ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

WHAT DO STUDENTS VALUE?

AN INVESTIGATION INTO STUDENTS' VALUE OF THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION

EXPERIENCES USING THE VALUE-IN-EXPERIENCE CONSTRUCT.

PAUL MICHAEL WEEKS

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to George Gordon Weeks and Winifred Joyce Weeks

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

LORD ASHCFROFT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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The aim of this thesis is to analyse the value that students identify throughout their
higher education experience, when they apply to go to university, while they study on
their course and are socialising with other students, and when they graduate and are in
either full-time employment or studying for a higher qualification. Value was
analysed using the value-in-experience concept because, unlike other
conceptualisations of value, it allowed the analysis of value throughout the duration of
the students' experiences, which extend well beyond the period in which they are
studying.

A conceptual framework was developed from a review of the literature on the value
construct and value in higher education, which was used to inform the design of the
fieldwork. The research was conducted using a case study of a post-1992 university
located in two cities in the East of England. Based on the pragmatist philosophical
tradition, a two-stage method was used. The first, qualitative stage explored the views
of a small number of students and alumni using semi-structured interviews to seek the
students' views on each stage of their university experience. In the second

quantitative research stage, convenience sampling was used to distribute a questionnaire to students studying at the two campuses and 526 useable completed questionnaires were obtained.

The research findings indicate that value was anticipated in the application stage and realised in all three stages of the higher education experience. During the application process value was anticipated by the applicants based on the image they formed of the university experience they wanted to have from their search for information about the university/course and talking to their family and friends. Younger applicants who wanted to have an independent life and felt that they could fit in and make friends chose to live in university accommodation and wanted to experience the stereotypical student life. Mature students did not want this and chose instead to live at home and maintain their family relationships and existing friendships. The motivation for studying was an important factor in the decision to study for a degree as 84 percent were vocationally orientated and studied for a degree to improve or enhance their career prospects. All the mature students were vocationally orientated whereas minorities of the younger students were academically orientated wanting to study subjects further which they enjoyed. Value was realised in the application process as applicants valued the support and advice they received from family and friends, the experience of attending an open/offer day where they talked to university staff and viewed the facilities and when they obtained a place at the university receiving the esteem of their family.

While studying on their course students valued the experiences they had when learning about the subjects they were studying and mixing with other students in academic and social settings. They also valued the relationships they had with the lecturing staff and their fellow students. This was a realisation of the value they had anticipated when they were applying to the university. The value realised in this stage was tempered, however, by poor communication between lecturers and students, lecturers who were unenthusiastic and not prepared to help students when they needed advice or information, when the university did not keep its promises and when they had poor relations with other students.

Graduates realised value when they got a job or studied for a higher degree depending on their motivation for studying; applied the skills they had learned on their course

and developed their self-confidence. The alumni were also nostalgic about their time at the university and reminisced about their experiences. A revised conceptual framework was produced as a result of the analysis of the research findings.

The research study makes a contribution to knowledge in two respects. Firstly, it has pointed to the importance of the student experience which has been seen in the value they realise in all three stages of the higher education experience and anticipate during the application process. Secondly the research study has contributed empirical evidence for the existing theoretical contributions on this subject.

Key words: student; perceived value; value-in-experience; application process; time studying for a degree; post-graduate experience. Higher Education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
ARU	Anglia Ruskin University
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LAIBS	Lord Ashcroft International Business School
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

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1   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   Research aim and rationale

This thesis presents an analysis of the value which students identify throughout their higher education experience when they are applying to go to university, studying on their course and socialising with other students, graduate and are in work. It is based on a case study of a post-1992 university in England located in two cities in the east of the country.   Having lectured on the subject of higher education marketing between 2009 and 2014, I am aware that the value concept has grown in importance in the marketing academy and there is very limited empirical academic research into the value students identify from their experiences of higher education. The thesis aims to contribute to the marketing academy by researching into this subject and to help to fill this research gap.

The higher education sector has been transformed into a market over the last thirty years. Universities in this market are competing to attract students to study at their institution and are expected to treat them as customers (Brown, 2015).   The market has been created as successive governments have reduced the funding they have provided universities with and, instead, made students and their families pay for their education by the introduction of tuition fees which finance the entire cost of their education. Because of this, students and their families are taking a greater interest in their educational experience and are demanding more of their HE institutions.   The result of these changes in the higher education sector has created the 'student-as-customer' approach (Chalcraft, Hilton, and Hughes, 2015).

In 2005 the UK Labour government set up mechanisms to provide information to students, universities and other interested parties about the performance of the universities through the national league table which comes from the National Student Survey (NSS). Students express their opinions about their university and courses when they complete the NSS, the outcomes of which are used by prospective students when making their choices about the course and university where they want to study. The university management team monitor their performance in the national league table and, in addition, the students' attitudes, through their internal quality assurance systems.   The leading industry newspaper in the UK – Times Higher Education – has developed the Student Experience Survey which, since 2007, has been analysing and reporting on a survey of undergraduates who are asked to describe how their university contributes to their positive or negative student experience.   The results are also published in a league table in the newspaper annually which rank the universities according to the student experience. The

information obtained from the NSS and Student Experience Survey is being used by universities to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to make decisions on which courses to develop or remove from the market. They have created marketing departments to market their institution and their popular courses to increase the brand image, sales and profit margins of the university (Hemsley-Brown 2011). Judson and Taylor (2014) claim that these marketing practices are based on archaic marketing theory which is based on marketing philosophies associated with the consumption of goods rather than services. Newer ideas which relate specifically to service marketing, such as service-dominant logic, value-in-use, value co-creation and value-in-experience are being ignored (Naidoo and Shanker, 2011). These developments in marketing theory have, according to Naidoo and Shanker (2011, p1143), 'the potential to assist universities in processes of constructive engagement with students.' This thesis therefore examines the student experience using the current thinking on value which will give academic support to the practitioner information on the student experience which universities are receiving through the existing market mechanisms.

Several researchers have suggested that service dominant logic has much to offer higher education (Naidoo and Shanker, 2011; Baron and Harris 2006; Ford and Bowen 2008; Sautter and Jones 20009; Tuzovic 2009; Chalcaft and Lynch 2011; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2015; Lynch and Egan 2012; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka 2015). Service dominant logic theory emphasises the role of the customer as an active contributor and interpreter of experiences who co-creates value with a company through the design, production, delivery and consumption processes (Payne et al., 2008). The researchers have called for research to be undertaken to understand the student experience in terms of the reasons for the choices prospective students make when applying to a university; to understand students' aspirations, expectations and goals; and to identify how students define value, the different points at which value creation might occur and the resulting value-in-use.

This thesis is a response to these calls for research into value in higher education and research into the value students identify from their experiences throughout their educational journey from the time when they think about applying to study at a university to the point when they graduate and are in employment or further study. The research seeks to answer the following main research question:

How is value realised before, during and after studying at an HE institution?

To help to answer this question, the research seeks to answer the following research questions:

What do students value when they are applying to a university?

What do students value while they are studying at the university?

What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

1.2 Key concepts on value and research into the subject in higher education

Marketing theory and practice has been through a process of change from the 1980s, in which the concept of customer value has come to prominence. The developments in value theory and the extent to which the subject has been researched in higher education are outlined briefly below.

The literature on customer value commenced in the late 1980s and 1990s when Webster (1992) identified that it was a means of competitive advantage. Woodruff (1997) supported this view and suggested that it was the next source of competitive advantage for companies. Since that time models have been developed to explain the concept either through simple unitary factors in the form of a benefit and sacrifice model (Zeithaml, 1988) or multivariate models which consider a range of factors which combine to produce customer value (Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991; Holbrook, 1999). The value construct has developed from value-in-exchange through value co-creation to value-in-experience which is discussed below.

- **Value-in-exchange**

The earliest thinking on value defined it as the outcome of an exchange process between a customer and company in which value is created by the company and exchanged for money or other goods with the customer (Woodall, 2003; Gronroos, 2006a; Gronroos, 2006b; Lush and Vargo, 2006). Value, in this concept, is measured in the exchange process only (Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008). This was not helpful when considering services as it did not take account of the value which customers obtained when using a service. The initial concept was rejected, therefore, by researchers who were advocating the value-in-exchange concept and

they proposed the value-in-use concept instead (Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Gronroos, 2006a; Gronroos, 2006b; Lush and Vargo, 2006).

The value-in-use concept was considered to be better than the value-in-exchange concept as it took into account the value which customers obtained from using a product or service (Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Woodall, 2003; Gronroos, 2006a; Gronroos, 2006b; Lush and Vargo, 2006).   It was defined as the unique experience which a customer perceives from interacting with a product/service as they use it (Woodruff and Flint, 2006; Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008).

- **Value co-creation**

The value-in-use concept broadened thinking about how and by whom value is created and led to the development of the value co-creation concept which was developed by Normann and Ramirez (1993) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b). Their ideas influenced Vargo and Lush (2004), who developed the service-dominant logic concept which included the foundational premises that customers are always co-creators of value, and that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.   Value is co-created in this concept through the integration of resources which are activated by the customer to create value (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013).

The value co-creation and service-dominant logic concepts are developments of ideas from earlier phases of research in relationship marketing, network perspectives and the resource-based view of the firm (Aitken, Ballantyne, Osbourne & Williams, 2006).   Relationship marketing has roots in service marketing and business-to-business (B2b) marketing and is focused on interactivity based on the inseparability characteristics of services and the need to foster good firm/customer relationships. It has been conceptualised as developing and maintaining firm/customer relationships and identified as a stepping stone between goods-dominant logic (the existing paradigm) and the new paradigm service-dominant logic (Vargo, 2009).   Regarding the resource-based view of the firm, service-dominant logic is based on the ideas of operant resources (knowledge, skills and labour) acting on operand resources (culturally constituted economic resources - income, inherited wealth, credit, goods or raw materials) (Vargo and Lush, 2004; Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006).   The service-development logic concept has also arisen from network thinking which

identified that 'services and associated value are created through 'actors' combining resources accessed in an exchange with other resources, both internal and available through other exchanges' (Lush and Vargo 2006, p285).

- **Value-in-experience**

The value-in-experience concept has developed from the experience research stream which started in the early 1980s with the work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) who suggested that consumer behaviour had an experiential element. In the practitioner literature, customer experience has been identified as an important development for customer advocacy (Allen, Reichheld and Hamilton 2005) and the drive to achieve competitive advantage (Gentile, Spiller and Noci 2007). Pine and Gilmore (2011) have written extensively on this concept and suggested that consumer experience could educate, entertain and provide opportunities to display knowledge, value or behaviour socially, or offer escapist, visual or aesthetic encounters. In the academic literature, Tynan and Mckechnie (2009) noted that the work of Holbrook and Hirschman identified the need to examine the whole consumption experience from pre-purchase through to disposal and/or outcomes. They also identified that emotion is a crucial aspect of consumption and consumers can evoke the past in response to an experience and can respond by imagining what they have not experienced which means that imagination and nostalgia have roles to play in any consumption experience. Value-in-experience has been identified as being more inclusive than the other two concepts (value-in-exchange and value co-creation) as it incorporates the customers' perception of value throughout the customer experience (Frow and Payne, 2007; Turnbull, 2009; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2012; Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom, 2012a).

Value-in-experience with its focus on experience taking place prior to, during and after consumption would appear to offer possibilities for consideration in higher education where there is the pre-purchase application process which students go through followed by the consumption process of studying at the university and the final, post-purchase experience, of graduation and entering the workplace.

1.3   Value in higher education

Value in higher education has been the subject of theoretical and empirical research in two research streams since the late 1990s. In the education management literature, the concept has been examined from the point of view of understanding value in relation to satisfaction. Researchers in this research stream have predominantly examined the subject using the Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) model of consumer value to consider the benefits and sacrifice elements of value. Researchers who studied value in higher education in this way were LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999), Ledden, Kalafatis and Samouel (2007), Ledden and Kalafatis (2010) and Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010). Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) used LeBlanc and Nguyen's (1999) work, which was based on the Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) model to form the basis for their examination of the dimensions of students' perceived value which was linked to willingness to pay. Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) based their research on LeBlanc and Nguyen's (1999) work and identified four perceived service values - career value, social value, personal learning value and image value. Two other groups of researchers examined the benefits and sacrifice elements of value in higher education using different models for their research. Sanchez-Fernandez et al. (2010) research was based on a price/attributes measure based on the work of Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991). Voss, Gruber and Szmigin (2007) research adopted Gutman's (1982) means-end approach to map university attributes to student satisfaction.

The other research stream has been based on the value co-creation construct. Research into value co-creation in higher education has been predominantly theoretical with several researchers (Baron and Harris (2006), Hilton, Hughes and Chalcraft (2011), Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes (2012)) proposing models and theories of how value co-creation takes place in a higher education setting. The educational experience has been viewed as one in which resource integration takes place between the student and the university, and the value produced as the result of the enhancement of operant resources by the student (Hilton, Hughes and Chalcraft, 2011; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2012). In this view of value creation, value is realised when the student has completed their studies and has achieved their personal goals (Hilton, Hughes and Chalcraft, 2011). Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) have proposed that resource integration is the interaction process between the lecturing staff and students in which value is only co-created if the resources of both lecturers and students are of the correct quality.

Other researchers have identified that the student experience is longitudinal taking place over the duration of the students' time spent studying on their course and involves experiences during which the student and university staff interact with each other (Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2012). Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) indicated that, in terms of student expectations formed prior to arrival at university, the students' perceptions of value depend on their experiences. Both of these ideas support the value-in-experience concept discussed above.

The value-in-exchange approach has been rejected by the marketing academy, as was noted in the previous section, as it was not helpful when examining a service and did not take into account the value that customers obtained when using the service. As higher education is a service the ideas based on the value-in-use construct are more appropriate to use when examining student value. As was noted above, researchers in the value co-creation research stream have proposed a number of models and ideas about how value is co-created. In the section above, it was stated that value-in-experience with its focus on the experiences that take place in the periods of pre-purchase, consumption and post purchase of a product or service offers possibilities for consideration in higher education and may be a useful way of researching into this topic. In the paragraph above researchers identified that the student experience was an important area for consideration as the experiences are longitudinal and students' perception of value depend on their experiences which support the value-in-experience concept. The thesis, therefore, examines the value-in-use for students using the ideas in the value-in-experience research stream rather than the value-in-exchange or value co-creation research streams, as the theory on the experiential aspects of value offer a better means to examine the value that is created throughout a student's educational experience including the time when they are applying to the university. The literature, as noted above, has been theoretical, however, and has lacked empirical evidence. Lynch and Egan (2012), for example, referring to service-dominant logic commented that the criticism of the concept is the lack of empirical evidence to support it. They specifically called for research to provide an understanding of how students define value and the different points at which value creation might occur (Lynch and Egan, 2012).

The literature review provided information on the theories about the value concept which were used to create a conceptual framework that was tested in the research programme discussed below.

1.4   Research methodology

The research project consisted of a case study of Anglia Ruskin University that has campuses in two cities in the east of England. To investigate into the value students experienced throughout their educational experience I decided that the most appropriate research methodology was the pragmatist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). The use of the pragmatic design provided a philosophical base for the research as it was not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality which allowed me the freedom to choose the methods, techniques and procedures which best met the needs and purposes of the research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The pragmatist paradigm was the best philosophical position to hold for this research project as I was able to research the views of students in two stages using qualitative and quantitative research methods. I was able to identify themes about the students' opinions of their educational experiences using focus groups and one-to-one interviews in the qualitative research stage. The themes identified in this way were then used to develop a questionnaire for the quantitative stage of the research project. Using convenience sampling, I was able to identify themes about the value which students identified for each stage of their educational experience. The qualitative research stage took place in 2014 when semi-structured qualitative interviews were carried out with a small sample of students and alumni in the university Business School on the two campuses to identify what they valued from their higher educational experiences. After the findings of the qualitative interview were analysed they were incorporated into a questionnaire which was used in the quantitative research programme which took place in 2015 and consisted of the convenience sample of the whole student population of the university across the two campuses. The results of the questionnaires were analysed to identify what the students valued in each stage of their educational experience.

The research design stages are outlined below.

Table 1: The two stages of the research programme

Stage	Type of research	Purpose and outcome
Stage 1	Qualitative research into students' perceptions of value	The results from the in-depth interviews aimed to provide an understanding of what students valued in each phase of their educational experience and was used to create a questionnaire used in stage two. The results from the in-depth interviews were also compared with the conceptual framework and differences identified between them.
Stage 2	Quantitative research into the students' perceptions of value.	The results from the research undertaken in this stage were used to answer the research questions and modify the conceptual framework.

Table 1 above provides an outline of the research methodology. In stage one the qualitative research programme consisted of in-depth interviews to establish the students' perceptions of value in the three phases of their student experience in the university business school across the two campuses. The aim of the interview programme was to improve my understanding of the range of issues identified in the literature review about the things which students valued during the application process, the period while they were studying at the university and their experience after they had graduated. The results from the literature review were used to help to formulate the questions the students were asked in the second stage of the research programme. The findings from the qualitative research programme were also compared with the conceptual framework to identify any similarities and differences between them.

In stage two the results from the qualitative research programme were used to formulate the questions which were used in the quantitative research programme which collected data from a sample of all the students in the university on the two campuses. The aim of this stage of the research programme was to test the

prevalence of the themes identified in the qualitative research stage across a wider sample so that I could aim for greater empirical generalisability of the results.

1.5   Intended contribution of the study

The research programme is intended to contribute to knowledge through determining the customer perceived value of students in higher education throughout their educational experience. As has been noted in the sections above there is a research gap for two reasons. Firstly, the literature is, for the most part, silent on the value-in-experience concept in higher education as it only examines the areas of retailing and services in general. Pine and Gilmore (2011) do refer to education as an experience but this has not been examined in more depth in the academic literature. Secondly, there is a lack of empirical research into the subject of value-in-use, value co-creation and value-in-experience. The literature to-date has been predominantly theoretical in which models and theories have been put forward to explain the concepts of value-in-use etc. but have not been tested empirically. This thesis aims to answer the call for research that Lynch and Egan (2012) have made to understand how students define value and the different points at which value creation might occur.

1.6   Outline of the thesis

In the next chapter I discuss the main areas of the literature which are relevant to the study: value-in-use and value-in-experience. This is used to develop a conceptual framework that identifies the value students experience when they are applying to go to university, while they are studying at the university and when they have graduated and are in employment or studying for a higher qualification

Following this, chapter three describes and justifies the research methodology to be used when undertaking the research programme. The options in terms of the research philosophy and methodologies are examined and the justification provided for the chosen research philosophical and methodological approach I used. I provide arguments to show that the pragmatic paradigm is the best one to use to obtain the data needed to achieve the research objectives. The methodological approach is discussed and a mixed methodology identified as the most appropriate for this research programme.   The research plan is outlined and data quality issues discussed. The sample selection is also outlined.

In the first empirical chapter (four) I demonstrate that the concepts identified in the conceptual framework are justified as I identify the themes about what the students valued in each stage of their educational experience. These themes are tested in the second empirical chapter (five) using a larger sample to enable greater empirical generalisability of the research findings and justification of the conceptual framework.

Finally, in chapter six I discuss the research findings and compare them with the literature in order to determine the perceived value students identify in their educational experience. Using the results from this examination of the literature and research findings a revised conceptual framework is produced. In chapter seven the conclusion to the thesis is provided in which the research questions are answered, the limitations of the research identified and suggestions made for further research into this subject area.

2   Applicability of marketing models to Higher Education

2.1   Introduction

The UK higher education sector has been transformed over the last 30 years by the marketisation of public services. This has resulted in the burden of paying for students to study at universities being transferred from governments to students and their families through the introduction of tuition fees. These changes have resulted in a new relationship between students and their families on the one hand and universities on the other, in which the students and families have begun to take a greater interest in their educational experience and are demanding more from their higher educational institutions. Universities have seen the development of the 'student-as-customer' (Chalcraft, Hilton, Hughes, 2015) phenomenon in which students expect the university to provide them with a degree and offer a good level of service comparable to that which they receive when purchasing other services. Universities are having to respond to this change and compete to attract students to study with them (Barnett, 2011). The Browne Report (2010, p27) referring to this issue, asserted that 'students are best placed to make the judgement about what they want to get from participating in higher education'. The UK government white paper that followed the Browne Report (BIS, 2011) claimed to be putting student experience at the heart of higher education, through empowering students by ensuring that universities were more responsive and accountable to students and provided better information on their courses, and by creating greater diversity of provision of higher education and modes of delivery. As a result of these developments in the higher education sector, universities are now having to treat students as customers, interact directly with them and respond to their needs and preferences (Brown, 2015).   As a consequence of treating students as customers, universities have introduced marketing departments to enable them to understand the students' perceptions of their educational experience and identify what they value.   The research streams into value are discussed below.

2.2   Research streams investigating value

In the marketing academy, research into customer value has been the central theme for the last 40 years, with a number of research streams established which have considered how value is created. The three research streams – value-in-exchange, value co-creation and value-in-experience – that were introduced in the last chapter, are examined below in relation to the research undertaken into higher education to identify the value research approach that is most suitable for this thesis. Empirical research into value in higher education to date has been in the value-in-exchange research stream only. There have been calls for research to be carried out based on the theories and models identified in the

value co-creation research. Value-in-experience has not been used as a research base in higher education research to date.

- **Value-in-exchange**

Value has been traditionally identified from an economic viewpoint as the outcome of an exchange process between a company and its customers (Woodall, 2003; Vargo and Lush, 2004; Gronroos, 2006a; Gronroos, 2006b; Lush and Vargo, 2006; Vargo, Lush and Morgan, 2006) which has been termed 'value-in-exchange' (Vargo and Lush, 2004). It is based on the work of Zeithaml (1988) who identified that value is based on the trade-off between the benefits and sacrifices that a customer makes when purchasing a product or service. Zeithaml (1988) indicated that value was the result of the assessment of a 'deal' which the customer could obtain through weighing up the benefits they would obtain versus the sacrifices they were prepared to make. The sacrifice element was thought to be concerned with monetary price by Bolton and Drew (1991) Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991) Chang and Wild (1994) Bonjanic (1996) Jayanti and Ghosh (1996) Grewal, Monroe and Krishnan (1998) who researched into this subject. Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima (2013) noted, however, that Zeithaml had proposed that it should contain both monetary and non-monetary elements.

In the higher education literature, the existing research into the value construct has been based on the value-in-exchange ideas of Zeithaml (1988). The earliest research was carried out by LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999) who identified the relationship between students' overall assessment of service value and perceptions of price in the form of price/quality relationships. Research carried out by Ledden, Kalafatis and Samouel (2007) and Ledden and Kalafatis (2010) derived their 'benefits' items from LeBlanc and Nguyen, and adapted the work of Cronin et al. (1997) as a basis for monetary and non-monetary sacrifices (time, effort and perceived risk). Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) based their research on LeBlanc and Nguyen's work and identified four perceived service values which they described as career value, social value, personal learning value and image value. Other researchers who based their research into value on benefits and sacrifices were Perin, Sampaio and Brei (2007) Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) Relyea, Cocchiara and Studdard (2008) and Schmidt (2002). All the research has used quantitative methods carrying out studies that were based for the most part on university students in their own institutions or across a number of institutions in a range of countries.

The value-in-exchange concept has been challenged by a number of authors (Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Vargo and Lush, 2004; Gronroos, 2006a; Gronroos, 2006b; Gronroos, 2007;

2008; 2012; Gummerus, 2013) who indicated that value is created as customers use a product or service instead of the outcome of an exchange process. Customers, they argued, do not rationally calculate cost and benefits; instead, emotions play an important role in consumer experiences. Value is perceived via the 'use' that can be derived from a product/service and is created by a customer as they experience using the product or service over time (Gronroos and Vioma, 2011). This construct has been labelled 'value-in-use'.

Value-in-use is a better model because it enables me to take account of the complex forms of value that students can derive over a long period of time. For the value-in-exchange concept to work, students would have to know exactly what benefits and sacrifices they would be making in the next three or thirty years or so. It has been suggested that research in higher education should be undertaken using value-in-use that identifies the value students obtain from their educational experiences which offers more opportunities to discover what students value as they apply to a university to study for a degree, study on their course and when they graduate. The suggestions to undertake this research have been based on the value co-creation research stream which is examined below.

- **Value co-creation**

The publication of articles by Normann and Ramirez (1993) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000; 2004 a, b, c) and the introduction of service-dominant (S-D) logic by Vargo and Lush (2004) developed the idea of value being co-created with the customer rather than exchanged in the purchase process. The value co-creation concept was offered as an alternative to the value-in-exchange concept (Gummerus, 2013), and several researchers in higher education have suggested that it has much to offer the higher education sector (Baron and Harris, 2006; Ford and Bowen, 2008; Sautter and Jones, 2009; Tuzovic, et. al., 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012).

In S-D logic, customers have a dual role as an active contributor and interpreter of experiences. Vargo and Lush (2004; 2008) outlined how value is realised in a number of foundational principles, which they label 'FP'. In FP6, value is viewed as something that is co-created with the customer (Lush and Vargo, 2006; 2008) through the integration of resources which are activated by the customer to create value (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). In FP9, Vargo and Lush (2008, p7) stated that "all social and economic actors are resource integrators" and that value is created in a network between the various actors. Baron and Harris (2008) stated that S-D logic emphasises the role of the customer in the co-creation of value, and Payne et al., (2008) observed that this takes place through the

design, production, delivery and consumption processes. FP10 stated that "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary" (Vargo and Lush, 2008 p7) which acknowledges that value is determined in consumer experiences. Several researchers (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Naidoo, Shanker and Veer, 2011; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2012; Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson, 2012; Malhotra, Lee and Uslay, 2012) in the higher education sector have discussed how the principles can be applied in the education environment. The work on the subject has been conceptual to date as the researchers have contextualised the FPs of S-D logic in higher education, however, and there has not been any empirical research undertaken to support the suggestions of how it can be used in higher education.

S-D logic developed out of a range of earlier ideas including relationship marketing (Aitken, Ballantyne, Osbourne and Williams, 2006). In relationship marketing the focus is on interactivity between the company and its customers based on the inseparability characteristics of services and the need to foster good firm/customer relationships. Relationship marketing (RM) has been conceptualised as developing and maintaining firm customer relationships over time, to profit from the customer lifetime value. RM also refers to co-production in which customers, as resources, participate in the service production process (Gronroos, 2006a; 2006b). S-D logic, on the other hand, argues that value is co-created and can only be determined by the user in the consumption process and through use, either directly, or mediated by a good (Lynch and Egan 2012). In this context, service is a perspective on value rather than a category of market offering (Edvardsson, Gustafsson, and Roos, 2005).

The value co-creation concept has been criticised as the roles of the customer and company are unclear. Gronroos (2011) observed that in value co-creation literature the company is identified as being in charge of the process and they invite the customer to join them as co-creators. Instead, Gronroos and Voima (2012) argued that customers are the ones in charge of their value creation which is constructed through their experiences, which I agree with. The company can only help the customer as a service provider to achieve the value they want. It has been suggested by Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima (2013) that the service organisation's role in the value creation process is to support the value creation process of the customer who creates the value themselves. Value is identified as being embedded in the practices of the customer rather than the resources of a service provider (Gronroos, 2009; Holttinen, 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013) which means that it is, therefore, personal, relative and related to the context and events in the customer's life (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). In response to these criticisms, the term "value-in-context" has been created by Vargo (2008) and Chandler and Vargo (2011) which they

regard as a development from value-in-use and, while it is still determined by the customer, considers a broader range of indicators and actors involved in the process which are related to the surrounding context of the value experience (Kukk and Leppiman, 2016). Tynan et al. (2014, p1060) stated that value-in-context "incorporates value gained without direct experience of the service or service provider using imagination or stories from others to construct future experiences."

As a researcher into the value construct, I am in agreement with the researchers above that value co-creation has limitations as it does not make it clear about the role of the company and the customer in the co-creation process. In higher education, for example, value is something that is achieved by a range of factors which are not just based on the co-creation between, say, a lecturer and a student and the resources they each hold. Instead it is better to examine it from the point of view of the experiences that students have in each stage of the educational process as they apply to go to university, study there and then graduate. The next section will examine the existing literature on value created through experiences which is used to identify and create a conceptual framework for the research programme undertaken for this thesis.

- **Value-in-experience**

Research into value-in-experience commenced with the work of Holbook and Hirschman (1982) who postulated that consumer behaviour had an experiential dimension rather than being based on rational behaviour and information processing by consumers when making a purchase. They discussed the facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of product use which they neatly described as "fantasy, feeling and fun" (Holbook and Hirschman, 1982, p132). Their work gave rise to the ideas that companies needed to entertain, stimulate and emotionally affect consumers through the consumption experience (Schmitt, 1999). Since that time there has been a recognition that marketers need to have a deeper understanding of the role of customer experiences in influencing how customers behave in services marketing (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009).

In the practitioner literature, experience marketing has been championed by Pine and Gilmore (2011) who have declared that experiences are a new economic offering and source of value, as consumers are buying experiences which are staged by companies and are memorable for them. They suggested that education is an experience in which students are active participants with the focus shifting from the teacher to the student as an active learner who interacts with those around them. Higher education, they argued, is a place

where students' learning takes place both in the classroom and throughout the university campus.

The academic literature has contributed to the discussion on value-in-experience in two areas. The first is the consumer behaviourist work of Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) who, as noted above, identified a number of key points about the consumption experience. Firstly, companies needed to identify the whole consumption experience from pre-purchase through consumption to outcome, and secondly, that emotion is a crucial aspect of consumption.   Hirschman (1984) added to this work when she suggested that there were three consumption motives, namely cognition seeking (the experience should stimulate thought processes), sensation seeking (the experience should stimulate the senses) and novelty seeking (the desire to seek out novel stimuli). Richins (1997) in her study of consumer emotions in the consumption experience added to the work of Hirschman by showing that emotions are context specific and may differ from those experienced in other contexts, which means that any investigation of consumption meaning embedded in experience should be context specific. Thirdly, interaction is at the heart of an experience as consumers receive experiences in a multi-sensory mode and respond and react to them. Finally, consumers can evoke the past in response to an experience and respond by imagining what they have not experienced, which means that imagination and nostalgia may have roles to play in any consumption experience.   Holbrook and Schindler (2003) added the hedonic social behaviour of reminiscing through their work on nostalgia in the consumption experience. Consumption experiences may be shared and value created for a consumer through interaction with other people (e.g. friends or family members) through a collective consumption experience (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; McKechnie and Tynan, 2008). Poulsson and Kale (2004) agreed with Holbrook and Hirschman when they stated that a successful experience contained four elements – personal relevance, novelty, surprise and learning. In the service marketing literature, Grove and Fisk (1997) suggested that service delivery is a drama with a performance that takes place at the point of consumption, as the result of a scripted interaction between a customer and an employee.

Value-in-experience uses the ideas of S-D logic, especially that of FP10 that value is phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, as, in the research stream, the focus is on the customer's perception of value throughout the customer experience (Frow and Payne, 2007; Turnbull, 2009; Chalcraft, Hilton and Hughes, 2012; Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom, 2012). It has been defined as "the customer's perception of value over the entire course of the customer experience" (Turnbull, 2009, p4). This definition reflects Holbrook's (1999, p5) definition of consumer value as "an interactive relativistic preference experience" which may be perceived by the consumer at many points over the totality of their interaction

with a product or service. Value is perceived by customers throughout their interaction with a service which includes the point of purchase, preparation and consumption or even value in the idea of a product or service, the exploration of a potential purchase and reflection on the experience (Hilton, Hughes and Chalcraft, 2011).   Customer experience should be understood, therefore, in terms of all the components of the experiences which customers have which contribute to the overall customer experience (Heinonen et al., 2010; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). These experiences can be routine and recurring or unique and one-off (Heinonen et al., 2010).

The stages of a customer's experience have been identified by several researchers (Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Woodall, 2003; Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005; Turnbull, 2009; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Shaw and Ivens (2002) identified that the customer experience went through five stages: expectation setting; pre-purchase interaction; purchase interaction; product/service consumption; and post-experience review.   Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) identified four stages of experience: anticipated consumption; purchase experience; consumption experience; remembered consumption and nostalgia.   Woodall (2003) indicated that value occurs over four stages: ex-ante (anticipated) value; transaction (at the point of experience) value; ex-post (post-purchase) value; disposition (after use/experience) value. Turnbull (2009) produced a list of the customer experiences that take place at this stage in the consumption process and stated that they "encompass antecedents such as exploration, planning and anticipation, and post consumption activities such as remembering, storytelling and reminiscing" (Turnbull, 2009, p3).   Tynan and McKechnie (2009) identified in detail the experiences for three stages of the consumer experience – pre-experience, customer experience and post-experience – which they achieve by combining Arnould et al. (2005) second and third stages into one. Table 2 below identifies the models of the stages of a customer's experience as noted above.

Table 2 - Multi-stage models of customer experience

(Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005) Classification of consumer experiences	(Shaw and Ivens, 2002) Stages of customer experience	(Woodall, 2003) Four stages of value	Tynan and McKechnie (2009) Three stages of the customer experience
	1. Expectation setting		
1. Anticipated consumption	2. Pre-purchase interactions	1. Ex-ante (pre-purchase) value	Pre-experience
2. Purchase experience	3. Purchase interaction	2. Transaction (at the point of experience) value	Customer experience
3. Consumption experience	4. Product/service consumption	3. Ex-post (post-purchase) value	
4. Remembered consumption and nostalgia	5. Post-experience review	4. Disposition (after use/experience) value	Post-experience

Source: Researcher's own research based on Turnbull (2009)

- **The chosen research stream**

Having discussed the three research streams on value above, the research stream that the remainder of this thesis is based on is value-in-experience which has much to offer a researcher examining the value that students create throughout their educational experience. The reason for this is that the value-in-experience research stream examines the experiences that customers have in a more comprehensive way than the other two research streams starting when they are thinking about purchasing a product/service through the consumption process to their reflections about their purchase experience. Value-in-exchange, as noted above, assumes that customers rationally calculate cost and benefits when they are deciding on the value that has been achieved from their interactions with a company. In higher education, the research using value-in-exchange identified above has been limited to these transactions only and has not considered the value that is created when students are applying to go to university, studying on their courses or have graduated.

The alternative research streams, which are based on the value-in-use construct, value co-creation and value-in-experience, are more suitable as they are based on the idea that value is created as a customer uses a product or service and take account of the complex forms of value that students can derive over a long period of time. In higher education, the student will create value, according to the value co-creation literature, as they interact with the university, its members of staff, other students, their friends and/or family. Whilst this is more in line with reality than the suggestions in the value-in-exchange literature, the limitation of this research stream, as noted in the section on value co-creation above, is that the value can only be created through the interaction of two parties with the organisation taking the lead role and inviting the customer to join them as co-creators. In higher education, this research stream proposes that value is created only when the student interacts with one of the following: the university and its members of staff, other students, friends or family members.

The other research stream within the value-in-use construct - value-in-experience - offers more to the researcher as, in this research stream, the customer experience throughout the whole process from pre-purchase planning and consideration to post-purchase reflection is central. The research stream is investigating the experiences that customers have in each of these stages and the value they create as they go through the process. For higher education, this research stream is better as it covers the whole student experience from the time when students are thinking about going to university to study for a degree, through the time when they are at the university, to their experiences after they have graduated and are in employment or further study. The experiences that students have in each of these stages are not just based on the interactions that the students have with others in a co-creation process but rather they are found in their activities and emotions as they experience the higher education process in its entirety and then reflect in later years on their experiences. The breadth of the experience and the inclusion of the students' own experiences is broader therefore than the value co-creation research stream viewpoint and provides a fuller picture of the student experience. For this reason, the rest of this thesis is based principally on the value-in-experience research approach. This is not to say that some aspects of the other two research streams will not be considered when discussing the whole student experience.

The next section contextualises the thinking on value-in-experience to the higher education sector.

2.3   Value-in-experience in the higher education context

Given the emphasis on student choice in a competitive marketplace noted above in the introduction, student experience has been identified in the higher education sector as an

important area for analysis. This is demonstrated by the Times Higher Education magazine who run the annual Student Experience Survey, the annual Higher Education Policy Institute and Higher Education Academy Student Academic Experience Survey and the UK government white paper of 2011 (BIS, 2011), which identified that student experience was at the heart of higher education. Researchers into higher education have suggested that value occurs during students' experiences when they apply to go to university, during the time they are studying at the university and after they have graduated (Lynch and Egan, 2012; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Ng and Forbes, 2009; Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson, 2012; Baron and Harris, 2006; Petruzzellis and Romanazzi, 2010). Research into value-in-experience has, therefore, something to offer to higher education in terms of a suitable way to investigate what students value throughout their higher education experience. Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) have suggested that value may only be identified when students graduate, where value may be obtained through getting a job, achieving proficiency in the job, and building networks and professional esteem. Their viewpoint is from the value co-creation research stream and, as noted above, is rejected in the value-in-experience research stream that holds that value is perceived by the customer at all stages of the student experience.

Applying the points noted above about value-in-experience to the consumption experience in higher education we can identify the following:

1. Universities need to consider the whole consumption experience of students, which includes the time when they are applying to go to university, the time they are studying and after they have graduated.

2. Interaction with others – lecturers, administrators and their fellow students – is at the heart of the student experience. The interaction can be considered, for example, to be a performance by the lecturers in which the students participate as they sit in lectures and seminars.

3. After graduation, students may reminisce and have nostalgia for their past experiences when they were studying at the university.

In higher education the customer experience, as noted above, consists of experiences throughout the time when the student is applying to study at the university, their experiences as they study their subjects and interact with lecturers, administrators and other students and when they have graduated. Value is perceived by the students at each stage of this process and can consist of actual and imagined experiences. The details for the three stages of the Tynan and McKechnie model noted in the last section are reviewed below with regard to the higher education experience.

- **Pre-experience**

In the pre-experience stage, consumers anticipated and prepared for the consumption they were about to undertake by actively searching for information (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) and planning and budgeting for their future experience (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Consumers anticipated their future consumption experience when they imagined what the experience might be like (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), daydreamed or fantasised about it and had "thoughts, feelings, and sensory images that surround the upcoming event" (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005, p347-8). Their search for information, may have involved the use of traditional and online media and/or talking to friends (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Family members could also have influenced the consumers in this stage through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions concerning the impending consumption experience (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013).

In higher education, the pre-experience stage equates to the period when potential students are applying to university to study for a degree. They were anticipating and preparing for their time studying at the university, searching for information about a course and a university where they could study their chosen subject, then were applying to the university. They spent their time planning and budgeting for when they started at the university and were studying on their course. In their decision-making they may have been influenced by family members as they discussed with them the options available to them. Value for the potential students was found in their experiences when they were anticipating their time studying on their course and experiencing university life, searching for information about the university, interacting with the university staff and their family and friends. This stage is discussed in more detail below.

- **Students' anticipation of their experience studying on their course and at university.**

In the phase before the students went to university they could be thinking about the experiences they may have while studying at university. They could be contemplating what it would be like to study the subjects they had chosen, the experience of being in lectures and meeting their lecturers and the relationships they would have with other students, both in the lecture rooms and participating in social activities in the university. The potential students could build up a picture of what student life could be like as they searched for information, talked to their friends and family about the idea of going to university, or attended an open/offer day which may mean that they developed an idealised view of

student life and which caused them to daydream or fantasise about the experiences they would have when they were at university.

The potential students' anticipation of their higher education experience could be influenced by two things - their motivation for studying their chosen subject and the type of relationships and experiences they wanted to have at the university, based on their perception of what the student experience was likely to be and deciding whether they did or did not want to experience it. These issues are examined below.

o **Motivation to study for a degree at university**

The literature (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Krickl and Geertshuis, 2012; Bennett, 2004; Maringe, 2006) has identified that students were motivated to study for a degree for three reasons. Firstly, students may have been vocationally orientated and viewed going to university as a means to help them to either enhance their job prospects and/or enhance their career development. Secondly, some students were academically orientated and could be thinking about the experience they would have of studying subjects they liked in more depth to satisfy their academic curiosity. They could be thinking about the experiences they would have of learning new ideas and theories when they were preparing for their time at university. Other students had a social orientation to studying for a degree as they wanted to meet new people or escape from mundane work situations. Depending on the potential students' motivation for studying, they could be thinking about the educational experience they would be about to undertake and assessing the value they will get from it.

o **Decision to live in the university accommodation or stay at home**

Potential students could decide if they wanted to live in university or rented accommodation or stay at home, depending on their thinking about whether or not they would fit in and make friends and whether they would be able to cope with a more independent style of living during their time at university. The traditional thinking about students going to university is that they leave home for the first time, experience independence from their parents and meet new students with whom they develop friendships and relationships throughout the time period they are at university. Some students could be wanting to go to university and have this type of experience which they could daydream and fantasise about beforehand. For these students, the location of the university may have been important as they did not want to be too far away from their home, as they wanted to be able to go home if anything

went wrong when they were studying at the university (Souter and Turner, 2002; Foskett, Roberts and Maringe, 2006; Maringe, 2006).

For other students, the idea of studying away from home did not appeal to them for financial and social reasons. Some students facing the prospect, in the present financial climate, of having to pay high accommodation costs for staying in university or rented accommodation and the prospect of having a large debt when they left university, preferred to stay at home and attend a local university. Students, for social reasons, may have wanted to live at home and maintain their existing contacts which meant that they maintained their friends and family connections while they were studying, and used their contacts to help them to get jobs while they were studying and after they had graduated (Souter and Turner, 2002; Foskett, Roberts and Maringe, 2006; Maringe, 2006).

o **The search for information**

It was noted at the start of this section that potential students searched for information about courses that they wanted to study and universities where they could undertake them. When searching for information the potential students could have used a range of sources including university brochures and other promotional material and online material on websites including the universities' own websites and those of third-party organisations (e.g. UCAS) (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The information they obtained about the course and university could help them to form a view about both of them which, as well as helping them to make their decision, may have fed their thoughts and ideas about student life which they could use when they were daydreaming and fantasising about the future experience. They may also have talked to friends, family members and teachers about their decision to go to university (Souter and Turner, 2002; Moogan and Baron, 2003; Bennett, 2004; Redding, 2005; Brown, Varley and Pal, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012; Lubbe, 2013) and sought their opinions of the courses/universities they chose.

The other factors which could be influential for applicants were attendance at an open/offer day which gave students an opportunity to obtain an overall impression of the university and meet staff members and existing students. They may also have done this at other times during the application process if and when they had contact with staff or students from the university. They could be influenced by their experiences when attending the open/offer day by the way that the day was organised and the impression they had of the staff they were able to speak to in person. The open/offer day would have allowed the students to check out their perceptions of the university which they would have formed by viewing the website or through word of mouth (Brown, Varley and Pal, 2009). These impressions of the

university could help the students to daydream and fantasise about their time at the university as discussed above.

- o **Influence of friends and family members**

Friends and family members could influence the potential students' decision to study for a degree in a number of ways. If friends were going to the university at the same time or were already there, the student would be influenced to attend the same university (Souter and Turner, 2002). Secondly, friends would influence the students through word of mouth as they either gave their opinion about the university or told them of their experiences while studying at the university (Petruzzellis and Romanazzi, 2010).

Family members could influence the potential students through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions during this phase (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). The potential students who were influenced by their family members would want to go to a university that was favoured by their parents and held in high esteem by them (Schmidt, 2002; Soutar and Turner, 2002; Lynch and Egan, 2012). Finally, the potential students would experience elation at being accepted on a course at their chosen university and the esteem they received from their parents (Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012).

- **Consumption experience**

Value in the consumption experience phase is formed by the customer in their experiences with products/services, other customers and in both extraordinary and special experiences as well as their mundane and routine activities (Korkman, 2006; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). Customers obtain value from a range of sources which include sensory meaning which is through taste, touch, feel, sight, sound (Schmitt,1999) and emotional meaning which covers the range of emotions including excitement, joy, contentment, discontent, worry and sadness (Richins, 1997). Other sources include rational economic choices which are driven by utilitarian meaning where customers look for functional value and relational aspects of an association between a company and its customer(s) (Vargo and Lush 2008; Lush et al 2007; Vargo 2009) in which value emerges over time as extended activities between two parties combine interactively and interdependently to create value (Vargo, 2009). The relationship may be social in nature and occur between the individual and other individuals, groups, inanimate objects or companies (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Informational value can be obtained from

traditional or online media (Kozinets, 1999) or they can acquire value through the consumption of novel experiences (Poulson and Kale, 2004).

The student consumption experience in higher education is unusual, as studying on a course at a university would involve the student in a number of different experiences including learning new ideas, attending lectures and studying the subjects themselves and being assessed on their knowledge and understanding of these subjects at regular intervals. They would be interacting with lecturers, other students and members of staff of the university in the formal setting of the lecture hall and seminar rooms, laboratory, workshop, etc. Students would be using the facilities in the university and informal social activities which they choose to get involved in. These activities would take place over the time period (usually three to four years) when the student was at university. Students' experiences during this time period could be considered in three areas – their learning experience; their relationships with academics and administrators; and their relationships with other students – which are discussed below.

- o **Learning experience**

Learning would be achieved for students through the experiences they had as they studied their chosen academic subjects and developed life skills through their participation in social and physical activities in the university. The experiences would create physical and psycho-social changes within the students (Ng and Forbes, 2009). This would occur throughout the time they were studying for their degree and would take place in the classroom and in social settings on the campus. Value would arise from the experiences they have of studying subjects on their courses which would enable them to learn new skills and develop subject knowledge that would help them to pass their assessments and obtain their degree (Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012). During the time period the students were studying they could have both positive and negative experiences of learning as they studied the subjects on their degree courses. This could be the case on modular degree programmes where students would study a range of subjects that they may or may not like. During the students' learning experience, they could obtain value from emotional meaning such as the excitement and joy of finding out new things and passing assessments which would give them a feeling of pleasure and adventure (Ng and Forbes, 2009), or having periods of discontent if they were not enjoying the subjects they were studying or failing their assessments. The whole learning experience would be for students either transformative, mundane and monotonous, or a combination of the two extremes (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005; Ng and Forbes, 2009).

In considering the learning experience of the student, their motivation for learning is an important factor in their perception of value which they could obtain from their educational experience. It was identified in the previous section that the students' motivation for learning was a factor in the decision to go to university. The motivation for learning was equally important when the student was studying on their course, as it would influence their perceptions of value about the subjects they were studying. As noted in the previous section about the application phase, students would have a range of motivations for studying their subjects. The students who were vocationally orientated could be thinking about the value of the subjects they were studying to help them to enhance their job prospects or their career development. On the other hand, students who were academically orientated could value studying subjects that were of interest to them and learning new things which would aid their personal development (Krickl and Geertshuis, 2012)

Value in the learning experience for students can therefore be transformative or mundane and monotonous which is dependent on their perceived value as, depending on what their motivations are, they would either enjoy and be transformed by the activities they undertake while studying or find them mundane and monotonous.

o **Student relationships with lecturers and administrators**

Value for students could be strongly influenced by the relationships they had with their lecturers and other members of staff of the university (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2010; Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson, 2012). Lecturers have been identified as having a significant role in the value creation for students as the two parties interacted with each other during the time when the student was studying at a university (Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson, 2012). Given the modular nature of most degree programmes, students would be taught by a number of lecturers who would have a range of styles of lecturing and communication skills which would impact on the students' experiences. The relationships between the lecturing staff and students would take place in the classroom where they were taught in lectures and seminars/tutorials and in social interactions that the lecturers and students may have in other parts of the university. The lecturers that were able to create an environment of deep learning and who could promote high quality learning (Wright, 2005; Chireshe, 2011; Siti, Haryati, Shaikh et al. 2013) were valued by students. Students also related best to lecturers that demonstrated the following range of characteristics - accessibility, enthusiasm, friendliness, helpfulness, fairness, as well as being respectful towards students, being passionate about their subjects, enjoying their work, having good lesson delivery and motivating students to enjoy their work (Wright,

2005; Chireshe, 2011; Siti Haryati Shaikh, et al. 2013). The students could also find value from the experiences they had with other members of staff that they interacted with as they used the facilities of the university for academic or social purposes.

Students as they entered university and started their courses would be dependent on the lecturers and other members of staff to help them as they were immature in cognitive, emotional and psychological terms. As they progressed through their time at university they should have developed knowledge and understanding in their subject area along with research and analytical skills to be able to study subjects on their own. Students would also have developed independence and maturity as they studied at the university which would reduce their dependence on the lecturers and other members of staff (Chung and McLarney, 2000).

The experiences that the students had with the lecturers and other members of staff could be variable and, depending on the type of experience they had, would either create or destroy value for them.

o **Student relationships with other students**

The relationships that students developed with their fellow students was an important element of value for them in their educational experience (Ng and Forbes, 2009). During the time when students were studying at university they may have formed friendships with their fellow students (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012) which would include them searching for common interests (Ng and Forbes, 2009) through which the friendships could develop. Students would be interested in establishing friendships with other students at the start of their course to help them to settle into their new surroundings, especially if they were living in the university accommodation and away from their family and friends. Developing friendships in this way would be important to help the students to have a positive experience and value their time at university.

The formation of friendships would take place in social settings in the university (e.g. sports clubs and societies) or in the academic activities that the students undertook. In the academic arena, the formation of self-help groups in which students valued the experience of working together on their assessments and coursework has been identified as an important setting for students to learn together as they organised and co-ordinated their activities, built mutual relationships and interpreted the world (Brownlee, Hewer and Tadajewski, 2009).

