

Transitions and student wellbeing in higher education: Exploring the role of Independent Learning Skills.

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Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
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Studies by Debbie Rowlett.

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The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Pett', written on a light-colored background.

Date: 24th August 2020

Abstract

The number of reported mental health issues amongst university students continues to rise, affecting student attainment and progression. Within this context, this study explores students' experiences of wellbeing during transition to university, specifically exploring the under-researched area of how Independent Learning Skills (ILS) and wellbeing interrelate. A novel conceptual framework combining aspects of ILS and wellbeing was constructed which then informed semi-structured interviews with university business school students and a Template Analysis. The study found a variety of ways in which the development of ILS and student wellbeing can be helped and hindered during transition to university, for example, how student and university practices appear to affect ILS and wellbeing. As such, this study sits in contrast to previous research in combining two areas not typically combined to examine student transition, offering new practical insights into supporting students.

Key contributions that have been made as a result of this research include a deeper understanding of the relationship between specific ILS skills and specific elements of wellbeing. The experiences that students had were found to be inconsistent relating to academic support and these experiences both positive and negative were shown to mediate the relationship between ILS and wellbeing. Early experiences of the students were shown to have an anchoring effect on ILS and wellbeing, for example not engaging with support offered by their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) was later shown to have hindered achievements and feelings of wellbeing. The diversity of learning needs and preferences identified from the research was also found to relate to students' development of ILS and associated feelings of wellbeing. Further research has been identified that seeks to explore the relationship between ILS and wellbeing to specific student outcomes, including student grades, retention and progression outcomes.

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Summary table of doctoral elements

Stage	Critical insights and developments
Level 7	<p>A key part of my Masters programme was based around coaching, teaching and mentoring within a sports context. My thesis examined which coaching styles were used by a range of sports coaches and how satisfied the players were with these styles and if there was a significant difference between their preferred coaching style and the actual coaching style used by the coach. In the intervening years, I have acquired more teaching experience at more advanced levels, including roles as a college Higher Education Coordinator and as part of the University of Chester's teacher training programme, as well as now lecturing over a full range of courses as a Senior Business Lecturer at the University of Chester. This journey has been long, varied and challenging but extremely inspiring.</p> <p>Since completing my Masters, I have always taken a great interest in exploring teaching methods and I believe I have developed my own unique style aimed at allowing all learners to reach their potential and overcome challenges.</p>
Researcher & Research Development	<p>The IS8004 portfolio was developed in preparation to undertake a research thesis that would explore students' experiences during transition to university, with a focus upon exploring how independent learning skills can enhance their wellbeing. This exploration falls at a key time as the Higher Education landscape has changed over the past few years, including a focus upon widening participation, the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and more recently the government informing universities that they need to improve</p>

	<p>the support for student wellbeing with a plan to introduce a new standards charter. Linked to student wellbeing, there has also been a high number of students identified as suffering from stress, with related incidents at universities having been reported. The systematic literature review reviewed students' feelings of wellbeing during transition. This revealed that many students are feeling stressed and lacking independent learning skills (ILS) that are required at Higher Education (HE) level. There was found to be a gap in understanding how academic staff can best prepare the students for transition in the early stages.</p>
<p>Major Project (thesis)</p>	<p>The thesis is an exploration of the transitions and student wellbeing in Higher Education, with a focus upon the role of independent learning skills. The research gave insights into the wellbeing of students during transition to university and ILS were found to be associated to different wellbeing elements. The main contributions made within this field are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed an original framework to identify specific associations between ILS and wellbeing. 2. Deepened the understanding of specific ILS and wellbeing associations. 3. Examined the impact the combination of university practices and the specific capacity students bring with them have on wellbeing. 4. Added to the body of research, suggesting practices that would enhance early and effective intervention relating to wellbeing through transition. 5. Suggested further research linking ILS and wellbeing to specific student outcomes e.g. students' grades, retention and progression outcomes.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the thesis and introduces the key sections to give an overview of the principal concepts, including student wellbeing, independent learning skills (ILS) and transition and explains why they have been selected. It also gives an overview of the chosen research strategies and how these relate to the practice issues identified. It concludes by proposing how the thesis can contribute to theory and practices within students' transitions based upon an in-depth study of students' experiences.

1.1 The practice issue: The challenges to students' wellbeing during transition to the first year of university.

This research area has two driving aims. Initially to listen to the students in order to comprehend their individual motivations, aims and challenges. Secondly, to explore the role that Independent Learning Skills (ILS) has upon students' development and wellbeing. Having worked within Higher Education for over 20 years, anecdotal evidence has shown the immediate and profound difference working on those aims has on students. Focussing on these two aims can drive up standards and results within a very short time, as well as reducing stress for students and increasing their resilience. The results can be exponential.

Having worked extensively in Further Education particularly having the responsibility for preparing students for the first year of university, it became evident that the teaching pedagogies used had a relationship on how prepared the students felt and also how they later achieved at university. Examples that helped students to develop the required ILS and to feel confident included problem-based activities, peer coaching sessions and online debates. Links with employers were also important, students were asked to set up employer focus group meetings, whereby students and employers networked and discussed employability skills. Current business case study assessments were also used to develop a range of ILS skills including reflection skills and cognitive thinking development. Through developing these ILS, the students become more autonomous learners, displayed greater satisfaction levels, were actively engaged in their learning and felt more confident. This understanding allowed further research concepts to be recognised surrounding how the early development of ILS affected students' wellbeing, especially with the national rising concerns about the wellbeing of students at university (Milojevich & Lukowski, 2016).

There is empirical research that shows university students are a 'very high risk' population for psychological distress (Larcome et al., 2016; Orgyen, 2017). The number of reported mental health issues amongst university students continues to rise, and these concerns have been noted (Castillo & Schwartz, 2013; Milojevich & Lukowski, 2016). Students' mental health problems have been dramatically increasing over time, with an increase in demand for counselling, rising from about 8,000 to 18,000 over a four-year period, to 2012-13 (Williams, et al., 2015). Significant correlations have been identified between wellbeing and academic achievement (Ansari & Stock, 2010) and Zullig, Huebner and Patton (2011) found that wellbeing linked to behaviour and withdrawal. The National Survey for Students (2015) reported that students appear less satisfied, less likely to regard their lives as worthwhile and less happy, in comparison to the whole population (HEPI-HEA, 2015). This concern was also reported by Moreira and Telzer (2015).

Uni Health (2019) carried out a survey of over 1000 first and second-year university students. Their findings reinforced concerns related to several areas of student wellbeing. 82% interviewed stated they suffered from experiencing anxiety and stress with almost half that number believing that had worsened into depression. 20% of those interviewed had experienced suicidal feelings and only one in four of those said they would seek help. Further insights included concern over the university's level of support during fresher's week and the contention from more than 75% of students that more wellbeing support could help them avoid dropping out of university altogether. In a response to this growing concern Student Minds are currently developing a Mental Health Charter to be undertaken in partnership with UK universities and which is supported by OfS and DfE.

The literature informs us that students transitioning to university are facing many challenges, including high levels of stress, lacking independent skills, lack of support, not being equipped, a mismatch of expectations and the loss of student identity. Briggs, Clark and Hall (2009) focused their research on examining the disruption to the learner identity during transition which affects many students. In order to combat some of these challenges, Carlson, Rowett and Domene (2015) highlight that mindful practices can enhance transitions, this is supported by Dawson and Pooley (2013) who suggest that optimism aids resilience during this stressful time. Tett, Cree, and Christie (2017) have identified that there are four significant transitions that students go through, or sets of critical moments: the loss of a sense

of belonging on coming to university, learning to fit in by the end of the first year, changing approaches to learning and belonging in the final years of study and changing selves in the years following graduation. At each point, positive relationships with peers and staff made a significant difference, this is reflected by Trautwein and Bosse (2017) who suggest that the responses during transition are critical and approaches used need to be connected between staff and students.

Research shows that theories of self-determination (Neimiec, Ryan & Deci, 2010) can provide a framework to empower students to thrive (Field, Duffy & Higgins, 2014).

Developing independent learning skills can develop students' capacity to manage a range of situations (Field et al., 2014). University degrees require students to demonstrate a range of higher level skills including the ability to solve complex problems, to perform under pressure and critically analyse. Independent learners can be referred to as self-directed, self-regulated, autonomous learners. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) states that students must develop 'Personal and intellectual autonomy', (QAA, 2011).

Meyer et al (2008) reviewed international perspective of ILS and concluded that independent learners "develop the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to make responsible decisions and take appropriate actions in regard to their own learning; are curious, self-confident and self-reliant; understand their own learning needs and interests; and values learning for its own sake", (Meyer, 2008, p.16). Independent learning relates to active learning (University of New South Wales, 2013). Field et al. (2014) show a correlation between ILS and student wellbeing, but further research is needed to explore the specific elements of ILS and wellbeing to be able to inform teaching and learning practices within universities. Research shows that students are lacking the required independent learning skills (The Higher Education Academy, 2014; Field et al., 2014) and assuming that students come equipped with these skills is a wellbeing issue (Field et al., 2014). Ensuring the students have developed the required independent learning skills should not be left to chance, and it should be a shared responsibility, Broad (2006) advocates that learners play an important role in developing the required ILS to be able to thrive.

The importance of developing confidence and resilience in students is of significant consequence, therefore consideration of health and wellbeing concerns during transition cannot be taken lightly. Consequences can be significant to universities and future employers

but, most importantly, to the students themselves. Meehan and Howells (2019) explored the feelings of 'belonging' in higher education. This extensive research identified that the rates of students not completing their educational journey was increasing and established that developing confidence and resilience was of significant importance.

Concern was raised that many factors were not helping these developments and these even included the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) introduced by the Conservative Government in England, partly as a means of delivering a standardised assessment around the quality of teaching. This framework was considered by the paper to be likely to be measuring the wrong aspects of learning and teaching. The work recommends a greater focus on assessment and feedback practice as being a more effective means of improving teaching quality. Three elements that most significantly impacted upon the students in this research were the teaching quality; the learning environment and student outcomes and learning gain. These findings reinforced findings that the quality of the academic staff, their area of study and the degree to which they felt they belonged in the environment as the principal areas of importance to students.

The findings go on to identify that in many cases student withdrawal was linked more closely to university factors rather than personal factors, also noted by Ansari and Stock (2010). These factors included importantly the quality and frequency of feedback, the quality of interactions students had with academic staff and the quality of advice received about the programme of study and university policies. Students often withdrew from universities within the first year of study and many reasons were stated. Different expectations students had of their course that were not matched by the reality, differing priorities within their lives, a lack of confidence in their own academic abilities, poor time management skills and not developing enough social engagement were some of the most frequent examples of reasons for their withdrawal (Meehan & Howells, 2019). This research clearly identifies some of the challenges many students experience particularly through their first year of transition to university. Sometimes these challenges prove too obdurate for them to overcome leading to significant rates of dropout and emotional challenges.

The quality of teaching and the interactions with staff are shown to be important areas in defining outcomes as is the importance of going into university with an accurate understanding of the demands of study. Importantly the ability to develop a feeling of

belonging and avoiding alienation (Askam, 2008) was proven to be fundamental in determining whether individual students completed their learning aspirations. A further significant finding surrounded the complexities and individuality each student brought with them to university (Askam, 2008). Differences that had been developed through their different family backgrounds and own intellectual and personality growth, illustrated these complexities. The report stressed the importance that university teachers accept and comprehend the fact that differences might disrupt aspirations and make efforts to develop inclusive practices.

The UK economy is an additional important area that has the potential to benefit significantly from students developing higher level skills, referred to as 'Extending & Applying' by Hockings, Thomas, Ottaway and Jones (2017), in an effective and timely way. Employers are suffering skills shortages, around 20% of employed graduates are in non-professional roles three and a half years after graduating (Johnson, 2016). Johnson, (2016), also states that a 1% increase in the share of the workforce with a university degree raises long-run productivity by between 0.2% and 0.5%. Further that a doubling of the number of universities per capita delivers a 4 % higher future Gross Domestic Product per capita. There is significant evidence that ILS can play an important role in contributing to employer needs. Sarkar, et al. (2016) revealed that a large number of employers were dissatisfied with the following areas of knowledge and skills of the graduates, with independent learning ability being second:

Commercial awareness

Many people moving into their first employment are not aware that the first target of most companies according to their Articles of Association is to make a profitable business. Investors or owners have often invested money, time and effort to build businesses that return a financial reward. Additionally, the country gains taxes from the profits businesses make so the importance of commercial awareness is difficult to overstate. The basic premise that wages are paid as an investment in productive effort is a reality graduates must grasp from the beginning of their employment.

Independent learning ability

This area presents one of the most significant opportunities to improve outcomes for individuals and companies. The acquisition of these skills affords the individuals the chance to become more self-directing and self-reliant as well as enhancing their employability value. For employers the

confidence of being able to rely on staff to make wise, timely and thoughtful interventions on their own initiative both removes the need to micro manage and provides an extra level of management security.

Problem solving skills

Much of business management relates to new and often unforeseen problems being overcome with the minimum disruption to the output of the particular company. As these problems occur at any time and at any location businesses gain a very significant advantage if all their employees possess a high calibre of problem-solving skills. New graduates can increase their importance to and rewards from a company if they can demonstrate they have these skills. Chhinzer and Russo (2017) also highlight the importance of graduate's problem-solving skills in securing a positive relationship with the employer's perception of specific graduate employability.

Leadership skills

These are important at every level for many of the same reasons as the problem-solving skills discussed above. In times of crisis it is not always possible to have a designated leader available, so graduates who prove to be able to make good decisions and obtain the respect and support of others in times of significance both minimise potential damage to an organisation and enhance their own employability and progression.

Ability to use own initiative

The above two vital skills can only be brought into effective use if they are accompanied by the ability to use one's own initiative. The understanding of when to defer to others and when to assert their own views relies on a realistic comprehension of what areas they have expertise or knowledge in and when they are the most able person to lead or problem solve. This skill relies on confidence and judgement that usually improve with maturity. The graduate who can develop this skill at an early point in their employment is of very significant value to a company.

Sarkar, et al. (2016) reported that the top five important graduate knowledge, skills and capabilities in current situations were a capacity for flexibility or adaptability; problem solving skills; analytical and critical thinking skills; ability to use own initiative; team working skills. These skills required, show that Higher Education needs to ensure that graduates are autonomous and self-regulated. This was highlighted by Kaur, Noman & Awang-Hashim (2018) suggesting that Higher Education learning needs to be student centered to enable these skills to be fully developed. Presently the productivity performance

of the UK economy is significantly lower than key competitor countries such as the United States, Germany and France. Bridging this gap has been identified as one of the most important tasks for Government and industry. Bol (2015) demonstrates additionally that education can provide productivity enhancing skills. It is clear that factors affecting recruitment to university, including students from less affluent backgrounds being accepted into high ranking institutions (Higher Education Funding For England, 2014) and dropout rates from universities affect the UK economy. Johnson, (2016), points out that many students are dissatisfied, with 60 percent concerned and disappointed about all or part of their course. A third of this number place the blame on the poor quality of teaching.

1.2 Research gap, aims and objectives

Several strategies have been adopted by universities in efforts to combat the concerns discussed, including peer mentoring projects, online interventions and activity sessions (Collings, Swanson & Watkins, 2015; Knox, 2005; Taylor, 2014). Most research to date focuses upon how wider university services and external agencies can support student wellbeing (Baik, Larcombe & Brooker (2019), however, there is limited research of how academic staff can directly or indirectly influence student wellbeing (Stanton et al., 2016). As the value of academic skills and the ability to intellectually channel and direct one's own learning are focussed upon, the route to becoming more resilient and thriving in a range of new environments present themselves. This is an area that academic staff are uniquely able to guide and inspire.

The Teaching Excellence Framework has introduced several important developments to ensure universities deliver higher level skills in an effective manner. However, ongoing and additional exploration into the transition year would be beneficial, concentrating on the best way for academics ensuring the early development of independent learning skills and delivering efficient support. There has been considerable work, both completed and ongoing around developing the academic resilience in students being taught Higher Education in Further Education establishments (Healey, Jenkins & Lea, 2014) and the Government is paying significant attention in relation to the optimum way of delivering Higher Education, The TEF will link funding of teaching in Higher Education to quality (Johnson, 2016).

There remains however, a significant gap in the understanding of the optimum way to support the transitions of students when they enter the university environment and of how to ensure

they are fully prepared. There also seems to be examples of high student withdrawal, particularly during the first year of the undergraduate programme (Harvey, Drew & Smith, 2006). The transition experiences of students have been well researched, transition can be likened to entering an alien environment (Askham, 2008). Some mature students may suffer from considerable anxiety and self-doubt in their abilities to study at a higher level (Christie et al., 2016) and there can be significant differences between Further Education and Higher Education (Christie et al., 2016). Through developing an understanding of the issues impacting on student transitions and wellbeing, this thesis project has made important developments in recommending optimum ways forward in supporting and allowing students to thrive in a university environment. This was guided by the following aims and objectives.

1.3 The Research Aim

To explore the role that independent learning skills have on student wellbeing during transition to university, in order to enable academic staff to better support students during transition.

Research Objectives

1. Design a conceptual framework which articulates the connections between independent learning skills and wellbeing, which can be readily applied by practitioners.
2. Explore how independent learning skills and wellbeing are related during transition to university.

1.4 Outline methodology

Template Analysis was used to examine the narratives of the students to gain an understanding of the experiences of their wellbeing during transition to the first year of university, and also the role that ILS played. This method was chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, because it allows significant flexibility relating to analysis including the capacity to develop ideas and the template as the work progresses. Secondly because it allows for the identification of important a priori themes that are considered the most important guiding principles for exploration within the research. Template analysis was used to identify codes, categories and themes from the narratives. A priori themes related to ILS and wellbeing components were identified from the literature and these allowed analysis of the data with

concepts already in mind. Emerging and integrated themes and theories were then examined to make conclusions about student transitions in relation to their wellbeing and independent learning skills. The Template Analysis allowed a systematic and also flexible approach to data analysis and also enabled the researcher to explore the data in depth to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and feelings, in order to provide insights and generate ideas, as well as uncover any trends in thoughts and feelings.

Twelve second year university students studying Business and Management programmes were invited to a meeting lasting between one and two hours with the researcher. Consideration was given to the time chosen when conducting the interviews (avoiding dates just before student exams and assessments). A week before the meeting students were asked to have given the researcher a piece of writing, (approximately 500 words) about “your transition to university.” From this piece of writing prompts were prepared. If the student did not complete the 500 words the meeting continued as planned with prompts from other students’ writing or focus on the main areas of investigation from the literature reviewed, used in their stead.

The students were selected by inviting them to participate and they were on a business programme where the researcher was not directly involved with their teaching or assessing, to allow the responses to be as free from external influences as possible. Participant forms were completed and collected before the data collection began, to ensure transparency at all stages. In order to minimise any possible anxiety from the students who took part in the research, the following points were applied:

1. As Level 5 students there would be some distance from the immediacy of the issues, as the discussions were about their experiences from the previous year.
2. Participants were advised to speak to their PAT or Student Futures staff, should any issues arise. These contact details were given as part of the consent form.

1.5 Proposed contribution to theory and practice

The literature reinforces the conclusion that the identified issues surrounding students’ transition to university are complex and interlinked. They therefore demand complex, coordinated and critical responses. The contribution universities have the potential to make to the knowledge economy of the United Kingdom is immense. The significant changes that are

sweeping over the country provide wide ranging opportunities and significant risks. It is clear that the outcomes will to a large extent be determined by the optimism, educational attainment and effective preparation of future leaders. It is also evident that universities must play a leading role in determining it.

The focus of the thesis and possibly an area for developing and ongoing research is in examining links between Seligman's model of wellbeing (2011) and Meyer et al.'s (2008) model of Independent Learning Skills. There is evidence in the literature of connections between various elements within these two models. Examples of this include research by Harding and Thompson (2011) who reported that students benefit from understanding how they learn and how they can learn more effectively. This improves their motivation, self-awareness and self-efficacy and makes them more likely to succeed. Anicha, Ode, Moeller and Robinson (2011) reported that students who scored highly on mindfulness scales exhibited greater cognitive control flexibility. The research focuses on connections students experienced during their first year of transition to university between their feelings of wellbeing and their acquisition of specific ILS.

The concept that the skills of independent learning may have definite links with student wellbeing is potentially of significance. If further research backed, specific information is identified to support these links, the opportunities to design programmes or implement practices that reduce stress for students and enhance their attainment hold self-evident benefits. These would primarily benefit the student but also the university, employers and even the country as a whole.

There are numerous anecdotal accounts of students who have successfully developed these critical skills at an early stage going on to achieve at university and it is reasonable to surmise that a person who is able to understand, guide and govern their own learning will be far more likely to thrive and counteract issues that can impair their own wellbeing. The evidence is that many students however do not develop these skills in a timely way, with some not mastering them at all, this is then identified by employers (Sarkar, et al., 2016). Identifying ways to ensure these issues are effectively addressed offers wide ranging opportunities to allow more students to attain their potential. This has been the focus of the contributions through this work.

Through the thesis research, understanding of ILS and wellbeing associations has been deepened. An original conceptual framework has been developed that identifies specific associations between the above. Additional emerging/ integrated themes including inconsistency of experience related to academic support, the anchoring effect of early experiences, and the diversity of learning needs and preferences were all related to ILS and wellbeing, and were shown to have significant impact on the students and demanded inclusion. The template analysis proved to be an ideal vehicle which could be developed to enhance the ability to effectively interrogate these themes. The body of research suggesting practices that would enhance early and effective interventions relating to wellbeing through transitions has been added to. The synthesis of the primary research, with the literature considered in the following chapter makes a compelling suggestion that work to more deeply understand this important area has the potential to make significant improvements for all involved.

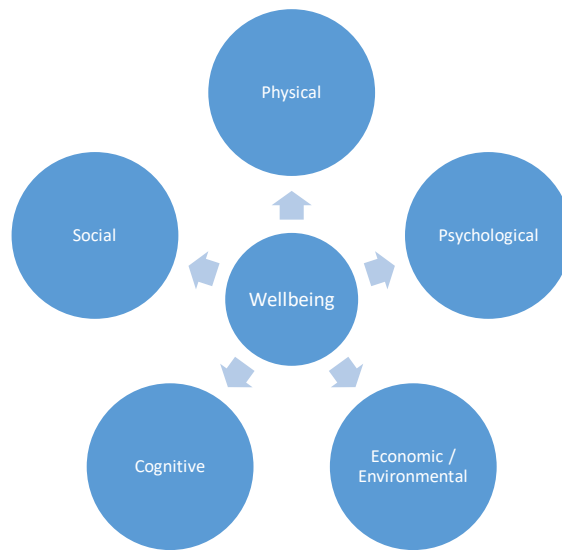
Chapter 2 Literature Review

The field of student wellbeing is an area of increasing concern nationally especially in relation to students' initial transition to university. Within this transition, their acquisition and development of independent learning skills (ILS) is important to ensuring students thrive in their new learning environment. The literature review explores these areas by first considering theories and elements that constitute student wellbeing followed by exploring transitions and ILS. A template allowing the comparison of the literature between specific ILS and specific areas of wellbeing is elucidated.

2.1 Experiences of wellbeing

There are many different theories of wellbeing and they incorporate different elements, however, Taylor (2015) states that there is substantial common ground when identifying the elements of wellbeing, things that are either constitutive, productive or indicative of wellbeing. Taylor (2015) refers to six key markers of wellbeing as happiness, health, life satisfaction, success in goals / values, supportive personal relationships and personal development. These markers of wellbeing align with Cohen et al. (2013), who state that four common elements of wellbeing are the presence of positive emotions (contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfilment including positive functioning and making contributions to society. From a broader perspective, the literature shows that wellbeing is a combination of physical, mental, emotional and social health, for example Gillett-Swan and Grant-Smith (2018) propose that the dimensions of wellbeing can be shown as interlocking as illustrated below in Figure 1:

Figure 1 The interlocking dimensions of wellbeing (Gillett-Swan & Grant-Smith, 2018)



In order to develop these different elements and ensure increased integration of all dimensions, Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2015 p. 3) consider that individuals may have an accrued wellbeing, defined as “an individual’s capacity to manage over time, the range of inputs, both constructive and undesirable that can, in isolation, affect a person’s emotions, physical and cognitive state in response to a given context”. This concept of accrued wellbeing may have some relevance when exploring students’ wellbeing as students are often affected by many external stressors at university, such as moving away from home and having to make new friendship groups.

Wellbeing studies often focus upon the benefits of positive psychological approaches, advocated by Diener, Heintzelman, Kushlev, Tay, and Wirtz, (2017). One area of positive psychology is subjective wellbeing (SWB), which is referred to as people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives. The three components of SWB are: life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect (Diener et al., 2017). This approach was explored by Field et al. (2014) who have shown that students benefit from being self-determined, resulting in reduced stress. Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2015) also show that wellbeing is linked to happiness, life satisfaction and quality of life. The literature would therefore suggest that the concept of positive psychological control is something to consider when exploring the wellbeing of students during transition.

When starting university students face many challenges including having to become independent learners and often working within an environment with a different culture (Crabtree, 2006 & Winter & Dismore, 2010). Students have to find a way of managing these challenges in order to achieve, engage in learning and university life, progress in a meaningful way and optimally flourish. Huppert and So (2013) presented 10 components of flourishing. Flourishing refers to the experience of life going well, it is a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. Flourishing is synonymous with a high level of mental well-being, and it epitomises mental health (Huppert & So 2013). The 10 components are competence, emotional stability, engagement, meaning, optimism, positive emotions, positive relationships, resilience, self- esteem, vitality. This model has similarities with Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model, however, Seligman’s model (2011) has been extensively used and validated in wellbeing studies (Seldon and Martin, 2017) to specifically support the wellbeing of students during transition to university.

Seligman’s (2011) multidimensional PERMA model, (see Figure 2) consists of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievements.

