



An investigation of the views, understanding, knowledge, experience and attitudes of sixth form teachers in regard to the preparedness of their students for the transition to university

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An investigation of the views, understanding, knowledge, experience and attitudes of sixth form teachers in regard to the preparedness of their students for the transition to university

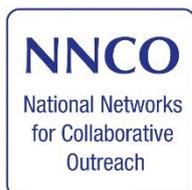
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Executive Summary

Introduction

Research has identified that many students feel significantly unprepared for university life and study (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Norton, Keenan, Williams, Elander & McDonough, 2009). While much work has been done to identify ways in which universities can successfully support their students through transition (Kift, Nelson & Clark, 2010; Walker, 2010; Yorke & Longden, 2008; Cook, Rushton & McIntosh, 2006; Hughes & Smail, 2015), little attention has been paid, in the literature, to the preparation students receive before engaging with their university.

Some writers have suggested that schools need to pay more attention to preparing students for transition (Bostock & Wood, 2015) but there has been little attempt to conduct comprehensive research to identify what preparation is currently occurring in schools, what role teachers believe they have and what barriers there may be to them helping with preparation.

This study seeks to address this current deficit.

Aims

The aim of this study is to increase understanding of the role of sixth form teachers in preparing students for the transition to university, to assist in the development of new interventions, by evaluating –

1. What role teachers believe they have in preparing students
2. What teachers believe their role should be
3. How well teachers believe students are prepared currently
4. What beliefs teachers have about university and transition
5. What teachers perceive to be the barriers and aids to them preparing students for university
6. What interventions may improve student preparation

Methodology

The study has adopted a pragmatic approach using a mixed methods design.

The initial phase employed a qualitative, case study design in which focus groups, using semi-structured interviews, were conducted with sixth form teachers in University of Derby partner schools and the results analysed using Thematic Analysis.

Using grounded theory, the findings of the qualitative phase informed the development of a quantitative questionnaire, which was disseminated to a larger group of sixth form teachers in all of the University of Derby's partner and progression schools, using online survey software. This questionnaire sought to test the validity of the findings of the focus groups and their applicability among a broader mix of schools and teachers.

Results

17 teachers were interviewed in 7 separate focus groups conducted in schools and colleges in Derby, Derbyshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Nottingham. The participants occupied a mix of roles including subject teachers, year heads, careers teachers, deputy heads and support mentors.

A number of recurring themes emerged from the resultant transcripts. These themes have been grouped below under three separate headings – Students, Current Activity and What Might Help.

From the results of the transcripts, a 33 item questionnaire was devised. This comprised 6 demographic questions and 22 questions that related to the themes of Students and Current Activity. The final 5 questions posited possible example interventions, to assess what type of support teachers believed might help most. Questions were posed in both negative and positive terminology, to ensure respondents were not being guided to agree with the qualitative findings.

The questionnaire was emailed to all schools in the NEMCON project and to University of Derby partner schools.

In the main, the quantitative questions supported almost all of the findings of the qualitative transcripts. This suggests that the findings from the qualitative study appear to have validity among a wider body of teachers and are worthy of further consideration and note.

Students

There was a general sense, among all of the teachers interviewed, that there appears to be a deficit in the personal growth and development of many of their students. In particular, a number of teachers had concerns about the psychological and emotional development of their students and felt that many lacked the necessary resilience, independence, skills and maturity to negotiate the application process and transition to university.

Teachers particularly identified difficulties students apparently have with visualising beyond the current moment, self-reflecting, surface learning and grade focus and expressed concern that many students lack key life skills.

There was also significant concern in both phases of the study that many students, in the participating schools, find the process of applying for university practically, cognitively and emotionally challenging.

A number of teachers expressed concern about how able and prepared many of their students were for the transition into academic learning at H.E. level. However this view was not unanimous. There was a clear divide among teachers in the quantitative phase, when asked if they believed their students were active learners or if they engaged in active learning behaviour (e.g. using a library without being directed to do so). Correlations suggest that poor active learning behaviour may be connected to other difficulties such as short term thinking or a lack of engagement from parents. This would perhaps suggest that the different experiences being reported by teachers are due to the different populations they are teaching.

Both phases of the study suggest that students from deprived areas are less likely to leave their local area to go to university, due to a lack of confidence and cultural capital.

Teachers in schools, with non-traditional university going populations, also identified issues of culture and family as potential barriers to good transition. In particular, teachers identified that students from low participation backgrounds were less likely to have engaged in activities, which would have improved their application and made them more ready for transition, because of a lack of opportunity or encouragement or because it was not culturally normative. These teachers also believed that cost would be of more concern to the parents of these students.

Teachers also expressed a belief that student preparation and ambition can be undermined not only by clear barriers, such as finance but also by psychological mindset, resilience, skills acquisition, culture, family attitudes and circumstances and approaches to learning. All of which suggests that, according to participants, many students are facing interlinked barriers in which poor acculturation, an inability to visualise the future, lack of parental engagement and parental concerns about financial cost, poor self-reflection, limited life experiences, a lack of active learning, poor insight into what might help and problems with the application process, combine to increase the difficulty of transition to university.

However, for other students with more engaged parents, better active learning behaviour and fuller life experiences the process of transition may be easier, but from the point of view of the participants in both phases of this study, the process is still one that they find emotionally and practically difficult.

Current Activity

Teachers in the qualitative phase described a wide array of interventions, activities and strategies that were taking place in their school to help students apply for and prepare for university. There was little consistency in how schools approached this and some significant differences depending on the type and size of school/college. Some schools were able to describe a significant amount of work, whilst others were inhibited by barriers such as time, resources or knowledge. A large number of teachers, also expressed a belief, that many of their colleagues did not have the training or knowledge they needed, to support good transition but this was not a unanimous view.

The teachers in the study clearly believed that they had an important role to play in preparing their students for university. Much of this role is currently focussed on career planning, promoting university, helping students make choices and supporting them through the application process. While some work is taking place to help students develop personally and academically, most teachers in the focus groups indicated that they would like to be able to do more in this area and the quantitative data largely echoed these desires.

What Might Help?

There was no clear agreement in the transcripts about what interventions or support might be most helpful in improving the preparation of sixth form students for university. Suggestions included taster classes, workshops, resources to improve resilience, online guidance, help to complete personal statements and relationship management training.

Five options were listed in the quantitative questionnaire and all were rated as useful to extremely useful. This in itself suggests that there is an appetite for further support on the part of 6th form teachers but mirrors the lack of clarity in the focus groups about what exactly is needed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Out of the 22 quantitative questions that addressed themes that arose in the focus groups, concerning Students and Current Activity, 21 found a level of general agreement between the participants in both phases of the study.

This high level of agreement suggests that the experiences reported by the teachers, in the qualitative phase, are a reasonable reflection of the experiences of many other 6th form teachers and are therefore worthy of further consideration. However, it should be noted that most questions also had a minority of teachers expressing disagreement, suggesting that these experiences are not uniform throughout the education sector. This is unsurprising given the high degree of variety in terms of schools, students and teaching roles.

Taken together, the findings also point towards steps that could now be taken to help ensure students are better prepared for university.

1. Providing training to teachers to help them respond appropriately to the difficulties students are experiencing during the application to university process. Even those teachers who believed they received enough training expressed an appetite for more assistance with this. Training that helped teachers respond to high emotional arousal, build self-reflection skills and helped students visualize the future could have a significant impact.
2. Providing clear online text information for teachers and students to help them understand universities as they are now, the life skills students will need to be successful and ways to develop these skills in advance of coming to university would help provide some apparently much needed clarity and certainty
3. Creating videos for use in the classroom with relevant lesson plans, that help students engage with the reality of student life at a deeper psychological and practical level, may help improve student visualisation and planning and create more flexible and robust expectations
4. Given the finding, that many of the barriers that students face are cultural and psychological, educational liaison work between universities and schools should include elements of psycho-education to help raise motivation, visualisation and confidence and to challenge these cultural narratives and psychological mind-sets
5. Interventions that assist 6th form students to move away from exclusively short term thinking and grade acquisition would also be beneficial, as would work that raises student confidence and competence around life skills such as time management, budgeting, cooking etc.
6. Given that many of the barriers described by teachers appear to be maintained by the current education system, further debate is needed to address the feelings expressed by participants that schooling has moved too far away from learning towards grade acquisition and that this is undermining the development and resilience of our students
7. As research elsewhere has shown that, for interventions to be successful, messages must be embedded long term, resources should be supplied for teachers to use within classrooms, on an ongoing basis to help their students

prepare and preparing students personally for life beyond school should be recognised as an important function and given appropriate time and resource.

As this study used a small sample size, more research is still needed in this area. In particular, more responses are needed from a wider range of schools to allow for clearer correlations to emerge or for confidence that such correlations don't exist. Benefit would also be gained from providing teachers with a range of interventions and asking them to arrange them in order of what they believe would be most useful, to help differentiate between the options.

Note on Funding

This project was conducted by Student Wellbeing at the University of Derby and funded by The North East Midlands Collaborative Outreach Network (NEMCON). NEMCON was a collaborative network that was funded through the HEFCE National Networks for Collaborative Outreach initiative.

The aim of the network was to develop and deliver a co-ordinated approach to working with schools and colleges to support and promote access to higher education. The network supported teachers and advisors to prepare their learners for higher education and help their learners make informed decisions in regard to their futures.

This research project supported these key aims by improving understanding of teachers' experience of supporting their students and current provision within schools and by seeking to identify future support that may improve the preparation of students for higher education.

1. Introduction

There is general acceptance, within the literature, that a student's transition into university is a key element in determining future academic persistence, satisfaction and attainment (Murtagh, 2012; Cook, Ruston & McIntosh, 2006; Harvey, Drew & Smith, 2006; Nelson, Smith & Clark, 2011; Palmer, O'Kane & Owens, 2009; Tinto, 1975; 2013). However, it has long been recognised that the transition into higher education can be a challenging and stressful process (Fisher & Hood, 1987; Wilson et al, 2006). It is not unusual for students going through transition to experience psychological distress, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, a reduction in self-esteem and isolation (Fisher & Hood, 1987; Hicks & Heastie, 2008; Palmer, O'Kane & Owens, 2009; Stanley et al, 2009).

Research has identified that many students feel significantly unprepared for university life and study (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Norton, Keenan, Williams, Elander & McDonough, 2009). While much work has been done to identify ways in which universities can successfully support their students through transition (Kift, Nelson & Clark, 2010; Walker, 2010; Yorke &

Longden, 2008; Cook, Rushton & McIntosh, 2006; Hughes & Smail, 2015), little attention has been paid, in the literature, to the preparation students receive before engaging with their university.

In particular, there is a scarcity of evidence in relation to the role of teachers, in schools, in helping their students to prepare for university life and study, alongside a dearth of research into the barriers that schools face in engaging with this work. This is curious given the apparent influence teachers appear to have over the process of students applying for and preparing for university (RAND Education, 2012; Oliver & Kettley, 2010; Reay, David & Ball, 2001; Brinkworth, McCann & McCann, 2013).

The research that has been conducted in this area seems to suggest that some teachers may prioritise the need to meet exam targets, over the need to prepare their students for life after school and that this may have negative consequences for students, once they go to university (Brinkworth, et al, 2013; Norton, et al, 2009; Crabtree, Roberts & Tyler, 2007.) Some writers have suggested that schools need to pay more attention to preparing students for transition (Bostock & Wood, 2015) but there has been little attempt to conduct comprehensive research to identify what preparation is currently occurring in schools, what role teachers believe they have and what barriers there may be to them helping with preparation.

This study seeks to address this current deficit.

2. Aims

The aim of this study is to increase understanding of the role of sixth form teachers in preparing students for the transition to university, to assist in the development of new interventions, by evaluating –

1. What role teachers believe they have in preparing students
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4. What beliefs teachers have about university and transition

5. What teachers perceive to be the barriers and aids to them preparing students for university
6. What interventions may improve student preparation

3. Methodology

The study has adopted a pragmatic approach using a mixed methods design.

The initial phase employed a qualitative, case study design. Case studies are an accepted research methodology within investigations in education, that allow for a depth of insight and detailed understanding of day to day experiences. Given the subject of this study, it was felt that a qualitative approach was necessary in order to capture the diversity and complexity of the views of sixth form teachers in relation to student transition.

In this qualitative phase, focus groups, using semi-structured interviews, were conducted with sixth form teachers in University of Derby partner schools.

Teachers were invited to attend the focus groups via the NEMCON website and direct communication with their school.

Transcripts of each focus group have been individually analysed using Thematic Analysis to identify key recurrent themes, commonalities and differences of accounts. These findings have then been synthesised to produce an overarching account of participants' current beliefs, knowledge and attitudes in relation to student transition to university and their role in helping students to prepare

However, it is also recognised, within the literature, that qualitative findings cannot be regarded as statistically representative. The second phase of this study, therefore took a quantitative approach. Using grounded theory, the findings of the qualitative phase informed the development of a quantitative questionnaire, which was disseminated to a larger group of sixth form teachers in all of the University of Derby's partner and progression schools, using online survey software. This questionnaire sought to test the validity of the findings of the focus groups and their applicability among a broader mix of schools and teachers.

Responses to the questionnaire were analysed, using SPSS, to identify which of the themes identified by focus group participants appeared to have gained support among this larger group of sixth form teachers and what correlations existed between different themes and between each theme and the demographic data gathered.

This report outlines the findings of the total project.

4. Results

17 teachers were interviewed in 7 separate focus groups conducted in schools and colleges in Derby, Derbyshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Nottingham. The participants occupied a mix of roles including subject teachers, year heads, careers teachers, deputy heads and support mentors.

A number of recurring themes emerged from the resultant transcripts. These themes have been grouped below under three separate headings – Students, Current Activity and What Might Help.

From the results of the transcripts, a 33 item questionnaire was devised. This comprised 6 demographic questions and 22 questions that related to the themes of Students and Current Activity. The final 5 questions posited possible example interventions, to assess what type of support teachers believed might help most. Questions were posed in both negative and positive terminology, to ensure respondents were not being guided to agree with the qualitative findings.

The questionnaire was emailed to all schools in the NEMCON project and to University of Derby partner schools. Follow up emails were sent at regular intervals encouraging participation.

There were 46 total responses to the questionnaire; some of these responses were partial but we have included all of the submitted answers in our final analysis.

Under each subheading below, we have first described the general narrative that emerged, in relation to each topic, from the synthesis of all of the qualitative transcripts. Quotations from the transcripts have been provided as illustrations of each point being discussed. Most quotations record the speech of just one participant; when a quotation contains a discussion, the speakers are indicated by the letter T and a number indicating the number they were allocated in their specific transcript. Where participants have been quoted, alternative quotations supporting the same point also exist.

At the end of each topic, we have detailed the results from each of the quantitative questions that are relevant to that theme and an analysis of the answers. The full set of quantitative questions, the responses and the statistical analysis is available in the appendix.

Quantitative answers were graded on a 5 point scale indicating disagreement/agreement. A mean of 3 indicates a neutral answer, where the consensus of opinion is neither a general agreement nor disagreement with the statement provided. The further from the 3 mean is, the stronger the agreement/disagreement. Standard deviation is also provided to indicate the level of consensus within the responses. Graphs are also provided below to illustrate the range of responses and the level of agreement within the responses.

Barely any correlations were uncovered between the answers to the thematic questions and the demographic questions. It is likely that this is simply a reflection of the fact that this is a small data sample, that some types of schools appear to be underrepresented in the sample and that many teachers were unable to answer some of the demographic questions fully. In particular, only 3 schools identified as having traditional university going populations and only one independent school responded to the questionnaire. 9 teachers were unsure whether or not their school was in a deprived area and 21 indicated that their population was a mix of traditional and non-traditional university going populations.

It is possible that some of this is also due to error in the research design – questions about whether or not a school has a traditional university going population are

perceptual and the answers may not be a reflection of the actual truth. A larger study that was in a position to draw a representative sample, using nationally recognised and agreed statistics, may result in a clearer picture.

Given that this is the case, care should be taken not to over-interpret this element of the data. A lack of correlations with demographic responses in this data, does not mean that there would be an absence of correlations in a larger and better representative data set.

We are particularly aware that despite the lack of correlations between thematic and demographic data, correlations were found between the answers to some of the thematic questions, which seem suggestive that different themes may be more relevant to different types of schools or populations. Where this is the case, we have highlighted it in the report but again warn that care should be taken not to over-interpret or overly rely on these findings.

In the main, the quantitative questions supported almost all of the findings of the qualitative transcripts. This suggests that the findings from the qualitative study appear to have validity among a wider body of teachers and are worthy of further consideration and note.

5. Students

There was a general sense, among all of the teachers interviewed, that there appears to be a deficit in the personal growth and development of many of their students. In particular, a number of teachers had concerns about the psychological and emotional development of their students and felt that many lacked the necessary resilience, independence, skills and maturity to negotiate the application process and transition to university.

Some teachers also expressed concerns about the ability of some students to engage fully in their academic work at school/college and to academically integrate into university, although this was a more mixed picture overall.

5.1 Ability to visualise beyond current experience

A number of teachers identified that many of their students had difficulty in visualising possible future events or life beyond their own current experiences. This was seen as a barrier to productive planning, ambition, understanding what support would be helpful and what practical activities students needed to undertake.

“I think – they just sort of see the here and now really. I think they can’t really look past the deadlines they’ve got for sixth form and I think they see – like, the application process and the personal statement writing, I think they see as- as work. I don’t think they see it as what it is for the future. I think they see it as just another task... I think they just see it as something else that we’re asking them to do – I think it just goes at the bottom of their list of priorities.”

“I think today they sort of take it in stages, they worry about the next thing when it comes, and today, I think maybe they’re not as prepared for some of that, as I would like them to be.”

Some teachers suggested that this may be to do with limited life experiences.

“We’ve got some students that have never been on a train and they want to go away to university, they’re just thinking, I think, about moving away – I don’t think they’re thinking about getting there and back on the train and coming back for Christmas and I don’t think they sort of think about that really. I think it is the detail definitely.”

However, difficulties in considering the future, was a common theme that ran across all schools, including those where teachers were able to identify an active engagement with extra-curricular activities designed to broaden experience. Specific examples were offered that suggested this inability to think forward impacted on a wide range of issues. This included students’ willingness to engage with the application process in a timely manner, to accurately assess the appropriateness of

individual degree programmes for them, their ability to set accurate expectations of learning in H.E. and their ability to consider practical requirements.

“I think our students just think – they’ll be given the information and get time to complete all the tasks within that lecture. I don’t think they realise exactly what it’s about and the workload around their university life.”

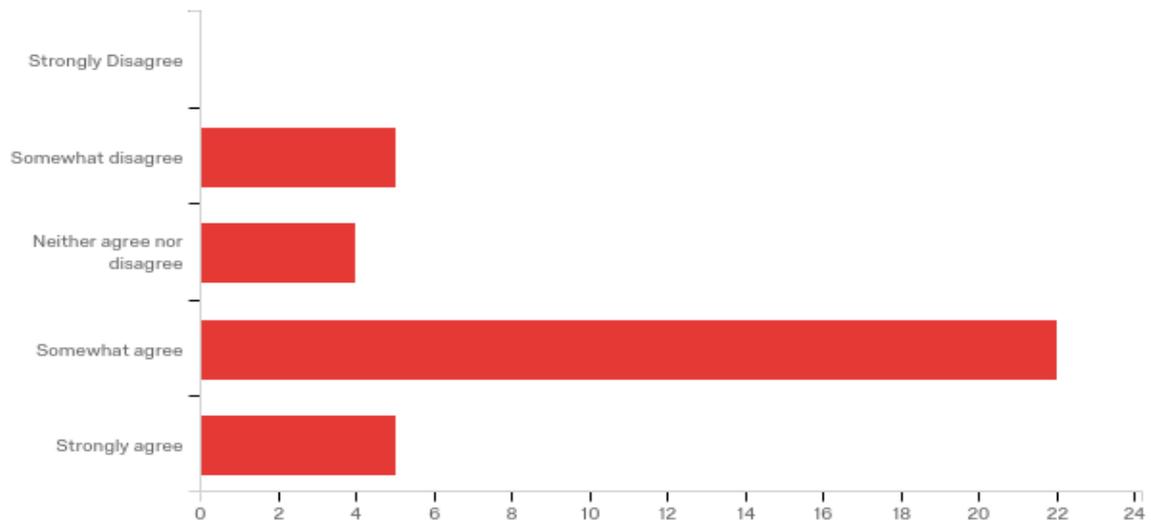
“I think also whether it’s realistic what they want. You know whether it’s going to be too much for them and whether they’re applying for all the right sort of courses for them and actually whether they’re actually going to get on the courses or don’t have a chance.”

Teachers specifically referenced efforts they were making to address this apparent deficiency but acknowledged that they had yet to uncover any completely effective solutions. On a number of occasions, well thought out solutions had failed because students did not engage with the support offered - possibly because they did not see its usefulness to them. In this way, student difficulties with using their own imagination to predict possible future events and rehearse possible difficulties, seemed to act as a foundation for other problems. In essence, this difficulty was part of a mind-set that left students more vulnerable to making poor choices and experiencing higher levels of anxiety.

2 quantitative questions were devised to test this finding and the responses provide strong overall support, suggesting that this inability to cognitively engage with the future is a phenomenon encountered by many teachers (Figs 1 & 2).

Fig 1.

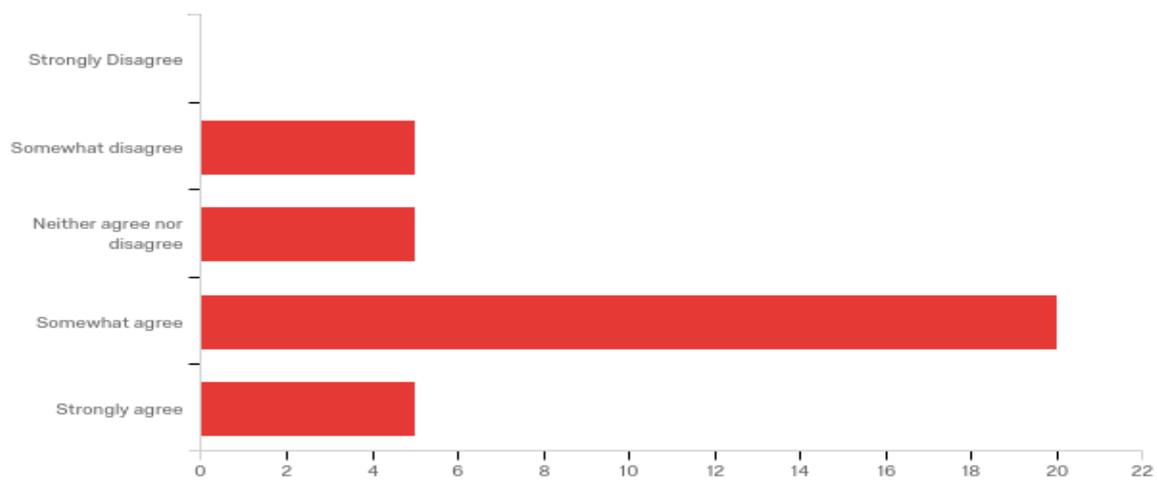
17. Our students find it difficult or don't want to think about things that are not an immediate priority



(36 complete answers. Mean = 3.88 (SD 0.79))

Fig 2.

22 - Our students find it difficult to accurately visualise what life at university will be like



(36 complete answers. Mean = 3.65 (SD 1.00))

5.2 Surface learning and grade focus

Allied to problems with visualisation and complex predictions, teachers identified that many of their students were engaged in forms of surface learning, relegating true learning in favour of, what Walter Weynes (2016) calls, pre agreed goal acquisition. In other words, educational activities were only important if a grade was attached and that grade was seen to have importance for their success.

“You will find that towards the end of the year in year 12 and year 13, when they are coming up to their exams they can’t see the benefit of doing those sessions, so it’s quite difficult to get... they all come to it but the enthusiasm wanes because they are so focused on their grade and because they know that is a class they don’t get a grade from, they can’t see the benefit of doing it”

“We do like an hour to do their enrichment and things like that but it’s difficult to get them to see the value of other things, like we’ve said, that don’t equate to those grades, that’s all their subject teachers are focused on, that’s all they are focused on.”

This was perhaps most evident for students who received unconditional offers from Universities. Teachers believed this practice was causing real harm to the learning and development of their students and were keen that this received specific focus in this report.

T2 “I think one of the issues I have is when students apply for university they’re often given kind of unconditional places and so you’re half way through the year and actually you’ve got a ... lack of incentive for them.” T5 “I do think that’s something that is really pertinent for us and something that we are really struggling with, so I’d like that in the report.”

“Although [named University] have really not helped us this year because they’ve offered all of our students who have applied to them, unconditional

offers – so they've all accepted and now they don't need any grades to go, so now they are all saying well I'll just go to [named University], that'll just be a pass then, I'll just do my pass work and I won't finish off my Btech because I don't need to because [named University] have accepted me anyway and then they're not the only ones, [named University] and places like that we've had... it's the funding, so they can guarantee that they've got that money now. I've been to – we run a post 16 group for the city and all the sixth forms in [named city] are saying it at the moment, they're really struggling with it..."

When asked about students willingness to engage with independent learning, there was a mix of responses, indicating that some students of these teachers do engage with their own learning and with suggested exercises, while others won't or can't.

"Independent learning, we struggle getting them to do independent learning; we set a lot of it, you know we target it to set it all the time."

"Most of them are very good, yes, yes it's just the few isn't it? Most of them are getting on with it and they will do the work at home because they want to do well and they'll come in and they'll be organised, most of them are brilliant."

A number of teachers expressed concern about how able and prepared many of their students were for the transition into academic learning at H.E. level. Some identified initiatives they were undertaking to attempt to close that gap but remained concerned that academic integration would pose a significant challenge to many of their learners.

T2 "I think one of the other things that, I mean I've taught in HE and one of the kind of issues that you have in relation to kind of delivery models as well, is that the universities still work on the basis of, kind of like, things like lectures and you know, it's like large scale delivery and actually, you know, our policy is that we're moving away from that so there's a discrepancy there in terms of...]" T1: "More student centred aren't they?" T2: "Yes." T1: "As opposed to

the lecture layout so they go to a world that they've not really experienced and a way of studying that they've... [not encountered].”

“I think they need to know what is expected of them – academic wise – because I don't think they realise – I think.... When you come here and there's a class, you're given your work and you do it in the class. Whereas obviously when you go to a lecture, it's very different... and to go into that lecture and just be taught – and then go away and do all your work – I don't think they quite realise that that's what it's going to be like.”

A number of teachers reflected on concerns that GCSEs had not prepared their students for A Level and that there was, therefore, significant ground for sixth form teachers to make up.

“They have a lot of support at GCSE, and throughout the school, from years seven to eleven and I think they struggle with not having as much support going into A-Level.”

However, it is important to note that this view was not unanimous. Teachers in at least one of the schools recorded few concerns about the academic ability of their student and believed personal independence was more likely to be a barrier.

“It's unusual that you find kids that can't cope with the work load or with the step up academically – I always say that the jump from GCSE to A-level is far more than what you'll get at degree level... it's a lot easier... but people generally drop out of university because they are unsettled within themselves for whatever reason, you know; moving away from home....”

Finally, teachers across all schools underscored the importance being attached to grades, when discussing the pressure that they felt they were under to increase the predicted grades they gave their students. This pressure was identified as coming from students and their parents.

“So I think there is that as well um obviously it’s grades, grades is the biggest thing um and predictions, for the staff predictions is the biggest problem because they predict then the students cry and say but if you predict me this then I’m not going to be able to apply for that course and then the staff cave in and then in the end, it’s me on the day, going through clearing with them because they actually couldn’t attempt to do that... it’s giving them the confidence to say you can do these choices but without saying, ‘well, no you can’t do that’ – it is a difficult balance. We don’t want them to give up and think, ‘well I’m not even going to try my exams’.”

“[predicting grades is] the hardest. It’s the one that gives us the most headaches because you’ve got teachers and then you’ve got parents as well. Parents, should we say, with slightly unrealistic expectations as to um what their, what the kids are going to get, what they are likely to get um, the additional thing is the dynamic in that... an independent school is that there is almost nobody actually comes out and says this but the implication is, I’m paying for this, therefore, you know, who pays the piper calls the predicted grade but it don’t work like that and I won’t do it. It’s pointless because you know, I could be the most popular person in Derby by predicting everybody who wants an A* an A* - if they don’t get it and they get offers for A* courses and they’re never going to do, it then they are going to have to go through clearing and what’s the point, you know.”