- **Post-purchase experience**

The post-consumption activities that may have occurred include remembering, storytelling and reminiscing about a purchase (Turnbull, 2009). Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005, p347) stated that the phase of "remembered consumption and nostalgia" can include reliving past experiences, telling stories, comparing old time with the new, talking with friends from days gone by, or playing 'what if' games. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) identified several outcomes from a successful experience. These are that it has entertained and generated enjoyment; the customers may have learned and developed new skills; they may have experienced nostalgia for the experience and engaged in the behaviour of nostalgic reminiscing when reliving it. Consumers could also have engaged in fantasising about how the experience could have been (or so nearly was) given more knowledge, other contexts or even other co-consumers to share it with. Fantasising allowed consumers to go beyond things they had experienced and even experience things as their ideal selves. Consumers also evangelised for an exceptional experience to persuade others to engage with it. In the higher education context, students may reminisce about their experiences when they were at university as they either relived past experiences and told stories, compared the old times with the new and talked with their friends who they had met and developed friendships with at university (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Turnbull, 2009; Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005).

In the higher education literature, Chalcraft and Lynch (2011), Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) have suggested that value may only be obtained through getting a job, achieving proficiency in the job, and building networks and professional esteem. Whilst, as was noted earlier, in the value-in-experience research stream the idea that value only occurs at this point is rejected, the thinking that value is created by students when they have graduated is accepted. The students would value the fact that they have got a job in the career that they wanted to be in, or a different career, especially if they had a vocational motivation to study. Alternatively, if they had an academic motivation for studying, they would value what they had learnt about their subjects in more depth. They would value the experiences they had in their job as they developed competences and became proficient in the work they were doing, using the skills and knowledge they had obtained while they were studying for their degree.

2.4 Conceptual framework for value in higher education

Having discussed the value-in-experience construct in detail above in relation to higher education, the following conceptual framework brings the ideas about student value

throughout the student educational experience together to form the basis for the research for the rest of this thesis.

The conceptual framework is a visual representation of the main themes identified in the literature review above and illustrates the key concepts and the relationships between them in relation to the student experience at each stage of their higher education experience. A conceptual framework was defined by Miles, Huberman and Saladena (2014, p20) as a visual or written product that "explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables – and the presumed relationships among them. Frameworks can be simple or elaborate, commonsensical or theory driven, descriptive or causal". This conceptual framework is a visual representation of the value students experience in each stage of their educational experience. In the application process students could think about their future educational experience and could be fantasising about their time at university and searching for information. During the time the students were studying at university they would have a range of experiences as they learnt about their subjects and interacted with the lecturers and administrators and the other students. After graduation, the student may have reflected on the experience they had when they were studying at the university as well as starting their career or continuing to a higher level of education.

The following conceptual framework identifies these factors.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for student value in Higher Education

Application process

Studying at university

Post-graduation

Anticipation for future experience

Daydreaming

Fantasising

Motivation to study

Vocational orientation

Academic orientation

Social orientation

Learning experience

Participate in social activities

Study subjects to learn new skills and develop skills

Getting a job

Achieving proficiency in the job

Influencers

Family members

Friends

Teachers/School

Location when studying at university

Live at home to avoid incurring large debts and keep existing friends and family relationships

Live in university accommodation to experience independence from parents, develop friendships

Relationships with lecturers and administrators

Create environment of deep learning

Value lecturers who are accessible, enthusiastic, friendly, helpful and fair in their marking

Learned and developed new skills

Search for information

Use traditional and online media

Talk to family and friends

Attend an Open/Offer day

Meet staff

View premises

Elation at being offered a place at university

Esteem received from family members

Student interaction with other students

Form friendships with other students

Participate in social activities

Form self-help groups to help them with their studies

Nostalgia

Reminiscing when reliving experience of studying at university

Time

2.5   Conclusion

The review of the literature above has examined three relevant research streams: value-in-exchange, value co-creation and value-in-experience.

The literature review identified that value-in-experience is the most appropriate value construct to use in the research programme for this thesis, as it includes value that is created throughout a student's educational experience prior to, during and after studying for a degree at a university.

The literature on value in higher education was reviewed and found to be either in the value-in-exchange or value co-creation research streams. Most of the empirical research undertaken to date had examined value in terms of the benefits and sacrifices that students considered in the assessment of their educational experience and was linked to issues of satisfaction and/or service quality. Literature that was conceptual had been produced in the value co-creation research stream and suggestions made about the value students would identify in the pre-university, during university and after graduation phases of their educational experience.

The research fills a gap in the literature as the research in the value-in-use literature with regards to higher education has been conceptual to date. Several researchers have called for empirical research to be carried out to contribute to the knowledge on the value-in-experience concept (Turnbull, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson, 2012; Lynch and Egan, 2012) which I am undertaking. Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012) in particular have called for research to be undertaken to identify what value means for students and at what point it is realised, which this research programme will try to determine.   The aim of the research programme described in the rest of this thesis is to conduct empirical research in order to identify more precisely what students value, and when and how this can be realised.

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodologies and methods which have been adopted for the research are discussed.

The first section explains the research paradigm which covers the research programme in light of the developments in the research paradigms in the marketing academy. A review of the research methodology which has been used by other researchers in marketing is provided in section two and the chosen methodology identified. Section three discusses the research plan and the research methods which have been used in the research programme. Section four identifies the data analysis methods and the issues which the researcher faced.

3.2 Research paradigms

The thinking on paradigms was developed by Kuhn in the 1960s when he identified paradigms as "shared beliefs within a community of researchers who share a consensus about which questions are most meaningful and which procedures are most appropriate for answering those questions" (Morgan, 2007, p53). A paradigm has ontological and epistemological positions associated with it which range from positivism to interpretivism. This section discusses the ontological and epistemological positions of the research paradigms which have been operating in the marketing discipline from the 1950s to the present time, as they have been through a period of change from the position where positivism was the only accepted paradigm in the 1950s to the present time where all the research philosophies are accepted and used by researchers in the marketing academy.

3.2.1 Positivism

In the 1950s and 1960s research in the marketing discipline was regarded as being descriptive using qualitative techniques only and therefore not acceptable in light of the scientific thinking at the time (Easton, 2002; Tadajewski, 2004). In a move to make the discipline acceptable to the wider academic community, rigour and quantitative methodology was introduced which was based on the positivist philosophical approach to research and theory development (Easton, 2002). The positivist paradigm from that time on played a prominent part in research in the marketing discipline (Tadajewski, 2004; Hanson and Grimmer, 2007).

Positivist marketing researchers' ontological position is that "the world has a concrete existence that is unchanging and independent of the observers' apperception" (Tadajewski, 2004, p310). Their epistemological stance is that they "seek general laws and assume that the object of research can be broken in to constituent parts and is subject to analysis" (Tadajewski, 2004, p310). The positivist researchers were mainly concerned with the verification of hypotheses which led to the establishment of functional models which were explanatory and predictive in nature (Tadajewski, 2004, p311). Quantitative methods were mainly used by positivist marketing researchers to measure and predict trends and act as informers of decision makers and change agents (Tadajewski, 2004; Guba and Lincoln, 2008). Logical empiricism represented, according to Tadajewski 2008, 'normal science' in marketing theory (Tadajewski, 2006a; Tadajewski, 2008).

The positivist paradigm is useful in value research in marketing when researchers want to test empirically the relationships between the role of the customer as value co-creators and the service organisation as a facilitator and provider of value co-creation platforms (Rihova, 2013). This includes the type of value that customers expect to receive, or derive, from their experiences (Turnbull, 2009), for example, or includes studying empirically how customers' co-creation impacts on their service perceptions and evaluations (Rihova, 2013; Yi and Gong, 2013).

In the 1980s researchers began to criticise the positivist paradigm for failing to reflect the complex socio-cultural environment in which consumption processes take place (Pachauri, 2001; Collis and Hussey, 2003; Gummesson, 2005; Belk, 2007). At the same time, Holbrook (1985; 1987) and Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1988) repeatedly called for the study of consumption for its own sake and suggested that marketing and consumer research ought to be "ground(ed) in a central preoccupation with consumption, independent of any relevance that subject might carry for marketing managers" (Holbrook, 1987, p130). As a result of the criticism of the positivist paradigm and the work of Holbrook, marketing researchers commenced to undertake research using the interpretivist paradigm.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm, which emerged in marketing in the 1980s (Tadajewski, 2004; Tadajewski, 2006b), had an ontological view which sought to "investigate the social world at the level of subjective experience with social reality seen as inter-subjectively composed" (Tadajewski, 2004, p317). Interpretivists seek to investigate

subjective and symbolic experiences which they identify through the way in which consumers construct meaning from their unique and shared cultural experiences (Pachauri, 2001; Tadajewski, 2006b). Epistemologically they differ from the positivists' stance, as they believe that knowledge is not apprehended from the standpoint of an external, objective position but from the lived experience of a research co-participant (Tadajewski, 2004; Tadajewski, 2006b). Interpretive research was concerned, therefore, with understanding and describing lived co-participant experience typically through the use of qualitative research methods (Tadajewski, 2004). The interpretivist approach to research is grounded in critical relativism, phenomenology, social constructionism and postmodernism (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Pachauri, 2001; Tadajewski, 2004; Levy, 2005; Caru and Cova, 2006; Hanson and Grimmer, 2007; Solomon et al., 2014). Phenomenologists, social constructionists and postmodernists seek to gain strategy insights through the exploration of the complex socio-cultural environment in which consumption processes take place (Pachauri, 2001; Gummesson, 2005; Levy, 2005; Belk, 2007; Moisander and Valtonen, 2012). Thompson (1997), for example, used interpretivism and hermeneutics when he interpreted consumers' stories to understand the socially and culturally grounded meanings from their experiences of using products and services.

In value marketing research, much of the service-dominant and customer-dominant research is associated with the interpretivist paradigm (Schembri, 2006; Heinonen et al., 2010; Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber, 2011; Lobler, 2011; Tronvoll et al., 2011; Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom, 2012b). Customer value, for example, was identified by Vargo and Lush (2008, p9) as something that is "uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary" which points towards a phenomenological epistemology (Lobler, 2011; Rihova, 2013). In their work on customer-dominant value, Heinonen et al. (2010) identified that consumer experiences are internal and emotional, are subjective and inseparable from feelings, which they orchestrate themselves, and arise within their own activities. They placed the research into the consumer experience in the experiential-phenomenological perspective (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Caru and Cova, 2006; Holbrook, 2006; Schembri, 2006) which suggests that research into the customer experience should be undertaken using a phenomenological epistemology. Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom (2012a) stated that phenomenologists try to uncover and describe how people experience and interpret their world which involves the interpretation of individual subjective experiences. They indicated that this is related to Husserlian

phenomenology which "focuses on individual subjective experiences and how people make sense of them" (Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom, 2012a, p557).

Epistemologically, the phenomenological perspective on the customer and customer value offers a suitable starting point for the analysis of value-in-experience, as it gives primacy to the unique nature of the individual's experience (Lobler, 2011; Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlstrom, 2012a). The customer is viewed as experiencing and giving meaning to his or her lived world, and in so doing creates a plan for action. For instance, the customer assigns meanings to his or her lived experience of a specific consumption object, consequently making subjective value judgements and decisions about their consumption (Rihova, 2013).

3.2.3   Incommensurability of research paradigms

The discussion above has highlighted that, on the one hand, value research should be approached from the positivist paradigm perspective using quantitative methods in order to test empirically the type of value that customers expect to receive from their experiences. On the other hand, the research should be carried out from the interpretivist paradigm perspective using qualitative methods in order to analyse phenomenologically the actively co-created value of customers' experiences of their lived world. In the mind of many researchers this would not be possible, as the two paradigms are believed to be incommensurable as "they are based on different goals and philosophical assumptions" (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p508) and it is, therefore, impossible for researchers to operate in more than one paradigm when undertaking research (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Tadajewski, 2004; Morgan, 2007). Creswell (2009) referred to researchers who espoused this view as 'purists'. Davies and Fitchett (2005) observed that researchers are being asked to make "'either/or' choices between two seemingly polar paradigmatic opposites of research practice" (Davies and Fitchett, 2005, p274). Kuhn in his work on paradigms treated the "best known epistemological stances as distinctive systems that influence how research questions are asked and answered and takes a narrower approach by concentrating on one's worldviews and issues within the philosophy of knowledge: (Morgan, 2007, p52).

The idea of the incommensurability of the research paradigms was discussed in the early 2000s (Hunt, 2003; Tadajewski, 2004; Davies and Fitchett, 2005; Tadajewski, 2006b; Tadajewski, 2008) and rejected by many in marketing and consumer research (Davies and Fitchett, 2005). Hunt rejected the incommensurability

argument in 2003 when he observed that the knowledge claims of the different paradigms "cannot be considered rival, or competing. No choice is required. Therefore, their claims are not incommensurable in any meaningful epistemic sense" (Hunt, 2003, p229). This led to the opening of the discussion on the use of multi-paradigm research in single studies (Tadajewski, 2004). Morgan (2007) and Tadajewski (2008) both identified that in Kuhn's later work he rejected his earlier view and the claim that "proponents of incommensurable theories cannot communicate with each other at all" (Kuhn 1996, pp198-199 quoted in Morgan 2007, p62). The rationale for multi-paradigm research is that it is "believed to facilitate conversations across research paradigms and in so doing provide a more comprehensive view of the foci phenomena that would ordinarily be available" (Tadajewski, 2008, p274). Multiple paradigms, Tadajewski observed, "can enable researchers to oscillate backwards and forwards between paradigms, reflecting on the research object through a diverse range of paradigmatic lens" (Tadajewski, 2008, p274). Denzin (2012) noted that there is a "compatibility thesis for the mixed methods research community" (Denzin, 2012, p83) which stated that mixing qualitative and quantitative methods is a good thing as they state that at the practical or epistemological level the two methods are not incompatible.

The discussion above which has identified that multi-paradigm research can be used in single studies justifies the rejection of the use of the mono-paradigm approach of positivism or interpretivism for this research. Instead an approach that incorporates the use of a multi-paradigm methodology is used.

3.2.4 Pragmatism

The pragmatic approach (Morgan, 2007) draws on the core tenets of pragmatism which concentrate on the "concepts (of) lines of action (from William James and George Herbert Mead) and 'warranted assertions' (from James Dewey), along with a general emphasis on 'workability' (from both James and Dewey)" (Morgan, 2007, p66). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p15) referred to pragmatists as researchers who "believe that multiple paradigms can be used to address research problems". Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Morgan (2007) stated that pragmatism is important for focusing attention on the research problems in social science research and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem.

Burke Johnson et al. (2007) commented that pragmatism is the most useful philosophy to support mixed methods research which offers an epistemological

justification through pragmatic epistemic values or standards and the logic of using a combination of methods and ideas that help to best frame, address and provide tentative answers to research questions. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) remarked that pragmatism is appealing as (a) it is a paradigm that philosophically embraces the use of mixed methods and mixed model designs; (b) it eschews the use of the metaphysical concepts truth and reality; and (c) presents a very practical and applied research philosophy. They stated that researchers should study what is of interest and of value to them in ways that they deem appropriate and "use the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p30) within their value system. Creswell (2009) stated that pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for research as (a) it is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality; (b) individual researchers have freedom of choice to choose the methods, techniques and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes; (c) the pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity; (d) truth is what works at the time and is not dependent on a duality between reality independent of or within the mind; (e) pragmatists look to what and how to research based on the intended consequences – where they want to go with it (Creswell, 2009). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p110) stated that "pragmatism argues that the most important determinant of the research philosophy adopted is the research question". Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012, p32) asserted that "pragmatism is a valuable perspective in management research because it focuses on processes that are particularly relevant to studies of knowledge and learning".

A pragmatic approach relies on abductive reasoning which moves back and forth between induction and deduction that converts observations into theories and then assesses those theories through action (Morgan, 2007). The logic of pragmatic inquiry includes the use of induction to discover patterns, deduction to test the theories and hypotheses and abduction to uncover and rely on the best set of explanations for understanding the results from a research programme (Harrison and Reilly, 2011, p8).

Harrison and Reilly (2011, p9) stated "implicitly, the marketing discipline encourages mixed methods research because of the emphasis on rigorous research and research using qualitative methods could usefully complement quantitative analyses". I believe that pragmatism is the logical paradigm to select and provides the best means of analytical perspective for this research.

3.3 Methodological approach

In the discussion above it was noted that most of the research into marketing has been based on a positivistic paradigm. In this paradigm researchers have used a quantitative methodology in which hypotheses have been tested and analysed to establish functional models that were explanatory and predictive in nature (Tadajewski, 2004), and to measure and predict trends and act as informers of decision makers and change agents (Tadajewski, 2004; Guba and Lincoln, 2008).

The research into value in higher education has mainly consisted of quantitative research that is positivistic in its ontology and epistemology. A number of researchers including LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999) Ledden, Kalafatis and Samouel (2007) Ledden and Kalafatis (2010) and Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) examined the benefits and sacrifice elements of value basing their research on the Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) model of consumer value and linking it to satisfaction. Other researchers to use a quantitative methodology for research into student value included Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) Sanchez-Fernandez et al. (2010) and Voss, Gruber and Szmigin (2007). Krickl and Geertshuis (2012), used LeBlanc and Nguyen's (1999) work to form the basis for their examination of the dimensions of students' perceived value which was linked to willingness to pay. Sanchez-Fernandez et al.'s (2010) research was based on a price/attributes measure based on the work of Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991). Voss, Gruber and Szmigin (2007) research adopted Gutman's (1982) means-end approach to map university attributes to student satisfaction. The quantitative technique used by the researchers was surveys which were usually based on case studies of one institution. Exceptionally, Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) examined students in four universities across two countries.

As noted in the section above, research into service-dominant and customer-dominant logic has been undertaken using a phenemological epistemology. Researchers operating in this research stream have undertaken research using qualitative methods that included in-depth interviews (Baron and Harris, 2010; Baron et al., 2010; Baron and Warnaby, 2011; McColl-Kennedy and Tombs, 2011; Rihova, 2013) and focus groups (Baron et al., 2010; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Other methods which have been used included participant observation (Baron et al., 2010; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012).

In the mixed method literature, a number of research designs have been discussed (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) have identified four major types of mixed methods designs which they labelled triangulation, embedded, explanatory and exploratory. In each design, the researcher uses qualitative and quantitative research methods either simultaneously (triangulation) or in sequence (embedded, explanatory and exploratory) to investigate a phenomenon utilising the strengths of the two research methods.

The mixed method that I have used to undertake this research is the exploratory design, as it enabled me to identify the issues that were of concern to students in the university which I was investigating using the results from a small-scale qualitative piece of research in one faculty. The findings were used to inform a quantitative research programme that explored the issues with students from across the whole of the university and enabled the findings to be generalised.

The exploratory design is suitable for exploring a phenomenon, or identifying important variables to study quantitatively when the variables are unknown (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). It is also appropriate when a researcher wants to generalise results to different groups, test aspects of an emergent theory or classification, or explore a phenomenon in depth and then measure its prevalence (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Researchers who use this design develop instruments, variables or propositions for testing based on emergent theory or frameworks that have been developed as a result of the qualitative phase of the research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In this thesis the design is used to test the framework developed from the literature review.

The design's strengths are that, as it is a two-phase process and only one type of data is being collected at any time, the design is, therefore, straightforward to implement and report and, as it includes a piece of quantitative research, the design may be more acceptable to audiences that favour quantitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identified two variations of the exploratory design – the instrument development model and the taxonomy development model. The instrument development model consists of a qualitative phase in which the research issue is explored with a few interviewees to produce findings that will guide the development of the items for the quantitative survey research programme. The

qualitative and quantitative methods are connected to each other through the development of the research instrument items. The quantitative aspect of the study is usually emphasised by the researchers using this method (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This research method is chosen as I was able to identify the research issues that were of concern to students in the qualitative phase that were used to develop the questions for the quantitative survey research programme.

3.3.1 Research into value in higher education using mixed methodologies

In the research into value in higher education a small amount of research has been undertaken using a mixed methodology approach as the researchers have combined quantitative and qualitative methods.

Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson's (2012) research into teaching quality assessment and value creation used a combination of secondary research into the paperwork on the teaching quality assessment process, qualitative research in the form of focused interviews and quantitative research using a questionnaire to triangulate the findings from the other two methods. Woodall, Hiller and Resnick (2012) researched the relationship between value and satisfaction/loyalty for students and used both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. In the first instance, students identified factors of importance to them which were used in group discussions. This was followed by quantitative research in the form of a survey. Lynch and Egan (2012) have suggested that a mixed methods approach be adopted with students. They suggested that qualitative focus groups with students at different stages would give an understanding of the issues which could then be used to inform a model development and questionnaire design.

The research programme undertaken here followed the suggestion of Lynch and Egan (2012) and adopted the exploratory design-instrument development model to explore the value students experience in higher education by using qualitative research to determine the issues which were important to them, which then informed the questionnaire design that was used in the quantitative stage of the research to inform and develop the conceptual framework that had been developed from the literature in the literature review.

Researchers examining the subject of value in higher education have used their own institutions as a case study for their research programme as noted above. Yin (2009) identified that a rationale for using a case study is where it is representative or

a typical case. The objective of the research is to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation" (Yin, 2009, p48). As Yin noted the lessons "learned from the case are assumed to be informative about the experiences of the institution" (Yin, 2009, p48). Stake (2006) identified that instrumental cases were used in situations where the researcher wants to understand how something worked by looking at a specific case from which generalisations can be made.

I used the institution where I am studying – Anglia Ruskin University – as the case study for the research programme. The research programme consists of qualitative research among students in the Lord Ashcroft International Business School followed by quantitative research among students studying in all the faculties of the university (see the research plan below in section 3.4).

3.4   Research plan

A detailed research plan is provided below in table 3 which outlines how the research programme was carried out.

Table 3: Research design plan

Stage	Procedure
1	Review of the literature on the value concept and value in higher education
2	Qualitative research into students' perception of value In-depth interviews and focus groups of students and alumni in the Business School
3	Analysis of the research findings from the qualitative research programme
4	Quantitative research of students using questions arising from qualitative research and literature review
5	Analysis of quantitative research programme.

3.4.1   Research into student perceptions of value

In order to research the students' perception of value, the researcher established when the students identified the value they obtained from their student experience in the time periods before, during and after their studies at the university.

The research programme was undertaken to examine the perceived value of current students and alumni (former students) of the case study organisation. Using the mixed methods design, the research programme used focus groups and in-depth interviews in the qualitative phase of the research programme starting with the alumni and then the three years of the current students starting with the third years and ending with the first years, using the issues raised and value identified by the respondents in the higher year. In the quantitative phase of the research programme, self-completion questionnaires were handed out to students of the organisation.

In stage one a literature review was carried out to examine the development of and current thinking about the value concept and value in higher education. The themes to be examined in the qualitative research were established in this phase and an interview guide (see appendix one) produced for use in stage two.

3.4.2   Qualitative study

In the second stage, focus groups and in-depth interviews were carried out with students and alumni from the Lord Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University (see the sampling discussion below in section 3.7 for the details). The research was carried out using an interview guide (see appendix one) which ensured that the same topics were researched in all the interviews undertaken. The results of the qualitative research programme were analysed using NVivo 10 software to establish the themes of what the students anticipated they would value when they started studying and what they valued during the application process before they joined the university and while they were studying at the university and what they valued after they had graduated.

3.4.3   Quantitative study

Using the results from the literature review in chapter two and analysis of the qualitative research programme in chapter four, a questionnaire was developed (see appendix two) which was used in a quantitative research programme among

students in Anglia Ruskin University. The results from the quantitative research programme were analysed using SPSS and the results informed the development of a model of the students' value-in-experience of higher education.

The survey research involved the use of self-completion questionnaires (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The advantages of this method are that they are cheaper and quicker to administer, there isn't any interviewer variability and the questionnaire can be completed at the respondent's convenience (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

The disadvantages of the self-completion questionnaire are that there is nobody to prompt the respondent when they are having problems answering the questions or probe for more information about an answer to a question (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Collis and Hussey, 2003). Respondents can read the whole questionnaire so the questions may not be truly independent of each other and the respondent cannot be guaranteed to have completed the questionnaire themselves (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

3.4.4   Interviews

In the primary research programme, qualitative research in-depth interviews were carried out (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007; Yin, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

Yin (2009) observed that in-depth interviews allow interviewers to explore respondents' opinions about an issue as well as the facts about a matter. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) identified that semi-structured and in-depth interviews are appropriate when it is essential to comprehend the ideas that the interviewee uses as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation, and to enable the researcher to understand the interviewee's 'world' so that they can influence it either independently or collaboratively.

The strength of the semi-structured and in-depth interview is that it is an open discovery process (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The information gained from the interviews varies from one interview to another, which means that the subject is being explored from different angles of the topic (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The interviewees also allow the researcher to "probe deeply to uncover new clues, open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012, p131).

Several problems have been identified with using these methods which are that they are time-consuming (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007) and expensive (Collis and Hussey, 2003); there are difficulties in obtaining trust (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) and they can resort to the interviewee telling the interviewer what they want to hear (Collis and Hussey, 2003). There can also be issues of interviewer/interviewee bias (Collis and Hussey, 2003) due to perceptions about the interviewer based on their comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour creating bias in the way the interviewee responds to them (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

Interviews were carried out in focus groups which were very useful in the exploratory study section of the research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). The focus group research can suffer from social pressure problems, however, as the interviewees may not be willing to share their views publicly (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) although this was not the case for the interviews I undertook as the students listened to other group members and were encouraged to share their own thoughts and give rich data (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Table 4 below summarises how the research methodology and methods will answer the research questions.

Table 4: Summary of research questions, methodology and methods

Research questions	Methodology	Methods
What do students value when they are applying to a university?	Qualitative and Quantitative research Single case study of whole university. Students in LAIBS interviewed for qualitative research programme. Students from the whole university surveyed for quantitative research programme.	Interviews with focus groups (five students) and one-to-one from each year of the undergraduate programme and alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value. Quantitative research using self-completion questionnaire
What do students value while they are studying at the university?		Interviews with focus groups (five students) and one-to-one from each year of the undergraduate programme and alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value. Quantitative research using self-completion questionnaire
What do students value when they have graduated from their course?		Interviews with alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value.

3.5   Data quality issues

A number of data quality issues have been identified in the literature with regard to the use of qualitative research methods which are discussed below.

3.5.1   Bias

In qualitative research programmes, the literature (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) has identified that, for in-depth and semi-structured interviews, bias can arise in interviewer and interviewee.

I tried to avoid creating bias in the interviews I carried out by ensuring that my comments, tone and non-verbal language was as neutral as possible so that it did not affect the way in which the interviewees responded to the questions. I also listened to what the interviewees were saying and used that as the basis for subsequent questioning. In this way, I tried to avoid imposing my own reference frame onto the interview which Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) and Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) state is a major concern of bias in this type of interviewing. To avoid any possible bias in the responses from the interviewees, I endeavoured to put the interviewee's mind at rest about the interview from the outset, using a participation information sheet and consent form so that they knew the purpose of the interview and that they could withdraw from it at any point if they chose to do so. Open questioning was used throughout the interview to allow the students to answer the questions as suggested by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012). I also endeavoured to avoid bias by asking the same questions to each of the respondents so that my comments and tone were consistent and did not affect the way in which the interviewees responded to the questions.

3.5.2   Reliability and validity

For positivist researchers, the issues of reliability and validity of the results from the research are of upmost importance when formulating the research design (Remenyi et al., 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2003; Gill and Johnson, 2010). Each issue is discussed below.

- **Reliability**

As the research programme used a mixed methods design, there were two stages of research which consisted of a qualitative piece of work in stage one followed by the quantitative research in stage two. Reliability of the qualitative data obtained from that stage of the research was low as it was not intended to be repeated. The findings from this stage of the research programme were used as a means to identify the important issues that were examined in the quantitative research programme. This is in line with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2007) comment that qualitative research is not intended to be repeated as the outcomes reflect the reality that exists at the time when the research took place. The value of this type of research is its flexibility to be able to investigate the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation which would be lost if the research was adjusted to make it repeatable (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). As suggested by Yin (2009), an interview guide was created to assist me when I was carrying out the interviews to ensure that I asked similar questions of the interviewees and that each of the interviews covered the same ground. Yin had suggested that a case study protocol should be created which contains the research instrument and the procedures for undertaking the research to guide the researcher when undertaking a single case (Yin, 2009) and develop a case study database which is formal and presentable so that other investigators could review the evidence collected directly. As well as the interview guide I created a list of procedures for undertaking the research programme and a case study database using NVivo 10 to contain the research findings.

- **Validity**

The validity of the research data was established using member checking, in which copies of the transcripts from the interviews were sent to the interviewees to check that they were in agreement that they were an accurate record of the interview. Triangulation of the data was undertaken in the analysis of the qualitative data using the findings from the interviewees who had been interviewed in either one-to-one semi-structured interviews or focus groups and self-reflective essays by students of their experiences. Yin (2009) identified the use of multiple sources of evidence as a major strength of case study data.

3.5.3   In-depth and semi-structured interviews

The in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide (see appendix one) (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).   The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) with the transcripts being given to the interviewees to confirm that they agree that they were a true and accurate record of the interview.

3.5.4   Self-completion questionnaires

The self-completion questionnaires which followed the five principles of good design (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) ensured that each item expressed only one idea; avoided jargon and colloquialisms; used simple expressions; avoided the use of negatives; and avoided leading questions.

The questionnaire (see appendix two for details) was administered using a convenience sample as this was the most suitable way to obtain the results from the research.   Bryman and Bell (2003) observe that in business and management research, convenience sampling is very common and has included a study among university students which gives precedence for the use of convenience sampling for this investigation.

Students were approached in the library and open access computer areas in the two campuses – Cambridge and Chelmsford – of Anglia Ruskin University on the same day of the week, one week apart.   Students were given the questionnaire and asked to complete it.   It was then collected later that day.

3.6   Data Analysis

The discussion of the analysis below is about the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the two stages of the mixed methods research programme.

3.6.1   Analysis of qualitative data

The analysis of data obtained from the qualitative research programme was not subject to unambiguous rules as was the case with the quantitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2003).   Instead, some general approaches to the analysis of qualitative data were used which are justified.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) stated that the analysis of the data generated through the interviews must be undertaken in accordance with the philosophy and methodological assumptions of the research design. As I approached the research from a pragmatist philosophical position I attempted not to draw too much distinction between the collection of the data and its analysis and interpretation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008).

The method I used to analyse the qualitative data from the one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus groups and self-reflection essays was thematic analysis. The analysis was driven by my theoretical interest in the area, which resulted in the production of less rich description of the data overall and more detailed analysis of some aspect of it (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were identified in the data based on the three research questions to identify the value that students either anticipated or realised when they were applying to go to university, studying for a degree and had graduated and were either in employment of further study.

The advantage of this method for me was that it was relatively straightforward and did not require detailed theoretical and technical knowledge. It is claimed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to be simple to use for novices.

3.6.2   Analysis of quantitative data

The methods used to analyse the results from the quantitative research programme were chi-squared test and factor analysis.

The analysis of quantitative data required some statistical analysis to be undertaken in order to draw conclusions from the data about the total population (confirmatory data analysis) (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Within confirmatory data analysis there is a distinction made between parametric and non-parametric techniques (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The parametric techniques are only used on data with a normal distribution and they compare sample statistics with population parameters. Non-parametric techniques are used on skewed data which is not normally distributed (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Bivariate analysis techniques were used to analyse relationships between the variables (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Collis and Hussey, 2003) by "searching for evidence that the variation in one variable coincides with the variation in another variable" (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p244).

The first technique used in bivariate analysis is contingency tables which allow two variables to be simultaneously analysed so that relationships between the two variables can be observed. They are created so that patterns of association can be searched for (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The second technique used in bivariate analysis is Pearson's 'r' which examines relationships between interval and ratio variables. The coefficient of the relationship always lies between zero (indicating no relationship) and one (indicating a perfect relationship), thus indicating the strength of the relationship between the variables. A strong relationship is identified when the figure is close to one and a weak relationship when the result is close to zero (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Collis and Hussey, 2003).

The test for statistical significance is concerned with identifying the level of confidence that the findings can be generalised to the population and the level of risk there is in inferring that the findings exist in the population (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The technique used to test for significance is the chi-squared test which allows the researcher to "establish how confident we can be that a relationship exists between the two variables in a population" (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p253). It is a non-parametric technique used to assess the statistical significance of a finding by testing for goodness of fit (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Factor analysis is a technique to measure something that cannot be measured directly which Field (2013) states is used to reduce a set of variables into a smaller set of dimensions. It seeks to achieve parsimony by explaining the maximum amount of common variance in a correlation matrix using the smallest number of explanatory constructs (i.e. clusters of variables that correlate highly with each other) (Field, 2013). The actual differences in the frequencies were calculated by means of the cross-tabs.

Table 5 below summarises how the methodology, methods and analysis techniques used in the research programme answer the research questions.

Table 5: Summary of research questions, methodology, methods and analysis technique

Research questions	Methodology	Methods	Analysis technique
What do students value when they are applying to a university?	Qualitative and quantitative research Single case study of whole university. Students in LAIBS interviewed for qualitative research programme. Students from the whole university surveyed for quantitative research programme.	Interviews with focus groups (five students) and one-to-one from each year of the undergraduate programme and alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value. Quantitative research using self-completion questionnaire	Thematic analysis Chi-squared test/factorial analysis
What do students value while they are studying at the university?		Interviews with focus groups (five students) and one-to-one from each year of the undergraduate programme and alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value. Quantitative research using self-completion questionnaire	Thematic analysis Chi-squared test/factorial analysis
What do students value when they have graduated from their course?		Interviews with alumni to examine their experiences and establish where and when they identified value.	Thematic analysis Chi-squared test/factorial analysis

3.7   Sample selection

The research programme seeks to investigate the customer perceived value of students. To achieve this I had to consider the most appropriate way to research the students in an HEI and in particular to decide what was the unit of analysis. Yin observed that this is "related to the fundamental problem of defining what the 'case' is" which can be an individual or an event or entity (Yin, 2009, p29).

The use of a single case study has been identified as appropriate to produce research outcomes that can be generalised. For this reason, the case study used was Anglia Ruskin University as it is a representative Public Sector HEI. It is my home institution which meant that it was easier to gain access to participants for the research. The university has undergraduate and postgraduate student populations located in Chelmsford, Essex and Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.

Within Anglia Ruskin University the subunit which was examined in the qualitative research stage was the Lord Ashcroft International Business School (LAIBS). Within this faculty the student population was drawn from the largest course – BA (Hons) Business Management degree course. LAIBS is a homogenous faculty with four departments which deliver courses in a range of business disciplines. The departments only differ in the courses which they manage and so do not vary greatly.

The research was undertaken using mainly students who are from the UK and Europe. The reason for choosing these groups was that in the university and the sector they are regarded as 'home' students and have had to pay tuition fees which have increased in size over the last year for new entrants. Secondly, the UK students are familiar with the UK education system and, thirdly, they will not have cultural barriers to overcome when studying in the UK which could impact on their perceptions of value.

The student population breakdown between the campuses is listed below:

Lord Ashcroft International Business School – BA Business Management

Cambridge – 249

Chelmsford – 215

In the quantitative phase of the research programme, a convenience sample from all the students in the university was selected as discussed in section 3.5.4 on page 52.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter above outlines the research programme which I have undertaken for this thesis. Having outlined and identified the research methodology and research methods in the discussion above, I provide in the next chapter details of the themes which were identified from the qualitative research which was undertaken in stage two of the research plan.

4   **Students' views of the value they obtain from their educational experiences: qualitative findings**

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter the research methodology to investigate students' value-in-experience was discussed. It identified that a mixed methods exploratory design, and specifically the instrument development model in which the research takes place in two phases, was the best method to provide answers to the research questions that had been provided in the introduction on page 4. In the first phase, qualitative research was undertaken to explore the student views about the issues identified in the literature review and included in the conceptual framework (see page 33), in chapter two, with a small number of interviewees to produce themes which were examined in the second phase of the research programme using a quantitative survey research programme. The themes identified from the first phase of the research programme are discussed below.

The students interviewed in the qualitative research programme were drawn from the Lord Ashcroft International Business School of Anglia Ruskin University which, at the time when the research was undertaken, offered an identical range of courses in its two campuses in East Anglia. The plan for the research was to produce knowledge by carrying out focus groups in each year group across the three-year programmes on both campuses and to interview alumni who had studied at both locations. The recruitment of the focus groups proved difficult which resulted in the research being undertaken with both focus groups and one to one interviews in each location. The alumni interviews were held on a one to one basis with one exception where two alumni who had attended the same campus were interviewed together. Tables 6 to 8 below provide a breakdown of the interviewees in terms of the number of focus groups and one to one interviews by location; their age and gender; and the number who lived at home and in university accommodation by location.

Table 6: Number of focus groups, one to one interviews and completed self-reflections for the qualitative research programme.

	Cambridge	Chelmsford
Number of focus groups	1	4
Number of one-to-one interviews	6	1
Number of self-reflections	9	15

Table 7: Breakdown of interviewees by gender and age group.

Age group of interviewees	Male	Female
18 on entry to university	10	6
Mature	5	3

Table 8: Breakdown of interviewees by location and whether they were living at home or in the university accommodation.

Location	Number of students living at home	Number of students living in university accommodation
Chelmsford	13	2
Cambridge	5	4

As well as the semi-structured interviews, third year students were asked to undertake a self-reflection exercise and provide the researcher with the results, with the aim of identifying any additional themes that had not been discovered when talking to the interviewees.

The semi-structured interviews were exploratory and used an interview guide (see appendix one) to ensure consistency in the questioning of the interviewees while at the same time allowing for exploration to take place of the issues that they raised.   The identification of the themes was achieved through a thematic coding exercise. An analysis of the interview texts identified new themes that the students raised which had not been anticipated when preparing to undertake the research programme and had not been included in the interview guide. A coding exercise was undertaken across the full range of the interview texts with reference to the theories and ideas on the three areas of the value students' experience when they were going through the application process, studying at the university and had graduated, which were identified in chapter two. A discussion of the results is provided below for each of the three areas of the student experience.

4.2   Themes identified during the application process

When students were applying to go to university they could be anticipating what they would experience when they were there and after they had completed their studies. At this time they would be thinking about the reasons why they wanted to study for a degree and the relationships and experiences they wanted to have when they were at the university. The

reason for going to university would be based on their motivation for studying for a degree. In considering the type of relationships and experiences they wanted to have at the university students would be basing their thoughts on their perception of what the student experience was likely to be and deciding whether they did or did not want to experience it. The decision about the type of experience the student wanted to have might have had an influence on the decision they made about where they wanted to live when they were studying on their degree course. At the same time as thinking about and anticipating the relationships and experiences the students would have had when they were at university, they would be searching for information about the courses they wanted to study and may have attended an open or offer day to gather information about a course and view the university. The students might have been influenced by a number of stakeholders when they were going through the application process and received their offer of a place on the course. The themes identified from the research into these areas are discussed below.

4.2.1   Students' motivation to study for a degree

In the literature students' motivation for studying at a university has been identified by Ng and Forbes (2009) Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) Bennett (2004) and Maringe (2006). The research findings support two of the three reasons identified in the literature namely that students were motivated to study for vocational or academic reasons. The vocationally orientated interviewees studied for a degree to either enhance their job prospects or further their career whereas the academically orientated ones wanted to study subjects they were interested in.

Students who identified that they were vocationally orientated and were studying for a degree to enhance their job prospects had entered university straight from school. They ranged in reasons for studying for a degree from those who aimed to qualify for specific jobs and careers to the majority who realised that they had to have a degree to open doors for them in the employment market. Three interviewees identified that they needed a degree to enable them to get a good job when they entered the workforce. Of these three, one interviewee stated that they had researched the job market and identified that they needed to have a degree as that was included in the job specifications for the types of jobs that the interviewee was interested in. They stated that:

> "If you look online and if you search for jobs you do find … in their job specifications that you need to have a degree at a certain level." Yr3ch1

The other two interviewees commented that they needed to have a degree as, without it, they would not get the type of job they were interested in and commented that it was

essential to have a degree in order to progress in a career and easier to get a job if they had a degree. The remaining interviewees discussed the need for education to help them with their career in a more general way and commented that education was important to enable a student to have a good job/career (five interviewees) and would open more doors for students (one interviewee).

The mature students were all vocationally orientated and had been in the workplace before returning to education to study for a degree. They sought to further their careers by gaining a degree which would help their promotion prospects. Five interviewees identified that they returned to education as they needed to do so to further their careers either in their current employment or when looking for alternative jobs. Of these five, two interviewees indicated that the company expected their employees to study for and complete a degree in order to be able to progress in the company. They were, therefore, studying for degrees in order to fulfil their employers' requirements.   One interviewee echoed the comment of the interviewees who were entering university from school when they noted that they needed to have a degree to have any opportunity to get a job at a higher level than the one they were currently doing.   In summary, the purpose for studying for a degree for these students was to enable them to progress in their careers.

The students who were academically orientated stated that they were motivated to study for a degree as they were interested in studying subjects that they enjoyed. Three interviewees stated that they enjoyed studying business so had decided to study it at degree level. The other interviewee explained that they were studying for their degree as they were interested in studying to as high a level as they could achieve. The indication from this theme is that a minority of the students were entering higher education for academic reasons as they were interested in continuing their studies in subjects they have enjoyed studying at school.

The discussion above has highlighted that during the application process the students were anticipating the value they would obtain from their degree when they had graduated and got a job if they were vocationally orientated, or the value they would obtain from studying the subjects they liked while they were at the university if they were academically orientated.

4.2.2   The type of relationships and experiences the interviewees wanted to have at the university

The analysis of the qualitative research data provided evidence that students were thinking about the type of relationships and experiences they wanted to have when they were at the university as is demonstrated in the examples below.

An interviewee who was about to go to university straight from school described how they had a change of plan about where they were going to go to university.

> "I'd looked for the course and then the university but right near the end I changed what course I wanted to do for personal reasons, I decided to stay nearer home." Ach1

From this statement, it is clear that the interviewee had planned to study at a university which was not in their local area and they, therefore, would have in their mind the thought that they would experience the 'stereotypical student life' when studying at the university. This can be identified in their comments about their experience in their first year at the university.

> "I studied from home for the first two months and then I moved into halls for the remainder of the first year .. that did affect (my) feeling because it felt more like college than it did university… I think most people do go to university for their whole experience as well as the learning… I think the social aspect is a massive part of everything… they need to make more of a community feel. I think it was just lucky for me that … I did make friends…. So we made a community feel for ourselves. … …. I was actually thinking about going but it was those people (friends) who actually kept me there." Ach1

The interviewee, having had an expectation of what the university experience would involve in terms of social activities outside of the lecture room, was clearly disappointed when they started at the university and discovered that the social activities were lacking. As they stated, "I think most people do go to university for their whole experience as well as the learning" and that the "social aspect is a massive part of everything".   From the interviewee's comments, it is clear that their view of the university experience improved as they made friends and were able to create a community between them which the university was not providing.

Another interviewee described how they had thought about their desire to have social interaction at university as they were leaving home and wanted to create friendships with other students when they started on their course. To do this they undertook some research in order to link up with other students and create contacts ahead of starting on the course.

> "During my summer holiday before my first year ... at University started, I joined some Facebook groups from ARU, with the goal of achieving some contacts. It was difficult and I took the initiative to write to several people …. Not many of the students were on these Facebook sites, and I got in touch only with a few students. " Yr3Src8

A third interviewee commented that they wanted to live independently from their parents when they were at university as:

"I feel like it was an experience that I had to take myself forward" Yr3c1

The interviewee wanted to have the stereotypical student life in which they would be living in the university and developing as a person independent of their parents.

Finally, an interviewee stated that they had the choice of which of the two campuses they would study in for their degree. They observed that they decided to attend the campus in Cambridge as:

"I had the choice between Chelmsford and Cambridge and I chose Cambridge because it has lots to offer… cultural events and that sort of stuff and lots of students here so I thought it would be fun to live here." Yr2c3

In contrast to the interviewees who wanted to live in the university and have the stereotypical student life, an interviewee stated that they were not wanting this type of experience. They stated that:

"I didn't want to live on campus and have that stereotypical student life being a little bit older to the student game, not terribly certain, 21 or 22." Ach3

In this case the interviewee had thought about the type of lifestyle that they thought students had at university and rejected it due to their age.

Another area of the student experience that an interviewee had considered before they started their course was the lectures and they stated that they had been concerned that they would be left alone to do the work without any support from their lecturers.

"I was really worried about the lecture start like sort of like leaving you on your own but they've sort of gone out of their way to help which really impressed me." Yr1ch1

From the examples above it is evident that the students were thinking about whether or not they would fit in and make friends and whether they would be able to cope with a more independent style of living during their time at the university. The students who felt they could fit in, make friends and live a more independent life were wanting relationships with other students and to live in the university accommodation. Those who were not so keen on this were rejecting this lifestyle and decided to live at home.

In the literature on this topic, the suggestion was that consumers (in this case students) may think about and anticipate what they will do when they are at their chosen university. Students may anticipate their future consumption experience when they imagine what the

experience might be like (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), daydream or fantasise about it and having thoughts and feelings about their upcoming experiences (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005). The research findings above have illustrated that the students were thinking about the relationships and experiences they wanted to have when they went to university. Those students who wanted to live a more independent life from their parents and felt that they could fit in and make friends were thinking about and anticipating experiencing the stereotypical image of the student experience in which students would leave home for the first time, experience independence from their parents and meet new students with whom they would develop friendships and relationships throughout the time period they were at university. Students who wanted to have this type of university experience expected to have lots of opportunities for social interaction taking place in the university which they could engage in and through which they could make friends. Alternatively, students who decided that they would not fit in and did not want independence from their family were taking this into consideration when they were choosing the course and university. This theme was discussed in more depth when considering the reasons why the students chose to live at home or in university accommodation which influenced their decision about the university where they wanted to study and is examined below.

4.2.3 The reasons why students wanted to live at home or in university accommodation

The research examined the reasons why the interviewees wanted to live at home or in the university accommodation and the findings are discussed below for those who stayed at home first and then those who were in the university accommodation.

The main theme identified for the interviewees who were living at home was that the interviewees wanted to be close to home. The reasons why the interviewees wanted to be close to home differed between those starting university straight from school and the mature applicants who were older and had been out of education for a period of time.

The interviewees who were continuing their education from school indicated that their reasons for wanting to live at home were:

- They wanted to be close to home in order to be near to family and friends
- They didn't want to move away from home to study as it was a big step to take to leave home and go to live in another part of the country
- They didn't want to pay for accommodation and incur debts while they were studying.

In contrast, the mature students stated that they were living at home because:

- The location was convenient to them as they were living in the area close to the university
- They were able to save money and stay with their family
- Local people were attending the university which made them more comfortable than going to a different part of the country
- They didn't want to have the stereotypical student life.

As 18 of the 24 interviewees were living at home, it seems reasonable to state that the decision about the university where the students decided to study was heavily influenced by the desire of the interviewees to live at home. The following comment sums up the attitude of these interviewees:

> " .. I thought, you know, stay at home, I only live down the road so I didn't want to rack up a huge debt, so I come local to keep costs down, live at home with the parents still so that's pretty much why I did it as well. It was just convenience and interest really." Yr3ch6

The literature on this theme identified that students were living at home as they did not want to incur high accommodation costs and wanted to maintain their friends and family connections (Souter and Turner, 2002; Foskett, Roberts and Maringe, 2006; Maringe, 2006). The research findings have agreed with the literature in that the interviewees said that didn't want to pay for accommodation, incur debts while they were studying and wanted to maintain their existing friendships and family connections. In addition to this the interviewees stated that they were afraid of going to university in another part of the country which is in agreement with the concern noted at the end of the last section that students were concerned about whether they would fit in and make friends.

While eighteen of the interviewees were living at home and studying in the university, the remaining six students were living in university accommodation.

The interviewees identified that they had decided to live in the university accommodation because they wanted to be independent of their parents, which they regarded as part of their development as individuals. Although they wanted to live away from home they did not want to be too far away and observed that they wanted to be close enough to home to be able to go back to their parents if required. An interviewee indicated this in the comment below:

> "... I moved away from home …. and …. because it's so local as well … I think that's helped because if I ever felt I needed to go home I do have that option because it's only 30 minutes away." Yr3c1

The choice of the students to be independent and live in the university accommodation but be close enough to go home was in agreement with the literature where Foskett, Roberts and Maringe (2006) observed that students did not want to be too far away from their home as they wanted to be able to go home if anything went wrong.

From the discussion of the research findings above it is clear that the interviewees chose to stay, in most cases, at home and study in the university because it was local to them. The minority that lived in the university accommodation were doing so because they wanted to be independent of their parents although they wanted to be close enough to be able to return home if they needed to.

4.2.4   Sources where students searched for information

The interviewees searched for information about the university by attending an open/offer day; reading the university prospectus; searching on-line on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and university websites and attending an educational fair.

The most significant source for information for the attendees was an open or offer day which the interviewees attended at the university and met with staff members where they were able to find out about the university facilities and courses. Interviewees stated that these days had been helpful to them to obtain information that convinced them to study at the university. For example;

> "she (a member of staff) put out things about the course such as assignments, exams, what other students thought about it, what she personally thought about the faculty and stuff like that and I think because of that it helped me feel calmer because it was nice to have personal experiences and someone to tell you about her life and how they got to where they were and what they think about it because otherwise you have such a biased view and yeah, she was very helpful I think." Yr3c1

The second most used source used by the interviewees was the prospectus.   The interviewees identified that they used this source to help them to decide if the course and university was where they wanted to study. One interviewee commented that:

> "the reading of the prospectuses, seeing what sort of teaching values they have and what they're going to provide me with made me want to come here as well." Yr2c1

The interviewees indicated that they searched for information on-line at the UCAS and university websites which they used to obtain information about the courses offered by the university and to look at the facilities they had to offer. An interviewee stated that:

> "I think it was through the UCAS web site to be honest where it says you want to do this course, these are available." Ac3

The university website was also searched by some interviewees to obtain information on the course content which helped the potential students to decide if it was suitable for them.