Figure 2: Seligman’s (2011) multidimensional PERMA model of wellbeing



Seligman’s (2011) model of happiness helps us understand these five elements and what we can do to maximise each element to reach a life with a full measure of happiness. The model directly focuses on the positive side of wellbeing, associations with health, life, and

achievements. Seligman's Model (2011) was identified as being the most appropriate model to use within the primary research. The elements of wellbeing can be easily related to the context of students and education, indeed the model has been used widely in education settings. As the primary aim for students is to achieve and engage with learning, the components are ideally linked to this aim. Positive and negative emotions are included in most models to measure subjective wellbeing (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2014) however, the context of measuring wellbeing within an educational setting allows for a more tailored approach to promote student wellbeing specifically and Seligman's model (2011) allows this more specific focus across the five elements.

Coffey, Wray-Lake, Branand and Mashek (2016) reported that Seligman's PERMA model predicted markers of wellbeing (for example vitality, life satisfaction) and flourishing (for example physical health) and is therefore useful for predicting flourishing among graduates. Not all literature concurs on the efficacy of the model. Miller (2009) believed that the detailed links between positive psychology and wellbeing were not well enough established and that further research should be completed. This appears to have some validity and this research will aim to contribute and add further comprehension to the field. Overall however, the advantages of being context specific and supported in significant previous studies as being a useful indicator, even a predictor of student wellbeing, makes this model the most interesting and appropriate tool to help unlock the understanding searched for within this research.

Other wellbeing models that contribute to the wellbeing discussion cannot as easily be applied to examining transitioning students in higher education, are less specific and so cannot contribute so fully. For example, Gillett-Swan and Grant-Smith's (2018) wellbeing dimensions are broader measures and focus less on specific factors when learning at university. Subjective wellbeing theories for example the three components proposed by Dienier et al. (2017) life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect, lead to producing a more overall wellbeing score. Whereas Seligman's (2011) model with five specific components measures wellbeing as a profile of responses to help develop the individual student. As Seligman's (2011) model is multidimensional this can help with the assessment of wellbeing, by monitoring changes and improvements in emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievements over time.

The PERMA components (an overview)

Positive Emotions

Huppert and So's (2013) flourishing model as well as Frallion's (2004) wellbeing model include the element of positive emotions (an emotional component), thus supporting the relationship between this component and wellbeing. Chen, Wong, Ran and Gilson (2009) also found that finding positive coping strategies has significant buffering effects on the wellbeing of students. This component relates to students developing resilience and supports the findings from Field et al. (2014) that self-determination is related to psychological wellbeing amongst students.

Engagement

Student engagement is a main area of interest for educational organisations, indeed, The National Student Survey (NSS) measures engagement as one of the outcomes, and it is recognised as a vital component within The Quality Assurance Agency's guiding principles of quality education (QAA, 2019). Engaging in a range of stimulating and challenging situations help to develop happiness as well as developing skills. Quevedo and Abella (2014) highlight that people who control their outcomes may be more satisfied with life. Students who are intellectually, socially and emotionally engaged in their studies do better (Richardson et al., 2012). The importance of student engagement was also noted by McIntosh and Shaw (2017) and Wrencha et al. (2010) who recommended that empowering the students helped to develop resilience and that a student-centred approach should be sought to allow this.

Relationships

Cameron 's (2011) organisational virtue model supports this component of wellbeing, focusing upon relationships within the workplace and promotes practices such as caring, respect and the interpersonal culture of the workplace. Building strong relationships with a range of people is a critical element in human happiness, resilience and development. Particularly during transition to university, students' life circumstances are disrupted, presenting challenges around identify (Bandias, Fuller & Pfitzner, 2011 & Leese, 2010) and having strong relationships gives support in difficult times (Crisp et al., 2009). Frallion (2004) also identified the component satisfaction with relationships as being a predictor of wellbeing, adding further validity to the inclusion of this wellbeing element.

Meaning

Steger (2012) reported that since the 1960s, research has suggested that people function best in both personal and work lives when they have a sense of meaning or purpose, defined in terms of having a direction, connecting to something larger than oneself, and feeling that what one does is valuable. Meaning amongst university students is varied, but having a purpose has been shown to relate to positive feelings of wellbeing (Adam, Hartington & Brown, 2008) and this purpose amongst students is often strongly linked to achieving their degree. However, others find meaning in engaging with the wider learning community through for example peer mentoring (Collings, Swanson & Watkins, 2015). Steger (2012) refers to achieving a purpose in life from one's strengths and engagements, therefore meaning can relate particularly to the engagement and achievement components of the PERMA model.

Achievement

Achievements and accomplishments can be defined by individuals differently. Some may refer to as awards and prestige, others to as a feeling of mastery and daily achievements (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). This component was also identified by Frallion (2004) as affecting wellbeing and a key factor to achievement is having resilience. Frallion (2004) also identified effective functioning and the maximizing of one's potential (a performance component) as an influencing factor of wellbeing, this aligns with Seligman's (2011) achievement component. Other research linking achievements to wellbeing includes Ansari and Stock (2010) who linked wellbeing with academic achievement and dropping out. Field, et al. (2014) showed that lack of academic preparedness, effects achievements and wellbeing. As achievement is the primary aim of students at university this component is likely to play a significant part in their feelings of wellbeing. It is also worth noting that there is limited research on the strength of association of each of these components in predicting wellbeing (Kern, Waters, Adler & White, 2014).

In addition to the wellbeing components proposed by Seligman (2011) there is other research that is important to consider when identifying factors that affect a student's wellbeing.

Education aims to develop the long-term wellbeing of students and the literature shows that a network of support and development is important to achieve the individual's wellbeing.

Research by McIntosh (2015) refers to the need for whole institution approach to transitions, and that a more integrated approach will improve retention rates, increase achievement and

engagement between students and staff, “We propose that the HE sector engages with government, policymakers and other education providers, including further education (FE) colleges, to provide a coordinated approach to developing students’ resilience”. (McIntosh & Shaw, 2017, Section 5, para 6). Another determining factor of students’ wellbeing is resilience (McIntosh & Shaw, 2017) with Dawson and Pooley (2013) finding that optimism and support significantly predict resilience.

McIntosh and Shaw (2017) further found that the development of resilience was a major factor in understanding student transitions and that developing mindfulness techniques is significant to their resilience. Thus, empowering students to thrive impacts positively on their wellbeing and supports their overall development. Research indicates that wellbeing is indeed linked to both self-efficacy and achievement (Giusta, Fernandez, & Jewell, 2017) and that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between engagement, wellbeing and outcomes (Willms, 2013). Further, the literature supports a time sensitivity priority, as psychological wellbeing is changeable, even over a short length of time (Gibson et al., 2018).

The literature considered above supports the concept that developing a range of psychological skills at an early stage in the transition process is likely to play a significant role in minimising student challenges, or allowing them to face them in a better equipped manner and thus combat these threats to their wellbeing. Additional considerations that need to be acted upon are the current pressures on student wellbeing due to Covid-19, which has prevented some aspects of wellbeing, for example relatedness, being present. Grant-Smith, Gillett-Swan, and Chapman (2017) highlighted the need for students to develop protective factors such as support networks, the need for flexibility within a working context, their wellbeing in other parts of their life, to help reduce risks to their wellbeing. This is reflected by McIntosh and Shaw (2017) confirming the need to assess both the internal and external factors that affect a student’s resilience. Seligman’s (2011) model has been found to be a relevant and recognised model to explore all these elements of wellbeing, during student’s transition to university. The next section reviews these specific challenges during transition and discusses some of the interventions that have been taken to enhance student wellbeing.

2.2 Challenges faced during transition to university and feelings of wellbeing.

A student's wellbeing in HE can be affected by both internal and external influences, however the literature helps to identify where some of the main challenges lie. The early engagement of the individual student during transition to university is vital to establishing a positive approach to their learning (Seldon & Martin, 2017). This is supported by a report by *The Graduate Assembly* (2014) demonstrating that academic engagement is ranked 4th out of 10 predictors of wellbeing at Berkeley University. Although different educational practices and policies do exist within the United States of America (USA), there is no evidence to suggest that the benefits of early engagement of students during transition would be any less significant to the United Kingdom (UK) students than to those from the USA and the findings of this research provide illumination that should be considered. Students' preparedness and academic engagement during transition is therefore worth considering.

Field, Duffy, and Huggins (2014) and The Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2014) indicate that the ineffective development of tutor student relationships and a lack of academic preparedness both have a negative impact on student wellbeing. Dias and Sá (2014) report that one HE institution reported a 29% increase in the use of counselling services in four years and another reported that 40% of the first-year students visit their counselling centre, these findings demonstrate that moving into university life can be a difficult experience for an increasing number of students (Askham, 2008; Bailey & Philips, 2016; Leveson, McNeil & Joiner, 2013). Postareff, Mattsson, Lindslom-Ylänne and Hailikari (2016) noted that the wellbeing and emotions of students needed support and it was not enough merely to support successful learning. A further issue of concern was a finding from Hall (2012) who reported that broadly across a range of subject areas, new university students now seem less well-equipped and prepared to deal with their evolving challenges or make the most of the opportunities for personal growth and development offered alongside academic studies, highlighting that additional transitional support programmes are required.

The specific challenges to student transition firstly need to be clearly identified. The UK Government noted the importance of ensuring effective student transitions in their 2016 White Paper relating to the knowledge economy, supporting the broader theme of the delivery of higher standards and more effective education (Johnson, 2016). When moving from a college to university it is evident that the teaching and learning environment is significantly different with students who "appeared to be unaware that independent learning

was a requirement for success in higher education and lacked many of the skills necessary for effective independent study” (Crabtree & Roberts, 2009, para 4). Other barriers noted in this work included the several barriers to widening participation including "the importance of social and academic integration, the mismatch between student expectations and experiences, lack of appropriate academic study skills and the importance of student support” (Crabtree and Roberts 2009, para 4.).

During transition consideration of challenges to student identity was a focus for Briggs, Clarke and Hall (2009) and Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali and Rogers (2008). The latter found that personal and cultural identification was confusing for many students during transition, as was the importance of developing appropriate pedagogies to inform university practices. This issue of identity is not solely confined to young people leaving college at eighteen. Askham (2008) reported that adult learners feel as though entering HE is like moving into an alien environment, suggesting that greater efforts to comprehend the challenges facing the entire body of students beginning their degree studies is required from the learning organisations.

The issue of concern over identity was also explored in other literature (Leese, 2010; Bandias et al., 2011) relating to students’ perspectives on transitioning from Further Education (FE) to HE and the disparities in the students’ confidence in workplace preparedness. The more practical skills focus of FE did not in many cases prepare the students well for the requirement of HE that the students understand and develop independent academic skills and take far more responsibility for their own learning. These findings highlight the importance of adapting expectations relating to HE and doing so in a timely manner so that the opportunity for learning can be maximised. More support for this point relating to the significance of prior educational experiences is provided by (Cook & Rushton, 2008) and evidence that experiences encountered shape students’ academic expectations and also their interactions with academic staff is detailed by (Crisp et al., 2009). All of the above indicate that work to ensure students’ expectations and abilities match more closely the reality they will face in their new environment will protect their wellbeing. Further research in this area should inform the institutions of the most beneficial actions and programmes to develop to support this aim in the future.

The literature finds the key challenges during transition include high level of stress (Askham, 2008; Palmer & Rodger, 2009), lack of support (Postareff et al., 2016), a mismatch of expectations (Crabtree & Roberts, 2009) not being equipped for work and lacking independent skills (HEA, 2014; Field et al., 2014), concerns around loss of identity (Askham, 2008) and varied levels of relationships with academic staff (Crisp et al., 2009). With some of the key challenges identified the review now considers examples of case studies and interventions during transition and explores possible ways from literature to reduce this noted stress and negative feelings of wellbeing. The literature above makes it clear that there are a significant range of circumstances that make transition often challenging and difficult and sometimes a genuine threat to the wellbeing of students. These circumstances make it important to ensure everyone involved take all steps possible to combat and minimise the most damaging potential outcomes, but more than that, maximising opportunity for every student and making transition an enjoyable and exciting first step of their higher education journey.

Numerous support programmes relating to student transitions that include interventions and activities have been undertaken. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of these programmes has been researched. They include introductory courses, focused induction activities before enrolment, online bridging courses and extracurricular activities to develop collegiality between first year students (Taylor, 2014; Wojcieszek et al., 2012). A peer mentoring study was found to demonstrate increases in the levels of student satisfaction during the early stages of transition (Collings, Swanson & Watkins, 2015). This work links to findings that students who are intellectually, socially and emotionally engaged in their studies do better (Richardson et al., 2012). This engagement was also noted by Wrencha et al. (2010), highlighting the importance around the students need to take on responsibility for their own learning and ensure effective tutor support.

Hughes and Smaii (2012) identified that early interventions in transitions was both required and effective in establishing social support, this reinforces the relationship element of Seligman's PERMA model. Gale and Parker (2011) produced a good practice report relating to student transitions into HE. The report helped develop the Australian Government's approach to enhancing transitions. Nineteen projects were reviewed and useful insights across a range of projects were obtained. This report provides an international perspective, so although caution should be given when drawing conclusions the scope of the report should

not be ignored. An important focus throughout this work is that the authors have suggested that there are three different conceptions of student transition into higher education and this is presented as a typology of student transition into higher education, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Alternative conceptions of student transition into higher education (Gale & Parker, 2011).

Conceptions of student transition	Transition metaphors	Types of transitional change: from one to another
Transition as Induction (T1)	Pathway; Journey; Milestones	Inculcation: sequentially defined periods of adjustment From one institutional and/or disciplinary context to another
Transition as Development (T2)	Trajectory; Life stage	Transformation: qualitatively distinct stages of maturation From one student and/or career identity to another
Transition as Becoming (T3)	Whole of life; Rhizomatic	Fluctuation: perpetual series of fragmented movements Lived reality or subjective experience, from birth to death

The idea of a typology is supported by Tett, Cree, and Christie (2017) suggesting transition is ongoing and is made up of critical moments. Furthermore positive relations with peers and staff make significant differences to individual’s transitions. Importantly transition activities should be embedded, coherent and connected with the curriculum and policies. The above findings in Table 1 are indicative that present practice is often more fractured than would be ideal and often not well matched with curriculum requirements, sometimes lacking in a well thought out, logical processes. This means that it is often not effective in providing seamless, effective transitions. Bogdan and Elliot (2015) contribute to this theme by suggesting the use of early introductory courses and extra induction activities before enrolment being embedded into the student journey, with Stanton et al. (2016) reflecting the benefits of flexible and connected learning. In order to increase the number of practical recommendations more work

to fully understand the complex needs of the individual young people transitioning to university would be needed.

Other important research has focused upon finding ways to address and support the potential problems of psychological health amongst university students. Examples are analysed by Seldon and Martin (2017), '*Helping students and staff by creating positive and mindful universities*'. This report focuses on case studies from universities in a range of countries and considers the benefits of developing a positive psychology approach seeking to develop innovative and proactive processes to enhance mental health. This work has great significance in the UK as the Teaching and Excellence Framework promotes seeking new approaches to develop positive and mindful universities, as currently mental health is at the forefront of thinking (HEFCE, 2015 & Student Minds, 2018).

Seldon and Martin (2017) explore transition management and support the views that isolation, work stress and financial pressures frequently occur during transition, with 87% of students finding transitions difficult to cope with. Seldon and Martin (2017) make several recommendations in relation to offsetting some of the potentially negative consequences. A ten point programme is put forward which includes one senior figure taking responsibility for transition inductions and mentoring schemes. The importance of the university staff supporting and understanding the programme is stressed as one of the first and most important steps and this clearly requires specific training (Seldon and Martin, 2017). Additional work including Carlson et al.'s (2015) work on mindfulness courses contributes to this theme. Carlson et al.'s (2015) work also highlights the connection between students learning and the trusting, empathetic, community environment of the classroom. Every participant in this study discussed the positive impact that the learning community had on their ability to understand complex topics of mindfulness (Carlson et al., 2015). Galante et al. (2018) confirm the need for mindfulness training for staff, to ensure a wider strategy for student wellbeing during university in order to increase resilience. Research by O'Driscoll, Byrne, McGillicuddy, Lambert & Sahmn (2017) suggest that further longitudinal research is required to assess the benefits of mindfulness in preparing students.

Other approaches focus upon different strategies. McKay and Sheridan (n.d.) analysed a pilot study that sought to develop academic writing through online support packages designed to improve students in transition, by promoting skills and clarifying expectations. The outcomes included improvements in students' self-confidence and identity. Developing students' confidence and providing more realistic expectations through online strategies proved to be of value even before transition had begun. Due to Covid-19, universities have required a rapid response to switch to online delivery overnight. Liguori and Winkle (2020) demonstrate how significant opportunities and learning can be derived, even from within a particularly harrowing crisis, by discussing how universities can now embrace mass adoption of online education. Digitalisation within both higher education and research is a field that has enormous potential. The Government has developed a strategy (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017) in relation to this, that immediately highlights the demands for significantly increased finances and other resources to ensure the UK maximises the potential of the innovations. The best ways to hone the ILS that this work considers important, must include mastering the digital world (Liguori & Winkle, 2020) and utilising the tremendous resources provided. Digital technology will inevitably be at the forefront of HE developments and its importance is difficult to overstate.

More work that focuses on the disparity of expectations has been completed with relation to expectations both from the students' prior expectations (Leese, 2010) and from gaps that exist between students' and lecturers' expectations (Brinkworth et al., 2009 & Crisp et al., 2009). This further supports the idea that the timelier the intervention the more benefits the students obtain. These positive outcomes for students are also noted by Knox (2005) reporting on the generic module '*Next steps at university*' a bridging course from level three to level four, providing enhanced understanding and support. One hundred and three students completed this course within a Scottish University, with benefits related to progression and retention identified. This work highlights the potential long-term benefits that can be developed before the start of university. These pre arrival courses and activities have proven popular with many UK universities (Nottingham Trent University, 2016 & University of Bedfordshire, 2016).

Building in tailored support through tutorial systems is considered, but concerns around this approach include, these systems taking time to set up and not proving responsive enough to the required critical responses (Tett, Cree, & Christie, 2017). This view is supported with the reasoning that the complexity of the accumulated first year challenges demands that certain

critical responses are interconnected and coherent in order to be fit for purpose (Trautwein & Bosse, 2017). The benefits of developing resilience in students may also be important. Studies including those by Ewert and Yoshino (2011) and Rowe and Stewart (2011) have looked at how the learning environment affects socialisation and resilience. Additionally, resilience-based interventions introduced at an early stage in transitions have been suggested as beneficial by Byrd and Mckinney (2012), who found that limited coping abilities contributed to the psychological distress of college students. All of this being said, more detailed studies of how the requisite skills needed by students can be acquired at an early stage of transition as well as the best strategies available to allow academic staff to support this work, would certainly be beneficial. More extensive research would begin to deliver the deeper understanding this complex area requires and could include future research into stress prevention programs for university students, that can investigate practice elements to inform teaching practices and policy (Rith-Najarian, Boustani & Chorpita 2019).

The literature reviewed has confirmed that the transition to university, particularly over the first few months can often, perhaps even usually, be full of challenges and life changes for students undertaking it, as well as requiring very significant developments in a range of skills and knowledge (Hall, 2012). Efficacy of preparation for and transition to university has a critical bearing on the final outcomes achieved. This is true in relation to both academic success and in producing individuals ready and able to contribute well to a working organisation (Johnson, 2006). Further research to this area is significantly important as it impacts upon the capacity to thrive of the student, the ability of the university to effectively educate and the professionalism of industry sectors that are ever more reliant on the abilities of the new recruits they will hire.

To summarise the above section, when looking at transitions the literature informs us that a high number of students identify feeling stress, with increasing numbers taking up counselling options to try and combat these concerns (Williams et al., 2015). Many students believe they are ill prepared for the move from FE into HE and research concurs with this view (Hall, 2012). The literature demonstrates potential benefits to universities that will take the time to understand the problems that the significant disparities between FE and HE pose (Bandias et al., 2011). There are many students who fail to stay the course with a significant rate of drop out during their first transitional year (The Higher Educational Statistics Agency, 2017). Looking at the wider context, as noted, the UK Government has concerns over the

knowledge economy. The withdrawal of students from the university process is unfulfilled potential and significantly affects not only the students and universities, but the development of the country as a whole. In some ways the massification of education as well as its commodification can be linked to these social and political questions. Far greater percentages of the population now attend university than in previous generations and the makeup of the students is far more diverse. Higher Education has moved from a very elite opportunity to one that is aspired to by many families and obtained by many people. The inclusion as universities of many technical colleges has blurred some distinctions, but the financial requirements for a country to provide more university level education has added to the commodification complexity riddle (Evans, Rees, Taylor & Fox, 2020).

Emerging from these current themes and almost certain to gain significance over the coming years is an intensifying debate. This relates to how independent, government controlled, privately owned, accessible, diverse and costly to the student, Higher Education in the United Kingdom should be? To have a realistic chance to successfully negotiate these complexities it is essential that students develop ILS and can become autonomous learners at an early stage in their university experience.

2.3 The role of Independent Learning Skills in student wellbeing.

Having considered student wellbeing and challenges surrounding transitions, the role of ILS is now discussed. The HEA (2014) advocates that HE students have to become independent learners, taking responsibility for their own learning. Students' need to critically engage with knowledge and their learning environment (HEA, 2014). Thomas, Hockings, Ottaway and Jones (2015) published their research on "Independent learning: student perspectives and experiences". Thomas et al. (2015) discuss the challenges of developing these critical higher-level skills in students from a range of subject disciplines and highlights that support is greatly required.

Research on the importance of ILS and the benefits to students has had different focuses within the literature. Christie et al. (2016) consider the importance of acquiring the skills over the entire length of the degree programme, explaining that focus on the transition year is usual but noting that students progressively develop the skills. This study is based on student interviews and feedback and brings into focus timescale. In comparison, Rogers (2012) notes that more consideration needs giving to the meaning of attaining specific goals through the

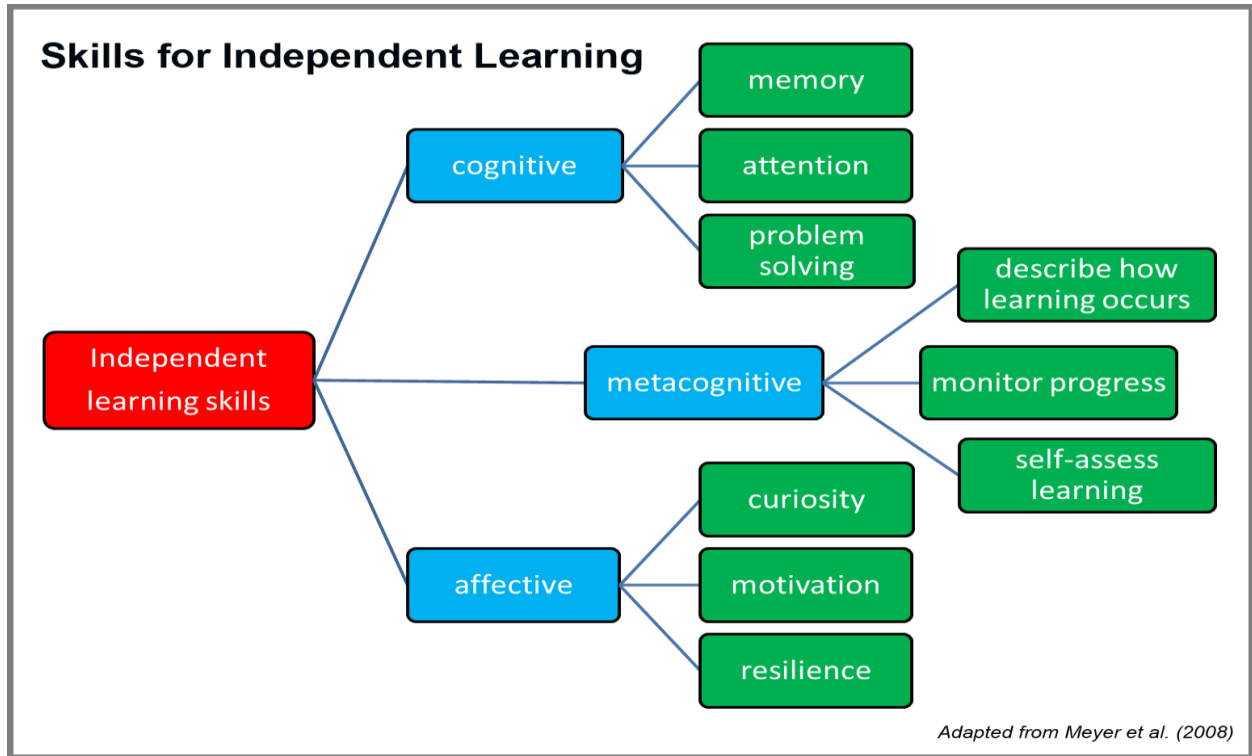
acquisition of both independent learning skills and self-regulatory skills. Rogers (2012) found that developing the ability to focus on the greatest areas of learning disparity significantly influenced wellbeing and attainment. This is also highlighted by Perez-Adamason and Mercer (2016), reporting on the importance to university entrants at Cambridge, from the state school sector, they again stress the importance of ensuring an early acquisition of independent learning skills.

Perez-Adamason and Mercer (2016) suggest that developing a strong sense of self-efficacy helps students to thrive in the environment they were newly exposed to. This is also reflected by Field et al. (2014) who considered the importance of self-determination theory in promoting self-management capacities and showed this related to the psychological wellbeing for first year transition students. Although this work was carried out in Australian universities the scope of it is significant and there is no suggestion that the links between ILS and wellbeing would not be as significant in the UK. Including this study for consideration has the potential to inform the understanding of the associations between specific ILS and different elements of wellbeing. This in turn will give insights into practices during transition that could be further explored. Broad (2006) also highlights the role that students have in taking responsibility for developing these academic skills. The findings stress the importance of the early development of autonomous, independent thinking and learning in developing student confidence in their own ability to thrive at university, this also correlated with reducing the anxiety of students.

