them are more low level – being punctual that sort of thing*
 206 *as you'd expect for a 16 year-old. They are supposed to map them into their lesson*
 207 *plans and their...*

208 A: *...having said that, the [sixth form] college use used ours to create their own and they*
 209 *call it the sixth form graduate way or something and that permeates their curriculum.*

210 I: *Right so that could work so students coming from there to here could work quite well.*

211 A: *It's the deputy or the vice principle there [redacted] he's moving to another institution cos*
 212 *he took it on board and he crafted it. Worth just speaking to him.*

213 I: *Right and I think the other issue with another partner is they work with several HE*
 214 *partners...*

215 A: *...that's confusing...*

216 I: *...who have their own graduate attributes...*

217 A: *...so how do they manage that then?*

218 I: *I think what they say, I mean they've made a generic poster with kind of the attributes a*
 219 *kind of amalgam of them, but then they do have a specific poster of [HEI] Graduate*
 220 *Attributes as well.*

221 A: *The students must be absolutely confused.*

222 I: *So yeah I think one of the things they say is where they have teachers who only come in*
 223 *for say 4 hours of HE a week and I suppose this is something that applies here, as you*
 224 *said Graduate Attributes you know you need to be putting into assessment and*
 225 *throughout the curriculum.*

226 I: *How does that work with those teachers who are in for just a short amount of time?*

227 A: *Well if they're only in perhaps they're delivering modules which have been designed*
 228 *within a team. Presumably if they're only in for two days they're just delivering rather*
 229 *than fully involved in the planning process. I assume they just, they receive the*
 230 *materials and just take them on. And it's the same with hopefully our international*
 231 *partners which I think they see the value of it as a brand and I understand they are*
 232 *delivering on it particularly at big ones like [APU].*

233 I: *So thinking of implementation and the process of bringing them in and it was quite quick*
 234 *that there was input from staff of the different faculties via committees, what successes*
 235 *and challenges have you faced in implementation?*

236 A: *I think scepticism, initially; 'What does this add?', 'Why are we doing it?', 'Is it going to be*
 237 *confusing for students?' and I think that was the main barrier really. I think the speed*
 238 *was the concern. I think there's some kick back against it because it was tied to the 30*
 239 *credits and I know these credits have been one of those things. Like Marmite isn't it? I*
 240 *think those were the issues; about speed, linked to the broader curriculum changes. I*
 241 *guess they could be more consultation but I think on balance, I might be deluding myself*
 242 *here, I think as it's gone on people have seen more the value and it's something you can*
 243 *talk about. I don't think it's done as much at open days but in the early days it was quite*
 244 *a selling point to our students. I think it could have been advertised a bit more around*
 245 *the campus cos it's not, mind you there are posters...*

246 I: *There's not very many are there? No and so I think would you say, you talked about*
 247 *some resistance there, was that mainly from teaching staff at the coal face or managers*
 248 *or a combination?*

249 A: *It was both. Yes. Yes. I suspect they'd say it was maybe unnecessary given that we*
 250 *have got the eight as a structuring device and that's been around since I can remember*
 251 *– early 2000's really. But as you said those aren't prominent, the students really don't*
 252 *know about them at all. It's about raising, you know, this is [HEI] University. It's a part of*
 253 *our brand, it's what we're about, what is our promise as it were to students. I think over*

254 time people have seen that. I know the business school had their own version of them I
 255 think.

256 I: *Was it the 5 As or something?*

257 A: Yes. I don't know if that's still around.

258 I: *Em, I think there's a poster. [Laughs]. From what I understand it was subsumed by the*
 259 *graduate attributes. So you would say that the graduate attributes are much more*
 260 *student facing?*

261 A: Yes. I think so. And I think we could do more around making them part of the academic
 262 life. Certain areas do it we. [Manager] in sport, has devised a series of badges, I don't
 263 know if you've seen these?

264 I: *I've seen, they've divided them into levels so that each level you're expected to achieve.*

265 A: Yes. And I know the top level is six, but actually each one of those has been broken
 266 down into a bit more specific one. So I think there's about 11 covering a range of skills
 267 and he devised these graphical badges and he and that area, psychology, I think sport
 268 have used them quite consistently so they put it on each of the lecture handouts. They
 269 say these are the attributes that we're covering today and they do it in the seminars. It
 270 doesn't take long for them to say, so this is critical thinking, teamworking is the focus of
 271 this activity...

272 I: *So it's very much, very explicitly pushed.*

273 A: Very much. Trying to get that across other areas is difficult and I don't know what the
 274 current Vice Chancellor thinks of the Graduate Attributes yet. But it's got to be
 275 meaningful for students. We might understand it, hope that our students do. [Senior
 276 Manager] he might, have a chat with him, but I think they are quite, it's like scout
 277 badges, they are very clear graphical representations

278 I: *And so is the aim to very much articulate that these are Graduate Attributes?*

279 A: Yes.

280 I: *As opposed to, say at the colleges, student attributes.*

281 A: Yes, that's right, they are graduate attributes. I think it's been a bit muddled. I like to
 282 have the word attributes in it. It's been shortened to the [HEI] Graduate which is
 283 confusing to students cos, [HEI] Graduate, aren't we anyway? So I think there was a bit
 284 of mixed messaging with that. Although from a marketing point of view they like to make
 285 things snappy – Graduate Attributes is a bit sort of fusty, you know, I think it varies
 286 across the sector – some include the word – Portsmouth Graduate, any other, the
 287 Brighton Graduate, they tend to shorten as a brand.

288 I: *From the branding point of view, yes. So it sounds like there are some areas of good*
 289 *practice, but perhaps they haven't...*

290 A: No. And there were these six awards who did the [HEI] Graduate employability
 291 programme, in the business school, in law, in film and technology and drama and
 292 biology, and they produced a specific module to deliver the graduate employability, [HEI]
 293 Graduate employability just to try and experiment really and see what happened. But I
 294 think that's what [HEI researcher] focused on.

295 I: *That's her research there. So would you, is there any mechanism say if a student says*
 296 *well I read about your pledge and I don't think they're being delivered on this course. Is*
 297 *that something that ever happened. Is there a mechanism where students can feedback*
 298 *about the attributes?*

299 A: Well, we did have a question in the SVS (Student Viewfinder Survey) survey. It was
 300 basically about awareness. It wasn't about satisfaction, 'are you aware or something like
 301 that of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?

302 I: *And is that still in the SVS?*

303 A: No it was deleted.

304 I: *Oh right.*

305 A: Oddly.

306 I: *Any idea why that was or?*

307 A: I suspect because it was about awareness rather than satisfaction. I mean you could

308 have had a supplementary, but you know in terms of awareness and you kind of

309 question what do you mean by awareness – it could be, have you heard about it, have

310 you understood what they're about. You know the percentage saying that they had was

311 70-80% which was pretty good I thought but in terms of CMA requirements sort of have

312 you delivered what they are paying for, no there isn't really. I suppose it would be part of

313 the complaints process if they felt that.

314 I: *And I suppose the counter evidence would be in AMRs [Annual Monitoring Review] and*

315 *things.*

316 A: Yes, I mean AMR's clearly question the [HEI] Graduate, how they're doing, how they

317 deliver and so on so it is in there in terms of monitoring process.

318 I: *So, I mean, is that now more about training towards NSS then?*

319 A: Well it is. Identify the problems early, well early-ish which is a good thing.

320 I: *Which explains why it was deleted then?*

321 A: It's one reason yes I think.

322 I: *I suppose in that case, how are graduate attributes monitored? AMR?*

323 A: AMR – there's no overall survey which does that.

324 I: *Nothing direct from the students anymore?*

325 A: No. I guess if we did a student engagement survey rather than satisfaction survey, you

326 could build it in more effectively in that. I understand that the NSS will be changing

327 anyway to be more about engagement.

328 I: *With the new TEF coming in.*

329 A: Yes. That's right yeah.

330 I: *I was surprised cos we've got a new module survey – there's no mention of them on*

331 *there I think.*

332 A: Evasys.

333 I: *Evasys that's it*

334 A: Yes, it doesn't mention that.

335 I: *Have you any thoughts on that?*

336 A: Now you mention it, and I have seen the survey tool. Yes, I think it should be in there. If

337 we're serious about continuing with it then it should be embedded in most of our survey

338 instruments otherwise how do you know how you're doing within it. But at the moment it

339 isn't a priority I think, other things are a priority. Again, I'm not sure where the VC stands

340 on it.

341 I: *Right I guess that kind of takes us to the kind of final aspect of things...*

342 A: The future.

343 I: *Crystal ball gazing yes. I mean, I suppose, if we look at those, what do you think if*

344 *anything needs changing about them? And why? I suppose we've mentioned about*

345 *marketing that seems to have dropped off. They're not really mentioned.*

346 A: Yes, I think so. On our web pages?

347 I: *Em, they are if you look for them.*

348 A: It was course information wasn't it – you have to go down a couple of layers.

349 I: *It's somewhere, yes. I think I've only found by just typing them in the search engine...*

350 A: ...oh really?

351 I: *I'm not sure you'd come across them if you were just browsing the website.*

352 A: Again, it's about decisions isn't it? There's a new University plan and it's about the

353 connected university. Not sure where that fits in. It's a question that we need to address

354 as part of SLT and I'll be doing that. VC's are very influential, they can determine things

355 if that's not a priority then |I guess it could just drift, carry on it's embedded, but not used

356 as a selling point. And that's fine but it just needs to be clear, and things change of
357 course, but some clarity I think.

358 I: *So if you had the power what you liked with the graduate attributes, what do you think*
359 *you would do – would you change them in any way?*

360 A: You can always review them, but the fact that, I don't think staff would be very happy if
361 we changed them, I mean we'd have to change the mapping. And that's not a good
362 reason not to do it. I think it covers most things and we've added things like digital
363 literacy and that's there anyway as part of global, so things can be...

364 I: *So you keep the six but you slightly change...*

365 A: Yes. To make sure that they are responding to current priorities. So yes I would think that
366 they still have an important role to I suppose advertise what we're about. Although we're
367 a connected university, globalisation is about connectedness, I think it does fit, you
368 know. So yes I'd hope it has a long future with the recognition that things do change.
369 They have become more common over the last five years. And then there's the
370 question there that they're devalued now if everybody's doing it – what's distinctive? I
371 think in terms of students being consumers they do play a role and I think, you know, if
372 we think Australia again I think the reason they've got them is that is a very clear
373 statement of what a university is about so I don't think they'll go away, but I don't know if
374 they'll get the same sort of traction that they get in Australia. Again, I've come across a
375 number of research papers looking at Australian attributes.

376 I: *I'm always keeping tables on the literature. Yes, if you have any.*

377 A: Yes, they're sort of secondary, reviewed, usually quite a large sample of universities in
378 Australia where even though there's a commonality there are some differences as well.
379 I'll see if I can fish them out.

380 I: *If you could that would be great yes.*

381 A: So yes, interesting position I think at the moment. In broad terms I think given how HE is
382 generally I think they still have very important role to play, you know. Simple, clear
383 impact – all those things a student wants to know about really.

384 I: *I think certainly from my students the positive comments seem to relate to how it has*
385 *given them confidence.*

386 A: Oh really?

387 I: *Which is something that a lot of part time students lack and so, 'well I never considered*
388 *myself a global citizen' and then we did this module where we looked at another country*
389 *and...*

390 A: Which country did they look at?

391 I: *Oh they choose their own and if we can grab any visiting lecturers from another country*
392 *we throw them in the classroom so tends to inspire some.*

393 A: I mean most subjects should be able to cover something – even engineering.

394 I: *I think when I reveal what the 3Es's are I think a lot have struggled 'Well I'm a teaching*
395 *assistant - I wouldn't call myself entrepreneurial', and then they start to think about*
396 *broader definitions of this, and enterprising, I think they take it more to be creative, ok*
397 *I'm creative and I'm innovative so they, but that's only discussion as part of this*
398 *process...*

399 A: ...prompting them – intrapreneurial – within your own organisation; doing things
400 differently.

401 I: *Yes which I think would certainly have more traction which has given me more to reflect*
402 *on. Great thank you so much.*

5.1.2 HEI Employability group member

Date : 01/02/2017

Duration : 42:56

The interviewee was a member of the Employability group. This was formed at the time of the Graduate Attributes and was tasked with developing employability across the HEI. This group was disbanded at the beginning of the 2016-17 academic year. The interviewee has developed generic modules which focus on employability development with the intention of developing graduate attributes at level 4 and 5.

1 I: *Just quickly tell me about your role at the university.*

2 A: So I've worked here for 11 years. I was originally taken on in a role for civic engagement
3 and urban regeneration in the creative communities unit which is in the, now, the School
4 of Creative Arts and Engineering. At the time it was in Arts, Media and Design.
5 Although currently for the last three years I've actually been part of the [Staff
6 development department (SDD)] and that change happened at the time when my role
7 changed and I was given responsibility for promoting [HEI]GAs as part of my job.

8 I: *Oh great.*

9 A: So I went into the [SDD] at that point although I'm still physically based with the creative
10 teaching team because all of the partnership work and project work research and
11 teaching that I do is linked directly to them. And I'm quite different to the rest of the
12 [SDD] because the [SDD] is the quality team, learning support and staff development.
13 And although I work really closely with academic support within the university and have
14 a kind of informal staff development role I've got a significantly external facing job. I'm
15 also a lecturer for courses for the local community as well as undergraduate courses.
16 Up until last year I ran the volunteering option module. I've run it on and off for the
17 whole 11 years that I've worked here. There was a year or so when I didn't teach it but I
18 just helped with the assessment of it. But I've always contributed to it since I started.

19 I: *Right. The volunteering option module, that pre-dated it?*

20 A: The volunteering option - yes – I mean it was already going when I started here. It was
21 set up by [name] and [name] both of whom are around so you might want to find out how
22 they, you know, why it was set up. But it was developed initially as a general option for
23 any undergrad where there was a space in their degree programme. It used to be
24 mainly students from Social Sciences in this school, faculty but then it, you'd get people
25 from forensic science and psychology and Early Childhood Studies, you know a whole
26 range there. Possibly even had a business student, a physics student.

27 I: *And it was 15 credits?*

28 A: 15 credits yes cos that's when there were still lots of 15 credit modules cos it changed so
29 there were supposed to be 30 credits.

30 I: *30 now yeah. Has the volunteering option stayed at 15 then?*

31 A: It has yeah.

32 I: *Were you responsible for when the graduate attributes came in? Did you adapt that
33 module in any way?*

34 A: Ever so slightly, but it was already, you know, bob on actually so I wasn't involved in the
35 very early stages of the development of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes but I joined the,
36 there was, like a committee to do with employability and there was a sub-group of that
37 where they identified a champion for the [HEI]Graduate Attributes within each of the 6 –
38 was that around the time they changed from 6 to 4 I think it was, so then 6 champions er
39 across the 4 faculties, to completely revise their curriculum or their subject area to make
40 sure that [HEI]Graduate Attributes were written in each level and that there was a model
41 to support students very explicitly around the [HEI]Graduate Attributes at level 5 that
42 included a kind of practice based one, but the courses that came forward to be
43 champions were courses that already did a lot of that anyway, so drama for example
44 were very much engage practically in performance and direction and so it wasn't hard for
45 them to do that. So what they decided to do was draw up a sort of template for a
46 module at level 4 and 5 that every single course across the university was then expected
47 to adapt and tailor to their course and the volunteering module was kind of there to say
48 to people if it's really hard for you to adapt your course to make it more adaptable at
49 level 5 then you could always refer to the volunteering option module which already
50 existed and didn't need changing. All that I changed was I put a bit more detail in the
51 handbook to specifically spell out how it links to the [HEI]Graduate Attributes.

52 I: *Is that offered at, because it's still going on isn't it...*
53 A: Um.
54 I: *...is that a level 4 and level 5 and level 6?*
55 A: It was always accredited at level 4 and 5 but level 6 students could also take it but they'd
56 have to credit it at level 5 and then we had it validated at level 7 and level 3 so that we
57 could offer it as a course to community groups if we had external funding at level 3 and
58 also we have had, so the last time I ran it we had, not the last time, maybe the time
59 before when I ran it. I used to run it twice a year so, in semester one and semester two.
60 The last year I ran it I only ran it once. And then this year I haven't run it at all because
61 psychology sent most of their, sorry it's not that they sent their students. A lot of
62 psychology students chose to do it last academic year and hardly anyone else and so it
63 looked like the main audience for it was psychology and psychology wanted to amend
64 their programme anyway so they've taken some of the core elements from the
65 volunteering module, adapted it and I've co-taught it with them this year though I'm not
66 currently running it as an undergraduate option module but it's still on the books so you
67 could at any level. And the last time that I ran it as a normal option module whenever it
68 was, last time but one we had 3 community members who paid to come on it so we
69 opened up not just to undergrads as an option module but it was also advertised to local
70 community and one of them did it at level 7. And we teach everyone in the same class,
71 the content is the same, the only difference is that level 7 there's a little extra content –
72 we just had a couple of extra tutorials with the person doing it at that level. And the
73 assessment is different at Masters level, but the rest of the portfolio's the same.
74 I: *But it is assessed with an essay at the end?*
75 A: Yes.
76 I: *Cos you mentioned about some sort of generic modules, were they across the whole*
77 *university?*
78 A: They were yeah. They, it was like a template module...
79 I: *Do you know what it was called?*
80 A: I've got all of the paperwork somewhere. I think it might have been called something like
81 [HEI]Graduate Employability programme or something like that. Level 4 and then level 5
82 as well. [Name] when he was there he designed those, you know by talking to people
83 already running modules that were closely aligned he came up with a template and so
84 the process was that every course had to map its curriculum content against the
85 [HEI]Graduate Attributes so the award handbook clearly said: "You will achieve the
86 [HEI]Graduate. You will be given opportunities to develop the [HEI]Graduate Attributes
87 in this way at level 4, this way at level 5, this way at level 6.
88 I: *So that was supposed to be in every course handbook?*
89 A: Every single subject award handbook was supposed to have that within it. Still is,
90 should have. And that at level 4 there was supposed to be a specific module which the
91 course leader could point to and say that's the main [HEI]Graduate Attributes module,
92 this year and then at level 5 this is the main [HEI]Graduate attributes module this year.
93 And at level 5 it was expected to have significant practical experience built in to it so
94 workplace work experience, volunteering, applied projects. And there was lots of talk
95 about there being a kind of expectation of a standard-ish module at level 6 but that never
96 imposed in the same way as level 4 and level 5 – everybody had to do it whereas level 6
97 it was encouraged...
98 I: *...encouraged but not mandatory. You mentioned about champions – champion*
99 *programmes or actual named champions?*
100 A: Both I think. A named person leading on it but there was a programme area. Some
101 were bigger than others so there was [name] for drama, [name] for business, [name] in

102 film, TV and radio, [name] sports and exercise and then a couple of others but I can't
 103 remember.

104 *I: Doing really well! So what's happened to these champion things? Are they around*
 105 *or...?*

106 A: They used to meet regularly. Once every handbook and course had kind of adopted the
 107 approach they decided they didn't really need to be champions any more so that sort of
 108 fizzled out and they decided they didn't need to meet any more. But then it was still on
 109 the agenda for the employability sub-group of the learning and teaching committee but
 110 then they were supposed to be meeting in September [2016] but it was cancelled and it
 111 was decided that that wouldn't ever meet anymore. So there isn't any sort of any
 112 meeting anywhere that's specifically about employability. [name] is the person who led
 113 on it. He's my line manager.

114 *I: So in terms of, there's that link to the employability group. I found there's an*
 115 *employability policy from 2009.*

116 A: Oh right, ok...

117 *I: Is that still current and what role did that play in the Graduate Attributes do you think?*
 118 *Was that something that was ever used?*

119 A: It's possible it was the sort of foundation for the work but that's a long time ago 2009.
 120 Longer ago than when we started working on the [HEI]Graduate Attributes. I wonder if
 121 there's a more recent one? There might be. I don't remember ever seeing a policy
 122 exactly. But there was lots and lots of papers, which I'm sure I've got somewhere in a
 123 Drop Box folder probably that I can let you have. Yes, I don't know about that. I don't
 124 know. It's possible I've read it at some point. I don't remember it.

125 *I: You don't recall it playing a central role?*

126 A: No.

127 *I: Ok.*

128 A: No in fact the central role came from, the sort of kick that led to all the activity that I've
 129 just described came from [the then VC's] sort of commitment and drive to develop the
 130 3Es. Which everybody found very confusing. Enterprise, Employability and
 131 Entrepreneurship. What's the difference? I don't know! So they were kind of the
 132 overarching things. They were on the website somewhere. They're probably still up
 133 there even though they're not supposed to be. And I asked [name] a couple of weeks
 134 ago whether the [HEI]Graduate Attributes were still something that we were supposed to
 135 be talking about, were still relevant and [they] said: "Well I haven't been told they
 136 weren't" so that's where we are. They're still in the module handbook so I currently,
 137 although I'm not teaching the volunteering module at the moment, the teaching that I do
 138 with undergrads, I don't run any courses myself. I'm invited into lots of different people's
 139 courses to do a sort of one off session or a couple of hours or co-teach modules with
 140 other people and I always, I've got a fairly standards sort of presentation that I do and I
 141 always start with, you know this is the context of employability and the [HEI]Graduate
 142 Attributes and there's usually some students in the room that can tell me some of the
 143 [HEI]Graduate Attributes. It is still out there definitely.

144 *I: It's an interesting point because you know we have the 3Es, [HEI]Graduate Attributes*
 145 *and, you said they shouldn't be there anymore? I know they are still on the website.*

146 A: I think what I mean by that cos it was [the previous VC's] thing and nobody really fully
 147 understood what [they], didn't fully buy in, you know, wasn't, it wasn't something that, it
 148 was a marketing thing.

149 *I: Yes.*

150 A: Rather than something that really underpinned our teaching and learning and research.
 151 Whereas the [HEI]Graduate Attributes are very specific so that was much easier to say
 152 how what we're doing links to those. And it's not that I've ever been told that we

153 shouldn't you know these words shouldn't be said but I just think they're not relevant
 154 anymore and they were hardly ever referred to when they were alive so I've no idea
 155 whether it's still live on the website. If it is still on there, for the last year and a half I've
 156 not really heard anyone talk about them. There was lots of talk about enterprise,
 157 entrepreneurial, but just not the 3E's. The language is ok, it's just the sort of this idea
 158 that we're driven by these three things.

159 *I: What was your understanding of how the two sat?*

160 *A:* They were awkward bedfellows! [laughs] Basically...Absolutely, employability was one of
 161 the 3Es so fine. And a lot of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes help people to develop skills
 162 which are essential if you're going to be entrepreneurial and enterprising and sort of
 163 attitudes around creative thinking and so on. So they are absolutely linked but I found
 164 them a distraction and I think a lot of other people did whereas the [HEI]Graduate
 165 Attributes were just clearly spelled out – these are the 6 areas and this is how this
 166 relates to your learning of the subject.

167 *I: Cos I found it interesting how the 3Es seem to be mentioned within the graduate
 168 attributes as well so are they above them are they within them?*

169 *A:* Exactly. I don't think it was ever that clear. [Laughs].

170 *I: Now the other one is about the [HEI]Eight or the [HEI]Eight plus Two.*

171 *A:* Oh I don't...

172 *I: Have you heard when you have to do a module descriptor you have to map the
 173 assessment to the [HEI]Eight so it's like knowledge, analysis.*

174 *A:* Oh yes those.

175 *I: How do you think the graduate attributes link to the [HEI]Eight plus Two?*

176 *A:* That's interesting – I've never thought about that before. [pause]. It's been a while since
 177 I've actually written a new module. And if I had I might well have thought about it cos the
 178 learning outcomes, as you say, have to link to one of the eight things don't they? Sorry
 179 not just one, eight, you have to show they link to the eight [pause]. They're very general
 180 though aren't they those eight, cos knowledge is just knowledge er [pause].

181 *I: You'd hope that would be in every module wouldn't you? [both laugh]*

182 *A:* You would, wouldn't you? [pause] And I think it's interesting cos the learning outcomes
 183 show what we assess people against and we assess against knowledge, application and
 184 analysis and reflection and so on. But the some of the detail of the assessment can
 185 actually be very specific with links to one or the other of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes.
 186 So they should be really closely linked shouldn't they? But I don't know whether that's
 187 actually ever been discussed anywhere. I've certainly not been...

188 *I: Even though they're not there. Cos I'm a bit curious. It seems like the Graduate
 189 Attributes certainly used to be linked to the content and the [HEI]Eight linked to
 190 assessment and I wondered why? What they value was?*

191 *A:* Well, if we go back to the volunteering module, that was designed years ago and the
 192 assessment was revised maybe about 2011 something like that, but again, pre
 193 [HEI]Graduate Attributes and the assessment is directly linked to the learning outcomes,
 194 but the learning outcomes are so closely tied up with the [HEI]Graduate Attributes
 195 anyway so the assessments and volunteering option module as it stands is a reflective
 196 portfolio which includes a self-rating of 3 areas of skills. The first area is communication,
 197 the second is teamwork and the third is self-management skills. Well they are explicitly
 198 in the [HEI]Graduate Attributes and the students rate their own skills at the beginning of
 199 the module and then the end and the bit they're assessed on in the little kind of
 200 review/report that says how things have changed.

201 *I: So like a reflection of their journey?*

202 *A:* Yes, they, the students set at least two goals for themselves and then review them in the
 203 report. They keep a reflective diary which informs their reflective essay and they give an

204 in class presentation which is about what they've been practically doing as a volunteer
 205 and what they've learned from doing that and linking to some of the content around
 206 volunteering that we've discussed in class. So presentation skills are also there.

207 *I: Communication...*

208 A: ...so I think [pause] because the essay in particular asks them to reflect on their
 209 volunteering experience and locate it in relation to at least 2, no three of the themes of
 210 the context of volunteering that we've looked at in the module so they have to make a
 211 clear link between theory and practice. So the assessment there is about knowledge
 212 and analysis and reflection and [pause] the rest of the portfolio is much more around the
 213 practical sort of side of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes I suppose. It's really interesting
 214 actually when you think about it. It would be good to go back to it and have a look and
 215 see if they do actually link. Well I'd want to.

216 *I: It's be great if you could send me any of that it'd be really interesting to look at thanks.*
 217 *I'm just looking. We've already started to have that discussion and about where you*
 218 *think the Graduate Attributes are going to go, so you're still promoting them but you*
 219 *haven't had confirmation. In terms of what you're seeing around the university, do you*
 220 *think, where do you think the direction of travel is?*

221 A: I don't think there's any doubt that employability, acquired learning, work-related
 222 experience applied research, you know, the vocational kind of practical aspects of what
 223 we do. That, I think that will always be, it's even more clear that that is the priority for us.
 224 Whether they'll be called the [HEI]Graduate Attributes, maybe the name will change,
 225 maybe they'll be reviewed and the attributes will be slightly revised. Maybe we'll find
 226 another way of doing it, but there's going to be something, there'll have to be something
 227 spelled out to students this is how we are making sure that your experience here
 228 supports your learning through the application of that learning in practice. So, so I don't
 229 think there's any, I'm not doubtful of the currency of them inherently. It's just that
 230 fashions change so the names might change or the way it's packaged might change but
 231 I suspect there'll be something.

232 *I: Something generic or a set of attributes. And I guess you've started to answer that as*
 233 *well. Just thinking about, in relation to what you perceive being important in graduates*
 234 *that we, I don't know, is 'produce' the right word? Horrible isn't it? But you know, people*
 235 *who graduate from our university, to what extent do you feel that the 3Es and the Eight*
 236 *plus 2 and the Graduate Attributes, to what extent do you think that they match what we*
 237 *would expect of our students?*

238 A: [pause] I think the 3Es are ok, but they're not sufficient. They miss an awful lot of other
 239 things that are really important. I might say why one of the Es might be 'Ethics'. You
 240 know, it's fine to be entrepreneurial, but what about being ethically entrepreneurial, you
 241 know, how are you going to apply your problems solving for the benefit of the greater
 242 society rather than just your own pocket. That sort of, that's missing. It's not clear,
 243 whereas in the [HEI]Graduate Attributes it's in the Global Citizen section, sort of talks
 244 about that, but nevertheless it could be stronger. Ethics could be stronger...

245 *I: Cultural...*

246 A: Cultural yeah and kind of, I'm a liberal leftie anyway so I'm bound to say that [laughs].

247 *I: I can't imagine there's been any recent events that have prompted that thought... Yes*
 248 *that's really interesting the idea of ethics because you can cover environment and*
 249 *culture and citizenship and so on.*

250 A: Yes, so [pause] I don't know, what else I think about it really. Ask me a different
 251 question – help me get my juices flowing...

252 *I: No it's just to get you to think about the extent you think they represent what we believe*
 253 *student need or graduates need rather.*

254 A: I think in theory, broadly, they're ok. I don't think there's a massive gap there.
 255 Confidence really is the biggest thing. And that's kind of unwritten around there in
 256 communication, because you're not going to be a confident communicator if you're not
 257 confident generally I guess. But I don't know whether that, no something around self-
 258 confidence, self-belief, self-efficacy, self-awareness maybe that isn't really in there,
 259 maybe that might be good. I think I know that's what holds a lot of students back from
 260 participating at university never mind once they graduate and then have got to compete
 261 for a job. To be able to say these are the things I can do the areas we develop and that
 262 doesn't mean I'm inherently a bad person, I don't know everything, I'm self-aware, I'm
 263 self-confident, you know, keen learner. Yes, I think that basically a lack of this and the
 264 support for students to develop their confidence. A lot of, you know, a lot of lecturers
 265 and courses are good at that but that's not something we've signed up for wholly as an
 266 institution, that idea of nurturing people to be self-aware and self-confident. That would
 267 be an interesting area to work on.

268 I: *I think we've pretty much covered things. I think maybe one question would be, what's*
 269 *your feeling about how consistently and, well we'll go for consistency first. You've told*
 270 *me we had champions and there were generic modules, supposed to be. How*
 271 *consistently, from your experience...*

272 A: I think inconsistently. I don't know what real evidence I've got for saying that other than
 273 knowing that if I go in and give a talk to Child Psychology or Biology or Film and TV,
 274 music tech whoever, there is a variation, it's a fairly subtle variation because no class
 275 I've been into has reeled of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes instantly. There might be one
 276 mature student that knows all 6, but not the whole class. But some seem to have slightly
 277 more idea than others. I think there's a distinction between students and staff being
 278 clear that the practical applied learning and the curriculum content that's around skills
 279 development that makes the [HEI]Graduate Attributes. I think most of the courses I've
 280 had contact with have the content, but they don't necessarily make it clear that these are
 281 the [HEI]Graduate Attributes. So I think there's a difference between the consistency of
 282 the approach and the consistency of people knowing they're the [HEI]Graduate
 283 Attributes they're linked to.

284 I: *So in some it's been explicitly taught and others...*

285 A: Yeah...

286 I: *...it's possibly there in the background...*

287 A: And they might maybe talk about work-related experience of employability skills but
 288 maybe not really mention the [HEI]Graduate Attributes using those three words and
 289 actually that can be a course that is very practical and very effective at enabling people
 290 to graduate and get people ready to get a job doing really well and are successful at
 291 getting employment. But they might not be as able to say well I've got the
 292 [HEI]Graduate Attributes. Maybe that doesn't matter – the point is they're employable,
 293 they've got a job. Whereas there are other courses that maybe talk more about the
 294 [HEI]Graduate Attributes specifically but that doesn't necessarily result in very
 295 employable students in the end. And I guess that's inevitable because the range of
 296 subject is broad and the ability to make some subjects highly practical and harder in
 297 some areas more than others. I guess practical philosophy is tricky compared to say TV
 298 production where you're actually making programmes for people. So I don't know
 299 whether the inconsistency, what we'd have to do is look at whether within a particular
 300 subject area there was consistency or not, rather than, you know it's like comparing
 301 apples and oranges, you can't necessarily measure it. It would be good to measure it, it
 302 would be good to try and review it cos it hasn't been reviewed for a couple of years. And
 303 all I can by is the feeling I get when I go into a number of courses but I don't by any
 304 means get involved in everything across the whole university it's only when academic

305 staff feel they need a bit of input on the subject and then my take on it is always linking
 306 to communities of practice for engaging and volunteering so I don't do work placements
 307 and paid employment related stuff. Yes, so it would be interesting to see what other
 308 people think.

309 *I: Yes, I suppose, are you ok of time, just thinking about quality processes. It's been taken*
 310 *away from the module handbook template this year haven't they. Disappeared- always*
 311 *used to be in the template, but it's still on the, it's not on the module descriptor, but it is*
 312 *on the AMR, the Annual Monitoring Review...*

313 A: ...that's strange that it's on there but isn't anywhere at the beginning of the process...

314 *I: Yes, so I was just wondering if you had any thoughts about the consistency and*
 315 *quality...*

316 A: I wonder how that decision was made that it would be not in the module handbook
 317 anymore. There's not too much information in there but, if it's not in the module
 318 descriptor or the module handbook, then new members of staff won't know whether to
 319 include it, current members of staff who weren't that committed to it in the first place or
 320 thought that it was spelling out what my course does anyway might be relieved that they
 321 can use their own words now, do that. So I suspect that will reduce the consistency.

322 *I: I would have thought the first time a new member of staff would come across it would be*
 323 *at AMR.*

324 A: Yes, and then they might say you're measuring me on something you've never told me
 325 about before.

326 *I: It's not in induction as far as I'm aware. I did speak to one who hadn't.*

327 A: And nobody's really talking about it anymore – apart from me in every class I go into!
 328 That's really interesting – yes. So I guess, it seems unlikely that that's going to help with
 329 consistency does it? It seems most likely that will make it patchy. That some people are
 330 really committed to it will continue, but no new members are going to start doing it cos
 331 where would they find out about it? Food for thought there.

332 *I: Brilliant thank you. I don't think there's anything particularly more from me I think we've*
 333 *covered areas, but is there anything else you'd like to say about it?*

334 A: [Pause]. Yes, one other thing, cos I'm just thinking about FE, because I work closely
 335 with university quarter partners and do a lot of work with [name] sixth form college and
 336 [name] college. [name] sixth form college quite some years ago created their own set of
 337 student attributes which directly link to our Graduate Attributes and we jointly run a
 338 scheme where university students volunteer to be learning mentors at the sixth form
 339 college and in the training I always remind our students of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes,
 340 get them to think about which two they'd most like to develop through being a mentor
 341 and which two they think their strengths they most like to help one of the sixth form
 342 students to develop and then show them the sixth form college attributes and see how
 343 they can support the learners there with that so they're really important to that.

344 *I: So are they aimed at level three those attributes?*

345 A: Yes, there's a few that aren't covered, they're more emphasising communication skill
 346 and kind of study skills I suppose. They're very similar. When they were created they
 347 were done with explicit reference to our actually. Possibly because [university
 348 employee] is on the Board of Governors so that's interesting because the sixth form
 349 students who become [HEI] university students cos quite a few of those students will
 350 come on and become our students, I've been saying to them you know you will be
 351 progressing and the [HEI] Graduate Attributes will be familiar, but they may not see them
 352 now.

353 *I: What about HE student in FE colleges, so [names]...*

354 A: Yeah, that's a good question – I don't know.

355 *I: How are they engaged?*

356 A: I don't know and that, I guess when the validation process was included they had to be
357 in the handbooks and they had to say how it was mapped across, but if it doesn't know
358 then, and the people supporting those partner colleges, if they don't talk about it with
359 them...

360 I: *Yes, cos I've noticed it's not on the Programme Advisor reports, you know the templates,*
361 *I couldn't find it anyway. It's quite a long template but I couldn't find anything about*
362 *Graduate Attributes. So I'm just wondering about how the colleges implement them and*
363 *if you're aware of any training that's been done.*

364 A: No, not at all. I wouldn't necessarily be aware, but I'm not. That's interesting. Lots of
365 material in there!

366 I: *Thank you very much for your time.*

5.1.3 HEI Faculty Education Manager

Date : 25/05/2016

Duration: : 35:33

The Faculty Education Manager has been working at the university since before the inception of the Graduate Attributes. This manager has responsibility for directing teaching and learning strategy within a faculty at the HEI. This role also involved representing the faculty on a key quality committee as well as attendance of senior management meetings within the HEI.

1 I: *Could you tell me something about your role within the university then?*

2 A: I'm [Management role] for Teaching and Learning in the faculty of Business Education
3 and Law. Currently I'm also acting Head of the [withheld] school.

4 I: *Ok thank you. Thinking about the Graduate Attributes at the University, what do you
5 think the reasons for their creation was?*

6 A: I believe it was to make the university distinctive among other universities and I think
7 that's proven by the fact that we had a big advertising campaign about the graduate
8 attributes at least when they were first introduced and we had to run them past the
9 advertising standards agency because we included I think the word guarantee
10 somewhere along the line and what was it we were actually guaranteeing? So we were
11 trying to be different. Personally, I don't think we were trying to be different I think we
12 were trying to catch up with other universities who had already got some sort of
13 attributes but it was also that way of actually codifying what it actually meant to be a
14 graduate, having gone through almost any programme at [HEI] University. You could
15 say it's the same at any university but we say that everybody would be able to do these
16 things and therefore make our students more ready for work and the world they were
17 going to me up against when they graduate.

18 I: *Ok thank you and to what extent do you think they've succeeded in making that aim of a
19 unique image of the university through the attributes?*

20 A: Unfortunately, I don't. I don't think they've succeeded at all really. If you ask any
21 applicants who come for interview 'have you heard of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?' I've
22 never had one who's said yes so obviously it hasn't got out there in the wider world in
23 terms of a marketing campaign to potential students and it's really unfortunate that in
24 some areas of the university, not in our faculty, some areas of the university the
25 knowledge of the of the attributes among the student population is as low as I believe
26 44%, so a large majority of students don't even know they exist. That's not true in our
27 faculty where I think we're up to 75% or so but clearly it hasn't worked in terms of
28 making us distinct to the outside audience or indeed the inside audience What it has
29 done is to focus member of staff's minds on the need to do more than teach their subject
30 and that's a good thing there's no question about that and certainly in some areas it's
31 expanded staff's view of the need to ensure that students are equipped with the skills
32 necessary to go to a wider world.

33 I: *Ok thank you and do you, in terms of the conceptualisation of these, do you remember
34 anything about consultation or...*

35 A: Yeah in fact was involved in the consultation. It happened at a time just after the
36 previous Vice Chancellor had joined – whether it was introduced by [the VC] or [A Senior
37 Manager] I can't remember, but I do remember that he had a tour of the Faculties in his
38 first few months and one of the things each of those was quite detailed I mean he spent
39 all day with us basically, going through every faculty. One of the things he was really
40 impressed about was the fact that we had already developed the 5 A star attributes for
41 our business graduates and a lot of these began with A, so he said oh that's good we
42 were thinking of doing something ourselves so would you like to join the work we'd
43 developed by I think [Business lecturers] in particular in conjunction with [Business
44 Senior Manager] in the Business School. What they had done was directly transferred
45 into the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and there was also a working group which I was a
46 party to which helped to develop these so yes I was consulted a lot and there was a lot
47 of consultation I was aware in the wider university.

48 I: *So there was a broader based approach?*

49 A: Yes, absolutely.

50 I: *And this is interesting cos actually it was a later question but the 5 As, do they still exist
51 within the [HEI] Graduate Attributes or...*

52 A: Not really no. they've kind of died a death. The poster is still up somewhere in the
53 Brindley building but I don't think it's referred to in any of the course material. I think it's
54 been subsumed within the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and therefore they don't exist as a
55 separate unit.

