Being a ‘model’ student: the impact of affective influences on full-time undergraduate student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context in England

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ABSTRACT

This research explores how full-time undergraduate students' (FTUG) behaviours can be theorised in terms of the State's biopolitical influence and distribution of power amongst constantly evolving actors within English Higher Education. Findings demonstrate how this framing enables a timely and nuanced perspective on the ways such influences shape the 'model' student and their negotiation of networks of power. Prior research investigated 'becoming' a student and student transitions (Nielsen, 2015), education's changing governance (Ball, 2007; 2013; 2017) and shifts in Higher Education's perceived and espoused purposes (Furlong, 2014; Choat, 2017; Wahlstrom & Sundberg, 2017). However, little prior work identifies the State's shaping of FTUG behaviours, particularly in a post-COVID-19 context where student belonging, attendance and engagement are problematic. The research addresses these influences in a series of delimited settings by considering the discursive spaces of marketing, regulatory and other documentation that frame the student experience, and a selection of social learning space (SLS) that students inhabit. Digital spaces are outside the research scope.

This research is multi-method and based on affect theory (Foucault, 1978; Anderson, 2011). Thematic analysis of a documentary corpus of illustrative materials enables an exploration of student discursive spaces. Individual and group interviews with key actors investigate shaping the 'model' student's experience. Structured observations of students identify their engagement with SLS.

The research elucidates universities' role in the State's scripting of 'model' student behaviour. Contrastingly, the findings illuminate how students retain agency amidst the exercise of biopolitical tactics and hegemonic power and offer policymakers and universities a perspective to re-evaluate and critique the current scripting of 'model' student identity. The research models a reimagined network of power, tying together the perspectives and power-flows between student, university and State, thus enabling new conceptions within which they might be rebalanced, for example in the use of SLS and setting student expectations.

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Glossary of key terms and acronyms used in this thesis

Keyword/Term	Definition
Academic staff	A person employed on an academic contract in a Higher Education Provider, usually in a role carrying a title such as ‘Lecturer’.
Affect	Affect is a behavioural phenomenon which highlights behavioural modification through subconscious appeal due to nudges and biopower (Esposito, 2008). Anderson (2016) ventures two definitions: the bodily capacity to be impacted by encounters; and the force of an apparatus/power acting on an ‘object-target’.
Agent (of power)	These in the context of power operating on students would be viewed as university staff. In the case of the university, these might be regulators.
Ancient university	An ancient university, for the purposes of this thesis, is considered to be any university founded before 1800.
Becoming	The notion of identity formation, seen as an iterative process moving towards a totality of an identity which allows one to belong in a particular space or be a particular ‘thing’ such as a profession requiring certain skills or qualifications (Butler, 1995).
Being	Presently living or inhabiting a particular identity, this might mean for example having achieved a particular certification or threshold to be seen as belonging within a particular community.
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy - A UK Government ministry that existed from July 2016 to February 2023. It combined the departments of 1. Business, Innovation & Skills, and 2. Energy and Climate Change
Biopolitics	The idea that governmental power operates through the management and regulation of bodies and lives of a population (Foucault, 2002).
Biopower	The shaping of the agency of individuals by a dominant power operating on individuals’ bodies through the regulation and intervention of life often seen as the ‘medicalisation’ of power, biopower is usually manifested through distributed governmentality of The State and intervenes in systems of healthcare, welfare, surveillance, and employment (Foucault, 2002).
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills - A UK government ministry that existed from June 2009 to July 2019. It combined the departments of 1. Business, Enterprise, & Regulatory Reform, and 2. Innovation, Universities, & Skills.
Cathedral Group University	A group of 15 UK universities, with the exception of one, were founded by the church for teacher training mainly from 1828 to

	1960.
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
Commercialisation	The process of making something into a product of service that can be sold, in this thesis, it is making aspects of Higher Education into a service for students and business
Commodification	The making of something previously seen as free or a public good into a product which is saleable. In this thesis for example higher education becomes something which is 'bought'.
Consumer	A person who purchases a service or product. In England students have been positioned as consumers since being recognised as consumers in the Consumer Act 2015
Contract	In the context of this thesis, a written agreement regarding an aspect of Higher Education that is intended as being enforceable by law.
Contracting (of student behaviour)	The rise of tuition fees has a more legalised sense of contractual obligations of several stakeholders within the network of power, which can be seen in the rise in student contracts.
Corporatisation	In the context of this thesis, viewed as the process of making the university/organisation into one which is run in keeping with the methods and philosophies of running a commercial company (including using methods of those seen in large multinationals such as key decision making premised in a centralised at executive level).
Democraticised	The process of making something, in this case education, more accessible to people.
DfE	Department for Education
DoM	Director of Marketing
DoSS	Director of Student Success
Everyday	Are the naturalised encounters with the world, incorporating those things that are seemingly banal and embedded practices that one does and navigates without consciously thinking about them (De Certeau, 1988).
FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
FTUG	Full-time Undergraduate
Global knowledge economy	The notion that there is a system of economic exchange based on scientific and creative discovery applying research.
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
Hegemonic power	The dominant group/influence over others in a particular network, whose influence is supported by legitimising norms and ideas

	(Foucault, 2010).
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEP	Higher Education Provider
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
Higher Education	In England, the definition of Higher Education is set out in Schedule 6 of the Education Reform Act 1988
HoD	Head of Department
JISC	Joint Informations Systems Committee (which in 2012 became an independent charity and was renamed 'Jisc')
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Framework
Lively	In this thesis, 'lively' connotes something that has multiple and possibly unexpected interactions, and that something that might under a non-theorised lens be viewed as quotidian or banal is instead a site of rich activity.
Marketisation	The process of progressive exposure and transformation of organisations (and those entities previously viewed as public sector) to market forces. This may see the introduction of competition and tendering, creation of markets, and privatisation.
Middle manager	In the context of this thesis, a university middle manager is one who holds a portfolio above that of a course and one that would not have an influence across the entire university, for example a Head of Department.
Model student	This is the idea that there is an imagined version of what a student should be in terms of behaviours, practices and interactions both academic and beyond that. This notion of what is a 'model' student is usually viewed from the perspective of the hegemonic power within a network of power.
Modern university	In the context of this thesis a modern university is any university that has been founded after 1993.
Neoliberal	The position of supporting free-market capitalism, which is usually accompanied with deregulation to encourage market investment whilst there is a reduction in government spending.
Network	This is the assemblage of nodes that impact or influence the student experience. Here, a node might be the university, or the student, or a government regulator, or a building, or a policy.
Network of power	The idea that each individual/organisation is in a relational position with others, this power is experienced as well as exercised on others. The network can vary in scope and significance depending upon the matter and context (Foucault, 1977).

Nudging	An intervention in the choice architecture that leads to a change in an individual's behaviour or decision to a predictable outcome (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009)
Nudging (of student behaviour)	This is seen where choice architecture has been designed to reduce perceived choice and that therefore there is only one viable option or intended trajectory, such as the design of virtual learning environments or the use of a particular space.
Officialisation	The process of making something legitimate in the view of an actor in a position of control, usually the hegemonic power in the network of power.
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OfS	Office for Students
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
Place	A space that has been ascribed with a particular meaning by an individual or group of individuals. Here, a place may generate emotional responses due to individual interpretations. Hence, a physical location may be viewed as a place with complex and multiple interpretations.
Plate Glass university	In the context of this thesis, an HEI that was created during the 1960s, and at the time was reflected in their construction containing large facades of plate glass.
Postgraduate	A person who has already undertaken their first degree, and often associated with study at RQF Level 7 or 8
Poststructuralism	The idea that one cannot accept universal 'truths' and that knowledge cannot be absolute. It views power as being beyond simplistic structures and that it is distributed through often complex networks.
Post-92 university	A university that was given university status in 1992/93 through the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.
Productification	The process of making a good or service into a saleable product accompanied with a particular rhetoric for making it into a product.
Professional services staff	Those members of staff employed by a university who are not on an academic contract. This includes a range of different roles at the university often fulfilling functions from learning and teaching development to landscapers.
Professionalisation of HE	The changes in the training and workload of lecturing staff, in particular, in HE have meant that they have been subject to agency redistribution
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency

Quaternary sector	A segment of the economy which is based on intellectual or knowledge-based exchange, this might be related to technology, information, finance or research and development.
Red Brick university	A 'red brick' university is considered to be any which was constructed from 1900 to the late 1960s, they are known primarily for their distinctive construction of brick and often found to be the "University of.."
REF	Research Excellence Framework
Regulation (of student behaviour)	This is where for example the university overtly intervenes to correct or remove something it does not deem acceptable, such as in student initiation ceremonies.
Russell Group university	A collection of twenty four research intensive universities in the UK; as a group they attract the majority of government funding for research activity.
Scripting	The active influence of affect which shapes the manifestations of an individual's behaviour in spaces. Usually this is a targeted intervention by the hegemonic power to create 'knowable behaviours'.
Senior manager	In the context of this thesis, a university senior manager is one whose decisions would have an impact across the entire university, for example a Director of Marketing.
SLC	The Student Loans Company
SLS	Social Learning Space
Soft Power	A projection of the state's power through media, and through distributing powers to arm's length organisations.
Space	A dimension of the world in which we are situated. In theorised understandings, it is somewhere with multiple existence with others. It is not neutral but rather is politically and socially charged (Massey, 2005).
(The) State	The entity that regulates and controls a society and a population within a territory, the state is often viewed as the Government. However, unlike a Government it should be viewed as being composed of the polity of ongoing power and apparatus that continues beyond a political lifestyle.
Student	A person engaged in study a place of education, in this thesis, a person at a university in England
Student experience	An elusive concept, but in this thesis it is viewed as the aspects of the quality of learning and teaching, support and pastoral care including wellbeing, access and quality of social activities, housing and accommodation, the catering offer, and perception of value for money.

Studenthood	This is the idea of the state of ‘being’ and belonging as a student (Nielsen, 2015).
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework for Teaching and Student Outcomes
Traditional university	This thesis views a traditional university as being legally recognised as a public university by the OfS, it is one that was established as ‘not-for-profit’ and has been granted the right to use ‘university’ in its title.
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
Undergraduate	A university student who has not fully completed and graduated from their first degree.
University	An institution that has the right to provide and award degrees to individuals. It is an autonomous body that is legally constituted, it usually is a centre with origins in delivering higher education and research, to advance and disseminate knowledge.
University buildings	University buildings can have a significant impact on students, they are the key sites of inhabitation for students and are primarily the place for nudging and affectively conditioning students. The buildings themselves have a complex history and are a statement about the positioning in the English HE sector. The buildings usually have distinct spaces that are designed for a particular use.
UUK	Universities UK
Value for money	A much contested concept in the HE context, the OfS (2019) views value for money as a combination of positive feedback from students, effective consumer protection, the wider public value, and the return on investment.

Notes on thesis presentation style:

1. Italicisation is used throughout when referring in the main text to the full name of a book or report. It is also used where a word or phrase is from another language. Additionally, in Chapter 8, it is used for emphasis on how the research objectives have been addressed.
2. Capitalisation is largely used for terms and words that are equivalent to a proper noun, for example, Higher Education, Government, Further Education, and the State.
3. The reference list presents the literature in a Harvard format, but in the method it is listed by the source, hence there are variations in the format of word capitalisation of titles and publications.
4. Key terms are defined in the Glossary above and in text on first use, and further nuanced discussion for some key terms is incorporated into the Literature Review chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

The narrative of Higher Education in England over the past three decades is widely recognised as the story of a sector transformed. The enactment of the Further Education and Higher Education Act for England and Wales (1992), which abolished the distinction between universities and polytechnics, resulted in significant reprofiling and repurposing of the sector (Wilson, 2022). Participation rose accordingly with the total UK university student population in the United Kingdom doubling between 1992 and 2016 (ONS, 2016) and over 1.4 million full-time undergraduate students studying at universities in England in academic year 2020/21 (the time at which empirical research commenced), (HESA, 2024a). The funding landscape has also been transformed; as a result of the recommendations in the Dearing Report (1997), academic year 1998/9 saw the introduction of tuition fees alongside the broadened remit of the Student Loans Company (SLC). Tuition fees have subsequently increased over time, rising in 2004, 2009, 2012, and 2017, and calls for a further rise are widespread at the time of writing this thesis.

It is increasingly recognised that these changes fundamentally altered the historical relationships between students, their university, and the State. Students have increasingly become positioned as ‘consumers’ and have more formal contractual relationships with their universities, in part due to their being protected by the Consumer Act (2015). Since 1992 there has been the establishment of a number of bodies focusing on an area of HE. Most notably the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was introduced in 1992 with a charity law compliance function, with a broadened remit in 2006 and 2010 to become a regulator with a focus on governance and leadership. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was introduced in 1997 providing oversight for quality curriculum and assessment. Following the Higher Education Act 2004, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was established, which sought to widen participation in HE. Again, following the Higher Education Act 2017, a new sector-wide regulator the Office for Students (OfS) was introduced in 2018, with more significant powers creating a register of HE providers and the ability to impose a range of sanctions on providers. The OfS subsumed the prior responsibilities of the OFFA and HEFCE, as well as resulting in an unusual position of the QAA as an advisory body in England. Here, there was a transition in the regulatory field causing shifts in the relationship between the State, universities, and students. Such changes are reflected in sector bodies, following the Bell Review (2017), the Equality Challenge Unit, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, and the Higher Education Academy merged in 2018 in Advance HE creating a single body for the sector, advocating for equality, diversity, learning, teaching, leadership, and governance. Hence, Advance HE now has a much more influential sector organisation influencing the pedagogic, regulatory and governance systems of universities.

The changes to the sector, particularly the regulatory changes, have increasingly seen a shift to HE being positioned in the domain of a competitive global marketplace with high student mobility. The regulation partly mirrors that of the utility sector, where regulators keep lists of providers and can take far-reaching action on providers who fail to meet expectations. Here, it is evident that there has been a dialectic interplay, on the one hand, decentralisation of 'minor' decision-making and the need for universities to become more autonomous in securing their financial futures. On the other hand, gradual (re)centralisation of the 'major' aspects such as governance expectations, value-added in degrees (increasingly referred to as educational gain following (OfS, 2022b)), student outcomes, equality and inclusion.

With the shifts in how the HE sector is financed, there has been an accompanying shift in the perception of the purpose and role of HE by students, staff, business, government, and other stakeholders. Many of the significant reports on the sector (UUK, 2011; UUK, 2015; Bell, 2017) have focused on sector sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness, and, increasingly, 'value for money'. These shifts are not only in the perception but also in the apparatus, regulation, and operation of the HE sector with HE providers having more responsibility than ever before for financial sustainability. This focus on finances, therefore, plays a significant role in decisions made by universities to attract students, through investment into the university and the student experience, a metaphor for showing that the student debt investment in that university is a good choice. Not only that, but universities have had to diversify their income streams looking to maximise the use of space, capitalise on intellectual property, and become more entrepreneurial. The entrepreneurial university is positioned as one that is rooted within a global market and supports staff and students in developing a range of skills for life while also contributing to the economy.

Quality assurance in HE has been met with a widespread acknowledgement of the need to make programmes 'robust' and to ensure that there is 'value for money'. However, quality assurance processes have often faced difficulty in providing robust oversight, particularly in a rapidly changing and interconnected world. This is due to the slower pace of regulation versus innovation, and the autonomy that universities have been afforded in a multilayered sector where universities have differing governance, financial stability, and priorities. The QAA became the dedicated quality body providing advice to the OfS on whether programmes met the Quality Code and required standards outlined in the Framework for

Higher Education Qualifications. However, the QAA has often been criticised for not holding providers to account (House of Lords, 2023), and the remit it now holds positions it more as an advice and guidance organisation. Indeed, there has been much controversy revolving around the de-designation of the QAA as the Designated Standards Body in 2023, raising concerns about the international standing and comparability of courses in England. As metrics have become increasingly important in denoting market competitiveness and comparability (both domestically and internationally) (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Beer, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017), league tables and frameworks for excellence have become commonplace; for example the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, the Research Excellence Framework, and the Knowledge Exchange Framework. Arguably, such datafication and compatibility systems facilitate a neoliberal HE marketplace, where the consumer chooses the option they deem to be most attractive (or led to believe is the best).

This thesis is concerned with how full-time undergraduate students (FTUGs) in universities in England are influenced in terms of practices and behaviours (embodiment of expectations/ influences). Thus, this study takes its place within wider literature on how social and agentive forces are played out in institutions, organisations and social structures. Studies in the anthropology of education (Ball, 2013), human geography and other fields have drawn attention to how schools (Hope, 2013; 2016), hospitals (Reeves & Nichols, 2008), the criminal justice system (Foucault, 1977; McDowell, 2012) and other settings (Adey, 2008; Kraftl, 2015) can be viewed as rich sites for the observation of competing social forces and the enactment and embodiment of discursive practices. Very much informing my approach have been the works of Foucault (1977; 2002; 2008; 2010) on a number of these social forces, which have been further developed by the likes of Lemke (2011) and Anderson (2014). Previous research by Ball (2007; 2013; 2017) has shed light on the complex power relationships, in a more Foucauldian conceptualisation, in universities, and relationships between institutions, the state, staff, and students. Furlong (2014) has shown how the State (re)shapes policy to meet the needs of the future workforce demographic. Nielsen (2015) has researched how Danish HE students are influenced by their identities, and how identities are (re)built over time. Brooks & O'Shea (2021) have explored how identities are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed over time, helping to draw attention to the imaginaries versus realities of student identities. To this extent, this thesis is influenced by the literature as viewing student identity as forming and reforming over time, specifically this thesis aims to highlight points of transition and shifts in agency throughout a student's journey at university.

My previous research has developed a strong thread of interest in affect theory and the influencing of behaviours, particularly how space is used as a method for shaping behaviours

(Tate, 2014; 2015; 2023). Affect, in this thesis, is considered as the influencing and shaping of behaviours in a manner which registers with the individual only subconsciously (Anderson, 2014). This view of affect is important for considering how influencing may operate in HE (this term is also briefly defined in the glossary and fully explored in S2b.1). In my undergraduate dissertation, I explored how public houses created atmospheres to influence consumer behaviours and notions of belonging (Tate, 2014), and in my Master's study, I explored how police station architecture influences the behaviours of different users of the spaces of the police station (Tate, 2015). Additionally, the familiar term 'space' is deployed in a more specialised and theorised manner in this study. Here, the concept of space is that of a politically and socially contested zone of existence, with a physical aspect but also an aspect of constructed meaning that varies depending on the perspective (Massey, 2005). Space is a key concept for this thesis as it is key in facilitating meaning and what it might mean to belong in that space. The concept of affect has also been employed in my previous research.

Accordingly, my doctoral research looks at the extent to which universities' interactions with their students reflect or embody the 'soft power' of the State as distinct from their own wholly autonomous actions as education providers. To that end, my research explores how universities in England influence FTUG behaviours and practices to become a 'model' student through affective tactics, such as the operationalisation of the power of the State, with a focus on the use of physical space. Nudging is also a tactic used in the shaping of behaviour through seemingly presenting one with the 'best' or reduced choice and/or through engagement methods (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009), such as an email using one's name rather than a generic greeting. Nudging is defined in the glossary and a nuanced discussion is offered in S2b.1. This study omits an investigation into digital space and the role of digital nudging. Before the commencement of the empirical research, there was limited evidence of digital nudging due to teaching pre-COVID-19 being premised largely on in-person synchronous teaching, and digital systems often being used as background and support rather than as an integral aspect of teaching. However, if the project were to be conducted again with the shift to online learning with digital space playing a much greater role, where there is a more calculated design, digital space would be included. As I have written elsewhere (Tate, 2023) there has been a marked change in how digital nudging occurs between 2018 and 2023.

It is important to understand how students are positioned in the current HE climate where universities are increasingly dependent upon securing students to provide a known income based on tuition fees, and more broadly ensuring that HE remains an important next step for future opportunities. Likewise, HE serves as an increasingly important space for further ‘citizen training’ to prepare students to be useful contributors to the economy and society.

To this end, the State is a key actor in encouraging young people to attend university. This research is specifically interested in how traditional full-time undergraduate (FTUG) students’ behaviours and interactions are influenced by the State; and in turn how FTUG students’ everyday behaviours and practices are shaped by universities. The majority of FTUG students tend to have come straight from school/college to university (HESA, 2024b) when there may be fewer prior life experiences and interactions having shaped the individual and the majority have had no prior HE student lived experiences. This sustained contact with the university over three years provides greater scope for investigation and discussion, this is because students have experienced only one place of HE study. Additionally, there is scope for discussion about the longer sustained relationship of three years of studying rather than the one year of a typical taught postgraduate programme. Finally, FTUG students remain the largest grouping of students within the overall student population (HESA, 2024b). The spaces and places in which universities operate are important aspects to consider to gain a more robust understanding of how FTUG students are positioned in HE in England.

This thesis focuses on HE in England, and as such is concerned with the power relationships and networks that operate in the English HE system. It is important to acknowledge that there is often a blurring between UK HE and England’s HE sector. The HE and FE Act of 1992, established funding councils for the respective nations, which is why the thesis excludes documents from funding councils other than HEFCE. Similarly, following the devolution of HE to the respective nations of the UK, the thesis excludes documentation relating to HE which solely concerns matters in Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. Where the UK HE is discussed, this thesis only includes discussion related to matters in England. This thesis has chosen to focus on England due to there being more universities in England, hence greater scope for investigation and impact of findings, additionally, for practical considerations it is easier for me to conduct research at a case study site.

1.2 Overview of changes to the HE sector

As outlined above, the HE sector in England has seen rapid changes in the legislative, regulatory, administrative and funding regimes due to an intensive period of policymaking and interventions since the 1990s, and the establishment of a succession of sector organisations and sector bodies. This restructuring has resulted in a complexity of competing agendas and priorities for the sector, with universities having to exploit the opportunities and meet the challenges thus presented. Devolution has also led to differences within the nations of the UK. Accordingly, this research confines itself to HE in England up to 2022.

Such is the complexity of even this single national system that a detailed visual representation of the structures and processes of Higher Education is helpful. Accordingly, the ‘swim lane’ diagram given (Figure 1) below, provides a visual representation of reports, events, actors and key moments in three discrete ‘lanes’, mapped against a timeline which spans from pre-1993 to academic year 2020-21 in which empirical data collection for this project concluded. The three lanes chart: 1) ***HE Tuition Fee/Funding Changes***, namely the shifts in the sector’s financial arrangements for undergraduate students; 2). ***HE Legislation*** and the associated shifts in regulatory bodies for HE in England; and 3). ***HE sector reports and organisations*** which have shaped and influenced the sector in the period under review.

Timeline of key legislation, reports and sectoral organisations relating to English Higher Education to March 2021 V2 02/08/21

	Pre-1993	1994-1995	1996-1997	1998-1999	2000-2001	2002-2003	2004-2005	2006-2007	2008-2009	2010-2011	2012-2013	2014-2015	2016-2017	2018-2019	2020–2021
HE Tuition Fee/Funding Changes	SLC first year of operation (1990) offering student loans.			1998 - Introduction of Tuition Fees of £1,000 per annum and Income Contingent Loans			2004 - Tuition Fees increased to £3,000 per annum		2009 - Tuition Fees increased to £3,250 per annum	2010 – Student Fees Movement Protests	2012 – Tuition Fees increased to £9,000 per annum		2016 – England removal of Maintenance Grants 2017 – Tuition Fees increased to £9,250 per annum		
HE Legislation	FE & HE Act (1992) expanded HE sector, established HEFCE to fund English HEIs.			Teaching and HE Act (1998) student tuition fees introduced, loans replaced most maintenance grants			HE Act (2004) established OFFA.	Charities Act (2006) led to HEFCE regulating English HEIs		HEFCE remit extended (2010) to regulate English HEIs.		Consumer Act (2015) explicitly covers students as customers of universities	HE and Research Act (2017) - OfS to regulate English HE, TEF to rate HEPs	OFFA+HEFCE (2018) subsumed into OfS. OfS becomes HE regulator.	Ofsted becomes a regulator for HE apprenticeships
HE Sector Reports & Organisations			Dearing Report (1997) provides basis for tuition fees and sector financing QAA established (1997) introduction of The Quality Code			OFIA created, with HEIs voluntarily able to commit (2003) DfES (2003) White Paper on the Future of Higher Education	HEFCE, UUK, Standing Committee of Principles Report (2004) established HEA to promote HE teaching excellence.	ECU role (2006) expanded to cover HE students plus staff. HE responsibility moved to Department of IUS (2007)	HE responsibility moved to Department of BIS (2009) HE Better Regulation Group established from sector bodies (2009)	Browne Review (2010) report into direction of HE BIS Students at the Heart of the System (2011) UUK (2011) Report Efficiency and effectiveness in higher education	QAA role reviewed and full introduction of new Quality Code (2011-13)	HE Better Regulation Group closed (2014) UUK (2015) Efficiency, effectiveness and Value for Money 2nd Report HEFCE introduce REF (2014)	Bell Review (2017) HE responsibility reverted back to DfE (2016) QAA updated in response to HE and Research Act (2017) DfE introduce TEF (2016)	UUK report (2017) established Advance HE, HEA +ECU+LFHE subsumed (2018) Augar Review 2018 sector funding, purpose, sustainability OFIA registration a condition of OfS regulation	Augar Review findings and recommendations released 2020-2021

Figure 1: Swim Lane Diagram of changes to HE in England to March 2021 - Key changes over time to the funding, legislation, administrative, and structural changes to the English HE

sector from 1990s to March 2021. [Swim-lane concept based, with kind permission, on a concept in Newman, 2020].

This visual representation makes clear at a glance just how complex, interdependent and increasing in intensity the structures and forces operating on HE in England in the period under review. For example, one might highlight the impact of just three milestones from each swim lane as follows:

- In the top lane (Tuition Fee/Funding Changes): The creation of the Student Loan Company a government-owned company providing support for UK students;The introduction of student tuition fees and income-contingent loans in 1998 following the recommendations of the Dearing Report (1997) to help cover the increasing cost of HE; the increase in tuition fees to £9,000 per annum in 20212 following the recommendations of the Browne Review (2010) to help balance the financial burden of HE for the government.
- In the middle lane (Legislation): The Further Education & Higher Education Act 1992 saw the expansion of HE transforming polytechnics into full universities; the Consumer Act 2015 explicitly positioned university students as customers, providing a range of protections; in 2018 the Office for Students was established as the sector regulator which subsumed and extended the range of powers and responsibilities.
- In the bottom lane (Sector Reports and Organisations): the Dearing Report (1997) outlined a range of recommendations for reforming the HE sector; in 2010 the Browne Review concluded with recommendations for making the sector more financially viable; in 2017 the Bell Review highlighted the fractured and complex sector calling for the merger of multiple sector bodies.

(For a comprehensive account of each of the interventions and milestones encompassed in the swim lane diagram see Appendix 2)

1.3 HE Sector changes and power

The contents of the HE Tuition Fee/Funding Changes swim lane illustrate the marketisation of HE, which underlies the drive towards neoliberal managerialism that has led to an altered profile, purpose and dominant philosophy of HE (Choat, 2017; Wahlstrom & Sundberg, 2017). From 1998 to date, students have been increasingly positioned as customers of HEIs and consumers of the HE product. Simultaneously, universities are situated within an increasingly complex environment that requires them to be individually sustainable whilst subject to greater regulation and to become places of business. These changes have meant that the relationship between the State, universities and students is increasingly entwined and blurred, set within a field of competing agendas (Winter, 2009; Ball, 2013).

The English HE sector's financing changed considerably between 1998-2020. The sector moved from almost exclusive Central Government Funding (CGF) to increasingly tuition-based fees levied from students, the latter largely supported by the central government provision of student loans. In 1998/99 tuition fees comprised 22% and CGF grants 41% of sector income; in 2019/20 tuition fees comprised 51% and CGF grants 13% of sector income (HESA, 2024c).

In an attempt to 'balance the books', central Government has attempted to make the sector viable through a number of 'refinancing' methods such as, in 1998, the shift to income-contingent loans for tuition fees of £1,000 pa and selling off the previous mortgage style loans to the private sector to raise £2bn. To sustain a growing demand for HE, there were further increases in tuition fees to £3,000 pa in 2004 and £3,250 pa in 2006. Following a number of sector reports, most notably the UUK Efficiency and Effectiveness report (2011), the Browne Review (2011) recommendations and the challenges presented by the global financial crisis, tuition fees rose to £9,000 pa in 2012. This reorientation of the sector towards spending effectively and maximising income by universities, a particularly neoliberal financial ontology (Furlong, 2014), was captured in UUK's *Efficiency, Effectiveness and Value for Money* report (2015). Dependence on student tuition fees results in competition between HEIs for student numbers to ensure financial stability, and hence greater focus was placed on attracting students through marketing and emphasis on student experience.

Accompanying changes in the quality framework for English Higher Education were also far-reaching. Following the Dearing Report (1997), the Quality Code for UK HE (1998) was introduced providing key benchmarks of educational provision and expectations of universities in producing and delivering curriculum and assessment. The introduction of the Quality Code constituted a key moment in reorienting universities to become more focused on the quality of the course and curriculum design, presenting a challenge to previously held assumptions that academics and universities were trusted/empowered to be autonomous in their academic provision. *The Future of Higher Education* White Paper (2003) presented a challenge to institutions calling for more robust teaching quality, a shift away from course design and curriculum toward quality expectations of how courses were delivered by academics, simultaneously, the focus on quality was supported by the creation of the Higher Education Academy, and the introduction of the UK Professional Standards Framework

(Bunce et al., 2017). The focus on quality rebalanced the role of academics from being primarily researchers with peripheral teaching responsibilities to some academics being solely teachers and others having both responsibilities more equally (McCune, 2021).

With widespread changes to England's HE, there has been limited exploration, to date, of conceptions of agency, power and the ways in which an 'ideal' or 'model' student is shaped and disciplined by these forces (Wong & Chiu, 2021; Ball, 2013). In a fast-changing financial regime, regulatory framework, and quality code, not only has the purpose and philosophy of English HE shifted, so have the relationships between all actors involved. Again, visual representation can help to elicit these questions of power and hegemony - in a manner attempted in Figure 2, informed by the Foucauldian concept of networks of power (Foucault, 2002; 2010). Here, it can be seen that the flows of power in question are multidirectional and in the period under review there has been a considerable intensification of sector changes.

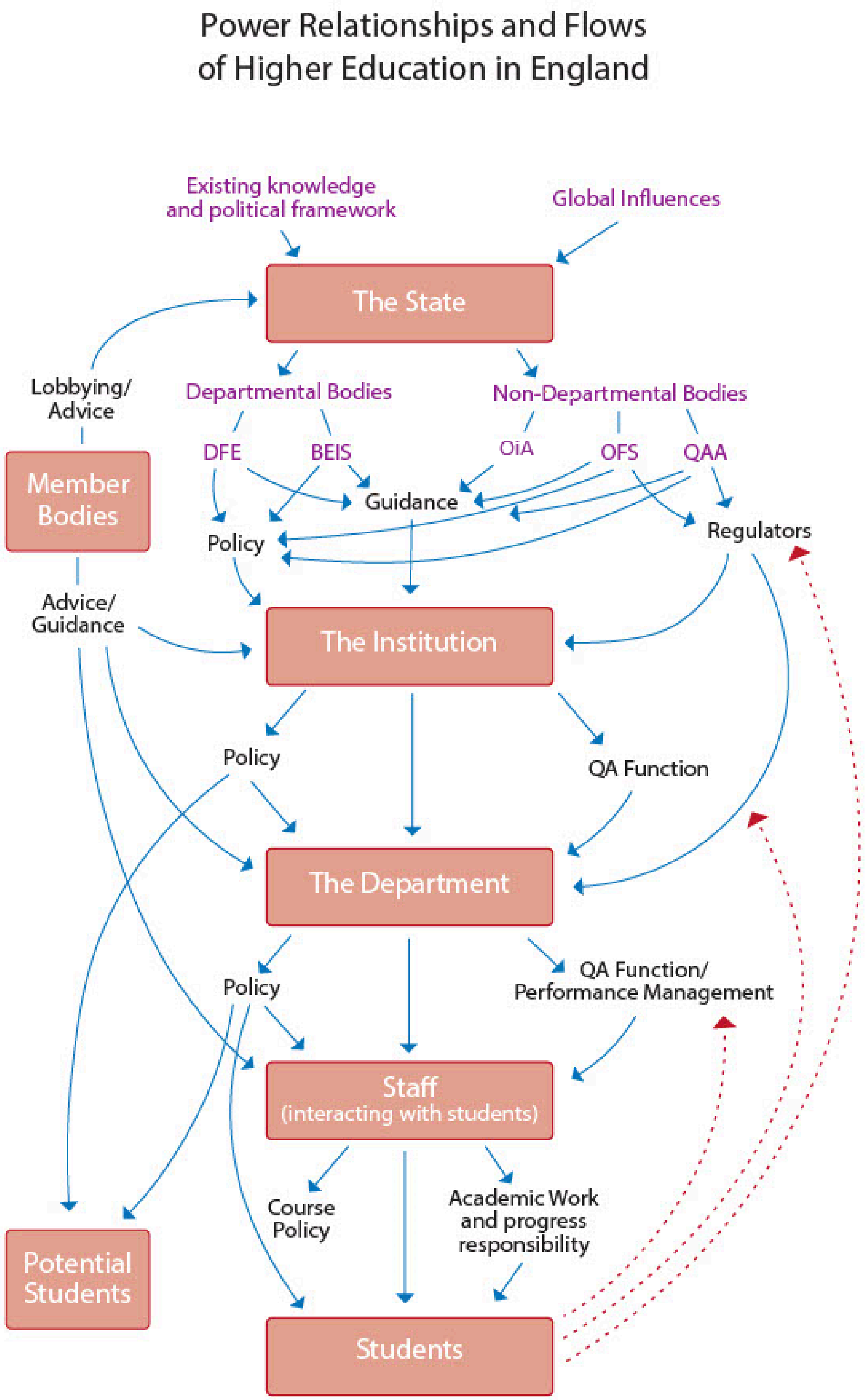

Figure 2: Exploratory model of networks of power in the formation of the 'model' student to be elicited and explored in the body of this thesis.

For the purposes of reading this thesis, as for the process of data collection and analysis, the kind of visual representation in Figure 2 reminds us of the complexity of the HE landscape and the interdependencies between its different agents and actors. We will revisit this Foucauldian concept of networks of power throughout the thesis and will return to Figure 2 in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 7) where the first principles visually represented above will be mapped against the empirical findings of the data.

As Chapter 2a further illustrates, the very framing of Higher Education activity within the structures of the State has shifted radically in the period under review (1997-2022). Higher Education in England has been ‘housed’ variously within the Department for Education and Skills (2001-2007); the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2007-2009); the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (2009-2016); and ultimately a reversion to the Department of Education (2016-Present). The period during which HE was housed within the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in 2007 explicitly tasked HEIs with engaging not only in intellectual inquiry for its own sake but the development of innovation and skills. This resulted in universities having their remits broadened to provide education, intellectual growth, commercialisation, and practical skills. This was a step towards combining the academic and the vocational skills domains. In 2009 the Department for Business merged with the Department for Innovation, Universities, and Skills. HE responsibility remained in this new Department (of Business, Innovation, and Skills) which gave the HE sector an even closer association with business, becoming saleable and transactable, in common with other sectors of the economy. A distinct shift can be seen in the HE sector, transitioning to a market and consumer-focused endeavour. This is demonstrated in UUK’s *Knowing the Market* report (2011), which introduced guidance on the requirement for HEIs to work with businesses, making knowledge into saleable services/property, and how to equip students with greater employability skills. Post-2009 saw the removal of barriers to HEIs operating in a more business-like fashion allowing (and encouraging) them to seek new sources of income generation. However, as HEIs developed new entrepreneurial business models for a more competition-driven market, students were afforded greater protections in the purchase of their HE experience through the Consumer Act (2015) (OfS, 2023a). Following Government restructuring in 2016, the funding and regulation of HE research and knowledge exchange, remained with the newly-titled Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, whilst the funding and delivery of HE teaching reverted to the Department for Education and regulation was undertaken by its agencies, for England initially, HEFCE, subsequently the OfS (from 2018). This division between HEIs’ teaching and research responsibilities created a duality of responsibilities and ways of working in the HE sector - the professionalisation of teaching in HE, increased quality assurance and minimum expectations to provide ‘value for money’ provision, *versus* the need for research output and income generation (Bunce et al., 2017; Bessant et al., 2015; McCune, 2021). These shifts in the HE sector profile have led to confusion about the purpose and philosophy of HE in England.

Furthermore, with the emergence of a new sector body (Advance HE) and a new sector regulator (the OfS), there is scope to better understand their impact and role within existing and new structures/frameworks. There is also scope to better understand unusual aspects of the sector that have been highlighted in sector restructuring, such as the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA operates a 'voluntary' student complaints scheme for universities, however, registration with a student complaints scheme is a requirement of becoming a HE Provider in England. As the OIA runs the only student complaints scheme, registration with it could be argued to be mandatory. Here, might be an example of a power dynamic between an arms-length organisation of the State and universities, which is likely to impact student information and processes.

There are implicit power relationships between these three bodies and universities which have not so far been investigated. This research aims to examine these power relationships and how the soft power of the State acts on and through universities in shaping students' behaviours and interactions.

To achieve this my thesis aims to:

1. explore how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes 'become and realise themselves as students' in terms of identity and behaviours in the Higher Education environment
2. investigate how networks of power, agency, and influence between students and staff have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education
3. elucidate the ethical implications and biopolitical implications of influencing students' behaviour from a position of power using concepts from social theory.

For full research aims and objectives see Appendix 1.

1.4 Contribution to knowledge and thesis structure

This opening chapter has thus outlined how there is scope for a fuller, more theorised account of how current FTUG student experiences are presented, influenced and shaped. There is limited literature regarding how the power of the State is operationalised by universities to shape FTUG student behaviours, and how discursive and physical spaces are used to influence behaviours. My research is conducted in a context of rapid change where the roles and impacts of a number of actors in the current English HE sector are not yet fully understood. The HE sector is in a period of perpetual transition (Tate & Glazzard, 2024). Likewise, the influence that sector actors have within the reshaped networks of power still needs to be fully understood, particularly in the increasingly hyper-connected neoliberal HE marketplace. This research builds upon the work of Nielsen (2015) who explored the shaping of studenthood in a Danish HE context, Ball (2013) who explores how student behaviours are influenced in schools, and Wong and Chiu (2021) who deconstruct the idea of the 'ideal student'. I utilise my background as a human geographer with experience in post-structuralist qualitative research into scripting of behaviours. 'Scripting' is a key concept for this research; it is the shaping of behaviours through affective tactics and nudging with the aim of resulting in particular interactions and behaviours (Adey, 2008). This thesis particularly draws on the works of post-structural thought such as that of Adey (2008), Anderson (2014), Esposito (2008), Foucault (1977) and is informed by studies into student being and identity such as Ball (2013), Brooks (2018), Furlong (2014), Nielsen (2015), and Wong and Chiu (2021). By taking a multi-method approach, this research aims to provide a breadth of insights from assembling and analysing a corpus based on sector marketing, policy, and reports to provide insights into the discourse being used. Greater depth into how student behaviours are influenced has been gained from group and individual interviews, seeking to locate decision-making and how space is utilised. Further to the interviews, there has been a series of structured observations to validate or challenge claims made in individual interviews about how space is used and the embodied practices in university social learning space (SLS).

In a contested and challenging period for the sector, my research extends both the frame of reference and the lexicon for conceiving of HE practices and identities in England in terms of dynamic networks of power; the key actors who operate within them; and their differential degrees of agency in shaping them. In particular, it will consider how FTUG behaviours and interactions are articulated and shaped (or in Foucauldian terms, 'disciplined') in keeping with what is deemed desirable or 'model' by the hegemonic power. Additionally, with a greater awareness of the power dynamics, and how that power is operationalised through the use of space, policy, and nudging with the resultant impact on the agency of those actors, there is the potential to highlight the ethical implications of practices used in the HE sector. Finally, the research helps to highlight trends in the HE sector marketing, policy, regulation concerning students, and how these aspects might be segmented according to HE provider groupings. This research is novel in its sustained application of a Foucauldian approach to these questions with the intention that the rapid transitions and transformations in the sector might productively be seen and discussed under this frame of reference. Relatedly, my findings offer a new conceptual three-stage model of an FTUG journey, mobilising and modelling precisely these Foucauldian concepts, which is advanced in Chapter 5. Most significantly, through combining various sources of qualitative data in this research, there is an original contribution to understanding the way in which discursive and physical spaces in English universities are designed and used.

To further investigate how FTUG behaviours are influenced, my research utilises an ethnographic-informed research design to provide data with qualitative richness to help better understand the rationale for decision-making and the thoughts of individuals. To fulfil this design, I have utilised individual interviews, sector-wide group interviews, structured observations, the development of a corpus, and drawing all into a Foucauldian discourse analysis. Upon generating insights from the analysed data, I am able to provide a nuanced discussion linking to the previous literature chapters which further discussed the gap in the research. The conclusion offers recommendations for different stakeholders in HE, drawing to light how physical space is intended to be used.

The subsequent chapter (2), is split into two main sections to help provide a better transition and journey throughout the literature and theoretical framework. Section 2a will present the current education literature which is required to provide more context to the complex HE landscape in England. Section 2b pertains to the literature about the main theoretical approach (affect theory) which is the underpinning conceptual lens which this thesis will use for understanding how behaviour is shaped. Following the literature, Chapter 3: Methodology will outline my methodological approach and the individual methods used in this research. Chapter 4: Findings presents the key insights from the data collection and analysis. A series of three discussion chapters around my findings focusing on Chapter 5: Students, Chapter 6: The University, and Chapter 7: The State and sector advance new insights. Finally, Chapter 8: Conclusion provides a summary of what has been found, limitations, and scope for future work in this important and under-researched area involving HE students' identity and agency.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The previous chapter has argued the case for a more theorised framing of Higher Education in England drawing on Foucauldian concepts of networks of power. The current literature review thus explores two core areas of literature as a preliminary to the data-focused chapters of the thesis. Section a considers the development and competing philosophies of Higher Education in England. Section b explores the key theoretical Foucauldian concepts that have informed the study including networks of power, affect and nudging.

2a: HE Landscape in England

In part 2a of the literature review chapter, the current research regarding ideas related to the 'model student' is explored. Part 2a then goes on to provide a background of the HE landscape to generate insights into the changing HE sector and the context in which FTUG students are situated.

2a.1 - 'Model' studenthood

Being a FTUG student carries the notion and concept of a particular form of studenthood, leading to a 'model' identity. The student experience literature recognises a range of diverse student identities and multiple ways of being a student at a university (Davis, 2015; Loewenthal et al., 2019). Nielsen (2015) suggests that being a student and hence studenthood is not a static experience, rather it is a more lively phenomenon that is informed through experience and the becoming process of being a student shaped by interactions, the institutions, peers, society and one's self. Yet for all this recognition of diverse identities, the effect of the disciplining hegemonic structures we have considered means that, as sociologists such as Field & Morgan-Klein (2010) have outlined, there is a delimited conception of what it means to participate in the student world, and of the identity and position that a student inhabits in society. Significantly, studenthood goes beyond the notional. It is, as Smith & Hubbard (2014) explain, bounded by the acts and spaces that are designated and perceived as spaces of being a student. Furthermore, with the increase in student numbers, there has been 'studentification' of particular places in English cities and towns to accommodate the student lifestyle. Studenthood is the exploration of and indulgence in what might be perceived as irregular habits by those who are not a student in HE. Hence, the identity of a FTUG student and being a FTUG student is filled with the promise of exoticism that once an individual is through to the other side can no longer indulge in, mirroring changing expectations over time. On the one hand, the experience will provide an enlightened worldview and a more individual character (Bye, 2012), and on the other, it cannot be too radical in the divergence of thinking and actions expected of the University and State, as that might result in disciplinary ramifications. Studenthood, therefore, is a useful lens through which to engage in further literature on constructions of identity and behaviours in the next literature section of this thesis, which explores affect.

Studenthood is more than the academic aspects of university life; it is an all-encompassing entity, a particular lifeworld and an iterative phenomenon, which can be seen as an assemblage of interactions, where expectations evolve over the duration of a course (Bye, 2012). It is a sensory and formative experience for individuals. However, studenthood is a notion of contestation; it is still perceived, and often is, a site of masculinity with students engaging in activities to prove masculinity through sports and drinking, and the university reinforces these through the perpetuation of male-dominated structures (Reay et al., 2005; Dempster, 2011). Studenthood is therefore not a neutral concept, it is contested, and increasingly there are attempts to provide a voice for a more representative reflection of the community. Carey (2013) writes about female students, that studenthood is deployed more as a process of identification of being part of a student community; and Hayden-Baldauf (2021) posits that female students, who are parents, experience studenthood alongside motherhood. So, studenthood might be portrayed as more inclusive for potential and new students in marketing; yet there is segregation of students from society, and the pervasive structures of the university convey who belongs in particular spaces (Ball, 2013). There is a lack of specific and convincing literature on non-binary FTUG studenthood in HE in England.

This study's adoption of the term 'model' student should be viewed against the backdrop of wider discussion in the literature on forms of normative student identities. Wong and Chiu (2021) provide a useful insight into the expectations of students, and the ways in which universities explicitly convey those expectations, such as through induction activities and academic progression. They offer the conceptualisation of the 'ideal' student, this is a useful contribution to the literature and something which this thesis aims to build on. The 'ideal' student is offered as a global HE concept with examples of it being applied to national contexts, however, this may lack nuance to understanding societal norms and expectations in localities. Nielsen (2012) suggests that undergraduate students are nudged toward particular notional identities as imagined by their university and the State. Her work explores the ways in which Danish undergraduate students ‘become’ students and how that notion of ‘student’ evolves as a student progresses in their studies, positioned in a neoliberal education marketplace. However, it lacks the rich nuance of a biopolitical analytical lens and tracing of power. In keeping with Ball’s (2013) work on school students in England, an ideal student is afforded varying degrees of freedom to not get it ‘right’ first time and be guided to expectations of the hegemonic power. Similar to Ball, Wong and Chiu’s work focuses on academic behaviours and expectations, whereas this research builds upon that by also considering the non-academic too, as students not only experience educational transitions but also life transitions whilst at university (Tate & Glazzard, 2024).

Studenthood is more expansive than earlier conceptualisations of being a student which focused primarily on the academic. Universities are more cognisant of the factors that constitute the overall student experience and the consequent needs of the students, particularly health (Baker, 2006). Studenthood has a broader narrative perpetuated by universities articulating a sense that it is diverse with people from multiple backgrounds (Davis, 2015; Nielsen, 2015). Even popular media continues to perpetuate the notion of the university being a masculine drinking society, imbued with ‘getting it out of their system’ ready for responsible participation in society upon graduation (Dempster, 2011). Studenthood is iterative and evolutionary, it goes beyond popular media and the constructions seen in marketing materials, it is a process and yet situated in certain practices, it is a period of formation and specialist education. It is clear that studenthood has evolved over time, reflecting the changes to HE, becoming more inclusive (although there is a long way to go) and reflecting expectations of students. Therefore, studenthood and being a ‘model’ student is a conceptualisation that is changing as the complex interactions of networks of power are played out - as explored in S2b.

2a.2 - The development and competing philosophies of HE

This section provides a short narrative about the developments of Higher Education (HE) in England, and charts how the sector has emerged as an increasingly neoliberal and marketised model. It considers how the marketisation, productification, and repositioning of students as consumers in a global knowledge economy has evolved, influenced by market forces, and regulatory and financial regimes. It concludes by asserting that it is, therefore, essential to trace the history and meanings of student experience and studenthood to cast light on the changes to policy and lived experiences. To achieve its aim, this chapter considers HE at both macro-level (sector perspective) and micro-level (student perspective).

This narrative review cites both propositional and perspectival literature to provide an overview of the different types of thought and perspectives about HE in England. Propositional literature comprises grey literature such as government white papers, government green papers, sector reviews, and reports by sector bodies. Here, the term grey literature is deployed for thought/insights that have been published by a place/organisation whose primary purpose is not publishing - see Exeter, 2024 for the perspective this thesis takes. Ideological literature comprises scholarly works that provide thought on the HE sector and is usually grounded in empirical research, research reported in academic journal articles, academic books, and monographs.

The purpose of education is considered by some to be contentious (Ball, 2017), such that there is neither agreement now, nor was there in the past, about what education is for. It might have the purpose of imparting knowledge to support the development and intellectual enrichment of individuals without any significant aim (Peters, 1959), others would argue it is to provide more life opportunities (Barnett, 1988; Dewey, 1997). Another interpretation by Furlong (2011) is that education is for creating a knowledgeable and skilled workforce that is valuable in the current political and economic climate. By contrast, Rousseau’s (1998) interpretation of education is as a form of citizen training, for ensuring that citizens, (those people recognised by the State as belonging to the State and afforded certain protections and responsibilities), make choices acceptable for society. There are competing ideas regarding the purpose of education, knowledge for its own sake, to boost individuals’ own economic potential, and preparation for ‘model’ citizenship. The literature does not appear to suggest that these different views are mutually exclusive, indeed, they may be mutually supportive and potentially manifest at different stages in people’s lives. Therefore, this thesis takes the view of convergence between those three key interpretations of education.

There is more equal access to education and there has been a transition to a mass education system, no longer, for the most part, is school attendance the domain of the rich and wealthy (Collin & Apple, 2007; Mandler, 2020). In part, this democratisation has been fuelled by technology, and in part through more liberal education agendas by governments and a reflection of the shifting expectations of a contemporary population (Phillips, 2001). An increase in an educated population at the primary and secondary level within a country generates the opportunity for a larger section of the population to proceed to tertiary education. The increase in tertiary education preparation and pathways, as well as systemic change in education, is noted in the book *The Education Debate* by Ball (2017). Ultimately, these changes in the population and society, in part, have manifested as a greater uptake for HE. Whether the changes have been due to increased willing demand or due to the school education system funnelling young people towards HE as the next step on the progression route to work is a point that could be debated further (Lunt, 2008). However, the rapid increase in student numbers can be seen as the massification of HE. This thesis focuses on the tertiary stage of education, specifically HE in England; the next section of this chapter concentrates on both its origin and purpose.

2a.3 - A recent history of HE

As the HE sector has expanded, it appears that the purpose of HE has widened in scope to become much more encompassing. Today, HE in England is still undergoing significant changes associated with austerity measures (HEFCE, 2013); as one would expect this has resulted in changes to the student and university experiences, expectations, demographics, and structural adjustment (Nielsen, 2015), the headline changes can be seen in Figure 1.

Before looking at current trends, it is wise to trace the recent history of some of the driving forces of change in HE. Sociological accounts of HE emphasise access to education, and studies of the policies highlight funding and structural changes. An example of this sociological perspective is given by Lunt (2008), who provides a nuanced and succinct discussion about the aims of the Dearing Report (1997) whilst also critiquing the outcomes. He outlines the difficulty faced at the beginning of the New Labour government (1997-2007), with the funding black hole faced by the under-resourced HE sector. Equally, there was a lack of resourcing to implement all of the Dearing Report (1997) recommendations to provide sustainability to the, then-new, flatter HE system by removing the tiering between polytechnic colleges and universities. The most significant recommendation was the introduction of student loans to provide funding to support HE; this was much needed with the agenda to more than double the number of students (Lunt, 2008). Brooks et al. (2020) posit that the purpose of HE has three strands ‘preparing for the labour market, achieving personal growth and enrichment, and/or contributing to societal development and progress’. It is important to consider that the recommendations in the Dearing Report were wide-ranging creating a new system that removed the split of the two types of universities, placing what were polytechnics on a par with all other universities. This created a broader flatter landscape that arguably would make it easier for newer policy, financial and regulatory regimes to be introduced and revised, and have greater convergence of vocational and academic competencies. These changes are associated with the policy narratives of the ruling government, with a drive to provide more access to HE and make a more competitive landscape (Brooks, 2020). The promise was for more representation of the diversity of society to access HE (widening of participation), and for HE to become a driving force for social reform with greater access to employment (Grant, 2017). As Lunt (2008) notes this was not (and arguably still has not been) fully achieved, instead, a new relationship from student-teacher towards seller-purchaser has emerged, where students through taking loans expect that they were purchasing into certification and more life opportunities. This change in policy approach is not wholly realistic because education is not a passive activity, and input and effort are still required by students (much like a gym membership); however, there has been a greater focus on teaching and learning, to ensure that universities take steps to allow 'customers' to have opportunities to be active participants in 'doing' education. The State introduced the likes of the HEA and the Professional Standards Framework as a means for facilitating a focus on pedagogy, professional practice, and curriculum (Trowler et al., 2005). Lunt (2008) provides a detailed and useful account of the impacts of the Dearing Report, however, he neglects to address the wholesale changes to methods and management of the education system in England and not just HE. Therefore it is important to highlight that the education system naturalises student expectations of commercialised education, evident with the proliferation of academy schools and private HEPs. Other commentators, such as Barnett (2005), have noted that the model of university management has moved increasingly towards entrepreneurialism as a key philosophy. This in part could be related to the rapid advancement of technology and the quaternary (IT-related) sector growing exponentially, therefore many jobs and future trajectories are uncertain, and skills are needed for jobs that do not currently exist (Barnett, 2004). With the future of employment in mind, the literature shows that HE holds that transferable skills and attitudes taught at university are as important if not more important than educating for one particular job. Hence, an FTUG student who knows how to learn is as important if not more important than one with advanced specialist skills for one particular job.

Commercialisation of education in England is part of a bigger system of change happening in numerous European countries and is not unaffected by these driving forces. There has been a greater focus on the changes to the discourse of education and hence the purpose of HE in Europe over the last 30 years; signalling a change to a welfare society, particularly in Western Europe (Wahlstrom & Sundberg, 2017). Additionally, with the rise of large transnational corporations, the policy landscape for HE has shifted towards public-private partnerships, a change to business-orientated methods of management, and an economy of knowledge (Wahlstrom & Sundberg, 2017). For example, the raft of government and sector-driven reports into HE over the last decade shows a drive in the need to create such partnerships to help further financial sustainability and embed new working practices.

Primary and secondary education has experienced significant reform, which ultimately impacts the HE sector, as the values, pathways, and opportunities for students and potential students alter. As Nixon (2017a) highlights, there are changes in the philosophy of 'doing' HE, reflected in the transitions from a welfare state to a welfare society, from laissez-faire neoliberalism to austerity, and the emergence of individual entrepreneurialism in society, and hence also seen in the education system. Today education is not simply premised on the enrichment of one's self through knowledge but also about being an engaged global citizen who is ready to contribute to society and the economy (Suspitsyna, 2012). However, whilst the philosophy changes, the driver of those changes, at least within the last 30 years, has been intrinsically related to financing HEIs (Nixon, 2017a). Whilst there are other views such as the changing needs of students in the world today (Advance HE, 2023) the significant factor seems to be finance. There is an increasing need for HEIs to self-fund and hence enter into new partnerships (Lundy et al., 2020) and create commercial opportunities (Prokop, 2021) within a competitive marketplace for HE, which may have forced institutions to reevaluate themselves against their founding principles and philosophies, to remain viable. In many ways, HE then has 'sold its birthright for a mess of pottage' (Skidelsky, Deb 14 June 2000), with the move away from more purist notions of HE as a place of intellectual endeavour to a more functionalist sight of training and business (Allen, 2004; Mansfield, 2019). These changes in the Europe-wide HE sector are reflected and entrenched in the changes to the HE sector in England.

The data recorded for the period 2011/12-2021/22 shows an interesting change in the UK student demographics. In 2011/12 there were almost 2.5 million students (with roughly 1.9 million undergraduates) the following year there was a decline of around 100,000 students the majority being undergraduates; by 2021/22, there was an increase to 2.86 million students (with over 2 million undergraduates) (HESA, 2024b). The proportion of undergraduates to postgraduates has remained relatively stable, with undergraduates making up around 72-76% of the overall student population. Whilst the proportion between full-time undergraduates to postgraduates has remained stable, the part-time population of undergraduates has declined by over 10% since the introduction of higher tuition fees (HESA, 2024b). With the changes in the tuition fees, there was at first a brief dip in student numbers, however, student numbers have been increasing again/recovering since 2015, and most recently (September 2023) reaching the highest recorded number of students in HE (HESA, 2024b). This data shows that the student population continues to grow and that HE is increasingly a key stage of education for individuals. It is therefore not unexpected that the HE sector is an area of interest for governments, in terms of policy, societal, and financial agendas. With stabilisation, and now an increase in student numbers, there is interesting scope to question whether the changes that occurred in the sector have become accepted and integrated into a new emerging purpose and practices of HE in England, or whether the full impacts of change are yet to be fully realised.

HE for the UK (England and the devolved administrative governments) remains part of the Government's agenda and the political sphere of debate (Gillard, 2018); the dominant discourse has been around funding and access. HE in England is increasingly viewed as a right for people to access, with evolving narratives about the right to access and use the services of HE much akin to the National Health Service (NHS) albeit with the need for debt encumberment (Nielsen, 2015; Brooks, 2020). Like the NHS though, access to HE is unequal; home FTUG students in England are not subsidised like their counterparts in the other nations of the UK, and hence an English student's experience and approach to HE might vary from that of non-English students. Unlike the NHS, for English students, HE is not 'free' at point of access as income-contingent loans bind students into long-term future repayment for accessing the 'services' and 'experiences' of a university. Interestingly some of these loans, whilst handled by the SLC, are now 'owned' by a number of banks and other financial organisations (Hubble & Bolton, 2020). Arguably, this complex system further entrenches students into the private debt sector. Similarly, the terms and interest rates for the loans can be altered and have been altered in attempts to address further funding pressures by the State. HE in England is increasingly seen as the progression pathway for the majority of school students (52%) (DfE, 2020). Schools have comprehensive training and preparation for students to access HE, and subsequent entry to a skilled workforce which is a key need for a country with an economy based on tertiary and quaternary industries (Ball, 2017). Here, HE is important as it acts as a gateway to a knowledge-rich and skilled workforce, hence acting as a legitimisation of the country's pitching on the global stage as a place for skilled business (Ball, 2017). The dominant narrative for FTUG students therefore is that HE is intrinsically linked to progression into a workplace, with an idea of access to a 'better' job, and increasing economic output. However, as noted in other works by Ball (2013) education progression may also be a case of further entrenching the State's power. In turn, shaping individuals' choices and the skill set of the population and consequently opportunities for reshaping the economy, although one must be mindful that much of Ball's debate concerns debates surrounding extension of compulsory education to 18 years. Whilst there are significant and immediate matters of finance in HE, there has been less attention afforded to how those changes in the purpose and philosophy of HE impact the agency of students. There is a need therefore to pay attention to how choices and behaviours are shaped, which this thesis will investigate through empirical research.

There has been increased recognition and exploitation of the global competition of HE, as the rapid development in technology, particularly communication and transport, has facilitated a more connected global education marketplace. This is particularly the case with the move to remote and blended formats of learning in response to COVID-19, contesting where and how education is done. The increased access to HE and as the technology is increasingly affordable, now communities and countries are better connected (Nielsen, 2015). As a result, universities seek to internationalise and attract an international audience (Nielsen, 2012), with universal employability skills being viewed as globally appropriate (Cole & Hallett, 2019). There are different rationales as to why universities seek to internationalise, and Nielsen (2012) argues it is to attract a more diverse workforce and student body or to seek a new audience for their education to provide sustainability by marketing education internationally, and to drive novel forms of academic engagement. Also, a greater emphasis is placed on knowledge exchange, such as through conferences and international collaborations, often seen as having commercial value. Here, universities no longer compete in narrow national contexts, but rather at an international level; hence this has signalled the emergence of global league tables and metrics for measuring the performance of universities, all competing for similar students from around the world. Nielsen's work (2012; 2015) is rooted in post-structuralism, viewing the power of the State as operating through networks, which can be difficult to trace; her work helps to provide a mapping of various actors involved in Danish HE, the visions and practices for the sector and is based on a range of documentary and empirical research. Whilst Nielsen's work is situated in Danish HE, and there are contextual differences, it provides a framing for some aspects of what has happened in England's universities and the complexity of influences from a global HE market (Barnett, 2013; Barnett & Peters, 2018). Nielsen's work explores the idea of studenthood and nudging, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, this thesis is not only interested in nudging but also in how affect is utilised in shaping FTUG behaviours. Consequently, England's HE sector is part of a repositioned global HE market that has a larger audience and operates in the context of fiercer competition in a more connected world. Nonetheless, Danish HE students do not pay tuition fees, therefore, there is a need to better understand how tuition fees in England impact on agency and networks of power.

HE in England has long-established foundations with the State and has experienced rapid changes in response to challenges that have presented themselves, often relating to funding (Amsler, 2011; HEFCE, 2013). The role, organisation, and function of HE have evolved; and participation rates have increased with more of the population now attending, having attended or worked in universities (HEFCE, 2013). Indeed, 2017/18 signalled a critical mass change, with the number of graduates outnumbering the number of non-graduates in the workforce and school-to-university participation rates hit 50.2%, and 51.9% in 2018/19 (DfE, 2020). Five main trends affect the role, the organisation and the function of HE in England. First, increased competition with other providers (Lindsay, 2015). Second, increased international competition with other HE providers (Morrissey, 2013). Third, the increased narrative for attending university despite there being a blurring of the purpose for why it is important to attend (Wang, 2015). Fourth, the need for universities to secure income to provide financial sustainability (Morrissey, 2013). Fifth, corporatisation of the HE sector; particularly as the contemporary neoliberal state continues to adjust to restructuring associated with austerity measures (Lindsay, 2015). Not only that, the change to the types of courses and teaching modes of universities provides other income streams (UUK, 2010). With such significant trends highlighting the range of changes impacting HE, it is not hard to understand that there are a number of struggles in conceptualising the role and purpose of HE in England today. Drawing on the work of Tate & Glazzard (2024), the sector can be seen to be in a constant system-wide transition. Many of these struggles have been exacerbated due to the intensification of the global knowledge economy (Nielsen, 2015). The global knowledge economy is the idea of a free-market approach to knowledge that is interconnected around the world and is as much a product as it is research (Nielsen, 2015). HE in England then is not only being reshaped and reimagined nationally but also by international trends and pressures.

Participation in and completion of HE makes a signature statement about the status someone has in society; it is imbued with the officialisation of competency (Reay et al., 2005). This competency is recognised by the institution, in turn, recognised by the State, and hence accepted by the wider community as being suitably capable to undertake and perform certain functions in society (Foucault, 2010). Bourdieu (1990) writes about the unique positioning of academics and the practices and power that are associated with the university and society more broadly, and links to his (1992) works which see practices being embedded in one’s every day. This in turn grants access to certain privileges and ways of living, enshrined in the practices, attitudes and knowledge the person has been taught to perform/have in their everyday life (Foucault, 1978; De Certeau 1988). A comparative study by Brooks et al. (2020) suggested that the purpose of HE comprised three strands: ‘preparing for the labour market; achieving personal growth and enrichment; and/or contributing to societal development and progress’ (pg. 1377). Arguably then, HE in England is largely about gaining acculturation, training and recognition for a certain role; creating individuals with specific skills to perform roles in the economy, and producing active citizens taking on responsibilities for a particular way of being and living. The literature discussed would suggest that HE is much more than attending a place of education, it is about creating practices that may not be visible but naturalised into ways of being. With that being said, there is a clear concerted effort by the Government and universities to widen participation in HE through strategies to support inclusion and provide FTUG opportunities.

2a.4 - Access to HE

As education in England has become increasingly accessible, there have been more pathways to HE, primarily as FTUG students but increasingly via other modes of study such as work-based placements and more recently degree apprenticeships (Gourley, 2010). Access to HE increased markedly through the mid to late twentieth century with the raising of the school age to 16 in 1972, at a time when university tuition fees were met by government block grants rather than by the individual student. Thus, providing a more equitable education system and funding tuition was not a concern of students (Ball, 2017). By 1998, tuition fees were introduced to address the funding gap caused by more students entering HE and the emerging future needs of the UK workforce (Lunt, 2008). At this point, the school system was increasingly preparing students to apply to universities for HE study.

A sociological and inclusive perspective for changes to the education secondary system is about providing greater access to HE through widening of participation activities. One of these sociological theorists is Ball (2013) who comments that under a raft of policy changes and system restructuring of secondary education, secondary schools are moving towards better preparation and normalising progression routes to go onto university. HE is embedded into a much more connected system of education with universities working closer with secondary schools to provide ‘seamless transitions’ (Williamson et al., 2020). This shows the reframing of the secondary student experience to increasingly focus on preparing to go to university. The mission of the State to increase HE participation was initially framed as social mobility, prosperity and opportunity. With a number of different funding options, routes, and schools setting high aspirations for pupils, the 1990s saw many families having the first generation of their children going to university (Lunt, 2008). Here, there was a widening of access for students who may have previously been unable to afford a university education, though there remains the question of how ethical it is to encumber a person with the levels of debt associated with HE study; hence, HE acts as the promise of an affluent future even if it means debt for the present (Shermer, 2015). Whilst an increase in student numbers has been seen, there remain a number of demographic groups that are underrepresented in English HE as discussed by Rainford (2024), Wong (2024), Bhopal & Henderson (2021).

Methods of enhancing access to HE have included targeted programmes with particular demographics of school students and communities that were/are underrepresented (HEFCE, 2013). This looks at providing a more diverse HE sector that is more representative of the demographic of England. One of the significant landscape changes for HE in England was the founding of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in 2004. This body ensured that universities had access arrangements in place for underrepresented and disadvantaged populations (HEFCE, 2013). Through these arrangements, there was an increase in outreach programmes, and widening participation activities. Since then there has been criticism that many of these programmes did not go far enough and were more tokenistic rather than having meaningful impact (Moore et al., 2013). Interestingly some widening participation activities have created opportunities for further market segmentation (Bowl & Hughes, 2013). Focusing on specific student backgrounds may have led to understandings of what it means to be a student at that HEI, in turn blurring the identity/ies of what it means to be a student at that university. At the same time as these programmes, with the rapid advance in technology and the digitising of processes, technology contributed significantly to widening access and bringing HE to a wider audience, particularly to those in rural communities (HEFCE, 2013; Nixon, 2017b). The technology has enabled people to be better connected, helping to demystify the processes and workings of HE (Furlong, 2014). At the time of writing, the OfS requires HE providers in England to outline much more robust actions for access to HE by means of closely monitored Access and Participation Plans.

Whilst the availability of tuition fee loans has ostensibly made HE increasingly accessible from an economic perspective, critics of the former OFFA contended that it failed to fulfil its aims of reaching and adequately supporting underrepresented groups and those facing disadvantage (Lunt, 2008). It is important to note however, that Lunt's criticism of widening participation efforts excludes 10 years of its operation from 2008 to 2018, although Harrison and Hatt (2012) also critiqued OFFA for the lack of widening participation efforts. The OfS has taken a much stronger stance on widening participation, requiring a concerted effort by institutions to increase accessibility (formalised in HEPs being required to produce Access and Participation Plans to outline their support for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups), yet, there has been the move away from funding of targeted pathways into HE leading to challenges in reaching certain communities (Cunningham & Samson, 2021). Furthermore, since the introduction of fees in HE, it has been further suggested that HE fails to adequately assist social mobility and address the pervasive class structure of England. For example, white British young men from low-income backgrounds still tend not to go on to university after school (Jones & Vagle, 2013), and likewise, the black community is still underrepresented in most of the elite universities in England (HEFCE, 2013). Again, there are concerns about the outcomes of under-represented groups in universities. Questions circulate in public and policy discourse about the suitability of university for certain groups, the need to focus on the ability of the individual, and whether representation is not understood due to the lack of data (Ball, 2017). These are some of the areas that the OfS, which has succeeded OFFA, seeks to address and use data to provide, arguably, a more equitable HE sector (Grant Thornton, 2016; Ntim, 2018). Here, there is evidence of a more punitive approach by the OfS to ensure that universities take steps to support access and participation, thus driving changes in recruitment, teaching and learning practices and behaviours. However, whilst the punitive stance might be one reason for the changes, it might also be, in part, the drive to increase the perceived value of degrees to ensure that participation in HE is seen as worthwhile (Cook et al., 2019). Therefore, degrees need to be viewed as being valuable by employers, creating graduates with skills and knowledge to take their organisation forward; likewise, though, graduates need to believe that their degree is worthwhile (Bryan & Guccione, 2018). Here, there are questions about how ethical it is to allow students to become subject to debt if the education they receive does not patently provide additional value or opportunities compared to if they did not attend university. Therefore, influencing FTUG student behaviours in England will be explored in the next section and discussion chapters to address the gaps in literature.

