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**Assessing the impact of a flexible delivery of
Careers & Employability Service Provision by
Conducting Career Exploration Studies of Students**

By

Rita Kapadia

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CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

AGCAS   Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

BNU   Buckinghamshire New University

CES   Careers and Employability Service

HECSU   Higher Education Careers Service Unit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Smaller institutions working with small budgets can make use of new technologies to meet the information needs of students more effectively and enable the careers service to integrate and interact with academics, schools and faculties. Effective means of communication is vital for the functioning of the careers information service in a small university. With the rapid rise of the Internet, there is great uncertainty in how users find, obtain, share and use information.

All of this demonstrates the challenge the Internet poses to traditional tools and services including information catalogues. Furthermore the rapid pace of technological change and emerging career models defies easy prediction of what is next. Everything in the Internet culture is setting up a new way of thinking about access to and delivery of information. There is a great potential for small and less well-resourced careers services to interact more effectively with students and staff.

This report documents the methodology, results and conclusions of a one year study at Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) to understand the gap between what student's desire from the Careers & Employability Service (CES) and how students conduct their career exploration.

The key research questions this study addressed were:
- Are students aware of the provision of the CES?
- What resources are students using to access career development information?
- Has the careers and employability service provision helped students with their career exploration?

The overall goals of the project were:-
- to understand the gap between what students desire from the CES and what the service offers as a valued proposition;

- to identify, collect and disseminate a base of knowledge of development, delivery and utilization of computer-based career information, advice and guidance support;

- to further develop web-based resources for careers guidance and personal development, including interactive careers materials and self-help career on-line tools;

- to recommend how new technologies might be mapped against the quality regimes for careers services. The use of technology should be justified by gains in effectiveness or efficiency;

- to provide further support for student users who have specific requirements because of a disability including the provision of information in alternative formats;

- to explore the optimal combination of on-line and blended learning. Taking into account the needs and expectations of different learner groups when planning entirely on-line programmes;

- to identify flexible delivery modes which would be effective and efficient in combining careers, information, advice and guidance support;

- finally to assess what impact the CES provision has had on the career exploration of undergraduate students.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

With greater cost in university tuition fees and a more challenging labour market, universities are progressively focussing on career education which teaches students how to take charge and have responsibility for their career development (Hirschi et al., 2012). Students' expectations of higher education and of careers service are also changing, as they expect more "value for money" (Foskett et al., 2008).

Furthermore, there is also a lot of uncertainty about how Brexit may affect graduate labour market. According to Moore's (2016) study a majority of students voted to remain part of the European Union; 71% of 18-24 year olds voted to remain as did 68% of those with a degree. Thus, students are entering a labour market shaken by a significant political change that most of them disputed. Early indicators have shown that job adverts decreased by 700, 000 in the week after Brexit (Sheffield, 2016). Thus graduates may find it more difficult to enter the labour market, particularly graduate level jobs. Based on this university career service have a vital role to assist students in understanding the new reality of the labour market, as Brexit is now an economic fact. Students also have to think through what this means for their current career development plans. Career education needs to help students with their individual career goals.

If a university careers service is to be successful in a time of high graduate unemployment and stiff competition for places at university, then careers education, information, advice and guidance is a vital ingredient in achieving success. At BNU the CES offer the following service to students: a drop in service to see a careers advisor offering career development advice and guidance, including career choice, career management, further study options and

sources to find jobs. Furthermore, CES include the use of an online career management tools, to support the growth and career exploration of students and a jobs database search tool. The student engagement data at BNU shows that 686 students accessed career service resources in academic year 2015-2016 and this decreased by 41% to 400 students in 2016-17. The Guardian Careers Blog, 2014, ("Graduates: is university careers advice failing you?", 2014), highlighted that research from High Fliers stated that fewer students are using University careers services than a decade ago. Irrespective of competition for graduate level jobs and increased tuition fees the percentage of students who visited their university's careers services had decreased in 2013 to 58%, down from 67% in 2003.

Whitman & Viswesvaran, (2010) mentioned that there is a need for individuals to engage in dedicated career exploration for career success. Career exploration has been defined as purposeful behaviour and cognitions that allow access to information about occupations, jobs and organisations (Berlyne, 1965; Jordaan, 1963). There have been many measures for specific career behaviours, such as, career planning (Gould, 1979) and networking (Wolff et. al, 2011). Stumpf et al., (1983) mentioned that there were two sources which were important for gathering career information the environment and oneself. Gianakos, 1995, highlighted 12 career exploration behaviours recommended to students through the careers service. These included meeting with a career counsellor; seeking assistance at a career planning office; attending a career planning workshop; researching various careers; completing ability tests; completing interest inventories; assessing work values; taking a variety of courses to learn more about the various fields; interviewing/meeting with professionals in the field on interest; working/volunteering in positions related to career choices; generating a list of careers consistent with abilities, interests and values that have positive employment outlooks for the 1990's. Many empirical studies have shown that these behaviours are significantly correlated (Creed et. al., 2009; Vos et al., 2009).

Ester (2008), mentioned that career exploration specifies all the activities people engage in for the purpose of promoting career development, choice or adjustment. Engaging with exploratory exercises helps an individual develop an understanding of their requirements and the environment which further helps develop their career goals (Sugalski & Greenhaus, 1986). Exploration activities have been considered most important in late adolescence/early adulthood period (Sharf, 2006).

When past behaviours have led to successful outcomes, an individual may have a strong self-efficacy that persisting with those behaviours will lead to desired results (Gianakos, 1995). Previous research by Li et al., (2015) have shown that an individual's career exploration is positively related to their career growth/success and their career self-efficacy. Furthermore a study conducted by Forstenlechner et al.,2014), highlighted that a low level of career

exploration created difficulties in search for a career, thus, many job categories remained unknown for participants.

Stumpf et al., (1983) inferred that as career exploration behaviours are a conscious process, it is also important to consider the person's beliefs about career opportunities. Berlyne, (1965) mentioned that exploration generally refers to a state of uncertainty, thus it is essential to know an individual's perception and expectations of achieving career goals.

It is even more important now as there is a lack of clarity on how Brexit will change the labour market as this policy will bring some serious social, political and economic changes. Thus this study will be a starting point for increasing understanding on how students in this current pre-Brexit emerging economic, political and social climate are engaging in career exploration behaviours. Although there is a lot of research on career exploration behaviours this study will highlight exactly what career exploration behaviour undergraduate students see as a valuable resource by level of engagement.

3.0   METHOD

The main objectives of this project were split into three main tasks:
- *Stage 1* Assessment of the current online and onsite learning provision at CES, in order to understand student requirements for flexible delivery of service provision.
- *Stage 2* Monitoring, feedback, evaluation and improvement of the interactive interfaces and new communication methods.
- *Stage 3* Assessing students career exploration activities.

In the following sections the methodology used in each of the stages is discussed in detail.

3.1   Stage 1 Assessment of the current online and onsite learning provision

This stage focussed on identifying the most important service delivery requirements and highlighted the opportunities for applying new advanced technologies to meet the student needs. Specific requirements were considered for graduate students, postgraduate students, part time students, distance learners, mature students and students with specific learning difficulties or with a disability.

Method of assessment included quantitative research, using a questionnaire for initial service provision assessment. Qualitative methods, that is, a focus group study was used to capture student perceptions of the CES. The activity was used to assess to what extent existing learning modes of careers information, advice and guidance and delivery were perceived as being a valuable service provision.

3.1.1 Design of Student Questionnaire

A student questionnaire was designed to understand what students thought was a valued provision of the CES, including assessment of both onsite and online provision. The specific questions are attached in *Appendix A*. The questionnaire was an online questionnaire using the Bristol Online Survey tool, specifically designed for academic research and education organisations. An online questionnaire was chosen as it was the most effective way of gathering a large amount of data, characterised by inviting students to respond to the online questionnaire in their own time. It was easy to deploy and the responses were stored confidentially in the survey database.

The participants for this study included undergraduate and postgraduate students at BNU. Students were contacted by email and informed during career workshops. Participation was anonymous and voluntary.

3.1.2 Focus Group Activity

A focus group activity was set-up with students on 8th February 2018. The students came from the faculty of Design Media Management and Society and Health.
Information of focus group:
Date: 8th Feb, 2018
Number of students invited: 8
Number of facilitators: 2
Recording permission: Acquired
The focus group script is attached in *Appendix B*.

The students were asked to conduct some simple tasks to navigate through the CES web pages and also some verbal feedback on their experience and knowledge of the CES. These tasks included feedback on the following:
- location of CES;
- student understanding of the online and onsite service provision provided by CES;
- finding the MyBucksCareer tool (online career management tool) on the CES website;
- understanding how students are supported in exploring options and choices.

MyBucksCareer Tool

The MyBucksCareer tool is a career management tool which was launched in September 2016 at BNU for all students. The tool has been integrated within the CES webpages (figure 1) and branded according to BNU guidelines.

Figure 1 Front page of MyBucksCareer

The tool is interactive, includes e- learning content and latest job opportunities. It is designed to help students explore the job market. The key features of the tool include the following:

- ***Digital Advice & Guidance***

1,500 employer films deliver the latest employability and job search advice direct from hiring managers.

- ***Career Tools***

Suite of interactive tools including CV/Resume builder, career planner, interview simulator, job search engine, psychometric/aptitude tests.

- ***Career Assessments***

Including motivation, personality, workplace culture and resilience assessments with reports highlighting practical career considerations.

- ***E-Learning Resources***

Covering critical areas, such as, handling interviews, researching employers, networking, working with recruiters, e-hirability and self-employment.