As the above points both illustrate, teachers in the study were clear that providing unrealistic grade predictions was ultimately likely to be harmful for their students. However, the narrative around the importance of high grades, was driving the behaviour of students and their families, in what was perceived to be unhelpful ways, creating pressure on teachers and maintaining a focus on grade acquisition over personal reflection, learning and development. It is worthy of note that the teachers within this study were attempting to resist this narrative despite external and internal pressures – one teacher noted that at a previous school, sixth form teachers were on performance related pay linked solely to A level grades.

“I mean it’s, I think that it’s becoming more of an issue um because of the pressure to get the grades, the pressure from the school, the pressure on the teaching staff to get the grades because now teaching staff pay is linked to performance, the pressure that they are putting on the students whether they know that they are or not is there, so it is difficult.”

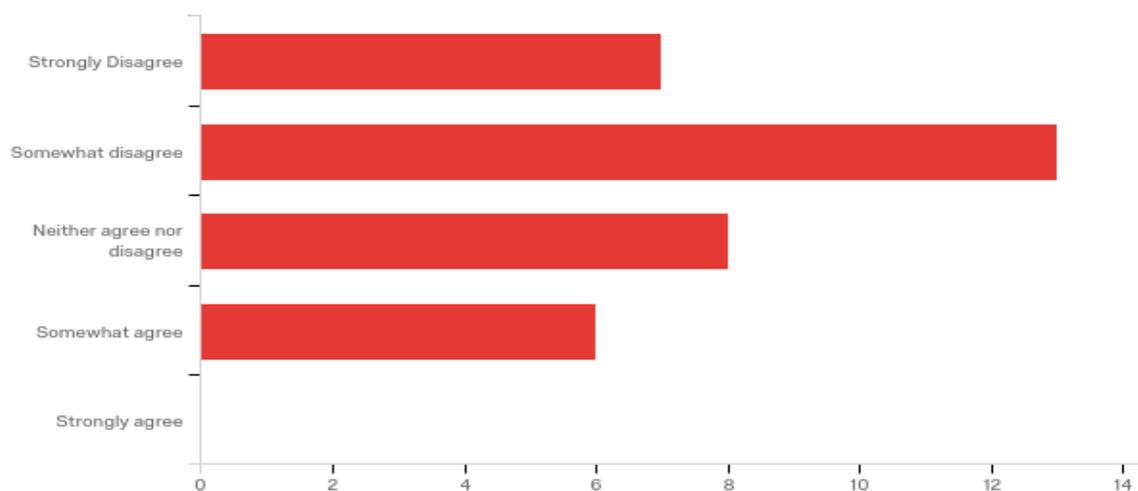
Given recent findings linking surface learning and extrinsic grade focussed motivation with poor wellbeing and academic underachievement, this is a point that deserves further attention from policy makers (Postareff, 2016).

Five questions were posed, on the quantitative questionnaire, on this topic and the responses were mainly reflective of the views expressed in the qualitative feedback.

Broadly speaking, the responses to these questions indicated that most teachers felt that their students needed to be persuaded to engage in independent learning (Fig 3) and that their students believed educational activities were only important if a grade was attached and that grade was seen to have importance for their success (Fig 4).

Fig 3

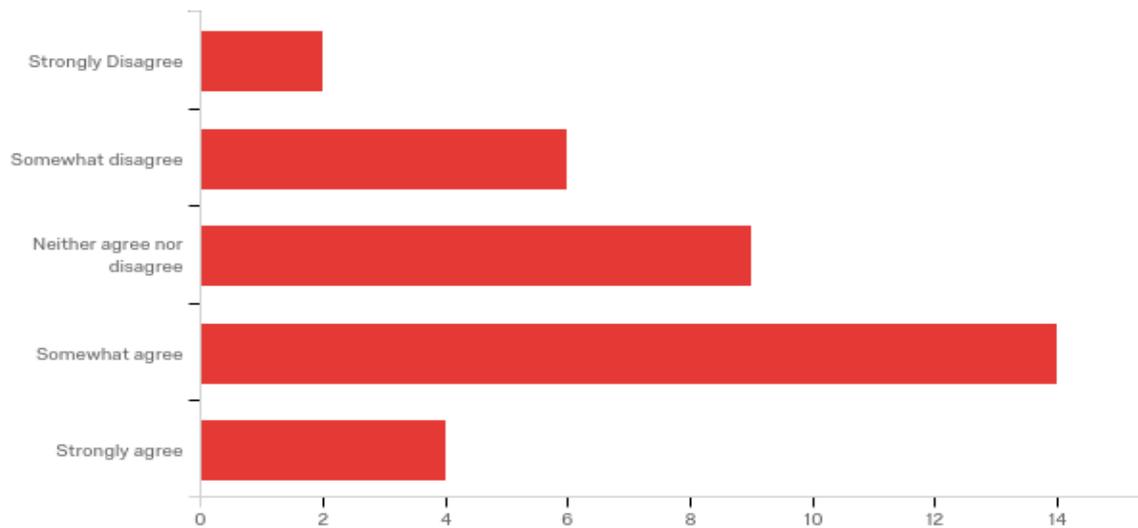
13 - Our students engage with wider reading and independent learning without much persuasion



(34 complete answers. Mean = 2.37 (SD 1.04))

Fig 4

18 - Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade

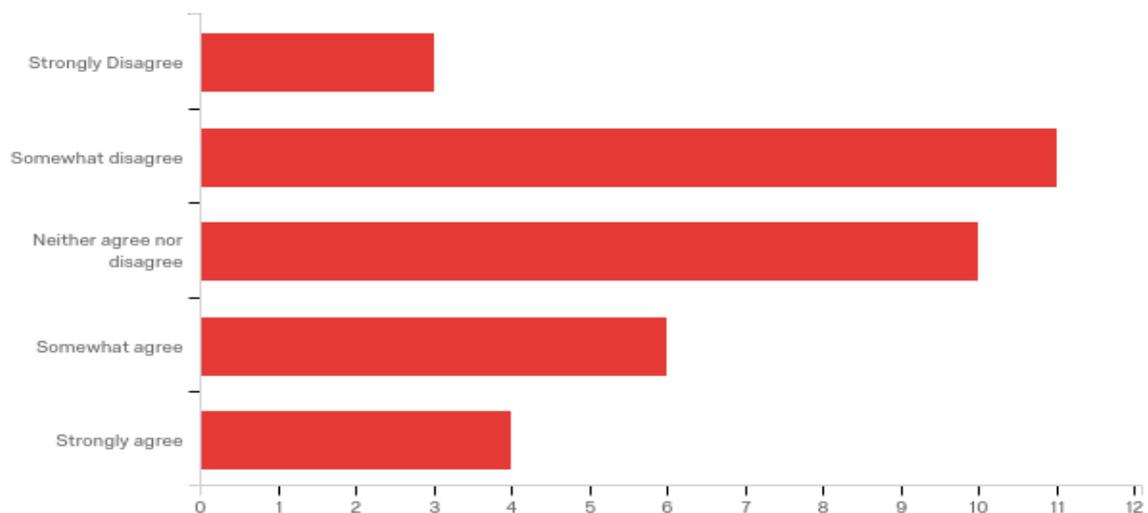


(35 complete responses. Mean = 3.37 (SD 1.03))

However, as was noted above, concern for students' academic ability was not unanimous among all teachers in the focus groups and this too was replicated in the quantitative data. There was a clear divide among teachers, when asked if they believed their students were active learners (Fig 6) or if they engaged in active learning behaviour (such as using a library without being directed to do so)(Fig 5).

Fig 5

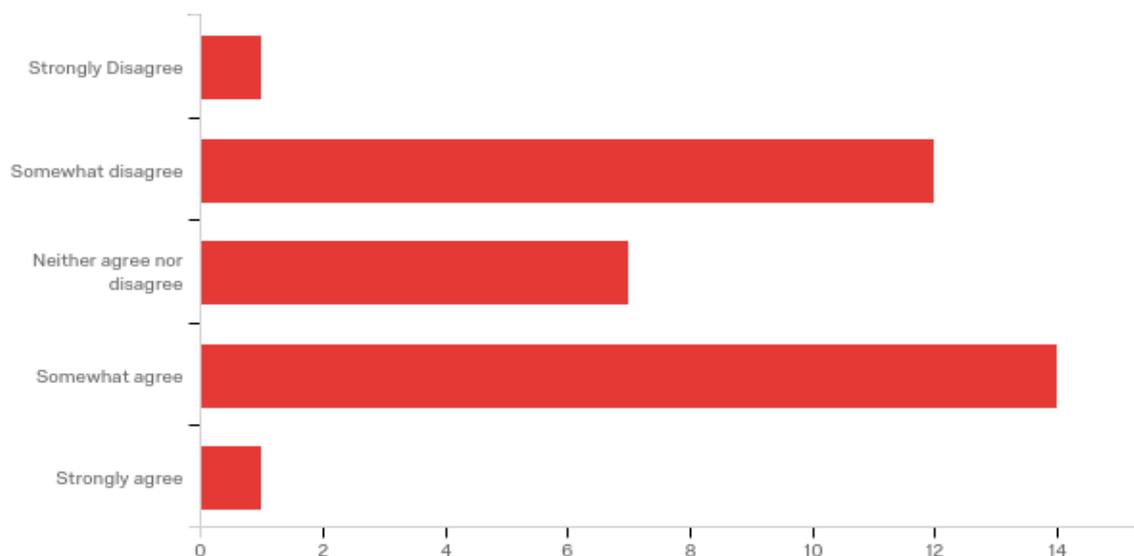
21 - Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so



(34 complete responses. Mean = 2.94 (SD 1.24))

Fig 6

28 - Our students are independent learners



(35 complete answers. Mean = 3.03 (SD 1.03))

With means of 2.94 and 3.03 these findings are essentially neutral, with questions 28, in particular showing real disagreement among respondents.

Understanding why teachers responded differently to these questions is difficult as there were no clear correlations between these answers and the demographic data. However, there were some correlations between these questions and the answers to some of the other thematic questions, which suggest that these differences may be a reflection of the varying populations being taught. The correlations suggest that

- Teachers who believe their students can engage with independent learning are (Q13) also likely to indicate that the parents of their students are engaged with their child's education and supportive of them going to university (Q30) ($r_s(31) = .498, p = 0.003$).
- Teachers who believed their students would only be motivated by the prospect of a grade (Q18), also indicated that their students had difficulty in visualising the future (Q17) ($r_s(32) = .372, p = 0.03$). Suggesting that short term focus and grade focus may be part of the same psychological construct, possibly

explained by the work of Ryan and Deci (1995) as being part of extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic motivation.

- When teachers believe that their students are able to engage with independent learning and wider reading (Q13), they are also likely to say that their students regularly use the library (Q21) ($r_s(31) = .516$, $p = 0.002$) and to believe that their students are independent learners (Q28) ($r_s(31) = .498$, $p = 0.025$).

These indications that a number of the problems identified during the qualitative research may be related to one another, perhaps also explains why there wasn't unanimity of views across this section.

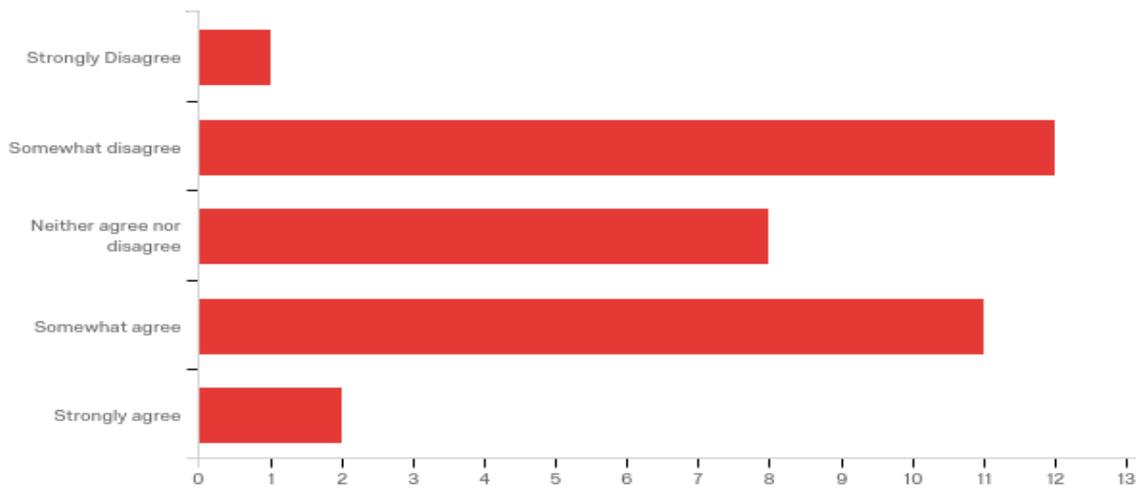
If, for instance, as appears to be the case, independent learning and parental engagement is connected, then teachers in schools with highly engaged parents are more likely to see active learning behaviour and to perceive their students as active learners. Teachers in schools with disengaged parents are more likely to see the opposite. This would lead to a split in the answers to some of these questions, depending on the population each respondent is working with, which is, in fact what we do see.

This apparent phenomenon, of students who are actively engaged also having engaged parents, suggests that this split may be partly an issue of family, culture and class as well as psychology. However, it should be borne in mind that the majority of all teachers perceived problems in visualising the future and in engaging in independent learning without persuasion. This perhaps indicates that there is a spectrum of difficulty that may be mediated by family, culture, class and school.

Finally, on this topic we asked a question about the pressure teachers experience to predict higher grades for their students (Fig 7).

Fig 7

24 - Our students and their parents put teachers under pressure to give them higher predicted grades



(34 total responses. Mean = 3.03 (SD 0.94)).

Again the responses reflected a split in teachers' views, suggesting that this is a phenomenon experienced by some but not all teachers. This question did not correlate with any other variable, so further explanation is not possible.

5.3 Problems with applications and personal reflection

From the transcripts, it is clear that all of the schools involved invest a significant amount of time in promoting university as an option to their learners, supporting them to make choices and helping them to complete their application well. However, the reflections of teachers in the study suggest that this is a process that many of their students either find difficult or are unable to engage with fully.

A number of teachers expressed concern that students were unable to research universities, courses and locations properly and that they did not fully understand the choices they were making. This led to students making unrealistic choices or failing to understand the choice that they had made. Some of this discussion related to the points made in 5.1 - as some students are unable to foresee what going to university might be like, they are therefore unable to prioritise their research or understand the value of activities such as attending an Open Day. Other comments suggested that the complexity of the university sector meant many were unable to genuinely understand the choices they were making.

“They just think of university as a university, they don’t realise the breadth of different types of universities and environments that they can be in, so the visiting is crucial.”

“And they don’t understand the importance of going to universities though and looking round because they don’t understand, not only is it about looking at information on paper, it’s a gut feeling about whether you’ll like somewhere and whether the people that are teaching, you know, you’d like to spend your time listening to the people that are teaching, the way it’s taught or whether the environment is something you’d like”

“Visits to different types of campuses – because I don’t think they realise – when we say there are different types - I don’t think they quite realise what that means. Erm- whether you know it’s something that’s all just on one campus or if it’s like a city.”

A number of teachers reflected on the experiences of students who had not properly researched and considered the courses they wanted to pursue – this was seen as leading to some students choosing courses for which they would not be accepted or going onto courses which would not meet their expectations. Some teachers clearly had a perception that this was a key factor in future drop out.

“It’s one of the most prevalent reasons that students leave university, because they’re on the wrong course for them, so it’s starting research early and making sure that they do enough research.”

“Being realistic about what courses um, they can do – and where they can go, because I think – I don’t think – I think they just see a course and like it – I don’t think they look at um, the UCAS points – and whether they can actually get on to that course.”

A number of teachers suggested that simply getting their students to engage with the application process in a timely manner was problematic. Again, part of the

explanation for this seemed to be because students had difficulty in prioritising their application as something which would be important in the future, over more immediate concerns.

However, teachers also referenced a lack of basic skills that many students had to complete their application to an acceptable standard. In particular, the personal statement was referenced, in all of the focus groups, as an area that many students find difficult. This led some students to avoiding it and some to request that their teacher's completed it for them. Teacher comments suggested that many students require a high level of support to simply complete the UCAS application.

"It's like, you can see that some of the personal statements that they write... it's so informal or so wrong on so many levels. They don't get it – this is going to decide your future, this sheet of A4 paper, this is for a purpose."

"For them it's their personal statement more than anything else in the world [that they find difficult] because they cannot write about themselves. They either put things that are too general or almost too specific, like my mum's name's Sheila and she taught me that money's really important or... do you know what I mean? So definitely writing about themselves is so difficult um we have personal statements where they've not even mentioned their A levels."

"Getting them to finish that is difficult, getting them to finish their personal statement is difficult."

"Short of doing it for them, which some of them expect - they really do expect you to do that."

Teachers felt that many students found it difficult to self-reflect and write about themselves in a positive way. Some referenced time they spent with students trying to tease out personal skills, interests and hobbies that could demonstrate what made them attractive to prospective universities.

In addition, a number acknowledged that different universities and types of courses tended to look for different things within personal statements. As a result there was no, simple, standard way in which students could be guided to craft their statement.

A good personal statement, it seems, is one which requires students to research and understand what their own prospective course leaders will want and then deliver a personal statement to meet those requirements. The implication from much of the discussions, is that this seems to be beyond many students.

Finally, a number of the conversations referenced the fact that many students find the application process emotionally turbulent and distressing. Teachers referred to numerous students crying, stressed and overwhelmed and that this can lead to some students reconsidering whether or not university was for them.

“I had another student in tears, trying to fill out the personal statement and so much so, that she couldn’t even speak to me; she couldn’t get any words out.”

Teachers described the period of waiting for offers as often leading to distressing catastrophized thinking.

“They haven’t heard back from the same one that their friend has had an offer from and it was sent on the same day and they’re like “well that must mean I’ve got a rejection and now what do I do? Because that was my first choice,” you know, it’s like, dramatic.”

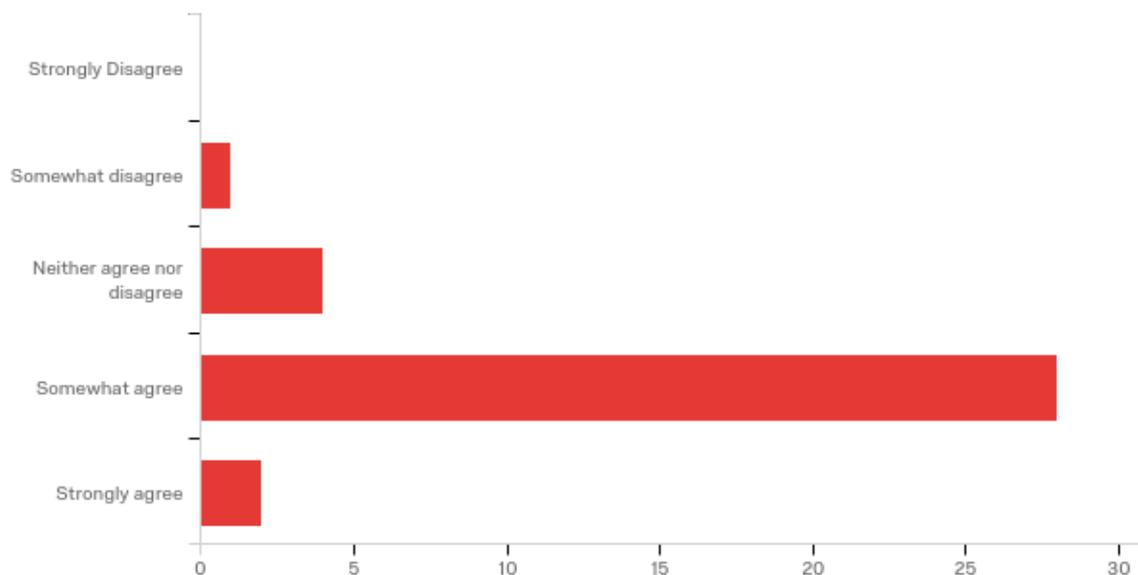
This uncertainty could then be compounded for those who receive rejections and have to reconsider or go through clearing. However, even for those who are accepted, it would appear that the nature of the uncertainty, that is an inevitable part of applying for and then going to a new university, is difficult to manage.

“People worry about accommodation but then they worry ahead of time because you can’t tell them what they’re going to be allocated because they’re just on a list waiting. I had a really anxious student last year who I mean literally, she must have really annoyed the accommodation department to the point where they were going “right we’ll secure this for you”, because she was so worried...”

The quantitative data provides strong support for the views expressed in this topic. Teachers responding to the questionnaire, clearly agreed that their students find the process of applying to university emotionally challenging (Fig 8), struggle with self-reflection (Fig 10) and have difficulty completing the personal statement (Fig 9). Indeed these three questions returned some of the highest means of the data set, with low levels of standard deviation, indicating that they garnered the highest level of agreement.

Fig 8

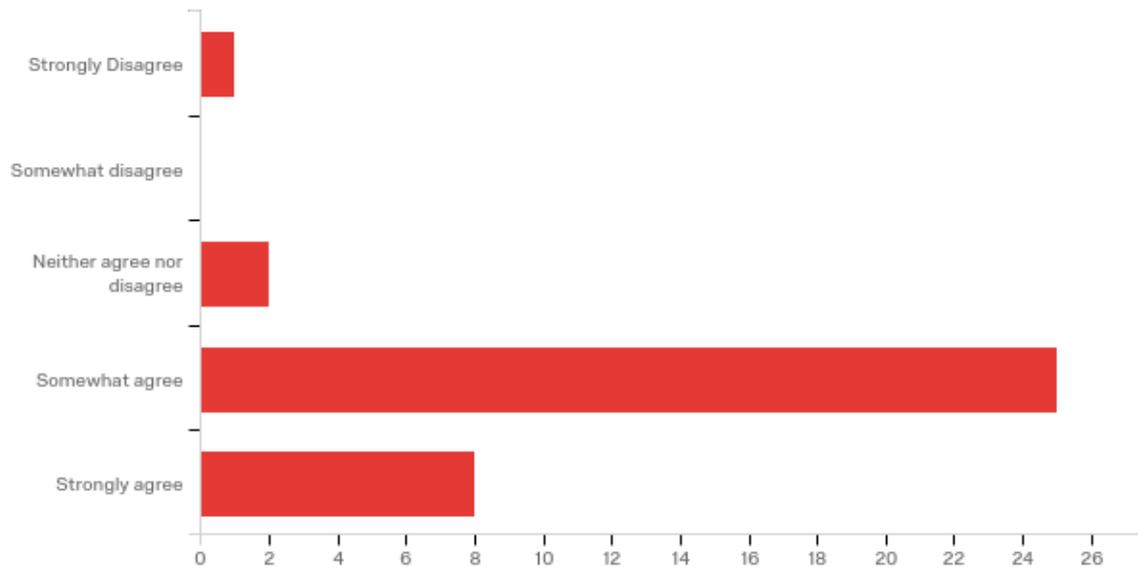
19 - Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging



(35 complete responses. Mean = 3.87 (SD 0.79))

Fig 9

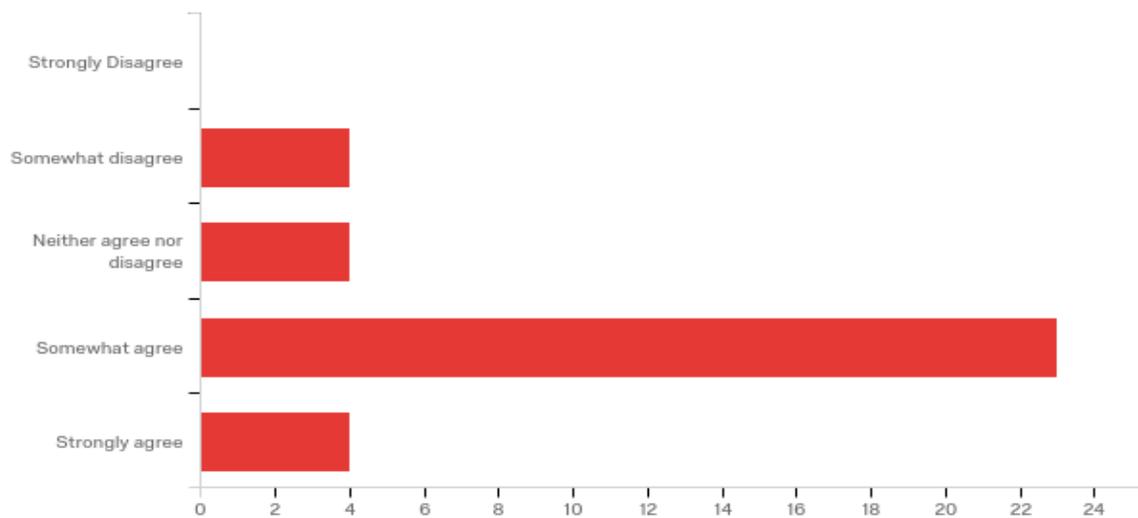
12 - Our students find it difficult to complete the personal statement on the UCAS form



(36 complete responses. Mean=4.19 (SD 0.54))

Fig 10

36 – *Our students find self-reflection difficult*



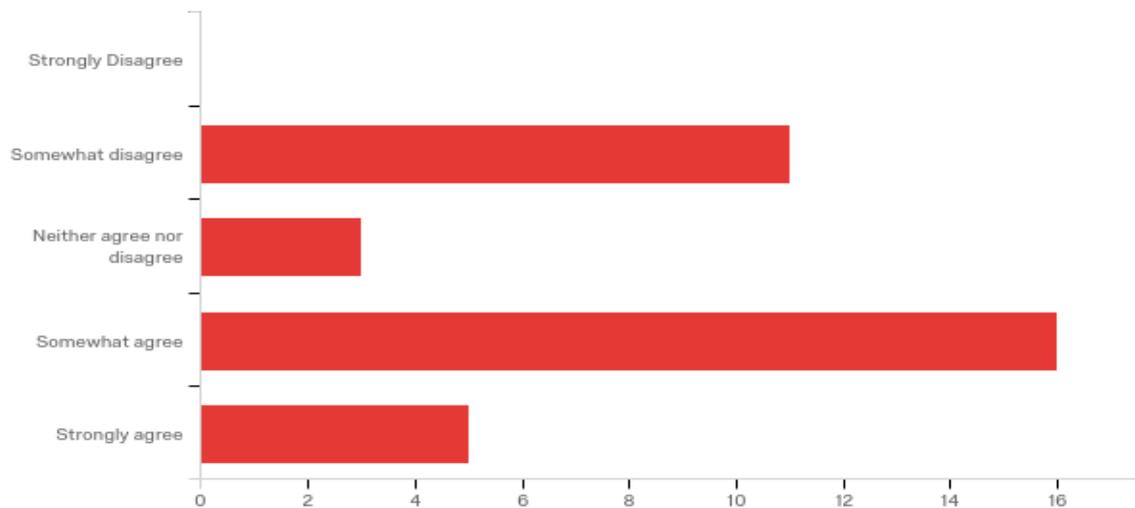
(35 complete responses. Mean = 3.84 (SD 0.77))

Although the unanimity of responses results in few correlations between these questions and other variables, there were, however, 2 weak relationships with question 12 that are worthy of note. The first, suggests that increased parental engagement (Q30) is linked to perceived better ability to complete the personal statement (Q12) ($r_s(32) = -.362, p = 0.035$). This may be another indicator that family involvement, or lack thereof, can either support or be a barrier to university.

The second correlation implies a relationship between students who find the personal statement difficult (Q12) and the final question of this section, which addressed teachers' perceptions of their students' ability to understand different types of university (Fig 11). This suggests that poor understanding of the H.E. sector, makes completing the statement more difficult ($r_s(32) = -.382, p = 0.026$).

Fig 11

26 - Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend



(35 complete responses. Mean = 3.5 (SD 1.08))

The high level of agreement, with the statement in question 26, suggests that most of the respondents, to the questionnaire, believe that their students do accurately understand the different types of universities available. This is the only question in the data set that significantly disagrees with the views of the focus groups. It is difficult to know why this is the case but it is clear, that the perceptions of the focus group teachers on this question, are not supported by the quantitative data.

This question also correlates with a further question in which teachers are asked if the staff in their school have the training and understanding that they need (Q32). This suggests that where teachers believe they are well trained, they perceive their students as having greater understanding ($r_s(32) = .378, p = 0.028$).

Notwithstanding the fact, that responses to question 26 appear to disagree with the qualitative findings, taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data in this

section clearly demonstrates that many students in the participating schools find the process of applying for university practically, cognitively and emotionally challenging.