> "It was mostly like from the actual like university web site and it was just like the outlay of the course and I decided that international business would be better for me because then should I decide to travel to another country that degree would help me to open some doors to get employment abroad perhaps." Yr1c1

4.2.5 The extent to which students were influenced in their decision to study for a degree by stakeholders

The interviewees identified a number of stakeholders who had influenced them in their decision to go to university. The biggest group of stakeholders were family members of which fathers were the most significant individual family member to influence the interviewees. They influenced them positively by:

- Encouraging their children to go to university (5 interviewees)
- Inspiring their son to go to university (1 interviewee)

On the other hand, two interviewees observed that their family members had been against the idea of them going to university and responded negatively when they told them what they were going to do. One interviewee stated that they were the first person in the family to go to university and the family did not see the value in them going as they were already in work. The other interviewee indicated that the family was against the idea of them going to university as they had not been to university themselves and they were worried about the debt the interviewee would incur.

The second largest group to influence the interviewees was friends. The male students who were influenced to a greater extent by their friends than the female students (eight males compared with two females). The number of male students who were talking to their friends was the same as those who were talking to their family members (nine students) compared to the females who were talking to their family members (nine students) and school/teacher (five students) much more than they were discussing the issue with their friends (two

students). The reason for this may be that the males wanted to be independent of their family members to a greater extent than the females and were interested to find out more the opinions of their friends about the university.

Friends influenced the interviewees in the following ways:

- They gave advice to the interviewees about the university in the form of good reviews and encouraged them to study for a degree (two interviewees)
- They had gone to university and were, in some cases finishing and getting jobs, which gave inspiration to the interviewees to do the same thing (two interviewees)
- The interviewees knew somebody who was going to the university or was already there (two interviewees)
- The interviewees were inspired to be as successful as a friend of the family (one interviewee).

The other significant stakeholder was the school and teachers. They influenced the females more than the males (five to two) who were all aged 18. In the school which the interviewees attended, the interviewees noted that studying for a degree was pushed quite heavily and this influenced the interviewees to consider, and apply to do, a degree. For example, an interviewee noted the following about their school:

> "At my school it was pushed quite heavily to go to university.." Ac1

Another theme identified from the research was the family background of the interviewees. Family members of seven of the interviewees had been to university before them and had influenced the interviewees to go to university.

An interviewee summed up the influence of the family with the following comment.

> "… So I decided to apply for university and also from parents and people round me obviously they're all very highly educated, my cousins and everything." Ach2

From the discussion above it is evident that stakeholders – family members, friends and schools – played a significant role in influencing students to apply for a degree programme and study at university for the majority of the students. This is in partial agreement with the existing literature as Schmidt (2002) Soutar and Turner (2002) and Lynch and Egan (2012) state that family members will influence potential students through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions when applying to go to university. The students indicated that the family members' attitudes were, for the most part, positive as they encouraged or inspired the students to go to university although some students reported that their family members were hostile to them going to study for a degree. Secondly the research findings about the friends

agree with Souter and Turner (2002) and Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) who observed that students are influenced by friends who are going to the same university and through word of mouth as they give their opinion about the university and tell them their experiences while studying there.

4.2.6   What students valued during the experience of applying to the university

The interviewees identified a number of occasions where there was direct contact between applicants and the university which they valued. These were:

- Experience at open and offer days
- Visits to the university at other times
- Contact with staff during the clearing process

The experiences of the interviewees during these occasions are discussed below and the themes identified.

Students also identified that they valued the following:

- Obtaining a place at the university
- The reaction of their family to obtaining a place at the university

The value that students realised is examined below as well.

- **Experience at open and offer days**

The attendance at an open or offer day was found to be very helpful to the interviewees in their decision to study at the university. Five interviewees commented on the friendliness of the staff at the open day which the interviewees attended which influenced them greatly in their decision to join the university. One of the interviewees commented that this was very positive for them:

> "… (a staff member) on the open day was really friendly and they spoke to me as if… I don't know, I'm an adult and that's where I should be, I want to be treated as well, like it's mutual respect and they seem really enthusiastic and passionate about what they were doing which I thought was important." Yr3c1

The way in which the staff were keen to help students at an open day was noted by one of the interviewees. They commented that:

" .. they were really keen to like help people and it wasn't sort off on your own… everyone seemed to want to help out." Yr1ch1

Four interviewees indicated that the investment in new buildings which looked modern and demonstrated that the university was forward thinking was very appealing to them. They noted that it was a factor in their decision to study at the university. One interviewee commented on the information they had received at an offer day which they found to be in depth and helpful to them in understanding what they needed to know to make their decision. This persuaded them to join the university instead of another one which had been their first choice.

- **Visits to the university at other times**

Two people stated that they had visited the university at other times which were not part of an open day.   They found that the staff were very helpful towards them as they were given personal tours of the university which they stated was very informative.

- **Contact with staff during the clearing process**

Three of the interviewees went through the clearing process as they applied very late to go to university.   They all referred to the supportive staff in the university.   One of the interviewees commented on the process and the way in which they were given advice and support by a member of staff which persuaded them to study at the university.

A theme that can be identified from the responses about the experience that the interviewees had when visiting the university at open days or other times and going through the clearing process is the level of assistance the applicants were provided with when they interacted with staff in the university. This was very much appreciated by the interviewees and was influential in helping them to make their decision to study at the university.

- **Obtaining a place at the university**

Seven interviewees stated that they were 'happy' that they had obtained a place at the university. Four interviewees indicated that they were relieved to have received an offer from the university. The other interviewees stated that it was 'good' (three interviewees) and they were 'proud' (two interviewees). The two interviewees who were proud were pleased that they were the first members of their family to go to university.

- **The reaction of their family to obtaining a place at the university**

The families of the interviewees expressed similar views to them in that four interviewees stated that their families were 'happy'. One each of the interviewees used the word 'excited' and 'pride'. One interviewee, however, stated that their family was 'shocked'. The reason for this was that the interviewee had made a snap decision to study at the university when they had received their A level results and had not discussed this with their parent. They felt inclined to go to university as they had been encouraged to study by their other parent who had saved up money for them before they died.

In the situations discussed above the interviewees indicated that they valued their experiences when they were meeting and talking to staff at open/offer days, during the clearing process and when they viewed the university facilities. They also demonstrated that they valued the experience of obtaining a place at the university and receiving the reaction of their family. Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012) only refer to the value that students obtain through the elation they feel at being offered a place at the university and the esteem they receive from their parents. The semi-structured interviews identified that value was also being created by students through the experiences they had when they attended open days and communicated with university staff members. When students visited the university and saw the facilities they would be able, as Brown, Varley and Pal (2009) stated, to check out their perceptions of the university which they had formed when they viewed the university website or spoke to their friends who were studying at the university or had graduated. The value they were getting from seeing the facilities of the university may also have helped them to form an impression of the university which they would think about and might daydream or fantasise about the time they would spend studying at the university as suggested by Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005).

4.3 The students' experience when they were studying at university

The student experience in the literature review in chapter two was discussed in terms of the following three aspects of their experience:

1. The learning experience
2. The relationship with academic staff
3. The relationship with other students.

The themes identified from the qualitative research programme are discussed under each of these headings below.

4.3.1   The learning experience

The interviewees discussed a range of positive and negative experiences which they had had while they were studying on their courses which are reviewed below.

4.3.1.1   *Positive learning experiences*

The positive learning experiences are concerned with the students' development of self-confidence; their participation in extracurricular activities; the learning environment and how they felt that they were learning.

- **Development of self-confidence**

The interviewees stated that studying at the university had helped them to develop their self-confidence. They identified that this arose from studying at the university, undertaking activities on their course, interacting with other people and participating in activities outside of the lecture/seminar environment.

The experience of studying at the university was identified by two interviewees as helpful in building their self-confidence.

> "I feel that my experience so far at Anglia Ruskin University has been very positive. I have learnt to interact with new people, different cultures and backgrounds. It has also allowed me to be much more confident and independent." Yr3src1

> "For me it was the gaining .. confidence because when I came here I wasn't sure if I would cope with that and I am older than everybody else and I've got family and working and how will I cope with that but I'm quite proud of myself because I did." Yr2ch1

Taking part in activities on the course was identified as a source from which the interviewees gained confidence as is noted in the examples below:

> "..Group presentations, I really enjoyed them and with these two years I felt confident speaking publically about things and it was really good.. Ach3

> "..I suppose it has just been the experience. Obviously, working in part of a team and ending up being team leader I don't know how many times you gain your confidence when you're getting your skills." Ac3

Interacting with other people and participating in activities outside of the lecture/seminar environment were identified by two interviewees as the means by which they gained confidence.

"… I think in terms of building me, my interaction with other people, my involvement in the students union …. helped to build me as an individual, make me a much more confident person." Ac2

"… I joined the university activities and it actually helped me a lot like boosting my confidence as a person and my public speaking, organisation skills… I did (think) … okay, I am just going to go into university, get the degree and come out and not realising that the amount of opportunities was open for me to actually develop myself as an individual as well and I made the most of all of that and it's definitely paid off in a really good way." Ach2

- **Participation in extracurricular activ**ities

Participating in extracurricular activities was identified by a number of students as experiences that helped them when they were studying at the university as is illustrated by the examples below:

"… I'm also Student Ambassador *…* student ambassador has been great for me … because it has allowed me to speak to random people from all sort of walks of life but it's also enhanced my customer service side.. " Ac3

"..I was a course representative which was incredibly helpful. I was a director of the student radio station that's shared between Anglia Ruskin and Cambridge. … all of those experiences of meeting different people and being able to apply what I was doing… you know I was trying to pick things that were relevant to the course I was on and being able to apply those, not only in a work environment but slightly different environment as well I think was very helpful to me." Ac2

An interviewee identified that getting involved in the students' union had opened their eyes to aspects of student life outside of studying in lectures and seminars which had helped them to get to know people better and improved their overall experience.

"I started working for the SU in the second year and that sort of it really opened up my eyes to like student life and the experience that you can have outside of just going into your lectures and going into whatever and this year, finally probably a bit too late, but I've finally really started getting involved with things, you know knowing people around halls and knowing people on your course." Yr3ch7

The other two areas that the interviewees identified that they liked about the university was the learning environment and what they were learning.

- **Learning environment**

The interviewees stated that the learning environment and facilities were very good and conducive to learning as is noted below:

> "I enjoy the atmosphere on campus and find it is full of support and a great learning environment. There are plenty of activities to do and they encouraged you to reach your potential through extra seminars on assignment, emails etc." Yr3srch8

> "The facilities as I said, bright, modern, it didn't feel like you were in a crusty building and it kind of encouraged you in that aspect." Ach3

> *"..facilities .. it's great, the fact that it's open, it's fresh, it's nice. So you feel like oh yes, I like to go in there to study instead of sitting at home because you know, it actually brings you to university because, you know, it's got a magnet or something, just wants you to come in there. Ach2

- **Learning**

Interviewees commented about how much they had enjoyed learning at the university which they related to their lecturers as is noted below:

> "Whilst at University I have had many good experiences. I have learnt a lot, with several very good teachers." Yr3srch18

> "the teaching is good. I am learning, I'm understanding what they are trying to get across and why they're trying to get across. I've enjoyed the aspects of writing the assignments and sort of mailing them and get underneath of what's needed to be found, that's been good. The feedback on some of it has been great, so I've received some really good, detailed feedback on how to improve myself. … studying from someone who hasn't enjoyed it in the past, I've found that it is actually very interesting and helping me to grow as a person." Yr2c4

Another interviewee identified that they learned from relating to and working with people from other cultures:

> "I enjoyed the course because it was so good and it did allow me to choose all my options… I mean, the overall running of it was okay … As with the good ones that I

learnt a lot from it in terms of relating to so many different cultures and sort of how to work with them and how they respond to you… This was with fellow students yeah. So, being part of multi-cultural teams, that side of it is going to benefit me in the long run." Ac3

The learning experience was identified by Ng and Forbes (2009) as experiences which students had when they were studying for their degree and involved the participation in social and physical activities that took place in the lecture and/or seminar room and other social settings. They stated that the experiences would create physical and psycho-social changes within the students. The discussion above has identified that the interviewees were valuing the changes that they were experiencing as they were building self-confidence through working with other students and participating in extracurricular activities. They also valued the facilities which made for a good working environment where they felt that they were learning through their studies and interacting with other students from the UK and other parts of the world.

4.3.1.2 *Negative learning experience*

Value was lessened for the interviewees, however, through the negative experiences they had in the university. These were to do with the curriculum; poor administration; and the lack of a community in the university.

The themes identified from the negative learning experiences are discussed below.

- **Curriculum issues**

The negative themes identified by the interviewees were concerned with their academic experience and specifically issues with the curriculum as noted below.

   o **Overlap of models/theories in the curriculum**

Comments were made by three of the interviewees about the overlap between the subjects and use of the same models/theories in the modules they were studying. A frustrated interviewee commented that:

"… some of the modules felt there was a little bit of an overlap, like you would be doing a module and think, I've sort of done this before. I think it was in my third year we had, it was a strategy, it was a strategy one and the assignment and the course felt very similar and you just sort of felt it could have been planned better or something like that. It was a bit frustrating sort of redoing the same assignment again." Ac1

Another interviewee noted that the overlapping of the module content and theories was confusing when it came to deciding what to use in the module examination:

"..Overlapping of content/theories so a bit confusing at times in knowing how to address/explain issues for examination." Yr3srch2

Similar to this comment, two interviewees commented on the relevance of the lectures to their assessment:

"… At the moment I am finding work difficult with some seminars lacking interest and clarity in terms of the assignment which does make the experience less valuable." Yr3srch8

"… have also experienced some lessons where I feel I learnt little to nothing. In these cases, the lectures were either irrelevant to the assignment or were filled with too much content." Yr3srch18

o **Assessment and feedback**

Three interviewees expressed concerns about the amount of assessment they received (they wanted more) and the poor amount of feedback they were receiving from the academic staff. One of the interviewees summed up the thoughts about the level of feedback they were receiving as follows:

"… I don't get any feedback when I sort of want it and that can be a bit frustrating for me as someone who wants to sort of grow and achieve … I like to receive feedback on how I'm doing and everything." Yr2c4

• **Poor administration**

The second issue of concern to the interviewees was to do with problems they experienced with the administration of their course. The issues were as follows:

o **Lecturers not turning up for classes**

The interviewees discussed the frustrations they experienced when either lecturers did not turn up for their lecture/seminar or they were not informed that a class was cancelled.

"..we'd turn up to lessons and lecturers weren't actually there… that was one thing I do think that annoyed a lot of us at the beginning of it that organisation of it … was bad…" Ach1

"… still get messages on the day going the lectures not able to come in and when you've travelled for an hour and a half to come in just for that lecture and seminar and that person's not going to be there to teach it you go I've got up at 7 O'clock for this to … but obviously that's for everybody …" Ac3

" … you'd turn up to lectures and the lecturer wasn't there or the lecture had been moved or the room had been moved but there was no communication. So, especially when you were traveling in, that made it very difficult. … organisation was pretty poor and given the depth that you get yourself into .. all the funding you have to find or how hard you have to work to be able to get yourself through it in terms of the financial element of it, you do feel very let down when things like that happen." Ac2

o **Deadlines for assessment feedback not being adhered to**

An interviewee commented that they felt let down when the deadline for an assessment was not adhered to by the faculty.

"… I do feel let down sometimes in terms of different aspects like … when … lecturers will set, a set day when they want the work to be in by. That's fine, I've got no problem with that. Then equally, us students expect lecturers to adhere to the 20-day working policy. So when we are getting results late why should I then bother handing in my work early … that's the sort of response I'll get. Not only students telling me as a student rep, but I feel the same as them why should I have to hand my work in if I'm going to get a late response sort of thing." Yr3c1.

o **Poor communication from the university staff**

A final issue that was raised by an interviewee was the poor communication from staff members.

"… sometimes there were times where there was a lack of organisation … at the time communication was pretty poor and that was a negative and didn't help to you know,

if anything that reinforced the negative stereotype that people have in the community of Anglia Ruskin because it just seem that they didn't know, pardon my French their arse from their elbow in some cases because you know, different communication would come out and no communication … "Ac2

The discussion above has indicated that the interviewees' experiences were tempered by issues that affected their enjoyment when they were studying and made them feel discontented about their time studying at the university. The value of the learning experience was being reduced, therefore, for these students which reduced their overall positive feeling about the university. The literature review did not identify this issue as the academics only referred to the positive aspects of learning. Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and Ng and Forbes (2009) did refer to the learning experience being either transformative, mundane and monotonous, or a combination of the two extremes which does cover some aspects of the interviewees views but not in great detail.

4.3.1.3 *Motivation to study*

In the previous section on the application process, the motivation for studying at the university was identified with most students stating that they were vocationally orientated and wanted to study for a degree to help them with their career.

The interviewees demonstrated that they were considering their motivation for studying while they were studying on their courses as they valued the subjects they were studying in helping them to decide on the career they wanted.

Specifically, the interviewees identified that studying at the university was helping them in three ways. Firstly, it was helping them to develop skills for their careers. Two interviewees stated that their course was helping them to develop their skills for their future career, in one case in a general way and the other very specifically towards their chosen career.

" … Business School has helped to improve prioritising my work load which is a very **v**aluable skill for my career." Yr3srch10

" My course has included a lot of business and accounting related modules which has ultimately improved my awareness and understanding. … and is preparing me with the core skills, both academic and interpersonal to succeed in my chosen career" Yr3ch2

Secondly, five interviewees stated that the subjects they were studying helped them to decide on their future career. For example, the following comments illustrate this point:

"Helped me get an understanding of what I want to do for a career in the future." Yr3srch14

"The variety of modules is helping me make my mind up for my future career." Yr3srch17

"… I am particularly pleased with how diverse my course has been …., in terms of financial and management accounting, giving me an insight on the potential career options available." Yr3ch9

"It has taught me things that are in line with the actual profession of accounting and has given me a good feel if I would like to become an accountant." Yr3srch13

Finally, an interviewee stated that while they were studying for their degree they took the opportunity to improve their CV through the activities they undertook.

"I enriched my time there by trying to get a… despite still working, trying to get involved with as many different things as I could whether that was society, whether that was through the Students Union because you know I kind of took this two pronged attack… approach to it, not only was I being given an opportunity to get a degree that would further my career but also an opportunity to bolster on lots of other CV points there. … some of the course it fit and it fit nicely and was adding value to what I was doing at work and I was able to take it away and use it almost immediately …. The ability to build up your CV I think and tie in with your course if you can I think is a big bonus, I think that added a lot of value and I think a lot can be said for that, a huge amount can be said for that if you do it right which I think I did." Ac2

The comments of the interviewees demonstrate that the subject choices they were making on their courses were concerned with their future employment prospects. The interviewees were creating value as they studied these subjects on the one hand but were also anticipating the value they would obtain when they were in their job/their chosen career. This is an addition to the work of Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) who only identified that students were considering their career value when they were applying to go to the university.

Having discussed the learning experience of the interviewees, the following section reviews the comments of the interviewees about their relationships with the academic and administrative staff of the university and with their fellow students.

4.3.2   The relationship with academic staff

The themes arising from the research about the relationship with the academic staff have been split into the positive and negative aspects and are discussed below.

4.3.2.1   *Positive aspects of the relationships with academic staff*

The interviewees identified that some of the academic staff they encountered were a combination of friendly, helpful and willing to provide guidance and information to help them in their studies.

- **Helpful**

The academics were helpful as they were willing to talk to students and help them out with any academic questions the students had. For example, the following quotes illustrates this point:

> "there's an informal relationship here, so the lecturers are quite approachable and you are able to ask them much more for help if you saw them outside the class room" Yr3ch5

> "… academics are really useful because if you do go to them with a question, they will always come back to you and say, yeah we'll look into it or do you want to meet at this point and they will always help, even if it's not necessarily related to your subject. So, they will sort of go back to you and sort of work out how to help you, which is nice" Ac3

- **Friendly**

They were seen as friendly as they were interested in the students as individuals and willing to chat to them outside of the classroom in the corridor or refectories.   The interviewees appreciated that they could have this sort of a relationship with the academic staff in which the students were being treated as 'friends' and that they were approachable in this way. Interviewees commented about the relationship with the academic staff and the impact it had on them as follows:

> "… what I notice that's unique …. is the fact that you can have one-to-one with a lecturer, it's more like a friend, like more to friends relationship rather than just lecturer and student …. it just makes it so much enjoyable as part in the university experience, so the fact that you can actually know them personally and have that experience and they can be actually you know, indirectly a role model to some

student because they want to know what you did before, how you got there, how you know so much." Ach2

In being friendly, an interviewee appreciated the way in which lecturers would talk to students in social settings and when they were preparing presentations.

"Second year, I started to speak to them a lot more outside of the actual course, which was really good. I mean, you could… it's like any sort of network you are working in, you get a lot more information when you can get like one-on-one situation with them and have discussion. I mean, we had a lecturer come into one of our presentations we were preparing, just to sit down and give us some feedback on what they thought of it. So for that position it was quite good to have that sort of experience with the lecturers." Ac1

Three of the interviewees also commented on the way in which they were able to communicate with the academic staff as they made themselves readily available to be contacted by the students. They observed that they were very pleased with the way that the academic staff responded to emails within 24 hours wherever they were around the world. Another interviewee commented on the willingness of some academic staff to be available to talk to them through their open-door policy which they found very helpful as they were able to go to them at any time and have a discussion about a topic of concern/interest to them. The academics would happily discuss the topic with the student and give examples from their experience which they could then apply into part-time work situations.

- **Passionate about their subjects**

Eight interviewees identified the passion and knowledge the academic staff had about their subjects as a positive factor in their experience. They appreciated the way in which the academic staff passionately explained their subjects to the students which brought the subjects to life for them as is demonstrated in the following quotations:

"… the people that got us so excited and explained it in such a way and gave real-life examples. They didn't just give me theory, no but gave me theory with practicalities that made it alive." Ach3

"it was like passionate teachers and I've got one at the moment, …, she's really passionate about the course, she goes above and beyond what's doing in trying to help me, doing my dissertation, the course, any questions. She bound to get back to you if you email her like a transcript, like say if you have an assignment with her and

I'd emailed it to her, within like a couple of days she's got back to me and she's helping me out trying to help me improve" Yr3ch3

With regard to the passion that the academic staff demonstrated, one of the interviewees commented on the way in which some of the academics lectured which they found to be better for them.

"… if somebody … is talking aloud, walking, asking … questions, pointing, shouting, showing a picture … you are much more interested and engaged in a lecture." Yr2ch1

Another interviewee commented that they were prepared to go to an early seminar as they enjoyed the lecturer teaching style so much.

"... his seminars with no offence to the other lecturers … were probably the most engaging seminars that I've come across. Like they were so entertaining… my seminar would be at   ten in the morning, normally I wouldn't like that but going to his seminar at ten in the morning wasn't a drag, I'd be prepared to listen in for two hours of a seminar and actually take it in and it helped me out a lot." Yr2ch3

The positive aspects of the relationships with the academic staff indicated that the interviewees valued the helpfulness and friendliness of the staff as well as the way in which they were passionate about their subjects.

While the interviewees were very pleased with the relationship they had with some of the academic staff, they did identify some negative themes based on their experience with the remaining academic staff which are discussed in the section below.

4.3.2.2 *Negative aspects of the relationships with academic staff*
- **Not explaining things very well**

As noted in the positive themes above, some of the academics were praised for the way in which they were providing guidance and information to students, others, however, were being criticised for not explaining things very well to students. For example, an interviewee commented that they had found that with some academics there was:

"… not enough guidance on some of the modules as to what you were meant to be doing…" Ach2

The other complaint of the interviewees was that some of the academics were not interacting with students in the classroom.   A student observed that:

"… most lecturers are just talking from the front of the class and they're no like real interactions, so… you can just stay in the class for an hour or two hours saying nothing and they don't really mind." Yr2c1

The interviewees noted that whereas some academics were friendly and helpful, there were others who were not prepared to help them when they did not understand the topics they were teaching. They found the negative attitude of the academics disappointing and, in some cases, this led to them avoiding modules they were teaching.

"Sometimes I feel like certain modules/lecturers have been unprepared ... Some lecturers and seminar tutors have been awful, and I've found myself avoiding choosing certain modules that I would have enjoyed on the basis of who was the module leader. Yr3src7

- **Lecturers who were difficult to understand**

Three interviewees commented that they found it difficult to understand what their lecturers were saying due to a language barrier:

"my seminar leader … is a Chinese lady and she's really good one-to-one but like she can't really control like the seminar class if that makes sense and then sometimes obviously the language barrier like gets in the way and sometimes difficult to understand …" Yr1c1

"the strain in sometimes understanding some of my lecturers over the years." Yr3src5

"there were a couple of other tutors, which I found… difficult to understand and quite unforgiving when you approached them and said I couldn't understand what you were saying, I'm not quite grasping how you teach and they were just well, suck it up and that was tough.." Ac3

The negative themes about the relationship between academics and students outlined here indicate that students' value which they obtained from the relationships they had with the academic staff could be reduced when the lecturers were not prepared to be helpful and were difficult to understand.

The final aspect of the student experience which was discussed by the interviewees was the relationship they had with their fellow students. The themes from this relationship are discussed below.

4.3.3   The relationship with other students

Students, during the time when they were studying on their courses would be forming friendships with their fellow students and working together with them in formal and informal settings. The relationships could create value for them when they were positive or affect them adversely when there were negative relationships. The positive and negative themes identified from the research programme are discussed below.   The interaction the interviewees had with other students during their first year at the university are also discussed in this section.

4.3.3.1   *Positive aspects of relationships with other students*

- **Friendships and new relationships**

The most important positive theme for the interviewees was the friendships they developed with their fellow students. One interviewee noted that the friends they made in the university helped them to stay at the university:

> "… I've made some really, really good friendships at uni …. I was actually thinking about going but it was those people (friends) who actually kept me there." Ach1

Another interviewee stated that the friendships they had with other students had formed a supportive network for them.   First year students noted that the friendliness of fellow students made it easier for them to start at the university. An example of this is provided below.

> "… I think because it's such a new experience it is quite daunting at first but all the people were really… like when we first started our induction day it was really focused like everybody getting to know each … I think making friends makes it easier and makes you want to go more and stuff like that. So that has been a good point." Yr1ch1

An alumni interviewee commented that it was nice to develop friendships with people they met during fresher's week and were still friendly with.

> "suppose right from day one when you sort of meet your first couple of students, some of them you sit with during fresher's, it's quite nice to still be talking to them even now after you've graduated. So, they've all helped because you can always go to them saying how are you getting on with question 'X' on this assignment because I'm stuck…" Ac3

- **Working together in informal self-help groups**

The second aspect of the student to student experience which the interviewees identified was the experience of working together in informal groups. The interviewees stated that working in the informal groups provided them with support while they were at the university.

> "… the best thing about the experience is the fact that you know there is somebody there to help you, not only your lecturers but also your fellow students, which is amazing because you know, when you're feeling like there's no one to help, you know there's always someone to help because they're always there for you. We are like a family." Ach2

> "…in my second year I remember just doing… we were all sitting around the library brain storming about how we were going to approach a particular topic or how we were going to work on a particular project that had been set… yeah, that was sort of when you need experience as well because everyone had so much freedom … when you get to university it is much more… well, when shall we organise to meet, what we're going to discuss and it just… it was so very much more freedom and it's a really a different experience and it's a good experience as well. I mean, I really enjoyed it working with different people, different students and you know, it opened your mind a bit." Ac1

The formation of self-help groups by students in which they worked together to study and revise their subjects was identified by seven interviewees as very helpful when studying on their courses. They commented on the way in which they were able to study together and the benefit that it brought them. One of the interviewees commented that:

> "… I don't think I would have passed in any way, shape or form in the degree that I did without the companionship of those fellow students and doing those extra hours outside class in those study groups, dissecting the lessons beyond what the teachers were able to give because they are limited in the way they can help…" Ach3

Another interviewee noted that they would brainstorm ideas together with other students when they were doing their assignments or revising for examinations. The interviewees stated that as a result of working together in self-help groups they had made good friends and had been more motivated as a result of the improvements in their grades which they were obtaining.

- **Studying with students from other cultures**

The interviewees commented on the benefit they had from studying with students from other cultures. They enjoyed learning about the cultures of their fellow students and seeing the different viewpoints about the subjects they were studying. As one interviewee commented:

> "… I've met lots of different people from different cultures and I have loved learning from different viewpoints and broadening my horizons to an international level." Yr3c2

The literature only discusses the relationship between students based on the formation of friendships. Ng and Forbes (2009) Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012) stated that students may form friendships and in doing this may search for common interests. The semi-structured interviews have identified that students do value the friendships they make when they are at university as it helps them to settle into the university and keeps them there when they are not enjoying their experience, and this builds on the work of these authors.

Working in informal groups is also seen as important for the students which helped them to achieve success while they were studying their subjects and built a supportive 'family' feeling for them.

The positive themes were countered, however, by negative themes about the relationship with other students as discussed below.

4.3.3.2 *Negative aspects of relationships with other students*
- **Students not wanting to work with others in formal group work**

The interviewees discussed the problem of working with other students in formal group work organised by academics in modules they were studying. Five interviewees did not like working in groups as they found the other members of the group were not motivated to do well on the project and it was hard to work together. As an interviewee commented:

> "… (it was) really annoying and painful at the time … because there were people who couldn't do it just could not and would not or did not want to in group presentations … with people who were fighting against team-leaders and stuff like that, that kind of business dynamic that not everything's peachy, … was a big negative while you're in university and while you were there you thought university was just letting you down." Ac1

An interviewee did not like to work in groups as they were very motivated to get a high grade and believed that the other students would not be as motivated to work hard on the assignment.

- **Relationships between students from different countries**

A final negative theme was the relationship between some students and those from other countries. While some interviewees commented on this positively above, others observed that they had problems with working with students from other cultures. One of the interviewees stated that they had problems as European and International students were being blocked by British students when forming groups as the British students only wanted to work other British students. This is illustrated in this quotation:

> "We just formed groups for the assessment and they're (the British students) just (think) …, international students they will reduce our chances for a better mark so they just quickly form their groups so they would be together. … the home students quickly formed together so they would build the groups, so no international students would be there." Yr2c3

Another mature student had the reverse experience when they worked with European students who stayed together and did not interact with them as was stated in this comment:

> "I was put with a group of people I never spoke before and I was working with them. We finish our project and we're not speaking anymore." Yr2ch1

- **Lack of community in the university**

Interviewees, as noted in the discussion about the application phase above, commented on the lack of community in the university as follows:

> "I think the social aspect is a massive part of everything… they need to make more of a community feel. I think it was just lucky for me that it was people I did make friends with had that about them anyway. So, we made a community feel for ourselves." Ach1

> "…a lot of people I find, if they've not got a lecture or they've not got a seminar, they won't hang about, they'll go home. So, there's not really that social side to things outside like you know." Yr3ch7

An interviewee noted that, as they had progressed through their studies, they had reduced the amount of contact they had with other students on their course.

" … I still feel a part of the university but you don't feel as a part of the circle of the people that are in your course because everyone's doing their own thing now, we are only in contact with our lecturers like twelve hours a week, something like that. Other than that, we are in the library or at home studying. So you don't actually get that much contact with like guest speakers and that anymore ..." Yr3ch6

As noted at the start of this section negative relationships due to students not wanting to participate in group work or to work with students from other countries where the language skills differ could have affected the value students had when they were studying at the university. Another area where the interviewees stated that value was reduced for them was when there was the lack of a community in the university.

4.3.3.3 *Interacting with students during the first year at the university*

The way in which students interacted with each other during the first year was discussed by the interviewees. Themes were identified concerning the relationship interviewees had with other students when they lived at home and commuted to the university compared with the students who were living in the university accommodation.

- **Students living at home and commuting to the university**

Some interviewees who had decided to live at home when they were applying to the university discussed the implication of this decision on their relationship with other students during their first year at the university. They commented that they did not interact with other students very much keeping to themselves as they were either older than the other students or commuting into the university. The following quotations illustrate this:

"the first year I feel very old actually compared with the rest of my colleagues, the students and so I kept myself aloof, pretty much by myself, me and my headphones and my lap top and worked pretty solid." Ach3

"First, when I came to university I wasn't too sure obviously being a bit more older … so I was a bit worried about the fact that I'm going to be isolated, the fact that I'm not very young like the other kids and obviously they have got different vision to why they come to university to what I've got. So, at the beginning it was quite different because the kids they were sitting with, the students they were hanging around with, were very young and they were… motive was very different to what I had. So, it is difficult because I was trying to find the right group to be with you know, to feel like, to enjoy

my experience, obviously it is difficult to do everything or understand everything by yourself with the fact that I did not have any business foundation previously." Ach2

"the first year, I pretty much just commuted in, especially the first semester, commuted in, spoke to a couple of people who also commuted, I knew a few people who got like the park and ride and that and then went home. Done my work at home and come back in." Yr3ch7

o **Students living in the university accommodation**

The first-year interviewees who were living in the university accommodation, in contrast to those living at home, observed that they were making friends and enjoying their time at the university as can be seen in the comment below:

"I get on with quite a few people like in my seminars and in my lectures and stuff and like in between breaks like if we've got no work to do then we just like hang about…. I've got my flatmates and I know people like in the area where I live because we started talking to people who like live directly opposite us and yeah, I'm starting to know them people as well. … people I meet like everybody's friendly like when you go out, then you can just talk to whatever like nobody's like what are you doing talking to me or something like that. It's more like everybody would rather talk to you than not talk to you." Yr1c1

The differences highlighted here identify that some of the students who were living at home and commuting into the university found it harder to make friends in the first year than those who were living in the university accommodation. This could be seen to relate to the decision the students made in the application phase where they decided that they didn't want to have the stereotypical student life, the downside of which was that they found it harder to make friends.

The next section examines the views of the interviewees about what they will do when they finish their course (existing students) and what value the degree has been to the alumni since they have graduated.

4.4 The post-graduation experience

The themes concerning the period after students have graduated are discussed below.

4.4.1 The expectations of the current students when they have graduated.

The interviewees who were studying at the university were asked to indicate what they expected to do when they finished their degree programme. Fifty-seven percent said that they would be looking to find employment when they had completed their course. Fourteen percent of the interviewees who were mature part-time students identified that they would be using the degree to help them to progress in their career. Twenty-one percent stated that they would continue studying for a higher-level qualification either immediately or one or two years after they had graduated. One student stated that they would look for a graduate scheme.

From the above it is clear that the majority of the interviewees were looking to go into jobs when they had completed their courses.

4.4.2 The value which the degree programme has been to graduates since they graduated

The alumni were asked to identify what value their degree had been to them since they graduated from their course.

The alumni identified that it helped them in two ways:

- **Getting a job**

The interviewees identified that having the degree had helped them to get their job. One of the interviewees observed that it helped them to get their dream job, as they commented;

> "… Before … my CV was terrible. … my CV … was just not good at all but now I think I would say 3 out of 4 things on my CV is … the university experience that I had because of it also give me the opportunity to do international internship, if I wasn't part of it, I wouldn't get to go and work with such a big company and from that link and it did definitely 100 percent helped me to get a job and I can say it almost helped me to get my dream job. So otherwise, no I would not get what I wanted if I did not do a degree." Ach2

An interviewee identified that the experiences they had while studying for their degree when they worked in the Student Union had a positive effect on their ability to get a job. Two interviewees noted that having their degree helped them in their interviews and got them to

the position they are now in much more quickly than they would have done if they had started to work after A levels.

The value that the students were getting from obtaining employment reflected their motivation for studying for their degree as they were realising the value they had anticipated when they applied to study for their degree and during the time they were studying at the university. This view reflects that of Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) who identified that students value getting a job when they have graduated from their course.

- **The ability to do their job**

Interviewees discussed how the subjects they had learned while studying for their degrees had been put to use while they had been working in their jobs. For two interviewees, the benefit of the degree was the way in which it had enabled them to go into the work environment and have a business mind-set to solve problems.   Other interviewees discussed how they had used the content of modules they had studied in practical ways to develop plans for their companies.   This had included developing marketing plans and redesigning websites.

> "there was one course we did with web design and I just thought myself what pointless this is. Why am I as a business management person need to learn how to design a web site, I just don't get it and then a couple of months ago I re-designed our company web site and so actually I giggled to myself because it became very useful but there was just some situations like that when I thought they were very, very interesting with the degree." Ach3

> "So at least now when we go for meetings, you've got something to do if you feel like, okay, yes we have the feel of it and we know and it actually helps you to prepare ourselves to how to deal with people, you know and it gives you the real life and this is how it's going to be but in this, like the university so it definitely prepares me a lot and also having the… indirect set I would say like doing the research or you know putting your own effort in just like how when you're applying for jobs or you're going for a job interview when somebody asks you to do something instead of just like or how do you do this, you actually like research how you do the job first and then you like I've done this and this is where I start." Ach2

The alumni discussion of how they were able to use the knowledge they gained during their course in their jobs is in partial agreement with the ideas of Chalcraft and Lynch (2011)

Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) who suggested that graduates value achieving proficiency in their jobs. The interviewees were illustrating that they were not only valuing gaining proficiency in their work but also that they were able to use the knowledge they had gained when they were studying on their course.

4.4.3   Learned and developed new skills

Tynan and McKechnie (2009) stated that in the post consumption phase an outcome for consumers may be that they have learned and developed new skills. This idea has not been covered in the higher education literature specifically and the examples below from the alumni illustrate how they learned and developed new skills from the time while they were studying on their course:

> "I'd say I value what it did to me as a person as a whole…. value I achieved was knowing how to go into a work environment and use my head and use my initiative and actually have… not just academia behind me but common sense as well… I was always one of those persons who didn't think I was very good at everything but university made me realise I was… and it made me want to try harder… and actually get somewhere and actually achieve something more. Whereas I think if I hadn't done that, I would have still been that person who sat there look, I don't really know, I'm not going to put my hand up, I'm not going to put myself forward for things but it gave me the ability to be like I can be that… and once I got in there, I think the persona I had which I only would have gained from University, the ability to do an assessment centre and to do a presentation and have three rounds of interviews, I think I wouldn't been able to do that if I hadn't gone to Uni. So, the learning I got from it… not necessarily the how do you do a forecast for a year for a business but more what you gain from learning as a whole like writing essays, evaluating things, analysing things, understanding processes, that's what I've gained from it most… so, I don't think it matters what degree you did, it was the processes you learnt doing those degrees is where it got me… … so not actually the content but the ability to carry out the work is what I gained most, definitely and presentations. Ach1

This alumnus reflected on the things that they had learned when they were at the university which built their confidence so that they could go with confidence into the workplace using the transferrable skills they had developed when they were studying. They were a prime example of what Tynan and McKechnie referred to about learning and developing new skills.

A second alumnus discussed how things they had been taught in their degree was helping them to think about and understand their role in the business where they were working and use that knowledge to help to support their co-workers.

"There were times when I'd sit and you know, I'm sure you'll do it, criticize other parts of the business and think to myself, that was not what I was taught and that's not what the book says, you know you should be doing it like that and I think that has helped me whilst being here work out my relationship and my role to them because I feel like in some degree whether it's just book knowledge or actual real-life knowledge, in some degree I feel like I understand their role and how to support them." Ach3

A third alumnus discussed how they had learnt new knowledge in their studies at university which was helping them to achieve success in their current job and would help them in their future educational plans.

"I suppose it's obviously given me the knowledge because I gained a first out of it … which has allowed me to stay here… and so it's now given me the backup sort of the background knowledge which will enable me to develop it further for my masters. …. value of it will be that over the time I've got all these skills and knowledge that I would never have had, I've been able to develop and learn new things, such as working as a team, and some went properly and sort of we done business plans and finance accounting sort of books, so the value I suppose is just the general knowledge of it… and which will enable me to develop it further." Ac3

4.4.4   Nostalgia about their time in the university

Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) Turnbull (2009) and Tynan and McKechnie (2009) all include references to consumers reminiscing about past experiences after consuming a product or service. This has not been discussed in the higher education value research literature to-date and so the discussion below is adding to the knowledge in this area.

The alumni reminisced about their time studying in the university and remembered what they had learned and how it had helped them to build confidence as is seen in the examples below.

"before university I was not a very confident individual, I nearly always doubted myself, I just wasn't confident inside mentally to actually take on the world and say I can do that because I've got proof that I can do something like that. Coming to the university has completely changed me as an individual and actually helped me to learn how to grow up because obviously while I was at university I had two jobs as well, so I had to juggle full-time education with full-time working plus another job on top of it. So literally it was, I would say the toughest time of my life because obviously

having to deal with family issues that were going on at that time, I managed to come through. It literally taught me … to be a better person and now anything can hit me and I'm like I can deal with this because I've dealt with a difficult situation and it was difficult for me being dyslexic as well, I struggle a bit, but with the support that I got it made it so much easier, it made it feel I can actually do university and I can succeed because people around me believe in me and they're helping me to get there." Ach2

Another alumnus reminisced about the experience they had had in their extracurricular activities which helped them to build their confidence:

"I was a course rep which was incredibly helpful. I was a director of the student radio station that's shared between Anglia Ruskin and Cambridge. I was their marketing director like officially on the board of the limited company at one point, that's a charitable organisation but was on the board there was later through those kind of experiences elected into the students union in a sabbatical post and again, all of those experiences of meeting different people and being able to apply what I was doing… you know I was trying to pick things that were relevant the course I was on and being able to apply those, not only in a work environment but slightly different environment as well I think was very helpful to me and like I said, I think it built me personally to me being able to build relationships with people and build my confidence, help me to become a more well-rounded individual and I think like I said, I don't think I'd be who I am today had I had not gone through that experience." Ac2

A third alumnus reminisced about the experience they had of working with other students during the time they were studying at the university which built up their confidence and gave them a sense of responsibility.

"especially my third year I felt a lot of students were coming to me asking questions and you just think, oh that's sort of odd but you sort of sit there in the class, you had a lot more confidence, you know… in my first year, I would just sit there, I wouldn't really contribute to the class. By the third year you sort of almost felt if your key point into the class and having the discussions and bringing everyone else into it. It was quite nice to have that confidence and taking it into the workplace, whereas before I went to university in the workplace, again I was quite shy. I didn't really want to sort of put yourself out, out there. Whereas you look today, I just go into there, you've got to put yourself on the line a bit more. Again, I don't know where I would have learnt that otherwise, you know I could have gone to work and maybe had an awful experience and you think, you know it would put you off work all together but you sort of university gives you that sort of nice easing in period to that workplace where you

know, you don't have that massive shock to your system thinking, okay I've got a lot of pressure on me now... you've had a lot of pressure at university and yeah, you sort of have that idea of responsibility, yeah." Ac1

These experiences are similar to the alumnus who commented on the way that they had learnt new skills which gave them confidence in the last section and, in both cases, the alumni were reminiscing on the time they spent in the university and what it had done to help them.

As well as building confidence, an alumnus reminisced about how the subject they were taught on their course has made them look at advertising in a different way:

"whenever I see an advert and I see a particular concept I like they've been doing I think to myself; how much do they spend? What was their revenue beforehand? What is it now? How can they value that? … you know and it was because of my university experience, the people that got us so excited and explained it in such a way and gave real-life examples. They didn't just give me theory, no but gave me theory with practicalities that made it alive, you know that make going to Tesco's still to this day as I walk past the aisles, I see … in my mind saying why is the beer next to the nappies and I still think today of that lecturer because she made it personable and I thought it was so important." Ach3

The alumni reminisced about the friends they had made at the university and were still in contact with as is seen below:

"you do make lifelong friends, there are people I am still in touch... there are people I am in touch with now, there are people I am not in touch with now, there are people I am vaguely in touch with, there are people who I talk to every week, there are people all over the country, all over the world that I still go to see or keep in touch with and I think you know, that has definitely shaped my life today and therefore, you know I look back fondly on my experience at Anglia Ruskin course and everything that goes with it." Ac2

"Amazing with everyone I met there, all like the friends I made. I've just lost one to Australia, which was quite sad. … I've made some really, really good friendships at university." Ach1

The examples above are illustrating the extent to which the alumni did reminisce about their experience at the university which built their self-confidence, made them look at the world in a different way and through which they made friends they are still in contact with.

4.5   Conclusion

In chapter two, value in higher education was discussed from the value-in-experience viewpoint where Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and Tynan and McKechnie (2009) suggested that value was realised through experiences at different stages of a student's educational experience. The analysis of the semi-structured interview and focus group data reported in this chapter extends this as it tells us more about what specific aspects of these experiences create value but also that value is not always realised by the students.

During the application process students anticipated the value they would experience when they were studying at the university and/or had graduated. In the conceptual framework in chapter two the anticipation of value consisted of daydreaming or fantasizing about the future experiences. The research findings found that students were not daydreaming or fantasizing about the time they would be spending at university and were instead thinking about and planning for the experiences they would have when they had studied at the university and after they had graduated. Students developed an idea of the social experiences they expected to have while studying at the university which was evidenced in the research findings by a student who was disappointed at the lack of social life where they were studying. Another student planned for their time at university by going onto social media to try and find friends before they started on their course. The way they anticipated their future experiences depended on their motivation for studying which was suggested by Ng and Forbes (2009) Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) Bennett (2004) and Maringe (2006). The research findings have identified that the majority of the students were vocationally orientated and were anticipating the value they would get from studying for a degree that would help them to get into a career they wanted to pursue or to get a job. A minority were academically orientated and wanted to study subjects they liked.

Students would also be thinking about and anticipating the type of experience they would like to have while they were studying at the university. In the marketing literature on higher education Souter and Turner (2002) Foskett, Roberts and Maringe (2006) and Maringe (2006) observed that students either lived in university accommodation or at home. The results from the qualitative research programme confirmed that students were making these choices and contributed to the literature as it identified that students wanted to live at home to be close to their family and friends, didn't want to incur debts or didn't want the stereotypical student life.   Those students who decided to live in the university accommodation did so because they felt that they could fit in to the university life, make friends and cope with a more independent style of living during their time at the university.

The influence of family and friends on students when applying to go to university was suggested by Schmidt (2002) Soutar and Turner (2002) Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012). The results from the research programme identified that students were influenced by family members (mainly their fathers), friends and their school or teachers.

During the application process value was realised by the students in three ways. Firstly, when attending an open/offer day, students valued the information they obtained about the university, the facilities of the university and the interaction they had with staff members who were friendly and supportive, which extends the suggestions of Brown, Varley and Pal (2009). Secondly students valued the interaction they had with staff members at other times when they were in contact with the university and during the clearing period when students were applying to the university. Finally, students valued obtaining a place at the university and the esteem they received from their family which provides empirical evidence for the suggestions of Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012).

When students are studying at the university, the value-in-use literature (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012) has proposed that students value their experience while they are studying and the relationships they have with the academic staff and the students with whom they are studying. The analysis of the semi-structured interview and focus group data above has extended this proposal as it has identified that students value their learning experience which helped them to build self-confidence through their participation in extracurricular activities. They also valued the university facilities which created a positive learning environment. The conceptual framework at the end of chapter two did not include references to the negative learning experiences that students identified, which reduced the students' value of their learning experiences. The negative learning experiences were concerned with the curriculum and poor administration and add to knowledge about the student learning experience.

The relationship with academic staff and administrators was valued by students (as suggested by Ng and Forbes (2009) Sanchez-Fernandez et al. (2010) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012)) where the staff were helpful, friendly and passionate about their subjects. Students, however, did not value the relationships with academic staff who did not explain things very well or were difficult to understand and these negative aspects of the relationship were not included in the conceptual framework at the end of chapter two.

As well as having relationships with academic staff, Ng and Forbes (2009) Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012) have stated that students will have relationships with other students. The research programme results found that students valued the

relationships with their fellow students as they made friends, developed new relationships, worked together in self-help groups and studied with students from other cultures. The conceptual framework did not include, however, the negative relationships which students did not value which included working in formal groups, working with students from other countries and the lack of a social community in the university.

After students graduated, Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) suggested that students realise value as they obtain employment and achieve proficiency in their work. The research results have extended these suggestions by detailing the extent to which the students have valued getting employment and learning and developing skills to build their self-confidence. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) Turnbull (2009) and Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) have implied that people can be nostalgic and reminisce about their purchasing experience. The alumni indicated that they had made friends during the time they studied on their courses which they were still in contact with and reminisced in the interviews about their experiences while they were studying at the university.

The discussion above has highlighted some deficiencies in the conceptual framework which was created at the end of chapter two. Table 9 below provides a comparison between the content of the conceptual framework and the themes identified in this chapter so that the reader can see the areas where the conceptual framework needs to be modified in light of the research findings.

Table 9: Comparison between the conceptual framework and the themes identified from the qualitative research programme

Conceptual framework	Themes emerging from qualitative research programme
Application process	**Application process**
Anticipation of value when studying or graduated	**Anticipation of value when studying or graduated**
Daydreaming or fantasizing	Students thought about the types of experiences they wanted while they were studying at the university. This was evidenced through the following: - Students who expected to have a good social life and were disappointed when the university didn't provide it.