One of the shifts to support students has been the move of HE teaching away from sole reliance on didactic lecturing and towards a pedagogic model of active-collaborative learning to enhance student outcomes (McNeil et al., 2021). This move towards a broader range of pedagogic methods has been viewed as an essential shift to creating a more inclusive teaching and learning repertoire (Singh, 2015; Fitzgerald et al., 2017). A range of methods of providing learning experiences means that learners of varying needs and backgrounds have greater opportunities to progress in their education. Students have seemingly been increasingly repositioned from docile bodies that knowledge is poured into, to beings who need active engagement in learning. Hence, there are implications to explore in how more lively bodies have reconstructed identities and meanings about what it is to be a student (Bergmark & Westman, 2018; Manfra, 2019). Universities are often engaged in debates about research and teaching priorities of staff, such tensions are often exacerbated between types of employment contracts, this divide between research and teaching is often not given space for meaningful discussion about the impact on students (Barnett, 2005). The introduction of the TEF by the OfS has been one method for increasing access and enhancing student outcomes through highlighting good practice and driving expectations of universities. The sector-wide response has been the further investment/emphasis on the learning and teaching provision for academic staff (Bunce et al. 2017; Cunningham &

Samson, 2021). This can be seen by institutions investing in formal academic staff learning and teaching development, often aligned to Advance HE good practice and the Professional Standards Framework so that staff have recognised proficiency skills and knowledge of HE pedagogy. For example, in HE Geography, teaching methods and curricula have been informed by how teachers in secondary education help to bridge the gap between school and university, and how best to support students to progress from one to the other (Butt, 2019). Today, teaching and learning methods, and the professionalisation of teaching and learning in a HE context are key as part of the plans universities have to provide greater access to knowledge and lifelong learning skills (Bengtsen & Barnett, 2017). In a similar vein, there has been an increasing convergence of HE and Further Education (FE), eliding their distinction as two distinct sectors and now providing more access to HE in a more vocational form through Further Education institutions (Perry, 2009). This is not to argue that HE is a homogeneous sector, on the contrary as previously identified there is still a stratification of universities by 'grouping'. Such changes to education have seen the erosion of the distinction between the more traditionally academic HE sector and the more vocational FE sector; such blurring of the distinctions poses a challenge to the sectors' purposes. The university is now a universal place of training and preparation for future employment (Furlong, 2014). Consequently, there is a reimagining of what HE is, its purpose, and who belongs in HE. Not only has there been ontological, structural and purpose evolution of England's HE, but the functioning and operation of universities have evolved to facilitate, or as a result of, some of these changes.

Prima facie, changes to HE may not be apparent in the student numbers, rather HE must be viewed in a larger context that has facilitated (or in many cases require) changes in universities. To support this, Nixon (2017a) notes that the sector has undergone recent changes at all levels, to its structure, function and operation. The reorganisation of most existing universities has been experienced to make them more competitive and efficient to make savings to reflect smaller immediate income streams from student fees (HEFCE, 2013). At the same time, there have been changes to the focus and use of pedagogical techniques to support teaching and student progress, particularly in undergraduate courses (Singh, 2015; Temple et al., 2016). Such reorganisation has led to a reprofiling of HE purpose and the expected ways of working (for institutions and individuals) within HE.

2a.5 - Neoliberal western education

HE in England has been given complex and competing responsibilities by the State, in a rapidly changing political, societal, financial, and technological world. In the period from the 1970s to present, HE has shifted from a national affair with clear ideals of who belongs, to an international affair concerned in part as soft power projection with international reputation highlighted in league tables. One of the key aspects of Western neoliberal education is the idea of choice, and the ability to select a place of education in a global market economy which is facilitated through data (Taylor, 2010).

With increasing numbers of private, largely media, organisations compiling and disseminating ranking tables based on their metrics or sourced data, universities aim to negotiate and compete on various different factors (Bulpitt, 2012; Nielsen, 2015). Universities seek to become 'a top ten' in at least one metric, in categories such as student experience, career destinations, and highest-paid graduates in a very specific destination. The availability of these metrics drives a sector shift toward competition; this new educational marketplace shifts perceptions of the purpose and position of universities (Furlong, 2014). Additionally, HE has shifted from the more abstract and intangible to something with a clearer sense of milestones and 'good' outcomes; with a more recognisable end 'product' or attainment goal (Tuan, 1990; Ball, 2017), and this is seen globally with HE (Elken, 2020). With that in mind, universities need students to be more active in ensuring they are making good progress and obtaining good outcomes. The apparatus of economic competition, and the concern with reputation, is a matter of discernment by the external world based on market measures. Also, changes in legislative and regulatory regimes have pushed universities to provide more data in an apparent attempt to be more transparent, but it also allows the data to be compared (Barnett, 2018; Elliot, 2020). Inevitably, the better the rankings and outcomes a university has the more attractive it becomes and potentially gains greater influence.

The introduction of tuition fees in 1998, led to a redistribution of growing government debt for HE onto students and shifted responsibility for oversight of that debt to a government-owned company. This is particularly the case for universities in England, where English students do not receive subsidised fees as standard. According to Rees and Stroud (2001), not only did this shift allow the outsourcing of debt to the, arguably, private sector, a key tenet of neoliberalism but also allowed the massification of HE. Lunt (2008) further narrates that redistributing debt has allowed the student population to increase; and reinforces that it provides a more secure and knowable income for the State, particularly as lower-tier education restructuring means that school pupils prepare and expect to go to university. The associated restructuring has taken time, and it has been accompanied by increasing participation rates, and attempts to allow universities to grow/become more sustainable as debt is assigned to students rather than the university. However, this can be critiqued as the HE sector continues to need to make efficiencies due to increasing debts (UUK, 2015). It might also be in keeping with the New Labour agenda for enabling more people to access education commencing from the ‘Cool Britannia’ era (Arday, 2019). The introduction of student loans is one of several changes that have reshaped England’s HE sector.

2a.6 - University fees and loans

Building on S1.3, the Dearing Report (1997) outlined the need to provide more funding for a rapidly expanding HE sector. One of the identified means for achieving this was through student contributions to tuition, or as Shermer (2015) views it the shifting of the debt away from State to student. Whilst the tuition model selected was income-contingent loans, there were several possible tuition fee loan models presented to provide options for increasing participation and financial stability (Watson & Bowden, 2007). Nonetheless, the income-contingent loans and the increase in tuition fees indicate the importance of those fees providing universities (and the sector) with financial stability. The model of student tuition fees and income-contingent student loans are a vital facet of HE in England and feed into the broader picture of England’s economy.

Tuition fees have been a permanent fixture of the political credo since their introduction, and in some cases have been important to the outcome of general elections such as in 2010 (Ibrahim, 2014). Clark et al. (2019) explain that there has been much political debate around the case for reducing or removing fee liability from students; for identifying new mechanisms for meeting fees through loans and grants (in some cases scholarship schemes); and reconsidering the sources of revenue for those funding methods. The introduction of tuition fees thus signalled a new era of funding and thought about HE in England.

Throughout 2010-2012 in England, there were mass student demonstrations, in some instances facilitated through the universities themselves. These were in response to the Browne Report (2010) which set out options for future HE funding in England, contentiously advocating for the further increase of tuition fees (Canaan et al., 2013; Cini & Guzman-Concha, 2017). These demonstrations resulted in widespread disruption to teaching, university functions and demonstrations turning into civil unrest in many cities, notably in London. As Ibrahim (2014) explains, this was a reaction to the sudden and significant increases in tuition fees, and hence the increase in student loans and resultant student debt, which was viewed by the demonstrators as an immoral act by the Government. In this respect, there was a misjudgment of the mobilisation of the political voice of young people, who were a more empowered and informed late modernist youth (Rheingans & Hollands, 2013). Additionally, many saw this as a fundamental failing of the Liberal Democrats in the coalition government who had promised in their election manifesto to scrap tuition fees (Rheingans & Hollands, 2013). On the one hand, this was an unrealistic expectation that scrapping fees would be achieved particularly in the context of cuts to public funding due to austerity measures; on the other hand, the significant increase was perceived by students as counter to the stance taken to support students. This resulted in mistrust specifically of the Liberal Democrats (Ibrahim, 2014). Tuition fees then became a point of national contention and the Occupy Movement/Student Fees Movement rapidly gained momentum across England staging sit-ins and demonstrations (Ibrahim, 2014). After a period of turmoil and the unrelenting and non-negotiable stance of the Government on the fees, 2011 saw little action, and by the end of 2012 despite judicial challenges and further demonstrations, the movement lost momentum. However, the Welsh Government took a different approach to tuition fees and agreed for Welsh Student fees, if they studied in Wales, not to increase (Coughlan, 2010; Bawden & Young-Powell, 2014). In a sense the issue of fees in England has become more accepted even if not agreed with, in a vein that a responsible consumer pays for a product; furthermore, with the loans being income contingent many students will not fully repay their loans due to not meeting the repayment threshold or due to the time elapsed (Morrison, 2017). Here, there is a readjusting ontology about what it means to be a student and acknowledgement that there is an expectation that one is likely to pay for it in the future once they have entered a career/job. Now with a ninefold increase in those fees; this marks a huge recasting, in less than one generation, of the funding, approach, and purpose of HE (Clark et al., 2010; Nixon, 2017a). Such sweeping changes in a small time frame have meant that the sector has become faster-paced and more focused on short-term viability rather than long-term sustainability. Indeed, in the race to make it to the top of the league tables, many universities have significantly invested in their estate, making the physical campus an attractive student-centred experience.

Student loans have been in existence since 1990 through the SLC and were introduced to help support the costs of studying at university. However, initially, student loans were optional and in a mortgage style (Hubble, 2014). With the introduction and subsequent increases in tuition fees, how a (potential) student can fund their studies has also evolved. Initially (from 1998) the loans became income-contingent (Clark et al., 2019). As fees increased, as noted by Lunt (2008), the then Labour Government introduced maintenance grants for students from lower-income backgrounds to support them with funding other expenses such as accommodation. In 2014, separate maintenance loans and tuition fee loans in England ended, and they were combined into a single loan format (Bolton, 2017). By 2016-17, as a spillover of austerity measures and to reduce the national deficit, maintenance grants ended, and there was a reduction in scholarship opportunities at individual institutions and national scholarships (Bolton, 2017; Clark et al., 2019). This signalled the rise of almost a wholly debt-encumbered FTUG experience in England and the expectation of future repayment for HE participation (Shermer, 2015). Such expectations of HE as debt encumbering can be reflected in company payrolls in the UK, which are set up to provide employees with an automatic deduction from their salaries to repay their student loans. Interestingly the debt and terms of repayment are set (and can be changed) by the Government, and tactics are employed to recover the debt from former students even if they leave the UK. The notion of HE being a financial investment and that debt is a binding shackle that follows one anywhere is at odds with notions of education being emancipatory and accessible to all. Here then, there is tension over what the purpose and philosophy of HE might be about, nonetheless, as noted before, rates of participation are higher than ever.

Market shifts in England have seen societal shifts in the expectations of HE; employers can demand more or higher qualifications of applicants than they could previously (in part a result of a shift to the quaternary sector with more highly skilled jobs) (Lunt, 2008). The expectation of requiring a HE qualification naturalises the debt encumberment as something that most peers will also have, and that it is a necessary burden to be able to access the workplace (Shermer, 2015). Additionally, this association of debt almost becomes compartmentalised and acknowledged but at arm's length due to it being through the SLC and repayments starting based on an income threshold, and even then it is usually handled by the employer's payroll, in a sense it almost 'fictional money' to students (Morrison, 2017; Bolton, 2017). The more highly skilled economy and the education system is a self-reinforcing trajectory of HE, with the dominant expectation of holding an undergraduate degree. This, therefore, links back to the earlier discussion drawing on the works of Cook et al. (2018) arguing that HE needs to be perceived as holding value.

2a.7 - Towards consumerism

In a hyper-connected Western neoliberal economy and society, the UK remains one of the largest consumer economies in the world; in 2018 the UK was the fifth largest economy in the world according to the World Bank (2019). This highlights that the UK, more specifically England, is a key global site of consumption, which has led to the commercialisation and commodification of services that might previously have been viewed as a right, an expectation of the state, and an accessible public good (Furlong, 2014). Whether education in England is a public good or a commodity is debatable (Ball, 2017).

Market shifts and economic restructuring have led the UK Government, as with other developed countries, to focus on services and products to be sold rather than natural resources to help the country maintain a globally significant position in the world economy (Peters, 2004; Furlong, 2011). There is a need to diversify the economy, to provide an alternative for an ever-insatiable appetite for new things, and the need for the economy and country to respond and provide for consumption (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002; UUK, 2010). Furlong (2011; 2014) notes that as technology evolves and the world is ever more connected, the recourse to old relationships and the creation of narratives of global centres of knowledge have emerged. The key point is that there has been a rapid shift in the economy and societal perception of how the globally connected economy operates and what can be sold. With shifts in financial and regulatory regimes, HE globally, particularly in England, has become repositioned as a commodity.

This consumer-based economy should be considered in the broader context of the last twenty-thirty years in the UK to trace changes in the funding of HE. The beginning of the 1990s saw the decline of Thatcherism with the succeeding Prime Minister John Major promising to provide more opportunities in HE and set about HE reforms in particular polytechnics being given greater status, funding, and freedoms (Rheingans & Hollands, 2013; Bessant et al., 2015). Lunt (2008) provides a narrative that with the introduction of the New Labour era from 1997-2008; the agenda was to provide ambitious targets for a larger percentage of the population to attend university producing a highly skilled and technical-based economy. Furthermore, Morrison (2017) argues that higher earnings associated with graduate-level jobs, allow people to have a greater disposable income and drive spending. The New Labour era signalled societal changes and a renewed global interest in England as a cultural and educational centre, the place to be was ‘Cool Britannia’ (Arday, 2019). Whilst, this is an oversimplified explanation of financial change, there was a naturalising of investment into one’s education. The economy has and continues to evolve into more entrenched systems of spending and corporatisation of functions of society and services previously in the domain of the State (Bessant et al., 2015). In England, State support and public funding have been rolled back (or at least in real terms), and this has naturalised having debt; being in debt is increasingly something which is accepted and one continues to p(l)ay their part in the consumer society (Morrison, 2017; Clark et al., 2019). Here, a raft of programmes and investments were initially state-funded, and when those became financially untenable the burden was offloaded from the State to the private sector and the population. The shifts in the types and scale of loans that students have to accept to participate in HE highlight the importance of funding the sector.

To this end, students in England, it could be argued, have been reconceptualised as the next generation of species, becoming the *homoaeconomicus*. The idea is explained by Foucault (2008), we are a species inextricably bound, identified and consumed by money, without money one ceases to exist. Universities in England for international students became sites of consumption from 1979, and this signalled the start of a quasi-public place of education and the full shift by 2018 as sites of consumption of education with all students having to pay for their tuition; it is a shift to being in a place that will enable them to feel like they belong due to paying (Tuan, 2011; Miller, 2010; Clark et al., 2019). At the same time, other theorists would argue that economics has become more humanised to better entrench finances and practices to enable more effective behaviour nudges; and for embedding practices to be shaped by and with finances (Thaler, 2000; Latour, 2012). If engaging in HE is a form of consumption; this then may fundamentally alter the approach to accessing it and participating in it (Nielsen, 2012). Our everyday lives appear saturated with monetary cognisance, in particular, neoliberal Western identities are intrinsically bound with notions of financial gain and social status. Through this lens, HE is not independent of financial philosophies and the associated practices.

Additionally, as HE in England has become neoliberal sites of business, with the commercialisation and the prescription of what an education at university is, the market economy of education has intensified (Nixon, 2017a). Like with all products and services, a ranking and quality approach has manifested, and consequently, there has been a move in global economies to cognitive capitalism, where the economy is now based more on knowledge and information rather than the trade of industrial goods (Lemke, 2011). Here, the whole sector is immersed in the neoliberal consumer society, of outsourcing, partnerships, and market-style management; in a manner, the sector is a mirror of the broader economy.

There has been a rise in the focus on student journeys in English universities (Bunce et al., 2017), especially so in light of new entitlements afforded under legislation such as the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and the Higher Education Act 2017. In this legislation, there is a focus on the whole student journey, as is the case with this thesis. Temple et al. (2016) view this as comprising four components: the ‘application’ the pre-experience stage of the course, the ‘academic’ which is the interaction and concern of studies, the ‘campus’ they view as all the other interactions of the course not concerned with the academic, and finally the ‘graduate’ which is the support into work and sustained relations. Temple et al. (2016), conducted an extensive piece of robust research for the Higher Education Academy utilising focus groups, interviews, and participative methods of engagement across six universities representing a cross-section of the profiles of universities in England. A particular strength of the research was the attention paid to the various interaction points of universities with students. However, there remains scope for advancing knowledge 10 years after the publication of the report in context of new societal and working practices. Universities are increasingly involved with provision and intervention beyond the academic, and to some extent, this regulation of a more prescriptive experience results in fewer opportunities for organicism and creativity. The loss of freedom to determine learning activities leads to alterations in the networks of power, such as students gaining more agency and lecturers losing agency (Fitzsimons, 2011; Aili & Nilsson, 2016). One of the rationales for this prescriptive approach is to enable institutions to monitor, and ultimately fulfil their obligations to provide a knowable experience, with the aim to provide a more equitable education; and to generate more comparable data helping to show student progress, hence interventions can be made attempting to optimise the attainment of the student population (Hull, 2017). Whilst Temple et al’s (2016) approach outlines a useful lens, their oversimplification of where learning happens might be contested with COVID-19 and online learning and what shapes the behaviours of students. It is clear the move to provide ‘as advertised’ experience has led to an increase in universities focusing on consistency, and the generation and use of data to make interventions. Thus, signalling a distinct shift towards HE being a pedagogical endeavour concerned with progress and outcomes.

2a.8 - Student recruitment marketing

Student recruitment marketing in the last five years has undergone a refocusing and a more used tool of the university. When the government removed student number caps placed on universities in England, this led to several responses. Greater student numbers result in more money, therefore many universities have increased the number of student places available (Grant Thornton, 2016; Nixon, 2017a; Temple et al., 2016). This meant that institutions that previously would have been considered elite (and still are) but no longer with the same automatic income by virtue of their status, now face greater competition for FTUGs. Thus, universities are involved in an active marketplace, needing to respond to market forces to remain competitive. In part, the lift of student number controls is attributed to the failure of the government to provide effective oversight and, in part, to address financial losses by shifting more burden of funding to an expanded student population (Hillman, 2014). Hence, there became a need to use a range of marketing methods to actively recruit students, through securing students there is clarity over the expected funding for the duration of the students' education. Based on such clarity, universities can make decisions about how to spend the expected funding and the amount of resources their projections will require.

Additionally, many universities, particularly those positioned mid-league table, have started to suffer as their previous main recruiting demographic has been encroached on by higher-ranking universities (Bessant et al., 2015). The struggle to recruit students experienced a distinct shift for most universities, moving away from the selection of students to oversubscribed places to recruiting to fill the vacant spaces available. The intense competition for students has seen changes in the number of unconditional places awarded to students, to tie students into accepting, and the university more able to secure income and set budgets (Bessant et al., 2015). Additionally, the post-results clearing period has seen a time of intensified activity with universities opening up places to more actively secure students, and as Ainley (2016) notes there have been more students 'upgrading' universities, sometimes viewed as 'poaching' the students. However, the OfS (2020) issued guidance on using 'unconditional offers' for selecting a particular university as a firm choice.

Universities in England have fiercer competition to recruit the same students to their particular institution (Grant Thornton, 2016). Marketing has evolved to have greater appeal to FTUG students and to provide them with a narrative of what it means to study at that institution and provide a positioning on that institution's culture and unique selling point (Smith & Hubbard, 2014). Marketing addresses the positioning of the university and the type of person that it is attempting to recruit; the materials through the use of particular images and text can carry affective meanings and understandings of the expected student experience (Nielsen, 2015; Ball, 2013). The clear direction has been to effectively engage potential students through marketing, to hook them into the narratives of belonging to that university and to become a student there. The marketing by universities has a targeted and segmented approach looking to provide an idea of what it means to be a student at 'X' and appealing to that audience. Potentially here emerges a range of new narratives of the purpose and philosophy of HE based on market segmentation, here new ideas of student identity emerge. However, more extensive research is required into the deliberate targeted affective marketing approaches used by universities in England.

Marketing mediums have adapted and diversified in most English universities, like elsewhere in the world. Universities have done this to gain greater reach and to be (or at least appear to be) relevant for potential students (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002; UUK, 2010). The use of social media as a medium of communication has significantly increased, and more traditional media have less importance than they once had (Swales, 2018). More regular and sustained content to build ongoing relationships and followership has also increased to provide more vignettes of information about the whole student experience (Samier, 2018). Indeed, more knowledge about what to expect outside of the academic experience is increasingly provided by marketing (Bulpitt, 2012; Haywood & Scullion, 2018). Marketing goes towards engagement and participation to provide students with an interaction before attending (Gibbs, 2009). Social media has had an increasing role in a faster-paced and more connected world, it is often the first interface that many potential students will now have with universities. In light of COVID-19, the role of technology is a significant factor in 'connecting' with students and helping to construct the narratives of being a student at 'X', becoming lively sites of interaction rather than more banal and passive information broadcasting. In using 'lively', it is to argue that there is a more-than-human aspect to the matter, that there are multiple and ever changing interactions between people, physical space, and discursive space (Barua, 2017). This results in ever-changing understandings and power-relationships, particularly with regard to where and how capital and agency is located.

Whilst marketing has developed to give insights about the FTUG student experience and what to expect, the target audience is not always potential students but rather their parents/carers, who are increasingly expected to help subsidise costs of study and living. In that regard, Haywood & Scullion (2018) comment that marketing is about reassuring parents/carers that their offspring will be safe, will enjoy their time, that there is sufficient academic challenge, support and enjoyment, and that going to that particular university is worth the investment. There may be a range of motivations for marketing, not just reassuring parents. The narrative of 'family' has been explored by Lainio and Brooks (2021), where students are positioned as family members in the university community. This is interesting as there seems to be the sense of students passing from one part of the family into another carrying with it ideas of shared expectations and safety, possibly intimating that there is less of a transition into HE than expected before. Entry into HE is associated with a range of social, physical, and psychological transitions which universities should support students with (Jindal-Snape & Rientes, 2016). To be cynical, constructions of the family may be clever marketing, like a good 'salesperson' developing rapport to close the 'sale', rather than dwell on the mechanics of the sale and its financial aspect. It is also important to reflect on the many backgrounds of students, such as those who also need to work to subsidise their education, and indeed some students may become involved in work not widely acknowledged or spoken about (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Sanders & Hardy, 2013). To this end then, HE is about an investment that will see the end product as a meaningful qualification that will provide good prospects for employment and progression. Although this view of progression may present a cruel sense of optimism about what one can achieve through participation in HE, it might be more about constructions of hope for parents and potential students rather than the reality of what HE will provide as an outcome (Loewenthal et al., 2019). The notion of HE in England as providing a lucrative career and opening the door to do better is a social construction associated with greater financial prosperity; whereas this often can fail to be the case with education representing a financial strain (Loewental et al., 2019). Nonetheless, constructions of HE are about what could be achieved through participation in HE. In this sense, universities are going beyond the traditional boundaries of marketing and making use of behavioural economics to explore and exploit what it means to an FTUG student at that particular university; and as Irons & Hepburn (2007) show behavioural economic approaches reduced perceived choice to the benefit of a particular university. By building choice architecture and determining the desires of potential students, it allows universities to better position that particular university as expert in meeting the needs of that potential student so that it will be chosen over others (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009). Here, marketing may try to create an immersive experience to give the notion that it is the rational choice and that there is no other reasonable choice to be had. More than being rational, marketing is used to build a narrative of belonging and the institution allowing the student to do what they would like to do. Hence, the affective messages of making the 'right' choice, in favour of that institution, is significant and plays upon not regretting the 'right' choice; and breeding doubt that they might regret making the 'wrong' choice by going elsewhere (Bye, 2012; Gibbs, 2018). There is a complex evocative and affective narrative with a sense of investment by all parties into the experience of the student, and there is a need to further secure decision-making through marketing interactions with nudges. The deliberate (or possibly not) constructions of the narratives of HE in marketing, perpetuate the fuzziness around what the current purpose of HE might be.

2a.9 - Summary of HE complexity

HE in England is difficult to understand, trace and provide a sector-wide overview of. With the HE sector growing and consisting of groupings of similar albeit not homogeneous universities, the sector as a whole faces a number of different challenges; certain groupings, indeed certain universities make different priorities for facing challenges (Bulpitt, 2012; Devecchi et al., 2018). Fundamentally the key priority is to remain financially viable; without financial viability, the legitimacy of the university would be called into question; indeed would the State intervene to support a failing university, a point which recent economic events might prove to be problematic (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002.; Rolfe, 2002). Here, the duty of the State in mitigating danger and securing futures has been delegated to the OfS, and a key part of that resilience is to maintain finances and the capacity to react to unexpected events (Grove, 2010). There are interesting questions that arise from the changes in HE since the introduction of student loans, and the subsequent reorganisation and reorientation of the sector. Such as, is HE a public good or a private endeavour?, what is the principle function of HE?, and who belongs in HE? As new ‘private’ HE providers emerge as offshoots of large multinational organisations, what may happen to the ‘university’ and how will English universities meet the new competition, particularly in securing their financial viability?

However, whilst funding of HE in England is a key priority, the complex agendas after funding are less clear and universities’ specific priorities are idiosyncratic even if similar in their endpoint of producing world-leading research outputs, diversifying activities, and providing teaching excellence (Peters, 2010; Nixon, 2017a). This fuzziness is underpinned by the battling of universities to be top or near the top of a particular national or international metric, to use in shouting about its achievements and deployed in marketing (Bessant et al., 2015). The complexity is further exacerbated when considering the impacts of sector-wide restructuring and austerity measures, and these have yet to be fully understood (Cini & Guzman-Concha, 2017). With such a lack of clarity, one could question how can sector-wide change be driven by an inclusive sector, and therefore, whose voices are heard or lost in the conversation around current and future trajectories of HE? Likewise, sector competition for financial stability and working on ever-pressured budgets, with staff having more responsibilities, there could be a risk to collaborative endeavours between universities. These factors have and will undoubtedly lead to a lack of consensus on the purpose of HE, with no single shared viewpoint of what HE is for. However, whilst there might be change it must also be recognised that there will undoubtedly remain some rootedness of philosophy, policy, and practice; particularly as universities seek to solidify their individual identity and narratives, for example the University of Oxford’s corporate governance is constituted by the Oxford University Reform Act of 1854. Nonetheless, it is important to better understand the network of power for HE in England to be able to identify how and whose voices are heard.

Since the introduction of tuition fees, there has been a marked shift in the role and purpose of education in universities in England, whilst transitions are marked there are others such as governance which remain more static over time. Education has become commodified and viewed as a product to be purchased with the course a service being paid for. This changing student ontology has led to changes in satisfaction survey results, and survey architecture with universities moving towards determining value for money (Gaffney-Rhys & Jones, 2010; Bessant et al., 2015). There has been this seeming reciprocal nature of the 'productification' of HE, on the one hand, students shifting views towards treating HE as a thing to be purchased. On the other, universities treat students as a means to secure funds to feed their insatiable appetite to provide financial sustainability and fulfil their aims (Lunt, 2008; Nixon, 2017a). It is important to note that 'productification' is not just a manifestation of students, but rather that it is the result of changes to how HE operates. Driven by reorientation of sector regulation and operation; with functions, services and methods of the university being 'productified' they become subject to commodification (Furlong, 2014). Those changes have resulted in structural changes to the way the university operates. For example, the transition to a competition-based autonomous running of restructured departments with specified budgets and forecasting, change to the minimum number of resources and staff to fulfil obligations, change in the allocation of time to tasks, change to student involvement and course content (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Nedbalvo et al., 2014). Hence, HE has shifted to become more able to 'trade' in the current global economic context.

While changes are occurring in English universities and the direction of travel for the sector can appear somewhat unclear, it may seem HE is in flux; this though is a reductionist interpretation. There are academics and some universities, as noted in Collini's (2015) work, who are resisting the almost inevitable change, in counter free-market movement, with small micro- and meso-level changes to attempt to keep the purpose of the university enshrined in the production of knowledge and scholarship, often referred to as the 'Ivory Tower'. Here, there is the 'maximisation of reason' where the growth of HE is to be able to both protect and exploit HE as a sector (and arguably a valuable 'product') (Furlong, 2014). For this maximisation, there tends to be a need for strong and effective leadership, something which is proposed by Collini (2015) as lacking across the HE sector; such an absence of leadership then might in part highlight how the Government can make such large-scale changes with relative impunity. Whilst there are sites of resistance to change, such as collaboration rather than competition (Feldman & Sandoval, 2018), there has been sector-wide restructuring and reorganisation in response to national and international needs and expectations, notably in financing HE. This section of the literature review shows that there is need to better understand how the recent transitions in English HE have had an impact on FTUG student behaviours and relationships with their universities. This thesis will advance new knowledge about the impact of recent structural and financial changes on FTUG's behaviour.

Student experience and performance are essential metrics for HE in England, creating more knowable experiences are key for making enhancements to metrics (Beer, 2016). Hence, the State and universities may attempt to create more knowable experiences and 'script' student behaviours through affective tactics and nudging. The following literature section 2b: Affect, will explore the theoretical framework through which my research has been conducted, and introduces the ideas of networks of power, agency, influencing behaviours, and nudging. The chapter provides links to concepts and ideas explored in the chapter on education.

Section 2b: Affect and governmentality

Having set out the background and competing philosophies of HE in England, this S2b of the literature review considers the core Foucauldian concepts informing the study: networks of power, disciplining, scripting, affect, and nudging. It will moreover be seen that these framing concepts intrinsically inform the post-structuralist ontology which informed all aspects of the study and which is further elucidated in the ensuing Methodology chapter.

This section explores the literature on affect theory and the operation of affect through networks of power between different actors. It looks at how FTUG student interactions are influenced subconsciously through affective interventions, and how affect and power operate to shape 'model' student behaviours. It is important to have an informed understanding of affective modification of student experience in the current HE context in England. To this end, this literature review highlights the changes and iterative processes/flows in ever-evolving networks of power that give rise to the (re)distribution of agency to actors within the networks of power. Additionally, this literature review explores how choice architecture, discursive and physical space and affect are used to shape behaviours. Literature is used by linking to choices made in the methodology to justify the area of study, such as the need for further work on how space and architecture are used in shaping FTUG student behaviours. Additionally, it looks at how FTUGs 'become' and are 'being' students.

Section 2b introduces the key theoretical approaches to affect and how power operates, it then explores in more detail how those theoretical concepts have been applied/manifest in education. It then focuses on individual students (micro), stepping back to focus on universities (meso), and a further step back to the sector and State (macro). To this end, section 2b will consider affect theory, governmentality and power, power in education, changes to the networks of power, scripting student experience, student contracts, the role of universities, actors of the university, architecture and HE, and the soft power of the State.

2b.1 - Affect theory

Affect theory is rooted in poststructuralist ideology and the interpretation of how individuals interact with the world, how the world interacts with individuals and with society (Anderson, 2014). As a concept, affect emerged from Spinoza's work on *affectus* theory which proposes a capacity to appeal to mind and/or body to change one's interactions with the world (Kraftl & Adey, 2008). Affect is encountered not only through physical interactions with people and the world; it is more pervasive operating throughout culture and entwined within vocabularies (Anderson, 2006). When considering the direction and management of populations, affect is an important concept; in particular, for the management of populations through networks and in biopolitical utilisation (Esposito, 2008). Affect, as is understood in this thesis, is manifested through control of the capacity to act (Kraftl & Adey, 2008). There are other interpretations of affect, such as the more-than-representational idea, which is the idea that there are forces and life in space that influence thinking (McCormack, 2003). However, all definitions concur that affect is concerned with the precognitive and the subconscious, generating a response to a stimulus (Anderson, 2014). The affective stimuli processing is about feeling, and the emotion is the embodiment and action of those feelings (McCormack, 2013). The view of affect in this thesis is something which creates a bodily response and is a key aspect in the networks of power, shaping the extent of an individual's agency.

The interpretation of affect operating through networks of power includes but is not limited to networks of regulatory regimes. Affect can and does impact the freedoms and agency within those networks; hence, in looser affective networks the result is that individual actors have more agency (Thrift, 2004; Stewart, 2007). Agency for individuals and populations is more nuanced as agency flows in varied ways for individuals and populations; it is situated, rooted, and evolving in the complex politics of the State and society; consequently affect is discriminative to those who do not belong (as much) in a particular place or situation (Anderson, 2012; Anderson et al., 2012). Thus, a 'model' student has greater agency than one who is more transgressive. Networks and assemblages of actors in networks, hence communities and societies, are imbued with affect, which can be wielded by the hegemonic power, usually government (Foucault, 1977; Bevir, 2013). Synthesising this, Grove (2013) presents the argument that networks, whilst often complex, allow governments to better understand and control populations' everyday interactions and lives. The motivation for such population control is to provide more knowable interactions of populations with the world, and better predict how to manage behaviours and responses to incidents; such measures of control may manifest in a hard state paternalism (enforced lockdowns in the context of COVID-19) or a softer libertarian paternalism (advising people to use hand sanitiser).

Hence, governing through affect is about the shaping of sensory interaction with the world, and behaviour can be modified through interventions for a changed bodily response (Anderson, 2014). It follows from theories of affect, as per Anderson (2012), that there is a loss of individual agency to the greater affective power, which in turn can influence an individual's behaviour. The changes to the affective environment can lead to new or different behaviours resulting in the individual(s) losing agency, and this process is argued to be dehumanising (Dean, 2013). The wielding of affect leads to a raft of ethical implications regarding the modification of behaviours, whether it is ever ethical to do so, and for whose interests are those modifications (Foucault, 2010; Dean, 2013). Nonetheless, if affect is being used to create knowable behaviours, it is easier for the hegemonic power to identify deviance. As a result, the individual might seem to be out of place and the hegemonic power exercises discipline and retraining (Foucault, 1977; Dean, 2013). Creating knowable behaviours is important in a society that is under surveillance, and for shaping market forces it is important to recognise the knowable behaviours to identify non-conformity of unexpected behaviours.

'Nudging' is a tool of affect, and can be slightly more explicit than other affective strategies. Thaler & Sunstein's (2009) seminal book highlights that nudging is used to guide an individual to see a scenario or choice being presented as the only viable choice (or one of a limited number of choices). As such, nudging leads individuals to a choice as designed by the hegemonic power or choice deemed most suitable for them. Affect permeates into life beyond the psychological, it extends to bodily changes, the physiological. The physiologically altered individual is nudged towards the hegemonic power's view of what they should be, and thus one moves toward a different psychological state, one that is open for further conditioning (Dawkins & Powell, 2011). The intervention into the physiological is a sensory act, intertwining a somewhat nascent concept to rooted changes in an individual; this is a sensual act that is embodied and tangible, lending further legitimisation to the body politic. Here, the body is seen as a site for regulation and for State intervention; as seen in Tan's (2012) work on legislation and training on drinking and smoking. The body becomes 'medicalised' and is a legitimated domain of the State to intervene in how one uses their body and interacts with the world (Lemke, 2011). Conditioning and use of affective messages have seen a proliferation; with more targeted use of nudging to create visceral or scripted responses to affects; as such one becomes open to further conditioning by that power, (or sometimes more resistant) (Anderson, 2014). However, we live in a highly sensory and connected world; it is navigated with shared collective knowledge and cultural cues, such as the colour red representing danger signalling a fight or flight response, making the individual more receptive to a particular set of affective messages (Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010). The UK Government in 2010 saw the importance of nudging and established a dedicated unit in the Cabinet Office to use behavioural science to influence the population, businesses, and government in key issues and everyday living (Behavioural Insights Team, 2023). This unit focused on individuals' contributions to society and making changes in regular routines such as recycling and emails. Everyday life is navigated through a sense of mundane and spectacular; lives are lived in and through networks of power with a plethora of affective meaning and regulation (Dean, 2013). Hence, nudging is also concerned with small habits and practices that become a naturalised part of one's everyday life.

2b.2 - Governmentality and power

Power is a controversial and hard-to-define term and concept; nonetheless, it is a central tenet of society and politics of the world in which we live. This thesis takes the Foucauldian approach of viewing power as being the ability to control one's or others' agency and free will. In this vein, the capacity to act of one's own volition knowingly is an underpinning concept of power (Foucault, 2010). A Foucauldian perspective is taken as it does not assume that power is uniform or heterogeneous, rather that there are different types of power that operate through political and societal assemblages and networks. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault's work views assemblages as power relationships rather than the desires of actors, showing influence rather than intentions (Smith, 2016). Additionally, Foucault's work also helps to locate sites of individual resistance to hegemonic power, rather than abstract collections of resistance to power (Smith, 2016). Therefore, as a researcher one is better placed in making specific claims of resistance and locating power in action.

This thesis in keeping with Foucault's theoretical approach utilises a feminist viewpoint of the world, which understands that power operates in different ways on different bodies, for example, everyone is implicated in networks of power (McNay, 1992). However, whilst on the one hand, Foucault's work is viewed as emancipatory for revealing power networks, it can also be critiqued for the deterministic way in which particular groups may be viewed (Macleod & Durrhiem, 2002). Whilst feminism as an overarching philosophical viewpoint is utilised, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the various perspectives and subdivisions of feminism. Feminism is used throughout this thesis to keep in mind the variations in which power operates on individuals. A feminist lens helps to provide insight into the lived experiences of individuals and different social groups rather than a universal approach to all people being acted on equally (Freeman, 2019). Hence, utilising a feminist approach helps to better consider those who are oppressed and suffer from power imbalances, through practices, policies, and systems. Such understandings are key to revealing power dynamics and being able to offer pragmatic recommendations for equity.

As older democracies have evolved in the Western world, particularly Europe, so too have modes of governing population. Foucault's works focus more on the development of power and governmentality in Western Europe. No longer is there a sovereign exercising divine absolute authority over the land with the ability to do as they please to the land and/or population. Sovereign power carries with it the ability to take life with impunity (Foucault, 2010). As the State appears, with a centralised collective authority, the sovereign power shifts to disciplinary power, with rule by spectacle including visible harsh application of a formal legislative system focusing on crime and punishment processes (Foucault, 1977). Today, however, the hegemonic power, usually a government, predominantly governs through management, guidance and intervention in its population's life; this is biopower (Foucault, 2010). Universities are interesting sites to explore these notions of power due to them being centres of theoretical knowledge and action; hence universities have an interplay between the pragmatism of governance and distributed governmentality (Bevir, 2011).

Biopower operates to regulate the lives of the people subject to it, in the case of the State through creating knowable citizens and behaviours, with bodies that respond in an expected manner to a stimulus. Dean (2013) argues that the body and mind become subject to intervention, to conform or have a knowable body biography with interactions that are regulated as such expected and interventions can be most effective. Therefore, all aspects of public and private lives are subject to regulation and intervention if deemed necessary. The State intervenes with, for example, medicine and education to support the creation of the ideal citizen appropriate for the needs of society and the economy (Foucault, 1977). Lemke (2011) goes further stating the case of medicine, that the body becomes subject to politicisation and intervention to create knowable humans with the correction of ailments that seemingly inhibit a person's contribution to society. In the economy, and in the structure of society, greater freedoms are managed through companies, public bodies providing a governmental approach, and the rise of managerialism as the government gives citizens more agency to decide on their course of action (Dean, 2013). Here, functions of the State and 'doing government' move away from state-run functions to public institutions and non-governmental organisations, creating a devolution of powers. Devolving power to citizens is based on them being more informed and responsible, who have been educated in the forms and norms of society, embodying the expectations of the State. Hence, education (that is primary to tertiary) is a key ground for population disciplining providing them with a transition to be ready for the world in the view of the hegemonic power (Esposito, 2008).

Furthermore, biopower in part operates more pervasively in societies that have, arguably, greater freedoms such as access to information and technologies (Foucault, 2008). Conversely, biopower relies upon the knowledge, information, and data about the people it seeks to operate on. Through having more data and more knowledge about behaviours, identities and populations, it is easier to identify deviance from expectations and address it (Foucault, 2008). In a similar vein, the knowledge that the State (or hegemonic power) could use that data, acts in a panopticon style of self-disciplining, meaning individuals self-regulate to conform due to fear that the State might be watching and use information about what they have done (Foucault, 1977). Whilst Foucault's ideas on information for biopower were theorised before the massification of the internet, it is a useful idea to apply to one's digital footprint, and the consequent extensive data available. Such availability of data has led to the quantification of life and working practice, as is the case in HE (Morrish, 2019); big data availability shows an avenue for why and possibly how biopower has been able to operate effectively in a digital age. A 'model' student therefore is one whose body is seen as a legitimate target of biopower to operate on to create knowable behaviours and practices.

2b.3 - Power in education

The tutorial room and lecture theatre are important spaces, but there is a lack of research about the design and use of HE spaces in shaping students' behaviours. When space is redesigned it can have powerful effects on the type of learning that happens and the power dynamics. Swinnerton (2021) discusses how three 'traditional' lecture theatres in a UK university were redesigned into collaborative lecture theatres, enabling active learning. In Scotland, there was a report commissioned into the future design and purpose of learning spaces in FE and HE, it marks the increasing importance of technology and physical spaces being integrated (AMA, 2006). Whilst this report may have been helpful at the time, it is questionable as to whether such learning spaces would be suitable with newer technology being available and funding in England has not increased in real terms to provide such large capital investment. Similarly, the report lacks nuanced insight into uses of spaces and potential behaviours expected in different university spaces. Ellis and Goodyear (2016) discuss that in Australia emerging learning space research helps to highlight how universities are investing money into student learning spaces and the implications space has on teaching, but also on the symbolic role on university life those spaces may have. As noted in a case study report about learning spaces in an English university, to create more stimulating learning environments, students need to be empowered and this can be done by making classroom layout more conducive for group work (Elkington & Bligh, 2019). However, there remains little discussion about the politics of affect in university spaces. As such this section draws on research of secondary school spaces, to help advance the arguments of this thesis. The findings of this thesis will help to address what seems a gap in research regarding the use of spaces and power in HE and will help to be of value to decision-makers when considering discursive and physical spaces of the university.

In a ‘traditional’ classroom there is a power dynamic which is premised on the person providing/delivering the education, seen as the ‘enshrined font of knowledge’, but who is also an agent of power (Jones, 1990). Nonetheless, there is no clear agreed and stable understanding of the dynamics of power relationships in education. Even in classrooms where there is student-led, peer teaching, and flipped learning pedagogic approaches, there is still the possibility of the teacher intervening to halt or correct misconceptions (Ball, 2017). Here, the teacher is an agent of the State; in England, teachers in schools, almost without exception, will need to hold Qualified Teacher Status, even in academies where there is no legal requirement it appears as an essential criterion in job descriptions (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Ball, 2013; 2017). Teachers in England are expected to conform to Teacher Standards set out by the Department for Education (2021), and to conduct themselves in keeping with these as a baseline of their profession; the professionalisation of teaching with direct registration and accountability, in certain circumstances, to a Government agency highlights a clear power relationship (Ball & Junemann, 2012). The relationship with the State shows a closer alignment of the State being able to influence the pedagogy and the shaping of school children’s experience and; by extension, future citizens and contributors to the economy and society. Applied to a HE context, there is a similar format with the lecturer at the front of the room or lectern, with lecturers increasingly seen to need Fellowship of Advance HE or a PGCert in HE teaching, and teaching contributing to citizenship agendas.

Most schools are hierarchical in nature, and formal education more broadly, entrenches power and authority in particular staff roles such as management and those who teach (Barnett, 1990). One could argue that the bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of schools are a reflection of the persistent class structure of England (Reay et al., 2005). Moreover, this early societal and cultural embedding of bureaucracy into everyday schooling is a reinforcement of the bureaucratic nature of the State. Whilst there is a raft of literature on power in education in the sense of authority and command, Ball (2013) provides a useful synthesis. He highlights that there remains a smaller dialogue around individual agency, and the ongoing flow of agency of those in education, whether it be a teacher or student. The research that does exist on this more specialised Foucauldian view of power (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Ball, 2013; 2017; Dean, 2013) highlights that education is a reflection of society or rather the society desired by the Government. Consequently, education has moved away from disciplinary power where corporal punishment was the ever-pervasive threat to a student, now biopower is concerned with the whole development of each child (and teachers), with the mantra of each person needing to contribute to society.

As Agamben (2005) argues, citizens live in a ‘state of exception’ where one is conditioned to move from one emergency to another, and the role of the State is to coordinate a response to threats that society faces. The move from crisis to crisis is in part a justification of the power the State exercises. These crises are not necessarily a threat to life, but to the way that one lives (Anderson, 2012). To that extent, HE in England has been under threat due to cuts, staff shortages, and curriculum and qualification changes. Through living in this state of exception, the HE sector is more affectively receptive to the power of the State, hence, open to the strategies used to condition individuals’ behaviours (Agamben, 2005). This can be seen in school education, where there is a focus on behaviour and conduct, with thought invested in the design and layout of classrooms. The dominant discourse of HE has moved away from the passive self-enlightenment of students, to creating active citizens who care about the world. Through the encumberment of debt, the State has a more legitimate sustained interaction (along with alumni outreach) to ensure that graduates continue to be active citizens and follow the messages of the State (Lemke, 2011; Esposito, 2008). It is clear that HE is neither neutral or passive; it is a complex sector that is affected by numerous factors resulting in a power interplay with the State, the university, their agents, and others.

2b.4 - Changes to the networks of power since 1997

Networks of power operate on the macro (sector-wide), meso (institutional/university-wide), and micro (individual) levels. There is a constant renegotiation of power dynamics due to a plethora of reasons such as the people, the politics, the subject, the room, the time, the existing knowledge, and the jobs of the people (Dean, 2013). On the macro-level, networks of power are produced and reproduced through societal norms and expectations, such as the role of the person doing the teaching (lecturer), the purpose of the university, and operate at a sector or institutional-wide entity (Fitzsimons, 2011). At the meso-level, networks operate at the institutional and sub-institutional-level, which are, arguably, more noticeable in their shifts concerning institutional restructuring. Meso-level networks are usually assigned to the physical estate in the university, where identities and belonging might be fostered (Ball, 2013). The micro-level networks of power are more subtle and iterative, with the interactions between individuals and the development of relationships over time (Ball, 2013). Here, it is clear that within the larger network of power, there are layers, interconnectedness, and interdependence within the network that seemingly (re)distribute agency and the capacity to act in sub-networks.

HE in England has experienced a sector shift in how it is funded (S2a.6). The sector had to become self-sufficient, and consequently has had to alter the way it operates and views opportunities, changing working practices and how employees are treated. This is evident in the report about the sector by HEFCE in 2013. Such systemic change has resulted in a shifting epistemological and ontological view of the HE sector by the outside world. Consequently, these have led to shifts in how the external world views HE, an argument sustained by Nixon (2017a). As a result of these macro-level changes, or at least the perception of changes, this undoubtedly has led to reorientation in the network of power. As the macro, meso, and micro are all interlinked in a complex relationship; changes at the macro-level will permeate across the network, impacting the meso and micro. The meso-level will act as a buffer to immediate power changes, and the micro acts in resistance, however, the micro rarely has an impact on the macro (Bevir, 2013; Dean, 2013).

As a result of the changes in the network (macro, meso, micro) each level of the network adjusts to a new reality and accompanying manifestations. As Bevir (2013) argues, changes in a network result in the nodes readjusting to their new positioning and the consequent agency within the new network (Bevir, 2013). Since 2015, the micro-level of the network of power, specifically students, might be seen as having greater agency due to protections afforded under consumer protection legislation (Ball, 2013; Todd et al., 2017). At the micro-level, members of academic staff might be perceived as having less agency due to increased workload and more performance management-related goals, situated within the context of cultural change management (Dean, 2013; Devecchi et al., 2018). Here, the network for many university staff is being impinged upon by a state-legitimated bottom-up arrogation of power as well as state-legitimated top-down prescriptive working practices imposed by universities. At the meso-level, universities were initially given the freedom to pursue new opportunities for producing revenue streams that under the previous funding systems would not have been allowed such as increasing student numbers (Hilman, 2014). However, the pressure of competition has led to universities having different demographics; now universities have more obligations since the introduction of the OfS in 2018, and face sanctions for failing to meet these. At the micro-level, the changing role of the university sometimes manifests as students viewing staff as providers of a service rather than educators. This is based more on individual power relationships remaining expansive, diverse, complex and contingent on the individuals and situations they are in (Nielsen, 2015). Thus, it is important to remember that universities remain institutions that exist only with the authorisation of the State, hence part of the wider state apparatus for directing the population and economy (Anderson, 2014). There is the privatisation and restructuring of the HE sector, and there is a redistribution of power in the network for university/sector financial security.

2b.5 - Scripting the experience of students

FTUG student experiences are increasingly subject to scripting, be that through choice architecture on the course and in the university, or through the narratives conveyed in affectively imbued physical surroundings (Ball, 2013). It is important to remember that scripting is the shaping of one’s emotional response to certain experiences and interactions in particular situations or spaces by a hegemonic power (Hughes, 2010). The use of physical space and cyberspace is increasingly consciously designed to generate particular ‘model’ behaviours or responses. These might not necessarily be through large-scale changes, but subtle small changes, for example, a nudge on keeping left in a corridor or using an atomiser to generate a visceral response (Esposito, 2008). It might be argued that interventions must go beyond simple nudging to have an impact (Mols et al., 2015), in the case of students there is a mid-ground with nudging and interventionism during their state of quasi-adulthood. It is important to note that within the complex network of power, it might not be the hegemonic power encouraging and making all of these changes; rather it might be an individual lecturer or the result of a new policy from any level (Government to module staff) (Dean, 2013). This thesis is interested in how scripting is used in the regulation of behaviours and practices, as such it is important to conduct observation of practices.

Scripting student experience is not without controversy and may appear in literature to be about creating student feelings or nudging towards a decision. Nudging of FTUG student experiences is sparsely researched, however, research that does exist, such as Amsler (2009), suggests that creating hope in universities for academics is mirrored in student spheres; by creating hope there is more ontological security. Here, modelling of expectations is key in helping to embody expectations of students. However, Amsler’s work is based on literature and autoethnography, its conclusions would be more compelling if grounded in empirical data. Previously, universities have been about experiencing unknowns and how to negotiate them, to experience iterative processes towards knowing through self-enlightenment (Foucault, 2010). Now, in a greater consumer-oriented society, wanting to know what to expect and the need to evidence progress, the academic experience has more knowns, such as what will be taught and how it will be measured to see if the learning has taken place (Ball, 2013). The restriction of choice might be viewed as helping to define what it means to participate in that particular course at that university. However, the restriction of choice leaves the student with less agency and potentially there is less metacognition required of the student, sanitising the teaching experience (Foucault, 1977; Ball, 2013).

Somewhat sceptically, this means that with more knowns about what a 'model' student should be doing and achieving, the university is provided with more knowledge about the student, and can make, if it decides to, more targeted interventions (Dean, 2013). Interventions might be used with the rationale of supporting a student, but they may also be deployed as a tactic for scripting a student to engage in a manner deemed suitable in the view of the university (Ball, 2013). In a Foucauldian view, this more interventionist approach is imbued with biopolitical power by the university (or its agents in the form of the academic staff) determining how to do education (or align it to the view of the State). Here, biopolitics is where individuals' bodies are conceptualised as legitimate sites of intervention by the State where individuals embody and enact state-sanctioned norms. In a biopolitical framing, Universities can be seen as seeking to produce citizens that contribute to society and everyday life shaped by the institutions of the State (Foucault 1977; Dean, 2013) - see also the glossary. Hence, the University is invested with determining what and how to be a 'model' student with retraining and guidance, or the ultimate 'sovereign decision' of removal from the university (Foucault, 1977; 2010; Ball, 2013). This scripting of experience goes beyond that of the becoming of a student as outlined by Nielsen (2015) but infiltrates all aspects of life. Scripting might be viewed as more interventionist as there is a covert direction of students on their journey to being a 'model' student at that university. Wong & Chiu (2021) helpfully explore the notion of the 'ideal' student which focuses on student expectations primarily within the academic domain; here I suggest the idea of the 'model' student as one that is not only concerned with the academic, but also conduct and interactions in all aspects of the everyday, and being a responsible global citizen.

Scripting of student experience extends not only in the lived world but also into the digital space. There are many more interactions with students through digital space, with the expectation that every course at the university will have a virtual learning environment, and there are purposeful online learning opportunities. There is no universal consensus about what specifically online nudging is, whether it is the narrowing of choice or the conscious intervention of creating particular outcomes through subconscious response to design (Mik, 2016; Castmo & Persson, 2018). Further conditioning of students to interact and engage with their course can occur in the digital space, this might be through a data science approach and responsive user interface, or nudging towards a certain method of ‘doing’ education aligned to their field of study (Thistoll & Yates, 2016; Castmo & Persson, 2018). Digital engagement, particularly online teaching, leads to conformity particularly if the lecturer or whole class is engaged in a visible online interaction, as one attempts to mirror that of others and follow the example of the lecturer/academic staff (Thistoll & Yates, 2016). It is clear that the digital space is an important site of interaction, and rather than a passive space, it is active and increasingly shaped through choice architecture and nudging. However, it is important to note that whilst this context is important to bear in mind, this thesis will not be exploring nudging and affective tactics in the digital space, (previously discussed in Tate (2023) since these spaces involve their own terms of engagement and interaction with additional considerations and interdependencies).

In an increasingly insecure world, where impacts of large-scale events of threat to society become spread within seconds across the world, the university, arguably, offers a safe haven from some of the threats as students are afforded protection from full exposure to independent adulthood (Coaffe et al., 2009). Through scripting student experience, the university is better placed to identify major events, and by reinforcing how to respond, the university is in a stronger position to plan for emergencies or events as there are expected behaviours (Adey & Anderson, 2011). This affective intervention might be argued to lead students to an ontological security, safe from exogenous threats, hence students can focus on endogenous matters (within the university) such as friendship groups (Dean, 2013).

Many aspects of the FTUG student experience are determined by the university, such as exactly where and who you live with as an undergraduate (Smith & Hubbard, 2014). Most universities in England encourage first-year students to live in accommodation owned/arranged by them. The agency students have in university accommodation decisions is usually limited, with formulas based on screening questions or profiles being used by staff to assign students to their accommodation, and this can then extend to decisions beyond the accommodation to the provision of food and transportation (Fitzsimons, 2011; Smith & Hubbard, 2014). Here, the university influences the lives of students’ non-academic and academic experiences, with contracts and handbooks about that aspect of their experience, codifying expectations. This, however, is not to argue that students are absolved of individual agency in the formation of their identities and have no input into becoming and being a student and ultimately a graduate (Esposito, 2008). As Foucault (2010) contends, students are engaged in a paideia; this is where students live in a child-like artificial world of culture and are in a heightened sensory state receptive to education and training. The university scripting acts as a means to navigate a responsible pathway through this paideia. Each university has a pervasive affective message about the type of person that attends that university, often perpetuated through the media, courses, and student societies at that university. Hence, there is ongoing reinforcement of who belongs and who should attend, and who would fit into the existing community(ies) (Reay et al., 2005). Some universities have made a conscious effort to change their infrastructure and external branding, resulting in shifts to the affective narratives. With changes to the student body and overt interventions such as trying to create a more diverse cohort, this notion of who belongs evolves (Bye, 2012). Nonetheless, the existing student body and offer of the university self-perpetuates who and what it means to be a student at that institution, representing a change in university identity, suggesting that they are in both a period of transition and permanence (Field & Morgan-Klein, 2010). Consequently, taking a post-structuralist view, the journey to becoming a student and how a university might attempt to convey what a ‘model’ student is varies, and is tied up in biopolitical flows and evolves as the network of power changes (Dean, 2013).

2b.6 - Student contracts

Students at most universities have, usually upon commencement of studies, had to sign contracts, or in rare cases take oaths, about their conduct and their expectations whilst at the university (Zarzeski, 1998; Gaffney-Rhys & Jones, 2010). However, with the introduction of fees, these contracts and types of agreements have become more professionalised and contractual, particularly concerning payment. With the intensification of the commercialised relationship with students has evolved, so too have the measures taken by universities to formalise their relationship with students, as now FTUG students are positioned as consumers and the university as a service provider (Wang & Wang, 2018). This newer relationship is a reflection of the positioning of education as part of the economy and the need to define relationships and the terms of those relationships. As a result, student contracts are more prolific and extensive, detailing the obligations of each party. The emergence of contracts with students, in their current form, can be traced to the 2004 Higher Education Act, which saw the formation of the OIA; the OIA in some cases would check for contractual obligations being met if a complaint was filed (Wang & Wang, 2018).

These student contracts, whilst not used in everyday university life, are used as a failsafe in the event of complaints, academic failure, disciplinary measures, financial breaches in payment, or when needed for consideration (Williams, 2015). Student contracts are noted as often being complex, punitive, and hard to understand, but in many cases have to be signed in advance to allow the person to undertake studies at that university (Wang & Wang, 2018). Nonetheless, since the Consumer Act (2015), seemingly unfair contracts have shifted more in favour of students, even if not necessarily easier to understand (Wang & Wang, 2018). This is interesting as students seemingly gain more agency as they become entitled to a minimum level of 'service', be that the provision of education, or the participation in a course as advertised at the time of enrolling, (unless explicitly clear that changes may occur).

Scripting of the student experience goes beyond the contract and is concerned with FTUG everyday experiences and behaviours, operating in a biopolitical manner and showing what it means to be a student; the contract acts as the basis for 'policing' FTUG students (Lindsay, 2015). Being an FTUG student is affectively imbued; the types of activities they engage in is a sensory experience with many legal firsts being encountered, due to recently having turned 18; and the university provides guidance about what to do and how to conduct themselves (Nielsen, 2015). For example, drinking alcohol provides a different sensory state of being, for this different state, the university provides guidance around limits and how to interact in the community; there has been a marked intervention of universities in initiation ceremonies and extreme drinking events (Dempster, 2011). This marks a soft paternalistic approach of universities directing students into what they deem acceptable and as a method of protecting an increasingly fragile external image of what it means to attend that university (Fitzsimons, 2011). It is important to note that there are more punitive interventions for the likes of gender violence (Lewis & Anitha, 2018), and this is highlighted in university policy documents included in the corpus. Interestingly, whilst drugs are illegal there are differing views on how to tackle the issue, those caught taking drugs are increasingly referred to drug education programmes (Waples et al., 2024). Regardless, there are various methods for intervention and 'police' behaviours. This may follow pressure in the media and by the State to tackle 'social misdemeanour' at universities. The university is increasingly involved in a complex negotiation of normalising its interpretation of a 'model' student , whilst being a site of diversity and engaged in debates on ethical forms of marketing (Gibbs, 2011).

Students are therefore increasingly embroiled in a game of negotiation between themselves and the university, each further entwining the other in representations in media and rights and responsibilities more explicit in contracting (Fitzsimons, 2011). This makes a stark scene for the neoliberal university, one which seeks to secure students and ensure they are valuable contributors to the university (Bessant et al., 2015). Student contracts serve as a bottom line about how to be a 'model' student in many aspects of life. Here, contracts are the baseline by which an intervention is legitimised, guiding ‘deviant’ FTUGs back into society as reformed individuals, or in some cases, to exercise disciplinary power to remove them from the conforming student cohort (Gaffney-Rhys & Jones, 2010; Fitzsimons, 2011; Bye, 2012).

2b.7 - Contextualising the role of the university in the network of power

The purpose of HE was explored in Chapter 2a, this section looks at how universities are important institutions of the State and how they contribute to citizen training (S2a.9), here there is greater attention paid to the biopolitical aspects. As a recap, the role and purpose of the university has been one that has been subject to debate, particularly within the sociology of education literature (Ball, 2017; Nixon, 2017a). However, there is not a universally agreed approach as to what the university is or the role it should play in England (or elsewhere for that matter). No longer are universities sites premised on knowledge production and education; rather they are service providers, corporations, sites of enterprise, places of commercialisation of knowledge, and much more (Fitzsimons, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012). This multifaceted, almost confusing, set of roles are all vying to be the most important causes a fuzziness over why the university exists and what it does; all this is underpinned by the need to balance their finance sheets (UUK, 2010; Bessant et al., 2015).

The role of the university is confused, as to whether it is concerned with education and commercial activities to sustain that, or if it is concerned with commercial activities and education is a by-product of those activities (Waterhouse, 2005). This confused identity at times manifests so that some institutions may seem quasi-educational, particularly in the context of commercially run HEPs. The role of the university, whilst in itself might be confused, is of great significance to employees and students (Fitzsimons, 2011). The role has a significant impact on the manifestations of being employed and conducting duties, and upon being a student and fulfilling responsibilities (Gaskall, 2013; Ball, 2013). Here, the culture of the university is important in how practices and behaviours might be normalised, a more neoliberal university may have more managerial approaches and quantification than those that are less neoliberal. Thus, the university acts as a key apparatus (institution) of the State, although it is held at arm’s length from the State, it is subjugated to the regulatory and quasi-public bodies that operate in and oversee HE governance, funding, curriculum, and the rights of students (Anderson, 2014). However, what is key to note is that the university acts as another level of soft state power in citizen training and preparation for a productive and useful member of society and the economy (Ball & Junemann, 2012).

2b.8 - Workforce of the university

The actors of the university are key in fulfilling the objectives and intended purpose of that particular university. They are key players in the exercising of the institution's power and purpose; and crucially key contact for preparing students for society (Dewey, 1997). The workforce of the university for this literature review is broadly viewed as an academic workforce and a non-academic workforce, who are not involved in executive decision-making. The workforce is therefore a composition of agents of the university, with increased performance management, quantification and oversight there is less individual freedom, and as such their roles and methods of fulfilling their roles are more aligned with the desires and the will of the institution (Fitzsimons, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012). In that regard, from a post-human and biopolitical view, the individual university at the sector level might be viewed as comprising as a collective workforce for the State, each university embodying the idiosyncrasies of a human that the State seeks to regulate (Braidotti, 2013).

Academic staff in particular are essential actors of the institution; they are the role models and teachers; they are the embodiment of what it means to be a part of a highly skilled neoliberal society (Gorman, 2012). Academic staff are key points of micro negotiations of their own politics, the politics of the department, and the politics of the university (Charteris et al., 2017). They are viewed as holding key knowledge and having expertise due to mastery of the creation and engagement with this knowledge, particularly when providing lessons about their own research (Foucault, 1978). They are there to provide education that is somewhat challenging and yet not intimidating; they are there in some ways akin to a capacitor converting and determining the ratio of power and education in each interaction with students and colleagues (Ball & Junemann, 2012; Ball, 2013).

Academic staff in universities in England are pivotal in the student experience, acting as tutors for academic work in a small-scale setting, acting as personal tutors/mentors for pastoral issues and onward signposting to other professional services staff, delivering teaching activities including lectures, field trips and workshops (Baker, 2006; Bulpit, 2012; Gaskall, 2013). In some cases, academic staff may interact with students in committees, examinations, more social settings, and in extreme cases formal hearings. It is clear then that academic staff are involved beyond students' academic lives and can have a more active role in their lifeworlds around how to live during their period of studenthood (Amsler, 2011; Lindsay, 2015; Bengtsen, 2018). Shaping the network of power leads students in a particular direction, resulting in a lack of agency in the lives of students, removing the freedom to make their own decisions or to learn from their own experiences (Ball, 2013).

The university workforce has restricted individual agency and they cannot use disciplinary methods or act on students with impunity (Ball & Junemann, 2012). The university is undergoing a transformation of the roles and activities that the workforce undertakes. Indeed, staff in the neoliberal university are facing a squeeze from all directions (Bulpitt, 2012). Staff are increasingly subject to performance management strategies, university ethics are more complex and risk-averse, making it harder to engage in research, and teaching and other responsibilities have become more cumbersome (Furlong, 2014; Morrissey, 2013). Nonetheless, they remain the key agents of providing education and operationalising what it means to be a 'model' student (Ball & Junemann, 2012).

2b.9 - Affect, architecture and HE

Research on the significance of architecture and the design of buildings shows their impact on the affective responses; post-structuralists argue that the gaze of governments since the 1970s, in particular, has been on the conscious design of buildings (Foucault, 2002). Design and architecture go beyond the exterior of the building and look at how human interactions are affectively shaped by the layout and furniture; here the human interactions become scripted into certain practices and interactions (Gregg, 2010). Interactions are not static, but rather a point in time in space; as such the idea of refrains is useful in showing that practices and actions are actual and virtual (McCormack, 2013). A refrain is an affective act that draws in the situated surrounding environment and context; here there is important input from the environmental design of where the acts take place (Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010; McCormack, 2013). Buildings become part of the affective journey; affect is a lived experience that is articulated through abstractions and engagements with the world, helping to shape and inform future interactions with the world (McCormack, 2013). Architecture and design is not a passive or banal process of construction of a building, but it is a social and active, something often carefully planned. Indeed, Adey (2008) looks at how architecture in airports utilise affects to lead to particular behaviours with the aim of enhancing security, through recognising deviant behaviours the airport authorities make pre-emptive interventions. Adey's (2008) paper, along with others, looking at affective architecture (Kraftl & Aday, 2008; Thrift, 2004) provide insight into conducting research on physical spaces and behaviours. These studies highlight that observation is important, as embodied behaviours often vary to what people might think they are doing when discussing them overtly such as in an interview.

Due to the rapid changes in the funding of HE in England, and the complex transitions to becoming a university, the HE sector does not have a holistic or unified approach to the creation/construction of university campuses let alone university buildings (Furlong, 2014). Individual universities may have an unwieldy array of campuses and buildings. Universities are usually grouped together according to their age and bestowal of university status, such as the Red Brick Universities or the Million+ Group (Whyte, 2006). The Red Brick tend to be universities created in the 19th to early 20th Century, and their design is of larger imposing brick-built solid buildings. By contrast, many of the Million+ Group were created in the 1990s converting from polytechnic status; they tend to be underpinned by the 1970s-1980s cheaper, less durable, and poor energy efficient buildings (Whyte, 2006). The buildings of English universities are affectively imbued with different meanings about what it means to be at that particular university and to study in that place, with notions of prestige and legitimacy of knowledge production (Griffero, 2014). It highlights and naturalises the power and importance of the product of education at that university (Foucault, 2010). Here, there is a clear indication that HE as an entire sector is operating in a constantly shifting landscape, with impacts on the macro- and meso-levels of the network(s) of power.

As tuition fees increased, a view of external observers was that with an injection of funds, universities should invest in their estate (Morris et al., 2016; Hillman, 2016). This was to replace the crumbling and no longer fit-for-purpose buildings, and makes a statement about that university by investing in new buildings (Rolfe, 2002; Temple et al., 2016). Additionally, through making this signature statement of what that university was about, it provided the message that by investing in the estate the university was also investing in students, with newer buildings, they were seen as a selling point (or expectation) for potential students (Bulpitt, 2012). The investment into the estate serves as an outward statement about how the university is using tuition fees to enhance student experience (Reynolds, 2022).

Building architecture has evolved, moving away from public building design to spaces of defensive architecture, many utilising smart gates and other strategies to denote who and how that space can be used. Another trend in architecture is the conscious design of spaces for students, but little is understood about the consequent impact of some of this space design and designation (Tuan, 2011; Adjaye, 2006). Not only are universities investing in new buildings for research, teaching and administration, but creating spaces for business. Beyond that, universities are working to provide impressive halls of residence, frequently in collaboration with a third party with whom the university enters service-level agreements /contracts for use by its students (Smith & Hubbard, 2014). Here, architecture works to attract students into an imagination of what it means to be a student at that university (Davis, 2015). The university presents its architectural imagery accompanied by the powerful affective messages of what that university is, this articulates how to use the university and who should use it. There are many universities with a mosaic of buildings highlighting an iterative biography, but this biography can lead to confused affective messages and a different narrative about that institution (Fitzsimons, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Ball, 2013). Nonetheless, the design of buildings intended for educational purposes is imbued with what it means to be engaged in education; they are bastions of the final stages of citizen training and affectively still convey the sense of dominance, with a notion of a requirement for learning (Tuan, 1990). Buildings have different spaces within them that signal what they are for, the intended purposes of using them, and who should be using them (Adjaye, 2006). Of importance are corridors; corridors act as spaces of transition where one might shift between one identity and state of being to another, and act as a liminal point of ontological refocusing for a differing type of interaction (McCormack, 2013).