56 I: *Can you explain because there is also the 3Es's. I always get 2 out of three so I'll read*
57 *them employability.*

58 A: I know them.

59 I: *Oh you can get them can you?*

60 A: Employability, enterprise, entrepreneurship. They caused enormous diff[iculty], well
61 actually one or two graduate attributes caused some difficulties as well. The one thing in
62 particular that cause a problem was the global citizenship and that had had particular
63 problems with some sectors of the university which didn't consider themselves to be
64 global in what they do. I mean for some it was dead easy - geography or international
65 business or whatever there was no question about that, but some such as your area
66 education for example might not immediately think of themselves as global citizens and
67 some areas of the arts and design areas didn't think that and similarly health, but we
68 managed to get over those problems somehow by exploring with those teams what it
69 meant to be a global citizen and it didn't mean working abroad necessarily. I think the
70 introduction of the 3Es was also brought in. I think that this was a result that partly we
71 were and unfortunately still are languishing down the bottom of the league tables in
72 terms of our employment statistics so we're not good as a university at getting employed
73 students or at least the way that it's recorded. That could be something of a difference
74 you know they do get jobs but not recorded as graduate jobs and so I think there was a
75 big push to move towards enterprise and employment and this entrepreneurship came in
76 at the same time – the 3Es were then established but that caused some real difficulties
77 in the university I mean for a start nobody actually ever defined what we mean by
78 entrepreneurship. There are all sorts of potential definitions but nothing's really stuck. A
79 lot of people don't consider themselves to be enterprising and actually there's a lot of
80 areas of the university where being enterprising is probably not a good thing and the one
81 that came up while I was validating something was in health sciences and I was told – I
82 think this is to do with paramedics – I can't remember it's a long time ago now, but I was
83 told there as a panel member 'we don't want our nurses to be enterprising, we want
84 them to do things the way they are taught to do it. Now they can suggest another way of
85 doing some things but a procedure is a procedure is a procedure. They must follow that
86 procedure – they don't want them saying that they're going to do it their own way. That's
87 probably not a good example as it's only as minor part of what it means to be
88 enterprising but I know it caused a lot of difficulties.

89 I: *And were they added afterwards?*

90 A: I think they were kind of added at the same time but a little bit after and one of the
91 problems there if you look at the surveys of students they have real difficulties either in
92 identifying them, or like yourself actually remembering what they are and more
93 importantly working out whether they are part of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes or
94 something else, something extra, or something that's had its time or whatever. Nobody
95 quite knows what they stand for but I think they still exist as part of our strategic plan and
96 it is very confusing unfortunately.

97 I: *So there are no clear answers as I know it's still on the website with the [HEI] Graduate*
98 *Attributes – it has the 3Es's as well. It's not clear how they sit within...*

99 A: It's not clear to me. It's certainly not clear to the students and I don't think it's really been
100 explored as to what their relationship is.

101 I: *Ok thank you and then I guess the same is with the [HEI] Eight – is that supposed to be*
102 *student facing or is that mainly for lectures? Analysis, Knowledge...*

103 A: Well those Eight, or Eight plus two as we call them have been here since long before I
 104 joined the university which was in 2007 so they have always been learning outcomes
 105 that every student should have from this particular university and they continue to run
 106 alongside everything else which again is probably a little bit of a problem in that nobody
 107 quite knows whether we should be going just for the [HEI] Graduate Attributes or the
 108 3Es's or the Eight or the Eight plus two or a combination of all of them. Some
 109 universities have actually solved this by saying these are the attributes that we wish our
 110 students to have and they will appear amongst all the documentation, so quite a simple
 111 plan but they run through everything, whether it's modules, whether it's programmes,
 112 whether it's extra-curricular activities or whatever so everybody sees how that picture
 113 builds up and those attributes are the same all the way through whereas we've kind of
 114 confused it with the academic side attributes of knowledge and understanding and ability
 115 to work on your own – I can't remember what they are – research and scholarship all
 116 that sort of thing. But people see the [HEI] Graduate Attributes as being something
 117 different and actually it would be much better if you said well a graduate is somebody
 118 who's got subject knowledge which would include the ability to research and think and
 119 critically analyse etcetera as well as and subsume it all into one.

120 I: *Thank you yes. And do you see attributes being for all of the students?*

121 A: Yes, I do actually, I do. That was one of the things that we debated when we were
 122 introducing them – are they applicable to everybody and we looked at the sort of
 123 extremes. It's quite easy for some programmes but then you look at the extremes of the
 124 students and we decided that yes actually they were. They are not all applicable to the
 125 same extent but we didn't feel that there was any student coming out of the university
 126 who should not be exposed to some extent to at least to all of them to some extent. So
 127 global citizenship is a good one. People need to be aware that whatever they're doing –
 128 working in a hospital in Stoke if that's what they're chosen career is, but they're still
 129 aware of other things that are available and that know they're part of a global village if
 130 you like. I was going to say something else there. Anyway, no, carry on.

131 I: *So do you think the typical student is full time and maybe doing placement, but some
 132 students you have are part-time and already employed in their discipline sector if you
 133 like. Do you see any difference in the way that graduate attributes are implemented or
 134 their relevance for those students?*

135 A: Well the relevance I think should be the same for everybody. That's the point actually
 136 that I was going to make so obviously you've asked that question. Are they applicable to
 137 all? Well actually I think the difference between part-time and full-time is really nothing
 138 except I think that the part time students would say that they have gained many of their
 139 attributes in their work anyway characteristics of graduate so they are applicable it just
 140 means you can kind of, if I can use the phrase, tick the box by what they have already
 141 done or they are doing rather than stuff they have to do in the curriculum, whereas an
 142 eighteen year-old coming straight from school probably wouldn't have those skills and
 143 abilities and therefore have to be built into the curriculum and also other activities. What I
 144 was going to say was in terms of the applicability to all students, there is a group of
 145 students, we two groups of students where I think there are some real difficulties. First
 146 of all, there are those students who come to us in level 5 and 6. Quite clearly they don't
 147 have a three-year programme to learn those attributes. Someone coming especially into
 148 level 6 have only got that year and it's very difficult to try and cram everything in. Are we
 149 therefore assuming somehow that the first two years of a programme somewhere else,
 150 you know HND in China or wherever it happens to be they kind of have done it, or do we
 151 insist that it's done in China to the same extent that it's done here and that's the
 152 question. We've never answered that question - never insisted that a programme
 153 overseas or indeed any other place has got those attributes so you might have a student

who's at a local college somewhere who's doing an HND in business not connected with this university able to progress onto a level 6 no problems. Do they have the same graduate attributes when they've been here a year and others for three? So that's one group. The other is our partner institutions, our partner colleges in education probably no problem cos you're doing the same thing and you operate very much as a team, but in business it's very different so have an example that I was personally involved with in fact, London [institution] whereby they were doing exactly the same curriculum as our students on campus so when I was validating some of their programmes I said to them, I said now you've got to undertake the [HEI] Graduate Attributes otherwise as they graduate from you the exact same programme is different if you like to a student here and yet you've done exactly the same programme. And all they did was to map their current curriculum onto the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, so they simply said we do that in that module, we do that there that's fine it's all done. But we weren't allowed to do that on campus. So we had to actually build activities and specific items in the agenda curriculum in order to say most definitely this is something very different from what we would normally do in the curriculum. But why do our students have to go through this to get these [HEI] Graduate Attributes – somebody in London hasn't got to and that then leads into the HEAR, the Higher Education Achievement Record and one of the things I was talking about when that was introduced in the University cos it had a chequered history of being introduced and then disappeared– it's now being introduced again, but when it was being introduced I said how is it fair that you've got these two or three groups of students, some have done a three year degree here, some have done a one year, some have never been here at all, they all come out with exactly the same [HEI] Graduate Attributes it demeans to me the fact that you've got something distinctive on campus.

I: *And I suppose that led to what we said about 'our pledge to you' or guarantee...*

A: Pledge, pledge was the word.

I: *So what mechanisms are in place to guarantee that this pledge is being upheld in terms of strategic policy?*

A: Well, er only the fact that somebody asks the question every now and then – are you still doing the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, are they built into the curriculum, but there are two distinct types of course. There were six champions, that's not the word I'm looking for, programmes that came from the four faculties, one of which is here in law, one in business and these were the ones that had the [HEI] Graduate pledges fully embedded throughout the curriculum so we had to kind of tear the curriculum apart, rebuild it. In business they did it in a sort of linear way through the whole of the years. It looked very much difficult in the nature of the subject because you had to do things in a certain way to satisfy external bodies. We built it into certain modules so the students would be exposed to it highly in certain modules so you could absolutely guarantee everyone who goes to a law programme in [HEI] will have picked up those graduate attributes and they've built it into the curriculum and they're still used all the time. But those programmes, the idea was that they'd run it for a year or two, learn from the experience, and extend it to the rest of the university. That last bit never happened, so many programmes do what London [institution] did – just tick the box yeah we think we do that, that's good enough.

I: *Why do you think that experience was never shared more fully?*

A: Two reasons. Firstly, I think the focus of those who were in charge of the [HEI] GAs turned to other things – they didn't see the project through to its formal conclusion and secondly there were areas of the university that were never engaged, never going to go along with it and they felt any excuse not to do it was satisfactory clearly attention wasn't on them anymore and they just didn't bother.

205 I: *Are you talking about from a managerial model there?*

206 A: Yes. Well yes, the people not engaged with it were the courses, the course teams but

207 then I know the managerial level didn't try and change their culture and say you will do

208 the university policies. They didn't do it – just ticked the box some way.

209 I: *In terms, I suppose this relates to assessment policy – is there an assessment policy in*

210 *relation to the attributes, I think you've touched on how some people map the curriculum*

211 *against the attributes or do others actually actively assess?*

212 A: I don't think anybody actually assesses the [HEI] Graduate Attributes per se, nor could

213 you say that a student could pass their degree but fail the [HEI] Graduate – the other

214 way round. And again I think that could be seen as a weakness in that if we're going to

215 do a job properly because students only really start paying attention when you start

216 talking about the assessment so too if the [HEI] Graduate Attributes were assessed then

217 students would pay a lot more attention to them. It's beneficial to them, but they don't

218 see the benefits until after they've graduated unfortunately so if we made it compulsory it

219 would be better to do that and again that was a part of the project that we didn't get

220 round to doing to finishing and it's almost died a death. Like I say there were some parts

221 of the university which never fully engaged. It was never really assessed I don't think,

222 though it should be.

223 I: *So in terms of the university validations and things like that - the assessment element is*

224 *not pushed at validation?*

225 A: I don't think it ever was pushed – it was always assumed that students would either do it

226 or not do it. One of the things that bothered me about the design the future [the new

227 University Plan] one of the things that was said and I mean there was so much confusion

228 about that I can't exactly remember when, but was that there was going to be that the

229 [HEI] Graduate would have two – it was published at one point on the website – would

230 have two elements to their award. They would have the academic element – this was

231 three or four months back – the academic element where they would get their degree

232 and they would have something else that was assessed by business - a certificate or

233 licence or whatever that was assessed by business I'll dig it out one day but you can't

234 have a situation where you have people in business whatever that is defined as coming

235 in and assessing students. I mean what happens if somebody gets their degree - first

236 class honours degree – and failed their graduate bit because a boss says you're not

237 employable. That student then is never going to get a job or you could have the

238 opposite situation where a student gets a 2:2 degree for example but five star graduate

239 something or other – it's completely incongruous. I'm not suggesting the best students

240 aren't the best at employment, but you have this two aspects to it. What was your

241 question again?

242 I: *I think we were talking about assessment and that does relate to it you know I guess*

243 *some universities have gone down that degree plus path – well done you've got a*

244 *degree with an extra certificate...*

245 A: But they have to be thought through very carefully and you have to think through the

246 consequences of giving people this extra bit of paper. We did this at my college - it must

247 be twenty years ago we were talking about this. It started off as common skills and then

248 core skills and the transferable skills and now attributes I mean it's the same thing – can

249 you type can you write a letter, can you talk, can you present and computers were

250 introduced then all that sort of thing – nothing changed in all of those years and what we

251 had was what was called an [Southern county] Passport and what this was a set

252 document which listed these attributes and where they had been obtained which is all to

253 do with employability and volunteering and practice placement and so and so forth and it

254 was signed by various people and the employer so a student would go along to an

255 employer and say that's my degree certificate you can see I've got a 2:1 in engineering

256 or whatever but I'm also very employable cos I've worked in Tesco's done this
 257 volunteering etcetera and it's a separate bit of paper we thought it was the best way of
 258 doing it cos otherwise if you pull the two together, you could actually fail your degree for
 259 not doing volunteering or something and we didn't think that was right.

260 *I: Ok so you think there is a merit in having it?*

261 A: There's a merit in having it, but it does need to be thought through very carefully in terms
 262 of the consequences in terms of the messages we're giving out, the ways we do it

263 *I: And in terms of assessment, so assessment is under the control of the teacher not some*
 264 *unspecified business person.*

265 A: Absolutely – it's got to be, it's got to be. There was one situation – a long time ago –
 266 where I've had two employers, one who said 'that was an absolutely cracking student,
 267 I'm going to give him 70%' and another who said 'this student is absolute rubbish – I can
 268 only give him 68%' so these one person saying, two marks difference, and yet the
 269 phrases used are completely at opposite ends of the spectrum because they've got no
 270 concept of the scope within which we are working, they've got no concept the sort of
 271 gradations that we would use and translate the language into a mark.

272 *I: And constructive feedback and things like that.*

273 A: Absolutely.

274 *I: And just a couple more now if you've got time just quickly. One thing is about training.*
 275 *What, how effective do you think the training was for enabling managers and then*
 276 *lectures to embed the graduate attributes?*

277 A: Those people who were involved in the trailblazer courses, I can't remember the real title
 278 of them, then I think it was very good, very effective and there was lots of programmes
 279 that were put on, lots of discussion and lots of definitions and so forth and lots of
 280 interrelationship, interaction between those various groups but it never got out into the
 281 wider university. Anyway I'll stop there. Another question?

282 *I: Yes, well following from that, was any training put on for FE partners? At all that you*
 283 *were aware of?*

284 A: Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm aware of. I don't think any of the partners were ever
 285 involved in that. I think they knew about it but didn't understand what it was all about.

286 *I: And yet they're delivering the Graduate Attributes*

287 A: I know they're supposed to be, but are they ticking the box again you know? I think that's
 288 one of the problems if you bring in something like this, it really needs to be thought
 289 through very carefully with the consequences, particularly when you've got lots of
 290 partners and these things weren't considered.

291 *I: So I guess the final question is to think about the future, what do you think could or*
 292 *should be put in place, if you think they should be continued, what do you think should*
 293 *be put into place to further embed them?*

294 A: I don't think they should continue in their current form, because the practice is too
 295 disparate across the university and we've never got to the bottom of the problems of
 296 partnerships doing the same curriculum but not the [HEI] Graduate but I think we ought
 297 to rethink the [HEI] GA. My proposal would be to have a separate document to the
 298 degree certificate but built up with largely the kind of things that we do in fact every
 299 university does really, just to demonstrate that there's something extra, and what I would
 300 do is to embed that in the student psyche right from the start - blank sheets of paper and
 301 say by the end of your three years you need to have filled this in with all signature. It will
 302 be reflective – some will be filled in with other people, some parts within the curriculum
 303 and some parts outside etcetera and we can help you do this and we will check every six
 304 weeks or eight weeks or so that it's building up. Whether it's assessed or not I don't
 305 know. Basically those people who turn up with a blank sheet of paper at the end you
 306 can turn round and say well you've got your degree at the end of it, whereas somebody

307 else who's got a fully filled in portfolio will have a much better chance of a job at the end.
 308 Cos you've got the situation at the moment where students can basically avoid the [HEI]
 309 Graduate and still come out with all of those attributes and tick all the boxes.

310 *I: They got them implicitly maybe rather than explicitly?*

311 A: Well only 40% of [a Faculty] even know about them, so how can they end up with all of
 312 the attributes and say 'we've done all that' when they don't even know what they're
 313 doing?

314 *I: And I suppose with a record that's based on employer feedback I think the fear of the*
 315 *part time students that I've spoken to is the possibility of having to do something extra on*
 316 *top of the degree – it's something that's kind of built up through employment.*

317 A: I mean most of these are things that people are already doing. I think us as educators
 318 have to draw out where those things occur cos a number of times I've talked to students
 319 I teach a module which is involved in reflective practice, which is a very difficult concept
 320 as you already know for students or anybody in fact and the number of times that
 321 students say I haven't got a clue what you mean by reflection and I just talk to them
 322 about various things and answer various questions; what have we done over the last five
 323 minutes - reflecting - exactly and you didn't even know you were doing it. What you've
 324 got to do now is think about what you're doing and say I thought about that and analysed
 325 it and asked questions, I changed my attitude so that is reflection and other things
 326 people do. 'Do you do any volunteering?' 'I don't do any volunteering.' 'Are you sure
 327 about that?' 'Well only helping out at the old people's home on Saturday morning.' 'Well
 328 isn't that volunteering?' 'Do you go on the Duke of Edinburgh' 'Oh yea I've led a group...'
 329 And I've asked people 'Do they do work?' A lot of students say no they don't work and
 330 then when you get chatting they say 'oh when I was at KFC I...' 'You were at KFC?'
 331 'Well I don't do it now' But you've done it – why does it have to be current? I did that six
 332 months ago so I think it's just a question of saying 'look you're doing this stuff anyway,
 333 now think about what you're doing and how you're doing it and what it means and how
 334 you're getting messages across etcetera and then you could fill in the various boxes.

335 *I: And that would have a very clear employability focus?*

336 A: Well I think so cos one of the problems that a lot of students come across, in general
 337 come across, when they get to an interview they think they will go through a set of
 338 questions that are the same as the application and they get shocked when you tell them
 339 'give me an example of when you have faced a difficult situation and what attitude or
 340 how you achieved a particular thing' 'What? You asked me if I've got a degree'. I know
 341 that – I know whether you've got a good degree or not. Can you do the job? Well I had
 342 this situation, this is what I did that's all very good.

343 *I: So that portfolio could be based on a series of generic interview questions?*

344 A: That's absolutely right.

345 *I: Any other thoughts?*

346 A: Well the only other thought I can give you is when it was first introduced [32:10
 347 interruption by visitor, resumed 32:20] when it was first introduced it was really funny
 348 because there was a big big push towards the [HEI] Graduate to get it out in time for the
 349 next open day. It literally was a training session in one of the lecture theatres over in
 350 Ashley on the sort of Thursday afternoon before they go out on Saturday and [a Senior
 351 Manager] in charge 'we've got to push the [HEI] Graduate' and it so happened that I was
 352 bringing my son up to the open day to have a look around and see if he wanted to do
 353 any of the courses that were here. And because he hadn't got much of a clue we went
 354 to three different areas. We went to the main talk, something in business, something in
 355 sport and health and something – well it was three different faculties and at the end of it I
 356 said 'Now what have you learned?' 'I've learned they do these [HEI] Graduate Attributes
 357 and shove them down your throat!' Cos we'd heard it on four occasions – everyone did

358 their talk and that was their script – everyone did exactly the same thing - then we went
359 to Psychology, then we went to Health or whatever and they all said exactly the same
360 thing. You poor lad – he hadn't a clue what the courses were all about but that there
361 was something called the [HEI] Graduate and he was completely fed up with it.

5.1.4 HEI Quality Manager

Date : 13/06/2016

Duration : 47:30

The Quality Manager has responsibility for implementing quality policies within a faculty of the case study HEI. The manager also liaises with central quality department in terms of contributing to policy development. The manager has responsibility for overseeing effective management of assessment regulations and practice. Additionally, the manager also has a lecturing role. The quality manager has been in position throughout the inception and delivery of the HEI's graduate attributes.

1 I: *Could you just start by describing your role within the university?*

2 A: My name's [redacted] and I'm the [quality management role] so that means that I am the
3 interface between the university and the faculty looking at regulations and the way which
4 we do things, policy etcetera to make sure we're all singing off the same hymn sheet.

5 I: *And how long have you been in that role?*

6 A: Been in this role for four or five years, something like that. I'm also a lecturer in
7 marketing, Principal lecturer in marketing and teaching consumer behaviour and
8 services marketing in the main.

9 I: *How long have you been at the university?*

10 A: I've been at the university [around 20 years], something like that. A long time. And
11 before I was the Quality Manager, I was the [involved in student recruitment].

12 I: *Ok thanks so if we start thinking about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes what can you tell
13 me about why you think they were created at this university?*

14 A: I think at the time a lot of universities were going down the graduate attributes line and
15 so I think there was a movement from the centre to say that we should have graduate
16 attributes and that we should try to have these so that they were distinctive from our
17 competitors, so I think that that was the main reason, there was a drive also in the
18 literature around the time for developing graduate attributes.

19 I: *Ok thank you. Looking for the rationale for the university doing them, so you thought a
20 lot of it was about copying other universities?*

21 A: Yes, a lot of it was about looking at the sector and seeing what the sector does and so
22 that seems to be the flavour at the time was to develop graduate attributes and it was in
23 a lot of the literature at the time as well that we needed to think about graduate attributes
24 – what makes a graduate. And I think in this university they tried to use that to make it
25 distinctive, a sort of distinctive offering.

26 I: *And to what extent do you feel the [HEI] Graduate Attributes do make a distinctive
27 offering for this university?*

28 A: I don't think they do because the attributes that we've got, and actually perhaps they
29 would be very similar to what other universities or colleges have. If you look at other
30 graduate attributes that are published, they are very similar to the ones that we have.
31 So, and I'm not sure that they're particularly memorable as well. We seem to have
32 dropped one of them en-route as well – I think it was the enterprise one which people
33 don't particularly seem to be using now. And I think it's sort of moved on from there as
34 well.

35 I: *So what do you mean by 'moved on'? Do you mean in terms of whether the graduate
36 attributes are being implemented or whether you think the graduate attributes are
37 changing?*

38 A: I think that the way in which we wrote our graduate attributes I think they were
39 particularly easy to deliver. Graduate attributes are often dictated in many respects by
40 our framework. So you know we have a framework which we have to follow in terms of
41 QAA where we have certain types of behaviour at certain levels. Therefore, those in
42 many respects are your graduate attributes what you should be doing at those levels, so
43 your level descriptors from the QAA are really what graduates should do. Now if you're
44 trying to make that a bit more distinctive, in the main we were promoting employability
45 and globalness and I think that in most of our courses we were doing that anyway so I
46 don't think it actually changed things. I think what it might have done is actually
47 constrain some of the developments we had because we were trying to force in graduate
48 attribute sort of language at the same time as trying to hit the learning outcomes. I think
49 we'd have been a lot better if we'd have redesigned our learning outcomes which were
50 developed from, because we had this eight plus two model, if we'd have had those

51 redesigned where we were looking at graduate attributes I think that would have been a
52 lot better. Whereas as it was we were trying to map onto two or three different things.

53 *I: You are referring to the [HEI] Eight there?*

54 *A: Yes.*

55 *I: Yes, that was a question later on cos I'm trying to understand how the [HEI] Eight and*
56 *the 3Es and the six graduate attributes have interact with each other – what the*
57 *framework is and.*

58 *A: I don't think, well they weren't developed at the same time you see. Because I've been*
59 *here so long I know the history [laughs].*

60 *I: Great I'd like to hear.*

61 *A: The QAA developed the model in terms of the level descriptors for levels of higher*
62 *education – the FEQH or whatever it is, I can never remember the exact acronym.*
63 *Those descriptors as to what you should be doing at each sort of level. Now we had a*
64 *member of staff here called [withheld] who worked for health and she worked on the*
65 *eight model with us and then went off to be Quality Director for QAA. She's gone from*
66 *there now, she's gone to a university now, one of the London ones I can't remember*
67 *which one it was, but she developed that as a sort of secondment and then she was*
68 *seconded to the QAA so we were quite embedded in that sort of talk and so that has*
69 *lasted years – must be 12, 15 years, something like that. 15 years, something. So we've*
70 *never changed that. When you see we had a change in personnel here, the graduate*
71 *attributes have been sort of bolted on to the eight, but actually the eight learning*
72 *outcomes worked quite well, and it wouldn't have taken a lot of work I don't think*
73 *perhaps either have one there for, have some things more employable in there, or have*
74 *things with more global aspects within that or even have a ten model with them built in,*
75 *so that you weren't trying to do the two things separately. Because as it is now, we have*
76 *to map with both and sometimes you're repeating yourself and do students really*
77 *understand and read them? Probably not. Probably most of the staff don't either. Cos I*
78 *can't think of the six now.*

79 *I: The six attributes.*

80 *A: Yes. No, I'd have to look online to see where they are.*

81 *I: And I mean this is something I've come across that I'm trying to understand how we*
82 *have it's almost a set of cognitive attributes isn't it?*

83 *A: Yes.*

84 *I: And then for the Graduate Attributes a kind of broader thing.*

85 *A: Yes, they are, yes.*

86 *I: But having the two sets does seem to be confusing?*

87 *A: Absolutely yes. And it's confusing to staff and it's confusing to students. If they'd have,*
88 *if we'd have realigned our [HEI]Eight with graduate attributes that would have been, and*
89 *this it would have been in built with all these structures, but as it is we've had to alter*
90 *things a bit to put it in or even worse, design particular modules where you're hitting*
91 *those. And I just think that's a bit false having something where, we had a couple on*
92 *Business, where you'd have these particular ability sort of modules and actually they*
93 *should be throughout the course, not just hitting it in one module. Because the trouble is*
94 *with modularity is that students just think of modules rather than the course and I think*
95 *that for the huge benefit would be to step back and think holistically about the course*
96 *and not this module here and this module there because otherwise, students don't think*
97 *that what they learn in one module they can use in another. They think that's that and*
98 *so that's finished with – I'm here now I'm doing something different and you know quite*
99 *often they're not. But it's that they would have much more cohesion if it wasn't quite so*
100 *much embedded in one or two modules.*

101 *I: So you think that sort of mapping approach is restrictive?*

102 A: Yes, I do.

103 I: *Ok so it's this graduate attribute is clearly addressed in this module – tick.*

104 A: Yes, and I think it's become a bit of a tick box thing now. And it's certainly in some

105 subject areas they're very easy to do you know things, I can't even remember of the top

106 of my head what the six are now, but certainly you know about global appreciation and

107 employability, with the work in out faculty and I would imagine in most faculties, they're

108 there anyway and did we really need to bring them out in the way we brought them out

109 because also they're very easily copied. I was down in [Midlands city] recently, I think

110 it's [a Midlands college] college I think it is and they've got the same as ours.

111 I: *Exactly the same?*

112 A: Exactly the same ones. Yes.

113 I: *And they're claiming them for the college?*

114 A: Yes.

115 I: *Because I know they're an HE provider, but these are for their own college?*

116 A: Yes, but this was a few years ago when I went to an external examiner event and we

117 were taking about graduate attributes and they listed theirs. They had the 3Es, we had

118 the 3Es. Now they might not have had the underlying ones, but they had those, sorry

119 the 3Es so they had those the same as we did exactly so I was wondering if they came

120 from somewhere else completely and we'd both got them from somewhere else.

121 I: *Right so they'd both been inspired by somebody else?*

122 A: Yes.

123 I: *Ok and you mentioned the 3Es there. We've already looked at the dilemma between the*

124 *[HEI] Eight and the graduate attributes and we have the 3Es as well so where do they sit*

125 *within that?*

126 A: Well I've never quite understood that. I've always thought that the 3Es were the

127 umbrella of the [HEI] Graduate but I might be wrong.

128 I: *Right ok and I think it's your observation about the students in the interviews I've done*

129 *so far, nobody's heard of the [HEI]Eight. Most have heard about the Graduate*

130 *Attributes.*

131 A: Well in some respects the [HEI]Eight are more important as they tell them what they

132 have to do to get a degree.

133 I: *They are cognitive skills which need to be achieved.*

134 A: Yes.

135 I: *So, I think moving on from that. Do you think they are equally relevant for all students*

136 *then, so the attributes are they for all students at this university?*

137 A: Well I think that, I think that it's a bit of a broad brush isn't it? And I think that students

138 like things to be much more precise. I think it would, if they had been developed more

139 into subjects and then we could promote those in those subjects I think that might have

140 been more valid. Because I think they can be, and actually sometimes it's a bit difficult

141 to say where they're not. Because if, for example, somebody's doing an HND or an

142 HNC they're often hitting those graduate attributes although they're not full honours

143 graduates and I know that when I've been working with partnerships you know they

144 might be on previous versions of our programme and we're supposed to be developing

145 them into the [HEI] Graduate, but actually they do it all anyway. So what difference is

146 there between those – it's not really giving any sort of differential there at all.

147 I: *And how do you think, cos some of our partners they have their own attributes, or they*

148 *work with other universities, you know so they're providers for other universities who*

149 *have their own attributes as well, what provision do you think the university makes for*

150 *that?*

151 A: I don't think they make any if you're on a [HEI] University one then you're supposed to

152 do that and it is quite a narrow sort of approach. And I don't think perhaps we involve

partners in the development of those Graduate Attributes. We didn't say well what do you think. Because actually I think we're missing a big trick with ourselves which is, partnerships can be a real pain at times, but at the same time we are pretty good at them and we don't use them and we don't have that sort of partnership community. It's a parent child relationship in many respects: "this is the course and these are the attributes that you have to do and these are the ones you have to do where and when". And so it's all, and those are the ones we've been told to do from high, so we tell our partners to do as well. It's all a bit parent/child-ish. It's not something that it's being discussed, where it's relevant, what parts are relevant, how you can really make it distinctive, because they're not distinctive.

I: *Right yes and just a little sidetrack from your marketing background, what would you have to say about, I mean some people comment that graduate attributes are a marketing ruse of universities to create a unique selling point. From your marketing point of view, what views would you have on that?*

A: Try to find them on the website! They're not easy to find, therefore, is it really something that's being sold? You know, if you just go on the website [goes to computer] they don't appear, you see they don't appear on the homepage, if you just go onto the, this'll pick me up if I just go to here won't it? If you just go onto the homepage it's not there.

I: *It's not on Blackboard is it? [The university's Virtual Learning Environment]*

A: No.

I: *I think you probably have to Google them or use the search to...*

A: You probably do. [pause – searching on university website]. It's not on the A-Z [list of university links] so how can it be a marketing tool if it's not there?

I: *Not being used no.*

A: [Laughs].

I: *so back to the development cos I'm interested in that. You said that the partners weren't really involved in that. Can you say were you involved in any way at all?*

A: No they had a working group where they were, but I think that was quite high level. I think it was mainly [Senior Manager] and [Senior Manager] who developed this idea about graduate attributes and it was on high and then there was an implementation group and I know that [Manager] was involved in that and I think it might have been [Manager] as well. So we have a couple of people that were involved because we were doing a sort of pilot of it within [tourism and events] so in many respects the bits about being global and employable fits very well with that and I think you know you said earlier about is it for all and I think probably in our sort of university it would be because I think we are quite vocational. I think if you were at a different sort, a red brick university and doing something like philosophy you might not be quite so much, but then it might be still. You've had a global awareness thing if it's in research or whatever, but it might not be quite so overtly linked to employment.

I: *Do you think the employability focus is equally relevant to part time students who are already employed in the sector who want to work?*

A: I think a lot of the aspects about it we do already and the students do already so when we do annual monitoring for example, you know were supposed to look at the way in which graduate attributes have been, you know, applied. Quite a lot of the reports I see, they do this anyway because they are in work. And they same with the employability I don't think that, I think that if you're doing it anyway, then how much of it is graduate attributes? Is it graduate?

I: *Is it graduate level?*

A: Yes, because you're doing it, you know, so. And is employability a graduate attribute? Cos it's not actually. Employability is just being able to get a job, but a graduate attribute to me is much more about cognitive aspects, about well what sort of skills and behaviour

204 do you have when you are a graduate as you're going through the course? And it might
 205 actually be something that's very specific to your course so what your graduate
 206 attributes might be for an education award might be different to what they would have in
 207 [the interviewee's subject area].

208 *I: So would you say that's a problem of having a one size fits all?*

209 A: Yes. And although they should have been perhaps tailored, we haven't been allowed to
 210 tailor them enough. Because we've been told 'no these are the ones and you map on to
 211 it' not 'these are the umbrellas, you use it to develop courses'

212 *I: So what do you think of mapping then?*

213 A: Well I think that it would be fine if then you didn't also have the eight learning outcomes
 214 that you have to hit as well. But I say if they'd have done it the other way round and
 215 embedded the graduate attributes into the eight then we would have been doing it all at
 216 the same time and we would have developed courses where we could say 'you'll be
 217 doing this, this and this' you know this is the sort of thing you would do not just to the
 218 graduate attribute because a graduate attribute is very broad, but it's a graduate attribute
 219 at [HEI] University and also a graduate attribute of the BA education. Yeah? It's got to
 220 be those levels hasn't it? So you've got those levels which QAA would say you might
 221 have graduate attributes a university might say, but then it's something about having the
 222 graduate attributes for your particular course and that's what makes it meaningful to staff
 223 and meaningful to students.

224 *I: One suggestion by one author is that each course should have a clear graduate profile –*
 225 *when you are doing this course, these are the kind of attributes, you know these are the*
 226 *ones of the university, but these are the ones you will develop more than others sort of*
 227 *like a profile.*

228 A: That's right yes. And you also might think about the, a typical graduate. What would a
 229 typical graduate be able to do and think about and what sort of skills and behaviour that
 230 they might have.

231 *I: Ok thanks. I want to think about I guess the implementation, assessment and quality*
 232 *management of these at the moment. We've started thinking about implementation and*
 233 *you said it was a working group and that you don't think the partners were involved very*
 234 *much – about staff, to what extent do you think people were consulted about this?*

235 A: The, I think that the, initial working group was very closed. The implementation group
 236 was essentially saying this is what you've got to do.

237 *I: So those attributes had been set before consultation took place?*

238 A: Yes.

239 *I: So consultation was more about how to implement rather than deciding...*

240 A: Yes.

241 *I: And do you have any thoughts on that?*

242 A: Well it's not really right is it? [Laughs]. I wouldn't have said. It's difficult in a university
 243 because everybody's got an opinion and you know the trouble is if you make things too
 244 wide then you get so many different opinions that it becomes unworkable so I can
 245 understand that they wanted to bring this in. I don't think there was enough consultation.
 246 I think in terms of the implementation they weren't told – it wasn't about implementing
 247 them, it was how do we get this throughout, it was targeting a few awards as ones that
 248 led on it and they were told that they had to embed it in certain modules and they had to
 249 develop a module, the details of those modules was discussed in this implementation
 250 group, rather than how do we spread it around, how do we get people on side. And I
 251 think also people became onside simply because it was the political thing to do.

252 *I: Ok, and so to what extent do you think they have been implemented now?*

253 A: Well I think in many respects they have been, but it wasn't a big ask in a lot of cases to
 254 be honest. The worst ones were actually the ones where we've had to embed them into

255 a module and we've had big problems with those modules. You know we had huge
 256 failure rates in business because of graduate attributes. Huge. And the reason why,
 257 and this is the implementation group were told that they had to have like a portfolio sort
 258 of approach to employability and student had to load things onto Pebblepad [online
 259 portfolio system] which if you've ever done anything with Pebblepad is an absolute
 260 nightmare. The had to load things onto Pebblepad and there had to be certain pieces of
 261 work, something like five different pieces of work loaded onto Pebblepad, all assessed
 262 and, you know, feedback to students etcetera. The problem with that was that at the
 263 time the university brought in a rule whereby if you, if you missed out on any piece of
 264 assessment it automatically got downgraded to a maximum of a 19 [%] - non-
 265 compensatable. The module that we put it into was a 45 credit module and students
 266 couldn't progress, students couldn't, you know students who had done really well, but
 267 they'd missed out on a 5% of something and they could not get onto the second year
 268 and it was simply because of this - regulations not talking to people who were
 269 implementing this, but also we were told that they couldn't have any other module, we
 270 could only have one piece of assessment. These were 15 credit modules in the main,
 271 we could only have one piece of assessment. Those modules where these were
 272 supposed to be capstone modules we were told we had to have something like five or
 273 six assessments, so where was the rationale behind that? It was nonsense.

274 I: *Where did that come from?*

275 A: It came from [a Senior Manager], she was the chair of that implementation group that
 276 this was something that had to happen. And we have all sorts of other things in it where
 277 we have things like they had to do a, oh they had to go out and do some work, some
 278 work experience with it. Well that's fine for us, but can you imagine trying to do that in
 279 [Overseas] College? You know, they just, it's a nonsense, they can't organise it. And
 280 then we were, we had to put Pebblepad on, but our partners didn't have Pebblepad.

281 I: *So that wasn't implemented to the partners?*

282 A: No, no. So it was, it was, we've had to back track and backtrack and get something that
 283 we can live with now.

284 I: *Pebblepad's died now?*

285 A: It has, it has. It was killed.

286 I: *So, are those portfolios still done in another way?*

287 A: They're done and still a bit messy.

288 I: *But that's not throughout the whole university is it?*

289 A: No. But these were the championship awards. These were the ones that were
 290 supposed to, the ones that were singled out as being, you know, really good to develop
 291 these. But then again it didn't, it hasn't worked for those.

292 I: *For the model, the model courses from which we were supposed to copy, these ended
 293 up having worse results than others.*

294 A: Yes. We had, as I say that first year that we had for the business management
 295 students, we had over 50% failure rate on one module which meant that they couldn't
 296 progress.

297 I: *And I suppose staying on that subject of assessment then, so we've said how there was
 298 clear assessment in these pathfinder courses. To what extent do you think graduate
 299 attributes were assessed in other courses?*

300 A: They would be assessed a lot easier if they were in the eight because you have to hit
 301 learning outcomes. You can't hit learning outcomes and hit graduate attributes. You
 302 know – there's too many things to hit then. But if they'd been embedded it would have
 303 been easier, but after saying that the graduate attributes are so broad they hit them
 304 anyway. And because they're being mapped to them, they sort of get them by default.

305 I: *You think it's almost automatic if you pass the course you will have these.*

306 A: Oh completely. Because I mean all of the courses have been slightly redesigned now so
 307 they do that to be honest.

308 I: *Do you think that goes back to your point about whether they are graduate level*
 309 *graduate attributes?*

310 A: Yes, I don't think, yes. Because you can have employability at any level. You know –
 311 my daughter's working in a Chinese restaurant – that's employability isn't it? [Laughs].
 312 Not exactly graduate level.

313 I: *So you think the focus should be on graduate level employability.*

314 A: Yes.

315 I: *Ok. Do you think, yes I think we've covered that. I think the university, I mean it's still,*
 316 *I've checked the website, it pledges that all graduates achieve all of the [HEI] Graduate*
 317 *Attributes. How does it know that this pledge is upheld?*

318 A: Because they are so broad that you can't not do them

319 I: *So you think it's so general.*

320 A: Yes, it is - prove otherwise, I mean how could you prove that you're not hitting those. I
 321 mean it's an interesting thing that what about if you get a student who says 'I haven't got
 322 a job, I've graduated from a uni within a year and I haven't got a job yet so therefore I'm
 323 suing you for the employability pledge.'?

324 I: *And how would the university defend itself?*

325 A: No idea. [Laughs]. It's very difficult to make pledges. I think we might have used some
 326 careful wording in terms of 'the opportunity to' rather than...