	- Other students didn't want to engage with their fellow students and experience the stereotypical student life.
	Some students planned for their time in the university and tried to develop friendships through social media before they started.
Motivation for studying at university	**Motivation for studying at university**
Orientation to study: - Vocational - Academic - Social	The majority of students were vocationally orientated as they decided to go to university in order to enhance their job prospects or further their career; they liked to do things that enhanced their CV and made them attractive to employers while they were studying on their course; and the majority expected to get a job when they finished their course. The minority of students were academically orientated and wanted to study subjects that they enjoyed to a higher level.
Decision to stay at home or live in university accommodation	**Decision to stay at home or live in university accommodation**
Live at home to avoid incurring large debts and keep existing friends and family relationships	Students decided to live at home as: - They wanted to be near their family and friends - Didn't want to incur debt - Didn't want to have the stereotypical student life.
Live in university accommodation to experience independence from parents, develop friendships	Students decided to live in the university accommodation as they thought that they would fit in and make friends and would be able to cope with a more independent lifestyle. They wanted to be independent of their parents and experience the stereotypical student lifestyle.

Search for information	Search for information
Use traditional and online media Talk to family and friends	Found out about the university through: - Online - UCAS or university website - University prospectus - Attending an open/offer day. Students were strongly influenced in their decision to attend the university when they attended an open/offer day.
Influencers	**Influencers**
Family members Friends Teachers/school	Students were influenced by the following: - Family members – fathers most important - Friends - School and teachers. Some students were not influenced by anybody else and made their own decision to study at the university.
	Value obtained during the application process
Attend an Open/Offer day Meet staff View premises	Students valued the following: - The experience at an open/offer day where they valued the friendliness of the staff and the information they received - The facilities in the university - Contact with staff during clearing and at other times when they had dealings with the university.
Elation at being offered a place at university Esteem received from family members	Students valued the following: - Obtaining a place at the university - Receiving the esteem of their family.

When studying at the university	When studying at the university
Learning experience	**Learning experience**
	Positive aspects of the learning experience
	Students developed self-confidence through their studies and interaction with other students.
Participate in social activities	They enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities which included being student representatives, participating in mentoring schemes and competitions.
	Liked the facilities and modern learning environment.
Study subjects to learn new skills and develop skills	Felt that they had learnt new things through their time at the university.
	Negative aspects of the learning experience
	Students identified the following negative aspects of their learning experience: - Overlap of models/theories in the curriculum which meant that they were confused in the assessments about which models/theories they should use - Lecturers not turning up for classes and students not being informed of cancelled classes - Deadlines for feedback to students missed by lecturers - Poor communication from the university staff.
	Motivation to study
	Students chose modules that would help them in their future career. The subjects they studied helped them to decide

	on the career they wanted to pursue after they had graduated.
	They studied in order to become attractive to employers through the knowledge and skills they gained in their modules and extracurricular activities.
Relationship with administrators and lecturing staff	**Relationship with administrators and lecturing staff**
	Positive aspects of the relationships with the administrators and lecturing staff
Create environment of deep learning Value lecturers who are accessible, enthusiastic, friendly, helpful and fair in their marking	Found the academic and administration staff helpful, friendly and passionate about their subjects.
	Negative aspects of the relationship with the administrators and lecturing staff
	Students stated that some of the lecturing staff didn't explain things very well and were difficult to understand.
Relationship with other students	**Relationship with other students**
	Positive aspects
Form friendships with other students Participate in social activities	Made friends with their fellow students which helped them to get through the course.
Form self-help groups to help them with their studies	Worked in self-help groups which helped them to form friendships and do well in their assessments.

	Negative aspects
	Students not wanting to work together in formal group work. Relationship between students from different countries. Lack of a community in the university.
	Interaction between students in their first year
	Students who were living at home and commuting to the university didn't interact very much with other students and found it hard to make friends. Students who were living in university accommodation were making friends and enjoying their time at the university.
Post graduate experience	**Post graduate experience**
Getting a job	Majority of the students expected to find a job when they graduated from their course or look to progress in their career. The minority expected to continue studying at a higher level.
	Alumni, when they had graduated had found their degree and experience of studying at the university helpful in getting a job.
Achieving proficiency in the job Learning and developing new skills	Had learned and developed new skills when studying at the university which they used to help them to develop in their jobs after they had graduated.
Nostalgia Reminiscing when reliving experience of studying at university	Were nostalgic about their educational experience and reminisced about their time studying in the university and the friendships they had made.

These research findings are limited as they were based on a small sample of students and alumni. The themes which have been identified throughout this chapter and summarised here were used along with the literature identified in chapter two to create a questionnaire that explored the themes using a quantitative research programme as stated in the research design plan outlined in section 3.4, table 3, on page 45**.**

In the next chapter the discussion of the research findings of the quantitative research programme is outlined.

5   **Students' views of the value they obtain from their educational experiences: quantitative findings**

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results from the second element of the mixed methods research design that was identified in chapter three are provided to continue the discussion of the answers to the research questions that were provided in chapter four. In the research methodology (chapter three) the exploratory design-instrument development model was identified as the best method to use to answer the research questions. In the previous chapter the research findings from the first part of the research method - the qualitative research programme - were provided and a series of themes identified. In this chapter, the results from the quantitative research programme are discussed and compared with the themes identified in the first stage of the research in order to see if they agree with them or, where appropriate, to modify them.

The results from the research programme will seek to answer the three research questions identified in the introduction (section 1.1 on page 4) and reproduced below:

What do students value when they are applying to a university?

What do students value while they are studying at the university?

What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

The quantitative research programme was carried out using a convenience sample from the whole student population during the last two weeks of the second semester of the academic year 2015-16. Students were approached in the library and open plan study areas of the two campuses on one day on each campus and asked to complete the questionnaire which was left with them. It was collected later that day with 576 useable questionnaires being collected in total. The students who completed the questionnaire agreed voluntarily to do so and were studying on courses from all the faculties of the university, not just the Business School, as had been the case for the students who agreed to participate in the qualitative stage of the research programme.

The research findings have been examined against the variables – gender, age range, campus, year of study, mode of study and region of the world. They have been analysed using the chi-squared test technique and where differences have been identified in the breakdown of the students for the variables used in the research they have been reported below.

The breakdown between the age groups and two campuses of the completed questionnaires is provided in table 10 below:

Table 10: Breakdown of completed questionnaires by age group and campus (figures in percentages)

Age group	Cambridge	Chelmsford
20 or under	56	44
21-24	60	40
Over 25	37	63
Total	55	45

The descriptive statistics for the research data is provided below in table 11.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics for the quantitative research programme

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	576	1.34	.474	.684	.102	-1.537	.203
Age group	576	1.83	.706	.259	.102	-.979	.203
Campus	576	1.45	.498	.182	.102	-1.974	.203
Year of study	573	2.10	.875	.127	.102	-.940	.204
Mode of study	576	1.95	.219	-4.124	.102	15.056	.203
Area	576	1.30	.664	1.935	.102	2.072	.203

The statistics indicate that the data is reliable as the skewness figures are within the range -1.9 to +1.9 for everything except for the mode of study and area. The Kurtosis results are reliable as the results are between -3 and +3. The only exception to this is the results for the mode of study which is outside the reliable range for both skewness and kurtosis. The reason for this is that the data is skewed in favour of full-time students compared with part-time students.

Table 12 below provides a breakdown of the number of respondents who were full-time and part-time and it can be seen that 95 percent of the students were studying full-time at the university.

Table 12: Student sample population by mode of study for the quantitative research programme

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Part-time	29	5.0
	Full-time	547	95.0
	Total	576	100.0

The breakdown of the regions of the world where the students originated from, which can be seen in table 13, below identifies that 88 percent of the students were from the UK and Europe and were regarded as 'home' students in the university while the remaining 12 percent were from the rest of the world. UK students accounted for 81 percent of the sample and were therefore the largest group.

Table 13: Student sample population by region of origin for quantitative research programme

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	UK	468	81.0
	Europe	42	7.0
	Rest of the world	66	12.0
	Total	576	100.0

The research findings are presented using the pattern established in chapter four and will cover the following elements of the student experience:

- Application process
- Experience while studying at the university
- Postgraduate experience

5.2   Application process

The following section provides details of the research findings on the application process which the students went through when applying to the university and builds on the results from the qualitative research which was reported in chapter four.

5.2.1   Students' motivation to study for a degree

Students were asked to identify what motivated them to go to university in the qualitative research programme. The reasons why students were motivated to study for a degree (see section 4.2.1 on page 61) identified by the respondents were used in the quantitative research programme to seek confirmation that these were the reasons why they decided to go to university (see table 14 below for details).

Table 14: Reasons why students decided to go to university

		Why did you decide to go to University?					Total
		I wanted to carry on studying subjects I liked	I didn't want to start work	I realise that I needed to have a degree to get a good job	I need to have a degree to pursue the career I am interested in	To help further my career	
Sample information	20 or younger	16	0	31	84	37	168
	21-24	29	10	42	96	45	222
	25+	0	0	15	46	22	83
Total		45 (9%)	10 (2%)	88 (19%)	226 (48%)	104 (22%)	473

There was a significant association between the reasons why students decided to go to university and the three age groups x^2 = 25.38, p<.001.

The results provided in table 14 indicate that in total 418 out of the 473 (89 percent) students were going to university to improve their career/job prospects.

The breakdown between the responses was as follows:

- 226 out of the total 473 (48 percent) indicated that the reason was to pursue a career they were interested in
- 104 (22 percent) stated that it was to further their career

- 88 (19 percent) stated that they realised that they needed to have a degree to get a good job.

The remaining 55 out of the 473 (11 percent) students were going to university because:

- 45 (nine percent) wanted to continue studying subjects they liked,
- 10 (two percent) didn't want to start work.

The reasons for studying for a degree varied between those who were aged 20 or younger, 21-24 and 25+ as can be seen in chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Reasons why students decided to go to university by age group (figures in percentages)
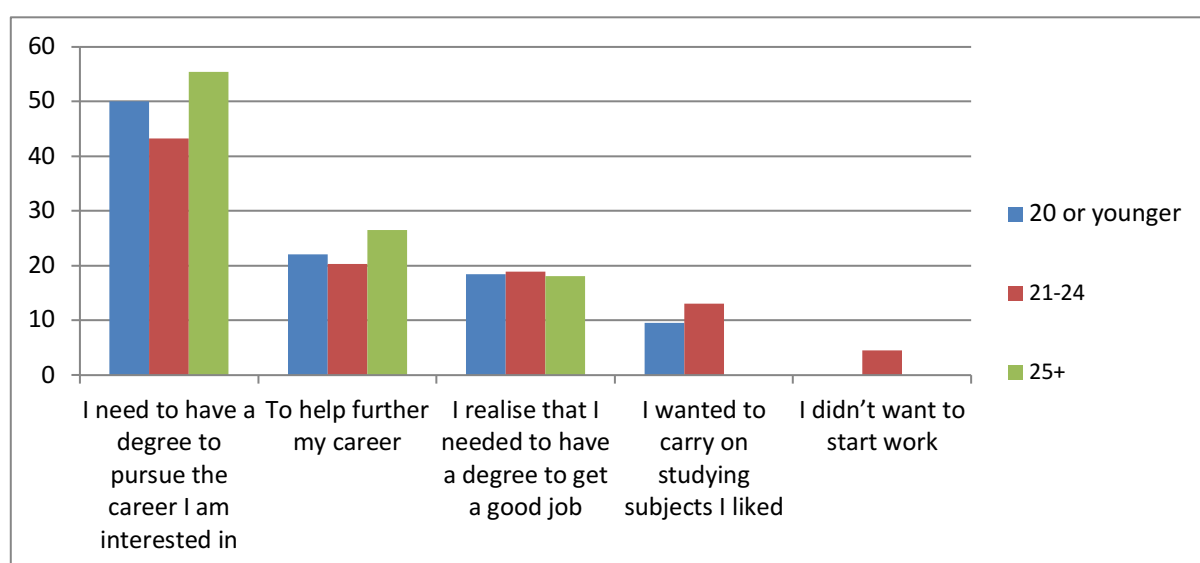
All the students aged 25+ decided to go to university for career-orientated reasons. As can be seen in chart 4 above, 46 out of the 83 students (55 percent) stated that they were going to study for a degree to help them to pursue a career they were interested in and 22 out of the 83 students (27 percent) were doing so to help them to further their career. This group of students would have been in work prior to going to the university and were looking to improve their career by getting a degree to help them to either further it or pursue the career they were interested in. Some might have been looking to change careers and realised that they needed to have a degree to get a good job. Fifteen out of the 83 students (18 percent) stated that they realised that they needed to have a degree to get a good job.

Students aged 21–24 and 20 or younger achieved lower percentage scores for career-orientated reasons than those aged 25+ as there were small minorities in each age group that were academically orientated and wanted to go to university to carry on studying subjects they liked. In the age group 21–24, 29 out of the 222 students (13 percent) were

interested in studying subjects to a higher level which was more than the 16 out of 168 (ten percent) of the students aged 20 or younger.

In the section on students' motivation to study in section 2.3 of the literature review on page 25, Ng and Forbes (2009) Krickl and Geertshuis (2012) Bennett (2004) and Maringe (2006) stated that students were either vocationally, academically or socially orientated in their motivation for studying at university. Table 15 below identified that 441 out of the 525 (84 percent) students were motivated to study at the university as they were vocationally orientated and went there to help them with their career. Eighty-four out of the 525 (16 percent) students were academically orientated and were studying at the university as they wanted to study subjects they liked in more depth. All 102 students aged 25+, 151 out of the 180 (84 percent) students aged 20 or younger and 188 out of the 243 (77 percent) students aged 21-24 were vocationally orientated which is similar to the findings in table 14 and chart 1 above. The reason why the students aged 21-24 had a lower score for the vocational orientation was that 55 out of the 243 (23 percent) students had an academic orientation. This was higher than for those aged 20 or younger where 29 out of the 180 (16 percent) students had an academic orientation.

Table 15: Students' motivation to study

	How would you describe your orientation to learning whilst you have been studying at Anglia Ruskin University?		Total
	Vocational orientation	Academic orientation	
20 or younger	151	29	180
21-24	188	55	243
25+	102	0	102
Total	441 (84%)	84 (16%)	525

There was a significant association between the students' orientation to learning and the three age groups x^2 = 27.387, p< 0.001.

The result above identified that a higher percentage of the students aged 20 or younger had a vocation orientation than those aged 21–24 which implies that there has been a change in the reasons why students want to go to university in the last four years. The reasons for this

change in attitude could be due to the change in the fee structure imposed by HEFCE which went from £3,000 per year to £8,400 per year for the university (started in 2013), which would have had a higher impact on the students aged 20 or younger. As a result of this, these students were more concerned about what they could do with their degree and, therefore, had a higher vocational orientation than those aged 21–24 who had been paying the lower fee.

A further reason may be the recession and austerity measures imposed by the UK government since the financial crash of 2008. Students in the age group 21-24 who were finishing their degree course would have started thinking about going to university and applying to them in 2010. The students in the age group 20 or younger would have been doing the same thing in 2012, by which time they and their families would have been more aware of the consequences of the 2008 crash and the implications for them after they had finished their course than would those who were applying in 2010.

In terms of the motivation to study that the students perceived from their university experience, the above discussion indicates that the majority of students had a vocational orientation and decided to go to university to help them with their career after they had completed their course. This is the sole reason why students aged 25+ were going to university and the main reason for students aged 20 or younger and 21–24. Students were going to university to study in anticipation of getting a good job after they had finished their course when they would realise the value they were anticipating at this point in the application process.

A minority 55 out of the 243 (23 percent) aged 21–24 had an academic orientation as they valued studying subjects they liked. Twenty-nine out of the 180 (16 percent) students aged 20 or younger also had an academic orientation but to a lesser extent than those who were aged 21–24 for the reasons discussed above and, in particular, because of the number who had a vocational orientation which valued getting a job at the end of the course.

5.2.1.1 *Key reasons why students decided to go to university*

The key findings about the reasons why students decided to go to university were that 89 percent of the students wanted to improve their career/job prospects.

The students identified that for the majority (84 percent) their motivation for studying was vocational, compared with those who were academically motivated to study (16 percent).

The research findings identified that all the students aged 25+ were vocationally orientated compared to 77 percent of those aged 21–24 and 84 percent of the students aged 20 or

younger. The reason for this is that the students aged 21–24 had a higher percentage who were academically orientated (23 percent) compared to the 16 percent of those aged 20 or younger.

The reason why students aged 20 or younger were more vocationally orientated than those aged 21–24 may have been due to the changes to the fees that students paid for their course which made them more concerned about the outcome of their studies, and they wanted to improve their chances of gaining employment when they gained their degree, rather than being academically orientated and wanting to continue studying subjects they were interested in.

5.2.2   The type of relationships and experiences the respondents wanted to have at the university.

Students indicated that they were either living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university in the qualitative research programme (see section 4.2.3 on page 65). The quantitative research programme sought further evidence about this issue and asked students to identify the reasons why they were living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university. The findings point to the choices students were making about the location of the university and the experience they wanted to have while studying on their course. In the literature review (Souter and Turner, 2002; Foskett, Roberts and Maringe, 2006 and Maringe, 2006) (section 2.3 on page 25), the university location was identified as an important factor in deciding where the student would study, along with their expectation of what the experience would be while studying there. The research programme found that an equal number of students were living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university. Differences were identified between the two groups in terms of the age of the students and campus as is discussed below. Table 16 and chart 2 below provide details of the research findings for the three age groups and the differences between students aged 25+ and the others.

Table 16: Students who were living at home or in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by age group

	Are you a) living at home or b) in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university that you rent?		Total
	Living at home	Living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university	
20 or younger	97	104	201
21-24	119	152	271
25+	73	29	102
Total	289 (50%)	285 (50%)	574

There was a significant association between the location where the students were living while they were studying on their course and the three age groups x^2 = 23.216, p <.001.

Chart 2: Students living at home vs. those living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by age group (figures in percentages)
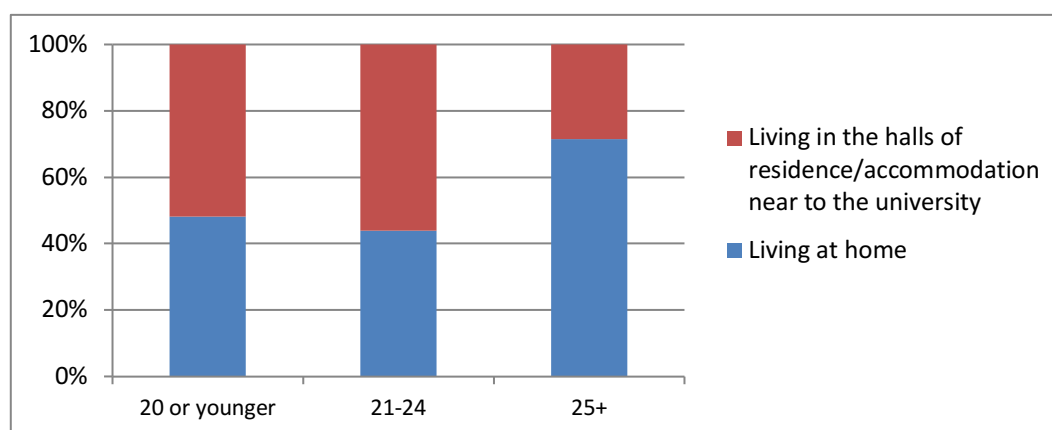
From chart 2 we can see that students aged 25+ and the other two age groups differed in terms of the percentages that were living at home. Seventy-three out of the 102 students aged 25+ (72 percent) lived at home compared with 97 out of the 201 students aged 20 or younger (48 percent) and 119 out of the 271 students aged 21–24 (44 percent).

Small majorities of students in the age groups 20 or younger and 21–24 were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university: 152 out of the 271 students aged 21-24 (56 percent) and 104 out of the 201 students aged 20 or younger (52 percent). The

results might suggest that students in the younger age group decided that they wanted to stay at home due to the increase in student fees and living costs under the changes brought in by the UK government in 2011.

Differences were identified for students studying in Cambridge and Chelmsford in terms of the number who were living at home or in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university as can be seen in table 17 and chart 3 below.

Table 17: Students who were living at home or in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by campus

		Are you a) living at home or b) in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university that you rent?		Total
		Living at home	Living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university	
Sample information	Cambridge	111	202	313
	Chelmsford	178	83	261
Total		289 (50%)	285 (50%)	574

There was a significant association between the location where students were living when they were studying and the campus they attended x^2 = 61.011, p<.0001.

Chart 3: Students living at home vs. those living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by campus (figures in percentages)
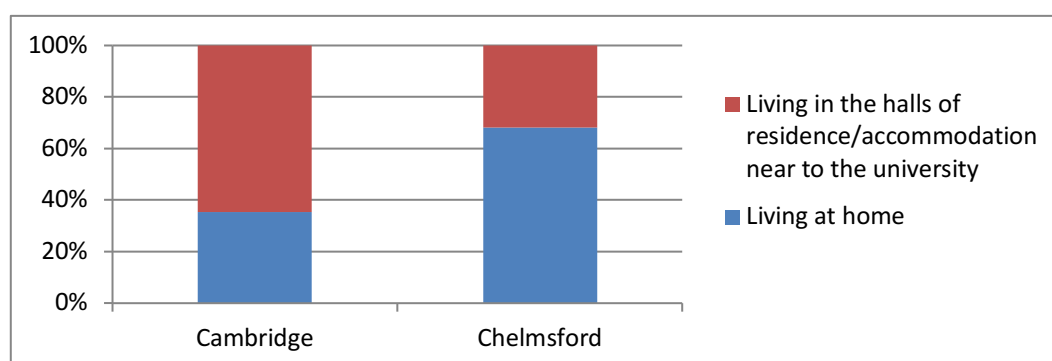
The results identified that 202 out of the 313 (65 percent) students studying in Cambridge were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university compared with 83 out of the 261 (32 percent) students studying in Chelmsford. One hundred and seventy-eight out of the 281 (68 percent) students in Chelmsford were living at home with the high percentage due to the number of students (73 out of 102, 72 percent) who were aged 25+

studying in Chelmsford. Cambridge appeared to be attracting younger students who wanted to stay in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university compared with the Chelmsford students who preferred to stay at home. The reason why students were living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university is discussed below.

5.2.2.1 *Reasons why students were living at home*

Students identified why they were living at home and the results are provided in table 18 and chart 4 by age group and table 19 and chart 5 by campus below.

Table 18: Reasons why students chose to live at home by age group

	If you are living at home is this because							Total
	You didn't want to study away from home	You wanted to avoid incurring debts by having to pay rent etc. while at a university	You wanted to stay in your local area where you had your family and friends	You didn't want to experience the stereotypical student life on campus	The course you wanted to study was available in your local area	You liked the university	You liked the course on offer at the university	
20 or younger	38	59	47	10	31	18	21	224
21-24	39	65	46	9	23	18	21	221
25+	26	9	38	2	14	5	12	106
Total	103 (19%)	133 (24%)	131 (24%)	21 (4%)	68 (12%)	41 (7%)	54 (10%)	551

There was a significant association between the reasons why students chose to live at home and the three age groups $x^2 = 28.300$, p=.005.

Chart 4: Reasons why students chose to live at home by age group (figures in percentages)
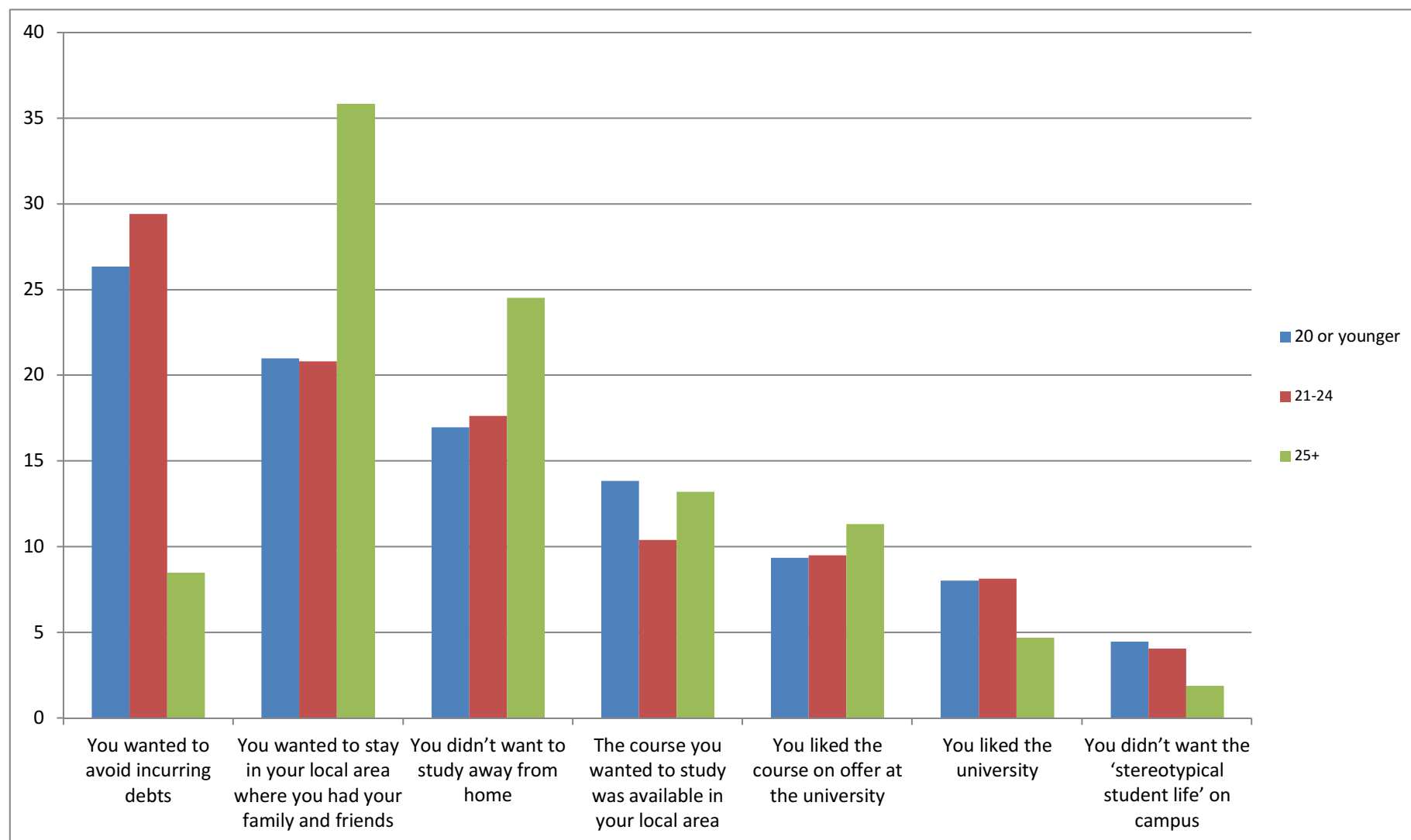
Table 19: Reasons why students chose to live at home by campus

	If you are living at home is this because							Total
	You didn't want to study away from home	You wanted to avoid incurring debts by having to pay rent etc. while at a university	You wanted to stay in your local area where you had your family and friends	You didn't want to experience the stereotypical student life on campus	The course you wanted to study was available in your local area	You liked the university	You liked the course on offer at the university	
Cambridge	37	51	45	7	20	14	28	202
Chelmsford	66	82	86	14	48	27	26	349
Total	103 (19%)	133 (24%)	131 (24%)	21 (4%)	68 (12%)	41 (7%)	54 (10%)	551

$X^2 = 7.605$, p= 0.268 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the reasons why students chose to live at home and the location; that is, the reasons why students were living at home in Cambridge and Chelmsford students were equally valid.

Chart 5: Reasons why students chose to live at home by campus (figures in percentages)
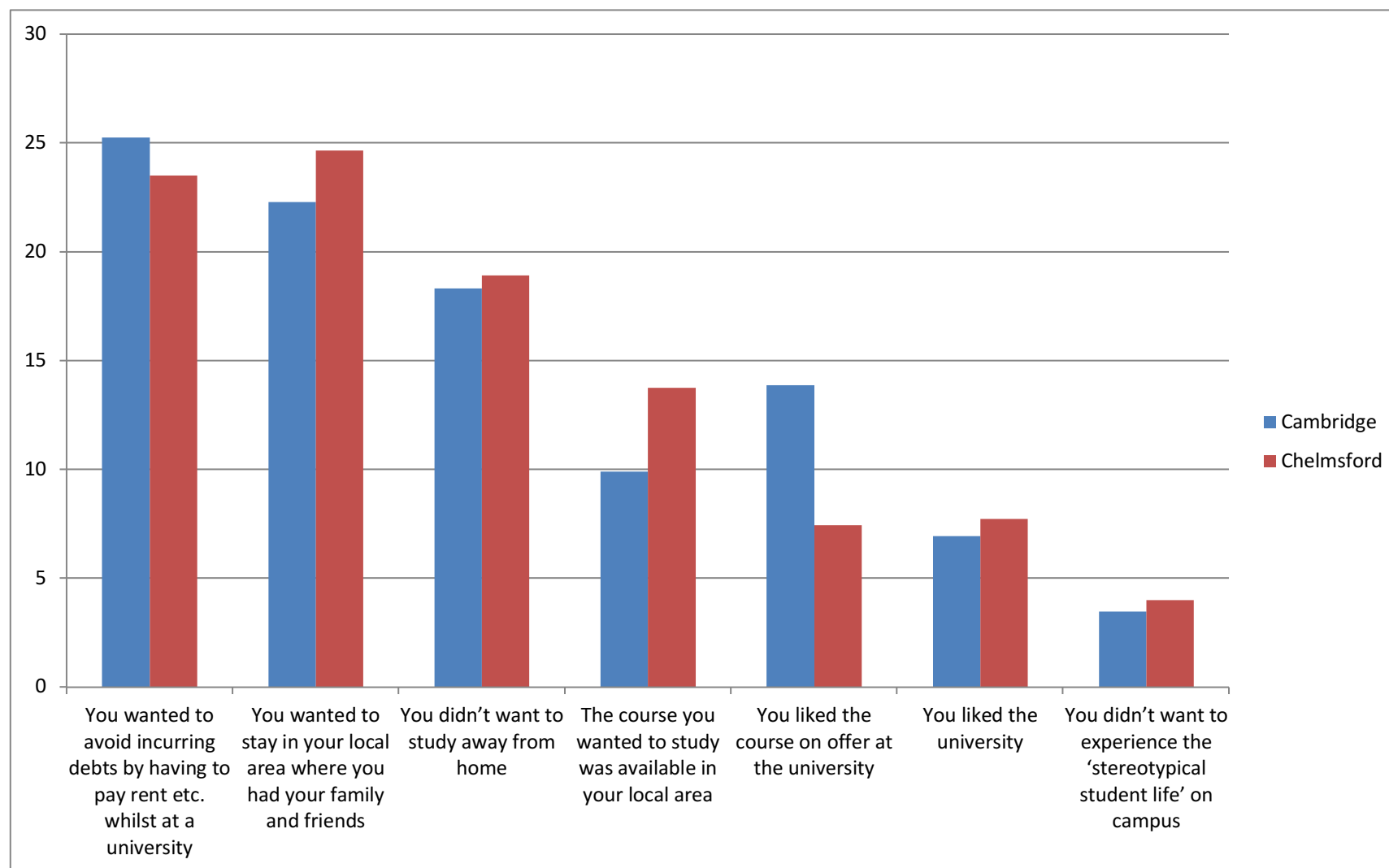
The results have identified that the three most important reasons why students were living at home were that they wanted to avoid incurring debts (133 out of the 551 students, 24 percent), wanted to stay in their local area where they had family and friends (131 out of the 551 students, 24 percent) and that they didn't want to study away from home (103 out of the 551 students, 19 percent).   These reasons are discussed below.

- o **Financial considerations/wanted to avoid incurring debts**

The financial considerations of incurring debts or having to pay rent while studying at university was important for two of the three age groups. Sixty-five out of the 221 students aged 21-24 (29 percent) were most concerned about the issue compared with the 59 out of the 224 students aged 20 or younger (26 percent).   By comparison only nine out of the 106 of the students aged 25+ (eight percent) identified this factor.

The reason why this factor was important for the students aged 20 or younger and 21-24 could be because of the introduction of fees and increased cost of living at university. Students who were going into education who had not worked and built up savings were more likely to be concerned about the level of debt they may incur than the students aged 25+ who had some reserves from their time in employment before they returned to education. Fifty-one out of the 202 (25 percent) students in Cambridge were slightly more concerned about this issue than the 82 out of the 349 (23 percent) students in Chelmsford which may reflect the age profile of the two campuses.

- o **Family relationships/wanted to stay in the local area where they had family and friends**

Students indicated that they were living at home due to their family relationships and friends. This factor was most important for the 38 out of 106 students aged 25+ (36 percent) compared to the other two age groups and was more important for the 86 out of the 349 (25 percent) students studying in Chelmsford than the 45 out of 202 (22 percent) studying in Cambridge.

Students identified in an open question where they were free to give their reasons that they had children and so could only consider local universities (88 percent of students aged 25+; 18 percent of students aged 21-24) or that family was important to them (100 percent of students aged 20 or younger; 82 percent for students aged 21-24; 13 percent for students aged 25+).

This reason indicates that family commitments were of value to students as were relationships with their friends. Students were deciding that they preferred their relationships with their family and friends more than the possibility of the adventure of going to a new place to study and meet new people. The value they were placing on the family relationships is in agreement with Holbrook's (1995) definition of value in section 2.2 on page 19 in which customers made preference judgements about the product/services they were using as the students preferred to live at home and maintain their family relationships instead of going to live in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university where they would experience new relationships with their fellow students. In the application process, they were anticipating the experience of studying at the university and deciding that they preferred to maintain their existing relationships rather than form new ones.

o **Wish to stay living at home/study from home**

Some students indicated that they didn't want to move away from their home/study away from home. This was most important for the 26 out of 106 students aged 25+ (25 percent) compared with the 39 out of 221 students aged 21–24 (18 percent) and 38 out of 224 students aged 20 or younger (17 percent). The issue was almost of equal concern to students studying in the two campuses. This reason would seem to imply that the students preferred the comforts of home and may have been linked to the issue above that family relationships were important to them.

5.2.2.2 *Reasons why students were living in halls of residence/accommodation near to university*

According to tables 20 and 21 below, 133 out of the 366 students (36 percent) indicated that the reason why they wanted to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university was they wanted to experience the stereotypical student life which suggests that this is the most important/frequently cited factor why students were living in university accommodation. The second most important/frequently cited factor which was identified by 76 out of the 366 students (21 percent) was that they didn't want to live with their family when they were studying at the university. The other reasons which were to do with the students' views of the course and university were identified equally by the students as can be seen in the two tables below.

Table 20: Reasons why students chose to live in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by age group

		If you are in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university is this because					Total
		You wanted to experience the stereotypical student life on campus	You didn't want to live with your family while you were at university	The course you wanted to study was not available in your local area	You liked the university	You liked the course on offer at the university	
Sample information	20 or younger	60	25	21	17	21	144
	21-24	66	45	25	29	28	193
	25+	7	6	6	5	5	29
Total		133 (36%)	76 (21%)	52 (14%)	51 (14%)	54 (15%)	366

X^2 = 6.044, p = 0.642 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the three age groups and the reasons why they chose to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university; that is, the reasons why students chose to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university were equally valid for all three age groups.

Table 21: Reasons why students chose to live in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university by campus

		If you are in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university is this because					Total
		You wanted to experience the stereotypical student life on campus	You didn't want to live with your family while you were at university	The course you wanted to study was not available in your local area	You liked the university	You liked the course on offer at the university	
Sample information	Cambridge	95	58	39	39	45	276
	Chelmsford	38	18	13	12	9	90
Total		133 (36%)	76 (21%)	52 (14%)	51 (14%)	54 (15%)	366

X^2 = 3.034, p = 0.552 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the two campuses and the reasons why the students chose to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university; that is, the reasons why students chose to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university were equally valid for students at both of the campuses.

The main reason why students wanted to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university was that they wanted to have the stereotypical student life. This was the reason given by 60 out of the 144 students age group 20 or younger (42 percent) compared to 66 out of the 193 students aged 21–24 (34 percent). Ninety-five out of the 276 students studying in Cambridge (34 percent) gave the stereotypical student life as the reason why they wanted to live in the halls of residence as did 38 out of the 90 students in Chelmsford (42 percent). The reason why there was a lower percentage of students in Cambridge wanting the stereotypical student life than those in Chelmsford was that the students in Cambridge liked the course on offer and the university more than those in Chelmsford. Forty-five out of the 276 students in Cambridge (16 percent) liked the course on offer at the university compared with nine out of the 90 students in Chelmsford (ten percent). Thirty-nine out of the 276 students in Cambridge (14 percent) identified that they liked the university whereas in Chelmsford the numbers were 12 out of 90 (13 percent). The reason for this may have been that students in Cambridge felt that there was more to offer them in the city

of Cambridge than there was in Chelmsford, as had been noted by a respondent in the qualitative research programme who stated that they chose to study in Cambridge instead of Chelmsford (see section 4.2.2 page 64).

The other significant reason why students wanted to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university was that they didn't want to live with their family when they were at the university. Forty-five out of the 193 students aged 21–24 (23 percent) didn't want to live with their family which was similar to the six out of 29 students aged 25+ (21 percent) and higher than the 25 out of 144 students aged 20 or younger (17 percent). The reason why the youngest age group were the least interested in living away from their family may have been due to the factor noted above in section 5.2.2.1 about the reason why they wanted to live at home, namely the financial implications of living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university.

The research findings indicate that the main reasons why students wanted to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university was that they wanted to experience the stereotypical student life and be independent of their family. As was noted in the reasons for students wanting to stay at home above, students were making a preference judgement about what they wanted to do while studying which would be of value to them. The key findings about the reasons why students considered living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university are identified below.

5.2.2.3 *Key findings about the reasons students were living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university*

The main reasons why students were living at home or in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university were as follows:

- **Students living at home**

The majority of the students aged 25+ (72 percent) were living at home. Minorities of the students aged 21-24 (44 percent) and 20 or younger (48 percent) were also living at home. The reason why students aged 20 or younger were wanting to live at home compared to those aged 21-24 may have been due to the increased cost of living in university accommodation and the fees students had to pay to study at the university brought in by the UK government in 2011 which they would feel more keenly than would the older age group.

The majority of the students studying in Chelmsford (68 percent) were living at home compared with those in Cambridge (35 percent). The reason for this was the high number of

students who were aged 25+ who were studying in Chelmsford which skewed the Chelmsford results.

The three main reasons why students were wanting to live at home were:

Students wanted to avoid incurring debt. This was the main reason and was of most importance for 29 percent of the students aged 21–24 and 26 percent of the 20 or younger age group; it was only of concern for eight percent of the students aged 25+. The issue was of more concern to students in Cambridge (21 percent) than those in Chelmsford (19 percent) which, as noted above, may be associated with the percentage of students aged 25+ who study in Chelmsford.

Students wanted to maintain their family relationships/friends. This issue was identified by students aged 25+ (36 percent) to a greater extent than the 21 percent for the other two age groups. The issue was more important for students in Chelmsford (25 percent) than those in Cambridge (22 percent) which reflects the make-up of the student population in Chelmsford.

Students didn't want to study away from home. Important for 25 percent of the students aged 25+; 18 percent of those aged 21–24 and 17 percent of the students aged 20 or younger.

- **Students living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university**:

Small majorities were found for the students aged 21–24 (56 percent) and 20 or younger (52 percent) who were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university. The majority of the Cambridge students (65 percent) were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university.

The main reasons why students chose to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university were as follows:

Students wanted to have the stereotypical student life. The highest proportion of students who wanted to have this experience were those aged 20 or younger (42 percent) followed by the students aged 21–24 (34 percent) and those aged 25+ (24 percent). The students in Chelmsford (42 percent) stated that this was a factor to a greater extent than those in Cambridge (34 percent). This result was lower for the Cambridge students because

they liked the courses on offer to them and the university more than the Chelmsford students.

Students didn't want to live with their family was the other significant reason for wanting to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near the university. Students aged 21-24 (23 percent) were more interested in living away from home for this reason than those aged 25+ (21 percent) and 20 or younger (17 percent). The reason why the youngest age group were the least interested in living away from their family may have been due to the factor noted above about the reason why they wanted to live at home, namely the financial implications of living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university.

5.2.3   Sources where students searched for information

Students were asked where they had heard first about the university to identify where they searched for information and the sources they used to find out about the university and the course they were interested in. Table 22 provides a breakdown of the sources they used by age group.

Table 22: Sources where students heard about the university by age group

		Where did you first hear about Anglia Ruskin								Total
		UCAS website	School/college -- from a teacher	School/college -- from an Anglia Ruskin representative or staff member	Current/previous student	Education exhibition/fair	Online advert	Word of mouth (from a friend/contact/school/teacher)	Other	
Sample information	20 or younger	83	35	5	8	6	0	49	12	198
	21-24	123	25	6	16	11	10	60	21	272
	25+	32	0	0	8	0	5	38	8	91
Total		238 (42%)	60 (11%)	11 (2%)	32 (6%)	17 (3%)	15 (3%)	147 (26%)	41 (7%)	561

There was a significant association between the sources where students heard about the university and the three age groups $x^2 = 49.471$, p<001

According to table 22 above, 238 out of the 561 students (42 percent) indicated that they had first heard about the university at the UCAS website. Out of the 561 students, 147 (26 percent) found out through word of mouth from their friends, contacts, school or teacher and 60 out of 561 students (11 percent) from a teacher at their school/college.

The UCAS website was important for the 123 out of 272 students aged 21-24 (45 percent) and 83 out of 198 students aged 20 or younger (42 percent) compared with the 32 out of 91 students aged 25+ (35 percent). Word of mouth was the most important source for the 38 of 91 students aged 25+ (42 percent) and of lower importance for the 49 out of 198 students aged 20 or younger (25 percent) and 60 out of 272 students aged 21-24 (22 percent). Teachers were an important source for the 35 out of 198 students aged 20 or younger (18 percent) compared to the 25 out of 272 students aged 21-24 (nine percent).

The sources identified under the heading 'word of mouth' in table 22 above was examined seperately in the research to identify the significance of each of the five sources (see chart 6 below). Friends were identified to be the most important source (49 percent) followed by family members (32 percent) and school (10 percent).

Chart 6: Sources for word of mouth (figures in percentages)
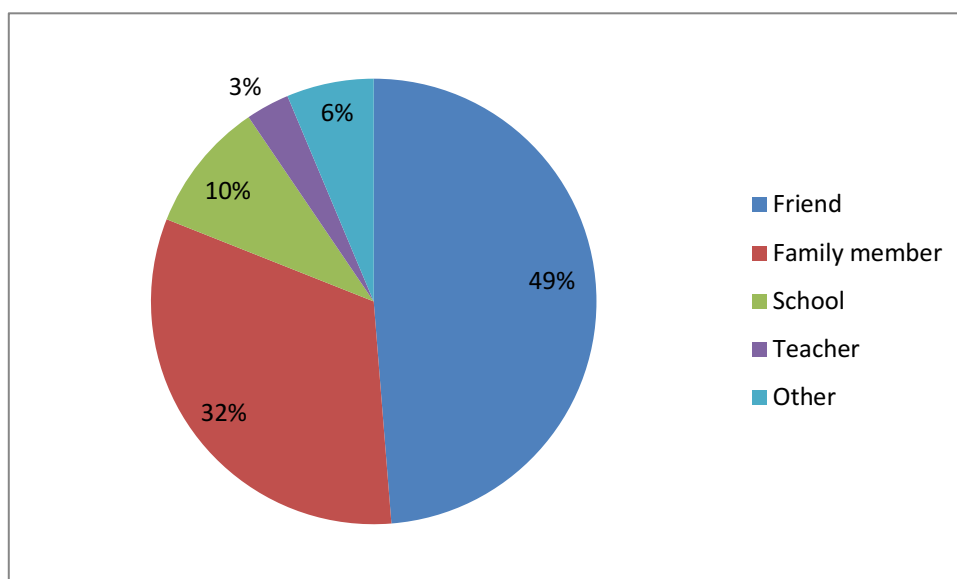
The research findings have identified that the main sources students used to obtain information about the university has been the UCAS website and their friends/family members in the form of word of mouth. The other source that many students have used was the open and offer days which are discussed below.

   o **Open and offer days**

The research findings identified that 315 out of 570 (55 percent) of the students indicated that they had attended an open day and 84 out of 565 (15 percent) an offer day as can be seen in tables 23 and 24 below.

Table 23: Attendance at an open day by gender

		Did you attend an Open Day or Offer Day at Anglia Ruskin University?		Total
		Open Day Yes	Open Day No	
Sample information	Female	220	160	380
	Male	95	95	190
Total		315 (55%)	255 (45%)	570

X^2= 3.193, p =.074 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the students' gender and whether or not they attended an open day; that is, the attendance at an open day was equal for students of both sexes.

Table 24: Attendance at an offer day by gender

		Did you attend an Open Day or Offer Day at Anglia Ruskin University?		Total
		Offer Day Yes	Offer Day No	
Sample information	Female	60	316	376
	Male	24	165	189
Total		84 (15%)	481 (85%)	565

X^2= 1.055, p =.304 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the students' gender and whether or not they attended an offer day; that is, the attendance at an offer day was equal for students of both sexes.

Table 25 below found that the experience at an open day was identified to be 'very helpful' by 168 out of the 297 students (57 percent) or 'helpful' by 124 out of the 297 students (42 percent). There was some variation in the opinions about the experience amongst students as is identified in table 25 and chart 7 below.

Table 25: Students' opinion of their open day experience by age group

		How would you describe your experience at the open day?			Total
		Very helpful in giving me information about the course and university	Helpful in giving me information about the course and university	Neither helpful or unhelpful in giving me information about the course and the university	
Sample information	20 or younger	59	51	0	110
	21-24	73	59	5	137
	25+	36	14	0	50
Total		168 (57%)	124 (42%)	5 (1%)	297

X^2 =11.254, p=.024 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the three age groups and their opinions of the experience of attending an open day; that is, the students experience of attending an open day was equally valid for all three age groups.

Chart 7: Helpfulness of open day by age group (figures in percentages)
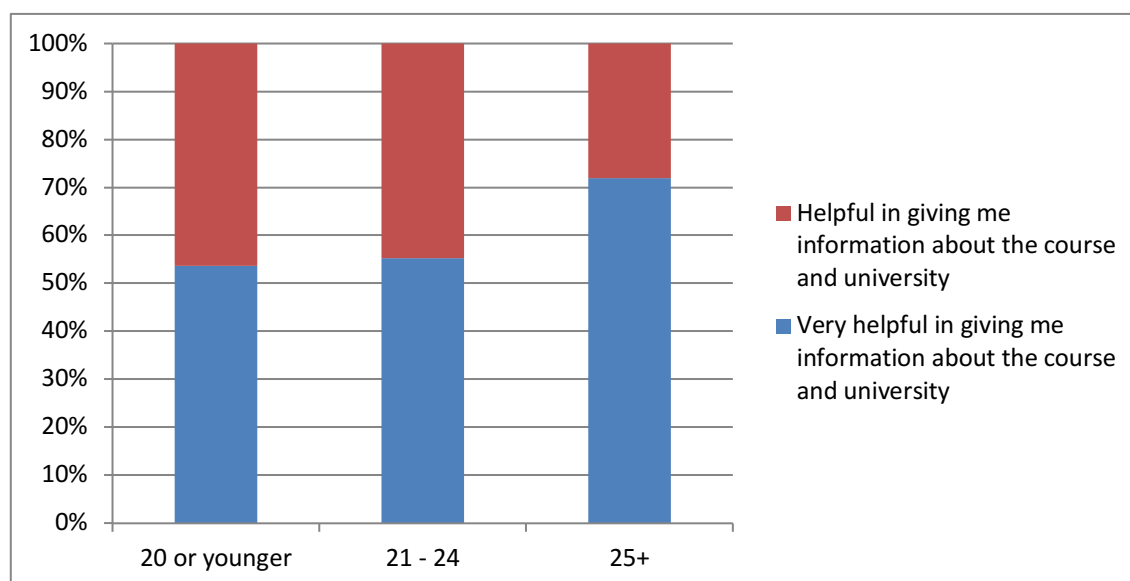
Thirty-six out of the 50 students aged 25+ (72 percent) found the attendance at an open day 'very helpful' compared to the 59 out of the 110 students aged 20 or younger (54 percent) and 73 out of the 137 students aged 21-24 (53 percent). Those finding the day 'helpful' were 51 out of the 110 students aged 20 or younger (46 percent), 59 out of the 137 students aged 21-24 (43 percent) and 14 out of the 50 students aged 25+ (28 percent).

In table 26 below, the experience at an offer day was found to be 'very helpful' to 48 out of the 79 students (61 percent) and helpful for 31 out of the 79 students (39 percent) of the students. Table 26 below indicate that there are variations between the students across the three age groups in the finding for the offer day.

Table 26: Students' opinion of their offer day experience by age group

	How would you describe your experience at the offer day?		Total
	Very helpful in giving me information about the course and university	Helpful in giving me information about the course and university	
20 or younger	16	17	33
21-24	19	14	33
25+	13	0	13
Total	48 (61%)	31 (39%)	79

There was a significant association between the students' opinions of their offer day experience and the three age groups x^2 = 10.621, p=.005

All 13 students aged 25+ found the offer day experience 'very helpful' compared with the 19 out of 33 students aged 21–24 (58 percent) and 16 out of 33 students aged 20 or younger (48 percent). The offer day is the occasion when the university provides a lot of details about the university and course to students who have been given an offer. Students who were older and had not been in an educational environment could have found it more useful than those who were continuing in education from a school/sixth form centre.