3.2   Stage 2   Monitoring, Feedback, Evaluation of Interactive Services

In stage 2 the performance output was assessed in terms of if the tools addressed current information in the external and internal business environment. This was done by considering:

- feedback from the students from the focus group, on how effective and efficient the CES was;
- setting appropriate targets, in order that success in the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance could be measured and used to promote continuous improvement;
- recording requests made to CES with a view to amending the service and making changes in provision of the services, if appropriate;
- undertaking regular reviews of the CES, which included development, monitoring and resourcing.

Based on the focus group activities in Stage 1 the CES online tools were tested on the following high level design principles of whether the system:
- used simple and easy to use language;
- ensured consistency in terms of terminology, environment and the real world;
- provided appropriate feedback to the student;
- provided clear and convenient layout of commands and other facilities;
- provided easy to use help and other navigational facilities.

Students were interviewed to examine in detail their reactions in relation to each of the above points. They were asked to compare the system with the systems they have been using before (both manual ones and other network interfaces).

Further to this, changes were implemented in the use of technological tools for delivering careers information, generating feedback and undertaking regular reviews of the CES, including development, monitoring and resourcing.

3.3   Stage 3 Assessing impact on Students Career Explorations

On completion of stage 2 a new and revised flexible delivery of CES provision was implemented.

Furthermore a final quantitative study was conducted to analyse career exploration behaviours using Gianakos (1995) survey, (***Appendix C***) Demographic variables were also requested, including, gender and year of study.

Gianakos (1995) career exploration behaviours included a 12 item author generated questionnaire, which referenced the range of career exploration activities recommended to students at BNU through workshops and career development activities. Respondents were asked to respond by "Yes/No" format, whether they had been involved in each behaviour. The behaviours included: meeting with a career consultant; seeking assistance at the careers and employability service office; attending a career planning workshop; researching various careers; completing ability tests; completing interest inventories (self-reflection questionnaires); assessing work values; taking a variety of courses to learn more about various fields; interviewing/meeting with professionals in field on interest; working/volunteering in positions related to career choices; generating a list of careers consistent with abilities, interests and values; and identifying three career areas consistent with interests, abilities, and values that have positive employment outlook for 2018.The data was evaluated by summation of all the positive responses, which could range from 0 to 12 and this was termed as the career exploration score.

Data was coded and analysed using a statistical package (IBM SPSS statistics 22) to find out which career exploration activities students engaged with the most, by viewing the highest percentage career exploration scores for each of the items from the results of the Gianakos (1995) career exploration questionnaire. Further analysis was done to see if final year students engaged more with career exploration behaviours than first year students.

4.0   RESULTS

4.1   Stage 1 Assessment of Current Online and Onsite Learning Provision

4.1.1   Online Careers Service Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire (*Appendix A*) was sent out in September 2017 and generated 64 responses. On reviewing results presented in Figures 2-11. Figure 2 indicated that there was good representation from both faculties and figure 3 revealed that 82% of responses were from degree students.

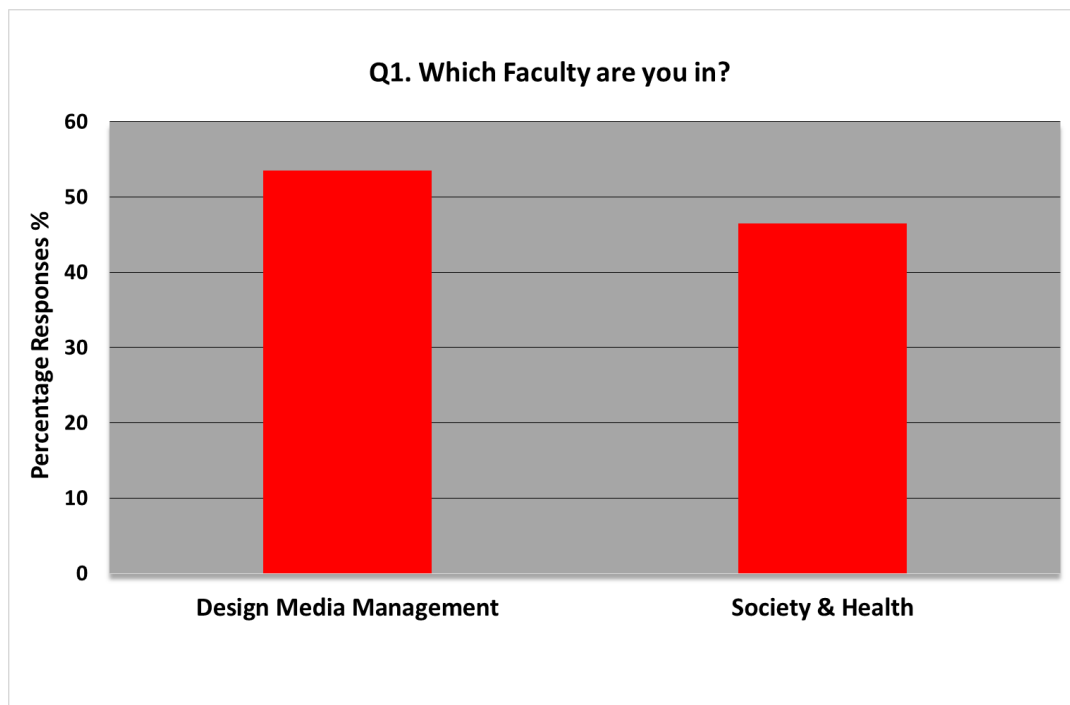**Figure 2   Q1 Faculty Representation**
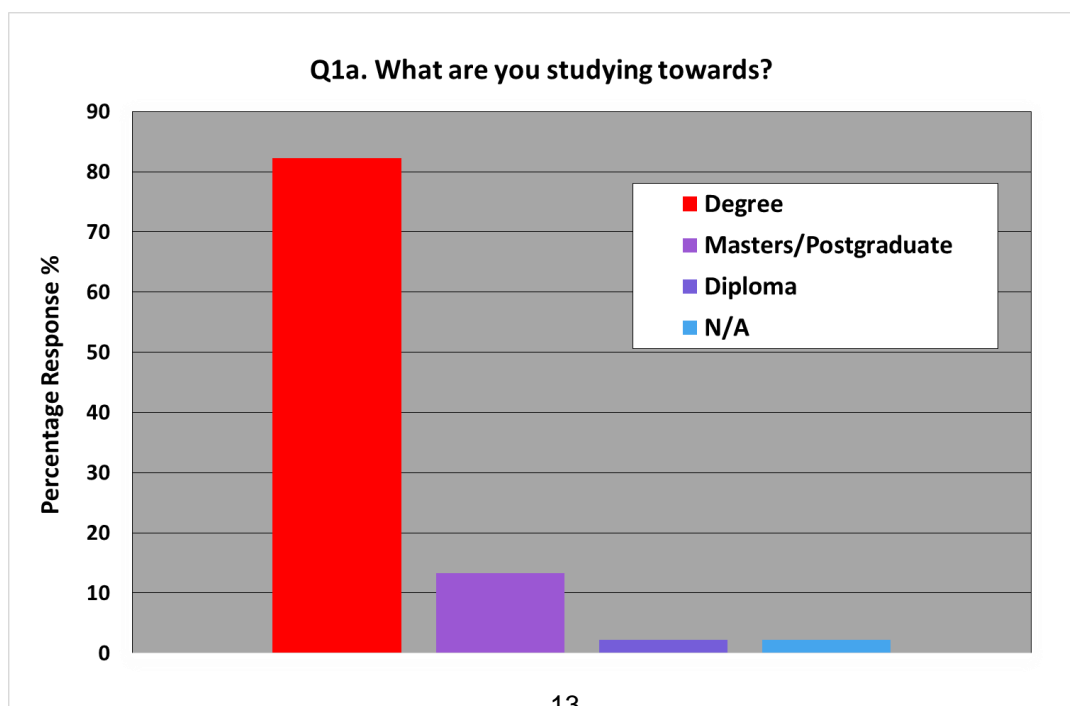

Figure 3   Q 1a Study Status

Figure 4 shows that most students (33%) became aware of CES by receiving an email from the CES staff team and 20% from word of mouth from other students.
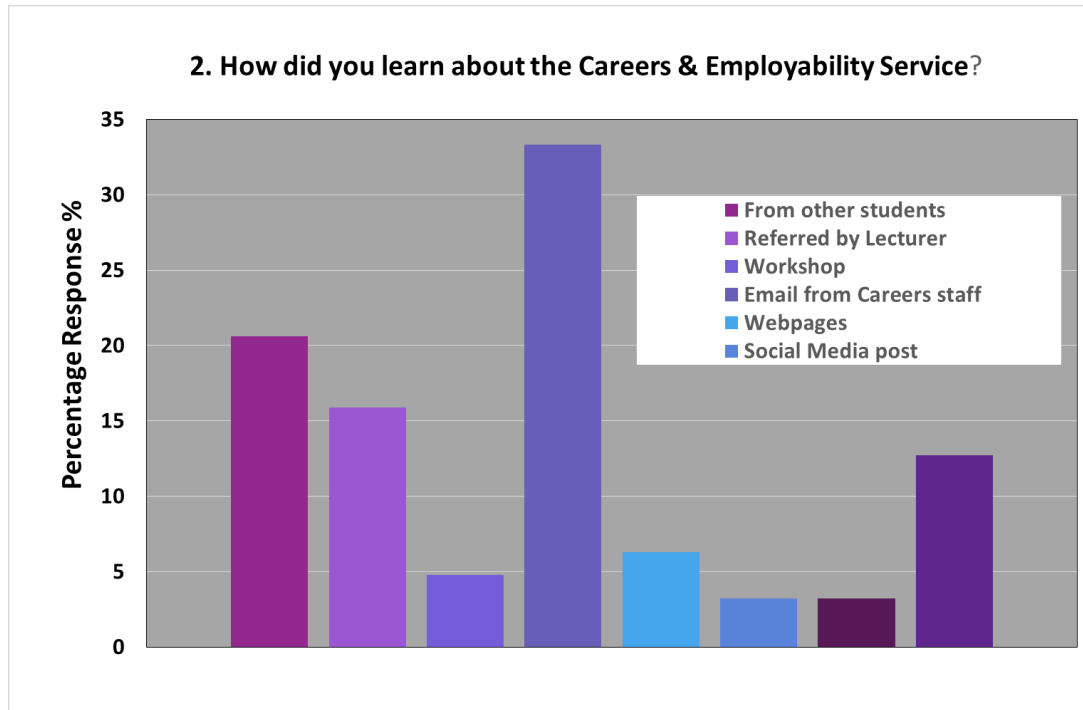
Figure 4   Q2 Awareness of CES

Figure 5 shows that only 28% of students had used CES.

