



GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH:
How Fees Affect Students' Approaches to Employability and University

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Abstract

The last three decades have seen significant changes in the higher education (HE) sector in England. Alongside a shift towards a market-based approach to HE and the implementation—and subsequent raising of—tuition fees, there has been a growing focus on employability and getting “value for money”, together with a growing concern about the growing prevalence of the so-called “student-consumer”. Even today, university funding continues to be a shifting and divisive issue, with tuition fees at the forefront of debates around students returning to universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. By contrast, Scotland has retained a system-based approach to HE and free tuition for both Scottish nationals and EU students.

Though much research has looked at the possible impact of tuition fees on university applications, little has been done to explore what tuition fees might do to the way that students experience and approach university. This study therefore aims to fill an important gap in our knowledge about how students are reacting to the differing funding arrangements in England and Scotland. It asks, specifically: how do different university funding systems influence undergraduates’ approaches to employability and university?

To address this, the study employed a mixed methodology consisting of three phases: a scale development phase, a quantitative phase (involving surveying 700 students at six universities in England and Scotland), and a qualitative phase (involving interviews with a subset of over 30 students). Key findings showed that the relationship between university funding and how students approach university is complex and impacted by social background: while being from a lower socio-economic background was related to a higher consumer orientation, students who self-identified as working-class were shown to be *more* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees than not, while middle-class students were *less* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees than not. On the other hand, though social background did not appear to affect approach to employability, and there was no significant relationship between fee-paying and approach to employability, university *country* played a significant role: students in Scotland appeared to be more employability-savvy than their peers in England. These and other important findings have significant implications, both in terms of the two nations’ HE/labour market policies and the discourse around the student-as-consumer.

INTRODUCTION

“According to the universities minister, Sam Gyimah, the most important thing about higher education is that it represents good value for money. The formula for this is clear: a research-intensive university, plus a degree in a science or business subject, equals cash for life. Of course, if you come from a background underrepresented in higher education, that formula works slightly less profitably, but that’s a minor detail” — Linda Drew, The Guardian

“And this nation pioneered free education for all, which resulted in Scots inventing and explaining much of the modern world. We called this the Scottish Enlightenment. ...We can do so again—‘the rocks will melt with the sun’ before I allow tuition fees to be imposed on Scottish students—upfront or backdoor ... this is part of the Scottish Settlement, our social contract with the people”— Alex Salmond, Speech to SNP Conference March 2011

Higher Education in the UK is at a particularly volatile juncture regarding its structure and purpose. Over the last five decades, English institutions have shifted from publicly-funded enterprises that educated only 5% of school leavers to privately-funded, competing institutions that currently educate 45% of school leavers (Willett, 2017). Alongside this has come a more explicit focus on employability, as well as new metrics which place increasing pressure on institutions to perform in particular ways. In the media, headlines such as “university students failed by rip-off fees” (Adams, 2017) appear regularly; and, in 2018, the government again re-arranged its relationship with the higher education sector by creating the Office for Students— a “regulator of the English HE marketplace” tasked with (amongst other things) ensuring “value for money”. Meanwhile, graduates are warned of an overly saturated labour market, while a corner of academia points to the dangers of this increasingly market-led and outcomes-driven funding system. In 2018, the University and College Union (UCU) strikes brought these issues starkly into the light: those on strike demanded a rejection of “marketization”, while some university students demanded reimbursement. Equally, the COVID-19 pandemic—during which the normal “student experience” all but disappeared, as students found themselves attending universities virtually—has only furthered these tensions. Many are asking what universities are for, and what exactly they should be doing.

At this time of increasing ideological polarization and political disengagement, proper understanding of this complex phenomenon—and its consequences for students and for policy—seems to be more important than ever. It is therefore a crucial moment to pause and examine the university experience in-depth; to ask what, if any, effect the funding system and the “value-for-money” approach has on students and their relationship with university and the labour market.

Summary of project

While there has been much in the way of debate about different funding systems and market-based models of higher education, as well as a general growing concern over gaining “value for money”, little has been done to explore precisely what paying money *does* to the way that *students approach university*, and particularly, whether this will differ between different socio-economic groups. This project therefore entered somewhat uncharted territory, and as such, was necessarily an iterative process. Essentially, though, the study looked at how (and whether) fee-paying influences student approaches to learning and employability.

To do this, it explored two sets of contrasts. The first was between the two national approaches to Higher Education funding systems, English and Scottish. As Paterson and Iannelli (2007) point out, this type of close cross-country comparison is particularly useful for educational research, since the broad social and economic structures are similar across the UK, making it easier to test for the effects of different educational policies than it would be if comparisons were to be made across entirely different national contexts. The second was between fee-payers and non-fee-payers across both systems. In this way, it aimed to filter the extent to which it might be the fee-paying itself that influences how students approach their learning and employability, and how much this might be a result of differences in the overall *system* of HE (Williams, 2013). In particular, the project looked at the variations that existed between groups of different social backgrounds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to note that the debate about how HE should be funded—which is itself a debate about the nature and purpose of HE, its relationship to employment and learning, as well as the concept of “value for money”—is still very much alive. As such, the following review offers only a snapshot of a rapidly shifting landscape. It necessarily highlights some areas while others are thrown into relief. Moreover, the terrain does not belong to one area of educational research alone; many of the topics explored below (e.g., debt, labour market outcomes, class differences) have remained siloed within particular pockets of research and are being brought together in ways that necessarily engage with only certain elements of the debate. This review therefore first gives a brief outline of funding in higher education in England, and then looks at the different approach in Scotland. Following this, I turn to research on tuition fees and student behaviour, after which the “value-for-money” outlook and its theoretical effect on students is explored. I then look at how “value-for-money” and employability are linked, and finally explore a framework for looking at approaches to employability. I end this chapter with a summary of the questions raised by the review.

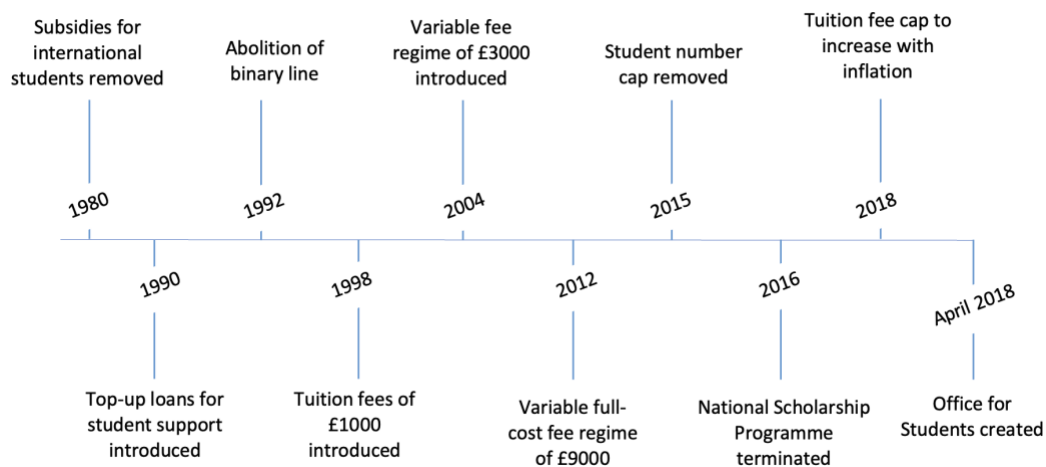
Overview: Economic and HE Policy in England *Fees and Higher Education*

The last few decades have seen significant change in the higher education sector in the UK, particularly for England. Though this perhaps began in earnest with Prime Minister James Callaghan’s 1976 Ruskin College speech—which ignited a national debate about the value and success of the British education system (Foskett, 2011), and pointed the purpose of education towards economic growth—its seeds had already been sown in the Robbins report of 1963. This report, alongside suggesting that universities should be available for anyone with the ability to attend them, also pushed for an expansion of the higher education system in the UK and emphasised, even then, a focus on skills (though not exclusively). Following the Ruskin speech came a series of changes in the nature of higher education, both in terms of its focus and its funding (see Figure 1 below for a timeline). In 1980, subsidies for international students were removed; in 1990, top-up loans for student support were introduced; in 1992, the massification of higher education began, with the abolition of the “binary line” between universities and polytechnics; and, in 2004, the rules

for institutions gaining a university title were changed and slackened (Brown, 2011). Tuition fees were introduced in 1998; these were means-tested, up-front fees of £1,000. Alongside this, maintenance grants were abolished, and then brought back in a more limited form in 2004; this was closely followed by the Higher Education Act (Higher Education Act, 2004), which introduced a variable fee regime, allowing universities to charge up to £3,000. This deferred fee was backed by a government-subsidised, income-contingent loan (with an income threshold of £25,000), a debt that was to be written off after 25 years. In 2012, tuition fees in England rose again when the government introduced a variable, full-cost fee regime that allowed universities to charge up to £9,000. At the same time, the Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS) implemented the National Scholarship Programme (NSP), which was meant to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds additional financial help with the cost of attending university. Alongside this, block grants for teaching were removed for all but the “strategically important” and especially “vulnerable” subjects (Brown & Carasso, 2014) and the student number cap was removed in 2015. Overall, this has led to nearly a 70% reduction in direct state funding for teaching and research (John & Fanghanel, 2016).

In 2016, the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) was scrapped, replaced with an increased loan entitlement instead, and from 2018, the tuition fee cap allowed increases in line with inflation at institutions offering “high teaching quality”. In April of the same year, the Office for Students (OfS) became the regulatory body for the English higher education sector, “designed to encourage the growth of a competitive market that informs student choice, to intervene when the market is failing in areas such as equal access, and protect the interest of its consumers (students, government, and wider society)” (Boyd, 2018, para. 2). A fundamental part of OfS’ role is to “grow the market” (ibid), and it is therefore able to grant a provider degree-awarding powers (and revoke these powers), without relying on any sort of track record. In 2022, the government increased the income threshold for student loan repayment to £27,000, and announced an intention to limit student access to these loans, based on “prior achievement”—whether this policy will be implemented remains to be seen.

Figure 1: Timeline of Funding Changes in Higher Education in England



Scotland and England: Fees After Devolution

England, therefore, became the first country in Europe to adopt tuition fees and quasi-market funding mechanisms (Naidoo & Williams, 2014). By contrast, Scotland has had a very different approach. In 1999, a devolution government was established in Scotland, with the new Scottish Parliament receiving separate legislative powers and thus further entrenching a fundamentally different policy regarding Higher Education (and indeed, education more generally) from the rest of the U.K.¹ This led to the abolition of the 1998 tuition fees (which had been introduced across the U.K) in 2001, replacing them with an endowment scheme in which students paid a total of £2,000 after graduation if their annual earnings exceeded £10,000. In 2007, tuition fees in Scotland were eliminated altogether for Scottish-domiciled students², though students from the rest of the UK were—and are—still liable to pay, as are international students (see Table 1)³. In addition, Scotland retained much more state involvement in funding and decision-making than England (Keep, 2014), with the Scottish government purposely focused on developing higher education as a public service and as a *system* of lifelong learning (including both further and higher education) (Gallacher, 2009) rather than a market, as in England (Bruce, 2011). So while England is largely reliant on

¹ It is important to point out that Scotland has always had a distinct relationship with education, construing this difference as an almost anthropological myth (Gray, McPherson & Raffe, 1983), indeed “it was and is a key factor in sustaining the identity of Scotland” (Arnott and Ozga, 2016). Even before devolution, Scotland had its own Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), as well as other major differences, such as four-year degrees.

² The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) pays Scottish “Home” students’ tuition fees on their behalf.

³ Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed breakdown of costs and fees in England and Scotland.

tuition fees and therefore on the choice of the student to steer universities towards the needs of the economy, Scotland invests almost £2 billion a year in the country's colleges and universities, with each institution promising to deliver certain outcomes (in line with governmental priorities and a strategic framework) in return for funding.

Table 1. Student funding in England and Scotland

Country	Fee Status	Fees for full-time undergraduates (2018/19)
<i>England</i>		
	Home	Up to £9,250
	International	£10,000 - £38,000
<i>Scotland</i>		
	Home	£1,820 (but covered by SAAS in almost all cases)
	Rest of the UK (rUK)	Usually £9,250 for the first three years
	EU	£1,820 (but covered by SAAS in almost all cases)*
	International	£10,000 - £26,000

* As a result of Brexit, the Scottish Government has confirmed EU students commencing their studies in 2021/22 and later will **not** be eligible for Home fees

These different funding systems have also entailed fundamentally different approaches to higher education's relationship with the labour market. In England, the Leitch Review of Skills (2006) presented skills shortages as an issue arising entirely from the supply side of the equation, suggesting that the solution would be the reform of publicly-funded skills systems—particularly universities. Scotland, on the other hand, rejected the Leitch review, and instead proposed that the difficulties were in the ineffective use of skills within many workplaces (Skills for Scotland, 2007). So while England has relied on market-based competition and industry incentives to drive universities to address the needs of the labour market, Scotland—thanks to the block-grant and funding council structure which it retained— has had more power to direct the activities and priorities of universities (Keep, 2014). Thus, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) gives funding to universities based partly on outcome agreements, which often refer to building student employability, creating links

with local businesses, or other similar employability initiatives. Sometimes, the SFC will go even further and allocate money to certain universities for specific employability-building projects; for instance, in 2017/18, the SFC gave £139,000 in funding to Edinburgh Napier university explicitly for the purpose of employability-building projects, such as e-Placement Scotland, a joint venture employability partnership between the university and ScotlandIS.

Little is known about the relative success of these approaches, in terms of funding system and relationship to the labour market, and what data does exist is contradictory. In both England and Scotland, students from more disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately attend post-1992 institutions (Connor, Burton, Pearson, Pollard, & Regan, 1999), and widening access and increasing participation appear to be ongoing issues both for Scotland and England (Paterson & Iannelli, 2007). In terms of graduate outcomes, evidence from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has suggested that Scottish graduates from Scottish universities will earn roughly £500 more per annum than their English graduate counterparts three and a half years after graduation (HESA, 2016). HESA also found that 95.1 per cent of graduates from Scotland's universities in 2014/15 secured employment or further study six months after graduation – the highest levels in the UK— and at the highest starting salary in the UK. Moreover, HESA found that graduates from Scotland's universities were more likely to be in employment or further study than those from institutions in England (93.8%), Wales (93.2%) or Northern Ireland (93.5%). At the same time, a survey by the National Office of Statistics found that, similarly to England, 52% of Scottish graduates are working in occupations which do not require a university degree (Clegg, 2017), and there is a fear that “in the desperation to get people off welfare, low paid, low skilled, entry-level jobs are promoted and longer term investment in skills and career development has remained relatively neglected” (Scott, 2006). Indeed, though a 2016 Scottish Employer's Survey suggested that 84% of Scottish employers found university leavers to be well prepared for the world of work, that number fell to 78% in 2019 (Scottish Government, 2019).

Tuition Fees and Student Behaviour

Concerns about the impact of tuition fees have mostly centred around the possibility that they might inhibit participation, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds,

who may be more debt-averse. There were particularly strong fears around this when the fees were first introduced, leading to the emergence of a field of research that focused precisely on the extent to which the new funding system was affecting applications to HE (Esson & Ertl, 2016)—despite evidence from Australia suggesting that no changes in the composition of the student body arose as a result of their HE income-contingent charge scheme introduced there in 1988 (Chapman & Ryan, 2005). Relatively stable levels of applications in the years following the introduction of fees in the UK likewise showed these fears to be in some ways unfounded, though there is evidence to suggest that tuition fees do have some impact, in particular on choice of university and subject: Maringe (2006), who surveyed roughly 400 school students, for instance, found that price (alongside programme, place and prominence) seemed to be the most important factor in determining students' choice of university. Wilkins' (2013) study, which surveyed over a thousand sixth form students across England, and looked at the extent to which students might consider studying at cheaper alternatives to publicly funded UK universities, found that financial issues emerged as *the* most important factor for subject choices, over and above institutional quality, institutional reputations and country reputations.

Similarly, Minty's (2015) qualitative study (using interviews with mostly Scottish and some English students) of attitudes to debt in England and Scotland found that in England, worries about debt had encouraged some interviewees to apply for vocational subjects such as Nursing, where bursaries covered tuition fees (subsequently abolished for nursing in England, but not Scotland). Larger-scale quantitative research appears to support this finding: Sa's (2014) comparison of the 2001 Scottish reform (eliminating fees) and the 2012 English rise in tuition fees found that the former led to a 21-log-point increase (equivalent to an increase of 8% per £1,000 reduction in fees) in applications to Scottish universities; while applications to universities in England went down by 25 log points (equivalent to a reduction in applications of 1.6% for every £1,000 increase in fees). More significantly, perhaps, she found that the decrease was *less* for courses with higher expected future earnings. Less robust research even suggests that there is a distinct difference between England and Scotland, in terms of the types of degrees chosen: a University Lifestyle Survey (Sodexo, 2014) report found that "students in Scotland are less job-focused when choosing their course than those at English institutions – an idealistic streak arguably linked to the absence

of tuition fees for Scottish residents” (ibid, 46). Whether this assertion can be supported by more rigorous studies remains to be seen.

Furthermore, debt has been shown to influence not only the choices made at university, but also afterward: Purcell and Elias (2011) found that approximately half of the final-year students they surveyed said that their postgraduate plans were limited by the debt they had incurred during their degree; most significantly, that the prospect of further debts inhibited their decision to pursue postgraduate study. Importantly, this seems to have changed over the last decade and a half: Davies and Lea (1995), when looking at student attitudes to debt, found that there was no significant relationship between debt and forward planning; most of their respondents claimed they were not thinking about the future at all.

It should be noted, however, that Tomlinson’s qualitative (2014) study—one of the few to examine the impact of the new funding arrangement on student attitudes and choices—found that there was little sense that the fee increases were influencing subject choices. This may be explained by the largely middle-class make-up of the students who took part in his study: Callendar and Jackson (2005) survey-based study looking at just under 140 English students found that debt aversion deterred people from *lower* social classes from applying to university, though not middle-class or upper-class students, and indeed that for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the costs of higher education were much more likely to be seen as debt rather than investments (Callender & Jackson, 2008). Moreover, a recent study found that these debt averse attitudes increased amongst lower-class students between 2002 and 2015, though not amongst their middle-class peers (Callender & Mason, 2017). Callender and Jackson (2008) have also shown that students who are more debt-averse are more likely to take a subject with good employment prospects—such as maths, engineering or technology—than less debt-averse students. Less formal research has suggested a similar trend; a 2012 panel survey found that the prospect of significantly increased tuition fees encouraged students to aim for institutions or courses with higher earnings potential—and the effects were particularly strong for those from lower socio-economic groups (OpinionPanel, 2012).

Indeed, even without tuition fees, financial concerns are a major factor for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds—for instance, Furlong and Cartmel (2005), looking at Scotland over a decade ago, found that less advantaged students were very conscious of the costs of study and the likely debt they would incur, and so were attracted to courses

that had very clear links to employment. Similarly, Ma (2009), looking at the American context, found that students from lower socio-economic families favoured more lucrative university degrees than their more advantaged peers. More generally, research on student decision-making indicates that a strong relationship exists between a student's choices and the socio-economic status of the student's family (Hossler & Stage, 1992; McDonough, 1997; Paulsen & John, 2002). More research is needed, however, to examine to what extent fees are encouraging students to see university only in terms of its relationship with the labour market, and whether differences exist based on social class.

The "Value for Money" Approach: Not Learners, But Customers

An integral part of the changing higher education funding system has been an increased focus on getting "value for money". This idea has become so central to the discourse around higher education that ensuring that students are getting "value for money" is, as mentioned previously, now a formal, central remit of the new Office for Students—a role that may be necessary, considering that, as tuition fees rise, perceptions of value-for-money appear to be going down: a recent Student Academic Experience Survey (Neves & Hillman, 2016) found that only 37% of respondents feel they are receiving good value for money, compared to 53% in 2012. Indeed, Newton, Laczik and Percy (2017) found that the majority of existing graduates would be unlikely to go to university at all under the current financial system, if they were to have their time again.

As a result of this value-for-money outlook, it has been suggested that students now expect (or indeed, demand) more from universities—evidenced by an increasingly strong complaint culture amongst students—and have become more outcome-focused in relation to their studies (Jones, 2010). Often this is framed within discussions of students as "consumers"⁴ of higher education; getting value for money is often seen as a consumer right that fee-paying students ought to have. This one-sided expectation by students that the university will "deliver" is, some have argued, part of what leads to a consumer orientation and consequent disengagement (Ng & Forbes, 2009). As they are described in the literature,

⁴ Although there is perhaps a semantic distinction to be drawn between "customer" and "consumer", where the former pays for a service and the latter uses it (Burns, 2019) these words and their meanings are used interchangeably in both policy documents and academic research, and so they shall be used interchangeably here as well.

students-as-consumers “seek to *have* a degree, rather than *be* learners” (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009), and use “minimalist and hyper-strategic approaches to learning” since “cognitive effort is not a responsibility of a paying service-user” (Tomlinson, 2013). Thus, it has been theorised that the current funding system is making students increasingly consumer-oriented and instrumental in their learning.

Not only has there been extraordinarily little empirical research on this, it is also not clear from these critics whether it is the financial transaction itself—the actual *paying* for courses, inevitably linked to a breaking down of cost and value—or, as some have suggested (e.g. Williams, 2013), the larger-scale marketisation of HE⁵ that is supposedly creating consumers of HE. Brooks and Abrahams (2021) suggest that students in England are ambivalent about the identity of the “student-consumer”, though students at non-elite institutions are more outcome and financially-focused than their peers at elite HEIs. The same study also found differences in student self-conceptualisations based on nation-state (though they did not explore possible variations between the different UK nations), suggesting some degree of policy or national influence on student self-conceptualisation. Evidence from the U.S., however, would suggest that it may be the fee-paying itself that creates more consumer-oriented students: quantitative work by Saunders and Kolek (2017), for instance, found that while students perhaps do not enter into university with a consumer mindset, they become more consumer oriented while they are there, through the prioritizing of non-curricular facilities, the normalization of indebtedness, and the magnitude of tuition fees.

⁵ The term “marketization” has in fact been used in various ways in the literature. Brown (2015), for example, uses the term to generally denote the shift in the provision of HE from being public to market-based, while Ball (2004) defines it as the change from a previously autonomous academic organisation to one that is based specifically on *business ideals*—implying a shift not only regarding the context of higher education, but also its identity. Barnett (2000) takes this one step further, suggesting that marketization is manifested in the commodification of teaching and research. Similarly, but more broadly, John and Fanghanel (2015) use “marketization” to mean a type of social production which addresses capitalism’s tendency to commodify. Indeed, the term is also often used interchangeably with “commodification” and “neoliberalism” to denote the use of market systems to regulate the higher education service, including the monitoring of quality, value-for-money and productivity (Miller, 2010). Certain ideas of marketisation recur frequently, however, such as: the student-consumer; league table rankings increasingly defining “quality” (Maginson, 2009); modularisation/standardization; and business-led organisational changes.

Bunce et al's (2016) study—one of only two quantitative studies to examine fee responsibility, consumer orientation and academic attainment in the UK—found that responsibility for paying tuition fees and studying a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subject were associated with a higher consumer orientation, a lower learner orientation and lower academic performance. The follow-up quantitative study by Bunce and Bennett (2021) suggested the explanatory mechanism: they found that a stronger consumer identity was related to lower academic performance because students were less likely to take a deep approach to learning. This would suggest that fee-paying is indeed linked to a more consumer-centred, less learning-centred approach; however, their study looked only at fee-paying students in England, and so did not compare fee-payers and non-fee-payers (though it controlled for fee-paying in the mediation model), so further work is needed to more fully understand the relationship between fee-paying and approach to university.

Getting Your Money's Worth: Being Employable

An important part of the “value for money” rhetoric has been an increased focus on employment outcomes and “employability”. Policymakers increasingly equate employment outcomes with the “worth” of the degree: in 2019, the Education Secretary called on universities to “drop or revamp courses delivering poor value for money”, proposing that universities could be fined for these “low quality courses” (Department for Education, 2019)—defined, crucially, as those where fewer than 60% of their graduates are in high-skilled jobs or enrolled in further education within 15 months after graduation. This emphasis on employment outcomes comes at a time when the “false promise” of the average graduate premium has been very well established in the research literature. As Brown, Lauder and Ashton argued over a decade ago, the ever-increasing availability of highly skilled, cheap labour as a result of expanding globalisation has meant that those with more education are no longer at an advantage when it comes to professional and managerial jobs (2010). Increasingly, studies have pointed to the wide variability and stratification of earnings within the graduate labour market, as well as the changing nature of graduate jobs. Green and Zhu (2010), for example, showed that the dispersion of the returns to graduate education has substantially increased between 1994 and 2006,

decreasing sharply at the lowest end of the residual wage distribution. Chevalier and Lindley (2009), in their study of the graduate labour market, found that over-qualification increased by 33% during the 1990s and in some cases, non-graduate jobs have been “upgraded” to make use of the additional graduates in the labour market. However, Tholen and colleagues (2016), in their work looking at British residential sales estate agents— an occupation that is becoming “graduatised”—found that the skills needed for the job were mostly soft skills, *not* the thinking skills unique to HE. Importantly, they found this to be true in both Scotland and England. Therefore, much of the time, in spite of doing the same type of work as non-graduates, graduates will end up competing against non-graduates in a labour market full of jobs which are neither fully graduate nor non-graduate (Brynin, 2013).

Despite this, previous studies have found that students by-and-large believe in the “fact” that graduates earn more than non-graduates, internalising the policy discourse around the positive graduate premium (Esson & Ertl, 2016). As a result, for many students, employability appears to be the key driver of further learning (Brooks & Everett, 2009). Again, though, very little research has been conducted to look at the links between the changing funding systems and employability (though as noted earlier, there is some evidence to suggest a link between fees and both place of study and choice of subject). One notable exception is Tomlinson’s (2014) study, which used interviews and focus groups to explore how students’ increased financial contributions may have affected their approaches and attitudes to learning. His findings indicate that higher fees are indeed having a genuine impact on students and how they are thinking about their higher education, suggesting that the increasing cost of participating in higher education has made many students reflect on what they “wanted to get out of” their experience and focus on “maximising” their experience both to justify their contribution as well as to ensure maximal value. Moreover, he found that many students had developed more stringently instrumental attitudes towards learning, and these students were concerned almost exclusively with the degree outcome and attaining a desirable grade. Significantly, their instrumentality was centred on ‘being more employable’ and being in a more favourable position to get a ‘decent job’ after they graduated.

Similarly, Minty’s (2015) interview-based work also found that many students believed that studying for degrees that did not lead directly to employment would be a “waste” of time, with a large proportion of students in England—but not so many in Scotland— feeling

a great deal of pressure to do well at university *because* of the debt they were accruing. Recent qualitative work by Brooks and colleagues (2020), looking at students across Europe, found that students from countries which required the greatest personal financial contributions to university also placed the strongest emphasis on the job-market-preparation aspect of university. Ingleby (2015) also, in his small-scale study of students and tutors at five UK higher education institutions, found that students were increasingly focused on getting “value for money”, obtaining the “right skills”, becoming “employable” and finding the right jobs. Likewise, Tomlinson’s (2008) qualitative study, looking at how (largely middle-class) students understood the role of higher education in relation to their future employment, found that they had increasingly instrumental views of higher education, and were focused on the need to develop “a narrative of employability”, encompassing experiences and achievement outside their degrees.

Different Approaches to Employability

The view that job-seekers need to develop a “narrative of employability” is typical of a particular approach to employability described by Brown and Hesketh (2004) as a “Player” orientation. According to their framework of approaches to employability, a Player is a type of student who “plays the employability game” by adjusting his/her narrative to the needs of prospective employers. Players, in other words, are strategic: they build CVs, network proficiently, and repackage themselves if they fail. At the extreme end, they are instrumental in their attitudes towards both career-building and university. “Purists”, on the other hand, see employment as a meritocratic process and so “remain themselves”, trusting that they will be chosen if they are the right fit. Work is seen as being “the expression of self”, and their career strategy is to “maintain career integrity”: they are decidedly not strategic and are, at the extreme end, entirely non-instrumental in their attitudes towards employability and university. Following Tomlinson, the term “approach to employability” here refers to the “subjective dimension of employability” (2007), rather than the actual employment outcomes of individuals or labour market features. In particular, it encompasses “not only the way individuals come to perceive and understand the labour market they are entering, but also the types of dispositions, attitudes and identities they develop around their future work” (ibid) and the labour market, as well as

the behaviours they adopt as a result of these dispositions. This aspect of employability—the *attitudes* and *behaviours* students adopt in relation to their future work and the labour market, regardless of their actual employment outcomes—is the focus of the current project.

When created, the Player/Purist typology was focused exclusively on middle class, fast-track students and little research has been done to explore the extent to which students adopt these two approaches, or what characteristics and/or factors may influence which one is adopted. The research detailed in the section above indicates that the new value-for-money outlook may be making “Players” of fee-paying students: instrumental, strategic and employability-savvy. Whether this is the case, however, remains to be seen—in particular, it is not clear whether this would be true for students from all socio-economic backgrounds. Some research suggests that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds would disproportionately fall into the “Purist” type of student (Thomas & Jones, 2007), since working class students are oblivious to—and so do not know how to play—the employability game, in terms of taking advantage of extra-curricular activities and social networks (Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008). Indeed, research has shown that many working-class students are not actively involved in career-enhancing activities that develop their employability, erroneously believing that a degree alone will be sufficient (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008), focussing their energies instead on “what might be considered the ‘old’ rules of the game”—getting a good degree (Bathmaker, Ingram, & Waller, 2013). This is not uniformly the case, however; some working-class students *do* have an awareness of the strategies needed to increase employability, but simply do not have access to them (*ibid*).

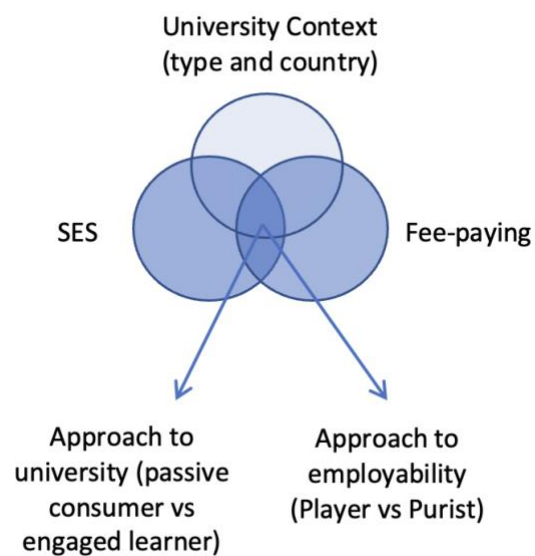
A lack of employability-building strategies—whether because of a lack of awareness about them or difficulty gaining access to them—might go some way to explaining why working class students are disadvantaged in the graduate labour market compared to their middle-class peers (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008) and why, upon graduating, students from lower income families have median earnings which are around 25% less than those from higher income families (Britton, Dearden, Shephard, & Vignoles, 2016). By contrast, many middle class students are strategic and able to mobilise the various sorts of capital necessary to make them employable (Bathmaker et al., 2013). Consequently, whether

approach to employability is affected by funding system has significant implications, particularly in terms of labour market outcomes.

Tuition Fees: Do They Influence Approaches to Employability and University?

Research would suggest, therefore, that there may exist a dynamic and potentially complex relationship between tuition fees, socio-economic background, and approach to university and employability (see Figure 2 below). In particular, the question arises: is the present funding arrangement in England influencing the way in which students approach employability and university and, if so, is it influencing students differentially based on social class?

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



Incredibly, very little research has been done to answer this question. One notable exception is Tomlinson's (2014) qualitative study mentioned previously, which looked at how the current funding system may be affecting students' attitudes to learning. However, though his study included students from institutions across the U.K., there was no systematic comparison between the students at the Scottish universities and those at English universities, nor between students of differing socio-economic backgrounds.

Indeed, though many of these studies have included Scottish institutions or students, none have looked at or pulled out differences that may exist between these and

their English counterparts; despite coming from different policy contexts, participants and institutions from the two countries have been treated as a monolith. As Power (2016) has argued in the context of Wales, this “lumping together”—where English educational policy is taken to be UK educational policy, and differences are ignored or elided—amounts to a “cultural injustice or misrecognition”. An important way to address this is to bring other nations—in this case, Scotland—“in from the margins” and take advantage of the ‘home international’ comparison (Raffe et al., 1999) opportunity afforded by the UK’s unique situation. The two countries have—for the moment at least, as well as for the last few decades—fundamentally different approaches to higher education funding and management as well as its links to employment. Despite operating under the same “quality control” umbrella (the National Student Survey, the Research Excellence Framework, the Teaching Excellence Framework), there is, in Scotland, a different conceptualisation about the *role* and nature of higher education; it is positioned as a public good and as such it operates under a different funding model. It is also managed as a system, not as a market. It therefore seems remiss to ignore such a crucial contextual difference when looking at students’ approaches to employability and to university.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Bearing this research gap in mind, the following question will be investigated by the study: how do different university funding systems influence undergraduates’ approaches to employability and university (learner-oriented or consumer-oriented)? This can be further broken down into the following sub-questions, grouped thematically:

Employability:

1. To what extent can approach to employability be measured (*QUAN*)?
2. Is there a relationship between fee-paying and approach to employability (*QUAN*)?
 - a. If so, is this moderated by institution type or socio-economic background (*QUAN*)?
3. How do students from different SES and from different funding systems approach their employability (*qual*)?

University:

4. Is there a relationship between fee-paying and approach to university (learner-oriented or consumer-oriented) (*QUAN*)?
 - a. if so, is this moderated by institution type or socio-economic background (*QUAN*)?
5. How do students from different SES and from different funding systems approach university (*qual*)?
6. Is there a relationship between approach to university (learner-oriented or consumer-oriented) and approach to employability (*QUAN*)?

Uniqueness and Contribution

This project contributes to research on the impact of English higher education tuition fees by exploring the extent to which current students' approaches to learning and employability are influenced by the English funding system, and whether there exist overall differences in attitudes between (i) students at English and Scottish institutions and (ii) fee-paying and non-fee-paying students. To the author's knowledge, no other studies have attempted to explore these issues in this way; indeed, as others have pointed out (Blackburn, 2016), there is a paucity of research comparing Scottish and English students' attitudes in general. In addition, most research on these topics has been either entirely qualitative or entirely quantitative; the present study, by bringing together both methods, offers an important mixed-methods perspective on the issues at hand. Moreover, though much has been theorised regarding the supposed negative effects of the new funding system on learning, only two studies have, to the author's knowledge, sought to test these theories empirically—and they did not look at employability, nor at students outside of England. Finally, the study also involves the development of a new scale for measuring students' approaches to employability which will, it is hoped, help future researchers.

METHODOLOGY

A methodology is more than the chosen methods used for a study, it is an investigator's overall approach to the research process and to scientific inquiry (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Thus, a researcher's epistemological and ontological beliefs will guide them towards methods of inquiry that are consistent with these beliefs, and thus usually towards either more qualitative or quantitative research methods. Mixed methodologists, who work within a pragmatist paradigm, set aside the issues surrounding truth and reality, focusing instead on what works for the research question (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The complexity of the phenomenon examined in this study, the potential real-world applications of its findings, as well as the combination of both exploratory and confirmatory elements the question asks, suggest that a mixed methodology approach, sitting within this pragmatist paradigm, is appropriate for this research.

Moreover, Mixed Methods research allows one to use both inductive and deductive logic, thereby allowing a researcher to both test theory and explore more openly. This combination is particularly important in the context of the present issue (i.e., the English funding system), where much has been written in terms of theory (e.g., the negative impacts of fee-paying on student learning), but little has been done to confirm, complicate and expand theory. Thus this study will use quantitative methods to test the theory, and qualitative methods to formulate new understandings from the data gathered. Moreover, Mixed Methods allows one to gather different, but complementary, data on the same topic (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016) and allows one to present and explore a greater range of divergent views (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Overview

Therefore, to look at how socio-economic status (SES), fee-paying and type of university affect approaches to university and employability, a sequential mixed methods approach was used (QUAN → qual). Six higher education institutions, two in England and four in Scotland, were used as case studies. These two countries provide an important contrast in terms of their tuition fee systems and their policy approaches to higher education and the labour market.

Moreover, to further this contrast and offer a broader understanding of the student experience in Britain, the aim was to include one post-1992 institution and one Russell Group institution in each country, both from the same city in order to minimise confounding factors. However, uptake of the survey was low in the initial two Scottish universities, and so it was decided to expand the reach to two more; still, however, one Russell Group and one Post-1992 university from the same city (see Table 2).

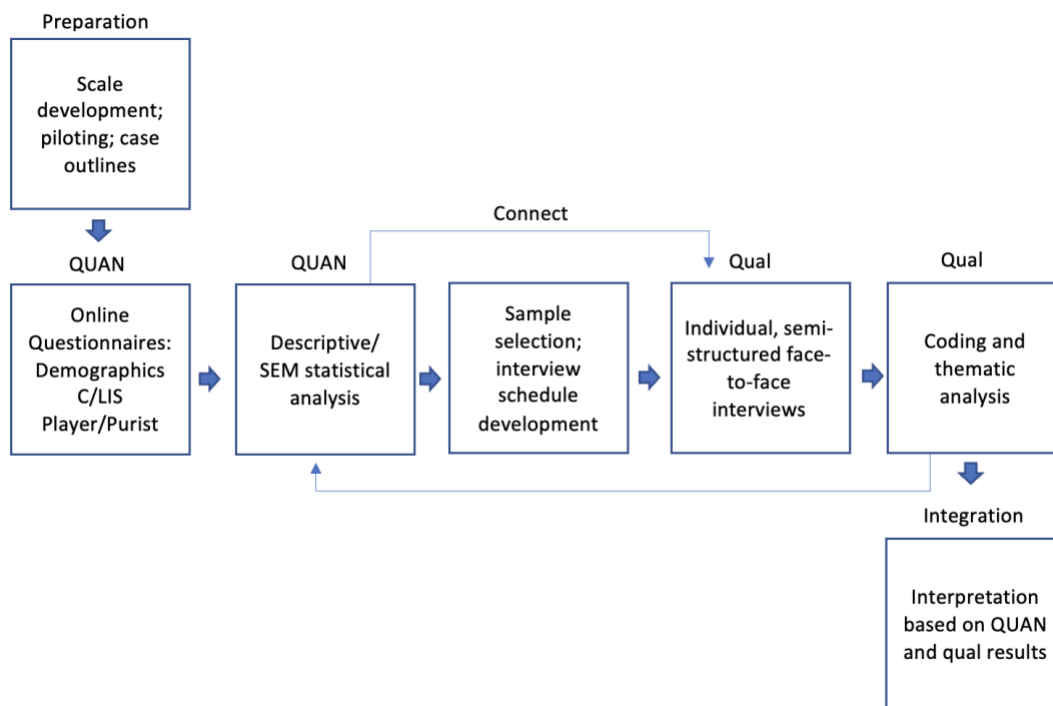
This cross-section allowed for a greater variety of students to be sampled, since students from more disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately attend post-1992 institutions (Connor et al., 1999).

Table 2: Case Study Institutions

Scotland		England
New Scot University (1) (Post-1992 HEI)	New Scot University (2) (Post-1992 HEI)	New England University (Post-1992 HEI)
Old Scot University (1) (Russell Group HEI)	Old Scot University (2) (Russell Group HEI)	Old England University (Russell Group HEI)

The project was divided into several phases. An instrument development and preparatory phase—in which a new instrument that measures employability attitudes was developed—was followed by the quantitative strand, in which the questionnaire (including the newly developed measure) was distributed to undergraduate students at the six institutions, and analyses were conducted. This was followed by the qualitative strand, which consisted of in-depth interviews with students, to triangulate and expand the quantitative data obtained in the previous strand (see Figure 3 below). The next section of this document details these different phases of the project.

Figure 3. Study Design



Design

Preparation and Scale Development

Before beginning the quantitative data collection, a new instrument to measure approach to employability was developed and tested. This was done by drawing on the work of Brown and Hesketh (2004), who differentiate between two typological groups: “Players” and “Purists”. The former “play the employability game” by adjusting their narratives to the needs of prospective employers; the latter see employment as a meritocratic process and so “remain themselves”, trusting that they will be chosen if they are the right fit. The measure used a Likert technique for measuring students’ attitudes; this involved asking students to rate the extent of their agreement on a five-point scale with a series of related items that cover the aspects of the Player/Purist framework. Thus, the measure consists of “Player” statements and “Purist” statements and summing the responses to these items produces a scale score for each typology.

The scale development began with a review of the literature on typological approaches to employability, specifically looking for any studies that employed the Purist/Player framework (see Appendix 4). The characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of “Purist” and

“Player” types described in the literature were carefully considered, and a number of items that “tap the domain of the construct” (Netemeyer et al., 2003) were drawn from the description of the construct and the specification of the characteristics of Purists and Players. Once a pool of items had been generated, the items were reviewed by a panel review of experts (DeVellis, 2012) consisting of Helen Carasso, Andrea Laczik, Ewart Keep, Jo-Anne Baird, and Michael Tomlinson (see Table 3 for biographical descriptions of the panel)—who were sent (i) background about the construct (ii) the items themselves and (iii) a review form to be filled in (see Appendices 6 and 7). This form asked the panel to rate each item in terms of relevance and clarity. The items were then revised if necessary and removed. The scale was then pre-tested with a group of 43 graduate students ($N = 43$) at an English university; a minimum of twenty generally being a sufficient number for finding issues that may arise (Rossi et al., 2013; Sudman, 1983), and to include diverse subgroups in the target population (Czaja & Blair, 2005). This was followed by respondent debriefing, in which respondents offered their views about the questionnaire’s problems and related their experiences (Willis, 2016). This is a way of including participants in the development of the scale, as well as addressing potential weaknesses of questionnaires and ensuring questionnaire validity. A more detailed description of the process is provided in the following (Scale Development) chapter.

Table 3. Expert Panel Biographies

Expert Name	Expert Biographical Description
Helen Carasso	<i>University of Oxford, Department of Education</i> Dr Carasso's academic interest in higher education policy developed from her professional experience of university administration, in public relations and admissions. Her doctorate focused on the market created by the introduction of fees for undergraduates at English universities in 2006.
Andrea Laczik	<i>Edge Foundation/University of Oxford, Department of Education</i> Dr Laczik has been working at Edge since 2017 and now leads Edge’s research work. She has over 20 years of education research and policy evaluation experience while working at Oxford and Warwick Universities and Edge. Her broad interests cover Vocational Education and

Ewart Keep	<p>Training (VET) and apprenticeships at all levels, employer engagement in VET and general education, skills development, innovative/alternative higher education, youth transition and trajectories and provisions for young people and adults from disadvantaged background</p> <p><i>University of Oxford, Department of Education</i></p>
Jo-Anne Baird	<p>Professor Ewart Keep holds the chair in Education, Training and Skills at the Department of Education, Oxford University. He has also acted as an advisor to a Government Office for Science (Foresight) project on adult learning and the changing labour market, and was a member of the Greater London Authority's task and finish group on the skills strategy for London. He is currently a member of the Scottish Government's Labour Market Strategy Group.</p> <p><i>University of Oxford, Department of Education</i></p>
Michael Tomlison	<p>Prof. Baird conducts a lot of work with government and industry partners, including acting as the Standing Adviser to the House of Commons Education Select Committee, a member of Ofqual's Standing Advisory Group and membership of the Welsh Government's Curriculum and Assessment Group. She is a member of the Editorial Board of the Oxford Review of Education journal and the International Advisory Board of Assessment in Education: principles, policy & practice.</p> <p><u>Southampton Education School, University of Southampton</u></p>
	<p>Dr Michael Tomlinson's research draws principally on sociological approaches to the education/work nexus and has substantive interests in higher education policy, labour markets, employability and marketisation. An ongoing theme in his research is the construction of identities and how policy and social changes impact on institutions and stakeholders.</p>

Quantitative Strand

A questionnaire was used to collect data on student background (tuition fee status, grade level, gender, parental occupation, etc) and on student attitudes to employability and to university. Questionnaires are appropriate data collection instruments when systematic

and comparable information from a large number of participants is needed (Willis, 2016), and particularly when the information needed regards attitudes, beliefs, values and concepts. Questionnaires have therefore often been used in the educational research context, particularly for the study of issues such as academic self-concept, school enjoyment, self-efficacy beliefs, and approaches to learning. For these reasons, therefore, it was considered that questionnaires were an effective research tool for the present study. Specifically, the questionnaire that was distributed to undergraduate students at the selected institutions consisted of three parts (as below).

a) Questionnaire

Part (i) Demographics: this included questions about age, the country of their university, how tuition fees are being paid, year of study, grade level, parental education and occupation (using the International Standard Classification of Occupations classification), type of school attended and subject studied.

Part (ii) Purist/Player Scale. The employability-focused section used the Purist/Player Scale developed in the preparatory phase of the study to measure the extent to which students identify as Players or Purists, and included comments sections in which the respondents could free write their own free text answers. In the questionnaire, this scale consisted of 14 Likert-scale items (7 Player items and 7 Purist items) scored between 1 and 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Part (iii) Consumer and Learner Scales. The Consumer and Learner scales together consist of 35 items that measure the extent to which individuals identify as Consumers and Learners. They are composite measures that take into account both attitudes and learning-related behaviours, such as financial pressures, the importance of being at university and study habits. The Consumer scale was originally developed by Saunders (2015) in the American context; the current version, adapted by Bunce et al (2016), has been used in the British context only twice before, and consists of 15 consumer statements. The Learner scale, also developed by Bunce et al (2016) is drawn from the work of Entwistle et al (Entwistle, 1991), and consists of 20 learner statements. Each statement is responded to using a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neutral, and 6 = strongly agree; summing these responses across items produces a Learner score and a

Consumer score. For instance, a mean consumer orientation score of 4.77— that is, between 4 (somewhat agree) and 5 (mostly agree)—would indicate that students largely agreed with consumer statements, suggesting that students generally adopt a consumer orientation. See Appendix 7 for the full questionnaire.

b) Sampling

As Sturgis (2006) points out, whenever the goal of research is to make statements about a group of people, the way in which one draws a sample from that group will determine how much confidence one can have in the generality of the findings. For this reason, size and sampling method are of extreme importance, as these affect the ways in which we interpret the findings—how much we can trust the representativeness of the data, how much we can generalise, and what statistical tests are possible.

In the case of this study, the intention was to distribute the questionnaire to all undergraduate students via their student union representatives, knowing that only a certain number of students would agree to participate; therefore, volunteer sampling was used to select undergraduates within the six institutions. Though a rule of thumb for Structural Equation Modelling (see analyses section) is a minimum sample size of 100 or 200 (Kline, 2016), the aim was to gather at least 100 participants from each university; in the end, after a low response rate from the two Scottish universities and the recruitment of two further Scottish institutions, there were over 900 respondents ($n = 963$), though after data cleaning (Appendix 3), this number fell to just over 700 ($n = 752$). This sample size is in line with previous surveys distributed to undergraduates at UK universities, which have had response rates of roughly 15-20% (Harrison et al., 2015; Neves & Hillman, 2016). To maximise the amount of data collected, the sample included students across all year groups and subjects. Despite the fact that mature and part-time learners can skew the data, they were not excluded from the sample, to ensure that similar sample sizes were obtained at all the institutions, even those where non-traditional students are a larger percentage of the student body (such as the post-1992 institutions in Scotland).

c) Procedure

The questionnaire was disseminated via email and advertised on Facebook between March and August 2019. Originally, the intention was to rely on presidents and vice-presidents of student unions at the four institutions, who were contacted and asked to send out the questionnaire to all undergraduates at their university (due to the new General Data Protection Regulation law, the student union representatives were not able to share the student mailing lists and instead had to send on the questionnaires themselves). However, due to a change in student union representatives, difficulties in communication and a reluctance to distribute the survey arose at two of the case study institutions in Scotland—Old Scot University (1) and New Scot University (1)—a new recruitment strategy was needed. In addition to student union representatives, therefore, departmental administration managers (found via university websites), student society presidents (found via Facebook and university websites) and college committee presidents (found via university websites and social media) were contacted at two additional Scottish universities, as well as at the previous four universities, and asked to distribute the survey to the students in their departments, societies, or colleges. The questionnaire was also advertised and shared directly on the social media pages of the universities and a poster for the study (Appendix 11) was also created and posted in common rooms and university spaces across the six universities in hard copy form.

Participation in the questionnaires was solicited in three ways: (i) by describing the study (ii) by informing students that all who complete the questionnaire would be automatically entered into a prize draw for a £150 Amazon voucher (ii) by informing participants that those who completed the questionnaire would be given feedback about their scores on the Purist/Player measure—i.e. they would be told whether they are more of a Player or a Purist. Feedback was requested at the end of the questionnaire; this illuminated participants' experiences and interpretations of the questions, adding rich data to the study. It was distributed online using the Qualtrics platform, allowing for real-time data collection. The median completion time for the survey was just over 10 minutes.

d) Analyses

1. Quality Assurance Measures and Descriptive Statistics

To begin with, data quality control was conducted on the full dataset to examine the data for any issues and repair these if possible; this included testing for missing data, normality and outliers, and other anomalies (see Appendix 3 for a detailed description of this process). Following this, statistical tests were conducted to establish the psychometric properties of the Player/Purist scale. These included item analyses via exploratory factor analysis (EFA), internal consistency estimates using Cronbach's alpha, and internal estimates of validity, and tests for measurement invariance. These gave estimates of the reliability and validity of the scale, giving a good indication of quality. This was followed by a descriptive analysis of the data; questionnaire scores were calculated using SPSS and descriptive statistics—means and standard deviations—for all groups were calculated (for a description the relationship between the variables, instruments and measures, see Appendix 2). Following this, inferential statistics were used to explore the central questions of the thesis. First, a preparatory series of analyses of variance were conducted, to establish patterns in the data, then structural equation modelling was used to model the theorised relationships in full.

2. Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is particularly useful for looking at complex relationships between variables (Frey, 2018). In SEM, researchers specify the relationships between variables, allowing for mediation and moderation relationships to be built into a causal model (ibid), as well as for relationships between unobserved constructs to be part of the model. As Hoyle (2011) points out, this comprehensive approach to statistically modelling data is especially beneficial for “tests of the richly detailed, process-oriented models of the human experience typical of social and personality psychology”.

SEM was used to examine the relationship between fee-paying and approaches to university and employability; in particular, whether these relationships were moderated by institutional context or socio-economic status. A “moderator” refers to a variable that specifies conditions under which a given predictor is related to an outcome, thus explaining ‘when’ a dependent variable and independent variable are related. In the case of this model, the literature would suggest that socio-economic status plays a role in how debt and finances are viewed and handled. Therefore, it could be hypothesised that SES would

moderate the relationship between fee responsibility and approach to university/employability, such that fee responsibility would be related to approach to university *when* SES is low. Similarly, institution types have been shown to influence learner identity (Crozier et al., 2008), and so it was possible that institution type would also moderate the relationship between fee-paying and approach to university. National context (Scottish or English) could also moderate the relationship between fee-paying and approach to learning/employability, since the wider differences in national approaches to HE may have trickled down to the ways in which students perceive HE.

e) Challenges

There were various challenges associated with this portion of the research project. Firstly, there was a risk of social desirability biasing the results of the measures used, with students feeling inclined to agree with certain statement because they believed it to be more socially desirable, in spite of it being untrue. However, self-administered questionnaires reduce the effects of social desirability (Nederhof, 2006) and the respondent debriefing during the preparation phase highlighted any questions that were likely to be especially susceptible to social desirability bias, which allowed them to be revised ahead of the quantitative data collection.

Secondly, approaches to learning are generally understood to be relatively unstable states rather than traits, and as such it is argued that they can be affected by as little as the type of subject being studied. There was a worry, therefore, that this might make it hard to find commonalities amongst the respondents within institutions, as well to generalise from the results since a plethora of external factors could have confounded the results. That being said, it is the presumed state-like nature of learning approaches that mean that they *can* be affected by institution, funding arrangement and socio-economic status. As a precaution, however, information about subjects studied was requested within the demographic section of the questionnaire, so that these factors could be controlled for in the statistical analysis.

Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that a key assumption of the study was that both approach to employability and approach to university are at least *relatively* stable constructs that can be reliably measured via the instruments used in this study. This is not

necessarily the case: approaches to learning and employability are complex, multi-dimensional phenomena that may in fact not be exclusive or stable at all—it is possible, for example, that a single individual may identify as *both* a “Purist” and a “Player” depending on the situation, and adopt multiple approaches to employability within a single sitting. This begs the question: to what extent can a questionnaire administered only once tap into the complexity of identity and the approaches adopted toward learning and employability? The issue is especially complicated by the scarcity of systematic research into the Player/Purist typology, meaning that there remain many questions about the construct and how it can be measured; this is an unavoidable limitation to any study taking first steps into somewhat unknown territory. However, these challenges are—at least in part—addressed by the second strand of the study, which enabled a more open-ended examination of the issues through qualitative methods, allowing for nuances and contradictions to be teased out and explored and data to be triangulated and corroborated.

Qualitative Strand

The qualitative strand was conducted using interviews. Interviews provide a method for collecting data imbedded in the interpretations and perceptions of respondents (Turner, 2010); as such, they are a preferred method within the social sciences for examining personal experiences and issues that relate to them (Cohen et al., 2011). Dialogue allows researchers to clarify answers, ask follow-up questions, and explore perhaps unexpected avenues, providing a greater depth of information than can be achieved through questionnaires alone. This was particularly important in the context of this study, where the Player/Purist questionnaire was new and untried, and the topic itself is relatively unexplored. Therefore, drawing on the data gathered through the questionnaires, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with a selection of undergraduates at the universities. The aim was to triangulate the data collected from the quantitative strand, and thus to explore the students’ views of employability and learning, particularly drawing out issues and themes that arose from analysis of the quantitative data. The intent was that, through these interviews, a deeper understanding would be gained of the issues raised through the quantitative strand.

a) Sampling

All students that took part in the questionnaire were asked whether they agreed to take part in an interview at a later date; this allowed the interview participants to be selected from the larger sample of questionnaire respondents. This is in keeping with the recommendation of Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), who suggest that, because the purpose of the qualitative strand in a QUAN → qual mixed methods study is to explain the initial quantitative results, the same respondents should participate in both study strands. The intended sample size was therefore twenty ($N = 20$), which Green and Thorogood (2009) recommend as the optimal sample size for interviews, since “little that is 'new' comes out of transcripts” (p.120) after that stage; however, since the number of case study institutions grew (from four to six), it was decided that thirty ($N = 30$) respondents should be interviewed instead.

Although the aim was to systematically select respondents based on their scores on the scales—looking particularly for consistency of responses and contradictory patterns—not enough respondents both agreed to interview on the survey and responded to follow-up requests for interview. Instead, therefore, participants were chosen so as to approximately represent the six institutions, together with all the different possible tuition fee types (on a student loan, not paying tuition fees, EU students in Scotland, etc). This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the various combinations of factors. Once a list of potential interview participants was assembled, participants were contacted via the email provided.

b) Method

To integrate the qualitative and quantitative strands and ensure that the quantitative results were explored in-depth using qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), the interview protocol was in part developed from the initial findings of the first stages of the quantitative data analysis. Thus, questions were devised to draw out in-depth answers to the survey questions, and thus look at *how* or *why* patterns were emerging. In keeping with Robson's (2018) suggested guidelines, the interview schedule contained opening and closing questions, to both get the interviewee comfortable and wind down the interview, and a core section of short, concrete, open questions. They were conducted using a semi-

structured format, mostly via Skype or phone call, although two were held in a neutral location that was convenient for the participants and where they felt at ease (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes to one hour as is common with semi-structured interviews (Jamshed, 2014), and were recorded electronically. They were conducted between August and October 2019.