- o **Value of an open/offer day**

The students were asked to what extent they valued their experience at an open or offer day (see table 27 and chart 8 below).

Table 27: Did students value their experience at the open/offer day they attended?

		Would you say that you valued your experience at the Open/Offer day you attended			Total
		Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree or disagree	
Sample information	20 or under	27	74	18	119
	21-24	36	85	22	143
	Over 25	26	22	7	55
Total		89 (28%)	181 (57%)	47 (15%)	317

X2=12.571, p=.014 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the three age groups and their opinions of whether they valued their experience of attending an open/offer day; that is, the students' experience of attending an open day was equally valued by all three age groups.

Chart 8: Did students value their experience at the open/offer day they attended? (figures in percentages)
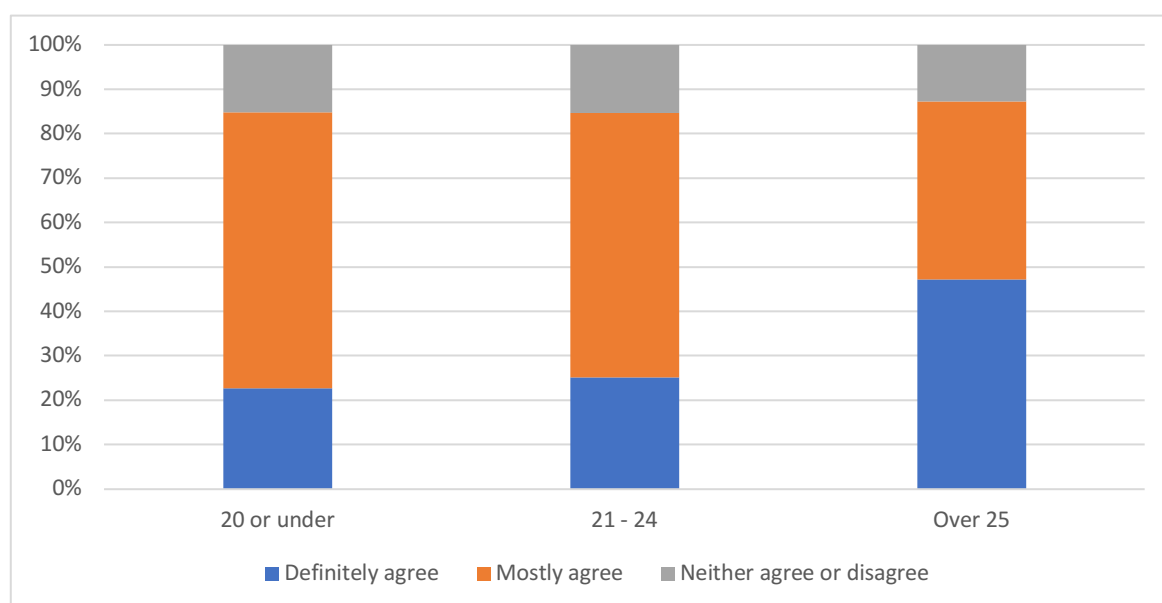
As can be seen in table 27 above, 89 out of the 317 students (28 percent) stated that they 'definitely agreed' that they had valued their experience at an open/offer day and 181 out of the 317 (57 percent) students 'mostly agreed' that they had valued the experience at an open/offer day. Out of the 55 students aged 25+, 26 (forty-seven percent) 'definitely agreed' that they had valued the experience at the open/offer day which was higher than the other two age groups – 36 out of 143 (twenty-five percent) of students aged 21–24 and 27 out of 119 (twenty-three percent) of students aged 20 or younger. This could have been because the students in the highest age group would have been in employment and were returning to education to improve their prospects as noted in section 5.2.1 on page 111 above. The students would, therefore, have valued the experience more than the other two age groups as they would have got more out of the visit to the university than the other students.

Out of 119 of the students aged 20 or younger, 74 (sixty-two percent) and 85 out of the 143 (fifty-nine percent) of the students 21-24 stated that they 'mostly agreed' that the experience at an open/offer day was valuable which indicated that they didn't value their experience at an open/offer day as much as those aged 25+ as can be seen in chart 9 above. The research findings agree with the result in section 4.2.6 of the qualitative research chapter on page 70 where students stated that the attendance at an open or offer day was very helpful as they had been able to meet staff and see the investment in the university infrastructure.

5.2.3.1 *Key findings about sources students used to obtain information about the university*

The key findings about the sources where students found out about the university are as follows:

Students first heard about the university from a number of sources, of which the UCAS website was the most important and was cited by 42 percent of the students followed by word of mouth (friends/contacts/school/teachers) at 26 percent and teachers at 11 percent. For students aged 21-24 (45 percent) and 20 or younger (42 percent) the UCAS website was the most important source where they found out about the university. Word of mouth was the most important source for students aged 25+. The most important sources from which the students learnt about the university under the umbrella of word of mouth were friends (cited by 49 percent of the students) and family members (32 percent).

Attending an open or offer day was another source where students gained information about the university. Fifty-nine percent of the students attended an open day with 57 percent describing the day as 'very helpful' and 42 percent 'helpful'. Of the students aged 25+, 72

percent rated the day 'very helpful' which was higher than the other two age groups indicating that they valued the day more than the others.

Fifteen percent of the students attended an offer day and all the students aged 25+ described the experience as 'very helpful' which was much higher than the other two age groups where virtually half the students only found the day to be 'helpful' for them instead of 'very helpful'.

Eighty-five percent of the students valued the experience of attending an open/offer day with 28 percent stating that they 'definitely agreed' that they had valued the experience and 57 percent 'mostly agreed'. Students aged 25+ were the largest group who 'definitely agreed' that they had valued the experience at an open/offer day, whereas the other two age groups scored the highest for 'mostly agreed' indicating that they did not value the experience as much as the older students who were returning to education from being employed.

5.2.4 The extent to which students were influenced in their decision to study for a degree by stakeholders

Students were asked about the people who influenced them in their decision to study at the university. In investigating this question there were two pieces of evidence which helped to identify the people who influenced the students.

o **People who had influenced the students**

The first source was the list of people that students were asked to identify who had influenced them when they applied to the university.

In table 28 below the breakdown of who influenced the students in their decision when they chose to apply and study at the university identified that 280 out of 616 (45 percent) were influenced by their parents with a further 80 out of the 616 respondents (13 percent) influenced by friends. Out of the 616 respondents, 140 (23 percent) stated that they were not influenced by anybody.

Table 28: Sources who influenced students when they made their decision to apply to and study at Anglia Ruskin University by age group

		Did anybody influence you in your decision when you chose to apply and study at Anglia Ruskin University?						Total
		Parents	Other family members	Friend(s)	Peers	Other	Nobody	
Sample information	20 or younger	117	15	28	9	7	45	221
	21-24	140	22	41	9	19	59	290
	25+	23	14	11	6	15	36	105
Total		280 (45%)	51 (8%)	80 (13%)	24 (4%)	41 (7%)	140 (23%)	616

There was a significant association between the people who influenced the students when they made their decision to apply to go study at Anglia Ruskin University and the three age groups x^2 = 42.914, p<.001.

Out of the 212 of the students aged 20 or younger, 117 (53 percent) were influenced by their parents as were 240 out of the 290 students aged 21–24 (48 percent) which was much higher than the 23 out of 105 students aged 25+ (22 percent).   Friends were the second most important influencer for the students with 41 out of the 290 students aged 21-24 (14 percent), 28 out of the 221 students aged 20 or younger (13 percent) and 11 out of the 105 students aged 25+ (10 percent) identifying friends as a key influencer on their decision.

As was noted above, 140 out of the 616 respondents indicated that they were not influenced by anybody when they made the decision to apply to the university. Thirty-six out of the 105 students aged 25+ (34 percent) was the largest age group to state that they had not been influenced by anybody else. Forty-five out of the 221 students aged 20 or younger (20 percent) and 59 out of the 290 students aged 21–24 (20 percent) also indicated that they had made their own decision when they applied to the university.

- o **Family opinion about the university**

The other piece of evidence about who influenced the students when making the decision to apply to the university was the extent to which the student's family had given their opinion

about the university to the students before they applied. Out of the 571 respondents, 329 (58 percent) did not receive any opinion from their family before they applied to the university (see table 29 below) The remaining 242 out of 571 students (42 percent) did receive comments about the university from their family.

Table 29: Students whose family gave their opinion about the university before the students applied to it by age group

		Did your family give you their opinion about Anglia Ruskin University before you applied to the university?		Total
		Yes	No	
Sample information	20 or younger	97	103	200
	21-24	115	155	270
	25+	30	71	101
Total		242 (42%)	329 (58%)	571

X^2 = 9.719, p = .008 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the family giving their opinion about Anglia Ruskin University and age; that is, all three age groups equally either did or did not receive opinions from their family about the university.

Chart 9 below indicates that there was variation between the student age groups in terms of the opinion they received from their families.

Chart 9: Extent to which family members gave their opinion about the university before the students applied by age group (figures in percentages)
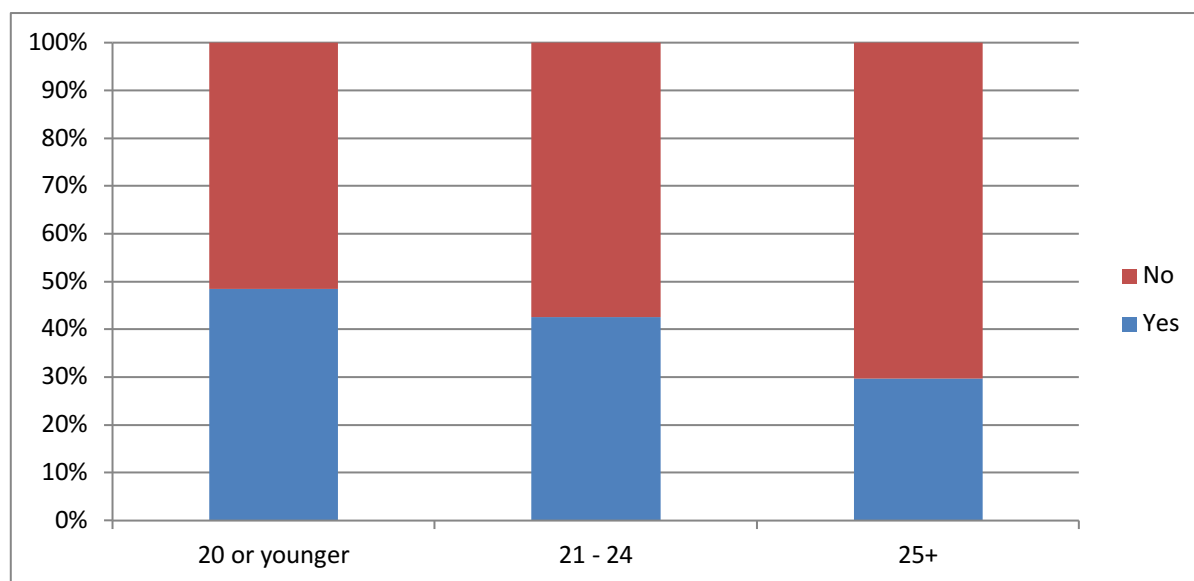
The results agree with the findings above, about the people who had influenced the students, as 71 out of the 101 students aged 25+ (70 percent) did not receive any opinions from their family members before they applied to the university. At the other end of the age groups, 97 out of the 200 students aged 20 or younger (49 percent) received the highest amount of opinion from their parents followed by 115 out of 270 students aged 21–24 (forty-three percent).

The research findings indicate that the main influencers on the students when they were applying to the university were parents and friends. Students who were 20 or younger and would be leaving school were influenced the most by their parents who also were the ones to receive the highest level of opinion about the university. The students in the other age groups were influenced to a lesser extent by their parents. The students aged 21-24, however, were influenced by their friends more than the students in the other two age groups.

Students aged 25+ were the least likely to be influenced by anybody when making their choice and the least likely to receive opinions from their family about the university before they applied. Twenty percent each of the other two age groups also indicated that they had not been influenced in their decision-making which meant that at least a fifth of students were choosing the university on their own.

5.2.4.1 *Key findings about the influencers on the students*

The students were influenced by two key sets of influencers – parents and friends. Parents were identified as the main influencer for students aged 20 or younger (53 percent) and they were also the age group to receive the highest level of opinion from their parents (49 percent) before they applied to the university. Parents were also a very significant influencer for students aged 21-24 with 48 percent identifying them as an influence on their decision to apply to the university and 43 percent stating that their parents gave their opinion to the students before they applied to study at the university.

The other significant influencer was the students' friends. Fourteen percent of the students aged 21–24 indicated that they had been influenced by their friends as were 13 percent of the 20 or younger age group and 10 percent of those aged 25+.

Twenty-three percent of the students identified that they had not been influenced by anybody when they applied to the university. Students aged 25+ (34 percent) were the highest age group to not be influenced by anybody else and they were also the least likely to receive an opinion from their parents, as indicated in the 70 percent who stated that they did not receive any opinion before they applied to the university.

5.2.5 How the family felt when the student received the offer of a place at the university

Students were asked about how their family felt when they received an offer of a place at the university. As can be seen in table 30 below, 216 out of the 549 students (39 percent) indicated that their parents were 'very pleased', 171 out of the 549 (31 percent) were 'happy' and 156 out of the 549 (28 percent) were 'excited'.

Table 30: Feelings of families when students received the offer of their place at university by age group

		How did your family feel when you received the offer of a place at Anglia Ruskin University				Total
		Excited	Very pleased	Happy	Hostile to your decision	
Sample information	20 or younger	56	80	59	0	195
	21-24	65	100	88	6	259
	25+	35	36	24	0	95
Total		156 (28%)	216 (40%)	171 (31%)	6 (1%)	549

X^2 = 12.100, p = .060 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the feelings of the family when the student received their offer of a place at the university and age; that is, all three age groups were equally satisfied with the response of their family to getting offered a place at the university.

There was some variation in the findings between the students of different ages as is identified in the chart 10 below.

Chart 10: Feelings of family towards students receiving their offer of a place at the university by age group (figures in percentages)
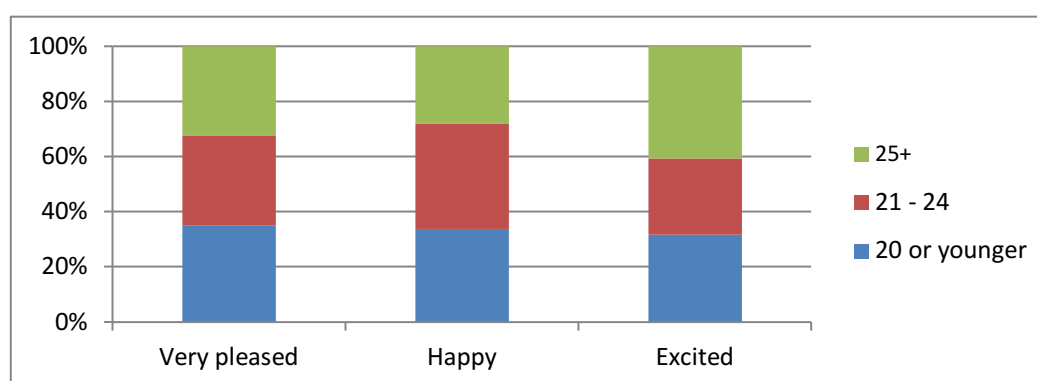
'Very pleased' was the feeling expressed by the majority of the families. This was highest for the students aged 20 or younger (41 percent) compared with those aged 21-24 (39 percent) and those aged 25+ (28 percent). The second most important feeling – 'happy' – was highest for students aged 21–24 at 34 percent compared to the 30 percent of those aged 20 or younger and 25 percent of the students aged 25+. Students whose families were

'excited' were highest for the 25+ age group at 37 percent compared with 29 percent of those aged 20 or younger and 25 percent of the students aged 21-24.

The research findings indicated that the families of the students were very supportive of them when they received an offer of a place at the university and expressed their pleasure in a different way for each age group.

Having examined the students' views on the application process, the next section examines the research findings on the students' experiences while they were studying in the university.

5.3   Experience while studying at the university

The aim of this section is to identify the students' perceived value while they were studying at the university to answer the research question 'what do students value while they are studying at the university?' The students were asked about their experience while they were studying at the university, using the themes identified from the research findings in the qualitative research programme in chapter four and the literature reviewed in chapter two. The format of the subsections below follows those used in chapter four and considers the students' learning experience, the relationship students had with the academic staff and their relationship with other students.

5.3.1   Learning experience

In considering the learning experience, the students were asked a series of questions concerning their experience while studying at the university; what they had valued from their course; if they had set up self-help groups and the extracurricular activities they had participated in. The results are discussed below.

o **How students described their experience while studying at university**

The students were asked to describe their experience of studying in the university by identifying three words from a list provided to them.   Variations were identified for the students by age group, campus and year of study which are provided below in the tables 31 to 33 and charts 11 to 13.

Table 31: Words that described the students' experience by age group

	Which three words would you say describe your experience to-date while studying at Anglia Ruskin University?																Total
	Fun	Inform-ative	Monot-onous	Dull	Exciting	Helpful	Average	Motivating	Transform-ative	Friendly	Imagin-ative	Mundane	Time-wasting	Disappointing	Inspiring	Other	
20 or younger	82	69	15	16	36	63	60	50	28	79	0	6	11	21	18	8	562
21-24	92	104	24	18	51	72	85	69	46	94	9	0	17	24	40	8	753
25+	20	46	8	5	14	31	18	32	24	30	0	0	0	8	24	0	260
Total	194 (12%)	219 (14%)	47 (3%)	39 (2%)	101 (6%)	166 (11%)	163 (10%)	151 (10%)	98 (6%)	203 (13%)	9 (1%)	6 (0%)	28 (2%)	53 (3%)	82 (5%)	16 (1%)	1575

There was a significant association between the words that described the students' experience and age group x^2 = 68.607, p<.001

Table 32: Words that described the students' experience by location

| | Which three words would you say describe your experience to-date while studying at Anglia Ruskin University? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
	Fun	Informative	Monotonous	Dull	Exciting	Helpful	Average	Motivating	Transformative	Friendly	Imaginative	Mundane	Time-wasting	Disappointing	Inspiring	Other	
Cambridge	119	106	28	18	72	81	87	77	59	109	12	7	20	26	45	9	875
Chelmsford	75	113	19	21	29	85	76	74	39	94	3	5	11	27	37	10	718
Total	194 (12%)	219 (14%)	47 (3%)	39 (2%)	101(6%)	166 (10%)	163 (10%)	151 (9%)	98 (6%)	203 (13%)	15 (1%)	12 (1%)	31 (2%)	53 (3%)	82 (5%)	19 (1%)	1593

X^2 = 30.574, p=.010 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the words that describe a student's experience and the campus where they were studying; that is, students on both campuses used similar words to describe their experience of studying at the university.

Table 33: Words that described the students' experience by year of study

| | Which three words would you say describe your experience to-date while studying at Anglia Ruskin University? | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
	Fun	Informat-ive	Monotonous	Dull	Exciting	Helpful	Average	Motivat-ing	Transformat-ive	Friendly	Imaginative	Mundane	Time-wasting	Disappointing	Inspiring	Other	
Year 1	62	62	13	11	37	54	39	52	21	71	5	4	10	16	20	6	483
Year 2	70	65	16	12	31	64	54	46	29	64	1	5	4	12	25	10	508
Year 3	57	87	17	15	30	41	65	51	45	66	9	3	17	24	33	1	561
Total	189 (12%)	214 (14%)	46 (3%)	38 (2%)	98 (6%)	159 (10%)	158 (10%)	149 (10%)	95 (6%)	201 (13%)	15 (1%)	12 (1%)	31 (2%)	52 (3%)	78 (5%)	17 (1%)	189 (12%)

X^2 = 88.128, p=.010 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the words that describe a student's experience and the year of study; that is, students in each year group used similar words to describe their experience of studying at the university.

Chart 11: Frequency of the three words which described the students' experience while studying at the university by age group (figures in percentages)
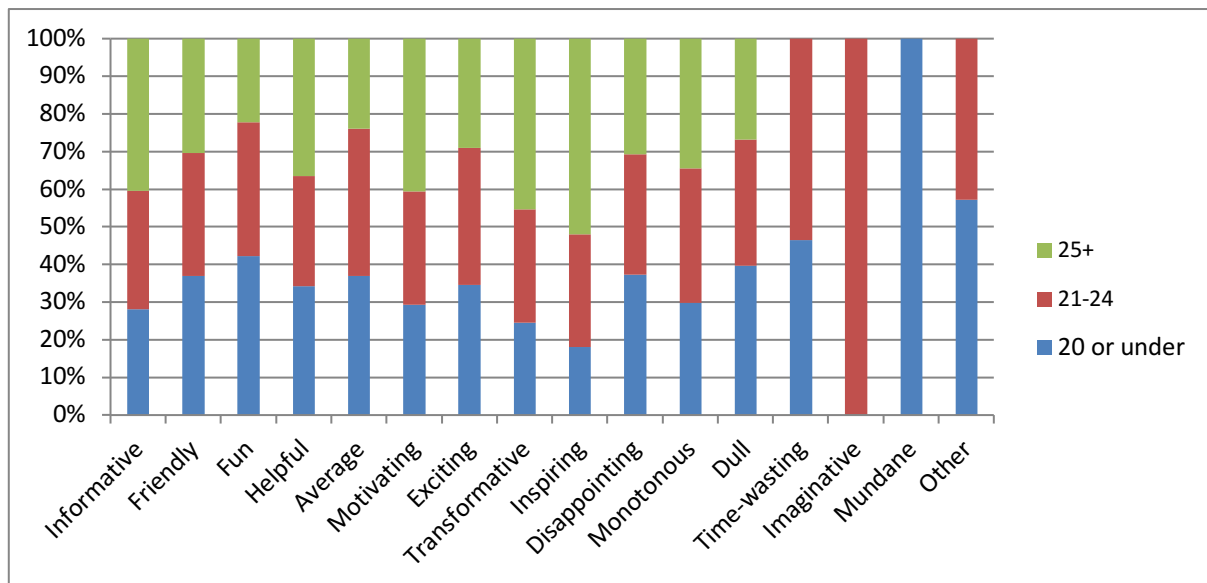
Chart 12: Frequency of the three words which described the students' experience while studying at the university by campus (figures in percentages)
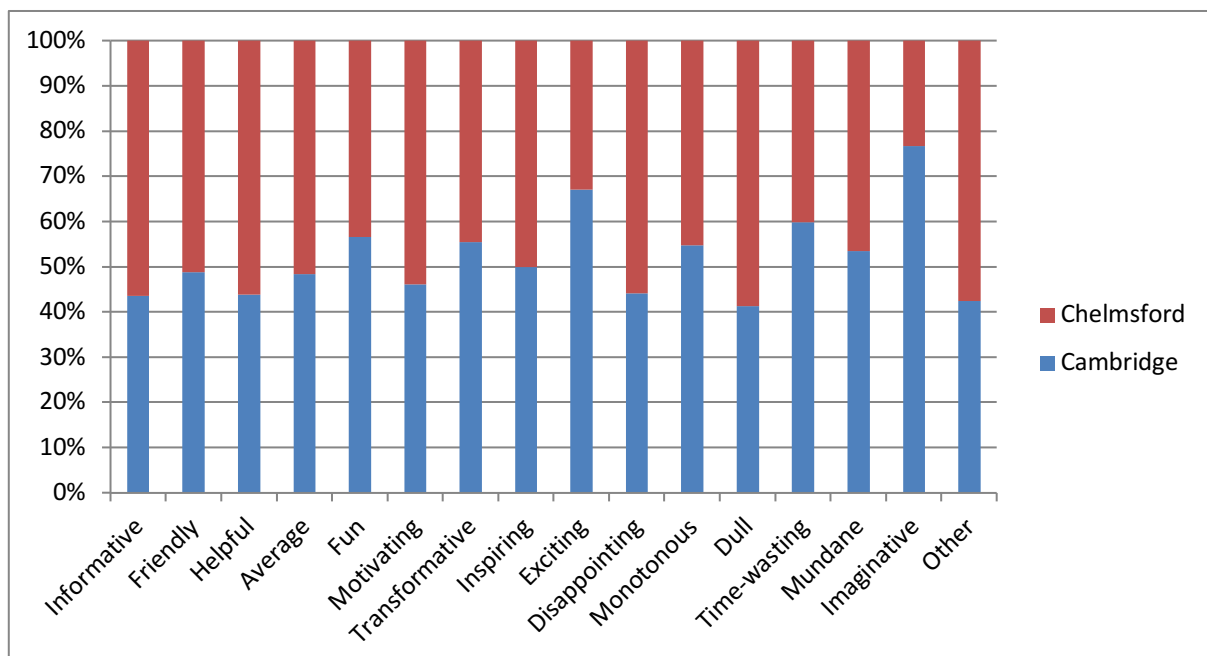
Chart 13: Frequency of the three words which described the students' experience while studying at the university by year of study (figures in percentages)
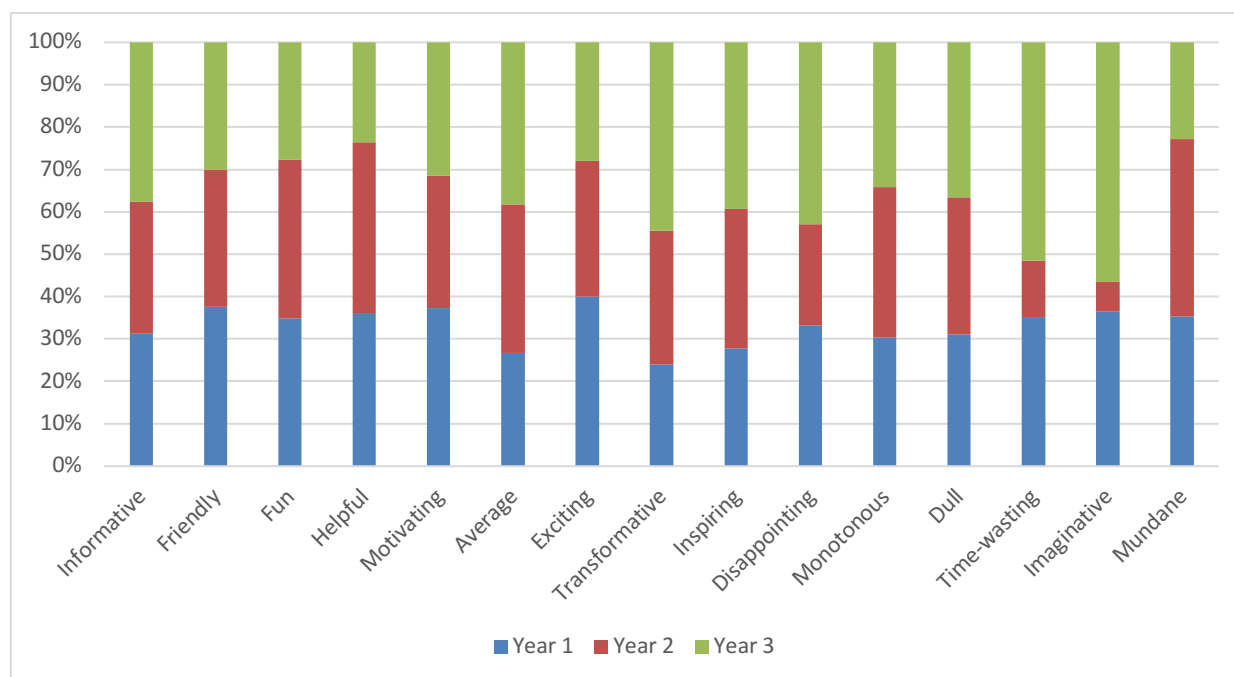
Out of 1575, 1223 (78 percent) of the responses were positive about the learning experience with the words 'informative', 'friendly' and 'fun' achieving the highest rankings by age group and year of study. The result by location was slightly different as the third highest ranked word was 'helpful' rather than 'fun'. There were variations in the way in which the students described their experience.

The three words which the students aged 20 or younger identified the most were 'fun' (82 out of 562, 15 percent), 'friendly' (79 out of 562, 14 percent) and 'informative' (69 out of 562, 12 percent) in that order, which differed from the 21-24 age group who rated their experience as 'informative' (104 out of 753, 14 percent), then 'friendly' (94 out of 753, 12 percent) and 'fun' (92 out of 753, 12 percent). Students aged 25+ rated the experience 'informative' (46 out of 260, 18 percent) the highest of the three groups in percentage terms and had ranked 'friendly' (30 out of 260, 12 percent) and 'helpful' (31 out of 260, 12 percent) equally in second place. The results for the campus where the students were studying was similar in that in Cambridge the word 'fun' (119 out of 875, 14 percent) was highest followed by 'friendly' (109 out of 875, 14 percent) and 'informative' (106 out of 875, 12 percent). The Chelmsford students' top three words were 'informative' (113 out of 718, 16 percent) 'friendly' (94 out of 718, 13 percent) and 'helpful' (85 out of 718, 16 percent). First year students ranked their experience at 'friendly' (71 out of 483, 15 percent), then 'informative' (62 out of 483, 13 percent) and 'fun' (62 out of 483, 13 percent) equally. The second-year

students' experience was described as 'fun' (70 out of 508, 14 percent) then 'informative' (65 out of 508, 13 percent), 'friendly' and 'helpful' which had the same score (64 out of 508, 13 percent). In contrast, the third-year students said that their experience was 'informative' (87 out of 561, 16 percent) to a much larger extent than 'friendly' (66 out of 561, 10 percent) and 'fun' (57 out of 561, 10 percent).

Summarising the students' description of their experience, second-year students aged 20 or younger living in Cambridge indicated that their experience was 'fun' and 'friendly' to a greater extent than 'informative'. Third-year students aged 25+ living in Chelmsford rated their experience as 'informative' the highest. First-year students aged 20 or younger living in Cambridge stated that the experience was 'exciting' more than the other students. The word 'motivating' scored highest for first-year students aged 25+ (52 out of 483, 11 percent) studying in Chelmsford. From this summary, it can be seen that the students in Cambridge were enjoying their learning experience at the university more than those in Chelmsford. This reflects the discussion above in section 5.2.2.2 on page 124 where it was noted that students in Cambridge who were younger, living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university and had wanted the stereotypical student life were having this fulfilled in their experience at the university. The student profile in Chelmsford was older (see table 10 above on page 108) and students on that campus who were preferring to live at home were finding the experience to be informative and motivating. As noted above (see section 5.2.1 on page 111) students in the age group 25+ were returning to education and would, therefore, be highly motivated and find their studies to be very informative.

In the literature review Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and Ng and Forbes (2009) suggested that the whole learning experience can be for students either transformative, mundane and monotonous, or a combination of the two extremes. With reference to these words, 24 out of 260 (nine percent) of the students age 25+; 46 out of 753 (six percent) of those aged 21-24 and 28 out of 562 (five percent) of the students aged 20 or younger referred to their experience as 'transformative'; eight out of 260 (three percent) of the students aged 25+, 24 out of 753 (three percent) of the students aged 21-24 and 15 out of 562 (three percent) of the students aged 20 or younger called it 'monotonous'. Only six out of 562 (one percent) of the students aged 20 or younger stated that it was 'mundane'. The students ticking the 'transformative' box was highest in year three (45 out of 561, eight percent) compared to those in year two (29 out of 508, six percent) and year one (21 out of 483, four percent).

Instead, as noted above, the students were using words that were less extreme for the positive words and the most significant word used to describe the course in a negative way was average which was identified by 10 percent of the students in each category.

Overall, 1223 out of the 1575 responses (78 percent) from the students were positive. The 221 out of 260 (77 percent) responses of students aged 25+ were the most positive compared with the 577 out of 753 (76 percent) responses for students aged 21–24 and 425 out of 562 (75 percent) for those aged 20 or younger. Six hundred and eighty out of the 875 responses (78 percent) from students in Cambridge indicated that they were more positive about their experiences compared with the 549 out of the 718 (76 percent) responses from Chelmsford students. Three hundred and eighty four out of the 483 (80 percent) responses from first-year students illustrated that they were happier than the 395 out of 508 (78 percent) responses from the second-year students and 419 out of the 561 (75 percent) responses by the third-year students.

From the research findings, it is evident that the majority of the students were positive about their experience and described it as being 'fun', 'friendly' and 'informative'. The happiest group was the first-year students, aged 25+ and studying in Cambridge. The least happy overall were the third-year students, aged 20 or younger, studying in Chelmsford.

- o **What students valued from their course**

In tables 34 and 35 and charts 14 and 15 below we can see that 302 out of 720 responses (42 percent) valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future careers, 230 out of the 720 (32 percent) valued gaining an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in and 188 out of the 720 (26 percent) valued the range of subjects they studied on their course.

Table 34: Breakdown of what students valued from their course by age group

		What would you say that you have valued from your course so far?			Total
		The range of subjects I have studied on my course	Gaining an in-depth knowledge of the subjects I am interested in	Gaining knowledge to help me in my future career	
Sample information	20 or under	56	80	102	238
	21-24	103	111	132	346
	Over 25	29	39	68	136
Total		188 (26%)	230 (32%)	302 (42%)	720

X^2=7.625, p=.267 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between what students have valued from their course and age group; that is, all the age groups were equally satisfied with their experience to date.

Chart 14: Breakdown of what students valued from their course by age group (figures in percentages)
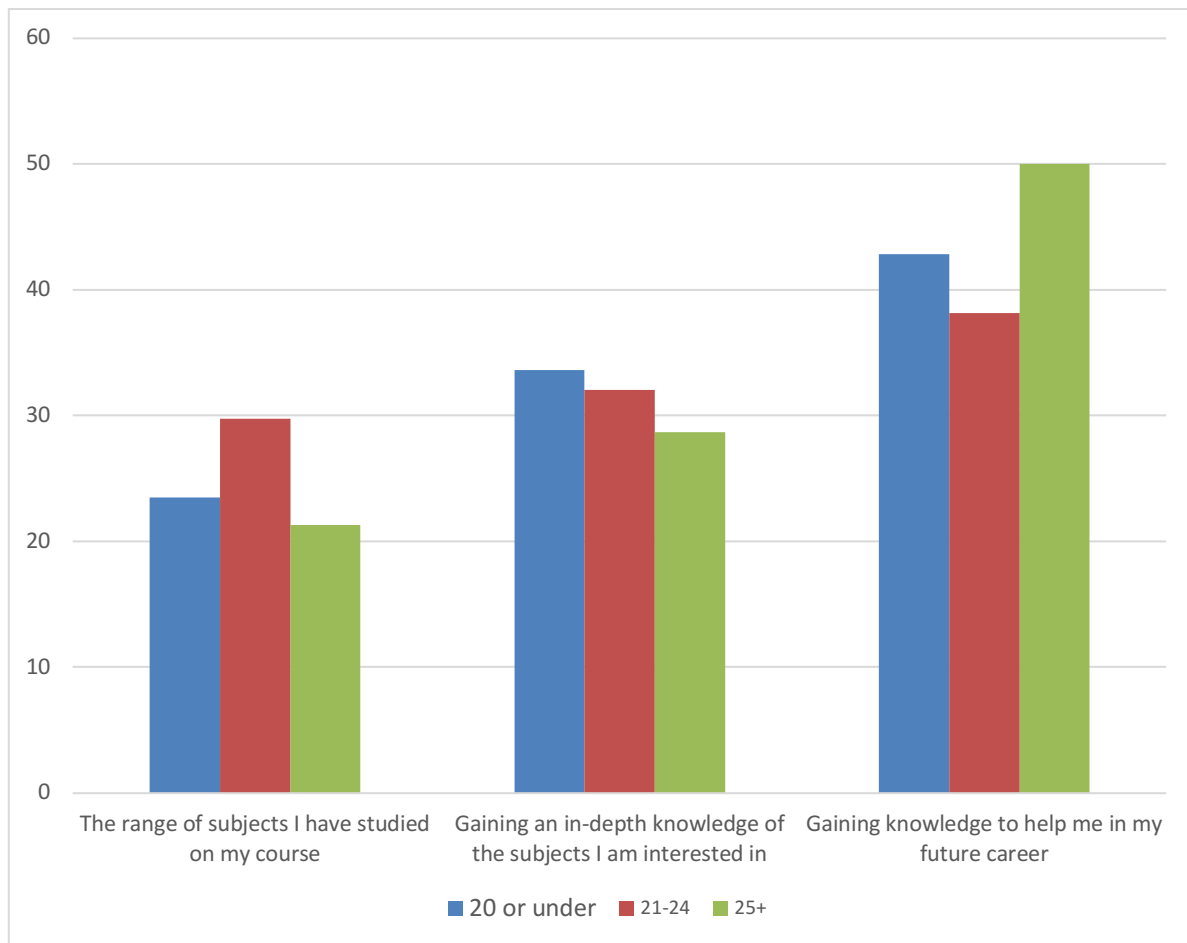
The analysis of the breakdown of the results by age group (see table 34 and chart 14 above) reveals that 68 out of 136 (50 percent) students aged 25+ and 102 out of 238 (43 percent) students aged 20 or younger valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career more than the 132 out of 346 (38 percent) students aged 21-24. The 103 out of the 346 (30 percent) students aged 21-24 valued the range of subjects that they had studied to a greater extent than the 56 out of 238 (24 percent) students aged 20 or younger and 29 out of the 136 (21 percent) of the students aged 25+. Eighty out of the 238 (34 percent) students aged 20 or younger valued gaining an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in more than the 111 out of the 346 (32 percent) students aged 21-24 and 39 out of the 136 (29 percent) students aged 25+.

Table 35: Breakdown of what students valued from their course by campus

		What would you say that you have valued from your course so far?			Total
		The range of subjects I have studied on my course	Gaining an in depth knowledge of the subjects I am interested in	Gaining knowledge to help me in my future career	
Sample information	Cambridge	112	125	153	390
	Chelmsford	76	105	149	330
Total		188 (26%)	230 (32%)	302 (42%)	720

$X2=3.721$, $p=293$ which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between what students have valued from their course and campus; that is, students on both campuses were equally satisfied with their experience to date.

Chart 15: Breakdown of what students have valued from their course by campus (figures in percentages)
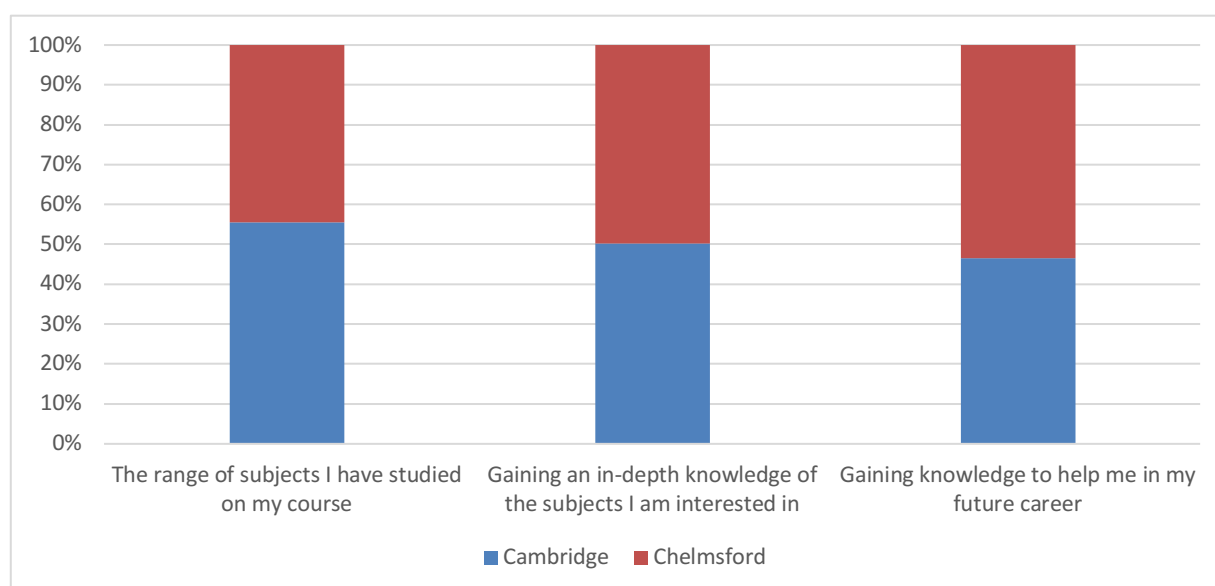
Out of the 330 students studying in Chelmsford, 149 (45 percent) valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career which was more than the 153 out of the 390 (39 percent) students studying in Cambridge. Out of the 390 students in Cambridge, 112 (29 percent) valued the range of subjects they have studied on their course, as did 76 out of the 330 (23 percent) students studying in Chelmsford (see table 35 and chart 15 above). These results reflect the motivation to study of the different age groups, as the students aged 20 or

younger and 25+ were more vocationally orientated than those in the middle age group. Also, the student population in Chelmsford was older with a larger percentage in the 25+ age group than it was in Cambridge.

- **What studying at the university had helped the students to do.**

Students were asked to identify what studying at the university had helped them to do. Out of the 965 responses, 379 (39 percent) identified that they had developed knowledge of the subjects they had studied, 299 out of the 965 responses (31 percent) had acquired skills for potential careers and the remaining 287 out of the 965 responses (30 percent) had helped them to develop their interpersonal skills and self-confidence (see table 36 and chart 16 below).

Table 36: What students valued from studying at Anglia Ruskin University by age group

	Has studying at Anglia Ruskin University helped you to			Total
	Develop your interpersonal skills and self-confidence?	Develop your knowledge of the subjects you have studied?	Acquire skills for your potential career?	
20 or under	106	129	95	330
21-24	128	176	133	437
Over 25	53	74	71	198
Total	287 (30%)	379 (39%)	299 (31%)	965

X^2=3.618, p=.460 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between what students had found studying on their course helped them to do and age group; that is, all three age groups equally found studying at the university had helped them.

Chart 16: What students valued from studying at Anglia Ruskin University by age group (figures in percentages)
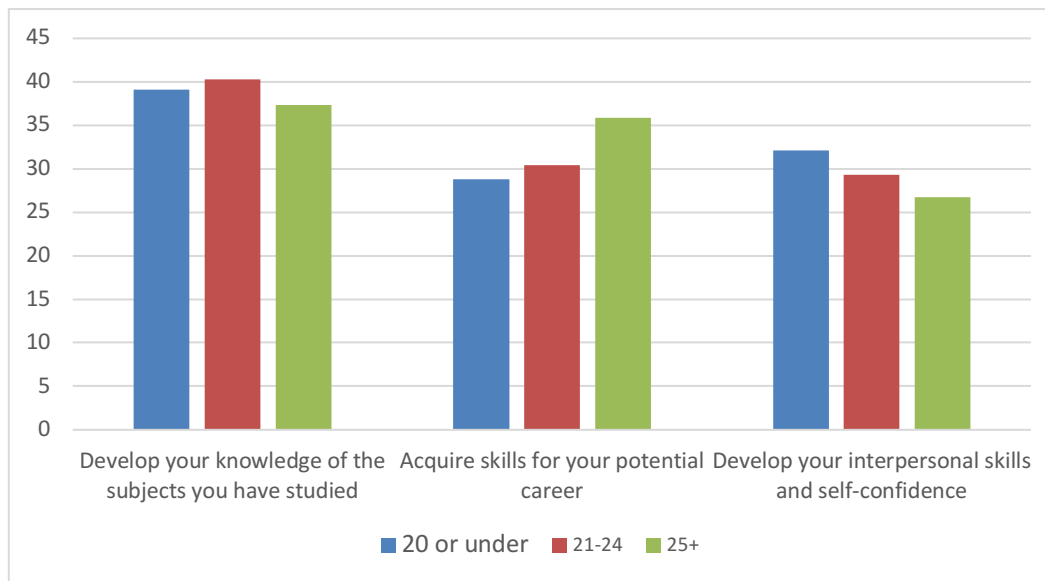
The breakdown of the results by age group in table 36 above shows us that 176 out of the 437 (40 percent) students aged 21-24, 129 out of the 330 (39 percent) students aged 20 or younger and 74 out of the 198 (37 percent) students aged 25+ valued developing knowledge of the subjects they had studied. The results reflect the motivation for studying of the student population as the 21–24 age group had a higher percentage that were academically orientated than the rest. Seventy one out of the 198 (36 percent) students aged 25+, 133 out of the 437 (30 percent) students aged 21-24 and 95 out of the 330 students (29 percent) aged 20 or younger valued acquiring skills for their potential career. The largest group was students aged 25+ which is to be expected as they were vocationally orientated and appreciated the skills they were learning which were going to help them in their future career, having returned to education with this intention. Out of the 330 students aged 20 or younger, 106 (32 percent) valued developing their interpersonal skills and self-confidence more than the 128 out of the 437 students aged 21-24 (29 percent) and 53 out of 198 students aged 25+ (27 percent) which is in line with the earlier research findings (see section 5.3.1 on page 149) which established that this age group described their experience as 'fun' more than the other age groups.

o **Aspects of the course that students didn't value**

As well as the students being asked what they valued, they were also asked what they didn't value from their course. The question was included to examine the issues students identified in the qualitative research programme (see section 4.3.2.2 on page 83) in more

depth. From table 37 below we can see that 202 out of the 513 students (39 percent) did not value the poor communication from the lecturing staff, 159 out of the 513 students (31 percent) didn't like the overlap of subjects in the modules, 84 out of the 513 (16 percent) students were concerned about the poor communications about the timetable changes, and the remaining 68 out of 513 (13 percent) did not value the poor communication from the administration staff (see table 37 and chart 17 below).

Table 37: Parts of the course the students did not value by age group

	Were there any parts of your course that you did not value?				Total
	Overlap of the subjects in the modules	Poor communication about the timetable changes	Poor communication from the lecturing staff	Poor communication from the administration staff	
20 or under	55	30	78	22	185
21-24	80	46	97	38	261
Over 25	24	8	27	8	67
Total	159 (31%)	84 (16%)	202 (39%)	68 (13%)	513

X^2 = 5.763, p=0.691 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the parts of the course students did not value and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar views on what they did not value from their course.

Chart 17: Parts of the course the students did not value by age group (figures in percentages)
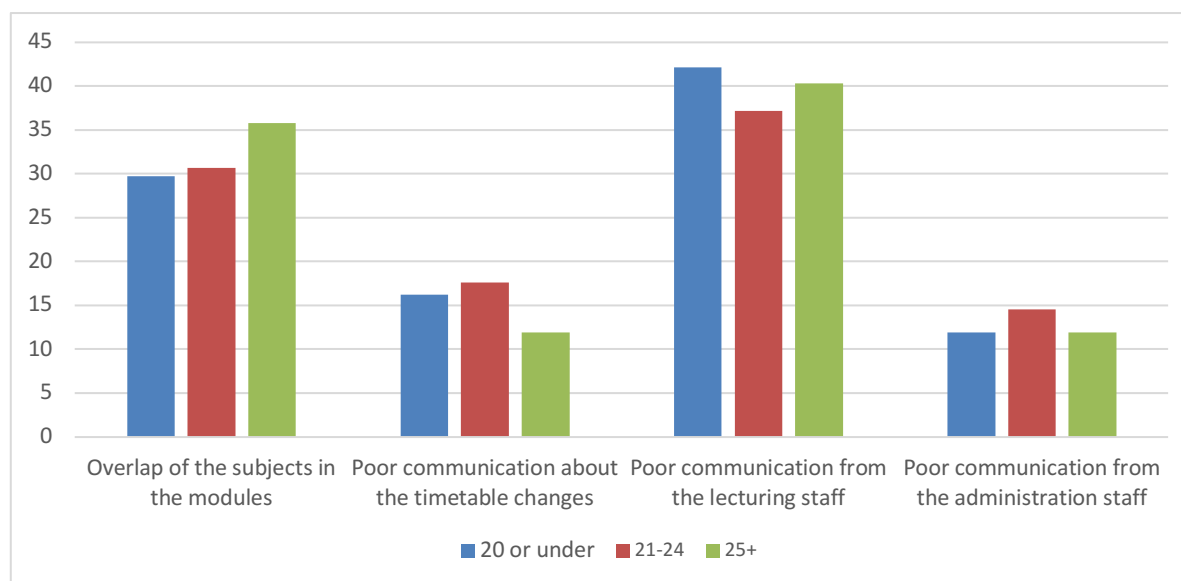
The research findings identified variations between the age groups, campuses and year of study in terms of the four areas that students didn't value (see tables 37 - 39 and charts 17 – 19). With regard to the 'poor communication from the lecturing staff', this was of most concern to the 78 out of 185 (42 percent) students aged 20 or younger, 105 out of 247 (43 percent) studying in Chelmsford and 71 out of 159 (45 percent) in year two. This issue is discussed in more depth in section 5.3.2 on page 174. The second highest issue, the 'overlap of subjects in the modules' was identified by 24 out of the 67 (36 percent) students aged 25+, 94 out of the 266 (35 percent) studying in Cambridge and 68 out of 196 (thirty-five percent) in the third year more than the other students. The issues 'poor communication about the timetable changes' received the highest scores for the 46 out of the 261 (18 percent) students aged 21-24, 43 out of the 247 (17 percent) studying in Chelmsford and 26 out of 145 (18 percent) in year one. The students most concerned about the 'poor communication from the administration staff' were the 38 out of the 261 (15 percent) students aged 21-24, 34 out of the 247 (14 percent) studying in Chelmsford and the 27 out of 196 (14 percent) in year three and 21 out of 145 (14 percent) in year one. From the research findings, it is clear that students' issues with the university differed for each criterion with the third-year students disliking most the overlap of subjects in their modules, which is to be expected as they would have studied more of the curriculum than the other year groups. In comparison, the third-years had the lowest scores for the poor communication from the lecturing staff who they would have got to know over the time period they had been at the university.