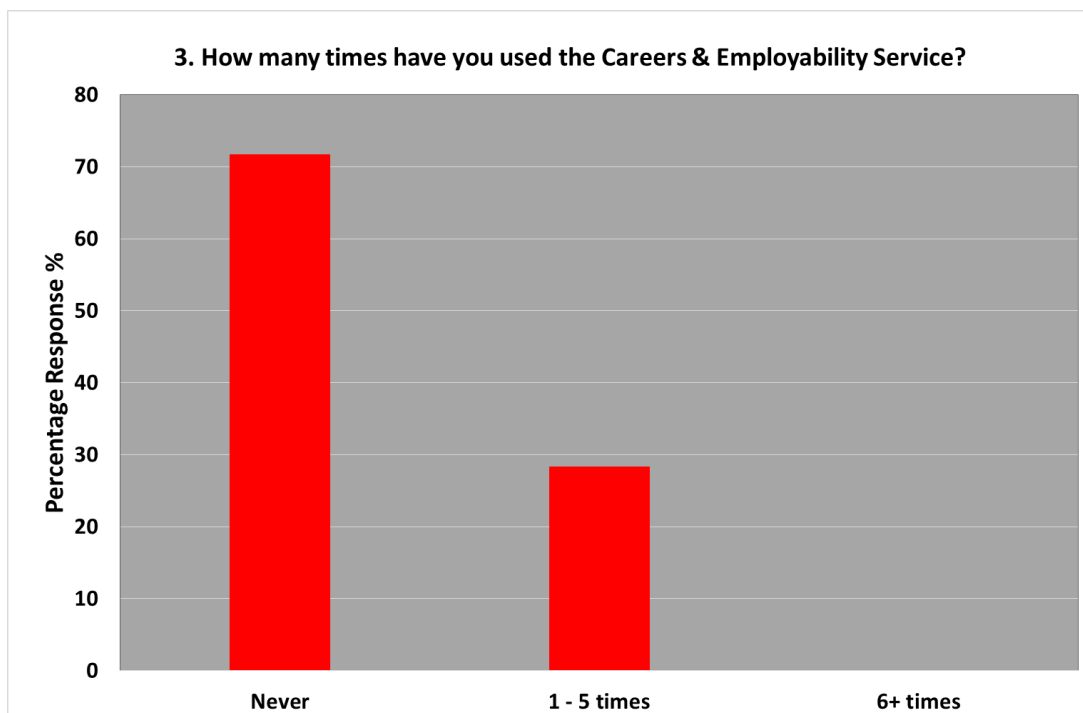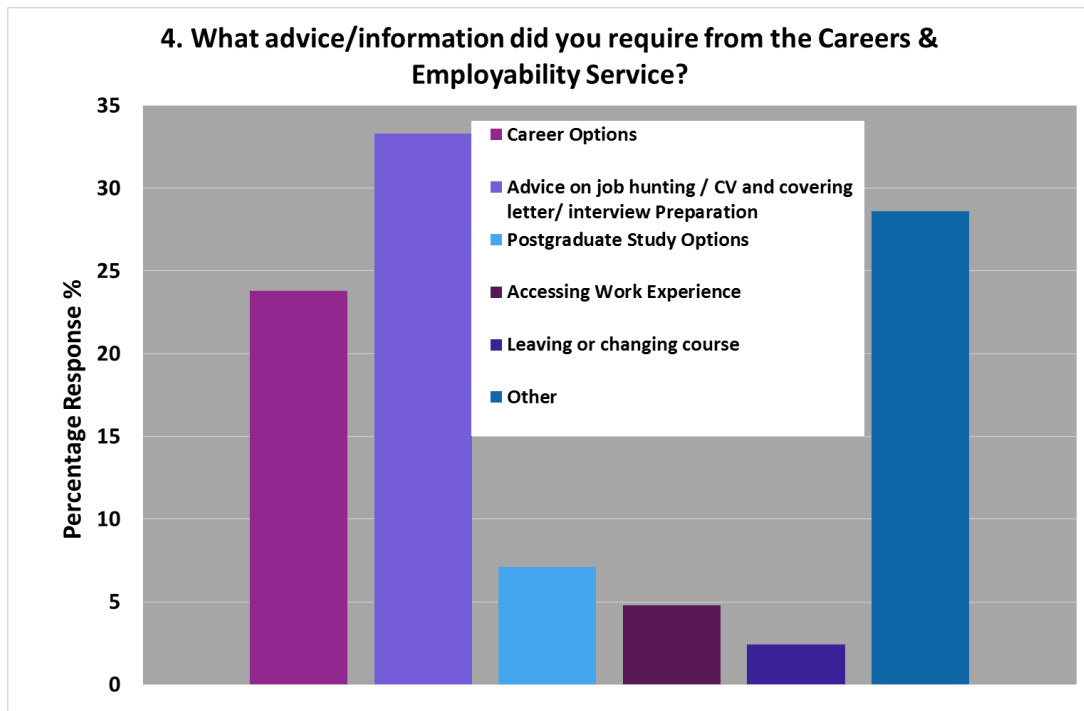**Figure 5   Q3 Use of CES**

Figure 6 shows that 33% of students used CES for advice on job hunting / CV and covering letter/ interview Preparation

Figure 6   Q4 Advice received from CES

In the following figures from 7– 17, ratings of fair to excellent have been interpreted as positive responses in CES delivery. Figure 5a shows that the users of CES generally felt that the service had helped them to improve their CV, application form or covering letter.

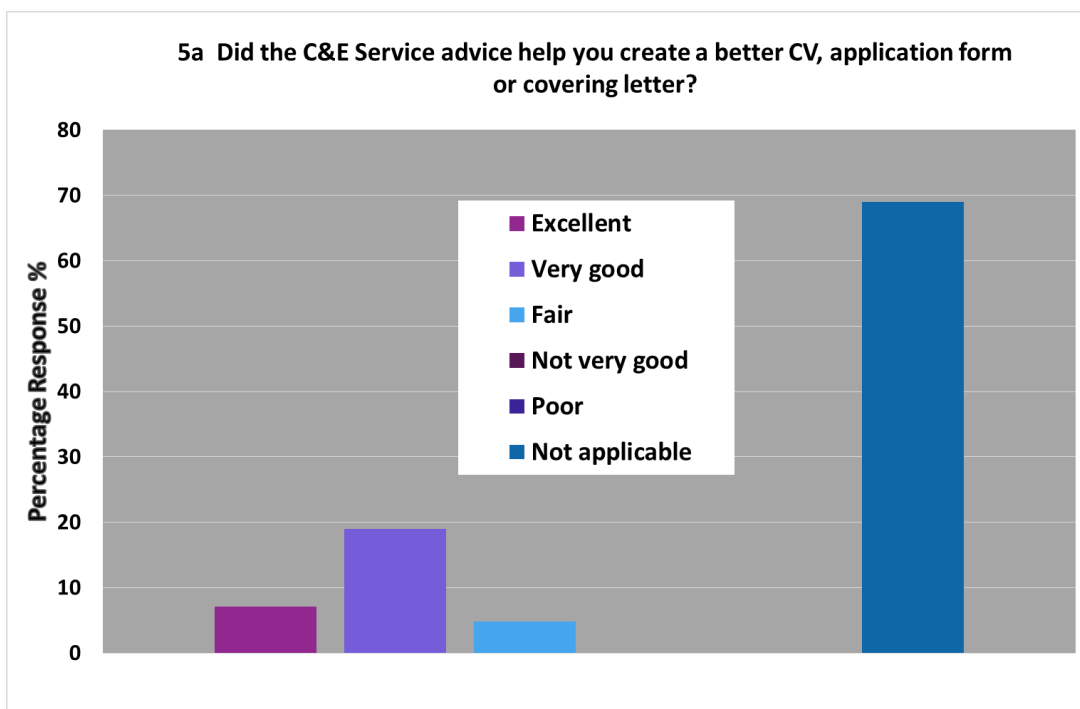**Figure 7   Q5a Value of service provision at CES**

Figure 8 shows that approximately 21% of student who accessed CES support felt that they were better informed on their options; approximately 6% were not happy with the advice they received.