The use of buildings is somewhat indicative in their design and architecture; for example, a central library tends to be a regulated and yet conversely open space, a space that has a designation and yet is open to all who belong at that university (Smith & Hubbard, 2014). Different buildings embody their purpose through design and the spaces found within them; conscious decisions on building use and designation of purpose, in HE, result in the creation of who may use that part of the estate/building(s) (Adjaye, 2006). Hence, buildings carry the idea of who belongs and who does not belong, those seen as 'other' and not belonging may be useful for the university in helping to identify those who do not belong in that particular place and take action through the likes of security and wardens (Tuan, 1990; Said 1978).

2b.10 - Soft power of the State

Soft power is the use of culture and economic influence in the approach to political and international relations in a positive and non-coercive manner (Lomer, 2017). The UK has maintained a first or second position in the Soft Power 30 index for the four years prior to 2020, highlighting its mastery and dominance on the global platform (Portland, 2020). Soft power incorporates the use of a range of media around the world such as television programmes, music, films, books, currency, beverages and fashion; HE is part of that projection of soft power and further legitimised through international metrics (Sellar & Lingard, 2013; Lomer, 2017). This creates a narrative through the affectively imbued messages about what it means to be part of that imagined particular culture of the UK;

however, this inevitably leads to silences of the possible multiplicity and hybrid nature of identities in the UK (Tuan, 2011; Thrift, 2004; Davis, 2015). The spread and use of the English language and culture are bound in a long-existing and difficult relationship of colonialism, which is remembered in part through the Commonwealth (Reay et al., 2005). Beyond that, the spread of the English language and culture is seen throughout the world with many global organisations and industries using English as its official language, such as education, maritime, and aviation (Holborow, 2006; Noya, 2006). This soft power is pervasive, and the State utilises many aspects of Englishness and provides the opportunity for other parts of the world to purchase into. The UK has the second-highest number of international students in the world (Study International, 2018). The State, in collaboration with universities, recognises that international students can be sold a lifestyle and a particular way of being. This is portrayed through popular media and the notion of what it means to hold a degree from a UK university, whilst appearing to be a multi-local experience with similar features to their home country (Massey & Jess, 2000; Temple et al., 2016).

Soft power not only acts on those in other countries but rather across and through aspects of society and upon all citizens. Soft power permeates most aspects of life, with the State providing regulation and guidance to business, setting parameters and showing positive ways of being and doing, and providing incentivisation as to how to go about a particular activity (Foucault, 2010; Dean, 2013). Here, soft power acts as an incentivisation to do something that fits in with culture and society and why it fits with the economy. Soft power sees the rolling back of the overt state and through parameters with positive incentivisation, the State allows other entities to lead the vision and self-image of society and culture as viewed as acceptable (Foucault, 1977; 2010; Thaler & Sunstein, 2009). These freedoms distribute agency to those other than the State and into interdependent networks of power, and persuasion occurs through biopolitical strategies such as how to live a positive life, a narrative potentially created at arm’s length by the State (Foucault, 2008; Bevir, 2013).

With the proliferation of television series set around studentship and what it means to be a student, there is a popular imagination around being a student, viewed on an array of non-traditional media formats such as online streaming services (Damratoski et al., 2011). Whilst these may be stereotypes in the portrayed studenthood and student experience compared to the lived student experience, it is nonetheless an imagination that is invested in by students and other stakeholders. Such popular thought highlights the freedoms and a period that is almost a rite of passage, with arguably juvenile behaviour, afterwards emerging as a self-sufficient and independent ready for society and work (Foucault, 2010). This soft power shows an aspect of ‘messy’ culture that on the one hand indicates that English university students are similar to those around the world, whilst at the same time investing in the unique facets of participating in English HE (Robertson et al., 2012; Nielsen, 2015). Although useful in providing context to HE studenthood in England, there are also questions out of the scope of my research. For example, what might be the differences based on fee paying students in England versus those of Denmark who have no tuition fees? Is there a different type of engagement with learning and expectations due to fee status?

2b.11 - Conclusions, future and scope for research

This chapter's two-fold literature review has thus yielded some important contexts. From the narrative review of this history and competing philosophies of Higher Education in England, it will be clear that the fast-evolving and radically transformed nature of the sector can helpfully be viewed in terms of the operations and influences of the State. HE in England has become increasingly politicised due to democratisation and consequent massification of the HE sector, with the resultant increase of those engaged in HE (Ball, 2017). The sector has further changed with the proliferation of technology and the introduction of a loans-based funding system following the reorientation of HE as a normalised next step from secondary education (Morrison, 2017). HE has had a long history of being independent and has historically been trusted to conduct its own affairs by the State, however, as the sector has grown so too has the State's intervention through market forces (Nixon et al., 2001; Bevir, 2013). The 'hard' state has been rolled back, but there has been an increase in distribution of powers to quasi-public bodies, membership bodies, and private-public organisations (Nixon et al., 2001; Fitzsimons, 2011; Morrissey, 2013). The network of power operating and reforming and (re)distributing agency is complex, and this chapter has discussed the multiple theoretical underpinnings of the networks of power in HE and how they might interact.

HE in England is in a deep period of reflection as financial pressures call for action, learning from the past and the fairly recent change of the positioning of HE as a part of the economy that must secure its own income and be self-sufficient (Nixon, 2017a). Somewhat confusingly, universities now stand both as a responsibility of the BEIS; and recently the DfE. This is an interesting shift in government alignment of HE as both a site of production of knowledge, a site of commerce and business, but also as a site of 'doing education' (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002; Ainley, 2016). This might further mean that the Government is seeking to provide another naturalised, more holistic, approach to education from early years through to university (Hillman, 2016; Ball, 2017). It might also signal the start of utilitarianism in HE, balancing the demand for funds, the contribution of research to the global knowledge economy and the need to produce well-informed and critical thinking graduates (Gibbs, 2009). HE also has to contend with the requirement of the new regulator the OfS which has a broad-reaching remit across the sector, with all aspects of finance, access, and experience; a regulator that has greater power than its predecessors (OfS, 2018a). Such changes to the regulatory regime produce questions about networked governmentality (Ball, 2017; Bevir, 2013) and how priorities and activities must be demonstrated.

What is clear is that in terms of the future of students in universities in England, much can be learnt from the changes to teaching in schools. Schools experienced a time of change from the trusted practice of a teacher to a professionalised educator role with many benchmarks, targets, performance management regimes, and the use of data to track and support student progress and justify interventions (Ball, 2017). With more vocational and technical courses being offered, and as universities prescribe more benchmarks and knowable student academic experiences, there is a rise in the number of training programmes for lecturers (Furlong, 2014; Bengtsen & Barnett, 2017). In most cases, universities will require staff to have a formal HE teaching qualification or professional recognition. HE in England, as it seeks to provide greater sustainability, needs to continue attracting international students. However, at a time of the internationalisation of HE where there are more similar courses in the global market and better technology, this will prove an interesting challenge to keep those numbers buoyant (Furlong, 2014). The recent Augar Report (2019) report still has yet to be fully realised and whether or not that will have a significant impact on the HE sector, likewise with the TEF expected to be introduced at the department level in UK universities (Deem & Baird, 2019). Whilst department-level TEF was not introduced in the 2023 exercise, there was and remains a cautious approach to whether this might be the case in the future.

The literature has gaps and there is a call for more research to better understand how FTUG students (and more broadly university students) experience the university in terms of their interactions with the spaces and people (Nielsen, 2015). There is a need to better understand how those experiences and interactions influence and/or shape students' behaviour and the manifestations of practices in response to the nudges they encounter. Whilst there is literature on identity formation of students (Nielsen, 2015), there can be different understandings of 'model' studenthood using a Foucauldian lens and the role that other influences in the networks of power they are situated in might contribute to that.

S2b has explained this research's perspective and use of affect from a biopolitical post-structuralist understanding, and how affect is a key tenet of governmentality in a network of power. The section has made links back to S2a on HE, and ideas of studenthood and student experience. Here, the chapter has brought the literature into discussion about how the university attempts to influence and regulate student experience; it does this through the likes of marketing, student contracts and affective scripting. As evident through the chapter, there is an absence of empirical research into how the FTUG student experience is influenced by government policies and how discursive and physical space is utilised. As such the chapter has provided context and the significance of existing literature as a basis for how this thesis will provide an original contribution to knowledge. The next chapter will outline the methodology that has been used in my research and will provide details about the philosophical approaches, assumptions, research methods, research sites, and ethical considerations. It will utilise this literature review to help inform the research design and the rationale for the methods chosen to address the research objectives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature discussed in S2a provided insight into the current context of the English HE sector, and S2b highlighted the theoretical underpinnings of nudging and affective scripting of student behaviours and practices. Affective scripting of student behaviours and practices in HE, as previously shown, concerns modifying experience by shaping it towards the hegemonic power's perspective, and in this case, is seen as an extension of the State's soft power. The literature shows an interconnectivity and multi-directional flow at varying levels within the inherently complex, and often blurred picture of the English HE sector. This chapter serves to link the theoretical concepts and literature to the research methods chosen to address the research aims and objectives of the thesis.

This chapter justifies the research methodology chosen and its inherent assumptions about the world. An overview of the methods is given and a rationale for why they were deemed most appropriate. Finally, the methodology discusses the ethical implications of the research. The chapter is structured to show the key aspects of my research. Importantly, there is more detail provided about the corpus development for finding subliminal data, the interviews and group interviews for eliciting lived experience data, and the structured observational providing observational data. In this thesis, in keeping with research by Anderson (2014) and McCormack (2013), subliminal data is defined as data which shows power relationships that are implicit (or explicit) between actors, the unspoken which would suggest something of note, and that can be observed as significant through analysis of multiple documentary sources. The chapter will identify the research positionality, locate the study site used as a case for the research, identify the study methods outlining the development of the corpus and then the ethnographic-informed research methods used (specifically individual and group interviews, and structured observations). It will then look at the transcription and coding of the empirical data, highlight the pilot study that was conducted prior to the full study, and the ethical considerations of the research.

3.1 Statement of methodology

This study is concerned with insights into people, biopolitics and ideas of networks of power, focusing on experiences. Therefore the most appropriate methodology is one which provides insights into these areas through qualitative methods (Dittmer, 2010; Fairclough, 1993). Specifically, this research seeks to glean insights regarding how biopolitical tactics are used in shaping behaviours and to reveal the power structures that students are situated in. Qualitative methods produce data that allow researchers to understand the 'how and why' of situations (Dittmer, 2010), this is by allowing interrogation of individuals' performance and practices, whereas quantitative methods tend not to allow such a level of insight.

This research is primarily informed by a post-structuralist perspective, hence it is not only concerned with knowledge and entities, but also the context in which these are produced (Dittmer, 2010). Furthermore, using a post-structuralist approach, rather than a structuralist stance, there is no assumption that power dynamics are constrained by hierarchical structures, but rather that power is distributed and networked. Through utilising a post-structuralist approach, which views power as more-than-theoretical, power is something that can be mobilised and used by different actors (Thomson & Walker, 2010). A post-structuralist framework is utilised in studies that look at airport architecture and affect (Adey, 2008), the affective qualities of architectural design (Kraftl & Adey, 2008), the use of architecture and affects leading to visceral responses (Lees & Baxter, 2011). This post-structuralist view is a key tenet of my research, which perceives power as being attributable to something or someone, with manifestations that can be observed in architecture, systems, and people. As power, affect, and nudging are rooted in post-structural theory, a post-structural approach, utilising qualitative data, is the most aligned epistemological approach to my research questions. Consequently, the research design is interpretivist, which assumes that knowledge is largely subjective due to information having been interpreted by the individual, often referred to as 'hermeneutic'. An interpretivist approach views meaning as being induced (subjectively constructed by individuals) from larger societal and environmental contexts and relationships with the world, hence meanings and understandings are based on existing knowledge (McDowell, 2010; Reichertz, 2004). This interpretive view means that knowledge and experiences are lively, ever-evolving, and by interrogating these experiences one can better understand their complexity and situatedness at the time data are produced.

In exploring student behaviours, a qualitative methodology is most apposite. Furthermore, an ethnographic-informed methodology is largely utilised, as my research is primarily concerned with the experiences and influences of and upon people, which is best captured through discursive data. With regard to the ethnographic-informed methodology utilised in this research, the main empirical data was collected using individual interviews, group interviews, and structured observations. As the interviews also considered the actions and unspoken words of those involved (body language and absence of comment on a particular point), the approach is grounded in understanding experiences and potential implicit meaning

(McDowell, 2010). These data collection approaches are aligned with other studies on studenthood, student behaviours and expectations of students, such as Wong & Chiu (2021) and Nielsen (2015). An inductive stance is used in this research, with data being collected first then meanings and theories derived from the analysed data in conversation with literature, rather than devising a hypothesis and applying existing theories to subsequently collected data (Yin, 2016). Such an approach is aligned with the research methodology used in much of Foucault's work which is grounded in post-structuralism and seeks to construct meaning and locate power (Foucault, 2010). Similarly, Ball (2013) uses an inductive approach to trace power in Education governance. Hence, an inductive stance is useful as it allows flexibility in understanding the relationships and origins of empirical data (Mayer, 2015). This is valuable when analysing data across a number of approaches.

My research is not concerned with extensive data collection across a broad population. This is because broad studies can lack the ability to interrogate large data sets and understanding of the rationale in decision-making. Additionally, there are practical considerations that limit the possibility of undertaking a broad population study, namely, the cost and time required to conduct such a study which is not feasible for the scope of a doctoral study. Rather my research is more intensive, seeking to understand decision-making and key actors within the network of power, the chosen research methods seek to elicit depth and rationale within decision-making at a research case study site. When discussing case study methodology, I utilise a broad approach to the case, as outlined in the work of Mauffette-Leenders et al (2001) being a place where the study is explorative of a particular location to gain greater depth to help address/ provide insight relevant to the research questions. As with their conceptualisation of the case study, this research sees the case as a location where a number of research methods are utilised, in this instance through individual interviews and structured observations; and if others following my research design could replicate the study. Through a careful triangulation of methods from the case study and the broader sector, there is scope to make claims beyond one particular situation/case study towards possible trends in HE in England. Qualitative methods are useful in characterising and identifying rich data that provides insight with depth, advancing understanding of meaning through integrative processes which draw together key aspects of the lived world (Cope, 2010). The research was broken into two distinct stages, first, a review of documents and policies potentially impacting undergraduate student behaviours and practices, and second, empirical research involving participants from a case study site (individual interviews and participant observation) and participants from a range of universities in England (group interviews). Using multiple methods can help make the research findings more valid and robust; Cope (2010) and Graue (2015) highlight that triangulated findings can be discussed and interrogated with greater criticality and help overcome bias arising from just one method. An overview table presenting the research methods and rationale can be seen in Figure 3.

Method Type:	**Interviews**	**Online Group Interviews**	**Moodboard in Group Interviews**	**Structured Observation**	**Corpus / Document Analysis**
Purpose:	To generate insight regarding the dynamic context of the University, and any impacts upon students' behaviours	To generate insight into the decision-making in universities and the sector, and how roles (student and staff) are governed and influenced	To enable group interview participants to engage with a collage of images to indicate 'mood' or feeling about a particular type of learning space and its potential for interactions	To provide a comparator data set between how the group interviewees state how they interact with particular learning spaces compared to how students are observed interacting and using spaces, this will provide observable insight	To provide an insight into how universities and the HE sector attempt to engage potential students and students, how student behaviours are governed in writing and key relevant recent changes to these. To identify a body of key vocabulary in these documents to enable discourse analysis and linguistic cross-referencing to the interview data.
Who:	1 * Director of Student Success (Senior Manager) 1 * Head of Academic Department (Middle Manager) 1 * Student Body Representative 1* Director of Marketing (Senior Manager)	3 Group Interviews Minimum of 3 people in each interview (Ideal composition of groups: 3 Students in each group 2 Lecturers in each group)	Students & Staff in Group Interviews	Users of social learning space at the case-study university	-
Data type:	Verbal data captured in transcripts Field notes on participant body language	Verbal data captured in transcripts	Initial predefined response categories, then progress to open discussion	Field notes on observed Interactions with the space being used	Textual and visual data, generating a corpus to develop a working lexicon
Strand of research:	2 (Case Study)	1 (Sector overview)	1 (Sector Overview)	2 (Case Study)	1 (Sector Overview)
Cross-reference back to corresponding research objective:	1,2,3,4.	1,2,3,4.	2	2	1,2,3,4.
Research aim:	1,2,3.	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,2,3
Stage of research:	Pilot & Full	Pilot & Full	Full	Full	Full

Figure 3: Table to show research methods used in this project

3.2 Researcher positionality and philosophical approach

Having confirmed the research methods adopted in this study, it is helpful to include some reflections on my own positionality (Cloke et al., 2004) which, having shifted and developed throughout the project, is closely implicated in the very networks of power that this study seeks to elicit. In addition to my role as PhD researcher, I am employed as a Senior Lecturer in Academic Practice in a post-1992 university, have recent experience of Master's study at a Russell Group university, and am closely engaged in sector networks and quality frameworks. Perhaps the most significant point to note is how during the period of researching and writing this thesis, I transitioned from being a full-time research student to a full-time post in academic development where I work closely with peers from across the full range of disciplines and gain accompanying insight on the experiences of their students. It is important to note my disciplinary background is centred in both geography and education, being a qualified Teacher of Geography and having previously been involved in a range of educational organisations and projects including work on government social action programmes. I have had a deep-rooted interest in post-structuralism and the works of Foucault since first encountering it in my second year of undergraduate studies in 2012. It will also be clear that from the outset of the study, I was sympathetic to Foucauldian framings of how individuals engage in organisational settings, something I had explored in my Master's level studies (Tate, 2015). These concepts, and associated interpretivist and critical realist views of identity and experience, have clearly informed all phases of my study and I have accordingly sought to challenge and contextualise them within the wider literature. As my own position in academia has evolved and my knowledge of the HE sector has grown, this has influenced my understanding of the significance of my findings. So too having an insider's perspective (as an academic who sits on a University Academic Board) has helped me in understanding some of the nuances of language used, and potential meanings in 'corporate' language. Accordingly, this research adopts several fundamental ontological and epistemological ways of viewing the world and hence leads to key assumptions about the research design and interpretations of findings.

Ontology is concerned with what we perceive to be our own reality and lived social world. My stance is that of idealism, the concept that reality is different for each person and that reality is socially constructed through interactions with the world and others (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013; Yin, 2016). Epistemology is concerned with the way of viewing how we know what we know. My epistemological view is that of interpretivism meaning that I see the world as socially constructed and lacking objective truths hence knowledge is not stable and meanings are reshaped over time (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013; Yin, 2016).

Kant (1787) argues that there is a need to have a clear understanding of the distinction being made between ontology and epistemology as the two can often become ‘fallaciously’ intertwined, in turn leading to a blurring of what can be categorised as one or the other. To avoid this, I have taken a deliberate approach of providing distance and reflection with regard to ontology and epistemology. As a result of these assumptions about ontology and epistemology, the research design has particular conceptualisations about the ways of knowing and being in the world. In this world, knowledge and reality are socially constructed and regulated. Hence, the research design comprises four elements, adopting:

1. A post-structuralist view that power and individual agency operate and permeate through and beyond hierarchical structures. Power is complex operating through networks and is always subject to a new actor or event causing the flow of power to change. Actors' ability to exercise free will is potentially affected by these changes in power relationships within networks. By using a post-structuralist approach there is not an assumption of who influences whom in a network of power, but rather this study aims to find out the influencers and agency of the actors within that network. As Campbell (2013) argues post-structuralism should be viewed more as an ontological approach due to it seeing reality as a construct.

2. A feminist approach views the world as unequal and hence ‘the body’ is a political entity with the possibility of power acting upon different populations, either emancipatory or discriminatory. This approach means that the research takes a more open view of seeing how different communities of students act and are acted upon, and how spaces are designed to create a sense of ‘belonging’ (or not) for those communities. Additionally, it means that it is important for my empirical research to capture diverse perspectives and actively seek ways of reducing bias and/or barriers that might prevent participation. The feminist ontology for this research is of importance as it views all persons as being equally important, and hence they are all subjects to be acted upon by power.

3. A constructivist approach to build meaning from the observed interviews regarding ‘what is’ or ‘what is not’ said, or from participants' actions or lack of actions, such that inductive analysis can be made from observations of an individual(s)/organisation(s). This means that my research will include methods to capture what people do (or do not do) as well as verbal/written data collection methods. Constructivism presents somewhat of a ‘philosophical paradigm’. Andrews (2012) posits that constructivism assumes that the only reality that exists is the one in which we live, and thus an epistemological approach.

4. An interpretivist view, allows one to construct meaning from qualitative data and to interrogate that meaning from the context in which the original data is situated. Taking an interpretivist view means that the data generated in my research was analysed through a Foucauldian and inductive approach. Following that, an interrogation of the data and critical discussion can take place. It helped to highlight the 'true' meaning of participants and gained greater depth to address my research aims. For this research, an interpretivist epistemological view is used, in keeping with Carson et al. (2001). This thesis sees an individual's knowledge and relationships with the world as constructed through 'perceived' knowledge and is particularly useful when analysing data from the case study.

By combining these research assumptions into the four-element design, I can conduct meaningful research to highlight the processes and actors involved in shaping 'model' student behaviour and practices. Previous research studies into students' behaviours and practices in HE have taken a different stance from my research. This thesis brings into conversation data obtained through my post-structuralist lens and triangulates data from a specific case as well as sector data. Nielsen (2015) writes at length about the transformation of university students and their behaviours, particularly, the 'becoming' of a student. Her research focuses more on the move into different notional identities that a student is expected to inhabit, as viewed by the institution or individual. Whilst she explores influences on students, she does not research it through affective scripting or affective interventions. A study by Ball (2013) explores how students have their experiences in the classroom scripted, and utilises a Foucauldian framework to analyse the network of power operating in secondary schools; but not HE, leaving a gap in the applicability of his work to university settings. Whilst there are studies into the governance of university students, such as Holdsworth (2009); Allen et al. (2013); and Chenn (2015), these have primarily been concerned with identity and 'good citizenship' training, rather than the phenomena influencing student behaviours and practices. My research is more encompassing, focusing not on a specific part of studenthood or the identity of a student *per se*, but rather the affective influences upon a student shaping them into what the hegemonic power perceives to be a 'model' student. This research helps to address the gap in the literature of specific research into the affective scripting of FTUG student behaviours and practices to become a 'model' student in HE in England (S2b.5). S3.7 on reflexivity explores my situatedness as the researcher and my inherent assumptions and biases about the world. Further reflection on my positionality and the potential impacts of that shifting position are presented in S8.3.

It is important to think about how subjectivity may have an impact on the study; this is to help ensure that bias is managed and mitigated. Subjectivity as an entity must not be viewed as inherently negative but rather something that as the researcher I must be aware of (Damaskinidis, 2017). My ontological and epistemological views inherently shape the subjectivities that I bring to the research and the way in which data is produced and analysed. In taking an interpretivist view, I do not argue that this study involves 'objective truths' but rather that meaning is constructed from data. I utilise a range of strategies to acknowledge and manage my subjectivity and any potential bias in the data and analysis. As recommended by Ahmed (2024), I utilise prolonged observations and multiple sources of data for triangulation making claims based on more than a single source, thus helping to mitigate confirmation bias and apophenia, and provide detailed explanations of methods. Not only that, to provide insight to how and why an argument is presented, I provide a contextual narrative that aims to show transparency. Additionally, as the thesis and data have room for subjectivity it allows the researcher to interpret the data to construct meaning particularly in the silences of the data. Hence, I do not present my findings or subsequent discussion as a universal and 'only perspective' but rather that of what was observed in the data by me (Mruck and Breuer, 2003). Throughout the PhD experience my supervisory team and I regularly reflected on what has been found, what has been learnt, and how that informs what I do next and what I have written (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). I embrace subjectivity as an essential aspect of doing qualitative research and with the lived experiences of the researcher, I can help provide greater understanding of the data whilst using strategies to ensure that there are robust insights.

3.3 Study methods

The various strands of data collection adopted in this project can be seen to be unified, and underpinned by a qualitative paradigm when plotted diagrammatically as a 'research onion' (Saunders, 2019). Figure 4 articulates my philosophy (in this instance, interpretivism and critical realism) hence the approach to theory development (induction). From there, one is better placed in making a methodological choice (multi-method qualitative in this thesis) and the strategies (ethnography and documentary approaches). The time horizon of this research is largely cross-sectional. Finally, the techniques and procedures of the study can be located in the corpus development, individual interviews, group interviews, structured observations, and data analysis via a Foucauldian approach using Nvivo.

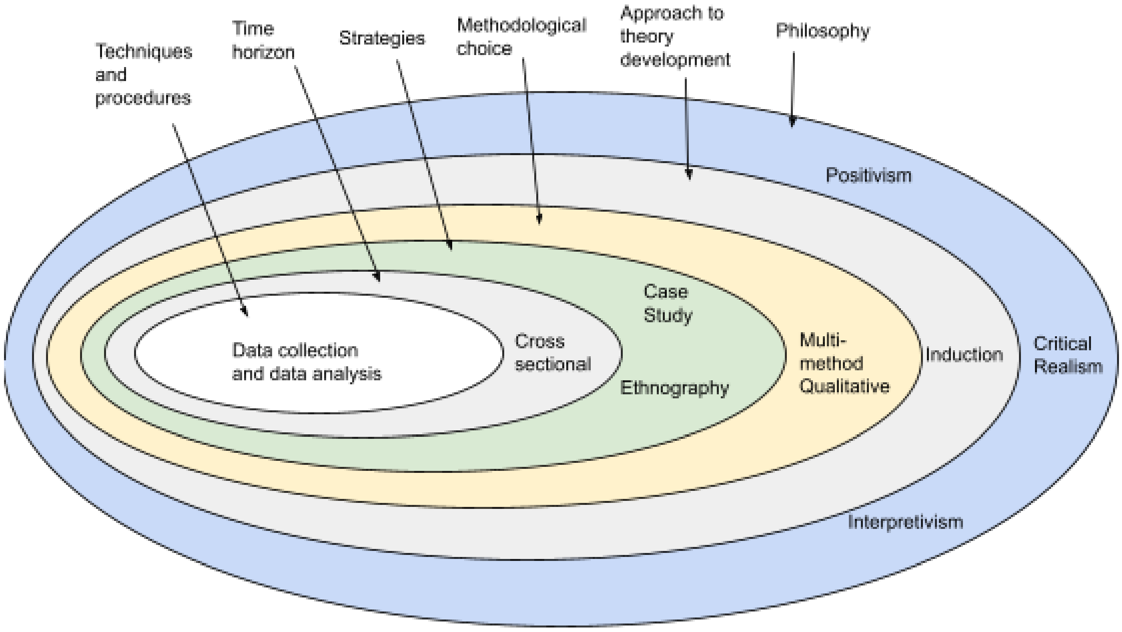

Figure 4: Methodology based on Saunders et al.'s (2019) Research Onion approach

The research design was also influenced by the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS), which is an approach that seeks to identify the methods that are best placed for addressing the research aims, and the point at which those methods should be used (Spradley, 2016). Taking a DRS approach meant that it was important to start by reviewing the current state of the HE sector to inform the subsequent research questions and identify the gaps in knowledge, and through this review make greater meaning from responses by participants later on in the interviews (Spradley, 2016). A strength of DRS is that it is well suited for qualitative studies, as it allows the researcher to start with a broader knowledge of the more apparent structures, language, and processes, which is known as the domain level. This domain level means that one is more able to effectively develop and pose questions to tease out key information and insights. In many ways, the idea of the domain level is in keeping with the first aspect of analysis in Fairclough's (1993) Foucauldian discourse analysis, discussed later in this methodology. Once the key aspects of the domain level have been found, the analysis processes allow for an exploration of the internal lesser-known structures, language, and processes, known as the taxonomic level. This is about being able to 'zoom in' on data to better understand the decision-making, influences and context in which data is produced, the 'why'. Further steps involve the componential level which is categorising the knowledge being produced to particular existing information in a specific field. Finally, the cultural level is where there is the attribution of data to the existing cultural knowledge to further understand how that data is situated and relates to specific communities. In this thesis, rather than a purist approach to the DRS more significance has been placed on the analytical stages, in line with Lee et al (2011) to help generate more robust insights into experiences and understanding of the use of space.

The DRS approach is not without controversy, presenting some limitations to induction, impacting the positionality of the researcher, and according to cultural anthropologists Lee et al., (2011), arguably urging a reductionist view of culture. Nonetheless, DRS is both a flexible and responsive approach to research. DRS allows a better framework to highlight the implicit and explicit influences and networks of power that the data and experiences are situated in, and the relationships that those involved in the research are bound in (Dittmer, 2010). Additionally, through empirical data collection, this can generate new insights that will feed into my Foucauldian discourse analysis as outlined by Fairclough,(1993); to that end, the methods used did not include large quantitative data sets, but qualitative methods to generate data to understand the 'why' and 'how'.

At the time of embarking on the empirical research, there was limited research into HE student behaviours and practices through a post-structuralist lens. My approach is informed by Nielsen's (2015) 'figuration work' into becoming a student in Danish HE and works that utilise affective atmospheres such as Anderson (2006; 2009). Anderson's (2006; 2009) work utilises a range of ethnographic informed approaches including observations and interviews, here they are used to help highlight the differences between participants' perceived behaviours and their behaviours as observed by the researcher. This helps provide a useful reference for the deployment of methods in a post-structuralist approach. Nielsen's work is useful as it helps provide an insight into how to go about researching phenomenological processes that are not easily observable through short-term observation, such as 'becoming', which will be helpful in my approach to revealing how students are 'being'.

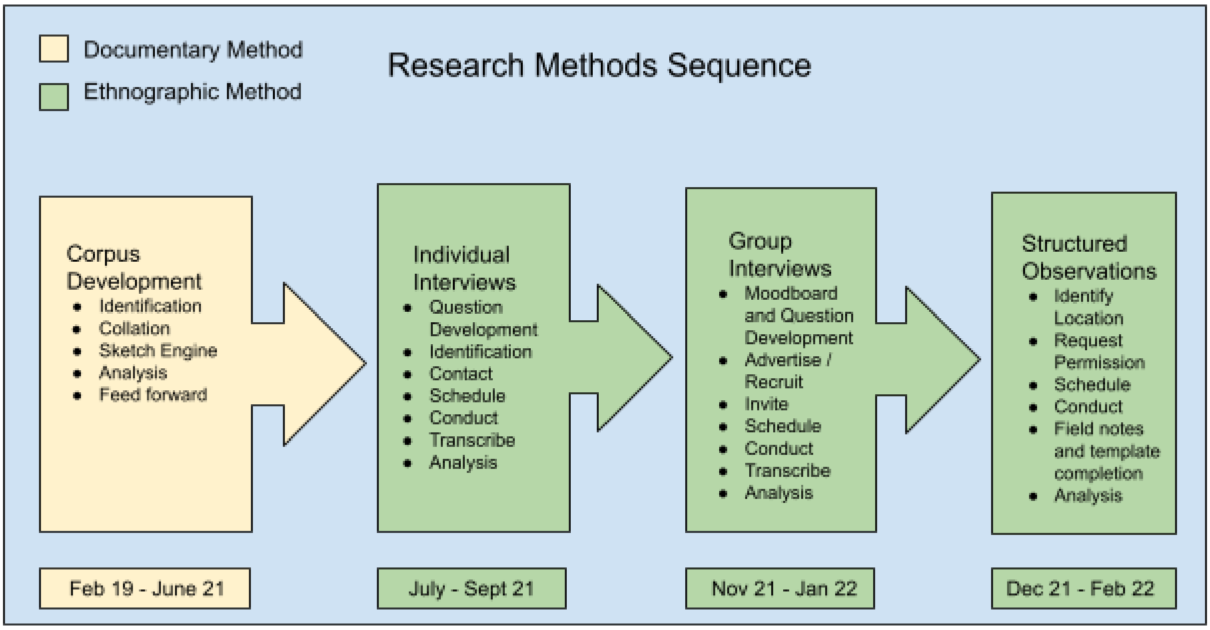

Figure 5: Research Methods Sequence for data collection

Figure 5 is useful in helping to show the sequence in which the different research methods were followed for elucidating insights. As seen in the development of the Corpus (S3.4). The subsequent methods were ethnographic and they are discussed in the subsequent sections.

It is important to note that as illustrated in Figure 5 the methods are not standalone but rather one method informs the subsequent method(s); however, this was conducted in a careful manner to prevent the closing down of opportunities for data discovery through reviewing the research design at the end of each step. The starting point is that of the corpora which developed a key lexicon in use in HE. Through utilising document groupings I was able to refine the language of the interview questions and develop explanatory notes contextualised for the interviewee. The group interviews utilised imagery and language that had appeared in marketing documents and university documents, and the group interview questions were further refined following the individual interviews to help elicit rich data. Finally, the observations helped to highlight the practices and use of SLS, enabling me to make comparison with how that space is depicted in discursive spaces. Not only that, the observations helped to validate or highlight discussion about the use of SLS from the individual and group interviews. Each data type was individually analysed in first pass analysis and collectively in second pass analysis, the approach was considered and reaffirmed following first pass analysis. Hence, all the data types build on each other and interact to provide more robust insights.

3.4 Framing of student behaviours in discursive spaces (documents)

To chart the framing and disciplining of student behaviours in discourse, a corpus of exemplar texts was assembled. Ranging across policy documents deriving from government, sector, and individual universities, the corpus enabled further illumination of the primary data collected during the research. By illustrating the characteristic lexicon and key terms within which the FTUG experience is framed, this corpus of exemplar texts assisted in developing questions for the individual interviews (S3.5.1) and group interviews (S3.5.2).

The process of assembling a corpus of this kind is necessarily selective but was conducted with the intention to collate illustrative material from across the sector and to illuminate the case study site. The first stage of data gathering was to collate and analyse a spectrum of exemplar documents in the public domain. The documents were to gain insight into the framing and disciplining of student experience, behaviours, and practices. The corpus development and analysis consisted of a review of policy documents of the UK government and regulators impacting HE in England, and policy documents from four universities in England representing a range of HEI groupings (one from each group: Ancient, Red Brick, Post 1992, and Million+). It was important to have a range of universities selected to provide greater representation of the universities in England's HE sector. Public domain documents encompass those aimed at students and potential students portraying what it means to be a student and/or how to conduct themselves, such as prospectuses. The corpus analysis took a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) approach. Therefore, this involved a study of texts and language in those texts (and images) to portray a particular event, whilst taking account of the context in which they were produced (Campbell, 2009). Going beyond that, as Fairclough's (1998) work posits, the Foucauldian analysis looks at the text as itself, as a lens to the context in which it was produced, but also how the text acts as a performance highlighting power relationships. There may be differing narratives about the production of a document, however, this serves to highlight the nuances of interpretation of events, legislation or policy. These narratives are particularly interesting when a government document/legislation is reproduced in the form of a policy at the universities (Campbell, 2009). To provide a greater relevance for this research, into HE in England, for documents to be included meant they had to be no earlier than the Dearing Report of 1997 (S2a.3), this was a defining point for the shift in the HE landscape. The documents were the basis for the corpus, indicating the language which is used in HE in England. The documents that were identified as being relevant to the study were collated to form a corpus of exemplar texts, as well as eight individual text groupings as follows:

1. Government Documents - Pre-COVID-19
2. Government Documents - COVID-19
3. Sector (non-Government) Documents - Pre-COVID-19
4. Sector (non-Government) Documents - COVID-19
5. Marketing Documents for individual universities - Pre-COVID-19
6. Marketing Documents for individual universities - COVID-19
7. University Policy Documents - Pre-COVID-19
8. University Policy Documents - COVID-19

Appendix 3 provides a breakdown of the documents included in the corpora and each text grouping.

Within each text grouping, the study sought to identify the differences in how language was used in relation to HE and FTUG student behaviours as portrayed from different perspectives and with whom the primary audience might be. Additionally, identifying Pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 it provided insight into how language changed in light of the move to remote teaching and to avoid skewing of nuanced insights from emergency measures such as lockdowns. The approach allowed for more targeted information for the rest of the research design. Each text grouping was compiled using SketchEngine software. This generated a range of outputs such as top 50 words, concordance for ‘student behaviour’, ‘nudging’, and ‘influencing’. These were exported as a PDF for further analysis.

The corpus analysis was important for the research design, as it helped to provide a grounding in the current English HE discourse, building on S2a. The corpus analysis highlighted recent policy shifts (or continuity of policy) impacting student behaviours and practices in England’s HE, the ramifications of those shifts, and, to some extent, how those shifts might reflect broader societal narratives about how HE is presented. Whilst a corpus (document) analysis lacks the depth to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ the documents were created, it helped inform the second stage of the research, particularly interview questions.

3.4.1 Government documents

A review of the significant policy changes to HE in England from 1997 until 2021 was conducted, seeking to understand how these policies have influenced students, legitimised changes, altered as political regimes change and how they have been critiqued by stakeholders in the network of power. The publicly available government documents used in the corpus captured the influence of legislation, policy, regulation, white papers, and guidance impacting student behaviours and practices. These documents were available on government organisation websites such as the DfE and the OfS. The corpus captured many key pieces of government policy impacting student behaviours, which provided an understanding of the development of policy and the construction of narratives about HE.

Policy documents were selected from the UK Government's online portal, focusing upon the two current (January 2021) departments which had responsibility for universities: the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education; and non-ministerial government organisations including the Quality Assurance Agency, the Office for Students, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, UK Research and Innovation, and the now-closed Higher Education Funding Council for England, and Office for Fair Access. The documents were read to ensure that they pertained to post-Dearing Report HE in England and that they explicitly made reference to matters that would or could result in changes to student behaviours and practices.

3.4.2 University documents

A search of university websites was conducted, for the differing 'types' of universities, which included an Ancient University, a Red Brick University, a post-1992 University, and a Million+ University. It should be noted that there remains much debate as to the clustering of universities (Boliver, 2015), but these narratives remain and are further reinforced through the language used in the documents. The documents sought were those relating to the student experience, student behaviours/conduct and practices, student charters, regulations on student behaviours, formal procedures regarding students' behaviours and conduct, and contracts or expectations between students and the university and its staff. All of these documents were found on the university websites or constituent departmental websites and were accessible using the public search function.

Marketing materials and images with a public audience were also captured; these materials help to highlight the universities' perspective of its identity and what it means to be a FTUG student at that institution. Documents of this kind were: prospectuses, impact guides, alternative university guides, particularly the materials given to potential and new students.

These documents and webpage wording were then captured and contributed to the corpus which was then used for analysis; webpages were made into a pdf using the NCapture extension on Google, and then uploaded to NVivo. Webpages were captured where, for example, a student charter might be published but not available in a pdf.

3.4.3 Analysis

The documents, webpage wording, images and other materials along with the Sketch Engine outputs were placed into NVivo software. Analysis started by using the initial ideas explored in Chapters 2a and 2b, of the network of power, student power, university power, HE change, austerity, commercialisation of HE, student expectations, student behaviour, student conduct, and student experience. First-pass coding allowed the documents to be assigned to these ideas, and other recurring themes, there was then further analysis by searching for keywords relating to the initial ideas. Where the analysis keyword parameters were met the sentence, and the sentences on either side of that text, were captured to provide context. Where necessary this was expanded to the whole paragraph.

The analysis allowed me to see how narratives were constructed, and whilst analysing these documents I created codes for new arising themes such as ‘student as consumer’ (Dittmer, 2010). The analysis of these materials helped confirm and identify key themes which informed the interview questions and observation schedule. Additionally, it gains a more nuanced picture of the discourse around full-time undergraduate student behaviours, and their situatedness within the networks of power across the HE sector in England (Dittmer, 2010). In keeping with my post-structuralist methodology a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis was used, which follows Foucault’s ideas on power (S2b.2). It was important to use an FDA approach as this helps to provide critical insight into the documents, considering the context in which the documents were written and the inherent assumptions at the time (Fairclough, 1998). The FDA insights from the corpus of this allowed me to create more targeted interview questions about the context that led to those changes or about changes that took place in HE, to gain further insight into decision-making processes and thought.

Additionally, as part of the analysis process, I returned to the individual text groupings to identify nuances in language between different ‘types’ of university, notably an Ancient University, a Red Brick University, and a Post-92 University to provide insights into a range of universities in England. These insights were considered alongside other data sources for example when the DoM was discussing other universities’ recruitment approaches, and also in the way that participants responded to conceptualisations of space to help provide context in line with the thesis’ analytical approach (S3.6).

3.5 Ethnographic informed methods

The second stage of the study involved empirical research using ethnographic-informed methods to study and observe people's practices. Ethnographic-informed methods are used to gain a perspective as close as possible to the lived experience of people, whilst also being able to zoom out to link to theory and explain why that type of lived experience occurs in the way that it does (Yin, 2016). Ethnographic methods attempt to capture rich original data, which is powerful for producing high-quality research findings, and in this case, my thesis. In the social sciences, rich original data allows insights into the practices and processes of individuals, with scope for subsequent research to try to understand why those practices and processes are as they are (Cope, 2010). Such lived experience and observational data help provide enlightenment, intervention, appreciation, or replication. This research uses three empirical methods: interviews, group interviews, and structured observation. These methods specifically build on the data from the corpus and are designed to be sequential, each building upon the method that has preceded it, as seen in Figure 5.

3.5.1 Individual interviews at the case study site

My case study was conducted at an English university. Selection and gaining access to a case-study site proved complex given the unusual circumstances of the data collection period (i.e. COVID-19 in 2020/21). In the event, and after many approaches to several categories of university, the empirical research data was collected primarily from a case study university in the South East of England, and complemented by data collected from participants drawn from seven universities. The sector-level data was obtained through group interviews (lived experience and perspective data) and a corpus (subliminal data). The importance of these data is discussed in S3.6. The case study site of a 'conventional' HEI was used for individual interviews (lived experience and perspective data) and structured observations (observational data). For this research, a university is viewed as a public body university primarily concerned with the provision of full-time education as set out by the OfS. My research does not pertain to a specialist institution such as a conservatoire, a private university, or an alternative setting of HE provision such as a Further Education college. It was important to use a more 'conventional' HEI rather than a specialist institution to provide greater relevance to the challenges likely to be faced by FTUG students in universities in England.

Case Study University Context

The university is campus-based with two primary campuses and a further remote campus. It was granted university status in 2007 and is part of the Million+ group of universities. The university is based in the South East region of England with good transport links to London. In 2019/20 there were roughly 14,000 enrolled students of which 11,000 (79%) were pursuing a FTUG course, and over 10,000 are UK home students (HESA, 2024a). It typically attracts students who are studying more vocational and applied subjects, or professional industries such as nursing and commercial pilot training. The university is considered a modern university and sits towards the lower middle rankings on various league tables comparing universities in the UK. The demographics of the university are useful for insight into FTUG student experience, making observations more robust as students were more likely to be FTUGs than in other universities, the sector average in 2020 being that universities have 69% of students as undergraduates and 26% postgraduates (UUK, 2021).

Interviews provide the opportunity to explore, and address, some of the questions generated from the document analysis, and to generate greater depth to how and why student behaviours might be influenced. Interviews may offer differing interpretations and understandings of the same document/policy/point and questioning helps to provide an understanding of an individual's interpretation (Yin, 2016). The interviews not only provide an opportunity for discussing the questions and responses but also serve as an opportunity to note emotions and reactions to the discussion. Semi-structured interviews, as used in this research, are particularly useful as they allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions, particularly points pertinent to the document analysis stage. Furthermore, this type of interview allows the researcher to explore in more depth a point that the interviewee may have raised or a reaction that the interviewee may have had to a question. I used online synchronous interviews using video conferencing software. This meant that both the interviewer and interviewee were present at the same time during the interview and could see each other. Such visibility was to create an experience aligned to an ‘in-person’ interview (Curasi, 2001). Online interviews using videoconferencing software can be just as useful and valid as in-person interviews, particularly as non-verbal cues and facial expressions can often still be seen. However, there are other potential drawbacks to this method such as failure of the technology, fear of online surveillance and the additional ethical considerations of online data capture (Janghorban et al., 2014). Due to the global uncertainty and restrictions during COVID-19, the consequent constraints on time and movement meant that I had to revise the medium in which to conduct the interviews. Nonetheless, online interviews offered a means of conducting research in a manner that is closely aligned to the original ‘in-person’ interviews. Another consideration for the interviews was ensuring that the selected software was compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations, that data was securely stored on Brookes’ servers, and that there was no third-party access or storage.

Interviews were conducted online with members of staff/students from the case study site, albeit they were working from home due to COVID-19 restrictions. The people interviewed were: the Director of Student Success responsible for Learning and Teaching; the Director of Marketing; a Head of Department; and a Student Body Representative. The purpose of the interviews was to identify how the university interprets, responds, and implements policy that impacts student behaviour and practices in the use of different spaces at the university. The rationale for selecting these individuals was that they broadly represent what might be perceived to be three levels of key interaction, role and decision-making in the university and are each key agents in the network of power described above. The Director of Student Success is a key member of the University's decision-making hierarchy and may be the lead institutional stakeholder for policy impacting students. The Head of Department is responsible for mediating the institutional policy into departmental policy, and for the students on courses in their department and the sort of provision they are likely to receive. The Student Body Representative will have a slightly greater awareness of the functions and policies of the university, thus able to give greater insight than other students, and through the nature of their job speak with some certainty on behalf of the wider student population at that institution. Operating in the discursive space I have identified, the Director of Marketing is responsible for the external image of the University, and for framing and communicating its offer to prospective students.

All individual interviews used a semi-structured approach; each was scheduled for a 60-minute slot, although some took slightly less time to complete, and were conducted 'blind', with participants unaware of the questions to be posed. This was done to try to provide a more instinctive response to the questions posed. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the freedom allowed compared to structured interviews and to provide a more conversational format (Cloke et al., 2004). In semi-structured interviews, one can 'go off script', asking follow-up questions about any interesting points and omitting any questions already answered. Crucially, by having some structure, the interview retains a greater sense of direction in questioning than an unstructured interview, though it is important to guard against too divergent a set of supplementary and follow-ups if the aggregated data set is to be coherent (Dunn, 2005; Longhurst, 2010). With these considerations in mind, an interview schedule was framed for each category of participant (Appendices 4-7). All interviews had similar distinct sections on 'HE today', 'students and use of space', 'policy impacting student behaviours', and an invitation to provide a concluding summary of the most important perceived factors influencing student behaviours and practices. Questions were constructed to be, as far as possible, unbiased and not leading. However, where there was absolute certainty that there had been a change in behaviours/practices/environment, a question rather than being premised on that change was to understand the driver or background for the change. Where I was confident there had been a change this was backed up through reference to a document from the document analysis. For drawing the interview to a close, I used non-verbal cues such as changing my seating position and placing my pen down, albeit these might not be noticed by the interviewee in the online format, and thanking the participants for their time and confirming if they had any questions for me as the researcher. Care was taken throughout the interviews so as not to let my subjectivity manifest to provide bias. This was managed through the interview questions being informed by the corpora; they were deemed suitable and approved by the Oxford Brookes Research Ethics Committee. Similarly, during the interviews, opinions of the researcher were not offered so as to minimise influence on participants responding to questions.

For all interviews, the prospective participant was contacted initially via email. If there was no response, I would follow up with another email. Where consent to proceed was secured, the online interview was scheduled and a password-protected link was sent to participants.

3.5.1.1 Senior manager interviews

Participants for the manager interviews were sought by contacting the relevant Directors (Student Success and Marketing). The interviews with the Director of Student Success incorporated questions of a more technical and policy nature and sought to establish specific responsibilities for interpreting and developing policy, as well as the university-wide approach to influencing and managing student behaviours and practices. Managers had more technical questions as they are likely to have a greater policy understanding of HE due to their role, and interaction with organisations such as the QAA, the OfS, and other government and non-governmental bodies. Therefore, there is scope to refer to particular reports and reviews that have had ramifications for the HE sector and how universities operate (McDowell, 2010, Cloke et al., 2004). Several questions were similar, to approach a point from different angles to check for consistency in responses over time that might give rise to further thought or elucidate more data (McDowell, 2010). There was little variation in the interview with the Director of Marketing, although there were some questions that slightly varied to explore how the university portrayed itself. (Question scripts in Appendices 4-7).

3.5.1.2 Head of department interviews

There was one interview with a Head of Department (HoD). The participant for the Head of Department interview was sought by identifying a HoD in Humanities/Social Sciences. The rationale for social science is that my background is in Geography and Education. This decision was so that when discussing with the participant there would be a greater understanding of the subjects and language used, including a shared understanding of body language and inflexions in the tone of voice; in turn, contextualising it and providing meaning (Cloke et al., 2004). In particular, staff with this disciplinary background will likely be conversant with the literature on affect and nudging, these concepts being native to human geography and anthropology, and their responses may accordingly offer greater nuance and depth. However, it is important to consider that through only utilising a participant of this background there are potential silences in my data as to the perceptions of those from different disciplinary backgrounds and those who work in different university spaces such as laboratories.

The interview with the HoD was conducted similarly to the senior managers, however, the interview schedule slightly varied (Appendix 5). The questions were designed to be to the point, but not intimidating. It was important for the questions to capture essential insights about the practical aspects of the interpretation of policy from the institutional-level to the departmental-level, and the processes and functions that varied between the differing levels of the university (McDowell, 2010). One has to be mindful that a HoD is a middle manager; whilst they lead a department they are also subject to tiers of higher management and therefore may exercise discretion or restrict their answer (McDowell, 2010). Here, it is important to note that interviewees are situated within a network of power, and therefore there is a politics that they are actively a part of. Hence, across all the interviews key phrases are considered within a FDA approach, to consider what the wording situated in one's context might mean (Fairclough, 1998). For example, identifying whether the language used is reflective of the University's (and sector's) language, or whether the interviewees are more comfortable in expressing their perspectives.

3.5.1.3 Student body interview

There was one individual student body representative interview (Student Rep). Initially, a participant for the Student Rep interview was sought by contacting the Education Officer of the Students' Union, who is responsible for representing educational matters of students at the relevant university. They in turn passed this responsibility on to an alternative member of the Students' Union team. The interview with the Student Rep was conducted using similar questions to those posed to the HoD; any variation in questioning was designed to look into the role of the Students' Union at that university. The questions utilised more student-friendly vocabulary, they had to gain insight into the lived experiences of students at the university and to establish the role of the Students' Union, the perceptions of students influencing the institution and how the institution influences students (McDowell, 2010). As with all the previous interviews, responses were triangulated to identify the politics and language in the responses by the Student Rep.

3.5.1.4 Interview analysis

The interviews were recorded using Zoom (online meeting software), as well as ‘field’ notes being made by the researcher, including any significant changes in body language, gestures or tone of voice (albeit within the constraints of what could be seen via the video). Each interview was transcribed from the recording into a text document; (any additional field notes were added to the relevant section of the transcribed interview in NVivo). All the interviews were audible, meaning that all spoken words could be identified and transcribed; all words and phrases that explicitly identified either the institution of the interviewee or the interviewee’s identity were redacted. The transcripts and accompanying notes were then uploaded to NVivo. This allowed for analysis of the transcription, utilising the codes identified in the document analysis and for the creation of new codes arising from the themes and key points from the interviews (S3.6 and Appendix 23b).

3.5.2 Group interviews with participants from universities in England

Following the individual online interviews, three group interviews (of group sizes between 2-7) were conducted online. It was intended that these would each comprise three students (from a traditional FTUG programme in three different departments, they would have a maximum age of 25, for them not to be classified as mature students) and one lecturer (from a different department to the students and from a different department to the Head of Department interviewed). The group interviews were open opportunities for participation for students and staff who were studying/working in a university in England. This meant that the composition of each group interview was different to anticipated but provided richer, more nuanced insights into the sector and different lived experiences of HE in England.

Group interviews are recognised as providing greater opportunity for insight and criticality than other methods that do not involve input by participants, as they provide discussion on lived experiences. Additionally, the researcher can observe the interviewees as cognisant issues become negotiated, and the interplay of agency and power becomes more visible (Bosco & Herman, 2010). Therefore, the group interview not only offers a collective perspective into the interpretation of the policy and use of space but also a collective sharing of experience. Furthermore, the group interview was a valuable method as it provided a social interaction experience that could be observed by the interviewer (Yin, 2016). Great care was taken in facilitating the group interviews to ensure any loquacious personalities did not dominate the group, and to avoid participants trying to involve others in consensus building. In this sense, the group interviews provide another level of rich data as they become a performative ethnography, with the participants involved in contributing to the analysis of why and how power might unfold and be enacted in their university.

The online group interviews stimulated dialogue around different perceptions of experience at that university; highlighting the development of the journey to 'being a student' and what it means to participate in 'studenthood' in HE. They helped to establish how FTUG student behaviour is influenced both in terms of explicit interventions in student behaviours and more subtle and implicit 'nudges'. Furthermore, the group interviews highlight how expectations are articulated and negotiated in practice, particularly through the use of discursive and physical space. They sought to further understand changes that staff have experienced over time and the effects on the network of power when 'becoming a student' with the altering positioning of staff. The group interviews allow information to come to light in cross-conversation, and it is important to see the interactions and interplay of discussion and thoughts of location within the network of power between staff and students in the group (Cloke et al., 2004). This information generated in cross-conversation might not otherwise be identified in group interviews had staff and students been separated, and therefore offers valuable insight and potential for follow-up questions to gain greater depth. Here, group interviews are not only concerned with dialogue but also assume an ethnographic informed stance, reflecting upon the significance of behaviours and the micro-politics of the group (Hoggart et al., 2002). This dialogue between the two types of participants in the group interview is a key aspect of understanding a broader picture of the thoughts between the relationship and location of power in the university (Bosco & Herman, 2010). This model of recognising the power dynamics in cross-conversations is rooted in feminist ideology, as discussed by Boucher (2017) where they look at how silences manifest in conversation on potentially sensitive topics.

3.5.2.1 Recruitment of participants

An open call was posted on Twitter with a link to an expression of interest form. The expression of interest form was via Google Forms. The form asked for the participants' names, confirmation if they were members of teaching staff or a student at a university in England, the name of the university, and their email address. There were 18 expressions of interest, and of those 14 were eligible based on the parameters. As a result of the expression of interest, subject to meeting the criteria of being a student or staff member, an email was sent to them. The email contained information about the research and a call to participate in the group interviews, along with participant information and consent forms.

Social media (Twitter and Facebook) can be a powerful and far-reaching method for contacting and engaging with potential participants and must be used responsibly and with integrity (Hay, 2010). The social media use was primarily by sending a tweet. Likewise, I placed a post in a Facebook group/feed in groups where I had permission to do so. The wording mirrored that of the email and contained a link to the Google Form, and this was only posted twice to avoid bringing pressure to bear upon potential participants. When posting to social media it was through my personal accounts tagging in the relevant university/department(s) or posting in a personal capacity into a social media group.

3.5.2.2 Conducting the group interviews

The group interviews were one of the most logistically complex aspects of this research, due to coordinating the meeting of multiple participants and the mediating of participants (Hoggart et al., 2002). Each group interview was 90 minutes long and was video and audio recorded, the interviews followed the same structure. Here, participants looked at a moodboard, which consisted of publicly available images of a particular space of a university, participants then selected from six possible options of how they considered they were encouraged to behave or interact there. This provided a focal point for early discussion and an opportunity for participants to voice their decision and reasoning. In turn, allowing a discussion about the images and the responses, and whether that was the case in their use and observed everyday practice (Hoggart et al., 2002). The decision to adopt an initial shared focus was in part to help provide a literacy for subsequent questions; and to help participants to feel comfortable interacting and contributing their opinions (McDowell, 2010). The discussion around the moodboard was thus designed to act as a metaphor for the initial negotiation of power relations and the formation of a group relationship in the group interview. The group interviews used moodboards to help mediate the composition of the group and develop the confidence to contribute; the moodboards helped to provide a shared focus rather than go straight into individual viewpoints about the questions posed.

Moodboards can be used as a visual representation or as an interactive site of engagement for capturing the views of individuals about a particular matter in a succinct manner and can lead to quantitative data from the number of participants who react the same way (Cloke et al., 2004). Participants in the group interviews were asked to state what behaviour they think should be occurring in the space depicted in the image. This then feeds the discussion about why they had selected that option. Thus the moodboards elicit information about the discourse around the officialised narrative of university spaces and interactions, the findings can be brought into conversation with literature in Chapters 4 and 5.

Following the moodboard section, about 25 minutes, there was a semi-structured group interview for the remaining time. The questions can be seen in Appendix 8. There were three sections to the group interviews: students and the physical space of the university, policy affecting student (and staff) behaviours, and the key things that participants believe shape students' behaviours and practices. Throughout the group interviews, not only was I noting what was said but also the interactions and actions of participants. I noted observations of participants negotiating uncomfortable perceived 'truths', agreements and disagreements about the situatedness of the staff and students in response to the questions asked.

The group interviews were carefully conducted so as not to let the researcher's subjectivity manifest to provide bias nor the subjectivity of one participant skew the data. This was managed through the group interview questions being informed by the corpora and individual interviews. The moodboards used images of spaces routinely utilised in English universities; the images were in the public domain and purposively selected to be representative of the types of images appearing in marketing documents in the corpus. The moodboards and questions were deemed suitable and approved by the Oxford Brookes Research Ethics Committee. During the interviews opinions of the researcher were not offered so as to minimise influence on participants responding to questions. Setting out the shared expectations further supported all participants to freely contribute their views.

3.5.2.3 Group interviews analysis

The group interviews were held online and recorded using Zoom. Additionally, field notes were made by the researcher trying to capture the perceived most significant points, but mainly noting the negotiating of responses and the network of power in the interview (Cloke et al., 2004). The concept of the network of power, as per S2b.1, acts on individuals and their identities differently affecting their agency; particularly, there is a power differential between staff and students. Another consideration is a manifestation of power due to the differing roles of the staff and student participants, hence power may manifest akin to teacher-student relationship seen in a lecture or tutorial. Each group interview was transcribed from the recording into a text document. Where the recording is inaudible if there were sufficient field notes, an insert of the notes was included to help abridge text if its meaning was unclear. Any words and phrases that explicitly identified either the institution of the interviewees or the interviewees' identity were redacted (Hoggart et al., 2002). The transcription was then uploaded to NVivo along with any field notes. This allowed for analysis of the transcription, utilising the codes identified in S3.4.3 and the newly created codes arising from the themes and key points from the interviews. The themes of ‘student as consumer’ and ‘changes’ (to working methods and attitudes of staff and students) strongly emerged in the group interviews. See S3.6 for more information.

3.5.3 Structured observation

The structured observations took place after the group interviews and built on them, by providing an insight into the embodied practices of students, and how these might vary to that discussed in the group interviews. Structured observation is about the researcher being involved in the research by observing a space or a particular person(s) to try to gain insight into people’s interactions with the world (Painter, 2009). Hence, this allows one to understand and articulate the functions, organisations, decision-making influences and pressures, measures and situations that are encountered in the university; and this gives a perspective close to the experience of decision-makers and students (Watson & Till, 2010). Here, different data sources are triangulated and brought into conversation, with linkages back to the documentary sources (S3.4). Data were drawn from lived experiences and perspectives offered in the individual interviews and group interviews to those behaviours observed through the series of structured observations. The findings of these data collection methods are presented in the subsequent chapter.

Structured observation is therefore a valuable method, as it helps to establish whether what is said, and believed by individuals as being what they do, is actually what they do; thus, it helps to better illuminate interactions in and with the world (Watson & Till, 2010). This provides a useful opportunity for discussion, and exploring the possible reasons for alignment or discrepancy between the articulated and the practice (Yin, 2016). The observations provide a link back to the document analysis and individual interviews on student behaviours and university spaces, as it allowed comparison between policy/expectations and practice. Of particular interest in the structured observation is the potential for discrepancy between the articulated and the practice. It allows exploration of how and why interventions, affective scripting, or nudges might not be working as intended. Such observations have been useful in other works exploring affect, for example by Adey (2008). Thus, the structured observation sought to capture not only embodied practices but the unarticulated and subconscious interactions that might not be recorded if data was restricted to individual interviews and group interviews (Shurmer-Smith, 2003). As a result, structured observations record the use of space, as witnessed by the researcher. The structured observations highlight differences from the intended use of space (if any), capturing the unarticulated scene and agency of actions. Hence, the observation shows the validation, divergence or convergence of the planned use of space and the actual use of space (Watson & Till, 2010). These observations can be compared with data from the other methods. Comparison of the data can identify differences and similarities in the stated and the observed use of spaces, and help advance understanding of how spaces in universities gain meaning becoming ‘places’ (Hoggart et al., 2002; Watson & Till, 2010). Moreover, structured observation helped to provide an insight into the affective interventions and reinforcement of behaviour; the sites of foci are where students interact with staff, peers and the institution (both physical space and the power relationship). Several types of spaces were identified in the university for this research: ‘the corridor’, ‘the lecture’, ‘the tutorial’, and ‘the social’ space. During the structured observation, the study was only concerned with the interactions in one type of space (mainly due to time limitations and access and ethical considerations): ‘the social’. Observations focussed specifically on social learning space (SLS), such as cafes and free-to-use areas for learning, rather than the night-time economy of social learning space where there are greater complexities for undertaking research.

Structured observation is, arguably, not as intrusive or as overt as the other methods utilised in this research. It involves looking at a space being used. In contrast, interviews and group interviews usually require a (re)thinking and active cognition of what is being researched/asked, hence different to the everyday more subconscious interactions and use (Shurmer-Smith, 2003). Here, structured observation is less intrusive by trying to become naturalised as a ‘shadow’ observing the space. It is important to note that the structured observation for this study is not covert nor trying to elicit confidential information, rather it is to gain an insight into the use and interactions in and with space. Observation as a method is not uncontroversial and there must be clear parameters for what might be observed and how idiosyncrasies in ways of ‘seeing’ might be overcome, in the case of my research this is aided through the structured observation template. (See Appendix 9).

Consent for the observation component of the study was obtained by the university through that institution’s ethical approval of my research. The relevant permission was secured in a letter that could be used in the observation if necessary. In the SLS, notices were displayed advising users of the area under observation that they were being observed, and that further information was available from the researcher who could be identified and asked. After five minutes of users moving into the area under observation, their continued use of the space denoted they were opting to participate. There were clear delimitations of the observation that were agreed to before commencement, such as observation taking place only in a designated area or specific tables of that SLS. The observation of the SLS was over a three-hour period and generated rich data, although, more sustained observation of all types of spaces would have gained a more varied insight into the use and flows through the case study university. Due to COVID-19, like the group interviews, structured observations were subject to restrictions and only took place in one SLS. The structured observations took place on three different occasions and at different times to provide more insights into the potential various uses of the space and in turn help to provide richer findings. Additionally, through conducting three observations, and drawing on data from other methods, this meant that researcher subjectivity was better managed and that the researcher was more able to make claims based on themes and patterns across the data. However, it must be noted that my subjectivity will undoubtedly influence the way that I have recorded and categorised data, particularly in the field notes, however, reviewing data collection across the three observations helps to provide greater consistency.

3.6 Transcription, analysis, coding of data

All of the individual and group interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom and, additionally, written notes were made of the key points in case the recording failed or if the participant's response was inaudible on the recording (Longhurst, 2010). This, therefore, allowed the main argument to still be captured if such an issue arose. Field notes were made in the group interviews to capture the interactions between participants, significant gestures, movements, or restraint in contribution (or not as the case sometimes was in showing a particular passion around a point being discussed). Where the recording was inaudible my field notes were used to abridge the text so that it made sense. Any identity-revealing information about the participants or their institution was redacted and not transcribed, instead being replaced by XXXX to denote a redacted word. In the case of the structured observation, field notes were made of how the person used space, how their behaviour changed in different spaces and how their interactions manifested/changed as a result; see Appendix 9 for the observation schedule. The observation schedule was based on existing templates in the literature (Gray, 2019; UCL, nd), and the categories were determined from the initial findings of the document analysis and interviews.

NVivo was used to code and analyse the transcripts from the interviews and group interviews, observational notes from the interviews and the field notes for structured observation. This thesis rather than utilising a 'purist' Foucauldian Discourse Analysis draws on Fairclough's (1993) Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1998) argues that through following his form of analysis one can trace power in a discourse and the power behind a discourse; and his work has been applied in studies into HE and university marketisation (Ahmed, 2021). Whilst there are drawbacks to Fairclough's approach and debates around how Foucault's original work was interpreted and potential for bias, however, it is useful in locating how social and organisational changes manifest in response to hegemonic power's determination. This approach allows insight into what is, or was, trying to be perceived as a new dominant narrative by the author of the policy. Throughout the coding and analysis, it was important to bear in mind not only the spoken but any notes on tone, body language, context, and who was speaking based on their perceived position in the network of power. This approach was applied across the data collection methods (corpus, individual interviews, and group interviews) except for the structured observations. As this research adopted a constructivist approach to the research, informed by Foucauldian theory, coding was built up from the perspective that participants live in a negotiated world. Hence, meaning is made from cultural and societal cues and experiences, and there is an implicit discourse in everyday life, and that multiple narratives of being can and are presented (Dittmer, 2010). As such, the second pass of coding allowed one to generate meaning from the context in which the data was produced, helping to better locate agency and power relationships. This analysis sought to identify the power relationships that exist and how knowledge has been produced within the situated social and cultural contexts. The nuances from the Foucauldian Discourse Analysis approach help in revealing some of the potentially hidden discourses, power dynamics, and the hegemonic power in the evolving networks of power. These aspects will be highlighted in the subsequent findings chapter and discussion chapters.

The coding utilised the codes identified and used in the corpus (S3.3.3), which were based on keywords as discussed in S3.4.3. Additional codes emerging from the corpus were added (Appendix 23b). These were used in coding the subsequent individual interviews and group interviews. There was a second pass of analysis of emerging codes and themes of the whole NVivo project data, see Appendix 4 for an example of the coding and analysis. A second pass using the FDA approach was important in illuminating trends across the data, and to better understand the discourse(s) being constructed and who holds the power in such discourses. The codes and themes helped to identify the basis of the subsequent chapter structure of this thesis and inform the discussion of the findings. It is important to note that through the data collection and the data analysis stages care was taken to avoid bias or skewing in the data. However, a degree of subjectivity will necessarily have arisen through the researcher's prior experience to help construct meaning between trends and silences in the data, and in doing so to help draw attention to the potential dynamics of the network of power.

3.7 Pilot study

A pilot study was approved by the University Research Ethics Committee and was conducted at another university in South East England during the summer/autumn of 2019 to test the research design. This was a useful experience in helping to test the integrity and robustness of the methodology and to further clarify the methodological and conceptual framework for the main study. The pilot study involved three individual interviews with one senior manager overseeing the student experience, one middle manager with a similar remit, and one student representative. The resulting data were coded and analysed and informed the main study research design, such as adding explanatory notes to questions.

The findings from the pilot study helped to clarify the focus on the areas and types of interactions that can helpful be viewed as sites of interaction and significance in the network of power. Furthermore, the pilot study helped reinforce my choice of possible sites for structured observation in the full research. The pilot study enabled further robustness of the research design by highlighting areas of revision/clarification points that might be needed for interview questions and the types of methods used.

3.8 Ethical considerations and reflexivity

It is important to be reflexive and understand one's positionality when conducting research (Smith, 2010). My background and prior experiences will have formed preconceptions, prejudices, and ontologies about the world (Smith, 2010). My stance is that of a white Western male from a middle-class background. In addition, my academic positionality is predominantly of a feminist post-structuralist which most importantly aligns with the view of this thesis that power operates through networks and actors are influenced and influencers. Furthermore, I have a belief that my research is interested largely in phenomenology (through the influence of affect and its evidence of influencing, as affect itself is unseen). Additionally, I am influenced by pragmatism (that is the intermixing of both qualitative and quantitative data), and I am committed to an interpretive analysis of data to help understand the world. Here, I have an academic background as a geographer and educator who has worked in a range of various roles (voluntary and paid) that have informed my worldview and how I expect to interact and be interacted with (Pillow, 2010). My worldview, and more specifically the epistemological stance for this research, does make assumptions according to that stance, and discounts other stances. However, given these considerations, it was important to ensure that my subjectivity did not hinder the research project and to try to remain open to other ideas and theories of understanding. As such, by trying to negotiate such subjectivities, future engagements and the interpreting of data with a broader dialogue to try to make the claims of truth from the research more valid statements (Dennis, 2018). With that in mind, my research constantly experienced micro-shifts in perception, interpretation and understanding; ultimately, therefore, the research can be claimed to be idiographic as it seeks to understand the subjective.