Although ILS have been explored in the literature the focus is more on generic skills required for university, study skills and employability skills. Meyer et al. (2008) however, suggests that ILS can be separated into cognitive skills, meta cognitive skills and affective skills, (see Figure 3 below). These three categories of skills are valuable for this research as it supports the identification of specific links and thus after future research the opportunity for more targeted interventions. Meyer et al. (2008) states most descriptions refer to independent learning as self-regulated learning. Cubukcu (2009) supports the need for learners to be fully engaged, as identified in Seligman's 2011 model and refers to these skills that allow them to be active participants in their own learning. Meyer et al.'s (2008) well respected model provides an effective lens to consider possible associations between ILS and wellbeing when used in conjunction with Seligman's (2001) wellbeing model. The opportunity to map across

the effects of specific elements of ILS to the specific areas of wellbeing will enhance understanding and allow the development of better targeted interventions.

Figure 3: Meyer et al. (2008) model of independent learning



One of the most important findings from the literature is that there appears to be significant research that needs to take place to explore the impact that developing ILS can have on the efficacy of student transitions. This is as the literature indicates, a time sensitive issue Perez-Adamason and Mercer (2016). The more quickly and fully students can develop the requisite skills the less dramatic the challenges and the better the final outcomes (Broad, 2006). Student perceptions of what is required of them within the first year at university is often misguided (Crabtree & Roberts, 2009). The demands they face may affect their wellbeing, make life more difficult and can in a relatively small, yet still significant number of occasions, lead to them leaving university, thus bringing about the drawbacks for the student, the university, employers and the country as a whole already discussed. Students with well-developed ILS and academic grounding, often those coming later as mature students to university, tend to demonstrate less stress and impaired psychological wellbeing (Field et al., 2014).

Independent learning skills and academic preparedness play a large part in attaining several of the key elements of wellbeing identified in the literature. They empower the individual with the significant opportunity for self-determination (Field et al. 2014) allowing them to both identify and fulfil their own goals. They also play a role in allowing the person in transition to remain safe and allow connectedness either by developing new and appropriate relationships or cementing previous ones, through understanding and thriving in their new environment.

In terms of the quality of ILS students bring with them when they begin university, little is known. It may well be that the level of these skills vary widely. Additionally, there appears to be a dearth of common approaches of how to develop these skills at an early stage, or an understanding of the benefits if effectively and broadly acquired these skills would bring to student wellbeing, university achievement and to industry. There appears to be no evidence of a framework relating to a comprehensive programme of this nature being applied to the development of ILS in this country over recent years. As the literature shows, the issues of first year transitions to university are very complex and an effective and coordinated approach is required. It can be considered that the absence of high quality academic and independent thinking skills at an early stage is having a detrimental effect on students, universities, employers and the development of the UK as a whole. A comprehensive research study with a potential widely applicable framework may prove to be a significant step in addressing this.

2.4 The role of ILS and wellbeing – A proposed framework exploring the potential link in the literature between Meyer et al.'s (2008) ILS model and Seligman's (2011) wellbeing components model.

This section of the literature review will consider the above question. The possibility of a link between early and well-developed ILS and enhanced student wellbeing offers the prospect of unlocking considerable opportunities for enhancing academic and personal outcomes for students, universities and employers. Field et al., (2014) have identified several important views that support this belief in their research, these include, that empirical evidence that shows the early development of ILS is justified to prevent a decline in university student psychological wellbeing, there is a need to ensure that students see the link between ILS and

success (however measured) and that ILS should be taught as a strategy to reduce stress. These views are based on Self-Determination theory from the field of positive psychology (Crabtree & Roberts, 2009). Students that enter university and do not already have or do not quickly develop high quality ILS are at a significant risk of disadvantage (Ansari & Stock, 2010; Zullig et al., 2011).

The body of evidence that demonstrates increasing levels of stress (Larcome et al., 2016, & Orgyen, 2017), more need for counselling (Williams et al., 2015), high rates of withdrawal (Ansari & Stock, 2010) and other challenges that impact on many areas of student wellbeing, shows that now is a time where effective strategies to combat these are urgently required. Methodically developing ILS is potentially a realistic and relatively straightforward such strategy. Some work has been done to assess this and will be looked at in detail below, additionally consideration will be given to the way the sum of those studies and potential future connections form an overall and potentially symbiotic relationship between Seligman's (2011) and Meyer et al.'s (2008) models. To date, work directly considering possible links with the two established models noted has not been carried out and the undertaking of such work affords significant opportunities to enhance understanding in the field. Thoroughly understanding the links could allow targeting of specific areas of wellbeing by the most appropriate ILS as well as the possibility of introducing more effective intervention programmes, especially at an early stage in a student's university career from induction and through the first year. Table 2 below shows the literature identified that reveals associations between ILS and wellbeing.

Table 2 Associations found in the literature between Seligman’s (2011) wellbeing elements and Meyer et al.’s (2008) ILS.

<p>Meyer et al.’s ILS</p> <p>Seligman’s wellbeing components</p>	<p>Affective Skills</p> <p>Curiosity Motivation Resilience</p>	<p>Cognitive Skills</p> <p>Memory Attention Problem solving</p>	<p>Metacognitive Skills</p> <p>Describe how learning occurs Monitor Progress Self -assess learning</p>
<p>Achievement</p> <p>(A sense of accomplishment)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills acting as an engine to drive accomplishment</i></p> <p>Liew (2012) provides a review of understanding the relations between academic achievement and effortful control, showing positive relations between EC and achievement.</p> <p>“A combination of mastery and performance goal motivations, rather than a singular perspective, may provide better outcomes related to course grades” (Richard, Dull, Schleifer & McMillan, 2015).</p> <p>Zhou et al. (2010) found that the effect of emotionality on achievement might be indirect, through motivational mechanisms.</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills delivering the tools to deliver accomplishments</i></p> <p>“A vast array of cognitive factors are known to influence students’ university success” (Richardson et al., 2012, Stadler et al., 2015).</p> <p>“Personality and cognitive abilities are predictors of university students’ academic achievement” (Vitulić & Prosen, 2012).</p> <p>Zhou et al. (2010) found that the effect of emotionality on achievement might be indirect, through cognitive processes (such as problem solving, memory, strategic thinking).</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills providing the self-determining capacity to achieve personalised, desired accomplishments</i></p> <p>HFCE research including three UK Universities found students benefit from understanding how they learn and how they can learn more effectively. This improves their motivation, self-awareness and self-efficacy and makes them more likely to succeed (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p> <p>Self-regulation is linked to increased achievement (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010).</p>

<p>Positive Emotions</p> <p>(Feeling good)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills acting as an insulation to protect positive emotions</i></p> <p>“Psychological wellbeing is influenced by personal characteristics such as resilience, and the individual’s optimism regardless of his/her degree of resilience can to some extent provide for psychological wellbeing” (Souri & Hasanirad, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills delivering skills to enhance self-confidence and optimism</i></p> <p>Students who scored high on Mindfulness scale exhibited greater cognitive control flexibility (Anicha, Ode, Moeller & Robinson, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills providing the comprehension to effectively monitor the balance of emotions</i></p> <p>“Students benefit from understanding how they learn and how they can learn more effectively. This improves their motivation, self-awareness and self-efficacy and makes them more likely to succeed” (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p> <p>“Self-confidence can be described as feeling well as a result of deepening positive emotions” (Sar, Avcu & Isiklar, 2010).</p>
<p>Engagement</p> <p>(Finding a Flow)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills delivering the energy and enthusiasm to develop and maintain engagement</i></p> <p>Links have been shown between motivation and student engagement (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills providing the abilities to thrive and participate in engagement</i></p> <p>“Where students are encouraged, or required, as in most problem-based learning environments, to take responsibility for investigating and solving problems through collaboration, reflection and collective presentation, they tend to report a dramatic improvement in their engagement” (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills taking ownership of the direction and effectiveness of engagement</i></p> <p>“Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a strong theoretical foundation for making this association between self-reflection and self-regulation and engagement” (Krieger, 2011).</p>

<p>Relationships</p> <p>(Authentic connections)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills providing the fuel to build and maintain authentic connections</i></p> <p>Links have been shown between resilience and positive relations (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills analysing and adjusting the ongoing development of authentic connections</i></p> <p>“Where students are encouraged, or required, as in most problem-based learning environments, to take responsibility for investigating and solving problems through collaboration, reflection and collective presentation, they tend to report a dramatic improvement in their learning relationships.” (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills taking stock of the direction, safety and personal satisfaction of authentic connections</i></p> <p>“Assessment and monitoring progress can affect learning relationships either positively or negatively.” (Harding & Thompson, 2011).</p>
<p>Meaning</p> <p>(Purposeful Existence)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills striving to search for meaning and delivering opportunity for a purposeful existence</i></p> <p>“Self-efficacy was the most significant predictor of Purpose in Life scores. The current study lends support to the idea of creating interventions based on self-efficacy theory in order to positively influence students’ subjective sense of purpose in life for the purpose of improving college student retention.” (DeWitz et al., 2009).</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills ensuring focus, developing and adjusting the meaning of a purposeful existence</i></p> <p>“Critical thinking skills are statistically significant predictors of student motivation and meaning at university.” (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009).</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills relating meaning and purposeful existence to the personal direction desired</i></p> <p>“Students who are actively involved in their learning and feel included have more purpose at University.” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011).</p>

The next section of the literature review will explore the specific associations of ILS to Seligman's (2011) wellbeing elements.

Affective skills linked to achievement

The affective skills that include curiosity, motivation and resilience act as an engine to drive accomplishment. Liew (2012) provided a review of understanding the relations between academic achievement and effortful control (EC), noting high-quality studies increasingly show positive relations between EC and achievement. Zhou et al. (2010) suggests that the effect of emotionality on achievement might be indirect, through cognitive processes (such as problem solving, memory, strategic thinking), motivational mechanisms (including engagement, school liking, and staying on task), and interpersonal resources (such as relationships with teacher and peers). Two further studies to note related to this area are, Richard, Dull, Schleifer and McMillan (2015) who found that mastery and performance goal motivations may provide better outcomes than motivations related to course content and Skaalvik and Klasse (2015) who noted relation between grades and motivation were partly mediated through emotional support and self-efficacy. The above supports the idea that affective skills play a significant role in achievement. It seems obvious to state for example that better motivated students will achieve better results but there is also significant academic evidence that this is the case and it establishes a link between Meyer et al.'s (2008) and Seligman's (2011) models.

Affective skills linked to positive emotions

The concept that curiosity, motivation and resilience are linked to positive emotions would appear to be common sense and there is evidence in the literature that links them. Souril and Hasanirad (2011) found that psychological wellbeing is influenced by personal characteristics such as resilience, additionally that the individual's optimism regardless of his/her degree of resilience can to some extent provide for psychological wellbeing. It does appear that the affective skills act as an insulation to protect positive emotions but significantly more contemporary research is needed to deepen our understanding.

Affective skills linked to Engagement

Only limited research has been completed in this area although Harding and Thompson (2011) did find evidence of links shown between motivation and positive engagement. The lack of more prolific literature in this field indicates significant opportunities for future

research, as a lack of engagement is clearly a significant problem and enhancing motivation particularly in this area, would potentially reduce some of the barriers to effective engagement.

Affective skills linked to Relationships

As with positive emotions and engagement confirmation of links between these two elements is hampered by a lack of the quantity of research. Harding and Thompson (2011) did again produce research linking resilience with positive relations but in this area as well, further research has the opportunity to shine more illumination on links that may allow important and helpful interventions become established.

Affective skills linked to Meaning

DeWitz et al. (2009) produced a study that lends support to the idea of creating interventions based on self-efficacy theory. They found evidence indicating enhanced self-efficacy positively improved students' subjective sense of purpose in life and linked this with increasing those students' college retention achievements. There appears overall to be evidence documented that the links between Meyer et al.'s (2008) ILS model and Seligman's (2011) wellbeing components model in the area of the affective skills are particularly strong.

Cognitive skills including memory attention and problem solving. Initially focussing on Achievement

Three studies of note need considering. In 2012, Vitulic, Prosen and Simona found cognitive ability as well as personality were predictors of university students' academic achievements, while Zhou et al. (2010) believed that the effect of emotionality on achievement might be indirect through cognitive processes including problem solving, memory and strategic thinking. Richardson et al. (2012) and Stadler et al. (2015) contended that a vast array of cognitive factors are known to influence students' university success.

Cognitive skills linked to Positive Emotions

Students who scored high on the Mindfulness scale exhibited greater cognitive control flexibility (Anicha, Ode, Moeller & Robinson, 2011). Importantly the theory of Cognitive Behaviour is a recognised method for controlling thoughts to direct behaviour and feelings.

Cognitive skills linked to Engagement

Harding and Thompson (2011) found that where students are encouraged, or required to take responsibility for investigating and solving problems through collaboration, reflection and collective presentation, as in most problem-based learning environments, they tend to report a dramatic improvement in their engagement.

Cognitive skills linked to Relationships

Harding and Thompson (2011), also demonstrated dramatic improvements in students' learning relationships when taking responsibility for investigating and problem solving through collaboration and reflection.

Cognitive skills linked to Meaning

Rugutt and Chemosite (2009) identified that critical thinking skills are significant predictors of student motivation and meaning at university.

The final set of links to consider involve **Metacognitive skills particularly understanding and self-assessing learning and monitoring progress and the links to Achievement.**

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (Harding & Thompson 2011) studied three UK universities and found that students benefit from understanding how they learn and how they can learn more effectively. Understanding how they learn improves their motivation, self-awareness and self-efficacy and makes them more likely to succeed according to Harding and Thompson (2011). Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, and Soenens (2010) noted that self-regulation was linked to increased achievement.

Metacognitive skills linked to Positive Emotions

Harding and Thompson (2011) believed that students benefit from understanding how they learn and how they can learn more effectively. Additionally, they conclude this improves their motivation, self-awareness and self-efficacy and makes them more likely to succeed. Sar, Avcu and Isiklar (2010) found that self-confidence can be described as feeling well as a result of deepening positive emotions.

Metacognitive skills linked to Engagement

Krieger (2011) believed that Self-Determination Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for making the assertion that these enhanced skills improve engagement.

Metacognitive skills linked to Relationships

Harding and Thompson (2011) found that assessment and monitoring progress can affect learning relationships either positively or negatively.

Metacognitive skills linked to Meaning

Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh and Whitt (2011) produced research that confirmed students who are actively involved in their learning and feel included have more purpose at university. The area of metacognitive skills linking with Seligman's (2011) wellbeing model is an area with possibly the most direct link as many of the elements relate to developing and monitoring one's own understanding and progress, it is however significantly in need of further research to allow better comprehension of the potential to maximise opportunity for students.

With relation to the specifics it appears that the links between affective skills and achievement have the best documented associations and indeed the wellbeing area of achievement seems to be impacted most by the range of ILS. This is interesting as it is the area that is the easiest to measure and probably the most visible. It is worth considering if because of this, the study of the other areas might have been minimised. Support for this finding might be that one of the least developed areas of research surrounds ILS and relationships. This connection would be much more difficult to measure as it would be often concealed and nuanced, however the impacts may well have at least as much influence on student wellbeing as achievements.

As we consider the literature as a whole there is an interesting story revealed. There is at least one piece of contemporary literature linking each of the areas that gives an indication that associations are widely present, but it could equally be argued that in many of the areas there is not the volume of study that would make an overwhelming case proving ILS have a consistent and important impact upon student wellbeing. On the other hand, there is no literature identified that argues against well-developed ILS at an early point in students' transitions being beneficial. Therefore, the most significant learning from the literature review might well be that this area of significant importance has limited contemporary literature or scientific research to illuminate it and that there is opportunity for increasing knowledge to be developed that could unlock doors leading to better targeted interventions and better outcomes for those involved.

2.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The literature reviews student transitions and wellbeing in HE and considers the role of independent learning skills. A key finding from the literature highlights the fact that first year transitions produce a multitude of complex issues and it is essential that to be effective, certain critical responses need to be well coordinated (McIntosh & Shaw, 2017). It is also evident from the literature that the relationship between students and academic staff is of paramount importance (Wojcieszek et al., 2012 & Crisp et al., 2009). As discussed previously, much of the work on student wellbeing is now taken on by non-academic support staff or students and in terms of counselling, pop up curricular activities, mindfulness projects, and peer support, this is evidently beneficial. However, the work to prepare and support first year transition students in terms of academic development and independent learning skills should clearly be the responsibility of the academic staff.

In carrying out this work the critical relationships between these staff and the students will initially be formed and then developed. There is evidence from student feedback that this is lacking (Wojcieszek et al., 2012). Non-academic staff have made contributions in financial support, emotional support including counselling and in other areas. The literature also implies that this has led to the critical relationship between tutors and students being slower to develop and sometimes not as valued as it would be hoped. The literature has identified a gap in our knowledge of the impact early intervention and support programmes targeted at understanding how students are developing their academic and independent thinking skills. Research is required into the extent that providing appropriate support programmes and initiatives to enhance their abilities in these areas will promote their wellbeing.

The UK Government has in place many targets in relation to universities. Improving outcomes for students, enhancing retention and easing transitions, including very specific NSS survey criteria ranking student wellbeing. They identify attaining this improvement in university education as critical in benefiting the country as a whole. The Employer Skills Survey (2015) found that the most personal skill cited as lacking in the labour market was time management. This skill was lacking in almost half of all skill-shortage vacancies (47%). Universities need to develop programmes that have research based evidence of efficacy.

Programmes that include the ideals of both government and industry and seek to significantly improve the core academic and independent skills of graduates leaving university. The literature has demonstrated the gaps between the requirements of universities in new students and the skills those students possess, as well as the amount of responsibility the students expect to have to accept for their own learning. If students are going to leave with those abilities fully rounded and their desired qualifications achieved, it is clearly essential that the evident gaps need to be addressed as soon as possible and the literature shows that this is most likely to happen by developing effective programmes that address those requirements in the first year.

After examining the links the literature has formed between the ILS and wellbeing elements, it is recognised that research to examine the strength of these associations needs to be completed to inform our understanding. Deepening understanding of these links has significant potential to afford a range of improvements. Enhancing student ILS at an early stage gives them, according to all the related literature, significant opportunities to improve their outcomes and thus their wellbeing. All the studies in the literature incline towards those conclusions, none seriously contend that there are negative issues. The majority of students do succeed and the majority develop the ILS skills to a greater or lesser degree during their university programme.

Would earlier, more targeted and more effective delivery of these skills enhance performance, minimise wellbeing issues and deliver better outcomes? If so the question for future studies may be how much and precisely what benefits a well-coordinated programme to ensure the early development of these skills would provide for the student, university and employers? The follow up questions should include how best to deliver that programme in a meaningful and holistic way? The contribution universities have the potential to make to the knowledge economy of the United Kingdom is immense. The significant changes that are sweeping over the country provide exciting opportunities and significant risks. It is clear that the outcomes will to a large extent be determined by the optimism, educational attainment and effective preparation of future leaders. It is also evident that universities must play a leading role in determining it.

Table 3 below shows a summary of the practice issues identified from the literature and the gaps that have emerged. These identified gaps will be a focus in the discussion chapter.

Table 3 A summary of the practice issues identified from the literature.

The practice issue	Examples from the literature
<p>National Student wellbeing concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uni health (2017) revealed that 82% of students at UK universities suffer from stress and anxiety and 45% have experienced depression. 1 in 5 students have suicidal feelings. • HEFCE reported mental health problems rose from 8,000 – 18,000 over 4 years (HEFCE, 2015). • Student Minds are developing a Mental health Charter to be undertaken in partnership with UUK, NUS and supported by key stakeholders in OfS and DfE (Student Minds, 2018). <p>Identified gap - To identify challenges that students face in relation to their experiences of wellbeing during their transition to university, with a focus upon the impacts of ILS.</p>
<p>Student Transition concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field et al. (2014) report that students have a lack of ILS and this impacts on their wellbeing during transition. • Bailey and Philips (2016) and Leveson et al. (2013) identify many concerns and challenges to transition. <p>Identified gap – how can academic staff better prepare and support students through their transition to university.</p>
<p>A proposed Framework linking wellbeing and ILS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seligman’s (2011) model of wellbeing is advocated by Seldon and Martin (2017) to achieve positive and mindful universities. • Meyer et al.’s (2008)’s et al. (2011) model of ILS shows some potential links to Seligman’s elements of wellbeing: • Ansari and Stock (2010) linked wellbeing with academic achievement & dropping out. • Field et al. (2014) show that a lack of academic preparedness has a negative impact on wellbeing. <p>Proposed solution – design and apply a framework to explore the associations between wellbeing and ILS.</p>

Chapter 3 Methodology & Methods

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter begins by stating the research aims and objectives, and then discusses the philosophical stance and the research paradigms used, linked to the aims and objectives. The chapter then reviews the data collection strategies, sampling and analysis methods applied, including a discussion on the reliability and validity of the research methods used. Ethical considerations are then presented, explaining the steps taken before, during and after the research to ensure ethical practices were upheld by the researcher. A final summary and conclusion are given justifying the chosen approaches used.

3.2 Methodology

The research aim of the thesis is to explore the role that independent learning skills have on student wellbeing during transition to university, in order to enable academic staff to better support students during transition. The objectives set to achieve this aim are as follows:

Research Objectives

1. Design a conceptual framework which articulates the connections between independent learning skills and wellbeing, which can be readily applied by practitioners.
2. Explore how independent learning skills and wellbeing are related during transition to university.

3.3 Research Philosophies

As epistemology refers to how judgements are made about the knowledge studied (Stokes & Wall, 2014) consideration needs to be made about the manner in which knowledge is being developed and interpreted. Stokes & Wall (2014) refer to the research philosophy relating to the overall values and beliefs and Audi (2011) refers to epistemology as the consideration and development of theories about how and why knowledge is made. The epistemological position in this research considers the stance that the researcher took, and their perspectives which affected how they collected, interpreted and reported the findings. This research gained knowledge from interpreting the narratives based on the students' recollection of experiences

of wellbeing during transition to university. The research ensured that the research questions, methodological and theoretical approaches were consistent (Churchill & Sanders, 2007).

Epistemological considerations were made when interpreting the data in order to present valid findings. Stokes and Wall (2014) discuss the need to understand the role of epistemology as the researcher is creating new knowledge and needs to understand how this knowledge has been formed and shaped. Questions of how and why the knowledge was accepted was important within this research. Bryman & Bell (2007) state that an epistemological stance is concerned with the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline. They also question whether or not the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences. Thus, the social context within the narratives of this research were taken into consideration when interpreting the data.

The ontological approach within this research considered the reality of students' experiences during transition, and considered how things really are before making inferences (Slevitch, 2011). Stokes and Wall (2014) refer to ontology as being concerned with varying perspectives on reality and states of 'being'. Within the context of students' in transition considerations were made about individual's perspective of their development of ILS and feelings of wellbeing, throughout the first year at university.

The aim of the research was to understand the experiences of students during transition, to further develop understanding of students' feelings of wellbeing and the role of ILS. An interpretive paradigm was therefore chosen as the researcher wanted to discover new knowledge based on the data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008) and to gain a rich and complex understanding of students' experience that is contextualised in relation to student transition to university. This interpretivist approach inclines towards relativistic ontologies (Whittle & Spicer, 2008) and this applies to this research as the reality of the students' experiences was created by the perception of the researcher. Using an Inductive approach allowed specific to broader generalisations to be made, the creation of inductive themes were driven by the data. The purpose for using an inductive approach was to condense extensive raw text data into a brief summary format, to establish clear links between the research objectives and the findings derived from the raw data and to propose theories about students' feelings of wellbeing during transition.

Yin (1989) states that the research design is “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and ultimately, to its conclusion” (Yin, 1989, p.28–29). The use of qualitative research allowed the researcher to fully understand the context of the data and to be aware of any preconceptions from experiences that may take away the subjectivity that can be found in qualitative research (Ratner, 2002). Considerable research on student wellbeing and preparedness during transition has used qualitative approaches (Wrencha, Garretta, & King, 2010; Taylor, 2014; Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2009; Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali, Rogers, 2008). A qualitative method was chosen to gain rich data to understand the wellbeing experiences of students during transition, with a focus on the role of ILS. The research aim set, sought to understand rather than measure (Oinas, 1999), in order to enable academic staff to better support students during transition.

3.4 Methods for data collection and sampling

Qualitative methods are often used when the research is concerned about exploring experiences, meaning and perspectives from the participants. There are a range of qualitative methods to consider including ‘small-group discussions’ for examining beliefs, attitudes and concepts of behaviour; ‘semi-structured interviews’, to seek views on a specified topic or collect background information; ‘in-depth interviews’ to understand the personal perspective of an experience; and ‘analysis of texts and documents’, such as reports, media articles, websites or diaries (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because this method allowed questions to be prepared ahead of time and the time for the participants to discuss their personal experiences in detail, in order to collect rich data that would not as easily be gained from observations, group discussions or textual information. The semi-structured interviews also allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms, thus providing reliable, comparable qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews are best used when you only have one opportunity to conduct the interview, allowing focus but also flexibility (Stokes & Wall, 2014). Semi-structured interviews also allow an informal and unstructured approach in order to develop a deep understanding of the topic. The inclusion of open-ended questions does, however, still provide the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic, and also follow trajectories in the conversation that may add value to the data by showing the full context of the participant’s narrative.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were carried out with second year university students, each interview lasted between one and two hours. After completing twelve student interviews the researcher felt that the optimum amount of rich data had been collected allowing the best exploration of the students' experiences as well as addressing the research question and objectives. The results were capable of some degree of generalisation (Boddy,2016). In qualitative research, the sample size is contextual and dependent upon the paradigms being applied (Boddy, 2016) and the aim of the research was to develop a depth of understanding rather than focussing on breadth.