Figure 8   Q5b CES Advice on Career Options

5b Did the C&E Service advice help you understand your career options?
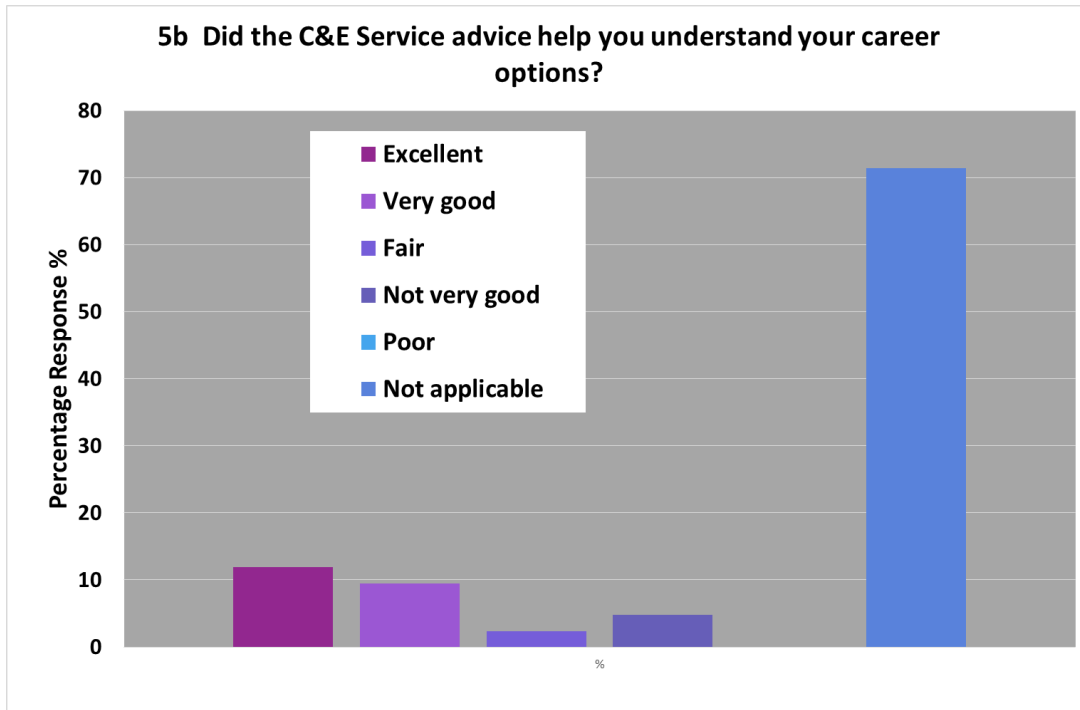
Figure 9 shows that approximately 20% of students engaged more with their studies due to advice received from CES.

Figure 9   Q5c CES advice and Student Engagement with Studies

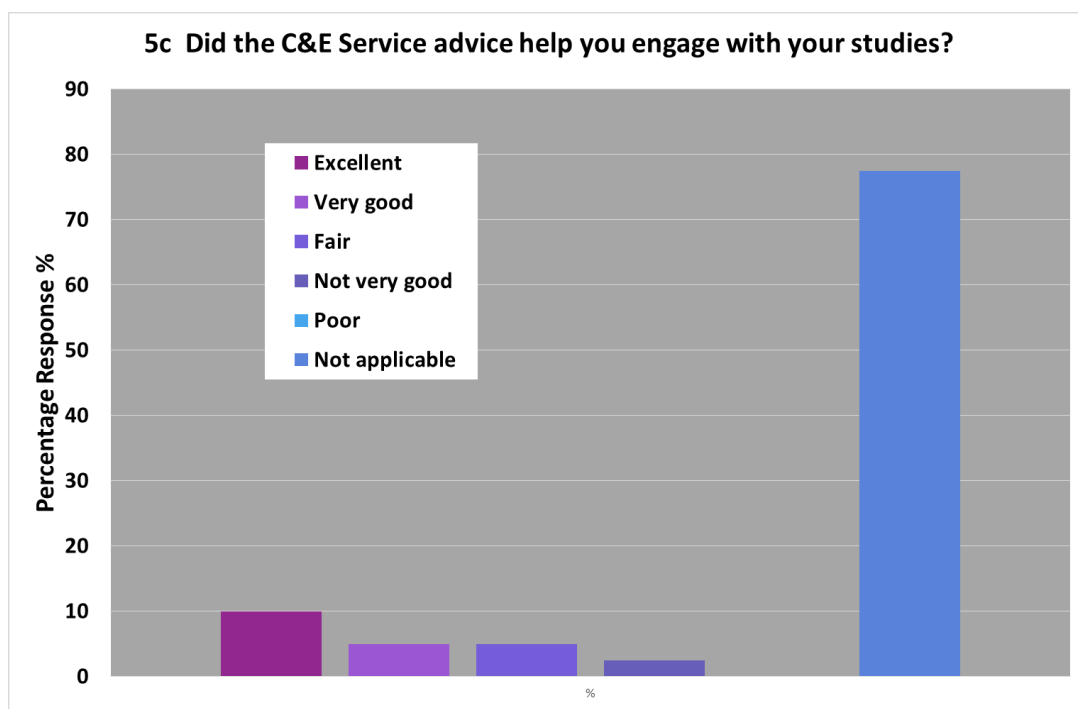**5c Did the C&E Service advice help you engage with your studies?**

Figure 10 shows that approximately 36% of students felt that the advice from CES helped them in making a decision in their career direction.

Figure 10   Q5d CES Advice and Decisions on Career Direction

5d Did the C&E Service advice help you make decisions on your careers direction?
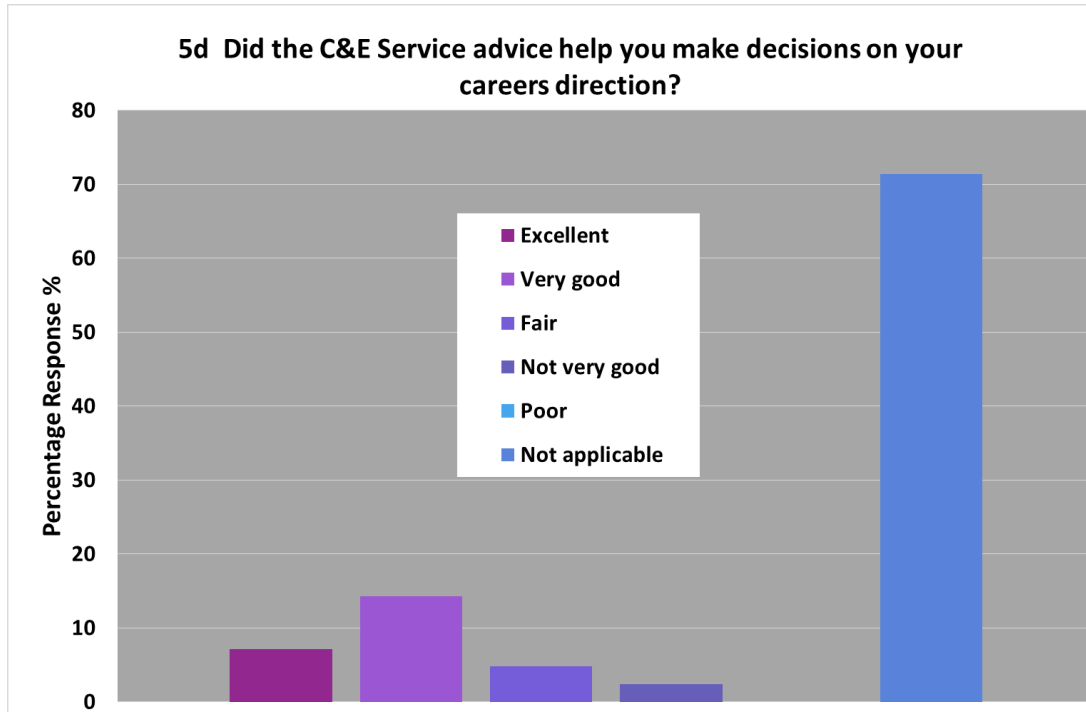
Figure 11 shows that approximately 14% of students felt that the CES advice helped them to remain on the course.

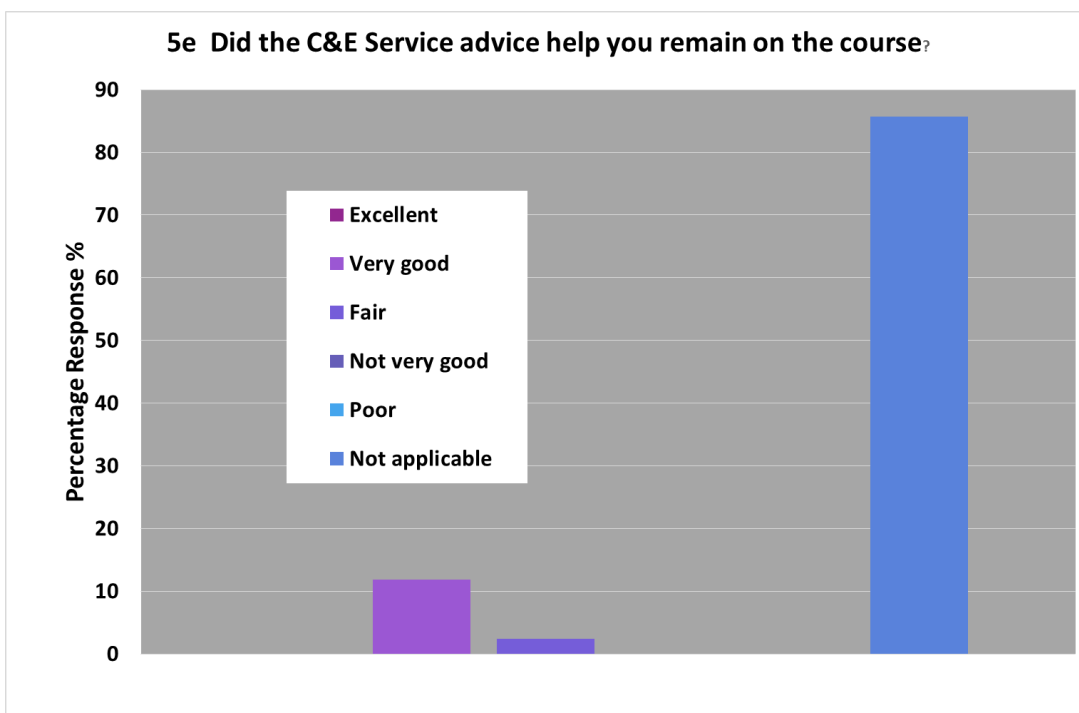**Figure 11   Q5e CES Advice help to Remain on Course**

5e Did the C&E Service advice help you remain on the course?