There has been a rigorous ethics approval process, and best practice discussions with supervisors, and by maintaining a professional manner subjectivity was minimised in the data collection methods (Cloke et al., 2004). However, it is important to note that the ethics process shapes and its inherent assumptions and projections also form part of the subjectivity that the study obtains (Hoggart et al., 2002). Furthermore, the conditions for permission to be granted and the regime of the University Research Ethics Committee at the time are projected through the ‘required’ research design for it to take place, there is a seeming negotiation of power between myself as the researcher/student and the university as granting power/tutor (Cloke et al., 2004). However, the sustained engagement and submissions through the ethics committee allowed me to be more cognisant of the demands on participants, what it is they were being asked to do and to ensure that the research design was as strong as it could be. It is also important to note that the research was compelled to change due to COVID-19 restrictions which had an impact on my research design and timescales (further discussed in Appendix 11).

Through the requirement to conduct a pilot study, I had a sustained and negotiated interaction with the ethics committee, requiring shifts and vocabulary changes to align with the worldview of the committee. It is interesting to reflect that this process to align with the ethical requirements of the university, could be viewed as part of the nudging architecture and me being situated in a power dynamic where I have to conform to the hegemonic power’s will. This back and forth creating an iterative process, results in an evolution of the project to be moulded into something that the researcher agrees with in principle but retains the essence of what it was and the original proposal (Hoggart et al., 2002). This process and back and forth is tautological with the same thing being said but phrased in a manner for it to meet the desired expectations of the ethics committee. Additionally, one has to be careful to minimise potential bias or interpretative distortion through the social construction of the researcher’s life world and prior experiences (Cloke et al., 2004).

The first stage of the methodology involved looking at publicly available documents to inform the subsequent questions in the empirical research; as the first stage did not involve human participants, ethical approval was not required. However, the second stage of the methodology which involved the collection of empirical data consisted of: individual interviews, group interviews and structured observation; and consequently required approval from the researcher's University Research Ethics Committee. There was extensive consideration given to the ethical implications of the interviews, with participants being given participant information sheets, an opportunity to ask at any point for clarification, providing informed consent and additional explanatory notes; furthermore, all data was anonymised to protect participant identities (Unwin, 2003). Participants in the interviews and group interviews could withdraw from the research at any point and they retained the right to withdraw their data up to the point of analysis. The interview questions were provided in a semi-structured format which allowed flexibility for additional or follow-up questions of interesting points raised in dialogue, and to move on from any questions already addressed (Longhurst, 2010). Likewise, the group interview participants were made aware of the research in greater depth with participant information forms, and their consent was captured. There was careful monitoring of the group interviews to ensure that no one individual was subject to undue pressure. Lastly, participants in the observation area were made aware of the research through notices and information available upon request from the researcher, consent was captured by opting to remain in that space. Through effectively setting expectations of the research through planning and communication, no ethical dilemmas arose during the research process that I am aware of.

Throughout the research, I recognise that my identity and positionality have an impact on the access that is granted to me to conduct research at the universities, and the potential types of responses that are provided in interviews and group interviews and manifested behaviours (Pratt, 2009). For the structured observation it was important to blend into the background; as to be invasive could lead to altered behaviours. Nonetheless, and as adjusted throughout the ethics process, the researcher had to be visible albeit initially and a suitable warning was given, to not make the structured observation appear to be covert (Hoggart et al., 2002). As a geographer, as discussed earlier in this section, I have been influenced by the way I approach structured observation and the importance I ascribe to it in helping to understand the world. I am used to seeing things in context and focusing on processes, seeking out why the observed world might be the way that it is. As a social science, the discipline often does not seek a single truth but the nuances in different perspectives, hence a geographer often sees 'grey' rather than 'black or white'.

When developing a professional relationship with people who I come into contact with, establishing a rapport is important, particularly when one might be in a perceived role of power (Belur, 2014). It is useful to establish ease with the research participants to allow them to feel comfortable (Cloke et al., 2004); also key is to develop a sense of shared humour and politeness to help ease the participant into more authentic actions and practises (Hoggart et al., 2002). However, I ensured that the interactions were not so unguarded that could lead to ethical implications; or jeopardising the research findings (Cloke et al., 2004). Nonetheless, my positionality will (have) shift(ed) as layers of knowledge begin to form about the place in which I am situated. Moreover, depending upon who interactions are with, undoubtedly this will lead to a shift in my position in the network of power. For example, more power might be premised on me as the researcher in an interview with a student compared to that of an interview with a senior manager (Cloke et al. 2004, Bettez, 2015). Additionally, my views and expectations shifted as a pilot study was conducted which then fed into the research design for the main study to conduct research at the other institutions. This had two effects: first, reinforcing bits of the research design that worked and bolstering confidence, and second those aspects that required research redesign or points that gave scope for further intellectual engagement. Here, there is a manifestation of guilty knowledge where one is in part already entrenched in the expectations of data, and has an insight into the uncertainties and changes facing the individuals participating in the research (Williams, 2010).

As this research is rooted in social science it would not be appropriate to treat it as a natural science regulated sequence of input-process-output (Cloke et al., 2004), meaning that it was open to unexpected events and situations that might form an integral part of the findings. As the study is interested in qualitative data my approach helped to provide an insight into behaviours and practices; this then is a small-n rather than a large-N piece of research (Clifford et al., 2010). Thus allowing me to focus on an issue and provide intensive analysis as opposed to a less focused large breadth of data (Cope, 2010).

One must consider that in the writing up of a project, one is constrained by language, and ultimately vocabulary, in the expression of what is thought to have been seen/done or has been interpreted (Deutsch, 2004). The commitment of the pen to paper (or in this case, digit to keyboard) embodies a sense of privilege and power that only the author of their piece has, and that commitment is imbued and tied up in narratives of epistemological and ontological stances, and personal biography of the author (Deutsch, 2004). Writing is a process in which language and the type of writing are codified and presented in a certain order, to make it acceptable to the audience and to be granted due merit within that community of practice. Hence, this leads to a conformity of accepted standards in the type of writing in that community (Foucault, 1978). Additionally, the drive to contribute to the global knowledge economy and to gain greater 'impact' by those reading the research, has undoubtedly been a very emotional and invested piece of work. The work is often shaped to conform with the community of practice, such as through journal article style requirements. Thus, where the text, albeit subconsciously at times, is tweaked to gain more universal appeal to make more than the author care about what is being conveyed; this too is something that a researcher must think about when providing interpretation and being reflexive (Bettez, 2015).

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the rationale for the research methodology; it has highlighted that through taking a post-structural and social sciences stance it is important to use intensive qualitative data to generate useful insights into practices and decision-making. To achieve this insight the chapter has outlined the methods used to capture this and why those methods were selected. Those methods were: corpus development, individual interviews, group interviews, and structured observation. This chapter discussed how the data collected from those research methods were coded and analysed, and it finished by discussing reflexively the shifting positionality and ethical considerations. This chapter has set out the methodological approach for this study, generating original empirical research to address my research questions. It is significant as it will provide some of the first post-structuralist insight into the networks of power FTUG students are situated in.

The next chapter will outline the findings from the research. It will present what has been found regarding documented and observed student behaviours in university spaces, and it will highlight behaviours in different types of spaces. It will also explore the use of spaces in the university by students and how student behaviours in certain spaces are embedded.

Chapter 4: Findings

Having outlined the methodology underpinning the study, we now move to consider the findings arising from the project. In chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively, these findings will be discussed and contextualised in relation to literature at the level of student, university, and State. As preliminary to these discretely organised chapters, the present chapter interweaves findings from the multi-method data collection to show how 'model' student behaviours are constructed in both discursive and physical spaces.

Given the multi-stranded character of the project, it is helpful to preface narrative discussion of the findings with a table detailing the different phases of the study, reiterating the purpose of each, and indicating the participant population in each category of data collection. Note that the Pilot Study is considered study 1, and therefore Figure 6 starts at study 2.

Study	Date	Type	Purpose	Participants
2	Oct 2019 - Jun 2022	Assembly of a corpus of exemplar documents	To provide an insight into how universities and the HE sector attempt to engage potential students and students through marketing and policy, how student behaviours are governed, and how these evolve.	N/A
3	Jun - Nov 2021	Individual Interviews	To generate insight regarding the dynamic context of the University, and any impacts upon students' behaviours, the policy landscape, the use of space(s), and the impact on students/staff in light of changes to the financing of HE in England.	n=4
4	Nov 2021 - Jan 2022	Group Interviews	To provide insight into the decision-making in universities and the sector, and how students and staff are governed and influenced. To gain insights into how participants indicate 'mood' or feeling about a particular type of learning space and its potential for interactions.	n=11
5	Oct-Dec 2021	Observations	To provide insight into how a specific social learning space is used and possible reasons for that usage; this will draw comparison to the group interviews to how it is claimed similar social learning space is used.	n=88

Figure 6: Summary of project strands, purpose and participants

In elaborating on the findings represented in the table above, this chapter presents the findings broken down into a number of sub-sections: 1. Findings emerging from the corpus of exemplar documents; 2. Observed Behaviours in Social Learning Space; 3. Use of Space in general; 4. Use of Specific Space; 5. Marketing, Consumerism, and Communication; 6. Policy & the Everyday; 7. Biopower. The findings are presented so that the first section follows the corpus development and findings, which then went on to inform the empirical data collection whilst also continuing the corpus as other data might highlight other key documents to include as part of the corpus. This is important to note as it helps provide ‘the scene’. The second subsection reports the specific findings from social learning space which is confined to a specific setting but helps to draw out insight into the specific behaviours and practices seen. The remaining subsections are driven by key themes from across all of the data, drawing on the corpus of exemplar documents, structured observation, individual interviews and group interviews. The subsections are driven by the following factors that may have a role in creating the ‘model’ student. First, an in-depth look at a specific example of how a space has been discussed and observed with note to how an ‘affective atmosphere’ has been created in SLS and results in different types of behaviours and uses. Second, shifts in the way that marketing is done and how that might impact the narrative of HE and what it might mean to be a ‘model’ student. Third, changes to the HE sector result in differing rights and responsibilities in the networks of power. Last, unpacking power relationships and networks of power in universities, and HE more broadly. Whilst this chapter presents the findings of the empirical research alongside key concepts explored in S2a and S2b, subsequent discussion chapters will bring those findings into a critical conversation with literature.

The findings contribute to the fields of the sociology of education, HE policy, HE, affect, and human geography (in particular, geographies of education). More specifically, as a piece of doctoral research, this forms a new contribution of knowledge to affect and nudging in HE in England. Crucially, my research findings reinforce that there is an ever-complex multi-layered interconnectivity of actors in HE whilst foregrounding the context in which and ways in which a ‘model’ student is created. The overall contributions and scope for further work will be returned to in greater detail in Chapter 8: Conclusions.

The research has found that complexity is played out in the interactions with and between people, spaces, and policy; and that the perspective from which a situation, space, or policy is viewed is seemingly interpreted differently by different actors in the network of power. Similarly, how a perspective is given and the actions/viewpoints are described is in some cases different from how those actions/viewpoints are embodied as observed by others. The study makes comparisons between how social learning space (SLS) was discussed by participants in the group interviews and from the structured observations of SLS.

Space is a key aspect to understand, how it is used, who uses the space, who is involved in managing the space, and what components make the space what it is at a moment in time (S2b.9). As shown in work by Anderson & Adey (2011) and Anderson (2014), spaces have ‘affective’ messages conveying what they should be used for, similarly, through the conscious design of spaces, behaviours can be shaped and interventions made when people deviate from expectations; in the case of this thesis, the expectations of a ‘model’ student. It is important to note that space can result in unintentional behaviours when there has been a lack of robust consideration or a move from a former use of that space. To provide insights into the observed experience and for nuanced insight into the findings from the interview data, observation findings are presented first. In this vein, the thesis follows a less conventional reporting of findings seeking to foreground implicit power dynamics and practice rather than a ‘funnelling down’ approach, to better trace the flows of power in keeping with other affect theorists’ work (Adey, 2008; Anderson, 2014).

4.1 Findings from the corpus of exemplar documents

The corpus data revealed nuances in the exemplar documents. Marketing materials in the corpus changed over time (pre-COVID and during COVID), with commitments and claims becoming more tentative and disclaimers more apparent. This might be because of the guidance published by the CMA (2016; 2019), and cases brought against universities where there was thought to have been misleading information about the ‘actual’ student experience one might encounter. Here, marketing has gone in one of two directions, becoming much more specific in the information provided, or (and usually the case) it is a lot less specific and lacks detail about the programmes of study. Rather, generic and university-level provision is provided rather than the course detail, with details for further communication with a School or Department about the programmes a potential student might be interested in.

	Ancient University	**Red Brick University**	**Post-92 University**	**Government Docs**	**Sector Docs**
Top 5 words Pre-COVID	1. student member 2. modern language 3. september 4. written paper 5. open day	1. tuition fee 2. student discipline 3. offer letter 4. serious misconduct 5. student regulations	1. foundation year 2. entry requirement 3. Location 4. course overview module 5. overview module	1. dearing report 2. condition of registration 3. ongoing condition 4. education institution 5. student number	1. online harassment 2. lad culture 3. attainment gap 4. universities uk 5. learning space
Top 5 words COVID	1. proctor 2. non-matriculated 3. disciplinary 4. Resubmit 5. open-book	1. crisis 2. disciplinary 3. Misconduct 4. Halls 5. timetabled	1. current-student 2. disciplinary 3. UKVI 4. studenthub 5. blackboard	1. OfS 2. QAA 3. self-isolate 4. OIA 5. term-time	1. Behavioural 2. capstone 3. JISC 4. socially 5. OECD
Concordance of Behaviour - Pre-COVID	0.02%	0.08%	0.09%	0.02%	0.10%

Concordance of Behaviour - COVID	0.08%	0.16%	0.17%	0.04%	0.06%

Figure 7: Table of keywords and concordance of behaviour

Figure 7 is presented here to indicate changing language in England's HE sector before and during COVID-19. The second row of the table shows the top five keywords for five different sources of documents, and this is to help provide insight into the language being used by different actors within the network of power. Here, there is a shift in the language of similar sources as can be seen between row two and row three, there is a move to much more explicit language related to behaviours and conduct. Unsurprisingly, due to COVID-19 and the shift to remote and online teaching, there is also mention of technology and those organisations related to supporting an innovation/technology-enhanced curriculum. The concordance provides a percentage of the frequency of use of the word 'behaviour' (a key aspect of being a 'model' student) and the concordance search is useful as when a search is run it provides the word in context (4-6 words either side) (SketchEngine, 2024). Interestingly, in Figure 7, the concordance shows that in four out of the five sources of documents, there is at least a doubling in the frequency of words related to behaviour. As an outlier the sector documents saw a decrease, this might have been due to the lack of best practice related to online learning during COVID-19. However, overall the language surrounding behaviour has become much more prominent in the vernacular of universities. Furthermore, tracing behaviour, and the way it is framed as behaviour relating to conduct and behaviours relating to learning attitude, changes depending on the text groupings. Marketing documents focus on behaviour more as supporting students to develop behaviours that will allow them to be 'workplace ready' and 'engage in learning', whereas university policy documents tend to focus on 'academic integrity' and 'living responsibly'.

There was a change in language, particularly in sector and government documents between pre-COVID and COVID. There became a much greater focus on learning, perhaps due to other aspects of the university experience becoming less accessible due to home-based learning and there being fewer opportunities for the in-person student experience. The corpus which included exemplar documents identified that there was a large distributed array of organisations and a raft of documentation that related to sector bodies such as Advance HE. Documents from the sector and universities after 2018 more frequently spoke about 'expectations' of universities, utilising a tone associated more with regulatory requirements. Here, this could be associated with the shift of powers and responsibilities to the OfS.

The government documents showed that HE is positioned as part of the tertiary (service) sector of HE, as a marketable and productive space for the economy. This is reflected in the language of 'efficiencies' and ensuring 'value for money'. Not only is it evident in government documents, such as the Dearing Report (1997), but also in sector documents such as UUK's *Efficiency and Effectiveness Reports* (2011, 2015). Given the prominence of 'Market Reports' by HEFCE, supported through other Government and sector organisations, there is a focus in the corpus on 'marketisation' of HE. There was a noted vernacular of 'competition' between universities in the UK, largely of England's HE sector on the global stage.

The marketing texts were useful in highlighting the narratives that are created through the use of prospectuses and other marketing materials. These seem to be aimed primarily at prospective students, but there was also a subtext highlighting a sense of 'family' and being a 'safe place', possibly suggesting a sense of continuity and reassurance for parents/carers. Of the universities included in the marketing text sample, 50% allowed one to construct their own/provided a tailored set of prospectus materials. Thus, it suggests that some universities are employing more targeted forms of marketing to engage students. Every university prospectus, both pre-COVID and COVID used what might be perceived as iconic and impressive buildings, often accompanied with text about 'place' or 'community'. Here, there are narratives being built and conveyed as meaning becomes ascribed to a particular building and through a focal point of a particular place. As meaning has been given to that building, a sense of belonging and knowledge of the university starts to be constructed.

4.2 Framing of student behaviours in physical spaces

SLS is where there are multiple interactions between different actors that this study is interested in (Leander et al., 2010). This makes SLS an ideal place for observing embodied actions and verifying claims made about actions in the interviews, and expectations set out in the kinds of policies contained in the corpus of exemplar documents. When discussing SLS, this would be an area at the university where one might talk with colleagues/peers and engage in work, group work, or other activity. There are multiple conceptions of the intended purpose of SLS, as discussed by participants in the group interviews. In S4.2, an overview of the SLS from across the three structured observations is presented in a narrative and descriptive format to give an insight into the liveliness of the space, how it changes, and presenting a descriptive account may help to reveal the flows of people and power.

Below, Figure 8 captures the observational findings from three observations conducted at the case study site. The three observations were conducted in the same SLS but at varying times of the day and week. Figure 8 therefore provides a useful insight into how the space is used at different times, capturing how the space was laid out and other physical attributes such as lighting and sound, who was using it, and how they were using it.

	Observational period 1	**Observational period 2**	**Observational period 3**
Who is using the space?:	22 x students, 1 x member of academic staff , 2 x professional services staff (25 visited the space)	28 x students, 8 x members of academic staff, 3 x professional services staff (39 visited the space)	13 x students, 7 x members of academic staff, 4 x professional service staff (24 visited the space)
Observation of interactions and use of the space:	• Individuals focused on their phones, and quiet conversation within small groups. • 3 students were eating their own food, member of staff repeatedly 'glared' at them. One student subsequently purchased food at retail outlet. • One student attempted to pay cash for an item but only cards were accepted. • The retail outlet employee interacted with customers and other professional service staff who visited the space. • The average stay - 10 minutes.	• 5 different groups of students used the space for eating and group work and/or talking. • 2 security staff sat in corner eating their own food. • Change over of retail staff. • A group of 6 students looking to do some recording/filming in the space, left, with one commenting 'it is too loud in here' • Group of students brought into space for 30 minutes by lecturer to discuss the design and feel of the space. • The retail outlet employee serving customers for most of the time. • The average stay - 25 minutes.	• Only 3 customers used the space at first. • Reduced range of products. Retail outlet employee restocking and cleaning. • Two professional services staff having a meeting. • Professional services member of staff from estates spent 15 minutes behind the counter with retail staff talking and laughing. • Retail outlet employee left space unattended, potential customers unable to purchase. • Retail outlet was closed early, light turned off for the space, sandwiches left out for people to take. Potential customers arrived and left. • The average stay - 30 minutes.
Description of the lighting and changes:	• Bright on the one side of the space towards the glass doors, duller in the entranceway/ connecting corridor to the space. • Half the lights were turned on. • Lighting angled towards retail outlet counters. • Large mirror windows, giving reflection. Sense of a much larger space than it is.	• Darker day than Obs 1, and all lighting turned on. • However, still much brighter lighting on the retail outlet with spotlights on the menu and cabinet with higher value products. • Darker lighting for the normal height and high tables and chairs.	• All lights turned on. • Much brighter lighting on the retail outlet with spotlights on the menu and cabinet with higher value products, rather than seating. • Lights turned off when outlet closed, although the space was still open for use for other purposes. Light shining through windows, and passing car headlights illuminating space.
Description of sounds/ noise and changes:	• First 25 minutes of observation, loud talking above the music being played. • After 25 minutes, the music switched off. Hum of fridges associated with outlet. Scrape of chairs and tables being moved.	• Radio station on, louder than 'background music' for first hour, this is reduced and changes station. Conversations are more audible after first hour. • Background hum of fridges and machinery such as dishwashers and coffee machine.	• Whilst retail outlet was open, a radio station playing rock music was on loudly. Individual conversations are hard to hear. • When the retail outlet closed, there was the hum of the fridges and low-level conversations.
Evidence of 'nudges' or 'affective influences' in the space:	• Poster to choose the 'ethical coffee bean' • Lighting design, clear access to retail counter • Open plan layout, variety of seating/tables. • Blocking off an area to signify not in use. • Limited seating and tables compared to size of space given to outlet displays	• Meal deal advertising design, wording of 'buy n go' • Seating area where food is largely being consumed functional and average height, whereas sofa tables low and further away. • COVID-19 QR codes on tables, about vaccination and staying safe on campus	• Posters about the university displayed, the type of university it was and where it sat in league table. • SU lectern in a corner, with students using it for charging and practising speech. • Poster on being a 'good neighbour' to the local community.
Categories of Behaviours:	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Group working, Laughing, Purchasing, Individual Working, Socialising	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Group Working, Restocking, Laughing, Purchasing, Filming Teaching, Parenting, Individual Working, Socialising	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Consuming, Meeting, Laughing, Purchasing, Cleaning, Individual Working, Socialising

Figure 8: Table to show a summary of findings from 3 Observational Periods at the case study site (A more detailed table of observational findings is presented in Appendix 12).

4.2.1 Physical attributes of the space

Anderson (2014) and Adey (2008) note architecture and physical space are important in influencing how a space is used and the affective shaping of behaviours and practices. The corpus data (marketing materials for individual universities) shows that physical space (including depictions of SLS) is a key aspect of nearly every marketing document drawn upon, and this was always the case in marketing documents that were analysed from prior to COVID-19. Hence, physical spaces of the university estate are viewed as having importance, and marketing documents tend to focus on 'iconic' buildings or spaces of that university. As noted by the DoM who describes the physical as being an essential part of the 'package' that students are buying, and to some extent becoming a part of.

In this research, the physical area (the constructed space, architecture, and layout) was seen as an important factor in the way in which SLS was used, as its design may suggest there is an intended purpose and expectations for its use. The SLS consisted of a small open-plan triangular-shaped area. One accesses the space via a long corridor with doors off it to different teaching rooms and a dance studio. As one enters the space there are multi-level ceilings some of which are open and one can hear the floor above, there are refrigerators and a coffee shop-style counter. The main area comprises a number of different tables and chairs arranged in multiple group sizes, and there are a number of sofas with lower tables, TV screens, posters, and sundry items such as a lectern and wheelchair. The total seating capacity was 32. The front of the space has multiple folding full-length doors which open out onto a small grassed area and just beyond there is one of the main roads into the town, although these doors were not used and remained locked; indeed, that particular path around the building had very little footfall.

Adey (2008) notes that the key physical attributes, such as lighting, sound, and furniture are important in creating an affective environment. In the SLS, lighting and the sound of a radio station were key aspects of the environment, with the retail outlet staff determining the lighting, radio (the station and volume), and cleaning. The space was reformatted, in the sense that the layout of tables was altered, without there being an apparent rationale. On one occasion the space was filled at one end with equipment seemingly being temporarily stored there, reducing the space size by about a sixth. These subtle changes to the design and layout resulted in altered uses and interactions in the space. Creating a particular layout or design sets some of the conditions in the 'everyday' interactions, changing behaviours.

4.2.2 How the space is used

Space usage is important to consider, as it helps to provide insight into the affective scripting of what it means to be in that space and whether one might be considered to be conforming or diverging from the expectations (Anderson, 2018; Dean, 2013). SLS in my research was primarily used for three purposes: first, as a place for eating food and drinking, second, as a place for meeting other people and chatting informally (usually it seems as if people await a lecture/class/meeting in one of the nearby rooms), third, as a place for social learning working on laptops, written work on paper, and art portfolios.

Interestingly, the space had no particular principal group of users during the structured observation, with students, staff (professional and academic), and members of the public (accessing nearby dance studios), although the majority were purchasing food or drink. (Whilst the observations were conducted across three different time periods, further observation would be useful to further validate such findings for other days and times). When the retail outlet was open, the space was primarily used for consumption, and additionally for social learning activities and waiting for classes; however, when closed there was very little consumption. Just over two-thirds of space users tended to remain there for under one hour, and roughly a third spent under ten minutes there. The observations showed a plurality in usage over the time of the day and the group of users. Appropriately enough during one observation, a lecturer in architecture brought his class to observe the design of that area, commenting upon the unusual open-plan layout and yet the feeling of being enclosed at the same time. He said that this was a particularly ‘awkward and underutilised space’ in the university. The class went on to comment on the outward angle of the ‘coffee shop’, designed to fan outwards and upwards as one might stand from the back looking out through the large glass facade. Here, SLS took on more of a formal learning environment, albeit the class size was small ~15 people, nonetheless, there was a sense of change in the purpose of the space with other space users altering their interactions.

In the group interview, which used images of SLS, there was little sense of disaggregation of users other than staff and students, although it was mentioned the space is being used for multiple purposes. Whereas from the observed use, users of space could be seen in more distinct groupings. Each grouping had traits in how they used and interacted with SLS.

Changes to the design and layout, particularly to lighting and sound led to shifts in who inhabited the space. When the food outlet had closed but the space was still being used, the lighting was dim and no music was playing, and there were people trying to work in the failing light. The behaviour seen by those working in the failing light might indicate that there was tension from the sighing and frequent glances at people speaking aloud. At this time, other people laughing loudly and conversing were using the space, so too were members of the public accompanied by young children who were running about. Such rich insights show that there is a clear power relationship when the space is open (Foucault, 1977).

4.2.3 Interactions between users of space

People have interactions not only with space but with and between each other. This was alluded to briefly in the group interviews but was explicitly seen during the structured observations. Here, there were four broad types of interactions: students with other students, students with members of staff, staff with other members of staff, and variation in the interaction 'tone' depending upon the time of day. It is important to note that there was variability in each of those themes such as students in different perceived year groups/academic stages, but most significant was the variation in the interaction of students with staff depending on whether staff were viewed to be professional services or academics.

4.2.3.1 Students with student

Interestingly, students use SLS in various ways. When consuming from the food outlet, students seem to primarily sit at full-height tables and normally be in groups of four or more individuals, whereas students eating food from elsewhere tend to be in groups of four to six and sit on the sofas. Students eating food from elsewhere tend to be louder. There are often smaller groups of students who sit close to sockets and use their laptops or phones, these students tend to be quieter and often purchase a single drink for the duration of their stay and sit on harder metal seats at full-height tables. There appeared to be tension between students aiming to study and those wanting to talk. For example, particularly those students on laptops who would frequently look up at groups of students on the sofas at particularly loud points, and on a couple of occasions such noise resulted in the music being turned up, heightening the sense of loudness. Here too, the role of the type of seating and the sounds occurring in the space interact with the idea of comfort, which may make individuals open to different types of sensory conditioning (Kraftl & Adey, 2008).

There were observable behaviour traits suggesting frustration and tension between particular student groups, as manifested in the body language, glaring, and muffled comments by students trying to study when others' laughter cut above the noise of the radio. At one point a group of students who had brought their own food which had a strong smell were being glared at frequently by retail staff, which one might argue was to make them feel uncomfortable and that they should not be there due to deviance from 'model' expectations.

Such narratives can draw parallels with Said's (1978) work of othering and the idea of who and what belongs there. Whilst noting these interactions, most of the student interactions were conversations crossing between the boundaries of everyday conversation such as transport and daily life, venturing into the personal, content of lectures and coursework. Students would use the space as a meeting place and would acknowledge others they recognised, even if people were with other groups of people. There was a pronounced difference when students from what were presumably other courses sat close by and loud students spoke quieter, one might say almost as if speaking slightly more quietly might make what they were discussing less apparent (which it did not).

To reflect, SLS embodied those two aspects, the 'social' and the 'learning'. There was socialising taking place between the users of the space and there was observed to be a dynamic of dialogue for the most part, in particular when the retail outlet was open. At the same time, the space seemed to host a range of learning, be that informal through conversations, working on personal devices, or classes using the space for teaching.

4.2.3.2 Student with professional service and academic staff

SLS for the most part was observed as an area which staff and students used together. Staff tended to use the space for buying food/drink and immediately leaving, there were a few exceptions. Student and staff interactions seemed to vary depending on the perceived role of a member of staff. Staff roles could be identified by different lanyard colours and/or uniform. Where a member of staff was from professional services, students seemed to pay less attention and behaviours remained as before. However, when students did interact with professional service staff it tended to be in a polite but perfunctory manner, the exception being with retail outlet staff and campus security. When professional service staff spoke to students, it seemed to be with a genuine interest in what the students were doing and how they were. As students interacted with retail outlet staff, there was a mix of polite and firm 'customer' service, and also the sense of being moved on with frequent tidying of tables and seating areas, and frequent buzz of activity. Such interaction gives a sense of who can linger and how 'in place' one might be (Cresswell, 2004).

By contrast, when students saw an academic, if they were unknown to students, there was a mixture of reactions. If the academic seemed to be more junior, conversation levels would continue but with frequent glances at the academic albeit without acknowledgement. If the academic was known or perceived as senior, often the conversation would stop or turn towards something that was not personal life or related to their studies. With the latter, when this happened it tended to draw the academic into a brief conversation. Undoubtedly, with known and senior academics, there was a conversational effort. However, whilst academic staff might speak to students, conversations tended to be brief, their body language was visibly different compared to when speaking with professional service staff, there seemed to be slightly more reservation and professional distancing through the type of language being used. Also, with academic staff, there was a sense of pace that they were walking quickly, checking their watches or phones as if they were on their way somewhere, perhaps in this instance as the observed SLS holds parity with corridors, being a liminal zone of transition.

From the posters on the wall (graduate outcomes, destinations, student union events, and advice), the stuck-down signs on the tables (COVID secure campus), and the food offerings there is a sense that SLS is for students to inhabit. The idea of who may inhabit a space is key in signifying belonging (Said, 1978; Massey, 2005). This might be a reason why SLS 'felt' more for students than staff, hence students tended to remain in the space, there was only one short observable moment where there were more staff than students.

4.2.3.3 Staff with staff

When staff used SLS they tended to be professional services staff, especially the estates team (they could be identified by their uniforms). The interactions were usually jovial between the members of staff running the food outlet and estates. Sometimes this could lead to being a wait for other customers as conversations would go beyond what you might expect of normal pleasantries in say a branded high street coffee shop.

There were two meetings between members of professional services staff, although as the researcher I was unaware of the purpose of those meetings. One might speculate a lack of space or for a 'lower stakes' discussion. One would expect that had the meeting been of a performance matter or important then the meeting would have been conducted in a private office away from other staff and students. Nonetheless, as commented on in the group interviews, space is increasingly under threat and it might be that nowhere more suitable could be found. These meetings seemed to be between a manager and a reportee(s), and they were held in a less frequented area of SLS at a full-height table and metal chairs.

When the food outlet staff serves other professional services staff, the service usually involves a low-stakes joke or jocular remark with a polite laugh or discussion about the day. The person being served tended to engage in much more of a conversation or widened their conversation to include others. In contrast, when it was an academic being served, there tended to be a smile and short polite comment or clarification, but a more superficial conversation. Similarly, the academic tended not to converse beyond pleasantries or would continue the conversation with a colleague (if there with a colleague). These micro-level differences in interactions highlight that there are differences within the power dynamics of the users of the space and the extent to which one might be seen as an insider or outsider (Foucault, 2002), or rather in this case customer and service provider.

4.2.3.4 Time of day dependent differences

Time of day was a significant factor in determining how the space was used and whether the food outlet was open or not, these factors resulted in a shift in how and who used the space, see Figure 9. The total number of users observed throughout the day over the three visits varied considerably from 39 in visit two to 24 in visit three. Irrespective of the number, the pattern seems to be driven by the class schedule in the nearby rooms. Immediately before and immediately after a class the space is more crowded than at other times, except on Friday afternoons when it is quiet until 4:55pm when there is a hive of activity for ~15 minutes as unsold food is left out for people to take for free.

Time	Food Outlet Status	Usage	Users
9 am - 1 pm	Open	Purchasing Eating Drinking Meetings in groups	Staff - Professional Services Staff - Academic Students
1 pm - 5 pm	Open	Purchasing Drinking Meetings in groups Self-led learning	Staff - Professional Services Staff - Academic Students
4:55 pm - 5 pm	Open	Purchasing Collection of free food (Friday) Self-led learning	Staff - Professional Services Students
5 pm - 7 pm	Closed	Waiting for evening classes Meeting in groups (social focus)	Students Members of the public

Figure 9: Table to show the users of space and their usage purpose during the day

When the retail outlet was closed and no staff member was present there was a notable difference in the atmosphere, no music, dimmer lighting (the main lights were turned off leaving only peripheral lighting), and the hum of the refrigerators was perceptibly clear. Despite this potentially less inviting atmosphere people still used the space. There was a short period of time during the ‘closing’ preparation that the space transitioned, and on Fridays a sharp five-minute period of activity. In the evening, the space was used by members of the public awaiting classes in the rooms/dance studio nearby, on one occasion there were a number of young children and a baby. The restrained atmosphere between 9 am-5 pm seemed to partially disappear after the outlet closed, largely as children climbed over sofas and furniture, although a parent/carer asked their children to ‘behave’ as people were ‘working’. Here, there are multiple uses of the space and potential ‘lingering affects’ may cause different understandings of how it should be used (Lees & Baxter, 2011).

4.2.4 Summary of SLS observation findings

Building upon the ideas of Cresswell (2004), Kraftl & Adey (2008) the conditions of comfort, sound, and lighting are key aspects of transforming a space into a place; somewhere that has particular meaning ascribed to it, and how and what it should be used for. Since, the observed SLS has a variety of furniture types, sound, and lighting changing throughout the day this space might be viewed differently by individuals. As a final observation, members of staff seem to use one table for meetings, three tables for eating/drinking/socialising, and students use the others. When these various tables were used on the odd occasion ‘the usual’ users of those showed discontent and confusion as to where to sit, particularly if they returned only a short time after having left. However, as a caveat, for robust claims of ‘usual’ to be made, further observations need to be conducted.

My observations suggest that this SLS should not be viewed as homogenous but rather that it has multiple interpretations. The design and layout lead to differences in how it is used and understood, and by whom. Indeed, SLS was lively, with more uses and users than those identified in the group interviews and corpus data which both tended to focus on places for ‘getting coffee’, eating, and brief visits for social learning. The corpus data (marketing documents and university documents) depicted SLS as key areas for student interaction and a location that students could eat in (although not always making reference to a retail outlet).

4.3 Use of space in general

The use of spaces around the university was explored through the group interviews, individual interviews, and input from the corpus development (specifically university policy documents and sector documents). During the interviews the way spaces are consciously used and reviewed, such as through departmental and university policies, was discussed by participants. This gave a sense of power dynamics of who controlled spaces and by what means. Such discussion helps elicit the networks of power and those who have capacity to influence and be influenced (Kraftl & Adey, 2008). In the group interviews, participants were presented with images of different spaces around the university (see Appendix 7) and there ensued a discussion about what those spaces might be used for. There were multiple perspectives about how spaces might be managed and used, this difference was more pronounced depending on whether the participant identified as staff or student. Staff participants in the group interviews tended to offer their perspectives on how the space might be used by them and how they thought students might use the space, whereas students tended to provide only their own perspectives. Whilst the researcher encouraged discussion in the group interviews, there was no prompting to consider how space is used by different users. There was a clear consensus across the interviews of space being in short supply and increasingly centrally regulated and controlled. Space usage was viewed by staff as being prescribed by the university centrally which implies a more senior-level decision-making rather than being a departmental or school-level decision. The HoD commented that:

> “more often than not…universities are going more central in terms of lecturing and lecture rooms, so that they can be utilised…across the university, … to provide more efficiencies in utilising that space.”

The idea of centralising decision-making regarding room allocation might have to do with a range of factors including efficiencies. However, if one were to consider power relationships of who makes decisions, the senior leadership team (S4.2.2), this suggests the power dynamic of there being a more top-down power structure. This holds resonances with Ball’s (2013) work on the power relationships in education between senior leaders and school staff. This comment by the HoD demonstrates an awareness of the “efficiencies” in HE and a centralisation of functions that might have previously been at a department-level.

4.3.1 University spaces as portrayed in marketing and policies

Interestingly, marketing documents such as a prospectus might typically use images of a flagship or iconic site within the university and its immediate vicinity (S4.1). Such iconic sites tend to be shared buildings such as libraries, welfare centres, or students’ union buildings where there is more of a collective understanding of the building’s purpose and a shared use by students. When depicting a specific discipline/school/department imagery tends to be of external facades rather than internal, those which are internal depict for example a state-of-the-art laboratory suggesting a particular discipline rather than an ‘average’ classroom/teaching space. The buildings depicted tend to either be new or ‘cutting edge’ modern-style facilities, or architecturally significant historic buildings, presenting a particular narrative of the university. Marketing documents, particularly prospectuses, show students engaged in a range of activities. They are shown, in sharp photographic focus, pursuing activities for example studying in a library, or in SLS interacting with peers. These students are invariably shown smiling and possessing a sense of camaraderie, due to their proximity to each other, eye contact, arms around each other or such similar gestures. In contrast, all of the policy documents that referred to space did so through written communication and not imagery. Space in policy documents was largely concerned with how space is designated or used by staff and students. Here, there was much more of a sense of the allocation of space for use by academics in their work e.g. offices, and classrooms. Where space was discussed regarding students this was concerned with conduct in and around the university, or how independent learning and SLS were allocated.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a proliferation of policies concerning the expectations of space and behaviour in an attempt to maintain social distancing and ensure legislation could be adhered to. However, prospectuses whilst pivoting to discussion about online learning spaces did not significantly change the imagery used.

4.3.2 Individual interviews

The individual interviews explored how space was perceived and managed (or thought to be managed) at the interviewees' universities. By engaging in discussion about space it would allow a greater understanding of the layers and perception of how power worked at the university, and who had the capacity to act (Esposito, 2008). For four interviewees, space seemed to be a contested issue, and their responses focused on the allocation of spaces for teaching, office work, and student socialising.

Whilst space was a key issue for them, there was a sense that it was a highly regulated and thought-out process by a central function of the university rather than something at a departmental-level. However, the idea of who space was for and who had greater influence varied between interviewees' perspectives. The Student Rep viewed the university as inconsiderate of students whereas the DoSS and DoM were more of the view that the spaces did consider student use. The Student Rep provided a detailed insight into the perspective about how space is used, or rather not considered, in 4 broad categories: building design and consequence of refurbishment, inappropriate space usage, space insufficiency, and mismatch between space and working practices. Whilst the question was posed as general trends, one must remember this was during a time that COVID-19 restrictions on movement were ending, consequently, this may have influenced responses.

The building design and consequence of refurbishment of universities can often lead to a lack of sufficient space. The Student Rep commented of the buildings, "they weren't necessarily very well thought through when we put them in" and they further go on to explain that one teaching space “is a refurbished office block that doesn't quite have enough space”. Additionally, the buildings when poorly designed or managed can lead to inappropriate space usage, which can have a negative impact on staff and students.

> “students sometimes have to sit on the floor to eat lunch and they've just done some work there to sort of increase the teaching space…”

The Student Rep explained that when space is not appropriately planned there can be a mismatch between space and working practices with “some people are having to do some home work” or they “are working from other campuses” because there is “no space to hot desk”. Here, the Student Rep highlighted a number of issues with how space is managed and used, although it is important to remember that when providing the example about the housing of staff this is in the context of Student Union staff rather than other university staff. As Hillman (2019) discusses, student unions often face difficulty in terms of adequate resourcing despite the support universities have for them.

The DoM provided an insight into the approach their university is taking, and how space has become more important for the university. They said that university spaces are frequently being “critically reviewed” and the university was “doing a big project about on use of space”. Furthermore, the DoM said as spaces are having a “wholesale review” and the estate is being (re)developed “that means that various areas are moving”. Here, there is a notion of ensuring that the campus is “fit for purpose”, and meets the future needs of the university. As the DoM indicated, space is a key aesthetic and part of the campus experience, and it seems to change depending on who is in senior leadership:

> “[W]e've got fresh blood within the University senior level who are looking at it with new eyes…our next step is to make ourselves look more attractive. What can we do with this unused space to make it more effective and create green areas … how can we create something, beyond the sort of cafes and restaurants that we have on campus.”

The creation of policies on space was thought to be driven by the University Executive Team and agendas on the university estate. From further discussion, it was implied that once a decision was made on rationalising, repurposing, allocation, and acquisition of space it was then driven by the Estates Team or a central working group. The Student Rep commented that student involvement was limited:

"I think in the construction, involvement at the time, they were [to] put together for some of the concerns that are spoken about, there were talks at the time, with better solutions than others…. But less so in the doing and ongoing review"

There was pause and visible thought. The form of input was also echoed by the HoD, and DoM. Here, these comments show that students are less involved in ongoing estate use and management. Lack of involvement of students who are the primary 'customers' of the university seems at odds with the 'consumer-oriented' shifts in the sector. Here, in keeping with Adjaye (2006) and Foucault (2010) there could be further exploration of estate being seen as a projection of power, which is predominantly shaped by the university.

4.4 Use of specific spaces

During the group interviews, there were differing views about how space should be used for a particular purpose(s). As the usage thus appears designated, observation of any change in use, associated behaviours, and interactions in these spaces is made easier. Within the group interviews, participants were shown a moodboard presenting a series of images. One was a SLS, discussed in S4.2. The other three images shown were: a 'traditional' lecture theatre, a 'modern' small group tutorial room, and a corridor (see Appendix 8).

4.4.1 Lecture theatre

The lecture, a presentation of knowledge and ideas by one or two lecturers delivered primarily to larger groups of students typically in a room with tiered seating, is still a widely used method of teaching in HE. The use of traditional didactic lecturing styles is somewhat contested (Freeman et al., 2014; Bhavsar et al., 2022). In keeping with thinking about teaching as a more active endeavour, HEFCE (2011) produced a report on teaching methods. Since 2011 there have been varying institutional responses and approaches, and best practice continues to be released such as the Student Success Framework (Advance HE, 2018). Therefore, it was not surprising that a range of perspectives in the group interviews about how lecture theatres should be used was discussed. Nonetheless, the general view of the lecture theatre is that it is where formal learning/teaching should take place. The lecture theatre depicted in the group interview moodboard showed multiple fixed rows of tiered seating with space to rest a laptop/notepad. The seating rows are curved to provide a focus on the lectern at the front by the whiteboard/projector and screens. Participant 2 remarked:

> "this looks like..some auditorium and, for me, I get the impression that this is a space where you have your presentations, lecture series, who hasn't been to a place like this. It gives me some sort of feeling that…you have a wider audience to project or to tell a story to."

As the comment highlights (and the agreements from other participants), there is a perception that lecture theatres are places of formal learning by participants. They are a place that students and their parents often imagine as where the education should be taking place, whilst this is more of a staff member's perspective it was echoed by student participants. Here, the DoM is talking about the use of imagery in prospectuses to build an idea of what the campus is about, "they… get …10-15 prospectuses … you find it's not the students that want to flick through them it's their parents". Such a view might be considered controversial, however, there have been debates dating back to 1999 (Moogan et al.) about who the university prospectus is for. While the audiences may have changed more towards parents of students, the question of who prospectuses are for still exists. Lecture theatres have been constructed through marketing about universities as the place where learning happens. Interestingly, for almost half (four) of the pre-pandemic prospectuses, a very large lecture theatre (possibly the largest for the university) was depicted. Subsequent discussion chapters will explore why there might be the use of such imagery.

4.4.2 Tutorial room

A tutorial might be seen as a workshop, it is usually collaborative and involves small-scale engagement and activities designed to support students in applying knowledge (Race, 2005). The research interviews revealed a variability in the conception of the tutorial room, being imagined differently depending upon the type of university which the interviewee attended. One interviewee from an ancient university commented on the tutorial being a one-to-one setting with an academic in their office, whereas another interviewee at a post-92 university described it as a small group of students with an academic in a classroom. Participant 8 commented "My Master's university also had … smaller scale teaching opportunities (maybe four to eight people)" they went on to explain "I find that as a student, that was a lot more engaging" interestingly they said that "I behaved a lot differently than if I was in…a massive lecture theatre." Here, there is a direct link between the type of learning setting and behaviour, highlighting that there are differences in how one might engage and how the space indicates those expectations. On the one hand, a larger lecture theatre might allow one to ‘hide’ away more whereas a smaller setting one is positioned more acutely in the network of power with the academic. Participant 9 provided a summary and confirmation of what had been discussed in the group interview and highlighted considerations for how the space might be ‘repurposed’ by those using it. For example, the tutorial room might be a collaborative space and somewhere for group work for staff and students:

> “it does look like a collaborative space for smaller meetings either perhaps a departmental meeting with a smaller cross-section of staff, or maybe… if it's on a small group work or a small seminar level or something where you need that opportunity for interaction… So it's not just dictating to people, it's not just presenting”

Participant 9 also said the tutorial room can be repurposed for the needs of the users of the space and they could “move the tables around and do things”. However, they then said:

> “And then I thought, oh, I wonder if you're allowed, because some buildings you go, it is completely fine you don't, it depends on which location you're in and … the establishment you're in, sometimes absolutely fine to move the tables around and as long as you leave it in the way you find it.”

This comment is particularly interesting, given that Participant 9 is a member of academic staff, it shows that they have to be given permission to move the furniture. Perhaps this idea of permission might be different had they had their own office, with a space large enough to conduct tutorials. Following a FDA perspective, the comment helps to highlight that even as a member of staff there is a central university power that regulates what is permissible.

These differences in conceptualisation of the ‘tutorial room’ can be seen in the way marketing imagery and language are seemingly used between universities. For example, drawing on the corpus of exemplar documents (marketing materials), the ancient university depicts, in marketing material, a tutorial room more as an academic’s office with a table with three or four chairs, whereas post-92 universities depict a room more akin to a secondary school classroom with groups of tables and chairs, and a whiteboard at the front.

In the group interviews, the consensus is that the tutorial room is a key space for learning. The participants' response to the moodboard image showing a tutorial room (Appendix 8) was that it was a place where teaching happens but in a different way to a lecture theatre.

The lecture theatre is described by Participant 11 as a place where “as a lecturer, I feel like I should be performing; and as a student, I would feel like not quite my preferred way of learning, constrained, and I should be you know paying attention, it's a very traditional space that doesn't lend itself easily to…group work”. In contrast, Participant 8 describes the Tutorial Room as “a space that might have a research group meeting or something like that, where maybe we would discuss the papers … and perhaps someone would be on the screen who couldn't join in person, but it kind of still gives that feeling that you're all there together”. Group interview 3, as captured by the quote from Participant 9 above, suggested that teaching is more personal in a tutorial room than a lecture theatre, or at least is a place where students should be more engaged. By following the argument of Lochtie et al (2019), this may suggest that more is known about the student in a tutorial setting due to there being fewer students, and as a lecturer leading the tutorial, there is greater potential for affective conditioning to take place compared to a lecture theatre.

4.4.3 Corridor

Corridors are often spaces that are key buffer zones or liminal spaces. They are where bodies experience transformation as one transitions from one space to another (or one state of being to another) (McCormack, 2013). The corridor is the third space that was focused on in the moodboards as part of the group interviews. The interviewees discussed the corridor as having several different functions, it could be for connecting different classrooms, offices, and other places, for students to gather before classes, or as a place for conversations. Participant 1 commented:

> “I work in buildings like this, this could actually be all entrances to classrooms, it could be all entrances to offices… Which is always really interesting if you're at the end office, and then you've got 15 business school students that have got a session in one of the rooms”

Whilst this view is offered by a member of staff, there seemed to be no disagreement by any of the other participants. Maybe student participants agreed, or maybe the authoritative way in which the comment was said meant others felt there were no other perspectives to offer, and in keeping with the FDA approach this would highlight a playing out of power dynamics in the group interview. This sense of a corridor being a place of waiting is reinforced by Participant 4:

> “Students tend to be waiting outside, to go into a classroom or waiting for students to come out so they can go in next, and I think there's a lot more,“

Interviewees discussed the considerations of the corridor depicted in the mood board (Appendix 8) as being a site that did not look particularly accessible, being too narrow for a wheelchair to easily manoeuvre, and the style suggested it was a 1970s/1980s building. Participant 1 said:

> “One word 'access' speaks to me… you are accessing, and then that then links to if you do have access issues, then it's not very friendly and not great, just more than three people here [then] you’re wrestling to get down the corridor.”

The previous comments by Participants 1 and 4 show the functional aspects of the corridor. However, Participant 1 discussed the potential nuances of the purpose of the corridor being not just a place to pass through but a zone of change, suggesting “it speaks to me as more of a transition to something”. The sense of transition was reiterated by Participant 6 in group interview 3: “I see that as a liminal space that you're going from one place to another and it's like an in-between [the] corridor.”

Participant 5 highlighted the importance of the corridor as a space for developing organic connections and potential ideas outside the confines of a scheduled meeting, commenting that ”there's an opportunity for those kinds of water-cooler conversations”. This was further elaborated on by Participant 10 “It just makes me think,.. conversations I've had... that have led to something happening” here then “the corridor has a sort of formal purpose, it can also lead to other things happening”. Participant 6, built on the idea that the corridor might facilitate other more managerial/ working purposes, highlighting their concern that a corridor cannot be viewed as a neutral space. Rather, corridors must be viewed with scepticism about what their intended purposes might include, and that the working culture of the university may frame how spaces are used.

> “it can in some circumstances, not that I would want it to be like this, … be a place of surveillance. In which staff are monitored in their offices...And I think managers could use that as an opportunity for surveillance walk in the corridors patrolling the corridors looking in the offices”.

This is an interesting point raised about surveillance, given the role that the Participant 6 has as a middle manager in HE, during a moment of seeming ease in his body language, maybe this is what he had used the corridor for in the past or it has been suggested to him. Another participant from the same institution as Participant 6 reinforced this point of corridors being used for ‘management walks’. Hence, the corridor rather than being a banal place, seems to be an important space that is beyond practical mobility connecting spaces but is a site of surveillance and signifying who and what might be appropriate there.

4.5 Marketing, consumerism, and communication

The role of marketing is increasingly important for universities to provide sufficient student numbers to maintain universities’ financial viability, through building their reputation and conveying an attractive image of the institution. It is important in a competitive sector for universities to have effective relationships with, and tailored information for, potential consumers - students (Lewin-Jones, 2019). The DoM commented, “I think … my…VC will say, you know, what's making the difference, of course, it is marketing.” The role of marketing literature and prospectuses for external facing audiences was highlighted in the individual interviews as being an important tool. However, this is an approach that is increasingly tailored to individuals and taking a digital format:

> “we have additional prospectuses for both undergraduate and postgraduate that can be downloaded from the website and we will occasionally create some course-specific collateral…our Design School like to send out postcards … to show the prospective students the kind of things that we do… And again [the] same school produces another brochure...So, a variety of different things that we’ll do digitally that we just don't do in print.”

The DoM has highlighted that there are several different forms of marketing and that this is networked across the university as to who contacts potential students and what it is that they may receive. Here, there is a much more targeted approach to marketing utilising what has been seen in other nudging deployments discussed by Thaler & Sunstein (2009) for better engagement. In a similar vein, the DoSS highlighted that there is much more work done with prospective students “ a big outreach program” by the “outreach team and our marketing student recruitment” who “do a lot of work with the schools”. Some saw the literature as enabling them to see themselves as belonging as a student in that particular institution, the likelihood of a good experience, and value for money. Student group interview participants were not specific about what constituted value for money. There was a much clearer idea by members of staff, who described the value for money as being in keeping with some of the UUK definitions (2011; 2015). The HoD said:

> “Students feel that they are under pressure, they are …paying good money and that this is a loan, which they’ll carry for the rest of their lives, so, therefore, they need value for money, and I mean we all do, that in real life, and so there is no reason why they shouldn't ask for that”

Here, there is a clear indication of the financialisation of HE and that there is a positioning of students as consumers. Through the FDA approach, the point made by the HoD was in an impassioned way, and suggested the naturalisation of consumerism in HE. In keeping with the idea that students should have value for money in their education, but that students at their university do not tend to demand this, the DoSS commented:

> “from an on-the-ground perspective...[we] became more mindful that they are paying this money and…we've certainly seen students…across the sector now saying …have we got value for money. Now because of COVID …we are put in a more customer service position”

This comment helps to highlight that universities are conscious of the service they provide in relation to student fees and that this is something which has been further exacerbated due to COVID-19. It would be useful if there had been time to explore the previous two points explicitly made by the HoD and DoSS with student participants to gain greater insights from the student perspective on value for money. Value for money is an important factor to consider in marketing when talking about the ‘value’ students get from an education at that particular university. Interestingly, the Student Rep highlighted that the Students’ Union seemingly had little interaction with prospective students and marketing about the university.

> “[I] can only really speak about that knowledgeably through the prism of our own contact in the Students Union, because I don't have a whole host of interaction with academics or marketing in terms of what they send, and how those conversations are structured. But we take possibly a more involved approach to pre-arrival communication for some of the students.”

The Student Rep has highlighted that there is a disconnect between the University and the Students’ Union, which may cause duplication or blurring of communications. To further illustrate the sense of blurred responsibility within the university for marketing, and how prospective students are recruited the HoD said “they will attend our open days” after some pause they added “some of them will leave their names and emails and if they ask for further information”. After students had provided such information then the university would attempt to engage further, which is done “by central sort of support departments and or the school itself and the course team”.

Concerning the communication that the Students’ Union has with prospective students, it appears to be through a number of mediums online and more traditional mailouts:

> “We…send every year a pre-arrival mail…to every applicant with an addition of the paper and newsletters and leaflets about the advice and leadership opportunities, early sign up to clubs and activities and to register your interest being a rep...and so there's a sort of first-year element to that. And then content that's relevant for returning students as well. And we have interaction with students pre-arrival through social media channels”

Here, it is useful to note that there is not only communication taking place for incoming students but also for returning students, which may be acting as a point of renewing the relationship with students. The DoM interview highlighted that there are multiple parties involved in communications and that this depends upon the stage at which the potential student/student is. The DoM highlighted that post confirmation of place communication responsibilities “that sits outside of potentially the role of communication,” and “that will come from [DoSS]'s area.” Similarly, the pre-confirmation central communications were noted as coming from the University’s marketing team led by the DoM.

> “I can tell you what communications we will send, so once someone has applied there'll be a set of communications, all the way through to them either becoming [confirmed] of which point we switch over, and those are the influence communications to remind them to not to forget to apply for accommodation,... what they need to know that student finance and funding to let them know about what bursaries and scholarships we have available”.

The DoM said that there are communications sent to potential students from subject areas.

> “Then there'll be content that comes that's relevant to the subject being applied for. So we will make sure that we have student ambassadors…all of whom are from specific courses in the university.”

Interestingly, the DoM referred to a responsibility being with the DoSS, but the DoSS identified the DoM as having that responsibility for communication with prospective students “my colleagues in Marketing will probably respond to that question, I'm aware of what's going on, but not in any real depth.” Here, there is a lack of clarity around who and how communication responsibilities are distributed, the DoSS has a large portfolio and internal communications is one of many, perhaps that is why they are less aware of communications being sent than the DoM. The change in communication would be of interest to explore to understand how nudging is used (if at all). Drawing on the FDA approach and the works of Thaler & Sunstein (2009), it is clear that communications and who is involved in those is complex and access to understanding how that is done is guarded, highlighting the importance of communications as a biopolitical tool. Such a comment from the DoM would infer that the marketing focus was directed at potential students and their families, whereas communications to students were from central and school administration, and subsequently becoming more focused on department and programme level as the year progresses. Increasing specificity of communication from university to department possibly shows a greater literacy and entrenchment of (potential) students in networks of power. This raises further interesting questions that could be explored, such as who decides on the marketing messages internal and external to the university?, how are marketing documents such as prospectuses designed?, is there a stratified strategic marketing plan to engage different potential student groups? However, these questions are outside the scope of this thesis.

4.5.1 The prospectus

The corpus drew on 12 prospectuses in the public domain from a range of university types including ancient, Red Brick, Plate Glass, Post-92, Cathedral Group, and modern; these universities’ prospectuses were looked at both pre-COVID19 pandemic (2019) and during COVID-19 (2021) (S3.4.2). The prospectuses, in eight cases, could be personalised by individuals, from a choice of content selection to including one’s name. Whilst prospectuses are a key piece of marketing there has been more of a move to online and digital prospectuses (Nwedu, 2019). These online prospectuses are more easily personalised than traditional printed ones, often using pronouns and present tense (Nasir and Shakir, 2014). Regardless, whether printed or online, all the prospectuses reviewed had a ‘glossy’ look of bold colours, and images of the university and its spaces and the immediate locality, accompanied by short summaries of courses, services, and facilities. Many of the images portrayed SLS (S4.2), and seminar spaces (S4.4.2), interestingly ancient and red brick prospectuses usually used the lecture theatre (S4.4.1).

4.5.2 Pre-arrival

During the individual interviews, it was suggested that many universities in England contract out their marketing activities to third-party specialist PR and Recruitment agencies offering support from paid advertising to more comprehensive online chat support functions through the universities' websites. In the case-study university, the DoM has effected change in the 'doing' of marketing and where responsibilities lay.

Many universities have used marketing agencies for recruitment and engagement activities. The DoM commented "when I joined we used agencies for practically everything" which included "the marketing for all the stuff we did" and that included the "digital website was outsourced". However, there was a desire to bring marketing back in-house, because the DoM believed outsourcing was "a really flawed model, I know that's what the majority of universities do." Using specialist agencies does not mean that the university has no control over its marketing, but its 'voice' could be distorted or silenced, particularly if the agency works with multiple universities (Salzer‐Mörling & Strannegård, 2004). The DoM has brought marketing back in-house for the buy-in of staff in engaging students.

> "my personal belief is that if you empower the people that work, when your team own something you get a much better outcome; because one they're involved in far more interesting work and two they have a sense of pride and ownership and level of satisfaction that they've never get from working with an agency."

The functions of marketing in-house are highlighted by the DoM as being multifaceted and requiring a range of skills, but skills that their team possess. It means the "team combines marketing digital PR and comms, the other in-house creative" here it means there is a single point of marketing for "international-domestic recruitment, admissions, and events". There is a clear power dynamic that is highlighted and the authority that the DoM has to have " kicked out every single agency that we work with". The role of online marketing to connect with students is asserted as more important now than it has ever been. The reorientation of online marketing has changed significantly around the narratives of being present on campus during my data collection period due to the restrictions on travel due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, the role of online marketing is important for recruiting students. Here, as mentioned in S4.5 and S4.5.1, there are new and innovative methods for recruiting students such as virtual open days, online virtual tours, chat groups, hosted online sessions, and other forms of online communication. As mentioned by the HoD, online marketing and ways of working have become normalised “through the digital communication learning online” so much so it is “the norm for teams meeting now”.

New working and learning practices suggest that relationships and setting the right expectations for what the experience might be like as students are key for recruitment, and securing people as students. Potential students in this context appear to be a target of marketing like any other business sector, such thinking might align with the vocabulary used by the HoD in their interview. The HoD said, “I believe it has just made them [students] feel that they are customers and, probably…more demanding and, and that is not a bad thing”. This was reiterated by the DoM: “ I think that…students have truly become customers in its proper sense.” The corpus data (government and sector documents) also showed that vocabulary was more orientated to students being aligned to customers. The language related frequently to student numbers and student finance as drivers for universities but also as measures for prospective students; in the case of government documents in the corpus ‘student loan’ was the second most recurrent phrase.

4.5.3 At the university

Once a person has become a student at the university, there seems to be a shift in who delivers the marketing content, the type of communication used, and the tone. According to the DoM, it is the point of student arrival that universities ‘switched’ from external facing teams/agencies to the internal communications /administration teams of the university (S4.5). As previously highlighted, the shift in tone is seen in the overall corpus data, the language moves from marketing documents, which use more active language, to the policy documents for students, which are typically in the passive voice. It is worth noting the tone change occurs as students and universities move into a contractual relationship.

It was discussed in the group interviews that once a student joins their university there is a more complex picture of which of the university’s expectations about ‘model’ student behaviours are communicated, who is involved in that communication, and how it is done. The HoD provided an insightful comment that highlighted the changing notion of relationships between the university and students. The course handbook is important for communicating expectations of students by the university, department, and course team.

> “[communicating expectations] is usually done, like every other university, in the course handbook. You know the course handbook will detail all the information about the course, about the course structure, about the modules, about the assessment regimes...and about the support they will

> get throughout. If it is XXXX based, the scheme of work…, so that kind of detail is all given in the course handbook …as soon as they could have enrolled and accept the university as…place of learning.”

The course handbook here appears to be a key anchoring point from the perspective of the HoD, and whilst course teams may invest time in creating them, it would be interesting to consider students’ perspectives of the importance and their use of the course handbook. The course handbook may risk becoming an artefact, particularly toward the end of an academic year. However, the expectations about academic standards and ways of living are communicated through a range of other methods in Induction Week. For example, the HoD said “they will have a number of induction lectures”, which are comprehensive “ranging from general health and safety to library”. Not only will there be university-wide activities in the induction but “ the course leader will be talking to all of them.” Whilst the HoD expresses that there will be a range of induction activities, he is less specific about what that might entail, particularly beyond the academic context. The HoD provides an induction talk where he makes the contract with new students and the department explicit. He says:

> “I welcome students and explain to them that in the nicest possible way that when they join the university it's like a contract we're entering, a contract between the university or the school or the Faculty and the students. And as always with a contract, it takes two to make a success of that contract”

The nature of the HoD’s talk explicitly shows the embedded nature of contracting and the positioning of students-as-consumers, albeit, in the way contracting is discussed, it is a reciprocal relationship with responsibilities from all parties. Following the FDA, the quote from the HoD shows a clear power dynamic that whilst it is inferred there is more of a partnership approach in what is being said, the HoD’s position and way of approaching it would show that they have more influence in the network of power. Interestingly group interview Participant 2 (a student at a different university) seemed to have a view counter to what was said about their induction experience and commented:

> “I feel that we were just told to do your assignments, assessments, just complete them, come to the lecture…it can sometimes be frustrating, I feel my uni has to do more.”

Participant 3 felt that the expectations were dependent on “...the size of the institution, the size of the school, the classrooms and stuff”. This is an interesting reflection and speaks to comments made in 4.5.4.1 about each course leader knowing their students. It is harder to build professional relationships with every student in a cohort of 4000 versus a cohort of 40.

In contrast to solely written communication, there was a much more rigorous induction process discussed by Participant 9 at their university:

> “there's much emphasis throughout this whole enrolment process and in the…initial couple of weeks … it's not just… going through this process of completing their enrolment forms and such like, where they’re introduced to a code of conduct or expectations, what we expect from you, and what you can expect from us... But… there are some lecturers who choose to introduce their own, with a lecture slide… to set out their guidelines”.

Participant 4 highlighted that their university was more explicit on paper but less so in person, suggesting “it's kind of referred to in inductions”. There were nods of agreement by two other participants when Participant 4 further elaborated “through our student support, professional services colleagues …that come in and talk about things”. Here, there seemed to be a lack of confidence in what was being said by Participant 4 saying “the information's there on the university website and the student pages.” Participant 4 is a newer academic, and following the FDA approach, maybe they are still navigating their own position in the network of power and being a newer academic might not understand the agency that they have and influence on FTUG behaviours. Building on that, the corpus data (university policy documents) supports the group interview data, showing that pre-pandemic there was a much greater focus on assessment and programme expectations, both in terms of what students should receive and how a ‘model’ student might engage. Whereas emerging into a pandemic world, the tone of documents shifted towards ‘conduct’ and ‘student discipline’ (S4.1), with the university using more explicit language about expectations of students.

4.5.4 Setting expectations

There is a codification of expected behaviours creating a set of norms and what it means to be a ‘model’ student at that university, these are behaviours and practices that one is expected to engage with in order to be seen as ‘in place’ and able to progress through the university (Wong & Chiu, 2021). Expectations of student behaviour appear to have been influenced by the impacts of COVID-19, specifically, how universities have responded to COVID-19. Participants’ views about their universities’ expectations of their behaviour were gathered in 2018 as part of my pilot study before COVID-19 and during it in 2021. The pilot study followed a robust process similar to the main study data, in terms of ethics, collection, and analysis; it is drawn on here for illustrative purposes for changes in perspective from before COVID-19 to during COVID-19. Their views were as follows:

Pilot Study Participant 1 in 2018 said:

> “all first year lecturers need to have a sensibility around them about that .., just because it says on the VLE doesn’t mean the students will have read it, putting it in the module guide doesn’t make a lot of difference, sending emails, all class emails expecting them to have read the all class email; you’ve got to understands student behaviour doesn’t stay the same”

This is a useful insight, as it illustrates that there is a need for more lively methods of articulating and setting expectations. It would suggest that staff need to be active in shaping their learning environments. They went on to say how students’ behaviour had shifted since the increase in tuition fees.

> “there are a lot of behaviours around, well ‘you are here to learn aren’t you, and no I am here to get a degree. It is your job to give me one’. So, that behaviour change has altered over time”.

Returning to the main study in 2021, and refocusing on student behaviours, Participant 1 said “We have loads of regulations and codes of practice”. However, these are not artefacts but rather “they change every year and it's just getting …the core messages to staff”. It is interesting to consider here, who the audience is for policies related to student behaviours, in this case, it seems to be for staff for “attendance.. around assessment and stuff like that”.

Participant 5 from 2021 commented: “We've had campaigns around like the respect campaign and things like that so some actively targeting student behaviour expectations”. They went on to further explain the different perceptions of them in their role as a member of academic staff, highlighting implicit power relations:

> “one thing I always do is kind of like a contract with my students, this is what you can expect from me, this is what I expect from you …I'll turn up on time, I won't be drunk, I'll be prepared, etc, and I expect them to do that. I bet because they see me as a teacher and act like minors, … they're expected to engage with the pre-work, attend the lectures, and contribute to the sessions.”

In addition, Participant 5 added, “A student code of behaviour. Yes, so our students have to sign that when they start, and they're also reminded of it for field trips and the start of each year”. Students signing a code of behaviour is embedded within a power dynamic, and the contract is used to hold them to account. However, it has not been commented on that staff sign a code of behaviour where students can hold them to account. Participant 9’s comment in S4.5.3 about the use of codes of conduct reinforced that of Participant 5. The HoD is a senior figure for students, he establishes the expectations for new students in their studies, akin to a verbal code of conduct.

Going beyond students’ studies some universities are seemingly more explicit in students’ behaviour in their everyday lives. The DoSS discussed how their university provides students with guidance on washing: “so we actually started doing some housekeeping lessons for the students, …this is how you use the washing machine.” Not only is guidance given on how to live but also interacting with members of the local community. Here, there is an entrenchment in biopolitics, with a hegemonic power shaping the practices of one’s life in terms of hygiene and creating knowable behaviours (Esposito, 2008). The FDA highlights the university’s power that is actively shaping students’ behaviours, and this is further the case with other incidents during COVID-19. The DoSS said, in relation to a student drunken incident in the local community during one of the 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns:

> “I think.. when students tend to calm down, and students will go, yeah I'm living in the accommodation or a shared house, and this is the first time I've come back. We had a student…who we have had to speak to because they've been picked up absolutely drunken in a street … I've told them to stay at home”

The Student Rep provided insight into how expectations might be enforced and the role of the Students’ Union which:

> “work[s] closely with academic staff, notwithstanding a personal tutoring system, that doesn't really work very well in places,..., and then certainly behaviourally as well, where they're not meeting expectations...there are professional programmes fitness to practice panels, disciplinary procedures that union staff and officers are often involved in…the Union has its own code of conduct for members' behaviour and associated disciplinary procedures. And every once in a while we enact those …because of…discrimination or…poor behaviour in licenced premises.”

The comment by the Student Rep positions the students' union as having a prominent role in expectation enforcement, which to some extent is at odds with discussion by other individual interviewees who did not mention the Students' Union. By considering this in the FDA, the Students' Union may not have the same value afforded it by the University as the Student Rep might seem to present here, nonetheless, further research would be needed to provide a more conclusive determination. However, further elaborating on the systems for expectations, the Student Rep said "there are a number of arrangements in place". For the case study site, "those expectations are framed at the highest level" of the university with "student charters" but whilst those expectations were written "they're not really read or paid much attention to or lived in practice." Here, there might seem to be a performative notion of expectations. Further research would help identify if there is greater attention paid to students' expectations of the university or the expectations of the university of its students.