Before the meeting each student was asked to complete a 500 word written reflection about their transition to university. This reflection allowed the researcher to prepare open prompts to be used in the meeting. The conversations were recorded and then transcribed verbatim, the researcher then read the narratives to check for accuracy. The researcher analysed the pilot data from two students and reviewed the method to be used. As the researcher was satisfied with the method used, it was decided to repeat this inductive approach during the next 12 interviews with students. From the literature review, key prompts were introduced into the interviews where appropriate depending upon the content of the individual narrative (Table 4). The researcher adopted an open style of enquiry to ensure the nature of the inductive research was upheld. For example, the researcher did not introduce the specific ILS or the specific elements of wellbeing being explored to the students.

Table 4 Interview Prompts constructed from the literature

1. Tell me about how you felt before you started at University? (Concerns highlighted by Castillo and Schwartz, 2013; Milojevich and Lukowski, 2016; Field et al., 2014).
2. How did you feel during the induction week and first few weeks? (Transition is made up of critical moments as noted by Gale and Parker, 2011. Hughes and Smaii 2012, suggest that early interventions helps establish social support).
3. How did you then progress through the first year? (Exploring reflection skills from the framework).
4. What support did you have from your PAT/ other staff? (Staff support identified as important by Wrencha et al., 2010).
5. What skills did you develop in the first year, how happy did you feel? What did you like about university /your programme? (Students' achieve more academically when engaged as noted by Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012).
6. What (if any) things did you struggle with? (Exploring reflection skills from the framework).
7. What areas have you improved in now you are in year two? (Exploring ILS skills from framework).
8. What advice would you give to new students starting university? (Exploring reflection skills from the framework).

Sampling method

Twelve students were selected based on convenience sampling. The subjects were selected using a convenience method because the whole population was too large to include all individuals, therefore the sample elements were based on convenience, accessibility and proximity (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). This is a non-probability sampling method, where subjects were recruited according to their availability and accessibility. Also however, the research aim was to explore individual experiences of their wellbeing and as this topic could be perceived as a sensitive topic, a sample size of 12 was suitable to collect sufficient information to allow a deep understanding of personal experiences and to make comparisons across the participants.

After 12 interviews were carried out there was considered to be sufficient rich and thick data to explore the different themes that arose from the data (Dibley, 2011), at this point it was considered that data saturation had been reached. Data saturation occurs when enough data has been collected to replicate the study (Walker, 2012), additional new information has been achieved and further coding is no longer feasible (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). The use of prompt questions helped to achieve this data saturation, and it should be noted that different research design parameters will affect the point of saturation (Ramburuth, 2010).

A concern however, when using convenience sampling is sampling bias and that the sample is not representative of the entire population. The results from a study that uses a convenience sample may differ significantly with the results from the entire population. This may lead to limits in any generalisations that can be made about the whole population. However the researcher ensured these considerations were accounted for and that consideration was made when extrapolating the results. All students in the research were keen to take part, therefore the findings may not be so relevant to less engaged students or those with specific wellbeing issues.

Validity and reliability

The issues of validity and reliability must always be considered to ensure conclusions drawn are accurate. Validity can be measured by identifying to what extent during the research project the requirements of scientific research methods have been followed (Pelto & PeRo 1978). Wilson (2010) refers to the researcher being aware of adopting a subjective approach which can compromise the reliability of the work. Reliability comes into question whenever a single observer provides the source of the data, “we have no certain guard against the impact of that observer’s subjectivity” (Babbie, 2010, p.158). In qualitative research validity and reliability terms are however often replaced with terms such as transparency and trustworthiness. This allows data to be collected outside of the parameters of quantitative research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose that trustworthiness is important to evaluating its worth and involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility explores the truth of the findings. As the researcher works as a Senior Lecturer and PAT within the university selected, this allowed the narratives to be understood clearly within the context of the practices and processes used within the Business Department and also within the wider university. This enabled the researcher to collect rich data and to have a

deep understanding of the students' experiences. The researcher has taught within HE for over 20 years and this brought a wealth of experience to understanding teaching paradigms, to finding the truth and a deeper understanding of the data.

Transferability ensues findings have applicability in other contexts. The context of transition to the first year of university was the focus of the research, however findings also emerged that were related to other areas of university life, for example, friendship groups, and students' engaging in activities for instance peer mentoring. This allowed the findings to be applied to a range of contexts.

Dependability relates to ensuring that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Each student's narrative was based upon their personal reflections and what they expressed had particular meaning when discussing their experiences of transition and wellbeing, thus the data collected was consistent to individual narratives.

Confirmability focuses on assessing that the findings of a study are shaped by the subjects and not the researcher. The open style questions allowed the students to respond in their individual way and however best suited their reflection upon their experiences.

When analysing the data collected through narratives, consideration was given to the social elements as relevant to the situation. Denzin (1989) noted the importance of both the context and the complexity of the social relationships, he used the term a thick description meaning the researcher describes in detail both the setting of the study and its participants. This allows consideration of whether findings can be validly transferred because of a number of shared characteristics (Creswell, 1998). Moen (2006) explains that narratives include all the characteristics of the whole and that they are integrated and a living part of the whole. Carter (1993) and Gudmundsdottir (1997) both felt that using narrative in this way was an effective thinking tool and hoped that this would be used to initiate and develop discussions and dialogues that would play an important role in enhancing reflection.

The reflexivity of the researcher was also considered, to minimise the researcher's bias and reactivity and to ensure the quality of results (Pillow, 2003). How the researcher approaches the research is also important to ensuring a richness of description of the information is gained (King, 2004). The researcher was continuously aware of reflecting, examining and exploring their relationship through all stages of the research (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, &

Scott, 1993). The open style enquiry approach to the prompts asked, helped to allow this and the researcher ensured that the students were able to tell their story in any way that reflected their experiences. The experiences and the knowledge of the researcher however, meant that this perspective was inevitably influenced by the inability to truly stand outside one's own position (Hammersley 1992). An awareness of this position was considered during the collection and analysis of data stages.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis (Template Analysis)

The research initially stemmed from anecdotal observations of the disproportional impact well developed ILS had on student achievement and wellbeing. This information was supplemented and supported by the literature highlighting associations between ILS and wellbeing, particularly through transitions into university. To help analyse this area, develop understanding and identify beneficial areas of future research and effective future interventions, it was decided to use template analysis. Template analysis is a form of thematic analysis which focuses on the use of codes. The data involved in template analysis studies usually is derived from interview transcripts (Goldschmidt, Schmidt, Krasnik, Christensen, Groenvold, 2006; Lockett et al., 2012).

Preliminary coding of the data is initially conducted, highlighting segments of the text that might offer insights into the research questions (Stokes & Wall, 2014) these segments would be expected to contribute toward the understanding. Codes are labels attached to a section of text to show a relation to a theme or issue that the researcher has identified as insightful to their interpretation. They are descriptive, no analysis is needed (King, 2004). Hierarchical codes are clusters of similar codes created by analysing the text at varying levels of specificity. Broad higher codes give an overview, while detailed lower codes allow distinctions to be made. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to the research question.

Central to the technique is the development of a coding template, usually constructed from a subset of data, which is then applied to further data which can then be revised until a broad range of the key data fits into it. One of the most important reasons for selecting this method was the potential for flexibility it provides (King, 2004). Unlike grounded theory it is not solely a bottom up approach, but instead allows initial areas of interest to be explored, while keeping an open mind as the work progresses. Further areas of interest or important emerging

understanding can be captured and analysed by developing the template even after the collection of data has been completed. One factor in delivering this flexibility is the use of pre-selected codes and a priori themes that lend themselves to template analysis (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley & King, 2015). These areas of interest in the search for enhanced knowledge can be built into the early template and used to begin to interrogate the data collected. It allows entry into the field of research with concepts already in mind (King & Brooks, 2016).

The first step in this work is to become very familiar with the data collected. It is important in the early stages of developing the template to avoid being too rigid (King, 2004). This is not an exercise in linguistic analysis but more in highlighting and pulling out interesting raw data, looking for common threads identified by participants that can be developed into themes, capturing the information, linking it to the whole and beginning to piece together a template that suits the aims of the research. Themes can be developed from a priori theme ideas, in this work these focussed upon ILS and student wellbeing. Additional themes emerged that will be presented in the analysis chapter.

In the case of this study the work of Seligman's (2011) model of wellbeing, seemed to accurately capture the elements of wellbeing it was hoped this work would develop an understanding of. Thus, positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement all suggested themselves as interesting a priori themes. The initial template identified Meyer et al.'s (2008) ILS model as a well proven vehicle for collecting the ILS relevant to the study and the groupings of affective, cognitive and metacognitive skills were coherent themes on the other side of the equation. The associations between them were part of the interesting and informative data captured. This was the content of the initial template developed.

Connections already identified by the literature between the areas of ILS and wellbeing were initially interrogated using this template as well as the primary research results relating to 12 interviews carried out with business students from university. The template was then heat coded in relation to the primary research, to illustrate the number of students who made the same associations on the template. Other emerging/integrated themes were identified, these were themes that were both new and also cut across the different areas of data. The template was developed to allow analysis of these findings. Several considerations relating to template analysis should be discussed at this point.

Keeping accurate, detailed notes is particularly important to allow an audit trail of the developing analysis to be maintained. This can help explain the utilisation of the process and the way it has progressed. Quality checks of the process are always helpful and this was ensured in this research by regular meetings with experienced supervisory staff, who supportively challenged thinking at each development. Template analysis has the advantage of flexibility (King, 2004) and this indeed was one of the main reasons it was selected. The balance to this is that how it fits into proven, perhaps less flexible theories must always be kept in mind.

There is also a continuum of style ranging from a very rigid approach that risks losing important information due to a devotion to process, to an embracing the chaos style, with every bit of raw data included and the important messages lost in detail (King, 2004). Navigating a reasoned middle way within this continuum is a key to success. Template analysis is far from prescriptive but elements generally present include the development of an initial template, flexibility, an interactive process that repeats and improves the template and the capacity to use priori themes.

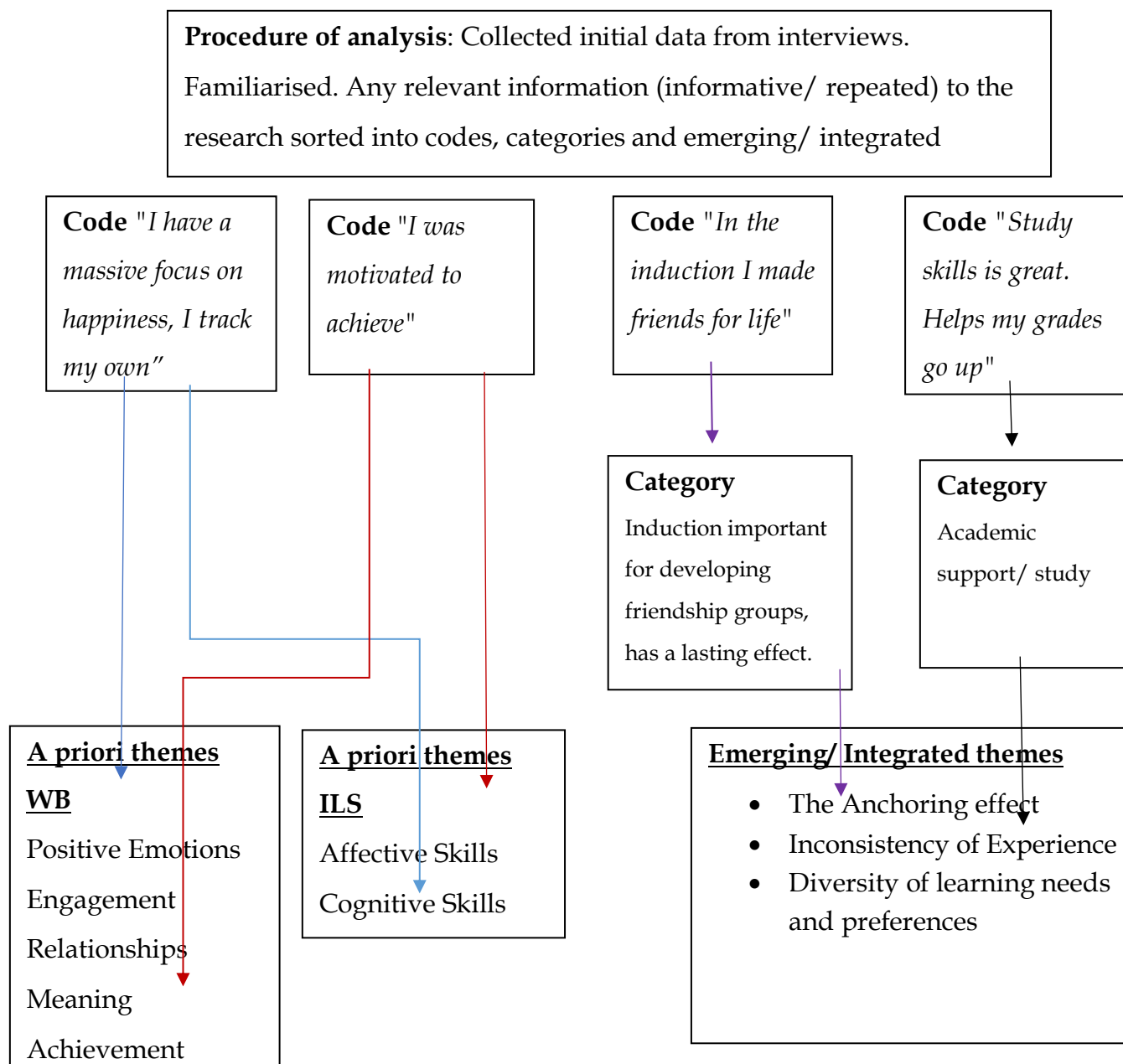
Top level themes are important and informative, however integrative themes can also be identified that cut through and impact on all of the other themes. These can prove to be key areas of interest in the research. Template analysis can be looked at as a tool to analyse research that allows identification of what is important, weighs the significance of data and is a map of thinking. Table 5 below shows the eight steps that were taken in carrying out the template analysis. These steps were based upon the template analysis processes presented by Stokes and Wall (2014) and King (2004). The analysis undertaken was context specific and explored themes emerging from the data based on identifying themes from the codes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Table 5 The procedures applied to analyse the data using template analysis.

1	Identified research problem, aim and questions.
2	Constructed initial template based on a priori themes.
3	Transcribed the narratives verbatim.
4	Extensive familiarisation of data by reading the narratives several times and considering the implications the data had on the potential areas of interest within the research.
5	Identified relevant data, codes and categories, as linked to research problem, aim, questions and a priori themes.
6	Identified emerging/ integrated themes, these were themes that students expressed were important to them, were noted repeatedly, were both separate and discrete from the a priori themes and also cut across the different areas of data.
7	Conducted frequency and repetition analysis and represented in heat map.
8	Revised template to include emerging/ integrated themes.

Each student was interviewed for between one and two hours using the interview prompts previously explained and allowing a free discussion to develop from those prompts. The raw data was then transcribed and studied. Data relevant to this research was drawn out, initially focussing on the a priori themes and then other areas of emerging interest. This information was then applied to a template along with the information collected in the same way from the other 11 students to support analysis. The combined data informed the discussion and conclusions of this research, initially relating to the a priori themes, then contributing to clarifying emerging/ integrated themes. The template was further developed to more fully interrogate these discovered themes as well as to explore elements of repetition by other students through a heat map. Figure 4 below gives an example of how four sections from the narratives were analysed in order to construct codes, categories and themes.

Figure 4 An example of the procedure used to analyse the data from narratives.



3.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the principles of research ethics at the university within the Faculty of Business and Management, set out in the ethical principles agreement. The role of the researcher is to ensure that all ethical considerations are identified. The researcher ensured that the eight areas in the BAM guidelines (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2015) were upheld. To ensure the integrity and quality of the research the research identified a gap in the knowledge and a clear aim and objectives ensured the methods used brought integrity and quality of results. All subjects were informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, as well as what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, were involved. Consent was gained ensuring all participants were free from coercion.

The students were selected by inviting them to participate and they were all studying on a business programme where the researcher was not directly involved with their teaching or assessing (to allow the responses to be as free from external influences as possible).

Participant forms were completed and collected before the data collection began to ensure transparency at all stages. In order to minimise any possible anxiety from the students who took part in the research, the following points were applied:

1. As Level 5 students they would all have some distance from the immediacy of the issues (i.e. the discussions are about their experiences from the previous year.)
2. Participants were advised to speak to their PAT or Student Futures, if any issues arose. These contact details were given as part of the consent form.

This allowed the ethical principle of respect for persons and prevention from harm to be assured. Confidentiality around all subjects was maintained through all stages of the project. The researcher ensured that there were no conflicts of interest before beginning the research to ensure an independent view was taken throughout. No form of misleading, fabrication or deception was intentionally carried out and the research upheld the organisation's values and objectives as well as conforming to legal requirements at all stages. All these steps ensured that the BAM code of practice was upheld throughout.

A consent form was completed and signed prior to the study by the students and covered areas such as: The purpose of the study, what will happen if I take part, withdrawal from the study, what are the possible risks and benefits of taking part, what if something goes wrong, confidentiality and the results of the study. All data collected was stored in a secure place by the researcher, and will be stored for up to 5 years from the publication of this report. At every stage in the data handling participants were assigned a confidential code that was kept separate from the data and only accessible by the researcher and supervisors.

Limitations

Limitations however, will occur and the researcher has acknowledged these as a key part in designing the research strategies (Collet-Klinberg & Kolb, 2011). Although this study provided rich data and explored detailed direct feelings from the students, the limited sample size means further research with larger numbers would increase the reliability of findings and may provide further information. The qualitative nature of the study allowed flexibility and a more responsive approach to be applied. In extracting more measurable data that could be used in conjunction with the qualitative information harvested further quantitative studies could be used, which may support better targeted interventions in the future.

3.7 Chapter summary and conclusion

The qualitative-inductive approach allowed themes to emerge from the data collected and the researcher's interpretivist approach enabled the experiences of students to be understood in order to give new insights into student transitions. The use of narratives was shown to give rich data which allowed a deep and insightful understanding of the feelings, hopes and concerns of the students. Additionally, the theoretical perspective of applying the framework allowed insights into how specific ILS relate to Seligman's (2011) wellbeing elements and shows how this framework can be used in the future to impact positively through more effective and targeted student interventions.

Chapter 4 Data and analysis

4.1 Chapter overview

The primary data captured from the student interviews was considered through the lens of the initial template, constructed by focussing on the a priori themes of the three ILS skills noted in Meyer et al.'s (2008) model and the five areas of wellbeing elucidated by Seligman's model (2011). This data focused on associations between specific areas of wellbeing and ILS occurring through the transition process. These associations are central to some of the main areas this research strives to gain a fuller appreciation of, whilst also offering the opportunity to begin paths of understanding that may eventually lead to identifying changes. These changes, if enacted, could make significant contributions to enhancing outcomes for all involved.

From the primary research three emerging/ integrated themes were discovered; the inconsistency of experiences relating to the access and communication of academic skills, the anchoring effect of early experiences and the diversity of learning needs and preferences. These were identified by the students as playing significant roles in their transition journey. A detailed consideration of the themes follows. To present this information an introduction will be followed by a diagrammatic representation of the frequency of associations of the a priori themes, which will be utilised in order to outline emerging/ integrated themes (Figure 4). This will be followed by a consideration of the specific associations identified between the three priori ILS themes and the five wellbeing constituent priori themes, including a heat map (Table 7) detailing the amount of repetition of each link. The emerging/ integrated themes will then be considered, followed by a conclusion to the chapter.

4.2 Introduction

In considering ILS it is initially important to state that no explanation was offered of precisely what those skills are during the interviews to the students taking part. The discussions that followed were based on their own understanding of ILS as well as what impact those elements that they did understand were perceived to have had on their transitions. Several students spoke of the differences in learning between the college they had come from and university. A view from the students was that of Independent Learning being a "culture shock".

A feeling was put forward that they had needed to become independent learners as they were not shown enough. Having explained that acquiring skills was not always a smooth process, there was clear recognition that the students did value the ILS they had acquired.

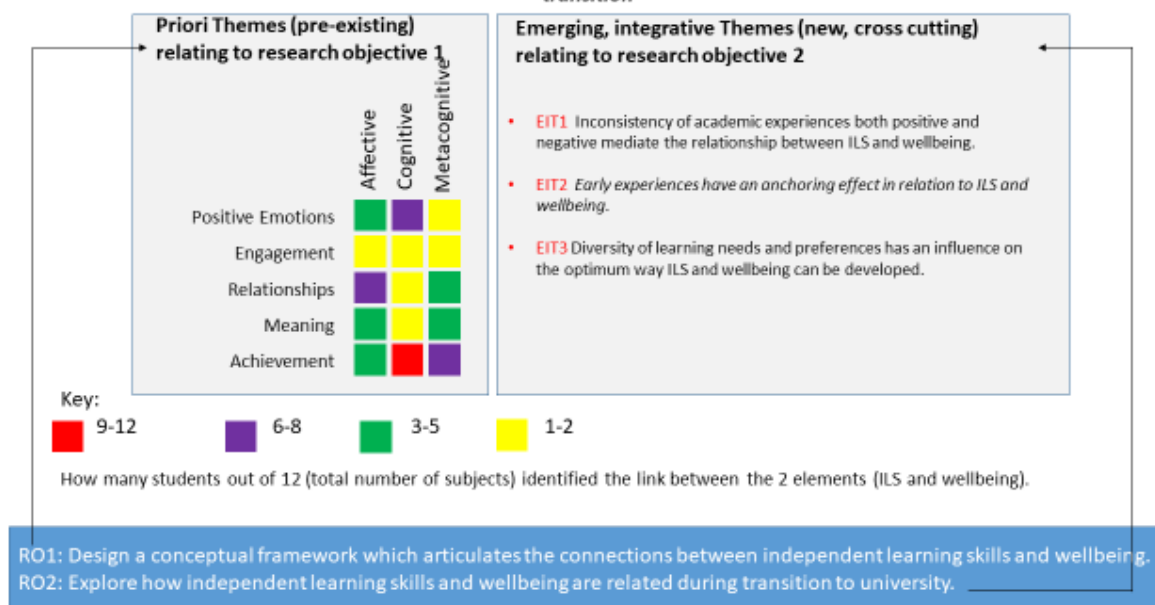
Overall, it should be noted that although all students had developed strands of their ILS none gave a broad explanation of the range of the skills. Each felt that developing the skills that they were aware of was important and had helped their transition, but there seemed to be a lack of a comprehensive study of what these skills are or how to identify and develop them.

The issue of student wellbeing is one of national and indeed international focus at this time. This subject was highlighted within many of the interviews carried out. In considering the issue of wellbeing, most students initially considered this within the context of their academic situation. Most were progressing in more or less the way they had hoped and each stage of achievement successfully secured had a positive effect on their wellbeing. Within this however there were several issues that impacted upon the students negatively. Issues that they felt were unclear challenged their feelings of contentment and they felt impeded their main goal of achievement.

This is displayed by a statement provided by one of the students: “I like to know what I'm supposed to be doing, I don't like uncertainty, it makes me stressed out.” Issues of perceived miscommunication or other occasions when elements of the students’ programmes changed for reasons they considered not to be valid, were clear examples of this. Some students reflected on the intensity of the transition and how this affected their wellbeing, one student said “I know that some people that they've lost friends because they have let the intensity of university get to them”.

Figure 4 below shows the a priori themes and the emerging / integrated themes that emerged from the data.

Figure 4: A Template Analysis of the relationships between independent learning skills and wellbeing during transition



4.3 Analysis of the data by applying the framework

The associations considered previously between ILS and student wellbeing re-enforced links made in the literature and led to the identification of an initial framework that will enhance understanding within this area. The data was applied to feedback harvested from the primary research and the results transferred to a framework that illustrated links between Seligman's (2011) wellbeing model and Meyer et al.'s (2008) ILS model. The repetition of links was illustrated through a heat map. A frequency code was used that measured how many times out of 12 (total number of subjects) the link between the 2 elements (ILS and wellbeing) was identified by the subjects. The following colours were applied:

Red – 9-12, blue – 6-8, green – 3-5, amber 1-2.

Table 7 Heat coded template, showing the links between wellbeing and ILS elements.