Figure 12 shows that approximately 26% of students felt that CES effectively referred them onto other appropriate help or services.

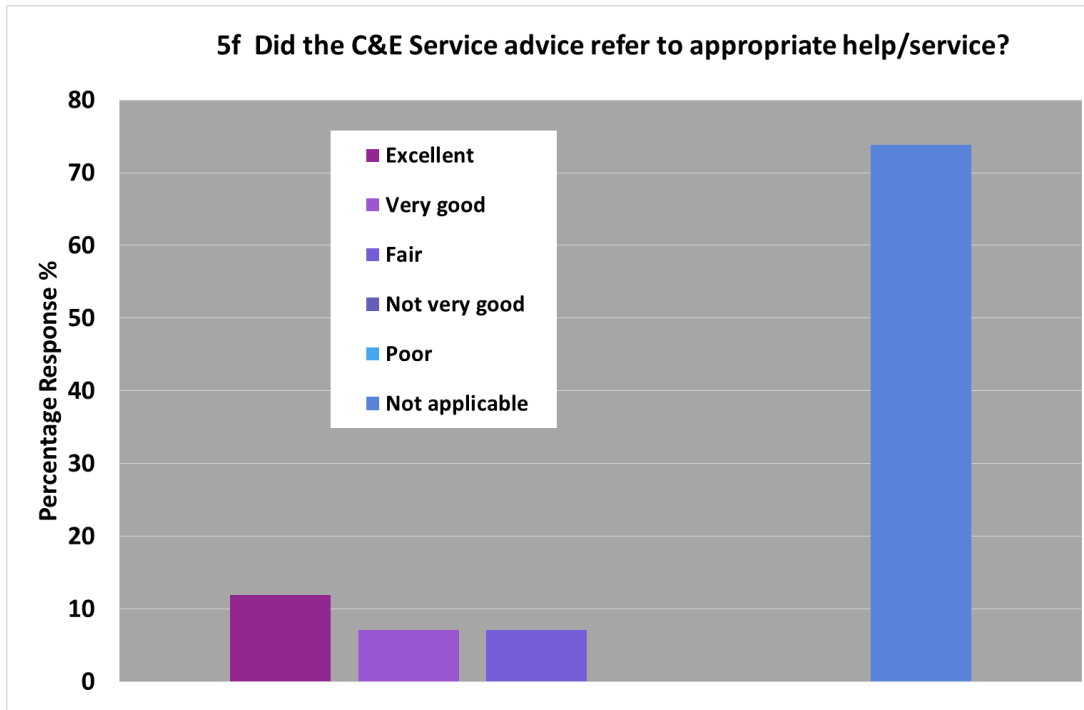**Figure 12   Q5f CES Referral to Other Appropriate Services**

5f Did the C&E Service advice refer to appropriate help/service?

Figure 13 shows that approximately 39% of students who had accessed CES webpages were satisfied with content.

Figure 13   Q6a Access of CES Webpages

6a Have you accessed the Careers &employability webpages, www.bucks.ac.uk/careers, and how would you rate this?
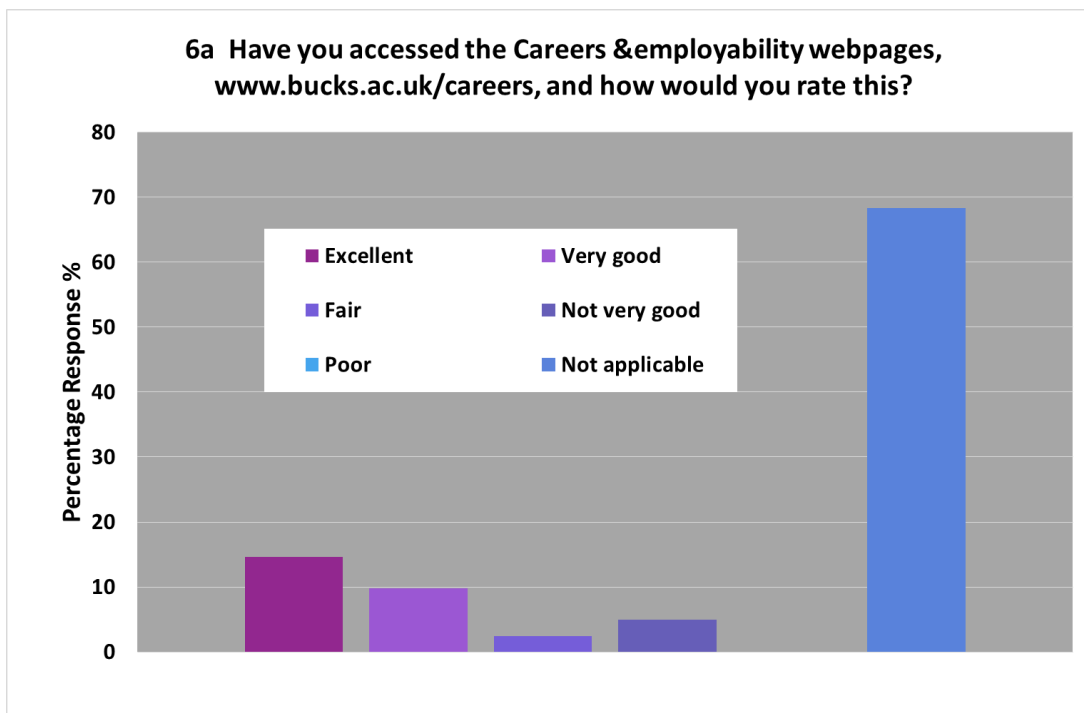
Figure 14 shows that approximately 24% students had accessed the new online career management tool, MyBucksCareer.
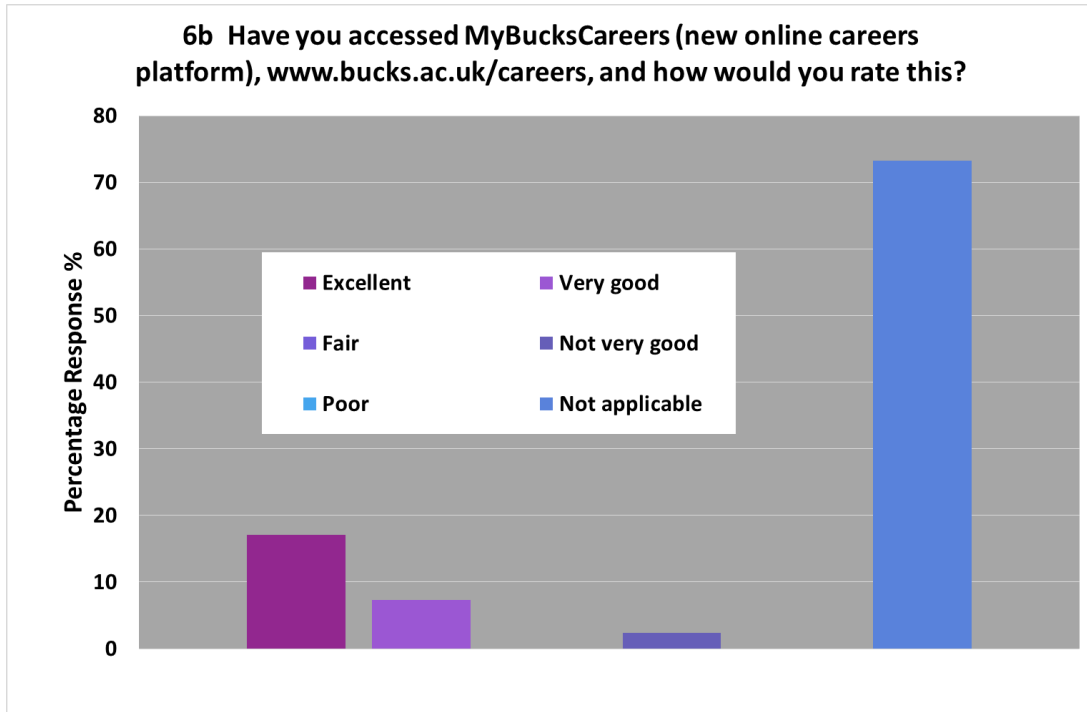
Figure 14   Q6b Access of MyBucksCareer Tool

6b Have you accessed MyBucksCareers (new online careers platform), www.bucks.ac.uk/careers, and how would you rate this?

Figure 15 shows that approximately 17% of student users were satisfied with the CES facebook posts.