1. Analyses

The student interviews were transcribed manually and then NVIVO software was used to conduct thematic analyses of the data. Thematic analysis involves a process of examining narrative data to look for recurrent ideas or topics; in this case, the first stage of analysis involved using a start list of *a priori* themes drawn from the research questions and interview questions and coding the data into these different groups of categories—this was important in the current research context, where I was primarily looking at comparisons between groups and between institutions (Mills et al., 2010). The aim was, therefore, to examine the interview data on the basis of the theoretical constructs—approach to university and approach to employability—that were being investigated. However, finding that more was emerging from the data than could be captured by using *a priori* categorisation, the second stage of analysis involved a more inductive, iterative approach, in which new and emerging themes were also found, examined and categorised. Further details about this process are given at the start of the qualitative strand chapters.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'Techniques for Evaluating and Enhancing Quality' were used. Peer debriefing—that is, speaking with a "disinterested peer" (a member of my DPhil cohort,) about the qualitative data—was conducted during the process of data collection and analysis. In addition, to ensure credibility, negative case analysis— which involved explicitly looking for and examining instances and cases that did not fit within the overall pattern of results that emerged from the qualitative analysis, and in so doing weighing up alternative explanations and arguing for one's own interpretation—was also conducted.

c) Challenges

A number of challenges presented themselves at this stage. The first was that, due to the small number of participants and the large number of themes to be examined, there was a risk of thin saturation. In this case, qualitative data from the survey feedback form was extremely helpful, and was incorporated into both the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis, mitigating some of the risk. Secondly, there was the risk that some potential interviewees—those who answered the questionnaire in their final year—may have graduated from university by the time the qualitative data collection was to take place. To address this, students were asked to provide a personal email address when taking the questionnaire, if they agreed to take part in an interview; this was helpful in many cases, though in some cases students neglected to provide an additional address. Of those that did, some were too busy with internships or jobs to conduct the interview by the time they were asked.

Finally, as with the administering of the questionnaire, social desirability bias could also have been an issue when conducting the interviews; students may have wanted to give answers that they believed would make them be seen favourably. However, it should be pointed out that in the case of the issues examined in this study—different approaches to learning and employability, learner and consumer identity—it is not in fact clear which attitude would be assumed to more socially desirable and indeed, even this assumption would suggest something about underlying attitudes and beliefs about employability and learning.

Ethical Considerations

In line with BERA (2018) guidelines, information about the study was distributed and written consent was obtained from participants. In addition, verbal assent was obtained from each participant before they took part in the interviews. All data was fully anonymised and stored in private, password-protected folders with no identifier that would allow a link to participants' full identity. Participants were given the name and contact information of the principal researcher and supervisors, in case they had any queries or wished to withdraw their data from the study.

One ethical issue that was important to consider was that the questions raised during the questionnaires and interviews—regarding debt, value for money, the purpose of

university, attitudes towards studying and employment prospects—might have been raised amongst people who had not considered these ideas before, and this might have caused feelings of stress or anxiety. Indeed, more than one participant, when talking about their financial situation or their sense of employability, expressed distress. It might also have raised feelings of jealousy or shame, since participants might have come to know of differences in funding responsibilities of which they were not previously aware. Moreover, these sensitive issues might have been even more difficult to discuss in face-to-face interviews than they would be in an online questionnaire (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Participants were therefore reminded ahead of the interview that they were free to stop at any point and/or leave, and reminded again at points of distress. In addition, all efforts were made to provide resources for support, as well as to stop if any discomfort became apparent, though all respondents were happy to continue and indeed more than one emphasised how “good it was to talk”.

PHASE 1: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

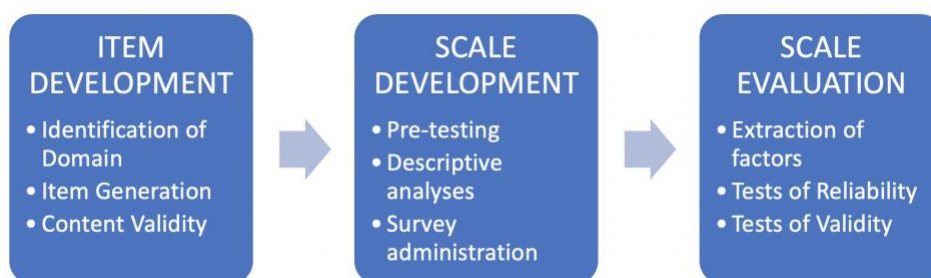
The following chapters detail the first strand of the study, which involved scale development and small-scale pre-testing, including both survey and interview methods.

Creating the Player/Purist Scale

Introduction

This chapter details the development of the new Player and Purist scales, which were used to measure students' approaches to employability, as detailed in the Methodology chapter. This chapter begins with the development of the items, looking at the literature from which the concepts have been drawn, as well as empirical examples of Players and Purists from research. It then gives an overview of the item generation, including decisions about response format and number of items. After this, it details the process of investigating content validity, including the review of the items by an expert panel of judges and respondent debriefing. It finishes by exploring the results of a pre-test of the survey, including descriptive analyses, which led to several items being removed. A visual overview of the scale development process can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Scale Development Process



Item Development

Identification of Domain

Players and Purists. Understanding how students approach their employability is increasingly important as ever more evidence emerges about the great variety in graduate

outcomes. Various models of approach to employability exist, developed out of a variety of academic disciplines, including education, organisational studies and career guidance studies. Tomlinson and Holmes (2016), for instance, identify ten such models, though it is important to point out that most do not focus on the same aspect of employability. For instance, while Bimrose and Barnes' (2007) model—which suggests four types; Evaluators, Aspirers, Strategists and Opportunists—focuses on types of career decision-making; others, such as Elias and Purcell's (2013) typology, are focused on the type of occupations occupied (“experts”, “orchestrators”, “communicators” and “non-graduates”). In terms of approach to employability—understood as the set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours associated with the labour market—only Tomlinson (2007) and Brown and Hesketh (2004) have developed models that apply. As Brown and Hesketh's model includes only two types, rather than Tomlinson's four, it was considered a more parsimonious model to explore further in this investigation.

In Brown and Hesketh's (2004) model, two general approaches towards the labour market are posited, derived from their study looking at recruitment strategies at elite graduate employers: that of Players and that of Purists. According to Hesketh (in Williams, 2003), Players “may not be the best people for the job, but they are the people who tend to be successful at assessment centres”. This is because they understand that they are in a positional competition with their peers, and thus they know how to play the “employability game” by marketing themselves and being instrumental in their attitudes towards career-building. Purists, on the other hand, understand the labour market to be essentially meritocratic; they see no game being played and therefore have no strategies for it. Their focus is thus to simply “be themselves” and eventually find the “right fit” in the labour market. Rather than falling categorically into one type or another, however, this typology can be understood as representing extreme types at the ends of a spectrum, with students being closer to one end or another (Greenbank, 2011). Indeed, even in the original account of the two types, Brown and Hesketh (2004) make clear that there are many students that fall *between* the two types.

It is important to point out two salient issues regarding the development of the typology. Firstly, it should be noted that Brown and Hesketh's (2004) research was undertaken with a very particular subset of students in a specific context; namely, mainly middle-class students at elite institutions using fast-track graduate schemes. Consequently,

it was not clear how accurately this typology would map onto the general student population. For instance, it has been theorised by both Brown and Hesketh (2004) and Thomas and Jones (2007) that students from non-traditional or working-class backgrounds may fall disproportionately on one end of the spectrum (namely, the Purist end), because these students would have limited access to social and cultural capital and therefore would not be able to use the same tactics as Players. The particular context is also important; students applying to traditional fast-track graduate schemes will be operating within a very specific set of labour market rules in which assessment centres and psychometric tests are an essential part of the recruitment process. The extent to which students who have no experience of the labour market—let alone knowledge of recruitment centres etc.—will have formulated any specific understandings or concepts about it is arguable.

The second, related, issue is that the political context in which Brown and Hesketh's (2004) study was conducted is significantly different from that of today. There now exists a strong national discourse around employability and the labour market, particularly in relation to higher education; it was therefore not clear whether many more students would now be aware of the positionally competitive nature of the labour market and the strategies necessary to secure employment—in other words, would Purists still exist? The present study aimed to answer this question.

Empirical Evidence. Despite the time elapsed since the publication of *The Mismanagement of Talent* (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)—in which Brown and Hesketh developed the idea of Purists and Players—no attempt has yet been made to create a scale based on the Player/Purist typology. Indeed, though the concepts have been used in some cases to inform understanding, very little empirical research has been done to build on the original Player/Purist typology. Only a select number of studies have been conducted with students looking at the extent to which they display Purist and Player orientations. Li's (2013) longitudinal study of Chinese students making the transition from a UK university to employment found that the majority of students in the study appeared to adopt a Purist orientation towards the labour market. This was evidenced by the fact that they “generally believed that one's own knowledge and skills are the most important element in competing in the job market” (p.485) and emphasized the importance of being themselves at work. At the same time, they also acknowledged the importance of continuing to develop

themselves to improve their employability, indicating that there were also some Player features to their approach.

Greenbank's (2011) work looking at how working-class students make career decisions found that the majority of students in the study also adopted a Purist orientation. Many believed that all that was needed in order to obtain a good job after graduating was to get the right degree (the "essential 2:1"). One student, for instance, viewed engaging in activities in order to enhance a CV as "like lying"; another said they would "feel uncomfortable" making themselves look good for others, adding: "It's like I would be putting someone else out of a job who really wants it and me taking it off them".

By contrast, in Smetherham's (2006) study looking at the labour market orientations of UK university graduates with a First Class degree, she found the opposite—graduates in her study were keenly aware that their ability to get a good job depended on the experiences they accumulated beyond a good degree. There was awareness among her sample that social skills, enthusiasm, self-presentation and extra-curricular interests would all be key to gaining good employment. She describes the attributes of one participant she identified as a Player: he expressed a clear idea of what he believed would advance a career in terms of collecting skills and experience from jobs and then using them in an instrumental way to move on in the labour market. This finding may be partly explained by the context of the participants; it may be that experience *in* the labour market makes Players out of otherwise Purist students.

Though not explicitly using the Player/Purist framework, Bathmaker et al's (2013) work looking at the progress of a cohort of students through their three-year undergraduate degree course in England (2010-2013) and their efforts to manage their employability found similar attitudes amongst their participants. They found that some students—particularly working-class students—were inclined to "play a meritocratic game fairly, putting extra effort into securing a higher class of degree rather than securing an internship for instance" (p 741), suggesting a Purist orientation. Their middle-class peers, though, appeared able "play the game in both a conscious and internalised manner" (ibid).

Most recently, Tomlinson's (2014) qualitative study looking at the effect of recent policy changes on the attitudes of students in universities across the UK found that students seemed to have a strong sense of the need to develop a narrative of employability and sell themselves to employers—both key features of Players.

Item Generation

Drawing from the literature. Following this review of the literature on the Purist/Player framework, characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of Purist and Player types described in the literature were collected, taking particular note of those attributes which came from theory and which came from empirical studies that contrast the two types. A large number of items that “tapped the domain of the construct” (Netemeyer et al., 2003, p. 95) were then drawn from the description of the construct and the specification of the characteristics of Purists and Players (see Appendix 4).

Number of items. According to Furr (2011), when considering the optimal number of items to include in a scale, one must bear in mind the following: (1) longer scales have better reliability than shorter scales; (2) scales that measure broadly-defined constructs may need more items than scales that measure more narrowly-defined constructs and (3) depending on the context in which the scale is likely to be administered, it may need to be shorter. Because the Player/Purist scale is part of a longer questionnaire that includes both a significant demographics section and the Consumer/Learner Identity Scale (C/LIS), it was decided that the total number of items in the final scale should not exceed 20. To reduce completion time, which could affect completion rates, it was decided that ideally the scale should consist of less than ten items. However, a much larger pool of 40 items was created originally in order to have a greater variety of questions from which to eliminate and select the final items.

Response format. In the literature on scale development, it is often emphasized that the researchers should have a clear concept of the intended response format (DeVellis, 2003) as well as the nature of the responses (whether agreement, evaluation or frequency response choices), to ensure content validity (Haynes et al., 1995). Since the C/LIS uses an agreement Likert scale format, it was deemed appropriate for the Player/Purist scale to use this too, particularly since consistent response formats help lessen participant fatigue. In Likert scales, items are presented as statements with a number of possible responses ranging from agreement to disagreement. Typically, five choices are provided, such that 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree (De

Vaus, 2002). Summing these responses across items produces a score for each respondent, so that each participant would get both a Purist score and a Player score.

Determining Content Validity

Expert Panel Review. In developing scales that have content validity, it is generally recommended that the items created be screened by judges with expertise in the literature (DeVellis, 2003; Robinson, 2010). The pool of 40 items was therefore reviewed by a panel review of experts (DeVellis, 2003), who were sent (i) background about the construct⁶ (ii) the items themselves and (iii) a review form to be filled in (see Appendices 6 and 7). This form asked the panel to rate each item in terms of relevance (3 = highly relevant, 2 = moderately relevant, 1 = not relevant) and clarity (yes/no). The results of this expert panel review will be detailed below.

i. Relevance of Items

The first area of interest was the Content Validity Index (CVI) score for each item, which was calculated using the “relevance” rating. This was done by dividing the number of experts rating the item as relevant by the total number of experts, which involved dichotomizing the ordinal rating scale used into 'relevant' and 'not relevant' (Lynn, 1986). In terms of the dichotomization, a conservative approach would categorise only items with a score of 3 as “relevant”, a more liberal approach would categorise items with a score of either 2 or 3 as “relevant”. Thus, using the conservative approach, if four judges gave an item a rating of 2, and one judge gave a rating of 3, the CVI score would be $1/5 = 0.2$; using a liberal approach, the CVI score for the same item would be 1.

Normally, a score of 0.78 would be considered high enough for inclusion, however, with five experts, “all must agree on the content validity for their rating to be considered a reasonable representation of the universe of possible ratings” (p. 383, Lynn, 1986). Therefore, for an item to be retained, it had to have a CVI score of 1. To begin with, therefore, a conservative estimate of CVI (items considered to be only highly relevant) resulted in the scale being cut down to only eight items; instead, a more liberal estimate (items considered to be either moderate or high relevance) cut the scale down to 24 items.

⁶ This repeats much of the information explored in the previous section and so will not be included here, however, the full form is included in Appendix 6.

Table 4 below displays the relevance scores for each item and a liberal CVI score. In cases of missing scores, only the existing scores were taken into account in the calculation. Items with asterisks received a CVI score below the threshold and were removed in all cases but one (item 30, “I would be the person they wanted me to be in an interview just to get the job”). This item was kept in spite of its low score after much deliberation because of how important this aspect of Player orientation appeared to be in the literature.

Table 4. Expert Panel Review CVI Scores

Questions	Relevance					CVI Score
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	
1 I think that to get a job, I just need to be the most qualified candidate	3	2	3	3	3	1
2 A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job	2	3	3	3	3	1
3 If I did not get a job I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it	2	3	2	3	2	1
4 All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job is to have the skills that the job requires	3	3	3	3	3	1
5 I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	2	3	2	3	3	1
6 The only extra-curriculars I would take part in are those that I am truly interested in	3	3	3	3	3	1
7 I would only do volunteering if I really believed in the cause	2	3	3	3	3	1

Questions	Relevance					CVI Score
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	
8 My experiences outside of university (such as travel) are not part of how employable I am	2	3	2	3	3	1
9 In terms of employability, the only thing you can build on is your confidence *	1	3	1	3		0.5
10 Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV	3	3	3	3	3	1
11 I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	2	3	2	3		1
12 It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	3	3	3	3	3	1
13 I would never fake enthusiasm for a company just to get a good job*	1	3	3	3	3	0.8
14 Networking (making contacts in industry) at recruitment events would make me uncomfortable *	2	3	2	1	3	0.8
15 You cannot practise presenting yourself well in job interviews*	3		3	1	1	0.5
16 University is about studying, not about becoming employable *	2	3	1	3		0.8
17 I chose my degree mainly because I am interested in the subject		3	3	3	3	1
18 Making the most out of university means mainly learning well		3	3	3		?
20 I think that to get a job you need to sell yourself	3	3	3	3	3	1

	Questions	Relevance					CVI Score
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	
21	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	2	3	3	3	3	1
22	To get a good job, I need to make myself employable above and beyond a good degree	3	3	2	3	3	1
23	Being "good enough" is not enough to get a good job		3	2	3	3	1
24	Using the careers information (online or through a careers service) to decode what employers want is key to getting a good job *	1	3	3	2	3	0.8
25	I am more focused on enhancing my CV than doing well in my degree *	1	3	3	3	2	0.8
26	I actively seek to build up my skills so that I can be as employable as possible	3	3	2	3	3	1
27	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	3	3	3	3	3	1
28	Building an exceptional CV is crucial to getting a good job	3	3	3	3	3	1
29	I would take part in extra-curriculars just because it looks good on my CV	3	3	3	3	3	1
30	I would be the person they wanted me to be in an interview just to get the job*	3	3	1	3	3	0.8

	Questions	Relevance					CVI Score
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	
31	Before a job interview or application, I would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them	2	3	2	3	3	1
32	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	3	3	3	3	3	1
33	Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear	2	3	3	3	3	1
34	Networking (making contacts in industry) is crucial for getting a good job	2	3	2	3	3	1
35	My course should be teaching me skills that are useful for my career	2	3	3	3	3	1
36	Making the most out of university means using it to get a competitive job after graduating	2	3	3	3		1
37	Universities place too much emphasis on learning things that are not useful for the future*	1	3	2	3	3	0.8

**Key: 3 = highly relevant, 2 = moderately relevant, 1 = not relevant*

ii. Item Clarity

The second area of interest was the clarity of the items; if two or more of the experts rated an item as unclear, the item was reworded, incorporating their suggestions as much as possible. In one instance, for example, one statement was changed from “*Networking*

(making contacts in industry) is crucial for getting a good job” to “Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job”, as suggested by one of the experts. Table 5 shows the clarity ratings of all the items; items with asterisks (meaning that two experts had rated the item as unclear) were reworded according to the experts’ recommendations in order to improve clarity and thus the validity of the scale.

Overall, four questions were reworded. The third area of interest was possible omissions; however, no members of panel identified any omissions, suggesting that there was no construct-underrepresentation, a possible source of content invalidity (Furr, 2011).

Table 5. Expert Panel Review Clarity Scores

	Questions	Clarity				
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
1	I think that to get a job, I just need to be the most qualified candidate	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	If I did not get a job I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
4	All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job is to have the skills that the job requires*	Y/N	Y	Y	Y	Y
5	I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6	The only extra-curriculars I would take part in are those that I am truly interested in	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N
7	I would only do volunteering if I really believed in the cause	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	My experiences outside of university (such as travel) are not part of how employable I am	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	Y

	Questions	Clarity				
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
9	In terms of employability, the only thing you can build on is your confidence*	N	Y	Y/N	Y	N
10	Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
11	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview*	N	Y	Y/N	Y	N
12	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
13	I would never fake enthusiasm for a company just to get a good job	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14	Networking (making contacts in industry) at recruitment events would make me uncomfortable	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
15	You cannot practise presenting yourself well in job interviews	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N
16	University is about studying, not about becoming employable	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	
17	I chose my degree mainly because I am interested in the subject	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
18	Making the most out of university means mainly learning well*	N	Y	Y	Y	?
20	I think that to get a job you need to sell yourself*	N	Y	Y	Y	N
21	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
22	To get a good job, I need to make myself employable above and beyond a good degree	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	Y

Questions	Clarity				
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
23 Being “good enough” is not enough to get a good job*	N	Y	Y/N	Y	Y
24 Using the careers information (online or through a careers service) to decode what employers want is key to getting a good job*	N	Y	Y	Y	N
25 I am more focused on enhancing my CV than doing well in my degree	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N
26 I actively seek to build up my skills so that I can be as employable as possible	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	Y
27 I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
28 Building an exceptional CV is crucial to getting a good job	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
29 I would take part in extra-curriculars just because it looks good on my CV	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
30 I would be the person they wanted me to be in an interview just to get the job	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N
31 Before a job interview or application, I would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	Y
32 It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
33 Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
34 Networking (making contacts in industry) is crucial for getting a good job*	Y	Y	Y/N	Y	Y

	Questions	Clarity				
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
35	My course should be teaching me skills that are useful for my career	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
36	Making the most out of university means using it to get a competitive job after graduating	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/N
37	Universities place too much emphasis on learning things that are not useful for the future*	N	Y	Y/N	Y	Y

Finally, the Flesch-Kincaid reading level of the items was calculated, to ensure that the language used would be accessible to the participants. This was found to be 71, indicating a reading level that would be easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students, the wording was left unchanged.

Respondent Debriefing. To further refine the scale and to ensure that participants understood the questions and concepts as intended, and to try to refine and shorten the questionnaire, Respondent Debriefing was conducted. This method “adapts probing techniques that have been used for decades to examine question meaning in survey pre-tests or the survey itself” (Martin, 2006, p. 11) by allowing participants to step into the role of an informant and play an active part of the scale development process (Oksenberg et al., 1991)—in the case of this study, the intention was both to engage students with the study from the outset by giving them a voice in the creation of the scale, and also to avoid items where the wording was unclear, or where widely different interpretations were being made. This is in line with the aim of Respondent Debriefing, which is to reveal hidden problems of meaning that respondents and interviewers may be unaware of, usually by asking questions after a survey has been completed, to avoid influencing responses. Therefore, following distribution of the survey for pre-testing (detailed in the following section), 20 participants indicated on the questionnaire that they would or might be willing to meet for an interview, and six interviews were conducted. The period of time that elapses between completing

the questionnaire and debriefing interviews can vary considerably (Martin, 2006); in the case of this study, it ranged from two to seven weeks.

There is little specific guidance on what respondent debriefing entails (often because it takes the form of unstructured inquiries), but generally the process involves mostly simple comprehension probes and probes to test interpretations of terminology or question intent, for instance by asking participants to paraphrase the survey questions (e.g. how do you understand the word “employability” in that statement?)⁷. These questions are useful for identifying words or concepts that respondents either do not understand or are not interpreting in the way that the researcher intended, as well as *why* this misinterpretation may be happening (Ikart, 2018)—this was the case, for instance, in the statement “*Making the most out of university means mainly concentrating on learning well*”. The interviews revealed that, not only was this being interpreted differently by the different respondents, the reason this was happening was the ambiguity of the phrase “learning well”. Two respondents commented on the broadness of the term:

Um it sort of could be multi-faceted in that like “learning well” could mean doing everything that’s required of you in terms of reading and attending every lecture, but it could also mean learning well as in progressing in your learning and getting good grades and feeling like you’ve learned stuff and haven’t just attended university just to get a piece of paper at the end of it, you actually made progress in your learning and being...you know stuff that you wouldn’t know if you hadn’t done the course, essentially. [Participant 5]

In that context, I think “learning well” means academically and like, putting your tuition fees to use and studying and working hard and like doing the readings and stuff like that. But I think it could also mean learning well as a whole, learning well about other people, about yourself, university as like a complete new experience for yourself, like you actually learn who you are...um...could mean that, yah. [Participant 4]

Other items that were being interpreted in unintended ways included the item “*Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear*”—which more than one participant understood as generally tailoring responses (i.e not telling a job interviewer about your academic interests), rather than to do with marketing oneself in different ways to different potential employers. The other was the item “*my experiences*

⁷ A full interview script and schedule is included in Appendix 10.

outside of university are not part of how employable I am”, which the participants interpreted in terms of how well one might do a job, rather than how much these experiences would improve a CV. Ultimately this process led to the removal of four items.

Scale Development: Pretesting and Piloting

Pre-testing

Participants. The sample comprised a total of 43 undergraduate students ($n = 43$) from two UK universities, though several respondents did not complete it to the end. The respondents were largely female (29 women, 3 men), non-white (17 BAME students, 13 White students), and publicly educated (38 attended comprehensive or free schools). The age ranged between 17 and 24 (mean age = 21). The final number of respondents who completed the full Player/Purist scale ranged between 36 and 38.

Distribution. The full online survey was distributed to students at two universities, one in London and one in the North of England, using opportunistic sampling. Two lecturers, who agreed to help with the recruitment of students for this study, sent the survey via email to their undergraduate students and encouraged them to take part.

Descriptive Statistics. Descriptive analyses were conducted on the survey data in order to establish the means and standard deviations of each of the items, as well as to highlight any potential floor and/or ceiling effects. The results are presented in Table 6 (below). Items with significant effects (i.e. $\leq 5\%$ agreement/disagreement) are in bold and marked by an asterisk.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Count	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree
1. I think that to get a job, I just need to be the most qualified candidate	3.05	1.32	1	5	38	45%	33%	21%
2. A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job	2.63	1.33	1	5	38	34%	53%	13.16%
3. If I did not get a job I applied to, it would	3.08	1.19	1	5	36	50%	42%	8%

Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Count	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree
mean I was not the right person for it								
4. All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job is to have the skills that the job requires	2.95	1.21	1	5	38	47 %	45%	8%
5. I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	2.57	1.24	1	5	37	22%	62%	16%
6. The only extra-curriculars I would take part in are those that I am truly interested in	4.04	1.16	1	5	38	76%	13%	11 %
7. I would only do volunteering if I really believed in the cause	3.54	1.33	1	5	37	65%	27%	8%
8. My experiences outside of university (such as travel) are not part of how employable I am	2.46	1.22	1	5	37	19%	62%	19%
9. Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV	2.78	1.14	1	5	37	27%	43%	30%
11. I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	3.14	1.19	1	5	37	43%	27%	30%
12. It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	3.7	1.27	1	5	37	59%	22%	19%
13. Making the most out of university means mainly concentrating on learning well	3.83	1.01	1	5	36	78%	11%	11%
14. I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	3.06	1.47	1	5	36	50%	42%	8%
15. I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	3.7	1.04	1	5	37	68%	16%	16%
16. To get a good job, I need to make myself	4.54	0.6	3	5	37	95%	0%	5%

Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Count	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree
employable above and beyond a good degree*								
17. Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job	3.97	0.91	2	5	37	78%	11%	11%
18. I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	2.72	1.15	1	5	36	31%	42%	28%
19. Building an exceptional CV is crucial to getting a good job*	4.51	0.65	2	5	37	97%	3%	0%
20. Before a job interview or application, I would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them	3.94	1.03	1	5	36	81%	14%	6%
21. It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job*	4.5	0.65	2	5	36	97%	3%	0%
22. Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear	3.75	0.98	2	5	36	69%	17%	14%
23. Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	3.89	1.07	1	5	36	75%	11%	14%
25. My course should be teaching me skills that are useful for my career*	4.32	0.84	2	5	37	86%	5%	8%
26. Making the most out of university means using it to get a competitive job after graduating	3.67	1.27	1	5	36	61%	19%	19%

Reliability. Though the sample size was small, a reliability analysis was carried out on the both the Purist scale and the Player scale to estimate the internal consistency reliability of the scales, comprising a total 26 items. Cronbach’s alpha showed the Player scale to reach

acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.738$. Most items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The one exception to this was item 4, which would increase the alpha very slightly to $\alpha = 0.755$. As such, removal of this item was considered but ultimately rejected. However, Cronbach's alpha showed the Purist scale to have very low reliability, $\alpha = 0.398$. Removing items 12, 6, 7 and 8 would increase the alpha to $\alpha = 0.421$, $\alpha = 0.421$, $\alpha = 0.439$ and $\alpha = 0.424$ respectively.

Due to the very small sample size ($n = 36$), these results were only indicators of potential issues that may be seen in a larger, more representative sample. Nonetheless, it was interesting to note that the Player scale appeared to have a much higher internal reliability score than the Purist scale, suggesting perhaps that the Purist items either point to more than a single (Purist) construct, or perhaps that the construct itself was not well conceptualised and represented.

Finalising the scale

In order to further shorten the scale—which was still averaging at 19 minutes to complete—and attempt to improve the alpha coefficient, items 6, 7, 8 and 12 were removed. In order to minimise floor and ceiling effects, items 16, 19, 25 were removed, though item 21 (“It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job”) was retained, due to its prominence and significance in the literature, and in case the small sample size had skewed the results. In addition, item 26 was removed, due to its similarity with one of the questions on the Consumer Orientation scale. Along with the four items that were removed after the respondent debriefing, this reduced the final scale to 14 items. An evaluation of this 14-item scale, as a result of its incorporation into the full questionnaire, is presented in the next chapter.

PHASE 2: QUANTITATIVE STRAND

Having created a new measure of employability, the following chapters detail the second strand of the research project, including: the evaluation and validation of both the newly developed scale and the pre-existing scale; findings of the preliminary analyses of both scales based on student characteristics; and the building, and results, of the Structural Equation Models.

Findings: Evaluation and Validation of the New Player/Purist Scale

Introduction

This chapter describes the examination and validation of the new Player/Purist scales, the development of which was detailed in the last chapter. It begins with descriptive analyses of the scales, presenting means and standard deviations of each of the items, as well as highlighting any potential floor and/or ceiling effects, thereby giving a general overview of the pattern of responses. Following this, the reliability and dimensionality of the scales is tested and described, and the validity of the scale is discussed, thereby answering the research question: *To what extent can approach to employability be measured (QUAN)?*

Descriptive Analyses: How did participants respond to the Purist and Player scales?

To gain a sense of the pattern of responses to the Player and Purist scale, as well as establish the means and standard deviations of each of the items, descriptive analyses were conducted on the full sample of students at the six higher education institutions in Scotland and England ($n = 753$). The results for the Purist scale are presented in Table 7 and Chart 1 (below), those for the Player scale are in Table 8 and Chart 2 (below). Items with significant floor or ceiling effects (i.e. $\leq 5\%$ agreement/disagreement) are in bold and marked by an asterisk.

It is important to point out that the overall pattern seems to suggest a greater Player approach to employability amongst all students; in general, participants were more likely to agree with Player statements than Purist ones. As Table 8 shows, however, only two items have ceiling effects: 89% of participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that before a job interview or application, they would learn all about a company to make sure all their

answers were tailored to them; and over 94% agreed that “it is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job”—two key features of the Player mentality highlighted in Brown and Hesketh’s work (2004). As one EU student at a Russell Group Scottish University wrote in the survey:

“I would probably have a better opportunity to get a job by being calculated and concentrating on pleasing the company I apply for rather than be myself.”

This is perhaps reflective of how the discourse has changed since Brown and Hesketh’s study; a vast majority of students are now aware that self-promotion is necessary for entry into the labour market. Indeed, over half (58%) agreed that a good degree would not be enough to get a good job, suggesting that most students now understand employability as a positional game of “how to win an advantage in a congested market” (Brown, 2007). As one student commented in the survey,

“I think that in the modern world, having a good degree is simply not enough to get a good job anymore. Everyone has a degree, you need something to differentiate yourself from all the other people with degrees. Extracurriculum [sic] studies, sports, clubs, volunteer work etc that reflect your personality.” (English student at English post-1992 University).

At the same time, however, a majority of students (78.5%) agreed that it was “important to be yourself when applying to jobs”, a defining feature of the Purist in Brown and Hesketh’s typology—this suggests that, though students are aware that they need to sell themselves, they are unwilling to give up their authenticity. Indeed, respondents were almost evenly split between those that agreed “to get a good job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you” (45.7%) and those that disagreed (41.4%). This may therefore be one of crucial questions for determining to what extent someone is a Purist or a Player. As one student from an English Russell Group university put it:

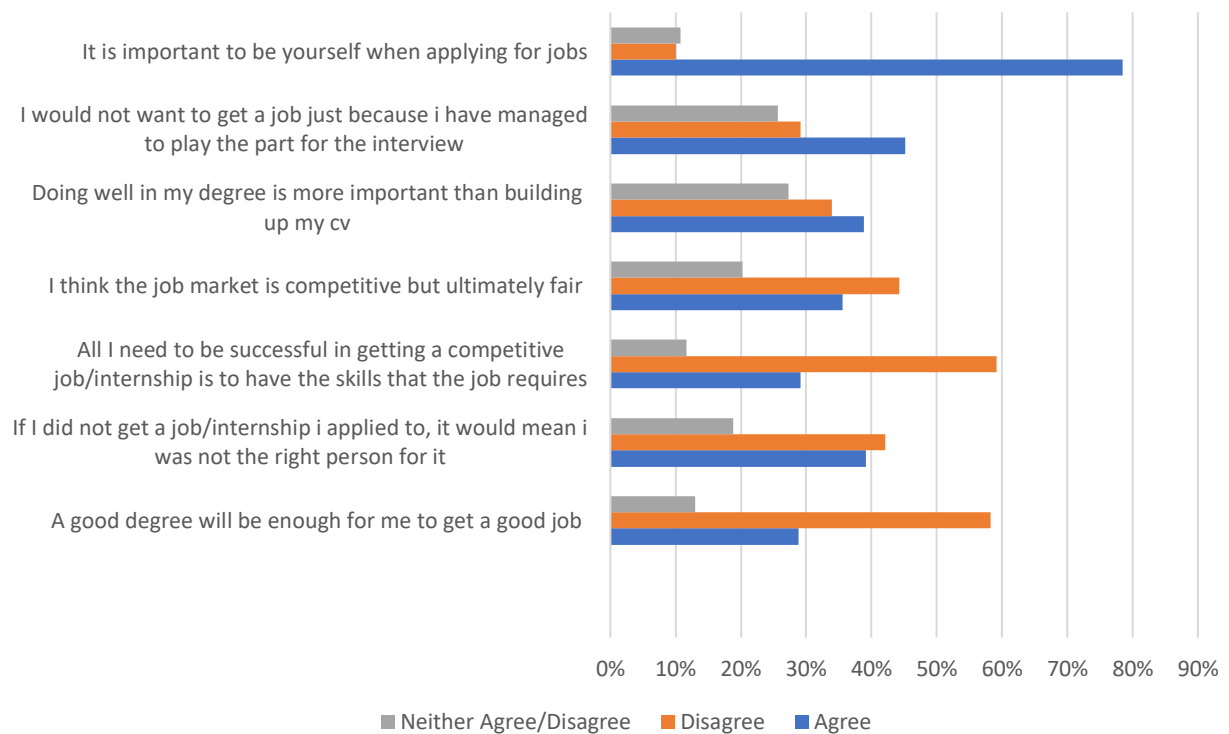
“I think that being yourself is extremely important for finding the perfect job, but due to the competitive nature of graduate job applications, not all applicants are looking for the 'perfect' job straight after university”.

Table 7. Purist Item Means, Standard Deviations and Percentages

ITEM	MEAN	SD
A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job	2.56	1.16
If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean i was not the right person for it	2.96	1.11
All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job/internship is to have the skills that the job requires	2.61	1.14
I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	2.86	1.13
Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my cv	3.12	1.06
I would not want to get a job just because i have managed to play the part for the interview	3.23	1.11
It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	4.06	1.00

Notes: scale scored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree).

Chart 1. Purist Item Response Patterns (in percentages)



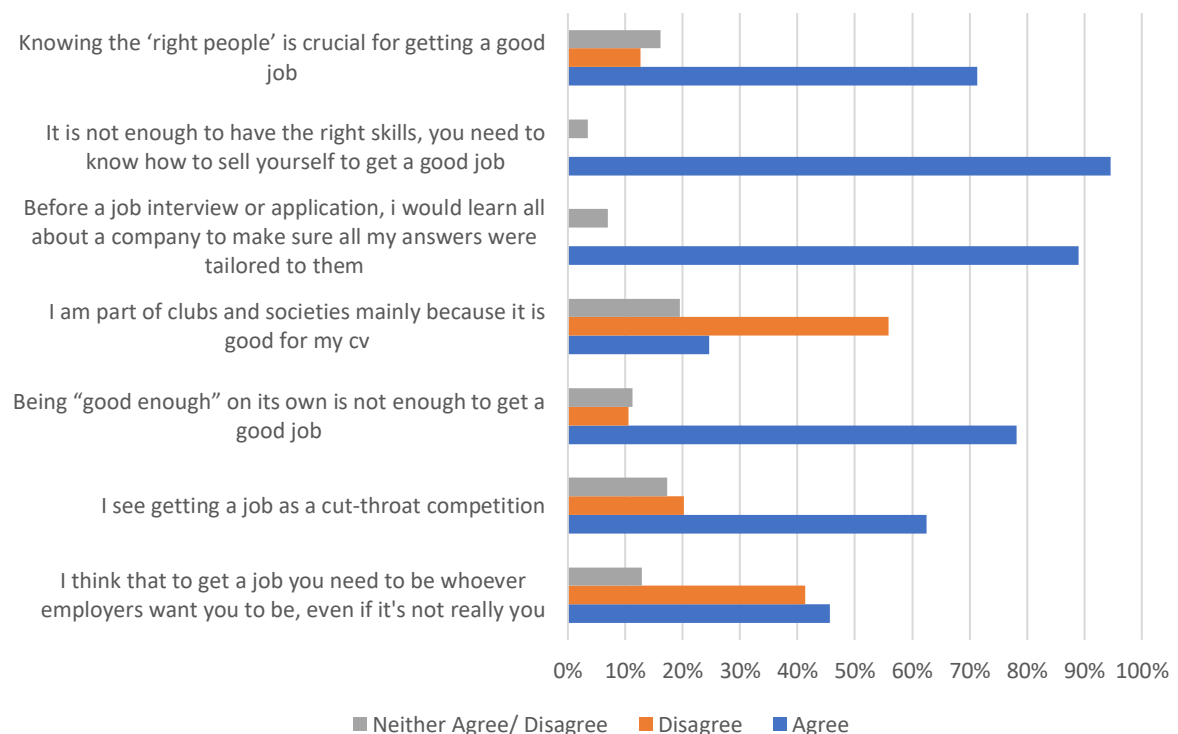
Note: "Somewhat agree" combined with "strongly agree" for total agreement percentage; "Somewhat disagree" combined with "strongly disagree" for total disagreement percentage.

Table 8. Player Item Means, Standard Deviations and Percentages

ITEM	MEAN	SD
I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	3.01	1.23
I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	3.58	1.10
Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job	3.97	0.96
I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my cv	2.47	1.20
Before a job interview or application, i would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them	4.30	0.79*
It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	4.40	0.67*
Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	3.77	0.97

Notes: scale scored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree).

Chart 2. Player Item Response Patterns (in percentages)



Note: “Somewhat agree” combined with “strongly agree” for total agreement percentage; “Somewhat disagree” combined with “strongly disagree” for total disagreement percentage.

Psychometric Analyses: To what extent can approach to employability be measured?

i. Reliability of the Purist and Player scales

An analysis was carried out on both the Purist scale and the Player scale to estimate the internal consistency of the scales, comprising a total of 14 items. Cronbach's alpha showed the Player scale to reach acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.637$. All items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha value if deleted, hence no items were removed. However, Cronbach's alpha showed the Purist scale to have low reliability, even with this larger sample size, $\alpha = 0.494$, and removing any of the items would only decrease the alpha further—thus the items were retained. The weakness of the scale could be due to poorly related questions, but it is also possible that the test is (unintentionally) tapping into multiple latent constructs, since reliability assumes unidimensionality (Green & Thompson, 2008). It is also possible that the scale may simply be too small—if the test length is too short, the value of alpha can be reduced (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

ii. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Since exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is the most common method of evaluating the dimensionality of psychological scales (Furr, 2011), EFA using the Maximum Likelihood estimator was run on the Player and Purist scales to examine their validity. The suitability of EFA was assessed prior to analysis, with the two items with significant ceiling effects removed from analyses. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed that 9 of the 12 items correlated at least 0.25 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(91) = 1178.961, p < .05$), also indicating that the data was likely factorizable.

EFA revealed four components that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 19.1%, 10.7%, 9.9% and 8% of the total variance, respectively. Though several factor solutions were examined, using both promax and oblimin rotations of the factor loading matrix, visual inspection of the scree plot (Cattell, 1966) suggested a 'levelling off' after one factor—this suggests the scale has a unidimensional structure (i.e., that there is only one latent construct being measured, such as a general "employability attitude"), rather than a multi-dimensional structure measuring two latent constructs (i.e. a "Purist"

attitude and a separate “Player” attitude). However, an examination of both 1-factor and 2-factor solutions showed that factor loadings were relatively low with only 1 factor, while the 2-factor solution (see Table 9 below) had relatively few cross-loadings and an interpretable, simple structure, with only one item (“If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it”) having a loading of less than 0.15. Thus it was concluded that a 2-factor solution, indicating two correlated but distinct underlying latent constructs, should be retained for further analyses. It was also decided that Item 2 would be removed from the scale.

Though the EFA made clear that both the Purist and Player constructs were related to a larger construct (such as a general employability approach), a moderate factor correlation score (-0.214) indicated that totalling the two scales to create a total “employability approach” score would be unreasonable. Instead, the two scales were treated separately for the following analyses. In addition, as can be seen from the Pattern Matrix, (Table 9) the items did not load as expected; two of the Purist items appeared to be more strongly (negatively) correlated with Player items. This suggested that those items could be included as part of the total Player score, but reverse coded. However, a further reliability analysis of the scales, putting Purist Item 6 and Purist Item 7 as part of the Player items, reduced Cronbach’s alpha quite significantly: from 0.637 without those to extra items, to 0.376 with those items included.

Table 9. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Promax Rotation

	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Purist 1	A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job		.534
Purist 2	If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it		
Purist 3	All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job/internship is to have the skills that the job/internship requires		.605

Purist 4	I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair		.290
Purist 5	Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV		.258
Purist 6	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-.355	
Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-.575	
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	.681	
Player 2	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	.497	
Player 3	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	.273	
Player 4	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	.410	
Player 5	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.386	

iii. Measurement Invariance

An important aspect of scale development is establishing measurement invariance; that is, testing whether a scale measures the same construct in the same way across different groups of people, allowing for meaningful conclusions to be drawn about differences in scores between groups. To do this, a further EFA was conducted, but with the data split by university country, since it would be important to know whether a two-factor model applies equally in each country. As with the full sample, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant for both Scottish ($\chi^2(91) = 656.29, p < .05$) and English ($\chi^2(91) = 518.97, p <$

.05) groups, and again EFA revealed four components that had eigenvalues greater than one. For the Scottish group, these explained 19.07%, 11.23%, 10.79% and 8.03% of the total variance; for the English group, these explained 18.63%, 10.91%, 9.45% and 8.23% of the total variance, respectively. As with the full sample, visual inspection of the scree plot for the English group (Cattell, 1966) suggested a ‘levelling off’ after one factor, but the 2-factor solution (see Table 10 below) had no cross-loadings and a similar structure to that of the full dataset, with only two items (2 and 5) having a loading of less than 0.15.

Chart 3. Scree Plot (English Group)

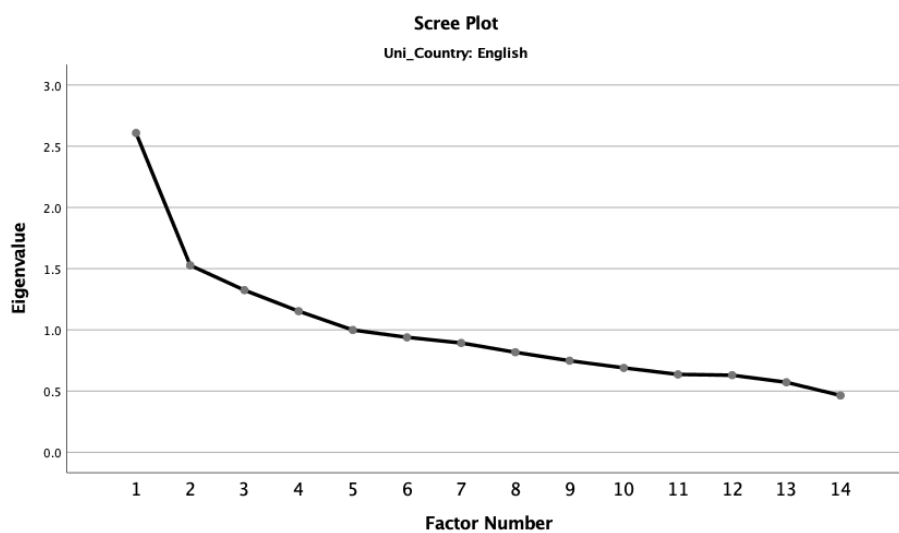


Table 10. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Promax Rotation (English Group)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Purist 1 A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job		.399
Purist 2 If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it		
Purist 3 All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job/internship is to have the skills that the job/internship requires		.699

9Purist 4	I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair		.428
Purist 5	Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV		
Purist 6	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-.388	
Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-.530	
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	.604	
Player 2	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	.496	
Player 3	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	.372	
Player 4	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	.435	
Player 5	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.279	
Player 6	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	.328	
Player 7	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.297	

However, the Scottish group had a slightly less clear structure; visual inspection of the scree plot suggested a 'levelling off' after 3 factors. In addition, the 2-factor solution for the Scottish group did not have an equal form to that of the English group. As seen in Pattern Matrix below (Table 11), Purist Items 1 and 3 had no loadings above 0.15, and Player items generally loaded onto Factor 2, rather than Factor 1. This violated measurement invariance, potentially precluding any meaningful interpretation of the data.

Chart 4.Scree Plot (Scottish Group)

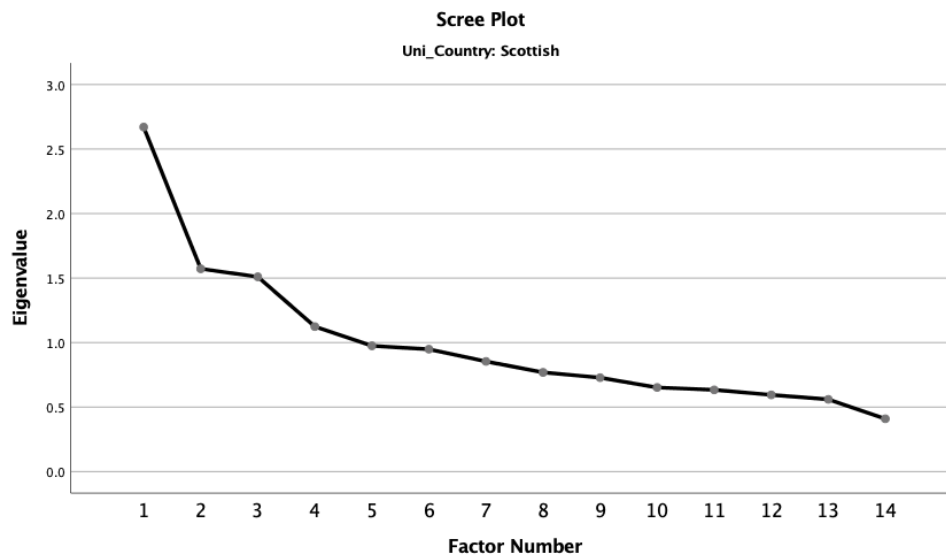


Table 11.Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Promax Rotation (Scottish Group)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Purist 1 A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job		
Purist 2 If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it	.360	
Purist 3 All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job/internship is to have the skills that the job/internship requires		
9Purist 4 I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	.313	
Purist 5 Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV		
Purist 6 I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	.341	

Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	.868	
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	-.499	
Player 2	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition		.566
Player 3	Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job		.492
Player 4	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV		.340
Player 5	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job		.360
?	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job		.594
Player 7	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job		.354

To address the violation of measurement invariance, the factor structure of the scales was examined again with the first four Purist items removed, as recommended by Putnick and Bornstein (2016). Although this could be considered a data-driven, rather than theory-driven, approach to scale development, in this case—since all seven questions in each scale were attempting to measure the same underlying construct (i.e. “Player-ness” or “Purist-ness”)—it was concluded that removing some items still made theoretical sense, and the potential benefit of finding an invariant scale was worth the possible drawback of letting data drive conclusions. Removing these four items resulted in a two-factor structure for the remaining items (2 Purist items and 7 Player items). As shown by Tables 12 and 13, this structure remained invariant across groups, and had relatively strong—and similar—loadings on all of the items. Moreover, a Pearson correlation analysis of the new scales revealed a significant moderate negative correlation between the new scales (-.355),

suggesting that students *could* potentially be placed on a spectrum between Purist and Player. Moreover, creating one scale on this basis (with Purist items 6 and 7 reverse coded), revealed that the scale had a higher Cronbach's alpha (0.67) than the separate scales did previously.

Table 12. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Oblimin Rotation (English Group)

	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Purist 6	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview		.386
Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs		.873
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you		-.481
Player 2	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	.354	
Player 3	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	.538	
Player 4	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	.408	
Player 5	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.428	
Player 6	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	.407	
Player 7	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.338	

Table 13. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Oblimin Rotation (Scottish Group)

	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Purist 6	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview		.376
Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs		.732
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you		-.634
Player 2	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	.497	
Player 3	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	.445	
Player 4	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	.316	
Player 5	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.370	
Player 6	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	.588	
Player 7	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	.330	

iv. Final Player/Purist Scale

Because of the negative correlation between the Player scale and the Purist scale, the establishment of measurement invariance, and the fact that a single scale with reverse-scored Purist items had a higher Cronbach's alpha (0.67) than the separate scales did previously, a new total "Employability Approach" score was calculated, combining the reverse-scored Purist items with the Player items; this was then divided by 10, creating a

score between 1 (total Purist) and 5 (total Player). The extent to which there exist significant differences in scores based on key factors will be explored in the following chapter.

FINDINGS: Preliminary Analyses of the Player/Purist Scale

Analyses of Variance: Do student characteristics affect approach to employability?

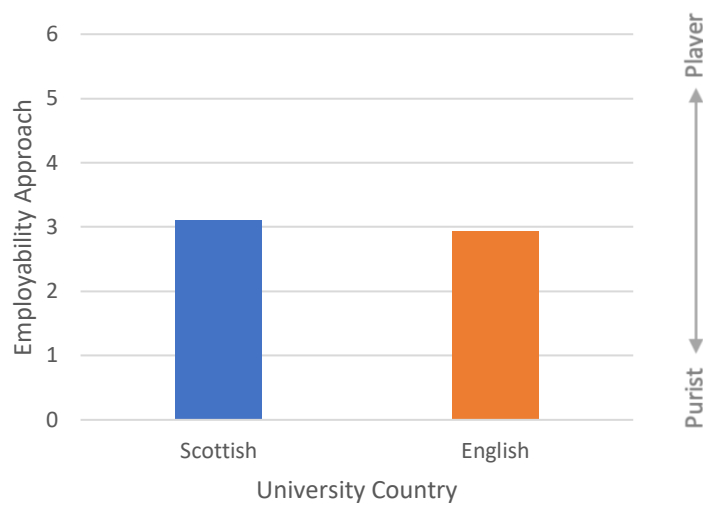
In preparation for the structural equation model and to determine whether there were significant differences in Employability Approach scores between respondents in different groups central to the research question, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, focusing on:

- (1) different UK nations (England and Scotland)
- (2) different types of university (post-1992 and Russell Group)
- (3) different socio-economic groups
- (4) different self-identified social statuses
- (5) different subjects studied and (6) years of university.

Charts 5-8 illustrate the mean differences in Employability Approach scores between these different groups, and Table 14 displays the results of the ANOVAs.

As noted previously, it should be highlighted that most scores fell more towards the Player end of the spectrum (above 3), suggesting that, broadly speaking, all the students were more Players than Purists no matter what their background, university, or fee status. That being said, there were interesting differences in scores between groups. For instance, students in Scottish universities scored higher (3.1) than their peers in English universities (2.9), a statistically significant difference (Chart 5, below). This may be because the national policy discourse in Scotland prioritises engagement with the labour market more strongly than in England, raising employability awareness among students and making them more into Players than their English counterparts.

Chart 5. Employability Approach Scores by University Country



There were also statistically significant differences in approach to employability by year of study and age group. Those in their first year of study scored lower than those in their second and third years (2.89, 3.03, and 3.07, respectively), those in their fourth year scored highest (3.1)— statistically significantly higher than those in their first year, indicating an increasingly Player-like approach with every year of university, as perhaps might be expected. Similarly, those in the 18-20 age group score significantly lower (2.95) than those in the 20-22 age group (3.07), as well as the 22+ age group (3.03), though the difference between this latter group and the other two was not significant.

Chart 6. Employability Approach Scores by Year of Study

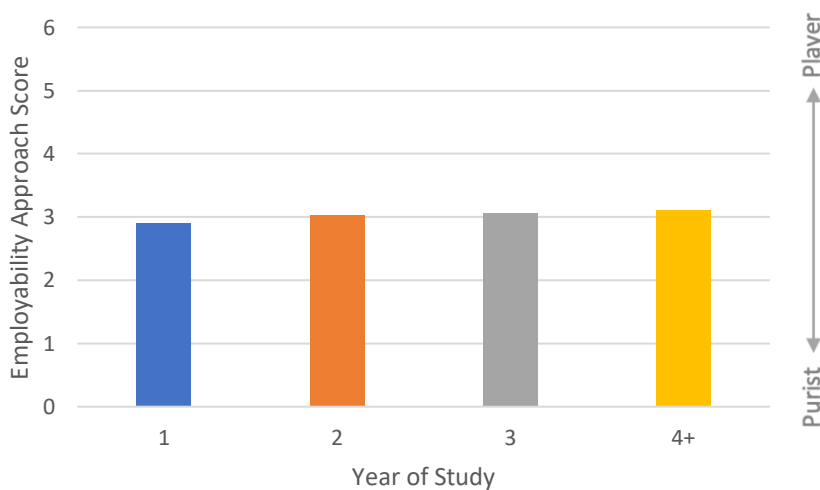
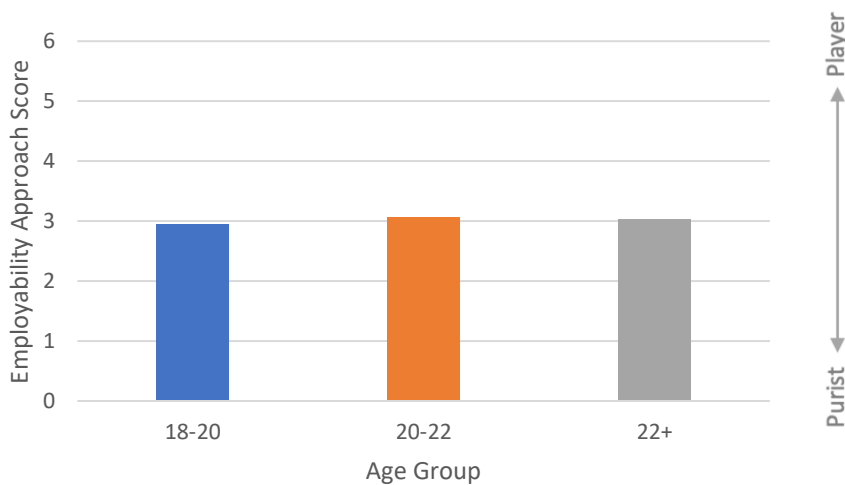


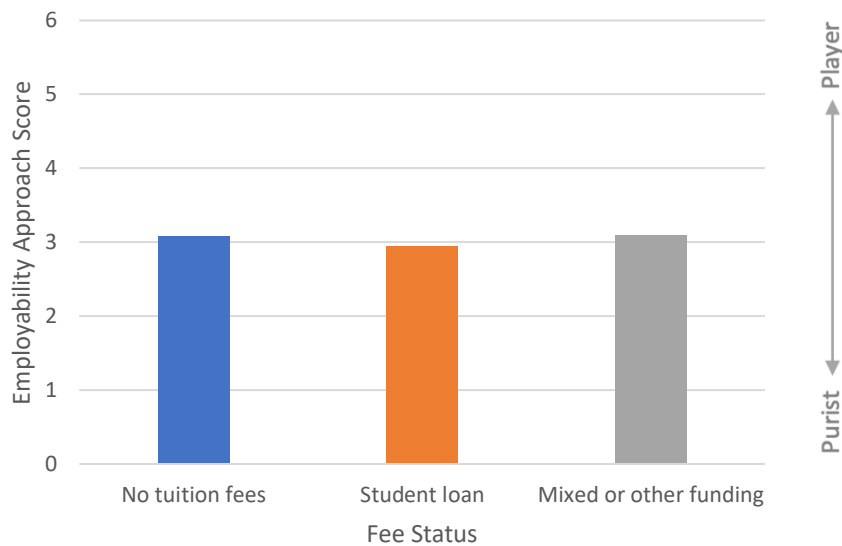
Chart 7. Employability Approach Scores by Age Group



However, there was no statistically significant difference in scores between students in post-1992 universities and students in Russell Group universities. Though students in Russell Group universities scored slightly higher than those in post-1992 universities (3.04 and 2.98, respectively), this difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, the mean scores for different socio-economic groups, as well as different self-identified social status (SSS) groups, were very similar, and there was no statistically significant difference between them. This is a surprising finding considering the literature, much of which has suggested that students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, who are more prevalent in post-1992 institutions, are more likely to be Purists, since their cultural and social capital gives them a worse (positional) understanding of the labour market (see e.g. Crozier et al., 2008). It is possible that SES or SSS do play a role, but that it is a moderating role, such that university type, for instance, would not affect Purist or Player approaches if SES were controlled for.