Code:

S - Summary of interpretation showing links in each section

DQ – Direct quotes from the students

<p>Meyer et al.'s ILS →</p> <p>Seligman's wellbeing components ↓</p>	<p>Affective Skills</p> <p>Curiosity Motivation Resilience</p>	<p>Cognitive Skills</p> <p>Memory Attention Problem solving</p>	<p>Metacognitive Skills</p> <p>Describe how learning occurs Monitor Progress Self -assess learning</p>
<p>Achievement (A sense of accomplishment)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills acting as an engine to drive accomplishment</i></p> <p>S. Self-motivation is very important to achievement, to grades and to the end goal (achievement of degree). DQ "You need to be more motivated than you imagine, there's a whole range of skills that students need to do well."</p> <p>S. Students speak of the need to deal with issues and just get on in order to progress. DQ "Each year it's another step up of what you've got to do, what you've got, just get on with it".</p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills delivering the tools to deliver accomplishments</i></p> <p>S. Early developments of skills from DPP module e.g. referencing, researching affecting achievements later on. DQ "The PDD module helped me lots with the skills I have now, it's very important"</p> <p>S. Students in year 2 unsure if analysing correctly, affecting achievements. DQ "uni didn't tell us how to access our grades, how to develop the skills we need e.g. analysing... it's just kinda like you've got to work all that out yourself".</p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills providing the self-determining capacity to achieve personalised, desired accomplishments</i></p> <p>S. Before starting university students feel not prepared for the academic writing, and not sure what to expect, they feel that this may affect their achievements in the first year. DQ "I had no idea what to expect before I started Uni, I was not feeling confident or prepared, not sure how I would perform".</p>

<p>Achievement (A sense of accomplishment)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills acting as an engine to drive accomplishment</i></p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills delivering the tools to deliver accomplishments</i></p> <p>S. Students want to be shown how to develop their academic skills more, they want more support, they see that this affects their grades and also motivation.</p> <p><i>DQ “Tutors need to show us more how to do these skills, it will help our motivation greatly.”</i></p> <p>S. Key skills identified as being required are time management, critical analysis, referencing, problem solving.</p> <p><i>DQ “I am not a last minute person and I hate the last minute so like time management is absolutely huge, other skills critical analysis, referencing and we need to solve many problems.”</i></p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills providing the self-determining capacity to achieve personalised, desired accomplishments</i></p> <p>S. Feedback helps confidence and helps them to develop academically, some concerns about the lack of quality feedback affecting their developments.</p> <p><i>DQ” it was helpful to get your feedback, it really helps but some give more than others and some is not clear.”</i></p> <p>S. Some students are able to self reflect when given feedback, some discuss this with staff and this helps with their next assessment. Some of aware of how this support from the PAT would help.</p> <p><i>DQ “I feel like I should have maybe had a meeting or two with my PAT to support the assessments.”</i></p>
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<p>Positive Emotions (Feeling good)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills acting as an insulation to protect positive emotions</i></p> <p>S. Motivation is gained from feedback on assessments and achieving good grades, this has a direct link to feeling positive.</p> <p><i>DQ "It makes me feel quite happy with the grades I'm getting because I feel like I'm motivated and doing a lot of work."</i></p> <p>S. Students have the self-motivation and ability 'to get on', they also feel this will help them in the 'real world.'</p> <p><i>DQ "You need to be able to solve problems and just get on, this will help you at work greatly."</i></p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills delivering skills to enhance self-confidence and optimism</i></p> <p>S. Having effective time management skills helps to feel less stressed (bunching of work causes stress).</p> <p><i>DQ "I was a bit stressed and I think one of my essays didn't do well at all because I think I've had to rush it a bit to try and get the next one done on time. This year is quite nice but earlier on I was quite stressed, nice to have friends back at home where I can kind of go there relax de-stress a bit but still be able to focus on my time management."</i></p> <p>S. Students in year 2 struggling to critically analyse, this frustrates them.</p> <p><i>DQ "- even in my second year I can describe the comment -- I need to do analysing more and continuing that analysis, it's hard to do and difficult."</i></p> <p>S. Students feel positive if they are self-motivated and can solve their own problems, they see the need for this at work.</p> <p><i>DQ "You need to be motivated and solve work problems in the real world, this is expected of you".</i></p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills providing the comprehension to effectively monitor the balance of emotions</i></p> <p>S. Reflecting on their feelings helped confidence and to develop.</p> <p><i>DQ "I have an Excel document. I read somewhere that it was what you should do. I split my life up into little parts and then for each one of them I give it a 1 to 10 every Saturday morning. I write a little comment on what happened every week and give a score to it and every week. I reopen it and I write a little comment and see how that compares with comments from the past..... is the best thing I've ever done. I've only done this for a month but I think everyone should do this."</i></p> <p>S. Students seem very critical of themselves, keen to know how to develop. Their emotions tend to follow the assessment cycle.</p> <p><i>DQ " It helps to always think about your feedback from tutors, when it's good I feel much better, but stressed when it's not."</i></p>
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<p>Engagement (Finding a Flow)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills delivering the energy and enthusiasm to develop and maintain engagement</i></p> <p>S. Students see the need to be self- motivated and this has helped them to engage in a range of academic and social activities.</p> <p><i>DQ “I’d also say look into all the sports and societies because that will give you again a network for more friends and does really help you through the years.”</i></p> <p>S. Students show the need to be resilient especially in the first year.</p> <p><i>DQ “You need to be resilient in the first year you will then feel much better in the second year, and even start helping other students”.</i></p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills providing the abilities to thrive and participate in engagement</i></p> <p>S. Students speak of the need to solve their own problems to be able to get on in life.</p> <p><i>DQ “You need to solve problems to get through uni and also your working life, you will then feel better and do more in life”.</i></p> <p>S. Students enjoy the interactive activities in smaller seminars, this helps them to apply the learning and engage fully in the assessment.</p> <p><i>DQ. “I talk more to people because we have done a lot of business presentation skills in the seminars, I have the confidence to present.”</i></p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills taking ownership of the direction and effectiveness of engagement</i></p> <p>S. After grades in first year most know they can do better, not leaving things to the last minute is key.</p> <p><i>DQ” I see some students who leave it to the last minute, I don’t get it. Leave it til the last minute and you’re stressing yourself. I know I can do better and develop time management more”.</i></p> <p>S. Some students spoke to academic staff more in 2nd year, this helped engagement in assessments and seminar activities.</p> <p><i>DQ “I went to see 3 lecturers and they spent over an hour to explain to me all the brief and how I should go through the assignment which was amazing because it helped me to develop my skills and improve my learning.”</i></p>
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<p>Relationships (Authentic connections)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills providing the fuel to build and maintain authentic connections</i></p> <p>S. Students who are self-motivated actively seek out connections with other students, staff and social activities. They stress the importance of further building networks to their achievements and careers.</p> <p><i>DQ “Firstly I’d tell them to get involved with activities because it’s while you’re doing those activities that you will meet your friends. I’d also tell them they should ask for help.”</i></p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills analysing and adjusting the ongoing development of authentic connections</i></p> <p>S. The team activities in the induction are very helpful for making friends.</p> <p><i>DQ “I met my best friend from the team activities in induction week”.</i></p> <p>S. Presentation skills in year 1 helped to bring students together.</p> <p><i>DQ “I had learnt good presentation skills in year 1, we all worked together and felt confident.”</i></p> <p>S. Learning all about the programmes and university life has enabled students to get involved with peer mentoring and becoming a student ambassador.</p> <p><i>DQ “I love peer mentoring what we’re doing now. Students listen to students, I can tell them everything you need to know.”</i></p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills taking stock of the direction, safety and personal satisfaction of authentic connections</i></p> <p>S. Students recommend that new students speak to staff about their progress, staff want to help so talk to them.</p> <p><i>DQ “I’d also tell them they should ask for help because most of the staff are good and do want to help you.”</i></p>
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<p>Meaning (Purposeful Existence)</p>	<p><i>The affective skills striving to search for meaning and delivering opportunity for a purposeful existence</i></p> <p>S. Interacting and being motivated to take part in a range of activities is a key recommendation by students to help new students feel a part of the University and having positive feelings of wellbeing.</p> <p><i>DQ "Now I'm more confident, helping out with open days, I've even become an ambassador representing the students for the university and I feel like that helped me and it's even helps me to get a job for next year."</i></p>	<p><i>The cognitive skills ensuring focus, developing and adjusting the meaning of a purposeful existence</i></p> <p>S. Students show having the ability to carry out the required cognitive skills (e.g. analysing, problem solving) gives them the confidence to manage their assessments and is reflected in their grades.</p> <p><i>DQ. "--then you go out into the big wide world, and there is no one to spoon feed to you anymore and it you need to be independent."</i></p>	<p><i>The metacognitive skills relating meaning and purposeful existence to the personal direction desired</i></p> <p>S. Some students are involved in self-reflection. Students show having the ability to self-reflect gives them the confidence to manage their assessments and is reflected in their grades.</p> <p><i>DQ "Excited generally, really excited to come to university and starting a new life."</i></p>
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Having introduced some of the key findings from the data analysis, the next section will focus upon the 15 individual associations between the ILS and wellbeing elements.

Associations between cognitive skills and achievement

This association focuses on the importance that the academic skills have on achievement. Most students' primary focus is on achieving the educational qualification they have targeted, as well as developing the requisite skills they will need in their future career. It follows therefore that this is the association that the students would be both most aware of and place as of prime importance to develop.

The association made by most students was between the cognitive skills and achievement. Eleven out of twelve students noted that with the development of these skills, they began to make significant improvements in the standard of their achievement. The ability to problem-solve and also enhanced study skills gave them the tools they needed to progressively attain the outcomes they were hoping for in relation to their university achievement. There was both a desire to develop these skills and an awareness that for some, even in year two, the limitations on how well they were developing these skills was making achieving their full potential more challenging. Students commented on the importance of cognitive skills including problem solving, attention levels and memory. Several students identified a significant gap in the requirement of these skills between the college they had left and the university they had moved to, direct views included:

"Before I came to university, I was nervous because I was coming from college. I wouldn't say I was being spoon fed but my teacher would sit next to me and help me out you know, it's a big step to university, very different than college was, different levels of work needed and you need the skills to achieve."

"I felt a decrease in quantity but an increase in quality of work expected, you need to develop the academic skills to pass all modules."

"I need to stop describing so much at uni. So even in my second year I can describe the comment but after I need to do analysing more and continuing that analysis, it's hard to do and difficult."

This view however was not universal. One student commented that they believed "A-levels were harder academically".

There was a belief that more training at university was required with regard to academic writing, referencing and critical analysis, including the view that:

"More early training on how to write is needed, we need to be shown how to reference and analyse much more, with examples".

Several students were concerned about their inability to grasp critical analysis and how important it was. Students had sometimes not developed this skill by the end of the second

year, when the interviews took place. They felt the fact that this particular skill was attained only partially and not at an early enough stage in their time at university, and in turn this impacted negatively on their development and caused them anxiety. Almost half the students felt time management was one of the most important skills that they needed to develop, with one student making specific reference to planning and prioritising, describing said skills as being “very important”. Another student noted the importance of developing their presentation skills:

“Because I have developed my presentation skills, I am now achieving much better grades, as I have much more confidence in writing, presenting skills and in group discussions.”

Overall, the specific ILS spoken of as important included time management, referencing, communicating, academic writing and critical analysis.

Two more issues noted as important in developing a range of cognitive skills were the role of the PAT in developing writing and referencing skills and the importance of students using the study skills services. In relation to achievement, poor time management in the first stages of university life was cited as a main stressor, one student advised, “Don't be overwhelmed by information, you have time”. Regret over not scheduling in more meetings with PAT and other lecturers was a factor for some. Students explained how anxiety was compounded when they stated “I don't understand what markers are looking for”. It was also contended by one student that “Good grades make you feel better about yourself”, while another commented that:

“ I like to talk to the PAT tutor, it helps to focus on the end goals, it is important to build up a good relationship you can develop your academic skills and then achieve more.”

With regard to the relationship between skills, stress and achievement, one student commented that “Better academic skills such as analysing means reduced stress and better results” and another believed that “good grades improve your confidence and helps you achieve much more.”

Evidence of a student transferring their academic skills into employability skills came from a student who was pleased that his enhanced writing skills were in place in time for his work placement, due to commence in a few weeks. Several other students were looking forward to these work placements and believed they would be able to perform better in them because of the skills they had developed. In relation to confidence an additional student felt that "Seminars are better for developing your confidence". The view prevailed that the students felt the seminars were more engaging and less daunting than the very populated lectures. They felt more able to communicate, learn and achieve.

Around two thirds of students identified associations between the affective skills and relationships; cognitive skills and positive emotions and metacognitive skills and achievement, making these the next three most identified associations.

Associations between the affective skills and relationships

Relationships are cited widely as of key importance to students, with many concerned with how these would be developed at a time when all students are entering a new environment and many are more distanced from their previous relationships. The affective skills provide the resilience and drive to fuel the growth of positive and successful relationships. These in turn enhance student wellbeing, minimise isolation and provide advice and support in the challenging period of transition through university and often through the longer life journey of the students.

During the discussions students explained that they felt anxious at first as to how well they would be able to build relationships with other students. But by moving out of their comfort zones and taking part in sporting or social activities they began relationships that they were convinced would remain important to them over the longer term. Their resilience and determination, they believed, had been rewarded by relationships that significantly improved their wellbeing. One student stated:

“I think that people should get out from their comfort zone and especially if you're in a new environment they should try to interact as much as they can in order to make friends... there are so many things people should do, just live the university is what I think”.

Relationships were an area of wellbeing the students placed most focus upon. Distance from home support and a feeling of isolation provided a theme that almost every student noted. The issue was felt to have been exacerbated in some cases by students electing to live in private accommodation instead of student halls, in turn making developing friend groups more difficult and decreasing the opportunities available to socialise. The best way of defeating this isolation and the stress that it could cause was seen to be taking up a social activity, often a sport. A student who had decided on private accommodation instead of residing in student halls stated that most friends had been gained and held on to by taking up rugby.

“There's so much more than the academic side. Join a society, the Law Society or hockey or anything there's so much, I recommend to join a club because I think it's all the way of taking your mind off everything, it's a massive stress relief, I don't know what I would have done without this”.

A more direct input surrounding the value of sport in enhancing socialising opportunities was from a student who said:

"It gives you a group of people that know each other, have the same shared interests, I've met a few people on the course because of the sport. Even met my housemates through playing sport".

The same student added "I'd say look into all the sports and societies because that will give you again a network of more friends and does really help you through the years." Evidence that isolation is damaging to wellbeing has been documented within this work. The importance these students place on navigating ways to avoid such isolation was a theme that emerged forcefully.

Several students emphasised the importance of saying yes to every social opportunity on offer, "Developing the social side is a massive stress relief" was a direct comment made as was, "I made good friends, we all sort of helped each other out". Students who had effectively developed friendship groups, accessed sporting or social activities and had effective support networks and communication with their friends and family from home in place, were generally able to reduce these challenges to wellbeing and focus on their main achievement priorities. A linked recurring theme was that although many felt anxious about

making friends and were intimidated to some extent by the large scale of the induction, many stated that they made friends at that induction and most still had that core group of friends two years later. Additionally, they were confident they would remain friends into the future:

“The induction is very important, it can be overwhelming as everything is new, but you need to be motivated early on and then everything will be much better. I met my best friends at the induction and all because I pushed myself to get involved with the team activities.”

One of the other elements that helped to offset impacts on wellbeing was that of staff support, two students specifically noted how friendly the staff were and another student recounted how they had a really beneficial relationship with a member of staff at the previous college they had attended. They were anxious as to how they would get through the university and initially questioned if similar support would be developed.

“I was really close to all my teachers at A-Level but I was at the same school since last 3 years. I grew up with the people around me and they were very supportive, I was anxious if uni would give me the same support. I soon realised they do and I feel there's been a lot more support at university for me.”

To conclude, it was important to students to develop relations with both staff and other students, partially to have a better opportunity to obtain the information that they would need, but primarily because all the students were anxious, as well as looking forward to their transition to university, and all realised the establishment of new relationships would play a key role in their ongoing wellbeing.

Associations between cognitive skills and positive emotions

Students had begun to comprehend the essential importance of enhancing and improving the cognitive ability and developing the positive emotions needed to thrive at university. The development of cognitive skills had improved how students felt about themselves, enhancing wellbeing and, with particular relevance to their time management skills, reduced pressure. One student commented that:

“Time management is probably something I still need to improve on as I feel like I've got more time than I actually have. This skill helped in college as we had to juggle

loads and loads of assignments at one time because obviously, we had like five submissions for one unit, that definitely helped me coming to university and to feel less stressed”.

There was a reoccurring comment from students that if they can manage their time effectively, they in turn feel better and more motivated. One student detailed:

“I think time management is probably the most important, I experienced that you sort of run out of time a bit and you’re struggling to cram an essay in, it’s really difficult, quite stressful”.

The anticipation of being able to apply skills to both their upcoming work placement and to future employment opportunities was a motivating factor and made them feel good.

“I went into work based learning and said I want to work as a project manager and told them the skills I had developed. Can you tell me the future, and then she got back to me, yes we have got one for you. This is exactly what I'm doing things, can't wait to start”.

Another comment was from a student who was feeling confident and happy about their upcoming work experience because of their skills developed, stating:

“The academic writing will be important when you’re speaking in documents. I’ll have to write a lot of reports. Part of the job is dealing with customer complaints so I’ve got to speak respectfully, things like that and because there only be me and the quality manager who’s responsible for the whole business it will be important, things like time keeping meeting deadlines, I feel happy about this as I developed these skills well at university”.

Not understanding specific ILS such as critical analysis revealed stress in some students. Two direct comments from the students elucidate this point: “I need to stop describing so much, I can describe the comment but after I need to do analysing more and continuing that analysis, it’s hard to do and difficult”, “Frustration is a key one because it's like uni lecturers are expecting us to be at this level but I've never written as an assignment before...frustration because I don't know how or what's the best tool to be able to achieve that”.

Associations between metacognitive skills and achievement

Developing the ability to accurately monitor both progress and wellbeing is fundamental to achievement. The fact that transition takes place within a new environment places even greater emphasis on this skill. Understanding when something is working, as well as when things are not going well allows the student to make the adjustments or seek the help that will eventually support achievement. Becoming more able to self-determine the individual life path is understood to be important to enhancing wellbeing.

This association focussed on the developing understanding from students of the need to take more responsibility for their own work through monitoring their own progress in both the academic and social fields. Students felt confident it was leading to better achievements. They assessed that their critical writing had needed substantial improvement and understood the significant role that effective feedback played in their opportunities to achieve. Most of the students placed the emphasis for their self-reflection and development squarely on the feedback they received. The reliance on this feedback was very significant with students basing their evaluations of how well they were doing and what they needed to do on this feedback. Specific views included:

"I increased my average mark from year one to two by the tutor explaining the structure required", "It's important to communicate with lecturers to identify gaps between the actual and desired work", and "I did not understand what markers were looking for".

The theme from the last quote was not unique, with students feeling that although very important, the feedback was extremely variable in both quality and frequency and because of their reliance on it, this subject elicited strong emotion. One student noted that "An employer doesn't care if you're stressed". This view reflected the situation that faced them all, of moving into a working environment in the near future. There was a definite feeling that they would soon need to transition again, but all seemed to have accepted this and taken more

control over their own emotional wellbeing, even if they were perhaps not all fully aware of doing so.

The following five associations were made by between a quarter to less than half the students taking part.

Associations between Affective skills and achievement

In keeping with the importance of achievement to students, the early acquisition of the affective skills also played a very integral role. The enthusiasm to begin this work through curiosity, pursue it relentlessly through motivation and stick to it through the inevitable challenges through resilience are all found in the domain of the affective skills.

The students noting this association were aware of how important their own levels of self-motivation were to their achievement and they also noted how important developing a "just get on with it" attitude was in nurturing the resilience they felt was required. The students felt meeting their own academic targets impacted on their wellbeing. If they were and getting on well with the staff, overall, they felt better about the world and themselves. One of the students who took part had already started a successful company and directed a lot of credit to the university for helping to develop his affective skills:

“My background is being a chef, is nothing related to business and achieving what we have achieved is good ...the university, the Business school have done a good job, I feel confident as I have a range of business skills, I also feel able to get through the hard times and all this means I am achieving great things at university and also with my own business.”

The influence and importance of the quality of resilience emerged from the interviews carried out, as did the achievement of goals. These were seen to be of seminal importance:

“I also joined a sport so that helped me meet more people, sort of more of a network. I then became more confident and the sports and my friends helped me. We talk about the assessments and then I become more motivated. This motivation has helped me to get through all assessments and do well in them.”

Another student recommended that new students should be determined to achieve the very best and they will become great business people of the future, this was a reoccurring view.

“New students need to keep trying and never give up, it may be hard at first as the work is very different at university, the writing, they should want to do their best and then they will have many rewards and be a great business person.”

Another student spoke about having a resilient mind-set and the results that this can bring:

“But you’ve had to be able to carry on and as we've been told you know as through each year it's another step up of what you've got to do, what you've got, just get on with it, and it already felt like that transition from a level to uni was a massive step up. You need to solve problems to get through uni and also your working life, you will then feel better and do more in life, you will achieve many things later”.

Associations between Metacognitive skills and relationships

The skill relating to being able to assess and monitor the efficacy of the developing relationships through the transition journey is fundamental in being able to access the most appropriate sort of help for each individual student. Knowing how well a relationship is progressing, be it with staff or students, allows more effort to be put in when required or support to be requested. Additionally, maintaining previous relationships with family and friends from home can often offset the damaging isolation noted in this study.

It is interesting to note that in several instances, telling support came from students who had been at university for longer periods, with substantial focus surrounding peer mentoring, including the following statement from a student who placed an extremely high value on the role of peer mentoring, feeling more networks should be built up by students themselves or that small networking groups led by PAT’s would be beneficial. They reflected on the following:

"Peer mentoring helps, less barriers to things", "I love peer mentoring, students listen to students, I can tell them everything they need to know". "We could think about peer mentors, not for peer mentor that sounds like something is wrong, it's not that, if you go to health and wellbeing it's like something is wrong, if you go to your PAT something is wrong, it's like study skills, I see as though my work has got so much

better nothing wrong with it but it's got better, it only takes one time, one feedback you'll see it go up and you will change".

These views reflected the student's feelings that generally peer mentoring was not done well, people were put off by the image, but the benefits with one bit of the right advice would be exponential. Further detail from new students about the importance of developing communication with staff was offered. It was recognised that staff were there and keen to help, but developing those relationships required effort. An example highlighting this was:

"I actually ask for help when I need it because I wasn't doing that through the first year very much as some assessment briefs have been fairly hard to understand for me and I have actually sought help this year".

Linked closely to these feelings was the feedback from staff. The absence of this in some cases or the poor quality or inconsistency as the students viewed it, had perhaps a disproportionate effect on their feelings and relations with staff. This could be influenced by the view that feedback was almost the only way students felt able to estimate how well they were progressing.

"I was frustrated with my feedback, I was not able to see what I should do next as the feedback was not clear, when this happened a few times I did not want to speak to the staff or my PAT as I was very frustrated."

These feelings were probably exacerbated by an isolation caused by leaving home, struggling to find new friendship groups and activities and the added isolation that can occur in private accommodation away from the main student halls. The key message coming through here is the importance of the relationships with academic staff; if the relationships are working, the students consider the results to be more fruitful.

Associations between metacognitive skills and meaning

These two elements are perhaps the ones that take the longest time to master and thus the associations are likely to be exhibited by students who have developed their skills and wellbeing most effectively. The search for meaning often takes people their entire lives to successfully pursue, and self-reflection and awareness are skills that many companies strive to teach to their top executives. The early consideration of these elements is a good way to

give students entering university the opportunity to accelerate their development and protect their wellbeing.

Of the five areas of wellbeing the area of meaning had the fewest associations. However, it is true that participation in activities and the awareness of their own advancement noted by some students does reflect a developing comprehension of a deeper meaning to their lives. An example illustrating this point comes from the student who stated, "I'm really excited to come to university...starting a new life". Another student who was looking to their future stated, "then you go out into the big wide world and there is no one to spoon feed to you anymore and you need to be independent". It was noted that students that became adept at self-monitoring had a greater ability to manage their assessments, better their grades and thus enjoy, experience and explore their time at university more effectively. One student talked about when he started to reflect on his work during the first year and how now this plays an important part in his life:

"The Professional Practices module in the first year, made me assess my skills and think about what I need to do to progress, this was really helpful as I could see why we were learning the different topics and this made me very motivated to develop even more. I always review my work and am quite critical, it helps me to see how important things are in my life."

Associations between affective skills and positive emotions

Positive emotions are consistently shown to be a strong predictor of wellbeing. Conversely, students who begin to experience negative emotions are in danger of beginning a spiral of decline that regularly leads to depression, anxiety and sometimes self-harm. Well-developed affective skills including resilience, motivation and curiosity may prove to be an effective protective insulator of emotional wellbeing, and acquiring those skills early on in the transition process should provide the student with the best chance to thrive in the university environment.

The impact of affective skills on positive emotions was expressed through the students obtaining positive feedback and good grades. These students rewarded their initial motivation and cyclically developed even more motivation, like a rock rolling downhill and gathering momentum, all the time increasing the conviction that these skills would help them in, as they referred to it, the real world, as one student said:

"I'm motivated, I see the benefits of university ... students need a lot of skills and to be more motivated they will then feel good about themselves ... I'm proud of my work ethic."

Students spoke about being independent learners and how this made them feel positive, with one student saying:

"Independent work is important, massive. In the big wide world there's no one to spoon feed you ... ILS means not being spoon fed, doing extra research, sorting things out yourself, you will feel positive about yourself and the work."

The essence of this last quote was reiterated by another three students. The discussions around being independent learners was highlighted by one student who explained the importance to him and his levels of happiness:

"...it's about you finding out how you do things best, who to work with, do you go to the library. It's so important to learn about how you do things. I don't think there's enough time for you develop these skills or enough significance put on them in the first year, it's not mentioned about, these skills are important to your happiness at university."

Associations between affective skills and meaning

Curiosity, motivation and resilience are the building blocks in the search for meaning. They allow new experiences including acquiring an education, developing friendship groups and exploring ambition to take place, with better chances of success than beginning with those skills in limited supply. Those experiences when distilled and reflected upon are often the basis for the individual answers to the question of what provides meaning in each life. The benefits of obtaining and refining those skills at an early stage cannot be overstated.

The demonstration of the above association was illustrated through the importance found in interacting with other students and staff and taking part in as many areas of university life as possible, motivating oneself to become a part of the university, the university lifestyle and in turn to enjoy enhanced feelings of wellbeing, as stated by one student:

"You should definitely talk to other people like I have done at university. You need to motivate yourself and reach out to different activities and different people, you will be

a part of the university fully, this will mean a lot to you when you leave as you can use all these skills.”

The final six links within the framework were the affective skills to engagement, the cognitive skills to relationships, the cognitive skills to meaning, the metacognitive skills to positive emotions, the metacognitive skills to engagement and the cognitive skills to engagement. These associations were noted by either one and two students from the twelve discussions. This is perhaps indicative of less established links, but may also demonstrate less awareness of the associations, as opposed to less associations, or that these skills have been less effectively developed by individuals or the university’s programmes. In either of the two latter cases it presents questions relating to the possible benefits that students have not enjoyed through the early development and comprehension of these skills. It also indicates potential areas where further research may enhance understanding. However, even in these cases, some association was noted by one or two students and in the search for understanding these discussions should not be discounted.