5.4 Emotions, resilience and independence

In the focus groups, all of this filtered through into broader conversations about student resilience, independence and emotional intelligence. Teachers identified resilience and self-efficacy as necessary components for a successful transition to university but expressed concerns that many students did not display these characteristics and required support within school or college to develop.

“XXX and I teach Psychology and we teach about something called self-efficacy, which you probably are familiar with but I think it’s making students have higher self-efficacy, so that they have the belief that actually, that if they give it a go and if they fail, fair enough, what can they do to make it better? Because a lot of them think “I’m not good enough, I won’t try”, whereas, what we’re trying to move them towards is, “no I am good enough, if I don’t get it right first time I need to adapt and try again.””

A number of teachers were able to identify the positive impact that confidence can have on student academic success and on future planning and ambitions.

“I think just as a person they are more confident. Those are the ones that are more mature. Academic and personally more mature definitely. I those are the ones that have got more family support. I think those are the ones that are more academic rather than practical really. Um, yeah I just think because of all that, they’ve thought about it a lot more. Definitely thought about it a lot more and can see themselves going for more reasons definitely.”

“They leave well-equipped academically, in terms, of their academic head’s on - able to cope with university life.”

However, there were significantly more comments relating to the ways in which low self-confidence can act as a block to both ambition and achievement. A number of

the transcripts contain discussions of a perceived rise in perfectionism – particularly among female students, which was seen to undermine their academic achievement.

T3: “There seems to be a lot of this fear of failure that you know, and therefore “I won’t try because I’m afraid of failing, before I’ve even got there.” T7: “Absolutely”. T6: “And “I’m not going to get into any of these universities, no-one will accept me” or “they will but I’m not going to get the grades” and it’s just carries on.”

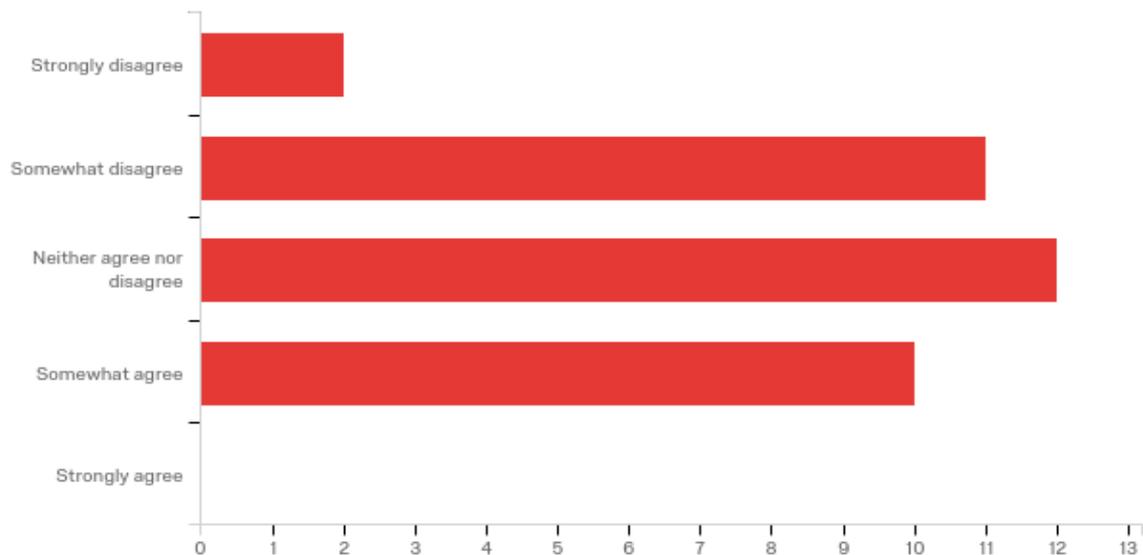
“It’s just this group of girls that need to be perfect in everything... I think, I don’t know where, I don’t know if it’s always been like this? I think it definitely is getting worse, I think it’s just a product of the education system isn’t it? it’s the fact that, I guess they are always examined aren’t they, they always need the A’s they always need the A*’s and if they’re going to get something, if they think they are going to hand something in that isn’t that grade then... “

“We have a couple of high achieving girls who are finding it incredibly difficult because they almost refuse to put pen to paper unless it’s going to perfect... they won’t hand things in, they’ll have a rough book where they’ll work and then copy it out neat to hand to the teacher because they don’t want crossings out, they don’t want to have showed that they’ve worked because this like perfection thing has started to creep in, it’s really strange.”

On the quantitative questionnaire, the majority of teachers declined to support a positive statement that their students were emotionally resilient (Fig 12). More teachers disagreed with the statement than agreed with it but the largest number of responses were neutral, leading to a relatively neutral mean. This suggests that although many teachers believe their students are not emotionally resilient, this is not a uniform phenomenon that effects every student or school.

Fig 12

35 – Our students are emotionally resilient



(35 complete answers. Mean =2.84 (SD 0.93))

Teachers in the focus groups also believed that low confidence limited choices, when considering which universities students would be willing to attend. For some, this appeared to be because they did not feel able to move too far away from home, because they needed the ongoing support of family and did not believe they had the ability to survive on their own. Others appeared to lack confidence in their academic ability, believing that they were ‘not good enough,’ for more traditional universities or fearing failure, refusing to put themselves through entrance tests, even though teachers believed, that in many cases, they had the academic ability.

T1: “That’s a lot of it. A lot of them won’t apply for courses if there’s an interview. They’re actually put off. I was talking to one girl the other day and I said “Have you looked at such and such a course?”, “I’m not doing that”, I said, “why not?”, “You’ve got to go for an interview for that, I’m not going for an interview”.” T2: “Or some of them, even the travelling to go to an interview.”

“I saw someone today, yes, going through the same thing. Top of the class for everything but she just doesn’t think she’s clever enough because she’s just not answering her mocks the way she should be and she’s already taken on that blame instead of looking at other strategies or ways around it.”

“But that could be a barrier to wanting to go to university at all, not feeling you’re good enough.”

For those who did not feel able to move away from home, teachers reflected on whether enough was being done to help them develop the skills and self-efficacy necessary. This was a particularly significant narrative for those schools and colleges who drew their students from low participation neighbourhoods or non-traditional backgrounds. Many of these students were seen to limit their choices, preventing them from considering, applying to or accepting places on courses or at universities which may be more appropriate for them.

“For some people it can be very daunting, and you can see it in them, you can see the choice whether they want to go to university or not and I mean the choice that they might not go, because of their confidence levels, when it comes to starting a new life for themselves on their own, and a lot of them want to stay in [their home town], even the younger ones want to stay in [their home town] just because of that; they don’t want to lose that support network and they’re still frightened about it.”

“I think for the students I think the hardest thing is... moving away. I think a lot of our students do want to move away, but as time gets closer I think their confidence – they sort of lose their confidence with their thinking that they can, really.”

“I wonder though if it is that connect between the fact that we don’t teach them as many life skills as such like; cooking, cleaning, looking after yourself. That maybe they want to stay clinging on to the apron strings, do you know what I mean?”

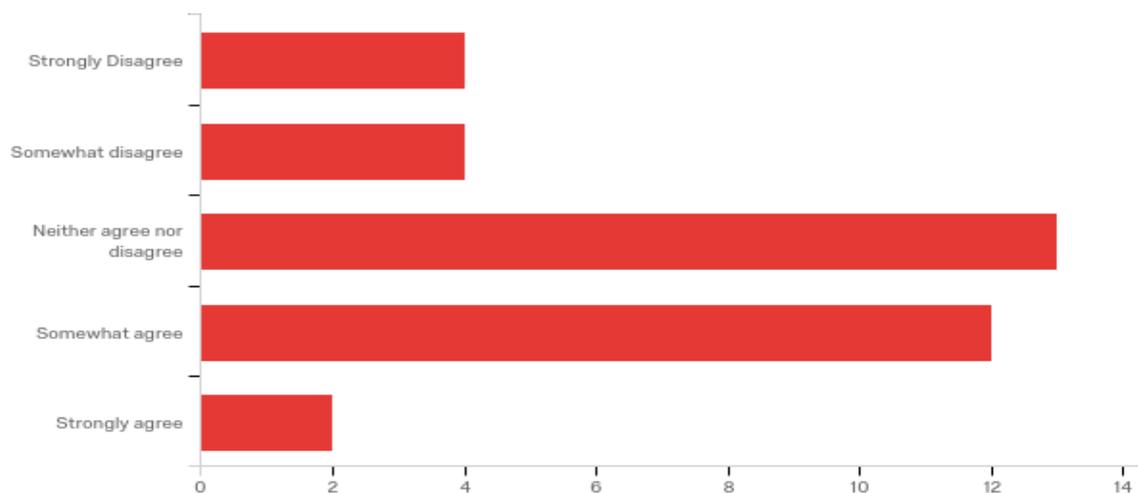
Some teachers explained some of these attitudes and behaviours with specific reference to demographic factors and indeed, teachers from fee paying schools in the study indicated that their students were much more likely to move away and much less likely to go to a local university. This suggests that confidence, family

norms or cultural expectations may create a demographic inequality within university applications and therefore may lead to an inequality of experience and opportunity.

In the quantitative phase, teachers seemed mixed in their views on whether or not their students would want to leave the local area (Fig 13), resulting in a neutral answer overall. The spread of responses suggests that teachers may be seeing a mix of responses, within populations as well as between populations. This lends some support to the belief expressed in the quantitative phase that some students do not want to consider leaving home to go to university.

Fig 13

11 - When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area



(35 complete responses. Mean = 3.12 (SD 1.09))

5.5 Life skills

Teachers made reference to work they were doing, mainly within PSHE or tutor groups, to help students develop their personal and practical skills. Some expressed surprise at the low level of skills and knowledge some students displayed and indicated that they felt many students were less well prepared now than they might have been in previous generations. Underlying all of this, seemed to be a concern that many students lack underlying problem solving skills to help them address new problems and situations. In other words, they lacked the skill to acquire new skills and instead sought assistance from authority figures to resolve problems for them.

“Some of them have said to me “how do I get to Liverpool” I’ve said, “on the train”. So I just showed them the website and then she’s said “that’s easy ok”, and it’s literally [their home town], get on the train, Liverpool, that’s it.”

Finance and money management was the subject most referred to, within the transcripts, as an area of life skills that was addressed within schools. Some of this was delivered by teachers themselves, although references were also made to external speakers from universities. Teachers identified that many of their students’ initially lacked knowledge in this area, however, it appeared to be something teachers felt could be addressed productively.

“...this week’s tutor programme has been budgeting. So we’ve been working with them and they are all incredibly shocked at how much electricity and things cost.”

“We had someone from [named University] come in to do finance talks and they were... just a simple task but they had to guess “how much is this tin of baked beans?” “how much is this?” and none of them go shopping and in that group none of them had and they were like “Oh I don’t know, I don’t know what that would be” so it’s like getting them to take more responsibility and everything not just university but living on their own.”

There were also a significant number of references to the ability of students to communicate appropriately in written form and in formal settings and the fact that a lack of knowledge may be a barrier to future success.

“If you start a letter with dear sir, what do you end it with? And I said it doesn’t seem important in the grand scheme of things but the person from the other end, I guarantee will notice that it’s the wrong ending or something because it’s a standard thing, yes? But they are so used to not writing anything, they just they don’t understand the consequence of that any more. It’s almost that kind of, I suppose there is no way to teach life experience in any depth and you can’t teach people to be more experienced or more comfortable talking to

one person or how to formally write, especially I think written. A lot of students don't have that job because it's not used, is it?"

There were also specific references to the problems many students appear to have with time management – particularly in moving from a more structured GCSE timetable to a less structured experience in sixth form.

"It's a lot, it's a big ask especially for students that perhaps hadn't had the opportunity to manage their own time before, so if they have not had the opportunity."

Beyond that the reflections in the transcripts covered a wide area of practical skills including cooking, washing, DIY and travelling, with some addressed in schools and some not (see section 6). The beliefs expressed by most teachers in the study suggested that most of their students will still lack many of these skills at the point of transition to university.

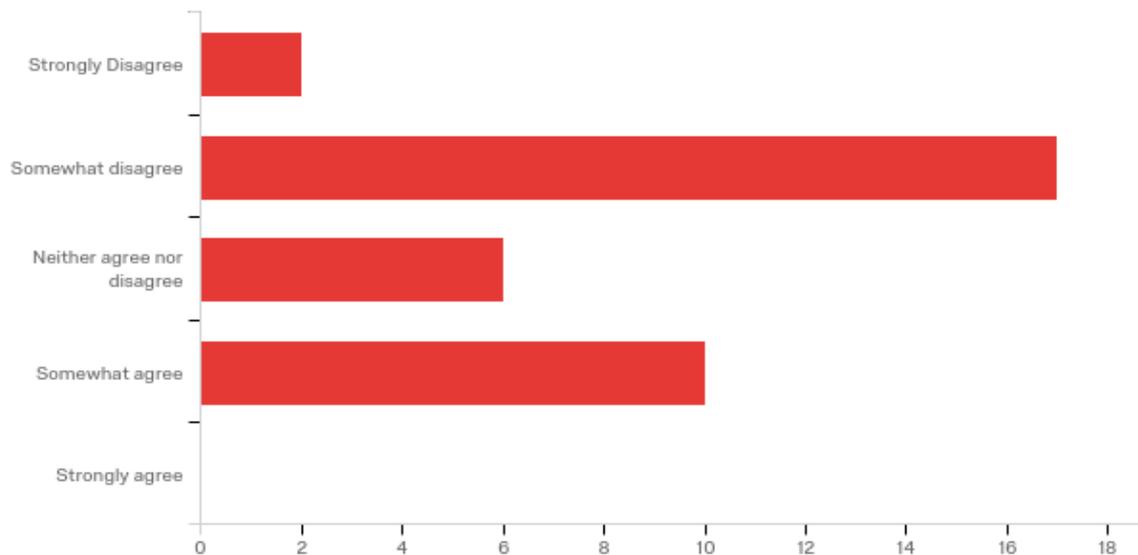
Finally, some teachers also discussed the need to develop relationship skills, with specific references to managing conflict.

"This week we have been inundated with students falling out. Yes and it's over silly things and it's almost... they don't know how to deal with conflict so sometimes they'll be a bit over zealous and that obviously has a fall out then as well, so I think dealing with conflict, "if you don't agree with somebody or if you are experiencing issues, this is how to handle it as an adult" because we get one or two responses, we get people bury their head in the sand and don't attend or won't come in or we get people who over react and start bullying another individual or something like that, so I think it's really teaching them how to deal with difficult and uneasy situations would be quite helpful maybe."

The views of the focus group participants were broadly supported by the quantitative data, with most respondents believing that their students did not have good life skills (Fig 14).

Fig 14

33 - Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time



(35 complete responses. Mean = 2.68 (SD 0.99))

5.6 Parents and families

Not all teachers in the focus groups made reference to the influence of parents and families on their students. Of those who did, there were a variety of responses, although there were significant differences between those schools who drew their students from non-traditional backgrounds and those with more traditional university going backgrounds.

Teachers in schools and colleges who drew students from non-traditional backgrounds, tended to identify cultural barriers, within families, that worked to block students, either from going to university or from having the freedom to choose which university to attend. Attitudes towards the cost of university seemed to play a major role in these discussions, with parents and families apparently less willing to believe that the cost of university was a worthwhile investment.

“I’ve even had one mum saying that she keeps it from the dad how much the daughter will have to borrow and they say “well we could buy a house for that round here”. You could not long ago.”

“And the parents pressure them into doing things as well like nursing because it’s free: One of the students recently said “I don’t want to be a nurse, I’m not going” and she’s had a massive row with her mum now.”

Among those parents who did want to support their children to go to university, teachers reflected, that many did not know how to support their child into, what was for them, an unknown experience.

“For a lot of our students they are the first ones in their family to go to university. So, I think some parents and guardians are a little bit worried. Because they’ve never been and don’t know how to support them.”

This, in effect, means that those students have less resource to call on when confronting the complexity of negotiating the myriad courses and universities available. Teachers did discuss efforts they were making, to work with parents, to help them increase their understanding of the practicalities and choices involved. However, helping parents to engage seemed to be a difficult task.

“It doesn’t seem as though they are supportive, because obviously they don’t engage when we put events on - regarding university. But, I don’t know whether it’s... worry because they’ve never been through it and they don’t know the information – or I don’t know whether they perhaps disagree and think their child should go into – full time work and be earning. I’m not entirely sure.”

Teachers also made references to the fact that students at these schools were more likely to have other responsibilities such as part time work or caring for siblings. These responsibilities appeared to restrict both their ability to engage with extracurricular activity and their ability to choose universities further from home. There appeared to be an expectation on some students that these responsibilities – to maintain an income into the family home and care for family members – would continue while they were at university and so they had to choose a local university.

T1: "And a lot of them are carers aren't they?" T2: "Yes." T1: "They'll be left to look after younger siblings or a parent or a grandparent who's poorly." T2: "But a lot of them don't come forward and tell you until grades get affected or there's a crisis, attendance goes pear shaped and you know it actually comes to our attention in a different way and then it all comes out because a lot of them obviously it's a bit of a stigma, they don't want people knowing. And sometimes that is another prevention to moving away to university or even to university in the first place."

"We have to mediate sometimes between the parent and the student, because the students decided they want to move to Aberdeen or whatever and then the parent start, like, well no you are stopping at home, because it's too much money and it costs a lot."

"And some from the different sort of cultural backgrounds, you're expected to go down a certain progression route and you know there's a lot of pressure on them then to take that line and a lot of them might not want to or they have responsibility at home and so you know they either have to go straight into a job after college or stay local you know and you know, it does limit their choices, if they don't feel they can stand up to the members of the family."

Students from schools whose demographic is more likely to be considered as a traditional university going population reflected on a different set of parental influences that could also be potentially unhelpful. Teachers in these schools tended to reference unrealistic parental expectations and/or parents who wished to select which university course their child should apply for.

"It's the slightly unrealistic expectations of parents thinking that their geese are swans, as it were..."

T1: "You can't be blamed for not achieving because it's not the course for you. But it's the pressure the students feel because they say that, 'it's what my dad wants me to do,' not actually them, 'but this is what my dad wants me to do.' So then we have parents in. So they come in and then we'll talk to the student

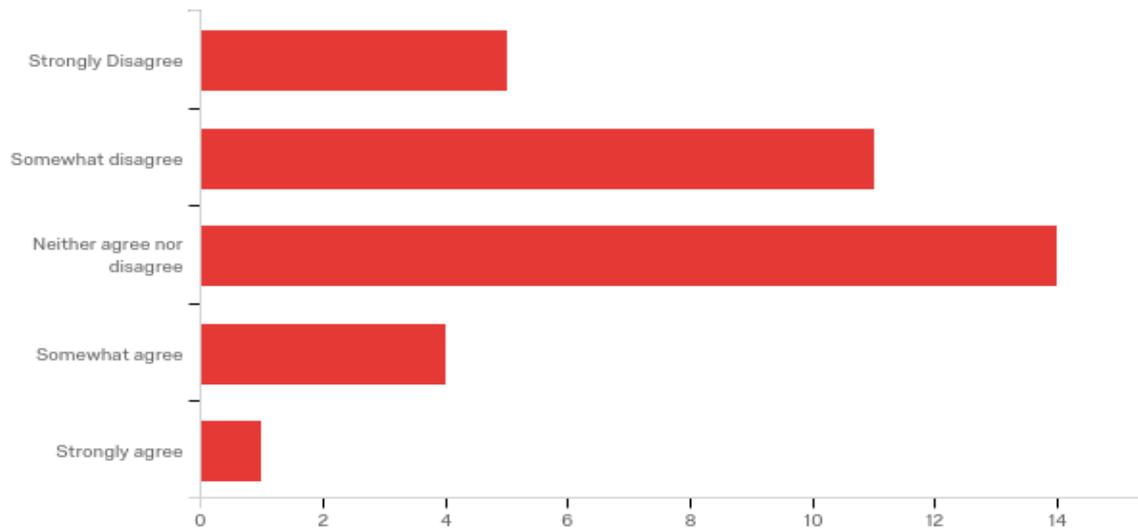
with the parent there and get it across and try explain to them and actually you know.” T2: “Veterinary really isn’t a feasible option very sorry but...” T1: “I suppose once again they are not really making that choice.” T2: “No it’s the parents that are planning, that’s what you are going to do and students don’t question.”

Quantitative data suggests that, the majority of teachers, in the survey, believe that tuition fees deter their students from going to university (Fig 15) and that parents doubt the wisdom of their children incurring the expense of studying for a degree (Fig 16).

Thematic correlations indicate that those parents who were adjudged to be most concerned with the cost of university were also seen to be less engaged in their child’s education and less supportive of them going to university (Fig 17) ($r_s(31) = -.481, p = 0.005$). Teachers responses to the questionnaire also indicated that the students of these parents find it more difficult to visualise what life will be like at university (Q22) ($r_s(31) = .402, p = 0.02$) and are less likely to engage in active learning behaviours (Q21) ($r_s(31) = .487, p = 0.004$). This is again consistent, with the possibility that, the problems some students experience with transition and preparation, are linked by culture, family and background.

Fig 15

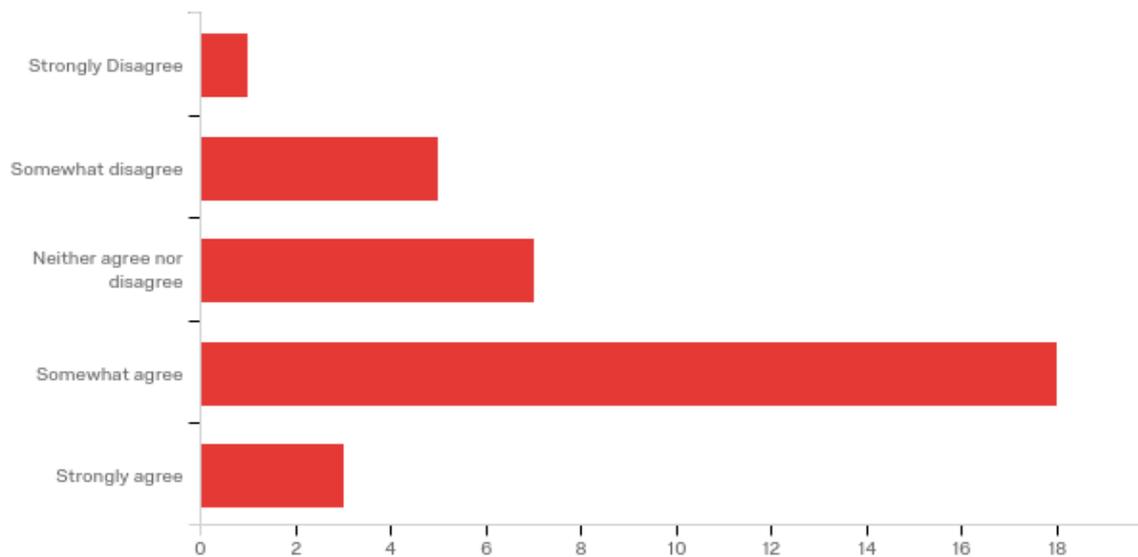
16 - Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university



(35 responses. Mean = 2.26 (SD 0.95))

Fig 16

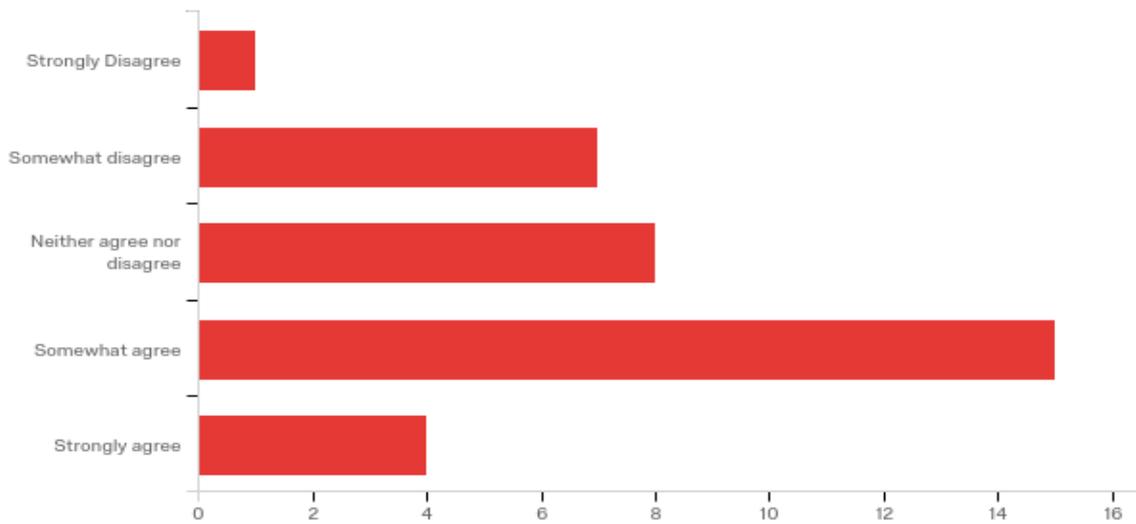
20 - Many of the parents of our students worry that their children should not go to university because it is too expensive



(35 responses. Mean = 3.56 (SD 0.95))

Fig 17

30 - The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university

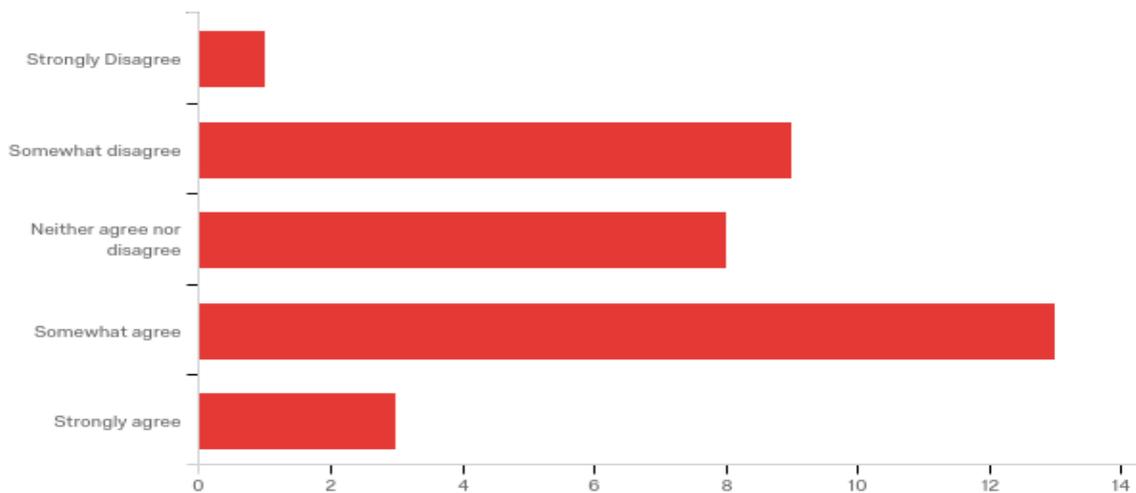


(Responses 35. Mean = 3.4 (SD 1.02))

There was slight agreement in the quantitative survey that other demands on students' time prevented them from engaging with extra-curricular activities (Fig 18). The responses to this question did not correlate with any other question but did reflect a range of views, which may again indicate a range of teachers' experiences.

Fig 18

29 - Our students cannot engage with extra-curricular activities because of other demands on their time (work, caring responsibilities etc.)



(34 responses. Mean=3.24 (SD 1.03))

5.7 Culture

Implicit in these discussions and findings are issues of culture and cultural capital, issues that a number of teachers in the qualitative phase referred to explicitly. In particular, teachers identified that students from low participation backgrounds were less likely to have engaged in activities, which would have improved their application and made them more ready for transition, because of a lack of opportunity or encouragement or because it was not culturally normative. One teacher who had moved from a school with a non-traditional university going population to a fee paying school reflected;

“My last school – they didn’t do anything, they had no hobbies, it was like so what do you do? What sort of, you know, talk to me about something you’ve organised and they’re like - you what? Like, what hobbies have you got? Are you in a team? Err no! So what do you do of an evening? I just sit on Facebook or play on the Xbox! Or hang around with the lads outside the shop and that literally was what most of them did. Whereas here we almost have to tell them to calm down a bit and stop trying to do everything, it’s not possible.”

Others reflected on the fact that student perceptions of universities could be a cultural barrier – if students believed they would not fit into an institution because it drew mainly from traditional populations or because they lacked confidence in themselves, they would not apply there.