An essential question for this project is whether fee status impacts approach to employability; these initial analyses would suggest it does. The mean scores for different fee statuses vary significantly, with those on student loan scoring significantly lower (2.95) than those without tuition fees (3.08) and those with mixed or other funding (3.09), which includes bursaries, family-funding, scholarships and combinations of these. Though perhaps surprising, this fits with the differences found between countries (since largely those who do not pay tuition fees will be based in Scotland), and so it is possible that one or other of these is the real key factor in relation to employability approach—the interaction between fee status and country will be teased out in the next set of analyses.

Chart 8. Employability Approach Scores by Fee status



The analyses also looked at whether there was any difference in approach to employability between different subject types; for instance, the role of vocational subjects (such as physiotherapy, nursing, medicine, law and others) in relation to more traditionally academic subjects (such as English and philosophy). Though students studying vocational subjects scored lower (2.97) than students in STEM (3.01), the humanities (3.03), and social science (3.08), these differences were not statistically significant. Nonetheless, the qualitative data from the survey would suggest that there are some differences in mindset between those who are on vocational courses and those who are not. As one Law student commented in the survey,

“I feel like universities put pressure on us by telling us academic work is not enough on its own, but at the end of the day it is the grades that matter the most in my degree.”

Table 14. Analyses of Variance based on student characteristics

	Employability Approach Scores	
	F	p
University Country	24.699	<0.001*
University Type	2.769	0.097 (Welch ANOVA)

<i>SES</i>	0.466	0.627
<i>SSS</i>	1.284	0.307
<i>Fee Status</i>	7.866	<0.001*
<i>Subject Type</i>	1.243	0.293
<i>Year of study</i>	6.228	<0.001*
<i>Age Group</i>	4.280	0.014*
<i>Grade Level</i>	0.699	0.497
<i>School Type</i>	0.059	0.809

Conclusion

In summary, these preliminary analyses suggest that approach to employability can indeed be measured (RQ 1) and that there exists a relationship between fee-paying and approach to employability (RQ 2), such that those on student loans are more Purist in approach than those without tuition fees and those on mixed or other funding—a surprising finding. These preliminary findings also suggest that the year of study and age are important predictors of employability scores; with those in the first years of university and those who are younger both falling more on the Purist end of the spectrum. Though, contrary to theory, there were no apparent differences in approach to employability based on SES or SSS, students in Scottish universities scored higher (more towards the Player end of the spectrum) than their peers in English universities, suggesting that university country does play an important role.

FINDINGS: Validation and Examination of the Consumer/Learner Scales

Introduction

This chapter describes the examination and validation of the Consumer/Learner Identity Scales (C/LIS), developed by Bunce et al (2017). It begins with descriptive analyses of the scales, presenting means and standard deviations of each of the items, as well as highlighting any potential floor and/or ceiling effects, thereby giving a general overview of the pattern of responses. Following this, the reliability and dimensionality of the scales is tested and described, and the validity of the scale is discussed. I then move on to examining the differences in scores based on demographics, looking in particular at whether there are statistically significant differences between socio-economic groups, university types, years of study, age groups, university countries and fee statuses, in preparation for the Structural Equation Model to be conducted in later chapters.

Descriptive Analyses: How did participants respond to the Consumer and Learner scales?

To gain a sense of the pattern of responses to the Consumer and Learner scales, as well as establish the means and standard deviations of each of the items, descriptive analyses were conducted on the full sample ($n = 753$). The results for the Consumer scale are presented in Table 15 and Chart 9 (below), those for the Learner scale are in Table 16 and Chart 10 (below). Items with floor or ceiling effects (i.e. $\leq 5\%$ agreement/disagreement) are in bold and marked by an asterisk.

Firstly, it is important to point out that the overall pattern seemed to suggest that, generally, students appeared to be more Learner-oriented than Consumer-oriented; i.e. students generally agreed more with statements on the Learner scale than on the Consumer scale, contrary to the current student-as-consumer discourse that suggests that students are increasingly consumer-oriented. Over 97% agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to expand their intellectual ability, over 96% agreed or strongly agreed with the statements “I think of myself as being at university to learn” and “I want to learn as much as possible while at university”. Just over 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “If I could

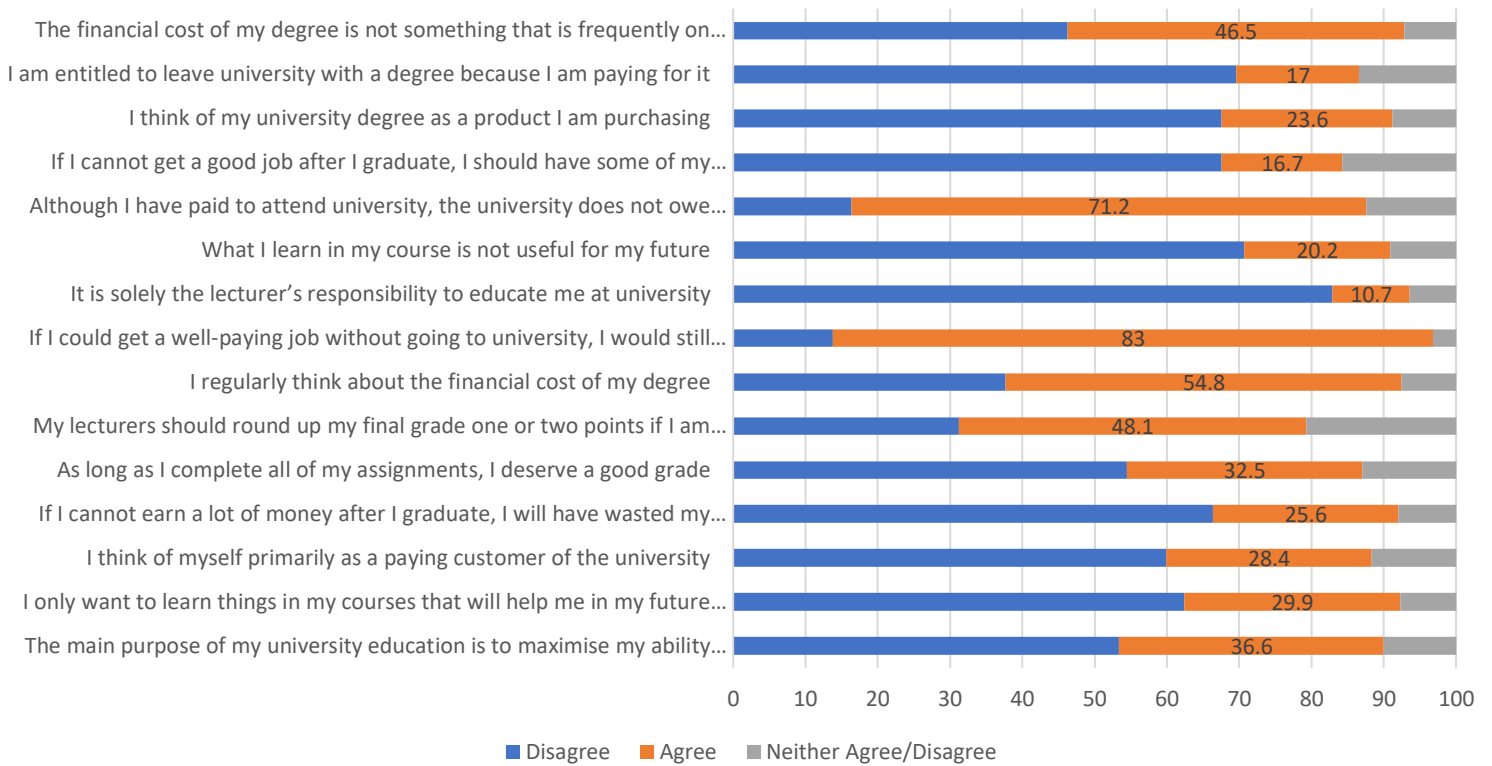
get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree". At the same time, over half (54%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree", and there are some indications of a more consumer-oriented attitude among a significant minority of the respondents: 23% agreed with the statement "I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing", 25% agreed that "if I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university" and nearly 37% agreed or strongly agreed that "the main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money".

Table 15. Consumer Item Means and Standard Deviations

ITEM	MEAN	SD
The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	3.48	1.84
I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	3.35	1.84
I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	3.21	1.88
If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	3.05	1.71
As long as i complete all of my assignments, i deserve a good grade	3.52	1.57
My lecturers should round up my final grade one or two points if I am close to the next grade boundary	4.33	1.79
I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	4.37	2.07
If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	5.60	1.50
It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university	2.42	1.34
What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	2.80	1.59
Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	5.20	1.56
If I cannot get a good job after I graduate, I should have some of my tuition fees refunded	2.82	1.63
I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	2.91	1.77
I am entitled to leave university with a degree because i am paying for it	2.84	1.62
The financial cost of my degree is not something that is frequently on my mind	4.06	2.12

Notes: scale scored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

Chart 9. Consumer Scale Response Pattern (in percentages)



Note: "Somewhat agree" combined with "strongly agree" for total agreement percentage; "Somewhat disagree" combined with "strongly disagree" for total disagreement percentage.

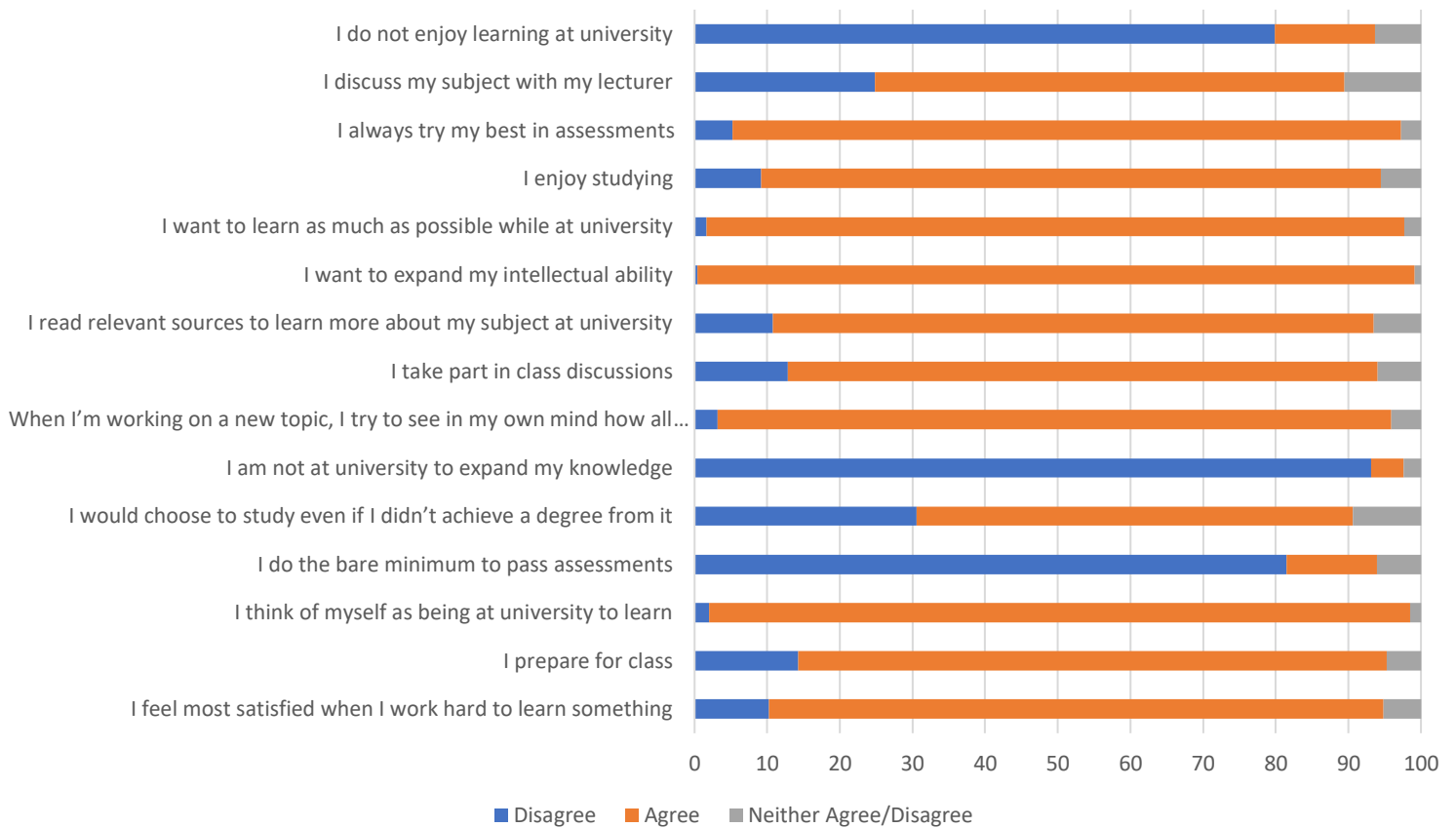
Table 16. Learner Item Means and Standard Deviations

ITEM	MEAN	SD
I feel most satisfied when I work hard to learn something	2.37	1.47
I prepare for class	2.62	1.43
I think of myself as being at university to learn	6.21	0.89*
I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	2.31	1.48
I would choose to study even if i didn't achieve a degree from it	4.55	1.80
I am not at university to expand my knowledge	1.80	1.17
When I'm working on a new topic, i try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	5.91	1.02*
I take part in class discussions	5.49	1.46
I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	5.53	1.38

I want to expand my intellectual ability	6.50	0.72*
I want to learn as much as possible while at university	6.31	0.89*
I enjoy studying	5.59	1.32
I always try my best in assessments	6.03	1.14
I discuss my subject with my lecturer	4.73	1.72
I do not enjoy learning at university	2.45	1.51

Notes: scale scored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).

Chart 10. Learner Scale Response Pattern (in percentages)



Note: "Somewhat agree" combined with "strongly agree" for total agreement percentage; "Somewhat disagree" combined with "strongly disagree" for total disagreement percentage.

Psychometric Analyses: Reliability of the Consumer and Learner scales

i. Reliability of the Consumer and Learner Scales

An analysis was carried out on both the Consumer scale and the Learner scale to estimate the internal consistency of the scales, comprising a total of 14 items. Cronbach's alpha showed the Consumer scale to reach strong reliability, $\alpha = 0.802$. All items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted, hence no items were removed. Cronbach's alpha also showed the Learner scale to have acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.720$, however removing item 2 ("I prepare for class") would increase the alpha very slightly to $\alpha = 0.782$. As the scale has been used as is in previous work (Bunce, 2017), it was decided the item would be kept, at least initially.

ii. Exploratory Factor Analysis

As with the Player/Purist scales, EFA using the Maximum Likelihood estimator was run on the Consumer and Learner scales to examine their validity. The suitability of EFA was assessed prior to analysis for both scales, with the three items with significant ceiling effects in the Learner scale removed from analyses. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed that all items were significantly correlated with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant for both the Consumer scale ($\chi^2(91) = 2818.96, p = 0.000$) and the Learner scale ($\chi^2(55) = 1939.53, p < .001$), also indicating that the data was likely factorizable. For the Consumer scale, EFA revealed four components that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 27.5%, 10.9%, 10.4% and 6.8% of the total variance, respectively, and a scree plot revealed a "levelling off" after four factors. A four-factor solution using a direct oblimin rotation of the factor loading matrix had only one cross-loading and a simple, interpretable structure. On the other hand, the Learner scale had only one component with eigenvalue bigger than one, which explained 39.2% of the total variance, with the scree plot showing a levelling off after only one factor.

Though not discussed in the original paper by Bunce et al (2017), the four-factor structure in the Consumer scale suggests that a consumer orientation is composed of four underlying constructs. Looking at the grouping of the questions, these could perhaps be categorised as "Entitlement", "Financial motivation", "Cost" and "Transaction". For the Learner scale, Bunce et al (2017) explain that this scale is "a composite measure that took

into account studying attitudes and behaviours including attending class, reading relevant sources, making an effort to study, self-identifying as a learner, enjoying learning, and the importance of being at university to learn” (p.1962); i.e., four related, underlying constructs. Thus, despite the scree plot suggesting a one-factor solution, a four-factor solution was attempted using a direct oblimin rotation of the factor loading matrix, and because the solution had no cross-loading and a simple, interpretable structure, it was found to be acceptable.

Table 17. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Oblimin Rotation for Consumer Scale

Item	1:Entitlement	2:Financial motivation	3:Cost	4:Transaction
Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.689			
My lecturers should round up my final grade one or two points if I am close to the next grade boundary	0.683			
As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.644			
I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.615			-0.407
If I cannot get a good job after I graduate, I should have some of my tuition fees refunded	0.572			
It is solely the lecturer’s responsibility to educate me at university	0.439			
The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money		-0.749		
If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree		-0.722		
If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university		-0.705		

I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career		-0.622		
The financial cost of my degree is not something that is frequently on my mind			-0.929	
I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree			-0.897	
I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing				-0.768
I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university				-0.754
What I learn in my course is not useful for my future				-0.394

Table 18. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Oblimin Rotation for Learner Scale

Item	1	2	3	4
I enjoy studying	0.716			
I do not enjoy learning at university	0.664			
I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	0.495			
I am not at university to expand my knowledge	0.379			
I prepare for class		0.812		
I feel most satisfied when I work hard to learn something		0.536		
I always try my best in assessments			0.69	
I do the bare minimum to pass assessments			0.67	
I discuss my subject with my lecturer				0.754
I take part in class discussions				0.557
I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university				0.431

iii. Measurement Invariance

A further EFA was conducted to check for measurement invariance in both the Learner scale and Consumer scale, with the data split by university country. As with the full

sample, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for the Consumer scale was significant for both Scottish ($\chi^2(105) = 61575.802, p < .001$) and English ($\chi^2(105) = 1338.208, p < .001$) groups. EFA revealed again that four components that had eigenvalues greater than one for both groups; for the English group, this explained 26.85%, 11.36%, 9.95% and 7.22% of the variance. For the Scottish group, this explained 28.89%, 11.24%, 9.95% and 6.98% of the variance. As with the full sample, visual inspection of the scree plot (Cattell, 1966) for both the English and Scottish groups suggested a 'levelling off' after four factors, and the 4-factor structure had no cross-loadings and a similar structure to that of the full dataset.

However, EFA revealed that the Learner scale had different factor structures when divided by country, with items loading differently on different factors. To address this, a further three items with less significant floor or ceiling effects were removed; this led to a similar one-factor structure both when split by country and when looking at the data as a whole (Table 19). This adjusted scale consisted of only 8 out of the 14 original questions, so on this basis, a new total Learner approach was calculated; the total was divided by 3.73 in order for the scores to total to 15, to match the consumer scores.

Table 19. Pattern Matrix for Principle Axis Factor with Oblimin Rotation for Learner Scale

Item	Factor 1
I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.469
I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	0.498
I take part in class discussions	0.545
I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.608
I enjoy studying	0.701
I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.566
I do not enjoy learning at university	0.607
When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.398

FINDINGS: Preliminary Analyses of the Consumer and Learner Scales

Approach to University and Approach to Employability: Are they related?

Firstly, to examine whether approach to university and approach to employability were related (and thus answer the research question, “*Is there a relationship between approach to university and approach to employability?*”), a Pearson correlation was conducted. Results indicated that there was a significant positive association between Approach to Employability and Consumer orientation, $r = 0.303$, $p < .000$, and a statistically significant but very low negative association between Approach to Employability and Learner orientation, $r = -0.094$, $p = 0.01$. Thus this suggests that the more Player-oriented a student is, the more Consumer-oriented they are; the more Purist-oriented a student is, the more Learner-oriented they are.

Analyses of Variance: Do student characteristics affect approach to university?

In preparation for the structural equation model and to determine whether there were significant differences in Consumer and Learner orientation scores between respondents in different groups central to the research questions, several analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, focusing on:

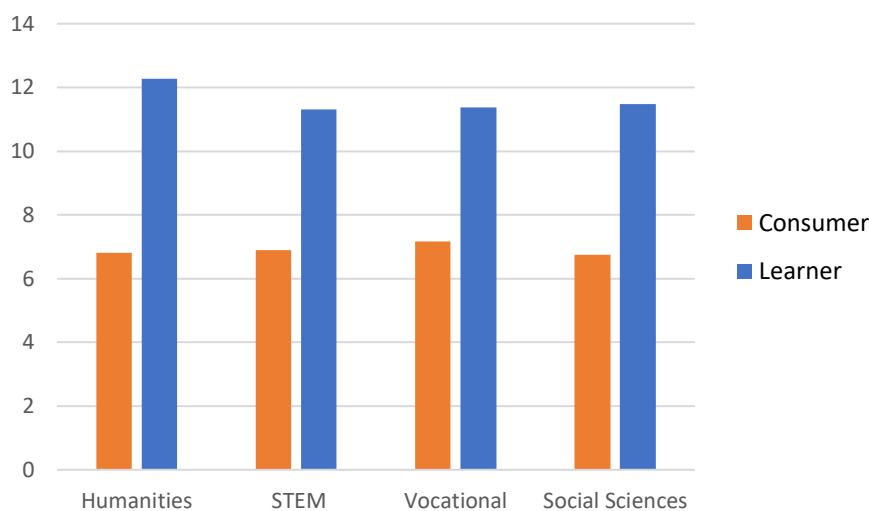
- (1) different UK nations (England and Scotland)
- (2) different types of university (post-1992 and Russell Group)
- (3) different socio-economic groups
- (4) different self-identified social statuses
- (5) different subjects studied and
- (6) years of university.

Charts 11-17 illustrate the mean differences in Consumer and Learner Approach scores between these different groups, and Table 20 displays the results of the ANOVAs.

Again it should first be highlighted that students generally scored much higher on the Learner scale ($M = 11.5$) than on the Consumer scale ($M = 6.87$), suggesting that, broadly speaking, students today are more Learner-oriented than Consumer-oriented, contrary to the discourse around the student-as-consumer. That being said, there were interesting differences in scores between groups. For instance, students studying Humanities subjects had higher Learner scores ($M = 12.27$) than STEM-studying students (M

= 11.30), students studying vocational subjects ($M = 11.38$), and students studying social sciences ($M = 11.49$) — a statistically significant difference ($F = 7.806, p < 0.001$). Students studying Humanities subjects scored lower on the Consumer scale than their peers studying STEM subjects, vocational subjects, or the social sciences; however, this difference was not statistically significant.

Chart 11. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by Subject Type

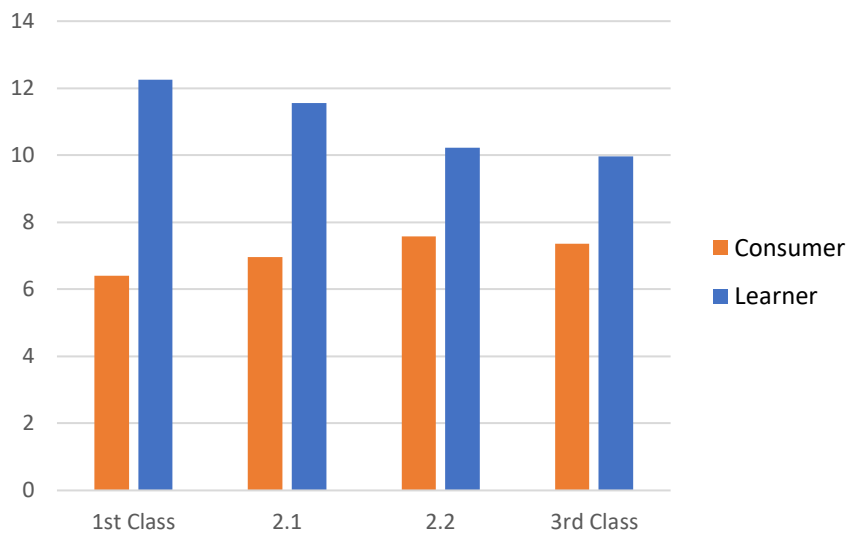


Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

There were also statistically significant differences in scores according to grade level, for both the Consumer and the Learner scales. In line with Bunce et al's (2017) study, those whose grade level was 1st class⁸ scored significantly lower on the Consumer scale ($M = 6.40$), than those whose grade level was at a 2.1 ($M = 7.00$), and those whose grade level was at a 2.2 ($M = 7.57$). Conversely, those with a 1st class grade scored higher on the Learner scale ($M = 12.26$) than those with an upper second class grade ($M = 11.56$), those with a lower second class grade ($M = 10.23$) and those with a 3rd class degree ($M = 9.96$). Again, these differences were statistically significant.

⁸ Grade level was self-reported, according to the last mark received.

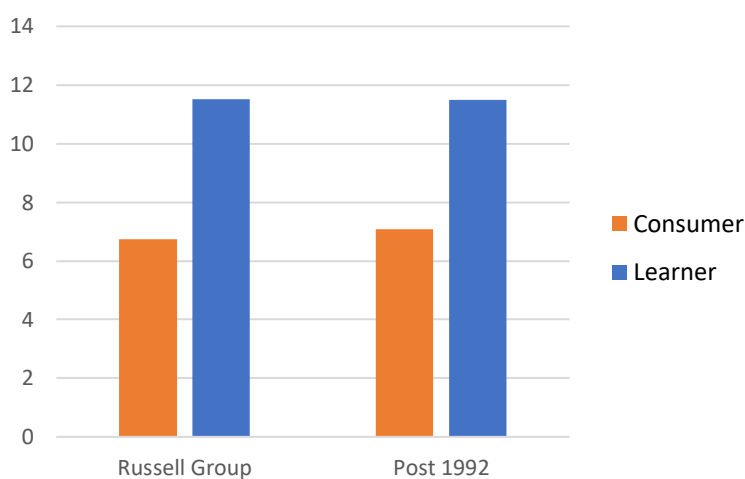
Chart 12. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by Grade Level



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

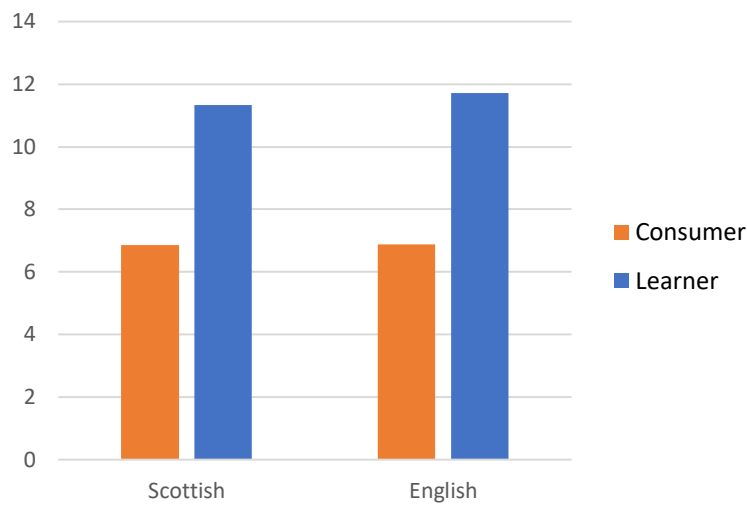
In addition, there were significant differences based on university type; Consumer scores were statistically significantly higher at post-1992 institutions ($M = 7.09$) than at Russell Group institutions ($M = 6.74$), suggesting support for Brooks et al’s (2021) qualitative work. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in Consumer scores between university countries; however, Learner scores were statistically significantly higher at English universities ($M = 11.72$) than at Scottish universities ($M = 11.33$)—contrary to prediction.

Chart 13. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by University Type



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

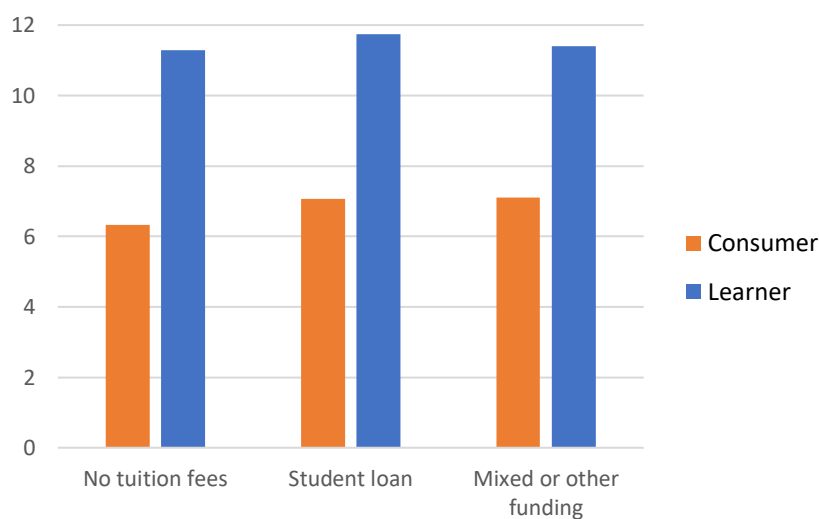
Chart 14. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by Country of University



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

There were also differences based on fee status: as predicted, those without tuition fees scored significantly lower on the Consumer scale ($M = 6.34$) than those on student loan ($M = 7.06$) and those on mixed or other funding ($M = 7.11$); this difference was statistically significant ($F = 11.548, p < 0.001$). Surprisingly, however, students with no tuition fees also scored slightly lower on the Learner scale (11.28) than those on student loans (11.74) and those on mixed or other funding (11.4)—those these differences are very small numerically, they were nonetheless statistically significant (Welch, $p = 0.019$).

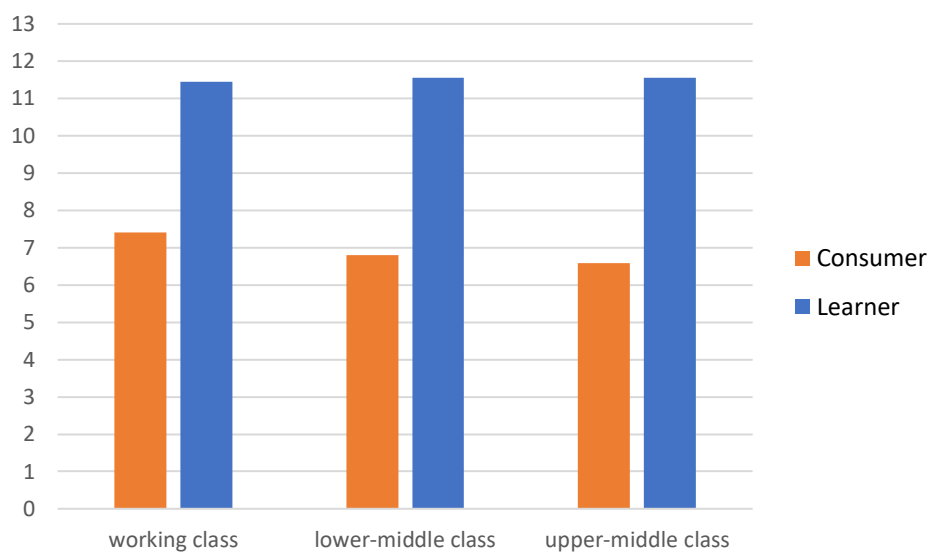
Chart 15. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores based on Fee Type



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

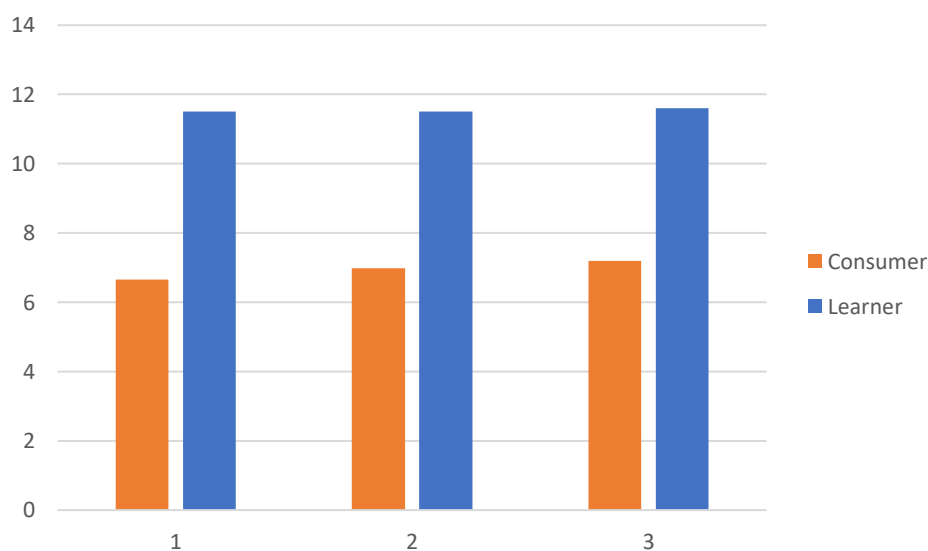
Scores on the Consumer scale also differed significantly according to both SES and SSS (self-identified socio-economic status). Those in the highest socio-economic group (1) scored significantly lower ($M = 6.66$) on the Consumer scale than those in socio-economic group 3 ($M = 7.19$). Similarly, those who identified as working class scored significantly higher ($M = 7.40$) on the Consumer scale than those who identified as lower-middle class ($M = 6.8$) and those who identified as upper-middle class ($M = 6.58$).

Chart 16. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by Self-identified Social Status



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

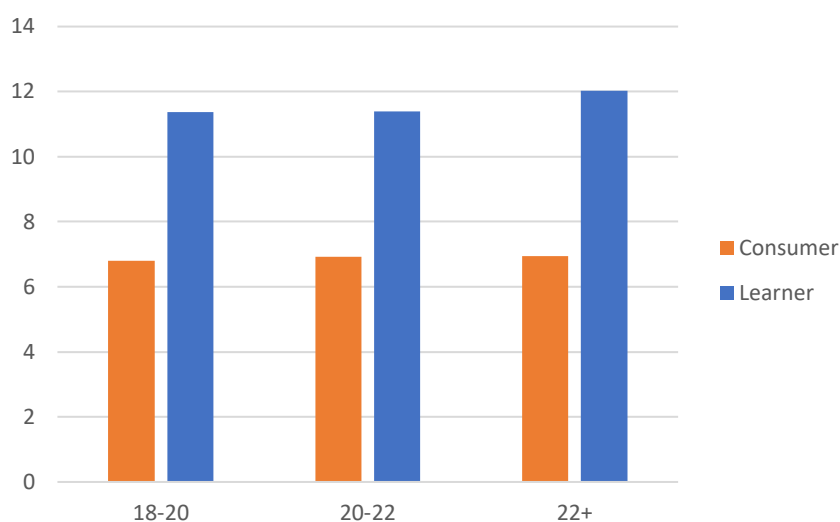
Chart 17. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by SES



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

There were also differences based on age, with those who were over 22 years old scoring significantly higher ($M = 12.02$) than those between 18 and 20 ($M = 11.38$) and those between 20 and 22 ($M = 11.39$), though there were no significant differences based on year of study.

Chart 18. Mean Consumer and Learner Scores by Age Group



Note: Total scale score range between 0-15

Table 20. Analyses of Variance based on student characteristics

	Consumer Scale Scores		Learner Scale Scores	
	F	p	F	p
University Country	0.004	0.947	7.51	0.006
University Type	5.540	0.019*	0.020	0.888
SES	4.208	0.015*	0.139	0.870
SSS	11.674	<0.001*	0.243	0.785
Fee Status	11.548	<0.001*	4.045	0.018*
Subject Type	1.207	0.306	7.806	<0.001*
Year of study	0.138	0.937	0.349	0.790
Age Group	0.327	0.721	7.484	0.001*
Grade Level	15.276	<0.001*	49.481	<0.001*
School Type	2.223	0.136	1.833	0.176

Conclusion

In sum, preliminary analyses suggested that there was indeed a relationship between fee-paying and approach to university (RQ 4), such that those without tuition fees scored significantly lower on the Consumer scale than those on student loans and those on

mixed or other funding. Surprisingly, however, students with no tuition fees also scored slightly lower on the Learner scale than those on student loans and those on mixed or other funding. Results also indicated that there appeared to be a relationship between approach to university and approach to employability (RQ 6), suggesting that correlating these variables in the Structural Equation Model would be warranted. In addition, the findings of these preliminary analyses highlighted several other significant factors: there were significant differences in Consumer scores between students of different SES levels, different self-identified social statuses, different university types and different grade levels. There were also significant differences in Learner scores by university country, fee type, subject type, age group and grade level.

FINDINGS: Construction of the Structural Equation Models

Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the SEM model used to investigate the relationships between university context, tuition fee type, SES/SSS, and approach to university (as measured by Consumer orientation and Learner orientation) and employability. I discuss model specification, detailing the measurement and structural parts of my models. Next, I briefly present my method of identification, parameter estimation, and model evaluation, discussing the assumptions and choices that have been made for this research. Finally, I examine and discuss my measurement model.

Model Specification

There are several logical steps in SEM, the first of which is model specification (Fan et al., 2016; Muthén et al., 2003). Model specification defines the hypothesized relationships among the variables in a SEM. In the case of this research, my proposed models explore the following research questions:

- **RQ 1: Does “Fee Type” significantly predict approach to employability and university?**
- **RQ 2: Does SES moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?**
- **RQ 3: Does SSS moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?**
- **RQ 4: Does university type moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?**

My proposed models therefore have multiple causes—tuition fee type, university country, university type, self-identified social status, and socio-economic background—and multiple indicators for the latent variables, thus they fall into the category of MIMIC (Multiple-Indicators-Multiple-Causes) models. The MIMIC model is appropriate when estimating a model that has a latent variable with multiple predictors and multiple indicators, as shall be detailed in the following paragraphs. Each model will also be expressed graphically using path diagrams. The use of path diagrams is an advantage of the

SEM approach, allowing for a clear way of representing the complicated relationships between variables theorised by the researcher (Moon-Ho et al., 2012).

i. Measurement Model

In SEM, the Measurement Model includes only the latent variables and their indicators but does not include predictors or “causal” variables. It is often the first step in the SEM-building process, and is essentially a confirmatory factor analysis, wherein the purpose is to examine a proposed pattern of observed variables to get at an underlying latent construct. Within this research, the latent variables being measured are: Approach to Employability, Consumer Orientation, and Learner Orientation. The indicators of Approach to Employability are the Player and Purist items explored in previous chapters, each item scored between 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 5 (“strongly agree”). Similarly, the indicators for Consumer Orientation are the Consumer scale items (based on Bunce et al, 2017), scored between 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“strongly agree”). Likewise, the indicators for Learner Orientation are the Learner items from the Bunce et al (2017) scale that were retained after the analyses of the previous chapter. These were also scored between 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“strongly agree”). Since the previous chapters provided an in-depth overview of the psychometric properties—including EFA, CFA and Measurement Invariance—of the three scales, the examination of the measurement model will be brief, and will focus on any significant differences found in item loadings as a result of covarying the three latent variables.

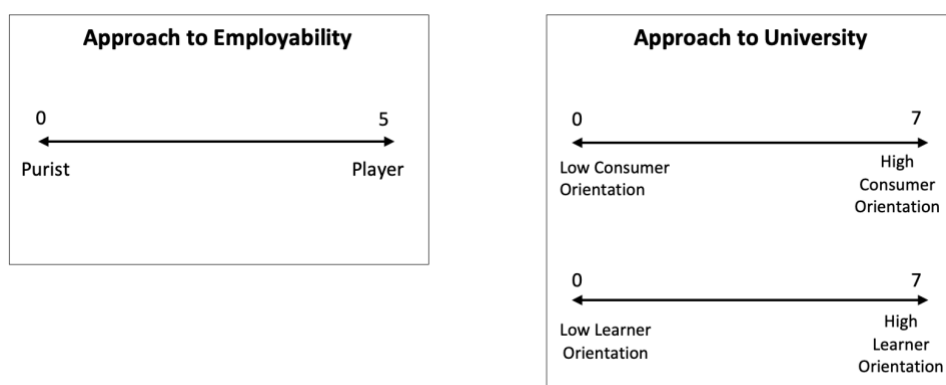
ii. Structural Model

The structural model represents the hypothesised relationships either between different latent constructs or between “causal” variables and latent constructs (Gana & Broc, 2019). In this study, paths were predicted between tuition “Fee Type” (a causal, exogenous, observed variable) and the three endogenous latent variables: Approach to Employability, Consumer Orientation and Learner Orientation (these are measured as shown in Figure 5 below). This is based on previous research that has hypothesised that tuition fees make students more Consumer-oriented, less Learner-oriented and more focused on their employability than they would be with free higher education, as well as on

the results of the preliminary analyses. Additionally, SES (socio-economic status) and SSS (self-identified social status) were predicted to moderate the effect of tuition “Fee Type” on Approach to Employability, Consumer Orientation and Learner Orientation. This is based on prior research that found that students from lower socio-economic groups tend to be less Player-oriented than students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Thomas & Jones, 2007), and that student loans have a differential impact on students from differing social groups (Callender & Mason, 2017). Finally, because different types of university institutions have responded differently to the funding regimes and have different student make-ups—with post-1992 institutions generally having a more diverse student population than elite Russell Group universities—University Type was predicted to moderate the relationship between tuition “Fee Type” and Approach to Employability, Consumer Orientation and Learner Orientation.

In MIMIC modelling, the emphasis lies on the path coefficients representing the regression of the Dependent Variable (here, the three latent variables) on the Independent Variables (here, tuition fees) as these represent the differences in the Dependent Variables depending on the Independent Variable levels (Green & Thompson, 2006). As such, hypothesis testing procedures are very similar to moderated multiple regression with binary Independent Variables. For each research question, therefore, I will present the results of the analyses of the structural model; that is, the results of the causal links (i.e., regressions) between these variables.

Figure 5. Approach to Employability and Approach to University



Model Identification

Following model specification, the model must be identified. Model identification refers to the relationship between the parameters being estimated and the information being used to derive these estimates. Under-identified models (wherein one is estimating more parameters than possible options, with negative degrees of freedom) and just-identified models (wherein one has as many parameters to estimate as one has degrees of freedom) are to be avoided and often will not compute in many software packages; instead, one should have more possible parameters that one *could* estimate than one actually does estimate. The most common approach for identifying a model, beyond ensuring that every latent variable should have at least two indicators (Kline, 2010), is known as the reference variable method (Kline, 2016); this involves constraining one “reference” indicator loading per latent variable to one. This is done automatically in Lavaan, with the first indicator being set to one unless otherwise specified, and the latent variables are then scaled like the reference indicators. Though some have suggested that the choice of reference variable is not important, others have argued that the reference variable should be the item that most strongly encapsulates the construct in question. Therefore, in my models, the reference variable for Consumer Orientation was Consumer 3, “I think of myself as a paying customer of the university”; the reference variable for Learner Orientation was Learner 5, “I would choose to study even if I didn’t achieve a degree from it”; and the reference variable for Approach to Employability was Player 7, “knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job”.

Parameter Estimation

After model identification, an estimation method must be chosen. Choosing an appropriate estimation method for the research question is of supreme importance, since this affects the credibility of the parameter estimates as well as the overall fit statistics (Gana & Broc, 2019). There are many possible estimation methods in SEM, such as Unweighted Least Squares (ULW), Diagonally Weighted Least Squares (DWLS) and Maximum Likelihood (ML), the latter being the default estimation method in Lavaan and one of the most useful and most widely popular approaches (Hoyle, 2011). However, ML assumes (1) multivariate normality; (2) that the dependent variables are continuous; and (3) that there is very little data missing. When data is non-normal—as is the case with many Likert-scale type

items, and indeed is the case with the data in this research project, as discussed in Appendix 3—ML can overestimate model fit and inflate standard errors. Instead, Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR), which is a maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors and a scaled χ^2 test statistic, can be used (Rosseel, 2012). Since ML would not be appropriate for my data's slight violations of normality, and ULS and DWLS are most appropriate for categorical dependent variables, MLR was used for all analyses in this study.

Model Evaluation

Model evaluation typically follows model estimation (and the subsequent running of the model). Unlike simpler statistical approaches, in SEM, there is no single statistical significance test that identifies a correct model given the sample data. Assessing the fit of the model using multiple indices is therefore a key part of SEM modelling, to evaluate how well the theoretical model fits the observed data. There are a number of approaches to evaluating fit, with a very large number of fit indices developed and available with most SEM software. The most commonly reported, however, are certain absolute fit indices (most often the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual, or SRMR), certain incremental Fit Indices (most often the Comparative Fit Index and Tucker Lewis Index) and parsimony-adjusted indices (with the Root mean squared error of approximation, or RMSEA, being the most popular). Reporting these, along with the χ^2 statistic, is recommended in the literature (Iacobucci, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; West et al., 2012) and will be reported in the results chapters that follow. The standard criteria for goodness-of-fit for these measures is χ^2 $p > 0.001$; RMSEA < 0.06 for 'good fit' to < 0.08 for 'adequate fit', SRMR < 0.08 for 'good fit', CFI and TLI > 0.90 for 'acceptable fit', or > 0.95 for 'excellent fit' (Dou et al., 2018; Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, it has been argued that these standards should not be used as strict cut-off points and without consideration (Kline, 2010), particularly since often these indices can offer contradictory information about the same model, and can be affected by sample size, normality, estimator procedure and number of latent variable indicators (West et al., 2012). Instead, though goodness-of-fit indices will be reported with each model, they will be treated as guidelines, and will be contextualised in relation to the theory and the data (Marsh et al., 2004).

Measurement Model Results: Approach to Employability, Learner Orientation & Consumer Orientation

I. Measurement Model A

Though the scale development and validation chapters that preceded this one have already detailed the factor structure and loadings of the items in the Learner, Consumer and Employability scales, the SEM measurement model detailed below included all three latent constructs together, and allowed them to covary (see Figure 5), influencing the structure of the factors. The factor loadings for the measurement model are presented in Table 21.

Although all items were significant and fit indices indicated good model fit ($\chi^2 = 624.791(356)$ $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.95, TLI=0.93, RMSEA=0.03, 90% CI 0.028 - 0.036, SRMR=0.05), factor loadings on Consumer Item 6 (“My lecturers should round up my final grade one or two points if I am close to the next grade boundary”), Consumer Item 12 (“If I cannot get a good job after I graduate, I should have some of my tuition fees refunded”) and Consumer Item 15 (“The financial cost of my degree is not something that is frequently on my mind”) were surprisingly low (0.20, 0.19 and 0.15, respectively). This was in contrast to the EFA conducted prior to the SEM analyses, which showed all loadings to be above 0.25. Because poor factor loadings can impact the accuracy of SEM results, it was decided that these three items would be removed and the CFA model tested again.

Table 21. Measurement Model A

Latent construct & item number	Item	Unstandardised Loading	Standardised Loading
Approach to Employability			
<i>Player 7</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	1*	0.46
<i>Purist 6</i>	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-0.67*	-0.27
<i>Purist 7</i>	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-0.65*	-0.29
<i>Player 1</i>	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	1.12*	0.40
<i>Player 2</i>	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	1.30*	0.52
<i>Player 3</i>	Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job	0.72*	0.33
<i>Player 4</i>	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	1.57*	0.58
<i>Player 5</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	0.50*	0.28

<i>Player 6</i>	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	0.38*	0.25
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Consumer Scale

<i>Consumer 3</i>	I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	1*	0.45
<i>Consumer 2</i>	I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	1.12*	0.51
<i>Consumer 1</i>	The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	1.47*	0.67
<i>Consumer 4</i>	If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	1.42*	0.70
<i>Consumer 5</i>	As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.54*	0.29
<i>Consumer 6</i>	My lecturers should round up my final grade one or two points if I am close to the next grade boundary	0.42*	0.20
<i>Consumer 7</i>	I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	0.58*	0.24
<i>Consumer 8</i> (reverse scored)	If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	1.34*	0.75
<i>Consumer 9</i>	It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university	0.69*	0.44
<i>Consumer 10</i>	What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	1.05*	0.55
<i>Consumer 11</i>	Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.43*	0.24
<i>Consumer 12</i>	If I cannot get a good job after I graduate, I should have some of my tuition fees refunded	0.35*	0.18
<i>Consumer 13</i>	I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	0.93*	0.44
<i>Consumer 14</i>	I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.67*	0.21
<i>Consumer 15</i> (reverse scored)	The financial cost of my degree is not something that is frequently on my mind	0.37*	0.15

Learner Scale

<i>Learner 5</i>	I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	1*	0.70
<i>Learner 4</i> (reverse scored)	I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.83*	0.48
<i>Learner 8</i>	I take part in class discussions	0.81*	0.42
<i>Learner 9</i>	I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.86*	0.44
<i>Learner 12</i>	I enjoy studying	0.91*	0.69
<i>Learner 14</i>	I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.86*	0.35
<i>Learner 15</i> (reverse scored)	I do not enjoy learning at university	1.06*	0.81

<i>Learner 7</i>	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.44*	0.33
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*factor loadings are all significant ($p < 0.001$)

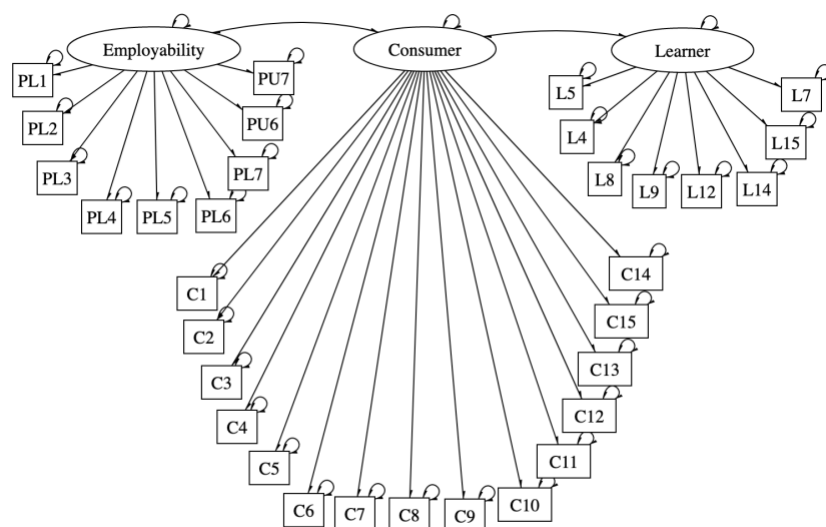


Figure 6. Path Diagram, Measurement Model A

II. Measurement Model B (Consumer Items 6, 12 and 15 removed)

The factor loadings for the re-run measurement model are presented in Table 22 (below) and the path diagram for the model in Figure 6. Though some items still loaded less highly than expected—such as Consumer 7 (“I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree”) and Consumer 11 (“Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree”), which both had loadings of 0.24— it was decided that they were close enough to the 0.25 threshold that they should be retained, particularly since further shortening the scale risked losing valuable information. No other items had problematically low loadings, and again, model fit was very good ($\chi^2 = 549.108$ (282) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.95, TLI=0.93, RMSEA=0.03, 90% CI 0.03-.12, SRMR= 0.04), and so it was decided that this measurement model would be retained for the rest of the analyses, and that it was appropriate to move on to the addition of the structural model.

Table 22. Measurement Model B

Latent construct & item number	Item	Unstandardised Loading	Standardised Loading
Approach to Employability			
<i>Player 7</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	1*	0.46

<i>Purist 6</i>	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-0.66*	-0.27
<i>Purist 7</i>	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-0.65*	-0.29
<i>Player 1</i>	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	1.10*	0.40
<i>Player 2</i>	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	1.28*	0.52
<i>Player 3</i>	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	0.70*	0.33
<i>Player 4</i>	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	1.57*	0.58
<i>Player 5</i>	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	0.49*	0.28
<i>Player 6</i>	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	0.38*	0.26

Consumer Scale

<i>Consumer 3</i>	I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	1*	0.45
<i>Consumer 2</i>	I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	1.11*	0.51
<i>Consumer 1</i>	The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	1.46*	0.67
<i>Consumer 4</i>	If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	1.41*	0.70
<i>Consumer 5</i>	As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.54*	0.29
<i>Consumer 7</i>	I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	0.59*	0.24
<i>Consumer 8 (reverse scored)</i>	If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	1.34*	0.75
<i>Consumer 9</i>	It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university	0.69*	0.44
<i>Consumer 10</i>	What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	1.04*	0.55
<i>Consumer 11</i>	Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.45*	0.24
<i>Consumer 13</i>	I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	0.92*	0.44
<i>Consumer 14</i>	I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.67*	0.35

Learner Scale

<i>Learner 5</i>	I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	1*	0.70
<i>Learner 4</i>	I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.57*	0.49
<i>Learner 8</i>	I take part in class discussions	0.48*	0.42
<i>Learner 9</i>	I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.47*	0.44
<i>Learner 12</i>	I enjoy studying	0.73*	0.70
<i>Learner 14</i>	I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.46*	0.34
<i>Learner 15</i>	I do not enjoy learning at university	0.99*	0.83

<i>Learner 7</i>	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.26*	0.32
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*factor loadings are all significant ($p < 0.001$)

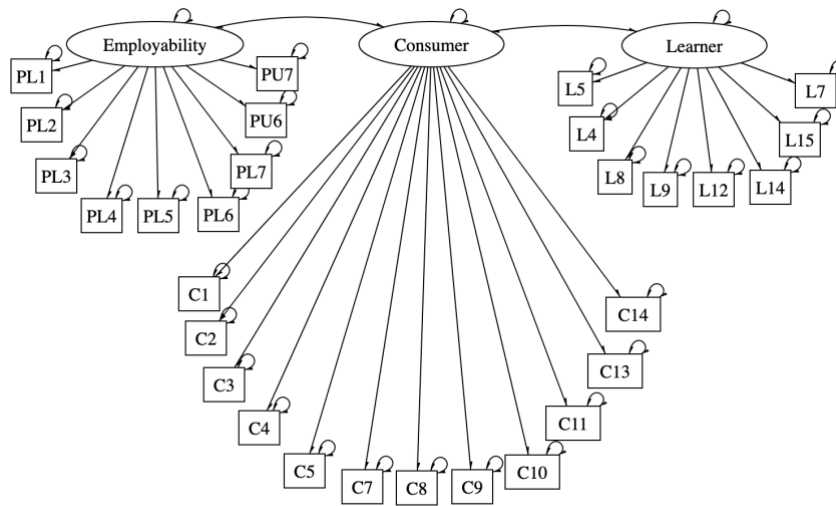


Figure 7. Path Diagram, Measurement Model B

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the background and set-up of my SEM models, including model specification, model identification, parameter estimation, and model evaluation, discussing the assumptions and choices that I made at each stage. I discussed the results of my first measurement model, which were unacceptable, and then the adjusted measurement model, which had very good model fit statistics and a strong factor structure. In the next chapter, I describe the results of the full SEM models in relation to the previously stated research questions.