Associations between affective skills and engagement

For many young people entering into transition to university, the way they build effective engagement with the many new people and new activities they will find around them will be fundamentally important to both their academic success and their emotional wellbeing. The challenges can be immense, with many suffering from anxiety and a lack of confidence at that point in their lives. The affective skills including curiosity, persistence and resilience can be applied enthusiastically to help build and maintain engagement, but these skills have to be both comprehended and developed in order to deliver the potential benefits. Immersing oneself into university life can have great benefits as is noted within this report, however the ability to be able to do this is strongly influenced by the individual’s mastery of the affective skills.

The need for self-motivation and resilience in order to engage with university life both academically and socially was seen as important. A discussion included:

“I think that my second year because I gain knowledge and I know more about the university. I've done volunteering, I've done many things I feel that I'm now kind of home, my space, I feel good, I feel relaxed. In the first year it was a bit weird coming

here because you have new people and you have to interact with lecturers and my English wasn't that good, even now it's not good but in the beginning I felt a bit like: I don't know, I felt a bit stressed because I couldn't be relaxed in this environment. This year I really feel at home”.

One student showed that his experience had been very different and that his “isolation” had meant that he was frustrated that he had engaged more within his first and second year at university:

“I'm living in a studio, a big mistake on my part, have been there for 2 years. I have felt a bit isolated and was not motivated, this has meant that I did not join in socially.”

Associations between cognitive skills and relationships

When arriving at university, the importance of developing relationships is at the forefront of most students' minds. Universities primarily constitute a learning environment with the achievement of academic excellence of significant importance, thus developing personal academic skills including problem solving, memory development and academic focus at a rate in keeping with peers helps to make and these relationships strong and enables them to be maintained. In addition, this also provides tutors with the best opportunity of being able to help develop learning and construct relationships. These relationships can provide help and allow this help to be accepted when it is needed. The challenging area of developing presentation skills was also recognised as being important, helping with both learning and additionally, the development of relationships. Students also reflected on their academic skills:

“The academic skills I have developed at university have meant that I can do so much more, I get on with many people now as I can talk about what I know, also have good friends.”

Associations between cognitive skills and meaning

The search for meaning is often a lifelong endeavour with stages achieved on the way as experience and comprehension develop. As both an emotional and intellectual challenge, one of the most significant aids in making these discoveries is the development of high-quality academic cognitive skills. These skills assist in the analysis, synthesis and valuing of experience and knowledge and the earlier and more effectively they can be acquired, the

sooner and more fully the comprehension of meaning can begin. Students valued the development of problem solving and analytical skills, especially due to their role in providing confidence, this confidence in itself enhancing enjoyment and meaning. Other students spoke of presentation and referencing skills and how developing these skills would help them in the future:

“I had a basic understanding of business, it’s quite good to have the base knowledge of business, after working over the summer. I was doing as well, but not much for public speaking, but I feel by doing it really helps. To present it properly and be able to do it in front of a lecturer was a big step for me. The feedback meant that I fully understood how to do this better next time. I then developed my presentation skills and now see how I can use these skills in my business career to excel. There are some things you are asked to do maybe you haven't done before, some students often mentioned referencing which was quite difficult, but when they learnt it they understood why we had to do it and again this skill will help in the future.”

Associations between metacognitive skills and emotions

Emotional mastery has a fundamental effect on wellbeing throughout life. This is true of all people but perhaps especially of young people transitioning from home life into a challenging new learning environment, with new relationships and experiences at every turn. The metacognitive skills of self-monitoring and critical evaluation, when utilised to ensure the emotions are well-managed and in good health, can provide crucial insights illuminating what adjustments may be desirable and what support and from who may be needed to bring these adjustments about. It is important therefore to recognise that these skills do not usually come about without training and development at an early enough time nor to a high enough quality to deliver all their possible benefits. Thus, the introduction of them at an early stage in the transitional process has many significant potential benefits.

It was noted that students tended to be very self-critical and really wanted to comprehend what they needed to do in order to improve. It was also noted that impacts on emotions followed the assessment cycles. With regard to positive emotions, these were challenged in most cases by an anxiety felt by students in relation to the academic work required. One student noted that they did not like new situations, stating "I don't like new procedures and

uncertainty, it stresses me out". These feelings of anxiety very closely followed the timetable of exams and work due submission dates.

In two of the interviews there was strong residual emotions, even a year after the actual transition, caused by beliefs that they did not have things explained to them properly and that different staff told them different and often contradictory things. Having said this all of the students who took part demonstrated a generally positive outlook. They all realised that feeling good and being happy was very important and they had developed significant resilience. As noted earlier, the students spoke more of the affective and cognitive skills and were less aware of the meta-cognitive skills of reflection and self-monitoring, however these skills were still demonstrated with one example being a student who had developed a programme to monitor the levels of happiness they felt on a day-to-day basis. This particular student believed this to be one of the most important self-development progressions made through their university transition:

"I have an Excel document. I read somewhere that it was what you should do. I split my life up into little parts and then for each one of them I give It a 1 to 10 every Saturday morning. I write a little comment on what happened every week and give score to it and every week I reopen it and I write a little comment and see how that compares with comments from the past..... is the best thing I've ever done. I've only done this for a month but I think everyone should do this."

Associations between cognitive skills and engagement

There are many activities and learning requirements open to students transitioning to university. All students are different however and the access to these activities that may be open and simple to one student can provide insurmountable difficulty to another, often resulting in challenges to their wellbeing and in some cases this can lead to them failing to continue their studies. Developing critical academic cognitive skills is an effective method of improving access to those activities noted because with better problem solving, critical analysing and other cognitive skills comes a significant increase in confidence and a stronger ability to thrive at these activities. Once moving in a positive way, this enhanced confidence and ability can lead to ever more enthusiastic engagement in all university activities.

The importance of being able to solve problems and become self-reliant was expressed, as was the preference for small seminar groups which allowed a better application and engagement of learning. Challenges to engagement were wide-ranging, although there was a feeling that "Saying yes" to everything was the best way to fight isolation. Two students interviewed did practice engagement very strongly and the results were positive. One example was a student creating a business with a colleague, importing Aragon oil from Morocco. This company allowed them to win the national young enterprise award, going on to the European final and additionally they won the Santander award for young business enterprises. A direct quote from the student relating to this success was:

"It's all because of the support of the Business School, if we would have done these things on our own we probably couldn't succeed, so behind all the good things that happened to us there is a lot of support".

A further example of this student's engagement includes being a student ambassador and supporting open days. Another student who is also a student ambassador has benefited from this engagement. A direct quote from this student is:

"I've become an ambassador representing the students from the university and it has even helped me get a job for next year. I talk more to people because we've done a lot of presentation skills, I have the confidence to present putting all that into practice which is really good".

These two examples of the development and opportunity that positive engagement can bring provide strong support for the ideas of focussing on building this area of wellbeing.

Associations between metacognitive skills and engagement

Engagement with university programmes as well as the associated social and sporting opportunities has been noted as being of significant importance. Allied to this must be utilising the metacognitive skills to self-monitor, and adjust this engagement as is most appropriate both for the individual involved and the particular point in the transition journey. Comprehending what is going well, what may need reducing for a time because for example critical exams are approaching, or what activities need adjusting to prepare for the next phase of the journey are critical skills that are not easily mastered. The teaching and understanding

of these skills at an early stage provides the best opportunities for the students to become self-directing in their university life and beyond.

Where students had regularly discussed their developments with academic staff it was noted that this gave them confidence to engage more in both lectures and seminars:

“I always try to talk to staff about my progress and feedback, I then feel much better about taking part in discussions in lectures and seminars as I know what I need to develop, so I practice my skills in the sessions.”

The second most spoken of method of self-reflection and of monitoring development came from conversations with other students. Comments included "Talking to other students is helpful", "Small PAT groups and voluntary older students help support". Students were aware that something was missing in terms of metacognitive skills. Two comments included "I need to develop ILS in the third year", "Need more self-reflection". A final comment worth considering was the view from a student that they "Need to be stretched in other ways". Clearly these views indicated that students knew further developments were needed but had not yet fully mastered the metacognitive skill of understanding how learning occurs.

Individual examples of a student who monitored their own wellbeing on a daily basis and an international student who felt the university integrated students really well and who was very much enjoying the total experience, were examples of the opportunities of thriving in the environment when the right circumstances were in place. The work placement section of the course that was coming up for the students was seen as a really fine opportunity and appeared to energise and motivate the students. Engagement was an area where most of the students appeared less aware of potential implications. Many felt that for example in relation to study skills, an area noted by all as important, by volunteering they were admitting they had problems and thus "stuck out like a sore thumb". Indeed, this issue was not isolated to study skills but accessing support services like PAT tutors were only perceived as being taken up when you had a problem, and it would be feasible to contend that often students can have issues with highlighting that they are experiencing problems.

Overall development of the framework

Overall, the development of this framework has noted links and associations in all areas. It is true that in some areas associations were far more frequently identified and comprehended, however the discussions were not rigid and quantified, nor were they intended to be. The students were free to explore the areas that were of the greatest relevance and importance to their own unique transition and indeed transformation. Some came in with certain skills well-developed, while others had gaps, and confidence varied widely. For some, understanding and skills mastered were at times developed quickly, however others were still feeling under-equipped in some areas at the end of their second year.

The focus on interest and achievement were different, some came from a non-academic background, others were focussed upon work, both through the immediate upcoming work placement and their future careers. The links however between the two models were plentiful. All students valued the ILS they had developed, none had an overarching understanding of them all but all felt their wellbeing was enhanced by the skills they had obtained. This work further re-enforces the links between ILS and wellbeing, and an exploration of this will follow.

The different academic expectations between college and university was an issue that caused many students anxiety and stress. Students were aware that far more independent learning was going to be required of them than they had previously done and in several cases they did not know how to accomplish that learning to a high enough standard. The study skills element of the university was widely praised for its content with academic writing, referencing and research giving the students who attended some of the basic tools they were going to need from day one. However, the way the service was delivered caused some consternation to some students. The inconsistent delivery in the teaching of these independent academic skills was a cause of stress noted by students. Concern, sometimes stress, endured about critical writing and analysis accomplishment was felt by students to be still ongoing at the end of their second year.

The elements of affective skills including motivation resilience and curiosity were highlighted in the discussions with students. These skills allowed them to overcome anxiety and feelings of isolation and thrive in the early stage of their transitions. That success and motivation was still in train to the present time. The willingness of these students to take part in this research is further evidence of those affective skills within this group. However, given the challenges noted by these students and the way they have applied these skills to combat those challenges to their wellbeing, it is worth considering how these skills are acquired by all young people. In addition, assessment around more effective ways to arm students with an awareness and understanding of requisite resilience as they begin their university life has the potential to deliver important improvements. In a similar vein, the consequences of isolation to students as they progressed through university was consistently noted. The negative impact on wellbeing through not having family support close to hand, having to cope with new situations and the pressure to succeed and obtain good academic results to help secure the future was a consideration for almost all the students. Some of the most effective ways to combat these stresses were considered to be through developing social groups and/or partaking in sport.

The metacognitive skills of self-reflection and self-monitoring are key to developing an awareness that things are not going well and to understanding both what is causing these situations to occur and understanding yourself well enough to be able to identify the best way of reducing the damage caused. With the exception of one student who had designed a programme that was effective in monitoring happiness on a daily basis, none of the other students seemed explicitly aware of the self-monitoring they must have utilised to ensure they were not having their wellbeing negatively impacted upon. This again seems to be an indication that the critical metacognitive skills have been developed effectively without the individual necessarily possessing an awareness of the process. This is not perhaps a problem for students who have evidently developed them successfully, but constitutes a possible learning opportunity in considering how the skills can be more widely and systematically supplied to students.

In looking at the elements of wellbeing individually, the two areas that had the most impact on students appeared to be relationships and achievements, followed by positive emotions with less focus, or perhaps awareness, going into engagement and meaning. Overall though it

is fair to suggest that it would be unusual at this early stage in their progression and with the intensely busy and challenging time they are going through that wide reflection and revelations about the deeper meanings to their lives would have been present in the majority of students. This is especially true within the specific context of these interviews. It is also true to say that developing an awareness of this search for meaning within the student population at this early point would allow the development and transitions they have made to be more fully appreciated and easier to build upon going forward.

The issue of socialisation was of particular relevance to students and significant parts of most discussions explored this subject and touched upon many of the a priori themes. Induction was found to have an impact to both the short and longer-term socialisation and settling in of students. Most found it useful both in terms of acquiring important information and also initially developing a cohort of friends. Two students specifically said they were nervous about the social aspect before attending university. One direct quote was "I wanted to meet new people and you make friends for life at uni, so yeah, I think it's (being) nervous about meeting people". Despite, or more probably because of, the value placed on meeting new friends, students valued the social side of university life for a range of reasons including the belief that having a "social life takes the pressure off". Students felt that there was a disparity between the provision of social and sporting activities between the two university campuses.

Accommodation was cited as having a role to play in socialisation with concerns about the potential for isolation within private accommodation. The importance of talking to other students as a way of reflecting on assessments and work was noted by students.

From the primary data, this research has considered there is evidence that the affective skills and the cognitive skills are both more widely understood and more frequently put into practice by the students, this is borne out by the heat map. When considering the affective skills, these can be further broken down to include curiosity, motivation and resilience. When making the transition to university the importance of developing these skills is vital in allowing students to thrive.

The myriad of challenges that need to be overcome are evident and in approaching this huge step a mind-set of optimism, a desire to learn and a determination to progress through setbacks gives the student involved a much-improved opportunity to obtain success. Further considerations about how many of the general population of university acquire the range of

ILS and at what stage in their progression they master them, are well worth considering. It is interesting to note that the development and utilisation of the affective skills mentioned appears in several cases to be driving the understanding of the importance of the cognitive skills mentioned and increasing the value of the acquisition of those skills. It is perhaps to be expected that the ILS are likely to be developed in the order of affective skills driving cognitive skills and finally rounding up with the mastery of the meta cognitive skills. There seems to be evidence of this process within the research. Consideration of the benefits of systematically developing the full range of each skill at an early stage in transition may provide an insight and understanding that could benefit many areas of learning.

4.4 Analysis of data

EIT 1 Inconsistency of academic experiences both positive and negative mediate the relationship between ILS and wellbeing.

This theme emerged and cut across all elements of the research. The reliance of students on academic support as they transition into the very different and challenging environment of university is evident, and this was shown to affect their wellbeing. Most manage to obtain this support in a way that is effective enough to allow them to achieve their academic goals, yet the story that emerged powerfully from these interviews was that of an inconsistency of provision and clear evidence that what was ideal and easily accessible to some students was an ordeal to others that stayed with them into the end of their second year and was sometimes still unresolved. The potential learning opportunities from this to educational providers is significant, with enhanced outcomes for all a potential reward.

Two key issues highlighted were communication concerns and a disparity of provision. One student noted that "everyone is keen to help when asked" and the notion of the need to ask was repeated, this was shown to highlight the differences in support received and the experiences of the students. One student reflected on their varying levels of support with frustration:

“There seems to be a bit of a communication problem I think with the uni and students, whether it's new students or existing. I faced challenges about module selection this year for example and it kind of feels like the uni isn't thinking of this ...

Tutors need to show us more how to do these skills, it will help our motivation greatly. Some do show but others clearly do not, it's frustrating."

Another issue that several students felt important was the feedback received from tutors. They felt that most of their development had come from feedback, both in terms of specific skills, for example critical analysis and in terms of comprehending university expectation. Three of the twelve students made comments around the fact that they had perceived lecturers would help them, but that in fact they needed to help themselves. A specific statement provided was that "detailed feedback in the meeting is needed", and other discussion was centred upon the fact that some students felt the balance was too far in the direction of needing to find out themselves, with very little feedback given from assessments.

"My feedback is very different from different tutors, some is good and tells me how to improve, but some is not, have to figure it out yourself."

It was usually either understood before university or comprehended soon after commencing that a far greater emphasis is placed on taking responsibility for your own learning than had been the case for the students when in college. This was accepted but it was felt that a clearer outline of how best to do this should be provided, one student stated that they were "frustrated in year one" and that "there was inconsistency between lecturers and seminar tutors that affected grades of the whole group". It was felt that some lecturers outlined the work and then advised students to ask about anything they were not sure of, but this presented difficulties to students who were more introverted or who were conscious of not appearing to understand. It was felt that there was an inconsistency of information delivered both between staff and between modules, one student made this clear:

"There was something that was very frustrating and it still is frustrating. I'll tell you about an example. We had an assessment and were told to do things one way by the seminar tutor, but when we checked with the lecturer they wanted it done in another way. So it's very frustrating that there is a lot of inconsistency between lecturers and seminar tutors, the lecturers are OK they are normally the module leaders and know a lot about the module but the seminar tutors seem not to bother and don't know as much. So we were all getting confused about this assessment and it will have affected our grades. That wasn't just me because we spoke about it as a whole group. We did

have one module that was very clear and everything was set out clearly, so I was happy with this and got a good grade.”

Another issue was that there was considerable evidence of many students feeling that the first year did not count. The comprehension of this issue and the challenge to its validity was something tutors had not appeared to take on board effectively, causing mixed messages between students. One student said this had been their own initial view but, in talking to a student who had graduated, had discovered that the grades obtained during the first year, although not counting towards the final degree pass score, did often predict the final outcome. This is another example of communication issues and differences in tutor support raised by the students, one student noting:

“It would be good if we all knew from day one what counted and what did not, how will we motivate ourselves, it’s all a bit unclear, some tutors are helping students to progress and some are not.”

The tutor support with regard to the work experience element of the university programme on the other hand seemed to enthuse most of the students. The emphasis that the university places on this programme was welcomed by several students, three students specifically stated that they were looking forward to their work placement.

“I’m really looking forward to my placement, I can’t wait to get out and do some work you know, I’m doing my work based learning out for five weeks then I’m trying to sort out a one year placement. I really want this to do well because it’s a long time and I’m hoping to get a lot out of it, the uni have helped me to set this up and I am thankful.”

However, one student highlighted that preparing for the placement was causing them a lot of stress and that they didn’t have much help:

“We also have to prepare for the year placement, I haven’t done it before and finding your placement things like that that can be quite stressful, because you have to update a creative CV and you have to create a cover letter as well, I didn’t know where to start, it’s stressful and not a lot of help was given.”

The importance of study skills in beginning to understand and acquire some academic and independent learning skills was a significant emerging theme with students who acknowledged the importance and the valuable content of this service, but also raised concerns about the efficacy of its delivery. It was noted to "use study skills as you need them from the start". Specific reference was made with regard to academic writing: "more early training on how to write is needed" was a direct example of one student's feelings, alongside this several students noted they did not have the ability to critically analyse well even two years into their university journey. Regret about not engaging fully with the service was highlighted by one student "Should have arranged more meeting with PAT and study skills", they contended. A concern that just by saying, if something is wrong come and see, us was a factor that was repeated more than once. The benefits the students who did engage with the service identified were very significant. Given this, a focus upon how those skills could be delivered to the full cohort of students both initially and over time, as these skills take considerable time and effort to hone, was a theme coming out from these interviews that is too important to not invest in understanding more fully.

This theme had developed so significantly as to have clear examples that actually contradicted each other. Regarding the induction week and their development over the first year, one student stated:

"Induction was supportive and good English support, I'm impressed by how internationalised Chester University was, everyone keen to help when asked, good grades improved my confidence, my PAT was helpful when meeting requested, feedback is vital, internationals are shy to interact in seminars so referencing and study skills are important. This good support allowed building of a successful company".

A different student interviewed felt at the beginning through induction there was a "lack of guidance and a reduction in support" and it "feels like a mountain to climb", "Not shown how to use the App fully, no map of the campus, lack of information". On the contrary, another student felt that "The induction was important, friends group made there are still friends, tutor's view was to help you but also help yourself".

All students were speaking genuinely about their own experiences of the first two years at the same university yet two found the staff universally helpful, the experience supportive and the opportunities for development excellent, whilst the other felt that staff and programmes had a negative impact on the grades and outcomes of the class. In terms of ILS the acquisition of these skills is gained broadly by some students and sparingly by others. Some students acquire these skills at an early stage, while others have not obtained mastery over some requisite skills by the end of their second year. This inconsistency of academic experience was an issue that was far more marked than was expected and the impact upon students that it had in all areas demanded its inclusion as an emerging/ integrated theme.

IET 2 Early experiences have an anchoring effect on ILS and wellbeing

The anchoring effect can be explained as the way a significant event or experience can impact a life for good or ill long into the future. These impacts can be unforeseen at the time by the people involved but often play an important part in the development of the person they are impacting upon. Some examples could include a family experience, witnessing an inspirational action, a piece of advice from a respected friend, an illness or accident, or a piece of learning within a formal lesson, as well as an infinite range of other experiences. They touch an important core within the person and influence thinking and actions over the course of the individual's development. The anchoring effect is a phenomenon that played a role throughout every element of the students' transition to university including the elements of acquiring ILS and wellbeing. It is to be expected that previous developments would have a part to play within the transition of students from college to university. This research however demonstrates the pervasive nature of it through all the themes and the pivotal role it plays. Some clear examples of the importance of the anchoring effect were demonstrated as follows.

Wellbeing was facilitated by some students meeting a supportive cohort in an induction session at the beginning of university life, several students reported that because of the induction activities they were able to engage fully in the week and made friends for life, one student reflected this:

“The induction week made a big change to my life, I enjoyed all the activities, was relaxed and also made my friends that I have today, this means that I have a good team around me.”

Others lived in isolated private accommodation and struggled to develop friendship groups throughout their university experience. Some linked with a university social programme that enhanced their wellbeing and helped them through every stage of their development, others never saw that programme promoted so never attended and potentially suffered as a result, with one student stating:

“I was not aware of all the social activities and clubs that you can join, looking back I wish I had been told, it would have helped me to feel better at uni. I am very on my own because of this and wish it was not this, I could have done much more outside of the classes.”

Some came from a supportive family living close by, others were more isolated as their family and friends were in a different part of the country or even living in another country. Further examples explored were a lesson attended at an early stage that developed the critical analysing ability of a student, the discussion with a PAT tutor for one student who decided to book in and attend as opposed to another two who elected not to.

“I went to see my PAT very early on, we got on straight away. My PAT showed me how to break down problems that I was having and how to look at all the different ways, this is a skill I do now, I am so glad I saw my PAT about this. I always do things this way since the meeting and it makes me have a positive way of thinking and not be stressed out.”

These inputs have an anchoring effect whether that be positive or negative, and this is demonstrated in the student stories that magnify achievement and support wellbeing, or impact to the contrary through the rest of their university journey. It is evident that many of the issues that affect individual students at an early stage carry on with them throughout their university experience, with one example of a student feeling things had not been explained properly in an early lecture still impacted upon them two years into the journey. It is impossible to remove the elements that anchor students and shape their character when assessing variables which impact on student wellbeing, but perhaps more could be done to offset the negative consequences by better understanding the major areas it can impact upon.

EIT 3 The diversity of learning needs and preferences

A further emerging/ integrated theme was identified around the key individual messages that emerged from each of the 12 students. These surrounded their specific story, ranging from before they attended university and continuing over their first two years, until the time of the interviews. Each journey was unique and each had presented a very individual key message, but all students had developed from the person who was planning to attend university two short years before. A number of these stories are considered below:

Example 1: The student has embraced everything while at university, built networks around them self, engaged with every opportunity. The student has a positive outlook, is highly motivated, achieved good grades and has become a student ambassador. This is reflected in a selected section of their narrative below:

“The final lecture of the year was HR, she was talking about three different types of people that are active, inactive, but they turn up and tick the box, disregarding everything and said averages in the UK about are about 10,30% active. How many people could come to today, she said about 75 people and she counted 7. It was about 10%, how do you get them other people to focus on doing the skills, happiness and all that. People like the active will just do it, but how can you motivate the others to get them active, I think it's done by showing people the benefits, because I love change management and it's all about that, if a student could see the benefits they would do it, in the first year.”

Example 2: The student feels strongly that students are not shown how to do key things by staff. They are told to research, reference, access online sources, even choose module options but are not shown how to go about doing this. There is a frustration about the lack of clear communication, but with determination the student has built up their own resilience, this was shown when stating:

“I think it could have been spelt out a bit clearly because when you first start uni don't really know what you expected and previously A Levels and GCSEs I've done full-length exams that never done a piece of course work before never done an assignment before never even seen a brief so I didn't know how to break that down how to understand how to understand the rubric or anything like that so I don't think there

was really as much support for actually how to write the assignments or how to understand the briefs, what lecturers looking and even what they expect from you, we weren't shown at all... I just get on with it now and find a way."

Example 3: The student feels that the social side of university is very important and benefits their own wellbeing. As the student did not live in student halls, isolation and frustration are felt even at the present time, two years into the university journey, primarily relating to a feeling of lacking of friends. Communication with others is difficult, but the student is trying to develop confidence in many ways, including trying to speak in seminar sessions:

"I am trying now to speak and take part in seminar activities, it is hard for me but I am getting better, it's because as I said I did not get involved early on and living in private accommodation was the wrong choice."

Example 4: The student is extremely driven by the end goal, the degree, and feels that motivation is very important, monitoring their own motivation weekly to see if and why it changes. A strong belief is present that students need to be independent both in their personal life and with academic work to have confidence, and this all comes from self-motivation. A conviction is held that peer mentoring is important to help develop confidence and interaction with others.

"I've even become an ambassador representing the students for the university and I feel like that helped me and it's even helps me to get a job for next year. I help out with questions at open days, and meet people. I talk more to people because we have done a lot of business presentation skills. I have the confidence to present, putting all that into practice which is really good."

Example 5: The student does not understand why there seems to be a disparity between the information lecturers, and seminar tutors give. This has affected the student's understanding and grades and also that of peers within the university.