“Mind you, some of the students here, I think said “I can’t imagine myself at [named universities].” “I just can’t imagine myself there,” they say, so you know. It is quite a divide actually, it’s almost like it’s an ‘other world’ do you know what I mean where you just can’t, it’s impenetrable. I don’t know if it’s a barrier or if they’re doing the right thing but they do have visions of where they can and can’t see themselves fitting.”

“And “I’m not going to get into any of these universities, no-one will accept me” or “they will but I’m not going to get the grades” and it’s just carries on.”

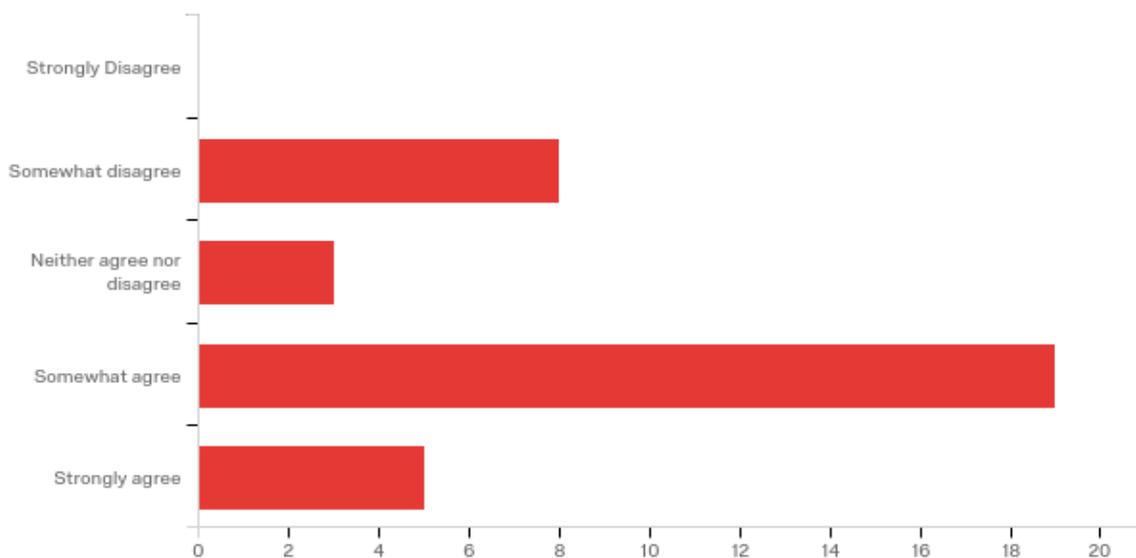
All of which suggests that many students may limit their ambitions and will be less well prepared for university as a result of cultural assumptions, low self-confidence and an environment that does not easily provide opportunities for development.

When considered alongside the other evidence, it is clear that the teachers in the qualitative phase of the study believe that student preparation and ambition can be undermined not only by clear barriers, such as finance but also by psychological mindset, resilience, skills acquisition, culture, family attitudes and circumstances and approaches to learning.

As we have already seen, much of this is implicit in the quantitative data and it was supported on further questions, with the majority of respondents indicating that they believed their students may be impeded by their limited life experience (Fig 19).

Fig 19

31 - Our students' success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience



(35 responses. Mean = 3.6 (SD 0.99))

Correlations suggest that teachers who agreed with this statement also believed that their students find self-reflection difficult (Q36) ($r_s(31) = .377, p = 0.031$) and that they do not have good life skills (Q33) ($r_s(30) = -.398, p = 0.024$).

All of which suggests that, according to participants, many students are facing interlinked barriers in which poor acculturation, an inability to visualise the future, lack of parental engagement and parental concerns about financial cost, poor self-reflection, limited life experiences, a lack of active learning, poor insight into what might help and problems with the application process, combine to increase the difficulty of transition to university.

However, for other students with more engaged parents, better active learning behaviour and fuller life experiences the process of transition may be easier, but from the point of view of the participants in this study, the process is still one that they find emotionally and practically difficult.

6. Current activity

Teachers in the qualitative phase described a wide array of interventions, activities and strategies that were taking place in their school to help students apply for and prepare for university. There was little consistency in how schools approached this and some significant differences depending on the type and size of school/college. Some schools were able to describe a significant amount of work, whilst others were inhibited by barriers such as time, resources or knowledge. As a result of this lack of consensus, only two quantitative questions emerged and were included on the final questionnaire.

6.1 Differences in schools

There were a number of reflections on the differences created by whether a student was attending a secondary school, large sixth form college, fee paying school or FE college. In particular, teachers reflected on the influence that the size of a school can have.

“At my last school, my sociology was 25 - your average, you know and you can't possibly go round and help everybody individually and if you've got like a group of 5 or something here um. I think the biggest A-level class size is 10 or something, which is phenomenal.”

Alternatively, teachers in FE colleges were clearly of the opinion that their students were more able to develop the kind of independence necessary to successfully transition to university. They expressed the view that the greater level of freedom and autonomy their students had, enabled them to develop time management and prioritising skills and to become more mature. They also believed that the transitional experience of moving to college from school, in a supported, safe environment gave students the confidence that they could successfully move to university.

“So that’s why I think college is a really good stop gap between here, doing whatever you’re doing and A levels, and university because you’ve already done... you feel quite independent, you feel quite grown up and I say to them “you know, once you’re going to university this is a stop gap, so it feels like just a year before university, so it feels like university.”

“If they have any apprehension about whether they would make friends, they did make friends already in the last two years rather than being at the same school for you know, seven or eight years, so I think you could at least draw on that, even if they don’t believe that, you can remind them.”

There were, however, also differences that only emerged through the analysis of the transcripts. In particular, there was a clear disparity, between different types of schools, in terms of the opportunities and resources they had to positively impact on the preparation and development of their students. For instance, there were clear differences in the availability of emotional support. One school was able to refer to a recent development in which an external expert had been brought in to help students improve their ability to resolve conflict in relationships.

T1: “So Relate came in to deliver it. We didn’t actually sit in with them because we felt that it was more important that they were open. But the feedback was excellent.” T2: “Phenomenal, they immediately said can we get her back? Let’s get her back. But then they were talking about what do you look for in a relationship, you know warning signs almost again I’m guessing

this is what they did because that's what... they got as far as issues about gender identity and things like that.”

Whilst another school made reference to emotional support being cut.

“We had a school counsellor but we haven't got funding for that anymore.”

This disparity effected the spread of life skills development that schools were able to address. This was partly an issue of resources but also an issue of time, especially for those schools who struggled to get students to engage with extra-curricular activity because they had external responsibilities. Some schools were able to describe substantive programmes of support and personal development on areas such as cooking, self-management, budgeting and time management, while other schools indicated that they simply were unable to address topics as wide as this, even though the teachers interviewed could see potential benefits.

T1: “We teach them to cook, don't we?” T2: “We do... so we offer them currently in upper sixth but we are looking at doing it in lower sixth as well – this truly educated scheme where we are delivering some PSHU things aren't we? So it's sort of skills that they won't otherwise get and part of that is this cooking on a budget which they do, so they spend 4-6 weeks doing different things that they can take to university, really easy things and then the lady that teaches them gives them a little recipe booklet that they can take away with them.”

“But as far as the cooking and the cleaning and the ironing and things, we've really thought about trying to incorporate that but time is an issue. We've got one hour a week. Um, where it's PHSE, so it's – we've only got that one hour a week to do it because otherwise we're never going to have time all together, unless it's after school and then they've got work commitments et cetera. So time and resource really is a huge issue there. But something like that we feel would be brilliant.”

6.2 Barriers and pressure

Time and resources appeared in a number of the transcripts as potential barriers to student preparation for university, but teachers also referenced the pressure to ensure students were achieving good grades as potentially problematic. This appeared to describe a view in which limited time and resource had to be mainly focussed on student achievement at A Level or on gaining a university place, as these were the criteria on which schools and teachers would be judged. Put in this way, preparing students to be successful once they went to university was a secondary concern – although still one to which the individual teachers in the study attached a great deal of importance.

“I think we are giving them, slowly giving them independence but because we are a results based organization... [we can't risk giving them independence too quickly].”

This was coupled with the problems referenced in earlier sections, relating to the difficulty of getting some students to engage in something that isn't immediately important. This combination of time, resource and the lower importance attached to the issue by the institution and its students, appears as one intertwined barrier preventing good preparation, despite the expressed best intentions of teachers.

“So all your A-levels have 5 hours a week, so if you are doing 3 that's 15. So then you've got home study and other things, yep. We take an hour to do their tutor period. We do like an hour to do their enrichment and things like that but it's difficult to get them to see the value of other things like we've said...”

“Time is always a factor but also the up and down nature of the tutorials because they do not want to take them... the curriculum get very annoyed at you if you take them out of lessons,” so it needs to be tutorial time and everybody's got tutorial time, it's so difficult, we'd like to collect them altogether in a big hall and have one big talk and that would be fine, it's so hard.”

“We’re also preparing students for work as well. So we’re trying to do quite a lot of things.”

However, as discussed in section 6.1, there were some clear differences in the size of the barriers teachers faced dependent on the nature of their school or college. For instance, one teacher at a fee paying school reported.

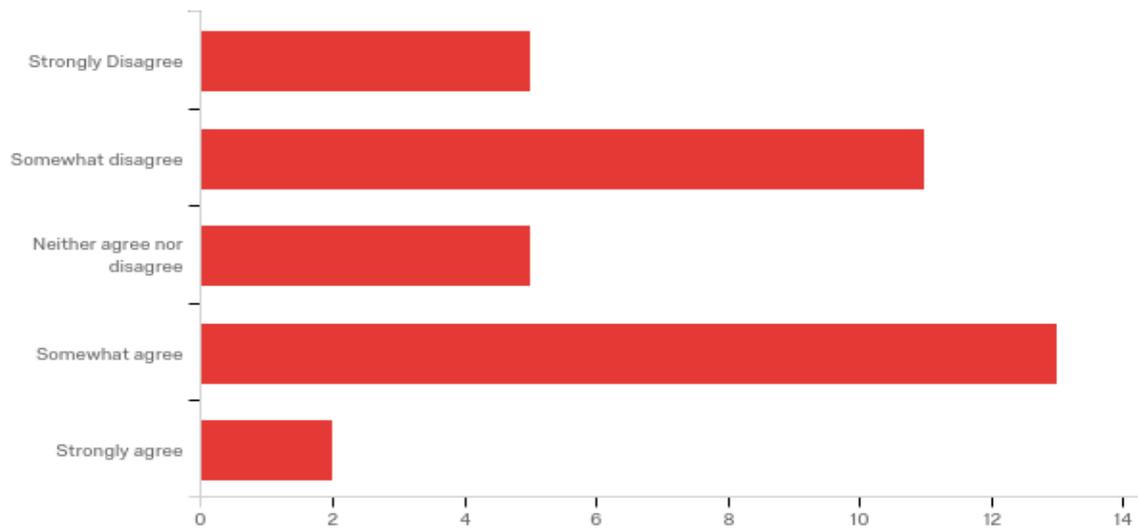
“Yeah, we’re very, very lucky here er in the state sector you constantly would be like well when the hell are we supposed to do this? When’s that going to happen! When we’ve got this, that and then the other to do all the time, we’ve got to show evidence of all of these things – we are very, very lucky here, yeah because and also we are given, we are trusted by the powers that be to get on with it and there’s not this constant scrutiny – well what about this? You know, they do trust us to get on, don’t they and we’re given a largely blank, within reason, a blank cheque to do what we need to do. I mean it helps the fact that we are, between us, very experienced and we do know what we are doing but we don’t take it for granted that we will just be allowed to do it um but er barriers are there to be removed.”

This difference in opinion or experience was reflected in the responses to a question in the quantitative phase (Fig 20). This suggests that while some teachers may be finding it difficult to find the time to address student needs, others are not encountering this problem in the same way. However, it may also be that these differences are a reflection of differing staff roles.

A Mann-Whitney U indicated a significant difference on this questions between ‘Head teachers and Management’ who were more likely to believe they had enough time and ‘Subject Teachers’ ($U(2)= 43, z= -2.021, p=.043$) who were more likely to believe they did not.

Fig 20

25 - We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university



(36 responses. Mean=2.89 (SD 1.2))

Thematic correlations suggest that teachers who do believe they have enough time, also believe that teachers in their schools are well trained (Q32) ($r_s(31) = -.563, p = 0.001$) and that their students are independent learners (Q28) ($r_s(31) = -.442, p = 0.01$).

6.3 The role of teachers in preparing students for university

The transcripts reveal a recognition, on the part of the teachers interviewed, of the importance of good preparation for university and a desire on the part of many to be able to do more. In focus groups, where a number of teachers were present, there were often conversations between them about what they might do better and what more they would like to do. These teachers clearly indicated that they wanted their students to do well, be ambitious and enjoy their time at university. At no point did any teacher suggest that preparing students for the transition to H.E. was not or should not be part of their role. Rather they felt that external barriers prevented them from doing more.

However, teachers did acknowledge that they (or some of their colleagues) may not have all of the skills or knowledge that may help them to support students better. In particular, this centred on two issues, responding to student stress and maintaining

an up to date knowledge of the university sector. A number of teachers reflected on the fact that they were seeing an increase in the level of stress and distress within their student population (see 5.4). In some schools this was occurring alongside reductions in other forms of support, such as counselling. Teachers felt that sometimes this need could not be met by them or by colleagues, as well as they would like, because of a lack of time, skills or insight.

“You know we are not trained to deal with that stress um that’s not something you go to – you get taught at college, teacher training or whatever.”

“It was difficult before then to be honest, because we used to get the teachers to do that role and for the teachers they saw that as a very peripheral part of their job; they were focussed on teaching, their subject etc. and we found that in the vocational areas they were better than the academic areas, but certainly for the GCSE and A level staff they didn’t want to be doing it which was a real shame, but for some of them they probably shouldn’t have been doing it because they didn’t have that skill set to be able to do it, so you had quite vulnerable learners that were coming to them but because they didn’t have that ability, those learners were falling through the net.”

The teachers in the interview also reflected upon the fact that the university sector seems to be constantly changing and that maintaining an accurate understanding was difficult. This was posed as a potential difficulty for a number of reasons. First because students tended to listen to subject teacher accounts of university as an accurate reflection to what they might experience, despite the fact that these versions were often very out of date.

“Yes they’re in their 60’s and... it was 1964 when they were there...”

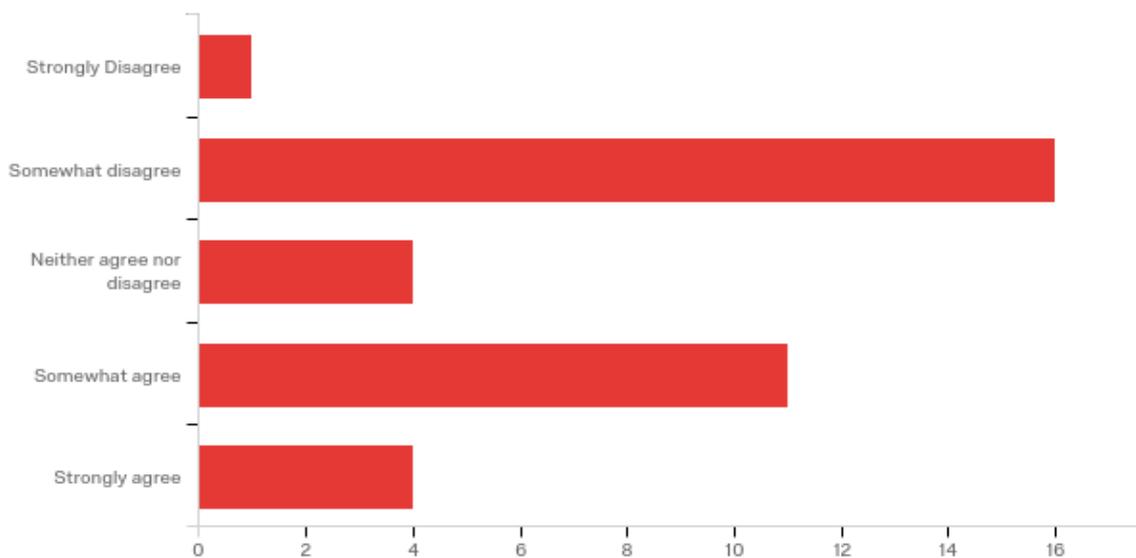
Secondly, those actively involved in helping to prepare students for university had to undertake considerable research in order to provide accurate guidance.

“Definitely the up to date information regarding finance, because obviously that changes quite frequently it is really difficult to keep up.”

A quantitative question on this topic revealed broad disagreement, with slightly more teachers suggesting that they do not believe teachers in their schools have the training and understanding they need (Fig 21).

Fig 21

32 - The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university



(36 responses. Mean=3.03 (SD 1.14))

There were no insights from the thematic correlations that might help to illuminate why there is this difference in opinion or experience. However, were this result to be reflected in a larger sample size, even a split response like this would be of concern. If even a small majority of teachers (or large minority), believe that they and their colleagues do not have the training or understanding to be able to support their students, this has clear and worrying implications for anyone who is concerned that students receive good preparation for university. That said, it should be acknowledged again that this sample size is small – although the qualitative and quantitative phases are reporting the same belief.

6.4 Supporting students to apply for university

A significant proportion of the transcripts is given over to describing the role, that teachers occupy, in helping their students to research their options and complete good applications to university. Indeed when asked to describe the support that they give students to help them prepare for university, most began by discussing the support they give to help students apply. This suggests that much of the focus of available teacher support is directed towards the application process. Again, teachers were clear in pointing to time pressures that required this focus – work on researching universities and completing UCAS forms has to be completed by a specific date and many students appeared to need a lot of help. As a result, it was clear, that many of the teachers in the study were investing a significant amount of time in helping students with this work.

“So preparing students for university; we do personal statement workshops and personal statement writing with them and this goes on from the end of year twelve through to year thirteen. We have an internal deadline which is actually this Friday – for personal statements and UCAS Applications as well.”

“I think initially in preparing them for university it’s actually the application, so it’s about preparing them to be ready to apply.”

“Yes. There are a lot of students. So October half term they should have finished UCAS... and then it goes off to be checked internally and then it goes back to them, if there’s anything missing or anything wrong. We write references for them. We write subject references and give them predicted grades, we negotiate with them on predicted grades, so as long as it’s possible and they’re working hard, we’ll predict them as high as possible.”

It would appear that this work begins with raising university as a potential option for students and helping them to explore what this would mean. Then moving them from vague aspirations and thoughts towards concrete decisions on courses and universities, by helping them to understand the multiple options they confront and what they want for themselves. Then finally, teachers support students to complete their applications to a sufficiently high standard and respond to offers or rejections.

All of this appears to take significant effort, as many students do not fully engage with this process without ongoing prompting and encouragement and many appear to lack key skills, (as was discussed in section 5).

“Getting them to realise the importance of completing uh- completing the process of applying to university - so looking at the courses, because I think they think “Oh I just want to go into something with animals” and I think they thinks that’s okay. But obviously looking at the courses um, like, the personal statement – completing it to a high standard – it’s not just a job application, they can’t just send a piece of paper – it’s got to be- you know – really to a certain... pro forma.”

“We have the same um errors over and over again with applications so they’ve not put, so they’ve put the year that they go to school wrong, so they’ve only put in that they come to XXX Sixth Form when they used to come here as a school, so then it won’t let them enter GCSE’s so then they just give up and say it doesn’t work, the system doesn’t work. So I almost feel like as the leader of the process I end up doing it 90 times (laughs) rather than just overseeing it at the end, I just end up sitting and doing.”

“Getting them to finish that is difficult, getting them to finish their personal statement is difficult.”

Some of this initial work formed part of their career and progression planning, during which teachers described work to encourage students to self-reflect and consider future options.

“Normally we start talking about progression routes as soon as they start first year, which probably scares a lot of them because they’ve literally just come from a nice warm environment of high school and suddenly they’ve got to think about what they’re going to do in two years’ time, but it is kicking it in early so they have a chance to go to open days, they have a chance to research, they have a chance to do work experience so they .. you know, they’ve got all that in the first year because as soon as they come back in the

second year it's almost straight into like.. is it an apprenticeship? A job? Is it UCAS? Is it a mixture of the lot? And sort of like trying to give them as much as a head start because I think in earlier years, it's been known, that may be a month or two too late and now we realise that we sort of need to have their eyes open a lot earlier.”

This work is supplemented with specific training to help students understand the need to acquire a broader experience and develop key skills, such as interview techniques and public speaking.

“Enrichment on Tuesday afternoon which is giving them the opportunity to do something completely different, so we do sign language, conversational Spanish, yoga – things that they could then say in their personal statement.”

“Preparing them for their working life, maybe looking over CV's, getting them to improve that, interview skills.”

“So it's even when they first come to sixth form in their sixth form interview; talking to them, because we've just started doing them now with year 11, so talking to them about the fact that they are going to need extra-curricular things to show the universities look we are a good student, talking to them about the fact that these are the subjects you have chosen, ok well do you want to go on and do something?”

6.5 Engagement with universities

There were examples, in all of the transcripts of current engagement between schools and universities and work teachers were doing, to use this engagement to help students make better choices and be more prepared for university. This operated in a number of ways. The most common references were to workshops provided by universities into schools and to university open days and visits to universities.

Workshops that were provided by universities were viewed by most teachers as effective ways of delivering key messages to students. Teachers believed that

students were more likely to pay attention to visiting speakers, as they would be viewed as having more accurate knowledge and better understanding of the university environment.

“They tend to take, for some reason, are more focussed when it’s someone that they’re not used to, it’s a guest speaker and they are more tuned in... if it’s someone from a university they might be like, “Oh right... that person’s at university”. It might motivate them.”

“We’ve had universities come in and are coming into speak to students regarding student union and what they do and the support they can give – um, the universities have done workshops about the different types of support and where you can go for that.”

“We’ve actually got [named university] coming in to do some sessions on surviving university.”

A number of teachers made specific reference to the potentially motivating effect of having university students address their classes. They suggested that being able to see other students, who were like them, helped school students to more easily visualise their transition to university. This means that the more like them the student was, the more motivating the effect.

“One of the students that came was an ex [from same school] student and she said that at the beginning, so I think that may be helped as well yes, it was like “she’s one of us, oh she’s gone there” I think it did help because they could relate to her.”

Open Days and visits were often described by teachers as crucial in ensuring students were making good choices. Teachers and schools discussed the ways in which they arranged visits to universities or facilitated students to attend Open Days. Within the transcripts are numerous examples of teachers encouraging students to use these opportunities to increase their understanding and familiarity with their potential universities.

“We are already coming to this session, I think that is really good for us and because we can take them actually to the university they almost take it more seriously – it isn’t just me standing in front of them again, telling them something else. They are coming to that environment to sort of learn about it, it’s really important. They take, it makes it much more serious for them, it makes it much more real.”

“After half term, February the 25th and March 3rd we are coming to [named university] to do study skills for the morning. We’re coming to do the university experience day and then they are going to talk to them a little bit about study skills, research and I think we are having a tour of the library and a talk in the library as well.”

“They are thoroughly encouraged to go on open days aren’t they, we took them to [named university] last year, [named university] this year um maybe [named university] next year, we’ll see, you know. They are thoroughly encouraged to go on open days.”

In addition to these day long visits, a number of universities also referenced university residential events, which some of their students had attended. Teachers were highly complementary about the impact that these events had on those who attended.

“And something that we did last year and we found really good was [named university] did a residential trip for our students. Uh, and we really promote that. Um and the group of students that went on to that last year – we had three- uh, no – yeah three nights, four days at [named university] as a student and stayed there and that was brilliant and worked really well... they found it really useful, really good, to actually experience exactly what it’d be like, it was great.”

“...a residential stay and we would stay with them, we stayed at [named university] and it was like “learning how to be a student” and you had certain a

budget and you went shopping to see what you got out of that, could you cook? You know you had like a whole task at the end of it, so it was really good so yes that side of it worked quite well.”

However, persuading students to take part in these residential events seemed to be challenging. Teachers suggested that a variety of explanations for this, including fear and an inability to recognise the benefit it would bring. Some teachers also suggested that cost may be a barrier, but poor recruitment also seemed to be an issue, even when the event was free to attend.

“I mean, some our students accessed the residential, the four – but the rest of them didn’t and I think again that was nerves, really.”

T4: “Residential opportunities would be good. We did one this year didn’t we?” T5: “I did one it nearly killed us, didn’t it? It was hard work getting it off the ground... It was [named university] and it was trying to get students to go and trying to get them to pay... Ah... We had a nightmare because I’d booked loads of places and I thought, “Yes they’ll love it” and I couldn’t fill them and it’s like – ohh...”

Finally, despite this engagement between universities and schools, there were one or two comments suggesting that students would benefit from close contact between teachers and university academics. Teachers suggested that if there was more of a dialogue between the two professions, then the gap between school and university might be narrowed.

“I mean I look at it from creative industries I suppose but I mean one of the things that I felt was that, you know, there’s greater opportunity for a kind of collaboration with universities really and it’s very difficult to establish that. There’s a reluctance to kind of, you know, on one level it’s “you know I’ve got a lot of teaching to do so I’m very busy” but on the other hand, they actually want learners who are prepared, you know there’s a lot complain, “well actually they’re not very able to cope with what I’m doing”, yet on the other hand, you know there’s a lack of kind of response to “let’s get together and

let's get your learners over here", you know.. I've been recently to talk to some of the arts staff at [named university] and you know, we're trying to do those kinds of things and I know some of my learners will go to [named university] and they do portfolio reviews with staff and with learners. And they benefit a lot from that."

7. What might help

There was no clear agreement in the transcripts about what interventions or support might be most helpful in improving the preparation of sixth form students for university. Suggestions often referenced previous discussions within each focus group and so varied across different types of schools and colleges. However, individual teachers did offer a significant number of thoughts about things which they believed should be considered.

7.1 Tasks and proactive exercises work better than information

A number of teachers suggested that their students find it easier to absorb information through proactive tasks, rather than simply being supplied with information. Working through activity, teachers believed, made it easier for students to accurately understand what university life would be like.

"...work it out for themselves." T1: "Yes. Rather than just being told "when you go to university it'll be like this..." T2: "I don't think you can picture it as well if you're just being told- you need to sort of- " T1: "Yeah – so, so the provision of those kind of more practical tasks is more helpful than just flat information." T2: "Yes. Yeah."

7.2 Accurate, easy to find information is still important

However, staff also stressed the importance of making it easy for students and teachers to find the information that they needed easily. There were some requests for a single, national website that contained accurate, up to date information on things like finances etc. Without such a facility, teachers believed, students, who are under-researching, may well not find the information that they need.

“But to be honest, somewhere where information, is just central. So whether it’s the UCAS information updated, whether it’s up to date student finance information, everything. If it could just be central. Would be brilliant. Anything like that would be great. Um, yeah – like the university information, student finance, the UCAS website information... It’s just about getting it all together because half the time, you spend so much time trawling through the different websites and there’s a website about university open days ,so you’re looking on that, you’re looking on student finance, you’re looking on... so you see you sort of get a bit mixed up sometimes. And up to date information because that they issue because you’re looking at something and the date at the bottom says 2013 – so the up to date information, but in one place.”

7.3 Visiting speakers engage interest

As was referenced in section 6, a number of teachers suggested that students seem to pay more attention to visiting speakers. They particularly engage with students – even more so if the students seem to be like them. However, there was a note of caution from some teachers about the type of students who take on the ambassador role and the overly positive image they can present. Teachers in general believed it was more useful if their students had realistic but generally upbeat descriptions of university life.

7.4 Pre-entry contact with staff and students helps

In line with 7.3, teachers also believed that students felt more confident about their choices and about going to university generally, if they’d had the opportunity to interact with programme staff and students from their prospective university. Teachers described this as an opportunity to really engage with the ‘nitty gritty’ of the reality of studying on a particular course or in a particular location.

“The only way we could help more is maybe finding out more like as you said from another student, what the real issues are and then may be getting that student to tell, prepare them because we don’t know do we? I just went and

got on with it and I remember it was stressful but you just expect that don't you?"

7.5 Help to visualise

One idea that developed within the discussions was a 'day in the life' type video to help students visualise the reality of university life. In general, staff seemed to suggest that anything that could help students, more clearly, understand what it would be like to be a university student, would be of real benefit.

"[Anything] regarding the more social skills and perhaps university life, and anything like that would be great. Perhaps like a 'typical day in the life of a student.'