FINDINGS: Examining the Relationships between University Context, Tuition Fees, SES and Approach to University and Employability

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the SEM models used to investigate the relationships between university context, tuition fee type, SES/SSS, and approach to university (as measured by Consumer orientation and Learner orientation) and employability. The analyses for each research question are presented as a series of SEM models of increasing complexity, “building up” to the larger models and rejecting any models with unacceptable fit. For each analysis, the results of the measurement model (i.e., factor loadings), the structural model (i.e., regression coefficients) and model fit statistics will be presented and briefly discussed. A concluding section will summarise the findings from all the models and discuss what these tell us regarding the relationships between university context, tuition fee type, SES/SSS and approach to university and employability.

Structural Model Results

1: Does “Fee Type” predict approach to employability and university?

SEM Model 1. Fees.

To explore the relationship between “Fee Type” and students’ approach to employability and to university, a predictor variable of “Fee Type” was first added to the measurement model, predicting each of the three latent variables (Approach to Employability, Consumer Orientation and Learner Orientation). Since the Lavaan syntax does not allow for categorical predictor variables to be entered into the SEM equation directly, “Fee Type” was recoded into three dummy variables:

Student Loan for students who are on student loans

Mixed for students who have a mixture of loans (some private as well as governmental) and bursaries or scholarships

No Tuition Fees for students whose fees are covered by Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), ie. Scottish students at Scottish Higher Education institutions.

It was decided that the “Student Loan” category would be used as the baseline/reference category, to which “No Tuition Fees” and “Mixed” dummy variables

would be compared, since it was theorised that there would be a significant difference between those on student loans and those with no tuition fees, and this theory was supported by the preliminary analyses conducted in the previous chapter. The path diagram representing this relationship is in Figure 8 below.

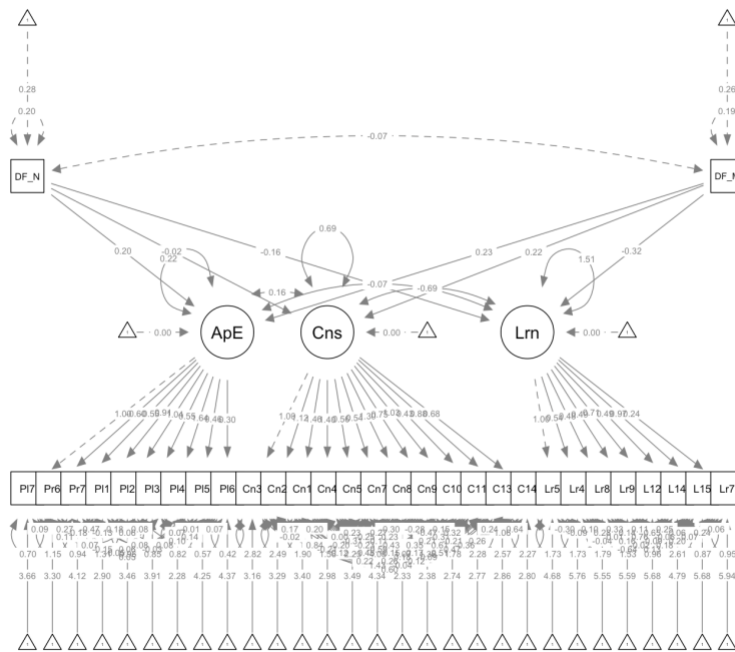


Figure 8. Path Diagram of the Relationship between Fees and Approach to Employability, Learner Orientation and Consumer Orientation

The results of both the measurement part and the structural part of the SEM model are presented in Tables 23 and 24, respectively. All loadings in the measurement portion of the SEM model were similar or identical to the measurement model described above, apart from Player 6 (“It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job”) and Consumer 7 (“I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree”), both of which decreased slightly.

The path coefficients of this structural part of the model suggest that “Fee Type” is a significant predictor of approach to employability, with students on no tuition fees or on mixed tuition fees having significantly higher scores ($\beta = 0.18, p \leq 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.21, p \leq 0.001$, respectively) than students on student loans. This suggests that those on no tuition fees (or mixed tuition fees) are more Player-like in their approach to employability than students on loans. This is in line with the findings of the preliminary analyses discussed in the previous chapter, though unexpected in terms of theory. Regression results also suggest that “Fee Type” is a significant predictor of Consumer scores, with students on mixed tuition

fees having significantly higher scores ($\beta = 0.11, p = 0.01$) than students on student loans. The results show that while students on no tuition fees scored lower on the Consumer scale than students on student loans ($\beta = -0.01, p = 0.196$) this was not a significant difference—this is in contradiction to the results of the ANOVAs conducted in the previous chapter. Finally, the results also suggest that “Fee Type” also is a significant predictor of Learner scores, with students on mixed tuition fees having significantly *lower* scores than students on student loans ($\beta = -0.12, p \leq 0.013$)—again, an interesting finding that contradicts theory and the previous analyses, in which there was no significant difference between students on student loans and mixed tuition fees.

Table 23. SEM Model 1, Factor Loadings

Latent construct & item number	Item	Unstandardised Loading	Standardised Loading
Approach to Employability			
<i>Player 7</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	1.000*	0.500
<i>Purist 6</i>	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-0.603*	-0.264
<i>Purist 7</i>	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-0.551*	-0.266
<i>Player 1</i>	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	0.906*	0.358
<i>Player 2</i>	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	1.037*	0.456
<i>Player 3</i>	Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job	0.554*	0.279
<i>Player 4</i>	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	1.636*	0.659
<i>Player 5</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	0.463*	0.286
<i>Player 6</i>	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	0.298*	0.217
Consumer Scale			
<i>Consumer 3</i>	I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	1.000*	0.445
<i>Consumer 2</i>	I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	1.121 *	0.510
<i>Consumer 1</i>	The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	1.461*	0.663
<i>Consumer 4</i>	If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	1.398*	0.683
<i>Consumer 5</i>	As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.560*	0.299
<i>Consumer 7</i>	I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	0.536*	0.216

<i>Consumer 8</i>	If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	1.304*	0.724
<i>Consumer 9</i>	It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university	0.753*	0.471
<i>Consumer 10</i>	What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	1.033*	0.543
<i>Consumer 11</i>	Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.433 *	0.233
<i>Consumer 13</i>	I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	0.880*	0.417
<i>Consumer 14</i>	I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.678 *	0.351
Learner Scale			
<i>Learner 5</i>	I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	1.000 *	0.685
<i>Learner 4</i>	I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.539*	0.451
<i>Learner 8</i>	I take part in class discussions	0.477*	0.402
<i>Learner 9</i>	I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.489*	0.439
<i>Learner 12</i>	I enjoy studying	0.713*	0.668
<i>Learner 14</i>	I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.485*	0.348
<i>Learner 15</i>	I do not enjoy learning at university	0.966*	0.787
<i>Learner 7</i>	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.245*	0.295

*factor loadings are all significant ($p < 0.001$)

Table 24. SEM Model 1, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
<i>Baseline: Student Loan</i>			
No Tuition Fees	0.197	0.181**	0.058
Mixed Tuition Fees	0.227	0.207**	0.058
Consumer Scale			
<i>Baseline: Student Loan</i>			
No Tuition Fees	-0.017	-0.009	0.089
Mixed Tuition Fees	0.215	0.113*	0.083
Learner Scale			
<i>Baseline: Student Loan</i>			
No Tuition Fees	-0.160	-0.058	0.124
Mixed Tuition Fees	-0.323	-0.115*	0.130

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicated acceptable model fit, ($\chi^2 = 683.618$ (335) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.92, TLI=0.89, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.034-0.042, SRMR= 0.05), and each of the three latent variables had at least one significant regression coefficient, suggesting that the theory being

explored in this thesis—ie. that there is a significant relationship between tuition fees and students' approaches to university and to employability—is supported by the data.

SEM Model 2: Fees as binary variable.

In SEM, it is customary to “build up” a model, adding greater complexity with the addition of more variables in stages, in order to assess the strength of the model at every stage (Gana & Broc, 2019). Because the next stage of this analysis was the inclusion of further predictor variables and interaction terms (to look at moderation), which meant a subdivision of the groups, it was decided that, prior to adding further predictor variables, “Fee Type” should be recategorized into only two groups to keep the sample sizes as large as possible. Recategorizing tuition “Fee Type” could have been done in two ways – either “Mixed” fees could have been grouped with “No Tuition” fees, leaving “Student Loan” as separate, or “Mixed Fees” could have been grouped with “Student Loan”, leaving “No Tuition Fees” as separate. The latter option was chosen because it was felt that there was, conceptually, a bigger difference between those on “No Tuition Fees” at all and those on “Mixed” fees, than there was between those on “Student Loans” and those on “Mixed” fees.

To examine the role of this re-categorised Tuition “Fee Type” variable prior to adding further predictor variables, therefore, a new Structural Model was run with this new dummy-coded binary variable, defined as follows:

Mixed or Student Loan for students who are either on a student loan or have a mixture of loans (some private as well as governmental) and bursaries or scholarships

No Tuition Fees for students whose fees are covered by Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), ie. Scottish or EU students at Scottish Higher Education institutions.

For consistency, it was decided that the “Mixed or Student Loan” category would be used as the baseline/reference category, to which the “No Tuition Fees” dummy variable would be compared. The results of both the measurement part and the structural part of the SEM model are presented in Tables 25 and 26, respectively. The path diagram representing this relationship is in Figure 9.

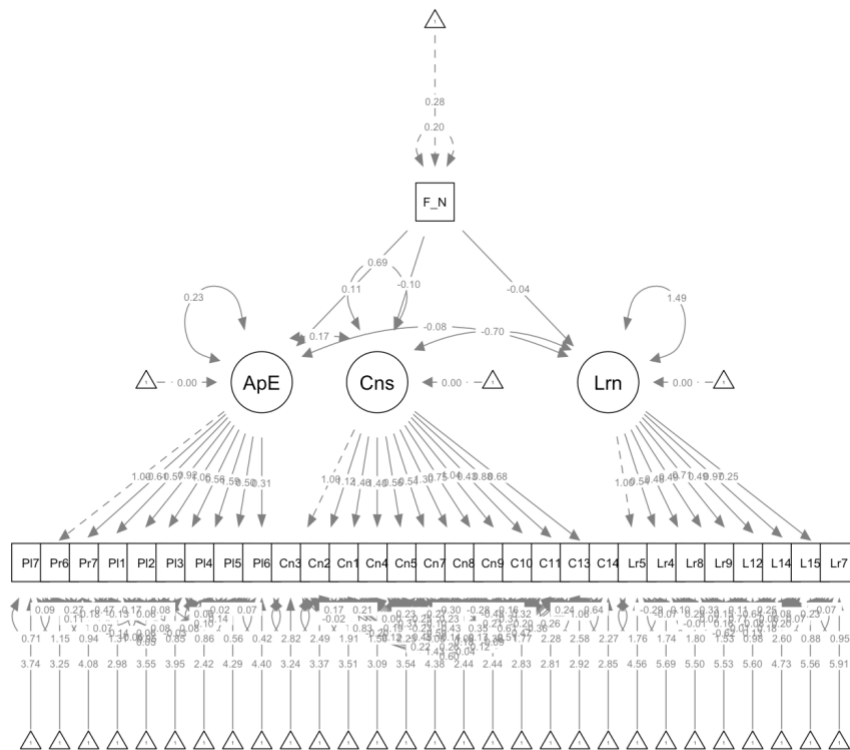


Figure 9. Path Diagram of the Relationship between Fees and Employability, Learner Orientation, and Consumer Orientation

All loadings in the measurement portion of the SEM model were similar to the previous measurement modes described above, with a slight improvement in the loadings of Player 6 and Consumer 7. The path coefficients of this structural part of the model, however, painted a different picture—tuition “Fee Type” was not a significant predictor of either Learner scores or Consumer scores in this model, though it was a significant predictor of Approach to Employability, with students on no tuition fees scoring significantly higher ($\beta = 0.11, p = 0.042$) than students on mixed or student loans.

Table 25. SEM Model 2, Factor Loadings

Latent construct & item number	Item	Unstandardised Loading	Standardised Loading
Approach to Employability			
Player 7	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	1.000*	0.499
Purist 6	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-0.606*	-0.264
Purist 7	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-0.568*	-0.273
Player 1	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	0.921*	0.363

<i>Player 2</i>	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	1.060*	0.465
<i>Player 3</i>	Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job	0.558*	0.281
<i>Player 4</i>	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	1.594*	0.640
<i>Player 5</i>	Knowing the ‘right people’ is crucial for getting a good job	0.495*	0.305
<i>Player 6</i>	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	0.309*	0.224

Consumer Scale

<i>Consumer 3</i>	I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	1.000*	0.445
<i>Consumer 2</i>	I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	1.120*	0.510
<i>Consumer 1</i>	The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	1.459*	0.661
<i>Consumer 4</i>	If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	1.399*	0.683
<i>Consumer 5</i>	As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.561*	0.299
<i>Consumer 7</i>	I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	0.536*	0.216
<i>Consumer 8</i>	If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	1.301*	0.723
<i>Consumer 9</i>	It is solely the lecturer’s responsibility to educate me at university	0.753*	0.471
<i>Consumer 10</i>	What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	1.038*	0.545
<i>Consumer 11</i>	Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.433*	0.233
<i>Consumer 13</i>	I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	0.880*	0.416
<i>Consumer 14</i>	I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.678*	0.351

Learner Scale

<i>Learner 5</i>	I would choose to study even if I didn’t achieve a degree from it	1.000*	0.678
<i>Learner 4</i>	I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.541*	0.448
<i>Learner 8</i>	I take part in class discussions	0.476*	0.398
<i>Learner 9</i>	I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.494*	0.439
<i>Learner 12</i>	I enjoy studying	0.710*	0.658
<i>Learner 14</i>	I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.494*	0.350
<i>Learner 15</i>	I do not enjoy learning at university	0.972*	0.785
<i>Learner 7</i>	When I’m working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.252*	0.301

*factor loadings are all significant ($p < 0.001$)

Table 26. SEM Model 2, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.11	0.11*	0.06
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.10	-0.05	0.09
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.04	-0.02	0.12

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner items scored between 1 and 7

Again, fit indices indicated a good model fit, ($\chi^2 = 626.937$ (309) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.93, TLI=0.90, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.034-0.042, SRMR= 0.05), highlighting the importance of theory in the interpretation of these goodness-of-fit statistics. Both the 3-category “Fee Type” variable and the 2-category “Fee Type” variable fit the data well, but the regression coefficients led to a substantively different conclusion regarding the relationship between tuition “Fee Type” and approach to university (as measured by Consumer Orientation and Learner Orientation), suggesting perhaps that some other external variable is playing an important role.

SEM Model 3: Fees with university context

Indeed, part of the reason for using a SEM approach rather than a simple ANOVA is to be able to control for other important variables and include them in the overall model, which may help explain the difference between the two models, as well as between the findings of the preliminary analyses and the findings of this SEM model. Research would suggest that university context—that is, university type and the country of the university—may play an important role in students’ approaches to university (e.g. Maringe, 2006; Wilkins, 2013) and to employability (e.g. Sodexo, 2014; Minty, 2015), and so controlling for these when testing the effect of tuition fees is important for both isolating the role of tuition fees and understanding the parts played by these other factors. To that end, two further dummy-coded variables were added to the model, defined as follows:

University Country:

England, for students in universities based in England

Scotland, for students in universities based in Scotland

University Type:

Post-1992, for students in post-1992 universities

Russell Group, for students in Russell Group universities

Russell Group and Scotland were chosen as the baselines, because these contained slightly larger sample sizes. Results from both the measurement part of the model and the structural part of the model are in Tables 27 and 28, respectively.

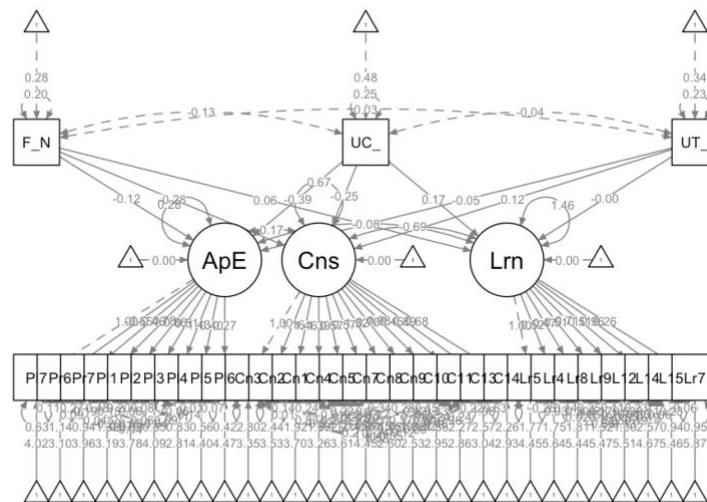


Figure 10. Path Diagram of the Relationship between Fees and Employability, Learner Orientation, and Consumer Orientation

Regression results show that when university context—that is, university type and country—is included in the model, tuition fees are no longer a significant predictor of approach to employability. Instead, the results show that students in English universities appear to be significantly more Purist in their approach to employability ($\beta = -0.35, p \leq 0.001$) than students in Scotland, when controlling for “Fee Type” and university type (i.e., when students are on Mixed Fees or Student Loans, and in Russell Group universities). Moreover, when university type is taken into account, tuition “Fee Type” is shown to be a significant predictor of Consumer orientation, with students on no tuition fees having significantly lower Consumer scores ($\beta = -0.15, p = 0.02$) than students on mixed or student loans. Interestingly, results show that students in English universities also have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish universities ($\beta = -0.15, p = 0.006$), when fees and university type are held constant at their baseline. This is contrary to what was

theorised, since Scotland operates in a significantly less marketised Higher Education system than England.

Table 27. SEM Model 3, Factor Loadings

Latent construct & item number	Item	Unstandardised Loading	Standardised Loading
Approach to Employability			
<i>Player 7</i>	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	1.000*	0.572
<i>Purist 6</i>	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview	-0.548*	-0.274
<i>Purist 7</i>	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	-0.457*	-0.253
<i>Player 1</i>	I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you	0.777*	0.351
<i>Player 2</i>	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	0.856*	0.431
<i>Player 3</i>	Being "good enough" on its own is not enough to get a good job	0.509*	0.293
<i>Player 4</i>	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	1.428*	0.657
<i>Player 5</i>	Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job	0.404*	0.288
<i>Player 6</i>	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	0.268*	0.223
Consumer Scale			
<i>Consumer 3</i>	I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university	1.000*	0.445
<i>Consumer 2</i>	I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career	1.164*	0.526
<i>Consumer 1</i>	The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money	1.462*	0.658
<i>Consumer 4</i>	If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university	1.388*	0.675
<i>Consumer 5</i>	As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade	0.571*	0.304
<i>Consumer 7</i>	I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree	0.565*	0.226
<i>Consumer 8</i>	If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree	1.316*	0.729
<i>Consumer 9</i>	It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university	0.756*	0.471
<i>Consumer 10</i>	What I learn in my course is not useful for my future	0.982*	0.513
<i>Consumer 11</i>	Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree	0.453*	0.242
<i>Consumer 13</i>	I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing	0.893*	0.420
<i>Consumer 14</i>	I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it	0.683*	0.353

Learner Scale			
<i>Learner 5</i>	I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it	1.000*	0.673
<i>Learner 4</i>	I do the bare minimum to pass assessments	0.523*	0.432
<i>Learner 8</i>	I take part in class discussions	0.467*	0.388
<i>Learner 9</i>	I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university	0.507*	0.446
<i>Learner 12</i>	I enjoy studying	0.711*	0.653
<i>Learner 14</i>	I discuss my subject with my lecturer	0.514*	0.362
<i>Learner 15</i>	I do not enjoy learning at university	0.961*	0.769
<i>Learner 7</i>	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together	0.258*	0.305

Table 28. SEM Model 3: Fees, controlling for university context, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.12	-0.10	0.07
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.39	-0.35**	0.08
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.05	-0.05	0.06
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.28	-0.15*	0.12
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.25	-0.15**	0.09
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.12	0.07	0.08
Learner Scale			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.07	0.02	0.15
<i>University Country: England</i>	0.17	0.07	0.14
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.00	-0.00	0.11

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicate a slight deterioration in model fit with the addition of these two predictor variables in comparison with the fees-only model, ($\chi^2 = 852.073$ (361) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.89, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.040 - 0.048, SRMR=0.05). This suggests that these two additional variables do not best describe the data; again, however, it is important to consider theory when interpreting these fit statistics. Research would suggest that these two additional variables—university type and university country—are extremely important for understanding students' approaches to university and employability; indeed, they are key components of this research project. Therefore, despite the slight deterioration of

model fit, it was decided this model would be accepted and these variables should be retained in further model building, and their path coefficients seriously considered.

SEM Model 4. Fees with University Context and SES.

Research would suggest that not only does university context play an important role in students' approaches to university and employability, SES does as well. Though preliminary analyses (detailed in the previous chapter) did not find any significant differences between students from different socio-economic backgrounds, SES might nonetheless play a role in an overall model. To assess this, therefore, a further predictor variable for SES was added to the SEM model. The composite SES variable created was calculated for each participant by adding together the values of the mother's education (attended university = 3, did not attend university = 2, not sure = 0), father's education (attended university = 3, did not attend university = 2, not sure = 0), mother's occupational status (using ISCO coding), father's occupational status (also using ISCO coding), and secondary school type (fee-paying = 2, publicly funded = 1). Thus the composite SES combined parental education with parental occupation and an indication of income via secondary school type; this "three-component" proxy variable is standard in psychological and sociological literature (Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Further details about this and other variables can be found in Appendix 3. To maximise group sizes (as with the Tuition "Fee Type" variable), SES was recategorized into two groups for this SEM model and dummy-coded as below:

SES High, for students from SES 2 and SES 1

SES Low, for students from SES 3

The full model—including SES, "Fee Type", University Type, and University Country—was then run. Figure 11 shows the results in graphical form, while the results of the structural part are in Table 29.

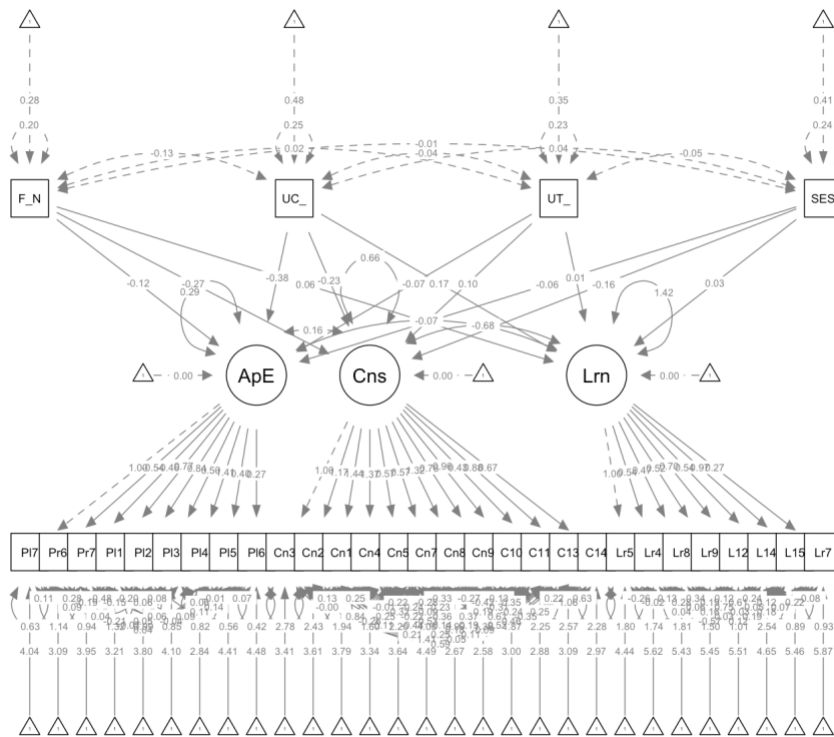


Figure 11. Path Diagram of the Relationship between Fees and Employability, Learner Orientation, and Consumer Orientation

Regression results suggest that adding SES to the model did not affect approach to employability; as with the previous model, students in English universities have significantly lower Approach to Employability scores ($\beta = -0.39, p \leq 0.001$) than students in Scotland (when “Fee Type”, SES and university type are taken into account). Likewise, the path coefficients show a similar pattern in this model to the previous one—i.e., students on no tuition fees have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers on mixed funding or student loans ($\beta = -0.15, p = 0.025$), and students in English Russell Group universities on Mixed or Student Loans also have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish Russell Group universities on Mixed or Student Loans ($\beta = -0.14, p = 0.011$). However, the additional path is also a significant predictor of Consumer score—students from high socio-economic backgrounds have lower Consumer scores than their peers from low socio-economic backgrounds ($\beta = -0.10, p = 0.015$), when other factors are taken into account.

Table 29. Fees when controlling for university context and SES, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			

Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.118	-0.094	0.072
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.385	-0.343**	0.076
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.066	-0.056	0.058
Baseline: SES Low <i>SES: High</i>	-0.056	-0.049	0.050
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.268	-0.145*	0.120
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.230	-0.139*	0.090
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.098	0.056	0.075
Baseline: SES Low <i>SES: High</i>	-0.164	-0.097*	0.067
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.060	0.022	0.146
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	0.166	0.069	0.134
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.006	0.003	0.111
Baseline: SES Low <i>SES: High</i>	0.033	0.013	0.102

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicate a slight improvement of model fit, relative to the model with university context variables alone, ($\chi^2 = 862.443$ (387) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.90, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.038 - 0.045, SRMR=0.05), though the TLI remains slightly below the acceptable threshold. In addition, the χ^2 is larger, though this statistic is affected by sample size and model complexity (Bergh, 2015), so this was perhaps to be expected. Again, considering the importance of these variables in the theory, this model was deemed acceptable and further model-building appropriate.

SEM Model 5. Fees with University Context, SES, Grade Level and Age.

Next, a more complex structural model was built. Preparatory analyses of variance had suggested that a number of other factors could play important roles in students' approaches to employability and to university. As described in Chapter Four, ANOVAs showed that there were significant differences in Employability Approach scores based on year of study and age group, as well as "Fee Type" and university country. ANOVAs also

showed that there were significant differences in Learner scores between different subject types studied, grade level, as well as fee type, university country and university type. Similarly, ANOVAS showed that there were significant differences in scores between grade levels and age, as well as SES, fee type, university country and university type. These additional factors were therefore added to the MIMIC model. For this, age was left as a continuous variable (Year of Birth), while grade level and subject type were dummy-coded, as follows:

Subject Type

STEM includes all students studying science, technology, engineering or mathematical subjects.

Humanities includes all students studying Humanities subjects, such as English, Philosophy, History, etc.

Social Science includes all students studying Social Science subjects, such as Psychology, Sociology, Criminology, etc.

Vocational includes all students studying subjects with direct career pathways such as law, business, physiotherapy, medicine, or social work. This was used as the reference category.

Grade Level

1st Class includes all students whose self-reported current grade level is first class (or A grade)

2.1 includes all students whose self-reported current grade level is a 2.1 (or B grade)

2.2 includes all students whose self-reported current grade level is a 2.2 (or C grade). This was used as the reference category.

The results of the structural part of the MIMIC model are in Table 30, while the full path diagram of the MIMIC model is in Figure 12.

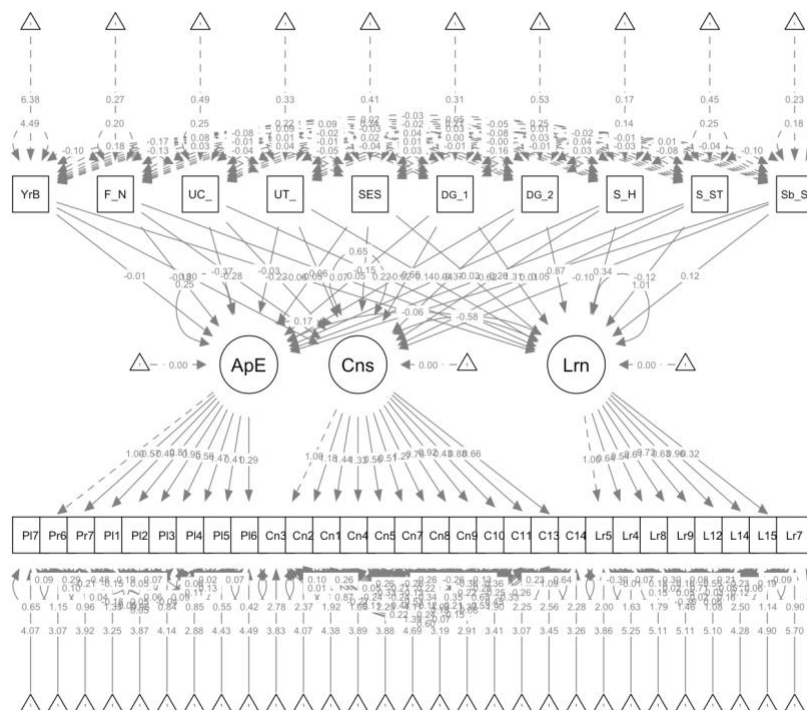


Figure 12. Path Diagram of Fees, when controlling for all other variables

Regression coefficients show that fees were not a significant predictor of Learner orientation or Approach to Employability, when controlling for all other factors. In addition, contrary to the ANOVAs conducted in the previous chapter, age was not a significant predictor of approach to employability; indeed, only country was a significant predictor of approach to employability, such that students in England appear to be more Purist-oriented than students in Scotland ($\beta = -0.35, p \leq 0.001$), when controlling for all other factors. However, in line with to the ANOVAs conducted previously, grade level and subject type were significant predictors of Consumer score; students with 1st class grade levels and 2.1 grade levels scored significantly lower than students with a 2.2 grade level ($\beta = -0.30, p \leq 0.001$ and $\beta = -0.22, p \leq 0.001$, respectively), when accounting for all other factors. Similarly, students studying a Humanities subject had significantly lower Consumer scores than students studying a vocational subject ($\beta = -0.12, p = 0.03$). Conversely, students with 1st class grade levels and 2.1 grade levels scored significantly higher ($\beta = 0.54, p \leq 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.39, p \leq 0.001$) on the Learner scale than students with 2.2s. Finally, age was a significant predictor of Learner scores, with an increase in one unit of birth year (ie one year younger) being associated with a significant decrease in Learner score ($\beta = -0.11, p = 0.02$).

Table 30. Fees when controlling for all other factors, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Year of Birth	-0.006	-0.023	0.013
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.131	-0.111	0.074
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.374	-0.353**	0.078
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.028	-0.025	0.062
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.046	-0.043	0.051
Baseline: 2.2 or below			
<i>Grade Level: 1st Class</i>	0.047	0.041	0.071
<i>Grade Level: 2.1</i>	-0.021	0.020	0.061
Baseline: Vocational			
<i>Subject Type: Humanities</i>	0.043	0.031	0.094
<i>Subject Type: STEM</i>	-0.016	-0.015	0.080
<i>Subject Type: Social Sciences</i>	0.010	0.008	0.088
Consumer Scale			
Year of Birth	0.000	0.001	0.016
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.285	0.149*	0.122
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.223	-0.131*	0.095
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.059	0.033	0.083
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.147	-0.085*	0.069
Baseline: 2.2 or below			
<i>Grade Level: 1st Class</i>	-0.557	-0.302**	0.121
<i>Grade Level: 2.1</i>	-0.371	-0.218**	0.100
Baseline: Vocational			
<i>Subject Type: Humanities</i>	-0.261	-0.115*	0.121
<i>Subject Type: STEM</i>	0.047	0.028	0.098
<i>Subject Type: Social Sciences</i>	-0.105	-0.052	0.116
Learner Scale			
Year of Birth	-0.057	-0.109*	0.025
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.069	0.028	0.134
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	0.223	0.100	0.130
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.140	0.059	0.113
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.028	-0.012	0.097
Baseline: 2.2 or below			
<i>Grade Level: 1st Class</i>	1.309	0.543**	0.164
<i>Grade Level: 2.1</i>	0.870	0.391**	0.151
Baseline: Vocational			

<i>Subject Type: Humanities</i>	0.340	0.115	0.177
<i>Subject Type: STEM</i>	-0.120	-0.053	0.147
<i>Subject Type: Social Sciences</i>	0.121	0.046	0.152

**p<0.05 **p≤0.001, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.*

Despite the significance of some of the added paths, and the theoretical backing for the model, fit indices suggest unacceptable model fit: $\chi^2 = 1177.603 (543) p < 0.001$, CFI=0.87, TLI=0.83, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.038 - 0.044 SRMR=0.05. Though some indices are good (RMSEA and SRMR), CFI and TLI are below the threshold for acceptability and Chi Square is much larger than the previous models. This suggests that the inclusion of these further factors in fact deteriorates model fit significantly, potentially because the sample size is too small to be subdivided into so many groups. Since these additional factors—age, grade level, and subject studied—are not central to the research questions, it was decided they would be excluded from any further models. The regression paths of this model are therefore disregarded in all further discussion.

2: Does SES moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?

SEM Model 1. Fees interacting with SES

Although adding SES and control variables produced an inadequate model fit, one of the research questions to be explored in this thesis was whether SES moderated the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university and employability. It was hypothesised that the effect of paying no tuition fees, or being on a student loan, would be moderated by SES, such that the difference between fee types would be felt more keenly by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. To explore this question, therefore, a further set of analyses was conducted. As with the first set of analyses, the model was built up in a step-by-step approach. The first model included only “Fee Type” (dummy coded once again), SES (dummy coded) and their dummy-coded product term (requested in the Lavaan syntax with the “:” symbol)⁹.

The results for structural part of the model are in Table 31 and the path diagram is in Figure 13.

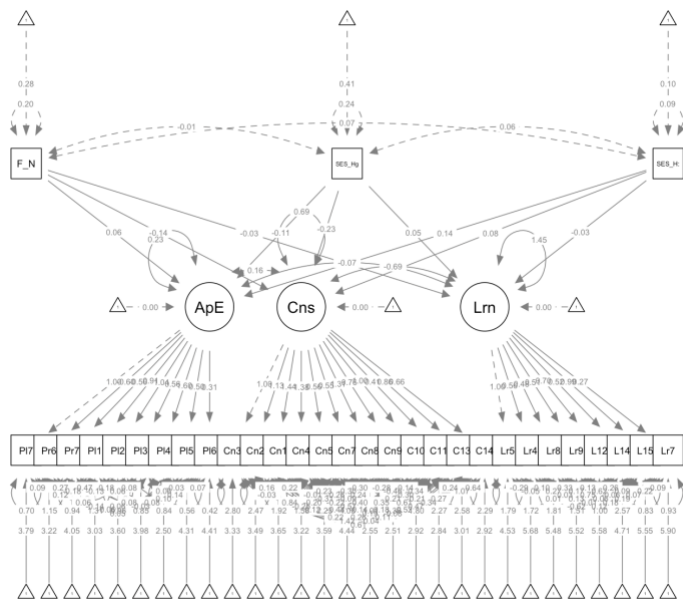


Figure 13. Path Diagram of Fees interacting with SES

⁹ Another approach to see whether a binary causal variable interacts with another variable is the Structured Means Modelling (SMM) approach, this works by comparing the means of the latent dependent variables across groups, and is particularly useful when measurement invariance has not been established. However, this approach is not recommended when sample sizes are not very large. As Breitshol (2018) points out, the choice between SMM and MIMIC essentially comes down to sample size and whether measurement invariance can be assumed—since measurement invariance was already established in the scale validation analyses, and the sample size was relatively small, MIMIC was considered the appropriate choice.

Regression results suggest that, when no other factors are taken into account, SES does play a role in approach to employability—students from high SES backgrounds scored lower (i.e., more towards the Purist end of the spectrum) than students from low SES backgrounds ($\beta = -0.12, p = 0.032$). This is contrary to what research would have predicted; previous studies have found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be more Purist-oriented, since they don't know “how to play the game” or “even what the rules are” (Crozier et al., 2008). Results also show that students from high SES backgrounds are less Consumer-oriented than students from low SES backgrounds ($\beta = -0.13, p = 0.006$). However, the results show that SES does not interact significantly with Fee Type to affect students' approaches to either employability or university. This is a surprising result, contrary to what research and theory would have suggested. Since no interaction paths were significant, the interaction was not probed further.

Table 31. Fees interacting with SES, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.058	0.053	0.068
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.115	-0.116*	0.053
<i>SES High x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.136	0.084	0.105
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.139	-0.074	0.113
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.228	-0.134*	0.082
<i>SES High x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.084	0.030	0.142
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.026	-0.010	0.143
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	0.055	0.022	0.116
<i>SES High x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.030	-0.008	0.226

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Despite the fact that the interactions were not significant predictors of Employability, Consumer, or Learner scores, fit indices indicate very good model fit with the addition of the interaction, ($\chi^2 = 688.583 (361) p < 0.001$, CFI=0.93, TLI=0.90, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.032- 0.040 SRMR=0.05.) It was thus decided that adding the key control

variables—university type and university country—was warranted, and therefore to continue with the next step of the model-building process.

SEM Model 2. Fees interacting with SES, controlling for university context.

To examine the model and the significance of SES as a moderator when including control variables—university type and university country—a further analysis was run, with both the product term and the dummy-coded control variables as before: University Country (England = 1, Scotland = 0) and University Type (Post-1992 = 1, Russell Group = 0). These were the only variables included because model fit was significantly worse when all other control variables (e.g. age, subject type and grade level) were added to the model, and because these were the key variables of interest to the research questions.

The results for structural part of the model are in Table 32 and the path diagram in Figure 14.

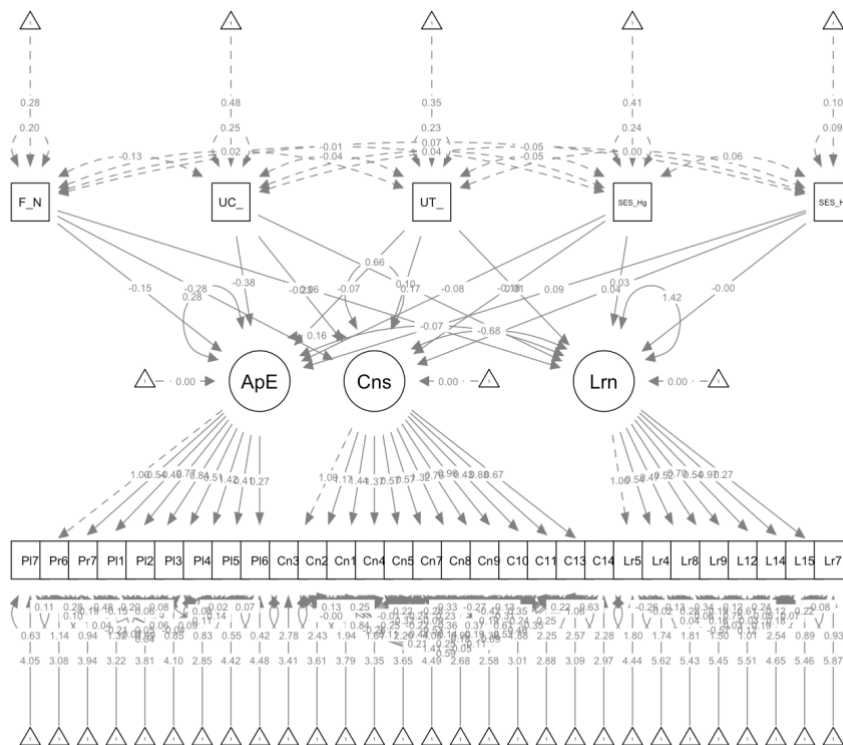


Figure 14. Path Diagram of Fees interacting with SES, controlling for university context

Again, the regression results show that SES does not interact with Fee Type, even when university context is taken to account. As with the previous (non-moderated) model, students in English Russell Group universities, who are on Mixed Fees or Student Loans and

from low socio-economic backgrounds, are significantly more Purist in their approach to employability than students in Scotland ($\beta = -0.34, p \leq 0.001$). Students on no tuition fees have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers on mixed funding or student loans ($\beta = -0.16, p = 0.038$), and students in English Russell Group universities on Mixed or Student Loans also have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish Russell Group universities on Mixed or Student Loans ($\beta = -0.14, p = 0.012$). Finally, students from high socio-economic backgrounds (in Scottish Russell Group universities, on Mixed funding or Student Loans) had significantly lower scores Consumer scores than their peers from low socio-economic backgrounds ($\beta = -0.10, p = 0.029$). Interestingly, when country and university were added to the model, SES was no longer a predictor of Approach to Employability, and once again there were no significant predictors of Learner scores in the model.

Table 32. Fees interacting with SES, when controlling for university context, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.146	-0.117	0.082
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.379	-0.338**	0.077
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: 1992</i>	-0.068	-0.057	0.057
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.080	-0.070	0.057
<i>SES x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.087	0.046	0.115
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.283	-0.153*	0.136
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.228	-0.137*	0.090
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: 1992</i>	0.098	0.056	0.075
Baseline: SES Low			
<i>SES: High</i>	-0.176	-0.104*	0.080
<i>SES x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.045	0.016	0.141
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.061	0.023	0.168
Baseline: Scotland			
<i>University Country: England</i>	0.166	0.069	0.134
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: 1992</i>	0.006	0.002	0.111

Baseline: SES Low

<i>SES: High</i>	0.034	0.014	0.119
<i>SES x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.004	-0.001	0.230

**p<0.05 **p≤0.001, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.*

Fit indices suggest a slight deterioration of model fit, relative to the SES-moderated model without control variables, ($\chi^2 = 894.377$ (413) $p<0.001$, CFI=0.90, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.037- 0.044 SRMR=0.05.) It however it still passes the threshold for acceptability, and suggests that the model fits the data relatively well.

3: Does SSS moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?

SEM Model 1. Fees including SSS and university context

Although SES has been theorised to play an important role in students’ approaches to university and the labour market, research has found that there can be significant differences between SES and self-identified social status (SSS). Since both approach to learning and to employability are related to self-perception and identity, it was theorized that SSS might also play a key role in approach to employability and university than SES, and therefore could be an important variable to take into account in the model. However, collinearity is a problem when including two variables that are highly correlated, such as SSS and SES. It was therefore decided that SSS would be included as an additional control variable, alongside university context, in a separate model, and its effect evaluated. As such, SSS was recategorized into two groups for this SEM model and dummy-coded as below:

Working Class, which includes all students who self-identified as “working class” in the questionnaire. This was used as the reference category.

Middle Class, which includes all students who self-identified as “middle class”, “upper-middle class” and “upper class” (the latter of which there were only four). “upper-middle class” is roughly equivalent to High SES backgrounds, since only four respondents in the sample self- identified as “upper class”.

The results for structural part of the model are in Table 33 and in Figure 15 below.

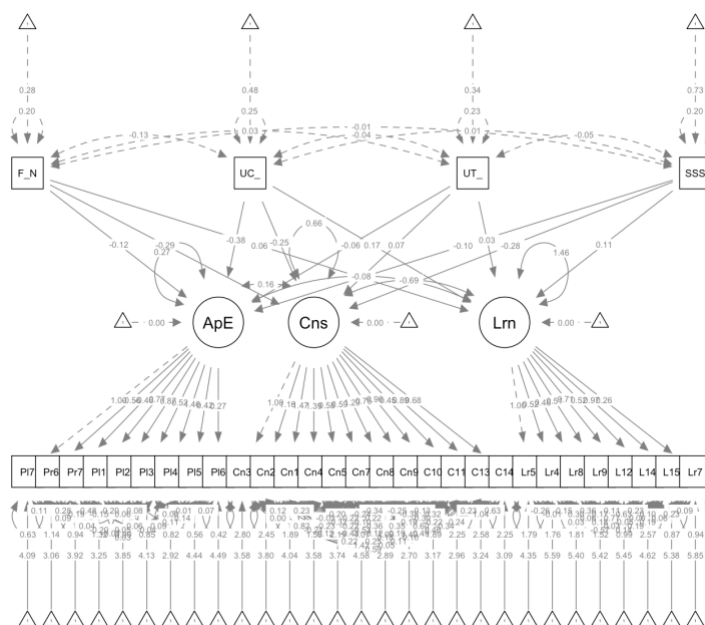


Figure 15. Path Diagram of Fees, controlling for university context and SSS

As with SES, regression results show that SSS is not a significant predictor of approach to employability, but that students in English universities (who are on Mixed Fees or Student Loans, in Russell Group universities and from working class backgrounds), are significantly more Purist in their approach to employability than students in Scotland ($\beta = -0.35, p \leq 0.001$). The path coefficients for the Consumer scores show a similar pattern in this model to the SES model—i.e., students on no tuition fees have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers on mixed funding or student loans ($\beta = -0.16, p = 0.015$) and students in English universities also have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish universities ($\beta = -0.15, p = 0.006$), when other factors are taken into account. However, the new path, SSS, is a significant predictor of Consumer scores—students who identify as “middle class” (in Scottish Russell Group universities, on Mixed funding or Student Loans) have significant lower scores Consumer scores than their peers who identify as “working class” ($\beta = -0.15, p \leq 0.001$). Once again there were no significant predictors of Learner scores in the model.

Table 33. Fees when controlling for university context and SSS, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.120	-0.099	0.071
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.376	-0.346 **	0.073
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.063	-0.055	0.055
Baseline: SSS “Working Class” <i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.101	-0.083	0.053
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.289	-0.157 *	0.119
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.249	-0.150 *	0.091
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.068	0.039	0.077
Baseline: SSS “Working Class” <i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.283	-0.151 **	0.087
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.064	0.024	0.146
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	0.173	0.071	0.135
Baseline: Russell Group			

University Type: Post-1992	0.030	0.012	0.112
Baseline: SSS “Working Class”			
SSS: “Middle Class”	0.115	0.042	0.121

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicate a very similar model fit to the model that included SES instead of SSS, ($\chi^2 = 868.840$ (387) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.90, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.038- 0.046 SRMR=0.05) and so it was deemed appropriate to continue with the model-building process to examine whether SSS might be a moderating variable, as theory would suggest.

SEM Model 2. Fees interacting with SSS

To explore this question, therefore, a further set of analyses was conducted. As with the previous set of analyses, the first model included only “Fee Type” (dummy coded once again), SSS (dummy coded) and their dummy-coded product term (requested in the Lavaan syntax with the “.” symbol). The results of the structural portion of the model are in Table 34 and the path diagram represented in Figure 16.

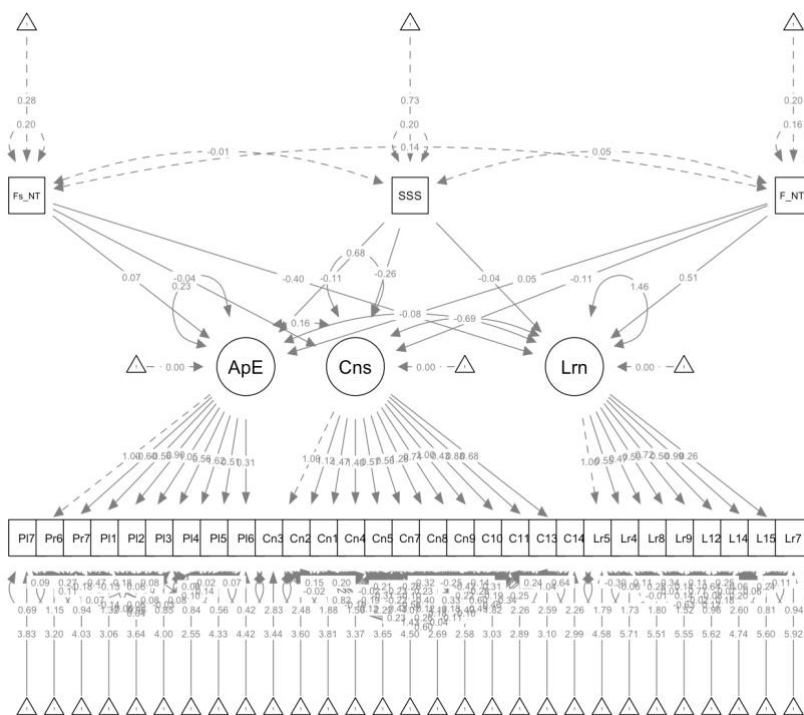


Figure 16. Path Diagram of Fees interacting with SSS

As with SES and the previous model, regression results show that SSS is not a significant predictor of approach to employability. However, the path coefficients show that it is a significant predictor of Consumer scores, such that students who identify as middle class (on no tuition fees) are significantly less consumer-oriented ($\beta = -0.14$, $p \leq 0.001$) than

their peers who identify as working class (on no tuition fees). Surprisingly, the interaction between SSS and tuition “Fee Type” was not significant for Consumer scores. For Learner scores, however, the path coefficient for the interaction term *was* statistically significant, suggesting that SSS does moderate the relationship between tuition fees and Learner scores. To probe this interaction further and understand the direction of the relationship, the interaction was plotted on a graph (Chart 19), as below. As the graph makes clear, SSS surprisingly moderates the relationship such that those who self-define as “working class” have lower Learner scores than those who self-define as “middle class” when there are *no* tuition fees, but higher Learner scores than those who self-define as “middle class” when they are on mixed fees or student loans.

Table 34. Fees interacting with SSS, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.070	0.065	0.097
Baseline: SSS “Working Class”			
<i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.111	-0.102	0.061
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.051	0.042	0.125
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.038	-0.021	0.146
Baseline: SSS “Working Class”			
<i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.265	-0.140 *	0.097
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.112	-0.053	0.161
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.403	-0.149	0.225
Baseline: SSS “Working Class”			
<i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.036	-0.013	0.133
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.511	0.167*	0.253

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

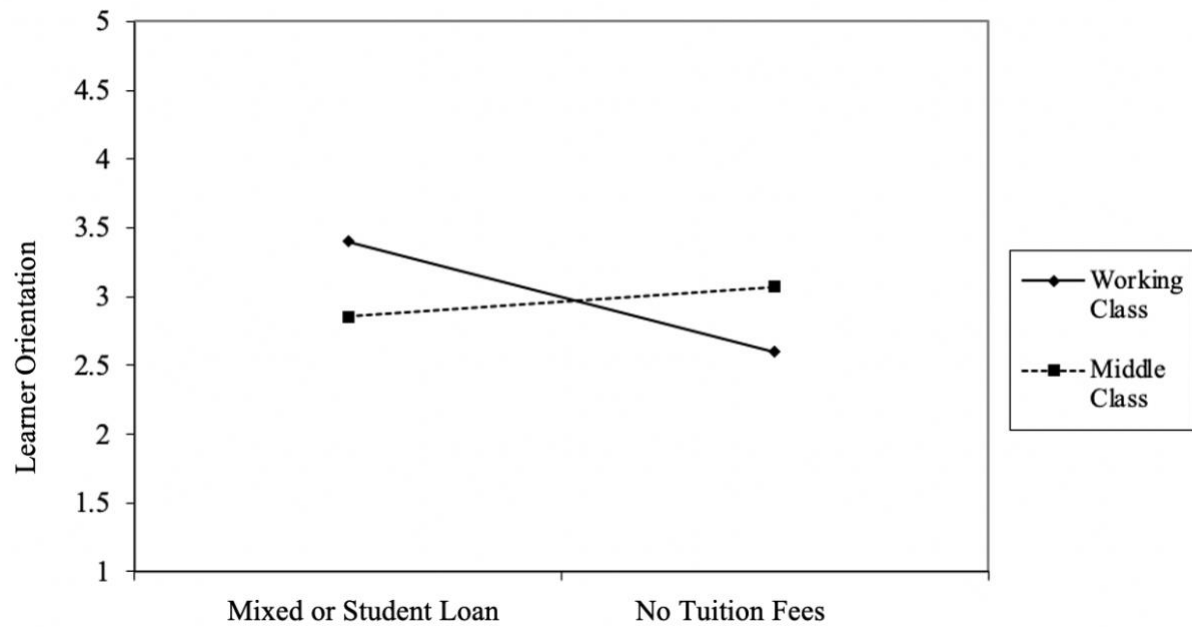


Chart 19. Interaction of SSS and Tuition Fees on Learner Scores

Fit indices indicate excellent model fit, ($\chi^2 = 691.826$ (361) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.93, TLI=0.90, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.032- 0.040, SRMR=0.05), suggesting that this model fits the data very well. It was therefore considered appropriate to build the model further by adding control variables for university context.

SEM Model 2. Fees interacting with SSS, controlling for university context

To examine the model and the significance of SSS as a moderator when including control variables for university type and university country, a further analysis was run. This model included the dummy-coded SSS variable, the dummy-coded Tuition Fee Type variable, their interaction term (SSS x Fee Type), and the variables for university type and university context.

The results for structural part of the model are in Table 35. The path diagram of the model is in Figure 16.