"It is very hard when things are not clear, it affects us all and our grades. We did have one module that was very clear and everything was set out clearly, so I was happy with this and got a good grade."

There was also a difference shown from the students in the importance between lectures and seminars. Some students enjoyed the more practical aspect of study which involved learning in the seminar, with one stating that "seminars are better for developing confidence", others felt that the bulk of the information is given in lectures. Some students felt that more emphasis should be placed on peer support and believed that the PAT system was flawed because "the PATs are lecturers too" and "the peer system has less barriers". Three students stated that if you go to PAT's you feel that something is wrong.

These are clear examples of the individual and ongoing nature and experience of transition. It must also be noted that in every case, the challenges and emotions identified early on still remain as either lessons or burdens two years after the initial decision to go to university and will probably remain for a long time into the future. Therefore, the impacts on both wellbeing and transitions should not be under estimated.

There were some similarities however and these included the fact that they were all to some degree stressed, overwhelmed or challenged by the upcoming phase of their lives, albeit also excited and enjoying the journey. They all had focus and determination to achieve their set end goal. They were all earnestly trying to develop their own independent learning abilities. One other similarity was that the students all felt that the level of provision from the university varied widely.

The emphasis on the early development of academic skills and the importance of developing social support to combat stress and isolation was clear in the discussions. The difference between a college and university mind set, the need to ask for support and the need to effectively juggle work and study was clearly understood, but also prevalent was a feeling that in a work place you would have less support and understanding. The idea that because of this it was necessary to develop a way to just "get on with it" was a strong indication that these students at least were becoming well able to adapt to different situations.

The emerging/ integrated theme relating to the diversity of learning needs and preferences demonstrated the significant transformations that each student went through. The students had all brought their individual stories and carried them through the complex experience of working through a university degree. The two elements, what they had brought with them

through their own individual history and character and the specific academic, social and support elements supplied by the university made the transitions completely unique in all cases.

Clearly the majority of students go on to achieve and obtain their degree. They find a way through and protect their wellbeing effectively enough to obtain a career, they transform and grow. There are clear indications that the students involved value the ILS they had acquired and credit much of their happiness and stress reduction to them. There are also indications that few attain the full range of the skills early in their transformations so remain unaware of the impacts obtaining them may bring. Sadly, more and more students are reported from suffering severe impacts to their wellbeing, some to the point where their targeted achievements are not met, some to the point of their health being negatively impacted upon or worse. These issues combined with the unpredictable circumstances surrounding the acquisition of ILS skills may provide a rich area for ongoing learning that could, with relatively minor adjustments, deliver the potential for significant benefits to student wellbeing.

Significant learning from this theme is that although every student is different there is a tendency to try and develop one size fits all provision. This is understandable as it lends itself to developing support that is both relatively simple to replicate as well as run out to a wide range of students improving access especially during transition. The difficulty is that our developed understanding strongly indicates that this provision is often not able to be accessed by the students that need it most.

The more effective way to deliver support would probably be to provide staff that better understand the need to assess the students individually, have the opportunity to develop more knowledge and understanding of the student and are more able to deliver flexible and bespoke support. This type of provision would need significant investment in staff development and a change in the mind-set most universities have to delivering support. More research to fully comprehend the full implications of this would certainly benefit in clarifying the options and possible benefits. However, it is clear that each transition is unique, that the other two emerging themes of the anchoring effect and the inconsistency of experience related to academic support bring a perhaps more haphazard element to those transformations than would be ideal and that the students themselves credit much of their

own wellbeing to the acquisition of ILS. These issues together make a strong case for the identifying of the optimal method of delivering effective, personalised support as a priority and make this a strong emerging/ integrated theme from this research.

4.5 Chapter summary and conclusion

The students all have individual stories and to a large degree their transition depends upon their background and past experiences, their personality, drive to succeed, the feedback that they are given for individual modules, if they access support and the quality of this support. They want to know how to develop but there seems to be inconsistencies in the information and support they get.

The analysis using the template shows potential links between developing the ILS and areas of student wellbeing. There appears to be often a less than best use of the first years' time because of a lack of acquiring these skills in a timely manner. Therefore, acquiring and understanding these ILS at an early stage and not leaving this to chance, would have the potential to deliver the optimum opportunities moving forward. The analysis shows the benefits of developing ILS in a holistic, consistent and timely manner. Setting up small student/ staff support groups may be a way forward and encouraging students to develop their own network of support and social activities as well as offering a more individual approach to their learning. The support from the PAT needs further consideration in developing this individualised approach to the students' attaining of ILS and enhancing wellbeing.

Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

After analysing the primary data and drawing conclusions about students' transitions and the role ILS may play in enhancing their wellbeing, the next chapter considers how these findings compare to literature and add new / further insights. A comparison is made between the primary and secondary research elucidating areas of new knowledge, focusing upon the gaps identified from the literature (see Table 3). The research aim and objectives are discussed in relation to providing new insights into student wellbeing and ILS through transition. Personal implications, contributions and recommendations are then considered. This chapter is completed by considering final conclusions.

5.2 Discussion

The primary research found students had experienced differing levels of stress and varied challenges during transition, as was noted in the literature (Askham, 2008; Palmer, & Rodger, 2009) however, the primary data identified high levels of enhanced preparedness, noted in the students before starting the first year at university to combat some of these concerns. The primary research found the change in requirements from college to university and the need for undertaking more independent learning was a major stressor, these findings supported literature asserting that there was a lack of ILS and that this did indeed contribute to levels of stress felt by students. Words like "overwhelmed", "anxious" and "challenging" were used to describe the initial transition. Students also said that they did not know what to expect and expressed regret about not planning more time to discuss their challenges with academic tutors, reflected by Field et al. (2014).

The primary research showed that students' expectations of transition need managing early on and on an ongoing basis. Crabtree & Roberts (2009) noted there was a lack of student preparedness and a mismatch of student expectations. The literature highlighted that the expectations of students are influenced by prior educational experiences (Cook & Rushton, 2008) and that the experiences encountered shape their academic expectations and also their interactions with academic staff (Crisp et al. 2009). This the primary research however, allowed a range of factors that affected the student's expectations and progression to be fully discussed and allowed the impacts on their wellbeing to be seen.

Several students commented upon the differences between college and university relating to teaching methods and assessment types and how this had affected their achievement, motivation and feelings of confidence, supporting Leese (2010) and Bandias et al. (2011). Induction activities shaped student relations with peers and also staff at an early stage and these experiences continued with the students well into their university life. The different educational back stories, family expectations, previous academic attainments, decisions on where to move to, including which city and student halls or private accommodation, all influenced student expectations and played a part in their ongoing wellbeing.

Isolation in private accommodation, a preparation year and self-reliance instilled by parents were all significant parts of different stories, but again the defining factor was that the transformation was different in every case and the ideal support identified in each story was also different. This adds the perspective that a real development of understanding from all the people and agencies involved in the managing and supporting of these transitions needs to take place in order to enhance the efficacy of this monitoring. This was noted by McIntosh and Shaw (2017).

Additional data allowed specific challenges to be identified. This was supported strongly in one of the emerging/ integrated themes of the primary research that of the emerging need for enhanced personalised support. It does not seem to be adequate to just put processes such as PAT support or induction programmes in place, however helpful those may be to the majority of students. Postareff et al., (2016) noted that it was not enough to support successful learning, but that the emotions and wellbeing of students also required support, and this relates to the findings elucidated in this study. The essential lessons from the 12 subjects are that the quality of those interactions, the ability of those trying to support and the importance of being able to listen to individual stories and respond in an appropriate way, are the defining features in the efficacy of support delivered.

How current support processes are prevented from becoming a box ticking process, how staff manage to engage individuals and take advantage of what may be their only opportunity to positively interact with students, meet their needs and help them overcome their specific, individual challenges are obstacles universities must find ways around. Several students felt the belief that you only engage with support when something is wrong was widespread and pointed out that no one wants to stick out like a sore thumb. Therefore, it was felt by students

that the university did not on occasion provide easily accessible interactions nor ensure that when those interactions happened the tutors they happened with were equipped to recognise them and optimise the outcomes.

The above clearly supports the need for specific challenges to be identified and to overcome the feelings of isolation as echoed by (Askham (2008) and concerns around varied levels of relationships with academic staff (Crisp et al. 2009). The literature suggests that different methods of interventions need considering both tried and new. Activities that focus upon mindfulness (Carlson et al. 2015 and Seldon & Martin, 2017) and the benefits of peer mentoring activities (Collings, Swanson & Watkins, 2015) were all important findings from the literature. However, the primary research revealed very individual challenges and allowed individual solutions to be discussed.

There were specific narratives that suggested consideration should be given to issues such as timings of interventions. An example here is evidence throughout the research that earlier interventions have a positive effect, minimising the length of time the negatives have to impact. Therefore, before the student begins their degree programme, stepping up or bridging activities can develop confidence and minimise anxiety. Alongside this, supporting the development of activities to enhance relationships with other students and staff enhances further confidence and resilience.

Similarly, smaller group size can be conducive to promoting a more informal relationship between students and academic staff. This can set a tone allowing students to feel more confident in approaching staff who are there to help them. Gale and Parker (2001) suggest transition is made up of critical stages from the induction stage to the development stage and finally the becoming stage. What was insightful in this research was that students carried their challenges with them into the end of the second year, therefore some had not reached the development stage at the end of their second year, indicating this smooth and linear development was not seen in this research.

More work on early intervention, for example a bridging course could prove to be very effective, (McKay & Sheridan, para. 1) indeed, students in the study believed the year they had attended such a course gave far more confidence and built ILS skills to a degree where they felt better placed to begin university life than many students who were arriving with

better previous academic attainments. The issue of many students not knowing what to expect was to the forefront of the findings with a lack of more in depth information about expectations at open days. Consideration relating to setting up small network groups of support were suggested and the importance of social activities as an effective intervention were noted in the primary research as was interest in peer mentoring. From a university perspective it was felt that a more consistent approach from staff including lecture and seminar tutors and individual programmes would allow students to understand what was required more effectively.

The literature reviewed considered that more focus is required upon academic development early on to add to the holistic approach of students' wellbeing. Significant correlations between wellbeing and academic achievement were noted in the literature (Ansari and Stock, 2010) as well as links to behaviour and dropping out (Zullig et al, 2011). The application of the template resulted in more specific and detailed evidence of links where particular ILS had impacted on the students' wellbeing.

This research significantly adds to the limited knowledge of the specific links between ILS and wellbeing. The heat map detailing the numbers of students who noted the discreet associations between the ILS and elements of wellbeing puts forward interesting understanding of which links were comprehended by all or most students, as opposed to the associations that many or most students did not identify. This learning can be utilised in further research to gain insights into how to most effectively deliver ILS as well as the potential impacts the discreet areas have to wellbeing.

The link between cognitive skills and achievement was the link most noted (linking to Richardson et al., 2012 & Stadler et al., 2015). It is evident that students focus very strongly on their academic achievement and it is a straightforward link that can be readily identified. Their academic thinking skills as well as time management and research abilities develop and they begin to see their learning achievements improve, often at a significant rate. This focus, with eleven out of twelve students commenting at some point in their interviews about this link suggests that interventions that focus on this association have a good chance to be both influential relating to outcomes and easily comprehended as beneficial by the students.

The following three associations were noted by six to eight of the students interviewed making this grouping the next most frequently identified and important to consider, as they affected between half and two thirds of the participants. Affective skills and their associations to relationships were the second most noted association overall. The importance of relationships was at the forefront of many discussions and when relationships were not working well students reported a negative impact on their wellbeing. The affective skills relating to resilience and enthusiasm supported students in overcoming difficulties and in developing long term relationships. Enhancing understanding of how best to develop these skills would deliver opportunities to support positive relationships and tackle wellbeing caused by isolation. The insights around moving away from the comfort zone and trying to face down anxiety as well as accepting as many social invitations as possible, provided by the students could help craft solutions through induction in particular, but also through a range of other interventions.

The cognitive skills associations with positive emotions and metacognitive skills associations to achievements were the other two areas that were noted by at least half of the students. The appreciation of the developing academic skills was identified as not only benefiting achievement but also in making the students feel better, enhancing wellbeing and thus allowing them to enjoy more of their time at university. It was also interesting that around half the students had begun to utilise their metacognitive skills to monitor their achievements. Overall the awareness of metacognitive skills were the later to develop but the importance of reflection and developing self-determination in relation to achievement, indicates that the development of the skills is not always a predictable progression but sometimes a more complex and subtle attainment of the variety of skills.

Although the above links were most predominately noted, five other areas of association, three wellbeing areas linked to affective skills, positive emotions, meaning and achievement, as well as two wellbeing areas relating to metacognitive skills, relationships and meaning, were noted by between three and five of the students interviewed. This would indicate that these areas were on the cusp of being attained by this group of students and may imply that improvements in both the numbers of students generally attaining these skills as well as the depth of understanding of them, could be enhanced with a little more focus being placed on their delivery.

The remaining six areas of association were only identified by either one or two students within this research. Most strikingly, within the wellbeing area of engagement (Harding & Thompson, 2011; Richardson et al., 2012 & Wrench et al., 2010) no more than two students were aware of developing any of the areas of the ILS to the point where they were able to enhance their capacity to effectively engage through these skills. The area of engagement is a defining element in students beginning to become autonomous learners and accrue the potential benefits and opportunities their time at university presents. The research suggests potential benefits of focussed ILS development related to engagement are presently relatively untapped.

Overall this research has opened up the conception that the use of heat maps in identifying the specific links between areas of wellbeing and ILS. By exploring the rich data relating to how well individual skills are understood by students, the benefits of targeting development on specific areas of wellbeing, the stages that associations are understood and a range of other potentially beneficial learning significant understanding could be gained. The scope for developing this research is significant.

In relation to the importance of early intervention (Knox, 2005) it was found that all the students had developed some ILS skills but none demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject area. All of them valued the skills they had developed and felt they had contributed to their positive wellbeing and were convinced they would better enable them for both the upcoming work experience and their future careers, but the story was of them being picked up in a haphazard and incomplete way. The discrepancy between the valuation of the skills by the student and the positive impact on their wellbeing, with the incomplete and far from timely acquisition of them seems to be supported by the conclusions from the literature review and brings into focus the question of what benefits may have been gained by the students the university and future employers had they been obtained in the way the literature suggests would be optimum.

The research shows the benefits of ensuring embedded, coordinated and time sensitive transition frameworks and is related to many of the findings outlined above. The additional contribution is the need to consider that there are two principles required and they present challenges. 1, developing the required transition framework noted above; while also 2,

developing a flexible and individual way of treating each student. These two ideals may appear to be mutually exclusive but it is essential they are not considered in this way.

Developing overarching efficient frameworks that ensure all students have opportunities to genuinely access support, develop ILS skills and build excellent relationships can be done even more effectively when those involved at key stages are skilled at providing individually targeted understanding and support. Developing the application of the framework proposed in this research and progressively enhancing its use as well as familiarising more tutors with the potential benefits would seem to be a means of delivering the upskilling of the required support. This could be used to support students in ensuring activities and approaches to transition are interconnected and coherent and added to in order to develop the individual support identified as important (Crisp et al., 2009 & Postareff et al., 2016). A further point to consider was the opinion from students that the first year was of limited importance as the results did not count. In consideration of this view and the need identified in the literature for a more effective transition programme, more focus could perhaps be given to the development of programmes exploring and developing ILS in this first year.

The rich data from the narratives has given a more rounded view of students' transitions and has also suggested specific examples of practices and learning strategies that can affect transition and students' wellbeing and would enhance early and effective intervention relating to wellbeing through transition. The associations between ILS and student wellbeing are detailed and are re-enforced by the application of the framework illustrating links between Meyer et al.'s (2008)'s ILS model and Seligman's PERMA model of wellbeing.

The themes of these associations as well as student transformations all appear grounded in the literature and to be present in the primary research. The additional contribution from the primary research of the need for both a well-integrated transition programme that ensures access for all but is also flexible enough to understand and support the individual complexity and need of each student, enhances understanding and poses further questions as to the how. A more comprehensive understanding of the associations between ILS and wellbeing during student transitions to university has been developed. The Emerging/ Integrated Themes (EIT) themes also deliver significant contributions to the overall research.

EIT 1 Inconsistency of experiences relating to the communication and access of academic support.

This theme highlights the very different academic experiences the students involved found across their university experience. In exploring this theme, the research uncovers an area that universities may have significant difficulty in addressing. Indeed, in many ways a diverse experience is essential to the university experience. Different teaching styles along with focus on different interests and developing ways of assimilating a range of new learning develop essential academic requirements. Problem solving, as well as assuming more responsibility for and control of learning are higher level skills that need to be enhanced. However, the students were often unsettled by feeling they were required to develop their independent learning without first being given the tools to be able to accomplish this.

They were sometimes bemused by the different approach of lecturers to seminars and lectures. The assumption from some staff that all the students were starting from a similar base although not unreasonable was often incorrect and when the students did not have the relationships or confidence to correct this, the problem built and was still affecting students after two years at university. Examples of where this had been corrected illustrated the immediate improvement that is possible both in relation to academic achievement and personal wellbeing. The probable improvement in results and outcomes makes this a productive area to focus effort on ensuring the basic academic skills are in place at an early stage in the student transition and are monitored on an ongoing basis.

EIT 2 The Anchoring effect

An understanding of the importance of the anchoring effect has proven it to be both an emerging and integrated theme. The ability of a significant action or experience to impact and influence the life of students far into their futures was evident throughout many of the discussions. Family and home life before university was noted as important. The expectations from families was a major motivation and provided some of the ILS, particularly affective skills, for students before their transitions even began to take place. The importance a single lecturer could have during college and a deep-rooted concern about how that influence would be replaced was noted, leading to a drop in confidence and potentially impacting negatively on wellbeing.

The example of students just being advised to ask if they needed anything when they did not know what they needed and did not want to stand out in a new environment, was an example of how an interaction that did not take place effectively made early transition more challenging. One example of the anchoring effect occurred when a student was talking to an older student who had already graduated. In stating how the first year did not count towards the result and so was de-motivating the new student was informed that the first-year results usually predicted the final outcome. In that moment and being told by that person the new student fully accepted the information and it changed motivation levels over the long term. There were many examples of this anchoring effect. Identifying, exploring and taking account of its importance has contributed to the increased understanding sought after in this research.

ETI 3 Diversity of learning needs and preferences

Although the notion of personalised learning is not new, actually discussing specific examples whereby universities can embrace this method is an important contribution. This theme emerged as significant in the students' discussions. Different events or contributions earlier in the journeys had influenced the way university transition had been approached. Their attitude to work, their ability to learn, their comprehension of how to thrive in new environments, the importance of positive attitudes along with many other elements had become deeply ingrained within the students who took part. This had a role in making them who they were, developed strengths and weaknesses and significantly, played an important part in making an intervention or service that worked well for one, ineffective or inaccessible to another. The frequency of this effect and the long-standing impact is a contribution to the understanding needed to design effective future programmes.

How an organisation measures the success and impact of its programmes is always being developed. The learning from this work implies that deciding on a programme's effectiveness needs more individual and in-depth interaction with those who have taken part and that more efficient delivery is likely to rely heavily on the ability of staff to listen and have a range of flexible options and depend less on pre-set responses. The issue of access to support is brought into sharp focus through the investigations of this research, requiring perhaps the development of broad opportunities and access to staff who are trained in guiding individual students to optimum support.

The research had two driving goals. Initially to understand and listen to the students in order to comprehend their individual motivations, aims and challenges. Secondly to comprehend the impacts that the acquisition on ILS (including at what stage and how comprehensively) had on the capacity of students to develop and protect their wellbeing as well as effectively nurture the essential desire to learn during transition. The results are both informative and important. They indicate that student achievement has the potential to be outstanding, student wellbeing could be markedly improved, the teaching organisation should have more success and potential employers a better choice of excellent candidates. For relatively inexpensive and straight forward adjustments of practice, the knowledge gleaned in this work could help alleviate some of the important and increasingly more prevalent issues that affect student wellbeing.

5.3 Implications and Recommendations

The research presents two overarching implications. Firstly, the importance of understanding the complex relationship between student wellbeing and ILS, particularly during transition to university, and including the specific impacts individual skills have on discreet areas of wellbeing. Secondly, the importance of developing the student's resilience and motivation to enhance their own transition experiences. Further impacts in other areas of practice include observing the way ILS, the students' personal capacities and university practices combine to impact on wellbeing. Through personal teaching experiences and the outcomes from the research, significant developments have been put in train. These will be considered as they have important implications with regard to professional development.

As the a priori themes were the initial focus of the research the implications of these to practice and ongoing work will be considered first. Some of the most important understanding has come from the significant associations between the ILS and wellbeing noted throughout the research. This has illustrated the importance of embedding ILS into all the phases of teaching, learning and assessments. Ongoing research would provide the opportunity to further understand the impacts specific skills have on discreet areas of wellbeing and allow more informed interventions and targeted skill development.

This learning could benefit many areas, one that has particular focus presently is the autonomy of learning. The benefits of enhanced autonomy of learning are becoming more

evident as more research into them is carried out. Well-developed autonomy and problem-solving abilities are highly regarded by both the HEA and employers. The professional implications of this has led to increased working with students to encourage them to develop control of their own education, particularly in allowing them to guide their own learning.

The understanding provided by the research indicates that the ILS are developed most usually in an order of affective, followed by cognitive and finally metacognitive skills. The self-monitoring autonomy of learning skills fall predominantly into the metacognitive grouping, but these skills cannot usually be effectively mastered without the resilience and enthusiasm of the affective skills and the more academic cognitive skills being, to a significant degree, in place. Programmes that begin to deliver an understanding of the need for these skills as well as effective ways to embed them at as early a stage within the transition journey, or even before it commences, have a high probability of proving valuable to all the stakeholders within Higher Education.

Many students do not fully comprehend the strong associations between ILS and their own wellbeing. Developments in working practices that engage students in discussions of both their wellbeing and the impacts they can have on the wellbeing of their fellow students have produced positive feedback. The example of English students working with Chinese students to help them overcome the language challenges, develop enhanced ILS and share their interest in the course specific content, have improved the outcomes and feelings of achievement of both groups.

The importance of employing these skills to relevant working situations is apparent. The enthusiasm for the work-based learning part of the course was noted in many interviews. Work that enables greater contact with employers and provides the opportunities for the students to employ the ILS they have developed is ongoing within their learning environments. This work includes using employer case studies to work at solving real business problems, thus developing both the students' knowledge of specific businesses and enhancing their problem-solving skills and resilience. The value students place on these opportunities along with the respect they earn in these new environments has had the most positive effects on many areas of their wellbeing.

The examples cited above increase the students' sense of belonging and provide ways and additional resources to strengthen their resilience. Developing skills of resilience and a sense of belonging are important in removing some of the negative anchors that we will discuss later. A further development of practice that has stemmed from the implications from the learning has been that of ensuring more formative assessments are carried out at early stages in the students' transitional journeys. An important example of this development is delivering on-line forums around solving business problems. This work allows excellent opportunities for the assessments and also gives the students opportunities to positively challenge each other. It delivers an additional positive learning environment that encourages the metacognitive skills surrounding self-monitoring and provides an opportunity for students who are initially less self-confident and who perhaps struggle socially to contribute and feel good about their achievements.

Much of teaching the range of ILS relates to trying to get students to become aware of these skills, realise the benefits of them and focus on their development. Efforts to encourage students to think from a different perspective, including understanding why autonomy of learning is so important and that accepting more responsibility for their own learning is a very positive step in both setting and realising future goals, is an implication and its importance has become even more clearly defined through this research.

The inconsistency of academic support

An important emerging/ integrated theme from the research was the inconsistency of academic support that students believed was significant within their university experience. Some of these findings have already influenced and informed practices within the university. The ways these changes were implemented focussed upon building in learning from both previous feedback and the evidence from the primary research within this study. The analysing of the data was ongoing with some interesting learning available before much of the new year's work was planned.

Reflections on findings from this research allowed learning to be taken into a variety of planning sessions. The induction programme was identified as important in student interviews and was an initial focus for development. It had been noted as a key time when students are making significant changes and are having to take on board experiences and new ways of learning. Focus moved away from formal information giving sessions and on to more

manageable, intimate groups. To support this process the role of the personal academic tutor was seen to be critical and was developed initially for the induction but then more broadly.

Some specifics of these developments include targeting efforts on the early relationship, trying to foster an atmosphere that is less formal and finding out more about students expectations, concerns, previous backstory and aspirations including considering getting the students to write a short piece about themselves in preparation for their initial meeting with their PAT. This idea of the writing could provide insights into specific areas of importance to the student and may indicate identifiable areas of wellbeing that future meetings could focus upon. In addition, it may allow the tutor to identify which ILS skills may benefit from targeted development and that could, in turn, provide the student with enhanced skills to improve wellbeing in the areas of most concern to them. It is understood that some students may not feel inclined to complete this piece, or if they do, not be able to complete it in a way that will facilitate the planned developments. Even in these cases however, the increased awareness by the tutor of what the aim of the writing is, may allow them to put in other strategies to elicit the background knowledge that would better allow effective support. To further improve this way of working, the tutors are planned to spend increased time with smaller student groups, making it more realistic to build effective relationships. It would be hoped that the insight gained through the above adjustments may encourage students to feel an individual and effective commitment was being demonstrated towards them and, over the course of the initial three to four months, they may be inclined to return the efforts and feel more confident in being open within the meetings. This process would, potentially, play a significant part in helping to overcome barriers that some students from this research indicated occur in relation to PAT meetings. Within the PAT meetings a more focussed discussion of expectations and where these may differ from what will actually be the reality, as well as ways to combat any fallout from this varying expectation, should more easily be accommodated. These adjustments are in their early stages and further reflections as to how to increase the benefits of these sessions will be ongoing.