7.6 Help to complete personal statements

There were a significant number of requests for new interventions to better support students complete their personal statements well and with confidence. While some schools reported using templates, others were wary of this approach as different courses and universities took different approaches to assessing statements. Underpinning all of this was a desire for an intervention that could help students self-reflect and motivate them to engage with their personal statement at an early stage. Some teachers suggested workshops but there were also requests for a more sophisticated reference tool that teachers could supply to their students.

"For us it would be personal statements, so hard copy wise, a guide to personal statements would be absolutely fantastic, we've produced something ourselves but we've been using it for a number of years and it probably does need updating."

7.7 Taster classes

To address the difficulties some students experience with academic integration, some teachers suggested taster classes or lectures. Teachers hope that this might

provide students with the opportunity to switch their expectations and prepare themselves for a different type of learning

“University style lectures so they can get a feel of what a lecture is.”

7.8 Resilience and self-management

There were some specific requests for workshops \ resources that would help students develop their resilience, manage stress more effectively and overcome adversity. Teachers also believed that finding ways to improve student confidence would help them become more ambitious and more ready for university. Some of these suggestions referred specifically to improving the ways in which students are supported during the challenges of the application process, while some were more generic, suggesting a focus on improving students overall ability to manage themselves and their emotions. These suggestions tied into others that related to life management skills, such as time management.

“I think I’d like to see something on raising aspirations and role models, so for some of ours, again it links back to the idea of self-efficacy, they won’t have a go at it or they’ll go for second best instead of really aiming quite high and it’s almost for them to say actually, “it is achievable and this is why it’s achievable because there are these grants, there’s loans, dah, dah, dah” but then secondly maybe have some role models who say “look I came through it, I had a tough time but I’ve come out the other end and the way I did it was by doing this”.”

“If you could think of any way to teach time management that would be really helpful as well.”

7.9 Relationships

Finally, some teachers requested support to help their students manage conflict, criticism and relationships generally. This seemed to specifically focus on issues that teachers were encountering within their student groups.

“I think dealing with conflict actually now you’ve touched on that, would be really useful because we, Ann and I this week have been inundated with students falling out. Yes and it’s over silly things and it’s almost... they don’t know how to deal with conflict so sometimes they’ll be a bit over zealous and that obviously has a fall out then as well, so I think dealing with conflict, “if you don’t agree with somebody or if you are experiencing issues, this is how to handle it as an adult” because we get one or two responses, we get people bury their head in the sand and don’t attend or won’t come in or we get people who over react and start bullying another individual or something like that, so I think it’s really teaching them how to deal with difficult and uneasy situations would be quite helpful maybe.”

7.10 Quantitative questions

To attempt to clarify which interventions teachers would most value, five example interventions were listed in the questionnaire and teachers were asked to rate how helpful they would find each one on a five point scale running from extremely useless to extremely helpful.

The five interventions were

1. A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management
2. Audio podcasts that could be downloaded by teachers and students that discuss different challenges students face at university and how to manage them well
3. Online text information that details the steps students can take to prepare for university covering academic skills, life skills, social skills and emotional skills
4. Video excerpts showing student dilemmas at university, with a suggested lesson plan that teachers can follow to encourage discussion and debate, to help students visualise university life

5. Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period

All five example interventions were rated as useful to extremely useful overall. This in itself suggests that there is an appetite for further support on the part of 6th form teachers but mirrors the lack of clarity in the focus groups about what exactly is needed.

There were some small differences in the ratings given to each intervention, with training for teachers received the highest rating and audio podcasts the lowest (Fig 22). However, because these are small differences they provide little certainty for planning purposes. It may be that this reflects an error in research design and that this question may have produced more helpful data if teachers had also been asked to arrange the options in order of preference.

Fig 22

| Intervention | Mean (1=extremely useless. 5=extremely helpful) |
|--------------------------|--|
| Training for teachers | 4.47 |
| Time management workshop | 4.44 |
| Videos with lesson plan | 4.44 |
| Online text information | 4.31 |
| Audio podcasts | 4.04 |

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Despite the fact that there were some differences in accounts between different types of school, some significant commonalities emerged from the transcripts and the quantitative feedback, in relation to the role teachers are playing in preparing their students, what they would like their role to be, how well prepared they believe students currently are for university and what the barriers and aid to preparation are.

The teachers in the study clearly believed that they had an important role to play in preparing their students for university. Much of this role is currently focussed on career planning, promoting university, helping students make choices and supporting

them through the application process. While some work is taking place to help students develop personally and academically, most teachers in the focus groups indicated that they would like to be able to do more in this area and the quantitative data largely echoed these desires.

There were broad agreements that many students were not as prepared for university as teachers would like. All the schools in the study indicated that they were concerned about the personal growth and emotional resilience of their students. Focus group participants, whose students are, in the main, from non-traditional university going backgrounds also indicated cultural barriers. Although the demographic data, in the quantitative phase, did not produce any correlations to support this view, there were a number of concerns that appeared to be linked that suggest this lack of correlation may be due to the low number of participants. Thematic correlations seem to suggest that some phenomenon do seem to occur together, e.g. low family engagement, concerns about tuition fees, lack of active learning behaviour and less willingness to leave the local area.

Teachers in both phases of the research also indicated concerns that many of their students were unable to visualise the future or prioritise beyond immediate concerns and this was undermining planning and preparation.

Academic concerns were not shared by all schools, although some indicated that they believed many of their students would struggle to integrate academically into higher education.

Teachers in the qualitative phase identified time, resources, culture and current student attitudes and behaviours as barriers to their ability to do more to prepare their students. However, the feedback in the quantitative phase was more mixed with some teachers indicating that they believe they had the time and training to support students to prepare for transition.

All teachers, in both phases of the research, indicated that students found the process of applying for university emotionally and practically difficult and that this is demanding significant amounts of staff attention.

Out of the 22 quantitative questions that addressed themes that arose in the focus groups, concerning Students and Current Activity, 21 found a level of general agreement between the participants in both phases of the study. One question, concerning whether or not students understood different types of university, found a difference between the quantitative and qualitative participants.

This high level of agreement suggests that the experiences reported by the teachers, in the qualitative phase, are a reasonable reflection of the experiences of many other 6th form teachers and are therefore worthy of further consideration. However, it should be noted that most questions also had a minority of teachers expressing disagreement, suggesting that these experiences are not uniform throughout the education sector. This is unsurprising given the high degree of variety in terms of schools, students and teaching roles.

However, this also means that those questions where there was a higher degree of consensus are deserving of further attention. The apparent concern teachers express about students' ability to complete their UCAS application, self-reflect, visualize the future and manage their emotions during the application phase seem worthy of particular focus.

Although there was a level of uniformity about a number of the problems teachers are encountering, no clear picture emerged as to what teacher's would find most helpful. All of the suggestions in the questionnaire were rated as useful to extremely useful, with little differentiation between them. This lack probably reflects the fact that many teachers are themselves struggling to find answers to these problems and indicates an appetite for more support.

Given the low response level to the quantitative questionnaire, more research is still needed in this area. In particular, more responses are needed from a wider range of schools to allow for clearer correlations to emerge or for confidence that such correlations don't exist. Benefit would also be gained from providing teachers with a range of interventions and asking them to arrange them in order of what they believe would be most useful, to help differentiate between the options.

However, the findings also point towards steps that could now be taken to help ensure students are better prepared for university.

1. Providing training to teachers to help them respond appropriately to the difficulties students are experiencing in applying for university. Even those teachers who believed they received enough training expressed an appetite for more assistance with this. Training that helped teachers respond to high emotional arousal, build self-reflection skills and helped students visualize the future could have a significant impact.
2. Providing clear online text information for teachers and students to help them understand universities as they are now, the life skills students will need to be successful and ways to develop these skills in advance of coming to university would help provide some apparently much needed clarity and certainty
3. Creating videos for use in the classroom with relevant lesson plans, that help students engage with the reality of student life at a deeper psychological and practical level, may help improve student visualisation and planning and create more flexible and robust expectations
4. Given the finding, that many of the barriers that students face are cultural and psychological, educational liaison work between universities and schools should include elements of psycho-education to help raise motivation, visualisation and confidence and to challenge these cultural narratives and psychological mind-sets
5. Interventions that assist 6th form students to move away from exclusively short term thinking and grade acquisition would also be beneficial, as would work that raises student confidence and competence around life skills such as time management, budgeting, cooking etc.
6. Given that many of the barriers described by teachers appear to be maintained by the current education system, further debate is needed to address the feelings expressed by participants that schooling has moved too far away from learning towards grade acquisition and that this is undermining the development and resilience of our students

7. As research elsewhere has shown that, for interventions to be successful, messages must be embedded long term, resources should be supplied for teachers to use within classrooms, on an ongoing basis to help their students prepare and preparing students personally for life beyond school should be recognised as an important function and given appropriate time and resource

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APPENDIX 1

Copy of question set for quantitative element of the research

1. Please identify what type of school \ institution you work in – tick all that apply (you can tick more than one)

General FE College 6th Form College State Secondary School 6th Form

Independent School 6th Form Fee-Paying Non Fee-Paying

Other

If Other, please specify

2. Please give a rough estimate of how many students attend your sixth form or college. *Please note this is not your entire student population, but the current number of students enrolled in sixth form \ FE courses.

Please circle/tick the answer that is the closest estimate:

Under 50 Students About 100 About 200 About 400 About 800
About 1000 About 2000 About 3000 About 4000

If you wish to specify please do so in the space below:

3. Does the local authority in your school's area consider the area 'deprived'?

Is your school Co-Ed/Mixed, All boys or All Girls?

Co-ed

Boys

Girls

5. Are the majority of your students from traditional university going populations or non-traditional university going populations?

Traditional university going

Non-traditional university going

An even mix

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree, **in general**, with the following statements about the students in your current school. (Answers will be measured on a Likert type scale of 1-5 indicating a range from agree strongly to disagree strongly)

1. When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area
2. Our students find it difficult to complete the personal statement on the UCAS form
3. Our students engage with wider reading and independent learning without much persuasion
4. Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university
5. Our students find it difficult or don't want to think about things that are not an immediate priority
6. Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade
7. Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging
8. Many of the parents of our students worry that their children should not go to university because it is too expensive
9. Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so

10. Our students find it difficult to accurately visualise what life at university will be like
11. Our students and their parents put teachers under pressure to give them higher predicted grades
12. We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university
13. Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend
14. Our students are independent learners
15. Our students cannot engage with extra-curricular activities because of other demands on their time (work, caring responsibilities etc.)
16. The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university
17. Our students success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience
18. The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university
19. Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time
20. Our students would not do well in universities where there are few other students who are like them
21. Our students are emotionally resilient

22. Our students find self-reflection difficult

As part of our research we would like to develop some resources that would be useful to teachers and students in preparing for the transition to university. Please indicate how helpful you believe the following resources might be. (Answers will be measured on a Likert type scale of 1-5 indicating a range from very helpful to not at all helpful)

1. A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management
2. Audio podcasts that could be downloaded by teachers and students that discuss different challenges students face at university and how to manage them well
3. Online text information that details the steps students can take to prepare for university covering academic skills, life skills, social skills and emotional skills
4. Video excerpts showing student dilemmas at university, with a suggested lesson plan that teachers can follow to encourage discussion and debate, to help students visualise university life
5. Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period

Appendix 2

NEMCON Survey raw data

Q2 - Please identify what type of school/institution you work in - select all that apply
(you can select between 1 and 3 answers)

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | General FE College | 39.47% | 15 |
| 2 | 6th Form College | 28.95% | 11 |
| 3 | State Secondary School 6th Form | 31.58% | 12 |
| 4 | Independent School 6th Form | 2.63% | 1 |
| 5 | Fee-Paying | 0.00% | 0 |
| 6 | Non Fee-Paying | 0.00% | 0 |
| 7 | Other | 5.26% | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 38 |

Q5 - Please give a rough estimate of how many students attend your sixth form or college.

***Please note this is not your entire student population, but the current number of students enrolled in sixth form \ FE courses.**

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Under 50 Students | 5.26% | 2 |
| 2 | About 100 Students | 5.26% | 2 |
| 3 | About 200 Students | 26.32% | 10 |
| 4 | About 400 Students | 15.79% | 6 |
| 5 | About 800 Students | 5.26% | 2 |
| 6 | About 1000 Students | 5.26% | 2 |
| 7 | About 2000 Students | 10.53% | 4 |
| 8 | About 3000 Students | 7.89% | 3 |
| 9 | About 4000 Students | 18.42% | 7 |
| | Total | 100% | 38 |

| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Please give a rough estimate of how many students attend your sixth form or college. *Please note this is not your entire student population, but the current number of students enrolled in sixth form \ FE courses. | 1.00 | 9.00 | 5.18 | 2.57 | 6.62 | 38 | 36.84% | 36.84% |

Q6 - If you wish to specify the number, or you feel the question above does not represent your institution, please write your estimation below:

If you wish to specify the number, or you feel the question above does not...

6000

6000

40

260

280

320

Q7 - 3. Does the local authority in your institution's area consider the area 'deprived'?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Yes | 35.14% | 13 |
| 2 | Unsure | 24.32% | 9 |
| 3 | No | 40.54% | 15 |
| | Total | 100% | 37 |

Q8 - Is your school/college Co-Ed/Mixed, All Boys or All Girls?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-----------|---------|-------|
| 1 | Mixed | 100.00% | 37 |
| 2 | All Boys | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | All Girls | 0.00% | 0 |
| | Total | 100% | 37 |

| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Is your school/college Co-Ed/Mixed, All Boys or All Girls? | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 37 | 100.00% | 100.00% |

Q9 - Are the majority of your students from traditional university going populations or non-traditional university going populations?

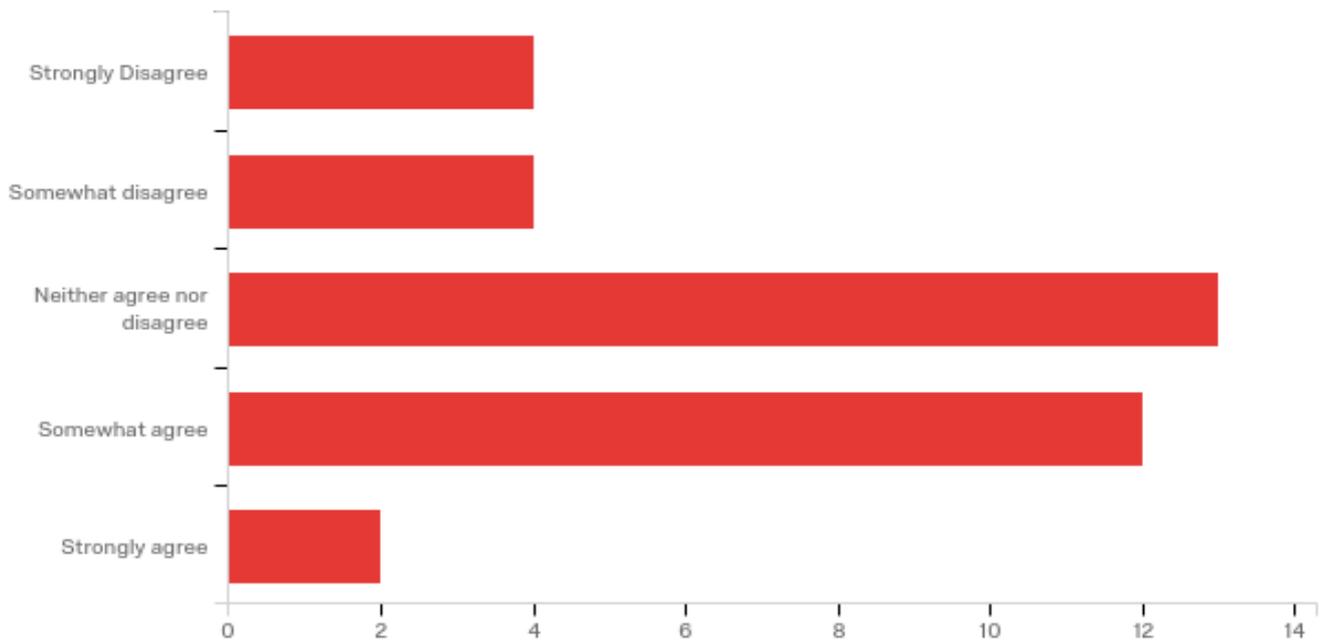
| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Traditional university going | 8.11% | 3 |
| 2 | Non-traditional university going | 35.14% | 13 |
| 3 | An even mix | 56.76% | 21 |
| | Total | 100% | 37 |

| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Are the majority of your students from traditional university going populations or non-traditional university going populations? | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.49 | 0.64 | 0.41 | 37 | 100.00% | 100.00% |

Q11 - When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 37.14% | 13 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 34.29% | 12 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 5.71% | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

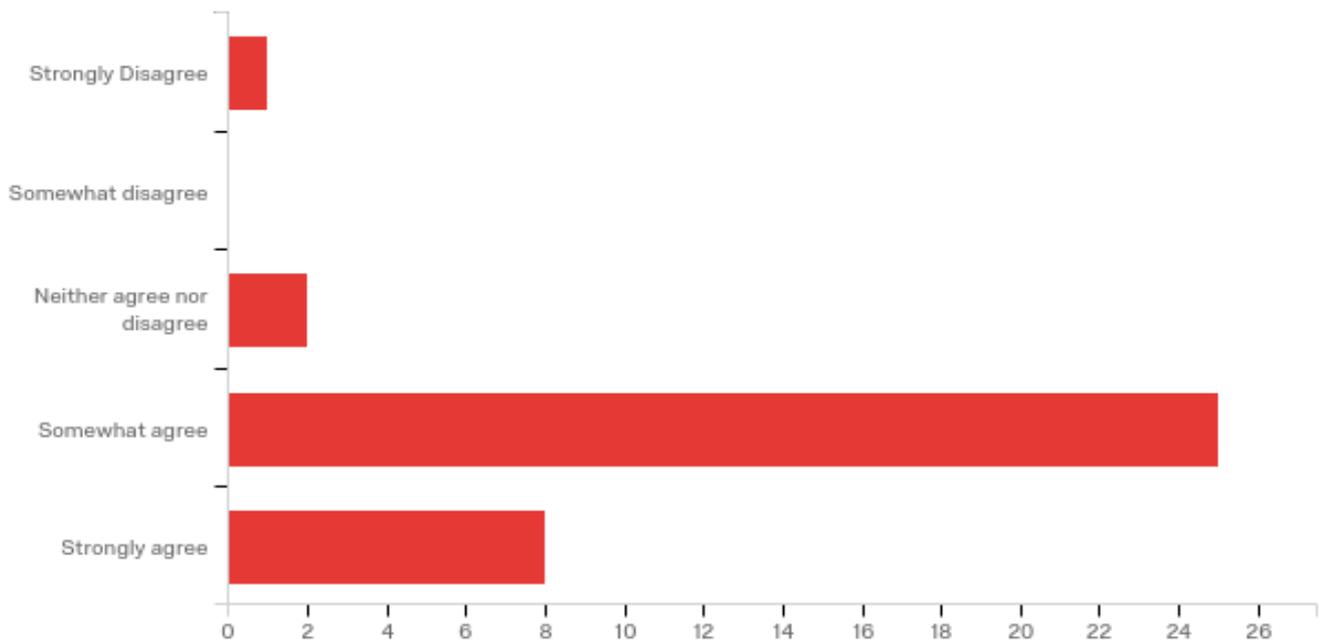
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.11 | 1.06 | 1.13 | 35 | 60.00% | 77.14% |



Q12 - Our students find it difficult to complete the personal statement on the UCAS form

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.78% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 5.56% | 2 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 69.44% | 25 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 22.22% | 8 |
| | Total | 100% | 36 |

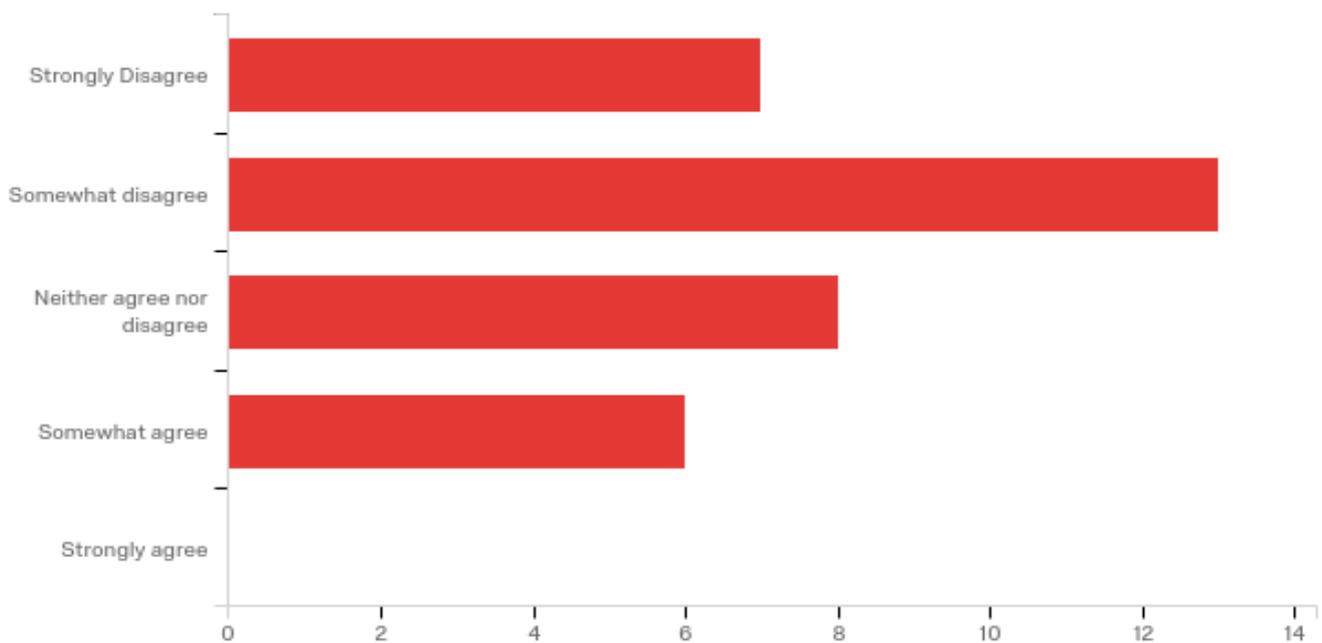
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students find it difficult to complete the personal statement on the UCAS form | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.08 | 0.72 | 0.52 | 36 | 8.33% | 97.22% |



Q13 – Our students engage with wider reading and independent learning without much persuasion

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 20.59% | 7 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 38.24% | 13 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 23.53% | 8 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 17.65% | 6 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 0.00% | 0 |
| | Total | 100% | 34 |

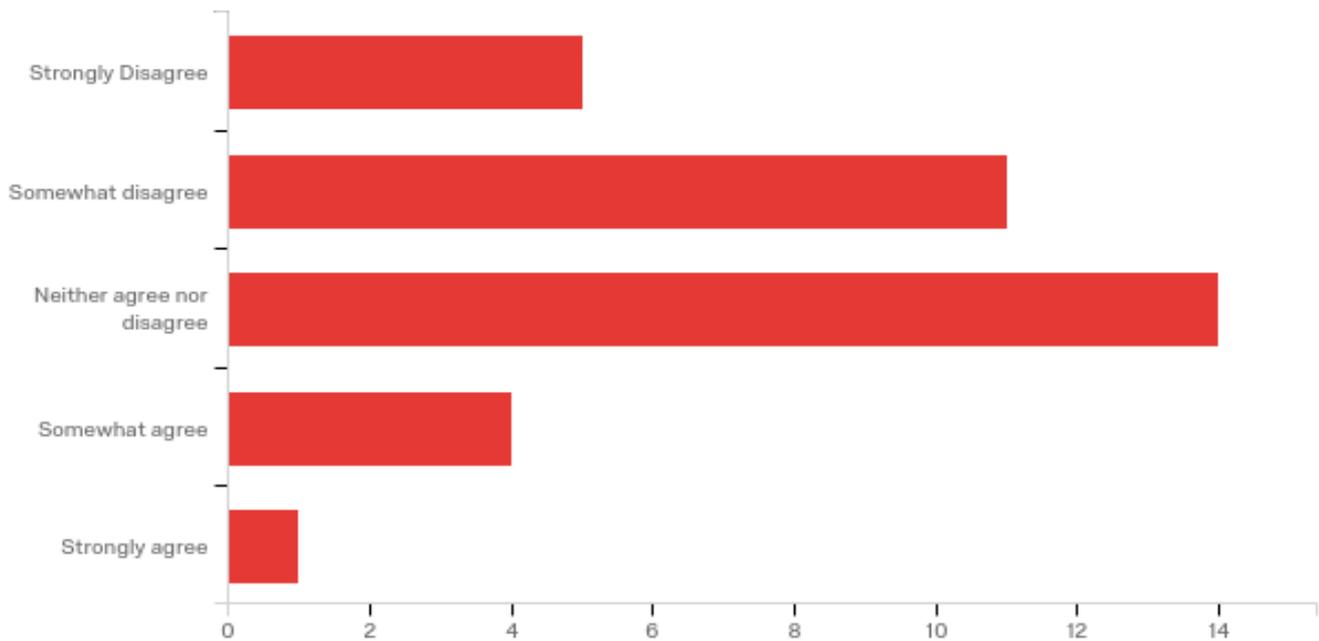
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students engage with wider reading and independent learning without much persuasion | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.38 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 34 | 82.35% | 41.18% |



Q16 - Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 14.29% | 5 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 31.43% | 11 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 40.00% | 14 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 2.86% | 1 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

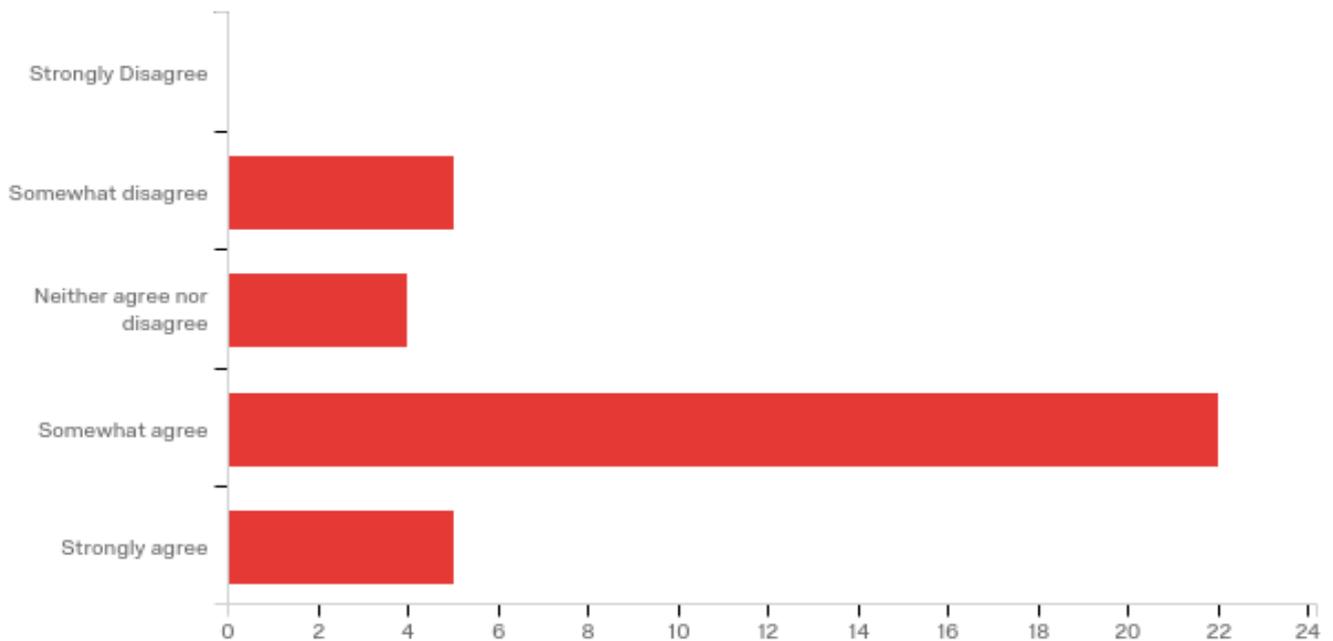
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.57 | 0.96 | 0.93 | 35 | 85.71% | 54.29% |



Q17 - Our students find it difficult or don't want to think about things that are not an immediate priority

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 13.89% | 5 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 11.11% | 4 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 61.11% | 22 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 13.89% | 5 |
| | Total | 100% | 36 |