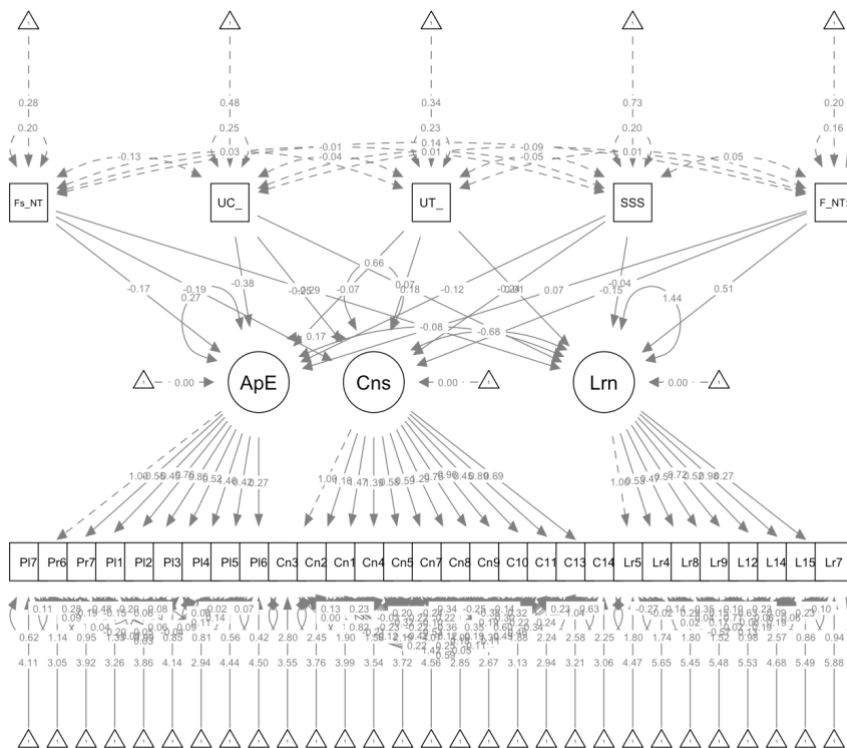


Figure 17. Path Diagram of Fees Interacting with SSS, Controlling for University Context

As with the previous models, regression results show that SSS was not a significant predictor of Approach to Employability, but that students in English universities are significantly more Purist in their approach to employability than students in Scotland ($\beta = -0.350, p \leq 0.001$), when accounting for other factors. Interestingly, and contrary to the model that looked at SES as a moderating variable, when SSS is included as a moderator alongside other control variables, Tuition Fee Type is no longer a significant predictor of Consumer scores. Instead, University Country is a highly significant predictor—students in English universities have significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish universities ($\beta = -0.151, p \leq 0.001$), when controlling for other variables. Once again, SSS is also a significant predictor of Consumer scores, such that those who identify as “middle class” are significantly less consumer-oriented than their peers who identify as working class ($\beta = -0.127, p = 0.017$). In terms of Learner scores, once again the interaction between SSS and Fee Type is significant. To better understand the relationship between the two variables, a graph was plotted to probe this interaction. Again, as with the previous model, the graph shows that students who self-define as “working class” have lower Learner scores than those who self-define as “middle class” when there are no tuition fees, but higher

Learner scores than those who self-define as “middle class” when there are mixed fees, when controlling for university context.

Table 35. Fees interacting with SSS when controlling for university context, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.167	-0.137	0.120
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.377	0.344**	0.074
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: 1992</i>	-0.060	-0.056	0.056
Baseline: SSS “Working Class” <i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.122	-0.099	0.064
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.067	0.049	0.131
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.188	-0.102	0.162
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.251	-0.151**	0.091
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: 1992</i>	0.072	0.041	0.077
Baseline: SSS “Working Class” <i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.238	-0.127*	0.100
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.145	-0.069	0.164
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.293	-0.109	0.238
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	0.185	0.076	0.135
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: 1992</i>	0.010	0.004	0.111
Baseline: SSS “Working Class” <i>SSS: “Middle Class”</i>	-0.045	-0.016	0.136
<i>SSS x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.513	0.169*	0.255

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

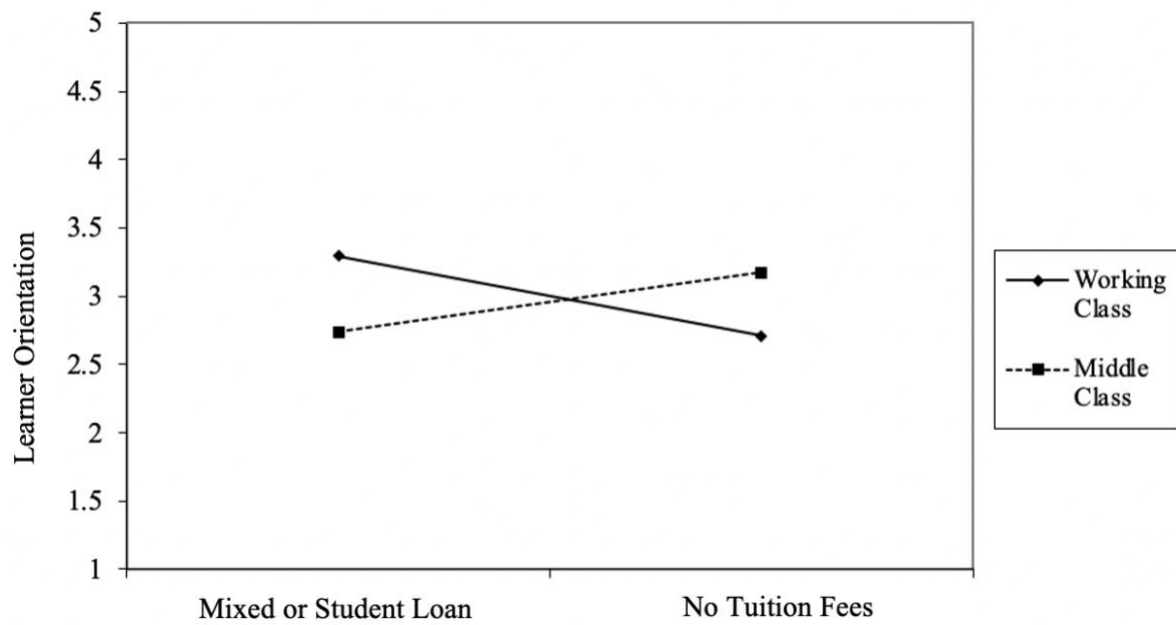


Chart 20. Interaction of SSS and Tuition Fees on Learner Scores

Fit indices suggest a slight deterioration in model fit, ($\chi^2 = 908.367 (413) p < 0.001$, CFI=0.89, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.038- 0.045, SRMR=0.05), relative to the model in which the control variables were excluded from the analysis, suggesting that this model does not fit the data as well. Nonetheless, because university context is a theoretically crucial part of this model, this model will be accepted, and its findings discussed in the next chapter.

4: Does university type moderate the relationship between “Fee Type” and approach to university or employability?

SEM Model 1. Fees interacting with University Type

Theory would suggest that the effect of Fee Type on students’ approaches to employability and to learning might be affected by the *type* of institution they attend, whether an elite Russell Group institution or a post-1992 institution, since literature has found differences in institutional identities—and responses to the marketisation of higher education—between these two university types. To examine whether this theory fits the data, therefore, another model was built, looking at the interaction between institution type and fee type. As with the previous sections, the first step was to include only the key variables and their product term and examine the results of this model, after which the control variables were added as well. The first model therefore included only “Fee Type” (dummy coded once again), University Type (dummy coded) and their dummy-coded product term (requested in the Lavaan syntax with the “:” symbol).

The results for structural part of the model are in Table 36 and Figure 18 shows the path diagram of the model.

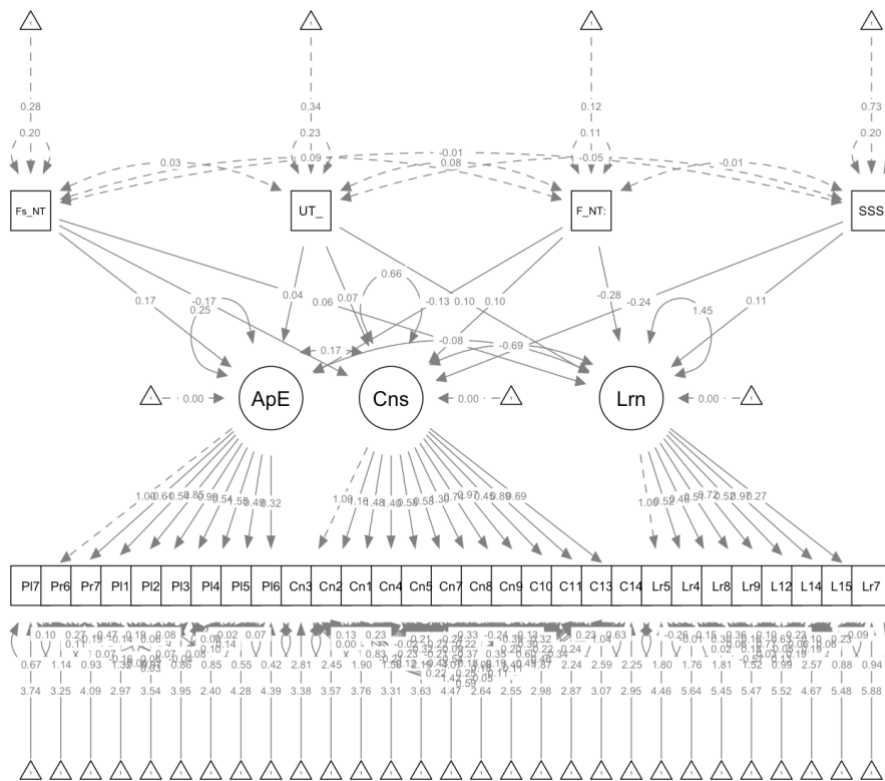


Figure 18. Path Diagram of Fees interacting with University Type

Interestingly, regression results indicate that, contrary to theory, there is no significant interaction between institution type and fee type. Indeed, the only significant predictor in this model is fee type when looking at approach to employability; those on no tuition fees appear to be more Player-oriented ($\beta = 0.15, p = 0.033$) than those on mixed fees or student loans, when university type is taken into account.

Table 36. Fees interacting with University Type, Regression Coefficient

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
No Tuition Fees	0.168	0.149*	0.079
Baseline: Russell Group			
University Type: Post-1992	0.022	0.021	0.063
Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees	-0.114	-0.074	0.106
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			
No Tuition Fees	-0.143	-0.078	0.108
Baseline: Russell Group			
University Type: Post-1992	0.120	0.069	0.093
Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees	0.076	0.030	0.147
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan			

<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.056	0.021	0.149
Baseline: Russell Group			
<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.060	0.024	0.124
<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.265	-0.072	0.230

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicate a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 799.611$ (361) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.90, TLI=0.87, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.037- 0.045, SRMR=0.05), suggesting that—despite the lack of significant predictors—the model fits the data relatively well. This model was therefore acceptable, and it was deemed appropriate to continue building the model by adding the key control variables of interest.

SEM Model 2. Fees interacting with University Type, Controlling for Country & SES

Since the previous models suggested that SSS and SES play different roles in the structural models—but that collinearity would still be a problem if both were included in the same model—it was decided that two analyses would be conducted: the first would include University Country and SES as control variables; the second would include University Country and SSS as control variables. The following model therefore examined the interaction between fee type and institution (post-1992 x No Tuition Fees), alongside university country (dummy-coded once again) and SES (again, dummy coded).

Figure 19 shows the path diagram of the mode, while the results for structural part of the model are in Table 37.

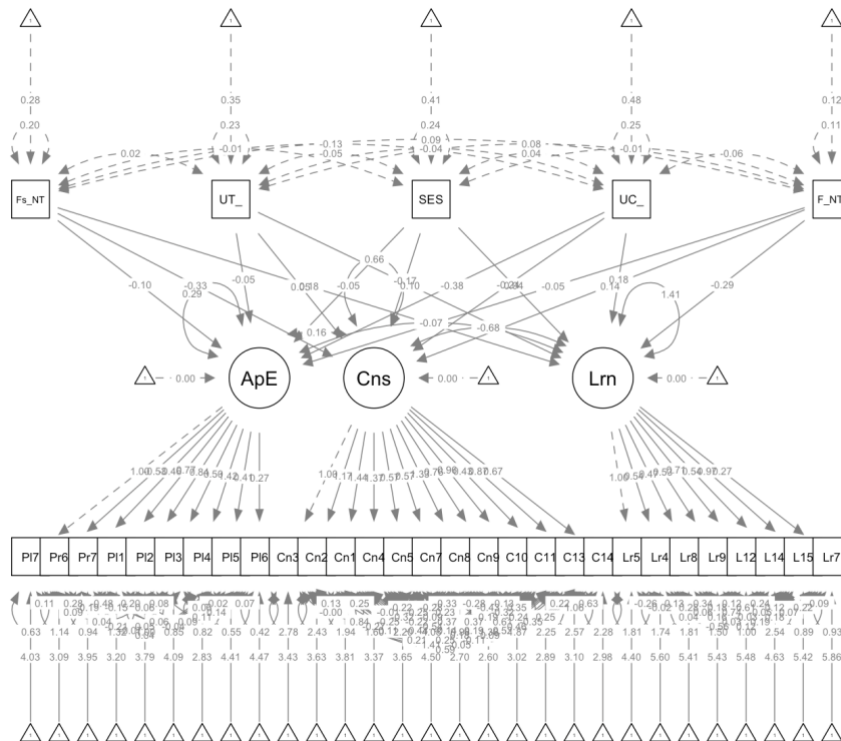


Figure 19. Fees interacting with University Type, Controlling for Country & SES

As with the simpler model, regression results indicate that, even when controlling for SES and university country, there is no significant interaction between institution type and fee type—again, a surprising finding considering the theory. Once again tuition fee type is not a significant predictor of how Purist or Player a student is; rather, University Country is a significant predictor of Approach to Employability scores, with students in England scoring lower ($\beta = -0.34, p \leq 0.001$) than students in Scotland, when other factors are taken into account. Tuition fee type is a significant predictors of Consumer scores, however, with those on no tuition fees scoring lower ($\beta = -0.18, p = 0.017$) than their peers on mixed or student loans, when all other factors are taken into account. Country is also a significant predictor of Consumer scores, when other factors are taken into account, with students in England scoring lower ($\beta = -0.14, p = 0.009$) than students in Scotland, as is SES: students from high SES backgrounds scored significantly lower ($\beta = -0.10, p = 0.013$) than students from low SES backgrounds, when other factors are taken into account. Interestingly, once again there were no significant predictors for Learner Orientation.

Table 37. Fees and University Type, controlling for SES and country, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised	Standardised β	Standard Error
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B

Approach to Employability

Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan

<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.096	-0.076	0.095
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Baseline: Russell Group

<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.049	-0.042	0.068
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Baseline: SES Low

<i>SES: High</i>	-0.054	-0.048	0.050
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Baseline: Scotland

<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.381	-0.340**	0.077
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<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.049	-0.028	0.114
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Consumer Scale

Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan

<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.326	-0.176*	0.137
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Baseline: Russell Group

<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.052	0.030	0.092
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Baseline: SES Low

<i>SES: High</i>	-0.167	-0.099*	0.067
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Baseline: Scotland

<i>University Country: England</i>	-0.235	-0.142*	0.090
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<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.142	0.056	0.148
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Learner Scale

Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan

<i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.182	0.068	0.178
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Baseline: Russell Group

<i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.098	0.039	0.123
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Baseline: SES Low

<i>SES: High</i>	0.042	0.017	0.103
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Baseline: Scotland

<i>University Country: England</i>	0.180	0.075	0.135
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<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.289	-0.079	0.230
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* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Fit indices indicate a very slight deterioration in model fit ($\chi^2 = 902.613$ (413) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.89, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.037- 0.044, SRMR=0.05), relative to the simpler model, though similar goodness-of-fit statistics to the models which included SES or SSS as moderating variables with control variables.

SEM Model 3. Fees interacting with University Type, Controlling for Country & SSS

Since self-identified social status was a significant predictor in previous models, a further analysis of the interaction between institution type and fee type was conducted, this time controlling for university country and SSS. The following model therefore examined the interaction between fee type and institution (Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees), alongside university country and SSS (both were, once again, dummy coded). The path diagram depicting these relationships is in Figure 20.

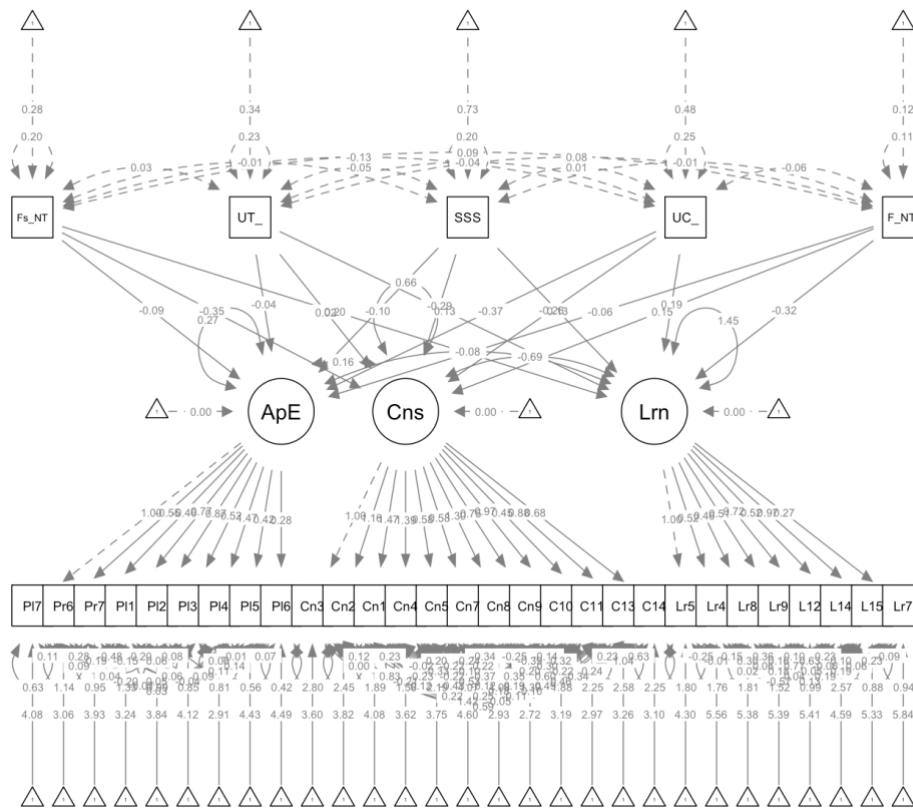


Figure 20. Fees interacting with University Type, Controlling for Country & SSS

The results for the structural part of the model are in Table 38. As with the previous model, the regression results suggest that there is no significant interaction effect between institution type and fee type. Again, tuition fee type is only a significant predictor for Consumer scores—those on no tuition fees scored lower ($\beta = -0.19, p = 0.01$) than those on mixed or student loans, when other factors were taken into account—and not for Approach to Employability or Learner Orientation. Instead, University Country was once again a significant predictor of Approach to Employability scores, with students in England scoring lower ($\beta = -0.35, p \leq 0.001$) than students in Scotland, when other factors are taken into account. University Country was also again a significant predictor of Consumer scores, with students in England scoring lower ($\beta = -0.15, p = 0.005$) than students in Scotland, when other factors are taken into account. SSS was highly significant as well: students who self-identify as “middle class” scored significantly lower ($\beta = -0.154, p \leq 0.001$) than students who identified as “working class”, when other factors are taken into account. Interestingly, once again there were no significant predictors for Learner Orientation.

Table 38. Fees and University Type, controlling for SSS and country, Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardised B	Standardised β	Standard Error
Approach to Employability			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.095	-0.078	0.093
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	-0.044	-0.038	0.066
Baseline: "Working Class" SSS: "Middle Class"	-0.099	-0.081	0.053
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.371	-0.342*	0.074
<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.056	-0.034	0.111
Consumer Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.351	-0.190*	0.136
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.018	0.010	0.094
Baseline: "Working Class" SSS: "Middle Class"	-0.288	-0.154**	0.087
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	-0.255	-0.154*	0.091
<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	0.149	0.059	0.148
Learner Scale			
Baseline: Mixed or Student Loan <i>No Tuition Fees</i>	0.200	0.074	0.178
Baseline: Russell Group <i>University Type: Post-1992</i>	0.133	0.052	0.124
Baseline: "Working Class" SSS: "Middle Class"	0.127	0.047	0.121
Baseline: Scotland <i>University Country: England</i>	0.190	0.079	0.137
<i>Post-1992 x No Tuition Fees</i>	-0.319	-0.263	0.229

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.001$, Approach to Employability items scored between 1 and 5, Consumer and Learner scored between 1 and 7. Latent variable means set to 0.

Once again, fit indices suggest a slight deterioration in model fit ($\chi^2 = 907.488$ (413) $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.89, TLI=0.86, RMSEA=0.04, 90% CI 0.037- 0.045, SRMR=0.05), suggesting that this model does not fit the data as well as the model without SSS and University Country as control variables.

Conclusion

The results presented in this chapter showed that tuition fees affected Consumer orientation as predicted, but did not affect Approach to Employability. However, there was a significant relationship between university country and Approach to Employability, suggesting that Scotland and England's different approaches to universities' engagement

with the labour market may be differentially impacting how students engage with their employability—in Scotland, where the Scottish Funding Council has been able to give universities funding to support the employability agenda, students appear to be more Player-oriented than in England. Surprisingly, students (on loans or mixed funding) in England also tended to be *less* Consumer-oriented than students (on loans or mixed funding) in Scotland, suggesting that tuition fees alone do not determine how Consumer-oriented a student is—and that Scotland has by no means avoided marketized environment of England.

Contrary to prediction, socio-economic status did not play a moderating role in the relationship between tuition fee type and approaches to university and employability; however, it did have a direct effect on Consumer orientation, such that students from high socio-economic backgrounds appeared to be less consumer-oriented than their peers. Self-identified social status (SSS) showed a similar pattern, with those who identified as “middle class” (rather than “working class”) also scoring lower on the Consumer scale. Moreover, SSS *did* have a moderating effect on the relationship between tuition fees and Learner orientation, though the findings were surprising. It was thought that students who self-identified as working class might be more Learner-oriented when they had no tuition fees, because the financial burden which would otherwise be keenly felt would be removed. Instead, students who self-identified as “working class” were less Learner-oriented than their “middle class” peers when they had no tuition fees, but *more* Learner-oriented than their “middle-class” peers when they were mixed or student loans. It could be that, for those who come from “working class” backgrounds, rather than lessening their engagement with university learning, the financial burden of a student loan in fact *increases* the desire for engagement with the university, to make the most of their money.

Contrary to prediction, university type did not moderate the relationship between fee type and approach to university or employability. Indeed, in contrast to findings from previous research and to the results of the preliminary analyses, university type was not a significant predictor of Approach to Employability, Consumer orientation, or Learner orientation in any of the models. It appears that whether a student is at a Russell Group university or a Post-1992 university does not appear to influence how Learner-oriented, Consumer-oriented, Player or Purist they are. These results and their implications, along

with the findings of the qualitative strand (detailed in the following chapters), will be further explored in the Discussion chapter.

PHASE 3: QUALITATIVE STRAND

Having examined the attitudes to the labour market and to university at macro level in the quantitative chapters, the following chapters detail the method and results of the interviews conducted for the qualitative strand, offering a micro perspective of fee-paying and non fee-paying students in Scottish and English institutions.

Findings: Students' Attitudes and Experiences

In this chapter, I begin by describing the interview sample and the method by which I analysed the data derived from it. I then explore the findings of this analysis, broken down by research question; firstly, I look at what emerged in answer to the question "How do students approach their employability?" and then I explore the themes that arose in answer to the question "How do students approach university?". I end the chapter with a summary of the findings.

Qualitative Sample

For the qualitative phase of this project, thirty-one participants were selected using a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling. Initially, the intention was to get equal numbers of participants from each institution and use a maximal variation strategy—wherein 'diverse individuals are chosen who are expected to hold different perspectives on the central phenomenon' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 174)—to select a variety of students from each institution. For this reason, only specific individuals fitting this criterion and who had previously agreed, in the online survey, to be interviewed, were contacted. However, drop-outs and non-responses led to a loosening of the criteria, which was considered acceptable in this case because representativeness was not the aim of this

strand of the project. Nonetheless, a diverse array of individuals (including estranged, mature, and disabled students) was interviewed, representing a variety of fee statuses, year groups, countries, university types and socio-economic backgrounds—thereby achieving a purposeful sample of maximal variation. Table 39 shows the diversity of the interview sample, with roughly an even split between fee-paying students and non-fee-paying students (17 and 14, respectively) and students at English and Scottish institutions (13 and 18, respectively).

Table 39. Description of Interview Sample

Variable	N (31)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	11
Female	20
<i>University Country</i>	
Scotland	18
England	13
<i>University Type</i>	
Russell Group	19
Post-92	12
<i>Socio-economic Status</i>	
High SES	7
Mid SES	9
Low SES	15
<i>Fee Status</i>	
Fee-paying	17
Non-fee paying	14
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
White	25
Asian or Asian British	4
Mixed	2
<i>Year of University</i>	
1 st	4
2 nd	6
3 rd	11
4 th	9
5 th	1
<i>Type of Student</i>	
Mature (over 22 years at the start of degree)	5

Method

Interviews took place largely by telephone, with only two interviews being conducted in person, and recorded using iPhone recording software (the Voice Memos app). Interviewees were asked at the start of the interview to confirm whether they were still happy to take part, and reminded that they were free to leave at any point. In order to expand and complement the work of the quantitative strand, a semi-structured approach to the interviews was used, focused on drawing out (1) what, if anything, students were doing to prepare for the labour market (thus answering RQ3); (2) how they saw, and interacted with, university (thus answering RQ5); and (3) what they thought about fees, value-for-money and the idea of “student-as-customer” (building on the findings that were emerging from the quantitative strand, suggesting that a relationship existed between fee-paying and consumer orientation).

Interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes (see detailed log in Table 40 below), with the average length being 31 minutes; half were transcribed by the researcher, half were transcribed by an appointed transcriptionist. However, all recordings were listened to multiple times by the researcher, and each transcription was read at least three times. These transcriptions resulted in a total of 145,242 words.

Coding was done, firstly, using NVivo software, using a deductive approach, based on the Player/Purist framework of Brown and Hesketh (2004) and on the idea of the student-as-consumer (Molesworth et al., 2009). However, it soon became clear that participants did not so easily fall into these ideal types, and indeed seemed to embody multiple, conflicting aspects of these ideal types at once. Therefore, interviews were then coded inductively,

looking for themes and connections within the data that might answer the two main research questions: (1) How do students from different social backgrounds and from institutions subject to different funding systems approach their employability? (2) How do students from different social backgrounds and from institutions subject to different funding systems approach university?¹⁰ This approach led to the creation of a new ideal-type model of student orientations to the labour market.

The following section details this model and presents the findings of the qualitative analysis by research question. Illustrative quotes are used throughout this section to exemplify the findings and highlight the voices of the participants; all participants are quoted more than once. To avoid overly “quantifying” qualitative research (Murphy, 2018), counts are used only in the discussion of the ideal-type model; the rest of the chapter deals with themes that emerged without reference to *how many times* a perspective emerged or *how many students* expressed a viewpoint.

Table 40. Interview Log

<i>Participant*</i>	<i>Duration (minutes)</i>	<i>Word Count</i>
LISA	31	5,372
ROSE	23	4,768
RENEE	29	3,917
AMANDA	24	3,669
MOLLY	27	3,201
JONATHAN	33	4,109
JAKE	35	5,719
KELLY	30	4,219
LEAH	35	2,637
HENRY	26	3,802
SUHAIL	26	3,837
CLARA	25	2,261

¹⁰ A full codebook is included in the Appendix.

MOIRA	23	3,896
HOLLY	34	4,943
EVA	30	4,232
KAYDEN	26	4,337
SAMIRA	38	7,105
BLAKE	49	7,319
CHARLOTTE	36	5,636
CARMEN	48	5,831
DEREK	47	4,553
BRIDGET	29	5,006
AADESH	61	8,889
FREYA	50	6,313
GABBY	45	6,992
ISAAC	28	3,606
JULIA	29	3,591
LUKE	27	3,586
MAC	39	4,237
SOFIA	31	4,406
NICK	31	3,253
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,045</i>	<i>145,242</i>

**Please note that pseudonyms are used here and throughout for participant anonymity*

Qualitative Findings

Research Question 3: How Do Students Approach their Employability?

According to the work of Brown and Hesketh (2004), whether students are able to successfully transition from university to an increasingly congested and precarious graduate marketplace depends on their knowledge of, and ability to, “play the game”. Thus Players, according to this ideal-type model, “may not be the best people for the job, but they are the people who tend to be successful at assessment centres”. This is because they understand that they are in a positional competition with their peers, and thus they know how to play the employability game by marketing themselves and being instrumental in their attitudes

towards career-building. Purists, on the other hand, understand the labour market to be essentially meritocratic; they see no game being played and therefore have no strategies for it. Their focus is thus to simply “be themselves” and eventually find the “right fit” in the labour market; indeed, self-presentation and narratives of employability are seen as a type of lie.

Therefore, understanding students’ attitudes towards the labour market – how they see the labour market, how they make use of resources, how goal-oriented and proactive they are – while at university, and whether these are influenced by the marketisation of university, is important. For instance, does being a Scottish non-fee-paying student mean that you feel less invested in your career? Are you necessarily more of a Player in an elite English institution? Discussions of employability are generally concerned with *outcomes* (i.e. is the graduate in “graduate” employment) and sometimes concerned with barriers (i.e. is the student’s social class impacting their ability to find “graduate” employment), but it is also important to explore how various conditions encourage or impact the positions students take in relation to the labour market before graduation; this was therefore a main aim of this study. Several findings emerged from their accounts.

Firstly, there was a sense, from many of the students, that money was indeed a strong factor in how they approached university and what they wanted from their degree, particularly with regards to the labour market. Particularly for those who felt the weight of the cost, there was a sense of not wanting to “waste” their time at university:

Renee: I was debating both English and History. But I decided on law because I wasn’t sure what I would do after an English or History degree, knowing I didn’t want to teach.

Interviewer: Interesting [...] does that mean that you want to work in law ultimately once you finish?

Renee: I'm not certain, but should I wish to there's quite an obvious career path. I know **I don't want to teach and it's a bit expensive to do an undergrad degree in History and then go on to do a law conversion as well.**

(Law, Russell Group Institution, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Samira: I'm like self-funded and it really makes me, like, it really makes you think, you know, when you're paying that much money, like for me, it's like, although I don't have to worry about the debt, but **it's a lot of money to go at once. It really makes you think about like, is this what I want to do, you know, it-it makes it feel a lot more serious rather than wasting your time.**

(Psychology, post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, rUK self-funded)

Aadesh: Yes, that really does play a role and does play in the back of my mind with so much money being spent on me for my education. You know, money doesn't come easy to anyone, right? It's hard-earned money by my Mum and my Dad, it's basically their entire life savings they're expending or spending on me. Essentially, the deal is that it's more like an investment, so that the outcome eventually makes up for it.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, International)

This, interestingly, included some Scottish students too, who viewed the Scottish system not as “free” but as a payment—and therefore investment—made by the government on behalf of the students:

Charlotte: By the end of second year, start of third year, I did really have more of an insight into not just my student loan¹¹ side of SAAS [Student Awards Agency Scotland], like, “Oh my gosh, I have to pay this back”, I was not really being wise to that, but also thinking that the government are paying for me to be at this university, to get this education, to invest in me. I started having that realisation of, again, I am actually here for a purpose. **I am here for a reason. I'm not just here to mess about, because the government are really investing in me and in my education. I'd better make it worth it.**

¹¹ Charlotte is referring to the maintenance loan, here, rather than a tuition fee loan.

(Natural Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

However, there was also a sense, from many students, that the Scottish system of *not* paying tuition fees meant that the degree choice was taken less seriously (and was potentially not considered in relation to labour market outcomes) and their time was used less fully, because it was *not* seen as a serious “investment”—it *felt* like it was free. This attitude was expressed both by fee-payers about non-fee-payers and by non-fee-payers about their hypothetical selves:

Holly: I think it's also like...a student, like the student attitude, like I think...people might take it a bit more seriously if they weren't getting it for free.

Interviewer: Oh it's interesting you say that. What makes you say that?

Holly: Well, like, a lot of people that I started with in first year, they just have dropped out, or like "Oh, I can't make it to this class because I have to work", whereas in the States, people would work like two jobs but never complain about having to miss class. So it's just, it's a totally different mindset that I've had to get used to.

Interviewer: And you think that's because the fees are covered?

Holly: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

(Microbiology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Lisa: There were a lot more dropouts from Scottish students that I know or people that are going to - they find it easier to switch. **Whereas I've always gone into it at least with a mentality to think, I've committed to it now, if you don't follow it through it's not worth it¹²**, but you need to keep doing it - I mean, even if I come out and it's not the degree I wanted but at least I've got one, whereas I feel like they're - they're more, oh well it's not working out for me, I'm not doing uni, I'm dropping out, because **they don't have the idea of, Okay well two years of uni that's 18 grand of debt...[...] I feel like they take it for granted sometimes?** It's just kind of like yeah, well, we came to uni because we can, rather than it ever being like a big decision that they've had to make. Yeah. They also have it easier to resit as well. So if they fail a year, they can resit once, because they get five years, they get five years paid[...] **So they've got that**

¹² Bold text is used to highlight especially salient sentences in the chosen quotes.

kind of net to fall back on, if they fail a year, they can resit it. I've had quite a few friends that have just done that, because it's not that it's easier to just stop and do it again, but they've got the option to? Whereas for me, that's just another year of loan, and even then there wouldn't be another year of loan, because you only get three paid I think. And so I'd have to then fund it.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it sounds like there's sort of more - almost more pressure that you feel is on you?

Lisa: Yeah, yeah.

(Archaeology, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, Student loan)

Charlotte: I had a great time at university. I'm not dissatisfied at all, but being able to expect more from them, and also I think it [paying fees] would have helped me to really narrow down and say, "Right. I'm paying for this. I'd better put in that extra hour, put in that extra and get the most out of it that I can." I tried obviously the best that I could, but **I feel like that would have definitely tunnelled my vision more into it and said, "Right. I'm paying for this. Let's get my money's worth." It doesn't feel like that when someone else is paying, because it just doesn't feel like you are paying at all. It feels like it is free.**

(Natural Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Gabby: **I think it would have felt a lot more like an investment if I was going to uni and having to pay nearly £10,000 a year in tuition fees, on top of a very tricky loan, and that kind of stuff. Like, SAAS made it very easy, and it made it very accessible for us to go to uni. Whereas I think if I was coming as an English student or something, coming to a Scottish uni, I would have been a lot more motivated about what I'd chosen to do. Because I probably wouldn't have just gone and done English Literature off the bat; I would have probably thought about it a lot more [...]. There would have been a lot more incentive, it's like, "Great, you're going to have so much debt after this; you're going to be, like, £70,000 in debt. This is going to have to be worth it, and you're also going to have to have enough career prospects in order to pay it off." So, yes, I think there would have been a lot more incentives to be prepared and, kind of, strategic with coming to uni. But I didn't really have that.**

(English Literature, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

In addition, many students—across both England and Scotland—expressed a desire and expectation for more labour-market preparation, in particular with regards to practical experience from their courses:

Lisa: I hoped it would be practical, like I hoped that I would be able to go onto a site any point during my degree and to actually know what I'm doing? Whereas I feel like either they're saving that all up for the last year or it's going to come in experience that you have to go and seek elsewhere.

(Archaeology, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Charlotte: It seems like such a trivial thing but I feel like going into the industry that would be something that we'd be expected to think off our own backs and be able to plan out our own sessions and things like that. I feel like that would have been really helpful. We didn't do a lot of that. We did the majority, as in 95% of the time throughout university, it was our schedule was given to us within the lab.

(Natural Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Derek: I guess kind of a more practical view of things. We're taught in the first year, we have a few labs where you make stuff, but then that goes away and it just becomes very theoretical. They do have labs to kind of bring that back on to practice on the practical side, but it doesn't really work, I don't think. I think that's one of the issues. I think that's particularly true of Old England University - that it's very theoretical, and it kind of gets around that it being called engineering science and not engineering so they can say, "Well, it's about the inference than it is science behind engineering. Which I guess is something that I kind of expected I'd get a bit more hands-on engineering experience.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Finally, very few students in this sample were "Purists" of the Brown and Hesketh (2004) variety; that is to say, the majority of the interviewees, across all conditions, viewed the labour market as congested and competitive, and showed an awareness that the degree

alone would not be enough to find a “graduate” job, supporting the findings of the quantitative strand of the study. There could be many reasons for this apparent shift in student awareness since the time of Brown and Hesketh’s study (including, for instance, the financial crash of 2008), but one important factor might be the discourse of competition and employability that has also now suffused many curricula at some universities and is taught explicitly, particularly at Scottish institutions. As one student explains:

Interviewer: We talked a little bit about that pressure that people feel, that the other students seem to be sort of giving into in terms of building up their CVs... I'm wondering, where do you think that pressure comes from?

Jonathan: I think it comes from many different places. It's kind of ... society in general... feels kind of...competitive, the job market is competitive, and you feel like you have to keep up with that, but concretely many people specifically kind of pedal this competition, this discourse of competition I think, which includes politicians who talk about having to be more competitive all the time, that the economy needs to be more competitive, and that Higher education needs to produce more competitive, employable students for the job market...and **at the University it's very much the careers service that furthers this pressure and seems to really push this narrative that actually - they are, they're pushing this narrative that the university education we are getting is not enough.** They often say this explicitly. Things such as, you know, that our extracurricular activities just as important as the education itself, and that you need to do this and that and otherwise you won't get a job. **We actually had in first and second year, I think, we had some compulsory zero-credit employability courses, which were fully online, where you had to complete like a course, yeah an online course, about employability,** which, you know ,to me was pretty pointless, but it was all about...it felt like it was all about socializing students into this narrative of competition and employability.

(Linguistics, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

Those few who did *not* view the labour market as a positional competition were, generally speaking, on specifically vocational degrees (for instance, Occupational Therapy or Nursing), where they saw the demand for their qualifications as high, and therefore

believed that entering the labour market would not be overly challenging. These vocational students were not concerned with building their employability in additional ways, because they viewed their degree as, by its very nature, making them employable for their specific field—and indeed, in these degree programmes, placements and networking opportunities were arranged by the universities. In other words, these students seemed to be already half-integrated into the labour market through their courses, and held the most meritocratic, fit-based (“Purist”) attitudes towards the labour market; however, in their case this attitude is arguably justified.

The interviews showed that among the non-vocational students, however, knowledge of a competitive labour market resulted in a variety of attitudes towards the labour market. “Players”, of the Brown and Hesketh type, were rare. Instead, students generally engaged with their employability in a number of ways, both authentic and inauthentic. For instance, the students that saw education as an investment appeared to be more goal-oriented and proactive in relation to the labour market—but for some this was an authentic, meritocratic journey to a specific, desired career, rather than an effort to become generally “employable”. A number of students were also aware of the “employability game” but were simply haphazard or unsuccessful in playing it, either explicitly aware of the social barriers or simply a bit lost; they had “Player” knowledge but no strategies. Many students were also unable to build their employability through internships, societies, etc. because they were supporting themselves financially by working part-time and during the summers—this was particularly true of students at Scottish institutions:

Charlotte: A lot of the people on my course did work experience over the summer. I wish that was something that I was able to do, but

because I was supporting myself living away from home and things like that I always had to be working. I didn't have that luxury of being able to take that week, two weeks to a month out of work. Yes, that set me back a lot.

(Natural Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Gabby: But a lot of the people who were in the society could have done, like, internships in the summer. They were applying for ones, like, once we'd just graduated, while we were, like, in the middle of our fourth year, and stuff. And that wasn't really something I was able to do. Like, financially, I would work in the summer, save some money, which I would then use, like, my whole year round. And then - I did that in the first and second year, and then in third year, I worked, like, part-time during uni, as well as full-time in summer. And then beginning of fourth year, again, full-time in the summer, and then worked part-time during uni. **So, like, there was never a point where I would have been able to have done an internship, even if I'd felt like I was able to apply in fourth year.**

(English Literature, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

These different attitudes towards the labour market were placed into a new ideal-type model in an attempt to expand the current Player/Purist dichotomy. This new ideal-type model will be explored in the following section.

[Expanding The Purist/Player Framework: An Ideal-Type Model of Student Orientations to The Labour Market](#)

In trying to fit the interviewees into Brown and Hesketh's (2004) Player and Purist framework, it became clear that the old dichotomy did not so easily translate to the students of 2019, nor to students studying a wide variety of subjects. A financial crash, increased tuition fees, the rise of tech, and increasing policy focus on graduate employment—all of these may have contributed to new ways of thinking about and engaging with the labour market. This model, therefore, which incorporates the Player/Purist framework but also

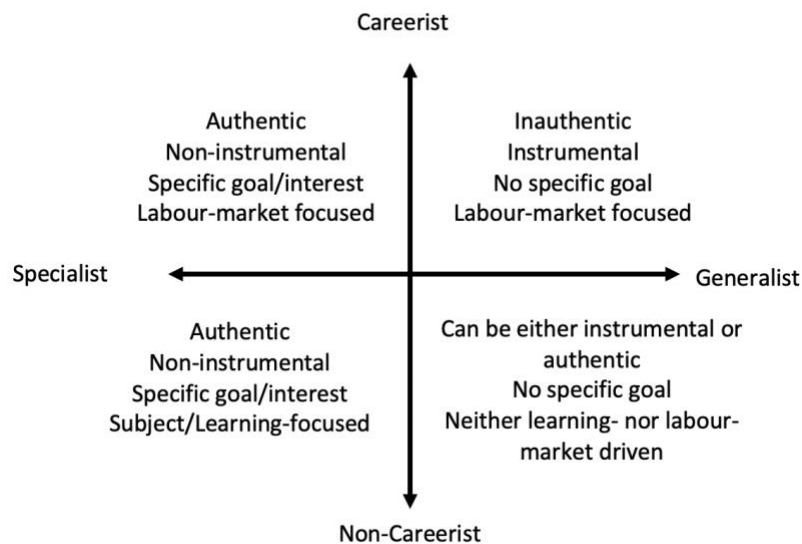
draws on the work of Tomlinson (2007),¹³ is an attempt to illustrate these new attitudes. It does not assume, however, that these attitudes are immutable, fixed traits—on the contrary, it would make sense that a single student could move from one to another over the course of a degree. Figure 21 shows an outline of the model.

The model takes into account not only how students are (or are not) building their employability, but also why they chose their specific degree in the first place. Those who chose to study a particular subject with a specific labour-market end goal—i.e. a career—are referred to as **Specialist Careerists**; these usually work towards that end goal by building their employability authentically. This idea of the “Careerist” is drawn from Tomlinson’s model; however, I used Brown and Hesketh’s ideas of Player and Purist to distinguish between those who have a *specific* career in mind, and who are interested in having a career *more generally*. **Generalist Careerists**, therefore, are labour-market focused but not working towards a specific career; rather, they are thinking in terms of making themselves *generally* employable, and therefore largely operate in “inauthentic” ways—meaning ways that are extrinsic and instrumental, rather than guided by an *authentic* desire to engage with a specific career. **Specialist Non-careerists** did not choose their subject degree with the labour market outcomes in mind and have no particular career aspirations; their focus is on learning or personal development, rather than making themselves employable. **Generalist Non-careerists** have little sense of why they are at university and have either no or many conflicting career ideas; these tend to retreat from employability-building and most closely match up to Tomlinson’s “Retreatists” (2007) —crucially, however, they are also not

¹³ Previously discussed in the Scale Development Chapter

connected to their degree subjects, nor to a wider desire to use university for self-development.

Figure 21. Ideal-Type of Student Attitudes and Approaches



The Specialist Careerist

Just over a third ($N = 9$) of the sample fell into this group, the majority of them ($N = 7$) from Low or Mid-Low SES backgrounds. Just over half were at English or Russell Group institutions ($N = 5$). These Specialist Careerists loved their subject and had a specific career aspiration that was built around it:

Moira:

I think it's going to date back when I was, I would say, 13 when I started junior high? I had a great chemistry teacher and you know, it was also the time when I was - I'm still very much into - fantasy. So chemistry is like alchemy, so a little bit like magical and I also like very much the quantum field of chemistry when you go deep into how the word is built and stuff and like this was very very interesting for me. So that's why I chose the chemistry in the first place, but then I have a period of two years when you know all the friends and parents said that I'm gonna have no work in chemistry after my degree, which is true in Poland. So I thought about medicine for some time but when it comes came to you know

- applying to University, so I decided that nah I'm not actually interested in medicine, I'm interested in chemistry.
- Interviewer: Interesting. Okay, and when you were first applying do you remember what you thought you would do afterwards with your degree, like did you have any sort of professional aspirations?
- Moira: I definitely wanted to do the PhD, and I wanted to stay in Academia. I wanted to be a scientist.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

- Interviewer: And what made you decide to do so Psychology?
- Rose: So I worked with kids in my gap year? I'd always been interested in Psychology, but then I worked with kids and I was like right, I want to do psychology and kids. I've done a couple of things since and yeah, it's just been a passion of mine probably since I've been about 15.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Hence these students were largely learning-oriented despite being largely driven by long-term career goals, indeed some of these students actively rejected the idea that university should be preparing them for the labour market:

- Nick: I definitely don't like the idea that the only purpose of university is to improve your lifetime earnings. From my perspective, the primary purpose of the university should be for learning about your subjects.

(Earth Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Because they were career-driven, they could be very proactive about building their employability, at times employing almost Player-like strategies, such as networking, gaining work experience, reaching out to mentors and the careers office, and building the curriculum vitae (CV). However, unlike the Players of Brown and Hesketh (2004), these activities appeared *authentic* and *non-instrumental*—in other words, because these students were focused on a particular career they wanted, rather than making themselves

generally employable, they viewed these strategies not as “playing a game” but as pursuing a passion:

- Rose: I think... it's really hard to get that sort of stuff and you just kind of have to know how to get in places, and it is just about sending your CV and hoping that somebody comes back and...wants to take you.
- Interviewer: Yeah, and so how do you feel like you found out about how to get in places and what you need to do to kind of get to where you want to go?
- Rose: A lot of it... like intuition and initiative, but if you're not into your degree, or you're not wanting to take it further, you're not going to find those avenues, **but if you're kind of passionate and are like, Right, I really enjoyed this part, you're kind of- you'll speak to your lecturers, you'll speak to people you know that are in the career.** So I have a family friend who is a psychologist, so she helped me find my mentor, you kind of just have to go out and try and do that, **but it's also about, yeah, I would just say being self-starting but that comes with liking your degree? Like I know a lot of people who are just in the degree to get a degree. Whereas if you want to...find stuff, you have to really kind of enjoy it and know that that's what you want to do forever.**

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

- Interviewer: So what made you decide to take on the volunteering role, and actually the Formula Student [an extra-curricular engineering project] as well...?
- Derek: The volunteering initially started out because I – as part of the Lloyds Scholars I have to do 100 hours a year of volunteering. So it started off with me just going on the activity days, but after 2 of the days, and I really enjoyed it, and they started having- I'm on the committee so I applied and I got a position on the committee. It started off as because I had to, and then it ended up with because I enjoyed it. The Formula Student, I heard about it from a friend of mine and joined because of him because I thought that looks interesting, and it's engineering-y and we build a racing car, so it's cool.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

- Interviewer: And so how did you find that internship opportunity?

- Moira: So I was just looking in research for research jobs in Warsaw, which you know matches the field of my interests, and I texted a couple of professors, I think five, from which two answered and, yes the one I went to was the one that answered.
- Interviewer: And why did you feel like you needed to - or what made you want to do an internship that summer?
- Moira: So there are two reasons first is I just don't want to lay around and you know do nothing, I'm the kind of person that needs a reason to get up from the bed every morning and internship is a very good reason. I enjoy chemistry and working in labs. So that was perfect for me.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Others may have the CV in mind but would not pursue employability-building for its own sake, without a sense of authentic enjoyment, purpose and learning:

- Bridget : [The work experience was] still for CV purposes but I'd only continue doing it if I enjoyed it. If I wasn't enjoying it, **I wouldn't stick something out for the benefit of a CV, it's definitely enjoyment and learning about different fields...**and I mean, for example, the natural history museum, fantastic that I did do that position, because my Masters is now in the natural history museum of Cambridge. So I would not have this masters unless I had been doing that, that sort of work experience.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

- Rose: It's so good. I've done it for two years now and it's fantastic because our uni sadly doesn't do placements so we don't get a placement alongside our degree. So I wanted to get some sort of on-hand experience and it's given me like my child protection training , my suicide prevention training, stuff like that. So it's been really, really good.
- Interviewer: Wow amazing and was the experience - is that why you applied for that volunteering position in the first place?
- Rose: Um a little bit, yeah, I mean I... wanted to get it so it would enhance my CV and I wanted to get some experience but also I just feel like it's an actual really helpful service and everyone that's on - that I speak to on the phone just thinks, I'm - just wish I found this sooner, it's really helpful and I'm kind of trying to get more students. So I work with them to get more students to volunteer for it.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

The **Specialist Careerists** therefore represent a particular type of *authentic* and *non-instrumental* career-driven mentality amongst the sample. They are not Purists, because they are thinking about the labour market and may be proactively and strategically preparing for this, but they are not Players either, because they are driven by an authentic desire for a specific career based on a love of the subject-matter or field itself.

Generalist Careerist

The Generalist Careerists represented just under a third of the sample ($N = 8$), and most ($N = 6$) were from Mid to High SES backgrounds. Just over half of those in this group were at Russell Group ($N = 5$) or Scottish institutions ($N = 5$). These students often had no specific career aspirations but still chose their subject with labour outcomes in mind, often with a view to keeping their future options open:

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. Did you have a career in mind when you first applied to do social sciences?

Freya: No, I - I wanted to apply for something that would teach me a variance of skills, allow me to specialize eventually down the road, and give me the choice of what I choose to make my degree into.

(Social Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: Moving back a little bit, do you remember why you applied for engineering to begin with, why'd you choose it?

Luke: I had quite a lot of difficulty choosing my course. I actually chose engineering because it keeps the most doors open for me in terms of further postgraduate degrees or job sectors. I was stuck between econ and geography and engineering. I figured that I could do engineering and study the other two, or anything else I'm interested in, on top of that through extra reading.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: What made you change from biotechnology to biomedical sciences?

Charlotte: I really liked the fact that there were so many different areas in biomedical science. It seemed to encompass a lot more, and it just gave me a lot more experience in different areas thinking about the future, like the job market and stuff.

(Natural Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Blake: Everything you use every day has had some sort of contribution from an engineer. So, I knew there were a lot more employment prospects there, which is one of the main reasons that I picked up the degree.

(Computer Sciences, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

The lack of specific career aspiration meant that these students were building up their employability generally, with a general (Player-like) awareness that a degree alone would not be enough:

Blake: I'm aware that it's very- If you want the top jobs, it becomes very, very competitive, and you need to have an awful lot on your CV. And you absolutely need experience, that is paramount. So, that is why I put such a huge effort in. I may not have made as many applications to companies where I knew I probably wasn't in with a chance.

(Computer Sciences, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Aadesh: Also I would say at the end of the day if you're really wanting to get a job or a good placement, it's not just down to your grades, there's so much that they look for. They're looking at your personality, they're looking at your intellect, they're looking at the smallest of things.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, International)

Freya: The way that University is sometimes sold is based on like, if you have a degree you will immediately be employable. [...] **“if you have a degree, you have job.” And it's based on the fact that degrees several years ago had this scarcity attached to them, this pristine idea of having a degree makes you employable... That's not really is suitable vision to be selling students in this day and age, because having a degree does not make you employable because so many people have degrees now...it's what you do *outside* of your degree**, you know, the volunteering, working while you're at Uni, your academic involvement with your lecturers, your engaging with other people [...] you know, it's all of these *extra* things that rounds you off and make you suitable for the workplace. And I think the academic idea of having a job is based on the end destination. It's not explaining the way that the person took to getting a job...you know, it's not explaining how you deal with an interview, how you- you write a CV, how you deal with situational questions that come up in interview, how you *make* yourself employable.

(Social Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Some of the students built their employability in *inauthentic* ways (these are the Strong Generalist Careerists, and these correspond most closely to Brown and Hesketh's Players), joining societies and enhancing their CVs, not out of an interest in what they would be experiencing in the internship, but largely only in order to give themselves an edge in the positional competition of the labour market:

Interviewer: Have you been doing work experience throughout the last few years or have you been saving that until the end of your degree?

Molly: No, I did a summer placement last summer and also one before that as well. The last one I did was in an oil and gas company and the one before it was at [an Italian] University.

Interviewer: Did you do those out of interest or were you doing those because you wanted to build up your work experience? How did those come about?

Molly: Yes, mostly for the work experience part, just because a lot of the jobs that you get afterwards, they require you to have had some kind of previous work experience.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Blake: To be honest, I didn't get a lot of offers for internships. I maybe had a few calls from Old Scot University (2), I had already accepted this one I had found through AIESEC, which is a sort of youth exchange international programme, which normally do volunteering, or they do organised internships as well. And I managed to get on this one with a company, Infosys, here in India. Which, to be honest, it's almost more of a marketing campaign than it is an internship. [...]It's more of a marketing thing [...]but it was this that came up. [...] If you don't get your first choice, it's very easy to pick up ones where nobody else has been able to apply for it. And there are tons each year.

(Computer Sciences, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Others appeared to do this in a mixture of authentic and inauthentic ways (these are the Weak Generalist Careerists), actively trying to build their employability but also *learn* about the labour market—through work experiences, societies, and networks—so that they might find their future place in it:

Renee: I've done quite a bit of legal work experience.

Interviewer: And what was the motivation for doing that work experience?

Renee: I was curious as to what it would be like and I figured since it was the expected career path after my degree it would be good to know what I was potentially signing for before I got there rather than getting there and discovering I'd spent a rather large amount of money to do something I didn't really like.

(Law, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Aadesh: I don't know, to be honest right now, I really do not know what I'm going to do. I'm just focusing on getting into fourth year for the moment and get a head start on my fourth year project, my project boards. But based on a few things, I'd say after a few weeks of my work, my job here in Old England University, maybe I'll get a good idea of how it is. And also it's like a research based job. So it really gives me an idea of both the worlds [PhDs or industry], and maybe I can decide that whichever is better for me.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, International)

The **Generalist Careerists** therefore represent a particular type of general labour-market focused mentally. They have an awareness of the positional nature of the competition of the labour market, but they have no specific career in mind, leading to, at the extreme end of the spectrum, *inauthentic* and *instrumental* approaches to their employability—that is, unlike the Specialist Careerists, whose work experiences appeared to be a natural extension of their love of their subject, and whose career-building was therefore part of creating an authentic work-self, these Generalist Careerists are motivated by the knowledge that the labour market is oversaturated, and therefore took any work experiences available, believing this might give them a positional advantage. These therefore correspond most closely to Players. Others, at the weaker end of the spectrum, were also focused on making themselves generally employable— but because they were also *exploring* the labour market, their efforts included, at times, non-instrumental and authentic approaches as well.

Specialist Non-careerist

On the other hand, the Specialist Non-careerists, of which there were only six in the sample ($N = 6$), were actively not considering the labour market, either with regards to their choice of subject or when it came to their extra-curricular activities. The majority of the students in this group were in Russell Group institutions ($N = 5$), in Scotland ($N = 4$) and originally from European countries. They were from predominantly mid-SES backgrounds.

Though some of these had developed some idea of what they might do after university during the course of their degree, these students chose their subject without thinking much about the associated labour market prospects:

Interviewer: And what made you decide to study psychology and sociology?

Kelly: I always wanted to do that. I was like curious about how the brain works... like emotions and stuff. Just genuinely curious about this stuff.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: Do you remember what you sort of thought you might do after your degree when you first started?

Suhail: Um...I hadn't really thought much about careers at that point. Um.. it was more... sort of biology really interested me, so I thought I'd try at Uni and really enjoyed it. It was more like, "I'll figure out after uni" kind of thing.

(Biology, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: And why did you choose to do international relations and Linguistics?

Jonathan: So what I really wanted to study at that point was international relations, because it was, yeah, it just intrigued me. I was traveling a lot, I did a gap year traveling a lot before University and I wanted to know more about yeah different countries and political relations and it was kind of a coincidence that Old Scot University (2) as the only University in Scotland offered the combination with Linguistics, and I was just like kind of kind of vaguely interested in linguistics. So I just thought I'd apply for that one because I knew I could still change it. But once I started I got really into Linguistics.