Other considerations related to the induction programme included garnering greater involvement from university support services agencies including the wellbeing team, the international office and student engagement officers. The promotion of social and sports activities was increased due to the direct findings from the research, that participation in these activities was the best way to combat loneliness and insulate students from the potential negative effects that isolation had on their wellbeing.

Another direct contribution enacted after consideration of the primary research was the development of on-line activities especially student feedback and on-line interaction, this resource has been adjusted to try and maximise the opportunities for new students to develop supportive cohorts and minimise the concerns relating to being overwhelmed and the impersonality that was found to be prevalent and an issue for some students, caused primarily by the large group size at induction.

The other support service that has seen an important development of their role is the study skills team. The importance of the role of this service stemmed from the frequent specific comments within the primary research of the need to acquire these skills at an early stage. The benefits of utilising this service was noted repeatedly as was the inconsistent access to these important skills. Consideration of how study skills could be made more accessible to the entire student body is work that is developing. The staff have been eager to engage more effectively and play a significant role by setting up networking opportunities and social activities to support early engagement.

One further important addition to the induction process has been the inclusion of students who were at a later point in their university journey and were excited by their own progress. These students were happy to make themselves available to talk about how the support from the university helped in their own start-up businesses as well as other experiences that it was hoped the new intake would be able to profit from hearing about. The real world understanding and success of these students proved to be very easy to relate to for many attending the induction and must have provided a clear observation of the possible benefits participation within the university could offer.

Further learning from the research on related issues has encouraged additional practice developments. The opportunities presented within early stage seminar activities became

evident through the research. These included a commitment to embedding ILS into these seminars that would help students consider how they may relate to the world of work and offering as much support on learning and assessments as possible. The importance of feedback was an ever-present issue from the primary research. Ensuring more of this feedback is centred around the development of the appropriate skills, especially related to the required academic and personal developments was felt to be of considerable importance.

Initial feedback from these developments has indicated improved attendance, more awareness of library staff and indications the students felt more comfortable throughout their induction process. The reaction to this early stage adjustment has been very encouraging and the learning potential from monitoring the reaction and future benefits is considerable. These are examples of how this research is already positively influencing practice, the many other elements of knowledge enhancement identified through the research will be considered on an ongoing basis.

The Anchoring effect and the diversity of learning needs and preferences

These two emerging/ integrated themes are considered together in terms of implications as the anchoring effect plays a significant role in developing the diversity of learning needs and preferences as explained previously in the research. The importance of the anchoring effect was noted throughout. The implications upon ongoing practice need to be understood in order to try to both offset the negative effects of the anchoring and develop the positive opportunities that can be derived from certain anchors. The consideration of some specific examples may serve to clarify the practice developments suggested by the research. One very clear example was the belief that developed which contended students only visited PAT when something was wrong and thus every interaction with these tutors was seen to be negative. This has potentially serious implications as the PAT resource is relied upon to deliver first line academic support to students.

The implications to practice from this finding has led to considerable and ongoing reflections about how this anchoring belief can be mitigated including better explanation of the role of the PAT to new students as well as considering the optimum ways to provide the PAT with the understanding of some of the barriers they may face in trying to deliver support.

A second anchoring effect is the isolation moving into private accommodation can impose. The choice of where to reside may take into account a range of factors but the isolating

consequences of electing not to move into student halls was noted within the research. The extra difficulty in socialising for students moving a considerable distance from their home was underestimated and the negative effect on happiness and wellbeing was felt to be significant. The best way to remove this anchoring belief was felt to be through participating in as many social and sporting events as possible and the consideration of how to adapt the induction to make this clear is an ongoing process that is already underway.

Linked to the induction and contrasting to the negative anchoring effect of an early choice that increased the effect of isolation was the impact that some of the adjustments made to the induction programme delivered. The decision to make the group sizes smaller and more intimate, as well as encouraging activity put in train largely through the understanding gained from the research provided feedback that strong friendship groups formed at the induction were already enhancing the emotional wellbeing of students who were additionally very confident the friendships formed would endure and develop over the long term. These have the opportunity to provide ongoing anchoring effects that should benefit the students into the future.

Having considered some examples of anchoring effects the practice implications relating to how the department of the university might deliver a range of diverse solutions was considered. As mentioned above adjustments to PAT processes and induction concepts and activities were in some cases implemented and learning from that is going into the ongoing search for the optimum developments. Other understanding driven from the research, relating to providing for the diversity of learning needs required consideration.

This included how best to deliver peer support with a focus upon looking into what training or development of those peers involved with this role may need; how to develop on-line support which would perhaps make it easier for some students less comfortable with seeking face to face support to still find effective support that they could engage with; how to address the anchors that the students come attached to at an earlier stage, perhaps through bridging courses or changing the content of early lessons. Practice developments that are ongoing include the development of strong, ongoing links with a Foundation School. These have already proven valuable and can be of even greater benefit in allowing early bridges to be built and initial anxieties to be overcome.

Additional outreach work with sixth form students is an area of development that could further clarify both requirements and expectations. A focus for them related to developing the ILS required and allowing them to access the early start to skill development, detailed as desirable by the research could be introduced, as well as informing them more accurately of realistic expectations and requirements. These outreach days now place even more value on the role student ambassadors can play in building student on student links, including utilising past student stories to illustrate how business skills developed within the Business School have led to the beginnings of successful careers.

It is hoped that the understanding gained from the research can positively affect practice implications to provide an improving response to both the anchoring effect and the need to ensure a diversity of support for the range of students learning needs and preferences.

Ongoing Research

During the completion of this research some potential gaps of knowledge have been identified that would benefit from further research. Much of the evidence already existing within this area relates to students studying health related disciplines. Additional exploration on the affects and links ILS skills have over the wellbeing of students in varied fields of study may provide a more encompassing picture. The benefits of looking in depth at additional disciplines may bring forth enhanced understanding, as well as exploring the implications to the future working environment the students will move into.

Linked to this, further in-depth studies into which ILS are most useful and which are the most difficult to obtain, as well as which areas of wellbeing are most challenged by transition, may improve the opportunities for universities to put in place the most effective intervention programmes. Consideration should be given to the lack of longitudinal studies focussing upon the relationships between ILS and wellbeing during transition to university; particularly longitudinal studies devoted to interrogating the relationships identified within the framework of the two models explored in this work. The learning potential for these types of studies should not be underestimated.

Further research into the area of student academic support, including better training for academic staff over a range of interventions may prove to empower the drive to deliver enhanced efficient interventions. Particular focus upon early interventions, including open

days and bridging courses, the better recognition of the importance of study skills, improved consistency of information and more established relationships with PAT tutors should be considered. Findings from this research show that significant benefits to students and universities could be derived from a fuller understanding of how best to deliver both more consistent and more diverse, individualised support.

Table 8 Summary of recommendations and the level of structural relevance

Recommendation	Level of structural relevance
<p>1. The novel conceptual framework to be used to gather further information on specific associations between wellbeing and ILS, within different student groups/ disciplines. With a view to embedding the framework into curriculums to inform teaching practices and policy.</p>	<p>The HEI within this study and the HE sector more widely</p>
<p>2. Early intervention and consistency of support during the transition to university should be a focus. This could include ‘stepping up’ programmes, extended induction support and more informal relationship building activities, increased PAT support with individuals, early engagement during induction with study skills services and social activities.</p>	<p>Pre HE and the HE sector more widely</p>
<p>3. Further develop strategies for allowing personalised support of the student (including more engagement with PATs, academic support, quality of academic feedback).</p>	<p>The HEI within this study</p>
<p>4. Further research – To identify the perspectives and considerations from a range of staff and employers relating to applying the key findings from this study and informing practices and policy.</p> <p>Further research- Longitudinal studies to further enhance the understanding of the role of ILS on student wellbeing during transition.</p>	<p>The HEI within this study and the HE sector more widely</p>

5.4 Conclusions

The most important strand of this work has been to explore the associations between ILS and wellbeing, particularly through transition. The importance of these associations has been demonstrated repeatedly, both in relation to their frequency and the impacts they have had throughout this research. A significant finding relates to how specific ILS impact individually on discreet areas of wellbeing. The research is an original introduction into this area of development. The area provides a potentially beneficial field for ongoing detailed research, including the impacts over a longer period than the transition, perhaps the three years of a degree course and in varied disciplines. Developing understanding and interventions relating to ILS, provides the opportunity to craft simple practical methods of enhancing student wellbeing.

Further understanding emerged through this research that relates to the field of university practice. Developments have already taken place with regard to areas of practice including the delivery of induction programmes, PAT support, study skills and the teaching of seminars and lectures. It was found that the provision of this range of support from academic staff had long term impacts on students. Access to uniformly high standard and easily accessible provision was at the forefront of enhancing wellbeing. Linked to this, but with a subtly different focus was the importance of making this support individual. These messages should be complementary and should not be allowed to become contradictory. The first part of the learning places the focus on the quality of the support, whereas this second element relates to the provision of a personalised supportive approach. It was recognised within the research that even high-quality support of one type may not be accessible for all students. Indeed, there were many examples of the same provision proving ideal for a number of students but inappropriate or inaccessible to others. This was often due to their unique backgrounds.

The anchoring effect has been discussed at some length and a range of different events, interventions and beliefs were already identified as having played a part in individualising the students and facilitated them accessing some support provision while inclining them to reject other support methods. One clear example is the way that students found they were not able to access services or support when simply told to just ask if you have a problem or don't

understand. No students want to "stick out like a sore thumb" by admitting they have problems of comprehension. Better ways of offering support need to be found.

The importance of understanding and applying both the ILS and the high quality but individual support noted to reduce negative impacts on wellbeing is important learning stemming from this research. Although changes to applying these interventions can be put in train, their success depends on staff being both aware of the requirements and skilled in delivering them. This clearly has resource implications, however the potential benefits, primarily to students' wellbeing, but also to the achievement and success of students, the universities and the employers who take on the students, makes continuing efforts to deepen our understanding and ability to implement these changes of significant importance.

The research undertaken has met the Research Aim; To explore the role that independent learning skills have on student wellbeing during transition to university, in order to enable academic staff to better support students during transition. The final section of the conclusion will review the key contributions from the research objectives.

Research Objective 1:

‘Design a conceptual framework which articulates the connections between independent learning skills and wellbeing, which can be readily applied by practitioners.’

The conceptual framework has been constructed linking Meyer et al.'s (2008) Independent Learning Skills model and Seligman's (2011) wellbeing elements; this framework allows associations between ILS and wellbeing to be analysed. The development of this concept has proven to be useful in analysing primary research for this study and suggesting the opportunity to allow more effective and targeted interventions be developed to help combat student wellbeing issues during future transitions.

The benefits of effectively developing ILS in students has found support both in the existing research considered in this work and from the twelve individual stories that makes up the primary research. Understanding of how those skills help students become more empowered and autonomous in such diverse ways has been explored. The work also has the potential to contribute through adding evidence to the TEF and NSS student sampling surveys that seek

to improve teaching and learning effectiveness. The essential importance of student preparedness was raised by the students repeatedly. This framework could contribute when further developed and applied as part of bridging courses before attending university. It has the opportunity to be delivered on-line to inform practice in early contact with students for example within Foundation Schools.

One important contribution came from a student who had independently developed their own programme for monitoring happiness, motivation and wellbeing. They were convinced it was one of the most important developments they had made. Repeated importance was also noted by students related to social activities, particularly sport and the promotion of study skills in delivering the tools they required to combat challenges to wellbeing during transition. The framework proposed has made a contribution through using the literature reviewed as well as the primary research within this study to produce a detailed mapping of ILS and wellbeing that deepens understanding of their interconnectedness, delivering the potential to make a difference. The strength of associations between ILS and student wellbeing is demonstrated and with it, opportunities to develop and deliver specific targeted interventions.

Research Objective 2:

‘Explore how independent learning skills and wellbeing are related during transition to university’.

In the wider context, insights as to how to effectively embed practices within curriculums that develop ILS at an early stage have been explored. The benefit of improving access to the wide student body through well thought out, inclusive delivery is evident. At the same time improving the skills and awareness of those delivering support related to the need to listen and respond to each individual story and not just apply a formulaic one size fits all solution is also key if the opportunities are to be seized by the students. Evidence indicates there may only be one or two interactions where the students decide whether taking up support is a realistic option for them. Balancing these two elements may prove to be the decisive denominator in the efficacy of delivery.

Following on from this point the importance of the anchoring effect is highlighted in the research. The message here is that interventions often have an influential and long-lasting effect on students. The occasions where the right person has the opportunity to make the right

contribution at a point where the individual student has the capacity to take the message on board are infrequent and thus every preparation and effort should be taken to give these interventions the best chance of succeeding. Other important specific findings include the perceived benefits of peer mentoring, the importance of the quality and consistency of feedback and the fact that transition to university is an anxious and challenging time yet also an exciting point in a person's journey with life transforming opportunities. Suggestions from the students of making better use of PAT meetings and setting up smaller support groups as well as the importance of saying yes to as many social activities as possible to both combat isolation and develop long standing friendships, illustrate some of the lessons students themselves have taken on board during their own transitions.

These further insights into students' wellbeing during transition agree with what the literature identified as key concerns especially relating to levels of stress, lack of preparedness and ILS, but the rich data has given us a more rounded view with many more specific examples. The smooth and effective transition from leaving college and often home into becoming a succeeding student in a university environment is a critical and challenging goal which can impact substantially on their wellbeing. Each individual must navigate their own way through. This work adds to existing evidence that being supported as an individual and enabled to develop strong ILS skills are effective ways of helping them plot that course.

The Framework proposed has made a contribution to demonstrating the role that ILS plays in students' wellbeing through transition to university. The associations found have added to the limited literature and have produced a detailed mapping of ILS and wellbeing. The framework itself is an original integrated juxtaposition of two concepts. Developing these concepts has facilitated detailed analysis of the impacts ILS have on student wellbeing during transition and has the potential to allow far more specific mapping into the future. Field et al. (2014) is one of the most significant pieces of research that supports the view that a lack of ILS impacts negatively on wellbeing.

The primary research has broadened understanding of the issue primarily through listening to the direct voice of the students involved. Valuable insights, particularly in elucidating how practically the development of the individual ILS can enhance individual elements of wellbeing have been uncovered. Following on from this there is support for the view that student wellbeing during transition is a complex and multi-faceted issue. In this work

complex and coordinated solutions have been considered. These have included in addition to the identification of the associations between ILS and wellbeing, the emerging/ integrated themes of the anchoring effect, inconsistency of experience relating to the access and communication of academic skills and the emerging need for enhanced personalised support of the student that permeated every element of the research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form

Participant Information Document

Transitions and student wellbeing in higher education.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore student transitions to university.

The aim of the study will be to explore the role that independent learning skills have on student wellbeing during transition to University.

A written report will be produced at the end of the project. The findings from the study will be used to facilitate academic staff to better support students during transition.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part as you are level 5 student from Chester Business School.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any point up to and including the meeting date without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw or a decision not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign the consent form.

You will then be invited to a meeting lasting between 1 and 2 hours with the researcher. These meetings will be planned at a time to be confirmed. 1 week before the meeting you will be asked to

give the researcher a piece of writing, approximately 500 words about “your transition to university”. This will allow discussions between you and the researcher to be relevant to your experiences of transition. All discussions that take place between the researcher and yourself will be **entirely anonymous**.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study, though you may be reminded of uncomfortable memories during transition. If there is a possible risk of this happening, you might want to seek advice from your PAT or Student Futures.

If you are currently receiving treatment you might want to seek advice from whoever is providing the treatment.

What are the possible benefits?

By taking part, you will be sharing your transition to university and this will allow recommendations to be made to academic staff within the Business School.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Meriel D’Artrey

Associate Dean Quality and Assessment

Chester Business School, University of Chester, United Kingdom, Chester CH1 4BJ

m.dartrey@chester.ac.uk

You will also be given a list of contacts before you begin the study if you require any support, these will include your PAT tutor and Student Futures.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly anonymous so that only the researcher and the supervisors carrying out the research will have access to such information.

Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form. By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data for up to 5 years from the publication of the original report.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up into a report for the University of Chester. Individuals who participate will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is funded by the University of Chester Business School

Who may I contact for further information?

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Debbie Rowlett Senior Lecturer

Programme Leader Business and Administration Top Up Degree

University of Chester Business School d.rowlett@chester.ac.uk 01244 512440

Please initial box

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understood this participant information sheet
for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected.

- 3. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 2: Example Student Narrative

Narrative for Subject 6

R- Researcher

S - Subject

R – It's the 23rd of April, this is subject number 6 who is going to talk to us about his transition to University. We'll start off by thinking back to when you began University here at Chester, how did you generally feel before you started?

S- So for me, I don't think you cannot help but to feel nervous. I wanted a change, I did not like sixth form. I have been in the same school for five year.

R- What didn't you like specifically at sixth form?

S- I think it was a change of scenery that I needed most.

I've been in Suffolk all my life and it was very much the same bus route for my whole life, over 10 years and I just wanted a complete change, that's why I chose to come to Chester, not one near me, Chester is a long, long way away, I wanted a complete fresh start so I chose Chester.

R – In September you arrive at Chester University, it's the start of year and you attended the induction week, how did you feel during this first week?

S- It was great because you are put in situations where you can meet people and we keep them as friends throughout university, I remember the team treasure hunt around the town, I'd keep that, that was really good, very competitive.

R- What about the programme sessions during that week, what did you do?

S - We had programme activities and meetings and talked about the programme. I can't remember the content of these sessions. We discussed the Personal Professional Practices module, and that gave us a few skills that we had to think about, such as planning and organisation. The Professional Practices module in the first year, made me assess my skills and think about what I need to do to progress, this was really helpful as I could see why we were learning the different topics and this made me very motivated to develop even more. I always review my work and am quite critical, it helps me to see how important things are in my life.

R – During the PDP module what other skills did you develop, learn about?

S - It was setting you up for the main skills you need to learn, but they didn't have time to tell you them all, so I don't know if that was useful. I doubt many people as a result of that went away knowing what to do in assessments. This is what you need to be aware of, how to do the assessments/

R – Was your first piece of feedback from that module?

S – Yes it was good. I don't know to what extent it helped. One-to-one sessions is vital, I do not receive one-to-one sessions. I felt like the first year support was not available, I didn't change myself in terms of the writing. I think we need one to on meetings and detailed feedback. Like this meeting I won't forget this, it's different. The first year was not challenging for me and therefore I did not challenge myself and because the marks didn't count, some would say. It would be good if we all knew from day one what counted and what did not, how will we motivate ourselves, it's all a bit unclear, some tutors are helping students to progress and some are not. I had the view to enjoy uni so didn't put in nowhere near as much effort into the first year. Therefore, the feedback was based off work I wasn't really caring about. I remember most of my feedback on first year was I need to do more referencing, it said what you've done is good. But as was not trying, and that's completely changed in the second year. I care about my work, uni matters, so therefore the feedback was based off work that most of us didn't care about.

R- That's very interesting, can you tell me about your academic results in the first year, were you happy with your grades?

S- Yes, all 50s or 60s in the first year but my average score this year is 74.

R- Well done, that is great. What helped to raise your grades?

S- I was in a quiet room, showed a tutor my essay, told I had no structure by study skills tutor. She showed me a booklet, since then my marks have gone up.

R – Had you not used study skills support before this point in the second year?

S- No I have spoken about this to the study skills team. Study skills is great but the way it is shown to students is awful, If I had that structure in the first year and developed my writing in the second year it would be great, the first mark I got was 63, my lowest mark, with no structure. Since then 70s 80s. Study skills is great don't need to change the content its how the students get to know about it. More early training on how to write is needed, we need to be shown how to reference and analyse much more, with examples.

R – Your grades are very good this year, you are very pleased with them, how do you feel within yourself now, what about your motivation levels?

S- I have a massive focus on trying to be happy but I can see how for a lot of students it's really tough. It's really difficult to give attention to it from a uni point of view and I don't know to what extent that's the uni's responsibility for the wellbeing of students because being told that you should be happy compared to finding out for yourself is a completely different thing.

R- Yes, there is a lot of research that shows that many students are very stressed at university.

S- Yes that 100 percent. I had an exam and before I was awful, I was working before and after until 4am, the worst thing.

R- So in terms of your levels of happiness how often does it change, weekly, does it change in cycles?

S- After talking to my PAT, about 2 months ago I started tracking it, I have an Excel document. I read somewhere that it was what you should do. I split my life up into little parts and then for each one of them I give it a 1 to 10 every Saturday morning. I write a little comment on what happened every week and give Score to it and every week I reopen it and I write a little comment and see how that compares with comments from the past. That then goes into a graph, I've basically got 2 graphs, one with overall scores and one with scores for each of the sections going up and down and so basically tells me every week what I need to focus on to prove myself and ever since I've done that is the best thing I've ever done. I've only done this for a month, but I think everyone should do this.

R- From speaking to you now you are very motivated and determined. What about other students who come to university and find the first year overwhelming, would you recommend anything?

S- My cousin is joining Uni next year, I said to her, say yes to everything, do more than you think you should do, first 6 months, I should look on u tube it tells you everything, its like a mentor for people, Career wise people stress about finding a career, but put yourself out there a career will fall into your lap, that what I said. Try everything, get to know your housemates, everything will help.

R- That a very motivational way of looking at things. Looking forward to next year, how are you feeling about your dissertation, you also have your placement soon? Where are you going for your placement?

S- My placement its brilliant, just the other side of Chester, a closed down Church they need 1.5 million lottery Grant what they're going for to renovate it. It's a venture Grant which means that they need to fund a business to support the running of the church. They have got a complete massive basement space underneath. Half of it is going to be split into 8 apartments for homeless people the other half is any planned space original ideas of 30-35 seat cinema that basically the running of that cinema can fund the upkeep of the church. I went into work-based learning and said I want to work as a project manager and told them the skills I had developed. Can you tell me the future and then she got back to me, yes we have got one for you? This is exactly what I'm doing things, can't wait to start

R – That's great, well done, you are very driven.

S- I'm driven by doing things that make you happy because it's not difficult.

R- What would you say to a new student, to help them with the academic skills such as researching, analysing?

S- Do it and make a mistake and learn from that. Not from the feedback, from the mistake.

Eg I go on the Internet and search, then you know how do this by yourself and this motivates you.

R- How does your PAT support you?

S- I have not spoken to my PAT, for other people I can see it could be helpful, like a group of friends if we've got anything wrong, we go on a group chat. If they have not got a group chat yes that could help. I still think its daunting because there are lecturers.

R- Why do you think this is an issue, why do some students feel that?

S- Don't think it's a perception that you can change, because I think people have perception of teachers lecturers before they come to Uni. I someone asks a question; you don't want to put your hand up so that starts the process of I don't want to speak to them so when it one on one you think don't want to speak.

R- As lecturers, is there something we could do to break that feeling down in the early stages, if it's a built-in perception it's going to take time?

S- I love peer mentoring what we're doing now. Students listen to students; I can tell them everything you need to know.

R- Did you have a peer mentor when you came to university during the first year, was there an option to have one?

S- There was an option but , No, I didn't do it because I was going to make a mistake and just find out, but I think it's because I've got people like my cousin, she would want one so I'm going to do it for someone like her or are you coming to unit maybe someday? We could think about peer mentors not for peer mentor, that sounds like something is wrong. It's not that. If you go to health and wellbeing its like something is wrong, if you go to your PAT, something is wrong. It's like study skills I see as though my work has got so much better, nothing wrong with it but it's got better. It only takes one time one feedback; you will see it go up and you will change.

R- Is there something we can develop around how we promote student support?

S- Yes the delivery of how silly skills is presented because I am I specifically remember in the first week of study skills that one of them they would say oh, I know the perception of study skills is for something if you feel like you're wrong or you're not skilled enough, but by saying that the one thing that reminds me is that fact, so saying that is completely wrong and it's it should be more put like come to one of our sessions, Look at your next feedback. Yes, definitely a distinction, but one sentence.

R- This is very interesting, hopefully we can look to take on board next year. We're going to come towards the end, if you were to sum up your transition you starting university in 3 words. Could you think of three words that would just describe how you felt during that transition, you first year really?

S- Overwhelmed because uni in the first year is overwhelming in so many ways, it was fun as well. For me it was all about the independence, doing your own shopping, all parts of life, everything is your choice.

R- You may have heard the phrase independent learning, you have mentioned your social independence, what about your independent learning, is that something you recognise?

S- Yes, it's about you finding out how you do things best, who to work with, do you go to the library. It's so important to learn about how you do things. I don't think there's enough time for you develop these skills or enough significance put on them in the first year, it's not mentioned about, these skills are important to your happiness at university.

I understand why the first is like it is because some students have not done business before, I've done two years GCSEs, 2 A levels the stuff was basic the finance was bordering on ridiculous. So people like that what extra challenges can you put to them outside of academic?

R – Very good points, so all learners need stretching,

S- I don't think the stretching should be done through academic sense, a student like me didn't need to, that was no motivation for me. It's what we going to get out of that, but if there were other things I could do wish you could see the benefit of in the first year so useful.

R- Thank you very much for that. Are you happy to conclude the discussion? Is there anything else you want to add is you're covered a lot there, I can see how things have clearly developed for you. I think your ability to self- learn, self-reflect has helped greatly, for example in your tracking of your own motivation.

S- I can understand why people get so stressed out because there's a massive tipping point and even me im getting really close to that where don't care anymore.

R- But you are finding ways round these challenges?

S- And that's the challenge. The final lecture of the year was HR, she was talking about three different types of people that are active, inactive, but they turn up and tick the box, disregarding everything and said averages in the UK about are about 10,30% active. How many people could come to today, she said about 75 people and she counted 7. It was about 10%, how do you get them other people to focus on doing the skills, happiness and all that. People like the active will just do it, but how can you motivate the others to get them active, I think it's done by showing people the benefits, because I love change management and it's all about that, if a student could see the benefits they would do it, in the first year I did not see the benefits. Yes I can't wait.

R- I wish you good luck with that. We will now conclude the discussion, thank you for your very helpful and detailed comments.