327 I: *Oh I think that's for the work placement you have an opportunity, but for the graduate*
 328 *attributes it's a pledge.*

329 A: Yes, our pledge to you is that you will have these, but as I say they're so broad that you
 330 are bound to.

331 I: *Right, thinking about your role in quality, how do you think the quality of GA provision is*
 332 *measured within the institution?*

333 A: Well I think that in, at the design phase of any sort of course we have to incorporate,
 334 which I within review you have to incorporate it and reflect on it in terms of the course
 335 design and then it is also you know you have a box there that you have to fill in for
 336 annual monitoring, so it is there throughout say, but it is a low bar to be honest.

337 I: *So what do you think would make it a higher bar or more effective?*

338 A: I'm not sure I want to make it any higher because I think it's been difficult and impractical
 339 enough but I think that maybe it's time to look at the learning outcome models – output
 340 model and see whether those are still relevant and if they need changing to be more
 341 [HEI] Graduate. It doesn't have to be the graduate because of course you've got things
 342 throughout the years. It depends what you mean by graduate. You know, kids
 343 nowadays graduate from nursery, but from a first year should they be doing, should they
 344 have certain graduate attributes?

345 I: *Should they have something to define what is meant by a successful student...*

346 A: Yes, but that goes back again to levels of education.

347 I: *Within the QAA?*

348 A: Within the QAA yes.

349 I: *I think, I think we've kind of covered it, because I'm talking about how are they monitored*
 350 *– you've talked about the forms they fill in. How do you know whether say [Overseas*
 351 *College] or [Midlands college] or [Northern college] – any of these partners. How do you*
 352 *know whether any of them are actually implementing the graduate attributes?*

353 A: Well all it, they're embedded in courses, and they're embedded in foreign modules so if,
 354 when we do the programme specs now we're supposed to map where they are
 355 assessed – where the graduate attributes are assessed and because, so therefore if

356 they do the course they get it by default which is right, but at the same time it's another
357 thing on top of the learning outcomes model we've got.

358 I: *I mean some universities are very explicit in the assessment they've got graduate*
359 *attributes...*

360 A: Yes, they are yes.

361 I: *Is that something you would see as being a benefit or a problem?*

362 A: I don't think it's that relevant and it might be the fact that ours are so broad that I'm not
363 sure that, it's a bit of a can of worms because you know if you do that, where do you put
364 it? Therefore, do you never allow compensation on those modules. You know once you
365 start with that you can get a whole load of problems.

366 I: *As in you've passed your degree but not your graduate attributes*

367 A: Yes

368 I: *Or you've passed your graduate attributes but you didn't get your degree.*

369 A: And also you see I know there was talk a little while ago about giving a score for
370 graduate attributes now I don't know if anything's going to happen, but can you imagine
371 getting a distinction, merit and pass, you get a distinction in your graduate attributes but
372 you only get a third class degree.

373 I: *Which is possible.*

374 A: Yes, absolutely. Completely possible, so it's got to be thought through.

375 I: *Would a solution be for them to be much more implemented in the course then so your*
376 *score is your score for graduation and attributes.*

377 A: Yes, that's right.

378 I: *I think we've, I've just thought about policies and practice; is there any redress for student*
379 *complaint in the event that GAs are not being implemented?*

380 A: Never had any. No student has ever come in here and asked anything about graduate
381 attributes. [Laughs].

382 I: *So no real thought about them.*

383 A: No real thought.

384 I: *I mean that, you know somewhat randomly somebody sent me an email where there*
385 *was a survey about graduate attributes from about two years ago. Is this something that*
386 *is still being monitored in any way?*

387 A: I haven't heard of anything. And I don't think that it's been as a matter of course, on for
388 example course committee meetings I don't think it's mentioned there. We do have a
389 set sort of agenda, I'm not sure if it's part of the agenda but I've not heard not heard
390 anything about that.

391 I: *So you've not heard anything about the survey that has been done since the initial one*
392 *then?*

393 A: No.

394 I: *Ok so that showed some quite considerable inconsistencies in knowledge then that's not*
395 *been followed up?*

396 A: No. I wonder whether or not it's just got a little bit old now and people are just thinking
397 well that's been done the next thing will be measuring learning gain [laughs].

398 I: *And what are your thoughts then in terms on ability to implement policy?*

399 A: For which? In what way?

400 I: *As a university, well I was thinking if you're saying the graduate attributes are sort of*
401 *drifting away.*

402 A: Yes, the next thing as I say it'll be the learning gains then there'll be another working
403 group talking about learning gains and then there will be some metrics, somebody to
404 work on metrics of that. And then there will be something about intermediate learning
405 gains that we can monitoring our students in terms of learning.

406 I: *So I guess a primary school model of assessment.*

407 A: Yes and then there might be streaming students in terms of their ability.
 408 I: *Now that's interesting. Any problems with that?*
 409 A: Well
 410 I: *Pay £9,000 to be in the third stream?*
 411 A: Although they might get more support and therefore they might get more classes so
 412 therefore the other lot in the first classes, they might complain! At my daughter's school
 413 they're doing GCSE's at the moment and she's complaining cos she's in the top set at
 414 maths. The bottom set get pizza the top set don't [both laugh]. This is the incentive – to
 415 feed [Laughs].
 416 I: *I haven't heard of that before to close the attainment gap through fast food. Nice. And*
 417 *the scientific research behind that is...*
 418 A: I've no idea. I think that we accept streaming in schools but I'm not sure whether
 419 politically we'd accept streaming so much at university.
 420 I: *Is that on the entry criteria you make...*
 421 A: Yes, but at the same time we do know that some are more able than others.
 422 I: *That's an interesting thought – another doctorate right there. I'll leave you to that one.*
 423 *So I think almost drawing to a close. Oh yes. In terms of when they were brought in but*
 424 *also to the current day I want to think about training. To what extent do you think*
 425 *training was made available first of all to staff on campus about how to implement the*
 426 *graduate attributes?*
 427 A: I think there was a few sessions in designing your modules with graduate attributes, but I
 428 think *that's as far as it went when it first came and there hasn't been anything since.*
 429 I: *Did those sessions tell you about how to implement them in relation to the [HEI] Eight*
 430 *and the 3Es's?*
 431 A: No. It's a tick box thing. I haven't seen anything brought in since.
 432 I: *These were brought in 2012, so any member of staff joining since then probably hasn't*
 433 *been trained?*
 434 A: No.
 435 I: *And then thinking about the partners?*
 436 A: No. I suppose what happens is they're now embedded into booklets so the training is
 437 you fill in that form and that's your template.
 438 I: *So when a new member of staff either here or abroad in a partner college sees that box*
 439 *saying what are you doing with the [HEI] Graduate Attributes there's no support*
 440 *available?*
 441 A: Not really no. And I've never seen any filled in very well. And I saw 110 reports last
 442 year!
 443 I: *Do you think there's a correlation there?*
 444 A: Possibly yes.
 445 I: *So just to finish off then, thinking about possible futures, what you think will happen from*
 446 *your point of view, what you think could be done with regard to implementation. First of*
 447 *all, in terms of the future of the graduate attributes what are your feelings for where they*
 448 *will go or whether they'll just drift away?*
 449 A: I think they'll just drift away and I think it'll be the new next thing that will happen and I
 450 think that we're becoming, the sector as well, is becoming much more twitchy about the
 451 metrics that you need for to do well on league tables and I think that that will overtake it.
 452 And in terms of marketing you know I'm not sure what's going to happen in terms of
 453 putting on courses and the marketing of the university but I think what might happen
 454 might be rather than sort of graduate attributes, it might turn back to values – university
 455 values, which I've seen in other universities a bit more. You know – 'these are our
 456 values, this is how we'll support you'. This is easier in some respects than the thought of
 457 graduate attributes. They're not really well understood are graduate attributes. We

458 forget that it's a foreign language to most people who are coming in and to the parents
 459 as well. So you know people won't know what a graduate attribute is.

460 I: *In your view then what, you've highlighted what you see as quite a few problems with*
 461 *implementation, assessment and evaluation – their role within the quality cycle. What*
 462 *would you change – would you get rid of them altogether or would...*

463 A: I think that what would be useful in terms of graduate attributes is actually having
 464 another look at the eight and having a look at what attributes we've got now, whether or
 465 not they're all valid, whether we wanted to change anything and then looking at it
 466 holistically with the learning outcomes and then maybe tailoring the learning outcomes
 467 cos they've never been changed in fifteen years and maybe it's time that we did. For
 468 example, there isn't one on teamwork.

469 I: *Are you talking about the eight?*

470 A: Yes. And you can put one in cos it's eight plus two model so you can have two of your
 471 own for every course.

472 I: *Oh I see so that explains the plus two.*

473 A: But you see nobody knows what the plus two is unless you've lived through it [laughs].
 474 So if you've got something particular on your course that needs to be addressed
 475 especially something like benchmarks then you put them in your two.

476 I: *Cutting, sticking, gluing...*

477 A: Exactly yes. Colouring in in yours.

478 I: *And that would just provide one framework.*

479 A: Only a framework is what we need. Some distinctiveness, but that mixture of being you
 480 know [HEI], any sort of distinctive levels we want but also incorporates the levels from
 481 QAA as well. Cos we've been trying to do too many masters. In the business school we
 482 did have the 5 As. Which only lasted for a couple of months until it was overtaken by
 483 graduate attributes, but you think that [Senior Manager] read similar things about
 484 graduate attributes so that was the reason they got that in.

485 I: *The poster still lives in the [HEI campus] building.*

486 A: They've gone – but it's a nice poster.

487 I: *It is a nice poster yes. Do you have any other thoughts about what we've discussed*
 488 *today then?*

489 A: I think that what is really needed is not just about, it's a very simplistic thing to think
 490 about what you want at the end. What you've got to, these are the sort of graduates at
 491 the end – this is this person you know and it's a complete moulded person there. And
 492 these are the people that come in. Well what you've got to think about is the journey.
 493 What happens between the student coming in and going out. What sort of things do we
 494 expect them to do? And I think that perhaps what we need to do is to address that,
 495 thinking about what, how we support students and what we tell them to do. We've
 496 drifted down a little bit in terms of trying to be entertaining all of the time and what we
 497 need to get across is this partnership approach about what a student should do for you
 498 what you have to do for us. I think that if we can get that partnership approach much
 499 more embedded, I think that would have more value than just thinking about some sort
 500 of headline attributes at the end, so thinking about how you would be successful. When
 501 I was doing my research I sat in here and did a focus group with some students and I
 502 went through the engagement survey I was doing and one of the students looked at the
 503 factors and said 'Oh is that what I should be doing?' They don't know what they should
 504 be doing.

505 I: *So rather than our pledge to you, your pledge to us?*

506 A: Yes, yes well it's all about that relationship and it's all about the relationship between
 507 ourselves and the students and how we develop them to the best of their capability.

508 I: *And that could be driven through...*

509 A: Yes, it could be driven through some sort of structure like this but it might not be actual
510 graduate attributes, it might be more thinking about stages of your university life and
511 what sort of things work and what sort of things don't work. I know there's a number of
512 universities now using what they call big data doing behavioural work saying what
513 successful behaviours do, sorry, what behaviours do successful students have?
514 I: *Ok.*
515 A: And then trying to encourage those behaviours.
516 I: *So that goes back to the character, resilience and grit that's big at the moment.*
517 A: Yes, but trying to develop those sort of things in the students in a sort of learning
518 journey. I know that some universities now, you download an app get to [Exeter] for
519 example and it does all sorts of things for example, but one thing it does do is link in with
520 metrics so it will tell you things like 'successful students go to the library for at least three
521 hours a week - you haven't been to the library this week. [Laughs].
522 I: *Oh great so it's almost like a Tamagochi.*
523 A: Yes, it's a Fitbit.
524 I: *'You haven't been a Global Citizen today'*
525 A: Yes [Laughs] It's a bit Big Brother. I'm not quite sure about it but I do like the idea but
526 these sort of things we don't think about it in terms of students' behaviour. And I think
527 that it's that needs to be looked at.
528 I: *More emphasis on the student.*
529 A: Yes.
530 I: *Thank you.*

5.1.5 HEI Outreach Lecturer

Date : 12/11/2016

Duration : 46:40

Education course Award Leader and Education senior lecturer. The interviewee lectures at both the HEI main campus as well as an outreach venue. This venue is shared between the HEI and a partner college. The interviewee's professional background is in school teaching but has worked at the university since before the introduction of the GAs.

1 A: My name is [name] and I'm a Senior Lecturer in Education in the School of Education
2 and I work on undergraduate programmes in particular the BA Education (top-up) but
3 also on other undergraduate education programmes.

4 I *So first of all I'd like you to think about Graduate Attributes. I think they formed around*
5 *2011-2012. What are your thoughts – why do you think they were created?*

6 A: I think probably to respond to the employability agenda, the need for the university to
7 demonstrate that they were addressing the employability agenda and that they were
8 seeking to improve the employability prospects of their graduates. And it provided a
9 structure similar to HEIs who are also looking at, you know, how do we quantify the skills
10 and attributes that are needed in order to be competitive in the employability market.

11 I: *And to what extent do you think it achieved those aims, or is it achieving those aims?*

12 A: As soon as it was introduced, I think it started a dialogue and discussion which is I think
13 the main value of having something like that, to start a dialogue for all stakeholders
14 involved, not just the people that designed it in the first place, so that they could then
15 develop it, refine it, and actually make more sense of it to get it to the point where it met
16 the needs of our students in our university as well as other stakeholders, employers
17 etcetera. I don't recall any preparatory work on the graduate attributes. They just, sort
18 of, arrived, so I'm not aware of any lead-in design when stakeholders were involved
19 which I think would be a mistake. So if it was going to be worthwhile, it wouldn't need to
20 be done retrospectively like 'I know we haven't consulted with you in the first place but
21 we needed a starting point, here's our starting point, this is what we think graduate
22 attributes look like, we're going to use them, put them in operation a bit and then we're
23 going to consult with everybody and see whether they've been a worthwhile thing or
24 whether they need altering'. We've had none of that so therefore it's, it could easily be
25 perceived by any of the stakeholders as being a bit of a flash in the pan and it's not
26 really used anymore, it's not really valued and then so people forget about it or it does
27 just fade and it's sort of there but it's a tick box exercise rather than something that's got
28 real meaning or value. I think it's got potential to have value – I think they've just missed
29 out the dialogue and the discussion, in terms of how it might develop.

30 I: *So you weren't invited to contribute to them or, you're not aware of any consultation*
31 *process.*

32 A: I'm not aware of it. I'm not aware of it. That's not to say it hasn't gone past me cos I
33 can't guarantee that I haven't, I might have missed it. However, what I will say is I
34 looked into, when I first started looking at them, it interested me that they were there, but
35 the lack of any kind of maturity model of what it looks like when it's first appearing,
36 what's it look like when it's becoming developing, what's it look like when it's more
37 established, what does it look like when it's actually at an empowerment stage or
38 extending somebody. It's got huge potential to actually have a real dialogue; what that
39 might look like, how appropriate is it. And when I started to put that idea around and
40 share that idea with other people, in some cases with high level people from the Faculty
41 and even the University, it met with, 'oh yes, that's really interesting – and then nothing'.
42 And so, I've got to say that I've though well I'd just be doing it on my own, you know,
43 where I think it's relevant and just, well I can't help but do that anyway. I always look at
44 things in terms of don't just tick the box – what does it look like as you get better at it?
45 And I try to use, I try to use a model of that, you know, for when I'm talking about
46 employability skills with students.

47 I *So you've got a vision of what it looks like at each level?*

48 A: Yes.

49 I: *Ok, thanks. Do you think, do you think they have the same value for part-time and full*
50 *time students?*

51 A: Yes, I do, they have to, because as they stand, possibly not, but as a concept they
52 would need to, there would need to be that consistency, because why would it be
53 different? I think that part-time students are already in that workplace, they're already
54 working normally and they've had other experiences of work that could contribute to
55 what they found graduate attributes are useful so how applicable would they have found
56 those already in their place of work. If they were going to change it, well which were
57 more applicable, which were less applicable? Have they opened their eyes to becoming
58 better employees rather than for a full-time student who largely although not exclusively
59 might be coming into the employment market fresh into the employment market starting
60 off on some kind of career so they, having different perspectives for the same framework
61 would be a good idea otherwise you've got two different perspectives, two different
62 frameworks – how would they sort of be able to inform each other, how would they be
63 able to learn from one another so I'd have one framework but I would value the fact that
64 people come at it from different perspectives. And again, if there's a dialog going on
65 about, you know, how useful it is, different perspectives can really add value to that
66 dialogue.

67 I: *And so what do you think of the six attributes then, do you think they're suitable for our*
68 *graduates or...*

69 A: I think they cover most of the things, if you look at other universities there are similar
70 things that HEIs have done or commerce have already done, they would probably adopt
71 something quite similar, so they cover most of the areas, I don't think there's anything
72 necessarily that's missing, you know, significantly that's missing, but we won't really
73 know until we're sort of, you know, sit down and discuss it because person had taken a
74 view that yes they do, no they don't isn't going to make any difference whereas if there's
75 a discussion about which is the most effective, then it could be really valuable. But
76 generally I think they cover, they cover a reasonable spectrum of skills and attributes. I
77 think the one that's mentioned, but everyone probably ignores is global awareness and I
78 think that's one that we all maybe ought to define a bit more closely. Certainly that's
79 something we ought to do particularly in the light of Brexit. Particularly in the light of
80 Brexit, yeah. We're going to be even more isolated, all our potential employees are
81 going to be more isolated in the global market if we don't place a higher value on global
82 awareness, global understanding and understanding of other cultures, functioning, what
83 skills and attributes you need to function in another culture. And it doesn't mean to say
84 that the culture needs to be a million miles away from where we are in terms of being
85 clearly and obviously different, I think we've probably experienced it ourselves. Go to
86 somewhere that feels similar to how we are and we make assumptions about how
87 similar we are. We've both been to Finland and have worked and have done work in
88 Finland. It always amazes me how when something looks similar there are also some
89 significant differences in the way that things are understood, the way they're perceived and
90 those subtleties of cultural differences is something we can't keep we have to learn that.
91 If you're not exposed to that and then reflect on that to realise what have I just
92 experienced then, actually that was quite a significant difference even if it feels quite
93 subtle to in our culture. I need to be aware of that next time I'm talking to that person so
94 that I don't put my foot in it. We probably create too many international incidents
95 because we are, we lack that ability to see the differences in, the subtle differences in
96 culture and that's something that I think we really need to work on. And we're awful at in
97 in this country.

98 I: *So it's an interesting, so to summarise you think it's the most problematic at the moment*
99 *but also the most important as well, the Global Citizen.*

100 A: Yes, I think so. Once we've moved, we've moved beyond fundamentals of
101 communication [Stop after 10:28 due to noise disturbance, resume 10:46]

102 I: *Right, think about, you've heard of the 3Es as well, haven't you?*

103 A: Yes, yes.

104 I: *What do you see as being the relationship between the 3Es and the Graduate*

105 *Attributes?*

106 A: That's a really good question cos there's that 5 As as well. There isn't an explicit

107 correlation between them which is a real shame because I'm not sure, I'm really not sure

108 that entrepreneurialism which is one of the 3Es figures at all in the attributes. I don't

109 think it does actually. And yet I would suggest that in modern times, the need to be

110 entrepreneurial no matter who you are what you do, what your job is, is important

111 because employers are always seeking the people to be able to do their job more

112 effectively, to be better at their job and if you just stick to a painting by numbers

113 approach, it never progresses, it never develops, abilities never progress and your, and

114 the efficiency of the job you're doing doesn't improve. Whereas if you've got an

115 entrepreneurial outlook, you'll always be looking at the job you do which could lead to

116 efficiencies, could lead to better communication, could lead to better sharing of ideas,

117 could lead to, it also gives you a stimulus that if it's tied in with not necessarily some

118 reward but mechanism it can give you, it can lead to job satisfaction, so I think that job

119 satisfaction is something that we can really see as quite important so back to your

120 previous question yes they're ok. They are, but there's that lack of connectivity between

121 them and the 3Es and particularly in relation to entrepreneurialism and enterprise.

122 I: *Would you say you've ever had any guidance or training on how these two aspects*

123 *relate?*

124 A: No.

125 I: *The GAs and 3Es?*

126 A: No.

127 I: *Do you think that would be useful?*

128 A: Yes! Yes [laughs]. I'm trying to stop myself from saying 'pigs might fly', but no and again

129 it just sort of down to the individual what you make of it I mean I pick up on the 5 As, the

130 3Es, the [HEI]GAs, I'm picking up on those that are on posters around the university.

131 The statements that we make around the university or particularly around the faculty,

132 particularly the part of the university where we've been, makes some quite profound

133 statements, but they're not lived out in the way that we actually, we as staff behave or

134 model that or have any training or it is modelled to us or, we're kind of putting stuff up on

135 the wall that says something but in reality do we live that? Is it part of our value that we

136 live on a day to day basis? I think half the problem with things like that is that next week

137 there could be another great saying that somebody comes up with almost like

138 advertising, you know just to capture your imagination and to get them enthusiastic or

139 fired up with something but actually it means nothing if it's not built into the culture of the

140 organisation so that connectivity and particularly with being a connected university I

141 would expect to see where there's no obvious connection with one thing we say we're

142 doing and another thing we say we're doing that we should make a decision about well

143 which is it? What's it going to be? What's the message? Cos it needs to be more

144 consistent.

145 I: *So are you saying that policies kind of come and then just fade away – they never*

146 *officially go, they just tend to drift.*

147 A: Yes, and I think that policies at the moment, policies have tended to be written because

148 they need to be written rather than that they are a reflection of the practice that devised

149 and recognised as being good practice, therefore we articulate that as a policy, so that

150 what we say in writing we're doing, what goes up on the wall we're saying we're doing is

151 actually have grown out of practice and the ethos and culture of the organisation. And if

152 we get something that is a new impetus, a new initiative then that needs to be discussed

153 so that we can see how it fits in with these ethos and culture of the organisation, how it
 154 fits in with the big picture, so that we can embrace it even if it's an early sort of take up of
 155 it to see how's this working, how is this fitting in with our ethos and culture. Because if
 156 it's working well with our ethos and culture then we need to embed it so we need to,
 157 there needs to be some development of it. If it isn't going to, after a period of time, if it's,
 158 sort of, creating some tensions with our ethos and culture, does this mean, if it's really
 159 important, does this mean we need to change our ethos and culture or does it mean we
 160 need to change our approach and drop it and find something that's more appropriate.
 161 I: *So this statements that appear and then are never really reflected on.*
 162 A: No
 163 I: *I mean, with 5 As, are they still around, I mean I've seen the posters but, are they still...*
 164 A: No. I'd be struggling to actually, to say what the 5 As are.
 165 I: *Were those business ones?*
 166 A: They were for business, they were specifically for business, but then, well it wasn't
 167 saying that, it wasn't actually saying you know business school objective. And in any
 168 case, there still should be a connection of how that feeds into anything that feeds into
 169 the whole university or across the whole faculty. It should be obvious how it fits in with
 170 the university and that's missing completely, so therefore that's unlikely that it's going to
 171 find its way into the ethos and culture other than on an individual basis, or a very
 172 localised basis which actually adds to the problem of people operating in silos and doing
 173 their own thing and having mini-cultures where something works truly well, or a mini-
 174 culture where something works really badly and we've got no sense overall of identity or
 175 a shared ethos and culture.
 176 I: *So would you say that the Graduate Attributes had the opportunity to represent the*
 177 *shared culture but...*
 178 A: Yes.
 179 I: *...at the moment they don't?*
 180 A: It's a missed opportunity. It's a great way of saying actually if this is what we really
 181 believe in, if this is what we're saying our students are going to look like when they leave
 182 the university then surely that should be the basis of our, it should sit very firmly in the
 183 foundations of our ethos and culture because it's an explicit statement about what we
 184 are offering to you as a potential student coming in. You come to us and when you
 185 leave then the [HEI] Graduate Attributes are what we, you know you with our help and
 186 guidance and advice and counselling, should reasonably expect you can walk away with
 187 so that you leave the university not just with a piece of paper that says you passed and
 188 you got a degree, but actually you are a serious contender in the employment market
 189 and you can hold your head high that you can be confident to go into an interview and
 190 stand up for yourself because you know what you're doing. There's none of that. I don't
 191 think there's any of that at all and it's a missed opportunity.
 192 I: *Ok, thanks. On the same subject of kind of connectedness, we also have the [HEI]*
 193 *Eight, or [HEI] Eight plus Two. Do you see any interplay between the Graduate*
 194 *Attributes and the [HEI] Eight?*
 195 A: Potentially - they could be, but again, it's not connected. To me it's just a paper
 196 exercise. There is a requirement to map the learning outcomes or the module
 197 assessment to, and the content to the [HEI] Eight plus Two and we go through it, but
 198 nobody ever seems to question whether the things that you block out [in the mapping
 199 process] you know, what sits there, what does that look like. And really we ought to be
 200 able to articulate whatever framework we're using, we should be able to articulate how
 201 not just the content but the process and the learning that has been designed as part of a
 202 module as part of an overall cause, what that's going to look like in reality in terms of
 203 some sort of framework. If we're using the [HEI] Eight, fine. If we're using the 3Es, fine,

if we're using the 5 As fine, if we're using the [HEI]GAs fine, but let's have something that is articulated well, might have some spin offs in different areas or sub-divisions that explain it in more detail, but fundamentally we know where we're heading towards, so that when somebody says, 'That alternative on your module assessment we're doing for the next module, that alternative option that they've got in order to develop a link, an international link, how's that going to their, to this framework, what this framework's going to be?', and we can give some practical examples of how it might, plus we can say in all honesty what the full range of potential of this is, because the students are going to have an input into this, so that dimension means it could go in a direction that we haven't already planned for, which is the exciting bit because that's where we're going to extend and start pushing boundaries a bit and learn from the students themselves and their experiences. That's going to make it even better and we missed that opportunity – we don't articulate that. We do it as a paper exercise and then forget about it.

I: *So would you say that students have had no feedback into any of these processes?*

A: I'd be surprised if they have. I don't think so and I can honestly say I've not engaged with the students to, with some of those paper exercises. However, I have invited the students to think what they think the learning outcomes of a model should be compared to what's written down and I've invited them to interpret the learning outcomes with me in a way that's more beneficial to them so that we can feel they've got some ownership of learning outcomes rather than it's just something that's done to them, so they've got some input. We've got a more dynamic range of modules which could change when the students' ideas feed into them as well as our own ideas, our own professional discussions.

I: *Would you say it would be beneficial then, just taking what you're saying, we've got the GAs, we've got the [HEI]Eight and we've got the 3Es. Would it be beneficial do you think to have just one framework?*

A: Articulated to one framework, more clearly yes. And in the process of designing that framework, engage all the stakeholders in, at some point, it might not be right from the start cos sometimes I've found from experience of this myself that if you get everybody starting off from a blank sheet of paper designing it and you've got 30 different stakeholders, you'll have 30 different ideas. Pull that together if you can, and you can waste a lot of time. There's something to be said if you want to move things quickly, somebody to drive that process initially, but being very open and saying this is the initial shot at it, but this is so that we don't have a blank sheet of paper to discuss, so I think it would be quite reasonable to give somebody the task of pulling that together into a framework that then was the basis to start a dialogue to see, right we're going to give this a certain amount of time but we're going to shape this up and we really value all of the input we're going to get from the stakeholders into making it something like it's going to be a better framework. It is going to be reviewed, the process until we publish our first one, you know, we'll set the process out so everyone can see how we're going to contribute to it, and it's going to be reviewed, initially on an annual basis until we get to a point where we feel we're pretty close to where it should be then, maybe on a biennial basis.

I: *Maybe every two years evaluation.*

A: Regular evaluation and opportunity to develop; is it still relevant? Is it still, you know, we've got stuff in education that we've been given yonks ago and we assume that it's still relevant. Well no it isn't necessarily. Some of it actually was relevant then, gone past being irrelevant and it's relevant again. So things change and that's the exciting thing about education – it's dynamic, but our processes aren't dynamic enough to work with them. We're constantly way behind rather than actually ahead of the game.

254 I: *We've looked at university implementation. You didn't get invited to any training, you*
 255 *didn't get consulted, or contribute to any consultations. In terms of the School of*
 256 *Education itself then, what would you say the processes were in terms of embedding the*
 257 *Graduate Attributes if there were any.*

258 A: I don't think there were any to be honest. I think it's been something that was probably a
 259 faculty initiative to say that these must be implemented, but it's like a number of where
 260 we've been told that they're going to be implemented and here's the thinking behind it.
 261 Another would be Problem Based Learning...

262 I: *[Laughs].*

263 A: Where somebody says, well we're now going to focus on Problem Based Learning.
 264 That's great, yeah that's ok, so have we got a shared understanding of what that
 265 means? 'Oh well the Faculty team have had that discussion and they've come up with a
 266 definition. And I said, 'Oh fine, ok' well there's a big flaw in that process because who's
 267 to say that they know. Ok, but they've given it, and has that been shared by everybody?
 268 No, so it wasn't even shared by everybody as to what the definition was, be we've then
 269 got to go out and do it. You can't really do something wholeheartedly and put your heart
 270 and soul into something, such that it becomes embedded in your practice if it's just done
 271 to you like that and I think that the [HEI]GAs as a part of the culture of the university, not
 272 as a reflection of the School of Education has, previously, just been a reflection of the
 273 faculty which has just been a reflection of the university. And it's doing stuff to you. I
 274 wouldn't even do that to 6 year olds in my own school without actually talking to them
 275 about what we were doing and why so that they know why it was important that we were
 276 going to ask them to look at, you know, Guy Claxton's 4R's of learning. We would talk to
 277 them about what that meant and how that related to them before we put it into operation.

278 I: *PBL, that's another case of an initiative that disappeared?*

279 A: Well yeah, for the time being but what a shame because actually it's moving in the right
 280 direction in terms of lining up with the [HEI]Graduate Attributes it was a huge opportunity
 281 to say 'look, we want to focus on learning from doing, we want to focus on flipping the
 282 learning which is another thing that's current, you know, everyone's got to flip their
 283 classrooms, right ok?' Well has anybody had a discussion about what that means?
 284 Saying well we do flipped learning and they haven't a clue what that means. We have
 285 no discussion about a shared understanding about what goes on and then people then
 286 lose heart and they become disillusioned and they become cynical because it's initiative
 287 in, initiative left, initiative forgotten and then another initiative comes in – you can't really
 288 expect people to do that. You're missing some glorious opportunities. PBL was a great
 289 opportunity to tie in with a good set of graduate attributes so that our students who are
 290 incredibly dependent, I'm talking about School of Education students, I can't talk about
 291 any others, our students are incredibly dependent when they come into us and we don't
 292 do enough, I think we expect them to engage with Problem Based Learning which
 293 requires them to have skills of independence, interdependence, which could be reflected
 294 in the [HEI]Graduate Attributes as part of an ongoing development, but we never invest
 295 time and money in doing that, we just curse that they're constantly needing to be told
 296 what to do. We don't build in, design into our courses as part of our philosophy that
 297 actually we recognise that they come in quite needy and by the end of the first year this
 298 is where we aim to get to, to make them less needy, more independent, more
 299 interdependent and we've got a plan for that as well so Problem Based Learning would
 300 have been a good vehicle in order to achieve that.

301 I: *But again it's an initiative that comes from above and...*

302 A: Yes, yes. It's lost in the fog now – for the time being.

303 I: *Suppose from an employee's point of view that has an impact on your when you see a*
 304 *new initiative? What are your thoughts?*

305 A: Erm, as an employer?

306 I: *Employee.*

307 A: Employee. As an employee well you just either go through the motions because you

308 want that piece of paper at the end and you're all geared up to product rather than

309 process as well and you buy into that game of well I just want a degree and I've paid

310 £9,000, so just give me a degree. I mean what I've learnt on the way doesn't really

311 matter as long as I've got a piece of paper that says I've got a degree. I will get

312 employment because I've got a piece of paper whereas in fact employers want to find

313 out what's the real you, who is this person that I'm considering to hire, interviewing for

314 employment. Yeah they've got a degree, but actually can they solve problems, can they

315 contribute? Some of the issues we have within our work which is always trying to

316 become more efficient and we become more efficient by practically solving problems

317 making things work together, how could they contribute to that. Oh no we didn't do that

318 but we can pass an exam. Sorry, I'm being cynical now. There's that mismatch

319 between what we, what we think employees need and what in practical terms employers

320 value when they get out into the big wide world so coming back to the [HEI]GAs it's no

321 good having a box where we can say 'we've covered that, we've covered that, we've

322 covered that'. I need to be, in practical terms, in the real world how do you demonstrate

323 that you have those attributes, how do you, attributes. It's not a knowledge thing that

324 you've got, it's not a skill that you've got that you can show once, it's an attribute that's

325 something you can make use of, it's about you as a person. And if employers want to

326 employ a person, they don't want to employ necessarily a degree.

327 I: *Ok, thank you. In terms of your students then, what do you think, how do you approach*

328 *the Graduate Attributes with your students?*

329 A: I'm very conscious of their employability and not necessarily as defined by the [HEI]GAs

330 religiously, but I think the employability issues that I raise with them could be found in the

331 [HEI]GAs. If you were to map conversations I have about me as a potential employer,

332 and having been an employer as somebody who does interviews, has interviewed any

333 number of people, sat on any number of interview panels, advising people on employing,

334 who to employ and who not to employ, I'm very conscious of the need for people to

335 demonstrate their employability skills and attributes and the [HEI]GAs are quite a useful

336 tool in terms of talking to them about something that's written in the module handbook.

337 My biggest focus for them is the area around self and to get them developing not just

338 self-esteem and self-confidence but actually self-knowledge and getting them to be

339 much more reflective and reflective about themselves, not just reflecting about what

340 they've done, so I quite explicitly say to them, challenge them as a person and, sorry, I

341 don't challenge them as a person, I challenge them to reflect on themselves as a person

342 and to develop that self-knowledge and self-concept in order for them to become more

343 self-confident and to have more self-belief and self-efficacy. I don't deliberately do them.

344 I: *And would you consider those concepts that you work on, would you consider them, that*

345 *they're slightly different to the Graduate Attributes?*

346 A: Yes, I think there's more specific emphasis. If you were to look at the [HEI]Graduate

347 Attributes and say ok over a three-year period, we're going to get them from where they

348 are when they come in to where they need to be at the end of it, it comes back to a

349 maturity model. First of all you need to find what it looks like when it's emerging, when

350 those are emerging. What do they look like when they're developing and established.

351 The third category and possibly the fourth when it's extended is what we should be

352 aiming for when they've finished.

353 I: *And that's not a model that is used throughout the school?*

354 A: No. No, not at all, but what I would focus on, I would pick out some of those attributes

355 and say, what are the most appropriate ones, to start off with, and I would say ones to

do with self, are the most important ones to start off with, when they're gaining a better understanding of self-learners, self as somebody who can work hard with other people and self in relation to the organisation they are either in in terms of the university, or they are going to work for or they're going on placement to. So, there are specific things I would focus on at specific times. But overall, I would like to think that all those attributes are defined by the [HEI]GAs. If I was with a group of students all the way through, I'm not, I would have made sure I'd covered that and I think it's something we should design into our undergraduate programmes quite deliberately. It's so important if we're going to, for two reasons. One the outcomes for the students are, have got better employability, not just what it says on a piece of paper. In practical terms they can articulate things very carefully, they understand themselves really well, they're confident about working collaboratively with others, they're confident about stepping out of what would be their comfort zone, attacking problem and knowing how to attack a problem and where to get help to help them to do that so that they felt much more, they've got greater self-efficacy when it comes to actually contributing to wherever they're going to work. And possibly also choosing the right place for them. I think one of the problems for them is they don't know, cos they don't know enough about themselves, they don't know what would be the most suitable place for them to work. And we don't have good careers guidance in this country. We might have a personality test, but that doesn't tell you much; you shouldn't rely on a test to tell you what you want to do. You should rely on what you know about yourself and we need to put more emphasis onto that. I think when we're designing our programmes we ought to be thinking about designing in how do we address the attributes, whatever they might have to be so if there is a rationalisation of the [HEI]GAs with the 3Es and the 5 As and the 8 whatever they're called, if there is a rationalisation of that and we sign up to it, my question would be: 'Have you had a discussion with everybody about what that looks like?' In terms of what we, what the students' aspirations are by the time they leave and then we'd drop that back to ok, what does the baseline look like when they come in. We need to have designed into our programmes, level 4, level 5, level 6 how we're going to provide the opportunities for those students to gain those skills and attributes. Because I think that at the moment we hope that they gain them by osmosis or by chance.

I: *Would you say it's important to put those, you know, when you're taking about that framework to, they would be somewhere within the assessment framework?*

A: Yes, definitely. You'd identify it, and how's this contributing to, as part of the assessment. The content, the content has relevance I don't, I'm not decrying the content, but at the moment I think that the content drives the assessment too much whereas the content can be vehicle, that's a relevant vehicle, so it engages people because they can see the relevance of it but sometimes the content is a means of getting the engagement in the process which is just as much about getting them developing as a person, just as much about getting them as a person, developing as a person who's able to collaborate so we want them to do a team assessment, a group assessment, it's deliberately designed, we're not doing it, say we're doing a group assessment therefor they'll be better at working in teams. No. how have we designed in the ways in which they're going to learn about doing that as part of that assessment? So at the end of it, we can assess what they've achieved as a group in terms of content. They can assess how they've moved on as a person during that process.

I: *That's a very good point, because teamwork is one of the [HEI]GAs and yet there's no formal requirement for it to be assessed at any level on any course.*

A: No. Quite the opposite. It's like Ken Robinson said: 'Don't talk to someone else because that's cheating.' Whereas actually we're preaching to them the benefits of social-constructivism which is all about learning conversation and how you learn and

407 Zone of Proximal Development increasing when you start to collaborate with other
408 people. It makes a mockery of it if we then have an assessment system that's all about
409 you on your own and putting you under pressure to such an extent that you're never
410 going to perform, or rather, only a small percentage of people will perform cos they
411 perform better under pressure whereas other people panic, you know, they've got poor
412 self-esteem, they've got poor self-concept so put them under pressure like that and you
413 don't get any kind of idea of the potential of what they could do other than they think
414 they're failures and they give up.

415 *I: Final question now and I think it's final. Just to flip the other side then, what do you think*
416 *are the students' perceptions of the [HEI]Graduate Attributes? If they're aware of them*
417 *at all.*

418 *A:* I think, if, they're perception is, 'What do I have to do here?', 'What do I need to do here
419 for the assessment? Rather than, this is, this is a graphic equaliser, you know, like we
420 use in what's its name to record, and the graphic equaliser is something I really like as a
421 metaphor for the [HEI]Graduate Attributes. Potentially, they should be able to look at it
422 and say: 'What does my graphic equaliser shape look like on my [HEI]GAs? Which are
423 my good ones, which are my poorer ones. Where am I?'. So that's how I think they
424 should see it. They don't have any way of judging that at the moment. They don't even
425 get them to rate themselves on a scale. We just name it – 'Have you got it or haven't
426 you got it?' You're either in, you're out, you either pass, you fail. Not, 'Where are you on
427 a scale of 1-5?' A scale of 1-10, 'Where are you on the maturity model? Are you
428 emerging, are you developing, are you established or actually are you, is this a real
429 strength you've got and you've extended that. There's stuff that other people could learn
430 from your experience. You could model that.'