Figure 15   Access of CES Facebook Group

6c Have you used the Bucks Careers Facebook group, www.facebook.com/careers.employability and how would you rate this?
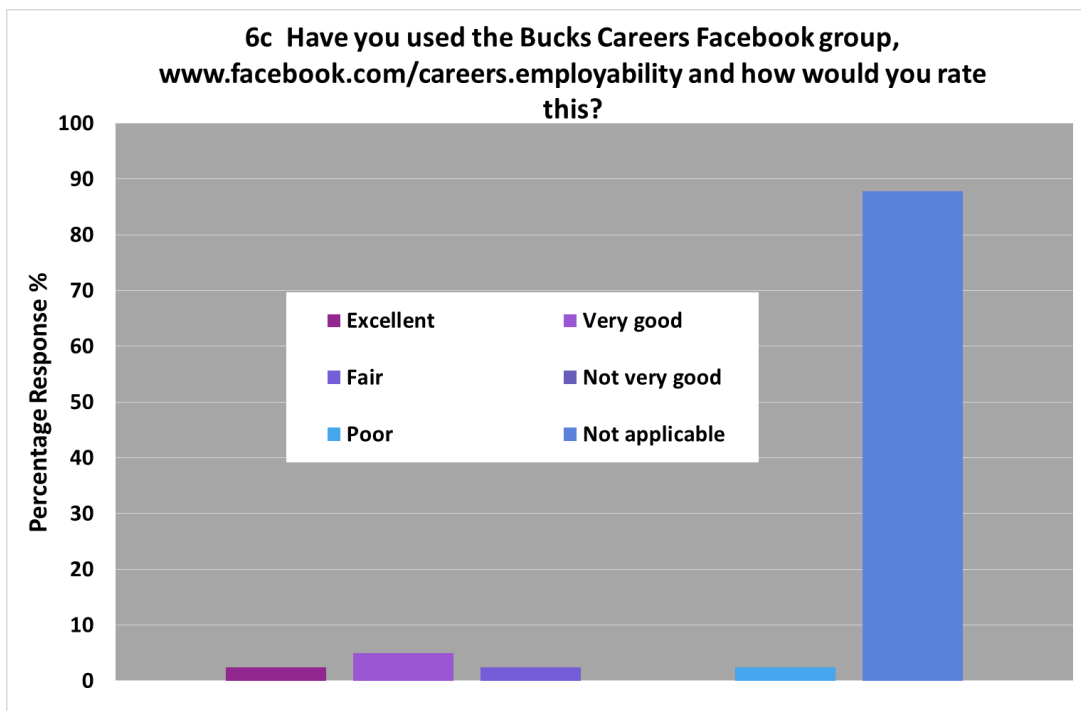
Figure 16 shows that approximately 7% of students accessed Bucks Careers twitter group and were happy with content posted.

Figure16   Q6d Access of CES Twitter Group

6d Have you accessed the Bucks Careers Twitter group, twitter.com/BucksCareers, and how would you rate this?
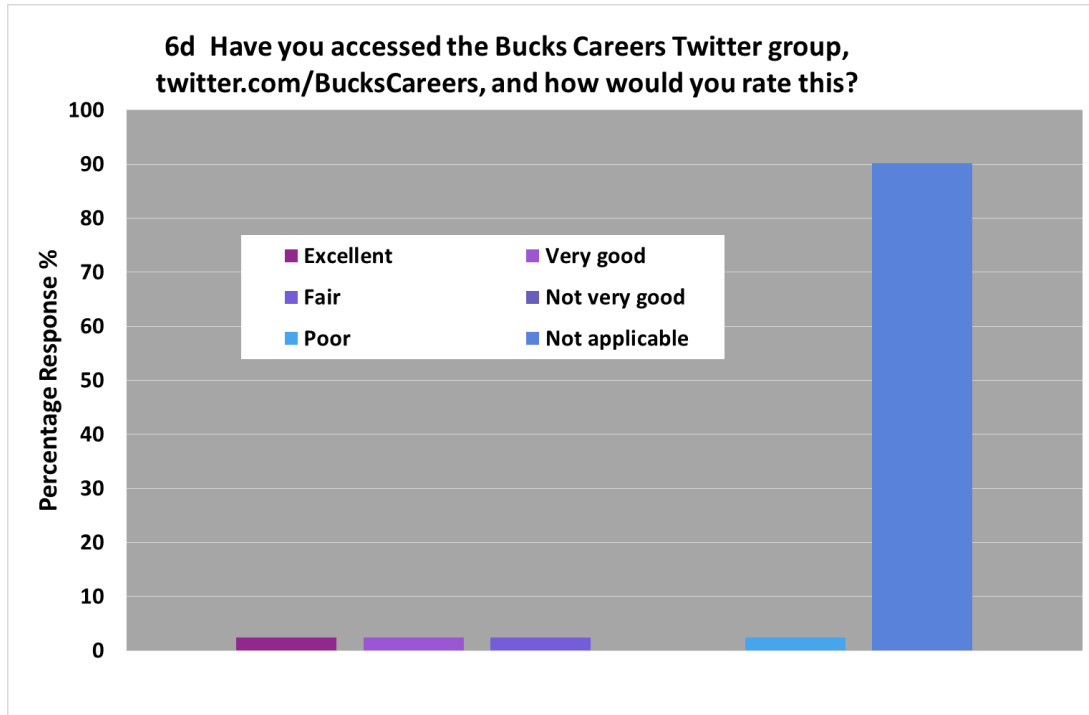

Figure 17 shows that approximately 12% of student users had accessed the Bucks Careers email and were satisfied with the service.
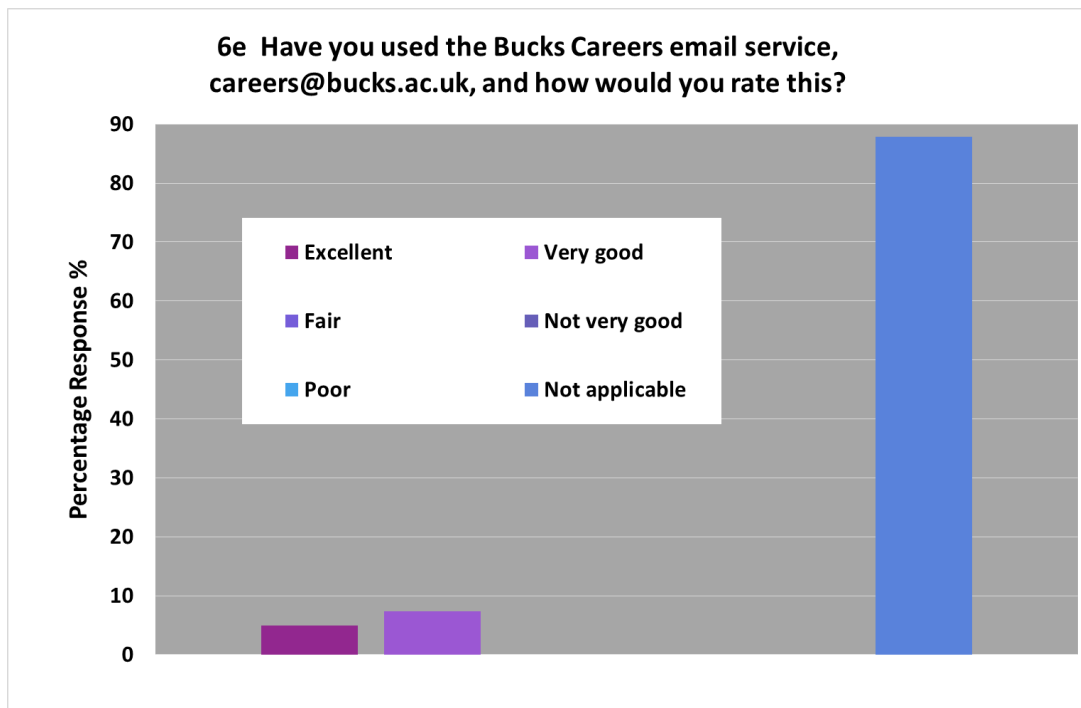
Figure 17   Q6e Use of CES Email

6e Have you used the Bucks Careers email service, careers@bucks.ac.uk, and how would you rate this?

Figure 18 shows that approximately 73% females and 27% males responded to survey.
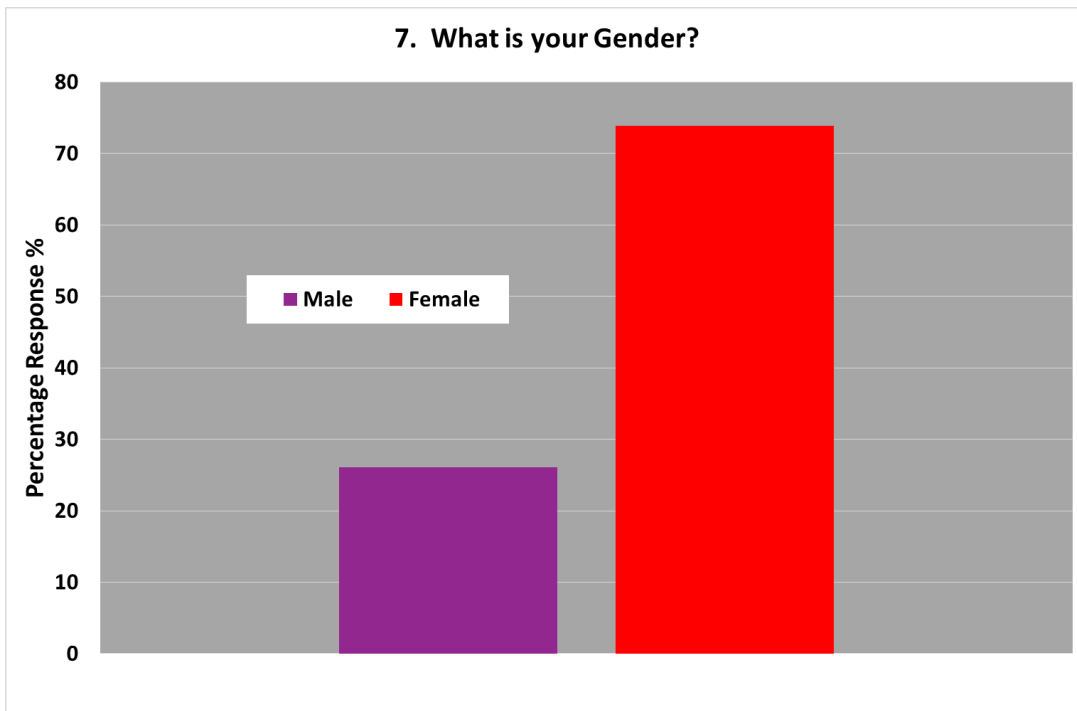
Figure 18   Q7 Gender

Figure 19 shows that approximately 65 of student respondents were in the age range of 18-24 and approximately 20% in the age range of 30-49.