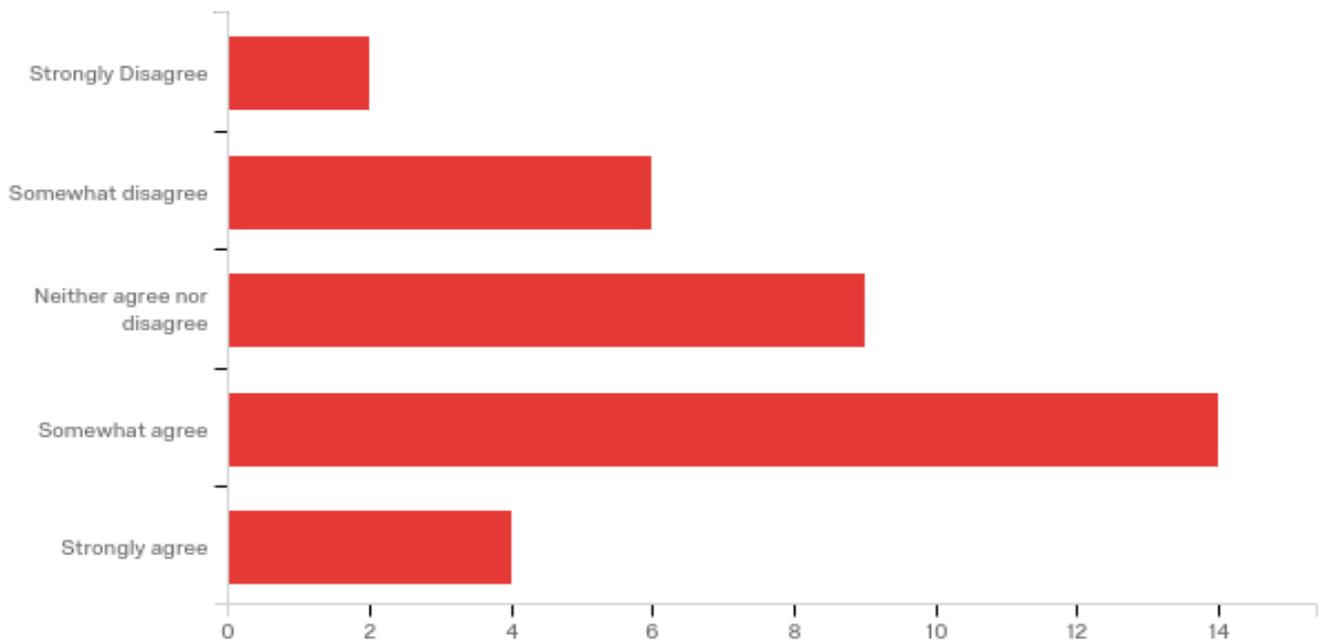
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students find it difficult or don't want to think about things that are not an immediate priority | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.75 | 0.86 | 0.74 | 36 | 25.00% | 86.11% |



Q18 - Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 5.71% | 2 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 17.14% | 6 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 25.71% | 9 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 40.00% | 14 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 11.43% | 4 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

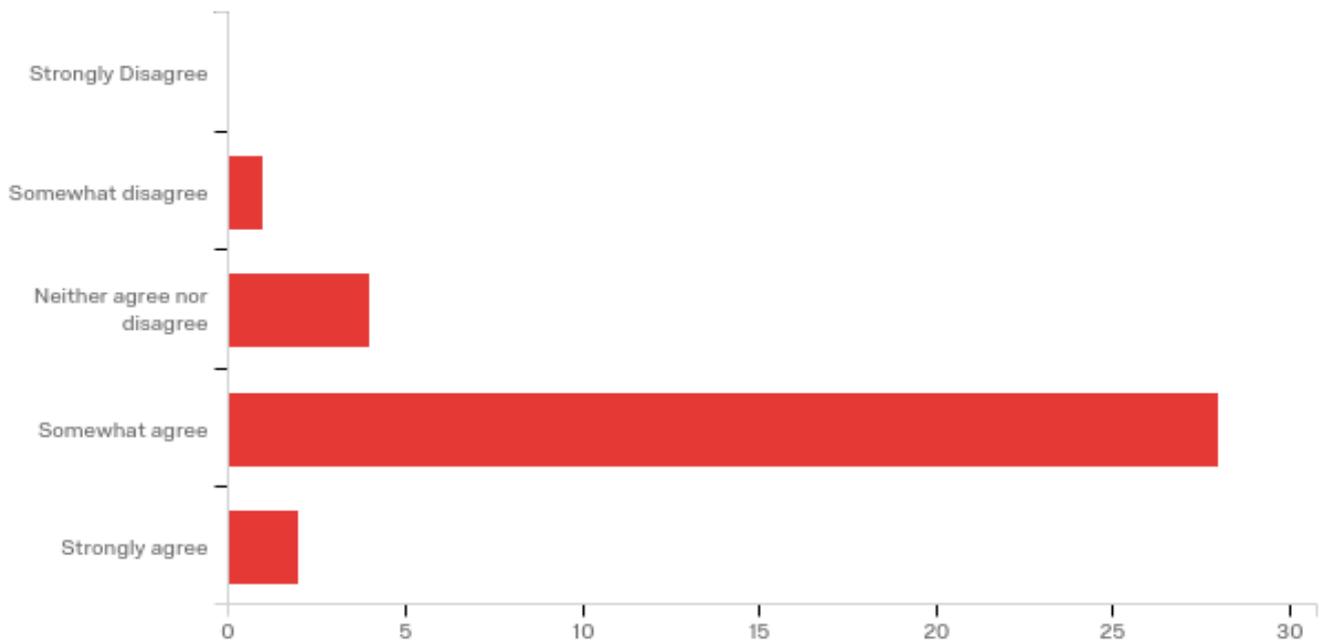
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.34 | 1.07 | 1.14 | 35 | 48.57% | 77.14% |



19 - Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 2.86% | 1 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 80.00% | 28 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 5.71% | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

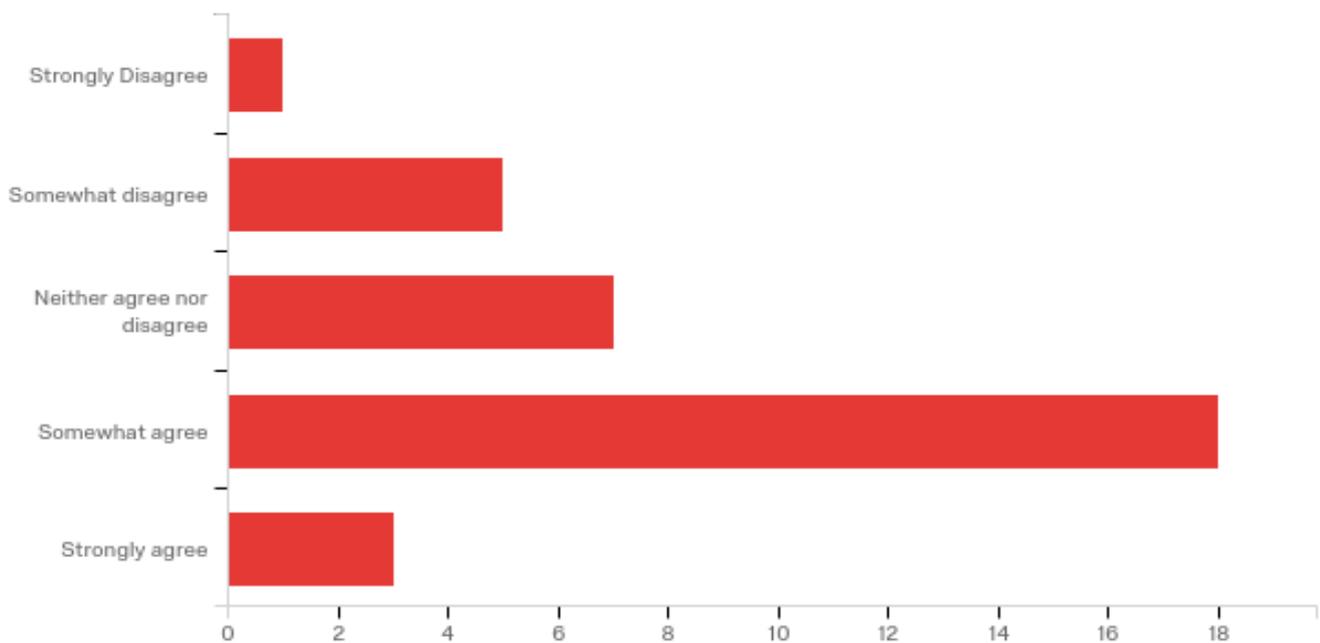
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.89 | 0.52 | 0.27 | 35 | 14.29% | 97.14% |



Q20 - Many of the parents of our students worry that their children should not go to university because it is too expensive

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.94% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 14.71% | 5 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 20.59% | 7 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 52.94% | 18 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 8.82% | 3 |
| | Total | 100% | 34 |

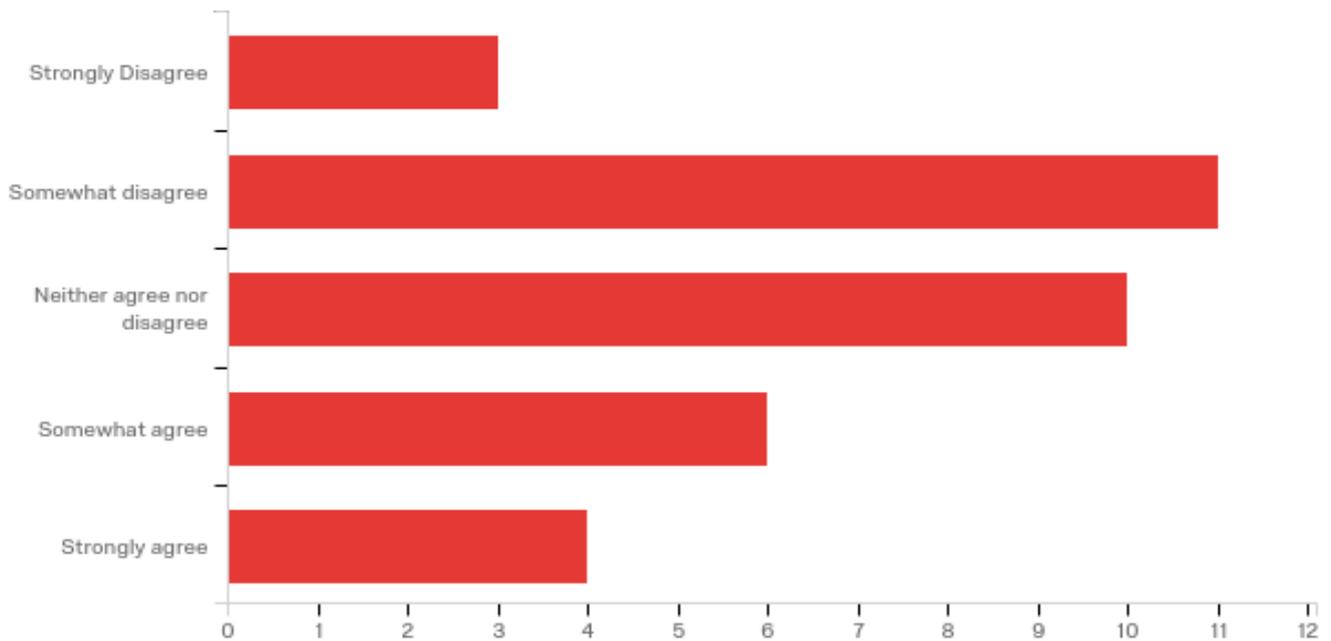
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Many of the parents of our students worry that their children should not go to university because it is too expensive | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.50 | 0.95 | 0.90 | 34 | 38.24% | 82.35% |



Q21 - Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 8.82% | 3 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 32.35% | 11 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 29.41% | 10 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 17.65% | 6 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 11.76% | 4 |
| | Total | 100% | 34 |

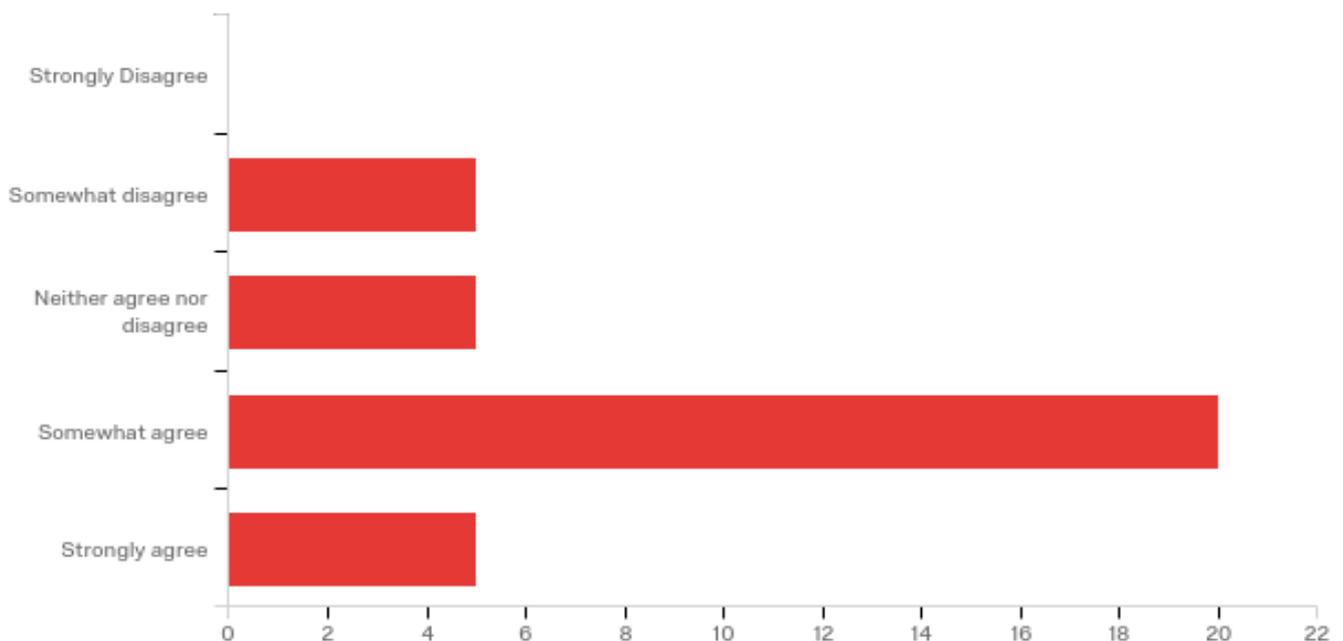
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.91 | 1.15 | 1.32 | 34 | 70.59% | 58.82% |



Q22 - Our students find it difficult to accurately visualize what life at university will be like

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 14.29% | 5 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 14.29% | 5 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 57.14% | 20 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 14.29% | 5 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

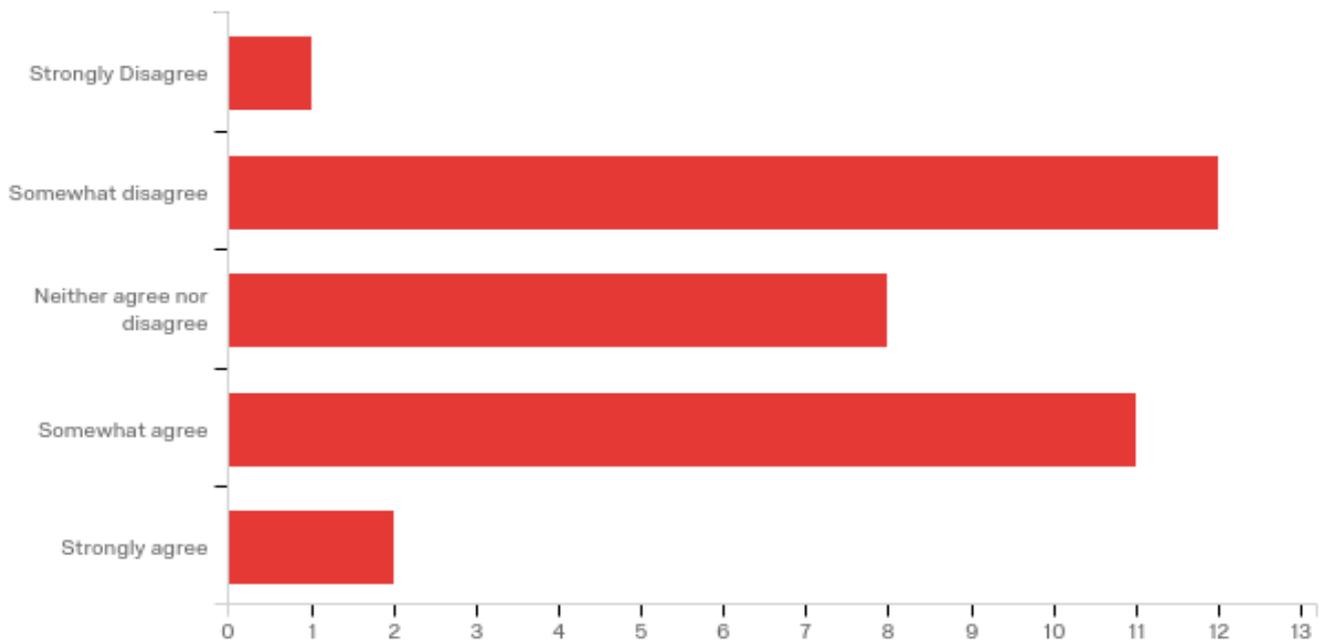
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students find it difficult to accurately visualise what life at university will be like | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.71 | 0.88 | 0.78 | 35 | 28.57% | 85.71% |



Q24 - Our students and their parents put teachers under pressure to give them higher predicted grades

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.94% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 35.29% | 12 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 23.53% | 8 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 32.35% | 11 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 5.88% | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 34 |

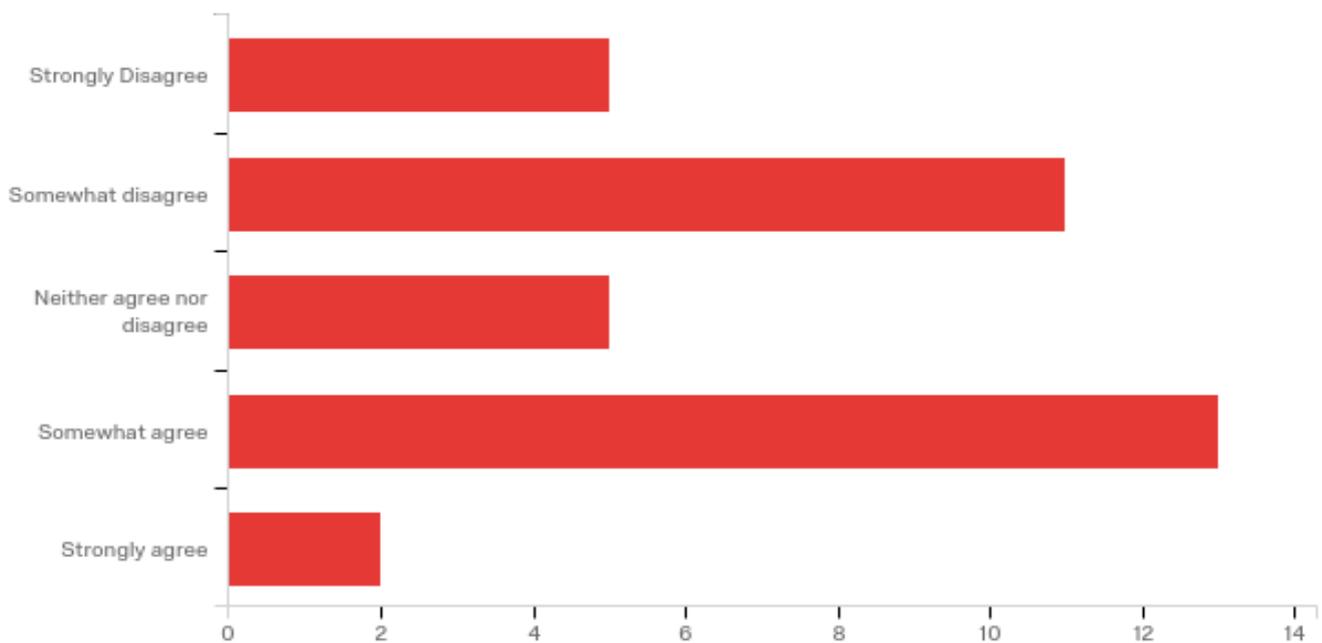
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students and their parents put teachers under pressure to give them higher predicted grades | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.03 | 1.01 | 1.03 | 34 | 61.76% | 61.76% |



Q25 - We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 13.89% | 5 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 30.56% | 11 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 13.89% | 5 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 36.11% | 13 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 5.56% | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 36 |

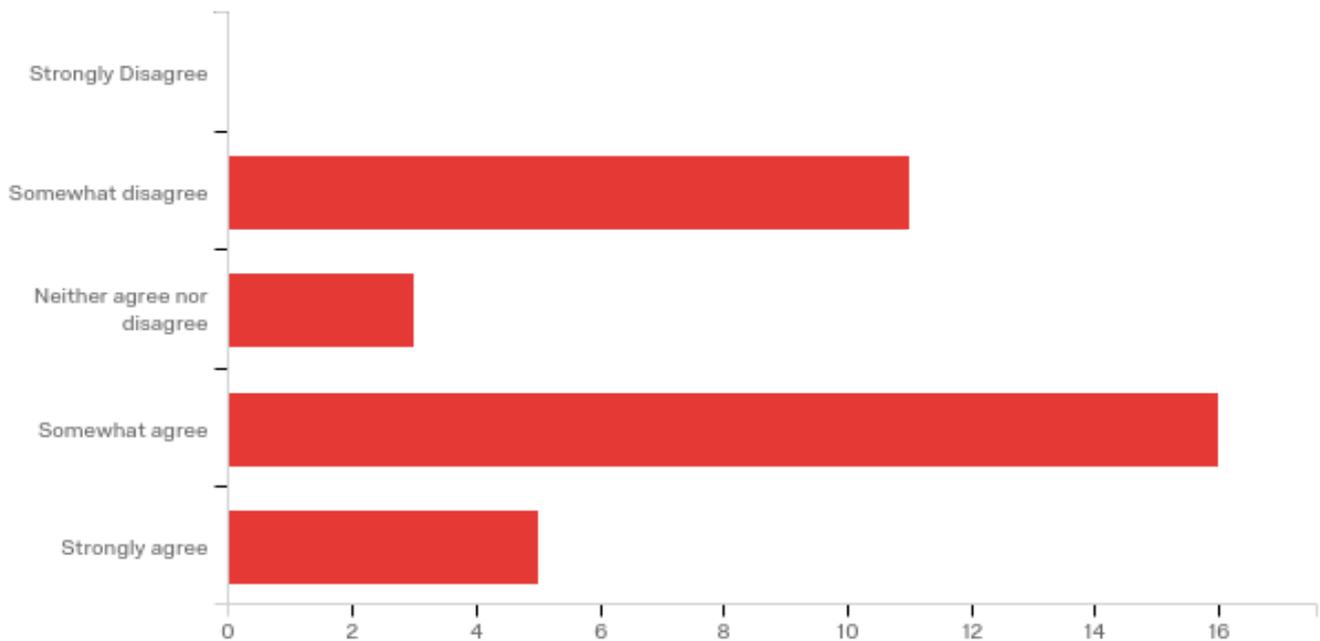
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.89 | 1.20 | 1.43 | 36 | 58.33% | 55.56% |



Q26 - Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 31.43% | 11 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 8.57% | 3 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 45.71% | 16 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 14.29% | 5 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

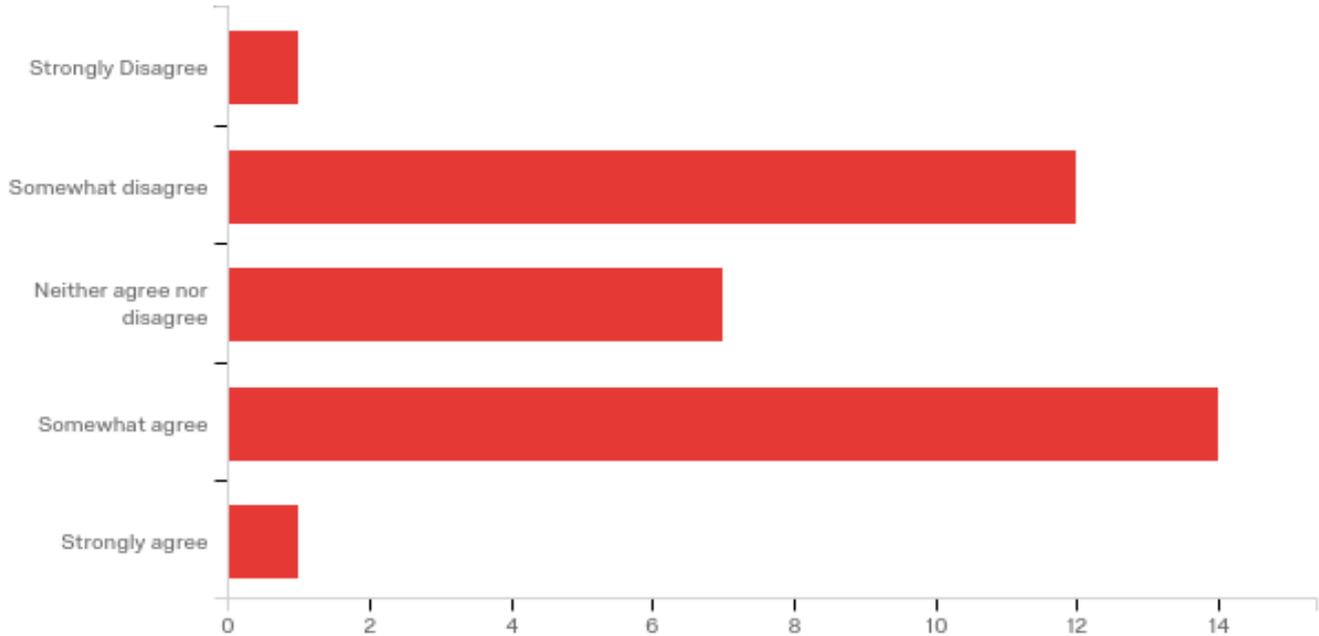
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.43 | 1.08 | 1.16 | 35 | 40.00% | 68.57% |



Q28 - Our students are independent learners

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.86% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 34.29% | 12 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 20.00% | 7 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 40.00% | 14 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 2.86% | 1 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

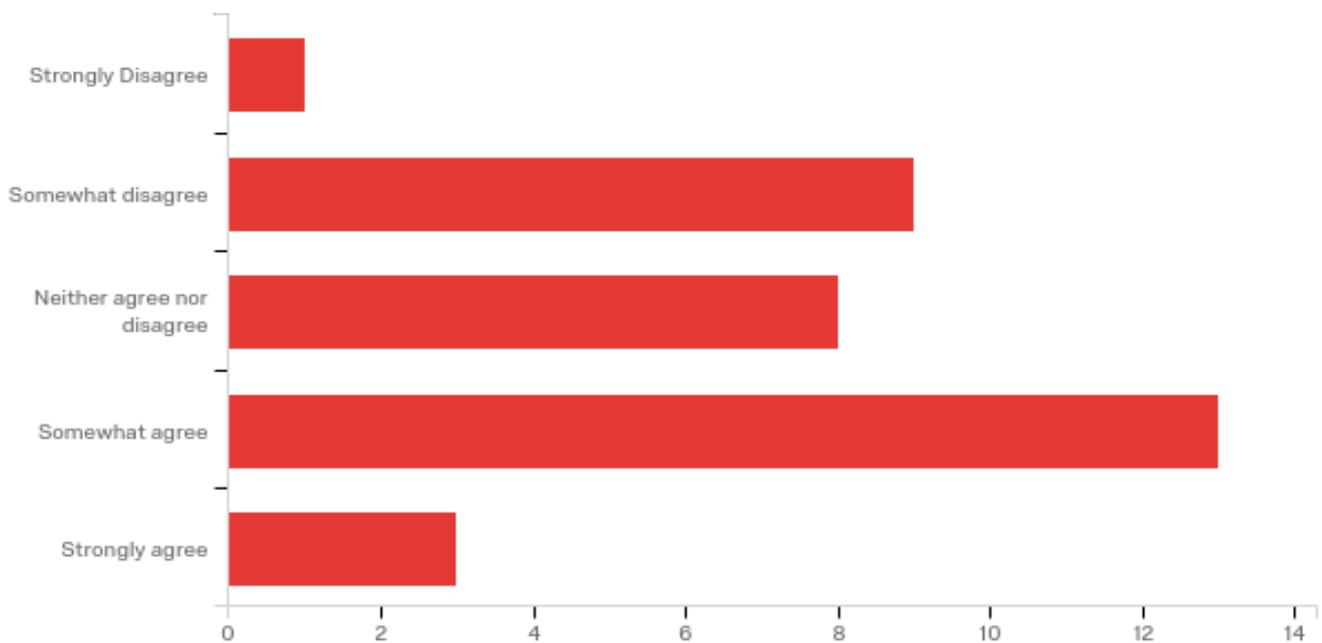
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students are independent learners | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.06 | 0.98 | 0.97 | 35 | 57.14% | 62.86% |



Q29 - Our students cannot engage with extra-curricular activities because of other demands on their time (work, caring responsibilities etc.)