431 *I: So you're saying that there needs to be informal assessment as well as formal*
432 *assessment models for the Graduate Attributes?*

433 *A:* I think so. I think one of the things they ought to be able to do is if we've got a really
434 good structure, you know, we combine everything. Yeah that describes what we get at
435 the end, this is where ideally a student would come out and that's where they're going to
436 be pretty well average all across. We know some of them are going to be up and down
437 and their profile will be individual to them which is a great reflection on them. They've
438 got ownership of it. They know what it looks like, they know what it looks like, you know,
439 from the baseline and all of the way through their course, they're mapping that. So if
440 Global [Citizen] stays low all the way through. They might ask of us, well actually I don't
441 feel as if I've had many opportunities for developing this during the three years I've been
442 here. Fair comment. You know, why have we put it into the [HEI]GAs if we're not giving
443 people an opportunity to develop them? Or they might say: 'I've not taken the
444 opportunities that were given to me to develop this because I'm scared of it, cos it
445 worries me, I don't have the confidence to do that.' Ok, then we can have an informal
446 conversation between student and personal tutor, in terms of how can we help you: 'Ok,
447 you're half-way through your course here, you're mid-way through level 5, you're saying
448 to me know, you, actually, this, particular [HEI]GA is lower. You recognise it, we
449 recognise it and we agree where you are. At the moment, why do you think it's not
450 moved from where it was on the baseline?' And you can have that informal conversation
451 with them. Now, aren't we then talking about personalising their learning? Aren't we,
452 but rather than write new content for them, aren't we helping them to see: 'So what
453 options have you got for actually doing more towards this. How could you, within the
454 next couple of modules, focus on that?'. And have a discussion to see to what extent
455 they could do something about it, and we could provide them with opportunities.

456 *I: So the driver is the personal development?*

457 A: Driver is personal development – it's got to come from them. We're dealing with intrinsic
458 motivation. We're talking about adults here, an adult model of learning is all about self.
459 Andragogy is all about self, the direction, the motivation comes from self. We haven't
460 got adult learners or people with an adult approach to learning and we're not doing
461 anything about it other than moan about it and I think that we could do something much
462 more constructive, particularly using something like this as a real, a real tool for helping
463 people to grow as people, you know, while they're here. We're a place of learning. Why
464 are we not helping people to grow? Why are we so obsessed with them getting a piece
465 of paper that says they've got a degree but actually they haven't grown while they're
466 here. They've just got a degree. I think we're failing, we could quite honestly say we're
467 failing, when we're saying [HEI]Graduate Attributes – come to us, this is what you'll get.
468 How is the question, and I don't think we've answered that, how we're going to get there.
469 And there's potential for it and we could do it, but we just don't do it.

470 I: *Ok thank you. That's all my questions. Do you have anything further to say about*
471 *them?*

472 A: No I think I've said enough really. It's something I've been particularly interested in, it's a
473 real passion, but I think we all are really. I think we should pay more attention to this,
474 because most people come in to education, particularly within the School of Education.
475 People come into education because they want to help other people to learn, help other
476 people to grow. Whether it's professionally, whether it's through research or whatever.
477 They grow personally as well as professionally as well as deepening subject knowledge
478 and understanding and all of those need to happen, not just one of them. It's no good
479 having somebody not grown as a person and just deepened their subject knowledge and
480 understanding so much that it's made them even more sort of detached from the real
481 world. How's that going to benefit them? Whereas if they can deepen their subject
482 knowledge and understanding and grow as a persona at the same time, haven't they got
483 more opportunities to do something with that subject knowledge and understanding than
484 if they just stay where they are. So I think that we really need to address that. I think we
485 have a lot of problems in this university because we don't help people to grow. We
486 expect them to grow, we expect them to do it, but we don't actually design in ways in
487 which we can do it.

488 I: *Ok, thank you very much.*

5.1.6 HEI Lecturer

Date : 04/05/16

Duration : 21:03

This lecturer has a background teaching in schools as well as one of the partner FE colleges. The interviewee managed HE courses at a partner college during the initial implementation of the GAs. The interviewee now lectures at the HE. The interviewee has experience of delivering both full-time and part-time education programmes.

1 *I: Can you tell me about your current role at the university and previous one at a franchise*
2 *partner?*

3 A: I can. Currently I am course leader for the BA Education [full-time]. I came here in 2015.
4 Previous to that I was working for one of the partners where I was overseeing the majority
5 of the awards that we were doing for [HEI] University; Early Childhood Studies and the
6 Education Awards.

7 *I: Thanks. So thinking about the university graduate attributes, what do you think is the*
8 *rationale for them?*

9 A: Very interesting question! Erm, ultimately I think they are trying to encourage
10 employability; my view on it is to make students more employable because if they fulfil
11 the [HEI] Graduate Attributes they will be more attractive to employers.

12 *I: Right ok thanks. Erm do you think they meet or do not meet your graduates' aspirations?*
13 *Thinking about your students at the moment do you think the [HEI] Graduate attributes*
14 *meet what you think their aspirations are or not?*

15 A: I will be perfectly honest I don't think our graduates will...I don't think the [HEI] Graduate
16 Attributes will be something they're particularly getting excited about, I don't think they
17 will necessarily see them as meeting aspirations if I'm honest.

18 *I: If you think about the attributes then...I'll put them there if you want to have a look at*
19 *them...Are there any that you think you would change out of those six?*

20 A: I don't know about change but I think the two I've always slightly struggled with are the
21 Global Citizen aspect but I can see it's talking about having an understanding of Global
22 issues and we do kind of incorporate that so I suppose that is quite relevant but the
23 lifelong learner because I think they're too early in their careers often to think about
24 being a lifelong learner all they can see is getting as far as the end of their degree or
25 potentially as far as doing teacher training for example with my current students and I
26 don't think they see it at this moment in time that idea of kind of constantly continuing to
27 develop themselves. I don't know how being here will really encourage them to think
28 about being a lifelong learner.

29 *I: Ok thanks. Do you think there's any difference, because you've got experience teaching*
30 *the part time students previously when you worked at the college, do you think there's*
31 *any difference in the aspirations of those two groups?*

32 A: I would say not massively I don't think most of the part time students I was teaching also
33 had aspirations of teaching and I think that had changed more recently I think a few
34 years back a lot of the part-timers were really just thinking about furthering their existing
35 careers as teaching assistants but I found more recently part-timers are definitely looking
36 at this as a route into teaching.

37 *I: Ok great thanks. In terms of implementation of the graduate attributes then what do you*
38 *think it (sic) gives any benefit to the students or...*

39 A: I don't understand what you mean to be honest?

40 *I: Yeah...What do you think...Alright, thinking about, implementing the Graduate Attributes*
41 *in your teaching, what challenges have you faced with that?*

42 A: I don't think there are really. I always put them in my handbooks, so that the key
43 graduate attributes that apply to the module are in the handbooks, I mention them in the
44 overall award handbooks and I would always make sure that I mention the ones that are
45 relevant at the start of any module that I did and in particular I incorporated them in part
46 of their level 6 placement module where they have to reflect on their placement with
47 reference to the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and the idea is that if you can kind of
48 demonstrate these different attributes and give an example from placement that's the
49 sort of thing that would help them with interviews and applications because it's really
50 making them think about the things that employers would want to see in them.

51 I: *Ok great thanks. I'm thinking about back when you worked in an FE college, do you*
52 *remember there being a physical presence of the GAs? I'm thinking about posters on the*
53 *wall, leaflets and that kind of thing.*

54 A: When it was first, when there was first a big drive towards it I sort of made sure that the
55 leaflets were given out to the students. I had a dedicated higher education classroom
56 and I had them up in that classroom and when the initiative came out I did make a
57 concerted effort to make sure that our students understood it and roll it throughout the
58 award because obviously when it came out it was very focused on the first year, but
59 what was important was that I tried to make sure that the second and third years
60 etcetera also understood what the [HEI] Graduate Attributes were.

61 I: *You talk about when it first came out, is there any implication about what's happened*
62 *since, in terms of the physical presence of posters and leaflets and the like?*

63 A: No it's just kind of existing students know what they are at the start of the module,
64 they're familiar with them and the level 4's understand what they are.

65 I: *Ok and so at the university do you think there's a physical presence of the [HEI]*
66 *Graduate Attributes around the campus? Something that's...*

67 A: I'm going to say no because I don't think you do see, there's some very nice posters and
68 stuff at the start and then I don't think you do. And I'm not even sure it's that visible on
69 the website to be honest.

70 I: *Ok that's my next question about the website as well. Do you know if there's any*
71 *presence when you were working at the FE college was there anything on their website?*

72 A: No.

73 I: *ok and the presence now on the university website, what's your view on that then?*

74 A: I'm really sure it's there I'm sure it is, but I'm not sure it's in a prominent place – on the
75 students' home screen it may well be and I haven't noticed it but I suspect it isn't – it's
76 one of those you put into the search engine and don't find very likely.

77 I: *[laughs] Ok thinking about the implementation of the attributes, has the university*
78 *provided you with any opportunities for training, as in training for how to implement them*
79 *into the curriculum and into your practice?*

80 A: No not at all, but obviously I came late so there may have been some stuff done at when
81 it first came but as a new person coming into the college er university erm no I don't
82 think anyone's actually mentioned it to me really.

83 I: *So just to clarify how long were you teaching HE in FE for?*

84 A: Er quite a while for about...

85 I: *Sorry – [HEI] University courses.*

86 A: From about 2005 I think.

87 I: *Ok so before the Graduate Attributes.*

88 A: Yes.

89 I: *During your time at the FE college were you ever offered any training - online or?*

90 A: Not that I remember.

91 I: *Ok thanks.*

92 A: I think it was more promoted through the award leaders at the university that I was
93 dealing with.

94 I: *ok so that's answered a few questions so do you think that you haven't been given any*
95 *training – do you think that this would be something that would be beneficial to you?*

96 A: If the university is committed to this then it probably would be because I think we
97 probably to a certain extent pay lip service to it and put it in the handbooks and mention
98 it to the students but I'm not sure where we would go from there with them or how we
99 should be going from there with them.

100 I: *Ok great thanks. Thinking about when you were teaching FE college comparing it with,*
101 *your situation's fairly unique because your experience of both, do you think there were*

102 *any specific challenge to implementing the university graduate attributes when you were*
103 *at the FE college compared with now?*

104 A: I don't, not massively to be honest but I think when you're out in the colleges you feel a
105 bit more detached from it all anyway I don't think if you speak to the students I don't think
106 they feel like university students so but I don't think that necessarily presents a challenge
107 to the [HEI] Graduate Attributes. I sometimes think that they don't see themselves as
108 fully university students anyway. But no I think it's just as easy to promote at either
109 location if I'm honest.

110 I: *Did your college have its own set of learner attributes 'cos I know some colleges*
111 *promote their own attributes.*

112 A: I think I'll say pass on that one [Laughs].

113 I: *Ok, we're moving swiftly, we're about halfway through so if you think about the*
114 *curriculum what role do you think graduate attribute play within your course curriculum?*

115 A: Not much. No I suppose if the university's intention is to try and make graduates more
116 employable then the graduate attributes does make you think a little bit about the
117 modules that you're doing and is it kind of promoting teamwork, is it promoting
118 professionalism, is it promoting being reflective and critical, you know that kind of stuff
119 and I think it just makes you think am I doing these things within the modules and if I'm
120 not then there's something wrong with them.

121 I: *so that implies the next question – have you mapped the GAs to the curriculum.*

122 A: Yes.

123 I: *Each module is mapped.*

124 A: Yes.

125 I: *What do you think your role is then in facilitating the development of GAs.*

126 A: [pause] I don't! If I'm honest. GA development? I suppose you mean as a whole how it
127 could be developed at the university?

128 I: *Erm well I think yes.*

129 A: Well I suppose if the university wanted to reflect on the Graduate Attributes and take it
130 forward then they're probably going to set up little working parties, working to kind of go
131 through it and analyse it. If it was my cup of tea I might volunteer to go onto that
132 committee or whatever.

133 I: *Um. Ok. And in terms of your confidence with the Graduate Attributes, how confident do*
134 *you feel about delivering them within your subject area and perhaps to clarify, are there*
135 *any specific that you feel more confident facilitating and are there any attributed you feel*
136 *less confident.*

137 A: No I think they're relatively straightforward to put in I think the key one I've probably got
138 a little bit of an issue with is the Global Citizen but it fits in nicely with certain modules.
139 So one of the modules on the BA is about comparative education so that gives
140 you a really good insight into the global issues and looking at the kind of different
141 countries and how different countries do that differently but for some of the modules
142 global citizen doesn't seem to fit to be honest but in others it does so I think it's just that
143 you make sure you apply the graduate attributes relevant to that particular module really

144 I: *Great thanks. So I guess thinking holistically about this now, to what extent do you feel*
145 *that you are enabling the development of these attributes for your students within the*
146 *course.*

147 A: A lot really because thinking about the professionalism, being work ready – they're out
148 on placement, we make sure they think about how they are going to present themselves,
149 what they're going to wear and all these kind of things. Other attributes such as team
150 work, they have opportunities to work in teams within the course and we certainly
151 encourage teamwork in level 6, thinking about the teamwork that goes on in placement
152 and so on erm and that also talks about effective communication and we make sure that

153 in their assessments they have that sort of thing involved in it and in particular they do
 154 an individual presentation at level 6 which is definitely getting them work-ready you know
 155 so many job applications will have them presenting something these days so that fact
 156 that they hate it and get really nervous about it is still really good practice for them and
 157 having done it once they realise that they can do it erm so things like that are really
 158 useful. Erm encouraging them to be reflective and critical and so on in the assignments
 159 that they do yeah I can't remember the question now sorry but ...

160 *I: Yes, how are they facilitated within your course?*
 161 *A: They are very much built into what we are doing.*
 162 *I: Are there any further developments that you think could be made? Or do you think its...*
 163 *A: I can't say I've really thought about it to be honest erm so I'm going to say no because*
 164 *I've never really thought about it.*
 165 *I: I think you've started to answer the next question which is about assessment of the GAs*
 166 *so thinking about how you assess them. I think you already mentioned that during the*
 167 *placement module you get them to reflect on the graduate attributes.*
 168 *A: I think all of the placements have a certain amount of reflection – the placements have*
 169 *reflection built into them certainly we encourage the level 4s to reflect on certain aspects*
 170 *of this sort of thing so they're reflecting on their placements about things like*
 171 *professionalism, bringing the [HEI] Graduate Attributes into their reflections so their*
 172 *encouraged to do that, particularly in level 6 they have a work placement log book to*
 173 *hand in where they are literally just ticking off the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and giving*
 174 *examples that fall under that sort of thing.*
 175 *I: So that's in the log book?*
 176 *A: It's in the log book – it's set up as graduate attributes and they have to just give*
 177 *examples from placement.*
 178 *I: ok great thanks. And do you have any suggestions to further improve the assessment of*
 179 *Graduate Attributes?*
 180 *A: I'm relatively happy how we do it and we certainly sell that log book as a sort of thing*
 181 *that they've had some great experiences on placement and if they don't write something*
 182 *down they will have forgotten and these are the sorts of things they could put on job*
 183 *applications, the sort of things they could use as examples to answer interview questions*
 184 *and that way they very much seem to get on board*
 185 *I: Ok thanks. Onto the last section so er thanks for this. I'm just thinking about thinking*
 186 *about you're an award leader so you work with the quality department on various things.*
 187 *How do you think the university measures the courses?*
 188 *A: I'm going to say it doesn't. I don't think they can measure the quality but they certainly*
 189 *on module monitoring forms they want - there is a box for [HEI] Graduate Attributes*
 190 *where you can say how you've incorporated it erm*
 191 *I: Do you ever get any feedback on what you have written in those boxes?*
 192 *A: Only I suppose when you're presenting on the AMRs [Annual Monitoring Reports] I did*
 193 *think initially some people haven't really got much in there and this was a while back and*
 194 *there was kind of slight comments made about it, so I think if there was nothing in there,*
 195 *there would be, you would be kind of sent away to put something in it nowadays erm but*
 196 *I wouldn't say any measurement of quality is done to be honest.*
 197 *I: Right ok so there are some things there that feed in but ok yeah. [pause] Do you think*
 198 *er have you been invited or had the opportunity to contribute to developing the graduate*
 199 *attributes or were they just presented to you?*
 200 *A: Well I've said they weren't even presented to me in a formal process – I just knew about*
 201 *them anyway so...*
 202 *I: So how did you know about them – was that through the Award Leader or?*

203 A: Well I just knew about them because I was working at a partner college I was head of
 204 higher education there so...

205 I: *Ok good I think that covers all the areas – have you anything else you would like to say*
 206 *about the Graduate Attributes?*

207 A: Not really sorry! *[After a few minutes the interviewee thought of more to say and*
 208 *recording resumed]*

209 I: *So as well as the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, the six [HEI] Graduate Attributes, the 3Es's*
 210 *and also the [HEI] Eight. So the 3Es's are enterprise, entrepreneurship and something*
 211 *else, and the [HEI] Eight would refer to cognitive skills. How would understand the*
 212 *interplay between those and the Graduate Attributes?*

213 A: I've heard of both and I see the 3Es's as kind of sitting above the graduate attributes. I
 214 couldn't remember what they were – I thought they might one might be enterprise I
 215 couldn't remember and I just think to be honest you end up with too many things going
 216 on and I think it just starts to get confusing - do we really need all three? I found the
 217 [HEI] Eight just because I found it in an old handbook I've no idea fully what they were
 218 supposed to mean – there's some language on there but again it's not something that's
 219 been formally presented to me as part of the this is the university and this is what you
 220 should be promoting so I think..

221 I: *So you've been formally inducted into the university this year, this academic year?*

222 A: Last academic year

223 I: *So you don't remember any tuition or any training in terms of these aspects?*

224 A: I don't. I remember swatting up on the 3Es's and the [HEI] GAs ready for my interview
 225 and used them in my interview so I did know them, but there was no mention of them
 226 when I started my job that I recall...and the eight things – there's something in the
 227 handbook that you're supposed to map across but I've no idea what they are.

5.2 College manager and lecturer interviews

5.2.1 Assistant Principal (AP), College A

Date : 23/05/16

Duration : 34:12

The interviewee has a background of being a teacher trainer as well as education lecturer. The interviewee is currently Assistant Principal with a focus on Higher Education provision at the college. This provision has grown to the extent that the college is currently delivering full BA programmes (level 4-level 6) and working with a number of HE providers.

1 *I: Ok, so thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview and I think if we just start, can*
2 *you just explain to me about your role in relation to university courses.*

3 *A: Ok, well I'm an Assistant Principal at the college and my responsibility is adult further*
4 *and higher education so I develop relationships with different university partners for*
5 *higher education programmes here at the college. Largely they are mature part time*
6 *students but we do have some full-time provision for eighteen year olds.*

7 *I: Ok thanks and so can you go over what courses do you run for the university then?*

8 *A: With [HEI]?*

9 *I: Yes.*

10 *A: We have a foundation year in health and social care, we have foundation degrees in*
11 *education and early childhood studies and the BA top up years of those programmes*
12 *and PGCE/Cert Ed teacher training and new for September are the PGCEs for primary*
13 *and secondary as well.*

14 *I: Ok thank you. Thanks for that. So, thinking about the students that achieve degrees on*
15 *your courses then, in what ways do you think achieving a degree is valuable for those*
16 *students' futures?*

17 *A: Well I suppose the very reason we offer HE here in college is in this particular borough*
18 *there a much smaller number of people with level 4 qualifications than in greater*
19 *Manchester and in the UK as a whole. So it's a very low skill base. One of the ways to*
20 *encourage gain high skills, people – local residents to gain high skills is to make HE*
21 *accessible, so that's in part why we do what we do. And then hopefully the ambition*
22 *obviously being that they can progress through higher level careers and better pay and*
23 *conditions for the careers that they might already have. To some degree that's working*
24 *because a lot of our provision is within education for support staff, some of them are*
25 *actually staying in the roles they've got, but perhaps making a better job of that job but*
26 *they're not necessarily getting a better salary and so we're seeing some of that as well.*

27 *I: In terms of the local area then, by offering degrees here, this is a means of widening*
28 *participation?*

29 *A: Yes – it's our purpose for being really. So we attract the kind of students that really most*
30 *of the time wouldn't really consider HE in a traditional sense in a University. Going into*
31 *Manchester might be a step too far for some people, but where there's education on*
32 *their doorstep and they are degrees that relate to what they do or aspire to do quite*
33 *soon, then it feels achievable.*

34 *I: And all those degrees, are they part time?*

35 *A: Most of what we offer is part time, but not all so PGCE is not – it's full time and actually*
36 *the health course is full time as well and then we have some provision with other*
37 *university partners which is also full time.*

38 *I: Ok great thanks. So what do you think is, you know we have the [HEI] Graduate*
39 *Attributes – what do you think the rationale for them is?*

40 *A: I – I think it focuses the students' minds on something beyond the main subject that they*
41 *are studying and also I suppose they are transferable so they might be doing a module*
42 *that's about child health, but through that they are becoming aware of something in a*
43 *different country – global attributes, citizenship or developing skills of working with*
44 *others. And all of those things are actually things that are making them more*
45 *employable. It's not – I think almost more – that body of knowledge is important, but*
46 *everything else they're gaining through that medium are the things that really are giving*
47 *them the edge when they are trying to be selected for interview and when they get*
48 *through to interview because that's what employers are telling us. It's those things, it's,*
49 *there are plenty of people that have a certain body of knowledge but actually it's the*
50 *people who communicate well who can prove that they can research something or that*
51 *they are aware of something beyond their own locality that employers might want.*

52 I: *So you are capturing that from employers then about the specific attributes that your*
53 *students have?*

54 A: We do on an informal level with the employers that we come into contact with through
55 the programme but also in national studies. There are plenty of students that might
56 have, at different levels, the qualifications but if they can't communicate and talk to
57 people, that's no good to that employer. I think that's what the graduate attributes do –
58 focus students' minds or make them more aware of that yes - as well as learning about
59 ABC - I'm being encouraged here to talk in front of other people, I'm being encouraged
60 to prove how I write or to look at a world beyond my immediate existence and those are
61 the things that they can take forward.

62 I: *Ok thank you and with the graduate attributes, do you think they mean different things to*
63 *different students – so do the graduate attributes mean something different to a full time*
64 *student as they would to a part-time student do you think?*

65 A: I don't think if they mean a different thing but they will pay more or less attention to them.
66 I think, I don't know who would be more keenly aware of them but I think, I don't know
67 whether our young students might be almost less interested in it than a mature student,
68 a part-time student is perhaps more aware of the benefits of those things you know what
69 graduate attributes represent really. I think they'll just be more keenly aware than a
70 student at 18 – I think they just think it's something written into their modules, learning,
71 and they've come through a system where those attributes were dealt with at a lower
72 level anyway, so I suspect that the more mature student, even if they don't articulate it in
73 terms of graduate attributes, they are more aware of how important it is to develop good
74 communication skills or be innovative and those sorts of things. They might not say it in
75 the language – probably not.

76 I: *Ok thank you. How long have you been working with [HEI] University?*

77 A: 10 years.

78 I: *10 years? Ok so you've been working with them before the inception of the graduate*
79 *attributes. They came in 2012.*

80 A: Yes.

81 I: *Did you have any role in the creation of them? Any input at all?*

82 A: No, no.

83 I: *So were you asked to contribute to...*

84 A: Not that I remember, no

85 I: *Any consultation or anything?*

86 A: I don't remember no. I just remember them emerging in course handbooks and displays
87 clips from adverts in cinemas I mean we're working with a number of partners and they
88 all have their own version which are similar. And of course in Ofsted world we're looking
89 at the same things so in our display in our base room we represent all partners as well
90 as Ofsted. The themes are the same so we represented it in a visual display - by
91 working here post-18 we're working on these whether you're at [HEI] or this partner or
92 that partner – and that's how we tried to represent it, so going back to the question now
93 – it was about consultation so no I can't particularly remember being asked how -
94 however, nothing in it I think is new or different to what we're trying to develop in
95 students.

96 I: *So you think these are core skills that are, I suppose the question following that I*
97 *suppose in terms of the marketing they would argue these core skills are unique to [HEI]*
98 *- what you are saying is that these are more generic to all higher Education.*

99 A: I don't think these are unique to [HEI]. In fact, the wording is almost the same in all of
100 them, including what we're delivering to the 16-18 framework as well with slight tweaks,
101 and our other university partners have their versions, but when you water them down
102 you've got pretty much the same themes coming out.

103 I: *Ok, so you think if they're fairly similar to other HE partners – I'm interested in this that*
 104 *you think they're fairly similar to what you do with 16-18 year olds. So would you say*
 105 *that the Graduate Attributes are not particularly representing gradueness? USEFUL Q*

106 A: I think it's the level you pitch something at and the expectation of the student, but if you
 107 look, so we've just had an Ofsted inspection so if you look at the Ofsted inspection it
 108 would be classed as employability skills there, but the same things are there. I suppose
 109 yeah the level is an expectation level and that's what gives it the gradueness.

110 I: *Right, so it's the level of those skills not the actual skills themselves.*

111 A: Yes, I think so.

112 I: *Ok great. Just going back a little bit then I think you mentioned advertisements and*
 113 *things, but when did you first hear about the graduate attributes? When was it you*
 114 *thought oh gosh what are these all about?*

115 A: I started to see them being printed in literature but then I was at some [HEI] events
 116 where the PR that was going on behind them was being shown. It was interesting to us
 117 because we're not geographically close to the university so stuff was not hitting round
 118 here anyway – the adverts we were actually seeing. So yes – printed and then being
 119 shown.

120 I: *Were you ever invited to any training on them or training about what they were and how*
 121 *to implement them.*

122 A: It would have been the curriculum people that are in my team that would have attended
 123 anyway rather than me necessarily and I think some of them have been engaged in
 124 activities, but I don't know whether that's been at course level looking at how to deliver
 125 and so on.

126 I: *In terms of your role which I guess has changed over the 10 years, do you remember*
 127 *being invited to any training or being sent through any training on the graduate attributes*
 128 *at all?*

129 A: No, no, but that could be bad memory! I don't think, no.

130 I: *Certainly recently then, like a refresher or...*

131 A: No.

132 I: *Thank you. Do you think training of any sort would be useful do you think to find out how*
 133 *to implement them?*

134 A: I think it would be useful but it's more at course level that that's needed – at a PGCE
 135 meeting or BA Ed or whatever. Because it's about those skills of that cohort and their
 136 interests. I think that's where it's most beneficial.

137 I: *So what you are saying is that do you think that Graduate Attributes should be*
 138 *contextualised within the course is that...*

139 A: I do if it is going to be meaningful.

140 I: *Rather than generic these are the attributes, this is our organisation, you're saying...*

141 A: I think the delivery has to be contextual if it is going to be meaningful to the student. I
 142 think it would be a distant concept if it wasn't, if the links weren't made, so the BA Eds,
 143 one of their modules is *Doing Education Differently* so that naturally presents more
 144 opportunities for looking at things more broadly – a world vision, so that kind of
 145 contextualisation.

146 I: *Thank you. Thinking about your managerial level, thinking about challenges, what*
 147 *challenges have you faced in terms of implementation. I think you mentioned that you*
 148 *have various universities with various attributes and then Ofsted coming into the mix as*
 149 *well.*

150 A: Yes, we can't be in a partnership – we can't just do yours [Graduate Attributes] to the
 151 detriment of other people and I suppose here my job is to create an HE community
 152 regardless of who's validating that award, regardless of whether they are full time or part
 153 time or whatever they are, I'm trying to keep a community, a sense of oneness so that's

154 a challenge. We do try to talk about graduate attributes, but not necessarily attribute
 155 them to you, it's just about graduateness or employability skills and that sort of thing.
 156 That's the only way we can do it really.

157 *I: Ok thank you. Does [provider A] college itself have its own set of attributes? Every*
 158 *graduate of [another college] is supposed to have 'the [college name] approach' – does*
 159 *[provide A] have anything like that?*

160 A: No actually we don't. But last year we reformed a section of the college called 'the
 161 guidance' and they have produced a policy/procedure and I suppose that's starting to
 162 articulate we aim for different students at different levels to experience with us and to
 163 prepare them.

164 *I: So you've got core levels of skills and those core skills are articulated as in what it*
 165 *means at each level?*

166 A: I suppose it's more in terms of what we are going to provide and offer at each level to
 167 develop those skills that is an attempts at articulating them in there. Yes, there attributes
 168 are a thread through that if not explicitly referenced.

169 *I: And in terms of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes are they articulated as being different at*
 170 *different levels? So we have level 4, level 5, level 6. Is it clear if there is any guidance*
 171 *as to what it means to achieve these at different levels; level 5, level 6?*

172 A: Not at college policy level. I guess where you would see that is in module handbooks
 173 where there's a reference to the graduate attributes, there's a link to the graduate
 174 attributes, but not at college policy level.

175 *I: And has the university has the university given you any guidance on, say, what a level 4*
 176 *graduate attribute is?*

177 A: Not to me.

178 *I: Not that you're aware of. Ok thank you. Do you think, I mean I think we've looked at all*
 179 *these challenges you have through different graduate attributes, do you think there are*
 180 *any benefits to having graduate attributes as a part of the course?*

181 A: Well I suppose it's, well what I was referring to at the beginning really

182 *I: The broadening aspect?*

183 A: I think, I think that's useful. I can't think at the moment really beyond that.

184 *I: This isn't on the list but do you think they are good or should be just scrapped?*

185 A: I can't see, they're there anyway, and they should be it is just that they create a vision or
 186 a framework – that makes them very visible. I think it's not much different to what we've
 187 always historically done to put across different skills I think. It's just putting a different
 188 badge on it, but it gives it a focus I think and I think that is useful.

189 *I: I find that really interesting and again, going off script somewhat, one of the reasons for*
 190 *bringing the graduate attributes has been to broaden the degree away from discipline*
 191 *expertise, the view that traditionally universities just teach knowledge and understanding*
 192 *of a discipline and your argument if I'm right is that the college when you taught HE in*
 193 *your 10 years' experience was you always taught a broad range of skills anyway.*

194 A: I think so, maybe that comes from the fact that we're a different college not a university
 195 delivering certain disciplines – our market we're dealing with is a raft of people we're
 196 trying to change – we've got to be transformational and they're not just here to learn a
 197 subject, they're doing it because they want some significant movement, but I just see
 198 that, it's that widening participation thing – we are dealing with a cohort of people who
 199 need support to transition something in their lives and knowing a bit more about
 200 something is going to be one small part of the puzzle. Unless they can talk confidently in
 201 an interview, they're going to get nowhere, unless they can work like I said, it's not going
 202 to matter that they know what that module covered.

203 *I: And are the degrees that you offer, are they all work based?*

204 A: They are all work related, so maybe that's what's forming my opinion – we're not running
 205 a straight biology degree or something like that – that's just where we're coming from,
 206 but that's our reason for being really – we wouldn't really be running HE for any other
 207 reason.

208 I: *Great thank you. And are most of the students already in work?*

209 A: Yes, they are.

210 I: *I think we've covered that, great, I've got a question about the physical presence of*
 211 *graduate attributes - we've seen in the classroom you've got that wonderful poster.*
 212 *What else have you got out there relating to the attributes.*

213 A: Well because we're in a college – it's not all HE and it's not all [HEI] and we're limited
 214 where it can have a physical presence, so in handbooks and in leaflets that might be
 215 handed out at different points of the year it really would be – we only hold one classroom
 216 and so that is it really. From September 17 we'll have a building and more opportunity to
 217 have more visual references really.

218 I: *And in terms of your online presence on the [College A] website, is there an online*
 219 *presence of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, would you say?*

220 A: No. Interesting question though.

221 I: *Thank you. And I think we've kind of covered about curriculum really. In your role,*
 222 *would you say, do you have any role in terms of facilitating graduate attribute*
 223 *development with your staff? Do you see that as part of your role to some extent?*

224 A: Yes, we do have CPD or professional development, but we don't have too many a year
 225 because some of the staff that work within HE, most of their timetable is not HE. They
 226 get a couple of opportunities, maybe two a year where I can gather them and talk to
 227 them as an HE practitioner not as whatever other identity they have and so those'll be
 228 the opportunities and I might cover some of these themes. I can't, I don't think we've
 229 had whole sessions on the graduate attributes but for example we've got a session
 230 coming up, an afternoon where everybody works for post-18 learners whatever level –
 231 they've had a directive to come to that and we're talking about core messages and that,
 232 some of it is that because those students don't have personal tutors like 16-19 that
 233 teacher or lecturer's responsibility to ensure they come in at certain times and that other
 234 bits happen and it's only then that we can make that happen. And in a college
 235 environment that's difficult because they see themselves as 'well I'm an A-level teacher
 236 but I do a bit of HE'. And I have to say but in this bit here, you're it and you've got to pull
 237 in these resources, make sure they get some mock interviews done and those are the
 238 things that contribute to the graduate attributes. So that would be part of the training.

239 I: *So what you're arguing for if I'm right is that a broadening of the role of the HE lecturer.*

240 A: Yes.

241 I: *Not just delivering the subject - that they have greater responsibilities.*

242 A: Yes, that's right. And if they're substantially in my area they know it. It's not a problem.
 243 Where it's a challenge is where they're predominantly something else in college and so
 244 their HEness of delivery and thinking at that level is a small thing to do and so I have to
 245 keep reinforcing those messages – for this cohort of learners you've got these
 246 responsibilities and those extra things if you like.

247 I: *So you'd say the graduate attributes actually broadens the role of the HE lecturer?*

248 A: Yes it does, it does yes because I've got to do more things than the necessary that I'll be
 249 directly responsible for so in the structure in college, say a business studies programme,
 250 there'll be multiple teams of people feeding into that programme and the business
 251 studies teacher would only have one responsibility for all, but in HE word that person's
 252 teaching that programme once a week's the only time they come in and so unless that
 253 HE lecturer teaches across the piece about the attributes, there might be experiences
 254 those students don't get so that would be part of professional development sessions.

255 I: *Ok very good thank you. In terms of the university and college relationship. Obviously*
 256 *you liaise with the university quite a lot in your managerial role. Is there anything you*
 257 *think the university could do to help support you to implement the attributes?*
 258 A: Well there are some things that have been really good that the university's done with us
 259 but it doesn't happen across the piece and I think they are things that support the
 260 graduate attributes. So in the health programme we've had somebody brilliant from the
 261 faculty come over but that doesn't happen consistently across all programmes.
 262 I: *And they talked about the Graduate Attributes?*
 263 A: No but they related so they might talk about progression or the health woman did an
 264 activity which was encouraged them to sell themselves and talk confidently so it's the
 265 graduate attributes, but that wouldn't happen across all programmes so I guess more
 266 opportunities to make use of staff expertise from the university would be quite
 267 supportive.
 268 I: *Ok thank you. Not too many left now - are we still ok to continue, is that alright?*
 269 A: Yes.
 270 I: *Thinking about assessment, to what extent do you think the graduate attributes are*
 271 *assessed on the courses?*
 272 A: I don't think that's consistent and I suppose I'm unsure as a manager to be pushing for
 273 that to be happening because I think it's of variable quality. Teachers or lecturers make
 274 reference within feedback to students' work to the [HEI] GAs and I'll use that as an
 275 acronym as some won't mention it at all. It isn't necessarily being picked up in
 276 standardisation though to what degree that's expected would be unclear.
 277 I: *So for example if I was to say student x on course b, to what extent have they achieved*
 278 *their graduate attributes, we wouldn't really...*
 279 A: We wouldn't know, no.
 280 I: *And do you think, I suppose, you know, do you think they should be assessed or more*
 281 *explicitly if you like then. Do you think there would be a value to that?*
 282 A: Hmm gosh do I? [pause] that's assuming you could put a measure or a number on them
 283 – a quantitative measure to something that I don't think is a best fit to them really. I think
 284 it's useful in students' work if given feedback to make reference. But just giving
 285 feedback is not putting a measure, saying this is a 70% grade or I think that's tricky, but I
 286 think feedback about the themes where somebody's demonstrated something useful is
 287 useful to point out.
 288 I: *So, some universities actually, they almost call it degree plus so like you do a degree so*
 289 *you can also take an option where you do this graduate attributes/employability portfolio*
 290 *that kind of thing. Would you think there would be any value or any problems?*
 291 A: I think there would be problems given our market where they come once a week to add
 292 that in really, as a whole. It might be different with full time undergraduates but I feel my
 293 lot don't have time to play with. I can't see that being received to well – I don't know with
 294 our students.
 295 I: *Too much extra work load?*
 296 A: I think so, I think so. And also I still think, I don't really know how you can put a measure
 297 on some of those themes really. Highly subjective, and what does it matter if they could
 298 be there I think it's putting a judgement on [interviewer interrupted]
 299 I: *So you think it's more about putting a personal judgement...*
 300 A: And the students should be able to talk about it and they can even say at the interview
 301 that yes they've had very positive feedback about the attributes. But it's dangerous to
 302 start to put a measure, I don't know. I'd have to think about that a bit more.
 303 I: *Ok yes thank you. And actually part of this process is I will do the transcript and send it*
 304 *out to you and then if you do have further reflections, and similarly if I have further*
 305 *questions I've thought about then you're welcome to contribute further if you want.*

306 A: Ok.

307 I: *Er, I mean one suggestion I've had is about making the graduate attributes more explicit*

308 *within the learning outcomes of the assessment, erm would you see any merit or*

309 *problems with that approach?*

310 A: Well they may not blend in so well to existing learning outcomes which already make

311 some assignment work quite complex I think but you can certainly have a go [laughs]. I

312 think all it needs is on Turnitin you have a box which reminds people to give feedback

313 about these because that doesn't happen. That would be a starting point, just so the

314 students getting feedback to know about relevant graduate attributes and if in an

315 assignment [interrupts]

316 I: *Sorry just to clarify – the teacher giving the student feedback?*

317 A: Yes, so, 'During this process you have...'. You could have in your assignment design

318 but I would be worried about overwhelming a student right – it's already complex enough

319 to meet five learning outcomes - some of them bare no relation in one essay and then to

320 layer on oh we'll think about these half a dozen things as well, but naturally in the

321 process of doing it they will be developing the graduate attributes I think.

322 I: *So your idea then just to clarify is on the feedback that the teacher gives is that there*

323 *should be some comment on graduate attributes that would be personal to that student.*

324 A: Yes.

325 I: *So rather than a quantitative measurement – say you've got attribute eight out of ten...*

326 A: It would be a ticky box thing.

327 I: *It would be more a qualitative statement about when you did this presentation or this*

328 *assignment really brings out...*

329 A: Yes.

330 I: *That's an interesting idea, thank you. Ok, I suppose I think we've probably answered*

331 *most of these, but on the broader quality assurance process working with the university*

332 *with your role you have to work with the quality processes of the university, to what*

333 *extent do the graduate attributes play a part in that quality assurance role?*

334 A: I don't think they've been very present. In their recent validation panel, they weren't

335 mentioned. So I don't know.

336 I: *So no mention at validation?*

337 A: [pause] Don't think so.

338 I: *Was there any mention of them in the documentation at all?*

339 A: Well they're written into course or module handbooks so, but they were just there. No

340 particular attention or no not that I can think of.

341 I: *So they were mapped?*

342 A: They are mapped. They're mapped to the course.

343 I: *That wasn't challenged or discussed at validation?*

344 A: No.

345 I: *Do you think there's been any developments to graduate attributes policy from the*

346 *university since they were implemented in 2012 so I guess it's four years now?*

347 A: I don't know. I don't even know.

348 I: *You've not noticed anything.*

349 A: No.

350 I: *Are you aware of any procedures for stakeholders giving feedback to the university*

351 *about the appropriacy of the graduate attributes? For example, have you been asked for*

352 *feedback or the students?*

353 A: I haven't, but whether people at middle management level have only they could say, but

354 it's not something that I'm aware of.