Figure 19   Age Range
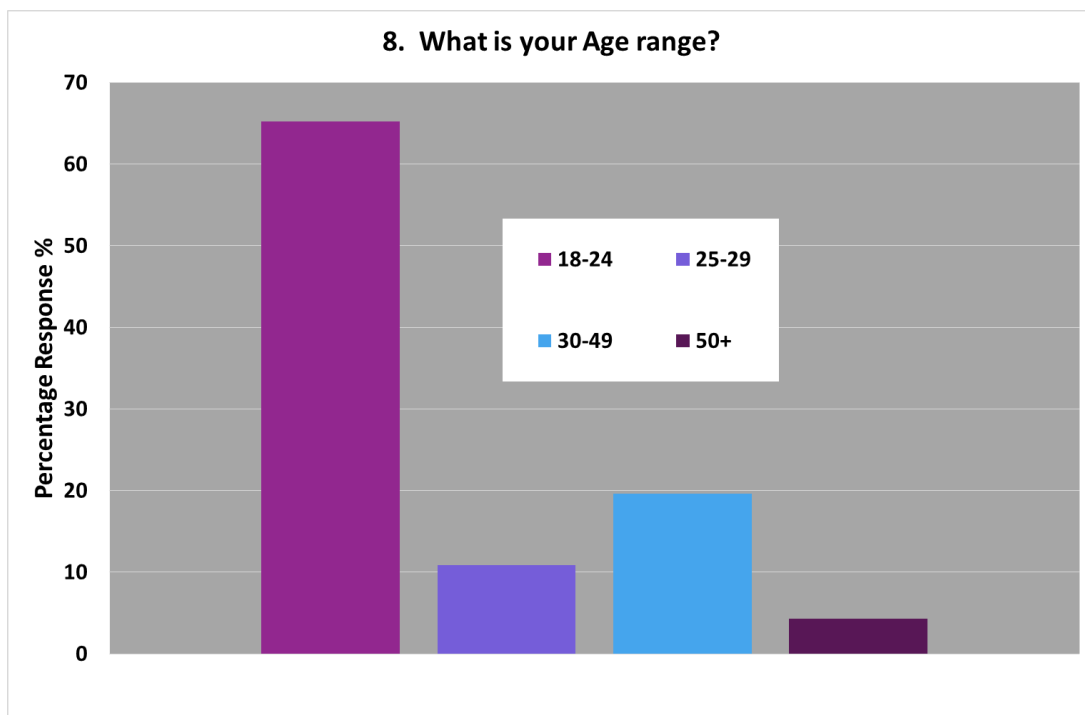
Figure 20 shows that 20% of student respondents declared a disability.

Figure 20   Q9 Disability

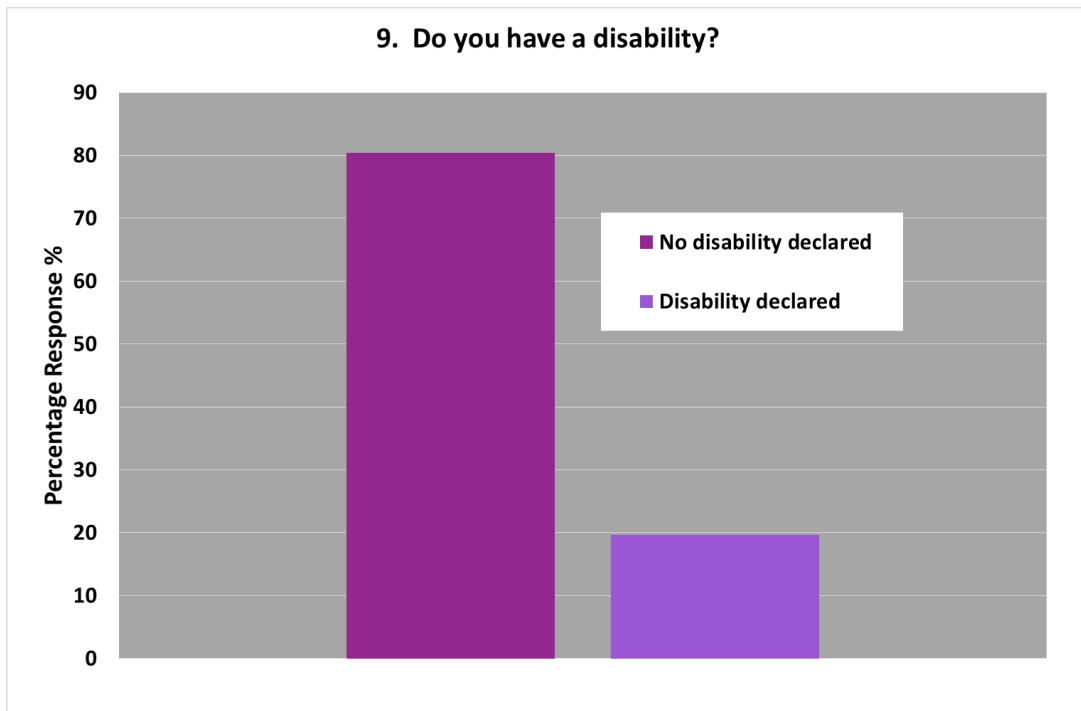**9. Do you have a disability?**

Figure 21 shows that approximately 15% students declared they had dyslexia and 9% declared they had mental health problems.

Figure 21   Q10 Nature of Disability

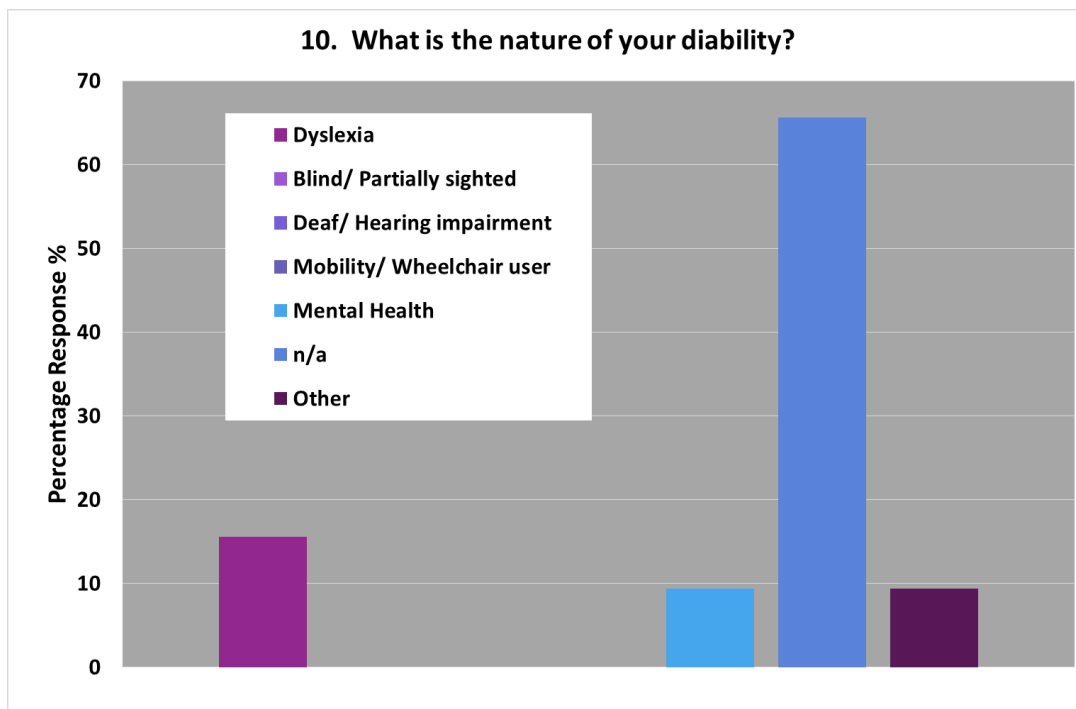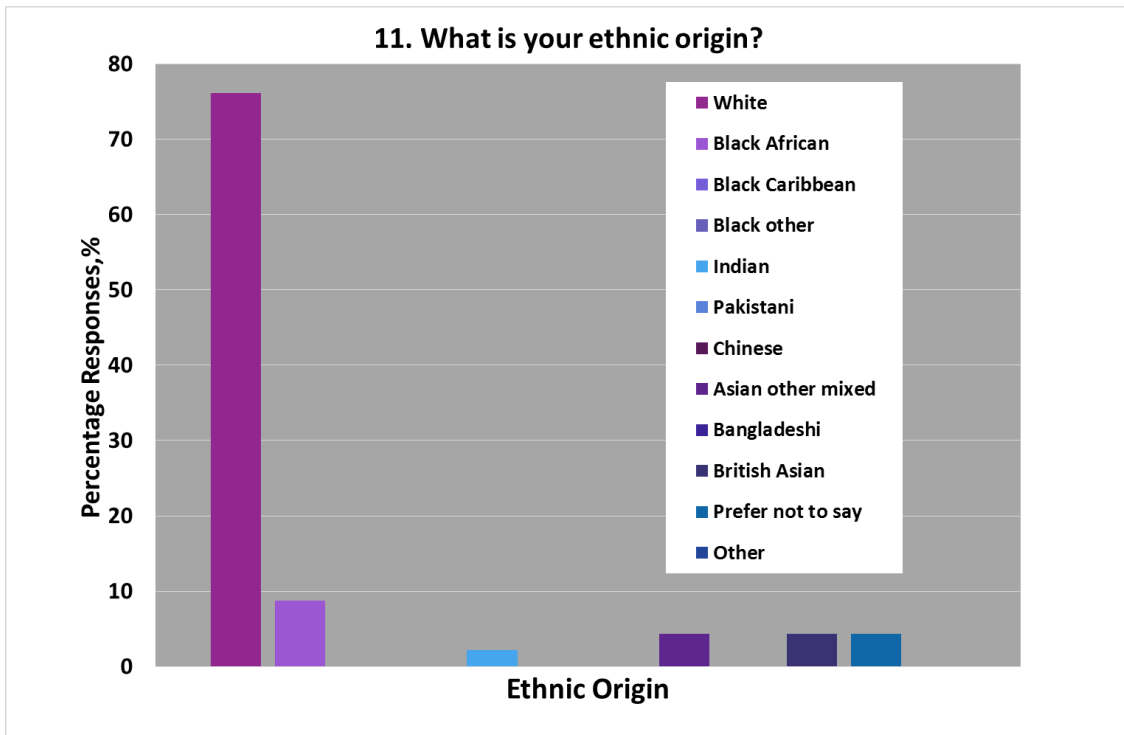**10. What is the nature of your diability?**