Table 38: Parts of the course the students did not value by campus

	Were there any parts of your course that you did not value?				Total
	Overlap of the subjects in the modules	Poor communication about the timetable changes	Poor communication from the lecturing staff	Poor communication from the administration staff	
Cambridge	94	41	97	34	266
Chelmsford	65	43	105	34	247
Total	159 (31%)	84 (16%)	202 (39%)	68 (13%)	513

X^2=5.73, p=.220 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the parts of the course students did not value and the campus where they studied; that is the students on both campuses had similar views on what they did not value from their course.

Chart 18: Parts of the course the students did not value by campus (figures in percentages)
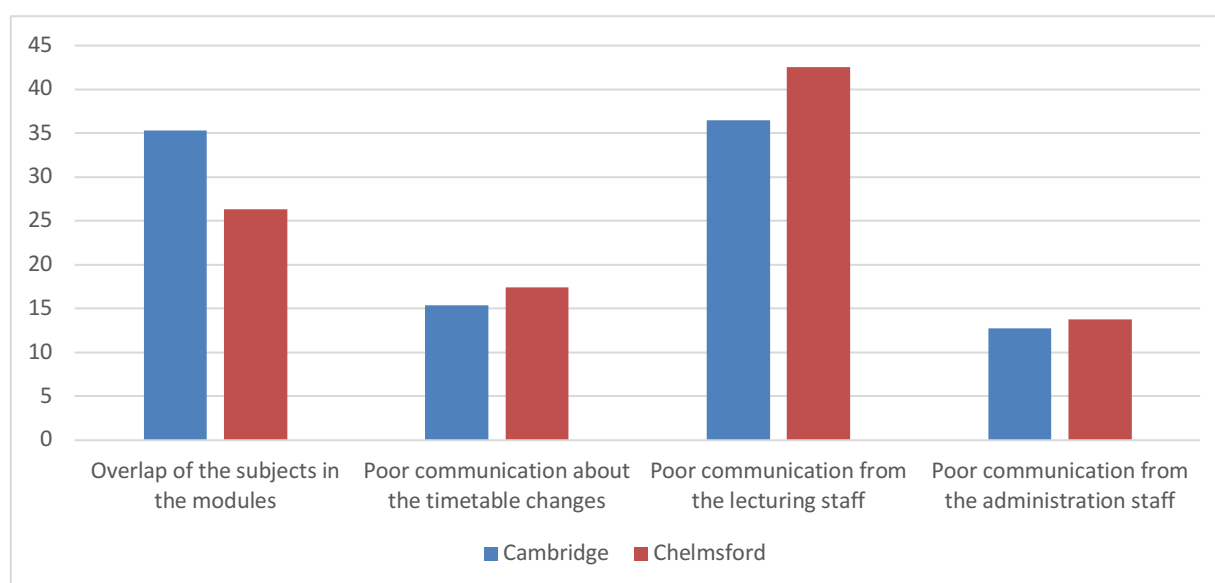
Table 39: Parts of the course the students did not value by year of study

	Were there any parts of your course that you did not value?				Total
	Overlap of the subjects in the modules	Poor communication about the timetable changes	Poor communication from the lecturing staff	Poor communication from the administration staff	
Year 1	41	26	57	21	145
Year 2	46	24	71	18	175
Year 3	68	33	68	27	219
Total	155 (29%)	83 (15%)	196 (36%)	66 (12%)	539

X^2= 10.491, p=.747 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the parts of the course students did not value and year of study; that is, the students in each year group had similar views on what they did not value from their course.

Chart 19: Parts of the course the students did not value by year of study (figures in percentages)
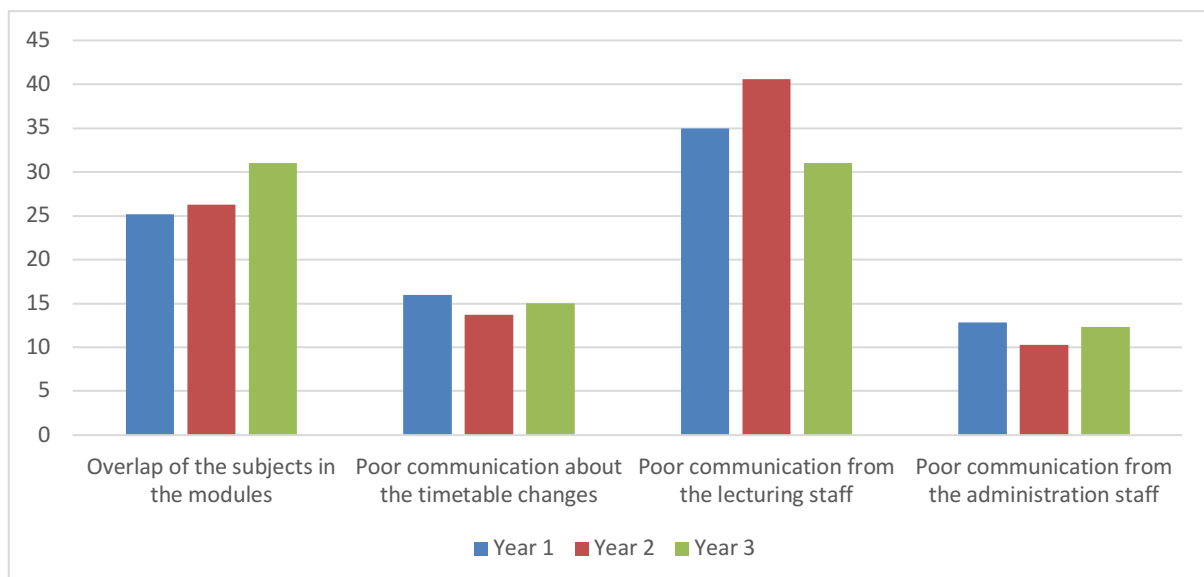
  o   **Participation in extracurricular activities**

Students were asked to identify the extracurricular activities which they participated in. The most popular extracurricular activity was identified in table 40 below as 'societies' which 166 out of the 344 (48 percent) students had joined followed by 'sports clubs' which 110 out of the 344 (32 percent) joined. Twenty-seven out of the 344 (eight percent) students were 'student representatives', 21 out of the 344 (six percent) joined a 'mentoring scheme' and 20 out of the 344 (six percent) participated in 'competitions'.

Variations in the participation in these activities were identified in the age groups of the students as is noted in the chi-squared test result below in table 40 and chart 22.

Table 40: Students' participation in extracurricular activities by age group

	Have you participated in any extracurricular activities?					Total
	Joined societies	Joined sports clubs	Participated in competitions run by my faculty/the university	Joined mentoring programme organised by Anglia Ruskin University	Been a student representative for the Students Union	
20 or younger	56	37	6	5	6	110
21-24	83	60	14	8	13	178
25+	27	13	0	8	8	56
Total	166 (48%)	110 (32%)	20 (6%)	21 (6%)	27 (8%)	344

X^2=17.594, p=.024 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the participation in extracurricular activities and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar satisfaction with the levels of participation in extracurricular activities.

Chart 20: Student participation in extracurricular activities by age group (figures in percentages)
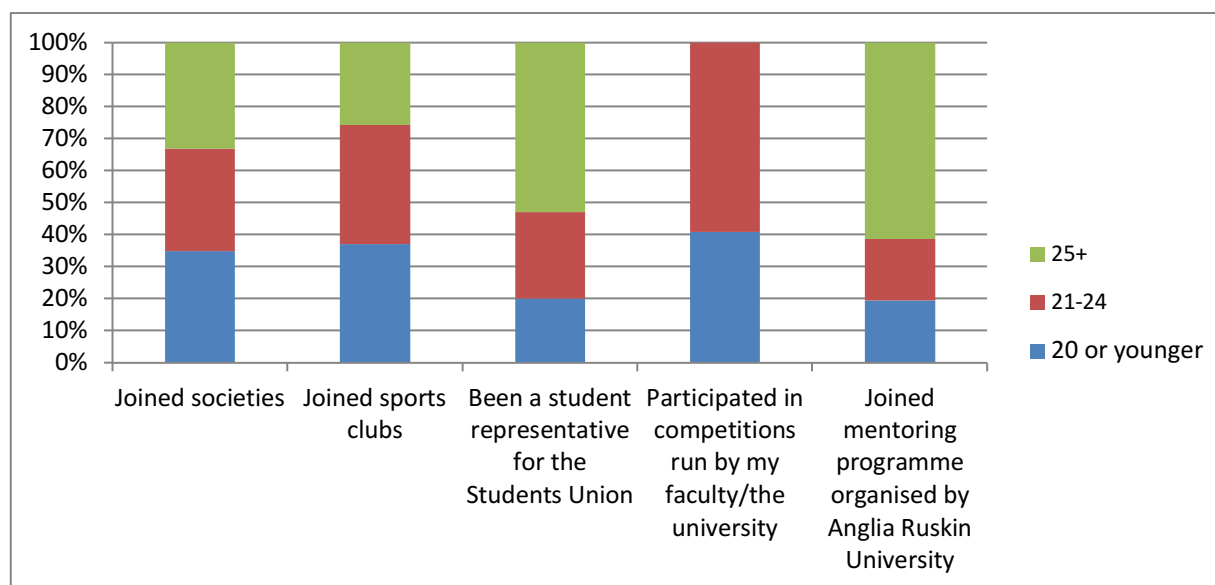
The 56 out of the 110 (51 percent) students aged 20 or younger were the largest group to join societies.   Sixty out of 178 (34 percent) students aged 21-24 and 37 out of the 110 (34 percent) students aged 20 or younger were members of sports clubs. Students in the age group 25+ were the largest group who were student representatives and had joined a mentoring scheme (eight out of 56, 14 percent for each activity).   The largest group to participate in competitions was the 14 out of 178 (eight percent) students aged 21-24.

Eighty-five percent of the age group 20 or younger were participating in societies and had joined sports clubs. The remaining 15 percent were participating in competitions, being student representatives or had joined a mentoring scheme.   This could be because the students had gone into the university straight from school and did not see the value in the activities where the numbers were low compared with the other age groups.

The findings for the students aged 25+ differed from those of the other two age groups as only 71 percent had joined societies and sports clubs. In this age group 28 percent were either student representatives or in mentoring schemes. Mature students would normally be more confident than their younger colleagues which means that they may have been more willing to be student representatives and may have seen the need to be active in this area. They also would have been keen to seek any opportunity to help them to get employment when they had finished their course and would, therefore, have seen the benefit of joining a mentoring scheme to a greater extent than the students in the two younger age groups.

   ○ **Valued experience while participating in extracurricular activities**

Having identified the percentages that were active in extracurricular activities the research programme wanted to find out to what extent the experience was valued by students.

Table 41 below shows us that 158 out of the 278 (57 percent) students stated that it was 'valuable'. Fifty-four out of the 278 (19 percent) students indicated that it was 'very valuable' making 76 percent in total who found their experience of extracurricular activities to be positive. Sixty out of the 278 (22 percent) students, however, were neutral on this issue indicating that it was 'neither valuable nor not valuable'. Only six out of the 278 (two percent) students said that the experience was 'not valuable'.

Variations were identified between students of different ages as is identified in the table 41 and chart 21 below.

Table 41: Extent to which students valued the experience of participating in extracurricular activities by age group

		How much have you valued your experience while participating in any extracurricular activities?				Total
		Very valuable	Valuable	Neither valuable nor not valuable	Not valuable	
Sample information	20 or younger	20	49	18	6	93
	21-24	25	89	30	0	144
	25+	9	20	12	0	41
Total		54 (19%)	158 (57%)	60 (22%)	6 (2%)	278

X^2=15.342, p=.018 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the value of participation in extracurricular activities and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar levels of value with the levels of participation in extracurricular activities.

Chart 21: Extent to which students valued their experience of participating in extracurricular activities by age group (figures in percentages)
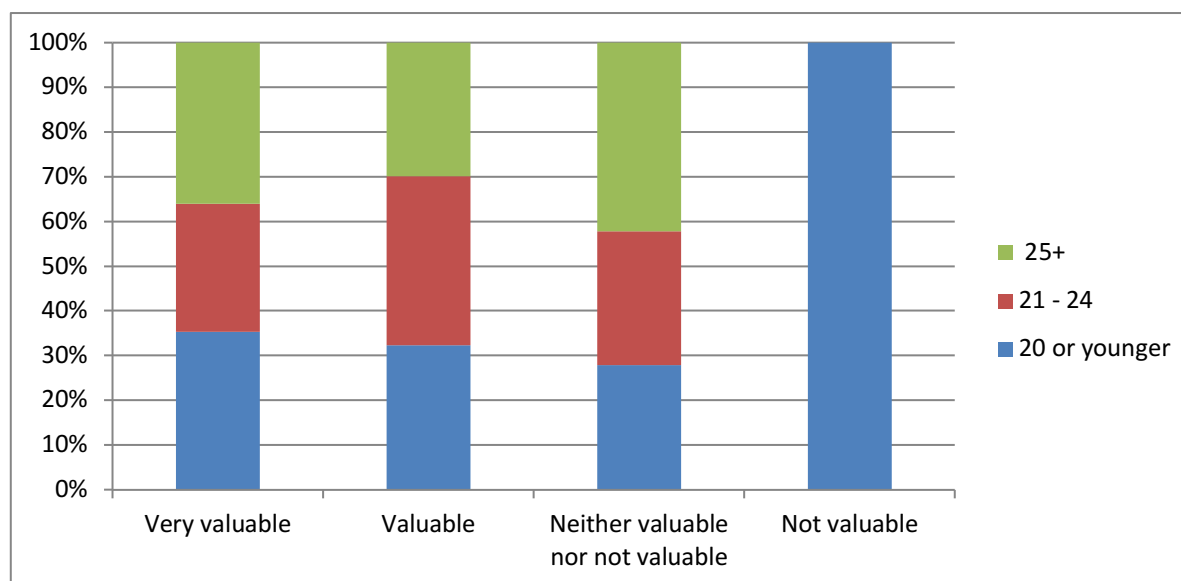
In table 41 above we can see that 20 out of the 93 (22 percent) students aged 20 or younger and nine out of the 41 (22 percent) aged 25+ regarded their participation in extracurricular activities as being 'very valuable'. The 89 out of the 144 (62 percent) students aged 21–24 only stated that it was 'valuable'. 12 out of the 41 (29 percent) students aged 25+ were neutral and stated that their participation in extracurricular activities was 'neither valuable or not valuable'. Only six out of the 93 (six percent) students aged 20 or younger indicated that their participation in extracurricular activities was 'not valuable'.

5.3.1.1 *Key findings regarding the learning experience*

The key findings about the learning experience are as follows:

Description of the learning experience

Second-year students aged 20 or younger living in Cambridge indicated that their experience was 'fun' and 'friendly' to a greater extent than 'informative'. Third-year students aged 25+ living in Chelmsford, on the other hand, rated their experience as 'informative' the highest. The first-year students aged 20 or younger living in Cambridge stated that the experience was 'exciting' more than the other students.

Overall the students aged 25+ were the most positive about their course, as 82 percent used positive words to describe their experience compared to 76 percent for students aged 21–24 and 75 percent for students aged 20 or younger. Students in Cambridge were enjoying their learning experience at the university more than those in Chelmsford.

Students identified what they value from studying on their courses

The students valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career (41 percent) more than they valued gaining in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in (32 percent) or the range of subjects they studied on their course (26 percent).

In terms of the breakdown by age group, students aged 25+ and those aged 20 or younger valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career more than the students in the 21–24 age group. The students aged 21–24 valued the range of subjects that they had studied to a greater extent than those aged 20 or younger and aged 25+. The students aged 20 or younger valued gaining an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in more than the students aged 21–24 and aged 25+.

What studying on the course had enabled them to do

Students aged 21–24 and aged 20 or younger valued developing knowledge of the subjects they had studied more than students aged 25+ which reflects the motivation for studying of the student population, as the 21–24 age group had a higher percentage that were academically orientated than the rest. Students aged 25+ valued acquiring skills for their potential career more than students aged 21-24 and aged 20 or younger. The largest group was students aged 25+ which is to be expected as they were vocationally orientated and appreciated the skills they were learning which was going to help them in their future career having returned to education with this intention. Students aged 20 or younger valued developing their interpersonal skills more than the other two age groups which is in line with the earlier research findings which established that this age group described their experience as 'fun' more than the other age groups.

What students didn't value

Students indicated that they did not value poor communication from the lecturing staff (39 percent), the overlap of subjects in the modules (31 percent), poor communications about the timetable changes (16 percent) and poor communication from the administration staff (13 percent).

Participation in extracurricular activities

The students participated in societies (48 percent), sports clubs (32 percent), as student representatives (eight percent), competitions (six percent) and mentoring schemes (six percent).

Students valued the experience of participating in extracurricular activities as 76 percent rated it either valuable or very valuable.

5.3.2   Relationship with lecturers

Students were asked what they valued in a lecturer, if the lecturers teaching them were demonstrating the values they had identified, if they were not why this was, and if the teaching had contributed to their personal development. These issues are analysed below.

o   **What students valued in a lecturer?**

The students were asked to rank in importance from 'very important' through to 'definitely not important' a list of factors which had been identified as the characteristics of an effective lecturer which students would value. Factorial analysis was applied to the data to identify the ranking of the 23 factors and how the factors clustered together. Table 42 below provides a ranking for the factors based on the mean and standard deviation for each factor.

Table 42: Analysis of the factors students valued in a lecturer – mean and standard deviation statistics from a factorial analysis of the data

What do you value in a lecturer	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knowledgeable	1.19	.455
Helpful	1.21	.472
Provides clear and helpful feedback	1.24	.518
Fair in their marking	1.25	.528
Well prepared	1.26	.504
Can explain issues/materials/notes well	1.27	.534
Good lesson delivery	1.27	.511
Readily available to speak to students	1.33	.555
Approachable	1.34	.755
Can motivate students	1.35	.619
Enthusiastic	1.39	.617
Provides clear marking schemes	1.40	.625
Professional	1.40	.654
Good control in the classroom	1.53	.683
Impartial marking	1.59	.796
Friendly	1.62	.712
Sensitive to students' needs	1.73	.761
Appropriate qualifications (e.g. PhD, professional qualifications)	1.83	.929
Charismatic	1.97	.835
Leads group discussions	2.04	.918
Sociable	2.21	.907
Involves students in class presentations	2.23	1.133
Encourages group work	2.28	1.028

Table 42 identifies that the factors 'knowledgeable', 'helpful', 'provides clear and helpful feedback' and 'fair in their marking' are the most important factors that students value in a lecturer. Students have identified that they do not like group work or class presentations and this is seen in table 42 as they have been ranked lowest in the list of factors that students value.

The factor analysis table of the correlation matrix identified the factor loadings between all the pairs of questions with only a few factor loadings having values over 0.5. The factor loadings that were above 0.5 were clustered around the factors 'fair in their marking', 'knowledgeable', 'good lesson delivery' and 'well prepared' as one factor and 'helpful' and 'readily available to speak to students' as another factor. On the other hand, a large number of factor loadings were very low (below 0.2) indicating that there were not any patterns between the factors for most of the questions. For example, the factor loadings between 'involves students in class presentations' and 'friendly' was 0.066 and 'impartial marking' and 'friendly' 0.156. Other factor loadings were also very low for example between 'involves students in class presentations' and 'helpful' (0.078) and 'approachable' (0.054) were also very low, suggesting that they were not connected.

Table 43: Summary of exploratory factor analysis results for what students' valued in a lecturer.

(N= 576)

Item	Classroom delivery	Student involvement	Personal qualities	Marking, Feedback, etc	Personality
Knowledgeable	.87				
Can explain issues/materials/notes well	.67				
Well prepared	.60				
Fair in their marking	.52				
Enthusiastic	.47				
Can motivate students	.32				
Encourages group work		.88			
Leads group discussions		.64			
Involves students in class presentations		.56			
Friendly			-.57		
Helpful			-.53		
Approachable			-.50		
Readily available to speak to students			-.45		
Sensitive to students' needs			-.39		
Provides clear marking schemes				.76	

Provides clear and helpful feedback				**.71**	
Professional				**.42**	
Good control in the classroom				.35	
Appropriate qualifications (e.g. PhD, professional qualifications)				.30	
Charismatic					**-.69**
Sociable					**-.50**
Good lesson delivery	**.64**				
Eigenvalues	7.81	2.16	1.29	1.12	1.01
% of variance	33.96	9.38	6.0	4.88	4.41

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 13 iterations.

Table 43 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items that cluster on the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents issues to do with classroom delivery, factor 2 represents issues to do with student involvement in classroom activities, factor 3 represents issues to do with the personal qualities of the lecturer, factor 4 issues concerning marking and feedback to the students and factor 5 the personality of the lecturer.

Table 43 above has identified the most important factors that students valued in the lecturers as follows:

- knowledgeable
- can explain issues well
- well prepared
- fair in their marking
- enthusiastic
- can motivate students.

The least important factors were that the lecturers were sociable, encouraged group work, lead group discussions, involved students in class presentations and were charismatic.

○ **The extent to which lecturers exhibited the values the students had identified**

In table 44 below we can see that 415 out of the 516 (80 percent) students found that the lecturers were exhibiting the values they had identified above. There were some variations between the students in terms of their age group, location and year of study, as can be seen in tables 44 – 46 and charts 22 – 24 below.

Table 44: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by age group

	Do your lecturers exhibit the values you have identified above?		Total
	Yes	No	
20 or under	149	32	181
21-24	194	58	252
25+	72	11	83
Total	415 (80%)	101 (20%)	516

$X2=4.416$, $p=.110$ which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which lecturers exhibit the values students identified and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar levels of views about the extent to which the lecturers had exhibited the values they identified.

Chart 22: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by age group (figures in percentages)
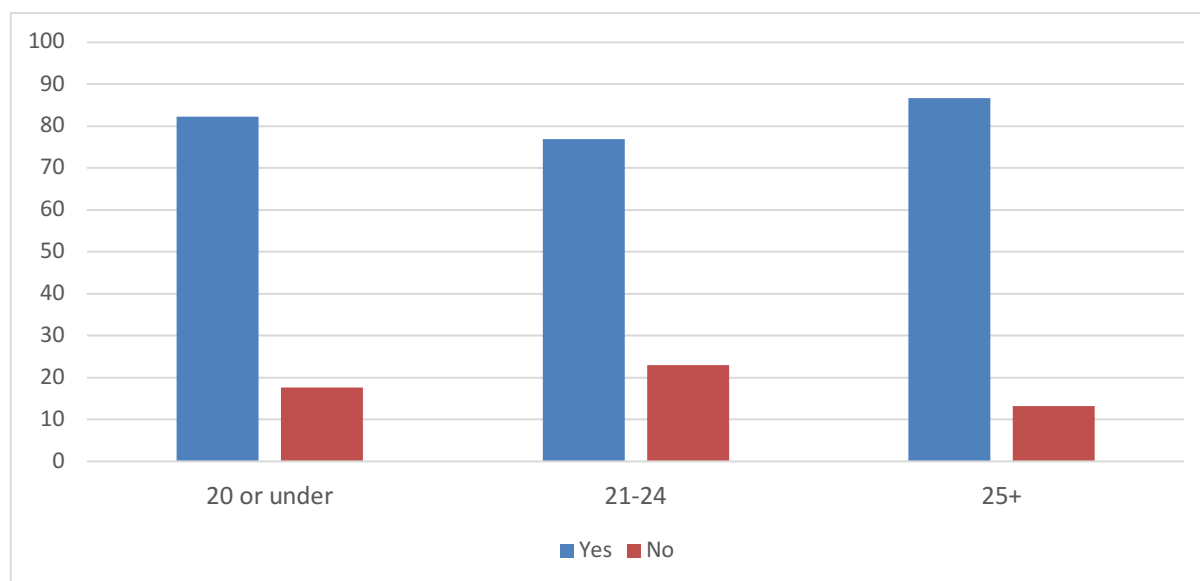
Table 45: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by campus

	Do your lecturers exhibit the values you have identified above?		Total
	Yes	No	
Cambridge	234	51	285
Chelmsford	181	50	231
Total	415 (80%)	101 (20%)	516

X2=1.140, p=.286 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which lecturers exhibit the values students identified and the campus where they were studying; that is, the students on both campuses had similar levels of views about the extent to which the lecturers had exhibited the values they identified.

Chart 23: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by campus (figures in percentages)
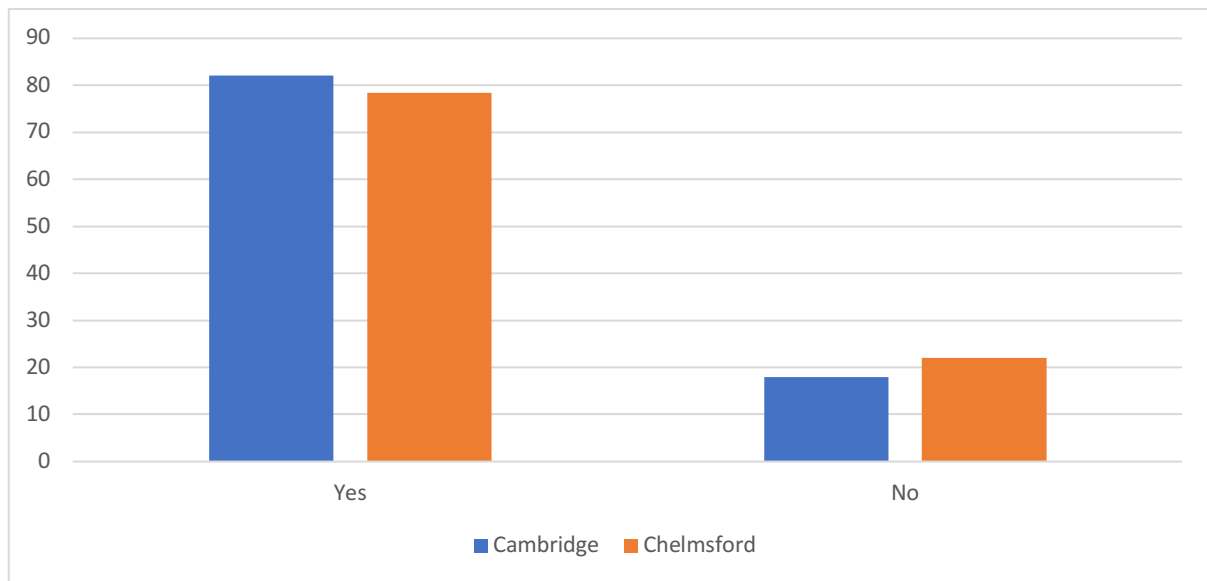
Table 46: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by year of study

	Do your lecturers exhibit the values you have identified above?		Total
	Yes	No	
Year 1	123	30	153
Year 2	138	25	163
Year 3	143	42	185
Total	404 (81%)	97 (19%)	501

X2=4.850, p=.303 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which lecturers exhibit the values students identified and year of study; that is, the students in the three years of study had similar levels of views about the extent to which the lecturers had exhibited the values they identified.

Chart 24: Extent to which lecturers exhibited the values students identified by year of study (figures in percentages)
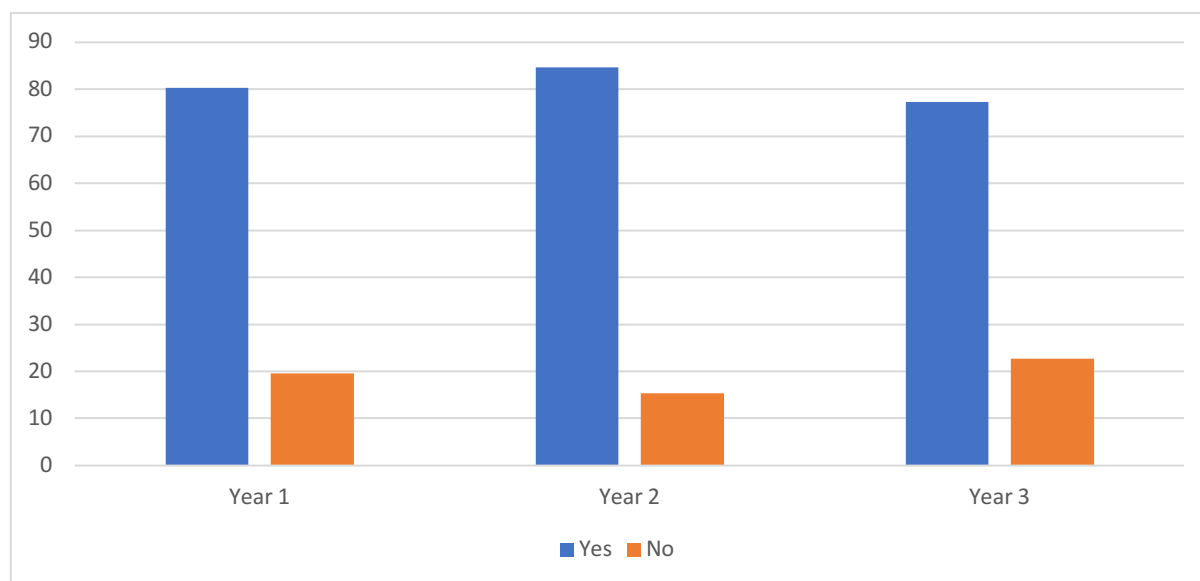
From the tables and charts above we can see that students aged 25+ (72 out of 83, 87 percent) thought that the lecturers were exhibiting the values identified above the most, as did those studying in Cambridge (234 out of 285, 82 percent) and in year two (138 out of 163, 85 percent). The highest groups of students who felt that they were not exhibiting these values were aged 21-24 (58 out of 252, 23 percent), studying in Chelmsford (50 out of 231, 22 percent) and in year three (42 out of 185, 23 percent).

Out of the 516 students overall, 101 (20 percent) stated that the lecturers were not exhibiting the values they had identified which are analysed below.

o **Reasons why lecturers were not exhibiting values which students considered to be important**

Students identified a number of issues about the personal qualities of the lecturers which concerned them. These were their poor communication skills, that they were unenthusiastic, unhelpful, unapproachable, boring, couldn't motivate students, lacked knowledge and skills and were poorly organised.   Tables 47 – 49 below provide a breakdown of these issues in terms of the percentages of each age group, campus and gender that identified the problem.

Table 47: Reasons why lecturers were not exhibiting values students considered important by age group (figures in percentages).

	20 or younger	21-24	25+
Poor communication	25	20	0
Unenthusiastic	13	13	0
Unhelpful	8	15	0
Unapproachable	4	9	20
Boring	8	7	0
Poorly organised	8	6	0
Language barrier	8	2	20
Cannot motivate students	4	4	0
Lack knowledge	0	6	0
Lack lecture skills	0	0	40

Table 48: Reasons why lecturers were not exhibiting values students considered important by campus (figures in percentages).

	Cambridge	Chelmsford
Poor communication	28	18
Unenthusiastic	14	9
Unhelpful	14	9
Unapproachable	9	9
Boring	5	12
Poorly organised	5	6
Language barrier	5	6
Cannot motivate students	0	3
Lack knowledge	5	3
Lack lecture skills	2	0

Table 49: Reasons why lecturers were not exhibiting values students considered important by gender (figures in percentages).

	Female	Male
Poor communication	26	13
Unenthusiastic	15	7
Unhelpful	9	17
Unapproachable	9	7
Boring	4	13
Poorly organised	6	7
Language barrier	4	7
Cannot motivate students	4	3
Lack knowledge	6	0
Lack lecture skills	2	3

The most significant issue which concerned them was poor communication from lecturers which is the same issue that was stated by students in table 37 above on page 155. This was of most concern to students aged 21-24 (25 percent), who were studying in Cambridge (28 percent) and female (26 percent). In the open question where students identified why lecturers did not exhibit the values they considered important, poor communication was identified as slow responses to emails, being hard to contact, not explaining things well, not providing clear feedback or not giving very much guidance to the students. The second highest issue identified by the students was the lecturers' lack of enthusiasm. This issue was of concern to 13 percent of the students aged 20 or younger and 21-24, studying in Cambridge (14 percent) and more of an issue for the females (15 percent) than males (seven percent). Students aged 25+ did not identify with this issue and instead were concerned that lecturers lacked lecturing skills (40 percent). This issue was only identified by students studying in Cambridge (two percent) and was of slightly more concern to males (three percent) than females (two percent). The main issue of concern to students aged 21-24 was that lecturers were unhelpful (15 percent) which was of concern more to students studying in Cambridge (14 percent) than those in Chelmsford and to males (17percent) more than females.

The research findings indicate a wide range of issues students did not value in the lecturers who were teaching them. The issues were spread across the two campuses although the total numbers of students raising these issues were higher in Cambridge and female than those in Chelmsford and male.

o **The extent to which students valued the relationship with lecturers**

The relationship with the lecturers was identified by students in the qualitative research in section 4.3.2 on page 81 as an important factor for them. The research programme sought to identify if this theme was true.

In table 50 and chart 25 below the research findings have identified that 301 out of the 560 students (54 percent) valued the relationship they have with their lecturers 'to some extent', 111 out of the 560 (20 percent) valued it 'a great deal', 113 out of 560 (20 percent) valued it 'a little'. Those who didn't value the relationship were 28 out of the 560 (five percent) who said that they valued it 'not much' and seven out of 560 (one percent) who didn't value the relationship at all.

Table 50: Extent to which students valued the relationship with their lecturers by age group

		To what extent would you say that you have valued the relationship you have with your lecturers?					Total
		A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	Not at all	
Sample information	20 or younger	29	100	53	15	0	197
	21-24	57	145	47	13	7	269
	25+	25	56	13	0	0	94
Total		111 (20%)	301 (54%)	113 (20%)	28 (5%)	7 (1%)	560

There was a significant association between the extent to which students valued the relationship they had with their lecturers and age group x^2=28.187, p <.001.

Chart 25: Extent to which students valued the relationship with their lecturers by age group (figures in percentages)
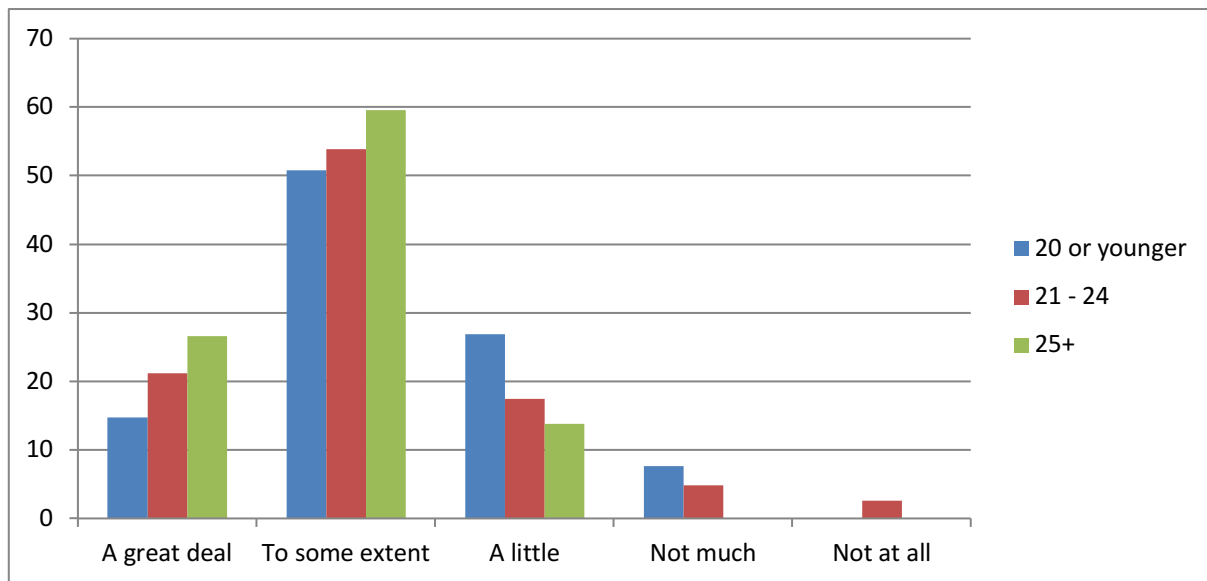
Twenty-five out of 94 students aged 25+ (27 percent) were the largest group in percentage terms to identify that they valued the relationship with their lecturers 'a great deal'. They were also the largest group to value the relationship 'to some extent' as 56 out of 94 (59 percent) indicated that this was the case. Fifty-three out of the 197 (27 percent) aged 20 or younger were the largest group to value the relationship 'a little' and 15 out of the 197 (eight percent) 'not much'. Seven out of 269 (three percent) students aged 21-24 were the only students who value the relationship with the lecturers 'not at all'. The students aged 25+ valued the relationship with the lecturers the most as these students were older than the other students and, therefore, likely to be closer in age to their lecturers; they may value the relationships that the lecturers develop with them by being friendly inside and outside the classroom. At the other extreme, the students aged 20 or younger were the age group that valued the relationship with the lecturers the least, which could be because they were not interested in a relationship with the lecturer, seeing them as a 'teacher' who they were used to holding at a distance when they were in school. Unlike the mature students, they may not appreciate having a relationship with their lecturers in the form of talking about their subjects or having a social conversation outside the lecture room and would prefer to be with their friends.

In table 51 below we see that the students' value of the lecturing staff increased as they progressed through their studies. Forty-four out of the 199 (22 percent) third-year students valued the relationship 'a great deal' which was the highest of the three years. They were very similar to the second-year students in valuing the relationship 'to some extent' at 98 out of the 180 (54 percent) second years and 106 out of the 199 (53 percent) which was higher

than the 88 out of 175 (50 percent) in year one. The 40 out of 175 (23 percent) year one students were the highest to value the relationship 'a little' and were similar to the third-years in valuing the relationship 'not much' at 13 out of 199 (seven percent) for the third-years and 11 out of 175 (six percent) for the first-years. The first-years valued the relationship 'not at all' the most at five out of 175 (three percent).

Table 51: Extent to which students valued the relationship they had with their lecturers by year of study

	To what extent would you say that you have valued the relationship you have with your lecturers?					Total
	A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	Not at all	
Year 1	31	88	40	11	5	175
Year 2	33	98	38	8	3	180
Year 3	44	106	33	13	3	199
Total	108 (19%)	292 (53)	111 (20%)	32 (6%)	11 (2%)	554

X^2= 20.646, p = .563 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students valued the relationship they had with their lecturers and the year of study; that is, the students in the three years of study had similar levels of satisfaction with the value they had with the relationship with their lecturers.

The research findings have identified a range of views on the extent to which the students valued the relationship they have with their lecturers, with the students aged 25+ and in year three valuing it the most and those aged 20 or younger and in year one the least. The research findings presented indicate that the students valued the relationship with the lecturers which contributed to the value the students experienced on the course.

- o **Teaching contributed to personal development**

From table 52 below we can see that 476 out of the 566 (84 percent) students identified that the teaching they had received had contributed to their personal development.

The 94 out of 99 (95 percent) students aged 25+ had found that the teaching had contributed to their personal development the most and the 44 out of 198 (22 percent) students aged 20 or younger the least.

Table 52: Extent to which students agreed that teaching had contributed to their personal development by age group

	Would you agree that the teaching you have received from your lecturers has contributed to your personal development?		Total
	Yes	No	
20 or younger	154	44	198
21-24	228	41	269
25+	94	5	99
Total	476 (84%)	90 (16%)	566

There was a significant association between the view of students about the teaching they received from their lecturers and age group x^2=14.720, p=.001.

As noted above in table 44 on page 169, the students aged 25+ valued the relationship with the lecturers the most and they may also have felt that they had most to gain from returning to education in which case they may have felt that the teaching had contributed to their personal development more than the other two groups.

5.3.2.1 *Key findings of the relationship between lecturers and students*

The key findings about the relationship that students had with their lecturers are as follows:

The Relationship between lecturer and student

Students valued lecturers who were knowledgeable, could explain issues/materials/notes well, were well prepared, fair in their marking and enthusiastic, and could motivate students.

Eighty percent of the students identified that their lecturers exhibited these values. The remaining 20 percent felt that they were not exhibiting these values due to poor communication from the lecturers, they were unenthusiastic, unhelpful and lacking lecturing skills.

Poor communication from the lecturers was of most concern to students aged 21-24 (25 percent), who were studying in Cambridge (28 percent) and female (26 percent).

The second highest issue identified by the students was the lecturers' lack of enthusiasm. This issue was of concern to 13 percent of the students aged 20 or younger and 21-24 studying in Cambridge (14 percent) and more of an issue for females (15 percent) than males (seven percent).

The main issue of concern to students aged 21-24 was that lecturers were unhelpful (15 percent) which was of concern more to students studying in Cambridge (14 percent) than those in Chelmsford and to males (17 percent) than females.

Students aged 25+ were concerned that lecturers lacked lecturing skills (40 percent). This issue was only identified by students studying in Cambridge (two percent) and was of slightly more concern to males (three percent) than females (two percent).

Extent to which students valued relationship with lecturers

Fifty-four percent of the students indicated that they valued the relationship they had with their lecturers 'to some extent', 20 percent valued the relationship 'a great deal', and 20 percent also valued it 'a little'.

Twenty percent of the students aged 25+ valued the relationship with their lecturers 'a great deal' and were the largest group to value the relationship 'to some extent' as 59 percent indicated that this was the case. Twenty-seven percent of the students aged 20 or younger were the largest group to value the relationship 'a little' and eight percent 'not much'. Students aged 21-24 (three percent) were the only students who valued the relationship with the lecturers 'not at all'. The students aged 25+ valued the relationship with the lecturers the most, as these students were older than the other students and, therefore, likely to be closer in age to their lecturers they may have valued the relationships that the lecturers developed with them by being friendly inside and outside the classroom. At the other extreme, the students aged 20 or younger were the age group that valued the relationship with the lecturers the least, which could be because they were not interested in a relationship with the lecturers seeing them as a 'teacher' who they were used to holding at a distance when they were in school. Unlike the mature students they may not have appreciated having a relationship with their lecturers in the form of talking about their subjects or having a social conversation outside the lecture room and would prefer to be with their friends.

The students' value of the lecturing staff increased as they progressed through their studies, as 22 percent of the third-year students valued the relationship 'a great deal' which was the highest of the three years. They were very similar to the second-year students in valuing the relationship 'to some extent'. Twenty-three percent of the first-year students were the

highest to value the relationship 'a little' and were similar to the third-years in valuing it 'not much' at seven percent for the third-years and six percent for the first-years. The first-years valued the relationship 'not at all' the most at three percent.

Teaching contributed to personal development

Ninety-five percent of students aged 25+ had found that the teaching had contributed to their personal development the most and 22 percent of students aged 20 or younger the least.

5.3.3   Relationships with other students

The research programme sought to examine in more depth students' views on their relationships with their fellow students in the area of developing self-help groups and if their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students.

o   **Self-help groups**

Students were asked if they had set up any self-help groups to help them in their studies to provide supporting evidence for the findings in section 4.3.3.1 on page 85. In table 53 below we see that 198 out of the 573 (35 percent) students had set up self-help groups. Out of the 312 students studying in Cambridge, 119 (38 percent) had set up self-help groups which was higher than the 79 out of 261 (30 percent) studying in Chelmsford. Table 54 below shows us that 66 out of the 175 (38 percent) students in year one was the highest group to set up self-help groups and the students in year three the lowest (61 out of 200, 31 percent).

Table 53: Students who had or had not set up self-help groups by campus

		Have you set up any self-help groups with your fellow students to help you to develop your understanding of your subjects and work on your projects?		Total
		Yes	No	
Sample information	Cambridge	119	193	312
	Chelmsford	79	182	261
Total		198 (35%)	375 (65%)	573

X^2=3.895, p=.048 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students had set up self-help groups and the location where they were studying; that is, the students in both locations had similar views about whether or not they had set up self-help groups.

Table 54: Students who had or had not set up self-help groups by year of study

	Have you set up any self-help groups with your fellow students to help you to develop your understanding of your subjects and work on your projects?		Total
	Yes	No	
Year 1	66	109	175
Year 2	67	115	182
Year 3	61	139	200
Total	194 (35%)	363 (65%)	557

X2=3.951, p =.413 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students had set up self-help groups and the year of study; that is, the students in the three years of study had similar views on whether or not they had set up self-help groups.

o **Value of self-help groups**

Table 55 below identifies that 120 out of the 208 (58 percent) students found the self-help groups 'valuable' and 68 out of the 208 (33 percent) 'very valuable'. Twenty out of the 208

(10 percent) of the students were neutral finding the self-help groups 'neither valuable nor not valuable'.

Sixteen out of the 39 (41 percent) students aged 25+ found the self-help groups to be 'very valuable' which was higher than the other age groups. 38 out of the 64 (59 percent) students aged 20 or younger found the self-help groups 'valuable' which was similar to the 23 out of 39 (59 percent) students aged 25+. Eight out of 64 (13 percent) students aged 20 or younger were the highest age group who were neutral about the value of the self-help groups. In terms of the year of study (see table 56 below), 23 out of the 67 (34 percent) students studying in year three were the highest group to find self-help groups 'very valuable' and 44 out of the 77 (63 percent) students studying in year two were the highest group to find self-help groups 'valuable'.

Table 55: Value of self-help groups by age group

		How valuable to you has this support group been?			Total
		Very valuable	Valuable	Neither valuable nor not valuable	
Sample information	20 or younger	18	38	8	64
	21-24	34	59	12	105
	25+	16	23	0	39
Total		68 (33%)	120 (58%)	20 (10%)	208

X^2= 5.986, p = .200 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students valued their support group and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar levels of satisfaction with the support groups they were associated with.

Table 56: Value of self-help groups by year of study

		How valuable to you has this support group been?			Total
		Very valuable	Valuable	Neither valuable nor not valuable	
Sample information	Year 1	21	40	5	66
	Year 2	21	44	5	70
	Year 3	23	34	10	67
Total		65 (32%)	118 (58%)	20 (10%)	203

X^2=3.788, p=.436 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students valued their support group and year of study; that is, the students in the three years of study had similar levels of satisfaction with the support groups they were associated with.

The value of self-help groups was high for all the students that participated in them and, as the results above have demonstrated, highest for students aged 25+ and in the third year of their courses who were the highest groups to indicate that they were 'very valuable'.

o   **Students views about the social life in the university**

In tables 57 and 58 below we see that 411 out of the 551 (75 percent) respondents stated that there was a good social life in the university. Out of the 301 studying in Cambridge, 250 (eighty-three percent) stated that the social life was good, which was higher than the 161 out of 250 (64 percent) studying in Chelmsford.   The reason why the students in Chelmsford were not happy with the social life may be due to the numbers who were living at home (see Table 17 on page 116) and were not participating in social activities on campus. In table 58 we see that 150 out of the 197 (76 percent) students aged 20 or younger were the highest group to feel that the university had a good social life whereas 195 out of 266 (73 percent) students aged 21-24 had the lowest positive view about the university's social life. Table 59 shows us that 138 out of 168 (82 percent) students studying in year one felt that the university social life was good to a greater extent than those studying in the other years.

The social life can be linked to the participation in extracurricular activities which was discussed in section 5.3.1 page 159 and the percentage of students living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university (see section 5.2.2.2 on page 122).   In Cambridge, the number of students living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to

the university was higher than in Chelmsford. The largest groups of students in Cambridge were in the age groups 20 or younger and 21-24 (see section 5.2.2.2 on page 124). These age groups were the largest group to join sports clubs and, in the case of the students aged 20 or younger, societies (see section 5.3.1 on page 159) which they found valuable (see section 5.3.1 on page 161). This would explain the reason why the students in Cambridge and aged 20 or younger felt that the social life was better than the ones in Chelmsford and the other age groups.

Table 57: Students who felt that the university had a good social life by campus

	Is there a good social life at the university?		Total
	Yes	No	
Cambridge	250	51	301
Chelmsford	161	89	250
Total	411 (75%)	140 (25%)	551

There was a significant association between the views of the students of the social life in the university and the location x^2= 25.081, p<.001.

Table 58: Students who felt that the university had a good social life by age group

| | Is there a good social life at the university? | | Total |
	Yes	No	
20 or younger	150	47	197
21-24	195	71	266
25+	66	22	88
Total	411 (75%)	140 (25%)	551

X^2= .489, p = .783 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students felt that there was a good social life and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar views of the social life in the university.

Table 59: Students who felt that the university had a good social life by year of study

| | Is there a good social life at the university? | | Total |
	Yes	No	
Year 1	138	30	168
Year 2	124	51	175
Year 3	138	55	193
Total	400 (75%)	136 (25%)	536

X^2= 7.683, p = .104 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students felt that there was a good social life and the year of study; that is, the students studying in the three year groups had similar views of the social life in the university.

- o **Extent to which the students' university experience had been enhanced by their fellow students**

The relationship with their fellow students was identified in the research programme in section 4.3.3.1 on page 85 as something that enhanced the students' experience. The purpose of this question was to explore this theme and identify the extent to which this was true for the students.

Table 60 below shows us that 231 out of the 551 (42 percent) responses thought that their experience had been enhanced 'to some extent', 199 out of 551 (36 percent) respondents thought that their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students 'a great deal', 88 out of 551 (16 percent) 'a little' and 33 out of the 551 (six percent) 'not much'.