355 I: *So you've not been asked to contribute your ideas about how appropriate you think they*

356 *are?*

357 A: No.
358 I: *Ok thank you. So, nearly finished now. At the university they also have a thing called*
359 *the 3Es's. Have you heard of the 3Es's?*
360 A: No.
361 I: *And have you heard of the [HEI] Eight?*
362 A: No. no, no.
363 I: *Ok don't worry about it. So last question, everybody's favourite question, do you have*
364 *any further thoughts about the graduate attributes?*
365 A: No, I suppose coming back to if you're talking about partners then there cannot be the
366 expectation that we view those graduate attributes in the same way that you do.
367 I: *They can't be exclusive?*
368 A: No and we have to have a method of delivering them that fits our circumstances. I think
369 there can be an assumption from HEIs that we do have everything in the way they say
370 and it's not always possible in the context of a partnership that works with extra people
371 and so on.
372 I: *Thank you very much.*

5.2.2 HE Manager, College A

Date : 20/05/16

Duration : 37:58

The interviewee has a background of working within FE colleges, joining the partner college after the graduate attributes had been launched. The manager is responsible for all HE provision at the college but also lectures on the Education award at the focus of this case study.

1 I: *Do you want to start by telling me about your role, so what you currently do in terms of*
2 *university courses at the college how much experience you have – that sort of thing.*

3 A: Ok so I'm head of subject for Education/Early Childhood Studies across
4 Foundation/Degree top-up degrees at [College A]. And with that comes responsibility of
5 managing those courses at [College A] as well as a small team of staff and a supporting
6 role of that. I've been in this role for just over a year. March 2015 started and prior to that
7 I'd got maybe two years' experience in HE so relatively new to HE delivery – and a
8 year's experience specifically with [HEI].

9 I: *So you worked for delivering HE within FE with another university?*

10 A: Yes, that would be with [Northern college] – [Northern university].

11 I: *And your team how many are in the team who deliver HE level.*

12 A: HE level education or early childhood studies.

13 I: *Er, well split them up.*

14 A So if we're looking at ECS it will be 3 sorry 4 members of staff one of which is also the
15 vice principal of the college one of them which is part time, permanent staff and another
16 member of staff she is part time variable hours just does 2 modules.

17 I: *Oh right yeah.*

18 A: On the education route it is again four members of staff one of who is deputy director as
19 well as well as a member of staff that's studying for his PHD and then myself and do you
20 deliver – as well as being manager, do you deliver on both awards? Yes, I don't deliver
21 on foundation early childhood for this cohort this year but I do deliver across foundation
22 and BA holistically across the BA ECS and Ed.

23 I: *And do you deliver level 6 on both awards or just...*

24 A: Yes, on both.

25 I: *Oh right thanks. So thinking about the graduate the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, what do*
26 *you think is the rationale for the university having these graduate attributes?*

27 A: I see that more as employability really, assisting their, I suppose progression,
28 qualification really so.

29 I: *So you see an employability focus of these attributes then.*

30 A: Yes.

31 I: *I guess, thinking about you teaching students on ECS and Education, do you think, to*
32 *what extent do you think they meet their expectations of graduating? Do you think the*
33 *Graduate Attributes meet their expectations?*

34 A: I don't know because I don't suppose when they actually enrol on the course that they
35 have any expectations of [HEI] Graduate Attributes I think it's only as we discuss them
36 as part of the modules that they begin to choose to engage with them. They don't all
37 embed them consistently through every module. I think it's just there as we remind them
38 to do it as I suppose part of the assessment process really – don't think they're active
39 thinking about it all of the time – don't think they've got any prior expectation of it you
40 know I think so...

41 I: *Do you think they've heard of them before they come on the course or do you think*
42 *they...*

43 A: I think they are completely new to them – the specific [HEI] Graduate Attributes. They
44 may be aware of the issues of it in terms of reflective practitioner you know, reflective
45 context – they're aware of that, they're aware of the need to be a lifelong learner, but I
46 don't think they associate it specifically under the realms of [HEI] Graduate Attributes em
47 it might be part of the studies that they've done. If anything it'll be more the reflective
48 one that they're familiar with.

49 I: *And to what extent do you think the students presumably would have some sort of*
50 *expectation of what becoming a graduate means - to what extent do you think the*

graduate attributes as we define them to what extent do you think they meet the expectations of the students?

A: I mean I think expectations of the students is that in terms of when they are enrolling onto a foundation or a BA is that it's going to be intense, it's going to be more hard work they have to engage in more reading and it's going to give them a higher salary. In terms of whether the [HEI]GAs help achieve that or not I don't know erm yes I think if as lecturers we're helping them embed that but I don't think the students necessarily relate to it specifically – I think they just see it as a paper exercise to be honest. I don't think they've got that necessarily inner drive to think that I must develop those six areas and I will be a rounded professional at the end of it. I think they're maybe seeing it as a tick list of criteria.

I: *Oh right – something they have to do, right? Rather than something they want to do. Do you perceive any differences between the ECS and Education groups that you teach then?*

A: In terms of the students or how they engage with the assessment?

I: *Yes, in terms of their attitudes towards the [HEI] Graduate Attributes.*

A: No not individual attitudes, no.

I: *Ok thanks. Er speaking with your own experience now, having worked with them for a year, would you change any of the attributes or?*

A: No because I think each one does have its place there, you know I think each one of them individually is valued so no I think they're fine. They're illustrated clearly as to how each one is divided so

I: *So would you add any do you think or...just keep them as they are?*

A: I wouldn't add any, no, erm because I think there's the potential to get less engagement with them if you add any. I think keeping them at six – that rounded number is manageable at the moment for students if the staff are able to relate to them and use them.

I: *Ok very good thank you. Ok, so in terms of you know these are things that are implemented from the university - your implementing them over to your further education college, what do you think the graduate attributes bring to students then? What benefits do you think they bring?*

A: I think it generally helps to develop their reflective approach. It helps them embed the learning if you like across the module, you know how they've utilised, how they've extended their knowledge, how they're going to implement it into the workplace so for that I think it makes it more, I think it helps them connect with it.

I: *Ok and what do you think as a teacher and perhaps as a manager as well – what do you think the challenge. Well I suppose we'll take them separately. As a teacher first, what do you think the challenges of implementing graduate attributes are in your own classroom practice?*

A: [Pause] I suppose it's just getting to see where they would naturally align to the learning outcomes within each module more than anything. Some will naturally fit in you know with the module. If you're looking at the critical expert and the reflective practitioner, that should naturally come through every module that you do anyway, but there are others that are going to be a bit more of a challenge.

I: *Any particular that you can think of?*

A: No because at the moment I'm struggling to remember what some of them are! [laughs] We've got them up on our classroom that we can always point the students towards as well.

I: *Shall I just pause and you can have a quick look?*

A: Yes. [Pause and restart 9:52]. Ok so effective in delivering/embedding those in the classroom? I think the teamwork one is obviously embedded if we talk about group work

sharing and respecting each other's contributions and so forth, professionalism – we're always drawing on the students to share their experiences, show how things link from the setting in the classroom and vice-versa. There academic research is impacting on that and drawing it together, so when we look, when we breakdown we can see how they naturally do fit in but its more remote – I suppose having that prompt there helps all the time to remember to help them do that so I suppose to some extent name dropping to the students you know.

I: *Explicitly?*

A: Explicitly this is what it relates to yeah so that they begin to understand how they link in and why we're doing that. So it does link it's just signposting to the students what we're doing and why we're doing it.

I: *So, I mean, we'll come to the matter of the management side later, but sticking with you as a teaching professional are there any attributes, you've thought about the curriculum that some are easier to map than others if you like. How about you as a teacher – are there any graduate attributes that you think are easier to teach or are difficult to teach?*

A: [Pause]. I suppose to some extent lifelong learner is probably difficult to teach because it depends on the attitude of the student in terms of we're trying to encourage them to be independent learner, to take control of which directions their modules and research is going to take. It comes back to the earlier discussion we'd had on spoonfeeding them you know [reference to ECS students joining the BA Education] we know that some students approach that particular direction of study with their, you know in the lower third category or as to whether they're in the higher first category or not, it depends on how they're going to engage in that particular [HEI] GA really with their attitude, their desire to go further. I suppose it's the growth mind-set as well, looking at how they want to be embracing, if they want to do the bare minimum to pass or if they really want to soak everything up any which angle they like and it's difficult to teach that. You know you can make all support mechanisms available, so that they can develop their academic writing, reading and the literature, incorporate sharing and becoming critical friends within the group but it still sits with the student – they've got to want to do it and so it's difficult to teach it.

I: *Ok thank you. And are there any that in terms of your confidence as a practitioner, any attributes that you feel particularly confident in teaching or that you don't feel confident teaching?*

A: I don't know really I think they're more really much of a muchness I mean I suppose professionalism it goes without saying that it's part of your everyday practice so that should be second nature to the majority of the lecturers really. Again, the global expert, it comes down into your wider reading really, to where you're sourcing your information. That in theory on paper should be relatively straightforward erm but if anything maybe the critical aspect in terms of trying to address the balance with your less able students in terms of embedding that in their research to academic reading, looking at how to critique something analytically, you know it can be difficult to teach it without clear-cut examples, guidance and being able to picture them at different levels. They're probably the most problematic ones.

I: *And that's, so when you're thinking about the graduate attributes, the university makes a pledge that all students achieve all of the attributes. Firstly, to what extent do you think that pledge is upheld? Do you think all of your graduates achieve all of those attributes?*

A: I would say they do, but maybe on different levels. I think it's a sliding scale.

I: *That's almost my next question that do you think all students achieve those attributes equally or do you think there are different levels.*

A: I mean with teamwork you get some students that don't attend consistently so they're not able to demonstrate their ability to work in a team and you know work collaboratively

153 with others even if it's just into group presentations or contributing to feedback and
 154 analysing different approaches whereas some will be there every week so yeah.

155 *I: So there's different levels of achievement?*

156 *A: Yeah, definitely.*

157 *I: So going back thinking about in terms of your role now as a manager, to what extent do*
 158 *you think there is consistency in your staff or do you think it is inconsistency in terms of*
 159 *the extent to which graduate attributes are a part of their practice when delivering the*
 160 *university courses?*

161 *A: It's difficult to say really because it's not something that I've particularly focused on in*
 162 *terms of we have a review of learning in terms of lesson observations. When we observe*
 163 *the lesson, we look at the whole package that goes on throughout the week for that*
 164 *member of staff and the [HEI] GAs are not part of that process, so if we're looking at how*
 165 *we're embedding it throughout everything then obviously so if we're not actually looking*
 166 *at directly goes on in the classroom and we're not picking up anything from second*
 167 *marking, we're not going to know if they're delivering it or not or if they're being*
 168 *consistent or if they're knowledgeable or not, so I actually wouldn't like to say only it*
 169 *would be easy to assume that we should be knowledgeable on it but it's certainly not*
 170 *measured.*

171 *I: Ok very good point thanks. Ok so next question's about training from the university, has*
 172 *the university, well I suppose the first question is when did you first hear about the*
 173 *Graduate Attributes?*

174 *A: On a training day when I started at [College A] and it was just a quick fire overview of*
 175 *what are the [HEI] Graduate Attributes at that point, so the setting itself, [College A],*
 176 *we're very much aware of them that's where it was introduced beyond that, it was just*
 177 *they were embedded in module handbooks.*

178 *I: Ok so it was briefly mentioned and this was induction at [HEI]?*

179 *A: It was at a meeting for all the staff so it was actually prior to me actually starting. It was*
 180 *part of the development day and it was looking at holistically how as an HE department*
 181 *we met those six attributes erm yeah so I think it was for a report that we were pulling*
 182 *together really and how we were reflecting.*

183 *I: Right so that was documented in a report then, the embedding of the Graduate*
 184 *Attributes?*

185 *A: I think it was preparation for something - it's going back a while now and obviously it's*
 186 *before I joined so I can't remember the details. It might have – I'd be guessing, I'd be*
 187 *guessing. It'll be for something but I can't put my finger on it.*

188 *I: At a management level then, how have the Graduate Attributes been discussed since*
 189 *then?*

190 *A: Not as part of a development day then, no.*

191 *I: No – so it was just that one occasion?*

192 *A: Yes.*

193 *I: In terms of, because you're an Associate Lecturer [of the University], delivering on the*
 194 *course, have you had any training from the university of information from the university?*

195 *A: No.*

196 *I: Have you had any information from the university about Graduate Attributes?*

197 *A: No. I did have an initial induction as part of the Early Childhood Studies route with [the*
 198 *ECS Award Leader] but that was more about standardisation and marking – a bit of a*
 199 *calendar of events. There wasn't anything on [HEI]GAs or anything like that.*

200 *I: Nothing in the induction?*

201 *A: No but then I wasn't expecting that so I didn't know that I wasn't getting that.*

202 *I: Ok, so reflecting, just to recap, so they were briefly mentioned the college.*

203 *A: Yes.*

204 I: *But that you've had nothing from the university. Do you think there would be, do you*
 205 *think that the university should provide training or it's not needed?*
 206 A: Yes, definitely if [HEI] are putting their name to these graduate attributes then there is an
 207 expectation that every graduate should achieve those and lecturers should be delivering
 208 to those then I think there needs to be some expectations streamlined across the
 209 university really as they are potentially going to get missed.
 210 I: *Does your college also have a set of learner attributes at all?*
 211 A: No, no.
 212 I: *So there's no potential clash then.*
 213 A: No.
 214 I: *Ok. So in terms of the physical presence of the Graduate Attributes, by which I mean*
 215 *posters and the like, is there a physical presence of the graduate attributes in the college*
 216 *at all?*
 217 A: Yes, yes. Our core room for HE, we've got a display board kitted up specifically for the
 218 [HEI]GAs and then how they break down within each one – you know some bullet points
 219 for each one and how it relates to each one and what we're doing.
 220 I: *Great.*
 221 A: And also previous students I suppose case studies if you like.
 222 I: *Oh great.*
 223 A: It makes it a little more real.
 224 I: *So the bullet points, are they the ones taken from the university or your own bullet*
 225 *points?*
 226 A: I've not looked- I'll be in that room on Monday! [laughs].
 227 I: *I'll take a photo then.*
 228 A: Yes, do – I think there's about four bullet points under each one so it's highly likely that
 229 they've been taken from the university.
 230 I: *But you've added your own little case studies to them then?*
 231 A: There's photographs above each one so it's showing them actually within the task, so
 232 the photograph kind of reflects the specific graduate attribute.
 233 I: *Ok good thanks. Is there any online presence of the Graduate Attributes within the*
 234 *college website?*
 235 A: I don't know.
 236 I: *Not that you're aware of.*
 237 A: No I couldn't say either way. I don't have involvement with the website because it's not
 238 something I really go into as an outsider. As part of the VLE the students have access to
 239 there's nothing there I don't think.
 240 I: *In terms of the area you're in control of.*
 241 A: Yes.
 242 I: *Right so, I think if we look at the curriculum then what approach do you take to graduate*
 243 *attributes within the curriculum and how are they covered throughout, or just some*
 244 *modules. How do you embed them in your curriculum if at all?*
 245 A: I wouldn't say they're embedded. I'd say they pop up in discussions and do it that way,
 246 so they don't get specific focus across modules it's I suppose a relevance to that topic –
 247 we'll signpost them to it and do it that way. I suppose that take a more natural rather
 248 than a rigid approach – makes it a little bit more real focusing on it. Actually, first year
 249 students they do get a specific session on it at the beginning as part of their, within the
 250 first couple of weeks. I do actually talk about it with the FDED students. So they do get
 251 around an hour's input worth where they do actually look at each of the graduate
 252 attributes and consider what contributes to each. But we don't revisit that so it's just that
 253 one bit and then we expect to try and weave that in amongst the modules really.
 254 I: *Would you be able to send me a copy of that?*

255 A: Yes.

256 I: *That'd be great thanks. Ok are the graduate attributes mapped to the curriculum at all?*

257 *You were saying it was more informal so...*

258 A: It is – so discussions develop.

259 I: *In terms of and I guess this you might have, I suppose you might have two answers here*

260 *the question is what do you consider your role in facilitating graduate attribute*

261 *development and so maybe there's two answers here in terms of your role teacher and*

262 *your role as manager. So shall we start with teacher then? So would you say you have*

263 *a role in that?*

264 A: Do you mean as in developing and reviewing the [HEI]GAs? Developing the schemes?

265 I: *If as a teacher you have that role in the whole process that's relevant as well so part of*

266 *the facilitation but also what input you have as a teacher within the role.*

267 A: I suppose, yes, there's definitely a role in terms of developing the knowledge of the

268 students, understanding of the [HEI]GAs in terms of developing the [HEI]GAs

269 themselves then reviewing the effectiveness of those, I don't see a role for ourselves in

270 that, I see that more as ownership of [HEI] really and we're following expectations.

271 I: *So you're not aware of any invitations to conversations to contribute to the development*

272 *or...*

273 A: No

274 I: *Right ok. Ok. I think we have touched on this but maybe explore it a little further,*

275 *thinking about assessment of the Graduate Attributes so I think that you said you*

276 *considered that all your students had achieved the attributes but at different levels – is*

277 *that right? Some achieved more than others.*

278 A: Yes.

279 I: *I suppose one question while we're still on that is that overall do you think that students*

280 *tend to achieve one attribute more than others? Or is it different for different students?*

281 *Does an education student typically excel in one area and not so well in another or can*

282 *you not make any typical comments?*

283 A: I think it probably comes down to just individual characteristics really. For instance we've

284 got a very high achieving student on the BA Ed and he's a very good critical learner

285 maybe less good in terms of the professional aspect and where he sits within the

286 boundaries of that in terms of his role and responsibilities so that he's very good at

287 critiquing, is a team player to some extent and will offer a lot of support and guidance to

288 peers in terms of proofreading and critiquing other work and trying to develop a

289 collaboration but there are also areas where professionalism is not always up there. I

290 think that is also a blurred vision cos he would think he has, but others would think that

291 he hasn't. I suppose it's different interpretations really – like being a sliding scale, so yes

292 he's got all of those but I suppose it's subjective as to one person's interpretation and

293 expectations of it.

294 I: *Professionalism in the example you've give.*

295 A: Yes.

296 I: *So do you think that you assess graduate attributes in any way?*

297 A: I think we assess to see if they've utilised them, but I think that's where it stops. I don't

298 think we really look at assessing the depth of their application and understanding of it. I

299 think it's, we probably assess it to see if they've incorporated abroad range within any

300 assessment and have they elaborated on it and maybe linked to literature but I think it

301 stops there – I don't think we do anything other with that cos the word count doesn't

302 allow it – they like to focus on the actual learning outcomes rather than explicitly the

303 [HEI] GAs. So often it ends a little bit of a tag on the end from the students' perspective.

304 I: *Right so the learning outcomes don't mention the Graduate Attributes explicitly?*

305 *INTERRUPTED!*

306 A: Not explicitly no.

307 I: *The learning outcomes a...*

308 A: No. Maybe if they were demonstrated in the specific colour or were bolded out and the

309 student and the students knew that anything bolded out linked to a graduate attribute

310 perhaps we could see the link but otherwise it becomes very disjointed. I think they see it

311 as GAs and learning outcomes and they're not assessed for the GAs – they just focus

312 on the learning outcomes.

313 I: *So in terms of moving forward, would there be a value in graduate attributes into the*

314 *learning outcomes do you think?*

315 A: I think so if the university sees them as being a valuable part of being a graduate then I

316 think there has to be that incorporation of them to some extent otherwise the students

317 won't value it

318 and lecturers won't value it either because it comes back to are we, are the students

319 expecting us teach the assessment you know in terms of guided learning hours and

320 certainly for the part time students that are just you know they might be working full time

321 and then they've got family life and then they're trying to squeeze in this assessment so

322 it becomes time limited so they do focus on the learning outcomes they don't want to

323 widen the experience and pay attention to the [HEI] GAs specifically. But I think there is

324 scope to link them to the learning outcomes.

325 I: *One alternative approach some universities take is you have a degree and then the*

326 *graduate attributes or graduate outcomes as they are sometimes known as can be*

327 *assessed separately so it's almost an award on top so you get a degree and then those*

328 *who choose – like an option – get that additional kind of accreditation or a separate*

329 *record. What are your thoughts on that?*

330 A: I think it could work. I think it would be much clearer and certainly it would link to one of

331 the reflective type modules – that they're actually reflecting holistically on their higher

332 education journey, what they've learnt from those [HEI]GAs then I think there's

333 relevance for it there. I think it would give them more purpose and intent to do it.

334 Whether it was an optional one, whether they would actually value it or not I don't know.

335 I: *Do you think some students might value it more than others?*

336 A: Definitely.

337 I: *Any particular kind?*

338 A: I think because work world – if they didn't feel it was relevant to what they were

339 specifically doing in their employment, I don't think they'd value it. If they saw it as

340 enhancing their classification degree I think they would do it, you know if it gave them

341 extra credits of something like that I think they would buy into it, but otherwise I don't

342 think they would.

343 I: *Right so if it was just a separate employability certificate...*

344 A: Definitely for those who are working alongside studying, I don't think they'd value it

345 enough to squeeze some more time into producing something else if there was no

346 benefit for them.

347 I: *Ok thank you. So I guess tallying on from that, the way graduate attributes are*

348 *assessed, do you have any suggestions to improve or...*

349 A: Yes, just to be explicit with the learning outcomes.

350 I: *So integrate them with the learning outcomes. We're nearly done now so thank you for*

351 *your time. Thinking about quality assurance. In a college I know you have lots of quality*

352 *mechanisms you feed into as both a teacher and a manager. What role do the graduate*

353 *attributes currently play in those mechanisms if anything?*

354 A: In the quality assurance?

355 I: *Um...*

356 A: (pause) Explicitly I don't think they do.

357 I: *Right – so for college processes there's no mention of graduate attributes.*
358 A: College processes no I don't, I don't think so.
359 I: *So annual monitoring, module monitoring...*
360 A: It'll come up in the annual monitoring, but at the college our own document, self-
361 evaluation document but they're not explicitly linked to that because we follow the QAA
362 guidance – more to that that the [HEI] GAs. What we do for the university it links in there
363 because we've got it for the module monitoring forms and the course handbooks and the
364 annual monitoring report but I wouldn't say it links into our institutions not as a specific
365 format, no.
366 I: *OK thank you. Is there any, is there any feedback on the self-evaluation – so you don't*
367 *mention the Graduate Attributes in the college based paperwork if you like for quality but*
368 *there is in module monitoring and annual monitoring. That data goes to the university.*
369 *Do you get any feedback back from the university about that? For example, how well*
370 *you're doing with the graduate attributes, implementation or...*
371 A: No, no we don't.
372 I: *So it goes up, but you don't get anything back?*
373 A: No, no feedback.
374 I: *Ok any thoughts on that?*
375 A: [Pause] It would be good to get some direct feedback from obviously the annual
376 monitoring report. In terms of the [HEI]GAs (pause) I think it would be useful but then I
377 think it also needs to come in the form of initial training, value and how it's going to be
378 implemented and then, yeah, how it's going to be implemented effectively, and that might
379 come through maybe the PA [Programme Adviser] visits and things like that as a bit of a
380 review.
381 I: *Have you had in the Programme Adviser visits, do the Graduate Attributes feed into*
382 *those visits in any way?*
383 A: I can't comment on that just yet because I wasn't in, when you were our programme
384 adviser, you came before I started and we haven't had one since.
385 I: *You're about to have one soon.*
386 A: They're looking at round about mid-June so I won't, I don't know the process.
387 I: *That's fine ok. Something I can do is check on the form as to whether they're mentioned.*
388 *I know they are on module monitoring, annual monitoring. I'm not sure if they are on the*
389 *PA one which is something to think about. Ok. Do you engage...I think that's fine. Do*
390 *you have any other comments about the graduate attributes practice?*
391 A: No, no I don't think so – that's covered everything.
392 I: *Right thank you very much for your time. What I'll do is transcribe this and I'll email it to*
393 *you and if you have any further reflections or if you think well I didn't quite mean that or*
394 *whatever, you're welcome to have an ongoing dialogue because I want to capture as*
395 *many thoughts as I can. Thank you very much.*
396 A: No problem.

5.2.3 Lecturer, College A

Date : 20/05/16

Duration : 24:50

The interviewee has a background working in other colleges, joining the current college after implementation of the graduate attributes. The interviewee has worked on a number of education related courses and is in the second year of teaching on the education course covered in the case study

1 I: *Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Can we just start off with, just to explain*
2 *about your role at the college and the experience you've had delivering HE in FE.*

3 A: I've been delivering HE in FE for quite a long time going right back to the 90's when I
4 used to work at [another] college and we did the open learning then. So that was when I
5 was quite involved with [a Northern] University and then I worked for [another Northern]
6 and that's where I got to understand the processes at [College A] cos we used to do
7 lessons at [College A] and [another] college.

8 I: *So to clarify, at [another college] you were actually working for the university?*

9 A: Delivering lessons and again that was foundation degree levels. PGCE, I've always
10 done a little bit for [Northern university] ever since leaving [College B] I've kept up with
11 the summer conferences there and the specialist programmes I've worked on with a few
12 different modules with them for that and I still do a little bit – it's nice to have that interest.
13 And that's a two-day conference and online tutoring which is nice. And then of course
14 [HEI] for the last few years now.

15 I: *Thank you. What do you think it means to be a graduate? When somebody graduates*
16 *from [HEI] University on one of your courses here, what do you think that brings to*
17 *them?*

18 A: Again I think it's just seeing the development that takes place from the moment they start
19 right through – more noticeable I think on the PGCE group, because they're coming in
20 as having not done any teaching and they're going out at the other end confident, good,
21 aspirational I think really and they're very much aware. We try to make sure that they're
22 aware of those skills that they're developing all the way through, and seeing the
23 programme today the fast track BAs.

24 I: *So talking about the education programme now. What do you think, cos they're going to*
25 *be graduating soon, what value do you think the degree has brought them?*

26 A: Immense value I think, their confidence is and the way they now feel they've got the
27 knowledge, they've got the ability to challenge, they've got the confidence to go for the
28 interviews to get, to apply for the PGCE course or whatever course they want to do next
29 – whichever it might be and again right from the very beginning, we're keen to promote
30 that they're not looking at just getting their degree but what they're going to do with it
31 straight away afterwards. And I think it was very effective this year because a lot have
32 already got courses in mind for September - much higher this year and I think it's been
33 very well organised with regards to using the careers service within the college as well to
34 promote that aspect. But everybody seems to have a really good idea. Some of them
35 have got to take another year because they've got to do the GCSEs possibly to get
36 where they need to go, but everybody's already looking ahead where they are going –
37 nobody's just stopped.

38 I: *So you think it's made a big difference in terms of their employability?*

39 A: Yes.

40 I: *Ok thanks. Now thinking more specifically now about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes,*
41 *which are actually on the wall quite conveniently no memory test! To what extent do you*
42 *consider that those attributes meet the needs of graduates?*

43 A: I think, obviously the 'reflective and critical' is crucial because they need to reflect to
44 understand where they are going and how they're going to get there. Identifying their
45 learning points is a major part but all the assignments are about being reflective and
46 critical as well. That's reinforce all the way through. I think the subject experts [sic],
47 they're building up expert knowledge all the time so where they feel they might not have
48 been able to challenge people of question things. We actually encourage people to
49 question even the literature they study that they're reading rather than taking things as a
50 given. And they do that and they get very confident about what is right and maybe what
51 is not right and what they need to research further. One of our students today was just

52 so excited about something she'd discovered and that just completely took her to
53 another level. Somethings now she can't wait to get more immersed in that even though
54 hasn't got the words to do it for her research project, she intends to carry it on. And it's
55 those things that make it all so exciting really and I think it's that sort of thing that
56 spreads across really. People talk to each other. The 'Teamwork' bit is obviously
57 evident within the class as well as within their own environments too so that's em,
58 'Global Citizen', I think the module we've got on the BA Ed is particularly good at that
59 where we look at what's happening internationally and that's very good and I think that
60 helps, but it's not so evident on the other courses.

61 I: *So would you say there's, in terms of consistency, do you think there is any*
62 *inconsistencies across the programmes in relation to the Graduate Attributes?*

63 A: Maybe on the global aspects because of the, well both changes and developments to
64 education help to think about it, looking at the differences is really crucial I think at
65 comparing different countries, and through the work in the classroom again it makes
66 them area of not just the country they're looking at but also others. And of course we've
67 got [College A HE Manager] to tell about China and Norway which is really helpful.

68 I: *Brilliant.*

69 A: Last year we had a delegation from China – they came here, came into the classroom,
70 were asking questions, but also were letting the students ask them the questions and that
71 was really useful.

72 I: *Oh right thank you. You don't think the 'global citizen' is an area that isn't covered as*
73 *much on other awards?*

74 A: There's been a new module introduced for the BA in Early Childhood Studies – Global
75 Perspectives. I wasn't involved in that this year, but I don't think that it's as broad.

76 I: *Ok thank you. In terms of the attributes that you see there, are there any that in your*
77 *professional experience that you think the university should change or would you say*
78 *they need to add something or maybe take something away?*

79 A: I think the Lifelong Learner says it, but I think it could be more explicit about setting new
80 targets, setting new goals, not just working towards a degree because that's what they
81 need, but what you do with them, what happens to it next and where can you go, what
82 career paths open from that and again I think it covers a lot of things but the
83 employability skills that employers look for are very much about reliability, meeting
84 deadlines, being able to work independently, so really, really important as well. But you
85 can't put everything into them can you so I think it's making sure that those areas are
86 within the main headings.

87 I: *Thank you. As a practitioner then, have you faced any challenges do you think*
88 *implementing the graduate attributes into your practice, in the education courses?*

89 A: [Pause] Because I've only been involved in the last two modules, 6.1 which is very much
90 about linking it to the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and other development. I think it needs
91 more reinforcement for some learners who don't seem to be as comfortable at relating it
92 as others might be. Looking again at 6.1 part one aspect. There are some that really
93 get it I think and because talking about each of the different aspects and there are others
94 that seem to have missed the point and looking at what they need to do rather than what
95 they have developed.

96 I: *Right so you think some learners embrace them for personal development, to help their*
97 *personal development, whereas look at it as a kind of...*

98 A: Where they need to go next. It's just quite distinctive to people who are very good at
99 looking at themselves to highlight where the skills and progression and others find it
100 difficult to look at those aspects and they see it as more as what they need to do for their
101 shortcomings rather than how they've actually made massive strides in many of their

102 skills and qualities and other attributes really, not just the ones they're good at, every
 103 one that matters.

104 I: *In terms of the university, it pledges that that every graduate has achieved all of those*
 105 *attributes, would you say that's the case with your provision?*

106 A: I would say so yes, as I say the global citizen, particularly on the education course is
 107 there as well, but certainly the teamwork aspect is great that some of the people have
 108 worked together so well because they come from two different groups in the classroom,
 109 but they look at each other's work, they use each other's study groups it just comes
 110 through constantly I think that's been great. The lifelong learning for the majority they
 111 already know exactly where they're going in September looking ahead so that's great.
 112 Professional they are. I think they're very professional, the way they talk, the way they
 113 communicate with each other, the things they are discussing about what they are doing
 114 in school and looking through the research project where they're going with that. I think
 115 that's great. And subject expert, you can see the knowledge that's coming through and
 116 that's speaking up and chipping in – it's just great. So you're confident that they've
 117 achieved them all.

118 I: *Would you say as a cohort they tend to one attribute more than others or is there a*
 119 *particular attribute that you think as a group they tend to struggle with?*

120 A: [Pause] I mean I think the reflective and critical stands out as the one that is very well
 121 achieved because they have to reflect and the whole point of the critical is trying to instil
 122 that from the start. We realise how we think we can still improve on that and help them
 123 realise the difference between description and critical analysis, and again creating their
 124 own opportunities for that. Lifelong learning I think through the work that takes place
 125 early on which makes them aware that they need to be pro-active right from the autumn
 126 term in thinking where they're going to otherwise it's too late they've got to wait another
 127 year, that's not what they're expecting to do so I think we're very pro-active about that.

128 I: *Ok thank you. In terms of your own practice, when was the first time you heard of the*
 129 *graduate attributes? Was it communication from the university or...*

130 A: No from the university. I think it was on the PGCE course it seemed to stand out more.

131 I: *Was that from some training?*

132 A: Can't remember.

133 I: *Have you received any invitation for training this year?*

134 A: No.

135 I: *Can you remember the university inviting you for training how to implement these*
 136 *recently?*

137 A: No.

138 I: *Do you think there would be any value in having university-led training?*

139 A: I think there could be but these days it's quite nice to put courses online and things.
 140 Again, [Northern university] are very good at doing that.

141 I: *Online training?*

142 A: Yes, and little videos about different aspects and things – very handy that's really useful
 143 so I always check what's there on the website and just go into it.

144 I: *Do you get a certificate or...*

145 A: No

146 I: *Just resources that you can access?*

147 A: The ones I do.

148 I: *Ok thank you. Thinking about assessment...*

149 A: Can I just go back to that a second. When we come to university for standardisation,
 150 there are opportunities I think to build in something like that. Yes, I think there was
 151 within the childhood studies we're very fast there were a lot of meetings which could
 152 probably have been condensed so it would have been quite nice to have introduced

153 something as a bit if a training activity within those when we're all together about
 154 different colleges and how we could work together.

155 *I: Comparing ECS and Education, has there been any difference in terms of how graduate*
 156 *attributes have been implemented would you say?*

157 *A: I wouldn't say a great deal no. No as I said on the education side the global citizen is*
 158 *Stronger?*

159 *A: Yes, much stronger.*

160 *I: Ok. In terms of assessment, how, well first of all, do you assess the Graduate*
 161 *Attributes?*

162 *A: They're implicit and some of the times basically in the assignments so looking again*
 163 *particularly in 6.1 professional development portfolio I think is where, is more so and also*
 164 *in any of the reflections it is expected that they are relating to their own personal*
 165 *development which hopefully relate to the [HEI]GAs as well.*

166 *I: Would you think there would be any benefits or challenges to making the assessment*
 167 *more explicit about the Graduate Attributes?*

168 *A: I think it would certainly raise their awareness and I think it would also be beneficial that*
 169 *they are very much aware of their progression across them and their confidence in their*
 170 *abilities and skills. That would draw attention to that rather than being part and parcel of*
 171 *the assignment.*

172 *I: How would you go about that – what ideas do you have to make assessment of the*
 173 *Graduate Attributes more...*

174 *A: I'm not sure of the assessment but their own reflection that has to be added to maybe a*
 175 *500 word piece of writing that is about their progression in the attributes and maybe they*
 176 *develop a little bit more into the skills as well – very strongly directed onto how they*
 177 *would consider the developing in each of those areas and where they're taking it to next*
 178 *with obviously their way they want to go with that, the next steps and I think that would*
 179 *be helpful because it would keep them in mind of the next targets they want to achieve*
 180 *and how they might build that into their next assignments.*

181 *I: Ok thank you. Are we ok for time? We're not too far off now.*

182 *A: Yes, I'm fine.*

183 *I: So how would you say, in terms of quality assurance, the graduate attributes feed into*
 184 *quality procedures in terms of what you do so, do they play any part in the quality*
 185 *procedures that you...*

186 *A: Really in every single lesson not only are we meant to but actually I just find it's essential*
 187 *anyway. There is some part of it that draws attention to employability skills, from years*
 188 *and years ago working with adults. It was always quite clear that nobody looked to*
 189 *beyond as I say getting a degree and you know there's so many undergraduates*
 190 *working far below their capabilities and having worked with adults on the open learning*
 191 *courses they would be asking them about their experiences they tend to feel that they*
 192 *weren't as valuable. If you sit a graduate next to them they would feel that the graduate*
 193 *was more knowledgeable than they were themselves so I just felt it's always been a*
 194 *major part of my teaching really to instil in people their confidence in what they can do to*
 195 *better themselves and look beyond what they're doing now. It's really everything we*
 196 *draw attention to I think is about how would we use this, you know where can you take*
 197 *this now. The presentation. Everybody as you say hates it, but really you don't go for*
 198 *many interviews these days without having to do a presentation and that can kill or cure*
 199 *your aspects again you have the aspirations that they've got – it's getting over those so*
 200 *they feel comfortable.*

201 *I: In terms of feeding into quality processes like module monitoring and annual monitoring.*
 202 *With regards to the college, does the college have any requirements with regards to the*

203 *attributes, so when you're participating in college based quality processes, do you have*
 204 *to mention them at all?*

205 A: Not the attributes themselves, but the employability skills and personal development
 206 skills are all very much part and parcel of everything that we do. It's an expectation on
 207 the lesson plans and everything – there's a section there about how they are being
 208 addressed – the literacy, numeracy, is absolutely crucial. We've got a really, really
 209 strong academic skills team so we're always encouraging every single piece of feedback
 210 where writing isn't up to scratch is trying to reinforce that you need to set up a tutorial
 211 with an academic skills tutor and they're really, really effective – very effective. And
 212 those that are accessing that you can see the difference immediately in the style of
 213 writing and we've also got a very strong inclusion team as well so they are supportive of
 214 testing for dyslexia of our students so I think the whole team works really, really well
 215 within the college at trying to ensure that everybody's got the same opportunities as
 216 each other and are supported through wherever they need that support.

217 I: *Ok thank you. A couple more questions now. The university also has something called*
 218 *the 3Es's – have you heard of them at all?*

219 A: No. [laughs]

220 I: *Ok that's fine – you're not the first and won't be the last I'm sure. The other thing is have*
 221 *you heard of the [HEI] Eight?*

222 A: No.

223 I: *Ok that's fine. Don't worry about that.*

224 A: What are the 3Es's?

225 I: *You're testing me now. I always get two and then forget the third er it's*
 226 *entrepreneurship, employability and another one, but...*

227 A: I have seen enterprising.

228 I: *They somehow fit with the graduate attributes and I'm trying to explore how or why, you*
 229 *know how they fit in. The [HEI] Eight relate to cognitive skills in every module so again*
 230 *I'm trying to see what the understanding of those is within the framework of graduate*
 231 *attributes as well and whether there is a misunderstanding of those. In terms of your*
 232 *ability to feedback to the university, have you had opportunity to feedback your ideas*
 233 *about graduate attributes to the university.*

234 A: I'm not sure how specific it has been about attributes cos obviously going to loads of
 235 meetings to discuss the modules and certainly there we're asked for ideas, but I don't
 236 know as such of any specific discussion about the attributes themselves.

237 I: *Ok thank you. I think we've probably kind of covered it you've said about, I was looking*
 238 *at specific activities where you think you've really developed graduate attributes. I think*
 239 *you mentioned presentations and things like that. Is there anything else that comes to*
 240 *mind?*

241 A: On the education course? I think there's lots of opportunities to talk about what's
 242 happening within their organisations and that comes across then about things related to
 243 the attributes and their place within that. Their roles and responsibilities – we have lots
 244 of discussion in the classroom rather than being formally set. In the PGCE group is my
 245 prime example because I used to take that on a Friday and we'd be reviewing all that
 246 had happened during that week and not only was it therapeutic, it became a fantastic
 247 opportunity to share experience and everybody then would either learn from that or be
 248 able to add their own ideas into different strategies that they could use. I thought that
 249 was just the perfect ending to the week because we're all going away with things to take
 250 forward into the following week. I'd find it really exciting - I'd learn loads.