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.94% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 26.47% | 9 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 23.53% | 8 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 38.24% | 13 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 8.82% | 3 |
| | Total | 100% | 34 |

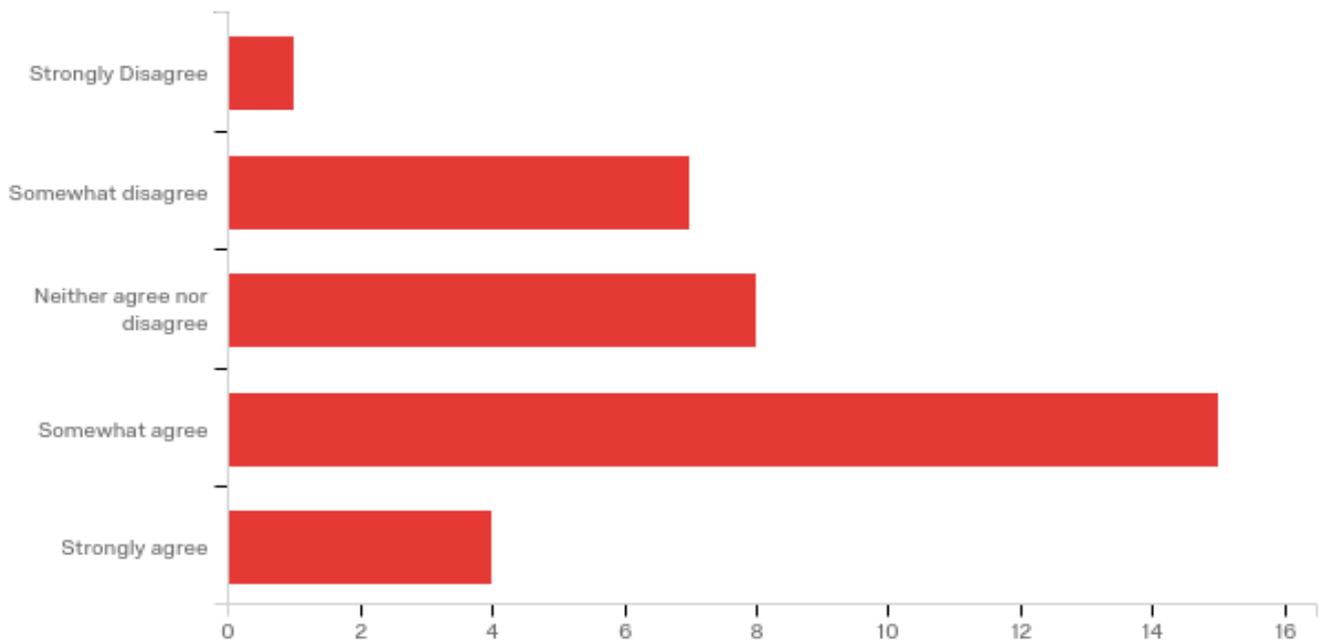
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students cannot engage with extra-curricular activities because of other demands on their time (work, caring responsibilities etc.) | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.24 | 1.03 | 1.06 | 34 | 52.94% | 70.59% |



Q30 - The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.86% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 20.00% | 7 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 22.86% | 8 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 42.86% | 15 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 11.43% | 4 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

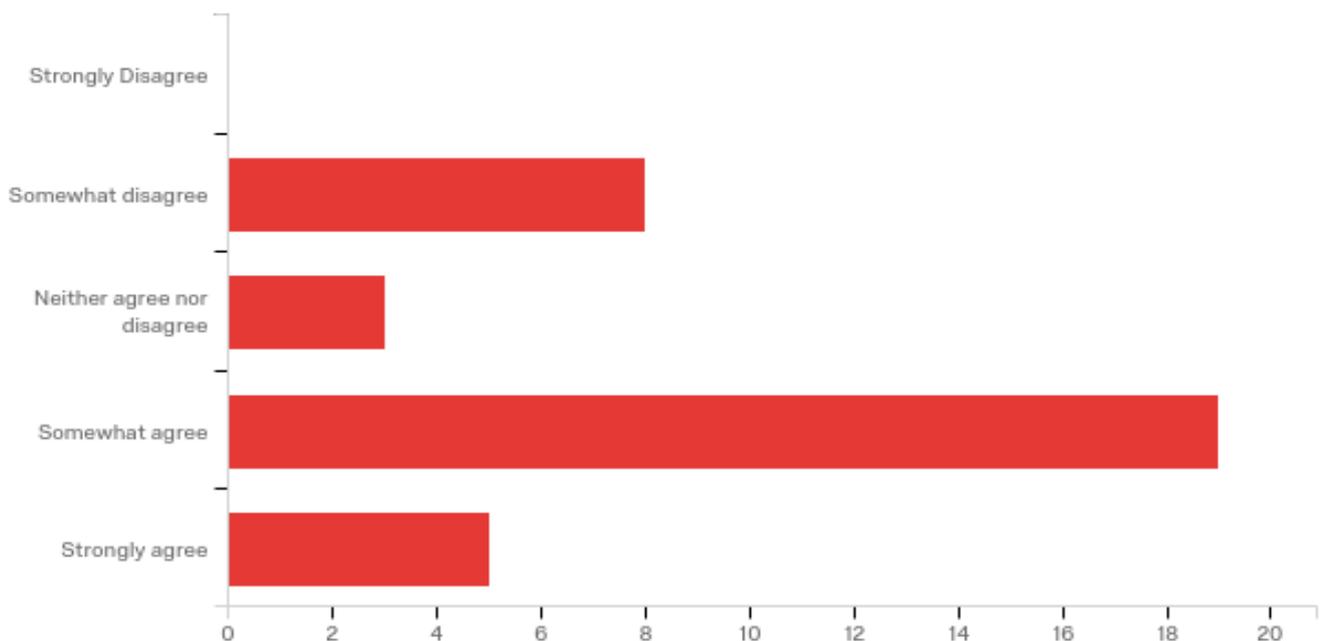
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.40 | 1.02 | 1.04 | 35 | 45.71% | 77.14% |



Q31 - Our students' success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 22.86% | 8 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 8.57% | 3 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 54.29% | 19 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 14.29% | 5 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

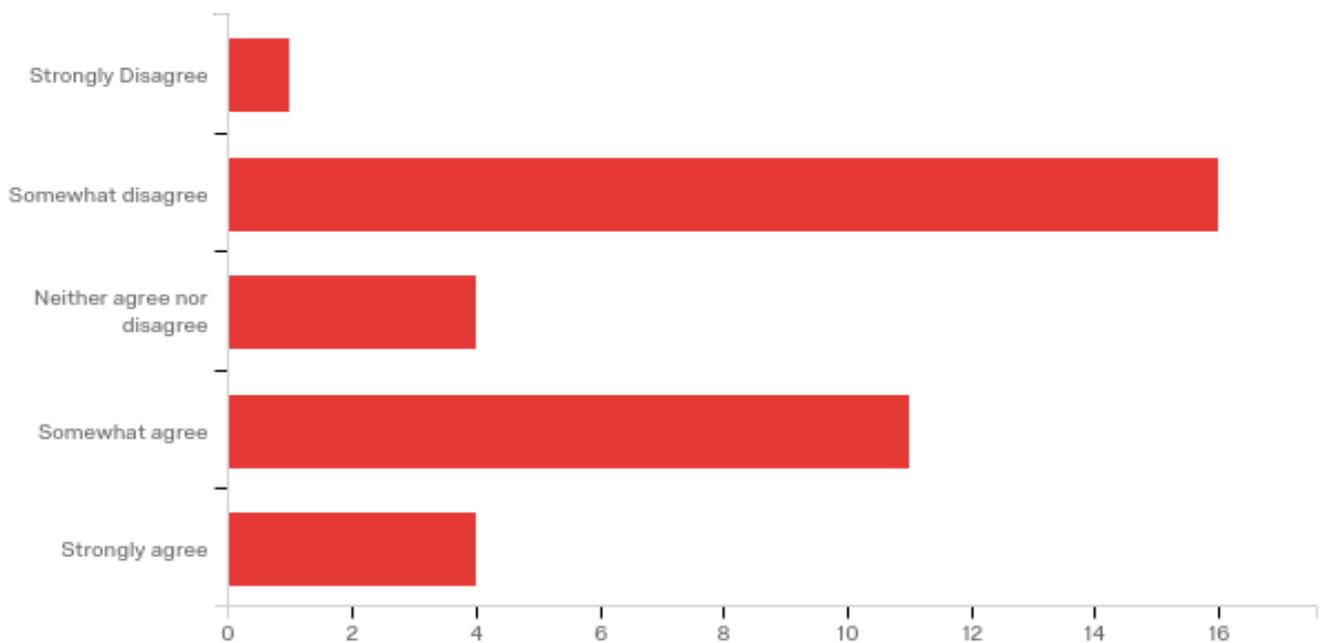
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.60 | 0.99 | 0.98 | 35 | 31.43% | 77.14% |



Q32 - The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 2.78% | 1 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 44.44% | 16 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 11.11% | 4 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 30.56% | 11 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 11.11% | 4 |
| | Total | 100% | 36 |

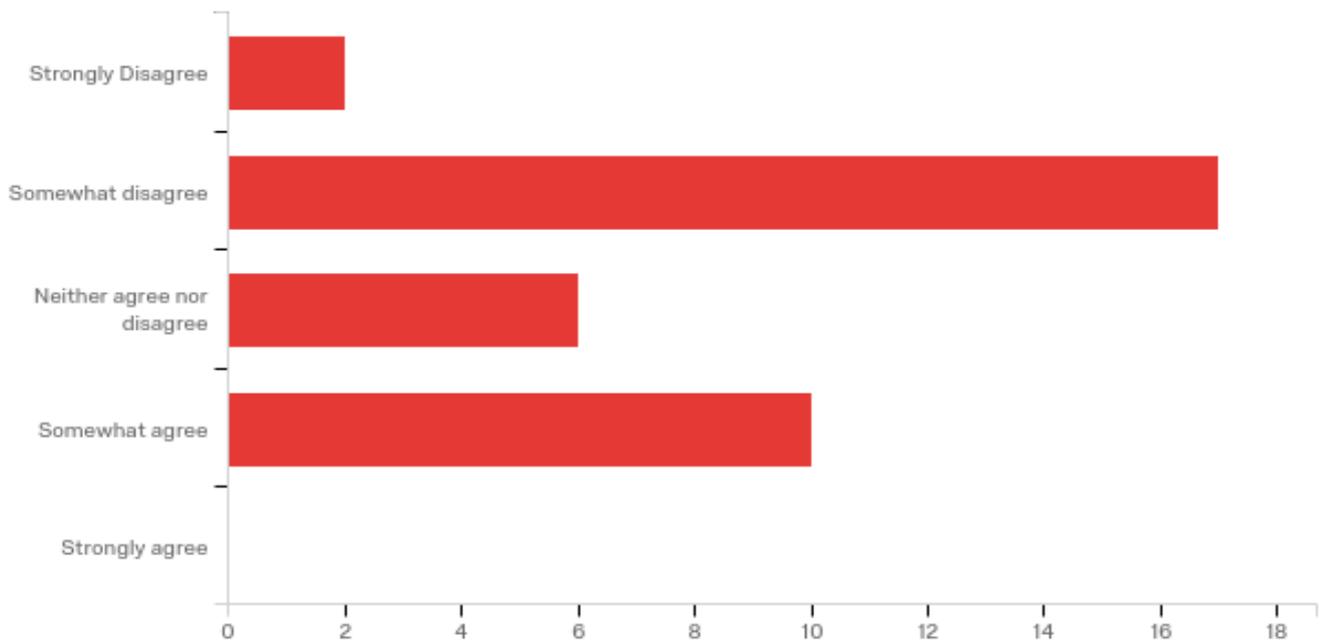
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.03 | 1.14 | 1.30 | 36 | 58.33% | 52.78% |



Q33 - Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time

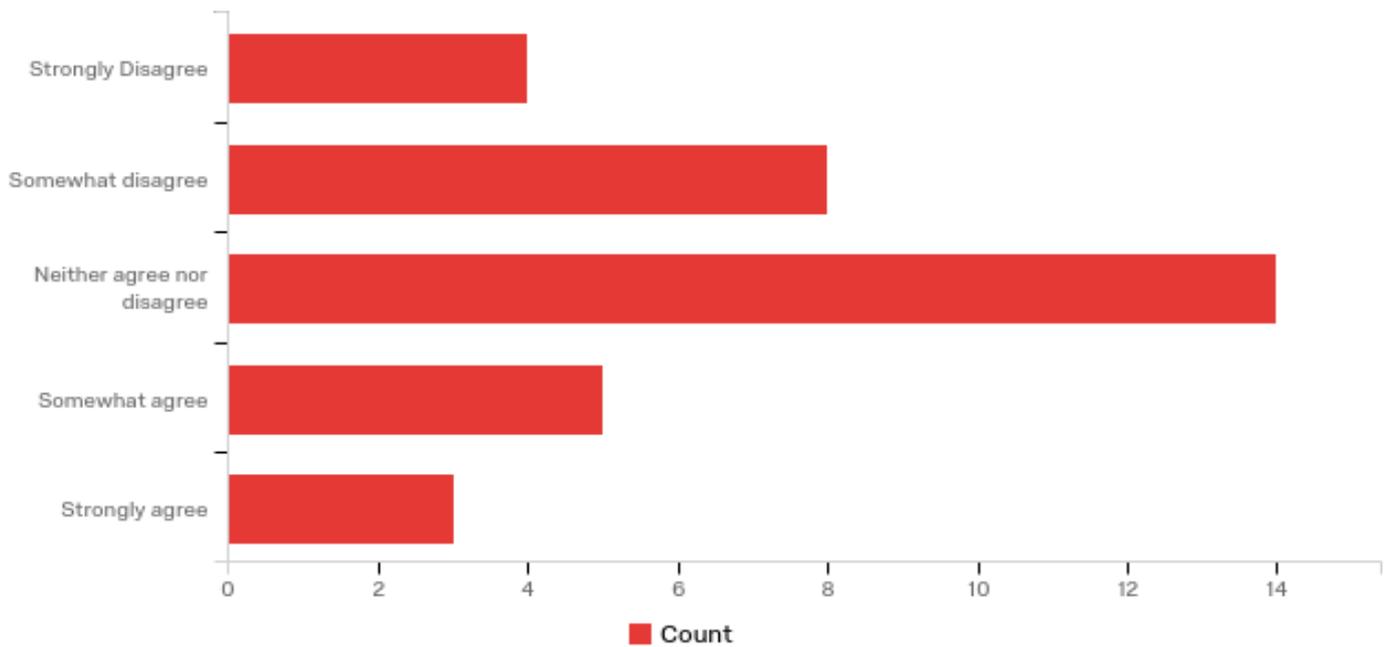
| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 5.71% | 2 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 48.57% | 17 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 17.14% | 6 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 28.57% | 10 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 0.00% | 0 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.69 | 0.95 | 0.90 | 35 | 71.43% | 45.71% |



Q34 - Our students would not do well in universities where there are few other students who are like them

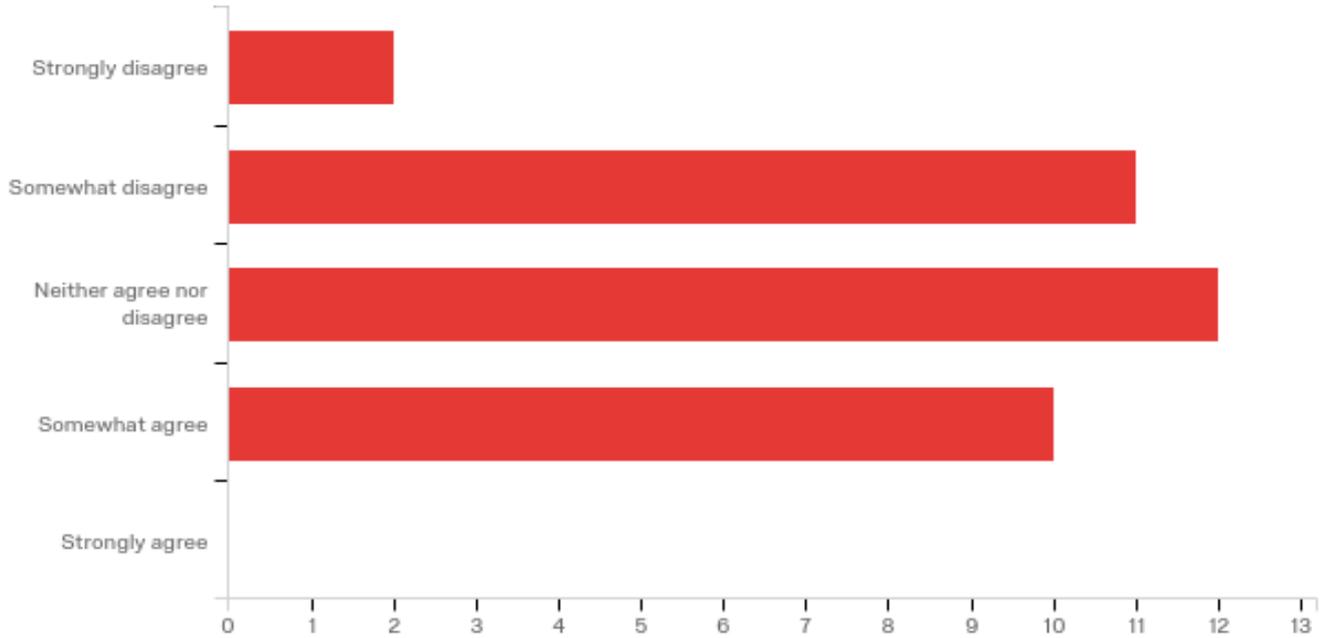
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students would not do well in universities where there are few other students who are like them | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.85 | 1.09 | 1.18 | 34 | 76.47% | 64.71% |



Q35 - Our students are emotionally resilient

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly disagree | 5.71% | 2 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 31.43% | 11 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 34.29% | 12 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 28.57% | 10 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 0.00% | 0 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

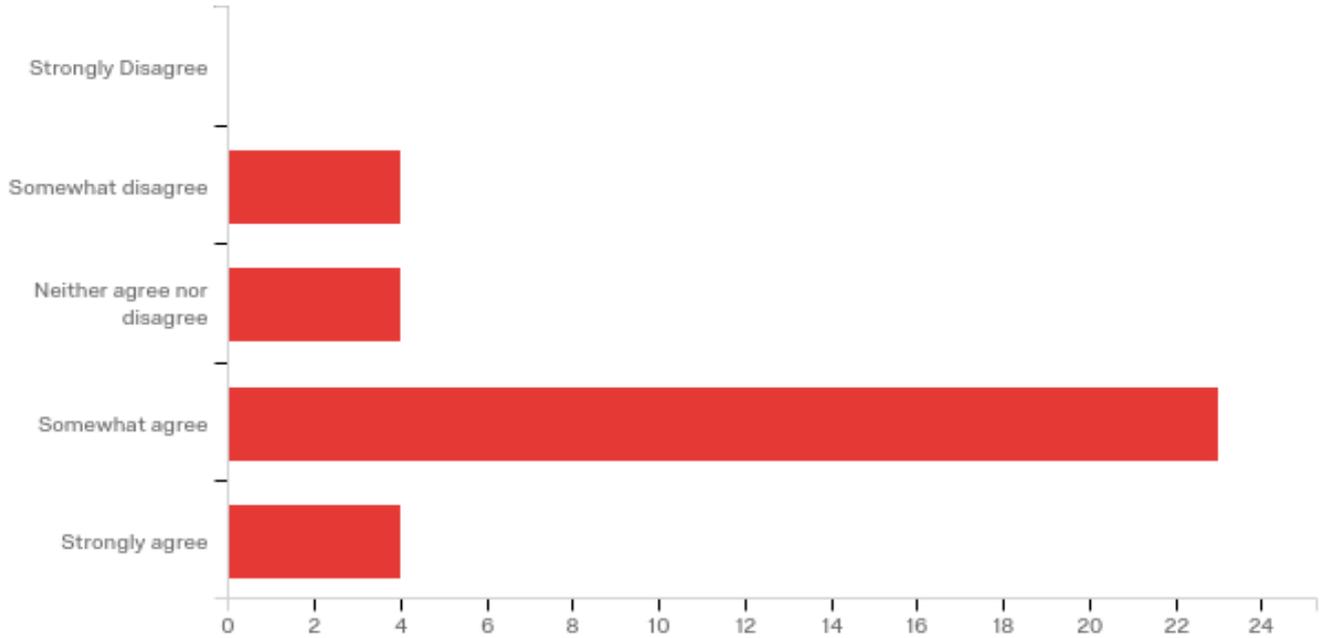
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students are emotionally resilient | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.86 | 0.90 | 0.81 | 35 | 71.43% | 62.86% |



Q36 - Our students find self-reflection difficult

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Somewhat disagree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | 11.43% | 4 |
| 4 | Somewhat agree | 65.71% | 23 |
| 5 | Strongly agree | 11.43% | 4 |
| | Total | 100% | 35 |

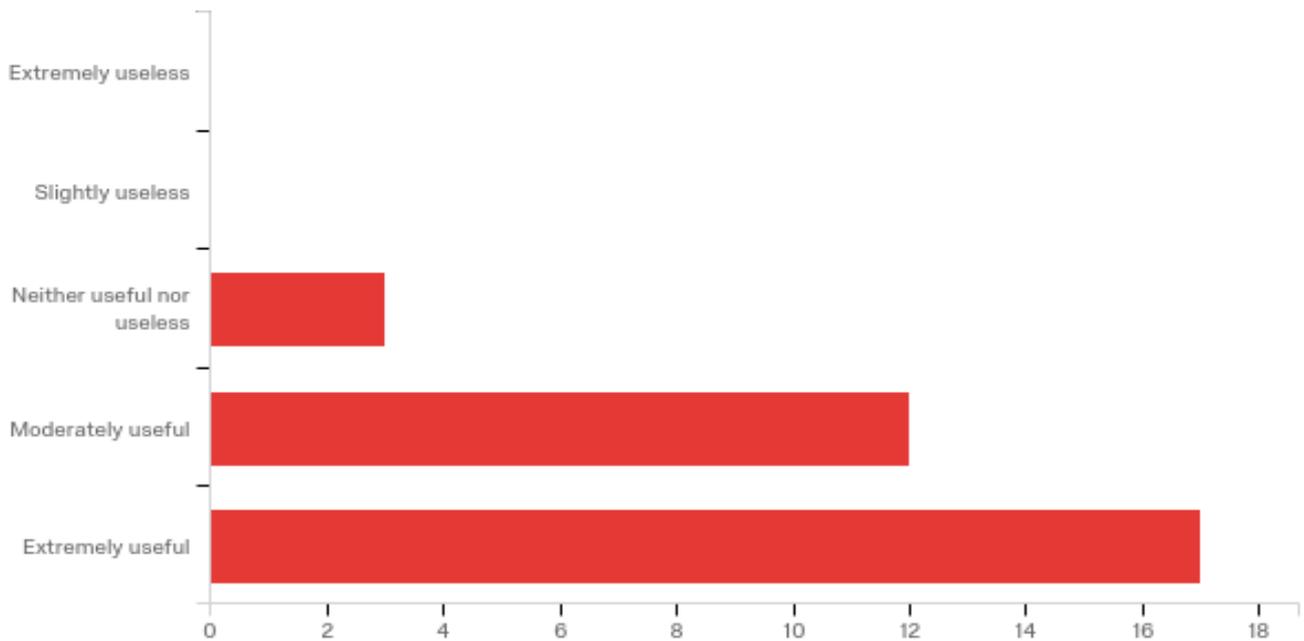
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Our students find self-reflection difficult | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.77 | 0.80 | 0.63 | 35 | 22.86% | 88.57% |



Q37 - A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely useless | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Slightly useless | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | Neither useful nor useless | 9.38% | 3 |
| 4 | Moderately useful | 37.50% | 12 |
| 5 | Extremely useful | 53.13% | 17 |
| | Total | 100% | 32 |

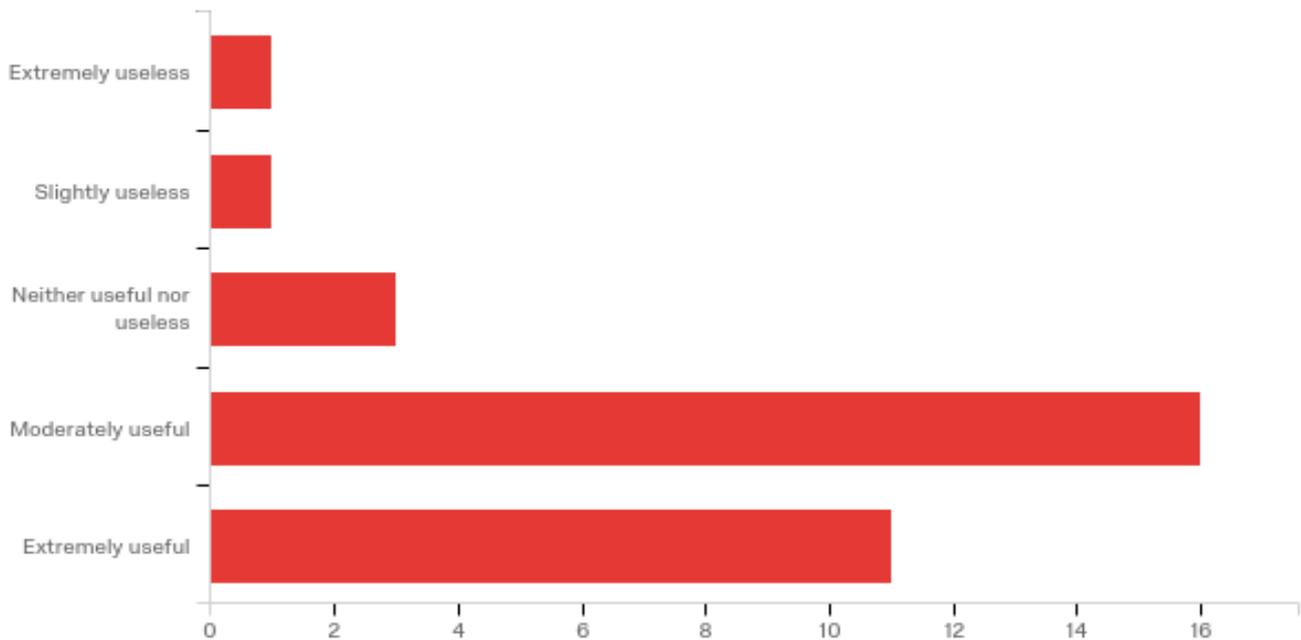
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.44 | 0.66 | 0.43 | 32 | 9.38% | 100.00% |



Q38 - Audio podcasts that could be downloaded by teachers and students that discuss different challenges students face at university and how to manage them well

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 2 | Slightly useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 3 | Neither useful nor useless | 9.38% | 3 |
| 4 | Moderately useful | 50.00% | 16 |
| 5 | Extremely useful | 34.38% | 11 |
| | Total | 100% | 32 |