(Linguistics, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: Is that what you saw yourself doing originally, sort of going into a PhD or going into Academia or research?

Clara: Um...I think... when I started here at Old England University , I wasn't thinking very much about what I'd do afterwards.

Interviewer: And sort of cycling back a little bit, can you remember the reason why you applied to do biology in the first place at Old England University ?

Clara: My first reason is just that I find life so fascinating and sort of the variety of forms of it there seems no end to what's out there to what can be learned about it and I think to me... I...like... I guess I - I like both sort of finding....the patterns of molecular biology and genetics and stuff and also the... the sort of more...essay-based end of it as well.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, High SES, Student Loan)

These students often did not seem concerned about gaining an advantage in positional competition, and so weren't engaged in building up their employability through extra-curriculars or societies, instead seeing these as an opportunity to explore *themselves*:

- Interviewer: Did you join a new societies at any point or think about it?
 Suhail: I didn't join university-wide ones but I was part of quite a few College Societies. So the college sports team, so I was part of the College founders team this summer, um...netball kind of thing.
 Interviewer: And was that for - what was the motivation behind sort of joining those sports teams?
 Suhail: I think just - just kind of to do something a bit different for a while. Hang around with people in college and also they were less commitment than the University sports teams. So, I think... and know quite conveniently timed and yeah.

(Biology, Russell Group Institution, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

- Eva: I've tried multiple societies, also tried to the film society and... we have many societies so I can always try something new...if I don't really like the one I'm in, I've done that and then... I meet with with my friends, I go on walks, I went on a few little trips, and...
 Interviewer: And what was the kind of motivation for joining the societies?
 Eva: I wanted to learn something new first. And then I wanted to....like... have a sport that I liked that I can go back to to keep in shape because I don't really have one that I like particularly. So I tried many sports to find one that I really enjoy that I don't just do like from my house, so I tried that and **I wanted to learn something new. Not just do my degree.**

(History, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

- Interviewer: Apart from studying how have you spent your time at Old England University ?
 Clara: I've - mainly getting involved in clubs and societies and things. I yeah, I...I guess ...church, I play ultimate frisbee, I sing in the college choir. Or... I used to do all these things rather. Yeah, so.
 Interviewer: What was your motivation for joining the various clubs and societies?

Clara: Um...for ah... You know going to church that's a deep part of who I am and what I believe, um... the other clubs and societies just because it was fun, basically.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Often, these students seemed to value the personal development and learning aspects of university more than the labour-market preparation aspect:

Interviewer: And you said that you'd always wanted to go to university or you knew that you wanted to go to university. What was your motivation there?

Leah: I think because both of my parents went and...because I think...a lot of it was that...they talked a lot about **how University sort of helped them develop themselves** and realize what they wanted to do with her lives and things like that...and then also that I just - I really like learning, I like...like knowing things.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: And what do you want to get out of your degree?

Kelly: Well... that's a hard question.[laughs]. I obviously want to get to qualification I need to do what I want, but then it's not ...I'm not trying to educate just because I have to... I just...it-it provided the means to, for me to... investigate other stuff because we have, because I'm a student in the University, I have access to databases that are usually paid, and -and this way I can - even related to-related to the lectures and whatever - I just like something and I just do my research on it, just because I'm curious like... because I have the means to do it.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

Jonathan: I mean, I think it's really about the education itself for the sake of education.... I think going to University, it's something you should do because you want to learn, and because you want to actually spend three or four years of your life in an institution and a place of learning... and because you want to develop intellectually. I don't think that University education should be just kind of training to go into the job market.

(Linguistics, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

If a career aspiration had been developed during the course of the degree, the students were not particularly proactive about building towards it:

- Interviewer: Okay, and have you sort of taken any practical steps towards kind of following that career path, have you looked at them as you mentioned like there's a need to get a masters and...?
- Kelly: Uhuh, well I have yeah, I know what I need to do, basically. But there's nothing that I can do about it now. I need to finish the bachelor's first. So yah, I haven't done anything about it, but it's because like I just cannot at this moment.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

One student actively rejected what he called the “narrative of competition” that was presented by the university, and instead intentionally focused on *not* building his employability for the sake of it, but instead to be authentic:

- Jonathan: I kind of realized at some point that I feel like it's kind of pointless to do all of those things just because of the pressure to have it on my CV, and **I've kind of made a point out of, for example, not applying to internships that I'm not really interested in.** Whereas I feel like that many of my friends just apply for internships because they feel pressured, like you have to have an internship during summer and it doesn't really matter what it is. You just need to have an internship.
- Interviewer: So what made you decide to not give in to the pressure as it were?
- Jonathan: Em...because... well, first of all I feel like it's just, it's very stressful, if you try to be a part of that, because internships are quite competitive. And I didn't want to kind of like feel stressed by the need to have an internship just for the internship's sake...and at the same time, I kind of realized, I believe that it's not - it's not really that big of an advantage later on in order to get a job. I think employers, many employers at least, can see if you, you know, if you just did some kind of internship just for the sake of it. I'm not sure if it really has that much value.

(Linguistics, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, No Fees)

Specialist non-careerists, then, relate most closely to Brown and Hesketh's Purists—they show little awareness of the need to build up a positional advantage or “play the employability game” (or intentionally reject it for a more authentic approach). Rather, they are focused on exploring their subject and themselves while at university, indeed, this is what they see university being *for*, self-development and deepening their knowledge of a beloved subject. Their preparations for the labour market, if they exist at all, are driven by authenticity; one of the students even going so far as to *reject* what he believed to be a false pressure of competition.

Generalist Non-careerist

Just under a quarter of the sample ($N = 7$) fell into this group, the majority of them fee-paying ($N = 6$) and from Low SES backgrounds ($N = 5$). Like the other Generalists, these students had no particular career aspirations or many conflicting aspirations, but unlike them, these students did not choose their subjects with labour market prospects in mind. However, they also did not choose their subjects out of specific love for them, but rather because they felt they *had* to go to university and simply chose a subject they were good enough at or had some interest in.

Jake:

Well, I didn't really know... kind of...I didn't really have a very good idea of any - of just kind of any of it? Uh... I didn't, like I didn't really know what I kind of wanted to do. I had a vague - all I really knew is I wanted- I needed to do something kind of humanities-y because I didn't do any - so I did the IB [International Baccalaureate], at school, I didn't do A Levels...uh and I didn't do any Sciences, so I just knew I was going to do something Humanities-y and I was like... I didn't really like the idea of doing history, and I thought law - I didn't want to be a lawyer, so I was just kinda like, may as well - you know I quite like politics,

philosophy and economics so I was like, I may as well just do that. It wasn't kinda like a very well thought-out decision in hindsight

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Gabby: I just, kind of- I like to read; I decided to do English Literature. But there was always that idea that when I, kind of, got to uni and stuff, and I was in, I would do my electives, and I would see if there was anything else that I would have rather done, and then swap into it after the first year. But I never really- the courses that I did in the first year I didn't really like any more than English Literature, so I ended up just sticking it out.

(English Literature, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Most of these students were not engaged with building their employability at all, retreating from engaging with the careers service:

Interviewer: Yes, yes, okay. Have you visited the career service at all?
 Isaac: No, I really should and I keep putting off, but I should.
 Interviewer: Is there a reason that you are reluctant to go?
 Isaac: Anxiety. Beyond that I am just kind of a wuss sometimes so, yes.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, International)

Interviewer: In terms of not knowing what you're going to do next kind of checked in with the career service at all over the last three years?
 Jake: Uh...Nnnooo.... because the thing is, I'm not really, I dunno, I'm not very kind of worrying? Just because, I, you know, I feel like I'm probably fairly employable. [...]. I'm just not really that bothered? I don't know. I just kind of - as long as I'm just doing something that's earning me a bit of money that I feel is kind of politically acceptable and I enjoy it and I'm kind of okay. I dunno, I'm not really...very uh...I don't know. I'm not really that bothered about earning a lot of money or anything.

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

- Interviewer: And how did you find out about the different opportunities, or the grad schemes? Did you ever talk to the career service at all?
- Gabby: I did, but I, kind of, left it a bit late to do it for the past year. I ended up speaking to them in June, I think [right after graduation].

(English Literature, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Extra-curriculars and work experiences were chosen haphazardly with no labour market intentions, or else not attempted at all:

- Interviewer: Have you looked into doing any kind of work experience or internships, or anything like that?
- Isaac: I'm looking to a bit of a small part-time job. It wouldn't be in the field of psychology unless I was really lucky, and mostly because I am saving up for a trip to meet some of my friends overseas. But beyond that, **I haven't specifically looked at anything that would help me career-wise because I've no idea what I'm doing there either.**

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, International)

- Interviewer: And so how would you spend your time, I mean apart from yeah tutorials and studying?
- Jake: So I edited the Isis, which is like the magazine, so I spent extensive time doing that, and I also kind of I guess co-founded, there's this kind of thing called, I don't know if you've heard of it, called common ground, which is this like, I guess, movement, organisation type thing, which started in the end of my first year and I got involved in second year and it just - it just- it's kind of a, kind of, a continuation of like stuff like Rhodes Must Fall, so to do with decolonization and you know racism and classism and support in Old England University and I kind of helped start a journal, made kind of for that in my second year as well. And then did that for like two Editions. **So kind of Journalism, I don't really - for no real reason, because I'm not really interested in journalism, but it was what I ended up doing.**

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

- Interviewer: And have you...have you been part of any of the like clubs or societies or extra-curriculars at all, has that been on your radar?
- Amanda: No [laughs] I've been very bad for doing things like that, em..doing any of those things. I just...I never played sports at school so I didn't, I just felt like, in my head, it probably wasn't the best decision to start now. I mean I know I could've, but I figured, most people that join clubs here it's because they'd been doing them for years...so I would've been way behind the rest of them.

(Veterinary Nursing, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, Student Loan)

However, this often did not come from a place ignorance regarding the need to build CVs and gain an advantage in the labour market, but often from feeling defeated or powerless:

- Kayden: It's little things just like, you know socializing, um, opportunities in terms of career. It's very much dependent on *who* you know not what you know [...] And it's little sort of, subsequent intricacies, like, you know accent, schooling, um...I just feel that all of these...**because I wasn't educated privately or been to a good boarding school or you know, I didn't grow up in a flash area in London, so they were just describing opportunities I can only ever read about.**
- Interviewer: Have you have you had any experiences where you sort of tried for an opportunity and found that it that there's been a barrier there for you?
- Kayden: Well, I just - I applied for numerous internships because at one point I was toying with the idea of you know going into private finance, and just heard from absolutely none of them. Whereas I know other people who didn't apply for the same post - or applied for posts of an almost similar nature, because obviously they had a lot of contacts - who got it and I know for a fact it, you know, they weren't qualified, you know they didn't have the academic credentials to work a bank, yet obviously because they had friends who did they got it.

(Philosophy and English Literature, Post-92 Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

For these students, university was not a place for learning and self-development, as it was for the Specialist Non-careerists, instead there was a sense of passivity in their attitude: university simply the necessary “done thing” in order to gain entrance to the labour market:

Gabby: I feel like because Old Scot University (1) is quite prestigious, in the end, I've got a very good degree from a very good university, and that may or may not put me out against other people. But **I just don't feel like the main objective for a lot of people is to actually learn at uni. It was more to just do what they could to pass, to end up getting the degree, so that then they could then go on to something.** So, I don't really feel like uni is really an educational institution in that sense, sometimes. Like, **I feel like uni is just this milestone that people have to pass, in order to get on to the next stage of life.** Because for some reason, having a degree has been the mainstream. So, people now feel like they have to have this in order to be able to get a bigger, better job, sort of thing.

(English Literature, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: What do you think university is there for? What do you think its purpose is?

Isaac: Well, you get the aspect of it where it is a place for academics to go and do research, but from the point of view of the student it is a place where you go to get higher education and more specifically, the big, shiny certificate at the end of it that gets you a better job.

Interviewer: Is that what you wanted out of university?

Isaac: I was not personally very motivated to go to university. I've had a lot of self-motivation problems but that is beside the point. **I'm more at university because my parents said, "You should go to university," than anything else.**

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, High SES, International)

Samira: I think now University is so commonplace that it's now almost like a... I don't want to say a basic...but I think most people are expected to go and even for some basic jobs, even in Dubai, like to even work in some, say, retail stores or to work as an air stewardess, you have to have a degree. And that sort of like... instead of it being you know, something say 20 30 40 years ago, they'd be like, oh she has a degree, you know something special and you know that added, it's now something that's more expected? So **I think for me is just sort of like the next level of education** [...]But even then like, sometimes having just like, you know, a line saying degree can be prioritized over, you know, five years of experience [...] and I think it's just, you know, a

norm of people - of people that seem more highly regarded if they went to University.

(Psychology, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

Generalist Non-careerists, therefore, like their peers in the Specialist non-careerist group, did not “play the employability game”—however, they also did not focus on developing themselves or deepening their subject knowledge. They were generally aware of the competitive nature of the labour market, but did not try to build their employability strategically and proactively, instead retreating from these opportunities or engaging haphazardly. For these students, university was simply a necessary step towards entering the labour market.

In sum, though students in the interview sample were generally much more aware of the labour market (and its highly competitive nature) than they were in Brown and Hesketh’s (2004) study, they nonetheless fell broadly into four ideal types: the Generalist Careerist, the Specialist Careerist, the Generalist Non-Careerist and the Specialist Non-Careerist. The Player in Brown and Hesketh’s work appears to match most closely to the Generalist Careerist, hence his strategies for employability are seen as inauthentic. The Purist maps most closely onto the Specialist Non-Careerist, who shows little awareness of or interest in the need to build up a positional advantage or “play the employability game”, focusing instead on her university learning with the hope (and trust) that she will find a right-fit job later on in life.

Research Question 4: How Do Students Approach University?

Previous literature suggested that students in today's marketized university environment—and particularly, fee-paying students—will expect and demand more from universities than students in the past, looking for “value for money” from their tuition fees. This, some have argued, is part of what leads to a consumer orientation in today's students (Ng & Forbes, 2009). As described in the literature, these students-as-consumers “seek to have a degree, rather than be learners” (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009), and use “minimalist and hyper-strategic approaches to learning” since “cognitive effort is not a responsibility of a paying service-user” (Tomlinson, 2014). Thus it has been theorised that the current funding system is making students increasingly consumer-oriented and instrumental (or disengaged) in their learning and university experience. It was theorised, therefore, that non-fee-paying students in Scottish universities would be less consumer-oriented than their fee-paying peers in English universities. However, results from the quantitative strand of this study showed that, while non-fee-paying students *did* have lower scores on the consumer scale than their fee-paying peers, when fees were held constant, students in English universities also had significantly lower Consumer scores than their peers in Scottish universities. This is contrary to what was theorised, since Scotland, with its free tuition for home students, operates in a significantly less marketised higher education system than England. The interviews sought to unpack these surprising findings.

How Students View the Cost of University

In order to explore the impact of the different funding systems on students' approach to university, it seemed important to understand exactly how students themselves viewed the cost of university. As discussed in the previous section on ‘Approach

to Employability', money played a strong role in how labour-market oriented students were. Looking more broadly, however, at how university costs were viewed by students, three main reactions emerged: the first group (of fee-paying students) saw fees as a non-issue, whether because of the structure of the student loan system or because it was future-based problem, and consequently were not motivated in any way by the cost:

Derek: It's not really an issue in my mind. I don't think, "Oh, I've got however much debt," because I don't really see it as an issue based on how it's structured after you leave. You have to pay back a fixed amount every month. The fact that it's sort of an extra form of taxation makes it really, it isn't an issue I worry about and it's always manageable.

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Jake: I don't know. I just think to be honest, the way that you pay it back means that I think it's fairly easy to kind of put it out of mind. Basically, you know, the whole nine percent or one or you know, whatever it is, and the fact that obviously it's only you know out of your income and I don't - I don't really expect to be ever earning....you know, I wouldn't be surprised, I don't really expect to every like fully pay it back, really. I don't know. So...it's not something that really yeah, it doesn't really play on my mind.

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Blake: I don't think cost is really an issue, for either Scottish or English students, I think they possibly view it in the same way, that maybe debt is- I'm in student loan debt but debt is not something you think of while you are accruing it, especially at university. It doesn't even really come up on people's radars, I don't think, the cost of going to university and the living costs. I don't think people really engage with it or see it as an exercise where they have to get their value for money.

(Computer Sciences, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, Mixed tuition fees)

Julia: Because a lot of my family, before I went to university, said, "Well, you won't be able to get a mortgage. You won't be able to get anything because you have got this debt." Having to explain to them that, "Actually, this debt is different. It is not the same as if you were to get like a payday loan out or something like that."

(Social Science, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

However, others, as described in the previous chapter, saw the cost as an incentive to not waste their time while at university, and not only in terms of high marks or gaining employment at the end, but also in terms of taking advantage of all the opportunities offered by university. Charlotte, who saw the Scottish government as “investing” in her education, for instance, puts it clearly in the following statement:

Charlotte: I fully understand that people might get to the end of it and be like, “No, I really don’t like that. I’ve got my degree to show, to have something to show for it, but I want to go into something different.” Fair enough. Do you know what I mean? That’s not a bad thing at all. That’s not a waste of time, as long as you put what you’ve learned to good use I think, and whatever good use is to them is fair, because everyone has got a different idea of that [...] like I said, through the Student Association I was able to take part in the committees and got to have impact on the campus and things like that. **I really felt like I could maximise the student experience.**

(Natural Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Similarly, international students in particular, who were paying for the fees through family means, rather than through a loan, described the cost of university as both a type of pressure and an incentive to make the most of their degree:

Samira: I know people on my course, they said they were there for "the sesh" and at the time I was like, I don't even know what the "sesh" is, I had to Google it [...] I'm like, I'm paying 9,000 pounds, I'm not here for the sesh, I'm here for an education, you know?

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

Interviewer: Interesting, okay. Does the cost of your degree ever play on your mind? Do you ever think about it?

Isaac: Oh, yes. Yes. It is constantly a big thing just hanging over there.[...] Yes, especially because I'm an overseas student for fees purposes, I'm paying more and that is my parents' money. If I'm not doing well in the degree that is going down the drain, especially since I know how hard they've worked for it and all of that and yes, it gets depressing.

Interviewer: It ends up being a kind of pressure that you feel?

Isaac: Yes, incredible, incredibly, that word.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, High SES, International)

A final group emphasised the sense of stress, unhappiness and frustration caused by the cost of the degree. These tended to be students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at English universities, though some were students from higher socio-economic backgrounds who felt they simply did not know how they would be impacted by the debt:

Interviewer: And are you relying mostly on a maintenance grant or loan...?

Kayden: Yes, it's quite off-putting because I'll have to pay that back at some point when I graduate, I had no other choice. [...] Yeah, yes, and it's quite sizable. But you know, I just had no other option. If I didn't have it then I wouldn't have been able to come here.

Interviewer: Do you think about that debt?

Kayden: *All the time*, yeah. It is, it is quite...you know, uncomfortable, you know. If I were from a - you know - a wealthy background obviously, I wouldn't even have to think about that, I'd just think right once I'm done with University, all my ties to it are severed, whereas for me, you know it - it's still kinda hanging above my head. [...] It's just so pricey. I mean it's just, you know, all sorts of things happen as a result of lack of finance, you know, anxiety, depression...

(English Literature and Philosophy, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Sofia: It is a bit frustrating because obviously, I don't know if you know but, healthcare used to be funded by the NHS. All healthcare courses, if you're a nurse, a physio, or midwife, they were all... It was all funded by the NHS up until 2016. Then, 2017, they cancelled it and made us pay. [...] Money does come up because you're thinking, "Well I don't exactly have that money upfront to pay for extra accommodation." Bear in mind I've already paid for my accommodation in Old England University so it does put you at a disadvantage there. I would've quite liked to go to that but my main thing was I didn't really want to be paying for the accommodation upfront because it would've been £1,500 probably. Then, if I had that £1,000 upfront from the Government then it would've been a different story. I would've probably been able to accept it.

(Occupational Therapy, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Bridget : So it's sort of a constant background thing, constantly thinking right, what are my finances like, sort of - what can I, what can I do, and obviously with things like Morris Hammond, there's also other things like oh, right, You're getting a fee reduction here, a scholarship here, Oh, there's a an essay competition you can enter to get book money or something, so I'm constantly...sort of, if there is something to do with money, I will see it and try and do it.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: So do you ever think about the cost of your degree?

Moira: Actually, yes, and so the first time I actually thought about that is when I want - when I started thinking about the PHD in the USA, and you need to have like appropriate credit score to rent places in the US and then I was like, all right, will my credit score be alright with the students debt or not? And yeah, that's actually a big concern for me right now.

(Biology, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Interestingly, however, students at both English and Scottish universities highlighted the sense of stress caused by *living* costs (and maintenance loans); indeed, many of the non-fee-paying students at Scottish universities saw the “cost of the degree” as encompassing the costs of living and subsisting in the university town.

Gabby: So, the cost of living; yes, definitely weighed us down a little. Especially Edinburgh being so big; it meant that, like, some form of cost of living; like, living further out, you may have to pay for a bus pass, which is then another £45, so has your rent really reduced that much, for you to be able to afford that? And so, it did get difficult.

(English Literature, Russell Group, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Interviewer: Do you think about cost in other ways at all?

Sofia: Yes. Living costs, I guess, as well, but that's sort of... I tend to manage my money okay, so I get by. Yes, it's something that I guess is on your mind quite a lot. I try not to let it bother me too much because otherwise you can't really live your life, can you? [...] I don't get that much from the... In terms of maintenance, I don't really get that much

[...] Yes, anything socially basically, going for coffees and things like that, I pay for it out of the money I work for.

(Occupational Therapy, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Kelly: I do [think about the cost of the degree], even though I don't pay for it, I still do, because...especially now with the Brexit thing, they can make me pay for it and it's not... it's not that bad, it's like 1600 or something with, for the year, not for the semester, which is...manageable. [...]But yeah definitely have- have thought about the cost of my degree, like, I used to - I used to think it's a lot but now when I kind of sit out and I see how much I can work, especially how much I can manage to work during the summer, like get extra hours...it's manageable. Yeah, if...yeah, if I cut some costs, don't really go out like and things...I can save enough.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

Renee: It impacts on the activities I choose to participate in at university. Rowing is incredibly cheap in college, I did play ice hockey, but it worked out to about £300-400 a term, and that wasn't sustainable for me.

(Law, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Stress over living costs was also reflected in a culture of part-time work, particularly at Scottish institutions (both Russell Group and Post-92) and in the post-92 English institution:

Carmen: Since I've moved in Scotland I've been a server [waitress] just to, basically I feel like it's the best job you could probably get while you're studying, you know, it's flexible hours but it gets the bills done and the rent paid, so...

(Anthropology and IR, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, No tuition fees)

Julia: At the moment I have got two part-time jobs, and I will try and work as much as possible throughout the summer, just to get some money together. But yes, from September I think we are in placement Monday to Thursday and then at university on a Friday. So then there

isn't much time to be working around that with assignments and everything else.

(Social Science, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student loan)

Kelly: I do, I work part-time during the university and at the moment I'm doing full time like a bit more hours during the summer but it's like, I guess it qualifies as part time, because most of the time I'm studying so it's... part-time. Speaker 1: What is what is the part time job that you do? Speaker 2: Um...cleaning? I used to work in a chip shop before, for like two years. Yeah. And this is the two things that I have done.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

Henry: I did, I did, I had a part-time job on the weekend. So that covered my pa-, my rent, or whatever I paid, I think it was 300 pounds a month for rent ,and any like bills or whatever.

(Biomedical Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Leah: I don't have any right now, but I am looking for one. I've...I don't have much in my schedule this term, so I feel that like I have the time to...for a part time job. I haven't really felt like that the last year.

Interviewer: And would the job be mostly for kind of money reasons or are you looking to get something else out of it?

Leah: Mostly money reasons so I don't - I'm not as dependent on my loans, I think... just to have more...more room to breathe.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, No fees)

Three differing responses to the cost of university emerged from the interviews, therefore—some students, across all university categories, seemed unaffected by the cost of university. Others, largely those who saw the tuition fees as an investment, were acutely aware of the cost and incentivised by this feeling. The last group were also aware of the cost but experienced this as a source of constant background discomfort or unhappiness. Many students also highlighted that tuition fees alone are not the only source of financial stress; indeed, living costs almost played a larger role for many of them in limiting their choices and

affecting their quality of life. In particular, living costs seemed to create a culture of part-time work in Scotland and at the post-92 institution in England, wherein weekends, summers and evenings were spent often in retail, service, or manual labour positions.

How Students View Value-for-money

Related to both how students view the cost of university and, theoretically, how consumer-oriented they are is what they think of—indeed, *if* they think of—their university experience in terms of value-for-money. The interviews showed a diversity of conceptualisations of, and reactions to, the idea of value-for-money, highlighting, again, a much more complex issue than the literature would suggest. For instance, many students said they did not think in terms of value-for-money, since they viewed university costs as a necessary step for their career and future selves:

Derek: In terms of, I spend however much and I get a degree? Hmm, I've never really thought about it, you know, is it worth however, what it's... £36,000. I'd say in a way yes, it is, because I can't become an engineer if I don't have a degree.

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Nick: The fact of the matter is to do what I want to do I have to get an undergraduate and then a Master's degree. There was never a question about whether I would go to university or not. In the end, even though I don't feel it's fair that I'm paying how much I'm paying at the moment. I don't think the way university fees are done is fair. However, in the end I've decided that going to this degree of debt to get a degree is worth it, and it is worth it. There's no doubt in my mind this was the correct decision to make.

(Earth Sciences, Russell Group, England, Low-mid SES, Student Loan)

For some, the fact that university was simply a “necessary step” also meant that they didn’t think of value-for-money because spending the money was an inevitability, and thus it was seen as an almost “sunk cost”:

Interviewer: I was just going to say, do you ever think about value for money?

Jake: Not really. I would say, I would say *no* and the reason I would say no is because it's kind of like I'm going to go to university, that's kind of like inevitable, I have to do it for an undergraduate degree, so that's something I have to do with no real opportunity cost because if I wasn't doing it, you know, it's just kind of I don't really know — it's just something that kind of has to happen.

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

A large number of students across different types of university also thought of value-for-money only in terms of *relative* value; that is, students expressed a sense of either (a) getting good value-for-money because they were getting more from their university *compared to* friends at other universities or (b) worry that they were getting less from the university *compared to* students at other universities. Interestingly, this included some Scottish non-fee-paying students as well (this will be explored further in the following section).

Bridget : In terms of just sort of education-wise, to start like really broad, I think Old England University itself is like great value for money, especially when I look at one of my friends in a London uni, where they have like the third term, their Trinity term, they have no lectures, no classes, they just have two days of exams and they're paying all that money for like no teaching, whereas Old England University is constantly pressuring you and giving you this great education so like value for money education-wise, I think like Old England University is by far - at least Oxbridge, maybe some of the others as well - it's really great value for money because at least you know, like the amount that you're spending is definitely being pumped back into you and your education and the research that goes on here.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Luke: I guess the one time when I do think about the cost of my degree is when I'm listening to my friends at other unis talk about their experience at uni and how different it might be, perhaps with the size of their classes or the size of their lectures or labs. In Old England University it's quite good that we've only got... In my tutorials there are only 3 people, whereas at other universities there are maybe 15. In terms of that, it makes me think about the cost of my degree but more about the relative cost or the relative benefit I'm getting for the same costs, if that makes sense.

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Sofia: I guess per university it's sort of the same... New England University does offer a lot in terms of research facilities and training you well, giving you the equipment to be trained well. I don't know, compared to other universities because I've not been, but I have heard stuff like, "Brunel is very focused on research rather than giving you the equipment that you need to be good clinically, rather than research-wise." That's more important to me, to be able to... The research is important, obviously, but, for me, I want the clinical skills more over the research. So that's important. I think New England University gives you a good balance of both. Obviously, it's hard to compare value for money not being in other universities.[...]. Obviously, times when not everything goes well and... I've never really had an issue, so I can't complain, but I know some other people are like... Sometimes, when they're being allocated, they feel like they haven't felt listened to. I guess you can think value for money in that. You can think, "What if I went to another university, how would it be there?" Again, you can't really tell, I guess.

(Occupational Therapy, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Charlotte: Obviously like I said, when I started thinking about SAAS [Student Awards Agency Scotland] and the investment that they are making in us I was thinking basically like I said are they getting the most out of what they are paying for? [...]Especially when it's so competitive....so, especially within Edinburgh, you've got Old Scot University (1), which is a huge institution, so if you are thinking outside in the job market, if you are thinking, "Oh, are we getting the same things put in for us as Old Scot University (1) are?" Because we are already competing with them. Are we getting that same level, or are we getting that value as well? Obviously you are getting money put into your university no matter what, but are we getting the right stuff out of it, out of that money?

(Natural Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

A number of students, on the other hand—all of them from low SES backgrounds and at post-92 universities—did express a sense that they were both thinking about the issue a lot, and feeling that they were getting poor value-for-money, suggesting a student-consumer attitude:

Interviewer: And do you ever think about value for money while you are at university?

Julia: Yes, definitely. One of our lecturers pointed out that each lecture we have with them is £100 per person. That kind of stuck with me, especially as I am paying for one year myself without finance. I don't feel like it is worth that much money sometimes.

(Social Sciences, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Kayden: I suppose I just wanted, you know, more for my money's worth. I know that it's expensive to hire teachers, it's expensive to get them to give you more books, but I do think as a whole a few extra hours a week would have certainly been of benefit to me.

(English Literature and Philosophy, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Others conveyed a sense of not having thought much about value-for-money simply because they had had, or were having, a positive experience—in its own way, also suggesting a student-consumer attitude that looks for “good service” in return for fees.

These were mostly from mid-SES backgrounds:

Moira: So, you know, like it's easier to you know cope with this price for the tuition fee when you are in like one of the top universities, and if I was at regular University, regular or maybe like, you know at a not so good University, I would definitely not be happy to be paying them that amount of money. And you know, also Old England University is very, very like - it's in a very old town with very nice buildings and everything and, you know, you can just feel like yay it's a nice place to be, so that also helps.

(Biology, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Samira: I will say my University is very good on resources... and like, what do you call it? Like people and stuff. So I've been very lucky in that way because I think I would have felt a lot worse if I attended a university that didn't have those resources and I still had to pay? And, you know, I didn't have good access to textbooks and research articles and whatnot and databases. I think I would have really been more annoyed. Whereas I've had a very good experience of my University, so I've been a bit less...um...angry, about sending over the 9,000 every single year.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

It is clear, therefore, that not all students are, as the literature and the media might suggest, looking at university simply in terms of getting good value-for-money. Some, in fact, didn't appear to think in terms of value-for-money at all, because the cost of going to university was seen as a sunk cost, simply a necessary part of reaching a future goal. Some really only thought about the issue when comparing themselves to students at other universities, highlighting the importance of *relative* value. However, there were students who did convey a sense of looking at their university experience through financial eyes in both Scotland and England, thus suggesting a student-consumer attitude—and whether this was seen positively or negatively appeared to be related to SES background. However, as the next section will show, the student-consumer identity appears to be complex, multifaceted and not, in fact, even fee-dependent.

Problematizing the idea of “Student-as-consumer”

One of the most important ideas to emerge from the interviews is that a large number of the students did not like or feel comfortable with the idea of being labelled a “customer” or “consumer” of higher education (as one Russell Group English Institution

student put it: “I hate that idea”). This came out in different ways: some students readily rejected the label, stressing instead that they were “students”—most, but not all, of these were students at Scottish institutions, both post-92 and Russell Group—or that they were earning, not buying a degree. Others tried to qualify the term, explaining that though they might be customers, they were paying for the *opportunity*, and the onus—and therefore cognitive responsibility—was on them. A group of students also expressed discomfort at being *treated like or perceived as* customers; others were ambivalent about the term, accepting it but, at the same time, disliking it.

There were also, however, a number of students who fully and readily accepted the label, a large subgroup of whom expressed dissatisfaction as customers. Interestingly, these students came not only from English institutions, but also Scottish institutions, and were both fee-payers and non-fee-payers—and they were often from low SES backgrounds. There was also a sense, from some of the Scottish students, that though they themselves were not customers or consumers of higher education, the Scottish government—as the body that funded their studies—was the customer instead; or that they themselves were paying in time or effort. A number of fee-paying students at Scottish universities also seemed to use particularly consumerist language, in part because of the contrast felt between their financial situation and that of their non-fee-paying Scottish peers—this perhaps goes some way to explaining the results of the quantitative strand, which suggested that students in Scotland had higher consumer scores than students in England, when fees were held constant. There were also, interestingly, two Scottish students who expressed a desire to be customers, arguing that being a customer would have given them more rights/power in relation to the university.

Not a customer, a student!

Most of the students who rejected the label of university “customer” or “consumer” were studying at Scottish institutions, though they were both fee-payers and non-fee-payers, studying a range of subjects (including vocational subjects). These students made clear that they did not feel comfortable identifying as customers, and instead saw themselves, and wanted to be seen as, “students”— thus implying that they understood these two categories (of “customer” and “student”) to be mutually exclusive:

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And for you personally, if you don't see yourself as a customer of the University, how do you describe the relationship between you and the University?

Henry: **I was the student! ...as it's a tertiary education. I was purely student and-and the lecturers in the University. I consider it as an education.** An extension to high school, just ...higher up.

(Biomedical Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Samira: I would never even think about myself like a customer. **I just see myself as a student.** I don't want to be seen as like something different.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

As one student explains, part of the rejection of the customer label is a rejection of the entitlement it implies:

Interviewer: So how would you describe your relationship with the university? What would you say you are in relation to it?

Bridget : I don't know, I wouldn't - I wouldn't want to say customer but I'm struggling to find a better word. I don't know. **I would have hoped, like when I was studying here, that it would be... I don't know, that you have been considered some sort of student** and now that, just rather- rather than a customer, because I **just feel like the word customer had some sort of - also some sort of entitlement about it, as if you're paying for something to get at the end which also feels a**

bit wrong because I don't feel like we're entitled to anything just because we paid to be here.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

And instead, interviewees highlighted the idea that being a student meant being part of the university in larger ways, contributing to knowledge and forming a part of a larger academic community:

Interviewer: What do you feel like the relationship is between you and the university, if you're not a customer?

Leah: **Mmm...I mean I don't know how to describe it other than...student!**
And yeah it's hard to describe, I mean, I hope that I'm giving something to the university other than just money. In a way.

Interviewer: That something being...?

Leah: Oh well maybe not more immediately, but when I write my dissertation and maybe come back for research in the future that I can sort of be a part of developing the university in a way. Sort of bringing my own way of seeing things to it.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, No fees)

Jonathan: **I don't want to feel like a customer. I want to feel like a part of an institution, of a community.** Which in some ways, you know... I want to feel like the university has authority over me in a way. They should be an authoritative institution which has the power to bestow degrees on people. It shouldn't be that - that I can demand anything from the University.

(Linguistics, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

L/Earning, Not Buying

Other students who rejected the label of “customer” or “consumer” did so because they felt the effort they put into their degrees would be erased if they identified as “customers” or “consumers”. For them, there is a difference between “earning” a degree and “buying” a degree, the latter being implied by the label of “customer”, and that what they get out of the degree should match the work they have put in, rather than the money.

These students were all at Scottish universities, and were a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds, and were both fee-paying and non-fee-paying:

Lisa: I don't like to think of myself as a customer of the University. Yeah. I don't think that's why - **we're not there to buy a degree, we're there to earn a degree.**

(Archaeology, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Rose: **I don't see uni as like a business transaction, like I paid them to give me something, it's more like I'm here to learn.** I see a bit more like school, like school was free and it's what you put into it. I feel like **because my degree is free...quote quote free, I feel like I'm putting - that I'm having to put the effort in** [...]think - I think - ahh - I think because we're from Scotland I feel like it's totally different, I don't feel like a customer but I feel like if you're paying 9 grand for a degree, you might feel a bit more like a customer?

Interviewer: Do you think that being - feeling like a customer would change your relationship to the university?

Rose: Definitely. Yeah, definitely because you need have an expectancy coming out like - you would expect at least a two one coming out of it, whereas because I don't feel like a customer, **I feel like I'm in there and I'm contributing my own effort that - what - that the amount of effort I put in is what it should equal but if I was like, right I've paid x amount for this, so I should be getting this degree for the amount I've paid.**

(Social Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, High SES, No fees)

Eva: I feel like they teach me what I would learn inside the subject, and then the rest it's - **I have to do it myself. Like it's more of a collaboration than just being customer and you get everything you want** without [laughs] - by just paying for it, you get everything, the knowledge and everything, like working on yourself. So I...**I feel like being a customer is way too easy, to put it that way because it makes people think that just by going to uni we get everything by paying for it and then we have just the degree. But it's a lot of work, a lot of learning experiences.**

(History, Russell Group, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Treated-as-customer

Students—again, generally Scottish students—also expressed discomfort with the idea of student-as-customer (and did not, therefore, identify as such) because to them it meant being *treated* as customers, which would in turn would mean poor quality and disinterested education:

Jonathan: **I think that's horrible. I think that's really, really bad because it pushes down the quality of education** and I see it in several ways...I mean, grade inflation is one thing—I've talked to one lecturer who told me that when she joined the university she was actually told that she needs to inflate students' grades because otherwise the university wouldn't be competitive, **because, you know, students have paid for their degree and now they want good grades. So I think it pushes down the quality of education [...]** it's also - **this student as customer thing that in some ways leads to this narrative of competition and so on because students expect that the university will make them employable** and the university in turn, through the career service, is kind of frantically trying to push students to do all kinds of silly things to put on their CV so they'll be more employable.

(Linguistics, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

Carmen: I do think in some sort of settings you do feel you're a customer because maybe in big universities where you're not too... Maybe professors don't put too much attention.

(Anthropology and IR, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

Kelly: Well, **it would be a bad thing if the....the...teaching is not...if you're taught like you're a customer...**Which is not the case - like I just said that. They really wanna like teach you stuff and not just for your assessment, just so you know, so it would be bad if that wasn't the case.

Interviewer: Okay. And what do you think, yeah, what do you think it would look like if they did treat you like customers?

Kelly: **Well, no one would care if go there and no one would care if you do your assessments as long as you pay your tuition fees.**

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland Mid SES, No fees)

Jake: Cause you know I think that's kind of the point of customers and buying things I guess. **Which kind of I guess creates like really**

perverse incentives...and I just don't really think, like I don't really think the point is for there to be something mutually beneficial exchange? I don't think should be like a business...and in terms of the student as a customer, I guess, like, I don't know. I don't think I can - it just kind of implies that the like - it's just very kinda like transactional, which is - it's just not very kind of...appealing.

Interviewer: Have you ever thought of yourself as a customer of the University?

Jake: Uh, no. I wouldn't say so.

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Being treated as a customer also meant, for many students—across both Scotland and England— feeling that they were being *sold a product* and being seen by the university as nothing more than “money”, even if they as students themselves did not identify as customers or consumers:

Samira: In Scotland it's advertised as buy 3 get 1 free, so it's the same as England. [Laughs] Yeah. I know. It's like I'm going into a degree and I feel like you're selling me something!

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

Sofia: They were very upfront with, “You are going to have to, possibly, have some... You are going to need some money upfront, to be able to pay for your travel accommodation, placement accommodation, and then you will get that money refunded.” Whereas when you went to other universities they weren't as blunt about that, which made me... You know, it felt like they were selling me something rather than... You know, kind of, trying to bring you over, if you know what I mean, trying to get you to study with them. [...] **Because of the way they're, I guess, selling the university and obviously wanting you to come there as students and wanting you to, I guess, apply there because, at the end of the day, you are money. You are going to bring them... You're another student, each student is £27,000 to them. So you do feel it in that way.** You don't feel it as much in the interview process but more towards, I guess, when you talk to them and when you're thinking of applying.

(Occupational Therapy, Post-92 Institution, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Freya: I think that universities have become more of a business, particularly with the marketing around universities, particularly with the doctoring of the university facts that may take place... this idea of the student experience is a big thing that comes into University marketing. It's not always the best thing to tell people.

(Social Sciences, Post-92 Institution, Scotland, Low SES, No Fees)

Parents/government-as-customer

Certain students—again, all at Scottish institutions, but from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and both fee-payers and non-fee-payers—didn't express discomfort with the label "customer", but simply felt it applied more readily to other actors, whether their parents (who were funding their studies) or the Scottish government:

Charlotte: Up in Scotland I don't think it affects so much, because a student isn't really the customer because the government is the customer and they are investing in the individuals. I feel like the government is more the customer as opposed to students.

(Natural Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Isaac: I'm not the one paying directly out of my own pocket, it is my parents. I'd say I consider them to be more the customers than myself.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, High SES, International)

Molly: I mean, I don't know. I mean, I know I'm not paying it but it is the government that's paying it, so I do think they owe a bit more attention to the students. For example, we would have lecturers that would just give us course work and things like that. There were a couple of times where we would say we have other courses that are due at the same time or if there were any issues, we would tell them to the lecturers, but they would say, "We don't really care." I guess from that kind of perspective it was a bit annoying.

(Engineering, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, No tuition fees)

The Ambivalent Customer

A group of students, all of them at a Russell Group English university, seemed less readily able to reject the label—accepting that on some level it applied to them—but at the same time expressed a dislike of its implications:

Interviewer: Do you see yourself at all as a customer of the university?

Nick: No, to be honest. No, really, I don't. The answer to that is no I don't, I don't see myself as a customer. **I accept that in some ways I *am* a customer because I'm indirectly paying a large amount of money for this education. I definitely don't see myself as a customer. [...]Being a customer implies you're getting... It implies you're entitled to a certain service or product from the university. The issue is, I do expect to get a certain service from the university.** I expect to get that service because I'm a citizen who wants to become educated, not because I'm paying the university a certain amount of money. That's why I would not regard myself as a customer. In terms of what would actually change if I were a customer, I think possibly not very much. Perhaps there might be a greater sense of entitlement if I was seeing myself as a customer. **I think primarily the reason why I don't view myself as a customer is because I don't see myself as getting these things in exchange for money. Even though obviously I am paying money.**

(Earth Sciences, Russell Group, England, Low-mid SES, Student Loan)

Luke: **I would agree, on some level, that the student is a customer of the university. We're paying for a degree, we're paying for a service.** At the same time, I don't think the sector as a whole should be that marketised because at the end of the day people being educated, people having degrees and learning, is a benefit to the whole society, which is why the government is involved with giving out loans to students I guess.

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. And what do you think about the idea of the student as customer of the University?

Suhail: Oof uh...**I'm not sure I quite like that term I think because it kind of makes everything far more kind of money based. Um...I dunno, yeah, I'm not a huge fan. But I think there is definitely a kind of a - a service that you have paid for, so I understand where it comes from.**

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Different-fees-makes-a-difference customers

This ambivalence also came through in the case of certain fee-paying students at Scottish universities, who used strongly consumerist language—in particular, when comparing themselves to their non-fee paying peers—while still rejecting the *label* of consumer:

Amanda: Sometimes I do think, am I getting value for money in uni and things like that and not to like, I don't want to degrade my teachers or anything like that but um, **you know sometimes I just think, am I paying nine grand for this?** Like...[laughs] it's a bit...you know, maybe if a class is cancelled or maybe they didn't really spend a good amount of time actually teaching, it is a bit of a...well, you know, the rest of my class—because most of them are from Scotland—are just, "Oh yeah", but I'm like, I'm paying for this, you know? I'd like to be taught something!
[...]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Would you see yourself as a customer of the university?

Amanda: **Um, no, I definitely don't think I feel like that at all. I do feel like a...like a student**, like a student should, like I was at school, I think. You know, my—although sometimes the lecturers don't maybe do exactly, wouldn't do things the way I'd like them, they, you know, they are really good and they know everyone and they do answer questions really quickly, if you have any problems, they're more than happy to talk to you. **So I do think, I don't really see myself as a customer.**

(Veterinary Nursing, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Samira: Yeah, because see **in England, everyone pays something. So for me to come to Scotland to hear these, you know Scottish kids getting it free...**I'm like, Oh, okay. Like I'm not angry at them because that's you know, that's great for them. But **I'm like what benefit am I getting by paying so much money, like where is- where is it going?** Am I getting any benefit out of this?

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, Mid SES, Self-funded)

Indeed, there was a sense that the differences in fee system were creating in some fee-paying students a heightened awareness of their tuition fees, and making them see their experiences at university in more consumerist ways as a result:

Lisa: The fees and things like that. I do think of it when I put myself in the same situation as **the Scottish students and European students that I'm studying with, they don't - they don't pay anything for their degree.** They're all - they get four or five years paid, and then after that, then they would then take loans. Whereas I don't think - **I'm coming out of it with 27,000 pounds of debt just for my tuition fee...** [...]so last year when strikes were happening, that was something that concerned me a little bit, because obviously none of the **Scottish students were paying for their education, but I think we worked out as something like 60 pounds a day it is to be at uni for us? And for each day that we missed because of the strike, we weren't getting that money back.** Yeah, so that was that was a thought that went through our heads, for me and the other English students.

(Archaeology, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, Mid SES, Student loan)

Two-way-street customer

Some students didn't reject the label of customers, but qualified it: they were customers, but the expectations went both ways, again highlighting the fact that the label "customer" seemed to imply an entitlement they did not feel:

Derek: I feel like it's not like we come and hand over our money and then we, you know... It's an experience that we, **it's like a two-way street I guess.**

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: And what do you think of the idea of the student as customer of the University?

Clara: Umm... I suppose in in one sense that is true. Sort of the- the lecturers are getting up there and giving their lectures for our benefit. But...I feel - I mean it's not like a customer of a shop, **it's - it's more like a like a two-way agreement** that they'll do all they can to teach me what I need to know, but if I want a good degree, I do need to put something into it too in terms of my, you know, effort.

Interviewer: And do you - would you ever see yourself as a customer of the University?

Clara: Mmmm...I think - I think - I think I - as I say I see myself as ah....you know, the university owes me something but I also...you know, am responsible for my own learning.

(Natural Sciences, Russell Group, England, High SES, Student Loan)

Julia: Well, the thing is you choose to go to university. You choose the course that you are going onto and hope to continue into that career. So I feel like there are expectations from the staff. They expect you to be professional and be willing to work. It is not like school, where you have to go to school. This is your choice. And because you have made that choice you should be willing to do the work. So I **feel like there should be equal expectations between staff and students. Students should expect to be given the best education that they can get and staff should expect students to work their hardest to be their best.**

(Social Sciences, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Paid-for-the-opportunity customer

Relatedly, other students—from a mixture of Scotland and England, both fee-paying and not—identified as customers, but of a particular kind: they had paid for the *opportunity* of getting a degree, and not the degree itself, and thus it was down to them as individual students to make the most (or not) of that opportunity. Again, what they highlight is a rejection of a sense of entitlement that normally accompanies the idea of a “consumer” or “customer”:

Blake: You're not a customer in the way that the university doesn't owe you anything. You pay them for an opportunity, and if you don't make use of that, then you've wasted your money. It's not fair that students can demand anything from universities, because you get an opportunity to improve yourself, rather than the university to give you something. They don't give you, you have to take it.

(Computer Sciences, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Interviewer: And what do you think of the idea of student as customer of the university?

Renee: I think it's a relatively accurate description. Certainly with um with the maintenance loans and the fees loans I have, I pay the university for the privilege of being there and being taught and...I'm paying for an experience rather than a product in the same way you'd pay if you went sky-diving. Only my experience is way more expensive and

longer-term. When there were grants rather than loans I think that the idea of the student being the customer was inaccurate as it was really the government paying, so the government was the customer through the students, whereas now students themselves are taking out the loans and paying. We are...customers. Or they would be, if you applied it to any other industry, whereas people feel uncomfortable with the idea that you buy something from your university.

(Law, Russell Group, England, Low-Mid SES, Student Loan)

Henry: I've got mixed opinions. So like you should receive a good quality education, for the money you're paying, but at the same time, it's down to you what you make of it. For example if I were to compare to anything... like imagine paying for for a holiday, and you going to holiday, once you get there, it's up to you whether you take...whether you take any excursions or whether you go swimming and do a lot of things or you just stay at the hotel and do nothing. So it's - it's what you make of it, it's down to you as well.

(Biomedical Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

The full student-as-consumer

Finally, there was a small group of students—studying a range of subjects, and in both Scotland and England—who did fully identify as “customers” or “consumers”, without ambivalence, and who felt they were thus owed a “quality product” by the university:

Isaac: I don't like the idea of education being a business, that is a bit naïve but it is a view that I have. However, **I do think that it can be important to see the student as a paying customer because, to a certain extent, that can motivate a university to make sure that the student gets what they paid for**, otherwise their reputation goes down the shitter. Excuse my French, by the way.

(Psychology, Post-92, Scotland, High SES, International)

Interviewer: Do you think that the students would classify themselves, generally speaking, as customers of the university?

Julia: **Definitely, yes. I would say so. We are paying for what we receive there, and if you are paying for a service, even though it is education, you are a customer. And I feel that if any students don't feel like they are receiving what they feel like the right standard of**

education is for them then they should be able to complain about it or go to someone to talk to about how they feel. Just as if you were in a shop or a restaurant and you didn't get what you expected. You would seek some justification of it.

Interviewer: And do you feel like that applies to you as well?

Julia: Definitely, yes. I would say so.

(Social Science, Post-92, England, Low SES, Student Loan)

Interviewer: Yeah, and what do you think about the idea of the student as customer of the University?

Moira: I feel like - it's not familiar for me. But I guess it makes sense. Like we are kind of buying all the stuff. So yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think you would identify as a customer of Old England University ? Think of yourself that way?

Moira: Yeah, I think yeah. So yeah, like **I paid them money so they can you know deliver a quality product**, I would say, to me. And I agree with that.

(Biology, Russell Group, England Mid SES, Student Loan)

The powerless customer

However, some of these students—exclusively from low socio-economic backgrounds—expressed not only a strong sense of identifying as customers, but a feeling of dissatisfaction, powerlessness and of being *taken advantage of* as customers of the university. Interestingly, they were not only fee-paying students, they were non-fee-paying students at Scottish universities as well:

Gabby: There were definitely times where, kind of, first and second year, things were a bit touch and go, that I was wondering, "Right, if I would ever get to that point of graduation..." or get a good enough degree as well, that all that money was worth it. **Because it did feel like you kind of bought a degree from the uni, and I was just starting to wonder if it was actually, like, a worthwhile trade**, almost [...] Yes. **I definitely feel like less of a customer, compared to the people who pay more. But in the end, I still do have some form of debt from the uni. And I still, kind of, put money and effort-** like that idea that all that four years of time is not money, it's silly to think that I have put so much effort into this degree, and there definitely have been

elements of the uni that have failed me consistently. **So, I do feel like yes, yes, I do feel like a customer.**

(English Literature, Russell Group, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Freya: I do to an extent. **I think every student is in some way a customer to the university. Obviously, I'm not a customer every sense, I don't pay money to the university directly, but I know that the government pays money to the university on my behalf. So there is a monetary transaction taking place...I'm just not the one who's footing the bill.** And... **and it's also about what the University does for me** and there have been situations at my University that I've not been satisfied with something and the university is purely focused on...you know, the preventing of facts and figures like it's a shareholders meeting.

(Social Science, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Kayden: **I feel like a customer, I feel like one who's not necessarily getting the upper hand.** I mean, I think a much better alternative would be to charge - to have degrees from like Cambridge or Oxford cost far more than say a place like I'm in? Because yeah, I think in America, if I'm not mistaken again, if you go to place like Harvard you pay for more I think than a local State University like Massachusetts or New York. I think a system like that has to be introduced here. **Because you know, we're not all getting the same package that were buying, if I were to study the exact same degree at Cambridge, I would get a lot more money upon graduation.**

(English Literature and Philosophy, Post-92 Institution, England, Student Loan, Low SES)

Finally, it is worth highlighting two students who, though they themselves did not identify as customers, imagined benefits to the idea of the student-as-customer, because they felt that *not* being a customer meant they had “no right” to want or demand more from the university, even they were unhappy with it:

Charlotte: **It almost feels like we have no right, because we are just accepting what we are getting because we are not paying for it.** We are just there. You are just getting what you are given. It doesn't feel like you have got any right to be like, “No, I want better. I want more of this. I want more of that. I want less of this and less of that because I'm

paying for this.” Because you’re not. You’d have to do it off your own back almost. “I want this.” It’s so hard to describe. You have to do it just because you want it, rather than you deserve it. Do you know what I mean? **Because if we are not paying for it, it feels like you have got no right to be like, “I’m not satisfied with this.”**

(Natural Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Interviewer: Do you think if you’d have had to pay tuition fees you would have felt differently about your experience?

Molly: Yes, I think I would’ve felt a bit more cynical. Yes, **maybe be a bit more annoyed if for example I couldn’t get a job afterwards, I would definitely be more- I don’t know if that’s the right word, like annoyed at the university** or just yes, wanting to be- to have more experience.

(Engineering, Russell Group Institution, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

Consumers vs. Learners

The variety of approaches to the idea of student-as-customer/consumer make clear that the straightforward framing of the customer-student as entitled and uninterested in learning does not reflect reality. Generally across all the interviews, the majority of students expressed a desire to learn and put effort into their academic experience. Even certain students who fully identified as customers, such as Aadesh—a middle-class, fee-paying male student at an English Russell Group institution—and Freya—a disadvantaged, non-fee-paying student female student at a Scottish Post-92 institution—expressed a desire to work hard and learn:

Freya: I try to work as hard as possible because I’m the one that’s going to reap the reward.

(Social Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Aadesh: Towards the beginning of this year I was trying to be very perfectionist and then I eventually realised it’s just not practical for me because this just takes so much time. I could be doing, maybe just getting some more sleep even, rather than, because at the end of the day, these notes, these drill sheets are just for my revision. If it makes

sense to me, that's all that matters, then you can make sense to anywhere else.

(Engineering, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, International)

Renee: I chose Old England University because I knew I'm quite an academic person and would appreciate being surrounded by other people who placed such a high value on studying and academic results.

(Law, Russell Group, England, Mid SES, Student Loan)

Conversely, those who did *not* like the idea of the student-as-customer and did not identify as such—such as Jake, a middle-class fee-paying student at an English Russell Group university; or Carmen, a high-SES, non-fee-paying student at a Scottish Russell Group university— did not necessarily engage more deeply with their learning:

Jake: I didn't really - I didn't really go in with that kind of a strong academic sense, I didn't really know what I was doing...to be honest, until third year, I didn't really...I spent a lot of, I didn't really do that much work in second year...but I've obviously partly got myself to blame, for some of these academic complaints, but you know...

(Philosophy and Economics, Russell Group, England, mid SES, Student Loan)

Carmen: Because it was so loose and so chill that because it was my first year I was so excited, I was doing activities and I was working as well, so I had friends from work, friends from university, I was discovering the city. I feel like it was way more chill, and so some subjects... I basically get to choose what to focus on because I know the exam is structured in such a way that I would get asked 2 questions, I would have to answer 2 questions only. For instance, I don't like national politics like political parties and the legislature and such, so I was completely excluding the politics and I was focusing more into international relations, although my entire degree is into politics/international relations.