Table 60: Extent to which students' university experience had been enhanced by their fellow students by age group

	Overall how much has your university experience been enhanced by your fellow students?				Total
	A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	
20 or younger	72	77	32	15	196
21-24	103	116	34	10	263
25+	24	38	22	8	92
Total	199 (36%)	231 (42%)	88 (16%)	33 (6%)	551

X^2= 13.197, p =.040 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students' experience has been enhanced by their fellow students and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar views on the extent to which their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students.

Table 61: Extent to which students' university experiences had been enhanced by their fellow students by campus

	Overall how much has your university experience been enhanced by your fellow students?				Total
	A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	
Cambridge	128	115	42	17	302
Chelmsford	71	116	46	16	249
Total	199 (36%)	231 (42%)	88 (16%)	33 (6%)	551

X^2 = 11.552, p = .009 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between the extent to which students' experience has been enhanced by their fellow students and location; that is, the students in both locations had similar views on the extent to which their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students.

From tables 60 and 61 above it can be seen that the 103 of the 263 (39 percent) students aged 21-24 and the 128 out 302 (42 percent) studying in Cambridge were the highest groups that thought their experience had been enhanced 'a great deal'. Thirty-eight out of the 92 (67 percent) students aged 25+ and 116 out of the 249 (47 percent) studying in Chelmsford were the largest groups to state that their experience had been enhanced 'to some extent'. Twenty-two out of the 92 (24 percent) students aged 25+ and 46 out of the 249 (19 percent) students studying in Chelmsford thought that their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students 'a little'.

The reasons why the students aged 21-24 felt that their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students more than the other two groups may have been due to their participation in extracurricular activities as noted in section 5.3.1 on page 161, where the students in this age group were found to have valued their participation in extracurricular activities more than the other two groups. The students were also the largest group to live in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university, as noted in section 5.2.2.2 on page 122 and would, therefore, have been looking to their fellow students for their social life and experience while studying at the university.

The students aged 20 or younger had a lower score than those aged 21-24 which could be because the students had not been in the university as long as the other students, so had not had the same amount of time to build relationships with their fellow students. Also, as noted in the last paragraph, the percentage living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university for this age group was not as high as it was for those aged 21-24, meaning that more of them were living at home and not mixing with their fellow students.

The 25+ age group were identified in section 5.2.2 on page 115 as the largest group to live at home and the smallest group to value their experience of extracurricular activities (see section 5.3.1 on page 162). The implication from these findings was that this age group was likely to not mix as much with their fellow students as the others and, therefore, not feel that the other students had enhanced their experience.

It has already been identified in section 5.2.2.2 on page 124 that the student population in Cambridge was younger and more of them were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university than were the students in Chelmsford. It was also identified above in section 5.3.3 on page 184 that more of the students in Cambridge stated that there was a good social life on campus compared with those in Chelmsford. It is likely, therefore, that the Cambridge students were mixing more with their fellow students in and around the campus during and after their lectures/seminars. As a

result, their experience was being enhanced to a greater extent by their fellow students than were the students in Chelmsford.

5.3.3.1 *Key findings about the students' relationship with their fellow students*

Relationship of students with other students

Self-help groups

Thirty-five percent of the students had set up self-help groups with 39 percent set up by students studying in Cambridge and 30 percent of the students studying in Chelmsford. Year-one students were the highest year group to set up self-help groups and the year-three students the lowest.

Fifty-eight percent of the students found self-help groups 'valuable', 33 percent 'very valuable' and 10 percent were neutral finding the self-help groups 'neither valuable nor not valuable'.

The highest groups in terms of age and year of study to find the self-help groups 'very valuable' were the students aged 25+ and those studying in the third year.

Good social life on campus

Seventy-five percent of the students agreed that there was a good social life in the university with the majority found in Cambridge (83 percent), aged 20 or younger (76 percent) and in year one (82 percent).

Experience enhanced by fellow students

Forty-two percent of the students thought that their experience had been enhanced 'to some extent', 36 percent indicated that their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students 'a great deal, 16 percent 'a little' and six percent 'not much'.

The largest groups whose experience had been enhanced by their fellow students 'a great deal' were aged 21-24 and studying in Cambridge. This compared with the largest groups whose experience had been enhanced 'to some extent' and 'a little' who were aged 25+ and studying in Chelmsford.

5.4   Postgraduate experience

The research programme asked the current students what they planned to do when they graduate and the findings are discussed below.

5.4.1   What students expected to do when they had finished their course

From tables 62 and 63 we can see that 365 out of the 560 (65 percent) students expected to 'get a job they were interested in' when they graduated. Out of the 560 students, 136 (24 percent) would 'study for a higher degree' and 59 out of 560 (11 percent) would do both. The 132 out of the 198 (67 percent) students aged 20 or younger were slightly higher than the other two age groups in the percentage that were going to 'get a job they were interested in' as were the 179 of 256 (70 percent) of students studying in Chelmsford. The percentage of students planning to study for a higher degree was also higher for students aged 20 or younger (54 out of 198, 27 percent) but the higher percentage for this were in Cambridge (90 out of 304, 30 percent) compared with those studying in Chelmsford.

Table 62: Students' expectations of what they would do after they had completed their course by age group

	What do you expect to do when you have finished your course?			Total
	Get a job I am interested in	Study for a higher degree	Both	
20 or younger	132	54	12	198
21-24	171	64	30	265
25+	62	18	17	97
Total	365 (65%)	136 (24%)	59 (11%)	560

X^2=10.566, p=.032 which tells us that there is no statistically significant association between what students expect to do when they have finished their course and age group; that is, the students in the three age groups had similar views on what they expected to do when they had finished their course.

Table 63: Students' expectations of what they would do after they had completed their course by campus

	What do you expect to do when you have finished your course?			Total
	Get a job I am interested in	Study for a higher degree	Both	
Cambridge	186	90	28	304
Chelmsford	179	46	31	256
Total	365 (65%)	136 (24%)	59 (11%)	560

There was a significant association between what students expected to do when they had finished their course and the location where they were studying x^2=10.485, p=.005.

The high number of students who were going to get a job at the end of their course reflects that the students had a vocational orientation and saw employment as the end goal for their studies. In section 5.2.1 on page 111 it was identified that all the students aged 25+, 84 percent of the students aged 20 or younger and 77 percent of the students aged 21-24 had a vocational orientation. The remaining students had an academic orientation and went to university to continue studying the subjects they liked (23 percent aged 21-24 and 16 percent aged 20 or younger). These figures may explain why a higher number of the students aged 20 or younger were planning to get a job when they finished their course. It does not, however, explain why they were the largest group to continue studying, as the suggestion would be more likely that the students aged 21-24 would be continuing to study for a higher degree as more of them went to university to carry on studying subjects they liked. However, if the group that is going to do both is included, the total for the students aged 21-24 is higher at 35 percent than the 33 percent for students aged 20 or younger.

The number of students who planned to get a job was higher in Chelmsford than in Cambridge. This result was only to be expected, as Chelmsford had a higher proportion of students aged 25+ than was the case in Cambridge and they all had a vocational orientation.

5.4.1.1 *Key findings of what students expected to do after they have finished their course*

The key finding about what the students expect to do after they have finished with their course is provided below which identifies the value students expect to achieve when they graduate.

Sixty-five percent of the students expected to get a job they were interested in when they graduated, 24 percent planned to study for a higher degree and 11 percent both. Sixty-seven percent of the students aged 20 or younger identified that they were going to get a job which was slightly higher than the other two age groups. The students studying in Chelmsford indicated that they were going to get a job more than those in Cambridge.

The students planning to study for a higher degree was also higher for students aged 20 or younger at 27 percent and those who were studying in Cambridge (30 percent).

5.5   Conclusion

This chapter has reported on the findings from the quantitative research programme that was undertaken as the second phase of the research programme that was identified in the research methodology chapter (see chapter 3, section 3.4, page 45) as the most suitable method to achieve useable results. The following section summarises the results from the two phases of the research programme to identify what the students valued from their educational experience and to answer the three research questions:

What do students value when they are applying to a university?

What do students value while they are studying at the university?

What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

5.5.1   What do students value when they are applying to a university?

The qualitative research findings identified that students were anticipating the value they would create through the experience they would have when they were studying at the university and after they had graduated and were in employment or studying at a higher level degree. Value was influenced at this stage of the student experience by their motivation for studying for a degree and where they wanted to live while they were at the university.

The research findings discussed in this chapter have added to the qualitative findings as they have identified that 84 percent of the students were vocationally orientated and the remaining 16 percent academically orientated. The majority of students, therefore, viewed the student experience as the means by which they would either improve their career

opportunities or further their career (if they were mature and had already been in employment).

In the qualitative research the interviewees identified that students wanted to live in the university accommodation or at home depending on the experience they wanted to have when they were studying at the university. The quantitative research findings found that the students who wanted to live in the university accommodation were anticipating the value they would have at the university as 36 percent wanted the stereotypical student life and 21 percent independence from their family. On the other hand, the students who wanted to live at home did so because they didn't want to incur debts, wanted to go to a local university so they could be with their friends and family (24 percent each) and/or didn't want to study away from home (19 percent).

The findings in chapter four identified that family members and friends influenced the students in their decision to go to university. The research findings in this chapter have confirmed this and identified that parents and friends were the most important groups to influence the students. The extent to which the students were influenced by each group varied across the three age groups. Twenty-three percent, however, stated that nobody influenced them in their decision to go to university.

The qualitative research programme established that students searched for information about the courses they wanted to study on-line at the UCAS website and the university prospectus. The research results in this chapter have confirmed that the UCAS website is the most important source used by students. The other source identified in both research programmes was attendance at an open/offer day. In this chapter additional sources have been identified namely word of mouth, of which friends and family members were the most important sources, and school/teachers.

Value was realised during the application phase in the qualitative research findings when students attended an open/offer day or had contact with the university staff at other times (for example during clearing). In this chapter, the attendance at an open/offer day was seen to be of value to the students in the research programme with 57 percent stating that it was very helpful to them. Finally, the students realised value when they were offered a place at the university and received the elation of their family.

5.5.2   What do students value while they are studying at the university?

The research programme has examined the value students identified in three areas – their learning experience, relationship with lecturers/administrators and relationships with other students. The following section summarises these findings.

- **Learning experience**

The research programme found that the students enjoyed their learning experience which they labelled as being 'friendly', 'fun', and 'informative' and which varied by age group. As the majority of the students were vocationally orientated, they valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career (42 percent). Students also valued developing in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in (32 percent). In the qualitative research programme, the most important factor the students identified was building confidence through their studies. This factor was not seen to be as important in the quantitative research as developing knowledge of subjects and acquiring skills for the students for future careers. Students also valued the experience they had as they participated in extracurricular activities of which membership of societies and sports clubs were the most important.

- **Relationship with lecturers**

The second area where students valued the experience at the university was in the relationship they had with the lecturers and administration staff. The quantitative research findings found that 74 percent of the students valued the relationship they had with their lecturers. They identified a list of factors they considered to be important in the lecturer which mirrored that discussed in the qualitative research, and 80 percent of the students indicated that the lecturers were exhibiting these values.

Students in the qualitative research programme identified that value was marred as they had negative experiences caused by poor communication from the lecturers and administrators and the overlap of theories and ideas in the modules they studied. The research findings in this chapter identified that this was a problem, as 62 percent stated that poor communication issues existed and 28 percent were concerned with the overlap of theories and ideas.

- **Relationship with students**

The final aspect of the value the students experienced was in the relationships they had with other students. Seventy-five percent of the students valued the social life in the university and 78 percent believed that their experience had been enhanced by their fellow students. These findings prove that the student experience was positive which they valued as they interacted with their fellow students. The other aspect of the student experience identified in the qualitative research was the formation of self-help groups which students found useful for creating friendships. In the quantitative research, the percentage who stated that they were forming and working in self-help groups was low at 35 percent. The value of the self-help groups for the students who participated in them was high, however, as 33 percent stated that it was 'very valuable' and 58 percent 'valuable'.

5.5.3 What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

The research findings in this chapter have agreed with the findings in the last chapter as the majority of the students stated that they were vocationally orientated and value would be realised for them when they graduated and were in employment. In contrast to this only 24 percent were academically orientated and intended studying for a higher qualification when they had completed their undergraduate studies.

At the end of chapter four a comparison between the conceptual framework and the list of the themes was presented in table 9. Table 64 below contains a comparison of the conceptual framework and both the qualitative and quantitative research findings which illustrates the areas where the conceptual framework needs to be altered and the relationship between the two sets of research findings.

Table 64: Comparison between the conceptual framework and the themes identified from the qualitative and quantitative research programmes

Conceptual framework	Themes identified from the qualitative research programme:	Themes identified from the quantitative research programme:
Application process	**Application process**	**Application process**
Anticipation of value when studying or graduated	**Anticipation of value when studying or graduated**	**Anticipation of value when studying or graduated**
Daydreaming or fantasizing	Students thought about the types of experiences they wanted while they were studying at the university. This was evidenced through the following: - Students who expected to have a good social life and were disappointed when the university didn't provide it. - Other students didn't want to engage with their fellow students and experience the stereotypical student life.	
	Some students planned for their time in the university and tried to develop friendships through social media before they started.	

Motivation for studying at university	Motivation for studying at university	Motivation for studying at university
Orientation to study: - Vocational - Academic - Social	The majority of the students were vocationally orientated as they decided to go to university in order to enhance their job prospects or further their career; they liked to do things that enhanced their CV and made them attractive to employers while they were studying on their course; and the majority expected to get a job when they finished their course.	Vocationally orientated: - 84 percent of the students - All students aged 25+ - 84 percent of students aged 20 or younger - 77 percent of students aged 21-24 Higher percentage of students aged 20 or younger had vocational orientation due to (a) concern for future employment prospects and (b) impact of changes to fee structure.
	The minority of students were academically orientated and wanted to study subjects that they enjoyed to a higher level.	Academically orientated: – 23 percent of students aged 21-24 – 16 percent of students aged 20 or younger
Decision to stay at home or live in university accommodation	**Decision to stay at home or live in university accommodation**	**Decision to stay at home or live in university accommodation**
Live at home to avoid incurring large debts and keep existing friends and family relationships	Students decided to live at home as: - They wanted to be near their family and friends - Didn't want to incur debt	Students who lived at home: - 72 percent aged 25+ - 48 percent aged 20 or younger

	- Didn't want to have the stereotypical student life.	- 44 percent aged 21-24 Majority of students in Chelmsford (65 percent) lived at home. Reasons why students lived at home: - wanted to avoid incurring debt – most important reason for students aged 21-24 and 20 or younger (29 percent each). Only of concern for eight percent of students aged 25+. More important for students in Cambridge (21 percent) than those in Chelmsford (19 percent) - wanted to maintain their family relationships and friends – important for 36 percent of students aged 25+ and 21 percent for the other two age groups. More important for students in Chelmsford (25 percent) than those in Cambridge (22 percent) - didn't want to study away from home – important for 25 percent of students aged 25+, 18 percent of students aged 21-24 and 17 percent of students aged 20 or younger.

Live in university accommodation to experience independence from parents, develop friendships	Students decided to live in the university accommodation as they thought that they would fit in and make friends and would be able to cope with a more independent lifestyle. They wanted to be independent of their parents and experience the stereotypical student lifestyle.	Students who lived in the university accommodation - 56 percent aged 21-24 - 52 percent aged 20 or younger - 28 percent aged 25+ Students who were living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university did so because they wanted: - the stereotypical student life experience on campus – highest number wanting this were aged 20 or younger (42 percent) then students aged 21-24 (34 percent) and students aged 25+ (24 percent). - didn't want to live with their family – this was important for students aged 21-24 (23 percent) and not as important for students aged 20 or younger (17 percent). May be due to the high cost of living in university accommodation as 29 percent of students aged 20 or younger didn't want to incur debt The majority of the Cambridge students (68 percent) were living in halls of residence/accommodation near to the university

		compared with Chelmsford students (32 percent).

Search for information	**Search for information**	**Search for information**
Use traditional and online media Talk to family and friends	Found out about the university through: - Online - UCAS or university website - University prospectus - Attending an open/offer day Students were strongly influenced in their decision to attend the university when they attended an open/offer day.	The main sources where students first heard about the university were: - UCAS website (42 percent) – important source for 45 percent of students aged 21-24, 42 percent of students aged 20 or younger - Word of mouth (26 percent) – this was important for students aged 25+ (42 percent). Friends were the most important source (49 percent) followed by family members (32 percent) and school (10 percent) - School/college – from a teacher (11 percent) – important for students aged 20 or younger (18 percent) Students found attending an open day helpful in giving them information about the course and university

		72 percent of students aged 25+ found attending an open day very helpful compared to 54 percent of students aged 20 or younger and 53 percent aged 21-24

61 percent of students who attended an offer (course or faculty) day found the experience very helpful in giving them information about the course and university. All the students aged 25+ found attending an offer day very helpful compared with 58 percent of students aged 21-24 and 48 percent aged 20 or younger. |
| **Influencers** | **Influencers** | **Influencers** |
| Family members

Friends

Teachers/school | Students were influenced by the following:

- Family members – fathers most important
- Friends
- School and teachers

Some students were not influenced by anybody else and made their own decision to study at the university. | People who influenced students in their decision to study at university were:

Parents – 45 percent

Friends – 13 percent

Nobody – 23 percent

53 percent of students aged 20 or younger were influenced by their parents compared to 48 percent of students aged 21-24 and 22 percent of students aged 25+.

34 percent of students aged 25+ were not |

		influenced by anybody compared with 20 percent each for the other two age groups.
		Family members giving opinion about the university when students applied to the university.
		58 percent did not receive any opinion from their families.
		42 percent received comments from their family which was broken down as follows:
		- 49 percent of students aged 20 or younger - 43 percent of students aged 21-24 - 30 percent of students aged 25+

Value obtained during the application process	Value obtained during the application process	Value obtained during the application process
Attend an Open/Offer day Meet staff View premises	Students valued the following: - The experience at an open/offer day where they valued the friendliness of the staff and the information they received - The facilities in the university - Contact with staff during clearing and at other times when they had dealings with the university.	28 percent definitely agreed that they valued the experience at an open/offer day. 57 percent mostly agreed that the experience at an open/offer day had been valuable. 47 percent of the students aged 25+ definitely agreed that they had valued the experience at an open/offer day compared with 25 percent of students aged 21-24 and 23 percent of students aged 20 or younger. 62 percent of students aged 20 or younger and 59 percent aged 21-24 mostly agreed that they valued their experience at an open/offer day.

Elation at being offered a place at university Esteem received from family members	Students valued the following: - Obtaining a place at the university - Receiving the esteem of their family.	40 percent of students' families were 'very pleased', 31 percent were 'happy' and 28 percent 'excited' when they received an offer of a place at the university.
When studying at the university	**When studying at the university**	**When studying at the university**
Learning experience	**Learning experience**	**Learning experience**
	Positive aspects of the learning experience	**Positive aspects of the learning experience**
		78 percent of students were positive about their learning experience Students described their experience at university as: Friendly, fun and informative – most important words for students aged 20 or younger Informative, friendly and fun – most important words for students aged 21-24 Informative, friendly and helpful – most important words for students aged 25+ Students studying in Cambridge described their experience as fun, friendly and informative which

		was the same as students aged 20 or younger
		Students in Chelmsford described the experience as informative, friendly and helpful which was the same as students aged 25+
		Students in Cambridge enjoyed their learning experience more than those in Chelmsford
	Students developed self-confidence through their studies and interaction with other students.	30 percent of students stated that their university experience had helped them to develop interpersonal skills and self confidence - Highest for students aged 20 or younger (32 percent)
Participate in social activities	They enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities which included being student representatives, participating in mentoring schemes and competitions.	Students' most popular extracurricular activities were joining societies (48 percent) and sports clubs (32 percent) to enable them to meet other students - Highest group to join societies were aged 20 or younger (51 percent) - Highest group to join sports clubs were aged 21-24 and 20 or younger (both at 34 percent) Students' extracurricular activities also included being student representatives (eight percent),

		joining mentoring schemes (six percent) and participating in competitions (six percent) - Largest group to be student representatives were aged 25+ (14 percent) - Highest group to participate in mentoring schemes were aged 25+ (14 percent) - Highest group to participate in competitions were aged 21-24 (eight percent) 57 percent of the students found the participation in extracurricular activities a valuable experience and 19 percent indicated that it was very valuable - Students aged 20 or younger and 25+ (22 percent for each age group) stated that their participation in extracurricular activities was 'very valuable'
	Liked the facilities and modern learning environment.	
Study subjects to learn new skills and develop skills	Felt that they had learnt new things through their time at the university.	32 percent valued gaining in-depth knowledge of the subjects they were interested in - Highest for students aged 20 or younger (34 percent) 26 percent valued the range of subjects they

		studied on their course - Highest for students aged 21-24 (30 percent) 39 percent developed knowledge of subjects they had studied - Highest for students aged 21-24 (40 percent)
	Negative aspects of the learning experience	**Negative aspects of the learning experience**
	Students identified the following negative aspects of their learning experience: - Overlap of models/theories in the curriculum which meant that they were confused in the assessments about which models/theories they should use - Lecturers not turning up for classes and students not being informed of cancelled classes - Deadlines for feedback to students missed by lecturers - Poor communication from the university staff.	39 percent found unhelpful the poor communication from the lecturing staff - Highest issue for students aged 20 or younger (42 percent), those studying in Chelmsford (43 percent) and in year two (45 percent) 31 percent didn't like the overlap of subjects in the modules - Highest for students aged 25+ (36 percent), studying in Cambridge (35 percent) and in year three (35 percent) 16 percent were concerned about poor

		communication about timetable changes - Highest concern for students aged 21-24 (18 percent), studying in Chelmsford (17 percent) and in year one (18 percent) 13 percent found unhelpful the poor communication from the administration staff - Highest for students aged 21-24 (15 percent), studying in Chelmsford (14 percent) and in year one (14 percent)
	Motivation to study	**Motivation to study**
	Students chose modules that would help them in their future career. The subjects they studied helped them to decide on the career they wanted to pursue after they had graduated. They studied in order to become attractive to employers through the knowledge and skills they gained in their modules and extracurricular activities.	42 percent valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future careers - Highest for students aged 25+ (50 percent) 31 percent valued acquiring skills for their potential careers - Highest for students aged 25+ (36 percent)

Relationship with administrators and lecturing staff	Relationship with administrators and lecturing staff	Relationship with administrators and lecturing staff
	Positive aspects of the relationships with the administrators and lecturing staff	**Positive aspects of the relationships with the administrators and lecturing staff**
Create environment of deep learning Value lecturers who are accessible, enthusiastic, friendly, helpful and fair in their marking	Found the academic and administration staff helpful, friendly and passionate about their subjects.	Students valued the following factors exhibited by staff: • knowledgeable, • could explain issues well, • well prepared, • fair in their marking, • enthusiastic, • could motivate students. 80 percent of students thought that lecturers exhibited these values - highest for students aged 25+ (87 percent), studying in Cambridge (82 percent) and in year two (85 percent) 54 percent of the students valued the relationship they had with their lecturers 'to some extent', 20 percent valued the relationship 'a great deal' and 20

		percent valued it 'a little'. Students aged 25+ (27 percent) and those studying in year three (22 percent) were the largest group to value the relationship with the lecturers 'a great deal'. The students aged 25+ (59 percent) were the largest group to value the relationship 'to some extent'. Students aged 20 or younger (27 percent) and year one students (23 percent) were the largest groups to value the relationship 'a little'. **Teaching contributed to personal development** 84 percent of the students stated that the teaching they had received had contributed to their personal development. Highest age group was 25+ (95 percent) and 20 or younger the least (22 percent)
	Negative aspects of the relationship with the administrators and lecturing staff	**Negative aspects of the relationship with the administrators and lecturing staff**
	Students stated that some of the lecturing staff didn't explain things very well and were difficult to understand.	20 percent of students felt that lecturers were not exhibiting values they had identified. - Highest for students aged 21-24 (23 percent) studying in Chelmsford (22 percent)

		and in year three (23 percent)
		Reasons why lecturers were not exhibiting these values were:
		- Poor communication, slow responses to emails and being hard to contact, not explaining things well, not providing clear feedback and not giving very much guidance to the students - Unenthusiastic - Unhelpful - Unapproachable
		Students aged 21-24 (25 percent), studying in Cambridge (28 percent) and female (26 percent) were most concerned that lecturers were not communicating properly.
		Students aged 20 or younger and 21-24 (13 percent in each age group), studying in Cambridge (14 percent) and female (15 percent) were most concerned that the lecturers were unenthusiastic.
		Students aged 25+ were most concerned that the

		lecturing staff were unapproachable.
		Students aged 21-24 (15 percent), studying in Cambridge (14 percent) and male (7 percent) were concerned that lecturers were unhelpful.
		Students found unhelpful poor communication from the lecturing staff, the overlap of subjects in their modules, poor communication about timetable changes and poor communication from the administration staff
Relationship with other students	**Relationship with other students**	**Relationship with other students**
	Positive aspects	**Positive aspects**
Form friendships with other students Participate in social activities	Made friends with their fellow students which helped them to get through the course.	They made friends with their fellow students which helped them to get through the course 42 percent of the students felt that their university experience had been enhanced by their fellow students 'to some extent' and 36 percent 'a great deal'. Students aged 21-24 (39 percent) and studying in Cambridge (42 percent) were the highest groups that thought that their experience had been

		enhanced by their fellow students 'a great deal'.
		Students aged 25+ (67 percent) and studying in Chelmsford (47 percent) were the largest groups to state that their experience had been enhanced 'to some extent'.
Form self-help groups to help them with their studies	Worked in self-help groups which helped them to form friendships and do well in their assessments.	35 percent of students had set up self-help groups with 38 percent starting them in Cambridge compared with 30 percent in Chelmsford.
		38 percent of year one students' set up self-help groups compared with 31 percent of third-year students
		58 percent of the students that were in self-help groups regarded them as 'valuable' and 33 percent 'very valuable'.
		41 percent of students aged 25+ and 34 percent of students studying in year three found self-help groups to be 'very valuable'. 63 percent of year two students indicated that self-help groups were 'valuable'.
		75 percent of the students felt that there was a good social life in the university. The largest groups to

		state this were studying in Cambridge (83 percent), aged 20 or younger (76 percent) and in year one (82 percent).
	Negative aspects	**Negative aspects**
	Students not wanting to work together in formal group work. Relationship between students from different countries. Lack of a community in the university.	
	Interaction between students in their first year	
	Students who were living at home and commuting to the university didn't interact very much with other students and found it hard to make friends. Students who were living in university accommodation were making friends and enjoying their time at the university.	
Post graduate experience	**Post graduate experience**	**Post graduate experience**
Getting a job	Majority of the students expected to find a job when they graduated from their course or look to progress in their career. The minority expected to continue studying at a higher	65 percent of students expected to get a job when they graduated from their course. 24 percent of students expected to study for a higher degree and 11 percent planned to do both.

	level.	67 percent of students aged 20 or younger were the highest group who expected to get a job when they had finished their course as were 70 percent of the students studying in Chelmsford. 27 percent of students aged 20 or younger were the highest age group to expect to study for a higher degree and 30 percent of the students studying in Cambridge.
	Alumni, when they had graduated had found their degree and experience of studying at the university helpful in getting a job.	
Achieving proficiency in the job Learning and developing new skills	Had learned and developed new skills when studying at the university which they used to help them to develop in their jobs after they had graduated.	
Nostalgia Reminiscing when reliving experience of studying at university	Were nostalgic about their educational experience and reminisced about their time studying in the university and the friendships they had made.	

In the next chapter the research findings are analysed in depth and a revised conceptual framework is developed for the value the students identified during the application process, the time spent studying at university and the period after they have graduated.

6   What does it all mean? A discussion of the research findings and literature

6.1   Introduction

In this thesis the literature on value-in-experience in the higher education context was examined in chapter two and the findings from the research into the topic using qualitative semi-structured interviews (chapter four) and a quantitative research programme (chapter five) outlined. In this chapter, the research findings are analysed and compared with the literature to explain how they answer the research questions identified in the introduction which have driven this piece of research. At the conclusion of the chapter the conceptual framework is updated based on the discussion of the research findings and literature.

The research questions that the thesis has sought to answer are as follows:

What do students value when they are applying to a university?

What do students value while they are studying at the university?

What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

The three questions are discussed in the following sections to establish what has been identified in the research findings and how this compares with and adds to the literature on this subject area.

In the literature review a definition of value-in-experience was provided which stated that value-in-experience is "the customers perception of value over the entire course of the customer experience" (Turnbull, 2009, p4). The customer experience should be understood, therefore, in terms of all the components of the experiences which customers have which contribute to the overall customers' experience (Heinonen et al., 2010; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). For students, the customer experience consists of all the experiences that students had when they applied to go to a university for an undergraduate course; the time spent while they were studying at the university; and the period after they had graduated and were in employment or studying for a higher qualification (e.g. a masters degree). As was noted in the literature review in chapter two examination of the student life using the value-in-experience construct provides a broader and richer area of study than the alternative research streams – value-in-exchange and value co-creation – which do not examine the subject exclusively from the student viewpoint or examine their experiences throughout the whole educational experience from the time when they started to think about studying for a degree through their experiences when they have graduated and reminisced about their time at university studying with their fellow students. The three sections of the student life are examined in turn below.

6.2 What do students value when they are applying to a university?

The value-in-experience literature proposed that customers in the period before they consume a service are anticipating and preparing for the consumption they are about to undertake by actively searching for information (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) and planning and budgeting for their future experience (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). During this time consumers may anticipate their future consumption experience when they imagine what the experience might be like (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), daydream or fantasise about it and have "thoughts, feelings, and sensory images that surround the upcoming event" (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005, p347-8). Their search for information, may involve the use of traditional and online media and/or talking to friends (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Family members could influence the consumers in this stage through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions concerning the impending consumption experience (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013).

The literature and research findings have identified that there are two types of value which students experience before they start studying at a university. The first is anticipated value as students will anticipate the experiences they would like to have while they are studying and also when they have graduated. The anticipated value will arise as the students plan and think about the time they will spend at the university and what they will do after they have graduated. As well as anticipated value, students will realise value from the experiences they have when they attend an open/offer day, discuss the subject with their family and friends, receive an offer of a place at the university and are congratulated by their family and friends. The two types of value are examined below.

6.2.1 Anticipated value based on the students' feelings and thoughts about their experience at university

The research programme sought to identify the extent to which students were planning, budgeting for and daydreaming or fantasising about the type of relationships and experiences they would have when they were studying at a university. The way in which students anticipated the value they would receive when studying at the university was based on three factors – what was motivating them to study for a degree; the extent to which they were thinking about the time they would spend studying at the university and the experiences they would have there; where they wanted to live when studying at the university. The latter would depend on whether or not they felt that they would fit in and make friends and be able to cope with a more independent style of living during their time at the university.

- **The motivation for the student to study at the university**

The academic literature on higher education has identified that the value students obtain from studying at a university is based on their motivation to study (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Krickl and Geertshuis, 2012; Bennett, 2004; and Maringe, 2006). Students have been found to be either vocationally orientated, who view going to university as a means to help them to either enhance their job prospects and/or enhance their career development or they are academically orientated and study subjects they like in more depth to satisfy their academic curiosity or have a social orientation to studying and want to meet new people or escape from mundane work situations. Depending on the potential students' motivation for studying, they would be thinking about the educational experience they would be about to undertake and assessing the value they will get from it.

The research programme identified that 84 percent of the students were vocationally orientated and were wanting to study for a degree to help them with their career. The remaining 16 percent were academically orientated and were wanting to study at the university as they wanted to study subjects they liked in more depth.

The students who were vocationally orientated were anticipating the value they would obtain when they had completed their degree and obtained employment in the career they were interested in. They were planning to study for a degree either because they had a specific career or job in mind, they wanted to further their career, or they had a general realisation that studying for a degree would help them to get a good job. The largest group (48 percent) were those who wanted to pursue a career they were interested in and would have had specific jobs or careers in mind. The students who were wanting to study to further their career were older and had been in employment before returning to higher education to get the qualification they needed to help them with their promotion prospects. The remaining students were studying at the university because they realised that a degree was an entry requirement to get a good job. Value for these students would be realised when they had graduated and achieved their goal of getting the job or career they wanted which agrees with the suggestion of Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) that value is realised when students graduate and are in employment. However, it would also be realised as they were studying subjects on their course that would help them achieve their career/job goal. The research findings did identify that younger students (aged 20 or younger) had a higher percentage that were vocationally orientated than those who were in the next age group (21-24). The reason why this younger age group were more vocationally orientated may be due to the recession and austerity measures imposed by the UK government since the financial crash of 2008 and the changes to the tuition fee structure imposed by HEFCE. The tuition fees changed from £3,000 per year to

£8,400 per year for the university (starting in 2013), which would have had a higher impact on the students aged 20 or younger. Students entering university after 2013 have been more concerned about what they could do with their degree and, therefore, have a higher vocational orientation than those who are older who have been paying the lower fee. The mature (aged 25+) students were all vocationally orientated and wanted to study for a degree to help them to improve their career prospects either in their existing organisations or when they looked for alternative employment opportunities.

Academically orientated students were looking to continue studying subjects they liked in more depth at the university. The students aged 21-24 had the highest percentage (23 percent) who wanted to go to university to continue studying subjects they liked. As noted above the reason for this may be that they were not as affected as the students aged 20 or younger by the impact of the change to the fee structure or the financial crash of 2008 and resulting austerity measures.

In summary, the majority of the students were vocationally orientated and motivated to study for a degree to help them either start a career, get a job or improve their promotion prospects. They would be anticipating the value that they would experience when they had graduated on the one hand and also as they studied subjects that would help them to get into the career or job they wanted to pursue. The minority of students who were academically orientated were looking forward to studying subjects in which they were interested, in more depth, while they were at the university. The 21-24 age group was more academically orientated than the other groups which may be because they were not as affected by the UK government austerity measures arising from the 2008 financial crash and were paying lower tuition fees than the students who were aged 20 or younger.

- **The extent to which students were thinking about and planning for their time at the university**

The value-in-experience literature states that when consumers are preparing for a purchase they may imagine what the experience might be like (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), daydream or fantasise about it and have "thoughts, feelings, and sensory images that surround the upcoming event" (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2005, p347-8). The research programme sought to establish the extent to which students did daydream or fantasise and have thoughts and feelings about the time they would be studying at a university and/or graduate and be in employment. In the qualitative research findings, some interviewees indicated that they were thinking about the time they would spend at the university and anticipating the value they would obtain from the relationships and experience they wanted

to have. There was evidence that some had built up an image of what they would value at the university and they highlighted the importance of the 'whole experience' which included the social activities they would get involved in and the friendships they would make, as well as the learning that would occur as they studied in lectures and seminars. One interviewee was disappointed with the lack of social activities at the university in their first year and discussed how they had contemplated leaving until they made some friends with whom they created a community. Another interviewee, however, took the opposite view and stated that they "didn't want to live on campus and have that stereotypical student life being a little bit older to the student game" illustrating that they were thinking about the type of experience they believed took place in a university and deciding that they didn't want to be part of it. In the quantitative research programme, the students gave the reasons why they wanted to live in the university accommodation or at home (see below for details) which indicated that they had thought about the experience they wanted to have when they were studying at the university.

Students' perception of the university and the experience they could have there would be formed from their research into courses and universities where they could study as they searched for information about the university on the UCAS and university website and read about the courses and university in the university prospectus. They would also talk to friends and family members who were either studying at university or had been there before, and talked to teachers at school. The students would form a view of the university life and study through their research which would help them to decide whether or not they wanted to experience the stereotypical student life and felt that they could fit in, make friends and live a more independent life from their parents.

The research findings suggest that students were thinking about the experiences they would have at the university and were anticipating the value that would be created as they were involved in social interactions with other students and developed friendships. The research did not find evidence of students daydreaming or fantasising about the upcoming experiences, however, although there was evidence that they were thinking about what the experience at the university would entail. The students were either embracing the idea of the stereotypical student life or rejecting it when deciding what they wanted to do when they were studying at the university. The research findings found that students who created a mental picture of what the student life consisted of, when they started at the university, did not experience the student life they had expected, were disappointed and had negative feelings towards the university.   The students' view on the student life that existed at the university and their feelings about whether they wanted to fit in and be part of it or not also

affected their decisions about where they wanted to live when they were studying for their degree, which is examined below.

- **Where the students wanted to live when they were studying at the university**

In the last section it was noted that, when applying to go to the university, students would be thinking about and anticipating the type of experience that they wanted to have when they were studying at the university. They would either want to have what has been termed the stereotypical student life which involves being independent of their family and meeting students with whom they would develop friendships and have relationships, if they could fit in, and live a more independent life and so would decide to live in the university accommodation. Alternatively, those students who did not feel that they would fit in and preferred to maintain the contact and relationships with their family and friends decided to live at home.

The results of the research programme identified that half the students wanted to live in the university accommodation and the remainder decided to live at home. There were small majorities for the students aged 20 or younger (52 percent) and 21-24 (56 percent) who decided that they wanted to live in the university accommodation. The reasons why students were wanting to live in the university accommodation was that they wanted to have the stereotypical student life and be independent of their family. Experiencing the stereotypical student life was more important for the students aged 20 or younger (42 percent) compared with those aged 21-24 (34 percent) and aged 25+ (24 percent). Being independent of their family was slightly more important for those in the age groups 21-24 (23 percent) and 25+ (21 percent) compared to the 17 percent aged 20 or younger. In the qualitative research programme an interviewee stated that living in the university accommodation and being away from their parents was part of their personal development. They did, however, along with another interviewee, comment that they wanted to live not very far away from their home so that they could return there and still attend the university if anything went wrong. This result supports the observation by Foskett, Roberts and Maringe (2006) that students did not want to be too far away from their home as they wanted to be able to go home if anything went wrong.

A minority of students had to study at a university away from home as the course they wanted to study was not available in a local university. This was the case for 21 percent of the students aged 25+ compared with 15 percent for students aged 20 or younger and 13 percent of those aged 21-24.

In the research stream on value in higher education I am not aware of any research into the decision to live in university accommodation. The reasons for wanting to live in the university accommodation discussed above are, therefore, contributing to the literature on this subject.

Students who decided that they didn't want to fit in to the stereotypical student life discussed above, didn't like the idea of being independent of their families and chose instead to live at home and go to a local university. The largest age group that was living at home was aged 25+ (72 percent) compared with 48 percent of students aged 20 or younger and 54 percent of students aged 21-24. The reasons why students chose to stay at home were concerns about the financial consideration of living in the university accommodation and wanting to avoid incurring debt; they wanted to stay in the local area where they had family and friends; and that they didn't want to move away from home. The age groups that were most concerned about the financial considerations and who didn't want to incur debt were those aged 20 or younger (26 percent) and 21-24 (29 percent) compared with those aged 25+ of whom only eight percent raised this as an issue. The reason why the younger groups were more concerned about the level of debt they might have incurred when they went to university may be due to the introduction of tuition fees and the increased cost of living at university. Students who were going into education and had not worked and built up savings were more likely to be concerned about the level of debt they might incur than those aged 25+ who had some reserves from their time in employment before they returned to education.

The students who were rejecting the chance to live in the university accommodation and experience the stereotypical student life were doing so as they wanted to maintain their family relationships and friendships. This factor was most important for students aged 25+ (36 percent) compared to 21 percent each for the other two age groups. The other reasons why students wanted to live at home identified in the quantitative research programme was that they had children and so could only consider local universities (88 percent of students aged 25+; 18 percent of students aged 21-24) or that family was important to them (100 of students aged 20 or younger; 82 percent for students aged 21-24; 13 percent for students aged 25+). This finding agrees with Souter and Turner (2002) Foskett, Roberts and Maringe (2006) and Maringe (2006) who observed that students, for social reasons, may want to live at home and maintain their existing contacts which means that they maintain their friends and family connections while they are studying, and use their contacts to help them to get jobs and after they have graduated.

The final reason why students were deciding to live at home was because they feared moving away from home as they didn't think that they would fit in at the university and saw it

as a big step to take. This was most important for students aged 25+ (25 percent) compared with the students aged 21-24 (18 percent) and 20 or younger (17 percent). In the qualitative research programme one of the interviewees referred to this point when they stated that they didn't want to go to a university in another town as they felt that it was a big step to take to leave home and go to live in another part of the country.

The reasons for students choosing to live at home instead of the university accommodation discussed above have highlighted that the changes in tuition fees and accommodation costs when students live in university accommodation has been putting students off the idea of leaving home. Instead they are wanting to reduce the debt burden they will incur when they have finished their course and have to start repaying their student loans. Secondly the students value the relationships and experiences they have with their family and friends and do not want to participate fully in the stereotypical student life. This may be age related as older students may feel that they would not fit in easily to this lifestyle or because they have commitments at home (family and or children) that stop them from living in university accommodation. The final reason is that they do not want to move away from home as they do not think that they will fit in at the university and see it as too big a step to make. All of these students were demonstrating that they had thought about the lifestyle they wanted to have when studying at the university and had anticipated the value they would get from their existing social arrangements which they preferred to embracing the stereotypical student life.

6.2.2   Value students realised when they were applying to go to university

The actions that take place before a consumption experience include the search for information, which may involve the use of traditional and online media, and/or talking to friends (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Family members could influence the consumers in this stage through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions concerning the impending consumption experience (Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima, 2013). The research findings have identified the sources that the students used when they were searching for information about the course they wanted to study and at which university it was delivered. The influence of family members, friends and other stakeholders and the value that students had experienced when they had received an offer of a place on their course along with the reaction of their family members was examined. This is discussed below.

- **Sources used to search for information about the course and university**

The research programme sought to establish the sources used by students when they were applying to universities. The sources they used were the UCAS and university websites, word of mouth from family members, friends and teachers and attending open and offer days. The value they obtained from each of these sources is discussed below.

  o **UCAS and University website**

In the quantitative research programme, 42 percent of students indicated that they searched for information about courses and universities on the UCAS website which meant that it was the most important source that students used. This finding was supported in the qualitative research programme in which the interviewees had stated that they found out about the university and courses on both the UCAS and the university websites. The UCAS was most important to students aged 21- 24 (45 percent) with those aged 20 or younger at 42 percent, slightly lower. Students aged 25+ did not look at the UCAS website as much as the others with only 35 percent indicating that they used it.

  o **Word of mouth**

The research programme found that 26 percent of the students were relying on word of mouth sources to help them to make their decision to go to university. The students were talking to and taking advice from the following sources – friends (49 percent), family members (32 percent) and school (10 percent). These sources are in line with those identified by Souter and Turner (2002) Moogan and Baron (2003) Bennett (2004) Redding (2005) Brown, Varley and Pal (2009) Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) Lubbe (2013) Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima (2013) who stated that students talk to and seek the opinions of friends, family members and teachers about courses/universities they choose.

  o **Attendance at an open/offer day and talking to staff at other times**

Fifty-five percent of students had attended an open day before they started at the university and 15 percent an offer day. The students valued the experience they had at these events as they stated that they were 'very helpful' (57 percent) or 'helpful' (42 percent). The age group to find these events most helpful were those aged 25+ (72 percent) who indicated

that it was very helpful compared to the 54 percent of the students aged 20 or younger and 53 percent of students aged 21-24. Similar results were found for the students who attended an offer day. In the qualitative research programme the interviewees stated that they valued the experience of attending an open or offer day or visiting the university at other times. What they valued was the friendliness of the staff who they talked to and the facilities in the university which looked modern and demonstrated that the university was forward thinking, which appealed to them. The attendance at an open day was suggested by Brown, Varley and Pal (2009) as an opportunity for students to check out their perceptions of the university which they had formed when they viewed the university website or spoke to their friends who were studying at the university or had graduated. The value they were getting from seeing the facilities of the university may also have helped them to form an impression of the university of the time they would be spending studying at the university, as suggested by Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and was discussed above in the section that discussed the extent to which students thought about the experiences they would have when they were studying at the university. In that section it was noted that the students may create a mental picture of the university and the experience of what they will do when they are there which may have an impact on their experience when they are studying at the university. The attendance at the open and offer day must be a time, therefore, where the university provides an accurate and positive impression of what the university experience is when the student is studying there.

Students were valuing the attendance at the open or offer days as they were able to talk to members of staff about the university and the courses they were interested in, and who were able to answer any questions and concerns they had before they decided to apply for a course there.

o **Influence of stakeholders on the students' decision to go to university**

In the discussion above on the extent to which students thought about the type of experience theiy wanted to have when they were studying at the university, it was observed that they were buliding up a mental picture of life in the university from talking to their friends and family members. The influence that these stakeholders had on the students is discussed below.

Seventy-seven percent of the students were influenced by stakeholders when they were deciding to go to university with the remainng 23 percent stated that nobody influenced them in their decision. The most important stakeholders were the students' parents with 53 percent of the 20 or younger age group stating that this was the case compared with 48

percent of those aged 21-24 and 22 percent of the students aged 25+. In the qualitive research programme fathers were recognised by the interviewees as the most influential parent who positively encouraged or inspired them to go to university. The other significant stakeholders were friends at 14 percent of the students aged 21-24, 13 percent of those aged 20 or younger and 10 percent of the group aged 25+. Male students were found to rely more on the opinions of friends than female students in the qualitative research programme and were being given good reviews and encouragement about studying at the university. Other students had stated that they knew friends who were already at the university and, in some cases, were leaving and getting jobs which inspired the interviewees to study at the university. School staff were a third stakeholder group who influenced the female interviewees to a greater extent than they did the males.

The results highlight the extent that students were influenced by stakeholders when making their decision about going to university. They are in agreement with the existing literature as Heinonen, Strandvik and Voima (2013) Schmidt (2002) Soutar and Turner (2002) and Lynch and Egan (2012) state that family members will influence potential students through their attitudes, behaviour and emotions when applying to go to university. The research findings about the friends agree with Souter and Turner (2002) and Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) who observed that students are influenced by friends who are going to the same university and through word of mouth as they give their opinion about the university and tell them their experiences while studying there.

- o **Value students experienced when they received an offer of a place on their course and the reaction of their family members**

The value in higher education research stream based on value co-creation has identified that in the period when students are applying to go to university they will only create value as they are elated at receiving a place at the university and receive esteem from their parents (Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012). The research programme found that the interviewees were experiencing value as they were 'happy', 'relieved', 'proud' or 'felt good' to receive an offer of a place at the university rather than being elated as had been suggested by Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012).

The family members expressed their pleasure at the students' achievement with 39 percent being 'very pleased', 31 percent 'happy' and 28 percent 'excited'. This agrees with Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) and Lynch and Egan (2012) that the students receive the appreciation of their parents.

6.3   What do students value while they are studying at the university?

Value for students when they were studying at the university was considered in the literature review and research programme with regard to the following three areas:

- The learning experience
- The relationship with academic staff
- The relationship with other students.

These are examined in order below.

6.3.1   The learning experience

Ng and Forbes (2009) stated that the learning experience is the experiences that students have when they are studying for their degree and involves the participation in social and physical activities that take place in the lecture and/or seminar room and other social settings. Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and Ng and Forbes (2009) suggested that the whole learning experience can be for students either transformative, mundane and monotonous, or a combination of the two extremes. The quantitative research programme identified that students were very positive about the experience they had while studying on their course as 77 percent overall used positive words to describe their experiences with the words 'informative', 'friendly' and 'fun' receiving the highest scores. Students aged 20 or younger, studying in Cambridge and in their second year scored the highest for the description of their experience as 'fun' and 'friendly'. This compared with students aged 25+, studying in Chelmsford and in their third year who described their experience as 'informative' the highest. The younger age group were enjoying the experience of studying and making friends which would account for the reason why they gave the highest scores for 'fun' and 'friendly'. Compared to this, the older age group were returning to education in order to further their careers so were wanting a different type of experience to the younger students and rated their experience as 'informative' higher than 'fun' and 'friendly'.

In the examination of the research findings about the application process, the decision of the students to either live in university accommodation or at home was discussed. The quantitative findings identified that 65 percent of the students in Cambridge were living in university accommodation compared with 32 percent in Chelmsford. The age profile of the two campuses was also different as the majority of the students in Cambridge were aged under 25 whereas in Chelmsford the majority were over 25 (see table 10 on page 108). The research findings above would suggest that the students who were living in Cambridge and living in the university accommodation were experiencing the stereotypical student life and

enjoying their experiences to a greater extent than those in Chelmsford. In the qualitative research programme these results were reflected in the comments of the students studying in Chelmsford with one interviewee stating that the university was "more like college" than a university, and another that when the students were not in lectures or seminars they went home instead of staying in the university and socialising. The older students (aged 25+) identified that their studies were informative more than fun and friendly.   This age group was living at home so would not be as interested in having 'fun' or being as 'friendly' as would those living in university accommodation.

Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2005) and Ng and Forbes (2009) had suggested that the university experience could be 'transformative'. This word was included in the research programme as one of the three words to describe the experience of the students by nine percent of the students age 25+; six percent of those aged 21-24 and five percent of the students aged 20 or younger. The overall score for the level of positivity of the students by year of study found that the students were less positive the longer they studied at the university (80 percent for the first-year students down to 75 percent in the third year). The reason for this would be due to the negative experiences the students had when studying at the university which were identified in the research programme. The two most important aspects of the learning experience were the poor communication from the lecturing staff and the overlap of subjects in the modules the students were studying. The scores for 'poor communication from the lecturing staff' were highest for students aged 20 or younger, studying in Chelmsford and in the second year. The results concur with the qualitative findings where the interviewees identified this as an issue that was of concern to them. The second most important issue was the way in which the curriculum contained the same models and theories in a number of modules. The results for this issue were highest for the third-year students, aged 25+ and studying in Cambridge which reflect the decline in the positive feeling of the students by the time they had studied in the university for three years. The students in Cambridge were much less happy than those in Chelmsford about the overlap of the modules they were studying which agrees with the findings from the qualitative research programme where this was raised by an interviewee who had been studying in Cambridge. In the qualitative research programme, poor administration was raised as an issue where the deadline for assessment was not being met by the university. The comment was that the lecturing staff were not adhering to the deadlines for the feedback for assessments which made the students feel that they should not submit their work on time.   The negative experiences were lessening the value that students were experiencing which is seen in the reduced scores for the level of positive words ticked by the students in each year of study.