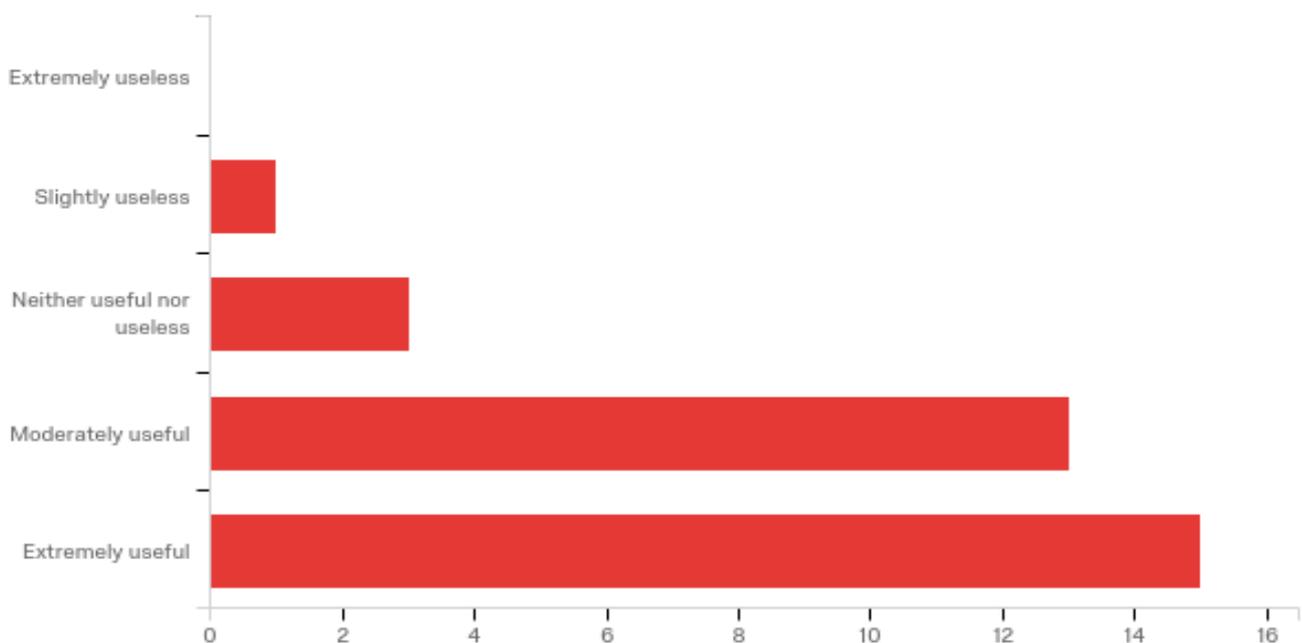
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Audio podcasts that could be downloaded by teachers and students that discuss different challenges students face at university and how to manage them well | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.09 | 0.91 | 0.83 | 32 | 15.63% | 93.75% |



Q39 - Online text information that details the steps students can take to prepare for university covering academic skills, life skills, social skills and emotional skills

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely useless | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | Slightly useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 3 | Neither useful nor useless | 9.38% | 3 |
| 4 | Moderately useful | 40.63% | 13 |
| 5 | Extremely useful | 46.88% | 15 |
| | Total | 100% | 32 |

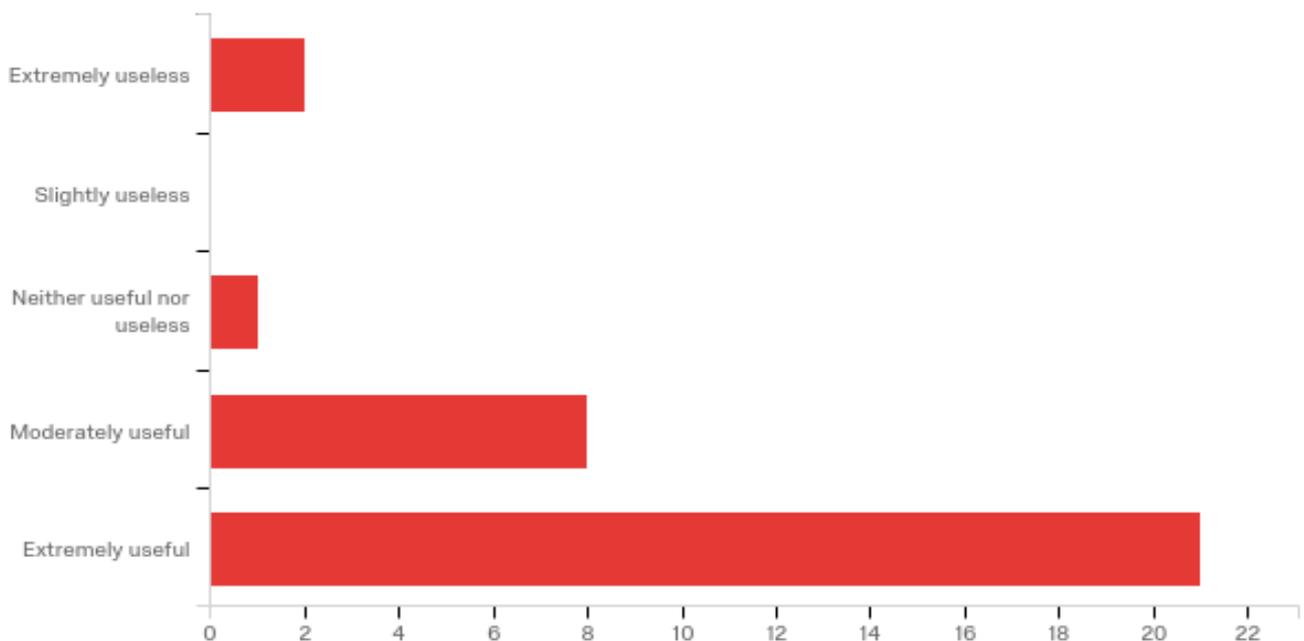
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|--|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Online text information that details the steps students can take to prepare for university covering academic skills, life skills, social skills and emotional skills | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.31 | 0.77 | 0.59 | 32 | 12.50% | 96.88% |



Q40 - Video excerpts showing student dilemmas at university, with a suggested lesson plan that teachers can follow to encourage discussion and debate, to help students visualize university life

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|-------|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely useless | 6.25% | 2 |
| 2 | Slightly useless | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | Neither useful nor useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 4 | Moderately useful | 25.00% | 8 |
| 5 | Extremely useful | 65.63% | 21 |
| Total | | 100% | 32 |

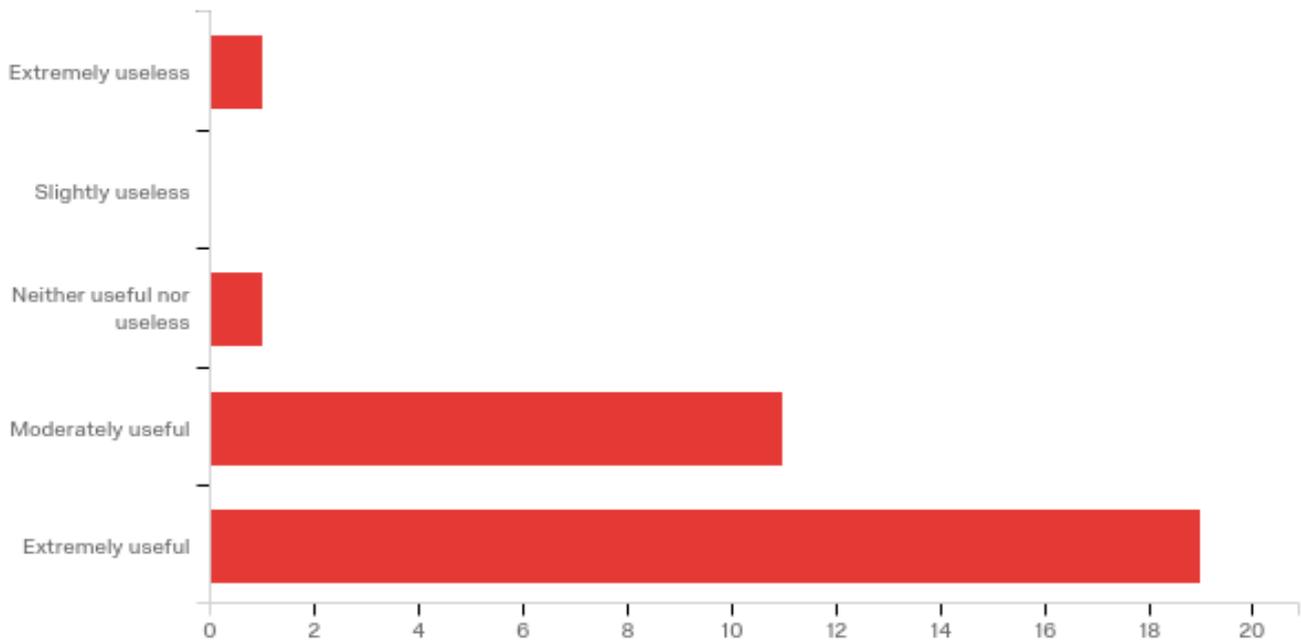
| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Video excerpts showing student dilemmas at university, with a suggested lesson plan that teachers can follow to encourage discussion and debate, to help students visualise university life | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.44 | 1.03 | 1.06 | 32 | 9.38% | 93.75% |



Q41 - Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period

| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Extremely useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 2 | Slightly useless | 0.00% | 0 |
| 3 | Neither useful nor useless | 3.13% | 1 |
| 4 | Moderately useful | 34.38% | 11 |
| 5 | Extremely useful | 59.38% | 19 |
| | Total | 100% | 32 |

| Field | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count | Bottom 3 Box | Top 3 Box |
|---|---------|---------|------|---------------|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.47 | 0.83 | 0.69 | 32 | 6.25% | 96.88% |



Analysis of the Quantitative data

1. Descriptive Statistics

- Demographic questions
- Staff experience questions
- Resource ratings

2. Methods Summary

3. Kruskal-Wallis H tests

- Deprivation status and planning to leave the local area
- Traditional vs non-traditional student population and ratings for podcasts, online text and videos
- Institution type (colleges/school sixth forms) and videos
- And a near significant result for position held by staff and 'q25'

4. Spearman's Rank Correlations

- Student population correlations
- Main items (leaving local area, resilience, parent engagement etc.)
- Resources (video, podcasts etc.)

APPENDIX 3

Descriptive Statistics Demographic Questions

| Demographic Question | Mean (SD) | Median | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Staff Job Title | 6.89 (3.09) | 6.0 (Subject Teacher) | .120 | 0.36 |
| Position Type (Heads/Managers, Subject Teacher/Tutor, Careers/Support) | 1.86 (0.80) | 2.0 (Subject Teacher) | .274 | -1.41 |
| Institution Type | 2.11 | 2.0 | .567 | -.135 |
| Student Population | 1624.28 (1775.99) | 800 | 1.09 | .130 |
| Deprivation Status (Yes, Unsure, No) | 2.08 (0.89) | 2.0 (Unsure) | -.174 | -1.74 |
| Traditional, Non-Traditional, Even Mix | 2.51 (9.658) | 3.0 (Even Mix) | -1.04 | .022 |

Staff Experience Questions

| Staff Experience Questions | Mean (SD) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|--------------|----------|----------|
| Q11 Leaving Local Area | 3.12 (1.09) | -.572 | -.169 |
| Q12 UCAS Struggle | 4.19 (0.54) | .179 | .265 |
| Q13 Wider Reading and Independent Learning | 2.37 (1.04) | .264 | -1.03 |
| Q16 Tuition Fee as a Deterrent | 2.56 (0.95) | .293 | .414 |
| Q17 Difficulty thinking about future goals | 3.88 (0.79) | -1.00 | 1.32 |
| Q18 Good Grade Focus | 3.37 (1.03) | -.287 | -.525 |
| Q19 Application Process Emotionally Challenging | 3.87 (.491) | -2.06 | 7.21 |
| Q20 Parents Worrying about Tuition Costs | 3.56 (0.95) | -.917 | .610 |
| Q21 Regular Use of Library | 2.94 (1.24) | .340 | -.890 |
| Q22 Difficulty Accurately Visualising University Life | 3.65 (1.00) | -1.07 | .589 |
| Q24 Pressuring Teachers for Higher Predicted Grades | 3.03 (0.937) | .190 | -1.33 |
| Q25 Time Available to Develop Life Skills | 3.00 (1.21) | -.228 | -1.22 |
| Q26 Understanding the different types of university | 3.50 (1.08) | -.330 | -1.22 |
| Q28 Student are independent learners | 3.03 (1.03) | -.066 | -1.34 |
| Q29 Working/Caring preventing Extra-Curriculars | 3.21 (1.07) | -.130 | -.958 |
| Q30 Engaged and Supportive Parents | 3.38 (1.07) | -.326 | -.721 |
| Q31 Limited Life Experience Impeding University | 3.53 (1.01) | -.485 | -.970 |
| Q32 Teachers Trained Enough to Support Transition | 3.09 (1.17) | .191 | -1.31 |
| Q33 Student Have Good Life Skills | 2.68 (.997) | .274 | -1.36 |
| Q34 Needing Similar Kinds of People at University | 2.81 (1.12) | .247 | -.243 |
| Q35 Emotionally Resilient Students | 2.81 (.931) | -.114 | -1.01 |
| Q36 Students Finding Self-Reflection Difficult | 3.84 (.766) | -1.09 | 1.60 |

*Question numbers were just arbitrary numbers added to the questions by Qualtrics, they do not correlate to how many questions there actually are. (i.e. there is no Q15, but there are 22 questions in total) The questions were given

in a randomised order without the numbers visible.
 *Shaded cells indicate values not within the range of normal distribution

Resource Ratings

| Resource | Mean (SD) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Workshop | 4.44 (.669) | -.792 | -.391 |
| Audio Podcast | 4.09 (.928) | -1.48 | 3.14 |
| Online Text | 4.31 (.780) | -1.06 | 1.01 |
| Video | 4.437 (1.045) | -2.44 | 6.06 |
| Training | 4.468 (.842) | -2.49 | 8.49 |

Method Summary

As some of the data were not normally distributed, the sample size was small, the independent and dependent variables were ordinal, (with the exception of 'Student Population' variable, that was measured as continuous scale data) it was necessary to use a non-parametric test. Kruskal-Wallis H test, followed by a series of Mann-Whitney U tests were utilised. 'Student Population' data was analysed using Spearman's Rank correlation. Spearman's Rank was also utilised to see if there were any significant correlations between different dependent variable items.

Kruskal-Wallis H

Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed significant results between the following factors:

- Deprivation status and 'Q11. When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area
- Traditional vs Non-traditional student population and ratings for podcasts, online text and videos
- Institution type (colleges/school sixth forms) and videos
- And a near significant result for position held by staff and 'Q25. We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university'

Deprivation Status and Leaving the Local Area

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a significant difference between 'Deprivation Status' and responses to the question "Q11. When our students go to university they will want to leave the local area"

$X^2(2)=7.304$, $p = .022$, with mean rank scores of 15.50 for 'yes', 11.50 for 'unsure' and 22.17 for 'no.'

A Mann-Whitney U test was utilised demonstrating a significant difference between 'Unsure' and 'No,' ($U(2)=22$, $z = -2.602$, $p=.009$), a non-significant difference between 'Yes' and 'No' ($U(2)= 50.50$, $z = -1.768$, $p= .077$) and no significant differences between 'Yes' and 'Unsure.' Suggesting that staff who were unsure of their institutions deprived area status were more likely to suggest their students would leave the local area to attend university. Conversely, this also suggests that staff who felt that their institution was in a deprived area were more likely to rate that their students would not leave the local area.

Traditional/Non-traditional student population and ratings for podcasts, online text and videos

a. Podcast

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a significant difference in rating the usefulness of podcasts and whether staff identified their student population as traditional, non-traditional and having an even mix of traditional and non-traditional students.

$X^2(2)=7.862$, $p = 0.024$, with mean ranks; traditional = 10.33, non-traditional – 11.70, even mix 20.00

A Mann-Whitney U indicated a significant difference between 'Non-Traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)=46.00$, $z = -2.463$, $p=.014$), a non-significant difference between 'Traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)= 11.00$, $z = -1.856$, $p= .063$) and no significant differences between 'Traditional' and 'Non-traditional' ($U(2)=14.00$, $z=-.194$, $p = .846$)

b. Online Text

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a significant difference in rating the usefulness of online texts and whether staff identified their student population as traditional, non-traditional and having an even mix of traditional and non-traditional students.

$X^2(2)=6.544$, $p = 0.038$, with mean ranks; traditional = 5.67, non-traditional = 15.20, even mix = 18.89

A Mann-Whitney U indicated a significant difference between 'Traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)= 7.5$, $z = -2.223$, $p=.026$), and a significant difference between 'Traditional' and 'Non-Traditional' ($U(2)= 3.5$, $z = -2.236$, $p= .025$) and no significant differences between 'Non-traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)= 70.50$, $z=-1.263$, $p = .206$)

c. Video

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a significant difference between rating in videos and whether staff identified their student population as traditional, non-traditional and having an even mix of traditional and non-traditional students.

$X^2(2)=5.625$, $p = 0.06$, with mean ranks; traditional = 7.50, non-traditional = 15.15, even mix = 18.63

A Mann-Whitney U indicated a significant difference between 'Traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)= 7.5$, $z= -2.466$, $p=.014$), and a non-significant difference between 'Traditional' and 'Non-Traditional' ($U(2)= 9.0$, $z = -1.10$, $p= .271$) and no significant differences between 'Non-traditional' and 'Even Mix' ($U(2)= 75.5$, $z=-1.140$, $p = .254$)

Near-significant result for position held by staff and 'Q25' 'time in school to develop'

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed there was a near-significant difference between position type (Heads and Management, Subject Teachers, Supportive Staff)

$X^2(2)= 4.844$, $p = 0.089$, with mean ranks; support staff = 20.56, heads and managers = 19.85, and teachers = 12.67

A Mann-Whitney U indicated a significant difference between 'Head teachers and Management' and 'Subject Teachers' ($U(2)= 43$, $z= -2.021$, $p=.043$), and a non-significant difference between "Subject Teachers' and 'Supportive Staff' ($U(2)= 31$, $z = -1.69$, $p= .09$) and no significant differences between 'Head teachers and Management' and 'Support Staff' ($U(2)= 54$, $z= -.324$, $p = .746$)

Spearman's Rank Correlations

A Spearman's Rank Correlation was run to determine the presence of significant relationships between the data.

Demographic Questions

- Student Population

There was a weak negative relationship between student population and Q11 'When our student go to university they will leave the local area' which was significant ($r_s(32)= -.350$, $p = 0.042$) suggesting that the higher the student population, the less likely students were to leave the local area. All other interactions with student population were non-significant.

Teachers Experience Questions

- **Q11 'When our student go to university they will leave the local area'**

Q11 and Q16.. Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university.

There was a weak positive relationship between students leaving the local area, and students being put off going to university because of student fees. ($r_s(31) = .386$, $p = 0.027$). This suggests that the more likely students were to leave the local area, the less likely students were to be concerned about tuition fees.

Q11 and Q19.. Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging.

There was a weak negative significant relationship between students wanting to leave the local area and students finding the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging. ($r_s(32) = -.349$, $p = 0.43$)

- **Q12 Our students find it difficult to complete the personal statement on the UCAS form**

Q12 and Q26 Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend.

There was a weak negative correlation between students finding completing personal statements and students understanding the different types of universities and campuses they may attend. ($r_s(32) = -.382$, $p = 0.026$)

Q12 and Q30 The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university.

There was a weak negative correlation between students finding completing personal statements difficult and parental support and engagement ($r_s(32) = -.362$, $p = 0.035$) suggesting that increased parental engagement may be linked to increased ability of the student to complete personal statements

- **Q13. Our students engage with wider reading and independent learning without much persuasion**

Q13 and Q21.. Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so.

There was a moderate positive relationship between students who engage with wider reading and students regularly using the library ($r_s(31) = .516$, $p = 0.002$) suggesting that the more likely students are to utilise their libraries, the more likely students are to engage in wider reading and independent learning.

Q13 and Q25.. We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do. There was a weak positive relationship between student engagement in wider reading and schools having time to develop student life skills. ($r_s(31) = .390$, $p = 0.025$)

suggesting that the more likely students are to utilise their libraries for independent study, the more time schools have available to develop life skills.

Q13 and Q26.. Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend. There was a moderate positive relationship between student engagement in wider reading and students understanding of different types of universities. ($r_s(31) = .487$, $p = .005$) suggesting that the more likely students are to utilise their libraries for independent study, the more knowledgeable students are about different types of universities and campuses.

Q13 and Q28.. Our students are independent learners.

There was a moderate positive relationship between student engagement in wider reading and students being thought of as independent learners ($r_s(31) = .498$, $p = 0.025$) suggesting that the more students engage in wider reading, the more students are thought of as independent learners.

Q13 and Q30.. The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university. There was a moderate positive relationship between student engagement in wider reading and ($r_s(31) = .498$, $p = 0.003$) suggesting that the more likely students are to utilise their libraries for independent study, the more likely parents are engaged with students education and support them to go to university.

- **Q16. Tuition fees do not put our students off going to university.**

Q16 and Q35. Our students are emotionally resilient.

There was a moderate positive relationship between students not being discouraged by tuition fees and students being emotionally resilient ($r_s(31) = .487$, $p = 0.004$) suggesting that the more emotionally resilient students are, the less concerned they are about tuition fees.

- Q17. Our students find it difficult or don't want to think about things that are not an immediate priority

...and Q18. Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade

There was a weak positive relationship between students finding it difficult to think about tasks that are not an immediate priority and students only engaging fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade ($r_s(32) = .372$, $p = 0.03$) suggesting that the more students struggle to think about things that are not an immediate priority, the more students only engage fully with work if they need to get a good grade.

...and Q26. Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend. There was a weak negative relationship between students finding it difficult to think about tasks that are not an immediate priority and students having an understanding of different types of universities ($r_s(31) = -.372, p = 0.033$) suggesting that the more students struggle to think about things that are not an immediate priority, the less students know about different types of universities and campuses.

...and Q31. Our students' success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience. There was a moderate positive relationship between students finding it difficult to think about tasks that are not an immediate priority and students being impeded at university by their limited life experience ($r_s(31) = .463, p = 0.007$) suggesting that the more students struggle to think about things that are not an immediate priority, the more staff felt students success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience.

...and Q36. Our students find self-reflection difficult.

There was a moderate positive relationship between students finding it difficult to think about tasks that are not an immediate priority and students finding self-reflection difficult ($r_s(32) = .420, p = 0.013$) suggesting that the more students struggle to think about things that are not an immediate priority, the more students find self-reflection difficult.

- **Q18. Our students will only engage fully with work if they need to do it to get a good grade**

...and QW.. A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management

There was a weak positive relationship between students having a grade focus, and the rating for a workshop delivered to students on time management ($r_s(32) = .377, p = 0.033$) suggesting that the more their students are engaged with work for the purpose of grades, the more teachers felt a workshop on time management would be appropriate.

- **Q19. Our students find the process of getting a place at university emotionally challenging**

This question did not significantly correlate with any other question asked.

- **Q20. Many of the parents of our students worry that their children should not go to university because it is too expensive**

...and Q21.. Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so.

There was a moderate negative relationship between parents discouraging university due to

costs and students regularly using the library for independent study ($r_s(31) = .487, p = 0.004$) suggesting that the more parents discourage students from university because of the costs, the less students regularly use the library.

... and Q22.. *Our students find it difficult to accurately visualise what life at university will be like.* There was a moderate positive relationship between parents worrying about university costs, and students finding it difficult to accurately visualise university life ($r_s(31) = .402, p = 0.02$) suggesting that the more parents worry about university costs, the more students find it difficult to accurately visualise university life.

... and Q30.. *The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university.*

There was a moderate negative relationship between parents worries about the costs of university life and parents engagement and supporting their child to go to university ($r_s(31) = -.481, p = 0.005$) suggesting that the more worried parents are about university costs, the less engaged they are with their child's education and the less they support their child to go to university.

- **Q21. Our students regularly use a library without being directed to do so**

...Q28. *Our students are independent learners*

There was a strong positive relationship between student library use and students being thought of as independent learners. ($r_s(31) = .621, p > 0.0001$) suggesting that the more students regularly used the library, the more staff felt the students were independent learners

And Q30. *The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university.*

There was a moderate positive relationship between student library use and parents of students being engaged with their child's education and supporting them to go to university ($r_s(31) = .507, p = 0.05$) suggesting that the more parents were engaged with students learning, the more the students utilise the library without being directed to do so.

And Q33. *Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time*

There was a moderate positive relationship between student having good life skills and library use ($r_s(31) = .416, p = 0.016$) suggesting that the better students life skills, the more students accessed the library.

And QW. *A workshop delivered to students in your school on time management*

There was a moderate negative relationship between student library use and the need for a workshop covering time management ($r_s(31) = -.400, p = 0.023$) suggesting the more

students accessed the library without prompts to do so, the less staff felt there was a need for a workshop on time management.

- **Q22. Our students find it difficult to accurately visualise what life at university will be like**

Correlated only with Q20

- **Q24. Our students and their parents put teachers under pressure to give them higher predicted grades**

Variable did not significantly correlate with any other variable

- **Q25. We have the time in school to help students develop the life skills they will need to do well at university**

... and Q28. *Our students are independent learners*

There was a moderate positive relationship between students being independent learners and schools having the time to help develop students life skills they need for university ($r_s(31) = -.442, p = 0.01$)

... and Q32. *The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university*

There was a moderate positive relationship between teachers having the training and understanding to ensure their students have a good transition to university and schools having the time to help develop students life skills they need for university ($r_s(31) = -.563, p = 0.001$)

... and QO. *Online text information that details the steps students can take to prepare for university covering academic skills, life skills, social skills and emotional skills*

There was a weak positive relationship between schools having the time to help develop students life skills they need for university and schools wanting online text resources ($r_s(31) = -.382, p = 0.034$)

... and QT. *Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period*

There was a moderate positive relationship between schools having the time to help develop students life skills they need for university and staff rating that they would like a training

session to help students manage their emotions whilst applying to university ($r_s(29) = -.436$, $p = 0.014$)

- **Q26. Our students understand the different types of universities and campuses they may attend**

... and Q32 The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university

There was a weak positive relationship between students understanding the different types of university and teachers in school having the training they need to ensure good transition ($r_s(32) = .378$, $p = 0.028$)

... and QT Training for teachers in strategies and skills to help students manage their emotions while applying to university and during the exam period

There was a weak positive relationship between students understanding the different types of university and teachers wanting a training session to help them manage their emotions whilst applying for university ($r_s(30) = .442$, $p = 0.011$)

- **Q28. Our students are independent learners**

...And QP Audio podcasts that could be downloaded by teachers and students that discuss different challenges students face at university and how to manage them well

There was a weak negative relationship between staff believing their students were independent learners and ratings for an audio podcast to be developed discussing the challenges students face ($r_s(30) = -.361$, $p = 0.043$)

- **Q29. Our students cannot engage with extra-curricular activities because of other demands on their time (work, caring responsibilities etc.)**

This question did not significantly correlate with any other question asked.

- **Q30. The parents of our students are engaged with their education and support them to go to university**

And Q31. Our students success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience

There was a weak negative relationship between parental engagement in students education and students being impeded by their life experience ($r_s(31) = -.362$, $p = 0.038$) suggesting that the more parents were engaged, the less likely students were to be hindered at university by their limited life experience.

And Q33. Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time

There was a moderate positive relationship between parental engagement in students having good life skills ($r_s(32) = -.436, p = 0.011$) suggesting that the more parents were engaged, the better students life skills.

- **Q31. Our students success at university may be impeded by their limited life experience**

And Q33.. Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time.

There was a moderate negative relationship between students success at university being impeded by limited life experience and having good life skills ($r_s(32) = -.436, p = 0.01$) suggesting the more students have good life skills, the less they are impeded by limited life experience at university.

And Q36 Our students find self-reflection difficult

There was a weak positive significant relationship between students being impeded by limited life experience at university and students finding self-reflection difficult ($r_s(31) = .377, p = 0.031$) suggesting that the more students find self-reflection difficult, the more likely to be impeded by their limited life experience at university

- **Q32. The teachers in my school have all the training and understanding they need to ensure their students have a good transition to university**

There was a moderate positive relationship between teachers feeling that they have the training to ensure students have a good transition, and the desire for more training opportunities ($r_s(30) = -.563, p = 0.001$) suggesting that the more staff felt their training they had was useful in ensuring good transition, the more training they wanted.

- **Q33. Our students have good life skills around areas such as managing money or managing time**

And QV Video excerpts showing student dilemmas at university, with a suggested lesson plan that teachers can follow to encourage discussion and debate, to help students visualise university life

There was a weak positive relationship between students having good life skills and staff feeling that a video would be a good resource for staff and students ($r_s(30) = -.398, p = 0.024$)

- **Q34.. Our students would not do well in universities where there are few other students who are like them**

This question did not significantly correlate with any other question asked.

- **Q35. Our students are emotionally resilient**

This variable correlated with Q16 only (See Q16 above)

- **Q36. Our students find self-reflection difficult**

This variable correlated with Q16 and Q 31 (See Q16, 31 above)