251 I: *Excellent ok thank you. Is there anything that you'd like to say about the graduate*
 252 *attribute side - the relationship between the university and the college.*

253 A: No only what I touched on before - is that it would be nice to have that built into modules
254 so that there is some sort of reflection about them rather than being on the side-lines
255 within the module and we mention the attributes and things but if it's something more
256 specific that they really had to consider in much more detail then that would be
257 beneficial.
258 I: *So more specific assessment?*
259 A: Yes, reflection on that would be part of the assessment process.
260 I: *Ok thank you very much.*
261 A: You're very welcome.

5.2.4 HE Course leader and lecturer, College B

Date : 22/06/16

Duration : 28:04

The interviewees teach a variety of subjects as well as leading the case study education course at College B. Both interviewees started lecturing on the course after the graduate attributes had been implemented.

1 *I: Thank you for agreeing to the interview about gradueness and graduate attributes.*
2 *Would you just give me an overview of your roles within the college?*
3 A: My name is [Teacher] I work for [College B] and I teach on the Foundation degree in
4 Education and the BA top up degree in education for [HEI] university at [College B]
5 college.
6 B: My name's [College course leader] and I work at [College B] on the Foundation degree
7 for Education and I teach on the BA top up education and I've also taught a little bit on
8 the Sports foundation degree as well. Point 4 working for [College B].
9 *I: Ok thanks. Can you tell me how long have you worked on [HEI] University awards for?*
10 A: This'll be my third year so I came in 2013.
11 B: I took the Foundation Degree and the BA top up and then took on the teaching from
12 there, so I started teaching 2013.
13 *I: Right thanks. Ok so you have had a role in embedding the graduate attributes in the*
14 *courses, what do you think the rationale for them is?*
15 A: Having come from a school background, both of us look at developmental pathways of
16 students all the time so it feels like a natural thing for us to be teaching transferable skills
17 alongside core knowledge. I think for us it wasn't anything new, it wasn't anything
18 different – it's there as part and parcel of the way that we teach that we're forever
19 developing to put in place strategies exercises and feedback to look at a student's all
20 round growth not just the academic growth and not just the learning for the assignments
21 so I think for is it would be something that we're doing anyway regardless of being given
22 a list of graduate attributes by [HEI] University.
23 B: I think part of the rationale is to give student voice, not only student voice but self-
24 analysis of development so that they've got something that they can hang these
25 transferable skills against and see where the marker is and where they're going and
26 maybe even discover that although they thought they were doing pretty well with the
27 transferable skills, things that they'd not thought about previously.
28 A: I think in particular for the self-reflective modules that they have in each year, it sits
29 particularly well within those modules, giving a scaffold and a structure to hang that
30 personal and professional development on.
31 B: Pretty difficult to fit them in within the modules really – we end up shoehorning them and
32 finding places for them, but yes, one and five and 6.1 [reflective modules] they pretty
33 much fit nicely don't they?
34 *I: Ok thanks. You said that it's nothing, it's nothing new in terms of you've looked at this in*
35 *the school's sector before. Would you say these attributes are graduate attributes or just*
36 *attributes for a student to aspire to? Is there anything that makes them particularly*
37 *graduate?*
38 A: I think we've had this discussion a number of times because they're also entitled
39 employability skills, and in particular on the courses we teach all of our students are
40 already in employment and some of them are graduates from other degrees. We have a
41 lot of mature students and so that title probably...
42 B: You would hope that they have a good tranche already of these sort of skills and
43 understand them...
44 A: Because a lot of these are life skills and with that title it does seem particularly relevant
45 to those youngsters straight out of school and becoming a graduate is the next thing. A
46 lot of our students are not in that position.
47 *I: So do you think it has a relevance for your students who are mainly part-time mature?*
48 A: In some respects...
49 B: Some of them do yes...
50 A: Cos they're such a generic good set of skills to have. They're almost like the ten
51 commandments you can't go wrong with them can you? Of course you want to be

52 professional, of course you want to be reliable, you know these things are not just about
 53 being a graduate, they're about being a rounded citizen as an adult in our society and as
 54 part of that you have responsibilities to get a job and be self-reliant and able to
 55 contribute to society by getting a job and paying your taxes. So you know I wouldn't say
 56 they were just for graduates, they are almost like, to be a grown up these are asset of
 57 skills you need. But for a lot of our students they're already very grown up so some of
 58 them are a bit patronising.

59 *I: As teachers then, how do you get around that potential issue then? I have heard of that*
 60 *patronising thing from students.*

61 *B:* We try to use them practically and if you take the team building, teamwork one, we use
 62 communities of practice a lot and I think we've done that on the back of well we need to
 63 make these links, so we do a lot of working together, communities of practice,
 64 experiential stuff that sits very nicely within that, but yeah some of them are patronising.
 65 And I think early on in the course, quite often a few backs go up don't they – well you
 66 can't tell me cos I'm already in work and it's finding that link so yes you're in work at this
 67 moment but some of these may help you to move yourself forward in line with the course
 68 so.

69 *A:* Yes, the IT ones and entrepreneurial ones are the ones that they find most difficult
 70 because of the sector that they're in and they're already in work. I don't know I think
 71 different people like them and some don't. Some modules they suit, some they don't.

72 *I: And you mentioned the entrepreneur, so that's part of the 3Es's which is Enterprise,*
 73 *Entrepreneurship and...*

74 *A:* Enterprise...

75 *B:* Employment...

76 *I: Employability. What's your understanding of how they link in with the 6 Graduate*
 77 *Attributes?*

78 *A:* Alongside the professionalism because they are that next step up for our students,
 79 because we take them from their role in the classroom to the role beyond the classroom,
 80 the school and a lot of them are looking for that career progression, those are the three
 81 areas that they've got to, not just using their initiative within the scope of the job but
 82 looking broader more strategically and that's their entrepreneurship, so having that
 83 confidence to speak up in staff meetings, and share good practice, so I would say those
 84 3Es's are quite good for us in lots of ways.

85 *B:* They're also a step up – once you've mastered the basic attributes.

86 *I: The six at the bottom in a hierarchy?*

87 *A:* Because once you've mastered timekeeping, dressing well, being polite, you know you
 88 can't tell our adults who are already in work to have those things, so really we're saying
 89 we expect you to be professional and you treat us professionally and with respect and
 90 that's our starting point. We won't be teaching that. However, in terms of career
 91 progression, this is another set of professional skills that you could develop and we give
 92 you opportunities

93 *I: So you see those three as professionalism plus?*

94 *A:* Yes.

95 *I: It's the going beyond what's expected of you?*

96 *B:* Yes. I think within them as well, some of the wording is quite useful, in that the modules
 97 1, 5 and 6.1 ask for development and transferable skills and actually you can go back to
 98 those and look at them and actually get some of those that actually you can use within
 99 your work.

100 *A:* And obviously what does it mean, what does it mean by entrepreneurship we share
 101 really good practice, some people have made connections with schools abroad and
 102 brought that information back into their own schools.

103 B: And they're almost looking at it as I need to work out how to make money then, to be an
 104 entrepreneur.

105 I: *A narrow definition?*

106 A: Yes, they think it's running their own stall at the summer fair, but it isn't, it's about having,
 107 you know, we've got some students, especially through the action research really good
 108 for entrepreneurs, having an idea that you don't know the answer to so that's where we
 109 mainly use that one. We probably don't need the first seven – just have those three
 110 [laughs].

111 I: *Do you think there's, because you've got the 6 and then the 3Es's.*

112 A: I think there's an awful lot, [Researcher], to be honest.

113 B: We've also got the skills, what is it called, the *Skills Promise*...

114 A: Which is another 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, we've got 12 from that. We have to put those in every
 115 lesson.

116 I: *Right, so this is fantastic. How do you go about this then, so you work for a provider
 117 which has its own set of attributes and you're delivering an HE course which has its
 118 own...*

119 A: We're trying very hard to get our heads round it cos we've got 12...

120 B: All of those tend to sit within the graduate attributes so...

121 A: We have linked your six with our twelve, and then within our lessons, on our lesson
 122 plans we signpost which ones we're focusing on because to be honest throughout most
 123 of our session we kind of run through most of them most times and so we're in
 124 negotiations with...

125 B: We've got British Values, E&D [Equality and Diversity], maths, English and everything.

126 A: We've got to embed English and maths in every lesson.

127 B: We haven't got a piece of paper big enough to fit all of those on as well.

128 I: *Right and teach them content?*

129 B: And teach them content...

130 A: And signpost what our assessment for learning is, and our assessment of learning and
 131 assessment for learning...

132 B: Have we got criteria set up front? Do we have a twenty minute stop and breakout?

133 A: What is learner-led and teacher led activities?

134 B: We're not allowed to use PowerPoint.

135 A: So at the moment, we're doing it, we're not writing it down very well, but we review what
 136 we're doing in terms of developing good practice. And you should see the scheme of
 137 work we have to fill in, so at the moment we're really struggling with all the different bits
 138 we have to pull in. At the moment we're focusing on good objectives and lessons and
 139 great students.

140 I: *So do you feel that having a university set of attributes, it kind of clashes with where
 141 you've got your own attributes?*

142 B: They sort of...

143 A: They clash even more cos they're for further education.

144 B: Yes, for the younger...

145 A: Very baby.

146 B: Cos it has got, I mean they've got entrepreneurial in there.

147 I: *And yet they are...*

148 B: 'IT, creative thinker, ambitious, job ready' so they're a distillation really of your six plus
 149 your three.

150 A: What me and [lecturer B] generally talk about is we'd like all of you to have less titles, so
 151 really we'd like to go down to the four R's wouldn't we? [all laugh]. We could do that and
 152 you could feed in where appropriate because actually...

153 B: Realistic, respect...

154 A: Reciprocity and so totally agree with underpinning the teaching with core skills so you're
 155 doing all that clever teaching all the time when you're laying down how you do it, how
 156 you develop your social skills, working skills – totally for that. We find it difficult...

157 B: A bit slave to master sometimes and it's doing the balancing act isn't it? When told
 158 we're being observed we tend to err on the side of FE, cos they're the guys that are
 159 coming to look at us and that's the bits that we make sure are there.

160 I: *So it's not accommodated then you're doing an HE course, it's, you're expected to follow*
 161 *exactly the same procedures?*

162 A: Yes.

163 B: Yes, we're all painted with the same brush.

164 A: Same scheme of work, our scheme of work is eleven columns long

165 B: A session plan and a scheme of work that equal each other in...

166 A: 7,000 words per session we have to fill in [laughs].

167 B: Needless to say it's quite similar most times.

168 A: Needless to say mine are not as good as [Lecturer B] [laughs]. Cos I like to make up
 169 what I'm doing as I...

170 B: Yes – responding to the students, and especially with...

171 A: We are succeeding with our delivery, we are good, our student outcomes are really
 172 good, the quality of our lessons are really good and we do take seriously underpinning
 173 skills. Do we sit and go down the list of [HEI] Graduate and go oh I need to fit that in, no
 174 we don't. We think we've got to teach somebody this, what is the cleverest way, oh
 175 we've got some students...

176 B: It's taken as implicit really because they are intelligent enough to know that they are...

177 A: That group that we've got in there, we have worked so hard developing teamwork,
 178 communication, respect for each other, sharing, you know through so many different
 179 strategies that we're at the point where we're having a really good time and they're
 180 having to make bonds and connect with each other, but we had some real clashes of
 181 personality. So as teachers we discuss that and put in place strategies to help those
 182 students move forward with some personality issues some of them have and it was
 183 embedding skills around teamwork, collaboration, respect you know...

184 B: But without actually flagging it up so it felt as if we were being patronising.

185 I: *I was struck by how personally they'd taken those things on – the Graduate Attributes.*

186 A: Yeah. When we go some feedback on it cos I'm particularly 100% keen on them but we
 187 were doing some work on it because we doing 6.1 saying about referencing their
 188 progress and we were doing some SWOT analysis [Strengths, Weaknesses ,
 189 Opportunities, Threats] they actually liked it and they got back their journals and saw
 190 how they were at the beginning and in terms of those things they are things they've
 191 taken all the way through, so they can reflect back to how they felt in diary entries about
 192 things and so it was a really important moment, they actually loved it.

193 B: The ability to sort of pin the badge to the particular attribute and see where they're going.

194 I: *Was, so you came in 2013, the attributes were 2012...*

195 B: When I was taking the course as a student, I think they came in at the end and there
 196 was no real use of them. We didn't do too well with them to start with really did we?
 197 We've taken them on probably in the last 18 months, made more out of it.

198 I: *Did you ever receive any invitation to training from the university?*

199 B: No, we made it up as we went along really, haven't we?

200 I: *So you've been left to work out how to embed things?*

201 B: Yes.

202 I: *Do you think there would have been any value in training from the university?*

203 A: Yes.

204 B: Yes, there's always value.

205 A: Especially for us in further education college to get that picture of how it sits in terms of
 206 HE would have been very useful and still would be useful for us.

207 B: And just the knowledge of what the intentions of them really were, because we've taken
 208 our interpretation.

209 A: I have to say we have flagged it back as feedback that we would like more direction of
 210 the way we're teaching HE. I mean for the BA in particular we haven't had a lot of
 211 support with.

212 I: *About what aspects of that?*

213 A: About whether we're doing it in the right way, in the way that [HEI] University wants it so
 214 we always say...

215 I: *In terms of kind of standardised pedagogy?*

216 A: Yes.

217 I: *Would you want a standardised pedagogy?*

218 A: No, no, no, we'd probably want to watch someone else doing it and then say we're
 219 better! [all laugh]

220 I: *More on the kind of ideas share?*

221 A: Yes. [Has to briefly leave at this point].

222 B: Cos we do, we go very different ways, cos I've noticed with the module 8 [FDED] there
 223 are just a plethora of different ways it's been taught and I noticed it was, there's one
 224 that's almost gone action research was set out like that. I haven't done that and I think
 225 right we're altogether more...

226 I: *Holistic?*

227 B: Yes. That sort of thing, so I think that difference is good isn't it? But it's just knowing
 228 that you're still ok in your own route for these things.

229 I: *So, so you haven't been offered training. Have you ever been invited to feedback on the*
 230 *attributes about...*

231 B: No I can't remember that we have.

232 I: *Have you been able to contribute, to say do you like these?*

233 B: No, not formally, maybe we've chatted informally in passing here and there.

234 I: *Right, so there's been no formal process.*

235 B: Don't think so.

236 I: *To gain feedback.*

237 B: No, I'm not aware.

238 I: *Do you think that would have any value or?*

239 B: Yes, I guess it's always got value, hasn't it? Whose value it would be more for, [HEI]
 240 making sure that we're using them in the right sort of way.

241 I: *I think you've said they're fairly good in terms of generic things, are there any that you*
 242 *would particularly want to take away or add to?*

243 B: The only thing that I was thinking that might be useful somewhere in there and it's very
 244 big at the moment is sort of mindset, resilience which either might sit within one that
 245 exists. I just think that it's a really important area. Because looking at some of the
 246 students that isn't always there. Maybe the fact of just bringing it to light and having it as
 247 part of a set of transferable skills might, em...

248 I: *It's interesting you say that as that has come from some of the student feedback about*
 249 *what they think it means to be a graduate is resilience – they've used that word.*

250 B: Yes. I've been reading a lot about Carol Dweck and character and grit and there's the,
 251 gosh, I can't remember the, another lady, Amanda, is she Australian I forget. But
 252 there's, there's a lot written about it at the moment and it makes a lot of common sense.
 253 It really does, and I think that's probably as important as most of the others that are
 254 sitting there at the moment, especially when you're looking at mature students, some of
 255 whom have got a family, a job, juggling goodness knows what, that resilience and that

256 ability to bounce back after setbacks or just sometimes the whole thing, being able to
 257 take that value judgement, this time I can't get a first because of things. But I think that
 258 resilience, grit, whatever it's called is important and maybe should be incorporated.

259 *I:* *[A returns at this point] We just asked about if there any attributes you would delete or*
 260 *change?*

261 *A:* We said tenacity, resilience. Did you talk about time management?

262 *B:* No.

263 *A:* Cos we do have an organisation thing over and above time management which is not
 264 time keeping for our mature students. And even though we go on and on about it, we
 265 talk about Gant charts and every year we've got people who come a cropper with it. And
 266 I don't know if we could put in place, I don't know, some sort of, it would help if...

267 *I:* *I know there's an assignment survival kit which emails out reminders.*

268 *A:* Yes, it's really good.

269 *B:* We've sort of put one together.

270 *A:* No but I've shared that one online it's brilliant on the [HEI] uni website. I've been on it
 271 you put your deadline in it and your assignment and it...

272 *B:* Gives you jolts!

273 *A:* Yes, it gives you reminders.

274 *B:* But then for some people it just, they will never do that will they? But yes, resilience I
 275 think it's an important one as well as being very current.

276 *I:* *Right thanks. We're just coming to the last few now if that's ok cos we've looked at the*
 277 *cycle where if you've been offered training, if you've had a chance to feedback I think*
 278 *we've missed, so has the university ever given you a chance to give feedback on the*
 279 *attributes?*

280 *A:* We put it in the AMR [Annual Monitoring Review].

281 *I:* *In terms of the box that relates to the Graduate Attributes.*

282 *B:* Yes, we usually put in there that because they're mature students in employment they
 283 don't see the value of it particularly.

284 *A:* And they didn't seem to be happy spending a lot of time in the module writing about
 285 them in every module but that's been taken out now so you just allude to the ones where
 286 they are appropriate.

287 *I:* *So the footprint of them has actually reduced then over the years.*

288 *B:* Um.

289 *A:* They've split it in terms of the modules, but not in terms of the teaching.

290 *I:* *So you used to have to write something about the attributes in each module?*

291 *A:* There used to be something in the PDR [reflective] modules where you had to show your
 292 progression against the [HEI]GAs. It wasn't called transferable skills it was about
 293 progression in terms of the [HEI]GAs.

294 *I:* *But you say in terms of quality monitoring to the university the only quality monitoring*
 295 *that you fill out with regard to, is the AMR?*

296 *A:* Yes.

297 *I:* *Have you ever received any feedback from the university about you know the*
 298 *appropriacy of what you're writing or whether you're doing something different with that.*

299 *B:* When you go to that meeting, the fierce lady tells you...

300 *A:* You've done it wrong.

301 *B:* You've filled it in wrong, but I don't think they've ever alluded to the fact that we've put
 302 the [HEI] Graduate Attributes in them.

303 *A:* We have been told they're in the AMR but we've not been told how to do it right.

304 *I:* *Right, so that part of it hasn't been picked up on?*

305 *B:* I think it's all picked up on generally.

306 *A:* But the things that we wanted to say were all taken out.

307 B: It appeared we weren't allowed to say anything against [HEI] in any way shape or form!

308 I: *Oh right.*

309 B: [Laughs] That's how it felt – got to take that bit out. Ok.

310 A: We're not sticking with the graduate attributes at all now apparently, but you understand

311 them all. So whatever we flagged up got taken out.

312 I: *Ok so when issues were flagged up you felt that they weren't particularly...*

313 A: Yes – not robustly followed through.

314 I: *Ok, the university pledges that they all achieve all of these six attributes. Do you, to*

315 *what extent do you feel that that pledge is upheld?*

316 A: It's a very individual student thing. I think that we would pledge definitely that we would

317 hope that all students have acknowledged and made progress and developed them

318 across the three years, four years for some, that they're with us in those areas.

319 I: *So in your sense the pledge is that they've made progress.*

320 A and B: Yes.

321 A: But how do you say you've achieved Global Citizenship?

322 B: Yes.

323 I: *So do you have any clear criteria upon which that achievement is defined?*

324 A: No. I think that lifelong learning is our big one in that we say that that's the one that we

325 judge ourselves against, that we have produced learners who see themselves as

326 reflective education practitioners on part of a journey of lifelong learner and I think it's

327 that one that we really focus on.

328 B: You would hope that completing to a decent standard the modules that within them there

329 would be a modicum at least of each of them.

330 I: *So you think in terms of reaching the module outcomes, you are achieving those*

331 *graduate attributes? You don't envisage the case of somebody coming out with a 2:1*

332 *but actually failing the Graduate Attributes.*

333 B: No, because again most of them have got the majority of those attributes before they

334 start. And even if they don't know they've got them, they're engrained in there

335 somewhere because of the jobs they do.

336 I: *So you think the graduate attributes is more about drawing them out as a focus point?*

337 B: Yes, I do. You're right I think it's just a case of are you aware of these, where this is

338 where you're working and what you've achieved and what you are doing and it just gives

339 you the ability as I've said right at the beginning to do that self-assessment on

340 development and then say actually well yes because you've done 6.1 or 5 [reflective

341 modules] I have achieved this because of professional practice and development and

342 where I'm going aspirationally careerwise even if it is a bit pie in the sky I'm really

343 looking at where I'm going and I think that sort of underpins the whole thing. By the end

344 of it they can actually sit there and think actually, maybe we should give them a list and

345 tick it off.

346 A: Did you teach on 5 [reflective module]? It might be something for you to, perhaps we

347 should...

348 B: Yes, right the way through we do use transferable skills and tick box, right at the

349 beginning, where do you think you are with this? Do one at the end of year one, at the

350 beginning of year two.

351 A: But we've done TA skills haven't we?

352 B: And they cross over quite well.

353 A: We do a SWOT analysis which they're all going to include this time in one and I also do

354 a short, medium and long term projection of where they want to be and it all sits in with

355 those modules. So yes we do, absolutely. Underpin the lot. [laughs].

356 I: *Do you have any comments you'd like to say about the Graduate Attributes?*

357 B: I had to make up the posters and little bits that we've used. It would be lovely to have...

358 A: Yes, like posters here [pointing to college attribute posters]
359 B: I cobbled them together [HEI GA posters].
360 I: *So the university has sent you...*
361 B: No nothing – I made them up off the stuff that's online so our little bits. We've got it in
362 two classrooms.
363 A: But we must have a poster we can display.
364 I: *So there was no poster supplied?*
365 B: No posters, nothing at all.
366 I: *No promotional material or anything?*
367 B: No. We've made it up.
368 A: But we don't see them round the university when we come there to be honest. Like we
369 walk round [College B] and you can't turn round for being told how you must aspire to
370 value your skills promise.
371 I: *And it's a skills promise? Is that more legally binding than a pledge?*
372 A: I don't know.
373 B: We all dance round a mushroom, don't we? [both laugh]
374 A: Take the pledge!

5.3 Student Focus Group Transcriptions

5.3.1 *HEI Student focus group (main campus)*

Date : 23/06/2016

Duration : 34:09

1 I1: *Ok it's recording so do you want to do the first one?*

2 I2: *So the first question that we're going to ask to all of you so please answer as you will is*

3 *in what ways do you think achieving a degree will be valuable for your future?*

4 A: Future employment, to be able to work your way up the ladder for promotion,

5 progression of my career.

6 B: Might be for a job description as well, part of the criteria might be you have to have a

7 degree, most teachers you tend to have to have a degree and getting QTS [Qualified

8 Teacher Status]

9 C: Personally, I feel that the degree showed my employer I'm actually capable of more than

10 an A-level student or just a GCSE, oh hang on, she's got a degree. That's got quite a

11 respectable status as a qualification.

12 D: I am hoping that a degree is going to put more value in my professional attributes, in my

13 qualification and that I will come away with a higher price label when I'm looking for a

14 job.

15 B: Yes!

16 D: ...as in oh she worth that much as well as I like studying is a good role model for my son

17 because he will in the future to be a university student. Because as a family we value

18 education.

19 I2: *Excellent thank you. So what personal and professional skills and qualities do you hope*

20 *to gain from your degree? What skills and qualities?*

21 A: More in-depth knowledge of your discipline that you can converse confidently, that

22 you're up to date with cutting edge findings, cutting edge literature, that you can be

23 considered effective within your field in the work place.

24 I2: *Anything wider in terms of things that you do as part of your degree, so any other skills*

25 *that link to what you have to do?*

26 B: I'd definitely say grammar. It's certainly improved. I remember on my first assignment

27 he said about apostrophes I just tried to avoid every possible word that involved an

28 apostrophe so I didn't get it on my feedback – I've learnt my lesson!

29 D: In my case in terms of skills I do feel more prepared in the field of work say if I am

30 working in my school and if the head teacher asks me to do research as in can you

31 verify if intervention is actually working. I feel that I have got the tools to carry out the

32 research and come up with an answer, bringing an answer substantiated by studies,

33 findings I feel that I can put visually to her and present it so in terms of presentation I

34 could present to the school, I could try to persuade perhaps for another point of view

35 through this research and finding literature and journals in a professional level and

36 evidence this research so I think I would, I could potentially look in terms of leadership or

37 co-ordinating a group.

38 B: It's a lot to do with confidence cos obviously you must have so much confidence to

39 develop through this knowing actually yeah I am capable of this and I can do it.

40 D: Definitely. Yes, I think my confidence levels really it was a confidence booster doing this

41 course which initially I did going back far when I started my NVQ you would be just a

42 teaching assistant so that's where falling into place and I was not planning to come this

43 far. And for my colleagues' feedback it inspires confidence.

44 B: You're right they said you've got a first leave and have a nice holiday.

45 I2: *Just making it more formal in terms of these graduate attributes, to what extent do you*

46 *consider the GAs meet or do not meet your aspirations. So the graduate attributes, I've*

47 *got them listed here, about professionalism, global citizen, teamwork, lifelong learning,*

48 *reflective and critical and discipline expert. So what extent do we consider that those*

49 *GAs meet what you want from the course in terms of your aspirations? Does that make*

50 *sense?*

51 A: I think they're quite thorough. I think they're accurate as to what we want to achieve on
52 the course, cos we're looking globally aren't we? And we're looking personally, looking
53 at work, so we're covering all areas aren't we as what we want to achieve as a student.
54 I2: *Anything missing, anything that, there might not be it's just a question that...*
55 A: Right.
56 I2: *Is there anything you might want to...*
57 A: Because in our job, cos we work as part of a team, so that's a big one isn't it. We have
58 to be reflective in teaching so that's another one that's really good and it's useful to know
59 what's going on globally and that's what we've learnt on the course cos we've learned
60 about Finland and Australia haven't we in some depth and other countries as well. So
61 that's helped us out globally and also a lot of literature about what's going on politically
62 that I wasn't really aware of, that's been a big thing so whether that could be included in
63 it somewhere I don't know. You know like the politics cos education is very political isn't
64 it? That's not on there would be the only thing.
65 I2: *Interesting, ok. Thank you.*
66 I1: *So now we're going to look a little bit more at the curriculum of your course ok so what*
67 *do you think is the role of the graduate attributes within the curriculum of what you've*
68 *just done?*
69 B: I think it's like a hidden agenda to be honest, I think it's like a hidden tick list and you're
70 not actually aware you're achieving these until [researcher] would mention it would be a
71 good point to mention in your assignment the [HEI] Graduate Attributes and I think oh
72 hang on I've done that and I've done that.
73 A: You do it without knowing don't you.
74 D: I would say it's embedded in the curriculum and you throughout, during the course you
75 develop those skills. I didn't enrol in this course with the aim of becoming a more
76 globalised citizen but I am now more aware that I can because of this knowledge I
77 developed.
78 I2: *Ok.*
79 D: So I think it is really valued that I do it in the course.
80 B: Without knowing so you're not working twice.
81 C: It's blended quite seamlessly. You're going back and having a look when you're writing
82 your assignments and it makes you think yeah I've done that and I've done that and I've
83 got that yeah.
84 A: You can put it in then can't you.
85 I1: *Yes, that's quite interesting cos you're sort of answering the next part as well which is*
86 *excellent, which is looking at how the GAs are clearly mapped to the curriculum, so what*
87 *it's asking is are you aware of the GAs as they come out during each module or do you*
88 *feel that maybe, and I don't want to put words into your mouth, but maybe [researcher] is*
89 *highlighting them? So maybe if [researcher] didn't mention them, would you be aware of*
90 *them?*
91 B: Personally no I wouldn't've until [researcher] highlighted them, but I'm glad he did cos
92 now I can put them on my CV, a global citizen, but I wasn't aware of them.
93 D: I was aware every assignment handbook has part of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, it's in
94 there so there is one or two sentences that say throughout the work that we should link.
95 So it is written there. In our Foundation Degree it was also mentioned we write about
96 the experience being linked to the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, we have a tick box.
97 C: It was quite a big thing on the Foundation Degree.
98 D: And it was very highlighted.
99 C: Emphasised that this is a graduate attribute put that in your assignment, whereas
100 [Researcher] hasn't done that this year. I think it's just been expected that we will.
101 A: Very subtle – it's not pointed out so much.

102 B: See it wasn't pointed out on my Foundation Degree so I was totally oblivious to them.
 103 D: In the past in the Foundation Degree it mentioned the attributes, how I developed them.
 104 A: Ours was really stressed.
 105 B: Ours didn't mention [HEI] I'm not going to lie, it didn't really promote it very well.
 106 I1: *But this is great because you've got different experiences because you're coming from*
 107 *different places aren't you so that's great. Moving on, sorry it's your section isn't it, sorry*
 108 *I'm getting ahead of myself.*
 109 I2: *What we're finding is that a lot of these questions are linked and we're answering them*
 110 *as we go along as well. So I think you've mentioned quite a lot about what [Researcher]*
 111 *has done in terms of your own GA development, is there anything else you want to add.*
 112 *Something he's put here, how effectively has he achieved this in embedding the GA*
 113 *development within the course?*
 114 B: I'd say very effectively.
 115 C: Yes, he's always saying what graduate attributes would apply here, what's going to
 116 come into it here so as well as talking about it, he always asks for us, he always
 117 addresses the class and makes you think rather than telling you throughout.
 118 B: He's always been good on that, like student involvement.
 119 D: Appropriate questioning makes us to reflect.
 120 B: Yes.
 121 D: And I think the attribute then may have developed in one assignment might be different
 122 than yours so that's very individual opportunity for if it comes from your reflection then I
 123 think it's been well applied. Yes, otherwise it's up to the individual to see how much they
 124 reach at it.
 125 I2: *Next question's interesting cos it's asking, it's asking which attributes do you think the*
 126 *course is most or least effective at developing, but I think from what you're saying to me*
 127 *is that it's quite an individual thing.*
 128 B: Yes, it is. It is definitely.
 129 I2: *So can I try and get an individual view from each of you. Are there any attributes you*
 130 *think the course is most effective at developing?*
 131 A: I would say reflective and critical.
 132 I2: *That's the second one for reflective and critical as well.*
 133 B: Yeah definitely.
 134 C: You're pulling everything apart aren't you, all your evidence, your learning
 135 A: I think at this level it's all about being critical isn't it? [general agreement]
 136 B: And you can apply that at work so if a situation happens you think hang on you reflect on
 137 this so you can ask like your colleagues for an opinion then you're sort of, I don't know,
 138 how you're working in your assignment, you're applying that to your job. And I was
 139 totally oblivious that I was actually doing that and someone said oh yes that's a good
 140 question and I thought hang on I've read this somewhere here.
 141 I2: *Ok so you're all saying that reflective and critical is the most, if you had to pick a least*
 142 *effective one?*
 143 C: I would say...
 144 B: What does it mean by discipline expert?
 145 C: Expert in education.
 146 D: I would say teamwork. I don't think we have as a class worked as a team.
 147 B: Oh I think we have
 148 C: We do that every week. In the sessions. We do that every session.
 149 A: And you work with different people as well.
 150 C: We've done it this session haven't we? 1,2,3,4 you go over there, you go over there.
 151 It's what you perceive as teamwork.
 152 B: Activities.

153 C: Do you mean like shared projects together as teamwork?
 154 D: I would say yes. Teamwork more like work.
 155 B: It doesn't, you could have a discussion. Sometimes I think we do that too much,
 156 sometimes we need our, I don't know, own time to process what you've discussed rather
 157 than you've discussed something and then 1,2,3,4 go off to your groups and then you're
 158 still writing down.
 159 D: For me is also the how is this teamwork has been used in this class. We have had time
 160 for discussion, but we never fed back to the class most of the time. We have things put
 161 on Blackboard which I prefer a different approach.
 162 C: See I like, it's a very personal thing, I like when we do the thought showers and then you
 163 go through and have a look at everyone else and see what they've brainstormed. I
 164 always find I take something from that, take global citizen you see apart from the one
 165 module we did where we studied it globally, I wouldn't say I'm very expert in that and I
 166 did very well. I write that in my last assignment that it is something I need to develop and
 167 that's why I've chosen this particular area that I've chosen because I'll be studying Hattie
 168 who's got like international research to pull that in a little bit more cos I do think that to be
 169 an effective practitioner you can zero in on your setting can't you, the demands of your
 170 setting locally.
 171 D: Yes, perhaps the global citizen we would like actually to go to Finland to study!
 172 B: Yes – trips!
 173 D: Over there a field trip to another country would be a bit more effective.
 174 B: But he did get a lady in didn't he to speak about Finland.
 175 D: No, no, no not the same! [all laugh!] Not the same. Going over and seeing...
 176 B: Very expensive.
 177 C: It's probably the hardest one to satisfy isn't it, the global one really.
 178 A: Well we've only had a short space of time.
 179 C: What more could we do?
 180 B: Cos it is part time we...
 181 A: ...we've only got four hours a week...
 182 B: Exactly
 183 D: However, this proposal in fairness was that we could communicate by Skype and emails
 184 with the students in Finland so there was a proposal there to be global.
 185 B: Which I did, I emailed someone and they got back.
 186 C: I did.
 187 D: And in my case because I have a foreign background I was in touch with people that
 188 work in education so that extended my global citizenship in a way.
 189 A: Yes, I was thinking that.
 190 C: I was thinking well you are a global citizen anyway, aren't you?
 191 D: Yes! Yes!
 192 C: You've still got friends and family over there and you can say we do this in school, what
 193 do you do there in school, so you've got that good match anyway haven't you?
 194 D: That's right.
 195 I1: *That was lovely. Let's look at assessment now, so we're thinking about how the GAs*
 196 *are assessed if you like, so how have the GAs been assessed on your course? So I'm*
 197 *thinking more of your, possibly your summative assessments that you're doing to get*
 198 *your marks on your course.*
 199 C: Well when you write about these are the ones that have been enhanced, these are the
 200 ones that you need to work on and develop more, really in the assignments and the
 201 written essays really.
 202 A: Yes, yes the assignments.

203 D: And we receive the list of the attributes and we pick from there which ones we think link
 204 to the assignment, but to be honest in our feedback it doesn't say, I never have well
 205 done for mentioning that these attributes have been developed through this assignment.
 206 You know I put there that there has been no feedback so I don't know if it has counted
 207 really towards the marks.

208 I1: *Is it in the learning outcomes?*

209 D: No.

210 C: It's in the module handbook, but not in the learning outcomes.

211 D: So does it really matter if we put it there or not? It is not in the learning outcomes.

212 B: That's probably why we're not so aware of it. I was focusing on the assignment like
 213 outcomes like rather than achieving the graduate attributes.

214 I1: *So do you think that the assignments, the assessments that you're doing could be
 215 improved as far as the GAs are concerned?*

216 B: It depends what you want to achieve through the assignment cos obviously if you
 217 wanted us to be assessed on GAs then he would you know put them into the
 218 assignments, be another task...

219 A: It would be a sideline I think...

220 B: ...yes definitely.

221 A: On the Foundation Degree I found it was more of a...

222 D: ...highlight at the end?

223 A: Yes. It was emphasised more.

224 D: But as I said is not part of the learning outcomes, I cannot recollect reading them.

225 A: It's not the focus is it?

226 D: No. It is part of the side...

227 B: Yes.

228 C: I suppose we're not actually making a judgement though your assignment are you, you
 229 might mention it but in a different way in your feedback.

230 D: Yes, but when your feedback comes as in oh you have put many apostrophes, it doesn't
 231 mention anything about the attributes throughout the whole entire year. Does it really
 232 matter more than apostrophes?

233 C: Well maybe you've hit all the graduate attributes.

234 D: I never heard anything – well developed points in your learning attributes.

235 B: He's never ever commented on it in each of the modules.

236 I1: *So, one of the questions is, do you think this could be improved? So maybe that's part of
 237 feedback or something?*

238 D: Well it needs to be explicit as a learning outcome, one of the learning outcomes and it
 239 needs to be part of feedback otherwise we not feature it.

240 I1: *So the university pledges that all graduates achieve all of these attributes by the end of
 241 their courses. What extent do you consider your class has achieved all of the GAs and
 242 how do know this? Do you feel general that you've covered all of them and?*

243 B: I do I think we're a good team within, I think everyone's quite happy to support each
 244 other no one's a bit, doesn't show up or anything. I'd say we all put a lot of effort into
 245 this degree.

246 C: Yes, because at the end of the day am I being assessed on my education degree or
 247 assessed on those because what I want to become an expert in is education not the tick
 248 boxes, you know what I mean for the graduate attributes. I'll have gained all of them by
 249 being successful in my degree hopefully.

250 I1: *So just, they're almost all swooshed together in some way*

251 C: Yes, I think they do.

252 I1: *I hope [Researcher] will enjoy that technical word swooshed.*

253 A: Something in your subconscious I think I mean I know in my practice has definitely
 254 improved I mean I'm more reflective and now I do it more naturally I think it must be in
 255 the back of my mind about.

256 I1: *Yes, I think part of this, what looking for, it's transferable skills that you're sort of getting*
 257 *that maybe transcend some of the subject, but you're sort of saying they all interweave*
 258 *together.*

259 C: Yes, like professional you can have a conversation with a senior colleague can't you?
 260 You're using academic language which before you couldn't so you are looking
 261 professional but it's not going to get a tick box somewhere but that's just been developed
 262 as part of the course, hasn't it? [general agreement]

263 I1: *Excellent. Do you think there's a relationship between the graduate attributes and the*
 264 *professional standards so it mentions the HLTA [Higher Level Teaching Assistant] and*
 265 *ETF [Education and Training Foundation] standards.*

266 B: Yes, definitely.

267 I1: *Anything in particular, it doesn't matter if not.*

268 B: Well for team work, you've got to be a good team player. If you're going to be like an
 269 HLTA in the classroom, like manage staff underneath, you've got to be, like more
 270 approachable and have a good knowledge of the curriculum, and if something does go
 271 wrong you've got to have the skills to reflect on what's gone wrong and discuss it
 272 efficiently rather than just saying that's wrong, you've done it, change it.

273 I1: *Ok, anything more? I'm passing back to you.*

274 I2: *What opportunities have you had to give feedback about the GAs?*

275 [Pause]

276 D: Da, da, da [sings]

277 I2: You may not have done – that's fine.

278 B: No I don't remember anything.

279 D: We fed back on the modules, but the form doesn't ask anything about them.

280 B: Not mentioned, is it?

281 D: However, in the Foundation Degree we always had the feedback which asked what we
 282 had developed in terms of the graduate attributes.