The students identified what they valued from the time they spent studying at the university which reflected their motivations for studying. The vocationally orientated students, who were aged 20 or younger and 25+, valued gaining knowledge to help them in their future career. Compared to this, the students who were academically orientated and aged 21-24 valued the subjects they had studied on their course to a greater extent than the other age groups. Similar results were found for the students who valued acquiring skills for their potential career with students aged 25+ rating it more highly than the other two age groups. Students aged 21-24 valued developing knowledge of the subjects they had studied to a greater extent than the other two age groups (40 percent; compared with 39 percent for students aged 20 or younger and 37 percent for students aged 20 or younger). The percentage of students who identified that they had valued developing their interpersonal skills and self-confidence was highest in the 20 or younger age group (32 percent) compared to 29 percent for students aged 21-24 and 27 percent for those aged 25+. The development of interpersonal skills and self-confidence would be more significant for the youngest age group as they would not have the life experience of the older students and would, therefore, appreciate more developing these skills. In the qualitative research programme the development of self-confidence was highlighted by the students as they felt that being at the university was helping them to interact with other students and be more confident. These results showed that the students were obtaining the value they had anticipated ahead of going to the university which was dependent on their motivation for studying. The students that had a vocational motivation were getting value from the experiences they were having which was helping them in their future careers whereas those that had an academic motivation valued studying subjects they liked in more depth.

The other area of the learning experience which was examined in the research programme was the participation in extracurricular activities. In the literature Ng and Forbes (2009) suggested that the learning experience involves the participation in social and physical activities outside the lecture and seminar room. The main activities that the students participated in were joining societies (48 percent) and sports clubs (32 percent). In the qualitative research programme the students had discussed the benefits that they had obtained from being student ambassadors, course representatives and part of the student union. In the quantitative research programme, however, the participation as a student representative (eight percent), in competitions run by the university (six percent) and being mentored (six percent) did not score highly. The majority of the students valued their participation in extracurricular activities with the students aged 21-24 valuing it the most and those aged 25+ the least. The reason for this is linked to where the students were living when they were studying in the university. Those students who had anticipated having the

stereotypical student life and chose to live in the university accommodation would be experiencing the social activities they had wanted and were realising the value they had anticipated. This was the situation for the students aged 21-24 who were the largest age group living in the university accommodation. The students who decided that they didn't want that type of experience and valued their family and friends more were not participating in the extracurricular activities as much and did not value them highly. This was particularly the case for those aged 25+ which was the highest percentage age group to live at home and to find the extracurricular activities not valuable.

6.3.2   The relationship with academic staff

The research findings identified that 80 percent of the students valued the relationship they had with the academic staff. Students valued the following characteristics about the lecturers - knowledgeable, could explain issues well, were well prepared, fair in their marking, enthusiastic and could motivate them - which are compatible with the characteristics to which Wright, (2005) Chireshe (2011) Siti, Haryati, Shaikh et al. (2013) stated that students related. These factors reflected the desire of the students to learn from academics who were experts in their subjects and were able to communicate to the students in ways they could easily understand. They were also wanting academics who were fair in their marking and didn't show favouritism nor were harsh in the scores they gave the students.

Although 80 percent of the students valued the relationship they had with the lecturing staff the remaining 20 percent stated that they did not value it. The main reason for not valuing the relationship was their poor communication skills as noted above in the last section. Students did not like lecturers who they perceived as unenthusiastic, unhelpful and unapproachable which indicated that they were important issues for students as enthusiasm was one of the characteristics they were looking for in a lecturer. The other issues also reflect the extent to which the lecturers were not liked when they didn't conform to the factors the students considered to be valuable which were listed in the last paragraph.

The breakdown of the extent to which students valued the relationship with their lecturers by age group and year of study found that those aged 25+ and in their third year valued it the most compared with the students aged 20 or younger and in the first year who valued it the least. The relationship with lecturers is seen by this evidence to be developmental as students who were older and had been at the university longer, valued the relationships they had with the lecturers more compared with those who were relatively new into the university and were younger. The value that students were identifying here is relational and, as stated

in the literature review, emerged over time (Vargo, 2009) as the students developed the relationships with the lecturers throughout the time they were studying on their course.

6.3.3   The relationship with other students

The final area of the student experience while they were studying at the university concerned the relationship they had with their fellow students. Relationships with other students have been identified as an important element of the student experience (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Chalcraft and Lynch, 2011; Lynch and Egan, 2012). Vargo (2009) stated that value emerges over time as extended activities between two parties combine interactively and interdependently to create value which summarises the relationships between the students and other students as is discussed below.

- **Self-help groups**

Students in the two research programmes discussed the relationships they had with their fellow students with regards to the formation of self-help groups. Although only a minority of the students had set up self-help groups, 91 percent stated that they were 'valuable' or 'very valuable' which shows that they were very well regarded and useful for the students who joined them. The research programme found that the students aged 25+ and in the first and second year of their courses valued them the most. The qualitative research programme had also identified that self-help groups were very good for students to help them academically to study and pass their assessments and also to create friendships, with one of the interviewees referring to their group as a 'family'. Some of the alumni also stated that being in self-help groups had helped them to develop friendships when they were at the university which they maintained after they had graduated. The self-help group seems to have been very useful for helping the mature students to find friends and establish themselves in the university especially in their first and second years.

- **Extent to which student experience was enhanced by other students**

The overall university experience was found to be enhanced by other students for 78 percent of the students with the students aged 21-24 stating that this was the case more than the other two age groups. The students' experience for students studying in Cambridge was enhanced to a much greater extent by their fellow students than those in Chelmsford. The reason for this is related to the issues discussed in the section on the learning experience above where it was identified that the numbers of students in

Cambridge living in university accommodation was much greater than those in Chelmsford. These students, who were also younger than the ones in Chelmsford, were experiencing the stereotypical student life and it was being enhanced by the friendships and relationships they were having with their fellow students. These students were realising the value they were anticipating when they were applying to go to university. Interviewees who had decided they didn't want to live in the university accommodation and were commuting to the university discussed in the qualitative research programme how they had not integrated very much with their fellow students in their first year of study. They discussed how they realised that they needed to have a relationship with their fellow students and set about doing this through either forming a community of friends, joining self-help groups or the university organised social activities, or the Students Union. Relationships were developed by these students over the rest of their time at the university which improved their experience and created value for them.

- **Issues resulting in poor relationships between students**

In the qualitative research programme the interviewees identified a number of issues where the relationship with other students was not valued. These were in the areas of working together in group work where students did not enjoy the experience as the other students did not want to take part in the activity. In the discussion of the value students obtained from the relationship with their lecturers in the qualitative research programme, encouraging group work was one of the characteristics the students didn't like which explains why the students did not like this activity. The other area of the relationship between students that was highlighted in the qualitative research programme was the attitudes of UK students to those from other cultures who were perceived to have poor communication skills and would have an impact on the students' performance in assessments, especially group work. As noted above, students did not like group work, especially where the individual students did not receive separate marks, and were taking action to enhance their chances to get a good mark by not working with students from other countries.

6.4 The post-graduate experience

The final stage of the student experience is when they complete their studies, graduate from the university and either go into employment or continue to study at a higher level on a masters or professional post-graduate course. The research programme sought to find out two things; firstly, what the students who were studying at the university intended to do when

they graduated, and secondly the alumni were asked about their post graduate experience to see what they valued from it.

The students studying at the university were asked, in the quantitative research programme, what they planned to do when they graduated. Sixty-four percent intended to get a job with the remaining planning to study for a higher degree. The majority of the students were vocationally motivated as they were looking to obtain value when they got a job which they had anticipated when they were applying to the university and during the time they were studying at the university which was discussed in the last two sections of this chapter. The other students who were academically motivated were also anticipating the value they would obtain when they had completed their undergraduate course and were studying for a higher qualification. For the alumni, value was created when they got a job, were learning and developing new skills, and reminisced about their time at the university. The interviewees in the qualitative research programme stated that having a degree and the experiences they had while studying at the university helped them to get a job. Value was being realised for the alumni and anticipated for the students studying at the university when they graduated which was noted in the literature review where Chalcraft and Lynch (2011) Lynch and Egan (2012) and Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012) commented that students value getting a job when they have graduated.

The alumni related stories of how they had learnt and developed new skills while they studied on their degree programmes which gave them confidence when they were working in their jobs. The value they got from the things that they had learnt and developed skills in, included knowing how to operate in a work environment with confidence using the theories and models they had been taught on their course, and being able to analyse their work environment and develop their job role and relationships with their colleagues.

Finally, the alumni reminisced about their experiences studying at the university remembering how it had helped them to build confidence through their studies and participation in extracurricular activities and stated that they looked at the world in a different way as a result of the things they had been taught. They also reminisced about the friendships they had made at the university and which they were still maintaining.

The experiences discussed by the alumni above about the way in which they learnt and developed new skills and experienced nostalgia as they engaged nostalgic reminiscing about their time at the university provide empirical evidence in the higher education sector for the work of Tynan and McKechnie (2009) in the value-in-experience literature on the post consumption experience.

6.5   Revisions to the Conceptual Framework

At the end of the literature review a conceptual framework was presented to summarise all the possible sources of value that previous research had identified about each stage of the student experience.   In light of the research programme reported in this thesis and the discussion above of the research findings, the following revisions have been made to the conceptual framework to reflect more accurately what students experience when they are applying to go to university, while they are studying there and when they have graduated.

- **Changes to the conceptual framework for the application phase.**

As a result of the discussion above the value that students would anticipate about the time when they were studying at the university and had graduated was identified in the conceptual framework in the literature review. The value they realised has been added to the conceptual framework for the activities they undertook during the application process. Specifically, they were the value from attending an open/offer day, talking to and receiving advice from stakeholders and obtaining a place at the university.

- **Changes to the value when studying at the university**

In the conceptual framework in the literature review, the three areas of the learning experience, relationships with lecturers and student interaction with other students, were linked to the general list of value sources. In the discussion above, value arising from the student experience while studying at a university has been highlighted and is illustrated in the changes to the conceptual framework below.   Students have realised value in the pleasure they found in studying subjects which were linked to their motive for studying. This was something that they anticipated during the application process and was now being realised while they were studying on their courses. Also students valued the experiences they had while studying on their course and the social activities they got involved in. The value they received was linked to their anticipation of what the student experience would be like in the application process and, therefore, to the image of the student experience they had established and their decision to either live in university accommodation to have the stereotypical student life or to live at home.

Value was exhibited in the relationships the students had with the lecturers/administrators and their fellow students. The relationship with other students was linked to the type of experience they had anticipated when they were applying to the university and where they were living. The linkages are shown in the revised conceptual framework below.

- **Changes to the post graduate period**

The discussion above has found that students when they had graduated, valued getting a job or continuing to study for a higher qualification. The latter was not included in the earlier conceptual framework. They valued learning and developing new skills which they were able to use in their jobs. Their skills had been developed from the subjects they had learnt on their course and the relationships they had developed with other students especially in self-help groups. The alumni were nostalgic about their time at university as they reminisced about their experiences when learning on their courses and having relationships with the lecturers and other students.

The revised conceptual framework is provided below in figure 2.

Figure 2: Revised conceptual framework for student value in Higher Education
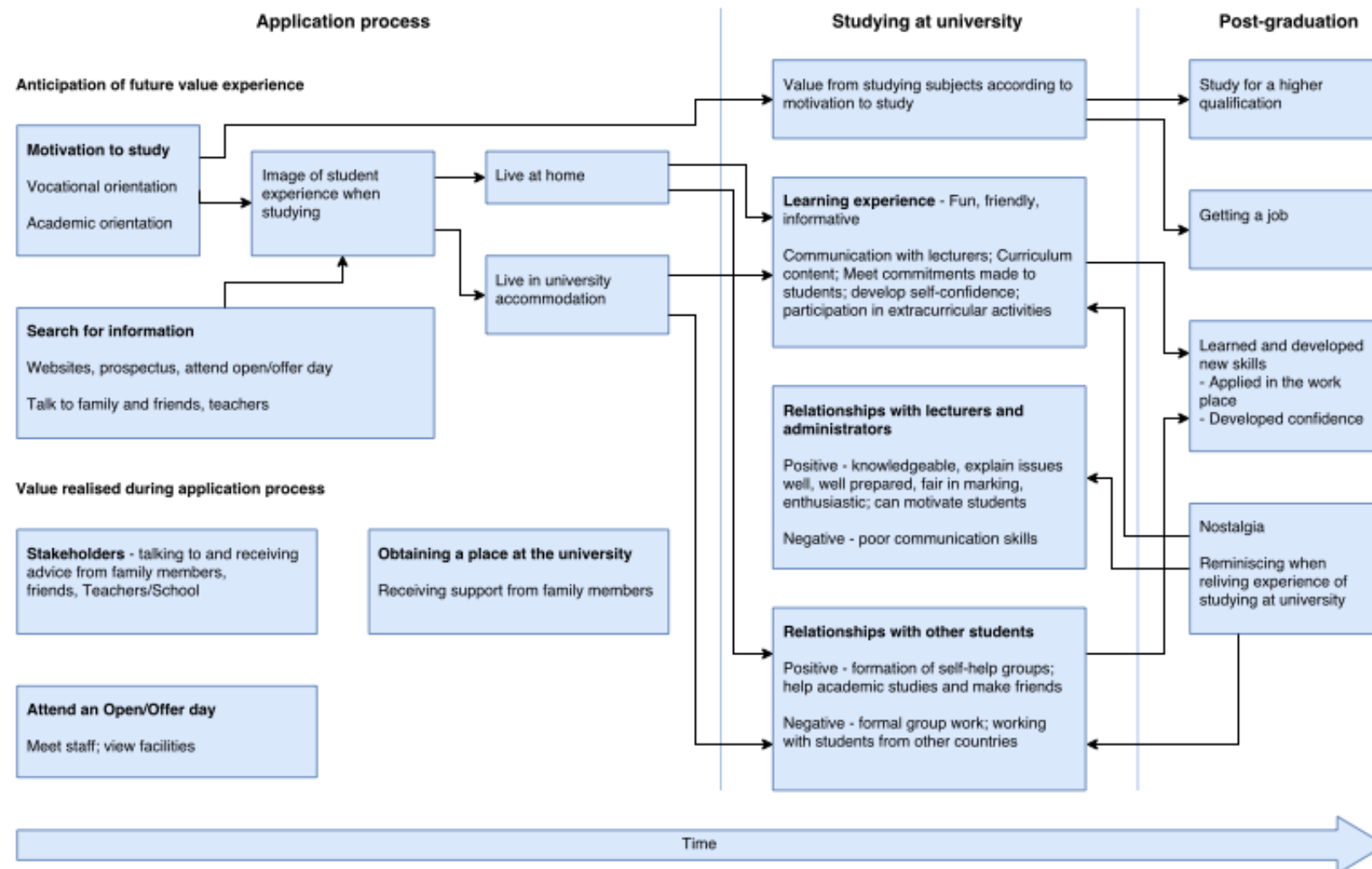
7 Conclusions, limitations and implications for managers in Higher Education

7.1   Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse the value that students identify throughout their higher education experience when they apply to go to university, while they study on their course and are socialising with other students, and when they graduate and are in either full-time employment or studying for a higher qualification. To achieve this, I have examined the subject using the value-in-experience concept as it has provided the most suitable theoretical base to examine the issue as it is concerned with the experiences which take place throughout all the stages of a student's educational experience from the time they are applying to go to university through to their graduation and gaining employment or studying for a higher degree. The alternative value streams were discussed in the introduction and literature review and their limitations noted which made them not as suitable to study the subject as the value-in-experience construct.

A case study into a post 1992 university which is located in two cities in the east of England was used as the basis for the research into this subject. The research philosophy that was the best to achieve the thesis aim noted at the start of this section was the pragmatist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). The research methodology consisted of two stages. The first contained an initial qualitative research programme with a small number of students and alumni who were either studying or had studied in the two campuses of the university. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a number of focus groups and one-to-one interviews to seek the students' views on each stage of their university experience. In the second quantitative research stage, the results of the qualitative research programme were used to develop a questionnaire which was distributed to students studying in the two campuses.   Convenience sampling was used to obtain recruits to complete the questionnaire and 526 useable completed questionnaires were obtained from the research programme.   The findings from the qualitative research programme were presented in chapter four and those from the quantitative research programme in chapter five.   The results were compared with the literature and analysed to determine the meaning and describe the value students identified in the three stages of the educational experience in chapter six. A conceptual framework that had been developed in chapter two was revised at the end of chapter six.

The research programme, sought to answer the following main research question

> How is value realised before, during and after studying at an HE institution?

To help to answer this question, the research sought to answer the following research questions:

What do students value when they are applying to a university?

What do students value while they are studying at the university?

What do students value when they have graduated from their course?

The remainder of this chapter provides details of the answers to the research questions, the contribution to knowledge this thesis has made, and the managerial implications arising from the thesis findings. The limitations of the research design are discussed at the end of the chapter along with suggestions for future research.

7.2   Answers to the research questions

The thesis sought to answer the research questions noted above in order to describe what students value in each stage of their higher educational experience. The research programme found that value occurs in each phase of the higher educational experience. In the application phase students anticipated the value they would have in their experiences when they were studying on their courses and after they have graduated. This was based on their motivation for learning and was influenced by the information they obtained from a range of sources as they searched for information about the course they wanted to study and a university where they could study the subject they were interested in. Students' perceptions of the experience they had when they were studying in the university would influence their decision about where they wanted to live and the university they wished to attend. Students who wanted to participate in the whole university experience and felt that they could live an independent life and make friends would have chosen a university where they could live in university accommodation and experience the stereotypical student life. Those who were concerned about the financial implications of living in university accommodation and felt that they would not fit into the student life and preferred to maintain their existing family relationships and friendships, stayed at home and only looked to attend a local university. When the students were searching for information, the main sources they used were the UCAS and university websites. Students valued the support and advice they received from family members and their friends and also valued the experience of attending an open/offer day, talking to the university staff and viewing the facilities the university had to offer which influenced their decision about the university and course where they chose to study.

When students were studying at the university they valued the experiences they had studying on their course and the relationships they established with the academic staff and their fellow students. The students valued the learning experience in which they enjoyed learning about the subjects they were studying and enjoyed mixing with other students in extracurricular activities. This could be tempered, however, when the university did not keep to the promises it had made to the students or where there was poor communication from the academic staff. They valued the relationship they had with lecturers and other academic staff where the lecturing staff were friendly, knowledgeable about their subjects and helpful. They did not value lecturers who were unenthusiastic and not prepared to help them when they needed advice or information. The relationship with other students was valued by the students especially where they worked together in informal groups to support each other as they studied and developed friendships. Problems were identified in the relationship between UK students and those with perceived poor language skills in English which meant that the UK students did not want to work with students from other countries on group work that was part of the module assessment.

After students had graduated from the university they valued getting a job or studying for a higher degree, depending on their motivation for studying at the university. The students applied in the work place the skills they had learned and developed when they were studying at the university which developed their confidence. They were also nostalgic about their time at the university as they reminisced about their experiences when they had been studying in the university.

Table 65 below provides the answers from the research programme to each of the research questions in more depth along with the location in the thesis where the answer can be found.

7.3   Contribution to knowledge

Research into the value students identified when studying in a higher education institution has to-date been either conceptual or empirical. Empirical research has been carried out in the value-in-exchange literature which is noted in the literature review in chapter two. In the value co-creation literature, the research has been mainly conceptual with papers written on the subject that have suggested how students identify and achieve value in their educational experience as they co-create with other people. As discussed in the literature review and above in this chapter the value-in-experience research stream has been identified as better than the other two to provide information on the value students experience when they are going through the three phases of higher education. This thesis contributes to knowledge as it is the first time that the subject has been researched through the lens of value-in-experience. The empirical findings are, therefore, contributing to knowledge regarding the

students' experience as they apply to a university and this is wider than the existing literature in the other two research streams. In the value co-creation research stream, for example, value has only been proposed in the phase when students receive their offer of a place at the university and receive the esteem of their family members whereas in this thesis value has been identified to be in the anticipation students feel about studying at the university and while they are searching for information, and this extends knowledge in this area. In the time that students are studying at the university, the value co-creation stream has conceptualised the value that would arise. The conceptualisations have been examined as the thinking is similar in the value-in-experience literature and empirical evidence has been provided to support the suggestions being made in the research papers. Additional value has been identified about the student experience when the students are studying at the university and the experiences they value. In the period after graduation the research programme has provided empirical evidence to support the existing conceptualisation of value in this phase from the value co-creation literature. It has illustrated that graduates have learned and developed new skills and that students were nostalgic during and after the period when they had graduated which is from the value-in-experience literature. The contribution to knowledge is identified for each phase of the research programme in table 65 below.

Table 65: Summary of the answers to the research questions and the contribution to knowledge from the thesis

Research question		Answer	Contribution to knowledge
What do students value when they are applying to a university?	Anticipation of value when studying at the university and after graduation	They developed image of what student life would be like from searching for information on UCAS and university websites, reading prospectuses and talking to family members and friends (see section 4.2.4 on pages 67 – 8, section 5.2.3 on pages 127 – 134 and section 5.2.4 on pages 135 – 138 for details)	Indicates that students are imagining what the experience will be like which contributes to knowledge in the higher education literature and supports the suggestion of Tynan and McKechnie (2009) in the value-in-experience literature.
		Decision to study at a university was based on the students' motivation to study – either vocational or academic (see section 5.2.1 on pages 110 – 114 for details)	Adds to existing literature by determining the extent to which students are motivated to study for a higher degree for vocational reasons. Indicates that age was a significant factor as mature students were all vocationally orientated whereas younger students were less so with minorities that were academically orientated in their decision to study for a degree. Agrees with the existing literature on this topic.
		Based on the image of the student life students have developed when thinking about the time	The decision to live at home or in university accommodation based on the values students

| What do students value when they are applying to a university? | | they will spend studying at the university, they either

• decided to live in the university accommodation as they felt that they could fit in, make friends and were prepared to live an independent life from their parents, or

• If they did not want this type of student experience they decided to live at home as they were concerned about incurring debt from living in university accommodation, they wanted to maintain existing relationships with family and friends, or they didn't want to move away to university.

(see section 4.2.3 on pages 65 – 67 and section 5.2.2 on pages 114 - 125 for details). | anticipated from the experience while studying at university has not been discussed before in the value in higher education literature. It agrees partially with the marketing in higher education literature which refers to students deciding to live at home for financial and social reasons. |
| | Value realised when applying to go to university | Valued finding out about the university and courses by talking to university staff when attending open/offer days and seeing the facilities the university had to offer (see section 4.2.4 on pages 67 – 68 and section 5.2.3 on | This has not been discussed in the value in higher education literature nor has there been any empirical research findings on the subject to date. It does agree with the marketing in higher education literature of Brown, Varley and Pal (2009). |

		pages 127 – 134 for details).	
		Obtained value from the information they found out about the university through the search process (see section 4.2.4 on pages 67 – 68 and section 5.2.3 on pages 127 - 134 for details).	Indicates the importance of providing accurate information about the university experience to potential students as they are applying to the university. They base their decisions on this information and are either satisfied with the experience when they are at the university or are disappointed and dissatisfied. Agrees with Tynan and McKechnie (2009).
		Valued receiving the offer of a place at the university and the support of family members about their decision (see section 4.2.6 on pages 71 - 72 and section 5.2.5 on pages 139 – 141 for details).	Adds to existing literature on this subject and establishes the extent to which families of students in different age groups were supportive of the students when they gained a place at the university. It has not been researched before in the value-in-experience literature.
What do students value		Valued from the experience of studying and socialising at the university. • Students stated that the experience was 'informative', 'friendly' and 'fun'.	Contributes to the literature as the research found that the student experience was more enjoyable for students who were younger and living in university accommodation compared with those who were older and living at home. The student experience also

while they are studying at the university?		Younger students living in university accommodation enjoyed experience to greater extent than students living at home • Positive attitude to student experience highest in first year students and declined over the second and third years due to negative student experiences as lecturers didn't communicate very well with students, there was overlap in the subjects the students studied, feedback was not being provided to students in the university specified time period. (see section 5.3.1 on pages 141 - 149 for details).	changed over time as the students studied on their courses. Agrees with the existing literature that this is an important issue for the student experience.
What do students value while they are studying at the university?	Learning experience	Vocationally orientated students valued studying subjects that would help them in their future careers: • Students aged 25+ valued acquiring skills for their potential career higher than other age groups • Developing interpersonal skills and self-	The previous work in this area by Krickl and Geertshuis' (2012) considered the students' motivation for studying when they were applying to go to the university only. This is adding to knowledge as it is identifying that students value their studies based on their motivation for studying and anticipation of what they will do when they graduate.

		confidence valued most by students aged 20 or younger	
		Value realised that was anticipated when students were deciding to go to university (see section 5.2.1 pages 110 – 113 and section 5.3.1 pages 149 – 153 for details).	
		Academically orientated students aged 21-24 valued developing knowledge of the subjects they had studied the highest. Value which was being realised here was anticipated in the application process (see section 5.2.1 pages 110 – 113 and section 5.3.1 pages 149 – 153 for details).	
What do students value while they are studying at the university?	Learning experience	Gained value from participating in extracurricular activities. Main activities they joined: • Societies • Sports clubs Students who were living in university accommodation participated in extracurricular activities more than those living at home. This was the realisation of the experience they had	The value of extracurricular activities in the form of membership of societies and sports clubs for younger students who were living in university accommodation adds to knowledge in this area. The importance of these extracurricular activities for younger students as part of their stereotypical student life compared with the views of older students also contributes to knowledge in this area.

		wanted and anticipated when applying to the university. Students aged 21-24 valued the experience the most and those aged 25+ the least (see section 5.3.1 pages 159 – 162 for details).	
What do students value while they are studying at the university?	Relationship with academic staff	Valued lecturers who were knowledgeable, could explain issues well, were well prepared, fair in their marking, enthusiastic and could motivate the students (see section 5.3.2 pages 164 – 172 for details).	Indicates the key factors which students value in the relationship hey have with their lecturers. Agrees with the existing literature on this topic.
		Didn't value lecturers with poor communication skills; those who were unenthusiastic, unhelpful and unapproachable (see section 5.3.1 on pages 154 – 158 and section 5.3.2 pages 172 – 175 for details).	Adds to knowledge about the issues that students like and don't like in their relationship with lecturers.
		Relationship with lecturers valued highest by those aged 25+ and in their third year of study. Relationship developed over time as students' progress through their studies (see section 5.3.2 pages 175 - 177 for details).	Adds to knowledge on this subject area by identifying the age groups and year of study of students who value the lecturers the most. Provides empirical evidence for Vargo (2009) suggestion that relationships develop over time.

		Formation of self-help groups valued by students to help them work on their projects and build friendships (see section 4.3.3.1 on page 86 and section 5.3.3 on pages 180 - 183 for details).	Adds to knowledge on the significance of the role of self-help groups for students to form friendships and work together informally on their studies. Adds to knowledge on the relationships students have with each other outside the lecture/seminar room.
What do students value while they are studying at the university?	Relationship with other students	The student experience was enhanced by other students' and was highest for those aged 21-24 and living in university accommodation as they were experiencing the stereotypical student life they had anticipated when they were applying to the university (see section 5.3.3 pages 183 - 188 for details).	The significance of the stereotypical student life for younger students which they anticipate before they go to university and then experience when they are living away from home adds to knowledge about the student experience. The significance of students who are living at home needing to build relationships with other students which they do through self-help groups and participating in extracurricular activities created by the university also adds to knowledge about the student experience.
		Students living at home and commuting to the university realised they needed to build relationships with other students in their second and third years through being involved in self-help groups or joining in the university societies (e.g. Students Union) (see section 4.3.3.3 on pages 89 – 90 for details).	
		Students found it unhelpful working together in formal groups on their courses where they only	Adds to knowledge as it identifies areas that a university needs to be aware of regarding careful

		had group marks. They also didn't like working with students from other countries with perceived poor language abilities (see section 4.3.3.2 on pages 87 - 89 for details).	consideration of the use of group work in multinational groups
	Getting a job	The majority of the students studying at the university and alumni valued getting a job as they were vocationally motivated (see section 4.4.2 on page 91 – 92 and section 5.4.1 on pages 189 – 190 for details). Students were anticipating receiving value that they had desired from the time they decided to go to university (see section 5.2.1 on pages 110 – 113 for details).	The realisation of value for students who were vocationally orientated which they had anticipated before they had applied to the university adds to knowledge of the student experience. It agrees with the literature on this topic.
What do students value when they have graduated	Studying for a higher degree	The students who were academically motivated were anticipating continuing to study at a higher level the subjects they liked (see section 4.4.1 on page 91 and section 5.4.1 on pages 189 – 190 for details).	Adds to knowledge in this area.

from their course?	Learned new skills and developing confidence	Students identified how they had learnt new skills and developed confidence which they were able to use in their work environment (see section 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 pages 93 - 96 for details).	Provides new knowledge for the higher education sector and empirical evidence to support the proposal from Tynan and McKechnie (2009) about the post consumption experience.
	Reminiscing about their experiences when studying on their course	Students reminisced about the time they studied on the course and the friendships they had formed with other students which they still maintained (see section 4.4.4 pages 94 - 96 for details).	Provides new knowledge for the higher education sector and empirical evidence to support the proposal about from Tynan and McKechnie (2009) about the post consumption experience.

7.4   Managerial implications arising from the thesis findings

The thesis has identified that students value their educational experience when things are going well and when they have good relationships with the staff and their fellow students. The research programme has, however, identified some issues that the management of universities need to consider and reflect on, as to how much they need to change as a result of these highlighted issues.

In the application phase the thesis has identified that students create a mental picture of what they expect their experience will be when they are studying at the university. This picture is created in part from the information they find out about the university from looking at websites, reading prospectuses and talking to friends who have studied at the university. It was identified that in one of the campuses of the university where the majority of the student population lived at home and commuted to the university, some of the students were disappointed with the lack of social activities on that campus and were not having as much fun as those at the other campus. This research finding suggests that the management of universities need to ensure that the information they are providing potential students with, about the experience they will have when they are studying at the university where there is more than one campus, needs to be as accurate as possible and identify the experience they will have on each campus. If this is not done, it could mislead the students about what the experience will be, which would cause disappointment and could mean that the students chose to leave the university and not recommend it to their friends.

The research programme has highlighted that social activities are an essential element of the university experience when students are studying for their degrees. The societies and sports clubs were the most important social activities for the students, and the university management need to ensure that there are active societies and good sports facilities for the students to allow them to mix with other students and make friends.

In this thesis students identified that poor communication from the lecturers, not receiving feedback from the lecturers for their assessments by the dates stated by the university and not being informed about timetabling problems (rooms being changed, staff off work and not able to take classes) were the main issues that affected student value. Management of universities need to ensure that the communication between the lecturing staff and the students is at a high level by informing the lecturing staff of the key information so that they can pass it on to the students. They also need to ensure that the lecturing staff are adhering to the university guidelines for the feedback of assessments and anything else that the university makes a commitment to the students about. Finally, the administration team

needs to ensure that they communicate with students when classes are cancelled or rooms are changed so that the students are aware of what is happening and will not feel annoyed if they turn up for a class to find that it is cancelled or the room has been changed.

The relationships between the students was seen to be positive by the majority of the students. There were, however, a few relationship issues concerning working in groups and between students with differing language abilities. The students did not value working in groups which were being jointly assessed, especially where the group members did not work well together. The management of the university will have to consider the value of group work to decide where and when in the curriculum it should be used and if it should be part of a formal assessment. If they decide to include it they will have to monitor closely the groups to ensure that the students work together well. Secondly, they need to ensure that the UK students are not refusing membership of the groups (where they are formed on a voluntary basis) to those students from other countries who are perceived to have poor language skills. If that is happening they will have to decide what they should do ensure that the students from outside the UK are not being discriminated against by the UK students.

7.5   Limitations of the thesis

This thesis has been based on research that has been undertaken as a case study in one UK university with two campuses in cities in the east of England. The research programme and thesis have a number of limitations which are discussed in the next few paragraphs.

The first limitation is that the research programme attempted to describe the value that students identified throughout their educational experience. As a result, there would have been unknown factors that I was not aware of which were not considered in the questions being put to the students. The research was also carried out mainly among UK students (81 percent of the respondents in the quantitative research programme) who were studying full-time (95 percent of the respondents in the quantitative research programme).

The research design and application used for this thesis has consisted of a mixed methods research design of a case study of one university with two campuses that exhibited different characteristics in terms of the age profile and the percentages of students who were living at home or in university accommodation. The use of a mixed methods design had some limitations which are discussed here. The first was that the opinions of the first and third years students in Cambridge were underrepresented in the qualitative research programme as I was unable to recruit sufficient numbers of students for the study. Secondly, the representation of students who were living in university accommodation in Chelmsford was

also underrepresented compared with the number of interviewees in university accommodation in Cambridge. This was the situation for the third-year students in Chelmsford which did not include any students that were living in university accommodation. The recruitment of students to complete the questionnaire for the quantitative stage of the research programme used convenience sampling rather than probability sampling, which is a problem as the findings cannot be generalised (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Bryman and Bell (2003), however, do note that convenience sampling is fairly acceptable and can be used "when the chance presents itself to gather data from a convenience sample and it represents too good an opportunity to miss" (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p 105). The opportunity to recruit students who were studying in the library and open access computer spaces on the two campuses were opportunities that were too good to miss to enable me to obtain recruits for the quantitative research programme. I did not have access to the university student database and would have been unable to put together a database from which to randomly select recruits to achieve a probability sample for the research programme. Bryman and Bell (2003) do, however, state that convenience sampling plays a prominent role in business and management research where it is very common. I, therefore, feel that the use of a convenience sample is following established practice in the sector.

The use of a mixed methods design which incorporated the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods has allowed me to overcome the limitations of either method noted above as the limitations in the recruitment of interviewees in the qualitative research phase was overcome by the use of the quantitative research method which did include more representative numbers for each site and therefore better findings than had been provided from the qualitative research alone.   As Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p5) state the central premise of mixed methods research is "that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" with which I agree.

Another area of limitation of the research is the use of a single case study which some researchers argue is not a suitable methodology for research into a phenomenon. Yin (2009) noted that researchers argue against the use of the case study method as it lacks rigor as case study researchers have not followed systematic procedures or have allowed biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions. I have used systematic methods to undertake the research outlined in the thesis and have triangulated the findings between the qualitative and quantitative research programmes to reduce bias in the findings and conclusions that have been drawn from the data. The second issue that researchers identify about case studies is that they don't provide a good basis for

generalisation. This has already been noted with regard to the use of a convenience sample for the quantitative research programme and I accept that the findings cannot be generalised to all universities. Yin (2009) stated that case studies are useful to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth which is the case here as I wanted to study the value students identified from their experience of higher education. The use of a case study of my organisation seemed, therefore, the best way to approach an investigation into this real-life problem especially as the university had two campuses with very different student groups and social life.

The final limitation of the research is that when I researched the value that students identified in the three stages of their higher education experience – application process, time studying at the university and post-graduation – I did not find any cause and effect relationships. The reason for this was that it was beyond the scope of the study as I only used the cross tabulation and chi-squared statistical techniques which failed to provide data of the type that would have established any cause and effect relationships. In the conceptual framework at the end of chapter six the arrows which suggest relationships between the three stages of the higher education experience are based on my interpretation of the findings rather than any statistical analysis. Having realised that this is the case I would strongly advise future researchers to look at the findings and undertake appropriate statistical analysis of them to establish the cause and effect relationships.

7.6   Future research

Any research programme will always bring up findings or conclusions which will lead the researcher to consider alternatives and additional research that could and should be undertaken. This research is no exemption to this 'rule of thumb'.

Suggestions for future research include the following:

1. Research into the international student population to see if the findings differ from those discussed in the thesis above, which researched the issue mainly among the UK student population.

2. Research into the staff understanding of student perceived value – the research reported in this thesis has identified the students' perceptions of value throughout their educational experience. Research could be carried out to establish the staff understanding of value to see to what extent they understand what the students perceive to be of value to them.

3. The research programme has been undertaken in a post-1992 university which operates across two campuses in East Anglia. It would be useful to repeat the research programme in universities where there is only one campus, or in a large metropolitan conurbation (e.g. Birmingham, London or Manchester). The research programme should also be undertaken in a university which is a member of one of the other group of universities such as the Russell Group or University Alliance to determine to what extent the findings and conceptual framework are consistent across the whole university sector.

7.7   Reflection on the personal journey

As a researcher, the experience of studying for this award has been a long and transformative journey which has posed a number of challenges and obstacles.

At the start of the journey I had a totally different view of the value construct and where I should carry out my research from the one I have now. My background had consisted of lecturing on the subject of value using the value co-creation construct and examining value propositions. I, therefore, started thinking about undertaking research to examine the value proposition of a public-sector organisation. At the time I was aware that the National Health Service was trying to improve its customer service and was interested in undertaking research to consider the value proposition of a hospital. This idea proved to be impractical, however, mainly due to the ethical procedures in operation in undertaking any research in that sector and it was considered too difficult to even attempt to get permission. Instead I decided to examine the area I knew well – higher education – where I also knew that I would have relatively easy access to obtain data in my own institution and I found the experience informative and richly rewarding.

My view of the value construct changed when I began to read the value-in-experience literature and realised that value lay in the perceptions of the customer (student) rather than what the company could do when they provided value propositions. As a result of this the research changed from identifying the university value proposition to, instead, understanding what students valued throughout their educational experience.

A second aspect of the journey that has been transformative has been my use of quantitative research. My background has been in qualitative research and I have always considered myself to be a social scientist based in the interpretivist ontological and

epistemological worldview. As noted above in section 7.5.1 the limitations of the qualitative research programme meant that I had to change my worldview and embrace a quantitative research methodology. In undertaking quantitative research, I learnt new techniques of analysis - how to do chi-squared and factorial analysis on SPSS - and I broadened my abilities to undertake research and analyse data which was a rewarding experience. In reflecting on my philosophical worldview about research, I came across pragmatism and realised that my view on research was compatible with this worldview, hence I adopted it for this thesis.

7.8   Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to bring about an understanding of the aspects of the student experience that students value when they are applying to go to university, studying on their courses and after they have graduated. The thesis has examined the student experience through the value-in-experience construct using the pragmatic research methodology which has been innovative and has made some contributions to knowledge on the subject for the marketing of higher education institutions.

The value placed on the student experience in universities is growing in importance at the present time as students are facing economic pressures due to the increase in tuition fees and the cost of living away from home when they are studying for their degree. The contribution of this thesis has been to point to the importance of the student experience for younger students who want to live away from home, have the stereotypical student life and go to university expecting to have a good social life as well as study for their degree. For the majority of students the motivation for studying, which was to help them to either get a good job or improve their career prospects, was also seen to be a significant reason for studying for a degree for which they were not being deterred by the cost of their education.

The analysis of the student experience in higher education using the value-in-experience construct should be developed further as it has brought fresh insights to the subject. Academics and managers of higher education institutions can use these findings to examine this topic in greater detail and create suitable programmes to support the students throughout their educational experience.

The use of the pragmatic research paradigm is also to be encouraged as it helped me to produce the research results that have been reported in this thesis and overcame the

problems that would have occurred if I had relied on either the positivist or interpretivist paradigm alone.

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9   **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Qualitative research interview guide

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for quantitative research programme

Appendix 1: Qualitative research interview guide

Questions

Prior to the start of the course

1 Why did you decide to go to university?

2 did anybody influence you in your decision?

3 did you look for the course first then the university or vice versa?

4 what information did you obtain about the course at ARU and the university? (probe for indications of value propositions)

5 what were the messages/promises that were made to you about the course and university? (probe for details about the value propositions)

6 what attracted you to your course at ARU?

7 how did you feel when you received the offer of your place in the Business School? (probe for signs of value)

Course so far

8 How is the course for you?

a good points? - what made it good who helped to make it good - (look for co-creation)

b bad points? - why? where did things go wrong? did others contribute to this? how?

9 Has the course met your expectations? (probe for signs of value being achieved)

10 Has the course and university fulfilled the promises made to you before you joined the course? (probe for signs of the value propositions being achieved)

11 Do you think that your experience has been enhanced by other people? who and how?

12 what are your expectations for the rest of the course?

13 what do you consider to be of value to you from your course so far?

After graduation

14 what do you expect to do with your degree when you have finished your course?

15 do you think that you will value your degree when you have completed the course and are in work

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for quantitative research programme

I am studying for a PhD on the subject of students perceptions of value in Higher Education. It would be really helpful to me if you could answer the following questions.

Some details about you

1 What is your gender?

□   Female

□   Male

2 Which age group do you belong to?

□   Under 20

□   21-24

□   Over 25

3 Where are you studying?

□   Cambridge

□   Chelmsford

□   London

4 What is your year of study?

1	2	3	4	5

5 What is the name of the course you are registered on?

_____

6 Are you a part-time or full-time student?

□   Part-time

□   Full-time

7 What region of the world do you call home?

□   UK

□   Europe

□   Rest of the world

8 If you answered UK, what is your home post code?

_____

Thinking about the time when you were considering studying for a degree please could you answer the following questions?

9 Why did you decide to go to university?

☐ I wanted to carry on studying subjects I liked

☐ I didn't want to start work

☐ I realise that I needed to have a degree to get a good job

☐ I need to have a degree to pursue the career I am interested in

☐ To help further my career

☐ Other, please explain below

_____

10 When did you decide to go to university?

☐ I always assumed that I would go to university

☐ After completing my GCSEs

☐ After completing my A levels

☐ At the last minute

☐ Other, please explain below

_____

11 Did you consider universities nationally or just in your local area?

☐ Nationally

☐ Local area

12 If you chose the local area why was this? (please explain below)

_____

13 Are you a) living at home or b) in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university that you rent?

□   Living at home

□   Living in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university that you rent

14 If you are living at home is this because:

(please choose all that apply)

□   I didn't want to study away from home

□   I wanted to avoid incurring debts by having to pay rent etc. while at a university

□   I wanted to stay in my local area where I had my family and friends

□   I didn't want to experience the stereotypical student life on campus

□   The course I wanted to study was available in my local area

□   I liked the university

□   I liked the course on offer at the university

15 If you are in the halls of residence/accommodation near to the university that you rent is this because:

(please choose all that apply)

☐ I wanted to experience the stereotypical student life on campus

☐ I didn't want to live with my family while I was at university

☐ The course I wanted to study was not available in my local area

☐ I liked the university

☐ I liked the course on offer at the university

16 In the year when you applied to go to university, what was the time of year when you applied?

☐ Before January

☐ Between January and June

☐ During Clearing

17 If you applied during clearing was this because you:

☐ Didn't get the grades I was predicted and had to apply to Anglia Ruskin University

☐ Only decided to apply to go to university after I had received my A level results

☐ Had to change my career plans due to unforeseen circumstances and decided at the last minute to study for a degree.

☐ Other, please explain

18 Where did you first hear about Anglia Ruskin?

Please select one answer only

□   UCAS Website

□   School/College - from a teacher

□   School/College - from an Anglia Ruskin representative or staff member

□   Current/Previous Student

□   Education Exhibition/Fair

□   Online advert

□   Newspaper advert

□   Radio advert

□   Outdoor advert (e.g. poster/train panel)

□   Word of mouth (from a friend/contact/school/teacher)

□   Other, please specify

---

19 If you selected Word of mouth who told you about Anglia Ruskin University

□   Family member

□   Friend

□   School

□   Teacher

□   Other, please specify

---

20 Did you attend an Open Day or Offer Day at Anglia Ruskin University?

Open Day

□   Yes

□   No

Offer Day

□   Yes

□   No

(if you did not attend either please proceed to question 24)

21 How would you describe your experience at the Open day?

□   Very helpful in giving me information about the course and university

□   Helpful in giving me information about the course and university

□   Neither helpful or unhelpful in giving me information about the course and the university

□   Not very helpful in giving me information about the course and the university

□   Very unhelpful in giving me information about the course and the university

22 How would you describe your experience at the Offer day?

□   Very helpful in giving me information about the course and university

□   Helpful in giving me information about the course and university

□   Neither helpful or unhelpful in giving me information about the course and the university

□   Not very helpful in giving me information about the course and the university

□   Very unhelpful in giving me information about the course and the university

23 Would you say that you valued your experience at the Open/Offer day you attended?

Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree or disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree

24 Did anybody influence you in your decision when you choose to apply and study at Anglia Ruskin University?

□   Father

□   Mother

□   Parents

□   Other family members

□   Friend(s)

□   Peers

□   Other, please specify

25 Did your family give you their opinion about Anglia Ruskin University before you applied to the university?

□ Yes

□ No

26 How did your family feel when you received the offer of a place at Anglia Ruskin University?

Excited	Very pleased	Happy	Unhappy	Hostile to your decision

Turning to your time at Anglia Ruskin so far please can you answer the following questions.

27 Which three words would you say describe your experience to-date while studying at Anglia Ruskin University?

(please tick the boxes to the left of the three words you have chosen)

□ Fun □ Informative □ Monotonous □ Dull □ Exciting □ Helpful □ Average □ Motivating

□ Transformative □ Friendly □ Imaginative □ Mundane □ Time-wasting □ Disappointing □ Inspiring

□ Other, please specify

---

28 How would you describe your orientation to learning while you have been studying at Anglia Ruskin University?

□ Career orientated – I am studying to enable me to get a good job at the end of the course

□ Socially orientated – I am studying as I am interested in the social side of attending the university and meeting and making friends with my fellow students

□ Personal development orientated – I am studying to improve myself as a person

□   Image orientated – I am studying here because I want to be associated with Anglia Ruskin and its academic reputation

29 Has studying at Anglia Ruskin University helped you to?

□   Develop your interpersonal skills and self-confidence

□   Develop your knowledge of the subjects you have studied

□   Acquire skills for your potential career

30 What would you say that you have valued from your course so far?

□   The range of subjects I have studied on my course

□   Gaining an in depth knowledge of the subjects I am interested in

□   Gaining knowledge to help me in my future career

□   Other, please provide details below

---

31 Were there any parts of your course that you did not value?

□   Overlap of the subjects in the modules

□   Poor communication about the timetable changes

□   Poor communication from the lecturing staff

□   Poor communication from the administration staff

□   Other, please provide details below

---

32 Is there a good social life at the university?

☐   Yes

☐   No

33 Have you made friends amongst your fellow students?

☐   Yes

☐   No

34 Have you set up any self-help groups with your fellow students to help you to develop your understanding of your subjects and work on your projects?

☐   Yes

☐   No

35 How valuable to you has this support group been?

Very valuable	Valuable	Neither valuable or not valuable	Not valuable	Not very valuable

36 Have you participated in any extracurricular activities?

☐   Joined societies

☐   Joined sports clubs

☐   Participated in competitions run by my Faculty/the university

☐   Joined mentoring programme organised by Anglia Ruskin University

□   Been a student representative for the Students Union

37 How much have you valued your experience while participating in any extracurricular activities?

Very valuable	Valuable	Neither valuable or not valuable	Not valuable	Not very valuable

38 Overall how much has your university experience been enhanced by your fellow students?

A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	Not at all

39 Would you describe the atmosphere on the campus where you are studying as:

Excellent	Good	Ok	Poor	Very poor

40 If you have described the atmosphere as Poor or Very Poor, what would you say are the factors that you consider important in making a good atmosphere on your course and the campus for you?

Please identify them below.

_____

41 What do you value in a lecturer?

(Please rank in level in importance from 1 being very important to 5 definitely not important)

	1 very important	2 important	3 neither important or unimportant	4 not important	5 definitely not important
Friendly					
Helpful					
Readily available to speak to students					
Approachable					
Sensitive to students needs					
Charismatic					
Sociable					
Encourages group work					
Leads group discussions					
Can explain issues/materials/notes well					
Enthusiastic					
Involves students in class presentations					
Well prepared					
Fair in their marking					
Knowledgeable					

Good lesson delivery					
Can motivate students					
Impartial marking					
Provides clear marking schemes					
Provide clear and helpful feedback					
Professional					
Good control in the classroom					
Appropriate qualifications (e.g. PhD, professional qualifications)					

42 Do your lecturers exhibit the values you have identified above?

□ Yes

□ No

43 If no why is this, please explain below:

_____

44 To what extent would you say that you have valued the relationship you have with your lecturers?

A great deal	To some extent	A little	Not much	Not at all

45 If your answer is 'Not much' or 'Not at all', please provide details below why you have ticked these boxes:

_____

_____

46 Would you agree that the teaching you have received from your lecturers has contributed to your personal development?

□ Yes

□ No

47 Would you say that what you have been taught by your lecturers so far will be useful to you when looking for employment after your course?

□ Yes

□ No

Thinking about what you hope to do after you have finished your course.

48 What do you expect to do when you have finished your course?

□ Get a job in a subject area that I am interested in

□ Study for a higher degree

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Your comments will be treated in confidence and not disclosed to any third party.

If you would like to receive a Participant Information Sheet and/or Participant Consent Form please provide me with your email address below and I will send them to you.

_____