Across the corpus and interview data from pre and during COVID-19, there have been nuances in how student expectations are conveyed (and enforced). However, such shifts must be viewed in the context of COVID-19 with an increase in paternalistic approaches to safeguard communities. Similarly, there can be seen to be more interventions since COVID-19 in everyday practice providing microchange to drive conformity and preparation for living in society as a full citizen (DeCerteau, 1988; Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010).

4.5.4.1 Staff setting expectations of students

The HoD mentioned, as quoted in S4.5.3, that he was a key person in setting out the expectations for students in his department. Whilst he outlines expectations of students, he highlights that he is one of multiple staff that will have interactions in outlining the expectations of students, but that the medium of that communication and targeting of the types of expectations vary. For example, in S4.5.4 the DoSS outlined how her team alongside the wellbeing and pastoral teams were responsible for articulating how to access support and how to interact in the community. This is not restricted to being a student but also for prospective students at open days, as noted by the DoSS:

> "[prospective] students talk to the course teams about what the course is, …they also talk to the Learning and Achievement Unit about the academic support. They go and speak to the inclusion and diversity and disability team around…what that support might look like and how soon they need to register and they talk about financial aid... the money team to look at how they support themselves and how they start applying for student finance".

Wider student support is essential for many students and is an important factor in building a picture of what their experience might be at that university (Magnan et al., 2010). The sense of building personalised courses and providing clarity of expectations is reflected in what the DoM said, and it reveals the importance of building professional relationships with students.

> “we very much speak about the practical nature of our degrees and the fact that every single one of our course leaders knows them, every student, … we tried to convey the feeling of being part of a family almost with much higher levels of support for more personal contact with course leaders”

Here, there is a sense of being ‘known’ to help in the narrative of being known and the use of ‘family’ may indicate a sense of belonging. Here, this notion of family is affectively imbued as it conveys a sense of being known and acts as a hook of being welcome and one should stay. Although, one should note that the concept of family is not homogenous nor is it something that all students can assimilate with. The Student Rep provided an interesting reflection about who is responsible for ways of working and setting expectations:

> “senior staff have sort of declared you've got to be delivering as much face to face and…they found that didn't really have a handle on what was being delivered in the building and what wasn't and when they were going around, scheduled sessions weren't taking place. And it has been a mess.”

To draw on the FDA approach, the language used in this comment would potentially indicate disdain in the way that senior university staff have interacted with other university staff. Arguably, it might indicate senior staff as being more detached and having greater authority and capacity to act, helping to show nuances in the conceptualisation of the network of power in the university.

4.5.4.2 University systems and policies about student behaviours

Every university in my research, the case study site and the corpus (university policy documents), had policies about student conduct and learning expectations, and two had policies on living in accommodation. Here, policies are usually followed with procedures for raising concerns about the university (a requirement by the OfS (2023)) and also outline the steps of ‘dealing with’ problematic behaviours or disengagement. Interestingly the university timelines vary. If the complaint is against the university, it usually takes 90-120 days from initial complaint to final resolution; in contrast, concerns about students often take 30-60 days from initial concern to action following an appeal. Here, whilst university processes are outlined, the processes are variable in specificity depending on the university, for example, one university has four stages before dismissing a student whereas another has six stages.

The role of digital systems of the university took an interesting shift. During the pilot study, there was no mention of the ‘online’ or the ‘digital’, whereas by the time of the main study, there was a shift to emergency online teaching in response to COVID-19. As noted by Tate (2023), the role of the online learning space and systems being used could be seen through observation of students engaging with university learning environments and systems, but throughout this research, there was little mention of the role they played. The policies that were included in this research usually did not involve online behaviours for learning, there were references to digital conduct on the likes of social media and email, but not for engagement in the virtual learning environments. However, were I to return now to gathering corpus documents (university policy documents, sector documents, government documents), after universities shifted to online and blended learning in response to COVID-19 this may well be different. My findings remain important as universities return to in-person learning being the default mode of delivery.

4.5.5 Metrics and comparability

As noted by Holmes (2020) there are increasing metrics (government and private sector) being used in HE in England and globally. Metrics were evident throughout my empirical research. In the structured observation, there were posters in and around the space and the university about it being ‘Top 10 in X’, ‘Top 50 for Y’, and ‘Over 85% for Z’ (something that can be seen in every university I have visited). The presentation of such posters particularly in a SLS, raises interesting questions and will be further explored in the discussion chapters.

Additionally, in the individual interviews, participants would on a number of occasions refer to the TEF (Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework) or mention a particular metric that the university needed to work on or seemed to be proud of. Marketing of these metrics by universities shows that they are entrenched in a performance-based system where universities can be compared against each other. For example, with reference to institutional TEF ratings, the DoM observed:

> “That to me is not marketing, that is a statement of fact, we are TEF silver,
> … what I think they're talking about it's all the universities that got gold.
> … we're not handing out gold credit cards and handing out things in gold”

There is an interesting distinction between marketing for potential students and 'fact' of the lived experience, which might speak to the consumerism theme explored in the next section.

4.5.6 Consumerism

The corpus data (government and sector documents) provide an interesting shift in the way that language is used, moving from earlier documents that discuss ‘institutions’ there is a more distinct change after 2018 when the Government language moved to ‘provider’. Not only that but my findings mirrored that of Morrison (2017), where there is repositioning by the government and sector in documents for ‘students as consumers’ and reference to minimum service and education standards along with the availability of data to verify the claims being made by providers. Here, there is a clear move to reflect students being given a consumer status and the accompanying consumer expectations, in addition to noting the right to raise concerns about misrepresentation and unfair contract terms to the CMA.

Similarly, the corpus data (sector documents), individual interviews, and group interviews all noted a change in student behaviours which might be seen as HE becoming a ‘service’, with recurrent framing of ‘students as consumers’. This was also seen in the interviews, such as with DoM (S4.5.2). In the summary of the group interview, regarding HE in England today, Participant 6 said “I've got, marketised, marketers, consumerised”. Participant 5 noted how the behaviour of students has changed in the last 20 years, with higher expectations of staff. Now “the student has more power” and this was attributed to “because they’re fee-paying” and there is an increased risk of “student complaints”. They further go on to explain that “there is a consumer-product” relationship which is the basis for that change.

Whilst Participant 5 was discussing their perspective, there were some glances exchanged by other students, which may infer a different opinion. It might be that there have been changes seen in Participant 5’s lived experience, but more data sources need drawing on to trace changes in power dynamic changes. However, the sense of consumerism is linked by Participant 6 to the brand of the university:

> “you know the student is a customer, the client is always right and they pay £9250, and if you tell them off for chatting in a library, how's that gonna go down on the NSS. … modelling practice, bringing them … what they expect, and helping to shape and guide … what will come out to your brand as a fantastic graduate,”

However, there were differing opinions within the individual interviews and group interviews as to whether this shift in students' behaviours and interactions with universities and staff was a positive or negative thing. For example, Participant 6 saw students as "much more demanding" whereas the HoD believed that students "should expect high standards" of staff. Noticeably in the marketing document data, there is also mention of social activities and food outlets, and for two universities there is explicit mention of food outlet brands that would be found on the high street. This is an interesting development to see the shift in the positioning of marketing documents which suggests links to evolving consumerism as per Chapter 2a.

4.6 Policy and the everyday

Policies in this research could be seen at differing scales, that of big P policy at the sector-level where there is a legal requirement or an expectation of universities to respond/act which has been driven by different political agendas, and small p policy at university/ department/ course level where there are ways of working and local expectations.

In the individual interviews, policies and guidance from the OfS do seem to directly impact the experiences of everyday living, and in particular during COVID lockdowns. However, the specifics can often be open to interpretation. For example, the DoM said that the university needed "very firm [direction], we didn't get one around COVID" which led to complications "because so much is left to the university discretion". It meant that the lack of OfS guidance "wasn't helpful for anyone... because it was open to interpretation". The DoSS said:

> "at the moment the things that keep me awake at night around government policy or the pending policy, … the Augar report and the spending review that's massive...things like the response to the sexual harassment and complaints and all those sort of really making us all really sit up and take note … and really look at our processes"

Here, there is a direct link between government policy and university policies and practices. It highlights the tangible impact of the government and the responses by universities. For example, following the Higher Education Act (2017), the documents in the corpus changed the language used about HE (S4.5.5.3). The documents show that the OfS has much greater influence and more references are made by universities to the OfS rather than during the preceding period when HEFCE had responsibilities for HE in England.

The corpus data (sector and government documents) suggests that stakeholders across the HE sector have input into policy, and more extensive reporting is required to ensure compliance with policy. In this sense not only is the university exercising influence over staff and students, but as an entity, it too has become a body which is acted upon and shaped by other actors in the network of power (Foucault, 1977). From my research, it is clear that the Government through the OfS, and the OfS as its own entity, has a powerful voice in creating and implementing policy. The OfS does seem to have an influence on the policy-making by universities, and this seems to have intensified in light of COVID-19 such as the expectations on and around campuses, and key concerns such as Sexual Harassment as noted in S4.6. The DoSS commented on the OfS's influence, "I think there's a subtle change between HEFCE and Office for Students, OfS compared to HEFCE more holds us to account, they're challenging, more challenging to us, other than what happened before, and I think that's been quite a big change for us." Here, the FDA approach helps to trace the power dynamics and expectations that universities have of the State regulator for HE, and arguably how distributing agency to universities to act has left a void in knowing how to act in crisis e.g. during COVID-19, and cost of living.

4.7 Biopower and affect

This section focuses on the biopolitical findings in the research, and as such there is a shift in the style of reporting to better align with the tactics of biopolitical interventions. This will then aid the link to the subsequent discussion chapters that provide a nuanced application of the findings regarding affect and nudging in relation to 'model' student behaviours. As such, this section provides less direct paraphrasing and more narrative reporting.

4.7.1 Biopower in action

Biopower as explored in S2b.2 shapes the way that lives are lived and influences the choices that are made (Gladwell, 2005; Lemke, 2011). Education presents an opportunity for further entrenchment and economic value for the state (as well as induction into those layers of society more central to hegemonic power), but also poses a fundamental challenge if one becomes too free a thinker or challenges that hegemony (Rousseau, 1998). Biopower was noticed in the structured observations, in the way the retail layout guided potential consumers to particular food and drink, eg. nudging them to buy sustainable coffee via a mural promoting 'drinking coffee in a sustainable way' placed directly above the retail counter. Additionally, more explicit biopower in action could be observed through the retail outlet worker controlling aspects of the space's environment, such as the lighting, the music, and their own interaction with other users of the space e.g. 'glaring' at those who had not purchased goods. Biopower was further exercised by creating an affective atmosphere to influence consumption, by building a sense of cosiness into the space, see more detailed results regarding the elements and aspects of an affective atmosphere below in Figure 10.

The individual interviews yielded several different ways biopower was exercised by the university. The DoSS talked about helping students to live healthily through seminars, e.g. washing and cooking. Here, such interventions would show the inroads made into student lives to create a more knowable and 'acceptable' way of living, part of the preparation for integration into wider society (Lemke, 2011). Furthermore, the DoSS described how biopower was exercised at the recruitment phase by describing the University's outreach programme targeted at various groups which might be considered 'non-traditional' entrants to a university, eg Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller. This highlights how different communities have specific interventions for enabling participation.

The provision of a safeguarding environment for vulnerable students, through e.g. reporting and implementation of protective measures was mentioned by several interviewees. The Student Rep discussed how students were able to interact with an established representation system and the systems to monitor and respond to behaviours such as academic misconduct. The HoD discussed explicit expectations of the behaviour and conduct of staff and students, including how to engage in appropriate time management, marking, interactions with each other, and use of facilities. Such an all-encompassing approach, with his view from a leadership perspective, would highlight the biopower in operation. Whilst biopower was not mentioned explicitly throughout the group interviews, there was mention of nudging and mirroring of language that would suggest biopolitical interventions. For example, one participant mentioned 'surveillance' and another discussed 'they had to' do something. Participants in the group interviews highlighted through the moodboards how they might expect people to behave in those different spaces, depending upon the layout and look of it. These discussions helped to show how expectations on the use of space have been socially contracted and normalisation of expectations of behaviour in particular spaces of the university, this is mirrored in the works of Adey (2008) on the use of airport spaces. Interestingly, the group discussions gave insight into the regulation and expectations of working not only for students but also for staff. There was discussion around the shared expectations the university has of staff and students, and also the expectations that students have of staff and vice versa. From the group interviews, it is clear there are systems for students to raise concerns about their provision and wellbeing, however, there was variation in the methods for doing so and the perceived effectiveness of those. Nonetheless, participants expressed that the mechanisms were important, which may be due to the more consumer nature of HE today. Biopower was evident through discussion pertaining to the interventions that universities were making in the lives of staff and students, for example, academic staff adhering to academic workload planners. The support through the cost of living funds, provision of personal hygiene products, and providing free fruit. While such interventions might be seen as a ‘public good’ it is nonetheless an intervention and guiding how one knows and lives their life (Lemke, 2011).

4.7.2 Affective atmospheres

Creating an affective atmosphere is used as a tactic (whether by design or coincidence) and is an important part of scripting an individual’s use of space and the interactions that they may have there, in some cases making it easier to make interventions (Adey, 2008). Previous work has focused on how cosy places are created or how a sense of cosiness is created in places of consumption (Billie, 2015; Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010). Hence, my research particularly drew upon the elements of creating a ‘cosy’ affective atmosphere and evidence of nudging in SLS. Figure 10, below, provides an overview of the different elements of creating an affective atmosphere and evidence of nudging across the strands of the empirical primary data collection.

Creating and controlling affective atmospheres is important in creating knowable behaviours depending on how the atmosphere is being managed. Figure 10 shows that the retail outlet staff are key agents of the hegemonic power in that space, shaping how the space is used. The retail outlet staff have control over the sound in the form of the radio playing music and how loud it is, the lighting whether it is on or not, which areas of the space are permitted to be used, and to a large extent determining who may use the space. How the observed space is used was also denoted by whether the retail outlet was open or not, in turn shaping factors such as the smell of coffee being made and ability to purchase food and drink. As such the affective atmosphere in the space is lively, changing depending upon the conditions, and this has ramifications on how SLS is used. There is significant delegated power (hence agency) to the retail staff in operationalising the attributes of the affective atmosphere and consequently, they are instrumental in facilitating influence over users of the space. A model of SLS affective atmosphere attributes is proposed in Appendix 13.

Affective Atmosphere (12 elements) and Nudging	Observed (social space only)	Individual Interviews	Group Interviews	So What? (What does this mean for my research	Link
Noise	Music too loud Hum of the refrigerators creating some distractions Road noise	DoSS mentioned idea of noise and disruption to the local community from poor student behaviour	One participant mentioned the poor design of a space Mention of types of noise Spaces are designed for purposes	Noise is a factor that can have an impact on the way the space is used Noise can be incidental or created	Affective Atmosphere is noise dependent, noise leads to users transiting rather than lingering
Sound	Music being played, and controlled by retail staff	Not mentioned	Expectations of sound in the moodboards and links to their own experiences A general sense that formal learning spaces have an expectation	Expectations implicit Sound is controlled by staff Fine balance between sound and noise Sound important for use	Active sound control influences the way space is used and interactions that may take place
Light - Natural	Daylight through large window front Areas with less daylight, esp towards the rear of space	Reference made to spaces being designed to enable students and staff to work	Images of lighting discussed Issue of traditional lecture theatres lacking natural light	Natural light important and may or may not be desired depending upon the space Light is thought as important	Natural light may convey particular meanings of how the space is used.
Light - Artificial	Lighting controlled by retail staff	Not raised	Images of lighting discussed Issue of light humming and straining eyes	Artificial light important and controlled by staff or automatic systems, determine how and who uses space Issue of lighting/ concentration	Artificial light controlled by staff, conveying meaning of expectations
Comfort - Spaciousness	More space in the sofa area Difference in space between the chairs and tables,	Student Rep – a lack of space, and working is more quantified DoSS and HoD – limitations on space, and increasingly prescribed central control of space and spaces	Discussed 'spaciousness' in terms of each image and how the spaces might be moved Space increasingly prescribed and lack of room for students and staff, except managers	Space is important, different conceptualisation of what is enough space and it is dependent upon the purpose it is for	Spaciousness is contingent upon the space and the purpose of that, and this helps to provide meaning for usage
Comfort - Boundedness	Sense of enclosure and boundedness at back of the space near corridor and the sofas, but metal seating and tables for eating	Not raised	Discussed different spaces and 'cosy' however not explicitly discussed boundedness	Boundedness provides a delimitation of spaces, implicit in discussion and observation it was explicit. Boundedness creates atmospheres and purpose	Boundedness helps demarcation of spaces and purposes
Comfort - Furniture	Choice of seating areas, higher seating (bar type hard seats and tables) seemingly used for coffee, lower seats and tables used for eating and formal meeting, sofas and lower wooden tables for group talking, informal work	Discussed what might be appropriate in social learning and specialist learning spaces	Discussed own experiences of furniture and rooms at their universities Discussed how furniture may be moved in tutorial room and lecture theatre, restrictions due to university policy	Plays a role in signifying what that space is for and how it should be used, idea of how a space might be set out and who is responsible for it	Furniture plays a key role, the idea that this is provide by 'university' rather than more locally/individual driven
Temperature	Cold at times requiring wearing jumper, however,	Not raised	Not raised	This may play a role, however, not enough evidence	Not raised, possible link

	fairly regulated to a 'comfortable' temperature				based on literature
Smell	Coffee during retail hours, occasional hot food, individuals heating own food in microwave, food brought in, few other smells	Not raised	Participant mentioned in one image the idea of coffee and eating, which would link to smelling coffee and food	Idea of smells might denote how the space used, e.g coffee. There was no differentiation between pleasant/unpleasant smells.	Link based on coffee more for SLS, and possible types of learning that can take place
Hygiene	Retail staff frequently cleaning tables, Cleaning fridges, food display cabinets, and mopping floor Sign about sanitising hands	Raised through the training of students on washing	Not raised, other than notion of 'newness'	Tidying spaces of consumption, not mentioned. Implicitly mentioned through new and old spaces, and how they might be used and impact on interactions and use	Link to social learning space as needing to be tidy for judgement of whether or not to consume
Freedom	Ability to participate in activities Need to consume in space during outlet opening hours Space in use even if outlet is closed, and different behaviours take place Limited overt regulation	Sense of choice in decision-making and who does decision-making was discussed Idea of constructing and empowering students Student choice/representation Discussion on decision-making esp. estates and finance	Discussed student input systems and involving students in learning Discussed the more prescriptive method of staff working, corridor as a method of surveillance Discussed estates decisions and how rooms are allocated	This aligns with ideas of affect theory, and different affordances/freedoms but there is a hegemonic power Freedoms are provided in micro amounts, but big decisions often remain behind closed doors	Freedom with academic rank Freedoms operate in a complex network Links to ideas on Jeremy Bentham and the Panopticon, and work by Foucault
Lingering	Sense of need to consume with interactions between 'consumer' and retail staff	Not raised	Discussed who should be using the space and for what purpose, although aspect of lingering not specifically discussed	This means that lingering is contextualised to the space and activity, gives rise to purpose and who is 'in place' and who is 'out of place'.	Tuan and Massey work on 'in place' through behaviours and interactions
Explicit direction on behaviours	Sustainable Coffee Drinking sign COVID-spacing posters and hand sanitising Floor 'stand here' signs Closure of part of space upturned chair on table	DoSS - lessons for students in washing and conduct HoD discussed his talks Student codes of conduct OfS regulation and lack of direction during COVID discussed explicitly	Discussed interventions during COVID-19 Student codes of conduct and contracts discussed Social Distancing measures discussed	Contractualisation of behaviours and practices between students and the university, and staff and the university Setting out how to interact Differing application of power	Very clear exerting of power over different actors within the network of power Conceptual model to trace who/what is exerting power
Other points to note	Types of meetings seen and uses of space Differing perception of a staff and consequent interactions Security staff generate some caution from students Posters about teaching excellence and quality of experience	DoM discussed teaching quality and excellence HoD discussion of contracts linked to neoliberal thoughts, and mutual expectations Discussion on the use of prospectuses	Discussion on the use of prospectuses Discussion on the nudging of students through learning environments (in-person and online)	Ideas about excellence and linking to codified language of expectations about student and staff conduct Use of prospectuses and imagery about how students might experience the university and the way that they should interact	Link to quality and conduct Representation of marketing and images into embodied practices link in corpus

Figure 10: Table to show a summary in the creation of an affective atmosphere and evidence of nudging.

4.7.3 Contracting

Agreeing to policies and contracts represents a symbol of acknowledgement of one's role and responsibilities to belonging to a society, or benefiting from a particular freedom or potential freedom (Rousseau, 1998). They signal formal acceptance of the rights, safeguards and responsibilities of a service/product, in this case an education (Lindsay, 2015). From the corpus data (sector documents), there is a much greater use of contracting between multiple stakeholders in HE. Of relevance to this study is the increase in contracting between universities and students. Now students sign numerous agreements with the university, these might include: Student Contract, Student Code of Conduct, Learning Agreements, Halls of Residence Agreements, and other behaviour policies. As noted by the HoD, students just 'sign what they have to' in order to enrol on their course, often 'without having read' what they are signing. However, since the recognition of HE under the Consumer Act 2015, students now have more protections than prior to that point. This was somewhat of a step change in the subsequent way that documents and policies spoke about students repositioning them more as consumers, and more freedom to express concerns about their provision. With the introduction of the OfS, further statutory guidance and conditions of being a HE provider in England have led to there being more clarity around minimum standards and details of student contracts. Similarly, universities have to provide greater clarity in how they work with all stakeholders, and as a condition of registration, they must be registered with an independent ombudsman service.

Whilst the structured observation offered little data pertaining to contracting other than posters and flyers reinforcing the value of money, the individual interviews contained rich information. All individual interviewees discussed student expectations in relation to a student code of conduct that students agree to by signing it as part of their induction. The DoM and DoSS discussed that contracts had led to negative impacts such as an increased expectation on the speed of feedback on work, and an overall increase in staff workload. Whilst contracts might be viewed negatively, the HoD and the DoSS welcomed contracts, as a way of holding both staff and students to account and helping to enhance performance. The interviewees discussed the shifts in HE that there was a marked shift in the way that HE is operationally done, and that the impact of the shift from HEFCE to the OfS is notable. The DoM noted that whilst many institutions use external marketing agencies to manage their media, they had removed the external contracting bringing marketing in-house to enhance performance and impact.

The group interviews highlighted the move towards making expectations of conduct and behaviour more explicit; each interview included a discussion on the lived experience of participants, and how from their perspective, there had been a shift in how universities engage in contractual behaviour. For one participant this was how their university expected them to work and where, for another, this was the way students and staff enter into contracts of expectations, another discussed the contracting between the OfS and the university. The discussion suggested that there has been a centring of students' protections and rights. One participant noted that there had been a shift in behaviours since the restructuring and reorientation of the sector since the Dearing Report and how that had further been exacerbated by the increase in student tuition fees. Such restructuring seems to have led to a much more neoliberal model of education resulting in a shift in neoliberal-capitalist behaviours and expectations as would be expected in consumer transactions (Nixon 2017a).

4.7.4 Control and regulation

Going beyond the contracting is the more explicit foreground of the control and regulation of individuals and the spaces that they use, here this focuses on the more explicit codifying of how one/an organisation should behave and interact. The OfS, as the sector regulator for HE in England, has provided a raft of conditions that HE providers must comply with in order to maintain their registration to provide HE. In addition, they publish statutory guidance and guidance for HE providers to follow which can have a direct impact on the ways of working in universities and the expectations being set for staff and students. Similarly, sector bodies such as UUK have published reports (2011; 2015) that directly relate to staff ways of working which aim to drive effectiveness and efficiency, it can be seen through those documents that there is now a much greater quantification and coordination of activity through regulator, sector, and university level systems and metrics such as the TEF. Universities have developed a raft of policies for staff and students for conduct and working practices, with these being linked to sanction and reward systems. For example, staff targets are set and reviewed through the appraisal system and academic promotion criteria.

Contracts such as Codes of Conduct, Student Union Codes Of Conduct, and Halls of Residence Living Agreements provide an often explicit set of expectations of behaviours that are and are not acceptable. In such a way this therefore sets not only an explicit set of expectations but contributes to the unwritten rules of what it means to be a ‘model’ student at that university and arguably this might feed into the ‘Social Contract’, or at least the social contract for that university (Rousseau, 1998; Ball, 2013).

In the structured observation, there was less evidence of explicit control of behaviours, rather this was through the affective atmosphere (S4.6.3). Nonetheless, as the retail outlet staff controlled the lighting, sales, and music, the staff member could control multiple elements of the affective atmosphere and hence was significant in shaping how the space usage. Additionally, on the first visit to the SLS, there were social distancing floor markers denoting where one could stand, whilst more of a nudge, it codifies acceptable behaviour for using that bit of the space for queuing at the retail counter. An example of explicit nudging is when DoSS discussed how they had intervened in the case of a student misconduct case and a concern for a student unable to look after themselves. In this case, the DoSS had developed a set of expectations for those students and a programme of education including living independently. Here, there is the direct intervention in individual students' lives and setting out the regulations that they are expected to follow to prevent further sanctions, but it goes beyond this into shaping expectations of how to live everyday life. Whilst the DoSS discussed these interventions more as the university expecting the student to modify their behaviour, the HoD discussed mutual expectations between staff and students. Here, for example, the HoD, as previously explored, explained the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in a student's education, and how to hold each other to account. In a more procedural vein, the Student Rep discussed the sanctions and support that are in place for students engaging in academic misconduct before moving on to the sanctions that students could face for other forms of misconduct e.g. misbehaving in the community. However, he explained that whilst these were seemingly punitive there was a focus on rehabilitation.

Group interview participants discussed how universities had input and potential control over students' behaviours and how they interacted with others. There was a range of lived experiences provided of how student (and staff) behaviours and interactions were controlled, notably through codes of conduct and professional expectations. Similar to the individual interviews, they showed how important the induction is for expectation setting highlighting rights and responsibilities for staff and students. Here, the explicit language of 'consequences' showed alignment to regulation and control linking to the degree of agency actors have (Esposito, 2008). One participant discussed how they had experienced circumstances where they felt that they were being directed in how they behaved at their university, and this was reinforced through the threat of sanctions and the need to participate in training. Another participant highlighted training such as academic writing workshops as part of the control, maybe suggesting that such workshops are a disciplining process of how to do HE (Foucault, 1977). They discussed feeling 'told off' through draconian interventions on academic work when a mistake occurred rather than feeling supported.

4.8 Summary of findings

This chapter has explored the key findings from the empirical research, showcasing a variety of the rich data that has been collected. To summarise, the key findings are that physical spaces are actively used in shaping FTUG student behaviours, and that as observed in the SLS retail outlet, staff have a significant influence in shaping the affective environment. Furthermore, the findings show that there are strong constructions of what it means to be a 'model' student and that the expectations of behaviours are actively and multiply conveyed be that through marketing documentation or through the intervention of staff. The findings form the basis for helping to address all four research objectives (RO), particularly 1 and 4 (Appendix 1). Specifically, there has been the narration of the behaviours in SLS, commentary on the use of different spaces both general and specific types of spaces in the university (RO4), the changes to the marketisation and consumerism in universities (RO1), the shift in policies about behaviour and everyday practices, and finally how biopolitical tactics are used to primarily shape 'model' student behaviours (RO2 & 3). The chapter has presented findings from the research, using an FDA approach, which is significant as it shows an intensive study into the power dynamics which exist between the State, universities and FTUG students. Most significantly, the findings help to provide an original insight into how discursive and physical spaces influence FTUG students' behaviour to create 'model' students, and how universities might expect spaces to be used.

The corpus findings were helpful in informing the questions for the interviews and structured observations, however, those findings lacked the ability to be further interrogated (S3.4). The individual interviews provide rich insights into a specific case study site to gain a greater understanding into the use of space and student behaviours, the perspectives offered were then compared against observed practices in the structured observation. However, some of the richest data was from the group interviews. The corpus and interview data was useful in creating a picture of the idea of a 'model' student which could be compared with the observed behaviours. As this study utilised a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis approach (S3.6) the group interviews helped to capture 'the scene' showing differences or agreement of perspectives through noting body language, and helping to reveal where power might lay through considering what was being said and the context. An example of this was when Participant 5 offered a perspective that didn't seem to meet universal agreement (S4.5.6). No one source of data would be robust enough on its own, however, by drawing on three sources of data there is conversation between the specific case study context (individual interviews and structured observation) and the sector (corpus and group interviews). Thus, the study findings have greater power in being able to be drawn into more meaningful discussion in the subsequent chapters.

Following analysis of the data, the key findings have been that power operates through a complex network of systems and stakeholders (RO2, 3, & 4). That is, biopower seeks to guide behaviours and interactions of students by regulating ways of working and the freedoms that are afforded to individuals, particularly with regard to ‘model’ studenthood. Spaces of the university, and as observed in SLS, script experiences through affective atmospheres. There has been a massification of contracting whilst at the same time marketing documentation has become much more homogenised and provided disclaimers to ‘marketed’ versus ‘actual’ student experience. Students have increasingly been repositioned as consumers, and this is reflected in changes to the student protections afforded to them by the OfS and other legislations and duties on HE providers. There seems to have been a shift in the way that policy operates at all levels, but most significantly at the sector-level with the de-regulation and de-centralisation of HE with consequent re-regulation and centralisation of HE. The hegemonic power appears to still be premised with the State operating primarily through the OfS, nonetheless, there are nuances at different levels of the network of power and the particular relationship(s) being analysed.

The following chapters will discuss the significance of my findings and will apply three perspectival lenses in turn: student (Chapter 5), university (Chapter 6), and sector (Chapter 7). Chapter 5 explores how the ‘model’ student is positioned in HE, how their behaviours and practices are influenced, and their agency. Chapter 6 explores how ‘The University’ as an institution might be affected and affect other actors in the network of power, specifically in creating ‘model’ behaviours, and how it goes about that. Finally, Chapter 7 explores how ‘The State’ with how ‘the sector’ has emerged as a concept, how it has been restructured and reorientated, how it exercises its own power, and how it influences what it means to be a ‘model’ student. The chapters have been set out in this way to mirror the conceptualisation of the levels of the network of power as seen in Figure 2 (micro - student, meso - university, macro - the State). Separated for considerations of scope and length, the three chapters are closely interconnected, reflecting the complex network of actors and power dynamics that exist between actors (McCormack, 2013; Thrift, 2004). The chapters work to ‘zoom out’ of the network of power, by tracing the power one must work backwards from those being affected, in this case the student, up through the apparatus of the power (the University) to the source of hegemonic power (the State). Hence, the discussion starts by looking at how individual FTUG students are affected to become ‘model’ students (Chapter 5), tracing the power up to the university and how it is affected and affects students (Chapter 6), and then tracing the power further up to a sector and explicitly the State (Chapter 7). For that reason, Chapter 5 starts off much more rooted in observable behaviours and specific practices, the impact of being affected. Chapter 7 is less situated in specific observed behaviours but reflects the less grounded nature of how the State influences FTUG student behaviours.

Chapter 5: Discussion - The Student

This first discussion chapter examines the student experience at the micro-level of the network of power, affording insights from the primary data as to how students are influenced. It looks at how the FTUG student experience, through the scripting of behaviour, is created; how that emerges throughout their university experience; and how a graduate might be ‘produced’ ready for society and employment. In this vein, the creation of students might be thought of as ‘becoming’ a student, the emergence of a student as ‘being’ a student, and a produced student/graduate who ‘became’ a student and is now ready to leave the university. To this end, the chapter explores the methods used to shape the ‘model’ student. The ‘model’ student is important to analyse as it creates a proxy for determining at which point an intervention might be made to ‘guide’ a student back to expected behaviours and practices. Hence, it is at these threshold moments of intervention (or not) that policies often focus such as in Codes of Conduct. To better advance new knowledge in the manifestations and results of scripting of FTUG behaviours this chapter is heavily grounded in empirical data to provide granularity at an individual-level. This focus is to provide a foundation of the micro-level in the network of power.

Universities having expectations of student behaviour and academic conduct is not a new phenomenon, but how those behaviours are conveyed has altered over time (Nielsen, 2015). Significant shifts in expectations of what constitutes ‘model’ studenthood can be seen in the corpus (which contains a sample of documentary sources), where language has shifted to become more explicit about physical conduct and interventions, in what might be a response to the post-pandemic context. However, such shifts trace the changing relationship between the State, the University, and students situated within a wider societal and political context.

To help trace the journey of a typical FTUG student, and the expectations of a ‘model’ student along that journey, the chapter is structured following the emergence of key themes from my empirical data related to the transition and sense of key shifts in the FTUG journey. Whilst largely, these follow the successive years of a typical three- year FTUG experience the descriptors could be applied beyond that. As such the chapter follows the stages of the journey, as shown in Figure 11 below:

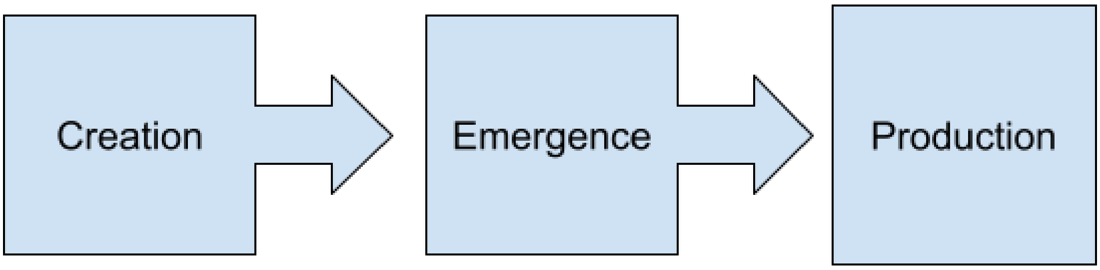

Figure 11: The journey of a FTUG Student through university

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5.1 Creation of the student

S2a.2 discussed the purpose of HE, the idea of creating an ‘ideal’ or a ‘model’ student can be seen through the deployment of citizen training to guide individuals to conform to the norms and conventions of the society that they live in. The data suggests HE is a vehicle in which being a ‘model’ student embodies the values of responsible active citizenship aligned to the view of the State. Rousseau (1998), explains that if one breaches the social contract there will be a consequence. Using a biopolitical lens, this might involve retraining and reconditioning to reenter society. However, this vision of the citizen is, of course, anticipated by a long tradition of moral education and citizenship education, but is more customarily associated with compulsory education rather than optional HE. Arguably, using post-structuralist terminology, the State is ‘naturalising’ HE as the progression pathway of 18- year-old school leavers. Chapter 4 documents the induction of students into studenthood and sets out the expectations of being a student at that particular university, be that through course handbooks, staff outlining responsibilities, or student conduct contracts. However, as Rousseau (1998) posits, training is required for individuals before joining a particular society, this training is manifest through the above documents students are expected to engage with. This early formative stage might be viewed as one of the steps in ‘becoming a student’. As previously discussed (S2a; S3.5), there is a focus within secondary and Further Education in England on preparing students for entry into HE. Likewise, for most FTUG programmes in England, the first year at level 4 is perceived as lower stakes, as a year of preparation for the second and third years which contribute to the final degree classification. The first-year of the FTUG experience is one of significant transitions, not only academic but also life. As Jindal-Snape & Rientes (2018) have shown, transitions are not banal but involve a whole range of actors, thoughts, emotions, and establishing new understandings.

5.1.1 Sector and universities creating the idea of the 'model' student

As seen in the corpus data (marketing materials), there is a portrayal of what it means to be a student at that particular university (S4.1). Furthermore, there is a dominant narrative of the value of being a student, albeit different HE stakeholders may portray that for their particular lens. Universities have several purposes in England, (S2a.2; S2a.4): they are sites of business, innovation, education, consumption, and public good. Across the sector, there have been diversification and widening participation efforts by universities, such as that discussed by the DoSS (S4.7.1.2). Nonetheless, students are the means by which universities fulfil these purposes. Hence, to attract students, each university portrays its unique characteristics through the media about what the 'student experience' is like there.

Being a 'model' student (or an 'ideal student' in the conceptualisation of Wong & Chiu, 2022), has been explored in terms of academic performance and developing the skills, literacies, and behaviours for learning as part of the academic community. Likewise, the use of nudges in 'becoming a student' to engage in the student community and to participate in 'studenthood' has been researched *inter alia* by Neilsen (2012). However, there remains a disconnect between these more academic-focused accounts of model studenthood and broader conceptions of student 'being'. These aspects seem to be particularly distinct throughout this research, and there is a period of assemblage of what it means to be a student, a term I coin 'creation of the student'. This creation aligns with the idea that becoming a student is unique to each person but premised on the context of norms, affects, policy, prior experience, early engagement and interactions, such as early inductions and interventions in living (S5.4.2; S5.6.1.2). This sense of creation is driven more by the hegemonic power's narrative rather than the experience of the individual's becoming (Ball, 2013). However, the vision of what a student might be has been shown as lively and changes over time (Ball, 2013; Nielsen, 2015; Chiu et al., 2022).

The idea of what a model student might be and how they interact with others and spaces may also help with creating a sense of a collective identity, which helps to generate a sense of belonging (Ball, 2013). A sense of belonging and collective practices help to denote who and what belongs in the university. Hence, when students deviate from these expectations, it is apparent and may lead to othering by peers. As there is a deviation from the knowable expected behaviours, thus, those deviant behaviours are more easily identified by staff and interventions can be made. Nonetheless, it should be noted that with differing staff and student perspectives on expectations (S4.5.4) there could be variations in the idea of being a 'model' student, and arguably my data present more of a staff perspective.

5.1.1.1 Using marketing to create the idea of a student

This research has shown that marketing is a tactic used by universities to convey what it means to be a student at that particular university. Ironically, branding and marketing management is often outsourced as highlighted by the DoM (S4.5.2). As use of traditional printed media has declined there has been a shift to digital and personalised media, such as tailored prospectuses and virtual tours. There are other tactics such as online conversations and seminars with existing students and staff to engage potential students in discussion about the university and experiences. Regardless of the medium of communication, potential students are exposed to what it means to be a student at that university and what they can expect as part of their experience. By using imagery and virtual tours of the institutions a prior literacy is developed by potential students. Throughout the first year through exposure to the marketing imagery and the move to internal communications, there is a sense of what it means to be a student. The notion of ‘student being’ is then reinforced gradually as the year progresses. Additionally, the documents seem to become less glossy and contain few, if any, images, such as of iconic buildings of the campus (S4.1). This can be particularly seen as an individual transitions from a potential student to an enrolled student.

For some students, there is an inherited knowledge from parents/carers and teachers about what it means to be a FTUG student (Forster & van de Werfhorst, 2020). Such acquired knowledge might shape what students expect to encounter and may help them prepare for university, however, students likely ‘reconstruct’ their perceptions based on engagement with their peers. The OfS (2018b) highlighted that students are most likely to turn to their parents/carers for advice in the decision-making process in choosing which university to attend. Parents/carers, therefore, may be looking to identify universities that are going to provide a good experience for their ‘child’, and universities are cognisant of this in their media to not only engage potential students but also their parents/carers (S4.4.1).

5.1.1.2 Engagement with students throughout the first year

The individual interviews highlighted that early engagement with students is a key tenet of HE in terms of conversion from a potential student into a student. The HoD and DoSS discussed that their university, like others, use the induction week for communicating an array of information about expectations and everyday practices to be adhered to (S4.5.3). At the same time, there is some acknowledgement that throughout the first year, there is likely to be more ‘citizenship’ training to support individuals to become more responsible global citizens and meet societal norms and practices. An example might be when the DoSS intervened in student drunken behaviour in the local community (S4.5.4.4). Hence, there appears to be greater leniency, an approach aligned to rehabilitation, to retrain students to ensure that the behaviour and/or practice that was deemed to deviate from expectations does not reoccur. The role of the university is about creating responsible work-ready graduates (S2b.7). Early interventions might be seen as aiming to develop greater resilience and self-regulation in students, which help them better cope with future transitions.

Throughout the early formative stages of student life there are much more paternalistic interventions guiding through engagement, be that nudging or more explicit inductions (S4.5.3). This engagement is not limited to academic but also to everyday living, such as washing and cooking, as discussed by the DoSS (S4.5.4). There are expectations of how to conduct themselves for example in halls of residence, and campus tours that explain where and how to use certain areas of the campus and key places of importance. Additionally, there are expectations of how to engage with the Students' Union which stretches to social and intimate lives such as sexual consent education. Here, setting expectations beyond the academic is an illustration of students not being banal objects for receiving knowledge but rather politicised and entwined in a biopolitical discourse beyond HE.

5.1.1.3 Policy direction regarding students - a student focus

As the notion of 'the student' is politicised, 'the student' is therefore a body of multiple contestations (S4.7). 'Big P' policy is driving students to develop graduate attributes to be work-ready, albeit 'graduate attributes' are unclear as to what they might be. However, broadly speaking policy is about ensuring that students have the skills and knowledge to be an effective part of a highly skilled workforce (in England the tertiary and quaternary sectors) (Bryan & Guccione, 2018). With that in mind, degree programmes and extra-curricular opportunities are fundamental parts of the student experience to build skills and knowledge.

Beyond the skills and knowledge to be part of the workforce, there is a direct link to the increased economic contributions of individuals to countries/communities as shown in the corpus data (government and sector reports). A more highly skilled workforce should lead to a higher economic output (Lunt, 2008), hence strengthening the country's economic position (and that of the individual). Focusing on the economic, from the perspective of the HE sector, universities must attract students to sustain themselves (Scott, 2021). Such dependency is due to HE funding being premised on a loan-based system which pays for students' education. Fewer students would mean a reduction in funding and a less stable university and HE sector, hence, growing student populations are essential to provide a viable university. Furthermore, the student becomes a site of policy to act on as preparation to be a responsible and engaged global citizen. For example, the introduction of volunteering projects into programmes and SU groups fundraising for good causes highlights an alignment with the ideas of the Big Society. The Big Society vision is one where individuals work and contribute in other ways to the wider community, such as volunteering (Alcock, 2012). Not only that, but HE was a key vehicle that helped the New Labour government drive social mobility. Today, HE still retains the promise of upward social mobility (Vignoles, 2013). Indeed, the Social Mobility Commission is a key government organisation remitted with enabling people to have access to opportunities, and HE remains a key strategy. Individuals, therefore, may seek to become students to access more opportunities for life.

The layering of policy can be seen in the 'small p' policy of the university, which has a replication of similar policies at the sector, the university, the department, and the course level (S4.6). As the data shows there are mechanisms for student voice, and for students to have input into the various layers of decision-making, however, key decisions are often made where there is no direct and/or meaningful student input. Such findings resonate with some of the key questions on the purpose of HE (S2a.2) and governmentality of HE (S2b.2). The lack of student input raises the question for whom then is HE? Consequently, what is it that the plethora of policies, regulations, and guidance is trying to achieve?

5.1.2 Students and contracts

Student contracts often extend to many aspects of life, from declarations regarding immunisation to using the halls of residence, from bicycle storage to the use of computer systems. Policies may codify the expectations of students, creating more knowable and embodied 'model' behaviours; hence if a student deviates from those then there is greater recognition of deviation and quicker targeted interventions (S2b.9). Interestingly, there has been a proliferation in the contractualisation of HE, there has been a move towards generic and homogenised marketing documentation. This will be explored in Chapter 6.

5.1.2.1 Making student conduct explicit through contracts

Conduct pre-COVID appears as something that was more implicit and there was a lack of detail as to specific behaviours expected (outside of academic matters). However, with COVID-19, and as reflected throughout the world, there had to be a change in behaviours and interactions to limit the spread of the disease, and since that language on non-academic behaviours is more apparent. The change can be seen in the corpus, which comprises a sample of documents from pre-pandemic to post-pandemic, (S2a.11), where the language used becomes much more explicit and paternalistic. With the emergence from the lockdown(s) to social distancing measures and ongoing heightened public health measures, universities needed to adhere to the legislation and guidance of the State. One method for compliance was the introduction of new behaviour policies outlining expectations of movement and conduct on and around the campus. Here, there are explicit directions about social distancing, signs of which were witnessed during the structured observation.

The data shows that staff throughout the induction week for students are key in bringing expectations into the cognisance of students (S5.1.1.2). For example, the HoD outlines his expectations of students and also the expectations students should have of department staff. Here, students are empowered with agency, but the manner and context have an implicit power dynamic with the HoD leading the conversation inferring a greater position of power than students, which renders the capacity to act as a new student somewhat impotent. Such a power dynamic is noted in works on education and emotion by Boler (1999), and problematic use of poststructuralist approaches by Hodgson and Standish (2009). As noted by the DoSS (S4.6), student expectations are not only explicitly conveyed by academic staff but also by activities of professional services staff and students' unions e.g. sexual consent workshops, library inductions, and student group welcomes. There are ongoing activities usually that students can engage in during the first year such as academic writing workshops designed to ensure students meet the 'academic expectations' of a 'model' FTUG student. Here, students are not only developing the 'ideal' attributes of being a student (Wong & Chiu, 2021), but also broader narratives of complying with societal expectations.

5.1.2.2 Centring students as consumers

With the Consumer Act (2015) protecting students in HE, this has led to a legal repositioning of students as consumers, albeit some may argue it was a formalisation of what was already practised. The documents drawn upon in the corpus show that there was a transition point in 2011 at which there were moves to a greater focus on customer service and ensuring that students are afforded value for money. Whilst students are given such protections, one has to question the purpose of positioning students as consumers (S2a.8).

As seen in the corpus and interview data, students are essential to the financial sustainability of the HE sector. Therefore, England's HE sector needs to remain lucrative and responsive to the needs of students to provide long-term viability. Not only that but by placing students at the centre of a HE market economy, universities might become more competitive and innovative to provide an attractive provision for students (and other stakeholders) (S4.5). Universities have to be agile and responsive to 'the market' working at a fast pace to meet the needs of current and future students. However, as seen in comments from interview Participants 5 and 6 (S4.5.6), whilst there seems to be more of a negative connotation in the interviewees' perspective, to the repositioning of students, this is not universally the case.

Nonetheless, such repositioning of students has resulted in changing expectations by students of the quality and experiences they have at university (Beech & Wolstencroft, 2022). Conversely, the expectations that the university has of students have also evolved.

5.1.2.3 Contracting as clarity or ambiguity?

The increase in regulation for HE Providers by the OfS (and CMA) means there have been changes in the way that experiences and expectations of students can be portrayed by universities in marketing literature (S4.1; S4.5). Bradley (2018) has provided interesting insights into a number of universities which have published misleading claims and subsequent responses by the sector, and the stance by the OfS. The data suggests that there has been a move away from detailed marketing literature, arguably for fear of misrepresentation of the anticipated student experience and to avoid being sued for not delivering that experience (S4.1). There has however been an increase in contractualisation with students (Wang & Wang, 2018), for example, annual enrolments including declarations on conduct, financial commitment, academic integrity, sexual harassment, and health and safety (S4.7.3). Thus, students are further entrenched in a system of legal and 'voluntary' contracts indicating their rights and obligations between them and the university. So-called 'voluntary' contracts or those which are not a legal requirement become presented as non-optional for students, they have to agree to be afforded a full education at the university.

Detailed contracting helps to formalise relationships between students and the university (or parts of the university experience). The extent of contracting can cause confusion, and as Participant 2 remarked, many students just sign without reading or knowing what they are signing (S4.7.3). Hence, contracting embroils students much more readily into a world of bondage of legal forms and obligations and arguably provides less freedom to live early adulthood. Fulford (2019) explored the impacts on both universities and students in a new era of contracting, she highlights the importance of separating the legal minimum requirements and that of the potential broader student experience. Whereas Souto-Otero et al. (2024) see that students are bound into contracts that see them as ongoing sources of potential finance. Here, students are incorporated into a complex web of terms and conditions and systems of financing.

5.1.3 Initial becoming of a student

The data shows that becoming an FTUG student starts before an individual reaches the university. The idea of 'becoming' is not new, but rooted in ideas of transition, developing a consciousness and assimilating a particular identity (Barnett, 2005) and this is different at discrete educational phases (James, 2013) - see Chapter 2a for ideas of becoming a student. The DoSS highlighted the extent of work that their university does to engage potential students, and the targeted interventions in communities of widening participation backgrounds (S4.5). Education in England is increasingly premised on preparing sixth-form students for entry into HE (Smith et al., 2015). Therefore the initial stages of 'becoming' a HE student transcends the boundaries of the physical university campus. The journey starts increasingly through the digital marketing spaces via social media and websites (S4.5.2).

Once a student joins the university, their first year, and particularly the first term (with induction week), involves exposure to a plethora of information. Concurrent with the life changes of meeting new peers, new lecturers and staff, new surroundings, and often new ways of living, students are presented with a range of documentation, talks, and training that codify implicitly (sometimes explicitly, as discussed by the HoD and group participants in S4.5.3) the expectations of the university. Early induction provides students with a reference point for what the rest of their student experience might look like and how they should go about studying. Most universities do not count grades from the FTUG first year and utilise the first year as an opportunity to build foundation knowledge and skills (Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007). Hence, there is a sense of the first year being one of formative experiences and one in which students are transitioning from school to university. Such a laissez-faire approach to the first year shows it is treated more as a time of 'becoming' a student, and preparation for moving to the second year where there are usually fewer contact hours. The DoSS commented (S4.7.4.3), it is a year in which students are expected to develop the skills to live independently and become engaged active citizens. In this vein not only are students becoming 'model' students they are also becoming 'model' adult citizens, being empowered with more responsibilities than ever before in a 'safe' environment (S4.5.4).

5.1.3.1 Social contract of being and belonging

Building upon the last section, and work by Rousseau (1998), as a student makes progress throughout the induction and enrol on their course, they accept the 'terms and conditions' of being at that university. Here, they become part of both the university and the students' union, as a member of those two intertwined communities students become bound by the social contract of belonging to those communities (S2a.2; S2b.6). There is a mix of formal contracting combined with early formative stages of social contracting that are used as a method to cut through the noise of a hyper-connected world. It is important to provide clarity as there are multiple interpretations of studentship globally, here the contracts may help to denote what it means to be a student at that particular university, and as explored in Chapter 2b this provides scripting to a particular vision of studenthood. As students become actors within the network(s) of power of HE, agency is given and taken depending on the situation and context (S2b.10). For example, newer students may have little literacy of the networks and expectations of 'being' a model student, so they lack agency. However, there may be more willingness to support a first-year student for poor referencing than a final-year student.

5.1.3.2 Formal inductions

The data suggests that induction to a university is not a single event in time; rather it is an assemblage of different activities including induction talks and campus tours as highlighted by the HoD and group participants (S4.5.3). First, there is the social aspect of meeting new peers, usually moving into shared accommodation, exploring the local area, navigating around the university, joining clubs and societies, and, for most, establishing independent living. Second, there is the pastoral, meeting of personal tutors, finding out the support available from the university and students' union for health and wellbeing, where to go for support for additional needs, and expectations on conduct. Finally, the academic, an induction to the course, the modules, the department, the expectations of academic conduct, academic integrity, academic writing, who's who, and other matters.

Inductions are also about developing a literacy of the physical estate (Barnes et al., 2008), and building an awareness of where places are and how they are used, thus indicating how one should use them (S4.5.4). The HoD highlighted campus tours both departmental and those through the likes of the SU. Here, access to spaces may be controlled through the likes of proximity access cards or opening hours, signalling who and when buildings should be used. Additionally, there is the induction into the digital space and how digital systems such as virtual learning environments and library searches should be used.

5.1.3.3 Quasi-state of being

Throughout the induction, there is an opportunity for students to express who they are. Entering HE marks a big transition, with most students having moved from secondary education, and this provides an opportunity to express new identities and form new everyday behaviours (S4.6). So, on the one hand, there is the opportunity for students to express who they are. On the other hand, with the lack of a known cohort and entering into what would usually be a much larger institution, students may have less confidence.

As the year progresses there might be more of a sense of becoming a student through self-discovery (Nielsen, 2015), and this was commented upon in the group interviews about communication from the university about expectations of independent study (S4.5.3). Furthermore, encounters with others, the learning and assessments participated in, and social activities attended, creates a better understanding of the society in which they live and their own identities. Thus, at this moment in time, students are still becoming students rather than 'being' perceived as full students who have competent literacy to navigate the university's systems. Students navigate the affordances and responsibility of being part of a university; a metaphor would be to see students being moved into a larger petri dish, to grow and realise more of their 'adult' responsibilities. However, students are still within the more contained environment of the university before they are 'allowed out into the world', such notions are reminiscent of Foucault's (2010) work exploring citizen training. There is not a full sense of 'being' as one transitions into HE, arguably there is a greater sense of quasi-being as one adjusts to their new social contract with more rights and responsibilities. However, greater freedom is with the ever-present knowledge that it is on the premise of making progress academically (S4.5.4.2). In a way, this is an experimental period, before passing into society with the recognition of education and the expected set of skills and attitudes. On graduation, students exit the quasi-state of being and relative safety of HE into the 'real world'. However, this is a contestable notion that can often be messy and idiosyncratic as each person is an individual and has their own interactions with the world.

5.1.3.4 Early interventions with students' behaviours

When a student has questionable conduct or there are signs of concern, be that academic or pastoral, in the view of the university/staff there is usually a targeted early intervention to 'support' them (S4.7.4). Here, the datafication of HE means that there is much more information about students and the support that they have/are receiving along with progress and attendance data among other things. While such data may help interventions it shows medicalisation and how individuals become the subject of biopolitical tactics (Lemke, 2011).

The DoSS intervention with a drunken student (S4.5.4) might on the one hand be seen as supportive and helping the student, it reveals a power dynamic. Such an intervention shows the paternalistic nature of the university, it highlights the control and exercise of power over students and the lack of agency that students have. This interventionism is in keeping with the ideas in S2b.2, particularly the ideas argued by Ball (2013) on the agency that students have (or don't). Additionally, it might highlight that such rapid intervention in this case could be to safeguard the reputation of the university more than that of the individual student, drawing into question the motivations for 'support'.

5.1.4 Different spaces of the university developing literacy of what it means to be a student

The design and layout of different spaces subconsciously influence student behaviour and consequent interactions. It is clear that whilst there may not have previously been as much planning into spaces, since the UUK Reports (2011, 2015) and the increasing financial pressures on England's HE sector, space is at a premium. The data highlights that space is very much on the agenda for universities, not just estate teams but importantly on the executive team agenda, as highlighted by the DoM (S4.5).

The data would support the idea that different spaces of the university are imbued with particular uses and expectations, affective scripting is narrated through the regulation and control of space, as seen in the creation of a 'cosy' atmosphere in SLS (S4.2). Small changes to the atmosphere denoted who belonged in the space at a moment in time, and what signified acceptable use. Throughout the moodboard section of the group interviews, each image was almost met with a unanimous view of what that particular space was, although SLS had some nuances over what its purpose was. Similarly, student participants in the group interviews unanimously agreed on what the purpose of the space was and how it should be used. It is important to note staff always agreed to the student participants' perspectives as well as offering additional views on the use of the tutorial room and purpose of the corridor (S4.4). The findings of this study suggest a dominant narrative across and through the sector about how one is expected to use a space, somewhat surprising given the extent of transitions being discussed in the data. Hence, affective scripting provides prompts around what is acceptable and what is not at a particular moment in time. Where there are multiple perceived interpretations, this might be down to differences in role and type of prior interactions in a space or similar spaces, having built a personal literacy of how to use a particular space. Similarly, spaces might be used differently compared to their original/intended use, which could result in lingering affects on how the space should be used. Lingering affects are important, as they can result in unanticipated behaviours and practices which then require interventions or redesign of the space (Cote, 2009). Nonetheless, architecture and conscious design of space which are created by the university, as the hegemonic power in that space, create an officialised narrative about the space (Bevir, 2013; Dean, 2013). Architecture reinforces how space should be used not only through physical design but also through policies and marketing literature providing particular narratives of behaviours and interactions. For example, SLS in the structured observation is portrayed in marketing as a place of coming together in a friendly and convivial manner around a piece of work with coffee; it is not portrayed as somewhere where members of the public are waiting for a dance class.

University spaces are not mundane or passive in the creation of students. Rather, they are active and lively, providing affective scripting of how they should be used and signify the expectations of ‘model’ students (S4.2; S4.3; S4.4). Additionally, throughout the creation of students, individuals build a literacy of the spaces, how their use might change throughout the day, and also the degree of agency that they might have. Also, for some students the consequence of transgressions in using a particular space leads to re-training, for example, shouting in a library resulting in the Librarian requesting quiet from the student or becoming overly drunk in the students’ union leading to temporary barring. Such disciplining done in early adulthood as one becomes a student is an important process of further preparation for societal expectations of post-HE experiences. Interestingly, as academic attainment in the first year is not included in the final degree outcome calculation, the first year could arguably be the premise for disciplining and understanding the everyday practices of what it means to be a responsible global citizen and student. The first year allows some expectation of exploring the limits of what might be acceptable and ‘getting it out of the system’ so that they can emerge into ‘being’ students. However, that is not to argue that students are absolved of agency, indeed, activism by students (and staff) has seen spaces such as a small underutilised corridor space being repurposed as SLS, and campaigning for a dining space as discussed by the Student Rep. The findings related to agency by different actors of differing influence in networks of power and the use of space can be seen reflected in the works of others such as Maass et al. (2009) and Gotham and Brumley (2002).

5.2 Emergence of the student

The second year of a FTUG course represents a shift in academic challenge moving from level 4 to level 5 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework. Whilst there is little or no change in the pedagogic approaches, there is usually a decrease in the number of contact hours that students have with staff, although this is subject-dependent (Milsom et al., 2015). These are debates that are frequently seen in online discussion forums such as ‘The Student Room’. The second year has sometimes been dubbed the forgotten year, as the university has less focus on those ‘in the middle of the system’, nonetheless the second year is one of social, psychological, and academic shifts (Milsom et al., 2015). With that in mind, students emerge into ‘being’ students, having navigated the early understandings of everyday practices and expectations outlined in the first year. Hence, there is an increased sense that the university has given more responsibility, and has higher expectations of students as discussed by participants including the HoD (S4.5.4; S4.7.1.2; S4.7.1.3). The second year for most FTUG students is the year with limited access to university-owned accommodation, which means they are likely for the first time to be sourcing private accommodation. Although it should be noted that there is increasing pressure on student housing which may mean some first-year FTUGs will have privately rented (Skopeliti, 2023).

5.2.1 Move throughout the academic programme

The move into the second year denotes an increase in academic expectations of students. This represents, for most students, the commencement of their academic grades contributing towards the final degree outcome. The Student Rep inferred that there is a sense the first year does not count and therefore it is not taken as seriously (S4.5). By that logic, it would mean that the second year is likely to be taken much more seriously by students and involve an ontological shift in how they perceive their studies, concurring with the findings of Milsom et al. (2015). However, this distinction was not evident in the corpus data, but the application of policies was commented on by group interview participants.

The first term of the second year serves as an opportunity to remind students of their rights and responsibilities, including being involved in the student voice systems. Much of this occurs around the 0th and 1st week of the academic year, with changes to the course and modules highlighted (S4.5). It is less overt than the experience of first-year freshers week. As part of being a ‘model’ student, they must make satisfactory progress throughout their course. This is not only the acquisition of new knowledge but also the ability to apply that knowledge to new contexts. It is also about the development of skills that might be relevant to their future careers (Wong & Chiu, 2021). Additionally, it is about developing key attitudes and behaviours that will likely enable them to be contributors to society and remain lifelong learners (S4.1; S4.5.4). Whether this is acutely apparent to the students or not is less clear, but rather incorporated into the umbrella of employability. However, students do appear to be more aware of the need for specific skills and knowledge for a potential career pathway and that employability support is a key provision at the university (Succi & Canovi, 2020). The findings suggest that students are aware of needing a degree for better job prospects, but students are less clear regarding specific skills and knowledge (S4.1; S4.5).

Additionally, individuals are repositioned as ‘being’ students and this could be argued as being reflected in agency redistribution in the networks of power (Ball & Junemann, 2011; Ball, 2013). It is expected that students know much more about key aspects of being in HE, such as how to structure an essay. The change in student year hierarchy, as second-years, are no longer the most junior students in the FTUG system, and indeed first years may see second-years as contemporary role models and sources of support. The repositioning of students might be related to students becoming more entrenched in the university system, hence incidents such as the DoSS intervening in drunken behaviour (S4.5) are less frequent. The group interviews support this narrative of students being more able to 'navigate' the university system. Second-year students have had one prior academic year to familiarise themselves with navigating their university's systems and have greater literacy of the university's expectations. Similarly, they will have been through the formative process of making friendships and developing everyday practices that conform to the university's expectations (Nielsen, 2015). Reciprocally, students' expectations of the programme and of being a student at that university will have been better mediated and internalised, such as staff availability and educational progress (S4.7.3). This is not to say that students stop developing literacies of society, citizenship, and academic participation; but rather they are expected to be at a point that requires less intervention (and arguably attention) by the university. As Milsom et al. (2015) observe, second-years are expected to be at a point where they have developed skills and knowledge suitable to make individual progress with less supervision. Here, as discussed in the group interviews students develop more independence and work on projects with less direct supervision from academic staff.

The second year serves as preparation for the third year, as such the level of engagement, emerging interests, strengths and areas for development shape possible choices for the third year, which typically is more focused on an individual's academic interests. Hence, the skills and knowledge that students develop are important to the quality and direction of work in future study (S4.5.4), and in some cases can be a determining factor in the final degree outcome (Milsom et al., 2015). The second year is important for students to participate in the student voice systems, as it is often the year for having a meaningful impact on their studies (S4.3.2). This is because first-years are often unaware of the systems, and timescales which often can be an academic year, and the bureaucracy to be navigated for change to happen.

5.2.2 Engaging with university systems

As students emerge into 'being' they are expected to know more about the university systems and become proactive in resolving their own issues. To some extent, the second year is when there are fewer university influences to navigate as living is often off campus, as a result there is less direct oversight of life outside the academic. The caveat is that university policies and expectations of conduct extend into the community, albeit self-policing and self-regulation are of greater emphasis (Foucault, 2010; Nielsen, 2015) (S4.7). This provides a mix of emerging into the 'real world' for accommodation and some social life, whilst still having the relative safety and greater structure of being in HE (Nielsen, 2015). Consequently, if the social contract of being a student at that university is breached, it would result in an intervention being made, as discussed by the DoSS (S4.5.3). Furthermore, there is an expectation that students in their academic work demonstrate good academic integrity, with, arguably, less compassion for poor practice than in the first year. This is shown by Hughes and McCabe (2006), who explore the ethics and morals of academic misconduct in the USA. The increasing responsibilisation of students is often mirrored in the rolling back of active engagement of student academic support, with students expected to be proactive in seeking assistance.

Moving to 'being a student' there is a move away from marketing communications, except for possible upselling opportunities and from the Students' Union for example the chance to participate in an exchange or selling of tickets to events (S4.5; S4.5.4.1). The student-university relationship seems to become more contractual and blunt at this point, denoting a change in their siting in the network of power. Students are part of the ongoing micro-negotiations of their position as consumers (Tomlinson, 2017). Additionally, as students engage with learning systems and progress throughout the year there is greater availability of data to enable staff to make targeted interventions (S4.7.4).

5.2.3 Using spaces at the University

The data shows that university spaces are important in shaping what it means to be a 'model' student at that particular university, such as campus tours of the library explaining what designated areas of the library are for with the expected behaviours and uses (S5.1.4). In the second year, expectations of space might be recapped but there is an assumption by the university that students know how to use different spaces as discussed by the HoD (S4.3.2). Being a 'model' student, especially one that might be well engaged means inhabiting and using the spaces of the university, being open to affective scripting, and reinforcing the narrative and practices of what it means to be a student there. Arguably, as second-year students tend to live outside of the university accommodation, the role of university spaces becomes more important, as the affective architecture is a biopolitical strategy to maintain the narrative of what it means to be a student (Ball, 2013; Anderson, 2014). Having said that, social spaces are no longer predominantly premised just at the university (Nielsen, 2015), hence there is a trade-off in which aspects of affective scripting are acting on students, namely the focus is on the academic. Here, the corpus data from marketing documents would suggest that university accommodation is focused on first-year students based on the language about 'moving in', 'moving to' and 'guaranteed first-year accommodation' (S4.1; S4.5.1). So, university spaces may also take on new meaning for students, due to the conceptual shifts in how being a student with work contributes to their final degree outcome. Refined ways of working may emerge from participation in lectures, seminars, and tutorials, particularly as assessments contribute to the final degree outcome. Additionally, SLS may take on renewed significance acting as a recognisable space for group working, which might be reflected in my observations (S4.2.2), albeit it is hard to argue as the observations had no way to capture student year groups.

5.3 Production of the student

The data has highlighted that as students move into the final (usually third) year of their FTUG course, there is a renewed focus by universities to provide more intensive support in preparing them for life beyond the university (Milsom et al., 2015). As students move from level 5 to level 6 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework, there is little pedagogic shift, however, there are fewer contact hours and most courses culminate in an individual project. The individual project, normally a dissertation, requires the application of a range of skills and knowledge drawing on what has been learnt across the course. Whilst there is a reduction in teaching contact hours, there is usually an intensification of the contact the university has with students (Milsom et al., 2015). One example of this is the increase in student surveying, usually involving questionnaires being sent to students related to their learning and experiences (S4.1; S4.5). Another example is the increased focus on preparing students for employment or progression to postgraduate degree programmes, which was discussed by Participant 6 (S4.5.6). Additionally, final-year students take on other academic citizenship roles acting as ambassadors for the university through outreach programmes, open days, community volunteering, and mentoring (internal and external to the university), which is seen in the corpus data (sector documents) that mention employability (S4.1).

The engagement with students further evolves in them moving beyond creation and emergence, towards production. This notion of production is beyond that of 'being' a student, but that of individuals who are competent 'model' students who are literate in the expectations of the university and navigate the social contract (Ball, 2013; Dean, 2013). Production is the idea that students enter their final stage of citizen training and preparation to enter into the real world, as examples of the 'product' of the university. Conversely, graduates act as proxies for the quality of education and experiences at that university (Race, 2019), hence the perception of the university is through metrics like the NSS (S4.5.5).

5.3.1 How staff engage students

In the final year, there is a focus on student engagement, in part to ensure that each individual is supported academically and pastorally. There is less leeway to allow students to 'make up' for academic lapses and as such interventions are usually faster. With more data about each student available, staff can better monitor progress and attendance and through learning analytics make more effective interventions (Sclater et al., 2016). Additionally, through the use of big data, more effective interventions and oversight of performance management can happen through predictive models (Beerkens, 2021). This is where nudges in online learning systems shape choice architecture to prompt particular engagement and choices about asynchronous participation (Brown et al., 2023). Data about groups of students and particular characteristics of students allows for those students to be monitored and targeted interventions made (S4.5.5; S4.7.4). This helps to remove barriers to learning and close attainment gaps, but it means that some groups are ascribed with particular lingering baggage associated with backgrounds and other ethical issues (Plak et al., 2023). Deploying data may allow students to be better engaged due to specific interventions, however, there are challenges that are associated with it and lack of informed consent.

Additionally, as individuals are usually better known through the tutorial/supervision system, and may have better professional relationships with staff, the quality and robustness of conversations are often intended to support students to be engaged. Being engaged is also about students having agency to engage in the way that they would like to with their course, which can be seen in empowerment over their module options and dissertation choices. The tutorial is a forum for greater engagement in learning and applying what has been learned to new situations (S4.4.2) (Race, 2019). Students by this time in their course are expected to be more independent learners, they should be focused on producing high-quality work demonstrating academic integrity (S4.5.4). There is the inference that students, as a cohort, do not require paternalistic interventions and discussions about their conduct. Thus final-year 'model' students are expected to know how to conduct themselves academically and socially, when there are deviations from this they may experience a greater sense of othering and ostracisation than at other stages of their FTUG course.