283 A: We did a lot more, didn't we?

284 D: Yes the module feedback, the form would ask what I had done.

285 A: What had you developed.

286 D: Yes.

287 A: By doing this module.

288 I1: *I think this question, what he's trying to get at from what I can see is sort of like, well*
 289 *these are the graduate attributes, have you had the chance to give feedback about*
 290 *whether you think they're relevant to you or whether you think they should be more...*

291 B: No I wouldn't say anyone's every asked me.
 292 [general agreement].

293 I2: *That's fine that's absolutely great. Right we're on the last leg now. So we're looking at*
 294 *student centredness. So thinking about you as students. So would you change any of*
 295 *the attributes at all? Are there any that you'd kind of chuck out and think I'm not sure*
 296 *that's relevant or anything that you'd bring in instead? Do you want to look at the list*
 297 *again?*

298 B: I quite like them to be honest.

299 C: I think they're quite nice.

300 D: Yes, I think I mentioned in another questionnaire that I filled in about the lifelong learner.
 301 I think when you come to university you are a learner and once you are in an education
 302 field you need to keep learning, so to me that one is a bit of a redundant.

303 A: I think you've already said that though because you came from NVQ, you've already
 304 proved it, haven't you?

305 D: Coming that far it does show to me it is a bit redundant. If, I like all of them to be there, if
 306 you're coming to university and you're not a lifelong learner...

307 B: ...exactly, you're not going to...

308 C: ...it depends what age you go to university doesn't it? If you're coming straight through
 309 school bang, bang, bang.

310 A: Yes, they're not quite lifelong learners are they?

311 I1: *ok so do you think that the university expects all students to achieve the GAs in the*
 312 *same way irrespective of the course they're on or do you think some courses emphasise*
 313 *some of the GAs more than others? So if you were doing an Engineering course or a*
 314 *Food Technology course or something like that. Do you think that before you said that*
 315 *the reflective and critical was probably one do you think that if you were on a different*
 316 *course that you'd probably be saying a different one was more important to us?*

317 B: Maybe [others also say maybe]

318 A: If you were doing Sport or something it maybe teamwork would be more important so
 319 yes.

320 I2: *Ok. So what do you consider to be your role in your own development of the GAs? So*
 321 *are they handed to you in a little box and you open it? Yes, I've got that GA now. What*
 322 *do you think you are doing?*

323 C: I think it's just recognising it isn't it?

324 B: Yes, recognising.

325 C: In yourself that yes you are achieving and this is something that you're doing very
 326 naturally that you didn't recognise or you didn't even have before, but now you know.

327 B: Because you do it without even noticing and then when someone mentions the GAs, you
 328 think, well personally I feel I've achieved this. You're not learning to achieve them type
 329 of things, your learning to just be, you know, have a broader knowledge in education,
 330 hence the degree in education but I think having them stated is brill.

331 D: Yes, I think it's about developing self-awareness in relation to...

332 B: ...and then just having them builds your confidence because you can say well actually I
 333 am them and actually I'm doing quite well – I thought I was drowning [laughs].

334 I1: *Are there any particular activities, part of the teaching or part of the learning or*
 335 *assessment which you consider have contributed more to the GAs than anything else?*

336 A: I think doing the assignments is a big factor isn't it, to achieve these you do it by doing
 337 your assignments.

338 D: I have to say that [researcher] has great enthusiasm about each subject, the fact that
 339 he's so knowledgeable he can transmit that can be, we go to the assignments with some
 340 sort of package we don't go away empty and I think that it is a good resource, he's
 341 knowledge, his enthusiasm, he communicates the subject...

342 B: And he's so approachable.

343 D: Being so approachable because to teach the very first assignment we did about the
 344 history...

345 B: ...comparative education...

346 D: ...so difficult to teach because there was a lot of sociology, a lot of politics in there and if
 347 he wasn't enthusiast it would make it so hard work than what it was.

348 I2: *Can I ask you something slightly aside? What can you tell me about the 3Es's at [HEI]*
 349 *University? Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.*

350 [silence]

351 A: Not heard of...

352 D: Right I have contacted the careers service which supported my employability to make an
353 audit of my experiences for my CV so that supported employability alongside the
354 studies. For the other two I don't think I have...
355 I2: *You're not aware of them as the 3Es?*
356 B: No.
357 I2: *As you were with the GAs because you were fairly comfortable with those. Ok. Next*
358 *one, what about the [HEI] Eight?*
359 A: No.
360 D: The [HEI] what?
361 I2: *Eight. The number eight.*
362 I1: *Not hate, eight.*
363 B: It does, sounds like a club somewhere doesn't it?
364 D: That sounds like for the twentysomethings then.
365 I1: *Fine. So final question, do you have any further thoughts you'd like to add about the*
366 *[HEI] Graduate Attributes?*
367 C: It's a good set of criteria.
368 D: Yes. I'm happy that we're on that.
369 B: I do and I think [Researcher's] done well for us to have achieved them without even
370 knowing cos I've have been so much more stressed if I knew I had two sets of criteria to
371 meet so no well done [Researcher] [laughs]
372 I2: *Thank you very much for your time.*

5.3.2 HEI Student focus group (Outreach university provision in FE college)

Date : 24/05/16

1 Duration : 45:05

1 I: *Thank you everyone for agreeing to participate in this interview about what it means to*
2 *be a graduate and the [HEI] Graduate Attributes. I anticipate the interview will take*
3 *about 20 minutes it might be a little bit longer, but if you need to leave then you know*
4 *then please feel free to do so and if you don't want to answer any questions then again*
5 *please feel free not to answer them. Ok so first question then, you're all about to*
6 *graduate hopefully. Not far off now just one module left. So when you become a*
7 *graduate what do you think achieving a degree will mean to you?*

8 E: Well it will complete my study. I started my foundation degree about four years ago and
9 I was unable to do the last part here until now. I've always wanted to become a teacher
10 so this is my next step. I've already got straight into teaching now through TES which
11 my school's going to support me so I'll be having a year 6 class next year. So it's helped
12 me get to where I wanted to in September.

13 B For me it means I can leave being a teaching assistant behind and start on a career
14 that's got more, how should I say this, prospects – that's not a dead end job. But there
15 are actually opportunities to progress but something that will be more rewarding for
16 myself, more challenging because partly as a result of my studies I've become incredibly
17 bored being a TA so that will get me out of that job situation.

18 C I'm not sure really cos I'm not sure what I want to do with it once I've got it. I did
19 originally want to go into teaching because I enjoy my job so much I'm not sure if I want
20 to make that step. I'm an HLTA at the moment.

21 I: *Do you think gaining a degree is, so what value do you think gaining a degree has given*
22 *you then?*

23 C: It's given me a lot of personal satisfaction. I feel more confident at work and I think
24 possibly teaching staff take me slightly more seriously than they would have done
25 before.

26 I: *Ok can you explain.*

27 C: I think, whether it's the people I'm working with this year I don't know but I feel that
28 they've listened to me a little more than they used to because I've obviously got the
29 underpinning knowledge to back up any suggestions I make rather than plucking them
30 out of thin air. Whether that's perceived or actual I don't know.

31 I: *Ok thank you yes.*

32 D For me I've kind of just been in education for ever, since I left school cos I did my level 2,
33 3, the foundation degree and then this so I suppose all of that has been working towards
34 a career and then I've just got one year to complete my PGCE and then that's it so it's
35 just been on a path like a means to an end if that's the right saying.

36 I: *It seems like you have some sort of employment focus in doing your degree?*

37 D: Yes, yes. I think that for part time students that's probably the focus. Cos a lot of people
38 if they do a full time degree and then at the end think do I want to do it or not. I think a lot
39 of the time, people in full time go into different things and don't use their degree whereas
40 if you're working full time and part time degree is kind of you're doing it.

41 A: When you're coming in part time you're doing it for a reason.

42 D: Yes.

43 A: And we've all got reasons of progression and we've all got reasons of progression so
44 that's what we want to do. We want to make it better for us, personal job satisfaction,
45 achieving the best we can and we sort of say that to our children as well you know – be
46 the best you can so.

47 I: *So you think that it's providing a role model for children as well doing a degree?*

48 A: Yes, yes absolutely. It's not just children, you know our own children, but even the class
49 children.

50 [?] Yes

51 A: Because they can see you're taking that step and you're stretching yourself and you're
52 really persevering and that's one of our learning attributes at school as well you try your
53 hardstand you carry on. You will get to your goal and that's a really good way of teaching
54 children to be the same way cos they usually look to examples rather than us saying it to
55 them 'oh you can do well' but you know how do you know that with them? I think that this
56 is a really good way of doing that.

57 I: *Doing a degree is helping with that?*

58 A: Yes.

59 I: *I was interested to say that you've hear it's made a difference in the workplace and*
60 *you're saying it might be perceived or not. I suppose we'll stick with perceptions first*
61 *about the other three then, do you feel that the fact you're doing a degree with, has*
62 *changed your relationship with other members of staff, you think it's given more*
63 *influence or just the same?*

64 E: PB I think it has. With some colleagues it's like they have sort of like a negative response to
65 it, with others it's like oh good for you – you can do this. And with SLT for example they
66 noticed that you know, we're putting ourselves out there, we're trying our best so their
67 response has been really positive as well so yeah it does, it does change the perception
68 around you.

69 D: I think sometimes maybe because you are more knowledgeable and you know a lot
70 more sort of things about teaching, like for me if I'm working with a class, the teacher
71 probably will see me as responsible, allow me to do more teaching or taking a larger
72 group or be outside with the children like supporting learning whereas maybe other TAs
73 who aren't doing degrees or haven't done degrees maybe wouldn't potentially have that
74 responsibility

75 I: *Understanding your role and responsibility and so on.*

76 D: Yes. It's kind of like the teacher I work with wants to support me and wants me to do
77 well so she gives me the opportunities and she'll not critique me but will say oh actually it
78 would be better if you did that. So then cos she knows that I'm trying to do better and
79 progress, she's supporting me in doing that as well whereas another TA who doesn't,
80 she wouldn't necessarily say oh actually there's a better way of doing that.

81 B: I don't think it's made any difference in my workplace. My school is very fixed on roles.
82 In my old school we used to have to come up and supervise children for several hours or
83 even teach the children whereas at my current primary school that's not the case like in
84 my old school we would not have a supply teacher but would step in, whereas in my
85 current school we will always have supply teachers or even members of the senior
86 leadership team will take a class and TAs just don't take classes. So from that point of
87 view my role has been a lot more restricted. I'm only allowed to work with children one
88 on one or in a small group situation so that's why I feel so frustrated because despite all
89 the knowledge I've got and the stuff I've learned compared with my old job my
90 responsibilities are actually small – I have less responsibility. I've got less job
91 satisfaction now in a way although it's a much, much better school but I've got this
92 theory that because it's a much better school, they can pick the best members, you
93 know they can pick the best teachers, the best TAs for their respective jobs and they
94 don't have to rely on some people covering for others because at a merely satisfactory
95 school the teachers are so exhausted they take a day off sick and the TA steps in.
96 These things happen you know whereas at my current school everything is so above
97 board and it's just so very, very different. The school is lovely and the children are lovely
98 you know and the other people are lovely but the job in itself it is just it's – doing this
99 degree has made no difference whatsoever, if anything it's made it worse because I've
100 outgrown the job. That sounds arrogant, but I've outgrown my specific job role and my
101 school and the structure won't allow me to progress beyond that. I've mentioned for

102 instance helping other TAs, other TAs have come to me and asked how do you do this,
 103 how do you do that so I said to my performance manager how about I get a PowerPoint
 104 and I give a talk on this because I've got this experience and other TAs don't. 'Oh I don't
 105 know, it's a matter of remuneration and dadidadida' so if I've made suggestions I've
 106 been held back and I've not been able to step up and yes.

107 *I: But this degree has given you that realisation then.*

108 B: Yes, that's the whole point. The more er, that's the other thing a degree has enabled me
 109 to be so much more critical about a lot of things.
 110 It's opened my eyes to so many things and I can you know I can see where as a school
 111 we could do better about what does and what doesn't work. I would change things. I
 112 can't do it but I see the limitations in a lot of things but I can't do anything about it – it's
 113 terribly frustrating.

114 D: I think that it's the same for me. We were talking about it earlier. The more you learn
 115 the more knowledge you like take in and talking to other people as well about what they
 116 view you think oh that's a good idea. But then you're observing teachers and you think 'I
 117 wouldn't do it like that, I wouldn't do it like that'. It's hard to keep it to yourself all the time
 118 and think well when I'm at my class then I'll do it differently.

119 *I: That's interesting the negative things you've said. Is there anything you can expand on
 120 that at all?*

121 E: Well it's just some colleagues, we're all TAs, but they've been there for longer and I don't
 122 know but it makes them think that they know the job better, which is not necessarily true.
 123 Cos you can be there for a short time doing the job really well or you can be there for a
 124 long time and you know just get on with the bare ones of it and the criticism came
 125 because I only joined the school two years ago and I didn't come into the top up in my
 126 first year - in my second year and they just, I had negative comments like 'she's just
 127 been here two minutes and off she goes and she gets Tuesday off' and you know that
 128 sort of thing but I didn't let it hold me back because I know where I want to be so but now
 129 this year, now it's been a bit of a change around. I've seen it change in their attitude.
 130 And because the school have actually said that I'll be getting a teaching post next year
 131 they've sort of come round to the idea so they do treat me a bit differently but I don't
 132 really, it doesn't really bother me in that respect. I'm not being rude but I just think their
 133 attitude is a bit, I've got no place for jealousy I just, I just think everyone should do well
 134 so I get on.

135 *I: And you've got a clear career focus.*

136 E: Yes.

137 *I: In terms of, I think we have touched on these but what personal and professional skills
 138 and qualities do you think you have gained by achieving your degree. Because I think
 139 you mentioned confidence, that's one thing. What other skills?*

140 C: I think the ability to reflect [others – 'yes'] or realising the importance of reflection [others
 141 – yes]. I think it's something you do without realising it most of the time. Until I started
 142 my foundation degree I didn't realise, I don't know that just having a chat at the end of
 143 the day was reflecting. I just thought it was feedback and but I think that some of the
 144 skills, the professionalism and I don't think if you are not a professional you shouldn't be
 145 on the course. It's just a personal opinion.

146 B: I used to think reflection was procrastination. I used to think, and think and think I should
 147 be getting up and doing this and doing that and doing that, like on a Sunday morning I'd
 148 lie in bed and think and think about stuff and I came to the realisation that I'm actually
 149 working. I'm thinking about what I'm going to write down later and what I'm going to take
 150 away from this and how I'm going to evaluate that and how's this effecting things. It's
 151 just actually brain work when I used to just think I'm doing nothing. It's actually really,
 152 really important stuff.

153 D: Yes, like you feel better about it rather than just guilty that you haven't actually done
 154 something.

155 B: Yes, I no longer feel guilty if I take time to reflect because usually I reflect on things it
 156 has an outcome – even if it's just to make yourself better about something or to you
 157 know it doesn't matter. It helps me.

158 D: So you've got loads and loads of things that you've been thinking about, you just need to
 159 process everything. Like I really struggled with reflecting. I could reflect and could talk
 160 about myself all day, but actually how it impacts my practice and that was just one thing
 161 that I've literally just got in the last reflection. Actually in like what you do and how you
 162 are processing things actually impacts like how the children are learning and I think that
 163 for me was the biggest sort of revelation and how sort of like something that I've done for
 164 so long can just be like 'oh' – yes I get it.

165 I: *Great.*

166 E: I think there's a lot of levels to reflection. I didn't really think I was doing deep reflection
 167 at points. I thought it was just only talking about things, you know reflecting back,
 168 thinking back what could have been done better. But I think writing it down and using
 169 some sort of model to organise your thoughts is really helpful in certain situations and so
 170 I think it's something that I'm learning to do. I don't want to do it cos I have to do
 171 reflection, I want to be at the point where I could reflect and think actually that's a really
 172 good point and take it to a deeper sort of thought and then how that will impact on
 173 practice and other people that I work with.

174 I: *Thank you. Are there any other skills that you think you've, or qualities that you think*
 175 *you've achieved?*

176 E: Confidence. Gained a lot of confidence coming here.

177 D: Knowledge, just kind of underlying understanding learning and knowing that this huge
 178 complicated thing that happens and that everything supports learning because that's
 179 what my reflection, because actually that's the focus, it's not me and what I think and
 180 whatever it's just that's all your doing it for it's just for learning, but...

181 E: Understanding the bigger picture.

182 D: Yes. Yes, I think.

183 E: I think especially with Doing Education Differently, where we could look at other
 184 countries how they manage things I thought that was really beneficial for me, because
 185 then you could be a bit more critical of education here and you know why do we get it
 186 right in some places, why do we get it wrong. How does policy change, what, how that
 187 impacts on work. That'll give us a really good background knowledge into what
 188 decisions are made for schools and why governments make decisions.

189 D: It makes you critical [others say 'yes'] with everything [everything yeah]. I think that is a
 190 bad point to doing it as well though, doing a degree because it does make you more
 191 critical and it makes you more aware that the government have chosen to do this, this
 192 and in this was and like no it doesn't work for everyone.

193 E: Every new government that comes in, right that's, not going to do that now, we're going
 194 to do something new. But it might be a really good idea but they've not kept with it cos
 195 it's not theirs, you know maybe.

196 B: I think the criticality aspect thing has been really important, but it has also made me less
 197 satisfied with my current position, my current job role, my responsibilities. It is a, what's
 198 it called, a double edged sword. It is very much like that, but yes the difference between
 199 I think possibly that sounds arrogant again but people who have been university and
 200 people who have not is that once you've done this course you've learned to be critical
 201 about things and don't just accept things. I think that people who haven't had that
 202 process can be very very blinkered and just kind of like go in one direction and not think
 203 of about anything else. It's like I mean thinking back to my dad, it reminds me of him

204 quite a lot. He was a skilled blue collar worker and he didn't see the point in discussion
 205 because he felt, you know there is no such thing as accepting two viewpoints right. One
 206 person is wrong and one person is right and that's it, no more. The point of discussion,
 207 it's got to be, there is a point of discussion and there is a point of looking at different
 208 ways and looking at things more creatively or what could be improved or is a person not,
 209 why are things not black and white? Why are there grey areas? And all those kind of
 210 things and all that sort of thinking I think comes from further education, no higher, what
 211 are we? Higher education yes, higher education as opposed to just you know going to
 212 school, getting a job that's it. You know, it's that kind of, that kind of...

213 D: You get the bigger picture with this.

214 B: Yes.

215 D: About everything.

216 B: Yes, about everything.

217 E: You're not just confined to your job role or just the school. It's like what's happening out
 218 there. You're more aware of it. [others: yes/definitely]

219 I: *Ok thank you. In terms of the actual, I mean the actual graduate attributes, [HEI]*
 220 *Graduate Attributes [group laughs]. Do you want me to quiz you? [laughs/no]*

221 B: I don't know them.

222 I: *I suppose that's one question. Do you feel these are things that you have seen before*
 223 *or have they been part of your classes before? [two say yes]*

224 E: I remember seeing them before.

225 D: Yes, we were given a copy on our foundation degree.

226 I: *So just to clarify. Your route was through the [HEI] Foundation Degree at an FE college*

227 C&D: Yes.

228 E: I was at [London based university] so mine's completely different.

229 I: *So you're only exposure is in this year and that's the same with you.*

230 B: Yes, I come from [Southern university] so I have no idea.

231 I: *So I guess you're question, to what extent have you seen the graduate attributes this*
 232 *year in your teaching?*

233 B: I have not been aware of them.

234 E: I think we've some of the attributes like you're a lifelong learner and your reflective role
 235 those are things that are ongoing all the time. Just like your professionalism, you have
 236 to have professionalism when you're working in a school or in your workplace. You have
 237 to maintain that so I don't think that's an attribute you've gained by being a student at
 238 [HEI] you know these are not things that you would not gain anywhere else, you know,
 239 so I think some of them they don't make sense to me that they're just [HEI] cos they're
 240 just part of who you are as a person you know you're learning all the time so you're a
 241 lifelong learner anyway. We reflect all the time but we didn't know what to call it. [all:
 242 yes]. Professionally in our workplace we work with other colleagues, we, you know
 243 wherever we've worked we've had to maintain that so they're not exclusive to [HEI]. I
 244 can't remember the other one so...

245 I: *It's professional, lifelong learning, global citizen, reflective and critical, teamwork, and*
 246 *discipline expert. That's with an 'e' so as in subject not behaviour management. So*
 247 *your feeling is that these are kind of generic skills you have.*

248 E: Yes [general agreement] I don't think you get them exclusively by just coming on this
 249 course. I think they help you. They're something that's good, we can refine them,
 250 improve on them, but I don't think you just get them through this course.

251 D: And I don't think you need to have read them or seen them to be able to do them or you
 252 know be taught them...

253 E: Or do this course really.

254 D: Yes.

255 E: To tell you the truth I only read them in my first handbook and then I forgot about them.
 256 But it hasn't really affected me. [Laughs].
 257 I: *Do you think, have they been, have you had in class explicit guidance on them or?*
 258 E: No. [general agreement]
 259 B: Not really no I don't think so.
 260 D: I don't think it's ever been done
 261 C: A couple of the modules where we've been particularly reflective we've been
 262 encouraged to kind of think about them.
 263 D: I remember it been mentioned once or something but I'm thinking of the foundation
 264 degree.
 265 C: I know I've referenced a couple of them across certain modules but of the top of my
 266 head I couldn't tell you which modules. [Laughs].
 267 I: *In terms of the six attributes do you think the course has been more effective in enabling*
 268 *some than others or do you think they are ones that you've achieved anyway?*
 269 C: I think most you would achieve anyway.
 270 D: Yes.
 271 C: I think they're attributes that, like you say, they're there.
 272 E: I think if there's one that stands out to me it's the Global Citizen. [general agreement]. I
 273 think when we were doing our research into other education systems, it made me more
 274 aware of what other countries are doing and how important it was to look at lessons from
 275 other countries and perhaps what do governments implement certain things and you
 276 know why do they make them. I suppose it made me more aware of other systems
 277 around the world and how successful they are, but yeah that's the one I would say.
 278 That's, I've improved on cos I didn't really look at education that way. I know it's
 279 happening around the world but I didn't look into any of it.
 280 I: *So that's something that's a genuine addition to your, your, I suppose it's your person*
 281 *really?*
 282 E: Yes.
 283 I: *Ok thanks. I guess the next one's about assessment. You're saying that they haven't*
 284 *really been, there hasn't really been too much focus on what you've experienced so I*
 285 *guess you're not aware of any explicit assessment of your graduate attribute*
 286 *development or anything like that?*
 287 [All: no]
 288 I: *Ok, I suppose the next question is then, do you think there would be benefits to explicit*
 289 *graduate attribute assessment, either within the module assessment, could they be*
 290 *incorporated into them such as in the learning outcomes or...*
 291 D: I don't think so at this point because I think at this point you're like, especially for part
 292 time students. All of us work full time in a school, so like professionalism and knowing
 293 like about the government and all the other things that are in it – you're just doing it all
 294 the time [general agreement]. You've got to the point where you're kind of nearly there,
 295 whereas I think maybe at the foundation degree, I'm thinking about some people who
 296 were on our foundation degree that probably could've been helped by professionalism or
 297 teamwork or kind of just having a conversation and being able to look at someone in the
 298 face and say...
 299 B: I think it depends on the individual's role as well because I think like you've said when
 300 you've got to where we are at the moment and there's a lot of higher level Teaching
 301 Assistants, there's a lot of people who know how to teach whole classes and different
 302 things whether they're an HLTA or not, so you've kind of got all that in place anyway
 303 because at the end of the day your workplace wouldn't put you in that situation if they
 304 didn't think you could do it.

305 D: You'd probably feel a bit miffed if somebody came in and said we're going to assess
 306 your professionalism [general agreement]. You'd kind of feel like yeah, yeah – I'm
 307 professional everyday [general laughter].

308 B: Oh yes I'd feel quite insulted to be fair.

309 D: Especially for you because you're experienced, you teach and I wouldn't use it.

310 B: I wouldn't take kindly to it to be honest. I would feel it's a slight on my professionalism.

311 E: It seems like a personal thing rather than a professional thing to do, doesn't it?

312 B: Maybe, I don't know, is this more aimed at the younger students? The 18 year olds?
 313 And not at us because, because we've gone through this experience.

314 D: I think that's it yeah.

315 B: I take this stuff for granted [general agreement], apart from the Global Citizen one which
 316 I've obviously learnt more about, but most of these things you sort of take it for granted.
 317 You've internalised it already and you don't have to stress it separately. An 18 year-old
 318 coming straight from school having the attitudes that that age have and who don't
 319 maybe, who maybe are not as focused...

320 D: They've got no life skills [general agreement].

321 B: They go straight from school to university and have no life skills cos I know what I was
 322 like at that age and why I didn't do a degree then but I'm doing it now so we've acquired
 323 that...

324 C: Some of them have never worked have they? So we kind of differ because you've like
 325 got them all you're like...

326 B: Perhaps that's why we didn't pay any attention

327 C: Experiencing in work with people for ages whereas like for me I feel like I've got them all
 328 but I feel like probably I'm not as professional as I could be because I haven't been in a
 329 professional role, I've been the youngest at every school I've ever worked at – always
 330 been the baby in the family, I'm babied a lot so

331 B: I do think some of those skills though...

332 I: *Do they have a value to you though?*

333 C: I think being helped recently what is it global citizen, understanding global issues, I
 334 would never have thought to even look at government stuff because you know someone
 335 at school tells me what to do and I just do it whereas just thinking about the government
 336 and what they do is kind of sort of, but I don't think I'd want to be assessed on it or
 337 taught it, I just think it's something that...

338 B: There probably is a place for assessment as [researcher] said, particularly young...

339 C: Never worked. I think a lot of those attributes you actually acquire whatever your
 340 employment is, you develop them, you hone your skills but I think if somebody's never
 341 worked in any way shape or form...

342 B: ...they've never had a job...

343 C: ...they've never had the opportunity, never been exposed to that sort of thing, so I think
 344 there is a place for assessment, but then, and perhaps...

345 E: Weave it through their learning as well.

346 D: Bring it in bit by bit so...

347 E: They could understand those.

348 I: *Ok thank you. Right, so you know the university they often ask you for feedback, the
 349 colleges do as well don't they, do you, have you ever had graduate attributes mentioned
 350 in any of the feedback that you have given to the university. So you're asked about
 351 modules, you're asked about.*

352 C: When we did our foundation degree, didn't we have evaluation sheets 'how well do you
 353 think this module addressed the [HEI] Graduate' I think it might have done – I might be
 354 wrong.

355 D: I think for, that one doesn't does it? I'm sure at [FD Partner college] it did mention the
356 [HEI]GAs
357 I: *[FD partner] college? Right so they do.*
358 D: Yes, I think they do cos [FD partner lecturer] mentioned it, the tutor, regularly
359 mentioned...
360 I: *And did you get feedback on that feedback – a response to what you'd said?*
361 C: I don't think we particularly did.
362 D: Possibly ones that maybe linked to the assignment – reflect, being reflective and global
363 so like if we were reflecting she's probably have mentioned, not specifically the graduate
364 attributes but she might have mentioned reflection. But then teamwork or
365 professionalism or lifelong learner, I can't imagine those being mentioned in an
366 assignment because how, we're here, we're there one afternoon a week I don't think you
367 can tell if a person is professional from that because, you're not in a professional
368 environment. You kind of revert back when you come to uni, kind of you can just...
369 [all laugh]
370 I: *Excellent thanks. So I think you've kind of started to answer these really. Would you*
371 *change any of the attributes, you've already mentioned about whether they are*
372 *appropriate for more mature part time learners as opposed, you seem to be saying*
373 *there's a value for...*
374 D: Younger learners.
375 I: *Younger learner, full time learners, but for yourself not so much [general: not really/no].*
376 *Would there be any scope for changing them that would make them more appropriate do*
377 *you think?*
378 B: I don't think so really.
379 E: No I don't, no. I think cos these are constant aren't they.
380 C: I think it's nice to have them set out for you, you know this is what we expect, but to have
381 them actually like open to assessment, no I don't think so.
382 D: I think it's as well because we've all kind of, you just gain them along the way, but for
383 someone who might read them and think actually you know what, I'm not a good lifelong
384 learner or it might acknowledge that actually you're not the best say discipline expert. I
385 don't really think at the end of it I will be at the forefront of my chosen field cos I don't
386 think you can ever be you know best.
387 E: There's always room for improvement. I don't think anyone's really an expert at anything
388 cos there's always something that's the next minute.
389 D: I think that could potentially be reworded to support you better.
390 I: *Do you think they're promising too much, because this is a pledge. [General: Yes]*
391 D: Especially with teaching as well because you're constantly being reflective, you're
392 constantly thinking about actually did I do that well or could I have done it better then
393 you're never going to be the best of the best, because even the government who are
394 supposed to be experts, they get it wrong all the time.
395 B: Yes but just because you're an expert doesn't mean that you are 'the best' that just
396 means that you've got a more in depth knowledge than somebody who hasn't learned.
397 E: I suppose you've got all the skills to do...
398 B: It doesn't mean, I mean you can't still be a lifelong learner can't still reflect and become
399 better and better at it but in comparison to other people you are an expert.
400 E: But some people see experts as that way, as being the best so it's how you...
401 B: Yes but if you haven't got a degree or that it's not just about...we know that...
402 C: That's making the assumption that the degree's going to make a person an expert.
403 D: But I think you're probably an expert in your discipline no I don't think I actually know
404 everything in teaching, I don't know every method, but actually now I've got skills to

405 reflect to observe other teachers and gain knowledge from that and research things that
 406 actually are, so I actually don't know everything, I'm not an expert.

407 E: It's like somebody saying I'm an expert in essay writing, but no we do dozens of jobs and
 408 we always think that we could get this, we could still be better you know you have to
 409 constantly question yourself. Yes, that's a big pledge to make I think, to say...

410 B: What is the definition of the word expert or could we replace it with a different word that
 411 more reflects what we have become as opposed to experts. What do we become by
 412 studying all of this?

413 E: Knowledgeable, professional...

414 D: Like that, I wouldn't say expert.

415 B: Would you scrap this thing altogether or would you replace it with a different word?

416 D: Maybe use something like you've gained the skills to do the job.

417 B: Or like advanced practitioner maybe or something like that as opposed to expert.

418 D: I think you've hit the nail on the head with knowledgeable to be honest, just the one
 419 word, knowledgeable in your chosen field or something must be preferable to disciple
 420 expert.

421 E: It's not too big.

422 D: I think it's open to interpretation as well. Cos we've all had different interpretations of it.

423 I: *Very quick question. Have you heard about the 3Es at [HEI] University?*

424 B: No.

425 D: No.

426 E: What, Education Excellence Everywhere!

427 I: *No – employability enterprise, entrepreneurship. Notice I had them written down. Have
 428 you heard of them at all?*

429 B: We have.

430 D: We've seen them recently who was it?

431 B: Blond lady did all the E's for the children

432 E: I might, I don't know.

433 C: I think I might have read it, I've seen it, but that was in our handbook right in the
 434 foundation degree.

435 I: *It's not something that's been covered in class?*

436 E: No

437 B: You see foundation degree I would have missed that again.

438 I: *But it's not been covered in the BAs either?*

439 B: Not to my knowledge but then I tend to focus on stuff I really, really need for my
 440 assignments. I tend to not 'waste time' in inverted commas on things that are essential
 441 or necessary.

442 I: *By these not being assessed you don't consider them important because they're not
 443 assessed?*

444 B: No. How does this, say it again employability?

445 I: *Employability enterprise and entrepreneurship.*

446 B: See enterprise and entrepreneurship I wouldn't associate that with an education degree,
 447 it's not subject relevant.

448 E: More of a business thing.

449 D: Yes.

450 B: Yes. It's a different discipline.

451 D: Which is why it hasn't been mentioned.

452 B: It's a different discipline. It's not applicable.

453 I: *Ok thank you and then the last one. Have you heard about the [HEI] Eight either?*

454 [All laugh]

455 B: The who?

456 E: the [HEI] Eight?

457 I: *They're cognitive skills I assessment. I just wanted to see if students are aware of them*
 458 *because it's something when we make assessments we have to do. I'm just wondering*
 459 *if people are aware. So final question. If you have to go I don't want you getting a ticket.*
 460 *Any further thoughts about the [HEI] Graduate attributes. Have you got anything more to*
 461 *say.*

462 E: I think rather than these, could you say tell the students about the time and the balance
 463 and work and family that are really pertinent to them cos it's going to effect their, how it's
 464 going to effect them doing this degree because it will have a big impact on all areas of
 465 your life. I think that would be good start and then perhaps say about how much time,
 466 you know they need to organise their time, how organised they need to be...

467 D: Maybe one of these could be timekeeping.
 468 [general agreement and one says time management]

469 D: That and organised.

470 B: Good thinking. This is, this is university focus isn't it and you're saying student focused.

471 D: I think I agree with you. It's yeah.

472 E: This makes them look good doesn't it?

473 D: Yeah. [laughter]

474 B: But what matters to us might be different.

475 D: I think in assessment, were you going to say something?

476 B: No.

477 D: Sorry, like you were talking about assessment, but maybe assessing yourself like at the
 478 end of every year, that might be relevant, because that might, like we might go yea, yea,
 479 yeah I'm fine but then somebody else might look at that and think am I professional?
 480 Can I team, like work in a team?

481 I: *So there could be a value form a self-assessment...*

482 D: Yeah. I think like we would feel fine with evaluation myself, but somebody else
 483 assessing me on them I wouldn't feel comfortable with.

484 E: And how would you take the result as well? So if someone's assessing you and I
 485 thought oh I thought I was really good.

486 C: Some of those, how would there be assessment? They're not necessarily relevant to an
 487 assignment. Team work and things like that I don't know. The tutor just looking at how
 488 we're working together.

489 E: If we're working collaboratively, doing what we're supposed to be doing, is that
 490 professionalism? Sorry, with the professionalism as well, are they taking part or sitting in
 491 a group chatting with the tutor, you know what's going on. I think that would be
 492 assessment from a tutor but it wouldn't be something that we could, we would assess
 493 ourselves.

494 D: Also it could be quite damaging if it was assessed by someone else. I just got a Teach
 495 Direct interview and the lady who interviewed my basically just slated me and said I
 496 wasn't professional and for me that was really 'oh gosh, unprofessional', and it just put
 497 me on a massive downer to try and be more professional. But everywhere I work it was
 498 like 'oh no you're professional' so it could be...

499 E: It's interpretation...

500 D: Yes and it could be detrimental to the person because literally at that point I was down
 501 on teaching, I'm not professional, I can't do it. And if that was someone who was didn't
 502 have like supportive family who were like '[Interviewee D] your fine' and 'no you're
 503 professional' like that could have just been that for them.

504 E: Devastating.

505 D: Yes. I'm not professional, I can't do this, the end.

506 B: I mean if you're saying this is for students to be assessed, is this supposed to be
 507 assessed quantitatively, are you supposed to be measured this high up on a scale, so
 508 many people are this and so many people are this like that or is it a qualitative measure
 509 because it, if so then those things will transpire from the assignments anyway, you know.
 510 A good assessor/tutor, whoever marks them, whatever you want to call them,
 511 professionals who mark our assignments. This will show, this will show in our
 512 assignments, yes, you will be able to judge yeah that person is showing the
 513 professionalism because they've written such and such, they have acquired the ability to
 514 I don't know work in team because they've written about it so why does there have to be
 515 a separate assessment which would just put extra stress on us. It's just like giving the
 516 kids at school more and more tests. So [HEI] university just wants to put on some
 517 document 80% of our students have become Global citizens, 78% have said da, di, da,
 518 di, da. Is it not an exercise in quantitative statistics or something if they did that.

519 D: I suppose what would be beneficial would be like assess at the beginning and then
 520 compare it at the end.

521 I: *Self-assessment?*

522 D: Yes, because obviously we have gained all these probably not from our degree,
 523 probably from life and working and things like that whereas you can't really say if these
 524 have been supported and developed in the degree.

525 I: *So you find it difficult to separate what you have learnt from work and what you've learnt*
 526 *from your degree?*

527 [General agreement]

528 D: Like I learnt teamwork from my first job working with loads of girls and working on my
 529 professionalism because it was she told me I wasn't professional.

530 E: That's reflective isn't it? [All laugh]. Yep that's it.

531 I: *Lovely.*

5.3.3 College A HE student focus group

Date : 04/05/2016

Duration : 37:35

1 I: *Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research on gradueness and graduate*
2 *attributes. If we could start off with a first question. You're all about to become*
3 *graduates, if your final assignments go well. Can you just say a few words about what*
4 *you think it means to become a graduate.*

5 A: You've succeeded in something – what you set out to do originally and you weren't sure
6 that this time would come, but now it has. I don't know about you guts but I'm pretty
7 happy about it to be honest with you.

8 B: I think it makes you look more employable because you've got a degree on your CV.

9 I: *Ok, so when you started your journey you weren't really sure why you wanted to do...?*

10 A: No I knew what I wanted to do but I wasn't sure about the process from the beginning of
11 the year, in September. How smooth or rough the journey would be to the end, but it's
12 not been too bad I don't think.

13 I: *And you said about employment, helps you with employment.*

14 B: Yeah I think it makes you look a bit more employable, the fact that you've took time out
15 of your own time to develop yourself, better yourself.

16 I: *So the enhanced employability, was that a reason for you doing the degree?*

17 B: Yes. Yes. It's enabled some of us to get on.

18 C: Yes, PGCE course at our school.

19 B: Progression.

20 I: *Right, so progression onto...*

21 B: Teaching yeah. It's encouraging when your employers at the moment are saying yes,
22 cos at first, when I was first starting it was a Wednesday evening course and then it
23 changed to Monday afternoon so it was oh know I'm going to have to go to my employer
24 and ask for time off. And to get their feedback for them to say that's fantastic, we want
25 you to go and do this, that's really rally good.

26 I: *So you got support for your employer.*

27 B: Yes, support from my employer yeah.

28 I: *Can you all say that? [General agreement]. Ok so, I think the next question is about, I*
29 *suppose, the next question is about professional skills and qualities that you think you've*
30 *developed so as a part of doing this degree, what skills and qualities, if any, do you think*
31 *you have developed personally.*

32 C: Confidence, confidence definitely.

33 I: *Can you explain more about that?*

34 B: Just to be able to work with the students and know fully that you understand why and
35 why you're doing something in the classroom and having the theory behind it.

36 C: Yes. You just know how and why you're doing it.

37 I: *Ok so that theoretical underpinning is...*

38 C: Yes you're able to process the thoughts and how it, probably how the day's gone and
39 you know why certain things have gone in a certain way.

40 I: *I'm interested in that confidence you said, so why do you think the degree has given you*
41 *confidence?*

42 C: Because of the amount of reading that you do and reading of literature and when you're
43 reading the literature you can kind of link it to your practice and think I actually do this
44 already. And it just gives you more confidence to go forward in practice, really, if that
45 makes sense.

46 I: Yes.

47 A: Yeah I think with me it's being able to read and access government journals from the
48 Department of Education and be a lot more clued up as to where things are going you
49 know. It's taught me to read these things I'm probably one of the only teaching
50 assistants at my school who's actually read these things. Really interesting – you read it

51 and link it to what you're doing. It gives you more knowledge as well. Like reading about
52 academies in journals like academic papers...

53 B: And actually understanding them as well, because we've got these tutorials and talking
54 together about what we're reading as well which is really useful.

55 I: *Thank you.*

56 D: Yeah just the same really. I think the fact that you read like government documents and
57 kind of understanding what's going on at school, why it's happening, the changes that
58 are made, especially now – assessment, SATs and all that sort of thing. It's quite a big
59 change at school and I think of what's happening now.

60 B: The history of education – turned a corner there didn't we?

61 C: Showed us how education changed depending what government was in. As a teaching
62 assistant you sort of do as you're asked, you don't really look any further but now it gives
63 us...