(Anthropology and IR, Russell Group, Scotland, High SES, No Fees)

At the same time, though, it is worth noting that those who rejected the label of “customer” and instead identified as students, or part of a community of knowledge-

sharers, did express a particularly strong learner identity, in terms of taking joy in intellectual stimulation and going above-and-beyond the class requirements. Considering the findings of the preliminary quantitative analyses (with regards to subject and learner orientation), it is also perhaps important to highlight that these students were coming from a variety of disciplines:

Eva: I really like that we don't have that many classes, so we have time to... do our essays and really do research on essays, so I've learned quite a lot from books and on the internet and everywhere because we have time to learn outside of classes because we have free time. I feel like I've recently learned everything outside the classes and then the classes kind of... of place the knowledge inside my head.

(History, Russell Group, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Jonathan: I want to get kind of this intellectual development...I mean first of all I'm doing it because I really really enjoy it. So I enjoy the learning.

(Linguistics, Russell Group, Scotland, Mid SES, No fees)

Interviewer: So yeah, so how did you spend your four years at university?

Henry: Mainly studying a lot [laughs]. I was always on top of everything, always prepared for all my exams, assessments and lectures, tutorials...which did have an impact on my social life, if I'm honest. But I had a goal going in that I wanted to graduate with a first class, so...

(Biomedical Sciences, Post-92, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

While others—such as Gabby, a low-SES non-fee-paying student at a Russell Group Scottish university—who identified as dissatisfied customers, were not particularly learner-oriented:

Gabby: I just wasn't the most motivated student, I don't think. I found it very hard. [...] And I just, kind of, assumed that because I was at uni, I had to just stay at uni, and just tough it out. I didn't really see the point in dropping out, now that I'd already done a year. But then that mentality would have been a lot less damaging if I'd dropped out after a year, than when I'd got to the honours point in my undergrad, and I

was like, “Right, well, now it’s time to feel passionate about something I no longer feel passionate about.”

(English Literature, Russell Group, Scotland, Low SES, No fees)

Conclusion

In sum, then, it is clear that, though students do, in some ways, think about value-for-money in terms of their university experience—whether with regards to the stress caused by the cost, or the relative value of the experience they were getting—very few appear to be customers of the sort theorised by policymakers and by the student-as-consumer discourse. Many students expressed discomfort with the label and its connotations of entitlement, arguing that they saw themselves as *earning* a degree, rather than buying one, or that university was a “two-way street”, in which they as students needed to put in the effort. Moreover—in contradiction of the quantitative strand—there does not appear to be a straightforward connection between fee-paying and consumer orientation. Although almost all the students who rejected the label entirely were non-fee-payers at Scottish institutions, there were, surprisingly, some fee-paying students who rejected the label and some non-fee-paying students at Scottish institutions who *also* identified as customers—whether because they saw the Scottish government as paying on their behalf or because they saw themselves having paid in time, effort or living costs.

Conclusions for Qualitative Chapter

The questions asked by this project were focused on the funding system and its effect(s) on students today; they asked, specifically, whether paying fees might affect student attitudes to (1) the labour market and (2) university itself (measured in terms of “consumer” orientation and “learner” orientation), and whether social background and

institutional type might play a role in this relationship. The findings from these interviews make clear that, firstly, money was indeed a factor in how some students approach university and what they want from their degree, particularly with regards to thinking about the labour market. For some, the weight of this cost created a sense of pressure or unhappiness, while for those who viewed the cost as an investment, this seemed to create a desire to “make the most” of their time at university. For others, though, cost was a non-issue—seen as an inevitable part of a necessary next step and structured in such a way as to not affect the student directly, cost was neither motivator nor stress.

Most students today are also well aware that the labour market is congested and competitive, and that a degree alone will not be enough to find a “graduate” job, supporting the findings of the quantitative strand of the study—indeed, there was a sense from many students that a degree was both necessary and pointless, a hoop they *had* to jump through that would not, in itself, confer an advantage. For some students, the inevitability of going to university seemed to counteract the feeling of financial investment or burden; it was seen almost as a type of sunk cost.

This is related to an apparent and important contradiction that emerged from the interviews: although there was a belief, particularly in Scotland, that paying for university would make one value university more (i.e., “take it more seriously”), in fact the majority of those who fell into the Generalist Non-Careerist group (i.e., students who had gone to university with neither a specific career goal nor a love of subject) were fee-paying. This implies that a significant number of the sample had drifted into paying large sums of money with no real idea of *why* they were doing this, or what value this activity had for them. These students were, it is important to note, also mostly from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In terms of the student-as-consumer idea, the findings indicated that, as perhaps expected, students in Scotland appeared to reject the label of consumer far more readily than their peers at English institutions; however, interestingly, these were both fee-payers and *non*-fee-payers. Moreover, fee-paying students in English institutions also expressed discomfort with the idea, and felt the need to qualify the label, emphasising that they did not feel entitled to a degree simply because they were paying tuition fees. Surprisingly, some *non*-fee-paying students in Scotland also identified as customers, whether because they saw the government as paying on their behalf, their living cost loan as a form of debt to be repaid, or because they saw the opportunity cost as a form of payment. Of those that seemed to more fully embrace the identity of customer (whether fee-paying or not), some—again, from low socio-economic backgrounds—expressed this particularly in negative terms, relating a feeling of powerlessness, and “not getting the upper hand.” Those who expressed a sense of not getting good “value-for-money” were also those from low SES backgrounds.

Although those who rejected the customer label most fully were also those who expressed the strongest orientation towards learning, there were some amongst those who had identified strongly as customers who still approached their studies actively and with no sense of entitlement. Conversely, there were several students who rejected the label of customer but who adopted a more lackadaisical approach to their studies and to university more generally. In both cases, students were from a mixture of economic backgrounds. The link, therefore, between fee-paying and approach to learning, specifically, seems to be more complicated than theory would suggest. The implications of this, and the previous conclusions, will be discussed in the following chapter.

Discussion: Do Fees Affect Students' Approaches to University and Employability?

Having developed and validated a new scale to measure employability, surveyed over 700 students at six case study institutions, applied structural equation modelling and then interviewed over 30 participants leading to over 17 hours of interview data, the following chapter finally brings together and discusses the findings of these three strands of this study. It highlights and discusses the following key findings (largely excluding the findings from the preliminary analyses chapters, since these are superseded by the SEM results):

- (1) on the whole, students appeared to be much more learner-oriented than consumer-oriented
- (2) fee-paying students had higher consumer scores than non-fee-paying students
- (3) working class students were *more* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees than not, middle class students were *less* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees than not
- (4) students from high SES backgrounds had lower consumer scores than students from low SES backgrounds
- (5) the relationship between students and the identity of consumer is complex, often qualified, and not fee-dependent
- (6) most students fall on the Player end of the approach to employability spectrum
- (7) students in Scotland fell on the Player end of the spectrum significantly more than students in England
- (8) students in England were less consumer-oriented than students in Scotland (when controlling for tuition fees)
- (9) there was no relationship between fee-paying and approach to employability

The chapter then discusses the implications of these and other findings for policy and theory, after which it considers the limitations of the study, as well as areas for further research. It finishes with a short conclusion.

The Impact of Tuition Fees

The Student-as-Consumer

Ever since university tuition fees were first introduced across the U.K. in 1998, they have played an outsized role in the public imaginary (the Liberal Democrats, for instance, lost political power almost entirely due to their reneging on the promise of being against tuition fees). Within the academic discourse, tuition fees have often been used as a type of metonym for the neo-liberalisation or marketisation of higher education. As such, much has been discussed in the literature regarding the potential transformative effects of fees on student identity; the *paying* student, it is theorised, is a student-consumer, and a student-consumer is less interested in learning and personal growth than in getting a good mark, having a good time, and finding a good job. But is this actually happening? And is it happening as a result of the fees themselves, or as a result of larger transformations of and within the higher education sector? Less than a handful of studies have sought to answer the former question (see e.g., Bunce et al., 2017; Bunce & Bennett, 2021; M. Tomlinson, 2014) and none have, to the author's knowledge, examined the second. This study therefore—by surveying over 700 students at six institutions in England and Scotland and using Structural Equation Modelling to systematically compare students with different characteristics—makes a significant contribution to our knowledge and thinking about this important topic.

The findings from the quantitative strand support the findings of Bunce et al's (2017) study, showing that fee-paying students had higher consumer scores than non-fee-paying students (though not, it should be noted, lower learner scores), suggesting that an increased consumer orientation is indeed related to paying tuition fees. However, the results extend previous research by showing that self-identified social status (SSS) plays an important role in the relationship between fees and learner orientation: students were *more* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees (than when not paying tuition) if they self-identified as working class, but *less* learner-oriented when paying tuition fees if they self-identified as middle class. This therefore suggests a significant point that has previously been missed in the discussion (by for instance, Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2009) about the impact of tuition fees on student identity and behaviour; namely, that fees appear to affect students differently depending on social background. In this case, the findings from the present study suggest that fees are perhaps incentivising those who see themselves as working class,

making them *more* rather than less academically focused, while the reverse is happening to those who are middle class—thus suggesting that tuition fees might arguably be *beneficial* in some cases, and detrimental in others. Intriguingly, however, socio-economic status (SES) was shown *not* to play a role in the relationship between tuition fees and approach to employability or university.

There therefore appears to be an interesting distinction between SES and SSS that deserves further discussion. While much research in the field of education focuses on SES alone (Patten, 2019), self-identified (or subjective) social status—which is to do with an individual's *perception* of his or her social standing, and may not in fact accurately reflect their economic status—has been shown to play a key role in other areas of research, over and above SES alone, for instance, in health research (Hoebel & Lampert, 2020). Indeed, both the survey and the interviews indicated that students self-identified in ways that might not typically fit with how they would be classified economically. One student, for example, described her family as “poor” and “working class”; all members of this family were privately educated, university-educated, and in professional jobs. The findings from the present study suggest that more research is needed around SSS and education, perhaps particularly when it comes to the impact of tuition fees—maybe not wholly surprisingly, since one might expect one's self-perception to play a bigger role than one's actual economic standing in the case of student identity.

Although the quantitative strand showed that fee-paying students were more consumer-oriented than non-fee-paying students, the descriptive statistics also painted an illuminating picture more generally: on the whole, students appeared to be much more learner-oriented than consumer-oriented, regardless of fee status, country, university type, or background—over 97% of students agreed that they wanted to expand their intellectual ability, over 96% agreed with the statement “I think of myself as being at university to learn” and just over 80% agreed with the statement “If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree”. This is in contrast to previous research by Tomlinson (2007) and the theories of scholars such as Collini (2012). The results of the qualitative strand both furthered and complicated this, supporting the work of Brooks et al (2021), who found ambivalence amongst students regarding the consumer identity. The present findings showed that the majority of students rejected the

label of customer or consumer because they did not like the entitlement it suggested—they wanted to be seen and treated as students and earn, rather than buy, their degree.

Students in England, in particular, although they accepted the label of “customer” or “consumer” applied to them, often seemed reluctant about it, as though in some way forced to do so by the nature of the transaction, and consequently many felt the need to qualify the label. This may go some way to explaining why, in the results of the quantitative strand, students at English institutions surprisingly scored *lower* on the Consumer scale than their peers in Scotland, when tuition fees were taken into account. Those who *did* identify fully as customers or consumers were often both those from low SES backgrounds and the most unhappy; they did not feel they had more rights but rather that they had little power in the relationship. This reflects the findings of the quantitative strand, which showed that SES had a direct effect on consumer orientation, such that students from low SES backgrounds were more consumer-oriented than their mid/high-SES peers. Importantly, though, these students who unhappily identified as customers or consumers were *not necessarily fee-paying*—these students were in some cases Scottish-domiciled students in Scotland who saw the government as “footing the bill” on their behalf, or as having paid in time, effort or living costs. This finding is crucial to our discussion around the student-as-consumer, since it suggests that tuition fees are neither necessary nor sufficient for creating that identity; rather, it seems as though the wider marketisation of HE—including policy discourse, university websites, etc.—is potentially transforming how students see themselves in relation to university, and not necessarily to their benefit.

(Not) Paying for a Job

As part of the discourse on the marketisation of HE and the potential impact on tuition fees, it has been theorised that students who pay for university may be more focused on the outcomes of their degrees, particularly in terms of employment—though extremely limited, previous research has suggested this may be the case (Tomlinson, 2007). However, the findings of the present study complicate this picture: the quantitative strand found no relationship between tuition fees and approach to employability (as measured by the newly developed Approach to Employability scale); instead, the descriptive statistics showed that most students today appear to be Players—that is, most students are aware that the labour

market is a positional competition, that techniques like CV-building and networking are necessary, and that a good degree alone will not be enough. Considering that the ideal types of Player and Purist were developed in 2004, pre-financial crash and indeed before the widespread availability of social and informational networks, this is perhaps not wholly surprising.

Moreover, the qualitative data made clear that the Player/Purist binary simply did not map neatly onto today's students—though many of them had a Player-like awareness of the labour market, this was by no means universal, and the ways in which they *responded* to that knowledge differed significantly. Therefore, to capture the ways in which students today view and interact with their employability, a new framework was developed, drawing on Brown and Hesketh (2004), but also Tomlinson (2007). This framework suggests four ideal types: *the Specialist Careerist*, who is authentic, non-instrumental, and focused on a specific career; *the Generalist Careerist* (who most closely matches the Player type), who is inauthentic, instrumental, but still focused on the labour market; *the Specialist Non-careerist*, who is authentic, non-instrumental, and subject- (not labour market-) focused; and the *Generalist Non-careerist*, who has no specific goal, and is neither learning nor labour-market focused, and as a result can be either authentic or instrumental. It is important to note that there were demographic differences in terms of who fell into these groups: for instance, the Specialist Non-careerists were mostly studying in Scottish universities and originally from European countries. The Generalist Careerists, on the other hand, were studying across both countries, but were mostly from mid to high SES backgrounds, while the Generalist Non-careerists were mostly fee-paying and from low SES backgrounds.

This latter group is important to consider closely, as they have the biggest implications. These students had gone to university, and taken on loans to pay for that university, with neither a desire to engage with university for its own sake nor a real plan regarding labour market prospects. These students were not Purists, because they were aware of the congested nature of the labour market and that a graduate premium was in no way guaranteed; indeed, to them, a university degree was not perceived as adding value, but simply as inevitable—not an investment or a burden, but a sunk cost. This is in line with the work of Brooks et al (2020) and Harrison (2019), who suggest that students increasingly perceive of university as an “insurance’ against downward mobility” and as “the basic

minimum required to secure any job” (Brooks et al., 2020, p.6), rather than as an investment in *upward* social mobility. However, the findings of this project extend the work of Brooks and Harrison by showing that this view is related also to how cost is seen by the student, and to a pervasive feeling among these students that they don’t know what to *do* with this “inevitable next step”. It also suggests that certain students in particular seem to fall into this way of thinking (mostly *fee-paying, low-SES* students in England, rather than Scotland). In other words, the internalization of the idea that the labour market is oversaturated and that “a degree is not enough” has apparently created a group of students—mostly from low SES backgrounds, mostly in England—for whom university is both necessary and pointless: they have no idea why they are there or what they will do next, they just know it was their only option and that they will likely “never pay back their loans”. The implications of this for policy will be discussed further in a later section, but in any case more research is clearly needed to further investigate how widespread this phenomenon is amongst students of different social backgrounds.

Competing Mythologies: Scotland vs England

Scotland pioneered the idea of universal access to school education in the 17th and 18th centuries. Ever since then, a commitment to education has been part of our identity, part of our sense of ourselves as a country.

(First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, August 2015)

Even before devolution, Scotland and England have had different national approaches to and mythologies around education (Phillips, 2000). Today, apart from the differences in tuition fee system, there are also differences in the structure of education at all levels: for example, though England adheres to a National Curriculum, Scotland has its own Curriculum for Excellence; while in England students can take GCSES and then A levels, students in Scotland (as of 2017) take Scottish National Standardised Assessments in both primary and secondary school, and then Highers and, sometimes, Advanced Highers. University courses in Scotland usually last for four years, rather than three, and tend to be organised such that the first two years are general, with a further two years conferring an honours degree (Phillips, 2000). In terms of the HE landscape more generally, it is perhaps fair to say that while subject to many of the same regulatory and marketisation pressures as universities in England, Scottish policy discourse has emphasised the idea that higher

education “should be seen as a public good from which society as a whole benefits” (Denholm, 2019), as the country’s Commissioner for Fair Access Peter Scott put it. The nations have also had fundamentally different approaches when it comes to university’s relationship with the labour market; the different HE funding mechanisms have meant that the Scottish Funding Council has been able to give universities funding to direct and support the employability agenda, while in England, policymakers have relied on market forces and industry incentives to drive the relationship between universities and the labour market.

No previous research has examined what impact, if any, these national differences are having on students, in terms of their approach to employability and to university; rather, studies into these topics, to the extent they have been undertaken at all, have generally been UK-wide. The findings of the present project are therefore extremely important. First of all, they show that, when fees are taken into account, students at Scottish institutions are *more* consumer-oriented than students in England. The findings from the qualitative strand go some way in explaining this: in England, there was great reluctance amongst fee-payers to fully accept the identity, while fee-paying students in Scotland seemed particularly aware that they were paying tuition fees, partly because of the stark contrast they felt with many of their peers. As one Scottish student put it:

“If a class is cancelled [...] the rest of my class—because most of them are from Scotland—are just, ‘Oh yeah’, but I’m like, ‘I’m paying for this, you know? I’d like to be taught something!’”

Although it is important to note that the qualitative findings did show that most of the students at Scottish institutions were able to wholeheartedly and unequivocally reject the identity of consumer in a manner that their counterparts in England could not, there was also, as discussed earlier, a clear internalisation of the consumer discourse by even non-fee-paying students in Scotland. Whether because they saw the government as paying on their behalf, or saw their payment in terms of opportunity costs, these non-fee-paying students in Scotland still fully embraced the identity of customer. This is a perhaps a particularly surprising and notable finding: despite the Scottish government’s emphasis on free tuition as part of Scottish identity, the wider marketisation of the sector and the English policy rhetoric of the student-as-consumer is clearly influencing the way some Scottish home students relate to university, and perhaps not positively.

Second of all, and very importantly, the results of the quantitative strand *did* indicate a significant difference between how students in England and students in Scotland approach their employability. The results showed that students in Scotland were *more* Player-oriented than their peers in England, which suggests that Scotland and England's different approaches to universities' engagement with the labour market may be differentially impacting how students engage with their employability. The impact of this can arguably be seen in the qualitative data, where interview participants from Scotland highlighted the integration of employability skills into their curricula, for example via mandatory "employability courses" and "skills passports". More will be discussed in terms of the policy implications later on in this chapter, but regardless, it is clear that more cross-national research is needed to further unpick the factors at play.

Getting Your Money's Worth

Central to the rhetoric around fees and marketisation has been the idea that fee-payers want to get their "money's worth" (Elliott, 2014; Huber, 1992; Pound, 2003). Even as far back as the Robbins Report of 1963 (which is more often credited with opening the door to social mobility than with anything to do with the current market system), there was a similar claim: "it is said that the student financed by grants is sometimes apt to take his privilege for granted: and that this may have as a by-product the lack of any sense of obligation and need to work. By contrast, the student financed by loan is likely to have a greater sense of individual responsibility" (Robbins, 1963). This idea also seems to have permeated the attitudes of students in Scotland, both fee-paying and non-fee-paying, who believed that *not* paying tuition fees meant valuing the degree less. This belief, however, was shown to be largely unfounded; for instance, many fee-payers were unmotivated by the cost because of its future-based structure, and the students who disproportionately fell into the aforementioned Generalist non-careerist group (those who were neither motivated by learning nor by career at university, and subsequently felt they were making little of their time there) were fee-paying students at English universities.

Indeed, as the findings of the qualitative strand revealed, it appeared to be less about the fees themselves and more a matter of perception: the students who saw university as a financial investment—particularly an investment made by others—in their

future felt incentivized (and pressured) to “make the most” or “maximise” their experience, regardless of whether they *were* paying fees. Students in Scotland who were not paying fees, but viewed the Scottish government as making an investment on their behalf, were incentivised to work harder and make the most of their time at university; students who were not paying directly but whose parents or families were funding their tuition likewise felt the need to “maximise” their experience. Moreover, this “maximisation” was not limited to building employability, but often also seemed to mean engaging with social activities, doing well academically, and taking advantage of the opportunities available at university. Therefore, though this “maximisation” could be interpreted as students looking at “the university experience” more transactionally (a mark of the student-consumer, and found in Tomlinson’s (2014) study), it could also be seen as students putting intentionality into their general flourishing, very much a non student-consumer approach.

It is possible that this may explain the moderating effect of self-identified social status as well; those from “working class” backgrounds may view the loan *itself* differently, and more as an investment, than those from “middle class” (or “upper-middle class”) backgrounds, many of whom simply saw the loan as a future worry or a non-issue because of the structure of the loan. This is in contrast to previous research which has suggested that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to see the costs of higher education as debt rather than investment (Callender & Jackson, 2008), and suggests a change over the last decade in how students relate to the loan system. It appears that one possible effect of framing tuition fees as a type of “buy now pay later” loan system may in fact be *demotivating* to some students.

At the same time, it is important to note that the quantitative strand showed that students from low socio-economic backgrounds were also more consumer-oriented than their middle and high-SES peers, a finding that again extends the existent literature on the student-as-consumer and points to the need for the more research on this topic. From the qualitative strand it was clear that those who most fully identified as consumers were indeed those from low SES backgrounds, but these were particularly *unhappy* consumers—consumers who felt powerless, as though they were “not getting the upper hand”. Those who felt they were getting poor “value-for-money” likewise were mostly from low SES backgrounds. Research from other fields has shown that low socio-economic background is often linked to a perceived powerlessness (e.g., Horton et al., 2010), and so it is possible

that this plays a role in how the identity of consumer is adopted. In effect this suggests that the policy framing of the university as “service provider” and the student as “customer-consumer” may be particularly alienating students from working class backgrounds. More research is clearly needed to see how the *perception of* and *discourse* around tuition fees can affect their impact.

Implications for Policy

A Better System?

The finding discussed previously showing that students are more Player-oriented in Scotland has important implications for policy. In an over-saturated labour market, where employability is about *getting* a job in the first place (rather than keeping the job or doing the job well), being a Player is a major advantage. This may explain why Scottish students appear to do slightly better in the labour market after graduating: as HESA data (2016) has shown, for instance, 91% of Scotland’s graduates are in work or further study within six months of graduation, compared to only 90% in England. Moreover, 73% of these Scottish graduates are in professional occupations. The average earnings of graduates from Scottish universities (six months after graduation) are also £500 higher than those from English universities¹⁴, also suggesting greater success in transitioning to the labour market.

Scottish graduates may be finding more success in the labour market (at least initially) than their English peers, therefore, *because* they are more Player-oriented. And this, in turn, likely reflects a significantly different policy context. As discussed in the Literature Review, Scotland’s funding model—which relies on block grants rather than student choice in the form of tuition fees—allows for much greater control of the sector. The result is a much more cohesive *system* of tertiary education (Keep, 2021) than England’s market-led approach (and consequently a more comprehensive approach to economic development more generally). Building employability—through partnerships with local industry, for example—has explicitly been made a priority in many of Scotland’s universities, and has been funded accordingly. As noted in the qualitative chapters, students in Scottish institutions mentioned certain employability initiatives in their universities—such as

¹⁴ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/28-06-2018/sfr250-higher-education-leaver-statistics-employment>

compulsory employability courses and skills passports—likely reflecting this effects of this funding model. By contrast, no such agenda-setting has been possible in England (though ministers try nonetheless, by threatening sanctions on “low-performing” universities). That students graduating from Scottish universities appear to be more employability-savvy than their peers from English universities suggests that Scotland has perhaps better incorporated the employability agenda into HE than England—and therefore that Scotland’s system-approach may be more successful than England’s market-led approach.

However, it should also be noted that a culture of part-time work seemed particularly pervasive in Scotland, across both types of institutions, and so it is also possible that this may be playing a role in how Player-oriented students are—students who have been more exposed to the labour market, even simply through part-time work, may be more aware of its rules. Previous work by Carney et al (2006) has suggested that even 15 years ago, a huge proportion of students in Scotland appeared to take on work alongside their studies, with half of those surveyed having part-time employment and another 37% without jobs looking for a job. More research is needed in order to explore to what extent part-time work habits in both England and Scotland are affecting attitudes towards and knowledge of the labour market.

The Point(lessness) of University?

The main purpose of higher education, as framed by policy and policymakers today, is economic progress (Kromydas, 2017)—it understands the student in largely economic terms, as a vessel of potential human capital waiting to be filled by the skills the university will provide, that will then go on to boost the economy by bringing those skills to the labour market, thereby also increasing their individual earnings. Previous studies had found that students by-and-large believe this; in the “fact” that graduates earn more than non-graduates, thus internalising the policy discourse around the positive graduate premium (Esson & Ertl, 2016). But this study shows that students and the act of studying cannot be thought of purely in financial terms. Though students do believe that graduates earn more than non-graduates, this is because they see a degree being necessary for *all* jobs, regardless of earnings potential. This, combined with the internalization of the related idea that the labour market is oversaturated, has created a group of students (mostly loan-

funded and from low SES backgrounds) for whom university is both *necessary* and *pointless*—necessary because to not have a degree would exclude one from the job market entirely, pointless because everyone else also has a degree (in their eyes). These students have no idea why they have gone to university or what they'll do next, they just know it was their only option and that, because they are unlikely to gain “graduate” jobs, they will likely “never pay back their loans”. These students, in other words, appear unable or unwilling to mobilize their university experience to confer them with an advantage in the labour market, and because they have no career focus or strategies, they are indeed unlikely to find high-paying jobs and pay back their loans—a major issue for policymakers who are worried about the ever-growing Treasury debt (McGettigan, 2015).

It is important also to highlight once again the connection between the discourse of student-as-consumer and that of employability (and indeed, the results from the quantitative strand showed that there was a significant positive association between Approach to Employability and Consumer orientation): both assume a student that is largely transactional and instrumental. That is, the “Player” is not interested in work experiences, networking or a career as *goods in themselves*, but rather as goods to mobilise in the effort to achieve a particular end-goal (usually, a good job). Likewise, the “student-consumer” is not interested in studying and classes as *goods in themselves*, but again, only as a vehicles for achieving high marks and, ultimately, employment. Specialist careerists and Specialist non-careerists both stand in contrast to the “Player” and the “student-consumer”: both types of specialist were intrinsically motivated and deeply engaged, despite the fact that for one group, their university experience was seen largely in terms of preparation for the labour market. It was the generalists, both the non-careerists and careerists, who were largely transactional and instrumental, and this was less to do with seeing university in terms of employability, and more to do with *purpose*. Put differently, those who seemed most fulfilled and engaged by their degrees and university experience were the Specialist careerists and Specialist non-careerists—that is, those that felt that they were at university for a *reason*, whether to prepare them for a specific career, develop themselves or enhance their learning.

A major implication of this is that too many students are being pushed into university as a default, without the necessary exploration of alternative options or any sort of career guidance. Perverse incentives that bring status and funding to schools that send

large numbers of their pupils to university, a myopic focus on university as the only route to social mobility, and a lack of “parity of esteem” between vocational and academic pathways, all likely contribute to this “university push”. Lack of state support for career guidance in schools—the Sutton Trust recently found that nearly a third of teachers at state schools lack the money to deliver careers guidance, while 51 percent said they did not have the time (Holt-White et al., 2022)—then exacerbates the problem, since students will be left to navigate subject and university choice alone, without support for the necessary long-term thinking and planning. This is a larger and crucial question about the benefits and (clear!) drawbacks of a system of mass higher education, in which more education increasingly offers less advantage when it comes to professional and managerial jobs (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2010) —a question that needs a serious discussion by academics and policymakers alike. Further research could more closely examine where the “university push” students end up, how they navigate their post-university years and what happens to their student loans.

There is also a question about the discourse *around* higher education: by focusing so exclusively on the economic/labour-market-preparation aspect of university, there is a risk that other purposes, such as self-formation (Marginson, 2018), get elided. This elision then potentially constrains, for students, the many other ways of interacting with university; their “horizons of possibilities”—in terms of what university is *for*—may, as a result, become limited¹⁵. One consequence of this may be that, feeling themselves tricked or trapped into going to university to simply avoid downward social mobility, some students—such as Gabby, a non-fee-paying student at a Russell Group Scottish university, who felt she did not enjoy or make the most of her time there, and did not have a plan for the future—may simply become “unhappy customers”. Alongside better career guidance, therefore, students need to know *why* they are at university, and what university offers *over and above* labour market preparation— beyond thinking it is the inevitable “next step”. These and the

¹⁵ As others have pointed out, there is also the risk that institutions themselves also become limited in their possibilities—“higher education institutions held in the public mind to be factories for producing private status goods and private knowledge goods come to focus largely on those functions alone. Increasingly, universities that come to see themselves as private firms catering for other private economic interests will embrace the producer/consumer mindset” (Marginson, 2011). Though beyond the scope of this project, how institutions *see themselves* as a result of the discursive framing, and how this then trickles down to students, is also an important area to explore.

findings discussed previously therefore point to the importance of the discursive framing around fees. As Foucault explains, discursive formations are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (1986, p. 49), thereby creating possibilities of thought. The fact that even students who do not pay fees can still feel like powerless, dissatisfied customers; that students who see their loans as a write-off appear less incentivised than those who view them as an investment (particularly an investment by others on their behalf); and yet that those from “working class backgrounds” may become *more* learner-oriented if paying fees, all suggest that policy-makers have an opportunity to significantly improve students’ relationship with HE simply by *framing* tuition fees differently, for instance, as a collaborative investment by the state and the student.

Implications for Theory

The first major theoretical implication to come out of the study is to do with the student-as-consumer of HE: both the theory that fees are turning students into passive consumers (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009)—and specifically, that students who pay fees in marketized systems will become entitled and uninterested in the cognitive demands of learning— and the policy imaginary that sees them as savvy customers (Willetts, 2017) were not borne out by the study. The relationship between students and the identity of “consumer” or “customer” was revealed to be much more complex than some previous studies (Bunce et al, 2017) would suggest, supporting qualitative findings from Brooks et al (2021). For one thing, students do not necessarily need to be fee-payers to identify as consumers. Students on the whole do not feel “entitled” to degrees, being very much there to learn— the student loan system therefore does not appear to be the death of the “student”, as some commentators have suggested (e.g., Collini, 2012).

A second major theoretical implication of the study, which has already been discussed at length elsewhere in the thesis but nonetheless deserves further mention here, is that Brown and Hesketh’s (2004) framework of Player and Purist no longer seems to apply to students in the UK: there just do not seem to be many Purists left. The vast majority of students are well aware that a degree is not enough; that the labour market is a positional competition; and that there is a game to be played if one wants to secure a job. This can perhaps partly be explained by the political and economic changes that have taken place since 2004; most

notably the financial crash of 2008, but also, increasingly, a policy and media rhetoric of competition and labour market over-saturation. As one student put it:

“politicians...talk about having to be more competitive all the time, that the economy needs to be more competitive, and that Higher education needs to produce more competitive, employable students for the job market.”

Moreover, this awareness does not seem to be related to socio-economic background—previous research had suggested that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds might fall disproportionately towards the Purist side of the spectrum, since working class students are oblivious to—and so do not know how to play—the employability game (Crozier, Reay, Clayton, Colliander, & Grinstead, 2008). The findings from the quantitative strand of this study, suggesting that there is no relationship between approach to employability and SES, are surprising but important. Since it is well-known that graduates from lower SES backgrounds *do* struggle to gain the same types of employment as their middle-class peers—students from lower income families have significantly lower median earnings than those from higher income families (Britton, Dearden, Shephard, & Vignoles, 2016)—the issue is arguably not in their approach to or knowledge of the labour market, but in their ability to mobilise this knowledge. It is also possible that the issue arises elsewhere in the transition, and indeed, possibly not from the supply-side of the equation at all. Further research could untangle this by looking at the ways in which low-SES but *employability-savvy* students transition to the labour market; it could also use the new framework developed in this study (of Specialist/Generalist Careerists/Non-careerists) to see how, with a larger sample, socio-economic background affects who falls into each group.

Limitations

Every study is subject to limitations and challenges, both methodological and theoretical, that affect both the trustworthiness and the interpretation of the results; this study is no exception. It is perhaps important to first point out the limitations of the design of the project: because this is a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, rather than a controlled experiment, clear causal connections cannot be established. Instead, the study is reliant on advanced statistical techniques to show associations and control for extraneous

factors. This means that though conclusions can be drawn about *relationships*, it cannot be said that, for example, tuition fees *cause* a higher consumer orientation. This limitation is common and indeed unavoidable when exploring complex real-world situations; there would be no way to design a controlled experiment looking at the impact of tuition fees. The “natural experiment” offered by the differing funding regimes of Scotland and England offers a valuable approximation, however, and the findings are likewise important, despite not allowing for causal conclusions.

The second challenge to highlight is with the measurability of the issues examined in this project; namely, approach to employability and approach to university (as defined by consumer and learner orientations). All scales of this kind are subject to criticism, since they are attempting to capture complex, potentially shifting phenomena at a single point in time. However, in the case of the Consumer/Learner Identity Scales, their previous use in studies by Bunce et al. (2017, 2021) were a good reason to use them again: using the same tools in different contexts is a key aspect of building knowledge and confidence in research through replicability (Nosek et al., 2022). Creating a new approach to employability scale, however, came with its own challenges: in creating a scale that attempted to measure the degree of “Playerness” to “Puristness” along a spectrum, I have assumed that the two approaches are mutually exclusive—that is, if you are a Player you cannot be a Purist, and vice versa. This is how the typology was presented in the work of Brown and Hesketh (2004) and this conceptualisation was not interrogated in the present study. It is possible, however, that certain elements of each type could be held contemporaneously; you could, theoretically, both believe that the labour market is meritocratic (and not a positional competition) *and* want to give yourself an advantage by tailoring your CV. In this case, the scale and indeed the typology would fail to capture your particular approach to employability. It is hoped that this challenge was addressed by the qualitative strand of the research, in which precisely these contradictions and complexities were explored. The consumer identity was indeed shown to be more complex than was able to be captured by the scales, and the new employability framework developed allows for a more nuanced understanding of students’ various approaches, while still incorporating certain key elements of Brown and Hesketh’s seminal work.

Relatedly, another challenge was presented when trying to accurately capture SES. Measuring socio-economic status is always complicated, since it is by nature a proxy

measure; that is, it relies on various data points (such as postcode, free school meals, education level or job type) to place a subject at a particular SES level. This particular project relied on three indicators (1) combined parental education (2) parental occupation and (3) an indication of income via secondary school type; this “three-component” proxy variable is standard in psychological and sociological literature (NCES, 2012). However, it is possible that this was not specific enough; in future, it would perhaps be important to also include home postcode and eligibility for free school meals, as well as annual household income (if not surveying students, who may not know). This might lead to a fuller and more accurate picture of the participant’s backgrounds.

Another important limitation of the study to acknowledge is that of the highly localised nature of the institutional sites. Though intended to help comparability, having both English institutions come from only one region and the other four in Scotland come from only two regions risks a confounding of factors—it is possible that what I have taken to be differences between “England” and “Scotland” are really differences between cities *within* these countries. In other words, to what extent are the attitudes of students at two universities in the south-east of England generalisable to students across the nation? This study is certainly not an outlier in its case-study approach—much research relies on data from two or three institutions, and generalises and extrapolates from this much broader national implications—and it is important not to dismiss the implications of the findings only because of the small-scale nature of the project. Having both English institutions from the same area allowed for other confounding factors to be limited; this was especially important for such a complex and multifaceted set of research questions. Nonetheless, it would be important for further research to expand the sample to universities across both England and Scotland in order to see whether the differences exist outside these localised sites.

It is also important to highlight the nature of the sample gathered for both the quantitative and qualitative strand. In order to maximise the possible number of respondents to the survey, no specific criterion had to be met for their participation, and so students were surveyed and interviewed at different points along their university journey. This potentially complicates the results, since—as indeed the descriptive statistics indicated—students may feel differently towards both university and their employability at different stages in their trajectory. Moreover, due to the time lag between survey and interview, some students had in fact already graduated by the time they were interviewed,

meaning that their responses were reflective of a past experience rather than a present one—potentially an important difference. However, this limitation also conferred some important benefits—not only did it allow for a large enough sample size for SEM to be conducted, it also highlighted some important insights that might otherwise have been missed. For instance, had a range of university year groups not been sampled, there would have been no evidence that there *were* differences in attitudes across the different year groups; similarly, it would not have been possible to see the surprising similarities in attitudes of interviewees across the different year groups, had the sample been limited to a single year.

Relatedly, the study surveyed only current undergraduates, and did not focus on those in the liminal space between university and the labour market. Therefore, though the findings tell us a lot about student *attitudes* and *approaches* to the labour market, there is no data on how these attitudes and approaches then played out in practice. Though beyond the scope of the project, this data would have been incredibly useful for teasing out the implications of the findings and perhaps highlighting any mismatches between what students do and what they say.

Areas for Further Research

By taking the first steps into largely unmarked territory, the present study has opened up many questions and avenues for further research. Comparing England and Scotland has provided rich and necessary data about the evolving landscape of HE; more such comparisons would be greatly beneficial to educational research in general. In particular, further research could explicitly compare the work habits and transitions of students in Scotland and students in England, and see to what extent the differences in approach found in this study translate to differences in employment outcomes. Research with academics at Scottish and English institutions, looking at how they embed employability in the curriculum, might also be an interesting avenue to explore. Relatedly, though the interviews suggested that students do not so easily fall into the Player/Purist spectrum, it would be interesting and important to test the newly developed approach to employability scale in other contexts, such as in the U.S. and Poland, two countries with very different relationships between HE and the labour market. Similarly, further research

could investigate whether the new employability framework (of Specialists and Generalists) maps onto other populations, and in particular whether there are more of a certain type than others in a particular context. The study has also highlighted the importance of the oft-ignored characteristic of self-identified social status (SSS); further research should look more at how the impact of SSS may differ from SES in other contexts beyond tuition fees.

The study has also shown that there are a variety of factors at play when it comes to approach to university and approach to employability, beyond tuition fees. For instance, though not possible to probe further within the confines of this research, the preliminary analyses suggested that subject type plays an important role in approach to university, such that students studying humanities subjects were significantly more learner-oriented than students studying STEM, vocational or social science subjects. Considering the ongoing “war against humanities at Britain's universities” (Preston, 2015), further empirical investigation into the relationship between approach to university and subject studied seems not only necessary, but urgent.

Conclusion

This project sought to examine the relationship between university funding types and student approaches to employability and university, using the Raffian approach of “home comparison” (Raffe 1991; Raffe and Byrne 2005) to try to tease out the various effects of tuition fees and funding systems on student attitudes. It did so by developing and validating a new scale to measure employability and then using this in a survey at six case study institutions, two of which were in England, four of which were in Scotland. This quantitative strand (consisting of 753 respondents) was then followed by a qualitative strand, in which a subset ($N=31$) of the survey participants was interviewed. In so doing, this project offers the first large-scale mixed-methods study to compare students’ approaches to employability and university in Scotland and England. As a result of the analysis, the project also offers a newly developed framework for approach to employability (the Generalists and Specialists).

The findings that emerged were in many ways surprising—much that has been theorised about the relationship between fees and students was not borne out by the study. They were also, perhaps, in some ways reassuring: most of the students of today are not the dead-eyed consumers that some academics have feared, nor overly naïve youths who

believe in the power of the “all-important 2.1” to get onto a high-flying career path. That said, there were other key findings with provocative implications: for instance, students in Scotland appear to be more employability-savvy than students in England, a finding with major policy implications that requires further investigation. The relationship between university funding and how students approach university is complex, interacting with self-identified social status and perhaps much more discursively determined than previously thought. Though higher fees are related to a higher consumer orientation, fees may, in some cases, also be making students *more*, not less learner-oriented. Being from a lower socio-economic background was also related to a higher consumer orientation, though the qualitative findings showed that these are perhaps disempowered, “unhappy customers”. Relatedly, there are a worrying number of students who have been “pushed” into university without any sense of their future or the cost of their choice. These and other findings of the study beg for more empirical research to be done in this area; rather than handwringing over the supposed effects of marketisation and the student loan system, large-scale mixed methods research must investigate what is actually happening and why. It is hoped that this study has taken a necessary first step in this direction.

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Appendix 1. Tuition Fees and Maintenance Costs, England v Scotland

Table 41. University costs and funding for full-time undergraduate students in England and Scotland in 2018

Country	Tuition Fees	Maintenance Costs
<i>England</i>		
Home	Up to £9,250 (governmental non means-tested student loans available)	Maintenance loan available; all eligible students qualify for a non-income assessed minimum amount of £3,516 ² . The maximum loan amount is £6,166, depending on income and living situation.
EU	Up to £9,250 (governmental non means-tested student loans available)	Maintenance loan available; all eligible students qualify for a non-income assessed minimum amount of £3,516. The maximum loan amount is £6,166, depending on income and living situation.
Int'l	Set by institutions – can be between £10,000 - £38,000 (no loans available)	No government support available
<i>Scotland</i>		
Home (Scottish and EU nationals)	£1,820 (but covered by SAAS ¹ in almost all cases, and non-repayable)	Income-tested loans for living costs are assessed and available through SAAS. For those under 25, this loan could be a maximum of £6,100, depending on parental income band. Low-income families have access to an additional non-repayable £2000 through the Young Students' Bursary. For those over 25, the student loan could be a maximum of £7,100, depending on individual income band. Low-income individuals have access to an additional non-repayable

		£1000 through the Independent Students' Bursary. ³
r(UK)	Usually £9,250 for the first three years (governmental non means-tested student loans available)	Maintenance loan available; all eligible students qualify for a non-income assessed minimum amount of £3,516. The maximum loan amount is £6,166, depending on income and living situation.
Int'l	Set by institutions – can be between £10,000 - £26,000 (no loans available)	No government support available

¹ *The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government, is responsible for paying for Home (Scottish and EU) students' tuition fees in Scotland. They also assess applications for living costs and bursaries, work with the Student Loans Company, and allocate Discretionary Funds to colleges and universities in Scotland.*

² *In England, bursaries are also available specifically for care leavers, in addition to maintenance loans.*

³ *In Scotland, there is also additional funding available (both for tuition and living costs) for certain courses through the Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery student bursary scheme (PNMSB), which comes from the Scottish Government Health Directorate. This includes a standard Bursary of £10,000 per year (not income-assessed), as well as a Tuition Fee award of £1,820 per year. Additional bursaries are also available for care leavers.*

Note that Scottish students studying in England will go through the same system as the English students in terms of tuition fees (though SAAS manages the student loan) but will have the Scottish system for maintenance costs (meaning differently calculated loans and grants).

Appendix 2. Table of variables and instruments

Table 42: Variables, Instruments and Measures

Variables	Instrument	Measure
<i>Endogenous Variables (EnV)</i>		
EnV1: Approach to employability	Purist/Player Scale	Likert-type scale
EnV2: Approach to learning	Learner Scale	20 item, seven-point Likert scale
EnV3: Consumer identity	Consumer Scale	15 item, seven-point Likert scale
<i>Exogenous Variables (ExV)</i>		
ExV1: Fee responsibility	Demographics survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No tuition fees (Scottish) 2. No tuition fees (EU) 3. Tuition fees loan (English) 4. Tuition fees other support (English)
ExV2: Institutional context (i.e. country)	Demographics survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Scottish 6. English
ExV3: Institutional type	Demographics survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Russell Group 8. Post-1992
ExV4: Socio-economic status	Demographics survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Parental occupation 10. Parental education 11. School type (private/public)
<i>Covariates</i>		
Subjects studied	Demographics survey	
Age	Demographics survey	
Gender	Demographics survey	
Grade level	Demographics survey	
Year of study	Demographics survey	

Appendix 3. Data Cleaning and Preparation

Introduction

This short chapter gives an overview of the dataset developed through the quantitative phase of the project. It begins by looking at the response rate and follows on to describe data cleaning procedures and decisions made regarding the creation and deletion of variables. It then focuses on judgments made regarding missing data and data anomalies; in particular regarding a group of students who answered the fee status question erroneously. The chapter concludes by providing a description of the final sample in terms of demographics, contextualizing the sample in the wider population and discussing generalizability.

Response Rate and Non-response Bias

Due to a low initial response rate from the two Scottish universities originally contacted, the survey was distributed in two further universities in Scotland. Though the total number of survey respondents was quite high ($n = 963$), only 80% of these completed the survey through to the end ($n = 771$). The majority of those who did not complete the survey (14.5%) gave up a quarter of the way through (at various questions); this may be because they erroneously believed they could close and return to the survey (only available for some users, depending on web browser), or simply because the survey was quite long. The spread of non-respondents was roughly even across different genders, ethnicities, universities, nationalities, age and socio-economic backgrounds, however, so there is no indication that a systematic bias was produced by the high rate of unfinished responses. It is unclear exactly what the final response rate was, since – for data compliance reasons – it was not apparent how many students were sent the survey.

Data Cleaning

Variables. To clean the data and prepare it for statistical analyses, several variables were combined, renamed and/or recoded. Universities were grouped into a new *University Type* variable, differentiating between Russell Group and post-1992 universities; similarly,

secondary school types (faith, grammar, comprehensive, academy, independent) were grouped into a new *School Type* variable, divided into either private or state-funded schools. A new *Combined Tuition Funding* variable was created, depending on the answers given by participants to the question *What are your sources of funding for tuition costs? (You can check all that apply)*; when more than one source was selected, it was coded as “Mixed or other funding” unless it included a student loan, in which case it was simply coded as Student Loan. Similarly, a new *Combined Living Funding* variable was created, based on the answers given to the question *What are your sources of funding for living costs? (You can check all that apply)*. Again, in cases where more than one answer was selected, these were coded as “Mixed or other sources”. In addition to recoding automatically using SPSS Syntax, individual participant text entries were also recoded manually. Manual recoding was also used in recoding the text entry answers to the question *What subject are you studying? (Check all that apply)* and all individual subjects were grouped together into four types (Humanities, STEM, Vocational and Social Sciences) to create a new *Subject Type* variable. “Vocational” subjects refer to subjects with direct career pathways such as law, business, physiotherapy, medicine, or social work. Two variables *First Choice (combined)* and *Second Choice (combined)* were created from the question *Why did you choose this degree? (Please rank your answers in order of importance)*; the first variable combined all reasons ranked as most important, the second variable combined all the reasons ranked as second most important.

A new *SES* composite variable was calculated for each participant by adding together the values of the mother’s education (attended university = 3, did not attend university = 2, not sure = 0), father’s education (attended university = 3, did not attend university = 2, not sure = 0), mother’s occupational status (using ISCO coding¹⁶), father’s occupational status (also using ISCO coding¹⁷), and secondary school type (fee-paying = 2, publicly funded = 1). Thus the composite SES combined parental education with parental occupation and an

¹⁶ This was as follows: Managerial positions = 1, Professionals = 2, Technicians and Associate Professionals = 3, Clerical Support Works = 4, Service and Sales Workers = 5, Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers = 6, Craft and Related Trade Workers = 7, Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers = 8, Elementary Occupations = 9, Armed Forces = 0

¹⁷ This was as follows: Managerial positions = 1, Professionals = 2, Technicians and Associate Professionals = 3, Clerical Support Works = 4, Service and Sales Workers = 5, Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers = 6, Craft and Related Trade Workers = 7, Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers = 8, Elementary Occupations = 9, Armed Forces = 0

indication of income via secondary school type; this “three-component” proxy variable is standard in psychological and sociological literature (NCES, 2012)¹⁸. The resulting scale was then transformed into a nominal variable by dividing it into three: High SES = 1, mid-SES = 2, and low-SES = 3.

Missing Data. Those who had completed less than 25% (i.e. almost no further than the first question) were removed from the dataset, this totaled 117 respondents. Once these were removed, almost no variables were missing more than 0.5% responses (1-3 responses), apart from the questions on sexual orientation (7.2% missing), grade level (4.2% missing), secondary school (1.3% missing) and university (1.1%). Where possible, such as in the case of university, these were added manually (based on the email address provided, for instance). Though Multiple Imputation was considered, the missing data on grade level and sexual orientation were not considered important enough (in terms of relevance to the research questions) to justify the challenges that are caused by Multiple Imputation; it was thus decided that the missing cases would just be excluded list-wise during analysis. For the structural equation modeling, full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation was used. This approach, in which missing data is handled *within* the model, rather than imputed or replaced, is most often recommended by researchers and is considered “state-of-the-art” (Schafer & Graham, 2002).

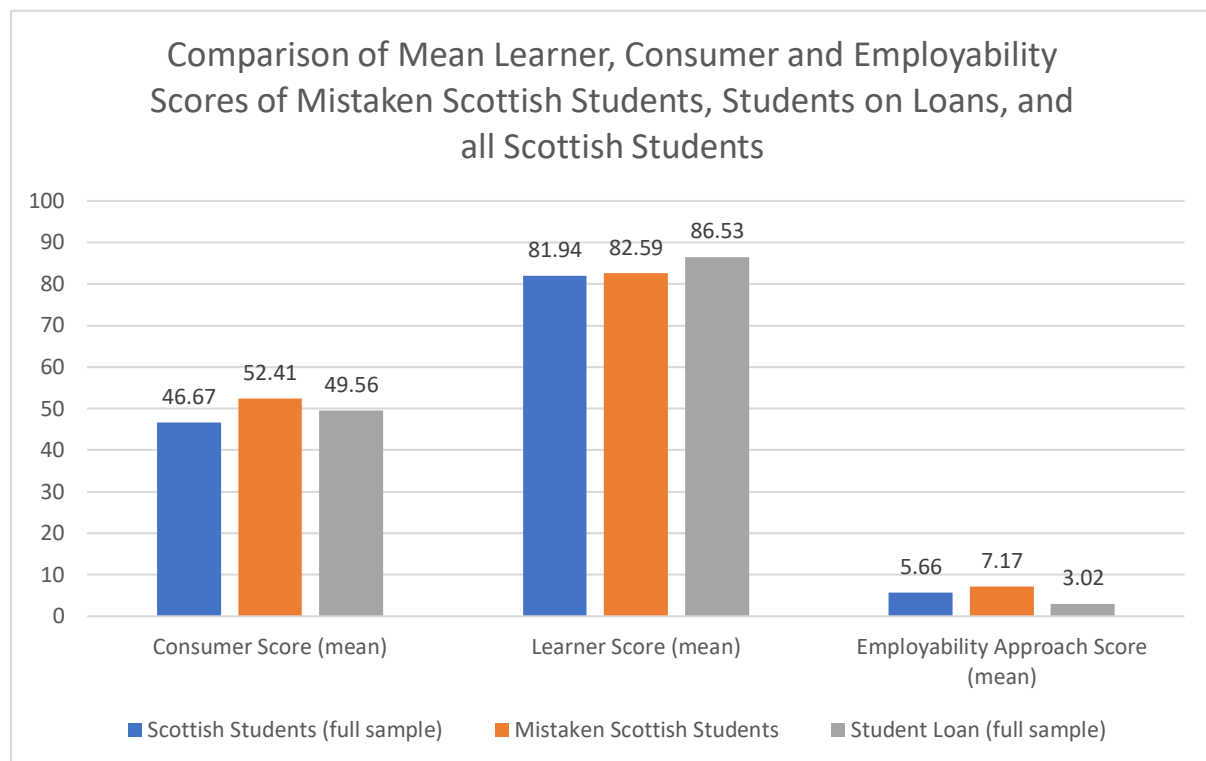
Normality and Outliers. *Employability Approach* scores were normally distributed for all categorical variables; however, *Consumer* and *Learner* scores were significantly non-normal. *Learner* scores in particular were negatively skewed. It was decided that these would not be transformed, however, as both SEM and ANOVAs are robust against violations of normality. There were some outliers in the data; however, only one outlier was significant for *Learner* scores across all categorical variables. From the text entries associated with this respondent, it seemed clear that they were suffering from mental health difficulties when answering the survey. For example, they wrote that “*no one would want to even employ me anyway*” and “*i think that was a sign i will never be good enough or*

¹⁸ Though some researchers suggest including self-identified social status (SSS) as part of the composite SES, other research has found that there can be significant differences between SES and SSS. Since both approach to learning and to employability are related to self-perception and identity, it was felt that it was important to keep both variables as separate.

amount to anything im to [sic] dumb". It was thus decided that this respondent would be removed from the analyses.

Anomalies. Close examination of the data revealed that 17 respondents had marked themselves as Scottish students at Scottish universities funded solely through a governmental student loan; a further 46 students marked themselves as having no tuition fees but also on a governmental student loan. Since it was not clear whether these responses were erroneous or intentional, these respondents were contacted via email and asked (1) how they were funding their university studies and (2) whether they would be willing to be interviewed. Of those contacted, five responded ($n = 5$) via email and one agreed to interview; these confirmed that they had no tuition fees and that the student loan was for their living costs (in other words, they had responded in error). Interestingly, however, the mean scores of these subgroups are different from the Scottish students in the larger sample who accurately reported their funding type; in particular, these mistaken Scottish students scored higher on the Consumer Scale than their peers, with their scores more closely matching the mean scores of students on student loans (see Chart 1 below). This suggests that even the erroneous belief of being on a student loan, or the conflation of the tuition fee loan with the living costs loan, has an effect on Consumer scores.

Chart 1: Comparison of Learner, Consumer and Employability Scores



It was therefore decided that the 17 Scottish participants in Scottish universities who mistakenly reported that their fees were funded through a student loan would be removed from the analysis. However, to further investigate the relationship between erroneous belief about student loans and Consumer score—and in order to properly integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods into all levels of the study—two interviews were conducted with students from this group and the findings incorporated into the qualitative strand.

Respondent Characteristics

The final sample therefore totalled just over seven hundred participants ($n = 752$). The characteristics of the respondents were analysed using frequency distributions (Table 1). In terms of gender, the overall sample was majority female (67.2% female, 28.7% male); this roughly fits the national picture, in which 57% of HE students across the UK are female (HESA, 2017/18). The majority of respondents were over the age of 20, most between 20-22 (41.7%), and roughly a third in the 18-20 age range (33.2%); this is in slight contrast to the national picture, in which the vast majority of students in HE are under 20, followed by the 21-24 age group. This can perhaps be explained by older students' greater willingness to

answer a survey than their younger peers. However, the sample contains roughly equal numbers of students across all year groups (apart from students enrolled in their 5th year of university; this number was unsurprisingly small). In terms of self-identified social status, the majority identified as middle class, split almost evenly between upper-middle class (39.8%) and lower-middle class (32.8%). Roughly a quarter of the sample had attended independent/private secondary schools (25.9%), a slightly greater proportion than the national average; the rest had attended a mixture of state-funded secondary schools. The vast majority of the sample were White; this is reflective of the higher education landscape more generally; however, the sample contained a smaller proportion of Black students and Asian students (2.1% and 6.9%, respectively) than are represented in the UK HE context (in which roughly 6% of the student population is Black, and 9% is Asian).

Breaking the sample down into the four groups central to the research questions (Scottish Russell Group universities, Scottish Post-1992 universities, English Russell Group universities, and English post-1992 universities), the respondent characteristics still more-or-less reflect both national and institutional trends. The English Russell Group university group, for instance, had the greatest number of students identifying as upper-middle class (48.9%), as well as the highest proportion of students with parents in senior managerial or professional occupations (68.6%), closely followed by the Scottish Russell Group university (52.2%). This therefore mirrors the larger UK-wide context, in which students from more disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately attend post-1992 institutions (Connor et al., 1999). Similarly, research shows that HE students in Scotland tend to be slightly older than their English counterparts (HESA, 2018); this is reflected in the sample, in which respondents from the Scottish universities were generally slightly older than those from English universities, with a greater proportion of the former group being over the age of 20. However, in contrast to the ethnic makeup of students from Scotland more generally (91% of whom are White, and only 4% of whom are Asian), the Scottish sample had a relatively high percentage of Asian and Chinese students.