5.3.1.1 Targeted interventions with students (academic and pastoral)

The data draws attention to where the university needs to act; there is usually still a greater focus on rehabilitation and retraining, particularly for minor offences as discussed in the individual interviews (S4.6.1.2). This approach mirrors the context of the rehabilitative focus of the justice system in the UK and the move in types of power as discussed by Foucault (2010), seeking to deploy biopower rather than disciplinary power in shaping behaviours and practices. The university often takes a dim view of transgressions later on in the student journey and hence are more punitive for offences committed by a third-year compared to a first year, which is inferred through the individual interview findings (S4.7.4.3). This is in part due to expecting students at this stage to demonstrate greater academic integrity and better conduct due to better literacy of the university's expectations. Likewise, there is usually a zero-tolerance approach to certain forms of misconduct resulting in criminal charges being brought by the university such as sexual harassment, as highlighted by the DoSS (S4.6; S4.6.1.2). Here, there is an increasing social contract conferment of rights and responsibilities and exposure to being in the 'real world' (Ball & Junemann, 2011; Rousseau, 1998) compared to earlier on in the creation stage (S5.1).

5.3.2 Disciplining students during the time of production

The data shows that as students transition to the final stages of their degree, there are micro-shifts in their positioning in the network of power (S5.3.1.1). This is due to changing expectations of their rights and responsibilities. There is recognition that they are coming towards the endpoint of their journey as undergraduates, and near to becoming graduates.

The seeming rollback of the university on overt communication of expectations in the earlier stages of the course mirrors the conventions of self-policing of wider living in the world they will inhabit after leaving the university (Foucault, 2002; 2008; 2010). There are exceptions to the reduction in communication about expectations, e.g. ethically conducting research, which is supported through modelling of good practice rather than a focus on the punitive measures for poor practice (S4.5.3; S4.7). There is a changing dynamic in ensuring that students as consumers have an enjoyable customer experience (Molesworth et al., 2011).

Disciplining and reminders of ways of working, continue to be embedded more as reminders than explicit discussions, as shown through the contribution of Participant 5 (S4.5.4). Hence, students' expectations of the university and the university's expectations of students are mediated through conversations, student voice processes, and surveys. Behaviours, if there are significant concerns, might be managed through complaints and conduct/academic integrity panels. However, biopolitical disciplining happens through interactions, using university spaces, and other affective tactics such as educational guidance and policy (Ball, 2013). As students are affectively receptive to the scripting of experience, and negotiate what it means to be a student at that university, they are entrenched within the social contract, and of their 'role' in the network of power. The positioning in the network of power signifies the agency students have as individuals and as a body, and their respective capacities to act. This is mirrored in the comment about expectations of students by the HoD (S4.5.3) and reinforced through discussion in the group interviews (S4.7.4.4). As students emerge their identities are much clearer, and through the years of their FTUG experience, have become more receptive to the nudging and scripting by the university (Jones, 1990; Morrissey, 2013). Throughout the final year, there is, arguably, an intensification in scripting and nudging students to produce the ‘graduate’ image in the view of the State with the university’s particular unique selling point of their ‘graduates’ (Tauringana et al., 2019; Thiel, 2019) (S4.3.1). This type of nudging was evident in the structured observation where posters about the quality of the university and urging final-year students to complete the NSS (S4.5.5). In this vein, affective scripting focuses more on developing particular skills and knowledge, acting as micro-calibration to enable students to be what is expected of a graduate. Thus, students become part of the apparatus of the university and serve as role models to those students in the creation and emerging stages of their FTUG degree (S4.2.3.1; S4.7). Here, those being disciplined embody and normalise the behaviours expected of newer students (Foucault, 2010). The interactions between students, and across years, help to communicate a collective understanding of being a student at that university.

5.3.3 The vision of what graduates are

There is a particular image of what it means to be a graduate (S5.3.2). This is influenced by the sector and the university, which will be further explored in the subsequent chapters. The vision of the graduate attributes that should be developed by students is ever-evolving and often aligns with shifts in government political philosophy, and national and global skills needs (Nielsen, 2015; Thiel, 2019). However, whilst there may be a particular hegemonic view of graduate attributes (Bryan & Guccione, 2018; Ball, 2013), there is nonetheless agency for students who are still active participants in their level of engagement and shaping their futures. For example, students may make choices that set out their particular intended pathway to a career after graduating. This aligns with the findings seen in the marketing materials (S4.1) where there is the idea that students can shape their own futures with the skills and knowledge they gain. Through the likes of pedagogic approaches that position students as co-producers of their curriculum and experiences, they are to some extent placed as shapers of their future (S4.7.6.4; S4.4.2). It is questionable whether that can be achieved due to the pressures exerted to develop particular graduate attributes and degree outcomes, hence such a notion can be reductionist and risk becoming tokenistic in practice (Bryan & Guccione, 2018; Ball & Junemann, 2011). It is important for universities to ensure that students go on to successful destinations, as articulated by the DoSS and HoD interviews, as universities and the sector are benchmarked on destinations numerous times in the years after graduation. The vision of the graduate is that of an individual who is ready to enter into the real world to be an essential contributor to the economic and social expectations of society (S2a.2; S2a.4). Here, there is the expectation of graduates being engaged global responsible citizens as part of civil society and formal employment. Hence, there is preparation for transition away from being a student, with the protections afforded to them by the university which involves further social, financial, and psychological shifts.

5.3.4 Importance of the spaces of the university

University spaces are important for final-year students due to the intensification of individual study, which means they are likely to spend more time in the library and SLS (S4.2.2). SLS is a forum for engaging in a range of activities and is a vital site for learning and the range of affective conditioning (S4.2.3). It takes on a role that arguably may be moving away from the group to individual working which might be reflected in what was observed (S4.2.2) and the subsequent interactions between users of the space.

Additionally, as some students in their final year return to university accommodation, this becomes a site for the social. On the one hand, this may create a greater sense of ontological security returning to the known and arguably more structured living which enables students to focus more on their academic studies (Nielsen, 2015; Kraftl & Adey, 2008). It should be noted that the case study site for this research and some other universities have final year accommodation, this seems to be a decreasing trend for HE in England (McCann et al., 2020). On the other hand, the return to university accommodation may signal familiarity and students become open to affective conditioning by the university, meaning students are receptive to affective scripting (S5.3.2).

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored how students are positioned in complex networks of power and engage in multiple interactions. It has highlighted the significant role of the university in shaping behaviours and interactions between students, their peers, staff, the university, the State, and society. To this extent, the chapter has explored how the dominant conception of the ‘model’ student may vary depending upon the stage of one’s FTUG journey, and that this is being actively shaped and regulated, through biopolitical tactics, largely by the hegemonic power and operationalised in universities. Furthermore, the chapter shows how the notion of model studenthood is embedded into a neoliberal education system that is dependent on students paying tuition fees and becoming work-ready to contribute to the wider economy. This chapter helps to address research objective (RO) 1 by narrating changes to the organisation of the FTUG experience; by mapping the biopolitical influences on FTUG students (RO2); by advancing new knowledge on ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ a FTUG student (RO3), and discussing the relationship between physical spaces and FTUG behaviours (RO4). This chapter posits that students go through three different ‘stages’ during their FTUG journey: creation, production, and emergence. Students do not merely ‘become’ or ‘be’ but rather there is an ongoing iterative process with key phases, the creation, the emergence, and the production of the ‘model’ student. Importantly this chapter has helped to reveal that students are not benign or devoid of agency but rather they are afforded some capacity to act. This has been achieved through the researcher applying a post-structuralist framework to identify how power affects FTUG students. The chapter has then gone on to reveal some biopolitical tactics that are used most significantly in how affective scripting has been deployed through interactions with staff, policies, guidance, and the use of spaces. Most notably, there has been a contribution to knowledge through better a understanding of how discursive and physical spaces influence FTUG students’ behaviour to engage in ‘model’ studenthood.

The next level of analysis moves the discussion from an individual student to the organisation in which they are situated. Chapter 6 will thus consider the position of the University in networks of power and their role in shaping ‘model’ student becoming and being.

Chapter 6: Discussion - The University

Having considered affective influences and biopolitical exchanges at the level of the individual student, now the thesis considers these forces in the context of the University. This chapter, similar to the previous one, is concerned with networks of power, the interactions of people, and how space influences behaviours. Drawing on the findings of this study, particularly data relating to the meso (university-level) individual interviews, group interviews and corpus data, it will allow the thesis to 'zoom out' from the individual to view how the university is affected and affects others in the network of power. In this vein, it shows that rather than being an all-powerful institution, the university has differing capacities to be affected and to affect others particularly in relation to the expectations of a 'model' student. Therefore, agency depends on whether the university is acting on students (and staff) or if the university is being acted on by the State and/or the broader HE sector. Here, my discussion draws on evidence of interactions between universities and the State, and universities and their staff and students. This chapter provides insight into the positioning of the university in the network of power as portrayed in Figure 12 (S7.3).

Therefore, this chapter explores how different actors in the network of power, such as the OfS, influence and shape the university; and conversely how the university has an impact on other actors, such as FTUG students. It highlights how tactics such as affective architecture are used to shape FTUG students' (and staff) 'model' behaviours, in particular, SLS. Universities are inherently hierarchical places, which is reflected in staff structures and responsibilities, the perception (and real) positioning of individuals within the networks of power, and who is engaged in decision-making. Hence, to further explore the power differentials the chapter explores the impact of staff member groups of different seniority/affiliations and their agency.

Universities are sites of deep-rooted traditions and places that attempt to develop a key sense of belonging, and what it means to belong to that particular institution. Along with such histories are the layering of the statutes of the university and a raft of policies about behaviours, ways of working, conduct, and more, which is in keeping with Smith and Hubbard's (2014) research on actions and practices. Here, there is a view that actions and practices are bound in long histories and over time become embedded into guidance and policy. In this vein, the chapter explores the actions of universities, generating insights as to how a person who conforms to the expectations and embodies the practices the university might consider of a 'model' student. The extent to which practices are understood and flexibility to the limits of being viewed as breached, and the consequent enforcement of sanctions on those who breach the social contract can affect perceptions of their robustness and need to conform. However, for the most part, universities operate through biopolitical tactics rather than disciplinary displays of power control. To this extent, the chapter traces how the university processes and traditions are important in shaping ‘model’ students’ behaviours, and subsequently, how such policies and expectations of universities might be enforced.

This chapter problematises how universities are perceived, how they are engaged in a complex web of competing priorities, and how they are under threat from market forces and the State. Therefore, there are similarities to the previous chapter, however, this chapter takes a perspective from/of the University rather than the student. To this extent, the chapter explores how universities are affected in the network of power, then looks at how universities affect other actors in the network of power, the chapter moves onto affective architecture in universities,and looks at how staff play a key role within the network of power. These key aspects are examined in relation to the creation of the ’model’ FTUG student. Finally, the chapter moves to look at the processes of universities and how these are implemented.

6.1 Affect in universities - the positioning of universities in networks of power

In recent decades (since the 1980s), there has been an ever-changing understanding of what ‘The University’ is for, what it does and how it does it (S2a). Universities are no longer sites solely of education and knowledge, rather, they are centres of education, places for research, centres of business and economic activity, and a place for citizenship training, as highlighted by Fitzgerald et al., (2017) and Bengsten (2018). More than half the school leaver population in England now progresses to HE, with the massification of HE (both in student numbers and providers) the sector has had to evolve at speed over the last 30 years. The busy and complex HE sector has seen the emergence of a range of bodies and organisations providing guidance to universities, such as Advance HE. Universities have become subject to more policy and guidance about minimum expectations for ways of working with students, staff, businesses and other stakeholders in HE (S4.1). Hence, universities (and key decision makers) are targets of affects, which in turn will influence their staff and students through scripting and deploying nudges that shape behaviours and interactions. However, universities do not exclusively use affective scripting for students. On the contrary, this research has found that biopolitical tactics are used to shape the work and behaviours of staff, and to a lesser extent of other actors e.g. businesses, and third-sector organisations. Sturm & Turner (2020) discussed how staff in New Zealand universities are affectively scripted in what and how they work, in what is captured in tropes of the life and death of the university and what one is expected to contribute to keeping the university 'alive'. Whilst this thesis is concerned with FTUG experience it is important to note that staff interactions with students and how they go about their work are being shaped.

6.1.1 How are universities affected in the network of power?

The data draws attention to how universities are under ever-present scrutiny, experiencing ongoing transitions and changes over the last 30 years, (S2a.6). As HE in England has become a much more politicised sector there has been a reimagining of who participates in HE and how HE is conducted, resulting in the reorientation and reorganisation of the HE sector. Figure 3 shows the shifts in the UK government department responsible for HE. Unsurprisingly, there have been competing priorities that HE has to contend with, not only financial but the whole offer and approach universities must take to remain viable in a more connected global HE marketplace (S4.1; S4.5). These challenges were discussed in Chapter 2a, including a change to the sector with the creation of the OfS as the sector regulator for England in 2018. There are other State bodies and organisations that have an impact on universities such as UKRI and OIA (S4.1). Typically, these bodies deploy biopolitical tactics to shape corporate behaviours, such as the commercialisation of knowledge through the production of vaccines (Taberner, 2018). Universities act as buffers of state and sector influences, interpreting them and 'repackaging' them before they influence FTUG students.

6.1.1.1 State shift: from HEFCE to OfS

This thesis has highlighted a move in the HE sector from a laissez-faire approach with HEFCE and other bodies being responsible for funding streams and some policy directives to a regulated marketplace largely under the OfS (S4.1; S4.5; S4.6). Responsibility for HE has shifted between government departments multiple times, as seen in Figure 1. There was not a wholesale move of HE responsibility to the DfE, as Research Councils and research funding have largely remained in the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. The move back to the DfE has led to discussion about the OfS being an Ofsted-like body, with greater oversight of each HE provider and operating a more interventionist approach. The OfS requires much greater access to data and has had more direct communication with students. Greater access to this data, provides a panopticon-like insight into universities (Ball, 2017), hence allowing the OfS to make interventions and set out conditions metrics/targets to be met. Whilst universities are still key institutions of society (and the economy), they have moved away from the State, and are not responsible to a single State body (Foucault, 2010), thus, requiring new modes of governing (Bevir, 2013). This could be a contributing factor in forming the OfS to centralise power.

6.1.1.2 State affective influencers: other influencers including OIA

The data shows that the OfS is the main state actor within the network of power (S4.6; S4.7.4), but there are other quangos and arms-length state organisations that influence universities. UKRI acting through Research England is responsible for the distribution of research funding, including block funding for research based on the outcomes of the REF. UKRI brings together all of the research councils under one coordinating umbrella and is focused on business, innovation, knowledge exchange, and maximising the impact of research. With such a different agenda to the OfS and being responsible to a different government department, it is little wonder there are competing priorities in universities. Indeed, there often remains a divide, or a perception of a divide between those who are researchers and those who are teachers, and this can be mirrored in viewing the Russell Group Universities as the places where research is primarily done. This might hold some truth with such universities often performing higher in the REF, hence receiving large block grants and having more high-profile industry partnerships. Frolich et al. (2018) reviewed career pathways in UK universities, this highlighted the ongoing split between research, teaching, and often industry practice. Those universities that have a higher research output might be perceived as being more scholarly than those that do not have high-impact research output, leading to different assumptions about the expectations of the university.

Some reviews commissioned by the Government have a greater effect on university working practices than others (S4.1). For example, the most recent review of the sector has been the Augar Review (2019). Interviews with the HoD and DoSS both mentioned the Augar Review and the potential impact on how the sector is funded and the implications for universities (S4.3.2). Universities changed their practices in anticipation of the outcomes of the report to be ‘ahead of the game’, meaning that only minor modifications were required when the report was published. In the case of the Augar Review, as the Government commissioned this, universities may see it as more important as there is likely to be new guidance or legislation.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has an increasingly active role in the HE Sector, as it has responsibility for providing funding for Apprenticeships, and whilst this thesis is concerned with the traditional FTUG student, it would be remiss not to mention the ESFA. The ESFA only arose in the corpus data, however with the increase in degree apprenticeship provision, most universities have an apprenticeship offer (S4.1). The ESFA, unlike the SLC, provides more oversight and scrutiny of the way that funding is used, requiring universities to provide monthly data returns, have clear detailed administrative processes, and are subject to auditing. Where there are omissions of data or concerns, the ESFA can withdraw and/or retrieve funding. As an executive agency, the ESFA can create and enforce regulations and statutory guidance. Hence, it should be noted that the ESFA is likely to have a significant role in some networks of power and shape the agency that universities have. This is because it sets out processes for ways of working, directing institutional practices and staffing and work roles. In this vein, drawing on Foucault's (1977) work, the ESFA is a powerful entity in ‘policing’ universities and making them more self-regulating to avoid ramifications through compliance failure.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education was created as a result of the Dearing Report (1997) to replace previous measures for providing adjudication and monitoring of universities’ complaints processes (S1.3). There is an interesting power dynamic, as universities must register with the OIA, it could be perceived as required rather than voluntary (S4.1). Thus, the OIA has greater influence than may be expected.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) was set up in 1993 by the UK Government and in 2018, HESA was appointed by the OfS as the Designated Data Body, recognised as being the data and statistics reporting organisation which HE Providers, as a condition of registration, must provide regular data returns (S4.1). This requirement highlights HESA as a key instrument in enabling insight into England’s HE sector by the State (and others). Whilst there is some freedom in optional data returns the scale of data provides an extensive visibility of each university. With such an extent of data, there is the possibility of greater surveillance by the OfS and other organisations, arguably, yielding a Foucauldian panopticon view of the university creating better self-policing for fear of data being utilised against the university (Elden, 2003) (S4.5.5; S4.7.4). So, whilst the university is surveilling staff and students, the university is also under surveillance (S4.3.3). HESA presents a range of data, making it possible to compare disciplines, and universities, for a range of possible metrics. Other organisations utilise this publicly available data and in some cases feed into third-party league tables. Thus, HESA is, arguably, a key actor in the network of power as the State-sponsored organisation facilitating the acquisition and deployment of insights, to drive and monitor market competition. It also provides the means for the Government and the OfS to monitor each university, through data to benchmark different aspects of provision, and potentially to make interventions. As of 2022, HESA became part of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). JISC from 2012 is a non-profit organisation, but it was a state-supported organisation created in 1993; to date, the majority of its funding still comes from grants from government agencies, devolved administrations, and research bodies (S4.1). JISC is therefore still intrinsically linked to the State and is more positioned as an authoritative voice on all digital matters in HE, not to mention being the provider of the digital infrastructure for most universities. Hence, JISC has power by maintaining and providing universities' connections to the global marketplace and holds huge amounts of user and usage data, data which might be mobilised to make working practices more efficient and effective. As Anderson (2014) highlights, data is a key aspect in affective interventions to shape behaviours and practices. As is the case of HE, this data is vastly more accessible through HESA, the OfS, and the ESFA.

6.1.1.3 Sector membership bodies, their reports and shaping expectations of universities and students

The corpus data used sector reports, from both government agencies and membership organisations (see Appendix 3). These reports ultimately influence the working practices of universities and their staff and students. It is interesting to note that the influence of these bodies seem to be limited to the data arising from the corpus.

Advance HE was established in 2018, following the UUK's Bell Review (2017) calling for a consolidation of HE sector organisations to create a central and unified organisation for learning and teaching (S1.2). It has roots back to The Institute for Learning and Teaching (which was formed in 2000 as a result of the Government's Dearing Report of 1997). Whilst Advance HE is not a regulator, it is a powerful actor for the sector. It is the guardian of the Professional Standards Framework and the awarding organisation that confers Fellowship, something seen as an essential requirement for many academic posts (the HE equivalent of Qualified Teacher Status). The historical roots position Advance HE as having significant capacity to act and influence the sector, which might also account for it being the guardian of professional standards for HE teaching, usually the responsibility of a government agency.

Guidance for universities regarding how they deliver their services typically originates from two sources, government reports and sector reports, for example, Dearing Report (1997) and Bell Report (2017), respectively (S4.1). The level of compliance with such reports varies by report type. Government reports' recommendations contain guidance which is strongly encouraged to be best practice or result in statutory guidance which must be followed. Contrastingly, sector reports comprise an aggregation of best practices which universities can implement if they choose. Sector body reports by the likes of Universities UK, such as those in 2011 and 2015 contain voluntary recommendations, nonetheless, with the momentum and weight of the sector there is an expectation that universities respond to any recommendations made. Here, such reports often act as precursors to changes that might be reflected in new legislation/statutory guidance, particularly since the introduction of the OfS. Hence, membership bodies and sector organisations often have an influential voice in the network of power, although the agency varies depending on the topic being reported on and the perceived legitimacy of the organisation commenting on the matter (Bevir, 2013). This is a demonstration of ever-evolving governance networks in the HE sector of England.

6.1.1.4 Sector metrics impacting on performance, behaviours, and practices

Being perceived to be in the top 10, 20, and 50 of one of the various league tables and sector metrics is important for most universities (S4.5.5). High achievement in a league table or metric is of significant importance for the positioning of the university in the national and international marketplace. Here, high scores in a metric are used in marketing documents, websites, and other forms of attracting potential students and clients for the university. The data suggests that marketing a university to attract students is vital (S2a.2). The metrics are aimed at attracting the particular market segment(s) that the university believes is the best fit for the profile of the institution. As evident in SLS and other locations at the university, there is a reinforcement of key high-performing metrics that are lauded about the campus, through visual means such as posters and digital display screens (S4.5.5), and in discussion with the DoM (S4.5.5). This overt display feeds into the narratives of what the university does well, and what it might mean to be part of that university (S4.3.1). Thus, marketing materials provide an affective reinforcement of the officialised narrative of being and belonging to that university. This resonates with the works of Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., (2016) who identified that HE marketing by universities conveys affective messages about expected destinations and prospects of graduates. Not only that, but the metrics may signal a message about the perceived ongoing quality of the university versus other universities, and this could lead to influencing future surveying, where metrics are based on student reporting. By influencing survey reporting, it helps the university sustain its reputation in a particular high-performing area, attracting future students, external funding, and experienced staff.

Regardless, it is apparent that universities engage in gaming the metrics, selecting metrics and league tables that suit their purpose (Tate & Glazzard, 2024), which is evident in observation with posters denoting the university being a top 20 in X (S4.5.5), and the DoM discussing TEF Gold (S4.5.5). With the proliferation of national and international data from a range of sources, there is inevitably data available to always provide a positive spin and unique selling point for each university. Sector metrics, arguably the most robust being those provided by HESA and the OfS, often act as a barometer for gauging the health and quality of provision at the university. These metrics help provide comparability and competition between similar types of universities (Williamson, 2018; 2019). The data is often deployed by the university to help drive efficiency and provide a more attractive offer. Hence, the university works to make more effective use of resources and implement action plans for ways of working to ensure sustained or improved performance in subsequent years (S4.1).

6.1.1.5 Students driving changes in HE

The two fundamental questions explored in S2.1 are: who are universities for? and what are their purposes? Students on the one hand are consumers of HE, and on the other, they are also essential commodities that are the cornerstone of funding the sector. Although evident in Chapter 5 that students are influenced by the University, students do have agency and can influence the HE sector in England. For example, as has been seen student bodies across England can mobilise significantly for key issues such as in 2010 with the student demonstrations against the increase of tuition fees (S2a.6). Arguably, they acted but were not heard as student tuition fees were increased by the UK Government regardless.

Students have input into how universities operate (at different levels). This is usually through a student voice system supported by students' unions. Depending on the institution depends on how engaged the student body is and in some cases, the turnout for students' unions' elections is so low as to question their representativeness and the possible outcomes. The Student Rep noted that at that particular institution, the student body was not particularly engaged; by contrast, they said some universities have a much more engaged student body. Therefore, the type of challenge that students might present and be empowered to provide is variable, and this could lead to differing expectations of students in the network of power.

There are structures for student representation and direct input into some decisions (S4.3.2). It is an expectation that at the course-level, there will be at least one student representative to provide the voice of their cohort at the likes of course committee meetings with the course team. Here, there is feedback on matters including the course content, field trips, assessments, and future course changes. At the Department/Faculty-level, there are often a range of committees associated with research and student voice, which provide more of a forum for student matters with middle leaders such as Heads of Department (S4.3.2). At the university-level, there is a fractured picture, in some cases, there are elected or nominated representatives from the departments/faculties, and/or Students' Union officers. Interestingly, in many meetings with student representatives, there are sections of the meeting deemed confidential and students are unable to be present as reflected in the researcher's experience. Neary (2016) argued that students are producers and stakeholders in the quality of the university provision. However, the exclusion of students from particular parts of meetings raises whether the student voice systems are tokenistic and performative, but allow the university to demonstrate compliance with OfS conditions of registration.

As universities become more student-centred in their pedagogic approaches and delivery of student experiences, course staff are under pressure to ensure that they meet the needs of individual students. Being student-centred is fundamental to building good professional relationships with students and ensuring that through better communication staff are better placed to respond to any arising matters of concern and enhance the student experience (Bruning & Ralston, 2001). Professional relationships are arguably more important now due to the impacts of COVID-19 and to build in aspects for socialising (Raheim, 2021). Such guidance on pedagogy and experiences, stretches beyond the academic and into the pastoral, supporting students with careers, additional needs, and advice on life and work (S4.1; S4.5; S4.7). However, students are afforded agency as they provide end-of-module, year, and course evaluations that in many cases are traced to individual members of staff. This may mean that if students mobilise locally, displaying dissatisfaction or call for a change in practice, if deemed reasonable by the department/faculty it will likely be implemented. Communicating changes is often run through campaigns such as ‘You asked, we did’ as commented on by the DoSS. The Student Rep noted that there were committees that they believed students should have been a part of but about which they learned after the committee (e.g. a working group) had concluded its work and delivered a report (S4.3.2). This incident shows that there are inequalities in where and how decisions are made. Students seem to have much more power in module and course decision-making, and yet where there are key decisions made at the university-level they have limited input. The approach of empowering students with smaller decisions can lead to changes in course expectations and ways of working, however, it does not lead to larger-scale change unless specifically empowered by the university. The caveat is when the university has significantly breached its contract/regulations on course quality and student experience.

6.1.1.6 Businesses driving new ways of working and shifts in universities

Businesses, local authorities, local organisations, and other stakeholders seeking services or potential services that either they or the university seek to engage one another with play an important role in the university’s financial stability (S4.1). As highlighted by UUK (2015) universities must work in partnership with communities to secure their long-term viability, through the diversification of programmes and formats of study. Whilst apprenticeship provision and other forms of provision are of increasing importance for income diversification, further discussion on this point is not within the scope of this thesis.

Neoliberal business models have had a significant impact on universities, leading to the rise in managerialism and a competitive working environment (S2a.5). Not only are universities in competition with each other (S4.5.2) but so too are the departments and courses that comprise the university. Hence, if a department fails to meet expectations or questionable profitability it can readily be dissolved or restructured (Barnett, 2013; Bessant et al., 2015). There have been examples of whole departments in Humanities being closed by universities to focus on more lucrative areas, and to better align with government funding into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Manufacturing. Similarly, there has been the rise of the neoliberal academic, subject to a range of market and business-like approaches, such as workload allocations and SMART objectives that need to be met for annual appraisal, with individuals who fail to meet those entering performance management (Boncori et al., 2020).

The corpus data (government and sector documents) show that Research England's Knowledge Excellence Framework is another important aspect that maps and determines universities' relationship with industry and the extent of collaboration (Johnson, 2022). This framework provides a number of metrics for government(s), universities, and businesses to identify suitable working partnerships. A range of white papers and sector reports have reinforced the need for universities to work in partnership with businesses (S4.1). This is to provide opportunities for income generation, work experience in the curriculum, and establish links for graduates to progress to employment aligned with the courses that students are graduating from. At a strategic level, universities must demonstrate that they are helping to address local skills shortages and contributing to the local economy (S4.1). Hence, senior leaders from the university will regularly meet with local stakeholders to ensure the university is addressing local needs. UUK (2023a) reported that there are expected in a five-year period to be at least 20,000 start-ups and spin-offs from UK universities, with almost all universities involved in creating a start-up or spin-off. Hence, whilst working with businesses, particularly in courses with a very specific career pathway is important, universities can often be shaping local businesses too.

6.1.2 How universities are affecting others

Universities are affected by a range of actors in the network of power, most significantly sector and state agencies (S6.1.1). Additionally, some actors can act upward on universities influencing how they operate. However, not only are universities affected, but they affect other actors most notably students, (see Chapter 5), and staff. Universities are lively sites of activity and policy, they interpret State policy and expectations and in turn, rearticulate them embedding them into everyday practices for students (S4.5.4; S4.7.4).

The data highlights universities have a greater capacity to act in the network of power on actors with less agency (mostly at the micro-level) such as students and staff (S4.7). Universities also affect local communities as they are major employers and contributors to local economies and to some extent the wider national (and sometimes international) communities. Universities have a voice in the sector and with the State, however, the standing and status of the university has an impact on the extent of the voice.

6.1.2.1 Students and staff members being affected by the university

As discussed throughout Chapter 5, students are affectively scripted by universities in the way they use physical spaces and expectations of 'model' students are articulated in various forms (S4.7.2). In turn, students' behaviours are shaped in preparation for economic and societal expectations. As FTUG students are exposed to the full three-year university experience, this demographic provides more opportunities to be affected than others.

University staff are also being governed. Terms of employment often have clauses that compel staff to fulfil duties beyond that which is clearly stated. Notably, there has been the emergence of fixed-term contracting for academics (Bryson, 2004; Menard & Shinton, 2022) and there are a range of inequalities in the academic workforce (McIntosh et al., 2021). The university in many cases has struggled with funding and therefore has placed pressure on staff (S4.1; S4.5.6). Working practices and expectations of staff have had to change to meet the demands of the HE sector and the university (S4.1). Hence, the emergence of the need for multi-talented and multi-skilled academics (Blair et al., 2023), who are subject to neoliberal managerialism. Hence, the university's workforce is driven to maximise efficiency and productivity in the various domains of their employ, with outsourcing of staff operations in areas that are deemed to be more efficient/pose less risk than direct employment. Staff receive greater oversight of how they go about their work and in some cases feel that the university utilises architecture and digital systems for the surveillance (S4.4.3). Here then, staff are under pressure to perform and embody the university's expectations of staff.

The data would suggest that staff act as agents of the university, and they have a fine balance of negotiating the complex relationship that students and the university have. The idea of staff acting as agents in the network of power follows a poststructuralist view of power (Dean, 2013). For example, SLS staff (S4.2.2) shape the environment students are using, signalling what can be done in that space and who can use it. Another example is when the HoD has welcomed new students outlining his expectations of 'model' students (and staff) (S4.5.3). This is also evident when the DoSS intervened in how students conduct themselves outside of the university and in the way they live their lives (S4.5). Staff are engaged in micro-negotiations of enabling and delineating the extent of students' agency, which is contextualised and should be appropriate for the situation (S2a.9; S2b.4). This might be why there has been a move to professionalisation of HE teaching, requiring academic staff to gain some form of qualification or recognition of their skills, knowledge and behaviours to teach (Shaw, 2018). When staff make poor judgements or fail to effectively fulfil their role, there are processes in place to performance manage them (Morrissey 2013; 2017). Additionally, when a member of staff is embroiled in a situation the university can mitigate the risk to its reputation by being seen to act to remove a member of staff or other punitive measures (Morrissey, 2017). Hence, whilst being empowered to act on behalf of the university, there is often a distinction that staff are not the university. Power is premised within the institution, within the larger entity which is more than the staff.

6.1.2.2 Sector and the State being affected by the university

The data draws out that the university, whilst largely being acted upon by the State and other sector organisations, does have the capacity to act (S4.6). Individual universities and universities acting collectively can lobby the Government to bring about change. Nonetheless, with the centralisation and increase in policy and statutory guidance by the OfS, universities have less capacity to act than they had before. Maybe that is due to fear that radical action may result in concerns about their conditions of registration being raised, hence there is less activism, or maybe it is due to factors out of the scope of this thesis.

Many sector organisations that are premised on membership subscriptions by universities and other HEPs are therefore funded by those universities and HEPs. It is in the interests of members that those sector organisations work. Whilst at times this can sometimes be forgotten, members do hold the organisations to account and often senior leaders of universities play a governance role in them (S4.1). Hence, universities do influence the sector, albeit there can be times when particular university groupings might be more exposed than others, having a greater or reduced voice depending on the debate/matter.

Universities with stronger influence largely seem to be those that have long historic roots or those that have adapted well to the highly competitive HE marketplace. Those within the Russell Group, in particular Oxford and Cambridge, have strong cultural capital, attracting students to apply rather than working hard to recruit. As commented on by the DoM (S4.5.2), of Oxbridge student recruitment staff, "they barely look up, because they don't even have to try". Universities with a more secure standing tend to be financially buoyant and have greater political influence (Raffe & Croxford, 2015). Legally many of the older universities were created by individual acts of parliament that afford them unique privileges and have complex systems and traditions, but are seen as cornerstones of ‘British Education’. The raft of universities created by the 1992 HE Act, when polytechnics became universities, usually have less political and financial influence (Raffe & Croxford, 2015; Morgan, 2022). Nonetheless, universities are a key part of the political landscape locally, nationally, and internationally (Purcell et al., 2016). Hence, universities have input into important decisions.

6.2 Affective architecture in universities

The data shows that architecture is mobilised as a biopolitical tactic by universities for shaping behaviours and interactions in physical spaces (S6.1.2.1; S4.2.1). The moodboard aspect of the group interviews highlighted there was a collective knowledge about how one is meant to use the spaces. This concurs with findings in other locations, such as airports (Adey, 2008) that consciously design spaces, thus, universities create and perpetuate narratives and use affective scripting of space. Using architecture for students can regulate and shape their behaviours shaping their experiences of that space (S4.7.2). Not only that, architecture is used to denote who can use that space and the purpose it should be used for.

A university might be viewed as important by local communities, as it embodies the local identity (S4.3.1). Here, the architecture of universities can become synonymous with location. For example, the Radcliffe Camera in Oxford represents the city and university on the global stage in an iconographic way. Buildings may embody emotions and knowledge about a place (Cote, 2009). Hence, some university buildings become national and international beacons, and hence intrinsically linked with the discourses of education.

6.2.1 Physical space design and regulation

Physical space is used by universities for a range of purposes and usually reflects the range of disciplines and endeavours of the university (S4.2). Additionally, physical space design can be restricted by the location and size of the university estate. For example, one participant in the group interviews, at a rural university, discussed the woodland walks and lakes, by contrast, another participant remarked on the spread of university buildings across a city. As Participant 6 identified (S4.4.3), they feel that they are under surveillance at the university. Public buildings such as universities are noted as being designed for self-regulation through the idea of surveillance, such as that of the panopticon (Foucault, 1977; Elden, 2003). Here, the university becomes the embodiment of the State’s power in citizen training for self-regulation and developing a greater sense of compliance and knowable behaviours in the society that students graduate into.

Space is often designed with a particular group of users of that space in mind (S4.2; S4.3; S4.4). For example, the teaching spaces are primarily intended for students, whereas offices are designed for staff. Interestingly some spaces act as zones for multiple uses such as SLS being for all, libraries more for students and academic staff, and enterprise centres to house start ups-spin offs and businesses. Hence, some buildings can be recognised by their design and designation for whom and what they are for. Iconic design and traditional buildings feature in marketing documents reinforcing the importance of the history and historical being of the university providing a sense of longevity, resilience, and officialisation. The iconic buildings of the university help provide a reference point for building identity and part of what it means to be at that university (S4.3.1; S4.5). As a juxtaposition to the historical buildings, the role of modern buildings housing the latest technology is also important, portraying a sense of innovation and of being at the cutting edge (S4.5.1). The range of buildings from the research lab to the lecture theatre, from the Students' Union to student accommodation are imbued with meaning that maintains a narrative whilst allowing others to evolve.

Many universities due to the rationalisation of their estate ensure that buildings are used for multiple purposes, creating hybrid spaces that hold and convey different meanings (S4.3.2) Hybrid spaces have to be carefully planned, designed, and maintained to avoid lingering affects that may lead to unintended behaviours (Cote, 2009). Through the purposeful design of buildings, they reflect the concerns of the time, and as they evolve reflect what might be anticipated as being needed by universities (S4.3.2). In this sense, universities are future-scoping and trying to insure their futures to provide greater resilience (Grove, 2010).

6.2.1.1 How decisions are made for physical spaces

The data draws attention to the scale at which physical space decision-making is designated and made varies (S4.3.2). Senior leadership teams are involved in the planning and management of physical spaces, and the estate remains a key agenda item (S4.3.2). Universities have comprehensive strategic and operational plans for the management and development of the physical estate, and programmes of work schedules aligned to forecasted income and expenditure (Valks et al., 2020). The campus faces increasing quantification and greater granularity of management, through estate management approaches such as micro-gridding (Alrashad, 2020). As discussed by the HoD and reiterated in group interviews, there has been a centralisation of space allocation to the departments and services, hence there is greater control and determination of permissible use of space (S4.3.2). On the one hand, centralisation may allow for greater efficiency and easier timetabling, but on the other, it means there is less freedom and flexibility for using spaces. Nonetheless, when a room has been allocated for a specific purpose, for example, the tutorial room, the space may afford some freedom (S4.4.2). Here, one participant said how the room could be reformatted to meet the needs of the session, such as facilitating group work. However, another participant said, of the same space, that permission might need to be sought to move furniture around. Such spaces may allow for multiple uses but are often accompanied by a room layout format that the room must be returned to. Here, there is an implicit power dynamic of what is acceptable and 'the norm', who is permitted to use or make changes, and expectations surrounding the terms of use.

Where a member of staff or a student has been allocated a particular working space, there is some degree of freedom, and minor personalisations allowed depending on the extent of time they might be granted use of that space (S4.3.2). For example, the use of a hot desk would afford little privilege to make changes to the working environment. By contrast, an academic with an allocated office may be permitted to fill the room with items relevant to working making the space conducive for work. Office spaces for staff have been subject to much debate about how different configurations and types of office spaces result in different behaviours of staff (van Marrewijik & Van den Ende, 2018). However, a dedicated office space is increasingly only afforded to members of staff of seniority, implying they have greater agency and responsibilities. Students in their accommodation can personalise their rooms to some extent provided they do not damage or make any change that would be irreversible to the structure and furniture provided, as specified in their contracts (S4.1). The limitations placed on students show a power dynamic and the flexing of the paternalistic university, which would not be the case in a space that students owned.

The extent of physical space is not as important as how physical space is used, as shown in the corpus data (government and sector documents) (S4.1). The real estate holds value and in many cases has been sold to allow universities to rationalise and reinvest in other capital projects including building regeneration and renovation. From observations and autoethnographic encounters of the researcher, space along with its contents are recorded in inventories and quantified. In some instances (Fitzsimons, 2011; Francis & Andamon, 2019) there has been a quantification of square-meterage allowed per member of staff for shared workspaces, this approach is reductionist aligning staff members to an object. The approach of determining staff by space commodifies staff and risks them being perceived as another metric by which the university can deploy to increase or reduce capacity/efficiency. Quantification of space for student areas and creating standardised spaces, for example, in accommodation spaces (S4.1), helps to create ‘fairer’ and consistent ‘model’ student expectations, hence deviations are more easily recognised and interventions made.

6.3 University structures, traditions, and policies

6.3.1 Staff hierarchies and power dynamics

A staff body should not be considered homogenous, staff interactions between individuals undoubtedly have some type of power relationship whether explicit or implicit. This was not mentioned in the group or individual interviews other than about the ‘senior leadership team’, the articulation of this seemed to denote a central higher power of decision-making in the university. However, by observing group interview participants, there was a power dynamic in the group with those holding more senior academic roles seemingly afforded more freedom/willingness to offer an opinion than junior academic staff. It was evident that some staff members had more or less insight into strategy and policy, whereas other staff had greater insight into ‘on the ground’ operations of the university. From the structured observations, interviews and corpus data, there appeared to be four broad groupings of staff: Junior Staff, Middle Management, Senior Leadership, and Professional Services Staff.

Junior academic staff are those primarily involved in the delivery of learning and teaching and often a range of activities essential for income generation and research output of the university. Junior staff can feel like they are also under scrutiny from the neoliberal performance management regime (S6.1.2.1). Junior staff, as inferred by Participant 9, can feel disempowered and navigate complex hierarchies of what they are allowed to do (S4.4.2). This might not be as explicit when viewed by students, as junior staff are pivotal in their daily interactions, and articulate expectations and shape study practices (S4.7).

Middle managers, such as HoDs, are essential in mediating university-wide policy, guidance, and expectations into departmental policy, guidance, and expectations and then articulating how those look in practice. The HoD said they set out expectations of ‘model’ students in the induction and have responsibility for overseeing departmental progress and interventions (S4.5.4). Here, middle managers are key in operationalising the policy and regulation that has filtered down from the State to the university, and thus middle managers are coordinators of ‘agents’ of power acting on FTUG students (Foucault, 1977). Furthermore, middle managers such as HoDs are accountable to senior leaders for the efficiency and effectiveness of their area of responsibility. In turn, middle managers hold to account their teams for their performance. Middle managers are expected to be multi-talented and skilled, akin to business managers using data to inform their decision-making and make pre-emptive interventions before issues arise. With that in mind, middle managers are often squeezed from multiple directions, managing stretched and pressured teams in an ever-evolving HE sector (Heffernan et al., 2022; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2019). They have to manage the expectations of students and ensure they have a positive experience, manage tight budgets and drive efficiency in their area, be accountable to senior leaders and they implement the directives of senior leadership, and fulfil their role as an academic. From the structured observations (S4.2.3.2; S4.2.3.3), if a middle manager entered SLS there was a perceptible change in how people were interacting, students would be quieter and look more engaged in what they were doing, and likewise, staff conversation seemed to change the topic. Thus, the entry of a more senior member of staff highlights there is a shift in the power dynamics and that the person is empowered with greater agency akin to a law enforcer.

University senior leadership teams vary in size and format, however, there is usually a core team of the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Chief Operating Officer (Registrar or Secretary), Chief People Officer, and Chief Financial Officer. The structure of most universities' senior leadership teams reflects the various strands of activity that it is engaged in, lines of responsibility for Pro Vice-Chancellors in Education, Research, Knowledge Exchange, and International. These areas reflect key priorities aligned with ensuring that the university maximises its activity and there are clear lines of responsibility, one could also argue that these align with key frameworks (TEF, REF, KEF) and attract students from overseas. Senior leadership may seem somewhat detached and a significant embodiment of ‘the university’ is akin to the perception of a Headteacher (S4.4.3). A person who may often be in an office and provide speeches or set out key expectations and show a presence at significant events, but rarely if ever is seen teaching. Here, senior leadership are often seen as detached from the rest of the university, this might be due to largely being sited outside of an academic school/department or service like most other staff (McCann et al., 2020). This idea of detached senior leadership is reflected in the comments by the DoM in relation to decision-making (S4.4) and in the comments about behaviour of students and staff (S4.5.4.1). In addition, due to the large workload, senior leadership usually have gatekeepers such as a personal assistant, which might make them seem less approachable. Additionally, the corpus data (S4.1) highlights that the composition of senior leadership teams shows a transition to a neoliberal capitalist business model with finance, operations, and resourcing being afforded the same importance as education (Kezar et al., 2020). The structure reflects the numerous recommendations of sector reports for good governance. Senior leadership are usually perceived by other staff as being much more strategic and detached from the on-the-ground situation, embodying the idea of the ivory tower (S4.3.2). Indeed, there is a sense at some universities that staff are under constant surveillance by senior leadership (S4.4.3), who are ready to demand accountability at all times with punitive consequences. It is important to reflect that not all universities are the same, but the actions of senior leadership impact working culture.

Professional services staff, sometimes perceived as the ‘other’ non-academic staff, should not be considered as a single entity (S4.2.3). As discussed by the HoD (S4.5.3) and supported in the group interviews, professional services staff are instrumental in setting out the expectations of the university and ensuring that these are enforced. Interestingly the concept of who is a member of professional services differs, due to the proliferation of contracting and outsourcing a range of professional services functions that are now delivered by contractors (S4.3.2; S4.7.3). For example, the catering outlets of many universities are delivered under contracts, similarly cleaning and IT. Whilst contracts with companies may change, due to UK employment law, the staff are usually carried over to the new company providing the contract. There is a clear difference in the interactions observed between professional services staff and academic staff and students of the university, evident from the conversations and body language in SLS (S4.2.3.2; S4.2.3.3).

6.3.2 Implementation and enforcement of policies relating to behaviours

The data suggests that there are multiple approaches to implementing and enforcing policies relating to behaviours, and this depends on who or what the subject is being acted upon. This means that staff and students are overseen differently (S4.5.4; S4.6). The behaviour of staff and students alike see them bound in fluid networks of power, giving and taking of agency. Staff are bound by professional behaviour expectations and are managed through appraisal systems, quality assurance systems, and benchmarking against performance metrics (Shaw, 2018; Boncori et al., 2020) (S4.1). Here, middle managers are key in leading and role-modelling expectations for junior staff and students alike, this is a complex interplay of managing multiple actors and their expectations. Equally, middle managers are normally the ones who chair misconduct and disciplinary panels for junior staff and students, although this is reported back to senior leadership (S4.1; S4.7.4)). Hence, middle managers have significant influence and discretion on the enforcement and consequent action when there are concerns relating to behaviour and conduct within the scope of the university domain. However, there needs to be greater consideration given to this point, often the chair of a panel involves a deal of discretion but is also about ensuring that the correct written procedure is being implemented. This problematises the notion of middle managers having greater agency, rather than agency it may suggest they have a greater literacy of the university's regulatory regime. Arguably, they embed the tropes of the university and have less freedom for individual actions and discretion than junior staff or senior leadership.

Middle managers may be significantly involved in addressing matters when they've gone wrong for staff and students, but senior leadership becomes involved in serious misconduct, and where a student is involved so too does the students' union. Professional services staff, academic staff, and the students' union are involved in shaping everyday behaviours and interactions of FTUGs, naturalising expectations and seeing those expectations enacted as everyday practice (S4.6). Behaviours and expectations are not limited to the domain of the academic but beyond that and into everyday life (S4.3; S4.6). Here, there is an alignment to the change agendas of the State which seeks to develop active global citizens, as discussed in Chapter 6. There are systems in place for sanctioning lapses in students' behaviour, however, there are far fewer incentives for positive behaviour than there have been at other stages of education. Rather the reward might be perceived as being the promise of a good degree outcome, and that they are developing the skills and knowledge ready to enter the workplace (Lunt, 2008). Additionally, there is a sense that through HE one is in less need of incentivisation, that one has more autonomy and has made the choice to be there rather than being required to be there. The notion of choice to attend the university has been problematised in S2.2 where the education system is premised on progression to tertiary education. The principal means through which behaviours and conduct are enforced is through self-regulation (Foucault, 1977). The university utilises architecture, pedagogic approaches, contracts, digital nudging and other affective tactics so that students exercise self-government and therefore become engaged in self-policing and that of their close peers, for fear of perceived breaches in their social and legal contracts.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the role of the university in the network of power. Universities actively shape FTUG student behaviours through biopolitical tactics and other more explicit means, whilst universities are also subject to a range of influences acting upon them. The chapter has helped to address research objective (RO) 1 by showing universities responding to HE marketisation; by mapping how it influences FTUG students (RO2); by showing how FTUG students are situated in the network of power (RO3); and by showing how university physical space shapes FTUG behaviours (RO4). It shows how the recent repositioning of the university has revealed the emergence of new actors in the network of power and the impact that they have had on it. Through this research applying a post-structuralist framework, the chapter has identified and discussed power dynamics, specifically how the university affects other actors, notably staff and students, particularly through the use of architecture, contracting, and regulatory and policy regimes (RO1, & 4). This research has provided a contribution to knowledge through better understanding the power dynamics that exist between the State, universities, and FTUG students. This chapter has traced how the university has been influenced by the many legislative and policy directives, and in turn how the university interprets (or finds itself compelled to act) in response to the legislative and regulatory recommendations/requirements. Here, policy and the operationalisation of policy leads to the university shaping what it means to be a 'model' student at that university. The university affects students, and the chapter has highlighted differences in agency (and expectations of behaviours and practices) between junior staff, middle managers, senior leadership, and professional services staff. In the discussion, this chapter has highlighted the contribution to knowledge regarding the way universities plan and intend how physical spaces should be used. It shows that the university is sited in a rapidly evolving HE sector that needs to remain relevant and invest in emerging technologies, but provides a sense of what makes it unique, and often relies on historical narratives and focuses on student experiences.

Our final level of analysis completes the process of micro (student), meso (the university) and macro (the State). This conceptualisation of stepping back further to consider these questions, will see Chapter 7 discuss 'model' studenthood at the level of the State and the sector. It will provide a tracing of how the State affects universities and students at the macro-level, this builds on the view of having identified how individual's 'model' behaviours are shaped at the micro (student-level) through Chapter 5, and subsequently taking a view in Chapter 6 at the meso (university-level) of how universities influence and are influenced, particularly shaping 'model' student behaviours. Chapter 7 will further widen the scope to understand the influence of the State, in particular the rise of paternalism through the OfS. By concluding the micro, meso and macro analysis, the chapter will tie together the three chapters, and will provide a visualisation of their dynamic and constantly changing interconnections through the network of power relating to influencing 'model' student behaviours (Figure 12).

Chapter 7: Discussion - The State & the sector

This final discussion chapter will explore the insights the data has generated regarding ideas of the State and the Sector. In particular, this chapter will look at how the State is a key actor shaping the behaviours of the 'model' FTUG student through a range of tactics, and responses to globalisation and marketisation of the English HE sector. It will then go on to explore the sector and the changes to sector governance and how this might have had an impact on 'model' student behaviours. Importantly, this chapter will draw together the narrative across the previous two discussion chapters: The Student and The University, with a graphic representation of the network of power relating to FTUG student behaviours being influenced by the State (Figure 12). Here, it is important to remember the various levels of focus and the extent to which the empirical data allow focus on the different levels of the network. To this end, this chapter 'zooms out' to the macro (sector-level) to help address the research objectives from a sector and state perspective (see Appendix 1).

The notion of 'the State' is complex. Building on the work of Foucault (2010) the State is not a singular person or entity; rather it is an assemblage of powers that are distributed across a number of institutions and organisations. The State ultimately is premised on legislation, guidance, traditions, organisations, and powers in determining what is and what is not acceptable to be recognised as part of that State. The distribution of the State's powers to arms-length organisations is the decentralisation of the State (Bevir, 2013). In the context of the State's relationship and authority over HE in England, this Chapter will discuss how the State influences and is influenced by students and universities within the ever-evolving network of power. This research focuses on the FTUG student experience, hence, the chapter helps to trace the hegemonic influence shaping what it means to be a 'model' FTUG student in English HE.

This chapter has been organised to present a discussion about the influence of the State and the Sector in relation to the findings. The ideas of State and sector are not clear cut, there are some sector organisations that have an origin with the State (S6.1). Providing such a discussion in this Chapter helps to trace the agency and biopolitical relationships across the ever-evolving and complex network of power in shaping FTUG 'model' behaviours. Furthermore, the Chapter provides the essential tying together of the three chapters that help to state the significance of the findings, and how this research contributes to the knowledge.

7.1 The State

HE is a key aspect of the State; it is part of the apparatus for developing the economy and enabling social mobility (Lunt, 2008), and as illustrated in S2a.2 the purpose of HE continues to evolve. The HE sector in England has been increasingly marketised (Gibbs, 2009; Molesworth et al., 2011) and repositioned multiple times following the reconceptualisation of the perceived value and associated risks of HE (Reynolds, 2022). The corpus data draws on sector reports and government documents, highlighting that the HE sector is an integral part of the economy and the UK's international standing (S3.4.1). For example, there is an emphasis on the soft power and social capital that an education from a UK university has.

As there has been increased participation in HE, the State has continued to focus on ways of providing a funding model to prevent the downfall of the sector from its own success (S4.1). Indeed, funding remains a critical matter of concern. In 2023, universities in England faced a deficit of £1 billion and fixed tuition fees represented a 32% real terms cut in funding since 2012 (Andrews, 2023). Thus, universities must be market savvy and strong competitors, albeit operating within the market expectations set by the CMA (S4.1). This is reflected in the repositioning of HE as a market economy, and the focus of government reviews such as the Dearing Report (1997) and the Browne Report (2010) have resulted in student loans and the subsequent increases in student loan amounts to cover tuition fees. It is fair to argue that HE is a market, given that since 2015 the CMA has had jurisdiction to intervene in unfair practices by universities. For example, the CMA required the University of Liverpool in 2019 to amend its student debt policy to allow students to graduate regardless of their outstanding non-tuition fee debt, similarly, it has intervened with other universities where it has deemed there to be unfair admissions, contract, or student debt policies (CMA, 2023).

The State creates and closes arms-length organisations (and in some cases detaches them to become their own 'independent' organisations after a period of time or as deemed fit) (Bevir, 2011). In this case, to fulfil a particular purpose of HE sector responsibility. Nonetheless, with HE responsibilities moving between government departments, there are noted differences in the corpus data (government and sector documents) regarding how the sector is spoken about (S4.1). Similar to Barnett's (2020) research, the corpus data of this thesis shows that by tracing language through to where a particular directive may originate indicates an influencing philosophy about HE. For example, when the sector was solely situated in BIS there was much more discussion about targets and business. In contrast, the current positioning, largely sited within the DfE, sees the language centred around objectives and providers. The DfE uses frameworks and language that are reflected in other phases of education, in particular, the reinforcement of the values and outcome-based competencies that the State expects of 'model' students. There is discussion in the individual interviews regarding the expectations of the OfS and an alignment of the language (S4.5.4 and S4.7.4).

7.1.1 - Changing State and repositioning HE

Although HE has increasingly been on the political agenda for over 30 years, the data shows that there appears to have been a greater repositioning of the purpose of HE towards teaching and income generation (S4.1). There is a shift in the move towards metrics and comparability leading to a greater market economy (S4.1), although some of these shifts face critique (Holmes, 2020). First, there was a focus on ensuring that research had an impact and highlighting the relative return of research spending with the introduction of the REF in 2004. Second, a move towards the quality of teaching and student outcomes, helping to determine the impact of teaching, arguably a response to provide incentivisation to universities to be more effective with their provision and increase standards due to the introduction of the TEF for 2017. Finally, there is a need to enhance collaboration and commercialisation with various stakeholders, including businesses, third sector organisations, and local communities following the introduction of the KEF in 2022. Whilst there are a range of rationales for introducing this move toward a market economy, there is an ever-present implicit or explicit mention of finances. Here, the findings align with the notion that Nixon (2017b) proposes of 'England's HE is for sale', there is an epistemological shift in HE towards being completely immersed in the concern of finance to be viable. Hence, HE now might be considered as consumed within the homoaeconomicus view of finances first and all other matters secondary. That is not to argue that this is true of each level but at the university and sector levels. One participant mentioned the need to focus on a range of competing priorities as a member of staff (S4.7.1.3), highlighting a shift in how the role of the academic is imagined (S6.1.2.2), that the academic is not focused solely on finance-oriented activity but also a range of broader pastoral-educational activities.

The State sees the HE sector as being significantly important to its position in the world and therefore attempts to be at the forefront of HE innovation and collaboration (UKRI, 2022). Indeed, in the UK, HE in 2021-22 contributed £130 billion to the economy providing over 768,000 jobs, and inwardly supporting another £53 billion to other economic sectors (UUK, 2023). Arguably, the State places increasing importance on securing international students to provide sector sustainability, as of 2022 international students make up 24% of the total student numbers in UK HE (HEPI, 2023). Recruiting students was commented on by the DoM as being crucial (S4.5) and she said that metrics for international comparability are essential (S4.5.5). However, it is important to note that guidance of different departments of the State highlights the fractured nature of the State. As such creating confusion like the need for international students, yet legislation is being introduced to reduce immigration impacting on student numbers. The State expects that universities provide minimum standards of support for students, although oversight is devolved to the OfS. Here, universities support FTUGs with an offering from the library and other student academic development (S4.5.4.1).

The data suggest that since the HE Research Act 2017 there is a two-pronged approach to the sector with matters related to teaching and taught students' experience governed by the DfE, with that devolved to the OfS. However, business, commercialisation, research and research student experience are governed by BEIS. For BEIS, following a restructure of the UKRI and Research Councils, Research England has become the principal body for research and knowledge exchange responsibility in England. Interestingly, knowledge exchange seems to fall to the professional services colleagues with dedicated teams helping academics monetise their research (S4.1). Such an observation is not new and has been discussed by Barnett (2013) and Nixon (2017a), however, what is new is navigating these in the context of prescriptive frameworks and expectations of ways of working. Consequently, new understandings of what HE is about and how one engages as a member of staff and student are being shaped. These new understandings have been articulated by the HoD of his expectations of department staff and students (S4.5.4 and S4.7.3).

7.1.2 - The OfS as the new regulator for HE

The data shows that with the introduction of the OfS, there has been a distinct shift in the language; newer language reflects how the OfS expects universities, staff, and students to be afforded particular rights and responsibilities (S3.4; S4.6.1.1). The new vocabulary demonstrates how the State has repositioned the sector and has increased alignment with other phases of education. Most significantly the move away from Higher Education Institutions to Higher Education Providers, seeing a focus on 'students as consumers' and 'minimum standards'. Some of the vernacular aligns with that of Ofsted (S4.1), this can be seen in the OfS regulatory indicators for student experience (OfS, 2022a).

The HE sector is a complex and lively entity with a range of wicked problems, which have prompted clumsy solutions, or at least discussion of clumsy solutions (Dickinson, 2020) such as establishing new arms-length agencies like the OfS. The data highlights that the central State uses arms-length organisations to exercise its powers. In doing so it mitigates some of the risks that could be associated with managing and regulating the sector directly (Dean, 2013; Ball & Junemann, 2012). The central Government can be perceived as being premised with the greatest power but with less reputational damage if things go wrong with an arm's length organisation. Interview participants when speaking about the State referred to the regulator or the political regime (e.g. 'The Conservatives') rather than the State (S4.6; S4.7). The State can act more as a corporate headquarters of a multinational corporation, akin to the Coca-Cola business model, that can axe and restructure aspects itself if it is no longer needed or functioning as expected (Bevir, 2013). This approach is replicated in universities through the neoliberal business models (S6.3). For the State, this might be seen in the restructuring of the funding and regulatory system. Notably disbanding HEFCE and introducing the OfS, and the disconnection of State-sponsored organisations to become independent self-governing organisations such as the Higher Education Academy and JISC.

There are a number of officers in the OfS who are empowered with enforcing statutory responsibilities and/or have portfolios for aspects of the sector. These include Student Outcomes, Higher Education Market, Quality and Standards, Fair Access and Participation, Freedom of Speech, Provider Governance, Pathways and Funding, and Regulation. The titles of these roles are indicative of the current priorities of the State for HE in England. It is interesting to note the absence of Education or Student Experience in any of these titles and speaks to the earlier point of who the OfS is acting for (or not) (Flippakou, 2022). In contrast to previous sector bodies, the OfS has communicated with students regarding their experience and the obligations of universities. In particular, during COVID-19, universities were required to disseminate information from the OfS directly to students. Whilst that was an unprecedented time, it highlights the power that the OfS has to contact students. The OfS along with other State organisations exercised their powers (and through emergency legislation were provided with greater powers) to enforce compliance with COVID restrictions (S4.3.1; S4.5.4). These restrictions covered a range of matters such as the format of education delivery, expectations of social distancing in universities, and living in halls of residence; although as the DoSS noted the guidance directly from the OfS at times was slow or lacking specificity (S4.6). As a new regulator, the OfS during the COVID-19 pandemic and the direction of what is expected of universities signalled the type of regulatory organisation that it was likely to become. Interestingly, the paternalistic interventions that occurred throughout the pandemic, have still not been fully rolled back to 'as they were', rather there seems to be the ongoing tension of re-emerging rights to be taken back. For example, academic freedom of speech has been seen to be under threat (Piercy, 2022) and as a response the OfS have a specific focus on appropriate freedom of speech (S4.1). Such control of the academic body and previously assumed academic rights are part of the biopolitical body, shaping what and how academia is done, in turn shaping the practices and acceptabilities in universities. As Scott-Baumann & Perfect (2021) argue, freedom of speech is essential for academic endeavour, and new legislation on the one hand might afford more protections to some, it is likely to have an impact on the range of topics discussed in HE. A more normative narrative may give rise to less heterogeneity of thought, and there could be long-term impacts. From a biopolitical viewpoint, greater regulation over freedom of speech provides a more knowable sector and reduction of risk to the standing of the sector, allowing more targeted interventions by the regulator when there are breaches of the legislation.

7.1.3 - HE as a marketplace

The research data and literature (S2a.7), show that there is a marketisation of HE in England and this is reflected in student behaviours and expectations. Staff and student participants in the group interviews without exception used consumer language when discussing HE, for example with the HoD (S4.5.4) and Participant 6 (S4.5.6). Such commercialisation of the sector repositions it as a marketplace akin to other public services during Thatcherism, here until 2017 the traits of supply-side economics could be seen (the de-regulation of the sector and removing student number caps, supporting universities to become self-sufficient ‘businesses’, providing start-up and spin-off business support, recognising Universities as exempt charities providing financial benefit without the full burden of charity law through the Charities Commission) (Synge, 2021). Like other economic crises, there was a flaw in this approach, leading to the re-regulation and re-centralisation of powers by the State (Dean, 2013), in this case, the creation of the OfS. Nonetheless, as seen in staff and students group interview participants, there are marked ontological and behavioural shifts in towards a customer-provider relationship (S4.5.6; S5.1.2.2).

The rhetoric for creating the OfS was to help provide an organisation that acts in the best interests of students, protecting them and the sector, however, none of the student participants spoke about the benefits of the OfS. It might be in the same sense as Ofsted, where a more negative view of the regulator is formed as being a burden to the sector demonstrating a paternalistic State rather than of the benefits as espoused in Government documentation (S4.1). Additionally, through having a more visible regulator there aims to be greater international confidence in England’s HE sector (OfS, 2021), arguably this might be happening as there are more FTUG students than pre-OfS. Nonetheless, with the decision to remove the QAA as the Designated Quality Body and overreliance on international students, the OfS has been critiqued for allowing the sector to become insatiable (Clarke, 2023). Whilst the rationale for decision-making to participate in HE is outside the scope of this thesis, the HE marketplace is larger than it has ever been despite COVID-19.

7.1.3.1 - The importance of metrics in the sector

The availability of data for metrics and comparability is essential, and as such the regime of the State has led to universities collecting data much more widely (Morrish, 2019). The UUK documents paved the way for having a greater awareness of data and how to use data to maximise efficiency and effectiveness in teaching (S4.1). Similarly, the proliferation of third-party metrics has made universities use data and focus on enhancing a particular aspect of provision; yet, with so many metrics universities are in the top 10, 20, or 50 in one or more rankings according to a particular organisation (S4.5.5). TEF as mentioned by the DoM (S4.5.5) is a four-yearly determination of the teaching quality of each university. Hence, the outcomes of the framework might be of greater critical insight and useful for potential students to make determinations about where to study. As voiced by Participant 6 there is a greater focus on student experience and brand in TEF assessment years when student data is collected and used for contributing to outcomes (S4.5.6). As a result of this, there could be an unrealistic expectation of student experience for years when the data is not being used, although universities may refocus on ranking highly in the likes of the annual Times Higher Education league tables.

The DoM highlighted the importance of metrics in encouraging potential students to choose to study at that university (S4.5), and the DoSS reinforced the need for encouraging participation in surveying and securing positive feedback from current students/recent graduates (S4.5.5). This free market approach to student choice means that branding associated with high-ranking metrics is important to universities, especially those, as the DoM commented, need to ‘recruit students’ (S4.5.6). Nixon (2017a; 2017b) argues that metrics are important in the neoliberal university for ensuring competitiveness and driving innovation, but that over-surveying and overuse of metrics can be detrimental.

7.1.3.2 - Need for HE to be an essential part of the economy

HE has a significant contribution to the UK (in particular England’s) economy (S7.1.1.1). As one of the largest global providers of HE, it is not surprising that there has been a renewed approach to securing the future sustainability of HE, and restructuring governance of the sector (Ball, 2013). Therefore, as the State looks for ways of not only sustaining the financial viability of the sector, it also has to contend with other economic pressures and an ageing workforce; hence HE presents a solution of providing inward investment and a more highly skilled workforce (Furlong, 2014). There needs to be ‘value’ in FTUG study and therefore graduate destinations data is key (S5.3.3). Some of the pressures the State faces have been intensified and are associated with the ‘welfare state’ costs of COVID-19.

Through the introduction of the KEF, universities now must work much more closely with businesses and other organisations, helping to address local and regional skills needs (Cunnigham & Sampson, 2021). The DoM highlights that universities may repurpose buildings for new uses (S4.3.2). This means that universities as well as being global are also locally focused, with some students engaging in local work-integrated learning and experience. Hence, skills and knowledge that appear in curricula are informed by the 'glocal' pedagogic approach, in turn shaping the development of 'model' students at that particular university (Patel, 2017). With skills and knowledge that are transferable but also part of the local need, the State encourages the retention of students for the local workforce/economy if highly skilled, or other suitable destinations, or further study, for example, the OfS expectation that every student receives career advice. Participant 8 spoke about "working with stakeholders in HE", to secure grants and using connections to support students gain employment. Participant 4 spoke about working with professional services colleagues to ensure students can access a range of employability support (S4.5.3).

7.1.3.3 - Finance, fees, & loans

The SLC is an important if infrequently mentioned, public body company as it is the major broker of funding for the HE Sector, and it is owned by the DfE (85%) and devolved national governments (5% each for Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) (SLC, 2022). While its role has changed as the funding of the HE systems has evolved, it has a quiet but essential role in providing funding for universities via tuition fees and collecting loan repayments. As the State's international projection of power moves to culture and knowledge focus, the university becomes a bastion of the State in the soft power projection, which requires constant investment and innovation (Nixon, 2017a; UUK, 2011; Ball & Junemann, 2012). The HoD said students expect to have a high-quality experience, and that there is value and purpose associated with the debt that they take on (S4.5).

Due to the cost of university education, access to university might be seen as increasingly elite, yet the student population has grown albeit premised on loans for accessing education. Arguably, such dependence on the loan system may lead to annoyance and also saviour dialectic of the State (Agamben, 2005). This is increasingly complex as the State expects universities to widen HE participation (S4.7.1.2), but there are fewer funded opportunities. Hence, new forms of study and studenthood are emerging with the extension of the loan system to postgraduate education, but they are outside the scope of this thesis.

The data suggests a university education is portrayed as necessary to gain the skills and knowledge to develop resilience enabling one to navigate a less certain world, which is moving from one crisis to another (S4.1). This is reminiscent of Agamben's (2005) *State of Exception*, where the State is seen as the saviour, here, it is not physical security per se, but rather psychological and educational security. Furthermore, the State could be seen as the gift giver of the promise of social and economic mobility. However, as the State's real-term contribution to funding the sector decreases even in light of increasing costs, there is a need to distance itself from the funding operationalisation. This has led to the sale of public debt in the SLC to private banks and investment firms (Clarke, 2017). The HoD said there is pressure to reduce budgets (S6.3). In the group interviews, students discussed how they wanted maximum value from the fees they had paid (S6.3). The permeation of finance throughout HE might therefore be proving a distraction and of greater importance in decision-making than the education itself.

7.1.4 - How the State influences behaviours of universities and people

The individual interviews showed the OfS as an important driver of change, whether that be pre-emptive or in response to statutory guidance and conditions of registration. The DoSS discussed ways of supporting students (S4.5.4) and then sexual violence policies (S4.6). In the group interviews, the OfS was mentioned both by staff and student participants (S4.6), which shows an increased consciousness of the regulator, and the powers that it has. However, one of the criticisms is that the OfS is not working in the interests of students but rather the interests of The State in creating a more neoliberal sector and securing sector sustainability (Morgan, 2022). Whilst this was not drawn out in this research there are silences in OfS protections for all student populations such as LGBTQ+ students. Additionally, there are questions about the commitment of OfS to meet HE requirements internationally following the QAA withdrawal as the Designated Quality Body after nearly 26 years (Mitchell, 2023). From 2023 the OfS is directly responsible for conducting quality assessment reviews of HEPs and those wishing to become registered (OfS, 2023b). Making judgments about the quality of providers through visits is reminiscent of an Ofsted-like approach to education. The investment of power in one regulator by the State shows a centralisation of powers and the importance of being able to bring about change in individual universities (or discipline areas of a university) if it is deemed appropriate. With more data available to the State and the possibility to 'zoom' in beyond the meso-level by the OfS, there is evidence to suggest that there is greater surveillance and conformity.