64 B: Oh there's a massive turning point there.

65 I: *So do you think that had any impact on your practice then.*

66 [General agreement]

67 A: Yes. Definitely.

68 I: *What sort of impact? Well personally, you're more aware of why you're doing it.*

69 D: Yes it just adds to that.

70 B: As a teaching assistant you don't really walk in to change anything. The way your
71 school runs is the way your school runs. But we've got a bit more nous about us to go in
72 to talk about learning and why that fits in to work.

73 I: *Do you feel that you have made any changes to your workplace as a result of this*
74 *course?*

75 C Chipping away! Chipping away.

76 A: Not just this course but foundation degree [general agreement] which personally I found
77 more enjoyable than this one. This one you can tell has been crammed into one year. I
78 enjoyed the three years at a decent pace. I did the three years.

79 C: Yes, we did the two years.

80 A: I did three years – you've had two years like this haven't you? Whereas we had three
81 years of it being quite sedate but achievable, not getting too stressed about it and having
82 a lot of time to discuss with the teacher rather than having to be rushed. Perhaps that's
83 nobody's fault.

84 I: *What about yourselves in terms of the workplace, do you think it has made any*
85 *changes? Have you made any changes to your workplace?*

86 C: When I started the course I was employed, but was made redundant so I'm doing
87 voluntary at the moment. As a voluntary worker you don't really have as much say. You
88 can still have some sort of say, you can do this or that, but you don't really because
89 you're not employed by the school. I don't think I'm as involved as when I was employed
90 in my previous job.

91 D: I think it's definitely impacted on my practice but, in terms of impact in school, probably
92 not so much. There might be small things.

93 B: I've had the chance to join, they asked for non-teachers to join a stronger management
94 team so I've joined that and I've actually got confidence and we have meetings every
95 week. And I've actually had confidence to go in and kind of put some things forward
96 which they're coming into force actually. We've got a new head there's a lot of changes
97 going on at the minute. It's all exciting at the minute.

98 I: *So you feel that the course is making a practical difference?*

99 B: Yes. Definitely yes.

100 I: *Ok so you've talked a little bit about, you know, becoming a graduate. About the*
101 *specifics of the [HEI] Graduate Attributes. You know I think you answered some*

102 *questions on the questionnaire about that didn't you. [HEI] University makes a pledge*
 103 *that you will have achieved all six [HEI] Graduate Attributes. Just to refresh your mind*
 104 *there's to be professional, lifelong learner, global citizen, reflective and critical, teamwork*
 105 *and discipline expert. It's our pledge to you at university. We pledge that you've*
 106 *achieved all of those attributes. First question – do you feel you have achieved all of*
 107 *those attributes. Or do you feel there are some you haven't achieved on the course?*
 108 C: I've not been updating my CV and things like that. There's certain things that I know I
 109 need to do. I don't feel confident that I can say I've fully attained all of those areas. But I
 110 can walk into an interview and know for a fact that I will get the job.
 111 A: It's a piece of paper at the end of the day with your name on it – a degree and it's down
 112 to how you are as an interviewee.
 113 C: That's how we're going to use it now isn't it?
 114 D: I think it, I think it we have got most of it, especially like in terms of global citizen. I'm
 115 definitely more aware of what's going on in the world.
 116 B: Yes.
 117 D: And what's going on and why.
 118 I: *From the course?*
 119 B: Yes.
 120 D: Yes. Just through wider reading which we do throughout the course.
 121 I: *Do you feel, because I'm interested to see whether we have a balance of these*
 122 *attributes. Do you feel some of these attributes you have particularly achieved and*
 123 *maybe some you haven't...*
 124 [Yes – general agreement]
 125 D: Discipline expert I feel not as successful at. I think the course definitely allowed you to
 126 be reflective because you've got to think about your practice quite a lot. How to improve
 127 when you're on practice and where things may have...
 128 B: Yes.
 129 I: *So you think Reflective and Critical has been pushed?*
 130 D: Yes very much so. And that underpins the whole, where you're going to go next. That's
 131 going to have to carry on so that's probably the most important...
 132 C: Yes.
 133 B: Yes.
 134 D: ...part for me I think.
 135 C: I think it's different for us because we're like adult learners to typical [HEI] University who
 136 come in at 18, 19. I think it's completely different because we do gain some of those
 137 attributes in life in general. So I think it's helped that we've already had this and then it's
 138 topped it up for us, but I still don't feel that we've had the point where I feel, you know
 139 we've absolutely got those, but yeah I think it's different for us than it would be for like
 140 the 19 year olds coming in. Cos obviously to be professional and things like that when
 141 you're older it comes out in the workplace, cos we're currently, when you're currently
 142 working.
 143 I: *So you've gained a lot of these already from experience.*
 144 C: Yes, but obviously you top these up with doing them.
 145 I: *So you mentioned that Global Citizen was an area that you think you have developed on*
 146 *this course and Reflective and Critical, were there any areas that you felt the course*
 147 *hadn't perhaps developed as much? You mentioned Discipline Expert – subject*
 148 *expertise.*
 149 D: Yes, for me on the course from the foundation degree I feel that there isn't as much on
 150 curriculum, being like a teacher on an education course. I don't think there's that much
 151 focus on the curriculum and, you know, the school base.
 152 B: It was more on policy.

153 D: Yes, it was more on policy than actually looking into, you know the things that a teaching
 154 assistant, teachers do day to day you know like lesson planning and stuff like that. We
 155 haven't done any of that.

156 I: *So you didn't get the practical element.*

157 D: Not on the course yeah. I think we would benefit when we go to a workplace.

158 I: *So just to clarify, are you all schools based?*

159 [All – yes]

160 I: *Is that Primary School? Secondary and three primary, right. So you feel that in terms of*
 161 *developing subject expertise, more of that practical knowledge...*

162 D: Yes I see it.

163 B: Yes, especially with all the changes as well, to the curriculum, you know, what's coming
 164 forward. I don't really touch on that.

165 A: I think it's enabled me to, to look into it.

166 B: Yes, when you're looking into it you start looking into policy and how it might look in the
 167 future.

168 A: Yes, I think you can move onto your next step like the PGCE and that's when that will
 169 come into it, but it would have been nice to have a bit of a flavour of what to expect in
 170 the future. If the idea of this course is to help prepare for Ofsted, it would have been a
 171 good preparation.

172 I: *So, so greater linkage with the PGCE?*

173 A: Yes, definitely. Or the life of a teacher, cos you can get it by speaking to a teacher can't
 174 you, but you're not going to go away and study it are you?

175 D: Every teacher's got their own, every teacher's got their own...

176 B: Yes, different preferences haven't they?

177 A: Yes, but like different curriculum and things like that, like you say.

178 I: *So would greater linkage with the teacher standards be useful?*

179 [General agreement]

180 A: I think so.

181 I: *Ok that's something to bear in mind. Thank you. So we'll just quickly go through, in*
 182 *terms of the curriculum then, the module that you covered, and I guess you can think*
 183 *about, cos you've all done the foundation degree before – is that right?*

184 [General agreement]

185 I: *In terms of the Foundation Degree and the BA, do you think that Graduate Attributes*
 186 *were covered throughout the course? Or just at the beginning, or do you think it's*
 187 *something that's been throughout?*

188 D: I'd say throughout.

189 [General agreement].

190 D: Through different modules, there's different parts in each bit which have featured.

191 I: *And how have they been implemented. Has it been explicitly where the teacher says*
 192 *'this relates to this attribute' or...*

193 D: I think it depends on the module we doing, especially like the reflective modules, it is
 194 quite clear like, this links to this, whereas with others it's a bit more within the teaching if
 195 that makes sense. It's not sort of thrown in your face, it sort of subtly runs along.

196 I: *I'll park this question now because I'm not expecting instant answers but maybe as we*
 197 *go along you can come back. Can you think of any specific instances, you know*
 198 *activities or things you have done in class which you feel have really pushed forward the*
 199 *Graduate Attributes. I'm just going to plant that question cos I know, thinking over your*
 200 *four years of study, but any things in class where you thin, actually that helped me push*
 201 *forward Graduate Attributes, my development of Graduate Attributes, because obviously*
 202 *this is something I can take forward to other teachers as well so I'll leave that question*
 203 *with you and maybe we'll come back to it at the end. I think we've kind of covered about*

204 *the teacher's role, so I'll just go onto assessment next. Have your graduate attributes*
 205 *been assessed in any way during the course? Are you aware – you've told me I think*
 206 *you said that you don't feel you fully achieved the attributes. You've achieved the*
 207 *attributes but not fully I think.*

208 D: Sometimes they're mentioned in feedback aren't they when you get your written
 209 feedback – you know, well done you've identified that you've met these.

210 I: *But are you aware of the extent to which you've achieved an attribute?*

211 D: I don't feel that we have.

212 B: No I don't think so.

213 A: I think it's very personal isn't it?

214 D: I have no idea on mine.

215 B: I don't know how that would be done? I don't know how they could say if you've
 216 achieved it. So it is personal isn't it.

217 D: I suppose if this kind of work based study, you could get that kind of thing if you was kind
 218 of working with, with the university was working with the school. I don't know, I'm just
 219 trying to think.

220 B: In connection with your team leader or something like that. You know, your student now
 221 can do this, this, this and this.

222 I: *So it's almost like an employment portfolio?*

223 D: I don't know, I don't know how any other way you could do that?

224 C: Yes because they'd be able to see over three or four years how you have come on and
 225 developed.

226 D: I don't know.

227 I: *So you think getting the employer to comment?*

228 B: That could be an idea of maybe how you've grown before you graduate.

229 I: *And get the employer to comment on, very interesting. Another idea that somebody else*
 230 *has suggested it to make the attributed explicit within the learning outcomes. So at the*
 231 *moment the learning outcomes on every module are...*

232 B: It would be tick boxes though wouldn't it?

233 I: *One idea was to incorporate particular aspects of the attributes within the learning...*

234 A: Yes, but they are though, though they're very subtly hidden.

235 I: *You think they're implicit?*

236 D: Yes.

237 I: *I'm interested in that idea about ticking boxes...*

238 B: Yes – would it be like right you've ticked that box 'cos you mentioned that in your essay
 239 and tick that 'cos you've mentioned that in your essay.

240 I: *Right so you'd be worried that people would just be mentioning it...*

241 [General agreement]

242 B: Yes, just to make sure you'd covered them. Yes

243 I: *That's interesting. Now thinking about quality, quality improvement. You know I'm sure*
 244 *the teachers give you feedback surveys and then you probably have class discussions*
 245 *of how teaching and learning's going. Have you ever had any opportunity to feed back*
 246 *to the university about the Graduate Attributes? Has the university ever asked?*

247 D: We usually have it through the student ambassador. We filled out many end of module
 248 forms. I can't say there's one specifically for graduate attributes.

249 B: Where they go I don't know.

250 I: *I guess there's two points here. First one you don't remember any of the feedback*
 251 *surveys ever asking about the graduate attributes?*

252 D: We probably have done but I can't remember.

253 A: I can't remember.

254 B: I don't know – it's been a long year. [Laughs].

255 I: *Second point was, have you ever heard, say you fill out these forms, where you're giving*
 256 *your feedback, do you then hear back, you know, if you said something do you ever hear*
 257 *what has changed as a result?*
 258 B: We have had you know about the learning comments, that came back. We had an email
 259 back about due to feedback the library will now be open for these hours extra. That was
 260 across the college.
 261 C: Not from [HEI].
 262 I: *Not from the university. That's something to take on board because we've done the*
 263 *national student survey at the end of the foundation degree – but you never heard back?*
 264 A: No.
 265 B: I can't remember
 266 I: *Well we're coming onto the last section – how are we doing for time? Am I ok to*
 267 *continue?*
 268 D: Yes.
 269 I: *So, thinking about these six attributes, you know I mentioned before, professional,*
 270 *lifelong learning, global citizen, reflective and critical, team work, discipline expert. Are*
 271 *there any that you think you would change?*
 272 A: Could I just have a look?
 273 C: I mean it might be a bit different for students who are in full time, but in work it doesn't
 274 really, I mean in work you obviously do teamwork in your employment, but I don't think
 275 particularly, I don't think teamwork is particularly...
 276 I: *You don't particularly value that yourself?*
 277 D: I do in employment, but I think obviously in class it's a bit more of an individual kind of...
 278 A: there's been some very strong characters this year hasn't there? [all laugh]
 279 I: *In terms of your graduate skills rather than what you have to do in class, do you think*
 280 *teamwork is valuable?*
 281 B: I think it's definitely important, I think it's important but you need it daily.
 282 I: *So you wouldn't look at those and say none of those.*
 283 [General agreement no]
 284 I: *I think one of the things that's come out in the questionnaires I've seen from other*
 285 *groups is a lack of value in Global Citizen, but I heard some comments before that you*
 286 *quite liked that?*
 287 [General agreement – yes]
 288 I: *And if, again, so we've said you wouldn't take any of those away would there be any*
 289 *attributes maybe that you'd add?*
 290 A: That's a tricky one.
 291 B: What if it was about initiative?
 292 A: That's be reflection though wouldn't it?
 293 B: Yes, I suppose you can link it all into reflection.
 294 I: *Initiative is something*
 295 D: I think it's important.
 296 B: You could feed it into your [HEI] GAs.
 297 I: *Ok I think we've covered, just bear with me while I look through. Yes, in terms of your*
 298 *own practice now, what do you think, you've all told me that you feel to some extent*
 299 *you've developed your graduate attributes, so as students, what do you think you have*
 300 *done to help you succeed. What have you done to achieve these Graduate Attributes?*
 301 B: Week in week out is totally dedicated really, the time management. Everything that
 302 comes with doing this kind of study.
 303 C: I think when you're working full time and then...
 304 A: You have to find your own way of dealing with it don't you?

305 B: It becomes part of you doesn't it and I don't think you'd ever go back. I keep thinking
 306 now what's going to happen now, now I don't have to do any more study?
 307 C: Yes [laughs].
 308 B: I mean go back to the gym or I wonder if I'll feel kind of lost and just want to...
 309 I: *Do a Masters...*
 310 C: Yes [laughs].
 311 B: ...do something else. I keep thinking in a few months' time what will I do?
 312 D: Have a lie in! [Laughs]
 313 B: I haven't got a life! [all laugh]
 314 C: You can borrow one of my children if you want. [laughs]
 315 [digression 25:00 minutes to 26:32]
 316 D: I think it depends where you're going – me an [interviewee C] will have to carry on.
 317 B: Once it's all over they're be something new to take on.
 318 C: All the stuff you have to do as a teacher which is a lot more.
 319 B: Just ask the question again to make sure - I don't think we covered it!
 320 I: *I can't remember which one. [all laugh]*
 321 A: Edit!
 322 I: *Oh yes, what have you done to achieve the Graduate Attributes?*
 323 A: Worked hard.
 324 D: Dedication.
 325 B: Time management.
 326 C: Organisational skills.
 327 I: *Right thanks. I think we've already covered the thing about the impact on the work place*
 328 *so you've told me to more or less extent there has been some impact on the workplace.*
 329 *Just final couple of questions. We also have a thing called the 3Es. Have you heard of*
 330 *them?*
 331 A: No.
 332 D: No.
 333 I: *So if I was to say, tell me about your development of the 3Es's, what would you say to*
 334 *that?*
 335 B: No idea.
 336 D: What are the 3Es?
 337 I: *Very interesting. Ok I will reveal, they are Employability, Enterprise and*
 338 *Entrepreneurship.*
 339 A: No. Never heard of them.
 340 B: Never heard of them.
 341 D: No.
 342 C: No.
 343 I: *It's interesting that this links to your idea about initiatives doesn't it, but you've never*
 344 *heard of those.*
 345 A: Is this a [HEI] thing?
 346 D: So if we weren't at [HEI] we probably hear them all the time.
 347 I: *Possibly. Following on from this, have you also heard of the [HEI] Eight?*
 348 [all – no].
 349 I: *Ok so that's interesting as well. They relate to your levels of cognitive development you*
 350 *know the skills you are employing in every module. I asked you a few minutes ago, can*
 351 *you give me any exemplars of when you were in class the teacher gave you an activity,*
 352 *or facilitated an activity that was powerful for you in terms of developing Graduate*
 353 *Attribute skills.*
 354 A: This year?
 355 I: *Well this year or previously – it's all the same provider.*

356 D: In some of the questions we've been posed in the debates we've had, where we've all
 357 been very, very reflective and critical.

358 A: With [College A lecturer]. Yes, see [lecturer] was great with that. [Lecturer] used to set
 359 you off...

360 D: Split you into teams...

361 A: ...and sit there, 45 minutes right talking about the issues – nobody would digress, no
 362 writing it down – I don't know what your class was like...

363 B: No we'd...

364 A: ...and then at the end of it we'd finish what we were doing and went home right and
 365 when you got home and you'd got out your work to do some work at home...

366 D: It's all come back.

367 A: ...or right yeah I remember it now. And that's how I preferred to learn right. Engaging in
 368 debates.

369 [digression about some students 30:00 – 32:06]

370 B: First of all, when it maybe last year and the year before when they said if you go on to
 371 the BA and you go onto the third year you've got to get used to working independently
 372 and getting on with it. And then when we got that first assignment it was like 'where's
 373 me help?', 'where's me support?' and I thought why are you so shocked because you've
 374 been warned this, I don't want to half an hour discussion about why we haven't had this.
 375 And I actually said, hang on a minute we knew this. Get on with it, get on.

376 I: *Is there a difference, have all students come from foundation degree in education or*
 377 *have some come from Early years?*

378 A: There's two groups effectively

379 B: Some were three years, some were two.

380 C: I intermitted so...

381 I: *So all from education then, nobody from Early Childhood Studies.*

382 A: Don't think there are.

383 B: The whole shock from you're not going to get a full draft marked back to you. You know
 384 we were really well warned that that's what the third year would be and when we got to
 385 the third year, people didn't seem to listen to that and thought it would be alright to start
 386 moaning about it.

387 [33:30 digression about specific aspects of the course, applying for teacher training 37:20]

388 I: *So last question – do you have any further thoughts?*

389 B: No I think we've gone slightly over the twenty minutes!

390 C: I think we've done alright there.

391 I: *Thank you very much.*

5.3.4 College B HE student focus group

Date : 22/06/16

Duration : 32:08

1 I: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about graduateness and the [HEI]
2 Graduate Attributes in particular. So if you could just introduce who we are and you
3 don't have to say who you are but just something about your role. I'm [Researcher],
4 Foundation Degree Award Leader and acting Award Leader of the BA, so do you want to
5 start with A?

6 A: I am a nurture group teaching assistant and I help learners within an infant school.
7 B: I'm B and I'm a teaching assistant at an independent school in [Midlands city], boys'
8 school, key stage two.

9 I: Ok great thanks.

10 C: I'm C. I'm a Higher Level Teaching Assistant at a small primary school, mainly working
11 with year five children.

12 I: Ok great thanks.

13 D: I'm D, I'm a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. I work in a rural primary school, mainly
14 with Key Stage One.

15 I: Thank you.

16 E: I'm E and I'm an Assistant Manager of a nursery and senior of a pre-school room.
17 F: I'm F, I work in Additional Support within Further Education college to support learners
18 with additional needs such as autism and dyslexia.

19 I: Lovely thank you. Ok so if we just start off, you're all about to graduate pretty soon
20 hopefully, just one assignment to go, so could you give me a few words about what
21 becoming a graduate will mean to you. Do you want, shall we start with A?

22 A: Yes. Becoming a graduate will give me a lot more confidence in job roles I want to go
23 and do, just having the knowledge behind you and there's a stigma around having
24 [unintelligible] I suppose for me.

25 I: Ok thanks, any others?

26 C: C, for me I would say it's the next stepping stone cos I'm going on to do my Schools
27 Direct so having this degree has enabled me to get on with that course, having this
28 Bachelor of Education has really given the knowledge that we might not have got if we'd
29 have gone a different route. It's given us a lot more understanding of where we've come
30 from.

31 I: Ok thanks.

32 F: I'm F, I feel really proud that I've achieved something that I never thought I would. You
33 know we start off with a certain background thinking that things aren't possible, but
34 knowing that you've achieved it gives you a great sense of pride and I've realised how
35 much I love learning and I don't think I'm going to stop there.

36 I: Great, so you're thinking of continuing?

37 F: Yes, I'm doing my teaching qualification in September and I think even then I'll find
38 something else to do.

39 I: Ok yes thank you. Any other thoughts?

40 B: For me, B, it's getting the piece of paper that I need for them to be able to pay me for the
41 work that I've been currently doing for the last five years at the pay that I'm not getting
42 [laughs].

43 D: I'm D and I totally agree with B. My, I need a piece of paper so that I can do the job that
44 I have been doing and be paid for it.

45 I: Ok great thanks. I think that's working quite well, if you just say who you are and don't
46 feel you have to answer every question. You know if you feel someone's already said it
47 then you can say you agree with somebody. Brill. Ok, looking back to when you first
48 started your degree, do you think you've, to what extent do you think you've met your
49 aspirations when you started your degree? Or is there anything you think you're still
50 missing?

51 F: I'm F, I think I have. I started off, yeah I had quite low aspirations when I started, I
52 wanted to just, you know, pass everything. After the first couple of modules I kept
53 pushing myself further and further. Teachers have kept discussing with me how I've
54 improved and yes I think I've more than achieved what I wanted to start with.

55 I: *Ok thanks.*

56 C: I think for, C, I was, I didn't do very well in school and actually I've always wanted to be a
57 teacher but I didn't get the grades so I could go to university so I've managed to be able
58 to do it anyway, by doing all of the stepping stones to get there. I think it is a massive
59 personal achievement that I've wanted to do it and achieve it at a reasonable standard.

60 I: *So it relates to that personal...*

61 F: Yes it does

62 I: *...feeling as well, as well as the importance of the qualification.*

63 B I agree with C and D. I didn't do very well at school – I couldn't be bothered but actually
64 proved to myself throughout the four years foundation degree and now this BA that
65 actually I can do it and I do know what I'm talking about, probably know more than the
66 people I'm working with because the way the course is structured and the information
67 that's delivered and the things you have to go away and research, I've more up to date
68 knowledge of education than people that I work with who have been doing it for twenty
69 years. It's really good

70 E: I'm E and to back that, I think that working for a lot of us full time and doing a degree on
71 the side...

72 B ...I agree...

73 E: ...we can, the experiences that you have really helps with our assignment structures and
74 the quality that we can put into it because we've all had first-hand experience doing it
75 and then for me, working with practitioners that are kind of level 3 whereas level 5 at the
76 minute they've really benefitted from me doing this cos I can teach them what you guys
77 have taught me so it's really helped yes.

78 I: *Right thanks, excellent thank you. Moving onto the [HEI] Graduate Attributes in
79 particular ok so I'd like you to think about them, do you all know them, do you have an
80 idea of what they are off the top of your head or do you need to have a look? I'll just run
81 through them – it's not a test. There's professionalism, global citizen, teamwork, lifelong
82 learner, reflective and critical discipline expert. I was quite impressed by your
83 questionnaire survey results – everybody seemed to know them. Were they on the wall
84 or did everybody know them? [some in the group laugh] Cos another place I looked at
85 they'd done quite well then I looked in the classroom and they were up there on the wall.*

86 F: No it's embedded so we know them

87 B: And in our recent PDP [Professional Development Portfolio] assignment.

88 E: Oh they are up there.

89 I: *In fairness they are quite small.*

90 A: I didn't even know that

91 D: Why didn't I look? [laughs]

92 I: *So in terms of the results some of you might have genuinely answered and some had a
93 sneaky peak.*

94 C: When we did the three-year Foundation Degree, we've done two PDPs, yeah, and we
95 had to put them in throughout. So we had to put them in every single document, so we
96 had to know what they all meant and I suppose looking from the first PDP to the second
97 on and now the third one you can show that you're getting all of them in there rather than
98 just the professional and the teamwork and the lifelong learning, you're able to put them
99 all in and it has helped because you can think about them and what you're doing.

100 I: *So you think on the reflective model, module on the three year course that was really
101 embedded. Who did the two-year course?*

102 E/D Yes we did the two-year course...

103 I: *...that's E and D...*

104 E: ...but we hadn't used them up until the third year or we weren't encouraged to use

105 them...

106 D: ...we used them at the end of the last one the one that we handed in at the end. This

107 year we've used them throughout...

108 I: *...right so it's slightly different but it has been embedded in both courses. So thinking*

109 *about those six attributes, to what extent do you think they meet your aspirations, so*

110 *when you are talking about what it meant to be a graduate, to what extent do you think*

111 *these are relevant to you?*

112 F: I'm F, especially for being a teacher I think all of them, especially to wanting to teach

113 because they are all things you need to be teaching your students as well aren't they so

114 to be able to use them yourself and then transfer them to others, yes I think they're very

115 important.

116 I: *Ok, any other thoughts?*

117 D: I'm D. I do agree, in definitely especially with teachers they are all very relevant. I think

118 it was because when we first started doing them and that isn't this year it was last year,

119 they seemed just to relate to people who were perhaps at university who didn't have a

120 job and I found it really tricky like the thing I wrote last year and trying to get them in and

121 thinking, I already have a job, I'm not looking for another job, it's not that I'm seeking, I

122 need to show these so that I can get a job. I have a job, so I think this year it's been

123 easier in that actually they just relate to what I'm doing all the time. I do need to keep

124 developing and reflection and lifelong learning and it seems clearer this year than it did

125 last year as to...

126 I: *I'm interested in that if I could pick up because, a refrain from other groups that I've*

127 *spoken to is that sometimes they feel that these are more relevant for 18 year-old full*

128 *time learners and some of them have struggled to feel the relevance of that. Now it*

129 *sounds like you felt the same way?*

130 D: Last year.

131 I: *Do you feel you've overcome that and if so...*

132 D: Yes...

133 I: *...how?*

134 D: I think within, it's this year with [Lecturer] and us seeing that I'd have to say I need to

135 have this skill so that I can move onto another job, it's how you can grow it, the area,

136 yeah grow in that area and develop what you do, make it better so you can develop as a

137 person rather than I can develop and go and get another job somewhere. We don't now

138 relate them to going to, I have to say when we did first start it was all about you need to

139 develop them so you can go and get a job or write a CV. Well I've already got it and I'm

140 doing it.

141 F: I'm F and I think, you know you're right I think it is about learning your personal

142 development...

143 D: Yep...

144 F: ...isn't it and relating to your personal situation cos we've all got different situations and

145 it's finding ways to relate them to you and your role and what you do.

146 I: *So you found relevance in these in terms of making them more personally orientated*

147 *rather than just about career.*

148 F: Yes.

149 I: *There's general nodding there, does anyone have any slightly different view at all or?*

150 C No.

151 I: *Ok. I think we've started to touch on it that you do feel that these have come in quite*

152 *well in the curriculum. Can you outline to me how they've been pushed forward in the*

153 *curriculum that you covered. If we start with the three year course first and then we can*
 154 *go onto the two, so who did the three? So that's F, C and B.*

155 F: I think when we started off they were quite tricky to look at well for me anyway, I'm F, I
 156 think it was quite difficult because by the time I started my role wasn't what I wanted to
 157 be and I was trying to look for a new job, but with what I was doing I couldn't relate them
 158 very well, but within the modules it helped work out how I could improve those to get
 159 myself a better role and how that would help put me above everybody else in those job
 160 roles. I think all the way through the module is that you've been taught where were you
 161 then, where are you now, can you push yourself with these.

162 I: *So using reflection to push forward those thoughts about the attributes?*

163 F: Yes, yes, absolutely.

164 I: *Ok.*

165 B: I think, sorry, B, I think in the most recent assignment that I handed in was the
 166 professional development portfolio which was a whole task on reflecting on your journey
 167 throughout the time you've been a student put in the [HEI] Graduate Attributes, weaving
 168 them into an assignment that I'd written myself made it really obvious which ones I'd
 169 nailed and got loads of and which ones didn't see really often and that really highlighted
 170 that that's an area for me to work on, so through reflection I think I found that the easiest
 171 way to think about them, but it is stuff like D said, you do it all day, without realising you
 172 do it, until someone asks you, so which attribute is that? And does that fit in and when
 173 would you link it together and work out what's relevant to that and that matches, it all
 174 becomes kind of obvious.

175 C: I think it's also that you can see your journey and you look where your next steps you
 176 can actually pick out which ones you're going to do more of cos you know when you
 177 become a teacher you've got to be professional, you've got to work as a team, you've
 178 got to do all of them but you can pick out ones which you are going to have to do more
 179 and that has helped because you've actually developed that skill over the last three
 180 years the fact that you know you've got to be reflective because you've got to look back
 181 at every lesson you teach so I think it has helped having it in for three years.

182 I: *We'll come to the two year course in a minute, but there's a question here- you*
 183 *mentioned that you felt you'd nailed some of the attributes more than others. Do you*
 184 *think that is relate to your role in education, do you think some attributes are more suited*
 185 *to education than others ([general agreement]. And if so, which are and which aren't?*

186 C: I think you've got the professional, teamwork and the discipline expert and I suppose
 187 that's been quite obvious with us because, as we've said, we're all working full time,
 188 you've got to be disciplined in your work to meet all those deadlines so I think that has
 189 helped but because you are going to become the teacher.

190 F: I think global citizen to start with I did struggle to use that one, but I think this year,
 191 looking at the model doing education differently – different countries and things, that
 192 really helped bring out about how you really do need to look at the wider world and how
 193 that is impacting on your job role. I suppose that is for any role that you do for any job,
 194 you know you it brought home how important it is to look at why people are doing the
 195 things they do and why you do need to be a global citizen today.

196 C: I think you develop your own practice as well, cos you can take ideas from other people.

197 B: I think [Lecturer] always made us look at what was in the news, not just learning about
 198 other cultures and countries, we always had a 10 minute in the news, what's happening,
 199 rather than waiting for it to impact on us in schools, we needed to be reading about it
 200 and getting to know about what might happen and so in terms of the global citizen I
 201 found that doing that, looking at the news really helped pull that one in, knowing what's
 202 going on.

203 I: *Ok good so that currency of knowledge underpinning. Ok so back to the two year*
 204 *course then so how were the attributes embedded within that then, coming from the FD*
 205 *onto this one?*

206 A: I think like [name] [laughs] like D [all laugh] suggested earlier, I don't feel like we touched
 207 on it much in the first year, but in this year I do feel like we've covered it quite broadly
 208 and like we've just touched on them, and global citizen has had a big impact for me
 209 personally, understanding wider issues and being able to filter, they all filter into each
 210 other, but within my own job role it's really opened my eyes up to how different teaching
 211 methods and styles and differences in individuals all of this needs to be touched upon in
 212 order to get the best out of the individuals so yes I found it really beneficial.

213 I: *Do you feel it's broadened your horizons? One of the criticisms of these attributes is that*
 214 *they are important skills, but are they really graduate level? How do you feel you've*
 215 *made them graduate level or do you think that you've maybe just covered them on the*
 216 *surface level?*

217 A: I think it's a personal take on it really. I think you can take of it what you need to and I
 218 think we've suggested that different ones apply more to each of us and that's obviously
 219 because of our job role and so I imagine that we've all got different areas that we need
 220 to improve, so I really do think it is a personal thing.

221 D: I think they are of the graduate standard you know if you talk to anybody they've
 222 probably got areas that they're quite aware of, they're proper professionals, they have a
 223 good understanding of issues. I think being across the board and being of a certain level
 224 I think they are of a graduate level.

225 B: I do think that as everyone said that the discipline expert, the lifelong learner is basically
 226 showing within our settings because much higher up people come to us for our opinions
 227 and to ask what's happening at the moment with that. You're the first port of call rather
 228 than the head who should be!

229 E: I'm E, I joined an academy who've also made their own skills attributes to put to our
 230 learners now, an, although they're very, very similar, our apprentices start from them age
 231 16 I do think like he said your personal approach to it because what I write down for my
 232 professional and my teamwork is a completely different standard to them saying yeah I
 233 work with a group of four of us, we manage this, whereas mine is I manage a group of
 234 38 different people so mine, my communication will be very different to what theirs is.
 235 So I think yes, ok they're very kind of anybody can use them, but it's what you take out
 236 of it that can be more beneficial for you.

237 D: The more you use them, the more aware of them you are doing yourself cos the first
 238 module we used them at the end of the two years I was just putting them in because I
 239 had to do it whereas I completely understood what I was writing, I need to better my time
 240 management or organisation, whereas my PDP now which has been my better grade so
 241 far throughout the three years I think it's because I do have a more thoroughly
 242 understood view of what is expected of me as a graduate and I've been able to relay that
 243 information back to work.

244 I: *Ok so thinking of it sounds like you've made them quite personal to yourself, playing*
 245 *devil's advocate now I could say well that's all very well and good, how do I measure*
 246 *this? So do you think the graduate attributes are measured at the moment? And if not*
 247 *how could they be?*

248 D: I think that they provide a basis of what is expected, or what it expects the learner to
 249 achieve and then like B has just said they have attempted to raise your own aspirations
 250 because of the individual element to it.

251 B: I suppose it's being measured in the style of their writing and understanding in their
 252 assignments as well because [Lecturer] doesn't know what we do at work, particularly
 253 our day to day routine, but when she reads our work she would be able to tell that

254 actually it's something that they are passionate about and that they have that sort of
 255 standard whether that was very minimal or they were excelling within that scale.

256 I: *So your reflection on those within your assignment is a means of assessing them?*

257 F: I think, sorry I'm F, I think in the outside world you could say yes well how could you
 258 measure how you've got these graduate attributes. I don't think you necessarily could
 259 as such, but I think by being able to get more able to show that you've got personal
 260 development or that you've got understanding of wider interviews when you go to an
 261 interview and you mention something, I think in that sense the fact that you have
 262 probably got a bit more employable.

263 I: *So do you think engaging in these graduate attributes has had an impact on your
 264 employability? [mostly agreement] No everyone's nodded there and it's ok to have
 265 different opinions we don't have to have group think here so do you want to explain your
 266 ideas and then if people think differently that's great as well.*

267 F: So I'm F and when I started I was teaching assistant I didn't have many responsibilities,
 268 didn't particularly understand my role, I wasn't very employable. I was good at what I
 269 did, but perhaps I didn't have the confidence to be able to show that to people. Doing
 270 this course over four years and understanding the attributes and that's what employers
 271 are looking for, I was able to communicate that when I applied for a job and I've got a
 272 better job now that's more secure. I've got more responsibility, I'm given more
 273 responsibility at work compared to other people who have the same job role as me and I
 274 feel that's because I have the will to express those things employers want to see.

275 D: I'm D, I agree that I have grown in all those areas and that they are obviously important.
 276 My thing with it is if they didn't exist I would have done that anyway. It's not because
 277 they exist that I have gone, I need to be more of a global citizen or reflective and critical.
 278 I have just done that.

279 I: *So that is more of an outcome, it's not a cause?*

280 D: Yes.

281 I: *Ok. So you think it's something you would have done anyway, it's just these have...*

282 D: Yes, because we didn't really do a lot with it in the first couple of years and it didn't, I've
 283 not suddenly got better because they now there. Yes, I have noticed now that yes I
 284 have grown in that, I've grown in that and that and areas that I need to work on, but they
 285 haven't driven me.

286 I: *They're not drivers then. Just a straw poll, what do you think of that for you?*

287 E: Yeah I agree with that like you say, it's not been there from the get go and it's not
 288 therefore been my focus. We came in, well I came in with wanting to better myself on
 289 the course anyway and I was hoping that that would be a side effect of it anyway.

290 I: *So it's more of an articulation of what you've achieved through the course rather than a
 291 driver you would say. Perhaps you feel that that's helped you focus.*

292 F: It's stuff that I was professional and I think it made me want to develop even more and it
 293 made me focus more on I was applying for jobs personally cos I knew that was what I
 294 was looking for.

295 C: Like with me, C, when I had my interview for my School's Direct, pretty much every
 296 question was literally around every one of those so actually having these here and for us
 297 having them for three years we're more aware of and I kind of thought about what I could
 298 say cos you're doing it more often...

299 F: Linking back

300 C: ...So your answers are better because you've probably got more, you're more aware of
 301 what they are and you develop those skills and yeah I agree with D in that we'd have
 302 done them anyway but I've got a better knowledge of them and are able to talk it
 303 because they're there.

304 I: *I mean one way, do you think there would be any means of incorporating them into the*
305 *learning outcomes, would that help with the assessment or do you think that would just*
306 *confuse the issue potentially?*

307 C: I don't think it would confuse it.

308 B: I think, I think because it's a personal thing, what I believe to be reflective and critical, A,
309 C, D, E and F might not but in my situation and in my experience I believe that that was
310 meeting that target whereas if you labelled learning objective 1 will cover reflective and
311 critical and discipline expert, well hang on a minute I don't think it does, I think it's too
312 personal on this course to link them to the learning outcomes of the assignment.

313 C: I think that's why PDP was good because it was have these in mind, put them in, it
314 wasn't like you've got to put them in there, you've got to put that in there, but show how
315 you've developed it.

316 I: *Do you find a more informal approach was more effective?*

317 [General agreement]

318 I: *Ok right.*

319 F: F, I think it's more of a not necessarily thing to put in your assignments as more of the
320 extra bits that you get from your degree isn't it? Your employability skills, your personal
321 development it's, it is academic but it's more like a personal side of it.

322 I: *Ok thank you very much. I'm thinking about opportunities for feedback now, has the*
323 *university, you know you get various forms to fill out and things, have you ever had the*
324 *opportunities to discuss the graduate attributed within the feedback forms you've done?*

325 D: No.

326 C: Not that I can think of.

327 B: Only that form the other week.

328 I: *Which was the one I did, but apart from that in module feedback or year feedback.*

329 C: No we've never been sent any you've shown that you've got this but you need to work
330 on...

331 I: *I was meaning the quality of the course questionnaires, you've never been asked.*

332 F: Is this specific about graduate attributes no.

333 I: *We're coming to the close now thank you very much. Are you ok for a few more*
334 *questions? Thinking about those six attributes, would you change any, and if so which*
335 *and why?*

336 C: I don't think so because they cover pretty much everything.

337 F: I think they're good, they're good.

338 C: I think within our job role as well, that's it, that's what we do.

339 A: Related to the jobs we do.

340 I: *Ok. Just coming to the last couple then, has anyone heard about the 3Es's?*

341 C: No [others, no]

342 I: *Ok I'll tell you what they are and I'm cheating – don't worry about them – cos I have to*
343 *have them down as well. So they are employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship.*
344 *So how relevant do you think they are to your role in the course you're studying?*

345 D: I think they're relevant.

346 C: It's the entrepreneurship that I worry about.

347 D: But you are, your research is your thing that you've decided you've generated ...

348 C: I suppose you do it all day long

349 F: And you think how do I do this how could I do that better, right if I could, what will I do. I
350 sit there sometimes and it does give me the aspiration to want to go and do things to get
351 a better job so I can change things so I think it does.

352 I: *Is that more innovation or creativity?*

353 F: Maybe I don't know.

354 A: But that goes hand in hand, doesn't it?

355 B: Yes, I think so because you've got to think on your feet to inspire young people.
356 I: *Ok and have you heard of the [HEI] Eight? [laughter].*
357 A: What?
358 I: *That's fine. They are basically some cognitive skills which go into making the*
359 *assessment process but I'm just interested to hear how many have heard of them. So*
360 *last question. Do you have any further questions about the [HEI] Graduate Attributes?*
361 *Great thank you very much.*