Table 1: Respondent Demographics, in percentages

<i>Demographic</i>	Scottish Russell Universities	Scottish Post-1992 Universities	English Russell University	English Post-1992 University	Total Sample
GENDER					

Demographic	Scottish Russell Universities	Scottish Post-1992 Universities	English Russell University	English Post-1992 University	Total Sample
<i>Male</i>	28.5%	20.2%	40.2%	11.7%	28.7%
<i>Female</i>	68.3%	77.9%	54.2%	87.2%	67.3%
AGE					
<i>18-20</i>	26.1%	28.8%	39.9%	38%	33.2%
<i>20-22</i>	41.7%	40.4%	47.1%	28.3%	41.7%
<i>22 and over</i>	32.2%	30.8%	12.9%	33.7%	25.1%
YEAR OF UNIVERSITY					
<i>1</i>	23%	16%	26.8%	28.7%	24.1%
<i>2</i>	21.6%	29%	31.3%	62.8%	31.5%
<i>3</i>	25.7%	27.2%	22.6%	7.4%	22.5%
<i>4</i>	23.4%	27.2%	18.5%	0%	19.4%
<i>5</i>	6.3%	0.6%	0.8%	1.1%	2.4%
ETHNICITY					
<i>White</i>	83.8%	79.6%	74.7%	79.8%	79%
<i>Black or Black British</i>	1.8%	2.5%	0.8%	6.4%	2.1%
<i>Mixed</i>	4.1%	3.7%	5.3%	6.5%	4.8%
<i>Asian or Asian British</i>	5.9%	5.6%	9.1%	4.3%	6.8%
<i>Chinese or other Ethnic Group</i>	0.5%	4.3%	4.2%	0%	2.5%
<i>Arab</i>	0.9%	1.9%	0%	0%	0.7%
<i>Other</i>	1.8%	0.6%	1.9%	1.1%	1.5%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	1.4%	1.9%	4.2%	2.1%	2.7%
PARENTAL EDUCATION					
<i>Mother attended university</i>	53.6%	34.4%	78.1%	33%	55.5%
<i>Mother did not attend university</i>	43.7%	64.4%	20.4%	63.8%	42.3%
<i>Father attended university</i>	53.6%	36.4%	77.4%	35.1%	56.1%
<i>Father did not attend university</i>	44.1%	61.1%	20.4%	62.8%	41.5%
PARENTAL OCCUPATION (father)					
<i>Manager/ senior official</i>	21.5%	21.3%	24.6%	30.1%	23.6%
<i>Professional</i>	30.7%	18%	44%	14.5%	30.7%
<i>Associate professional</i>	4.9%	2%	4%	4.8%	4%
<i>Administrative/secretarial occupation</i>	4.9%	8.7%	3.2%	4.8%	5.2%
<i>Skilled Trades occupation</i>	10.7%	14%	7.1%	13.3%	10.5%
<i>Caring and other Service occupation</i>	1%	2.7%	0.4%	7.2%	1.9%
<i>Sales and Customer service</i>	4.4%	6%	2%	3.6%	3.7%

Demographic	Scottish Russell Universities	Scottish Post-1992 Universities	English Russell University	English Post-1992 University	Total Sample
<i>Process or machine operatives</i>	2%	7.3%	1.2%	1.2%	2.7%
<i>Services or security worker</i>	2.9%	8%	3.6%	9.6%	5.2%
<i>Unemployed</i>	6.3%	4%	2.8%	3.6%	4.2%
<i>Retired</i>	10.7%	8%	7.1%	7.2%	8.5%
PARENTAL OCCUPATION (mother)					
<i>Manager/ senior official</i>	4.7%	9.7%	6.1%	3.8%	6.2%
<i>Professional</i>	33.3%	23.6%	44.1%	27.8%	34.5%
<i>Associate professional</i>	4.7%	2.1%	5.3%	2.5%	4.1%
<i>Administrative/secretarial occupation</i>	16.7%	20.1%	10.6%	19%	15.5%
<i>Skilled Trades occupation</i>	0.5%	2.1%	0.8%	2.5%	1.2%
<i>Caring and other Service occupation</i>	16.1%	13.2%	6.5%	20.3%	12.3%
<i>Sales and Customer service</i>	5.7%	5.6%	3.7%	3.8%	4.7%
<i>Process or machine operatives</i>	0%	0.7%	0.4%	1.3%	0.2%
<i>Services or security worker</i>	3.6%	4.9%	0%	0%	2.4%
<i>Unemployed</i>	9.4%	12.5%	14.7%	15.2%	12.9%
<i>Retired</i>	5.2%	5.6%	7.8%	3.8%	6.2%
SELF-IDENTIFIED SOCIAL STATUS					
<i>Working class</i>	24.3%	36.4%	15.6%	48.9%	26.5%
<i>Lower-middle class</i>	31.5%	32.1%	33.8%	28.3%	32.4%
<i>Upper-middle class</i>	44.1%	31.5%	48.7%	22.8%	39.9%
<i>Upper class</i>	0%	0%	1.9%	0%	0.8%
SECONDARY SCHOOL TYPE					
<i>Private/Independent</i>	23.3%	11.8%	39.7%	17.4%	25.9%
<i>State-funded</i>	76.7%	88.2%	60.3%	82.6%	74.1%
COUNT	222	163	265	94	752

In sum, the sample generally mirrors the wider population of interest, suggesting that the conclusions drawn from the analyses in the next chapters may be generalized to the UK context.

Appendix 4. Player/Purist Scale Development

	Player	Purist
	Descriptions	
1	Players will engage in extra-curricular and other activities in order to enhance their employability . players present the “competent/packaged self” to employers (Greenbank, 2011)	Purists believe they should simply be themselves. purists present the “authentic self” to employers (Greenbank, 2011)
2	players will be more instrumental and calculating in their endeavours to secure appropriate employment . They make greater use of careers information services , are more likely to attend workshops simulating group exercises at assessment centres; they practice psychometric testing and capitalise on social contacts in order to develop and refine their strategies. (Thomas and Jones, 2007)	Hold fast to notions of meritocratic recruitment practices and the belief that the candidate who can best fill the role will be appointed (Thomas and Jones, 2007)
3	understood employability as a positional game of how to win a competitive advantage in congested job markets. To stand out from the crowd, they used careers information and social contacts to “decode” the winning formula, attended workshops that simulated group exercises at recruitment events, read books on how to answer difficult interview questions and “practised” psychometric tests . Engaging in university clubs, voluntary work and waged work is motivated by the need to add value to one's curriculum vitae . They understood the task as learning to be competent at being competent, given that this is how they would be judged by employers. This tailoring of the self to the requirements of the competition was the price that had to be paid. (Brown, 2007)	Purists viewed employability as winning a competitive advantage in a meritocratic race, where differences in individual achievement reflected innate capabilities, effort and ambition. Work was viewed as an expression of the self. Securing the “right” job involved developing good self-presentation skills so that employers could see the “genuine article” (Brown, 2007)
4	Players understand employability as a positional game, with its own set of rules. The aim is to adopt tactics that give	Purists, by contrast, live by a ‘meritocratic creed’ (Brown and Hesketh, 2004, 137) where outcomes

	individuals a competitive edge; to engage with the employment market, conform to the requirements of employers and employing organizations, and to market themselves appropriately and effectively to maximize their chances of success (Smetherham, 2006)	reflect differences in individual achievement based on effort and ability. Purists exhibit faith in the job market to serve as a fair and efficient means of matching the right person to the right job. (Smetherham, 2006)
5	'players' who understand the requirements of graduate employers and know how to 'play the game' in order to obtain a competitive advantage over other students (Greenbank, P. and Hepworth, S., 2008)	'purists' who feel they can be successful by being themselves and behaving in a way that is unaffected (Greenbank, P. and Hepworth, S., 2008)
6	'Players' are adept at responding to such competition, embarking upon strategies that will enable them to acquire and present the types of employability narratives that employers demand (Tomlinson, 2012)	'Purists', believing that their employability is largely constitutive of their meritocratic achievements, still largely equate their employability with traditional hard currencies , and are therefore not so adept at responding to signals from employers (Tomlinson, 2012)
7	If you're a player, you're someone who thinks that recruitment is a game in which winner-takes all; you are therefore prepared to make yourself look as employable as possible to get the job (Williams, 2003)	If you're a purist, you believe that the recruitment process is more or less objective and that it will usually identify the right person for the role; therefore, all you have to do is try hard and be true to who you really are (Williams, 2003)
8	Players have created what we call a narrative of employability; that is, they try to exude the subjective and, in many ways, immeasurable qualities, as as 'drive', 'character' and 'charisma' in the form that they think the employer wants to see (Hesketh quoted in Williams, 2003)	
	'players' understand the competition more as a positional game and are willing to commodify their 'self' and other assets to win the competition (Li, 2013)	'purists' believe the competition for employment is a meritocratic race and aim for a right match between themselves and employers' requirements. generally believed that one's own knowledge and skills are the most important element in

		competing in the job market. (Li, 2013)
9	Graduates with ‘player’ approach to their employability management were more likely to shape themselves and their credentials around what they perceived companies would require and value. This involved an attempt to ‘package’ their profiles in accordance with their understanding of employers’ demands. (Tomlinson, 2007)	
10	Understand market rules as a competition, see their task as winning a positional game, self-development is expressed through work and their career strategy is to maximize market options (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	Understand market rules as meritocratic, see their task as solving a technical puzzle, self-development is seen as work being the expression of self, and their career strategy is to maintain career integrity (Brown and Hesketh)
11	Devote time prior to attending recruitment events to construct an appropriate narrative of employability as the understood that it is not enough to possess the desired skills, it was how they were embodied and conveyed that really mattered... all players recognised the need to be economical with the truth that placed demands on the self in a context of intense market competition (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	Are aware that they are in a competitive situation but still believe that if they’re good enough they will get a good job
12	Players are sceptical of employer claims that they could ‘see through’ people who were play-acting rather than offering an authentic rendition of who they really were...There is an implicit recognition that is social ‘form’ rather than technical ‘substance’ that is being used to separate candidates who meet the basic requirements of the job.	
13	See the task as one of learning to be competent at being competent. For them, employability was a learning process. If at first they fail, they seek to learn from their mistakes and repackage themselves in ways that can contribute to success in the next contest. They were willing to work on their tactics...	
Example Statements		

14	<p>"I think you have to be quite selfish — all ideas of loyalty and anything like that are just out the window. You really have to think about your- self — thinking about moving on all the time, getting what experience you can from any particular job and the skills that you want to pick up from it, and then just going again — not hanging around. Because at the end of the day you're the only one that knows where you want to go and how to get there" (Smetherham, 2006)</p>	<p>"I'd feel uncomfortable making myself look good for others. It's like I would be putting someone else out of a job who really wants it and me taking it off them" (Greenbank, 2011)</p>
15	<p>"I went in there to be the person that they wanted—but I didn't believe any of it" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>"I wouldn't just do it to make my CV look better, it would have to be something I really believed in" (Greenbank, 2011)</p>
16	<p>"I don't think the classification is the be all and end all. I still think there's a degree of actually selling yourself. I don't think a First does it for you. It does have positive benefits, to get your foot in the door, but I don't think it does the job [of securing employment] for you" (Smetherham, 2006)</p>	<p>"It would have to be something I felt about. I couldn't do it just to put on my CV" (Greenbank, 2011)</p>
17	<p>"I think how you come across in the interview is more important now than just the fact that you've got a degree, and so people are looking for a particular skill set — a particular personality even — that they want for their organization" (Smetherham, 2006)</p>	<p>"I know I've got the skills so don't see why I should have to play the game" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>
18	<p>"For the most recent company I found out all about the project that they were running, found out the philosophies that they had, found out through people that had already worked there, were they male or female? What panel would be interviewing me? And I really geared it to that, went in there saying I couldn't work for a company that didn't have the philosophy they had" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>I know there'll be difficulties (finding a good job) but I am confident. I have done my research very carefully. I think the key thing is to find the job that suits you so you can do your best (Li, 2013)</p>
19	<p>"You learn the best way to sort of sell yourself. Especially when you speak to</p>	<p>"the most important thing of a job for me is whether it lets me to spend my life</p>

	<p>them and realize what they're looking for and I think a lot of them...you sort of, you find out what they want to hear and then you learn to tell them what they want to hear...I try to come across nicer than I think I really am" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>as I wanted ... I mean, to be myself and do things I value and am interested in most" (Li, 2013)</p>
20	<p>"I always look through the module that I did last year with all my examples and all my achievements documented in it. I always look through my CV and the application form. I always go to the company website and see if I can get some sort of idea from that of the kind of specific qualities that they're looking for in people, and often you can get that from the literature as well. If they're particularly keen on people who are—for example, Unilever: they were keen on people who were innovative and could think up new ideas—so you can get some sort of idea of what they want you to say from the literature" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>"I believe these assessment centres...favour the people that deserve it, if you do well then you are the person they are looking for so, if it favours them then fair enough" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>
21	<p>"[In interviews] you always want to try and write using the past verb—'organized', 'was involved', use strong words; instead of 'responsible for', 'controlled'; trying to make it all sound more powerful...it is something that I've worked on a lot (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>"I think that it doesn't matter where you have studied, whether you have been to Oxford or not. I think that your grades are going to be important and what you know, but it is not always the case where someone who has been to a top university is going to be the best person" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>
22	<p>"I have about five situations that I can apply to any of the questions they ask, so I just try and integrate those because I like giving different examples" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>	<p>"You can go there, not exactly show off but really do your best and show what you can do and really try to impress, but be yourself, so if you get the job then you know it's your sort of a job, you're not just randomly picked, it's not a lottery, you're just not picked by the fact that you've got good grades, but because you genuinely will be the right person for the job" (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)</p>
	<p>"I've felt from day one that you need to stand out, you can't just come out of uni with 2.1 and nothing else because everyone's got that. Whereas if you can</p>	<p>"I always try and make sure I am myself. I don't try and be something I am not. I want them to have an honest picture of me and I would like to have an honest</p>

	say “I’ve been to America for a year, I’ve been doing this, I’ve been doing that” — employers go like “Wow! How has she been doing all that and got a degree?” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	picture of the position as well ” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)
23	“ With interviews you have to play the game and you have to point out to them that you have the skills that they are looking for , so perhaps you might have to emphasise a part of your nature that isn’t...make it more of a part of your nature if you see what I mean?” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	“You’ve got to be yourself really. If you try to be something you’re not in a job that is only suited for you whenever you’re not your actual self, you’ll find difficulty in succeeding, because you’ll be constantly hitting a barrier against what you’re actually like, so I think it’s about getting a job that’s completely suited to you ” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)
24	“For some interviews and some of the jobs, they are not going for the true person, they are getting what they want to hear and because we know what they want to hear, we are telling them that... you don’t expect to be yourself at interviews” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	“You can’t really practise to present yourself in a certain way, if you are a certain person that is the way you are but I think the only thing you can build on is your confidence , maybe that is what really puts people through” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)
25	“It’s a game you learn, don’t you? Just like they catch you out in the interviews, you learn what to say , don’t you?” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	“ I don’t want to get a job just because I’ve managed to act out a role for a day , it’s not in your interest in the long term” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)
26	“It’s having the knack and playing the ball... if you’ve done them enough times then you know what to expect and then you can prepare yourself better and jump when they jump ” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)	“I’ve been unsuccessful currently but in a way I’ve been totally myself and when they’ve given me feedback in a way they’ve been totally right; I wasn’t into that company and I think that’s much better to be yourself ” (Brown and Hesketh, 2004)
Scale Questions		
	I am part of clubs and societies because it’s good for my CV	I don’t have time for clubs and societies because I am concentrating on doing well in my degree
	I take part in lots of extra-curricular activities to enhance my CV	I don’t really care about enhancing my CV
	I have made a lot of use of the university careers service	I have not been to the university careers service
	I have attended workshops simulating group exercises at assessment centres	I have never attended workshops simulating group exercises at assessment centres
	I have practised psychometric testing	I have never practised psychometric testing

I've read books on how to answer difficult interview questions	I trust that if I am the right person for the job, my answers to interview questions will be right
I've done volunteering because it looks good on the CV	I would only do volunteering if I really believed in the cause
I am more focused on enhancing my CV than doing well in my degree	I am very focused on doing well in my degree
Before a job interview, I would learn all about a company to make sure my answers are tailored to their priorities	Before a job interview, I would not spend time learning about a particular company because the most important thing is just to be myself
I think that to get a job you need to "play the game"	I think that to get a job, I just need to be the most qualified candidate
In order to get a job, I need to make myself employable above and beyond a good degree	In order to get a job, I just need a good degree and be true to myself
I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	I see getting a job as a matter of finding the role you're most suited for
I would be the person they wanted me to be in an interview just to get the job	During a job interview, I'd just be myself
To get a good job after university, I need to know the right people	I don't need contacts in order to get a good job after university
I need more than a good degree to get a good job	A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job
I would take part in extra-curriculars just because it looks good on my CV	The only extra-curriculars I would take part in are those that I am truly interested in
I actively seek to build up my skills so that I can be as employable as possible	I concentrate on doing well academically
I need to know what employers are looking in order to get a job	I just need to have the skills that the job requires in order to get a job
To get a good job, I need to stand out by having more than just a good degree	Finding a good job is about finding one that is perfectly suited to you
Before a job or internship interview, I find out what they want to hear and then I learn to tell them what they want to hear	I don't want to get a job just because I've managed to play the part for the day
Before a job or internship interview, I always go to the company website to get an idea of the kind of specific qualities that they're looking for in people	You can't practise presenting yourself a certain way in job interviews
If I do badly in a job interview, I learn what to say the next time	If I do badly in a job interview, I probably wasn't the right person for the job
In terms of employability, it's important to know how to sell your experiences	In terms of employability, the only thing you can build on is your confidence

	If a person gets a competitive job, they probably knew how to sell themselves well	If a person gets a competitive job, then they probably deserved it
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Appendix 5. Expert Panel Review Form

Many thanks for agreeing to take part in this Expert Panel Review for the Player/Purist Scale (please find the full scale on page 5). In order to complete the review, please fill in the form below as follows:

Please rate how **relevant** each item is, using a three-point scale (3= high, 2= moderate, 1= low).

Please also indicate how **clear** each item by circling either 'yes' or 'no'.

Please indicate in the **comments** column if you find any items particularly awkward or confusing, and if you could suggest any alternative wordings.

1	I think that to get a job, I just need to be the most qualified candidate	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
2	A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
3	If I did not get a job I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
4	All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job is to have the skills that the job requires	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
5	I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
6	The only extra-curriculars I would take part in are those that I am truly interested in	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
7	I would only do volunteering if I really believed in the cause	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
8	My experiences outside of university (such as travel) are not part of how employable I am	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	

9	In terms of employability, the only thing you can build on is your confidence	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
10	Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
11	I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the day	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
12	It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
13	I would never fake enthusiasm for a company just to get a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
14	Networking (making contacts in industry) at recruitment events would make me uncomfortable	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
15	You cannot practise presenting yourself well in job interviews	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
16	University is about studying, not about becoming employable	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
17	I chose my degree mainly because I am interested in the subject	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
18	Making the most out of university means mainly learning well	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
19	When it comes to employability, you are a Border Collie. You are not really thinking about the job market right now, because ultimately, you know that if you get a good degree you will find a good job. The most important thing is just to be yourself and eventually find a job that is a good fit. You would never want to pretend something you're not. Do you think this describes you accurately?	
Relevant	Clear	Comment

20	I think that to get a job you need to “play the game”	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
21	I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
22	To get a good job, I need to make myself employable above and beyond a good degree	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
23	Being “good enough” is not enough to get a good	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
24	Using the careers information (online or through a careers service) to decode what employers want is key to getting a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
25	I am more focused on enhancing my CV than doing well in my degree	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
26	I actively seek to build up my skills so that I can be as employable as possible	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
27	I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
28	Building an exceptional CV is crucial to getting a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
29	I would take part in extra-curriculars just because it looks good on my CV	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
30	I would be the person they wanted me to be in an interview just to get the job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
31	Before a job interview or application, I would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
32	It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment

	Yes/No	
33	Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
34	Networking (making contacts in industry) is crucial for getting a good job	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
35	My course should be teaching me skills that are useful for my career	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
36	Making the most out of university means using it to get a competitive job after graduating	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
37	Universities place too much emphasis on learning things that are not useful for the future	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
38	When it comes to employability, you are a Jack Russell Terrier. You recognise that the job market is tough and competitive, and you know that the way to get ahead is to be strategic about it. You actively try to give yourself an edge by building up your CV, making the right contacts and being good at selling yourself and your experiences. Do you think this describes you accurately?	
Relevant	Clear	Comment
	Yes/No	
Please comment here if you believe there are any obvious omissions from the item pool		
Please comment here if you have any further comments or suggestions for additional items.		

Appendix 6. Expert Panel Briefing Note

Summary

As part of a DPhil project entitled “Getting Your Money’s Worth: How Fees Affect Attitudes to Employability and Learning”, a scale is being developed. This scale is intended to measure attitudes towards employability and the labour market; specifically, the extent to which a person has a “Player” orientation or a “Purist” orientation. Your review of this scale will be used to refine, amend and cut the items before they are piloted with a small sample.

Background

The typology of “Players” and “Purists” is drawn directly from the work of Brown and Hesketh (2004), who looked at undergraduates and recruitment practices. They found that Players:

“...understood employability as a positional game of how to win a competitive advantage in congested job markets. To stand out from the crowd, they used careers information and social contacts to "decode" the winning formula, attended workshops that simulated group exercises at recruitment events, read books on how to answer difficult interview questions and "practised" psychometric tests. Engaging in university clubs, voluntary work and waged work is motivated by the need to add value to one's curriculum vitae. They understood the task as learning to be competent at being competent, given that this is how they would be judged by employers. This tailoring of the self to the requirements of the competition was the price that had to be paid” (Brown, 2007)

By contrast, Purists:

“viewed employability as winning a competitive advantage in a meritocratic race, where differences in individual achievement reflected innate capabilities, effort and ambition. Work was viewed as an expression of the self (Brown, 2007)

Thus Players “play the employability game” by adjusting their narratives to the needs of prospective employers, while Purists see employment as a meritocratic process and so “remain themselves”, trusting that they will be chosen if they are the right fit. No scale has yet been developed to measure the extent to which people fall into either category, and so the extent to which respondents can be grouped into one type or another remains to be seen.

The Scale

The scale will use a Likert technique for measuring students’ attitudes; this will involve asking students to rate the extent of their agreement on a five-point scale with a series of related items that cover the aspects of the Player/Purist framework. Thus the measure will consist “Player” statements and “Purist” statements, and summing the responses to these items will produce a scale score for each typology.

Intended participants

The scale will be administered to undergraduates in four UK universities.

Appendix 7. Questionnaire

Start of Block: Consent Form + Intro

Thank you so much for participating! This is a questionnaire for a study about fees and student experience. You will be asked to answer questions (mostly multiple choice questions) about your experiences thus far in university. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your participation is voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous. You are not expected to provide any personal information regarding your name, address, and phone number.

The analysis of your responses will be written up in a report of the study for my doctoral degree. You will not be identifiable in the data set, the analysis, or in any publication which might follow.

The University of Oxford is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. We would like your permission to use your anonymised data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Responsible members of the University of Oxford, or funders may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure we are complying with guidelines, or as otherwise required by law.

If at any point you want to withdraw your data or participation, simply close the browser window.

What if there's a problem? If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to me, Nuzha Nuseibeh (Nuzha.nuseibeh@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Professor Ewart Keep (ewart.keep@education.ox.ac.uk) who will do our best to answer your query. I will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how I intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford : Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD. The Chair will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner. Please note that you may only participate in this survey if you are 18 years of age or over.

Thank you so much for your time!

Page Break

Do you agree to go ahead with this questionnaire? If you complete it, you'll be entered into a draw for a £150 Amazon voucher (exciting!).

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: Consent Form + Intro

Start of Block: University

What is the name of the university at which you're studying?

▼ University of Edinburgh (5) ... University of Old Scot University (2) (19)

What is your nationality (for tuition fee purposes)?

- UK - English, Welsh, Northern Irish (1)
- UK - Scottish (2)
- EU (3)
- International/Overseas (4)
- UK - Islands and Highlands (5)

End of Block: University

Start of Block: PLAYER/PURISTIntro

The next section is about your attitudes towards your career and the job market. There are no right or wrong answers, but at the end you'll be told what your employability type is! Keep going to find out.

End of Block: PLAYER/PURISTIntro

Start of Block: PLAYER/PURIST



A good degree will be enough for me to get a good job

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



If I did not get a job/internship I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



All I need to be successful in getting a competitive job/internship is to have the skills that the job/internship requires

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



Doing well in my degree is more important than building up my CV

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



It is important to be yourself when applying for jobs

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I see getting a job as a cut-throat competition

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



Before a job interview or application, I would learn all about a company to make sure all my answers were tailored to them

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job

- Strongly agree (5)
 - Somewhat agree (4)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



Knowing the 'right people' is crucial for getting a good job

- Strongly agree (5)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

End of Block: PLAYER/PURIST

Start of Block: "Purist" Vignette

When it comes to employability, you are not really thinking about the job market right now, because ultimately, you know that if you get a good degree you will find a good job. The most important thing is just to be yourself and eventually find a job that is a good fit. You would never want to pretend something you're not. Do you think this describes you accurately? (Don't worry if it doesn't—we're still working on this scale!)

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Somewhat agree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (4)
 - Strongly disagree (5)
-

Is there anything you'd like to add? Say it here!

End of Block: "Purist" Vignette

Start of Block: "Mixed" Vignette

When it comes to employability, you think that both having a good degree and having a good CV are equally important for finding a job. While you'd rather be yourself and find a job that is the perfect fit, you are willing to actively sell yourself and network if that's what it takes. Do you think this describes you accurately? (Don't worry if it doesn't—we're still working on this scale!)

- Strongly agree (8)
 - Somewhat agree (9)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (10)
 - Somewhat disagree (11)
 - Strongly disagree (12)
-

Is there anything you'd like to add? Say it here!

End of Block: "Mixed" Vignette

Start of Block: "Player" Vignette

When it comes to employability, you recognize that the job market is tough and competitive, and you know that the way to get ahead is to be strategic about it. You actively try to give yourself an edge by building up your CV, making the right contacts and being good at selling yourself and your experiences. Do you think this describes you accurately? (Don't worry if it doesn't—we're still working on this scale!)

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Somewhat agree (2)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - Somewhat disagree (4)
 - Strongly disagree (5)
-

Is there anything you'd like to add? Say it here!

End of Block: "Player" Vignette

Start of Block: Consumer Learner Scale



The main purpose of my university education is to maximise my ability to earn money

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I only want to learn things in my courses that will help me in my future career

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

I think of myself primarily as a paying customer of the university

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

If I cannot earn a lot of money after I graduate, I will have wasted my time at university

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

As long as I complete all of my assignments, I deserve a good grade

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



My lecturers should round up my final grade one or two points if I am close to the next grade boundary

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



I regularly think about the financial cost of my degree

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



If I could get a well-paying job without going to university, I would still be interested in studying for a degree

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)



It is solely the lecturer's responsibility to educate me at university

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



What I learn in my course is not useful for my future

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



Although I have paid to attend university, the university does not owe me a degree

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-



If I cannot get a good job after I graduate, I should have some of my tuition fees refunded

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



I think of my university degree as a product I am purchasing

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



I am entitled to leave university with a degree because I am paying for it

- Strongly agree (7)
- Agree (6)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)



The financial cost of my degree is not something that is frequently on my mind

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)



I feel most satisfied when I work hard to learn something

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

X→

I prepare for class

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

X→

I think of myself as being at university to learn

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

I do the bare minimum to pass assessments

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)



I would choose to study even if I didn't achieve a degree from it

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I am not at university to expand my knowledge

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-



When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see in my own mind how all the ideas fit together

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I take part in class discussions

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

I read relevant sources to learn more about my subject at university

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

I want to expand my intellectual ability

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-

X→

I want to learn as much as possible while at university

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I enjoy studying

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I always try my best in assessments

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I discuss my subject with my lecturer

- Strongly agree (7)
 - Agree (6)
 - Somewhat agree (5)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (3)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Strongly disagree (1)
-



I do not enjoy learning at university

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

End of Block: Consumer Learner Scale

Start of Block: Demographics

What year were you born?

▼ 1992 and earlier (1) ... 2002 and later (11)

What are you studying? (You can tick more than one box)

- English Literature (13)
- Languages (14)
- Philosophy/Theology (15)
- Natural Sciences (22)
- Social Sciences (23)
- Medicine (24)
- Engineering (25)
- Arts/Drama (26)
- Business Studies (27)
- Law (28)
- Maths/Computer Science (29)
- Other (30) _____

What year of university are you in currently?

- 1 (1)
 - 2 (2)
 - 3 (3)
 - 4 (4)
 - 5 (5)
-

What is your student enrollment status?

- Full-time (1)
 - Part-time (2)
 - Other (3) _____
-

Why did you choose this degree? Please rank your answers in order of importance.

- _____ I was interested in the topic (1)
 - _____ I think it will be good for my career prospects (2)
 - _____ My family wanted me to (3)
 - _____ It leads directly to a job (4)
 - _____ Other (please specify) (5)
-

What is your current grade level?

- 1st Class (1)
 - 2.1 (2)
 - 2.2 (3)
 - 3rd Class (4)
-

What are your sources of your tuition funding for university? (Tick all that apply.)

- Governmental student loan (1)
 - Self-funded (family supported) (2)
 - Self-funded (own savings) (3)
 - Bursary (4)
 - Full scholarship (5)
 - Agency funded (e.g Armed Forces) (6)
 - No tuition fees (Scottish or EU national at Scottish institution) (8)
 - Other (7) _____
-

What are your sources of funding for living costs?

- Maintenance grant (1)
 - Family support (2)
 - Employment (3)
 - Governmental student loan (5)
 - Other (6) _____
-

How would you describe your ethnicity? Please tick against one of the following:

- Prefer not to say (7)
 - White (1)
 - Black or Black British (2)
 - Mixed (3)
 - Asian or Asian British (4)
 - Arab (5)
 - Chinese or Other ethnic group (8)
 - Other (6)
-

What is your sex?

- Prefer not to say (5)
 - Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non-binary (3)
-

What is your sexual orientation?

▼ Heterosexual (1) ... Prefer not to say (5)

Did your mother (or primary caretaker) attend university?

- Not sure/prefer not to say (2)
 - Yes (1)
 - No (3)
-

Did your father (or other primary caretaker) attend university?

- Not sure/prefer not to say (1)
 - Yes (2)
 - No (3)
-

What is your father's (or primary caretaker's) occupation?

- Manager, director, or senior official (1)
 - Professional (e.g. scientist, nurse, teacher, lawyer, librarian, journalist) (2)
 - Associate Professional (e.g. lab technician, paramedic, community worker, prison service officer, writer, musician) (3)
 - Administrative or secretarial (e.g. sales administrator, office manager, credit controller) (4)
 - Skilled Trades occupation (e.g. farmer, tool-makers, vehicle technicians, electricians) (5)
 - Caring, Leisure and Other Service occupation (e.g. childminder, veterinary nurse, undertaker, travel agent, hairdressers) (6)
 - Sales and Customer Service occupation (e.g. retail assistant, customer service manager, telemarketer) (7)
 - Process, plant or machine operatives (e.g. energy plant operative, road construction operative, van driver, routine inspector) (8)
 - Services or security worker (e.g. postal worker, window cleaner, security guard, bar staff) (9)
 - Unemployed (10)
 - Retired (11)
-

What is your mother's (or primary caretaker's) occupation?

- Manager, director, or senior official (1)
 - Professional (e.g. scientist, nurse, teacher, lawyer, librarian, journalist) (2)
 - Associate Professional (e.g. lab technician, paramedic, community worker, prison service officer, writer, musician) (3)
 - Administrative or secretarial (e.g. sales administrator, office manager, credit controller) (4)
 - Skilled Trades occupation (e.g. farmer, tool-makers, vehicle technicians, electricians) (5)
 - Caring, Leisure and Other Service occupation (e.g. childminder, veterinary nurse, undertaker, travel agent, hairdressers) (6)
 - Sales and Customer Service occupation (e.g. retail assistant, customer service manager, telemarketer) (7)
 - Process, plant or machine operatives (e.g. energy plant operative, road construction operative, van driver, routine inspector) (8)
 - Services or security worker (e.g. postal worker, window cleaner, security guard, bar staff) (9)
 - Unemployed (10)
 - Retired (11)
 - Not applicable (12)
-

What type of secondary school did you attend?

- Comprehensive school (2)
 - Faith school (3)
 - Grammar school (4)
 - Academies/free school (5)
 - Independent/private school (6)
-

How would you describe your socio-economic background?

- Working class (1)
- Lower-middle class (2)
- Upper-middle class (3)
- Upper class (4)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Skills Question

What, if anything, are you doing to develop your employability?

End of Block: Skills Question

Start of Block: Contact**Timing**

First Click (1)

Last Click (2)

Page Submit (3)

Click Count (4)

Thank you so much for taking part in this survey! Would you be willing to take part in an interview about the issues raised in this questionnaire?

- Yes, happy to! (1)
- No, this has been unbearable (2)
- I'm not sure but I'm willing to be contacted (3)

Display This Question:

If Thank you so much for taking part in this survey! Would you be willing to take part in an intervi... = Yes, happy to!

Or Thank you so much for taking part in this survey! Would you be willing to take part in an intervi... = I'm not sure but I'm willing to be contacted

Thank you! Please enter your personal email address below:

End of Block: Contact

Appendix 8. Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Understanding the Impact of Tuition Fees

The project aims to examine the impact of tuition fees and different funding systems on student learning and employability.

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- 2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.
- 3 I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by designated individuals from the University of Oxford where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.
- 4 I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
- 5 I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.
- 6 I understand how this research will be written up and published.
- 7 I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.
- 8 I consent to being audio recorded
- 9 I understand how audio recordings / videos / photos will be used in research outputs
- 10 I agree to take part in the study¹

	<i>dd / mm / yyyy</i>	
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

	<i>dd / mm / yyyy</i>	
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 9. Interview Schedule 1

Background Information

- Can you tell me a bit about your degree? How is it structured? When did you start?
- Full-time student?
- Where are you from (country/ region)
- What kind of school did you go to? Private, comprehensive...

Parental/guardian Background

- Did your parent(s)/guardian go to University? Where? What did they study?
- What kind of work do they do?
- Do you have siblings? Did they go to university? What did they study?

Degree and university Attitudes

- Why did you choose to go to this university?
- Why did you choose your degree?
- Do you ever think about the cost of the degree?
- How do you see your role as a student in the university?
- What do you think the value of university is?
 - How do you see the value of your degree
- Do you even think about value for money?
- What do you want to get out of your degree
- What did you expect university to be like?
- What do you think of the idea of student as customer?

Knowledge and Skills

- How is your learning structured at university?
- What do you think is the most important thing you've learned so far during your degree?
- Is there anything you'd expected/ hoped to learn that you haven't?
- What skills do you feel you've developed while at university? Are they relevant for particular jobs?
- How have these been developed?
-

Labour Market Attitudes

- What would you ideally like to do once you've finished your degree?
 - Has this changed over the course of the three years
- Have you taken any practical steps towards that?
 - Have you used the career service
- How would you define employability?
- Do you do anything outside your course (extra-curriculars)?

Appendix 10. Interview Schedule 2 and Script

Hello again, I'm Nuzha from the University of Oxford and as I mentioned before, the main purpose of this interview is just to explore how you understood the questions in the survey you completed recently, and whether there were any major issues with it.

Are you still interested in taking part in the project? *[Await confirmation]*. Now I'd like to confirm some of the details of the project to make sure you understand what's involved for you:

- It's a project about tuition fees and higher education and it's being used for my PhD project. The questionnaire that we'll be talking about is about attitudes towards the job market.
- If you agree to take part, I'll need you to answer a few interview-style questions lasting approximately 30 minutes here in this cafe.
- You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw or take a break at any stage without giving a reason.
- My supervisors will have access to the anonymised research data, but if you choose to withdraw within the next year, that data will be deleted. After that point, it'll be fully anonymised.
- You are aware that an Oxford University Research Ethics committee has approved this research project and how to contact me (in the first instance) or the committee in case of any concerns or complaints. I have given you the project's ethics reference number and relevant contact details. To reiterate: their contact details are ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk.
- I won't use your name next to data you provide, but can I have your permission to quote you directly in research publications using a pseudonym?
- I will store any information you provide safely and confidentially in a password-protected hard-drive and will keep the anonymised, encrypted research data after publication.
- I would like to be able to use your anonymised data in future studies, and to share this data with other researchers
- I would like to audio record you.
- You're aware that my written work will be published online in the Oxford Research Archive.
- The project may also be published in an academic journal.

Are you still willing to take part? Do you give your permission for me to interview you and audio record the interview?

[Await confirmation] So if you're happy with all of that, and have no more questions, let's start.

Let's just start with a couple of easy questions.

1. What course are you studying?

2. What year are you in?
3. Do you take part in any university activities (like societies or sports teams) outside of your course module?
4. One of the questions in the survey was “I am part of clubs and societies mainly because it is good for my CV”. What do you understand by “good for my CV”?
5. Have you applied to any jobs or internships yet?
6. What does being “the most qualified candidate” mean to you?
7. What do you understand by the question: “If I did not get a job I applied to, it would mean I was not the right person for it”?
8. How do you understand the question: “I would not want to get a job just because I have managed to play the part for the interview”?
9. How do you understand “fair” in the question “I think the job market is competitive but ultimately fair”?
 - a. What do you think you need to do to get a competitive job?
10. In the question, “My experiences outside of university (such as travel) are not part of how employable I am”, what do you understand by the term “employable”?
 - a. What experiences, other than travel, do you think this question refers to?
11. In the question, “Making the most out of university means mainly concentrating on learning well”, how do you understand “learning well”?
12. How do you understand the question, “I think that to get a job you need to be whoever employers want you to be, even if it's not really you”?
13. What do you understand by the term “good enough” in the question, “Being “good enough” on its own is not enough to get a good job”?
14. In the question “It is not enough to have the right skills, you need to know how to sell yourself to get a good job”, what do you understand by “sell yourself”/how would you “sell yourself”?
15. In the question, “Being successful at job applications is about telling them what they want to hear”, who does “they” refer to?
16. The scale calculated your score as _____. How well do you think this describes you?
17. Looking over this questionnaire, were there any questions that didn't make sense to you?
18. Were there any questions that you felt were repetitive?
19. Were there any questions you felt you really didn't know how to answer?
20. Is there anything you'd like to add or address that we haven't talked about?

Thank you so much for your time —do you have any questions for me?
Have a nice day!

Appendix 11. Study Poster

Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY



Getting Your Money's Worth
Ethics Approval Reference: [ED-CIA-18-236]

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR STUDY ON FEES AND LEARNING



Want to win a £150 Amazon voucher and help shape education policy?

We are looking for UK undergraduates at this university to answer some questions about their experiences studying here. It should only take **about 8 minutes to complete** (and you can pause and go back to it, as well as do it on your phone). There's no obligation to take part, but every single response makes a huge difference. I'd be so grateful if you could spare the time.

As a thank you, anyone who completes the survey gets automatically entered into a **prize draw for a £150 Amazon voucher!** Imagine all the things you could finally take off your wish list with that.

Please either scan the QR code or follow this link to take the survey: <https://bit.ly/2ucQoYa>

If you are interested and would like more information please contact Nuzha Nuseibeh at the Department of Education, Oxford Nuzha.Nuseibeh@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk.



Thank you!

Appendix 12. Code Log

Macro Code	Micro Codes	Example
Structure of the course	First two years not so useful	at school, then you don't spend a year wasting time, either in your first year of university or your last year of school. So, the first two years are easy, they're a breeze, they're almost a waste of time
	Large classes	it wasn't very easy because it is quite a big class, so you'd have your hand up for quite a while until they can get to you. Usually it would be quite noisy as well,
University experience	Personal Attention	I went to uni and all my lecturers knew me by my name. I feel like even the head of the school was really approachable. We could stop and chat to him. He made the effort to get to know us all, and that's really nice because I've heard other unis have an experience where they are just known by their matriculation number. It's not great.
	Things that happen on the side	I think sometimes things that happen on the side [of uni] are just as important, just as the internships I've been doing
	Class Issues	from Scotland would end up finding each other, and it was very rare that you got a good mix of people
	Community	subjects that you're studying but knowledge from other students and their experiences and knowledge from the professors
	Challenging	first year was really a big eye opener for me, "Oh my God, this is so hard, I can't do it."
	Mental health struggles	a person's academic rigour is perhaps less important to the person's healthy mental and psychological state to do well at the end of the day in an environment like this where it's very mentally demanding, academically rigorous and very, very challenging. You need your mind to work as well as your body,
	Personal development	things. Because Oxford terms are so short, everything sort of gets pressed into a short amount of time. Keeping on top of work, keeping on top of interesting things to do as extracurriculars, and keeping up with my friends, yes, that's definitely been the most important thing I've learned so far at uni
Expectations of University	Skills	specific intense lab skills. I think it's definitely quite a range of them
	Stopping and starting	actually initially I went to study tourism straight after high school, um but I left, I left after six months and then I went to work a little bit, um and I got a job in a pharmacy and ever since of her working in dispensary, working with drugs, that kind of got me into their life sciences and I kind of developed my interest in it
	No clear expectations	I didn't really know what I was walking into at all, so I didn't really have any expectations
	Large and anonymous	I really thought that I was going to go to university and I would be a number. That people wouldn't know me, what I was studying, do you know what I mean?
	Like school	I perhaps expected that...um...it would be a bit more like school than it actually
	Challenging	I expected it to be like really difficult and I'd not be able to pass anything
	Freedom and fun	I was very idealistic about what I thought uni would be. That was just because I was unhappy when I was at home. I just thought uni would be this big escape
Attitudes towards university/learning	Social life	I think what I was really thinking about a lot before starting was maybe mostly the social part of it
	Become knowledgeable	the end of my degree I'll be able to do engineering
	Desire for broader, liberal-arts style learning experience	can, you know, just study a whole collection of subjects and when you have a - a [00:13:22] four-year project, where you really challenge ideas totally unorthodox to your own ones. I'm just not kind of finding myself in that environment here
	Desire for knowledge/deep understanding	I really really wanted to understand International politics I guess. I really wanted to feel like... I really knew what was going on in the world, you know?
	Maximise the student experience	student experience
	Relaxed approach to studying	I thought I'll go into the lab and then, you know, 9:00 until lectures, to do the research, etc., and then evenings hopefully I have some time off and relax. That did not happen. (Laughter) You know, I slept in a lot, I went in the lab at odd hours, but that was, I guess, just me not being able to stop myself, I guess.
	Motivated to learn, engaging with lectures, resources	paid, and - and this way I can - even related to - related to the lectures and whatever - I just like something and I just do my research on it, just because I'm curious like... because I have the means to do it

Macro Code	Micro Codes	Example
Attitudes towards university/learning	Motivated to learn, engaging with lectures, resources	paid, and -and this way I can - even related to- related to the lectures and whatever - I just like something and I just do my research on it, just because I'm curious like... because I have the means to do it
	Hard-working, studious	How did you spend your time while you were there. Speaker 1: Mainly studying a lot [laughs]. I was always on top of everything, always prepared for all my exams, assessments and lectures, tutorials...which did have an impact on my social life, if I'm honest. But I had a goal going in that I wanted to graduate with a first class, so
	Enjoying learning	There are certain topics that I'm relatively weak at but I still love them because they're just interesting just the way they put it out to me, and I still think that I can do
	Independent learning	seminars, but besides for those basically you're the only responsible, like you only are responsible for your studies
	enjoy the subject but not university	I don't really enjoy university. I enjoy the subject, but I don't enjoy the university lifestyle that much
	Ambivalent	I mean there are interesting things that pique my interest from time to time but then there's the boring stuff where you have to know it because there's going to be an exam
	Desire for intellectual challenge	I think I chose electrical engineering- I think it's the one I liked the most, but it was the one everyone found the most difficult
	Opens doors	the opportunities it opens up after graduation. I think that's one of the reasons to go and study, because of the doors it opens later on in life
	Personal development	I think I just wanted to develop myself more than anything. It kind of prepared me for that wider world, regardless of what... Because when I started I didn't know if biology was something that I was going to go into. Yes, it was generally just to develop myself and gain that confidence and gain that ability to learn and to adapt
	About more than job market training	learning about your subjects.
Value and purpose of university	Employment	Engineering is the vocational degree, you do it to get the job, and that was always my intention
	University as signal	So to me, university is like the proof that you are smart enough to understand advanced subjects
	At once necessary and pointless	English teacher, or something like that.
	Gain/share knowledge	I would say knowledge, like getting knowledge... that's the most valuable thing the university can offer
	Mix of knowledge and job market preparation	for the working experience, but also an idea or some sort of preparation of how it would be to be working with my degree.
	Just the 'done thing'	wanted to send people to university. It felt like the next stage of life. But then again, I felt ushered into it rather than- And not really knowing what any alternative was, or really being sold the benefit of any sort of alternative
	A way to kill time	I think for a lot of people it's a stopgap. I know our school kind of forced us into doing it. If you didn't do - if you weren't showing interest in doing a degree or going to University even, you were kind of sidelined to the people who were? So it's kind of like that was the only line of progression that we saw
	Societal investment	investment of themselves
	Interest in the subject	what kind of pulled me towards it.
	Keeping doors open	I actually chose engineering because it keeps the most doors open for me in terms of further postgraduate degrees or job sectors.
Subject choice	Career	I figured that law would give me the opportunity to explore something and offered a fairly stable career path afterwards, so
	Seemed nice	for me
University choice	Geography	Why did you choose Aberdeen, was that just because it was your local? Mia: Yes, just because I could stay at home while I was studying. Yes, stay with my family.
	Reputation	university...then why not actually go there...
	Limited number offering that degree	I think I just knew I wanted to go into that kind of field and there were a limited number of universities that did chemical engineering.
	Job prospects	I thought if I get a degree from Oxford, then job opportunities, from a practical perspective, would be easier for me to find and get a placement and things like that
	Intellectual challenge	One of the things I really wanted to do when I grew up was to really intellectually challenge myself and get to a good institution. That was one of the major motivating factors

Macro Code	Micro Codes	Example
	Intellectual challenge	One of the things I really wanted to do when I grew up was to really intellectually challenge myself and get to a good institution. That was one of the major motivating factors
	Value for money/Can't quantify the university experience	to be -to be here, in a way
	Value for money/Investment	you know, is it worth however, what it's... £36,000. I'd say in a way yes, it is, because I can't become an engineer if I don't have a degree. So in that way I've invested in my life
	Value for money/Price reflects quality	There is an aspect of it in my mind that if it's definitely valuable because it's Edinburgh and it's a good course. And to be expensive, I'm assuming that it must be good as well.
	Value for money/About relative value	size of their classes or the size of their lectures or labs.
	Value for money/Don't think about money because it's free	Maybe because my tuition fees are paid, I've never actually thought about university as money
	Value for money/Don't think about money because it's good	finances of it.
	Value for money/Don't think about it because it's future-based	future cost
	Value for money/Not worth the money	finance. I don't feel like it is worth that much money sometimes
Tuition fees	Determining choices	that. But studying medicine at Oxford as an international would be so much more costlier and expensive. ... So that kind of had an influence in me trying to just shy away from it and change my goals a little bit.
	Would have been more dissatisfied if had been fee-paying	if I was paying thousands of pounds, I might be thinking why isn't the university better at this, or why isn't it better at this, and feel more angry
	Cost as stress	wouldn't even have to think about that, I'd just think right once I'm done with University, all my ties to it are severed, whereas for me, you know it - it's still kinda hanging above my head.
	Differences in fees make a difference	resources and stuff. I mean, I don't expect to be treated any differently, but I'm like, what's the benefit of me paying nine grand? Like when the person next to me is paying nothing
	Investment as pressure/incentive	right? It's hard earned money by my mum and my dad, it's basically their entire life savings they're expending or spending on me. Essentially, the deal is that it's more like an investment, so that the outcome eventually makes up for it
	Anti-tuition fees	living, but I'd like for education to be free, because if someone is willing to put that much time and effort in we should reward that, rather than saddle them with debt that means they can't necessarily do the job they'd choose, they have to pick one that pays well.
Costs	Regularly thinks about living costs and loans for living costs	So, the cost of living; yes, definitely weighed us down a little. Especially Edinburgh being so big; it meant that, like, some form of cost of living; like, living further out, you may have to pay for a bus pass, which is then another £45, so has your rent really reduced that much, for you to be able to afford that? And so, it did get difficult
	Part-time work	A lot of the people on my course did work experience over the summer. I wish that was something that I was able to do, but because I was supporting myself living away from home and things like that I always had to be working. I didn't have that luxury of being able to take that week, two weeks to a month out of work. Yes, that set me back a lot
	Not an issue	It's not really an issue in my mind. I don't think, "Oh, I've got however much debt," because I don't really see it as an issue based on how it's structured after you leave. You have to pay back a fixed amount every month. The fact that it's sort of an extra form of taxation makes it really, it isn't an issue I worry about and it's always manageable.
	Other/Parents/government as customer	I'm not the one paying directly out of my own pocket, it is my parents. I'd say I consider them to be more the customers than myself
	Wants-to-be-a customer	given. It doesn't feel like you have got any right to be like, "No, I want better. I want more of this. I want more of that
	Not a customer, a student	than...student
	Not a customer, part of a community	that wants to attract people they're passionate about studying and they want to study.
	Perceived-as-customer	kind of, trying to bring you over, if you know what I mean, trying to get you to study with them.
	Unmotivated customer	Even I myself I don't feel the course or the degree that important because I'm not paying it myself

Macro Code	Micro Codes	Example
Student-as-customer	Not a customer, a student	than...student
	Not a customer, part of a community	that wants to attract people they're passionate about studying and they want to study.
	Perceived-as-customer	kind of, trying to bring you over, if you know what I mean, trying to get you to study with them.
	Unmotivated customer	Even I myself I don't feel the course or the degree that important because I'm not paying it myself
	Ambivalent customer	as a whole should be that marketised because at the end of the day people being educated, people having degrees and learning, is a benefit to the whole society, which is why the government is involved with giving out loans to students I guess
	L/Earning-not-buying	So I don't like to think of myself as a customer of the University. Yeah. I don't think that's why - we're not there to buy a degree, we're there to earn a degree
	Two-way street customer	I feel like it's not like we come and hand over our money and then we, you know... It's an experience that we, it's like a two-way street I guess
	Paid-for-the-opportunity customer	money.
	Unhappy customer	or get a good enough degree as well, that all that money was worth it. Because it did feel like you kind of bought a degree from the uni, and I was just starting to wonder if it was actually, like, a worthwhile trade, almost.(
	Full customer	We are paying for what we receive there, and if you are paying for a service, even though it is education, you are a customer. And I feel that if any students don't feel like they are receiving what they feel like the right standard of education is for them then they should be able to complain about it or go to someone to talk to about how they feel.
Indicators of marketisation	Indicators of marketisation	they had such incredible bad reviews for that course that they ended up changing it, I think, for the next year to come.
	Works out career path even without careers service help	I: And have you used the careers service at all? A: Uh...no. Not at all. It's just purely been myself and talking to others
	Motivated to make the most	if you want to...find stuff, you have to really kind of enjoy it and know that that's what you want to do forever
	Tailors interview	how did you prepare for it? Speaker 1: So I looked up their - the department, I looked up all their practices and stuff like that. So I kind of read through their departmental stuff that's available online. I read through some NHS guidelines, I spoke to somebody I know that works within the NHS who does interviews
	Narrative of employability	I feel like I'm fighting against... so many other candidates that are you know, that don't have what could be perceived as a deficit. And I have to assert dominance over my deficit, turn it into a positive, spin it into a way that makes it seem that that the deficit is actually a really positive thing to bring into the workplace
	Seeks out opportunities	sending out, filling in applications and interviewing for, just random, like internships so I got the opportunity to do something
	Aware of the positional competition narrative	and you feel like you have to keep up with that, but concretely many people specifically kind of pedal this competition, this discourse of competition I think, which includes politicians who talk about having to be more competitive all the time, that the economy needs to be more competitive, and that Higher education needs to produce more
	Does it for the CV, but has to enjoy it/find it meaningful also	learning about different fields
	No engagement with the careers service	In terms of not knowing what you're going to do next, have you kind of checked in with the career service at all over the last three years? Speaker 2: Uh...Nnnnoo.... because the thing is, I'm not really, I dunno, I'm not very kind of worrying? Just because, I, you know, I feel like I'm probably fairly employable. And
	Not clear how to get experience	I'm looking to a bit of a small part-time job. It wouldn't be in the field of psychology unless I was really lucky, and mostly because I am saving up for a trip to meet some of my friends overseas. But beyond that, I haven't specifically looked at anything that would help me career-wise because I've no idea what I'm doing there either.
	Job has to be "the right fit"	position or something I was interested in, and I'm not learning anyway
	Extra-curriculars for enjoyment	was genuinely such a nice release from the uni stressful side. It was a great social side, and also just getting that competitiveness out and things like that, and obviously physical activity is great as well for stress and stuff. Yes, it added a really nice balance

Macro Code	Micro Codes	Example
	Full customer	We are paying for what we receive there, and if you are paying for a service, even though it is education, you are a customer. And I feel that if any students don't feel like they are receiving what they feel like the right standard of education is for them then they should be able to complain about it or go to someone to talk to about how they feel.
Indicators of marketisation	Indicators of marketisation	they had such incredible bad reviews for that course that they ended up changing it, I think, for the next year to come.
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	Job has to be "the right fit"	position or something I was interested in, and I'm not learning anyway
	Extra-curriculars for enjoyment	was genuinely such a nice release from the uni stressful side. It was a great social side, and also just getting that competitiveness out and things like that, and obviously physical activity is great as well for stress and stuff. Yes, it added a really nice balance
	No interest in/time for extra-curriculars	really busy anyway, you don't really have time...? Speaker 2: Oh, yeah. At some point, I was going to my volunteer job, then I had my part time job, which I worked 30 hours per week, and then I had the uni lectures and stuff as well. Like it was crazy! I wasn't sleeping
	The all-important 2:1	Normally the companies around, in the UK at least, they look for good grades, they look for a 2:1 or a first, the bare minimum is a 2:2, right, in most companies
	Willing to compromise to build career	my career depended on it and if it were my career break, to get some experience, to learn, I would probably take it.
	Positional competition	have got lots of experience and stuff.
	Gaining Experience	was trying to do that?
	Enhancing the CV	What was your motivation for becoming the student rep and doing all those committee positions? H: Well, make contacts and put it on your CV.
	Proactively finding out about the labour market	the engineering careers
	Using the careers service	number of times to check through my CV and stuff
	Networking	name I think.
	About more than just degree	at your personality, they're looking at your intellect, they're looking at the smallest of things
	Desire for practical experience	when you are looking for a job.