7.2 - The Sector

As of 2023, there were 425 HEPs in England of which 107 were universities (OfS, 2024). Whilst this thesis is concerned only with universities, it is important to recognise that the sector continues to expand, with increasing numbers of private and affiliated HEPs. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the majority of regulation remains focused on universities, maybe because student numbers in them are far greater. Equally, sector organisations, formal and informal, tend to centre on university provision, which is not unsurprising given that universities invest in membership fees and collaborative endeavours. With the massification of HE, the sector has seen the rise of sector organisations that advocate for a particular grouping of universities with shared identities or origins, such as the Russell Group, Cathedral Group, and Million+ (Grayson & Grayson, 2023). Also, a number of sector organisations that were once a government quango have become 'independent', such as Advance HE and JISC (S4.1). These well-sited former quangos tend to retain a close relationship with the State and can influence universities, as they often speak 'on behalf of the sector' in the political sphere, advising the Government on HE matters.

The data shows that the sector appears as an assemblage of universities, sector bodies, regulators, and State arms-length organisations as identified in the corpus (sector documents) (S4.1). Each actor has a role within the network of power at a moment in time, depending on the matter, with actors having greater or lesser agency (Foucault, 2010). Location, expertise, domain of the matter, the manner of action and involvement expected all play a role (Bevir, 2013). Additionally, the scope of potential impact on and across the sector, and the economic, political, and social consequences, play a role in the extent of involvement by the State. For example, the involvement of JISC in matters relating to the professional standards of academic practice might not be sought or considered as highly as that of Advance HE (S4.1). However, in the specific area of Active Learning, the Active Learning Network's voice might be seen as valuable, but being a smaller organisation less able to mobilise change. Large organisations that are well-connected globally and help retain the sector's international standing such as UUK produce reports about the sector resulting in sector-wide responses; this can be seen in their 2011 and 2015 reports on efficiency and value for money. However, there is a lack of discussion regarding sector organisations in other strands of this thesis' data collection, and there is scope for further research.

7.2.1 - Ensuring that best practice is disseminated in a knowledge-rich world

Over the last 30 years, HE expansion has led to an increase in sector bodies, both formal and informal organisations (S4.1; S5.1.3). Except for large and well-resourced organisations, most tend to be premised within a specific domain/interest/purpose. These organisations need to establish a sense of expertise and credibility. This is important, as the voice and legitimacy grow with its operations. Sector bodies work closely with the State and other stakeholders to disseminate best practice, not just in England but often internationally (S7.2.1). For example, Advance HE conferences attract participants from a global audience and help to reinforce England's position as a global leader in HE innovation and practice. Additionally, through sector body guidance, sharing of practice, thought leadership, and voluntary agreements and certifications, they shape governance and ways of working and being in universities (S4.1). For example, the Professional Standards Framework, the Athena SWAN commitments, and the Student Mental Health Charter (S6.1.1.3). Such practices and ways of working are curated with State regulation/guidance (or expectation of such, especially, if there were no voluntary changes), as discussed by Nielsen (2012) and (Dean, 2013) such changes result in shifts in understanding what and how HE should be done. Consequently, there is an impact on the student experience and how HE might be embodied. Thus, sector bodies establish and try to maintain an often dialectic position, working with and often for both the State and universities. Interestingly, as many of the larger sector bodies are premised on a connection with the State and have been afforded political, social, educational, and economic currency, there is a perception that universities must become members of organisations such as Advance HE. Without such membership, the university may be afforded fewer opportunities and viewed as not following best practice, leading to greater suspicion by the sector and the State. Such a perspective may suggest policing of the sector and distributed governance through biopolitical tactics including the threat of reputational damage, and fewer opportunities for funding and innovation.

By illuminating the role of some sector bodies, one can see the connectedness of actors in the network of power and the agency (or lack of it) that they have. There is a complexity that might not be as apparent from the interview and corpus data alone, but bringing them into conversation and utilising this thesis' post-structuralist framework, deploying the FDA approach, these connections are more apparent. The power dynamics shift over time. For example, whilst it did not appear in the empirical research, poor decision-making can lead to boycotting, as has been the case with the National Union of Students (Hillman, 2023). It is far too complex and beyond the scope of this thesis to decouple the State and the sector as they are intrinsically linked and there is no single entity where the State exercises total sector management and control, rather power is distributed (S1.2; S6.1.1; S7.2). For this research, the State is proposed as the conglomerate of powers and bodies with the premise of defining who, what, and how HE is done in England.

7.3 - Tying together the narrative of The Student, The University, and The State

In Chapter 1, Figure 2 ‘Network of Power’ was introduced to provide a conceptual approach to the different tiers of focus in this research, namely: the student, the university, and the State. This has been reflected in the presentation of the three discussion chapters. Each chapter draws into conversation students, universities, and the State. Due to the complexity of England’s HE sector, it is difficult to discuss one of these three aspects without the other two being drawn into conversation. The discussion chapters started deliberately focused on the micro (the student) to present a rooted sense of the operationalisation of biopolitical tactics shaping individuals’ behaviours. The chapters then ‘zoomed out’ helping to build an understanding of the meso (the university) and how it is influenced and influences students. Finally, ‘zooming out’ again to the macro (the State) which shows how the State is positioned in and influences the sector and universities. Whilst these three important levels within the network of power have been of focus, this thesis has highlighted that the network of power is much more complex than portrayed in Figure 2. As a result of the research findings, this thesis is well-placed to propose a revised model of the network of power - see Figure 12 below. The Figure is helpful in illuminating more important nodes (actors) that have an impact on FTUG ‘model’ student behaviours, and the possible flows of influence.

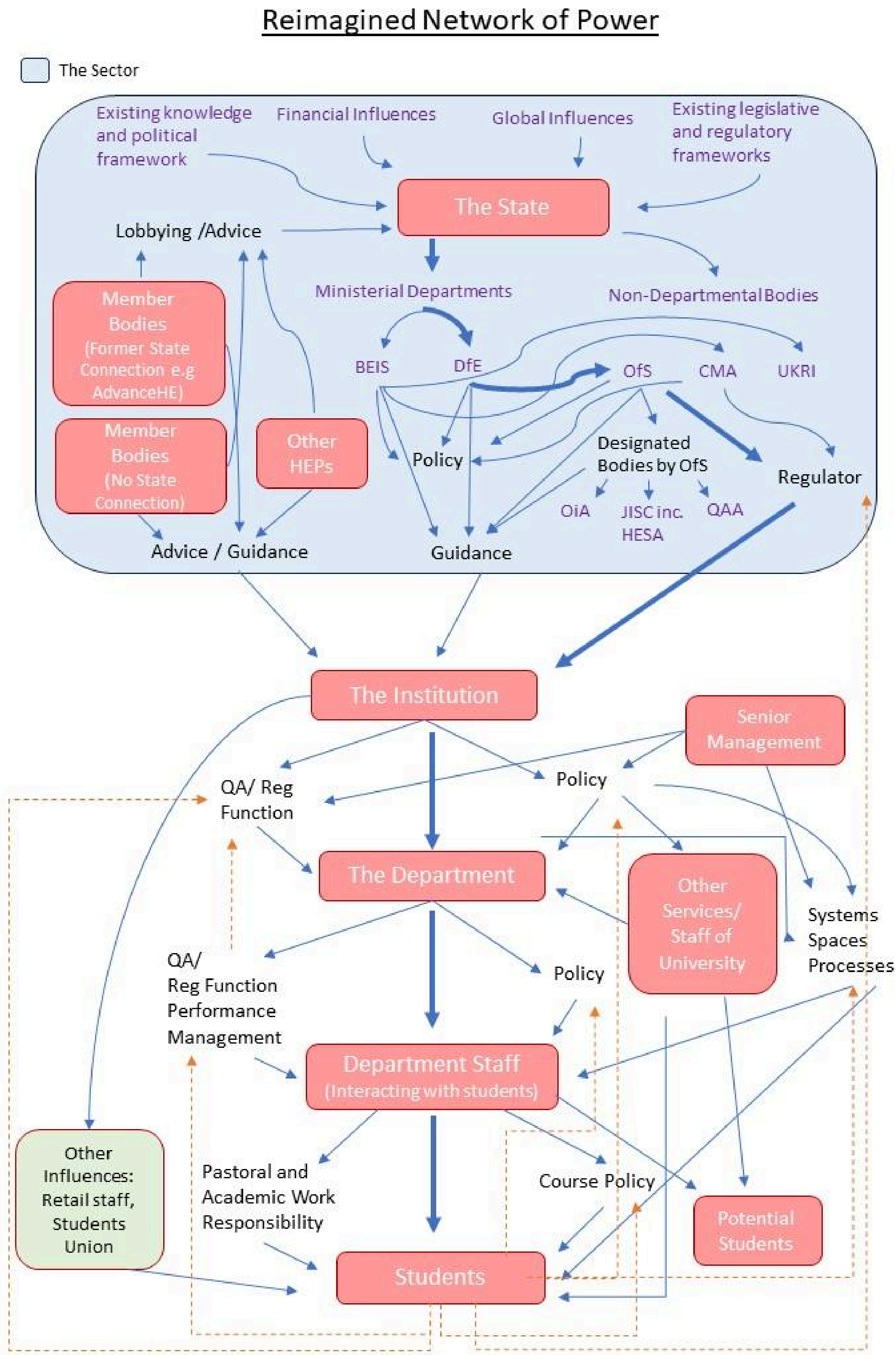

Figure 12: Revised Network of Power model based on findings in 2022

This revised model, in Figure 12, is not exhaustive but indicative of the relative findings from empirical research tracing the power influences back from students to the State. The model provides a variation in the thickness of the connective lines between different actors, the lines provide a sense of the scale of influence that an actor may have over other actors. Additionally, these lines of connection provide directional arrows to indicate the direction in which actors affect and are being affected. The blue arrows show a flow that will ultimately influence being a ‘model’ student, whereas the yellow arrow shows how students might influence something. Whilst there may not be connections shown between particular nodes in Figure 12 it is not to argue that there is no influence between them, but rather that evidence was absent in the empirical research. The blue box encapsulates the main actors/types of actors that this thesis considers to be ‘The Sector’, this is due to them exerting influence across numerous universities. Figure 12 shows an evolution of Figure 2 following a more nuanced understanding of actors and their positioning in the network of power. The model should not be viewed as a constant but rather a reflection of a moment in time and varies depending on the matter of concern. Figure 12 is an original contribution to knowledge and has evolved out of the FDA approach taken to illustrate the power dynamics involved in shaping FTUG ‘model’ student behaviours. Newman (2020) in his findings presents the complexity of HE in England and the regulation and policy relating to disabled students. This thesis reinforces the arguments of Newman, of how complex and often confusing/conflicting relationships that the State and sector bodies have with universities.

Sector changes appear to be largely driven by the technological and societal context and the State’s political and economic context. These combine to be underpinned by the State’s regulatory regime to bring about changes, particularly in creating and expanding a neoliberal HE marketplace (Lindsay, 2015). Hence, the State helps to provide the parameters and expectations of HE through arms-length organisations, with the regulator the OfS providing more detailed guidance and enforcement. Sector bodies go further by presenting best practice (and in some instances consulting or outsourced services) in almost all aspects of HE expansion, delivery, operation, and strategy for universities. For example, the DoM discusses marketing services being outsourced to specialist consultancies (S4.5.2). Universities in the fiercely competitive marketplace are reimagined as multifaceted business hubs, sites of education, of research and innovation, a service provider, key community partners, and beacons of hope for prosperity and the future. The data shows that this complex layering is not contained in the consciousness of staff, but it is evident in the experiences of students. For example, developing employability skills (S5.2.1), volunteering in the community (S5.2.2), and the wider student experience. Importantly, universities are cited as key service providers with shifting ontologies of what a HE student experience might look like, from appearing to focus on students as consumers (S5.1.2.2). Students’ behaviours are actively shaped by their university through interactions with staff, universities in turn have their strategies and operations shaped by the State. Nonetheless, as seen in Figure 12, students do have some agency, particularly in their position as consumers.

7.4 - Chapter summary

This third discussion chapter, building on its predecessors, has thus sought to address the research objectives set out in this thesis. The State's power is enacted through distributed governance and is enacted through biopolitical tactics, it utilises neoliberal regulatory and legislative systems to drive competition and contribution to the economy. Drawing on the data, the chapter has illuminated and mapped the biopolitical influences on FTUG students, research objective (RO) 2 and has advanced knowledge of how FTUG students are situated in networks of power (RO3). The chapter has shown the ways in which 'model' studenthood is depicted at sector level and explicitly by the State, and there has been the codification of the expectations of various actors in the network of power by government organisations such as the OfS. Due to the limited number of research sites involved in this project, this chapter has drawn more on existing literature and the corpus of exemplar documents rather than the primary data that more extensively informed the preceding two chapters. Hence, caution has been used when discussing the State and sector to avoid any over-generalisations being made.

The discussion has helped to identify the research's contribution to knowledge by presenting power dynamics of the State, universities and students, in keeping with research objective (RO) 3. The chapter presented a revised network of power model it shows the influences shaping 'model' student behaviours (RO1 & RO2). The State has become more involved in the shaping of 'model' student behaviours and interactions through a range of tactics and strategies (RO2). Principally, it utilises biopolitical methods, with the student body becoming a site of intervention and modification to meet the expectations of an educated citizen who will contribute to society and the economy (Fitzgerald et al., 2017). As seen in setting entry requirements (S5.1.3), supporting students of particular backgrounds (S4.7.1.3), and determining medical requirements (S5.1.2). Such expectations as discussed in Chapter 5 extend beyond induction but throughout the course, with the creation, emergence, and production of the 'ideal student' but also the active globally responsible citizen to be a 'model' student.

The next, concluding, chapter will demonstrate to what extent my research questions have been addressed, the significance of the findings, the contribution to knowledge, and the possible next steps for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This research has provided a contribution to knowledge through the use of a post-structuralist framework to conceptualise how power operates in universities. Universities are essential buffer zones for translating the expectations of the State and fulfilling the State's objectives of HE in producing a competent workforce and engaged citizens. Universities emerge as hybrid places that must thrive as independent businesses and centres of education (S6.1). In that vein, there is an embodiment of skills and expectations of students to be able to do and be more than one particular thing. However, as universities face increasing pressure in a crowded marketplace, they are expected to collaborate and work with sector organisations (S6.1). This is vital for them to be afforded a voice. Without mechanisms to be part of a collective voice, most universities risk not being heard by the State or the sector, which poses a risk to their standing and viability. Finance and the idea of efficiency are paramount for universities, with staff conscious of the need to generate income and make savings, and the quantification of practices as discussed by individual interviewees (S4.7.2) and group interview participants (S4.7.2.2). Hence, there are tensions between what some staff would like to do for their students and what is viable within the limits of the department/university finances (S6.1.1.7). Thus, resonating with the work of Nixon (2017a) who posits that universities act more as businesses that operate like production factories rather than allowing for intellectual endeavour.

Recent years have seen a marked increase in the discussion about student expectations and behaviours in HE. This has been particularly so since the COVID-19 pandemic when there was an extended discourse for thinking about student engagement led to wider recognition of the concept of affective nudging (Tate, 2023). The marked difference in language has been maintained with the OfS continuing guidance to universities about a range of other matters related to the academic and pastoral domains of student experience. In turn, this has seen student contracts, behaviour policies, and codes of conduct being made more explicit and closely specified. Such contractualisation by universities also reflects the increase in the consumer-service provider type relationship that they have with students. This final chapter summarises the propositions and findings of the preceding chapters and proffers some tentative recommendations. Returning to to the research aims and objectives to indicate how these have been addressed, the conclusion will review how far the thesis has been able to map the student experience in England; trace and delineate the influences on the 'model' student behaviours; articulate a theorised conception of FTUG student formation; and present a coherent insight into the connections between discursive and physical space and behaviour change. Furthermore, this chapter will return to the key findings of how affect operates in universities, how ‘model’ student behaviours are being shaped and by whom, and how the HE regulatory environment has shifted, alongside other key points relevant to the research focus. The chapter will then set out the limitations of this study and the scope for further future research. Finally, it will conclude by setting out key considerations and implications for a range of potential stakeholders.

8.1 Addressing the research aims and objectives

The aims of this research were to explore how full-time undergraduates in England ‘become’ ‘model’ students; how they go on to inhabit that model identity while situated in Networks of Power; and how their behaviours are influenced. The findings establish that there is no single moment where students experience one major transition into being a ‘model’ student, but rather they are subject to ongoing transition where identities are formed and reformed over time. This reaffirms the findings of Nielsen (2012) of being a student where identities are seen as an assemblage changing and shaped over time. This study’s findings reiterates those of others such as Jindal-Snape (2009) where education is a landscape of ongoing transition, and Wong and Chiu (2021) where behaviours and knowledge are rehearsed and reinforced over time. As shown in Chapter 5 (The Student), a traditional FTUG course can be disaggregated into three phases mirroring the academic years (1st year - Creation, 2nd year - Emergence, and 3rd year - Production). Each year is associated with slightly different expectations and the affordances of agency a student has in the network of power, consequently leading to shifts in behaviours and interactions. The findings reinforce those of Ball (2013) and Fitzsimmons (2011) highlighting that students (and staff) are entwined in complex networks of power; my findings provide a more fine-grained view of the hegemonic power shaping what it means to be an FTUG student, and indicate that such narratives become embedded into policies and embodied in practices. A ‘model student’ is one who follows the expected trajectory of progress and meets expectations as viewed by the hegemonic power. In most cases, this is the State but operationalised through universities.

As a reminder of the context for the empirical data, England’s HE sector is subject to constant change, however, the sector has entered into a new regulatory regime under the direction of the OfS as the single sector regulator. As the OfS establishes itself as an organisation, its presence and impact have been seen across the sector and commented on internationally (UUK, 2023b; Williams, 2023). However, the findings of this thesis serve as a reminder that whilst the OfS is a powerful new regulator, other bodies and organisations influence universities such as the CMA. Additionally, neoliberal managerialism shapes the expectations of staff and students determining ways of working and studying. Such ways of working are monitored through performance management and surveillance systems, with data utilised to make interventions. With the increased deployment of data, affective architecture, and nudging there are questions about the ethical implications of shaping behaviours, particularly the restriction of freedoms related to choice and a lack of informed decision-making by individuals. An example of such influence can be seen in how SLS, in the structured observation, is designed and controlled by retail outlet staff to lead to particular uses by students who frequent the space.

Returning to the research objectives provides a useful opportunity to outline what has been found in relation to those objectives and how the objectives have been addressed. (See Appendix 1 for the full research aims and objectives).

1. *Document narratives and observations of student experience*: As demonstrated through the corpus data, utilising illustrative university and sector marketing and policy documents, and individual and group interviews, there is a sense of change in the HE sector. This thesis shows that the sector, universities, staff, and students are experiencing constant transition, which matches the findings of Tate & Glazzard (2024) who discuss that HE is seemingly always in transition. The introduction of the OfS has resulted in a regulatory and funding regime change that universities have had to respond to at pace. Notably, universities have had to adapt to a more 'hands-on' regulator that has greater powers and the need to provide greater transparency and compliance with conditions of registration (UUK, 2023b). Throughout this research, and indeed in the HE sector, there have been changes to working practices and everyday living as a result of COVID-19. Consequently, the role of technology has evolved, and where and how education is done has shifted with the digital space becoming more important for its delivery. With the introduction of public health measures in response to COVID-19, there have been shifts in paternalistic policies and practices mandated by law such as social distancing and the use of masks. The perceptions of what a lecture is and what is meant by being a 'model student' are stable over time. However, the specific actions and observation of embodied practices related to 'lecturing' and 'being a student' may evolve.

2. *Map and differentiate key biopolitical influences*: This research has traced a range of actors who deploy biopolitical tactics to shape behaviours and interactions, most notably universities and the State explored in Chapter 6 (The University) and Chapter

7 (The State). Multiple influences on FTUG student behaviour were found, especially the university appearing to act as some form of ‘agent’ for the directions and expectations of the State. This reinforces what would be expected from an individual supplier of a service in a regulated neoliberal market, and such findings reinforce those of Nixon (2017a), and Ball and Junemann (2012). Nonetheless, my findings show that the OfS appears to be the key instrument of the State as the single sector regulator requiring universities to implement its directives and ensure that governance, finances, practices, and other aspects of the provision are in line with the conditions of registration. Hence, the OfS is a powerful actor and key influencer shaping the network of power. Not only does the OfS’s influence shape universities and departments but the OfS has more direct contact with students than HEFCE.

3. *Advance new knowledge of individuals on FTUG courses – how they become students and how they are situated within networks of power*: The notion of ‘becoming a student’ has been explored in Nielsen’s (2015) work, and this thesis has built upon that by exploring how behaviours and practices manifest throughout a traditional FTUG course. Here, the journey to ‘becoming a student’ has been presented as three phases which map to the research findings where there appear to be changing expectations of the students, proposed as Creation, Emerging and Production. A student’s capacity to act is influenced by the situation and stage of the FTUG experience in which they find themselves. The protections afforded to them under the Consumer Act 2015 reposition students as customers. These protections are further extended through the State’s minimum standards created and enforced by the OfS. As discussed by Guilbault (2016), and shown through the findings, students gain greater agency in some relationships within the network of power. In tracing the actors in the network of power there is a complex landscape; Figure 13 in S7.3 illustrates the array of actors involved, and it is important to note that the context and matter of interest largely determines the specific actors and influence. However, the most significant influencer in the network of power acting directly on individual students for the majority of the FTUG experience is the university.

4. *Theorising the relationship between physical space and students’ behaviours and interactions:* Building upon the work of Adey (2008) and Anderson (2014) the findings have highlighted conscious efforts to design space for specific purposes and consequent behaviours, with expected uses in mind by the hegemonic power. However, this thesis explores universities rather than other public buildings such as airports. The observations of SLS showed that discursive and physical space has an

affective architecture with a mix of narratives of acceptable uses and factors influencing how it is used and by whom. For example, the space has both informal/formal purposes, work-related/non-work-related activities, and use by individuals/groups. The SLS was actively regulated by outlet staff. Here, it is important to note that there are examples where the university's intent to create a collaborative space was frustrated by a third-party supplier who may have no knowledge of or interest in the university's objective for the space. Furthermore, it was clear that different spaces of the university are denoted with expectations from staff and students about how they should be used and who belongs in the space. Also, the university narrative provides expectations about how the space should be used. As argued throughout the discussion chapters these uses have nuances depending on the role one has, for example, students, academic staff, and professional service staff. Space allocation and strategy are increasingly centralised, and greater control allows the central university to have more oversight of who has access and how that space is used (S4.3; S4.4; S6.2). There is an exploration of how staff and students perceive the use of space and how that varies from their embodied actions and the intentions of the university in how the space should be used.

8.2 An overview of what has been found

Universities are lively places and are imbued with affects to which individuals ascribe multiple competing narratives. This is not surprising given the complexity of the HE sector and the many purposes of the university (S2a.3). The purpose of the university varies depending upon one's position in the network of power and the function/area of focus. The neoliberal university has to perform a range of functions to remain viable and relevant, which impacts the roles and responsibilities of staff (Teichler, 2021). There are shifts in student expectations and studenthood (Guilbault, 2016). As illustrated in Chapter 6, just as staff have many competing pressures on their time, with a range of tasks calling them into different aspects of their role, so current students, increasingly positioned as 'customers', have different expectations of staff and the university. Applying the ideas of Ball (2013) to the university context, the university is imbued with affects and there are a range of governance systems in universities often linked to their origins. Such heterogeneity has been challenged and universities have had to respond to the introduction of the OfS, which requires universities to comply with conditions of registration, including embedding systems and ways of working and providing more transparency in data (UUK, 2023b). Interestingly, the OfS' own transparency and independence have been called into question (House of Lords, 2023).

In a messy regulatory field, the consolidation of power to the OfS provides greater clarity and structure, however, it has also led to a regulatory burden and forced ways of working (UUK, 2023b). The new regulatory regime, which requires frequent disclosure of data, is part of creating knowable beings (universities, staff and students), such data allows the State to gauge the health of the sector and individual HE providers, and where necessary take action. In Chapter 4, interviewees highlighted the increased demand for compliance with the OfS. However, it is important to remember that there are aspects of HE, notably research and knowledge exchange, that are overseen by other State organisations such as Research England. The State can be seen as the hegemonic power in England's HE sector; this is evidenced through the regulatory restructuring as a result of the HE Act 2017, and the creation of the OfS along with the centralising research councils under UKRI.

Universities in the meso-level of the network of power are being squeezed from above and below. With static tuition fees for almost a decade, the financial context is significantly different than in 2012, and the shifting regulatory and financial landscape has resulted in viability pressures (Bolton, 2021). As staff have greater workloads and wellbeing issues, there are calls for better remuneration and work-life balance concerns to be addressed (Teichler, 2021). Significantly, students have high expectations of what their student experience will involve and how education is provided. As discussed in Chapter 6 there are differing perspectives, nonetheless acknowledgement of, increased expectations of universities delivering value for money. In particular, facilities should be modern and fit for purpose, keeping pace with changes in technology (Adisa et al., 2022). By the same token, these expectations might also be manifestations of the expectations of the State regarding how universities remain competitive in a global HE marketplace (Chapters 6 and 7).

The physical estate in the case study is actively and consciously designed and redesigned with particular uses and users of that space being considered (S6.2). The importance of physical space is a key agenda item for university executive teams, thinking about the optimisation of space and what might enhance the student experience in those spaces. The increased consciousness of using space has led to the rationalisation of space, with some universities selling off smaller and satellite campuses (Burns & Jollands, 2022; Greatrix, 2019). Now universities focus on campuses becoming more of a one-stop-shop to service all the needs of students. The physical space is actively controlled in how it is approached and managed through codified student behaviours in contracts, the use of nudges for example colour coding for different areas of libraries denoting noise levels and type of work which is acceptable, or the regulation of the lighting and music in SLS. The findings are reminiscent of Adey's (2008), where architecture is explicitly utilised to create knowable behaviours, and if there is any deviation from those expectations interventions can be made. This thesis shows that there is an intertextuality about what university spaces are for and how they should be used. Such a narrative about the use of university spaces is embodied in the marketing literature (S3.4), and prior educational preparation. Nonetheless, affective architecture scripts the experience of how one should use a particular space, what is acceptable and how this might vary depending on the time of day and other factors. However, it is important to note that affective scripting may unfold in unexpected ways that might be counter to the hegemonic power's expectations. Unexpected behaviours may happen when there are lingering affects such as a change in the purpose of a space (Thrift, 2004). Here, it might be when the physical space does not accommodate the needs of the users, such as when students have to use corridors as dining spaces (S4.4.3). Corridors are important spaces embodying a range of purposes, meanings, and facilitating movement but act as zones of transition for going from one state to another state of being (McCormack, 2013). Hence, corridors are key in providing preparation for different behaviours and practices for the space one is moving into, for example going from SLS to a lecture theatre.

The physical space is instrumental in forming part of the FTUG experience. It is part of the offer by universities, which requires constant investment, whilst also an area looked to for efficiency and value for money. The physical estate has been a key target of sector reports and recommendations to help alleviate the financial burden and address projected deficits. Such an approach might be through suggested management of spaces, outsourcing, shared investment schemes, and rationalisation (Chapters 2a and 7). Whilst a range of grey literature has focused on value for money, such as UUK (2015), and works such as Ball (2017) have looked at decision-making structure, my research has provided insights into decision-making regarding physical space. Of particular interest are the functions of working groups that are formed to create institutional policy/strategy on matters that impact students but are concluded without involving students at any point (S5.2.2).

Students are socialised into a neoliberal consumer-focused education system, premised on a more transactional interaction between them and the university as a supplier of education, rather than when university education was free and perceived as a place of intellectual endeavour (Guilbault, 2016). The shift in the positioning of students results in a consumerist ontology, arguably a quasi-consumerist ontology as other affects and influences shape legal and social roles and responsibilities (Morrison, 2017). This research's findings show how there has been an increase in contracting for various aspects of the student experience drawing new relationships between students, the university, and other third-party providers of key university provisions such as accommodation. The rise of contracting and more detailed service levels provides an explicit level of minimum service students should expect, but likewise, this outlines the expectations of students denoting practices and behaviours they must demonstrate to remain part of the university. Contracting is an explicit method of codifying expectations, however, this is less about embodied everyday practices (Williams, 2015; Gaffney-Rhys & Jones, 2010). In the case of HE in England, contracting has experienced several iterations with interventions by the OfS concerning the clarity of contracts by universities to ensure students can make ‘informed decisions’ (Boggs, 2021). Nonetheless, if contracts are not signed students cannot take up study at that university.

Biopolitical tactics are used to shape student behaviours as detailed in Chapter 4. Nudging is used to present a ‘better choice’ to be made by individuals, choices engineered by universities for their staff and students. Due to COVID-19, there have been wider paternalistic nudges for public health (Krawiec et al., 2021), an example of this is using floor markers to maintain social distancing (S4.2.1). Another nudge is social proofing of the quality and standing of the university and its courses, through marketing materials highlighting a ‘top 50’ or ‘top 10’ for a particular metric and reinforcing the narrative of student choices (S4.5.5). Beyond nudges, affective architecture is used to shape interactions with both the space and other users of that space. Additionally, the university is involved in biopolitics on behalf of the State setting out medical requirements and knowable/acceptable bodies to be admitted to study (Lemke, 2011). In a similar vein, certain populations are targeted with bespoke interventions to allow students to fulfil academic standards, and in some cases societal expectations. The University, therefore, in an intensified regulatory regime, is hollowed out and academic freedom eroded, with the need for compliance and ensuring good graduate destinations. Whilst affect has been explored in universities such as by Amsler (2009) and nudging of students by Nielsen (2015), this thesis has offered insights into specific observed practices in SLS and some of the tactics used to facilitate an affective atmosphere (S4.7.2).

In the period in scope of this research, there has been a considerable concerted effort by universities to set out expectations of students and their behaviours - particularly academic integrity and conduct (Gaffney-Rhys & Jones, 2010). As highlighted by the HoD, there is time spent setting out expectations early on in the first year, and it is not confined to the numerous documents that students sign and agree to adhere to, but also through a range of induction activities (S4.5.4). There appears to be a comprehensive set of ‘onboarding’ activities during Freshers’ Week where multiple university staff have interactions with students. These include academic conduct/integrity expectations by senior staff and professional services, engaging with the course and where to find course module procedures delivered by the course team, accommodation and community codes of living by accommodation staff, expectations set out by the students' union, sexual harassment and violence training provided by online delivery. Here, there is an explicit codification of students' rights and responsibilities within the social contract that one becomes bound into as part of the conditions of study (S4.7.3). This is sustained through second year induction activities and academic integrity training, with slightly shifting higher expectations of students' conduct and study behaviours as they pass into the next stage of their degree. In the third year, there is a refocus on student expectations and support, which may be in the form of academic integrity training and how to conduct ethical research projects.

For the State, the student is a political being, with greater focus in politics than before, and this can be seen in the increase in HE guidance and legislation in the last 30 years (S1.2). As economic prosperity becomes centred on the endeavours of workers engaged in highly skilled jobs HE becomes more important (Barnett, 2004; Ball, 2012). Not only that, but as participation rates in HE increase so too does the financial burden of funding the sector (Lunt, 2008). Hence, there have been systemic changes to education premised on providing pathways for more people to enter and re-enter HE to sustain the neoliberal model of student loan-based funding. HE, since the Dearing report (1997), is therefore more important on the political agenda for the contribution it has to the overall UK economy and the need to make a more attractive appeal in a competitive global knowledge economy. As part of these endeavours, in a reshaped HE marketplace, the State through new regulatory and funding regimes encourages universities to be competitive and maximise opportunities for attracting and retaining students (House of Lords, 2023). However, the State appears more concerned with marketplace regulation and setting the conditions for maximising economic growth and perceptions of education quality (S4.1), rather than individual learning experiences.

Universities are key actors in interpreting a raft of State policies, guidance, statutory guidance, and conditions of registration into a delivery/operational model. Universities serve as a key buffer between the State and students, and they translate policy into practice. Here, this buffer acts as a key zone not only in becoming a student but also in becoming an active global citizen in the vision set out by the State. Hence, the university has multiple purposes and is not only a site of education but also a place of citizen training and disciplining. Also, it is a site of business, enterprise, and innovation (Chapter 6). Thus universities are protecting students from the coarseness of State policy whilst also exploiting students and securing their financial sustainability (Ball, 2013). This draws into question how important students are and what their value is to the university: are they a means of financial sustainability, or perceived as individuals with intellectual curiosity wishing to be educated?

Students do appear to have gained agency at the micro-level being ‘empowered’ to raise concerns about the quality and experience of their education, and to expect customisation in the service delivery (Guilbault, 2016; Adisa et al., 2022). However, this appears to be one of the major contradictions of the neoliberal university, as the systems of complaints seem clear but are often hard to navigate and rarely result in a complaint/appeal being upheld. The agency students gain appears confined to course/department issues, with little evidenced impact on university-wide systems/issues. Furthermore, there is evidence to show that committees/working groups on key matters form and deliver their reports before student representation systems can have input (S4.3.2). There is evidence in the findings to show that students are the target of department and university policies with guidance becoming embedded into everyday practice (S4.6). Students are conditioned to become affectively receptive which is facilitated through contracting, affective architecture in physical spaces, and nudges. Hence, students must be supported with an understanding of how they can organise and utilise representation systems effectively if needed. Thus, is the targeting and conditioning of students a barrier to representation and its impact?

Throughout the majority of the research period, there seems to have been an increase in paternalism that has been evident in response to COVID-19, where the State introduced strict legislation ordering most people to remain in their place of residence. When universities started to allow students to return to campus, this was accompanied by Government statutory guidance on social distancing and other measures (Caulfield et al., 2021). Towards the end of the research period in 2022 this guidance was starting to be relaxed, nonetheless, the expectations of the use of space and students’ conduct were still much more explicit than pre-pandemic (S4.1). On the one hand, there were changes throughout the research and there also seemed to be continuity, in the sense of education being delivered through particular teaching approaches such as ‘the lecture’, ‘the seminar’, and ‘the one-to-one’, albeit the mode varied from in-person to more sessions taking place online. Since data collection, the HE sector seems to use a much more blended approach to teaching with many smaller education formats such as tutorials and supervision taking place online, and there is a more intentional pedagogic approach to online delivery rather than ‘emergency online’ teaching (Baker et al., 2022; Megahed & Ghoniem, 2022). However, there is a clear move to reaffirming the importance of on-campus student experience, and the university experience as a holistic offer encompassing the social and academic (S4.5.1).

To summarise this thesis has provided a number of original contributions. First, through the application of a FDA it has helped to identify the networks of power English FTUG students are located in (Figure 12). Second, the thesis has narrated how the complex power dynamics that are played out between different actors in English HE, and that these are not static nor do they have equal influence, Figure 12 highlights how some of those actors have greater influence than others. Furthermore, it has shown how the State has distributed governance of English HE. Third, my findings advance a new conceptual model of a traditional three-year FTUG journey - Creation, Production, Emergence (shown in Figure 11), which is reflected in the structure of Chapter 5. Figure 11 acts as a departure point for future discussion regarding alternative modes of study. Fourth, the thesis has offered rich insights into the way discursive and physical spaces in English universities are designed, affective scripting is deployed, and policy is created regarding how they should be used. Lastly, my findings have provided a contribution to how FTUG behaviour in physical university spaces follows affective scripting depending on the users of the space, and the other factors such as time of day. This is valuable for considering the ethical implications when designing spaces.

8.3 Limitations

This research presents findings that contribute to knowledge regarding how student behaviours and interactions are shaped by the State and operationalised through universities. However, the project does have a number of limitations which must be taken into account when considering scope and ability to apply to different contexts and form an indication for potential further work by myself and other researchers of student experience and student behaviour change. Whilst there are limitations there have also been some gains from the situations and there has been a changing positionality throughout this research.

The impact of COVID-19 permeated all aspects of the empirical research, and it would be remiss not to recognise how this presented both an opportunity and significant restrictions. The constraints on access to research sites resulted in several revisions of the methods for conducting the investigation. The experience of the pandemic also formed a key reference point for interview participants who would typically relate their experiences in ‘pre and post’ COVID terms, suggesting that the pandemic represents an ontological and epistemological shift. Given this project’s focus on space, it is also important to note how COVID-19 caused shifts in where and when education was conducted. The pandemic also significantly impacted the capacity to communicate with students for recruiting them to the study and with many students engaging in remote learning it meant there was a whole cohort of FTUG students who had not had an on-campus experience, nonetheless, it was important to ensure that participants had such experience to be able to discuss their insights. This meant that there was a challenge to recruiting for the group interviews. The group interviews were comprised of participants from a range of universities, some from Russell Group, Red Brick, and Post 92; this meant that whilst there was a shared commentary on spaces and systems, at times there might be differences in how teaching and learning were approached and variation in demographics and spaces of the university. Additionally, there was a need to establish a vernacular that could be understood by all present. This was useful in creating a narrative that gave insight into the sector and commonalities across different types of universities. It was important to provide parameters and explanatory notes for some of the discussion. Here, it was incumbent on me to ensure that participants had the opportunity to provide their perspectives in the discussion rather than letting one or two loquacious persons dominate the conversation. Additionally, it meant considering the perception of an activity or particular place could be constructed differently depending on individuals' university, so illustrative means to help provide context was important by either a photograph or example.

With that in mind, this study omits an investigation into digital space and the role of digital nudging. Before the commencement of the empirical research, there was limited evidence of nudging due to teaching pre-COVID-19 being premised largely on in-person synchronous teaching, and digital systems often being used as aid rather than as an integral aspect of teaching. This was in part due to a lack of access to sufficient documentary sources in 2018 for the corpus to discuss digital nudging. However, if the project were to be conducted again with the shift to online learning with digital space playing a much greater role, where there is a more calculated design, digital space would be included. As I have written elsewhere (Tate, 2023) there has been a marked change in digital nudging between 2018 and 2023.

It is important to reflect on how my positionality has changed throughout the thesis, and that whilst there is a clear statement of intent this did evolve (S3.1.1). At the outset of the PhD, I was a full-time PhD student with no other university role or affiliation. I then became an Associate Lecturer and School of Education Representative sitting on a University-wide committee which provided more insight into university policymaking and learning and teaching practice. By the end of this PhD, my participatory role in the sector I am researching is as a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader at another university, where I also sit on the Academic Board and lead two university-wide projects. I experienced a changing identity from being an outsider looking into the structures and processes of the university, to becoming an insider who is an active member of key decision-making committees of the university, acknowledged and (hopefully) respected by senior academic staff and involved in teaching new academics. Additionally, I have become entrenched in some of the systems that I have discussed and been through further professionalisation for example progressing through the Advance HE Professional Standards Professional Recognition from Associate

Fellow to Senior Fellow. Such a change in my positioning in HE has given me rich autoethnographic insights into the way that policy is translated into practice, and it has given me access to a range of timely and more open conversations about the matters explored in this thesis. Consequently, this means that I am more aware of the audiences and how to make policy and practice recommendations, alongside having a richer understanding of the systems and rationale for driving changes to policy and practice within the university and its departments. However, this richer perspective risks ‘reading’ things into my data, and as such I have revisited my empirical data on a number of occasions.

This research focuses on a single institution for observations and to build more robust findings, future research needs to have a broader cross-section of university profiles, to draw on different types of institutions and make comparisons and contrasts between them. Similarly, the structured observations utilised one type of space, social learning space. It was the intention to conduct research into various types of discursive and physical space to provide additional data to bring into conversation with the moodboards, however, this was not possible during COVID-19. Here, the additional data would help to further apply observed practices of how different spaces are used, making the claims about relationships of spaces more robust. The observation of other spaces would also allow a more nuanced discussion about how affective architecture is deployed to script behaviours and interactions, it would help in further illuminating how spaces are used in contrast to the narrative of how they are meant to be used. Additionally, such observations allow for further insights into the ‘playing out’ of the network of power and micro-negotiations in different learning and social spaces, indicating what and who is acceptable in those spaces.

8.4 Provocations

This research is about exploring experiences and helping to reveal the networks of power that students are situated in, and in particular, how students’ behaviours and interactions are shaped. In doing so, the findings raise a number of ethical implications about how students are affectively scripted and nudged. These recommendations serve as provocations or prompts for discussion and guiding action by key decision makers, in particular senior leadership in universities, but are useful too for policymakers and others interested in engaging in debate about how student behaviours and interactions are shaped. Below are a number of recommendations to act as a starting point for continuing the conversation.

- There has been a proliferation of contracting, providing information about the protections, rights and responsibilities between students and universities. It is an OfS requirement that contracts are straightforward and do not use unnecessary jargon. Whilst universities provide an array of information, many FTUG students have yet to engage with the extensive documentation. Hence, there are questions about how FTUG students have an understanding of the content of the complex documents. Is there more that needs to be done to understand with whom and what each contract is for, particularly the implications of financial contracts which can be a lifetime debt?
- Space is actively designed with particular uses in mind, and where there is deviation from that there are interventions. Spaces utilise affective architecture to limit the choices of users of that space and script behaviours, similarly, nudges are deployed to provide a choice architecture leading one to what is perceived to be the 'most appropriate' decision/action. If universities wish space to be utilised in a particular way, it is important for there to be clear and specific guidance for facilitating that provided to the relevant staff and third-party providers. Additionally, it is important for universities to clearly articulate their vision of re-developed/re-purposed space and how that might be used. However, such a paternalistic approach erodes individual agency and decision-making; might this over time lead to less nuanced thinking and problematise the metacognition that HE is trying to develop? Additionally, is space designed keeping in mind the individual needs of all students, particularly important as widening participation in HE means students come from more diverse backgrounds and may have learning needs?
- If student behaviours are being scripted with a limiting of agency, there are questions as to whether scripting is ethical, and should students be informed of when nudges or affective environments are being used. In most research studies use of data is captured in consent forms and there is the right to withdraw, hence should such freedom to withdraw be the case with nudging.
- There is a complex mapping of actors in England's HE Sector, and it is disingenuous to imagine the network as singular or static. Rather it is an ever-changing interconnected web of relationships, the network is connected to a bigger picture of the international HE sector. The actors involved in the network and their capacities to act/influence and be influenced depending upon the matter. However, it is clear that education has emerged as a commodified service for students 'customers', and ironically a customer, even with a changed relationship with universities 'the service provider' and the State 'the service regulator', have the least capacity to act.

8.5 Areas for future research

While this research has explored the notion of the 'model' or 'traditional' FTUG student, there is clearly scope for related inquiry into different modes and formats of studenthood. There is also the possibility to conduct further research exploring other aspects that might provide more nuanced insight into being a 'model' student, and how such conception may vary depending on the space being used. Further research might:

- Explore other modes of non-traditional undergraduate studenthood such as those who are undertaking study in a part-time format and how the experience of part-time study may manifest in different ways of becoming and being a student. Similarly, there might be an investigation into those undergraduate programmes that include a fourth year, either a foundation year or an additional sandwich placement year and the implications of the experiences and engagement of those students. Finally, there might be an investigation into those students who are undertaking a degree-apprenticeship and how they manifest a sense of multiple identities as a result of the programme largely being based within a workplace setting, and how universities make provision to ensure that such students are supported and made to feel as if they belong as part of the university. To better understand the variations of student experiences, researchers could utilise sector data from HESA to understand how the shifts in student modes of study and student age groups are reflected in the changing narratives about student identity and expectations.
- Investigate the postgraduate student experience, as there is a significant increase in the number of postgraduate taught students. In 2012 there were ~271,000 postgraduate taught students, by 2021 this number had increased to ~493,000 (HESA, 2024b), almost a doubling of the number in a ten-year period despite the increase in tuition fees. Hence, there is a concerted effort to recruit postgraduates and retain undergraduates for further study, therefore, there is scope to conduct research into the taught postgraduate student experience, and this would be illuminating to see how student expectations are conveyed, and a sense of belonging developed given that most taught postgraduate programmes are one academic year.
- Develop an understanding of the different types of universities and narratives of what it means to be a model student, how expectations are conveyed, and how student behaviours are shaped. Given that COVID-19 limited access to only one case study site, there is scope to increase the number of research types helping to provide a more representative insight into how the sector utilises biopolitical tactics to shape student behaviours and interactions.

- Find out how the different spaces of the university are used for shaping behaviours. Firstly, exploring the different discursive and physical spaces of the university, as first intended but subsequently restricted to only one space due to concerns relating to COVID-19, to conduct observations of a lecture theatre, a tutorial/seminar room, a meeting room, and a corridor. Here, this would provide an insight into the embodied experiences of individuals as they move through and use different spaces of the university which might be affectively imbued with different meanings and purposes. Alternatively, this approach might be achieved through shadowing individuals as they move throughout the university in a 'typical' week, and help reveal the nuances of their use of the physical space. This might also help to provide an insight into how power dynamics evolve and manifest in different spaces. Second, since the role of digital space has changed since embarking on this research, there is value in conducting research into how digital space is used by the university and the role it plays in forming part of the student experience. Having established the role, definition and extent of digital space for universities, more detailed research can be conducted into how universities use digital nudging and choice architecture to shape students' online behaviours and how that translates into embodied practice.

This research sought to illustrate how FTUG student behaviours and interactions can be productively viewed as influenced by the State in its fashioning of the 'model' student. While this study has sought to illustrate in detail how this is done, the preceding pages have necessarily offered only a snapshot at a particular point in time. It is thus important to reflect on how higher education in England remains a dynamic system in a state of constant transition. The post-pandemic identity of the sector is contested, not least in terms of the distribution between in-person and online learning in the era of blended delivery (Orr et al., 2022; Kernohan, 2024). Therefore, this thesis closes with anticipation of how student behaviours and interactions will be further shaped and reimagined in the increasingly blended educational era that we are entering.

Word Count: 95,588

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Table of research methods and research objective fulfilment

Method Type:	**Interviews**	**Group Interviews**	**Moodboard as part of the Group Interviews**	**Structured Observation**	**Corpus**
Who	1 * Director of Student Success (Senior Manager) 1 * Head of Academic Department (Middle Manager) 1 * Student Body Representative 1* Marketing Director	3 Group Interviews Minimum of 5 people in each interview (Ideal composition of groups: 4 Students in each group 2 Lecturers in each group)	Students & Staff in Group Interviews	Users of social learning space at the case-study university	-
Data type	Verbal, looking to gain depth, Notes on body language	Verbal, looking to gain depth	Initial predefined response categories, then progress to open discussion	Interactions with the space being used	Written and imagery
Network Level of focus	Meso, Micro	Macro	Macro, Meso	Meso, Micro	Macro
Strand of research	2 (Case Study)	1 (Sector overview)	1 (Sector Overview)	2 (Case Study)	1 (Sector Overview)
Purpose	To generate insight regarding the reorganisation of the University, and the impact upon students' behaviour	To generate insight into the decision-making in the university, and how roles student and staff are governed and influenced	To enable group interview participants to engage with a collage of images to indicate 'mood' or feeling about a particular type of learning space and its potential for interactions	To provide a comparator data set between how the group interviewees state how they interact with particular learning spaces compared to how students are observed interacting and using spaces, this will provide observable insight across the Universities	To provide an insight into how universities and the HE sector attempt to engage potential students and students, how student behaviours are governed in writing, and key relevant recent changes to these. To identify a body of key vocabulary in these documents to enable discourse analysis and linguistic cross-referencing to the interview data.
Key areas being addressed	Reorganisation of HE, Decision-making in HE, Networks of Power,	Decision-making in HE, Networks of Power, Biopolitical influences	Impact of affective influences, Biopolitical influences	Networks of Power, Impact of affective influences, Biopolitical Influences	Networks of Power, Decision-Making in HE, Reorganisation of HE, Reorientation of HE
Research Objective	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	2. 4.	2. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.
Research	1. 2. 3.	1. 3.	1. 3.	1. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Aim					
Stage of research	Pilot & Full	Full	Full	Full	Full

Research Objectives:
Using the specialised concepts from social theory of affect, biopolitics and networks of power, the objectives of my project are:

1. To document narratives and perceptions of the ways in which the role and the organisation of the fulltime undergraduate student experience are being reimagined in the context of marketisation and State restructuring of the Higher Education sector.
2. To map and differentiate the key biopolitical influences on fulltime undergraduate students engaged in HE.
3. To advance new knowledge of how individuals on fulltime undergraduate courses ‘become students’ and how those individuals are situated within networks of power.
4. Theorise the relationship between physical space and the impact on how it can shape student behaviours and interactions.

Research Aims:
1. To explore how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes ‘become and be students’ in terms of identity and behaviours in the higher education environment
2. To investigate how networks of power, agency, and influence between students and staff have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in higher education
3. To elucidate the ethical implications and biopolitical implications of influencing students’ behaviour from a position of power using concepts from social theory.

Note:
Only Individual Interviews were conducted in the pilot aspect of the research design, and the other aspects of the research are included to provide a broader picture of how the overarching research design intends to fulfil the research aims and research objectives.

Appendix 2 Swim lane detailed explanation

This provides further elaboration of Figure 1.

HE Tuition Fees/Funding Changes (Top Lane)

1. **Student Loan Company Starts Operating** in 1989, as a Government-owned company, with the first financial support being offered from 1990 to support students with mortgage-style loans to assist with their costs of living.
2. **Introduction of Student Tuition Fees and Income-Contingent Loans** in 1998 following the recommendations of the Dearing Report (1997) to increase access to HE, it was decided to introduce loans on an income-contingent repayment scheme to cover part of the cost of tuition. Notably, this was £1,000 per annum. At this time, the Government sold two 'lots' of mortgage-style loans from 1990-1998 to raise £2bn to help.
3. **Tuition Fees Increased to £3,000 per annum**, in 2004, following pressures on the sector's financial stability due to inflation and greater participation in Higher Education, tuition fees were increased.
4. **Tuition Fees Increased to £3,250 per annum**, in 2006, tuition fees were increased to cover inflation and the mounting deficit of the Government to fund the HE sector. In addition, by 2006 income-contingent repayment loans were also introduced to cover the cost of living.
5. **Student Fees Movement** in 2010 was founded as a result of Government proposals (the recommendations of the Browne Review) to increase tuition fees to £9,000 per annum, resulting in widespread demonstrations and the Welsh Assembly Government announcing it would not be increasing fees for Welsh Students studying in Wales.
6. **Tuition Fees Increased to £9,000 per annum** in 2012 for new starters in September 2012 putting in place the recommendations of the 2010 Browne Review.
7. **Removal of Maintenance Grants** in 2016 as a result of the 2015 Government Financial Budget and the outlining of further funding reforms.
8. **Tuition Fees Increased to £9,250 per annum** in 2017, in addition to the removal of Maintenance Grants the 2015 Budget announced an increase to tuition fees to meet inflation.

HE Legislation (Middle Lane)

1. **Further Education & Higher Education Act 1992**, expansion of the HE sector transforming polytechnics into full universities, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) established to administer the funding for English Higher Education Institutions taking over the responsibilities of the Universities Funding Council.
2. **Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998**, the legislation outlining the introduction of a mandatory student tuition fee system and the basis of the current income-contingent student loan system, at the same time removing much of the maintenance grant system with eligibility significantly reduced.
3. **Higher Education Act 2004**, the introduction of teaching excellence as a key priority for HEIs, creation of the Office For Fair Access with an agenda to increase the number of disadvantaged young people participating in HE.
4. **Charities Act 2006**, shifted the responsibility of charity/funding regulation to HEFCE, hence being positioned as a finance and governance regulator of English HEIs.
5. **HEFCE remit expanded in 2010**, to have oversight of further aspects of governance, teaching quality, research quality, and access to HEIs in England.
6. **Consumer Act 2015**, explicitly positions students at a university as a customer of the services and provisions of the university, a significant change in the protections afforded to students and the obligations/responsibilities of HEIs.
7. **Higher Education and Research Act 2017**, outlines comprehensive changes to the sector for the future, the Teaching Excellence Framework carried forward incorporating significant other metrics to become the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (still referred to as TEF), Higher Education Institutions in government/regulator documentation as a term withdrawn to reflect an

increase in a new expanded 'market' of Higher Education Providers (HEPs), plans outlined for one new larger sector regulator, the Office for Students (OfS) to replace a number sector bodies/regulators.
It is important to note here that the HEFCE's responsibilities for most aspects of research quality and research funding were passed onto the new sector body UK Research and Innovation.
8. **Office for Students in 2018**, takes over regulatory responsibility for HE in England, subsuming the Office for Fair Access and HEFCE, as well as having a much broader regulatory scope, including the administration of quality standards in and admittance to the List of Registered Higher Education Providers, a requirement to be registered with to legally provide HE qualifications in England.
9. **Ofsted Regulatory Powers extended April 2021**, the expansion of Apprenticeships to Level 6 and Level 7 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework has resulted in shifts in how HE is regulated, namely Ofsted becoming the regulator for all apprenticeships. This has created a significant shift in how HE administers, finances, governs, and teaches degree-level apprenticeships.

<u>HE Sector Reports and Organisations (Bottom Lane)</u>

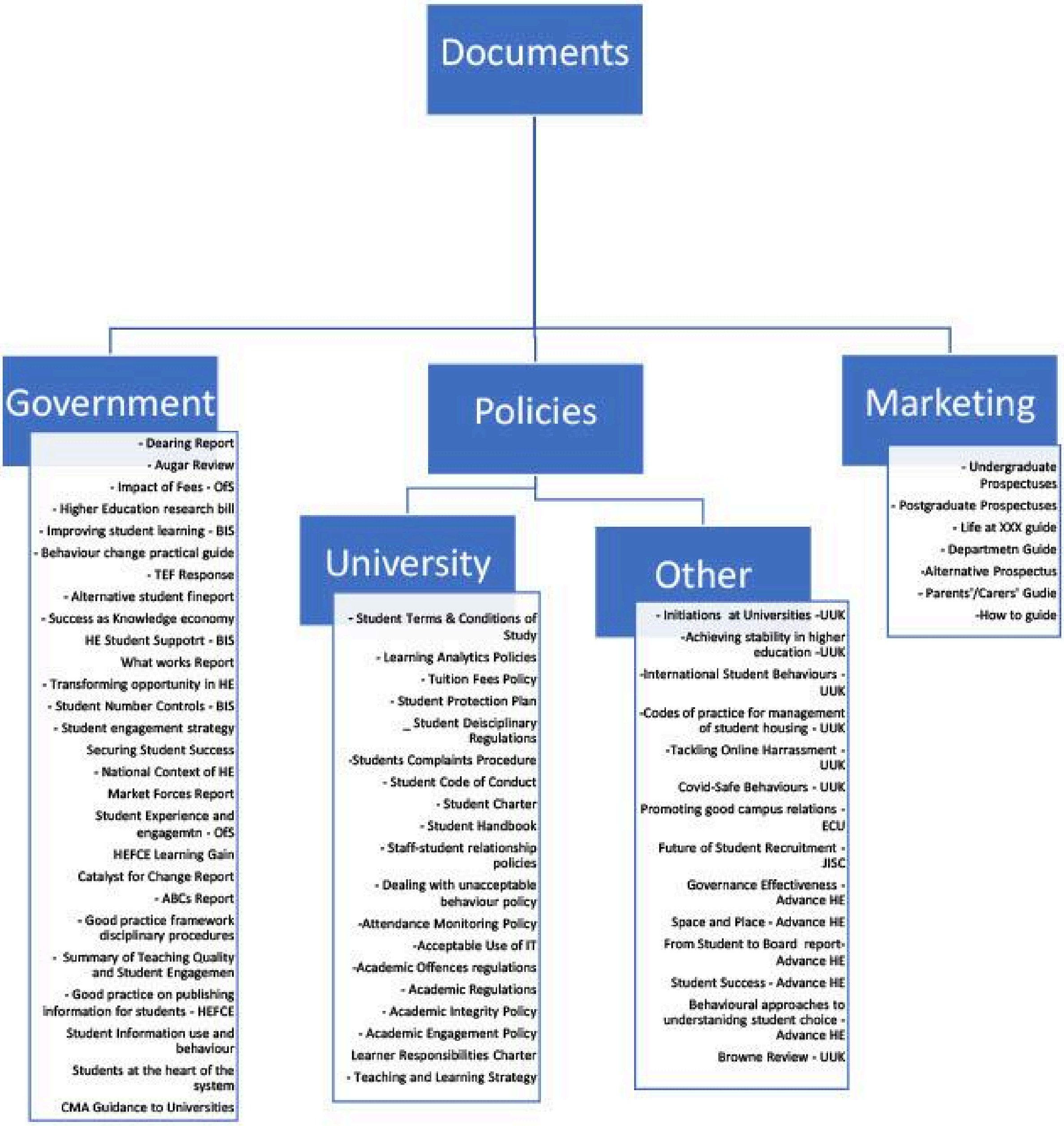
1. The **Dearing Report**, provided its findings in 1997 and set out its recommendations to the Government on how to provide financial stability whilst also providing a system to allow increased HE participation. Dearing's recommendations signalled changes to the tuition and loans systems and paved the way for the Teaching and Higher Education Act of 1998.
2. **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) established in 1997**, with increasing rates of participation and significantly more HEIs in the UK the QAA was created to establish and have 'ownership' of The Quality Code setting out the expectations of UK HE qualifications in terms of quality assurance standards with qualification development/lifecycle and quality standards in teaching.
3. **The Future of Higher Education**, a White Paper released by the then Department for Education and Skills in 2003, setting out recommendations for the sustainability of the sector, enhancing teaching quality, and providing a greater voice to students for their education.
4. **Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**, created in 2003 as an independent arbitrator for disputes between students and some HEIs (specifically universities), as the OIA is a non-regulatory body, providing the sector's student complaints scheme and universities had an obligation to listen/act on its outcomes.
5. **Higher Education Academy** created by HEFCE and the Universities UK, Standing Committee of Principals in Higher Education(GuildHE) published following their report in 2004 calling for the need of a new sector organisation to champion teaching excellence in HE.
6. The **Equality Challenge Unit role expansion** in 2006, a sector organisation championing equality, diversity, inclusion and leading the widening participation agenda, expanded its role to include matters concerning both staff and students in HE.
7. In 2007, the responsibility for the Higher Education sector was moved to the newly formed and short-lived **Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills** following a reorganisation of the Blair Government Cabinet. This move was the first step in moving Higher Education away from other forms of education and aligning it closer to industry and as space for new working partnerships with organisations.
8. In 2009, the responsibility for Higher Education was transferred to the then newly formed **Department for Business Innovation and Skills**, (this subsumed the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) following Brown's restructuring of Government due to the 2008 financial crisis, hence this move aligned the sector to being part of the UK's business economy, becoming part of the UK's international marketplace.
9. **Higher Education Better Regulation Group**, formed in 2009 from a number of HE sector bodies by the Government, to provide strategic thought and recommendations on HE governance and finance. With the spread of concern about the lack of regulation and oversight that had led to the global financial crisis, HE was a focus area for austerity measures.
10. The **Browne Review** in 2010 provided updated direction on the Higher Education provision that looked at the sustainability of the sector, the UK's HE sector in an international marketplace, and the need for focus on the student experience.

11. **Students at the Heart of the System** was published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2011, a key tone change following a shift to a new coalition Government and highlighted that HE calling for HEIs to work more closely with businesses and other parts of the economy to ensure that students are work-ready, with key employability skills that students should be at the centre of the operation of the university being provided with an education that provides transferable skills.
12. **Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education** published by Universities UK, their first report in 2011, this report looked at how universities were spending their money and the impact of that spending in a range of metrics in terms of spending versus income generation, the destinations of students, and made recommendations for new managerialism to maximise spending impact in times of austerity.
13. The **Quality Assurance Agency's role in HE was reviewed** in 2011-12 following a number of quality assurance cases that made their way into the public eye, and under new direction created a new Quality Code between 2011-13 for the sector. This new code placed greater emphasis on consistency and the robustness of quality assurance processes.
14. The **Higher Education Better Regulation Group dissolved** in 2014 following the work it had been remitted to perform for highlighting new governance and organisational structures, methods of accountability, and funding recommendations. This also coincided with the start of deregulation to stimulate the economy following a number of years of increased regulation to combat the global financial crisis.
15. **Efficiency, effectiveness, and Value for Money** published by Universities UK in 2015 their second sector report on the financing of the HE sector. This report is framed in the context of ongoing financial pressures of austerity, with increasing difficulty for the HE sector to be able to 'balance their books', and this report made recommendations on approaches being taken at some HEIs, maximising spending impact and efficiencies, particularly in the restructuring of universities being seen across the sector. This report very much looked at the announcement by the Government in 2013 about the lifting of student number controls, and how the future of universities would be much more of an open market.
16. The **Research Excellence Framework** was introduced by HEFCE in 2014, replacing the Research Assessment Exercise. This new framework situated research outputs in a global context, providing impact ratings from unclassified to four-star, with four stars being world-leading. It was stated that the new REF system would reduce the administrative burden on HEIs. The REF also took into account the income generation based on research outputs and aligned HEIs to sources of funding they would be eligible for from HEFCE and research councils.
17. In 2016, the responsibility for Higher Education was transferred back to the **Department for Education**, alongside all other forms of education, following a restructuring of Government under the leadership of Theresa May. However, some research and funding links/routes were held in the new Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy.
18. The **Teaching Excellence Framework** for HEIs was announced and introduced in 2016 by the Department for Education, with HEFCE holding responsibility for TEF for the first iteration in England in 2016. TEF is an assessment of the quality of undergraduate teaching. HEIs are assessed at the institution-wide level and as a result of the TEF assessment were/are awarded Bronze, Silver, or Gold based on several metrics, including student outcomes, attainment, destinations, assessment and feedback, teaching quality, non-completions, and academic support with data drawn from five sources.TEF was introduced based on a trial year, subsequent lessons learnt year, and with the future trajectory of TEF ratings being used to determine the funding given/eligibility for funding for HEIs by the Government.
19. The **Bell Review** in 2017 was commissioned by Universities UK and GuildHE to look into the future of HE sector agencies, with an increasingly complex and fractured picture with multiple organisations and areas of focus a number of recommendations were made calling for a single sector agency to provide a stronger voice for sector-led standards, quality and excellence, and to assist in a more effective sector relationship with government.

20. The **Quality Assurance Agency's** role and responsibilities were revised in response to the Higher Education and Research Act of 2017, and in 2018 became the Office for Students' designated quality body to make recommendations about the standards of education curriculum and quality assurance, and to oversee The Quality Code. In England, this positions the QAA more as an advisory body than a regulatory body.
21. **Advance HE** notionally announced in 2017 following The Bell Review and other subsequent Universities UK Reports in 2017 in response to consultations from the Government on the establishment of the Office for Students. Advance HE was officially launched in 2018 as a sector organisation for excellence in Higher Education teaching, governance, finance and quality matters; merging the Equality Challenge Unit, the Higher Education Academy, and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.
22. **Augar Review commissioned** in 2018 by the Government, to assess the suitability and sustainability of post-18 education in the UK. The review was tasked with particular emphasis on the return of investment on education and methods for addressing 'low-value' provision, and how to provide sustainability for further and higher education.
23. **Office for Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education registration made a condition by Office for Students** in 2018, it is required for all Higher Education Providers in England. Whilst it is technically a requirement to be registered with a student complaints scheme, the only current scheme recognised is by the OIA.
24. **Augar Report findings and recommendations released** throughout 2019-2021 following the post-18 education review. This called for a number of changes to finance, governance, teaching, engagement with other parts of the economy, and quality assurance. The Government response so far has indicated sector funding being restructured with the introduction of life-long loans to enable more people to be able to access education, local skills plans to highlight regional needs and the required FE and HE sector responses to meet those needs, and an increased focus on technical education.

Appendix 3 Corpus of exemplar documents

3a Corpus documents Included



3b Corpus keyword identification example

SKETCH ENGINE

(items: **87,881**)

	Word
1	dearing report
2	condition of registration
3	ongoing condition
4	education institution
5	student number
6	funding body
7	student representative
8	participation plan
9	teaching excellence
10	hei manager

	Word
11	student experience
12	education provider
13	education funding council
14	fee cap
15	student choice
16	student finance
17	student support
18	education college
19	learning gain
20	ongoing condition of registration

	Word
21	social mobility
22	fair access
23	student loan
24	awarding power
25	degree awarding power
26	living cost
27	widening participation
28	public engagement
29	prospective student
30	tuition fee

	Word
31	education sector
32	research council
33	asf model
34	behaviour change
35	pe activity
36	public funding
37	student learning experience
38	university title
39	teaching grant
40	knowledge economy

	Word
41	gsr behaviour
42	degree award
43	general ongoing condition
44	gsr behaviour change
45	education qualification
46	post-18 education
47	academic staff
48	registered provider
49	office for students
50	individual provider

This shows an example of top 50 keyword analysis of the Government Documents pre-pandemic, and this was conducted for each of the nine corpora.

3c Corpus concordance example

SKETCH ENGiNE

simple behaviour • **102**
1,718.18 per million tokens • 0.17%

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	doc#0	ıt they cannot face addressing; Odd or unpredictable	**behaviour**	, including disruptive or withdrawn behaviour; Behavio
2	doc#0	ıdictable behaviour, including disruptive or withdrawn	**behaviour**	; Behaviour which indicates persistent sadness, lack
3	doc#0	haviour, including disruptive or withdrawn behaviour;	**Behaviour**	which indicates persistent sadness, lack of emotion,
4	doc#0	ıir hair etc?</s><s>Sudden change in appearance or	**behaviour**	; Smelling of alcohol or signs of taking drugs; Lack of
5	doc#0	lures or fitness to practise procedures if the student's	**behaviour**	is disruptive to others or if it presents a risk to others.
6	doc#0	ɜrn of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening	**behaviour**	, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over w
7	doc#0	about suicide Disorientated or is displaying psychotic	**behaviour**	Taken an overdose of drugs/alcohol A recent victim o
8	doc#0	ıgainst them or their involvement in crime, anti-social	**behaviour**	, family tensions, race/hate crime, lack of self-esteem
9	doc#1	›03/07/2022, 16:00 Home Dealing with unacceptable	**behaviour**	: guidance for students and staff | University of West
10	doc#1	s Policies and regulations Dealing with unacceptable	**behaviour**	: guidance for students and staff 1.</s><s>Introductio
11	doc#1	ntroduction 2.</s><s>What constitutes unacceptable	**behaviour**	? 3.</s><s>What should you do if you experience una
12	doc#1	›What should you do if you experience unacceptable	**behaviour**	? 4.</s><s>Confidentiality 5.</s><s>You've made a c
13	doc#1	ɜ platforms. 2.</s><s>What constitutes unacceptable	**behaviour**	? https://www.uwl.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-regulat
14	doc#1	1/9 03/07/2022, 16:00 Dealing with unacceptable	**behaviour**	: guidance for students and staff | University of West
15	doc#1	ınsider that they have been affected by unacceptable	**behaviour**	by staff or another student.</s><s>Any student in this
16	doc#1	if they wish to access support.</s><s>Unacceptable	**behaviour**	may involve actions, words or physical gestures that

This shows an example of a concordance analysis of a university corpora based on the search term 'behaviour' drawn on documents during COVID-19/

Appendix 4 Question schedule for interview with DoM

<u>Interview with Marketing Lead of XXXXXXXX</u>

5 Minutes on the introduction and briefly about the research, and reminder of the right to withdraw

No	Question	Response/Observations
	Section 1 - 40 minutes - Space & Students	
1.	How does the University engage with prospective undergraduate students prior to them becoming enrolled (if at all)?	
2.	Does the University in its marketing convey what it means to be a student here?	
3.	How important is the University's marketing for attracting students to come here? Why?	
4.	What makes this University different from other local universities? How is this portrayed in the marketing?	
5.	Does the University make undergraduate students aware of its expectations? How does it do this? Clarification: about expectations - student behaviours regarding their academic progress and conduct	
6.	Could you explain how different spaces of the University are portrayed in media (if at all) for different purposes/uses	
7.	How is the use of space around the University reviewed (if at all)?	
8.	Have undergraduate student behaviours in your University altered since the increase in tuition fees? Why do you think this is? Clarification: tuition fees since 2012 increase in fees to £9,000 per year	
	Section 2 - 10 minutes - Policy	
9..	How does government policy impacting the student experience influence procedures and policy at the University-wide level? Clarification: This is looking to do with key pieces of legislation or guidance or reviews	

	that impact upon universities providing education/experience for students, such as the Augar Review or the student tuition fee changes.	
10.	Have austerity measures affected University's ability to put procedures and policies into action? Clarification: Here austerity measures are viewed as the response to funding cuts as a result of the global recession in 2008 and the subsequent years.	
Section 3 - 10 - Minutes - Conclusion		
11.	Have austerity measures led to changes in the organisation of the University and Department? How has marketing changed at the University?	
12	Do you think these changes benefited the student experience? If so, how?	
13.	Finally, what do you believe is the most important factor shaping student academic and social behaviours at the University? Why do you think this?	

Appendix 5 Question schedule for interview with DoSS

Interview with Director of Student Success

5 Minutes on introduction and briefly about the research, a warning at start of recording, and reminder of right to withdraw

No.	Question	Response/Observations
Section 1 - 15 minutes - overview of Higher Education		
1.	Briefly, how has XXXX University changed in the last 10 years?	
2.	Have the changes in tuition fees impacted upon the University? In what ways? Clarification: this question is focused mainly around the 2012 increase in student fees	
Section 2 - 30 Minutes - Space and Students		
3.	How does the University engage with prospective undergraduate students?	
4.	Similarly, does the University convey to students what it means to be an Undergraduate Student here? If so, how?	
5.	Are undergraduate student behaviours and interactions monitored at your University? If so, how? How are those behaviours influenced (if at all)? Clarification: about expectations - student behaviours regarding their academic progress and conduct	
6.	To what extent have recent government policies impacted upon undergraduate student behaviours at your University? Could you explain why this is the case? Clarification: This is to do with key pieces of legislation or guidance or reviews that impact upon universities providing education/experience for students, such as the Augar Review or the student tuition fee changes.	
7.	How can undergraduate students express their views about the University? (OfS requirement that student views are captured)	

8.	Are spaces around the University designed with particular uses in mind? Are spaces always used for what they were designed for?	
9.	How have undergraduate student behaviours altered (if at all) since the increase in tuition fees? Clarification: student fees increase since 2012	
10.	Does the Office for Students influence the University and everyday practice at the University? If so, how?	
11.	Has the current context of Covid-19 altered undergraduate student behaviours and interactions? If so, in what ways?	
Section 3 - 10 minutes -Policy		
12.	How is government policy translated into procedures and policies at the University?	
13.	In what ways has the University responded to recent austerity? Clarification: Here austerity measures are viewed as the response to funding cuts as a result of the global recession in 2008 and the subsequent years.	
14.	In light of the pandemic how has the University altered its policies to ensure students' and staff interactions are Covid-secure?	
Section 4 -5 minutes- Review		
15.	What do you think influences student academic and social behaviours the most at the University? Why do you think this?	
16.	In three words please describe higher education in England today	

Appendix 6 Question schedule for interview with HoD

Interview with Head of Department of XXXXXXXX

5 Minutes on introduction and briefly about the research, warning of recording, and reminder of right to withdraw

No.	Question	Response/Observations
Section 1 - 30 minutes - Space & Students		
1.	How does the Department engage with prospective undergraduate students prior to them becoming enrolled (if at all)?	
2.	Does the University and Department make undergraduate students aware of its expectations? How does it do this? Clarification: about expectations - student behaviours regarding their academic progress and conduct	
3.	How can undergraduate students express their views about the University and Department? (OfS requirement for student views to be considered)	
4.	Could you explain how different spaces of the Department are designed (if at all) for different purposes/uses?	
5.	How is the use of space around the Department reviewed (if at all)?	
6.	Have undergraduate student behaviours in your Department altered since the increase in tuition fees? Why do you think this is? Clarification: tuition fees since 2012 increase in fees to £9,000 per year	
7.	With that in mind, in your Department how have the methods of teaching and learning, responsibilities and workload of lecturers changed (if at all)?	
8.	How have student interactions and behaviours altered in the department in light of the current context of Covid-19?	
Section 2 - 20 minutes - Policy		
9.	How does government policy impacting the	

	student experience influence procedures and policy at the University-wide level? Clarification: This is looking to do with key pieces of legislation or guidance or reviews that impact upon universities providing education/experience for students, such as the Augar Review or the student tuition fee changes.	
10.	Does the Department translate those University-wide procedures and policies ‘into action’? How does it do this?	
11.	Have austerity measures affected University Departments’ ability to put those University-wide procedures and policies into action? Clarification: Here austerity measures are viewed as the response to funding cuts as a result of the global recession in 2008 and the subsequent years.	
12.	Has University and Department policy on student behaviours altered in light of Covid-19? If so, in what ways?	
Section 3 - 10 - Minutes - Conclusion		
13.	Have austerity measures led to changes in the organisation of the University and Department? If so, how?	
14	Do you think these changes benefited the student experience? If so, how?	
15.	What do you believe is the most important factor shaping student academic and social behaviours at the University? Why do you think this?	
16.	In three words please describe higher education in England today	

Appendix 7 Question schedule for interview with Student Rep

Interview with Student Body Representative

5 Minutes on introduction and briefly about the research, warning at start of recording, and reminder of right to withdraw

No.	**Question**	**Response/Observations**
Section 1 - 30 minutes - Students & Space		
1.	How does the University and the Students' Union engage with potential students prior to them joining the University?	
2.	Does the Students' Union help to negotiate the relationship between the University and the Students? How is this done?	
3.	How can students convey their views about the University, and what systems are in place to respond to these? (Rationale for question: OfS requirement for student views to be considered)	
4.	How does the University and Union express what it means to be an Undergraduate Student here (if at all)?	
5.	Does the University provide interventions for students failing to meet expectations (academically or otherwise)? What are these?	
6.	Could you explain how different spaces of the University are designed (if at all) for different purposes/uses?	
7.	How is the use of spaces around the University reviewed (if at all)? Such as rooms, lecture theatres etc.	
Section 2 - 20 minutes -Policy		
8.	How does the Students' Union provide input into university-wide processes, procedures and internal policy?	
9.	Does the Students' Union work with the University to respond to government policies which fundamentally impact on the student experience? (e.g. fees, numbers cap). How does the Students' Union do this?	

	Clarification: This is looking at key pieces of legislation or guidance or reviews that impact upon universities providing education/experience for students, such as the Augar Review or the student tuition fee changes.	
10.	Have austerity measures affected government policy and the University's ability to put them into practice? Could you please explain this? Clarification: Here austerity measures are viewed as the response to funding cuts as a result of the global recession in 2008 and the subsequent years.	
11.	Has the current context of Covid-19 resulted in any changes to university policy on student behaviours? If so, could you provide an example of these changes, such as use of spaces (if any)?	
Section 3 - 5 minutes - Return to behaviour		
12.	What do you believe are the most important factors shaping students' behaviours at the University? Why do you think this?	
13.	In three words please describe higher education in England today	
A1.	Has the organisation of the University changed due to austerity measures? If so, why?	
A2	Do you think the recent changes in Higher Education were necessary? Why?	

Appendix 8 Group interview schedule

Group Interview schedule

Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

The session will be scheduled for up to 90 minutes

5 Minutes on introduction and briefly about the research, ground rules, a warning at start of recording, and reminder of right to withdraw.

Indicative introductory background.
Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this group interview today. As you may have noticed in the participant information form that you received prior to today, this group brings together participants from a number of universities and some of you may be students and others academic staff. It is important to remember that this is a safe space for your contributions to my research exploring the student behaviours, practices and interactions and how they might be influenced by the state, universities, and other actors. Today is about exploring and sharing your own experiences and understandings rather than a consensus view, and that you input is really valuable so please do feel free to provide that; and as we are convened from staff and student perspectives it is completely okay for you to have and share differing perspectives on a question or point of discussion. Some of the topics that we explore may require you to think about relationships of power and how those relationships are played out across your universities, indeed your own experiences of these, such as the way how for example the university holds students accountable for their conduct and academic progress. These rich insights shared as a group help to build a picture of the way in which experiences around and within the spaces of the university may be shaped, and to help identify if there are commonalities across the higher education sector in England.

No.	Question	Response/Observations
Section 1 - 20 minutes - 'Mood Board' responses to four different learning space images		
1.	Please take a moment to reflect on these four images of university learning spaces. How do you feel inclined to behave/interact here, and why do you think that?: A. Lecture Theatre B. Tutorial Room C. Corridor D. Students' Union	[Data collected here may take the form of key words and impressions rather than continuous narrative. Follow-up questions will establish further information.] [These images will be of recognisable social learning spaces (please click below for indicative example) that have been identified from the document analysis and which are likely to prompt recognition from interviewees as having similar spaces at their own institution. All images will be from the public domain and do not require permission to use.]
Section 2 - 30 minutes - Students & Space		
2.	Thinking now about the equivalent spaces in your own institutions, would you like to share some examples of the ways in which the behaviours of individuals vary in different spaces around your university?	

	Has the University tried to ensure that spaces are used as they were designed to be? How do you know this? Who might have been involved in the design? Why do you think this?	
3.	Does your University or your specific Department/School convey its expectations about undergraduate students' behaviours? If so, how does it do this? (e.g. codes of conduct, charters)	
4.	How are students at your university able to express views about their University experience?	
5.	Whose input appears to be more important in the relationship between 'the University' and 'the Students', the Students' of the University (sense of demand) or the University's to the students (sense of being told)? Why do you think this?	
6.	How have students' behaviours and interactions altered in the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic?	
Section 4 - 15 minutes - Summary of Behaviours and interactions		
7.	What do you believe is the biggest factor shaping students' behaviours and interactions at your university? Why is that?	
Section 3 - 10 minutes - Policy		
8.	Have funding constraints affected provision for the student experience and your university's ability to put them into practice, please provide examples?	
9.	In three words please describe higher education in England today	
Other observations:		

What do you feel you should you be doing in this space?

Source: SEATS Software :https://www.seatssoftware.com/case-studies/solent-university/

Socialising	Working	Reading
Focused work/discussion	Waiting	Other (please state)
Why do you think this?		

What do you feel you should you be doing in this space?

Source: AccessAble -https://www.accessable.co.uk/venues/rattray-building#6fcc49fc-4a58-4c4b-897a-4f19f9f05e50

Socialising	Working	Reading
Focused work/discussion	Waiting	Other (please state)
Why do you think this?		

What do you feel you should you be doing in this space?

Source: NIDA -https://www.nida.edu.au/venue-hire/rooms-and-studios/tutorial-rooms

Socialising	Working	Reading
Focused work/discussion	Waiting	Other (please state)
Why do you think this?		

What do you feel you should you be doing in this space?

Source: Michelle Ball - https://edlaw4students.com/private-schools-expel/

Socialising	Working	Reading
Focused work/discussion	Waiting	Other (please state)
Why do you think this?		

Appendix 9 Structured observation form

Structured observation record form

University Number:

Type of space: Social Learning Space

Brief description of the physical space:
(Including: furnishings, posters, decors, focal point, approximate age of setting, type of architecture, comfort, hygiene)
Description of the lighting and changes in lighting:

Description of sounds/noise and changes in sounds:
Evidence of ‘nudges’ or ‘affective influences’ in the space (if any):
(A nudge is for example a poster indicating how to use the space, something that shapes how to use the space)
Evidence of who the space is designed for?
Who is using the space?
(Comment every 5 minutes)

Observation of interactions and use of the space
(Write in a narrative format of use every 5 minutes, e.g in the first 5 minutes students working individually on a shared table very little noise, the last 5 minute students in a group loudly discussing rugby whilst drinking alcoholic beverages)
Other comments or notes

Appendix 10 Completed structured observation form

Vst 2

Structured observation record form

University Number: U1V2

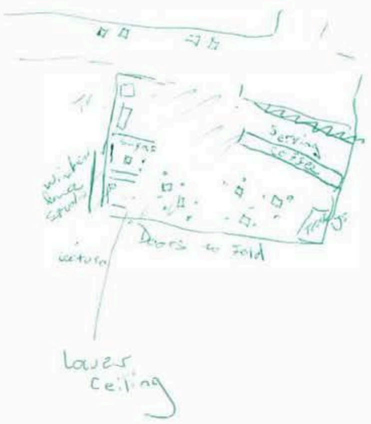
Type of space: Social Learning Space

Brief description of the physical space:

(Including: furnishings, posters, decors, focal point, approximate age of setting, type of architecture, comfort, hygiene)

- Entrance way Wire chairs and tables,

(Same type of setting as previous)



- still steak area
-
- Changes
  - [redacted] SU lecturn in one corner
  - Some muddy foot prints
  - new offer posters
  - Three push trolleys
- Dark open plan design to space outside, outsider no longer feeling part of the cafe, person outside the Liverpool

Description of the lighting and changes in lighting:
- Darker day,   → strip lights on   →   - Brightest lighting on the food counter of the main cafe section, with higher value goods   - Darker area in the higher 'food' style tables   -
Description of sounds/noise and changes in sounds:
- Magic Radio → steady but background rather than preventing conversation   - Change over the staff, music is much louder, dominates soundscape   - ~~Bes~~ Disruption when washing up and on phone   - Background hum of refridgerators   - Discussion in corridor
Evidence of 'nudges' or 'affective influences' in the space (if any):
- Design of meal deal branding, more ease to shop and go   - split of seating, food seating more functional and solid rather for use and go, contrast to other area of softer sofas and lower for drinks only   - Covid-19 QR codes on tables   (A nudge is for example a poster indicating how to use the space, something that shapes how to use the space)
Evidence of who the space is designed for?
- Multiple users   - more visit to get food and use

Who is using the space?

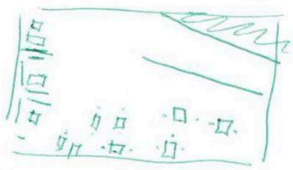
- People collecting coffee
- staff
- Researcher
- Group 6 filming
- Lecturing staff
- student with baby
- staff of different / bodies of
- children
- BME
- men
- Disabled
- Women

(Comment every 5 minutes)

Observation of interactions and use of the space

(Write in a narrative format of use every 5 minutes, e.g in the first 5 minutes students working individually on a shared table very little noise, the last 5 minute students in a group loudly discussing rugby whilst drinking alcoholic beverages)

- 1 person coffee
- 1 person staff coffee
- 2 members of staff, change over discussion
- staff changing layout of space to be more regular layout



- Group 6 people using the space for filming the group left due to radio being too loud, and the lighting being too dark
- 2 people visits the space and then left the cafe didn't assume the look of the place
- 1 person on wire chair on corridor without cafe
- 1 person about 15 minutes changing phone and talking
- 1 person collect the meal deal and go

Continue on phone
no consumption
just sat

returned to the space for on phone

- 1 person coming for coffee
- 1 member of staff pass by window to dance studio
- 1 x group 3 -[illegible] the lower seats
  ↳ left for group
- 1 x groups on sofa with 6 students and 1 lecturer, small group teaching looking at the design of the space, Socratic question
  ↳ Architecture redesigning of cafe to increase light and space

12:20 - Student remains on his phone - appears playing with phone
- 2 students collecting straws for drama school performance, other students notice,
- group of students and lecturers discussing left after 45 minutes
  ↳ insurance discussion

12:30 → staff member restocking in build up to anticipated lunch period

12:45 - 1 person snack and go
1 person remaining on phone now 1hr

12:50 - 3 students using sofas, own food and use of microwave → Group of students chatting
- 2 students in soft chairs, heat own food
- 1 student on computer seemingly working
- 2 security staff own meals
-

Other comments or notes

13:05 - 3 students in circle discussing
- ~~[illegible]~~ Lady and pram [illegible] deal → baby crying
- 3 students on sofas
- 2 students at main table eating
- 1 student still on mobile
- 1 lecturing staff members, meal deal
- 1 student on a walking frame

Reflection
coffee ordered
small [illegible]

This example is from visit 2, this example was chosen as it also includes field sketches of the space. Visit 1 and visit 3 followed a similar format of how notes were made.

Appendix 11 Adaptations to research due to COVID-19

Revisions to Methods

Recruitment to Group Interviews
It was the intention for the member of staff to be recruited for the group interview first; once a member of staff had been selected from the expressions of interest at that university, a convenient time and date for the group interview for that member of staff was established. Following that the student participants for the group interviews were to be recruited.

It had been intended to also recruit participants by using posters with tear-off strips; these posters were aimed at the recruitment of FTUG students at the case study site. These posters were to be displayed on shared notice boards throughout the recruiting department and students' unions. The recruitment poster included a QR code with a link to the expression of interest Google form requesting the same information as specified on the poster. Poster recruitment is a more traditional form of recruitment for participants, and they were used as a targeted method of recruitment rather than a broad and widely shared poster campaign, hence, the clarity and the location of the poster were paramount (Bosco & Herman, 2010). Nonetheless, due to COVID-19 measures and the move to remote online teaching, the posters were not used.

However, all intended methods of recruitment, for ease of administration, were signposted to the Google form for expressions of interest in participation, (although my institutional email address was included too for expressing an interest). This would then have made it easier to identify and select potential participants.

However, due to difficulties in establishing means for reaching the demographic that had originally been intended the recruitment was opened up to any person who worked as a member of academic staff or had studied a traditional FTUG course in an English University.

Group interviews and interviews rather than being held in-person pivoted to be held online, as such noting of behaviour and gestures was limited to what could be seen on screen.

Research Sites and Spaces

It had been the intention to conduct observations at a range of different UK universities to be able to make comparisons of findings across different university groupings such as Russell Group, Red Brick, and Post-92. However, due to COVID-19 a number of institutions withdrew initial expressions of interest to be involved with student learning moving online. Similarly, the research case site was mindful of student anxiety returning to campus and the ongoing COVID-19 measures and as such granted permission solely to observe SLS.

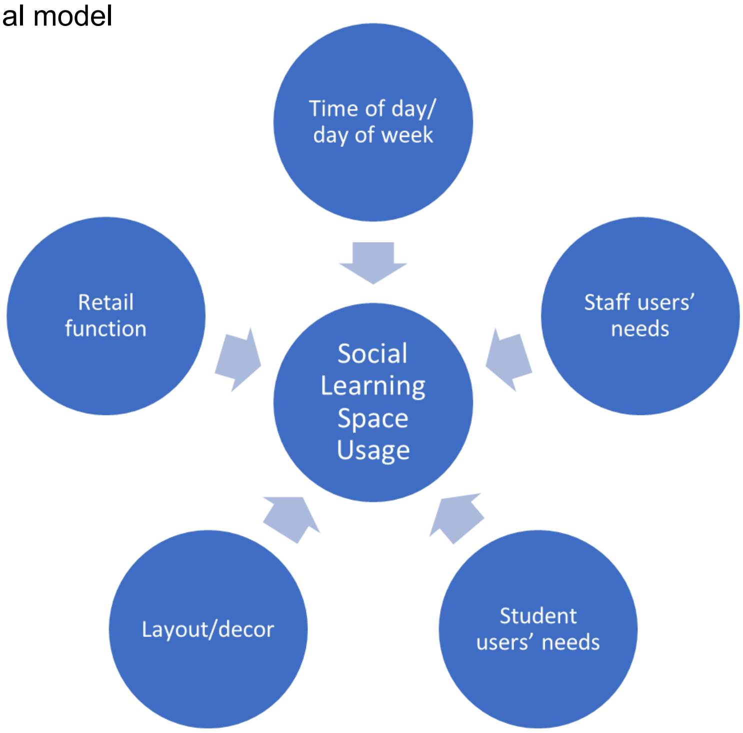
Appendix 12 Detailed observation findings

	Observational period 1	Observational period 2	Observational period 3
Who is using the space:	2x students seated on sofas, talking; 2 x students seated on low stools, eating; 1 x member of staff, purchased takeaway coffee; 1 x student in corridor reading; 3 x students seated, talking; 1 x student seated at dining table, drawing; 4 x students purchased takeaway coffee; 9 x students passing through [using as a transit]; 2 x professional services department personnel (Approximately 25 people came, then went or stayed in the space)	4 x Students purchasing takeaway coffee; 1 x student working on laptop; 1 x student sat in corridor on wire chair, using their phone; 8 x member of staff, purchasing takeaway coffee; 6 x students with filming equipment; 6 x students brought into the space with their lecturer looking at the design; 3 x students sitting on sofas talking; 2 x students on sofas working on laptops; 1 x student tending to a baby; 2 x student at table eating; 2 x students asking for straws for project; 3 x professional services department personnel (Approximately 39 people came, then went or stayed in the space)	1 x student sat in corridor on wire chair, using their phone; 1 x student at standard height table using their phone; 3 x students on sofas, eating their own food; 2 x professional service staff, holding a meeting; 3 x students purchasing takeaway coffee; 2 x professional service staff; 2 x Academic staff purchased takeaway coffee; 2 x Academic staff at table eating; 2 x Staff entering and leaving when no retail outlet employee present to serve; 3 x students looking for sandwiches; 3 x member of staff looking for sandwiches (Approximately 24 people came, then went or stayed in the space)
Observation of interactions and use of the space:	1st 5 minutes: individuals focused on their phones, quiet conversation within small groups. After that conservations became louder, and subsequently quieter again towards the end of the observation. A group of 3 students were eating their own food, member of staff repeated 'glared' at them. One student subsequently purchased food at retail outlet. One student attempted to pay cash for an item but only cards were accepted, leading to a discussion between vendor and purchaser which was audible to all. The retail outlet employee interacted with customers and other professional services members who visited the space. Average stay excluding the retail employee (estimate) was 10 minutes.	There were five different groups of students who used the space for eating and group work and/or talking. 2 security staff sat in corner eating their own food, and only interacted with each other. Change over of retail staff after 1 hour. A group of 6 students looking to do some recording/filming in the space, left, with one commenting 'it is too loud in here' A group of students brought into space for 30 minutes by their lecturer discussing the design style and feel of the space. The retail outlet employee was busy serving customers for most of the time. However, they did restock one of the fridges, and changed the furniture layout of the table and chairs giving clearer access to the retail counter. When phone rang two students went into the corridor to take their calls. Average stay excluding the retail employee (estimate) was 25 minutes.	There were only three customers using the space for the first 20 minutes. Even at that they had food from elsewhere, but drinks from the retail outlet. All but one of the food counters/fridges were out of order, meaning there was a reduced range of products. However, the retail outlet employee spent much of their time restocking this fridge and cleaning the outlet machinery such as the coffee machine and display cabinets. Two members of professional services staff appeared to have a meeting Professional Services Member of staff from estates spent 15 minutes behind counter same side as retail member of staff talking and laughing Retail outlet employee left the space unattended, potential customers entered and left when unable to purchase Retail outlet was closed early at 15:12, with light turned off for the space, sandwiches left out for people to take for free. Some potential customers arrived and left when seeing unable to purchase drinks. Average stay excluding the retail employee (estimate) was 30 minutes.
Description of the lighting and changes	Bright on the one side of the space towards the glass opening doors, whereas it is much duller in the entrance way/connecting corridor to the space. Half the lights were turned on.	Darker day than Obs 1, all lighting turned on. However, still much brighter lighting on the retail outlet with spotlights on the menu and cabinet with higher value products.	All lights turned on. Much brighter lighting on the retail outlet with spotlights on the menu and cabinet with higher value products, rather than in the seating areas.

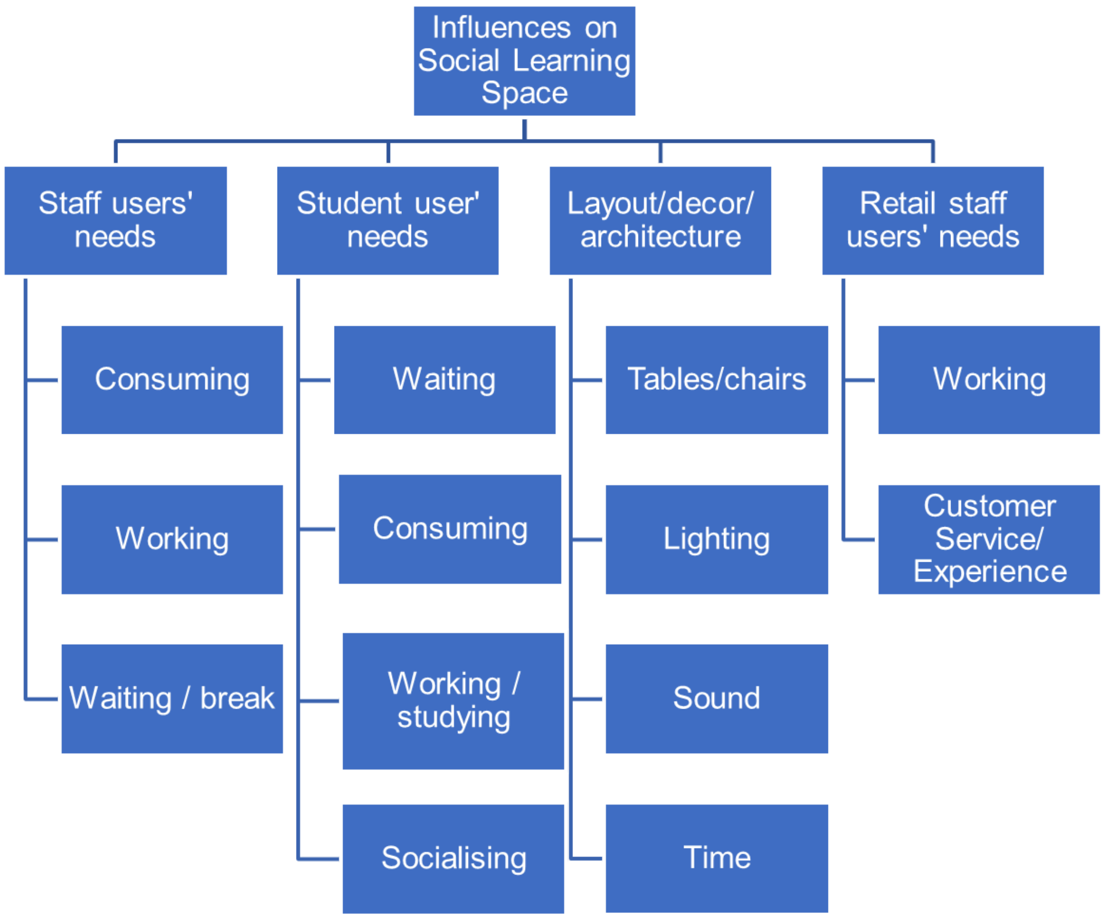
in lighting:	Lots of sunlight shining through from outside. Lighting angled towards the retail outlet counters. Large mirror windows, giving reflection in some angles that it is viewed. and sense of a much larger space than it is	Darker lighting for the normal height and high tables and chairs.	Lights turned off when retail outlet employee closed the outlet, although the space was still open for use for other purposes. Light shining through windows, and car headlights illuminating space more brightly as they passed by on the road outside.
Description of sounds/ noise and changes in sounds:	First 25 minutes of observation, loud talking above the music being played. (Evident when radio temporarily loses signal) After 25 minutes, music switched off by retail staff member. At that point hmm of fridges and machinery associated with the retail outlet the loudest noises. Scrape of chairs and tables being moved, as the retail outlet staff members cleans floors and surfaces.	Radio station on but louder than what might be expected as 'background music' for first hour, this is reduced and changes station to music of a much slower beat. Conversations much more audible after first hour. Background buzzing of refrigerators and retail machinery such as the dishwashers and coffee machine.	Whilst retail outlet was open, a radio station playing rock music was on loudly. Individual conversations hard to hear. When the retail outlet closed, the was the hmm of the refrigerators, and low level conversations.
Evidence of 'nudges' or 'affective influences' in the space:	Poster urging customers to choose the 'ethical coffee bean' Design of lighting and clear passage access through to the retail counter Open plan layout and variety of different types of seating and table at different levels Blocking off an area of space with seating to signify not in use Limited seating and tables compared to size of space given to retail outlet displays and products	Design of meal deal advertising and wording of 'buy and go' Seating area where food is largely being consumed more functional and average height, whereas sofa tables are very low and further away. COVID-19 QR codes on tables, about vaccination and staying safe on campus	Posters about the university were displayed, about the type of university it was and where it sat in different league table metrics. SU lectern in corner, with students using it for charging and practising speech. Poster on being a 'good neighbour' to the local community.
Categories of Behaviours:	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Consuming, Group working, Laughing, Purchasing, Individual Working, Socialising	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Consuming, Group Working, Restocking, Laughing, Purchasing, Filming, Teaching, Parenting, Individual Working, Socialising	Talking, Drinking, Eating, Consuming, Meeting, Laughing, Purchasing, Cleaning, Individual Working, Socialising

Appendix 13 Model of significant influences on observed social learning space

Top level conceptual model



Further depth to conceptual model



Appendix 14 Recruitment social media text and follow-up email

14a Academic staff

Short text for posting on social networks:

Are you a member of academic staff at a university in England? Would you be interested in taking part in an online group interview on student behaviours and interactions? Participants will be entered into a prize draw for a £20 Amazon voucher. For more details click here.

First one - Tuesday 14th December 3pm

Dear Academic Staff

I am writing to invite you to express your interest in participating in an online group interview for my PhD research project exploring the influencing of student behaviours and interactions in Higher Education Institutions in England

What is this project about?

Project title: *Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context.*

The project aims to establish how universities seek to influence student behaviours and how the dynamic of influence has changed over time. In particular I'm exploring how the actions of different individuals and organisations shape student behaviours in the modern higher education environment.

I'm looking to explore this in an online group interview of roughly 90 minutes' duration. There are three different dates that you may indicate for your participation XXXXX or XXXXXX or xxxxxx.

Who am I looking for?

- **Staff** - who are primarily located in a university in an active lecturing position, based within a recognised University in England; and who are prepared to participate in one online group interview alongside a number of full-time undergraduate students and other members of academic from a different university/department from your own.

The online group interview will be conducted confidentially and all contributions will be anonymised, with you retaining the right to withdraw at any point before the data is analysed.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated, and all participants will be entered into a £20 Amazon voucher prize draw.

Call to action:

- If you would like to express your interest for participation please complete this form: here email Adam Tate: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk with the Subject: Group Interview and confirming:
    - Your status: Staff
    - Your University
    - Your Department
    - Your email address

If you have any further questions or would like more information please contact me on 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you
Kind regards
Adam

14b Students

Short text for posting on social networks:

Are you an undergraduate student at university in England? Would you be interested in taking part in an online group interview on student behaviours and interactions? Participants will be entered into a prize draw for a £20 Amazon voucher. For more details click here.

Detailed text that displays when students click the specified link:

Dear Students

I am writing to invite you to express your interest in participating in an online group interview for my PhD research project exploring the influencing of student behaviours and interactions in Higher Education Institutions in England.

The project aims to establish how universities seek to influence student behaviours and how the dynamic of influence has changed over time. In particular I'm exploring how the actions of different individuals and organisations shape student behaviours in the modern higher education environment.

I'm looking to explore this in an online group interview of roughly 90 minutes duration with a mix of higher education students and staff (from different institutions and who will not know each other). There are three different dates that you may indicate for your participation XXXXX or XXXXXX.

What is this project about?

Project title: *Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context*.

You may decide to express an interest in participating in the online group interview, if you do you retain the right to withdraw your expression of interest/participation for any aspect of the research.

Who am I looking for?:

- **Students -** 1st Year, 2nd Year and 3rd Year full-time undergraduate students who are aged between 18 and 25 years old and who are studying at a recognised university in England.

Students will then be selected purposefully ensuring that there are a number of students from different universities in England, and a number of members of academic staff (from different departments/universities to you) to form the group interviewees.

The online group interview will be conducted confidentially and all contributions will be anonymised, with you retaining the right to withdraw at any point before the data is analysed.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated, and all participants will be entered into a £20 Amazon voucher prize draw.

Call to action:

- If you would like to express your interest for participation please complete this form: here email Adam Tate: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk with the Subject: Group Interview and confirming:
    - Your status: Student
    - Your University
    - Your Department
    - Your Year of Study
    - Your email address

If you have any further questions or would like more information please contact me on 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you

Kind regards
Adam

14c Poster for social media recruitment

CALLING YOU!

CONTRIBUTE YOUR VIEWS IN A FOCUS GROUP ABOUT THE INFLUENCING OF STUDENT BEHAVIOURS

Are you eligible?

- **Students: 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of a fulltime undergraduate course and aged 18-25**

- **Staff: primarily in a lecturing position, and holding no line-management responsibilities**

Participants will be purposefully selected from those who have expressed an interest, free refreshments provided for participants!

EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST

EMAIL: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
SUBJECT LINE: Focus Group
CONFIRMING: Your Status (Student or Staff)
Your Department, Your Year & Course (if relevant)

Appendix 15 Participant information sheet DoM

Participant Information Sheet: Interview with Marketing Lead

Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context – information sheet.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a short online interview (up to 60 minutes) as part of a PhD research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes 'become students' in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and affective influence between students and staff, examining how these have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve month drawing upon input from one HEI and the England HE community with the resulting anonymised data being analysed as a contribution to the student experience literature.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been approached as a member of staff who has a leadership responsibility for marketing and communications at your institution.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this PhD research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used, and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time up to the point of coding of data and without giving a reason.

If you do decide to take part, your online interview will be one of five online individual interviews in the main research project.

As a member of staff, it should be noted that taking part in this research study will not have an impact upon your current or future employment.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in an individual online synchronous interview using the video conferencing software Zoom. The interview will last up to sixty minutes and will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. The interview will be recorded using Zoom's audio capture, in addition to the researcher making notes on a question script, answers to the questions asked will be captured to identify key information. Please note the assumption that both participant and interviewee will have their webcams on.

All the data that is produced from this will be anonymised and will be transcribed in a code known only to the researcher onto an appropriate and securely stored computer location, the transcripts and other data will be coded to key themes and ideas; helping to shape the conclusions from the data. All data capture will be conducted with the relevant consent of participants/institutional consent. The video conferencing software will record the audio only, and there will not be any capturing of the interviewee's or interviewer's image. Once transcribed the audio recording will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is a small opportunity cost on your time by kindly taking part in the interview and a slight risk of disruption in the quality or continuity of the Zoom call, thus requiring a rescheduling of the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of participation in this research study include the possibility to reflect and contribute your views on student experience leadership and initiatives in your institution, and to relate these to wider higher education sector developments.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about each participant/interviewee will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and in accordance with GDPR legislation. The video conferencing software fulfils the GDPR compliance and is approved for use by the university.

All data will be anonymised as far as possible at data collection, and throughout transcription, coding and production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with Oxford Brookes University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

Thorough care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and or the individual. It might be the case that due to the role and nature of commentary about the sector with some individuals, that whilst care is taken, it is impossible to guarantee absolute anonymity. Additionally, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, in the unlikely event of a concern arising for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of affective influences on student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's Doctoral Thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of at least three academic journal articles, and presentation at academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study can be obtained by emailing Adam Tate, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a self-funded doctoral candidate, in the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Oxford Brookes University.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, by emailing ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Thank you

Thank you for your interest in this research study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

(Note the same wording but replacing the role title was provided for the DoSS and HoD)

Appendix 16 Participant information sheet - Student Rep

<u>Participant Information Sheet: Interview with Student Rep</u>

Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context – information sheet.

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a short online interview (up to 60 minutes) as part of a PhD research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes ‘become students’ in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and affective influence between students and staff, examining how these have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve months drawing upon input from one case-study HEI and the wider England HE community with the resulting anonymised data being analysed as a contribution to the student experience literature.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been approached as a key member of the University community with an important role in student experience leadership and representation.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this PhD research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used; and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, up to the point of coding.

If you do decide to take part, your online interview will be one of five individual online interviews in the main research project.

As a member of sabbatical staff, it should be noted that taking part in this research study will not have an impact upon your current or future employment; nor will it have an impact upon your future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in an individual online synchronous interview using the video conferencing software Zoom. The interview will last up to sixty minutes and will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. The interview will be recorded using Zoom’s audio capture, in addition to the researcher making notes on a question script, answers to the questions asked will be captured to identify key information. Please note the assumption that both participant and interviewee will have their webcams on.

All the data that is produced from this will be anonymised and will be transcribed in a code known only to the researcher onto an appropriate and securely stored computer location, the transcripts and other data will be coded to key themes and ideas; helping to shape the conclusions from the data. All data capture will be conducted with the relevant consent of participants/institutional consent. The video conferencing software will record the audio only, and there will not be any capturing of the interviewee’s or interviewer’s image. Once transcribed the audio recording will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is a small opportunity cost on your time by kindly taking part in the interview and a slight risk of disruption in the quality or continuity of the Zoom call, thus requiring a rescheduling of the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of participation in this research study are an opportunity to reflect on student learning and development in higher education and to contribute to a project that seeks to inform the literature and sector knowledge on the full-time undergraduate student experience in higher education.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and in accordance with GDPR legislation. The video conferencing software fulfils the GDPR compliance and is approved for use by the university.

All data will be anonymised as far as possible at data collection, and throughout transcription, coding and production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

Thorough care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and or the individual. It might be the case that due to the role and nature of commentary about the sector with some individuals, that whilst care is taken, it is impossible to guarantee absolute anonymity. Additionally, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, in the unlikely event of a concern arising for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of the influencing of student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's doctoral thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of academic journal articles and presentation at conferences both hosted by Oxford Brookes University and external academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study will be offered to participants.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. The School of Education is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This is a self-funded doctoral research study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, by emailing ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Thank you
Thank you for your interest in this research study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 17 Group interview participant information sheet

17a Staff

Participant Information Sheet: Group Interview (Staff)

Thank you for showing an interest in taking part in my research, your anticipated participation is much appreciated.

Study title

Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a group interview (up to 90 minutes) as part of a PhD research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes 'become students' in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and affective influence between students and staff, examining how these have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve month drawing upon input from one HEI and the England HE community with the resulting anonymised data being analysed as a contribution to the student experience literature.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate:

Group Interview – You have been identified as a member of academic staff in a lecturing role without a direct professional relationship to student participants in a university in England.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this PhD research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used; and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason; you can withdraw you and/or your data up to the point of analysis of coded data.

It should be noted that for staff taking part in this research study that participation will not have an impact upon your current or future employment.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research study will involve a multi method approach to ensure that findings are robust and can be used for identifying trends across the Higher Education Institutions being used.

- Group interviews will consist of no fewer than 5 people identified as being eligible to participate in the group interview. It is likely that there will be a number of other full time undergraduate students and members of academic staff from other universities to your own. This is to help provide a discourse and better understanding of differing perspectives of the questions/statements offered/ as well as providing insight to the use of different types of spaces at a typical university. The group interviews will be recorded using an audio-visual video conferencing software (Zoom) and the researcher/assistant will also capture information about the proceedings of the group interview.
- The group interview will last for approximately 90 minutes, it will be held at XXXXon XXXX.

All the data that is produced from this will be anonymised and will be transcribed in a code known only to the researcher onto an appropriate and securely stored computer location, the transcripts and other data will be coded to key themes and ideas; helping to shape the conclusions from the data. All data capture will be conducted with the relevant consent of participants/institutional consent. The Zoom video conferencing software will record the audio only, and there will not be any capturing of the interviewees' or interviewer's image. Once transcribed the audio recording will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The potential disadvantages of this research study to participants is that there is a slight demand upon time for those involved, particularly the group interview. All participants must remember the need for discretion for the discussion and views aired in the group interview. There may be conversation that relates to stressful university experience or workload, and if this arises I will signpost the person to a relevant support service at the university.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of participation in this research study is that there is the opportunity to contribute to this research project, helping to identify the changing networks of power and influencing of students at your university/higher education in England. This opportunity to engage in interviewing may help some participants to become more confident and develop articulation for future interviews, and self awareness of their actions. All participants will be entered into a £20 Amazon voucher prize draw.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about each participant/interviewee will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and in accordance with data protection legislation.

All data will be anonymised as far as possible at data collection, and throughout transcription, coding and production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

It should be noted that care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and or the individual. It might be the case that due to the role and nature of commentary about the sector with some individuals, that whilst care is taken, it is impossible to guarantee absolute anonymity. Additionally, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, where there is a concern for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to take part in the Group Interview you should respond by email to Adam Tate by XXXXXXXXXXXX Using: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of the influencing of student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's Doctoral Thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of at least three academic journal articles and presentation at conferences both hosted by Oxford Brookes University and external academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study can be obtained by emailing Adam Tate, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. The School of Education is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This is a self-funded doctoral research study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

17b Students

Participant Information Sheet: Group Interview (Students)

Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a group interview (up to 90 minutes) as part of a PhD research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes 'become students' in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and affective influence between students and staff, examining how these have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve month drawing upon input from one HEI and the England HE community with the resulting anonymised data being analysed as a contribution to the student experience literature.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Group Interviews – You have been identified as an undergraduate student on a three-year full-time course and under the age of 25 at a university in England.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this PhD research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used; and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason; you can withdraw you and/or your data up to the point of analysis of coded data.

If you do decide to take part, your group interview will be the only one at your university; and will be one of three group interviews in the research project. You will be one of three students in the group interview, consisting of one member of staff and three students.

It should be noted that for students taking part in this research study that this will have no impact upon your future marks, assessments or future studies.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research study will involve a multi-method approach to ensure that findings are robust and can be used for identifying trends across the Higher Education Institutions being used.

- Group interviews will consist of no fewer than 5 people identified as being eligible to participate in the group interview. It is likely that there will be a number of other full time undergraduate students and members of academic staff from other universities to your own. This is to help provide a discourse and better understanding of differing perspectives of the

questions/statements offered/ as well as providing insight to the use of different types of spaces at a typical university. The group interviews will be recorded using an audio-visual video conferencing software (Zoom) and the researcher/assistant will also capture information about the proceedings of the group interview.
- The group interview will last for approximately 90 minutes, it will be held at XXXX on XXXX.

All the data that is produced from this will be anonymised and will be transcribed in a code known only to the researcher onto an appropriate and securely stored computer location, the transcripts and other data will be coded to key themes and ideas; helping to shape the conclusions from the data. All data capture will be conducted with the relevant consent of participants/institutional consent. The video conferencing software will record the audio only, and there will not be any capturing of the interviewees' or interviewer's image. Once transcribed the audio recording will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
The potential disadvantages of this research study to participants is that there is a slight demand upon time for those involved, particularly the group interviews. All participants must remember the need for discretion for the discussion and views aired in the group interview. There may be conversation that relates to stressful university experience, and if this arises I will signpost the person to a relevant support service at the university.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
The benefits of participation in this research study is that there is the opportunity to contribute to this research project, helping to identify the possible influencing of students at your university/higher education in England. It provides the opportunity to give your views about the lived student experience at your university/higher education in England. This opportunity to engage in interviewing may help some participants to become more confident and develop articulation for future interviews. All participants will be entered into a £20 Amazon voucher prize draw.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about each participant/interviewee will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and in accordance with data protection legislation.

All data will be anonymised as far as possible at data collection, and throughout transcription, coding and production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

It should be noted that care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and or the individual. It might be the case that due to the role and nature of commentary about the sector with some individuals, that whilst care is taken, it is impossible to guarantee absolute anonymity. Additionally, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, where there is a concern for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you would like to take part in a Group Interview you should email Adam Tate or complete the Google Form (link on recruitment materials) by XXXXXXXXXXXX Email: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of the influencing of student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's Doctoral Thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of at least three academic journal articles and presentation at conferences both hosted by Oxford Brookes University and external academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study can be obtained by emailing Adam Tate, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. The School of Education is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This is a self-funded doctoral research study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, by emailing ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Thank you
Thank you for your interest in this research study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 18 Structured observation participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet: Structured Observation of Learning Space

Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Notice of observation

Please be aware that between ___ and ___ today, this area of the _______ building is under observation by a PhD researcher who is making field notes on the use of social learning spaces. These notes will not contain any personal data but if you would rather not be included in the observation area please kindly move to a non-observed part of this space until the observation is concluded.

What is the purpose of the study?

This PhD study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes ‘become students’ in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and affective influence between students and staff, examining how these have changed over the last decade in the context of contemporary changes in Higher Education. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve month drawing upon input from one case-study HEI and the wider HE community in England with the resulting anonymised data being analysed as a contribution to the student experience literature.

The structured observation is enabling the researcher to make field notes on how spaces appear, how students interact within social learning spaces, and how those spaces might shape behaviours of students using them.

Why am I considered a participant in the research?

The researcher is observing a specific section of this social learning space for a period of three hours. If you use the observed section of the space (marked by notices on desks and furniture) you will be considered to be one of the users in the space and will thus be included, in a completely anonymous capacity, in the researcher’s field notes.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. If this is your decision, please do not use the observed section of the space for the period of today’s observation. If you do remain in the observed space you also have the right to request that the researcher removes any data relating to you from the field notes.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you use the observed section of the space for the period of the observation, you may be included, in an anonymised capacity, in the researcher’s field notes. These will record data pertaining to the architecture, design, framing of the social learning space and will document interactions and practices that occur between the space and the users of the space. The observation is primarily concerned with the affordances of the social learning space and the building layout rather than verbal data. The researcher will not be transcribing conversations or names and no personal data enabling identification of individuals will be collected.

This observation will be one of three in the entire research project.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You may feel uncomfortable at the presence of the researcher or you may find it inconvenient to move out of the observed space. Please relay either of these concerns to the researcher who will be able to resolve them with you.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

If you take part by remaining in the observed space, you are contributing to an opportunity to gain data on an aspect of student experience and student engagement. The resulting data (triangulated with the data arising from the interviews with university staff and students) will be disseminated to study participants who include senior managers of the student experience. This observation serves as a useful insight as to whether embodied practices are the same as said by participants in the group interviews.

Data storage

All data resulting from the observation will be anonymised and no individuals or organisations will be named in the production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times. The researcher's laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with Oxford Brookes University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

It should be noted that care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and/or the individual. However, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, where there is a concern for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you are happy to take part in this structured observation of a social learning space you should remain in the observed section of the space for the period of the observation. .

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of the influences on student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's Doctoral Thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of at least three academic journal articles and presentation at conferences both hosted by Oxford Brookes University and external academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study can be obtained by emailing Adam Tate, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. The School of Education is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This is a self-funded doctoral research study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, by emailing ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this research study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 19 Interview consent forms

19a Individual interviews

CONSENT FORM – Main Study - Online Interviews

Full title of Project: Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Adam Tate, PhD Candidate, Smetham Room, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford, OX2 9AT

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Please initial box

	Yes	No
4. I recognise and agree to this interview being conducted online using video conferencing software	☐	☐
5. I agree to the interview being recorded via Zoom (only audio will be maintained as a recording)	☐	☐
6. I understand that my actions and interview maybe recorded by the researcher	☐	☐
7. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐
8. I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a secure data manner for analysis	☐	☐

Name of Participant ________________ Date ________________ Signature ________________

Name of Researcher ________________ Date ________________ Signature ________________

19b Group interviews

CONSENT FORM – Online Group Interviews

Full title of Project: Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Adam Tate, PhD Candidate, Smetham Room, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford, OX2 9AT, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Please initial box

	Yes	No
4. I understand that group interviews will be recorded via Zoom (only audio will be utilised)	☐	☐
5. I understand that my actions and interactions may be recorded in the researcher's notes	☐	☐
6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐
7. I agree that an anonymised data set, gathered for this study may be stored in a secure data manner for analysis	☐	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 20 Group interview participant agreement

Main Study - Group Interview Participant Agreement

Re: ‘Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context’

Thank you for your interest in taking part in a group interview in support of the main study element of my research. This document is designed to tell you more about the study and your proposed role in it. Please take a moment to read this information and if you are happy with it please sign at the bottom of the page.

Why do I need the data?

I am gathering empirical data for my doctoral thesis at Oxford Brookes University entitled: **‘Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context**’. The data will be analysed to extend knowledge about the influencing of students in higher education.

As a student at Oxford Brookes University I am obliged to ensure that I have your consent to collect and store data arising from the group interview and that you are content for me to process this data in the pursuit of my research.

What type of data will I collect which Oxford Brookes University will hold?

Data from conversation and observations in group interview (both audio recording and researcher notes). This data may include opinions and views that have been disclosed in good faith to the group.

What rights do you have regarding the data that I will collect and which Oxford Brookes University will hold?

- You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used
- You have the right of access to your data
- You have the right to withdraw your data from the study up to the point at which it is analysed
- You have the right to restrict use of the data I collect from you

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?

There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

How long will Oxford Brookes University keep your data?

In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for upto 10 years in accordance with University policy.
Data will be stored and recorded with anonymisation of participants using a coding system known only to the researcher.

What about disclosing information from the group interview to others?

The group interview is designed to be a safe environment for confidential exchange. Therefore it is important that you do not disclose any information arising in the group interviews, to any other persons except where legally required to do so; such as to the Police when a crime is disclosed, and to protect others or yourself from harm where there is a concern. Disclosing information could lead to implications for others involved in the group interview, to the research integrity, to the research project, and to the organisations where the research is being conducted. Disclosing information, except where legally required to do so, may result in further action.

Who can I contact if I have concerns?

You can contact the Information Management team.
Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP
Email: info.sec@brookes.ac.uk
Tel: 01865 485420 in UK
+44 1865 485420 outside the UK

Declaration:

By signing below, I recognise that I have read and accepted the Group Interview Participant Agreement. I understand I retain the right to withdraw at any point (up to the point of analysis) and ask for information I have provided to be redacted, I also understand the need to maintain confidentiality throughout and after the research has been conducted (except where permitted under the law).

Signature:……………………………………………………. Date:......................................

Appendix 21 Request for permission to observe social learning space

<u>Gatekeeper Permission Request: Structured Observation of a Social Learning Space: XXXXXX</u>

Thank you for responding to my email request for permission to undertake a structured observation of a social learning space at your university as part of my PhD study entitled: Being a ‘good’ student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

Request

Following the granting of institutional level permission to conduct some educational research at XXXXXXXX, I am requesting permission to undertake three observations (180 minutes each) of a section of XXXXX on three different working days during full term in Autumn 2021 (dates to be determined as you see fit). I am approaching you as the person with responsibility for the granting of access to this social learning space. To help you decide whether or not to grant this access for the purpose of observation, please could I ask you to kindly read the detailed project information below.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study explores how individuals entering full-time undergraduate programmes ‘become students’ in terms of identity, behaviours and belonging in the Higher Education environment. It also explores notions of power, agency, and ‘affective influences’ on undergraduates (including the design of the learning spaces they occupy), examining how these may have changed over the last decade. Data collection for the study is being conducted over twelve month drawing upon input from one HEI and the England HE community. In addition to structured observation, it involves interviews with staff and students at your university (permission to conduct those elements of the research have been secured from the University’s Research Ethics Committee). The data from the study will be anonymised (at both individual and organisational level) and written up in a PhD thesis as a contribution to the student experience literature.

The structured observation will explore how spaces appear and how students interact within social learning space, and how those spaces might shape behaviours of students using them. The structured observation seeks to understand the manifestations of different student behaviours in different spaces.

Why have I been contacted?

You have been identified as a person responsible for granting access to the social learning space I would like to observe as part of my study.

What will happen if I grant permission?

If you grant permission for this observation to take place the researcher will conduct three three-hour observations of a defined section of XXXXXXX at dates and times that you specify. Notices will be posted in the space 24 hours before the event to advise users of the space that the observation will be taking place. At the time of the observation, potential participants in the research field will be made aware of my presence by clear signage on the desks and furniture of the area under observation. These will make clear that a specific section of the space is under observation for a short specified period and that their consent to be included in the research field is indicated by their occupying the space for this period. The researcher will be clearly identifiable and will have available for review a laminated copy of the participant information sheet; the privacy notice on the use of the resulting field notes; and proof of gatekeeper permission for the observation to take place. At the end of the specified observation period the researcher will remove all observation notices from the space.

The researcher's field notes will record data pertaining to the architecture, design, framing of the physical space, interactions and practices that occur between the space and the users of the space. The observation is primarily concerned with interactions with the affordances of the social learning space and the building layout rather than verbal data; no personal data enabling identification of individuals will be collected. The researcher as far as possible will remain as discreet as possible to be unobtrusive, but visible enough for participants to be able to identify the researcher to request a review of the participant information sheet and gatekeeper permission.

The text for the 24-hour advance notice of observation will be as follows:
Between __ and __ tomorrow (for a period of three hours), this area of the __________ building will be under observation by a PhD researcher who will be making field notes on the use of social learning spaces. For more information please contact 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

The text posted on laminated signage on tables and furniture while the observation is taking place will be as follows:
Please be aware that between ___ and ___ today, this area of the _______ building is under observation by a PhD researcher who is making field notes on the use of social learning spaces. These notes will not contain any personal data but if you would rather not be included in the observation area please kindly move to a non-observed part of this space until the observation is concluded.

If you would like to see the information sheet or the gatekeeper approval for this research observation, please do approach the researcher, Adam Tate, who is seated _________.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is a small risk that some users of the space may object to the observation and to the suggestion that they should move elsewhere. If such an instance were to arise, the researcher will be able to give assurances about removing any objecting individual's data from the field notes. Should any user of the space become concerned about their privacy or even distressed at the observation, the researcher will signpost them to relevant support and wellbeing services of the university.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By granting permission for this short observation of a social learning space at your institution, an opportunity is created to gain data on an aspect of student experience and student engagement with learning spaces. The resulting data (triangulated with the data arising from the interviews with university staff and students) will be disseminated to study participants who include senior managers of the student experience. This observation serves as a useful insight as to whether embodied practices are the same as described by participants in interviews.

Data storage and security

All data resulting from the observation will be anonymised and no individuals or organisations will be named in the production of findings and conclusions in the thesis and any subsequent conference proceedings or journals and any other dissemination method.

Research data will be kept securely at all times. The researcher's laptops and other devices are password protected and data files will be encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with Oxford Brookes University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

It should be noted that care will be taken to ensure that individuals are not identifiable, through redaction of revealing information of the institution and/or the individual. However, whilst this study respects and upholds confidentiality, where there is a concern for a participant's welfare or disclosure of illegal activity, the researcher has a duty to pass on those matters to the relevant authority.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research findings will be used for the basis for advancing new insights and understanding of the influencing of student behaviours for the completion of Adam Tate's Doctoral Thesis (PhD Education). Additionally, it is intended that the findings will be utilised for the development of at least three academic journal articles and presentations at conferences both hosted by Oxford Brookes University and external academic conferences.

A copy of the findings from the research study can be obtained by emailing Adam Tate, 18028677@brookes.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Adam Tate as a Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. The School of Education is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This is a self-funded doctoral research study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research study has been approved by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee.

What about Covid restrictions?

This research will be carried out in accordance with both your University's Covid-19 guidelines and policies, and those set out by Oxford Brookes University, following whichever guidance is more stringent. Observation will be conducted in accordance with Covid-19 legislation and social distancing adhered to (if and where still in enforcement). Observations will be terminated in the event of new legislation/lockdown rules being introduced.

Contact for Further Information

For further information you should contact Adam Tate, by emailing: 18028677@brookes.ac.uk
Or you can contact the Director of Studies, Roger Dalrymple, by emailing: rdalrymple@brookes.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you should contact the Chair of the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, by emailing ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Thank you
Thank you for your interest in this research study and taking the time to read this information sheet.

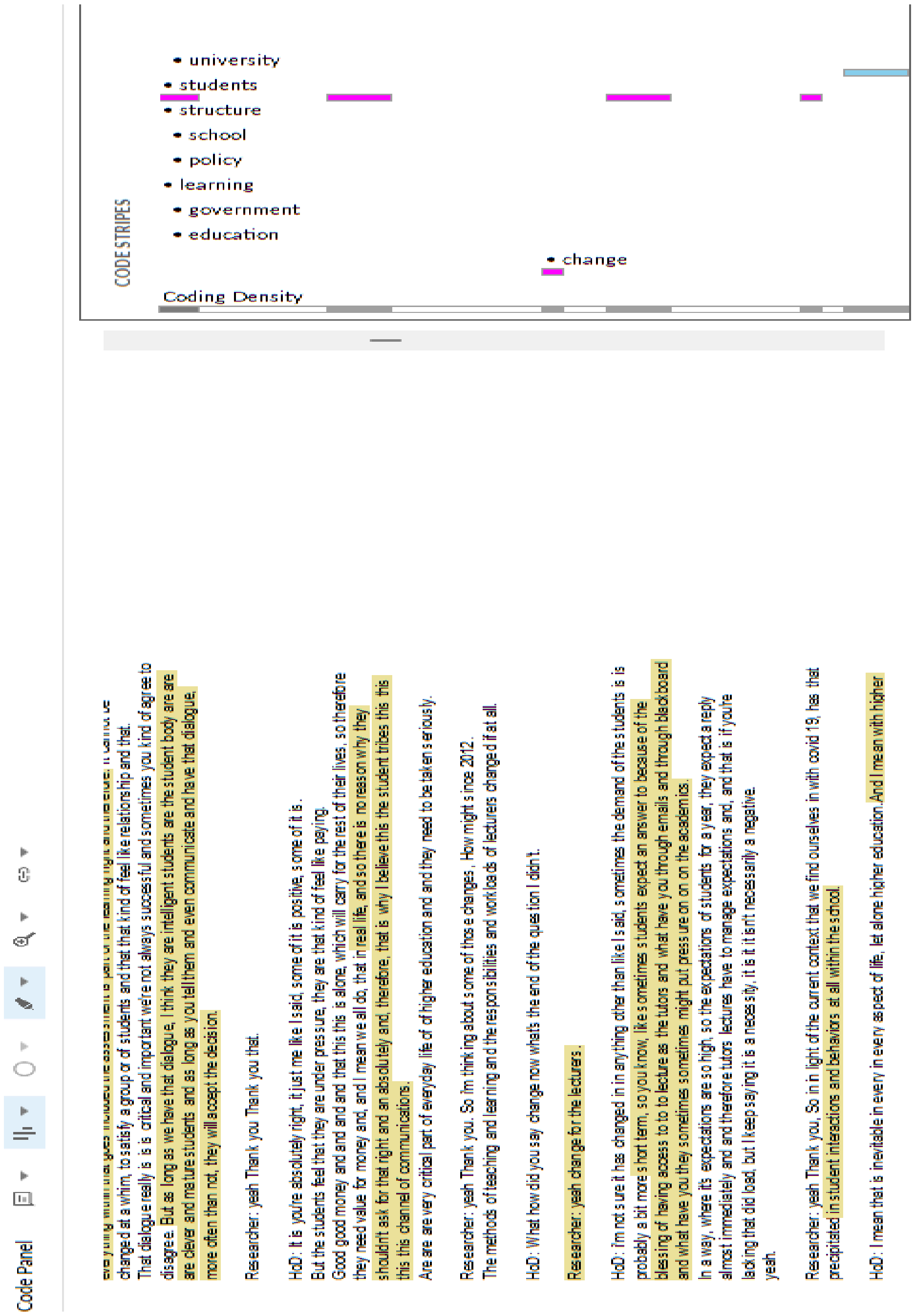
Appendix 22 Structured observation sign

Please note this area is currently under observation as part of a research project

A researcher (identifiable by a badge) is making field notes on students' use of social learning spaces. If you'd prefer not to be included, please move from the observed section of the space. If you'd like to read the information sheet and privacy notice, please approach the researcher. **You can withdraw your consent to being observed at any point by moving or by informing the researcher. THANK YOU**

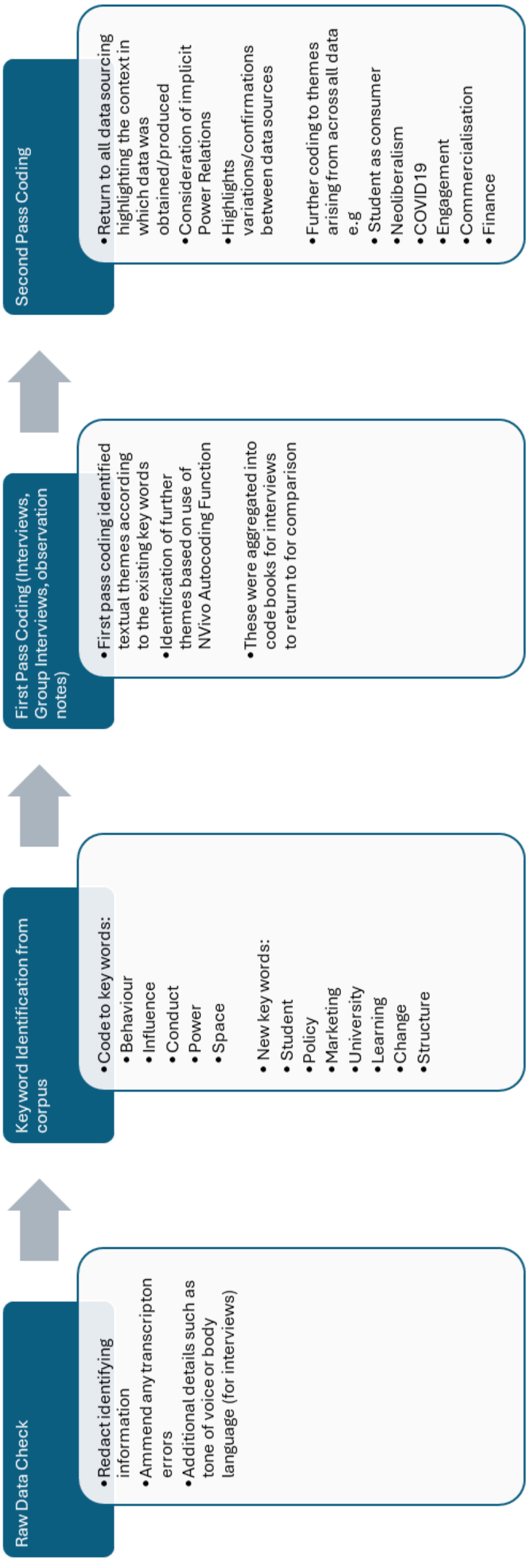
Appendix 23 Transcripts and coding

23a Example of transcribed and coded interview



This shows an example of a page of transcription from the HoD individual interview that has been coded in NVivo, as shown from the code panel to the side of the main next.

23b Coding stages



This diagram shows the approach taken to coding, here the second box shows the importance of the corpus development in generating codes. The diagram provides distinction between the first pass of coding which focuses on the textual/spoken/observed aspects, drawing out key links to the code words. Whereas the second pass was in keeping with the FDA approach of identifying power relations and building meaning in context that the data was produced.

Appendix 24 Institutional ethics permission

24a Pilot study

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Dr Roger Dalrymple
Director of Studies
School of Education
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Oxford Brookes University
Headington Campus

19th August 2019

Dear Dr Dalrymple,

UREC Registration No: 191297
Becoming a full-time undergraduate university student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours in the current Higher Education context (Pilot Study)

Thank you for the email of 8th July 2019 from your research student, Adam Tate, outlining your response to the points raised in my previous conditional approval letter and attaching the revised documents. I am pleased to inform you that, on this basis, UREC is happy to grant full approval for the pilot study.

The UREC approval period for the data collection phase of the study is two years from the date of my email confirming full approval by Chair's action, so 9th July 2021. If you need the approval to be extended please do contact me nearer the time of expiry.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic effects from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sarah Quinton
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Professor Jackie Potter, Supervisory Team
Adam Tate, Research Student
Dr James Percival, Research Ethics Officer
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team

24b Main study - Oxford Brookes (and COVID-19 amendments)

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Dr Roger Dalrymple
Director of Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Oxford Brookes University

4th February 2020

Dear Dr Dalrymple,

UREC Registration No: 201362 Tate
Study Title: Becoming a full-time undergraduate university student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours in the current Higher Education context.

Thank you for the email of 4th February 2020 outlining the response to the points raised in my previous conditional approval letter regarding the PhD study of your research student, Adam Tate, and attaching the revised documents. I am pleased to inform you that, on this basis, UREC is happy to grant full approval for this study.

The UREC approval period for the data collection phase of the study is two years from the date of this letter, so until 4th February 2022. If you need the approval to be extended please do contact me nearer the time of expiry.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic effects from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sarah Quinton
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Prof. Jackie Potter, Supervisory Team
Adam Tate, Research Student
Dr Carol Brown, Research Ethics Officer
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Dr Roger Dalrymple
Director of Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Oxford Brookes University

21st April 2021

Dear Dr Dalrymple,

UREC Registration No: 201362
Study Title: Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context.

Thank you for your email of 13th April 2021 requesting an amendment to the original study approved by UREC on 4th February 2020.

You would like to amend the title of the study, as well as revise the recruitment method and research site. You have provided the relevant updated documentation. It was noted that the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms should stipulate that Zoom settings will be set to audio record only and no video will be captured.

There are no other changes to the study and on this basis I give Chair's approval for this change. The UREC approval remains the same as the original study, so until 4th February 2022.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic effects from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible.

I wish you continued success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Quinton
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Prof. Jackie Potter, Supervisory Team
Adam Tate, Research Student
Dr Carol Brown, Research Ethics Officer
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team

24c Approval by case study site institutional ethics

[redacted]

[redacted]

Mr Adam Tate
Smetham Room
School of Education
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Harcourt Hill Campus
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford
Oxon
OX2 9AT

16 June 2021

Dear Adam,

Ethical approval: Ref UEP2021 MayEX01 Tate

I am writing to confirm that ethical approval was granted by the University Research Ethics Panel of [redacted] on 21 May 2021 for you to undertake both interviews with [redacted] staff and structured observations of our students in [redacted] Building in autumn 2021 as part of your project being undertaken at Oxford Brookes University:

Being a 'good' student: the impact of affective influences on student behaviours and practices in the current Higher Education context

This approval is valid between 21 May 2021 and 21 May 2022.

Please ensure that you quote the above reference number as evidence of ethical approval and in all materials used to recruit participants.

The Research and Enterprise Development Unit must be notified of any amendments to the proposed research or any extension to the period of data collection.

I hope that your research project goes well.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Secretary to the University Ethics Panel
Research and Enterprise Development Unit

Appendix 25 Pilot study learning

Learning from the Pilot Study

The research design set out in this E2U application has been partially piloted at Oxford Brookes University in academic year 2018-19.

The research design has been amended and refined in the light of emergent learning with particular narrowing of the scope of the group interview and structured observation components to better reflect the realities of recruitment logistics and time constraints.

Broader learning points include:

- Timing: it is essential to consider the time during the semester to conduct research
- Wording clarity: the wording of ethics documents and information and guidance to research participants must be extremely clear and precise, and explanatory note prepared to help provide greater clarity if needed

Learning points relating to Interviews:

- Question interpretation: questions can be interpreted differently by different people, however I was happy with the questions, nonetheless the questions have been reviewed to ensure that they are not leading questions
- Holding the silence: the pilot study shows that many members of staff when interviewed take time to consider their response and as such I have learnt to hold the silence that might occur

Learning points relating to focus Group/Group Interviews:

- Group interviews: to better reflect the structure of the methodology I have revised the focus groups to make them slightly smaller and more directed, as such they will be run as group interviews.
- Timing of group interviews: it is important to ensure that the interviews are scheduled at a convenient time for staff, and at a time of year when the target audience for students are at the university and in a less busy time of the semester.
- Recruitment difficulties: did occur in the pilot study leading to the focus group not being run, there were multiple factors for this such as students not being at the university, recruitment methods not being as clear, and holding dual roles at Oxford Brookes leading to a narrow pool of potential staff. Additionally, the parameters of who can participate have altered to be broader on the one hand for staff and more specific in terms of focusing on one department
- Moodboards: will no longer be a separate entity within the research with the public display one being removed, however, one moodboard (with images of the university) will form part of the group interview to elicit views about how to use that space shown in the image

Appendix 26 Researcher's publications, conferences, and awards relating to thesis

ACADEMIC OUTPUTS

Figshare/National Teaching Repository - https://figshare.com/authors/Adam_Tate/10521023
ORCID - https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5087-7615

Conference Presentations
Tate & Fox – 2023 – Developing Early Career Academics in Higher Education: A shift in Policy and Research – Society for Educational Studies Annual Colloquium
Fox & Tate – 2022 - Changing Times, Changing Spaces, Changing Academics: A shift in Academic Identity and the Sense of Belonging of Early-Career Academics in the 'digital' and 'blended' University – Society for Educational Studies
Tate - 2021 - How is a 'good' student shaped, and what is a 'good' student anyway? - Eurostudents Conference - University of Surrey
TTate – 2020 – Being a good student – School of Education conference – Oxford Brookes
Tate - 2019 – A pilot study of becoming a full-time undergraduate university student – SRHE Annual Conference 2019
Tate – 2019 – Becoming a fulltime undergraduate student – School of Education conference – Oxford Brookes

Publications
Tate, A. Glazzard, J. (2024) 'Immersed in the Transitioning Higher Education Sector: The Impact of Transitions in the Higher Education Sector in England on Staff and Students'. *International Journal of Educational and Life Transitions*. [Online] 3 (1), p. 3. Available from: doi: https://doi.org/10.5334/ijelt.77
Tate, A. (2023) "A nudge for positive behaviours: digital nudging in higher education", *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, (28). doi: https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi28.1026

Other
2023 – Host - LTHEChat - Digital Nudging in Higher Education - Twitter
2022 – Host – LTHEChat - Whose Higher Education is it anyway? - Twitter
2022 – Poster Reviewer – Oxford Brookes Annual Learning & Teaching Conference
2022 – Summary Paper – Revisiting the evidence of digital nudging – Oxford Brookes
2021 – Contributor – Teaching case study on assessment – Oxford Brookes
2019 – Summary paper – Is there evidence of digital nudging in higher education – Oxford Brookes