Figure 22 shows that approximately 76% of student respondents were of White ethnic origin approximately 10% were of Asian origin.

Figure 22   Q11 Ethnic Origin

4.1.2   Focus Group Discussion Results

The results were discussed with respect to each of the themes outlined in the focus group script in *Appendix B.*

Student Awareness about the Service

Majority of the students at the focus group were aware of CES and had mostly found out about the service from their tutors. One student mentioned that they found out about the service last year when a trial CES drop in service was offered at the University library reception area from 1-4pm. The students felt that this made CES very visible and easily accessible. However, since September 2017 the CES drop in service moved from the library to an office environment.

Some students mentioned that they became aware of CES in their first year, due to a graduate challenge module they were required to do as part of their course. However, they did not really use the service as they were more concerned about getting used to university life and managing their studies.

A final year student mentioned that they only became aware of the CES and its service provision in their final year, when they started to become concerned about career options and

considering applying for graduate jobs. Two students mentioned that they had never really considered using CES, as their tutors were also providing them with specialised careers advice and sharing their industry contacts.

With respect to location of CES and signage, some students mentioned that it was not clearly signposted. Most students found out about CES through other student support services. Students felt that the CES office was a bit concealed and needed more signage.

Currently the CES team is composed of a Careers Manager, 2 Careers Consultants and an Erasmus Co-ordinator, supporting the delivery of career management learning to 8209 students, including full-time, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students. Students were not aware of CES staff resources and had assumed that there were between 8-10 career professionals working in CES.

Students use of the service is defined and understood
Students mentioned that they were aware of the CES provision: through promotion at Fresher's fair; other promotional material, such as, banners and leaflets at library reception area; through careers webpage; from information supplied by Student Union members; through promotion by academics during lessons and leaflets distributed to communal areas in their halls of residence.

A suggestion was made by one student that the CES provision would be more visible, if it was clearly defined and advertised through the front page of students' internal portal, blackboard.

Most students were aware that the service offered CV and covering letter checks, advice on career options and advertised job vacancies, however, some students were unaware that the service included mock interviews and mock assessment centre activities. One student however, did talk about their positive experience of having undergone a mock interview at CES and how it made them feel more prepared and confident. Only half the students knew about the daily drop in service, Monday to Friday from 1- 4pm and had used it.
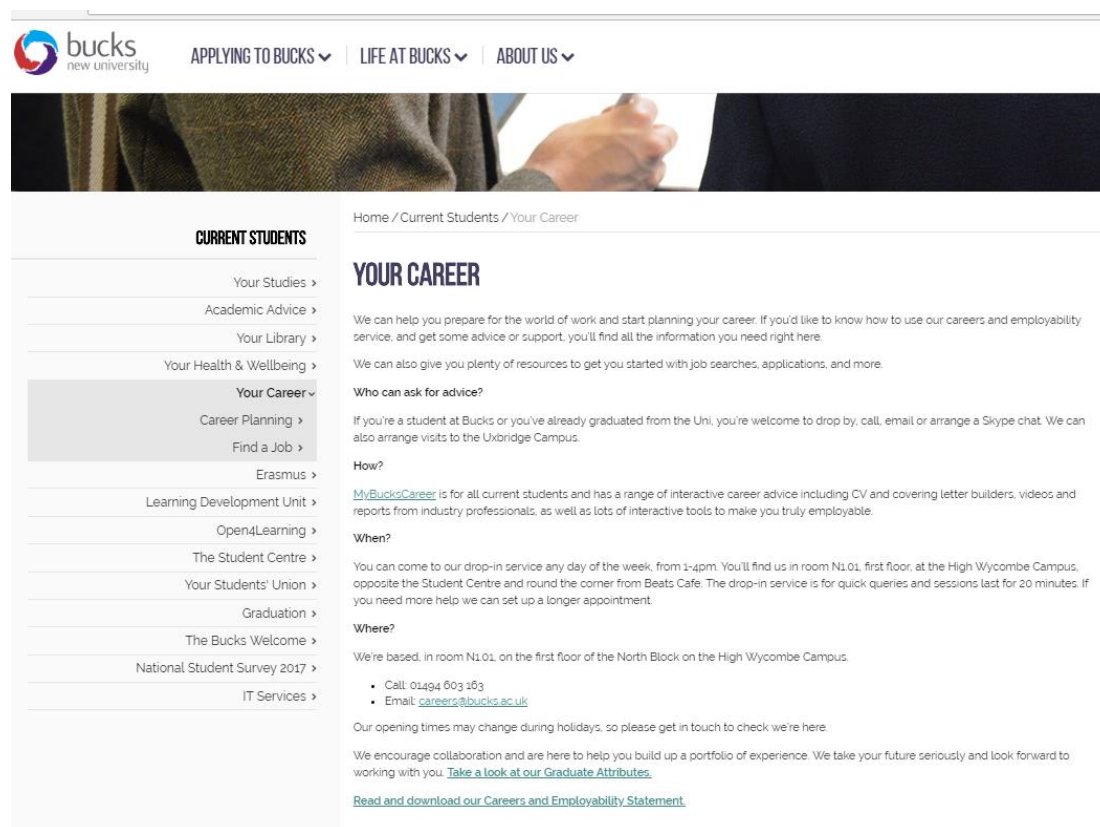
All students felt that CES provision was appropriate and accessible for students who had a disability, this was assessed in terms of location of CES and the service provision offered to students who have specific disabilities. Students also felt that the service provided to part time students was acceptable, as there was a careers email that students could send their queries to or have the option of a telephone or skype call (should the timing of the drop in service not be suitable).

Use of technology for providing a high quality service

Students were asked to locate CES webpages through the front page of the university website, https://bucks.ac.uk/home. Only half the students could locate the front page of the CES website, https://bucks.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability, figure 23. Students found it easier to find the CES webpages through conducting a search via google chrome rather than navigating through the BNU website pages.

Students were further asked if they were aware of the MyBucksCareer tool (BNU career management tool) and if they had used any of its features. Half of the students had used it and half were not aware of it at all. Students who had not used it were asked to log into MyBucksCareer. It was evident that the first time users were struggling as they were unsure of what log in details to use. Thus, it was apparent that the login requirements were not initially clear to students.

Figure 23   Front Page of CES Website

Students were asked to review the features of MyBucksCareer and all found the CV and covering letter examples on MyBucksCareer as a very useful resource, especially when they were studying the employment module on their course.

Students found the career assessment section on MyBucksCareer very useful, figure 24. One student mentioned that they had struggled with interview preparation in the past and found this feature of MyBucksCareer very helpful for initial preparation, which included lots of personality and work style preference questionnaires.

Figure 24   Career Assessment Section on MyBucksCareer Tool
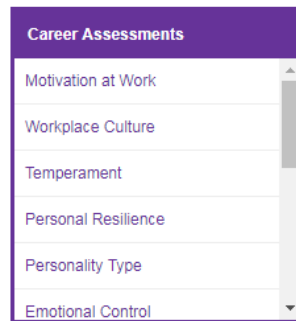
Students were asked to review the CV builder feature of MyBucksCareer in the dashboard area, figure 25.

Figure 25   CV Builder Tool on MyBucksCareer
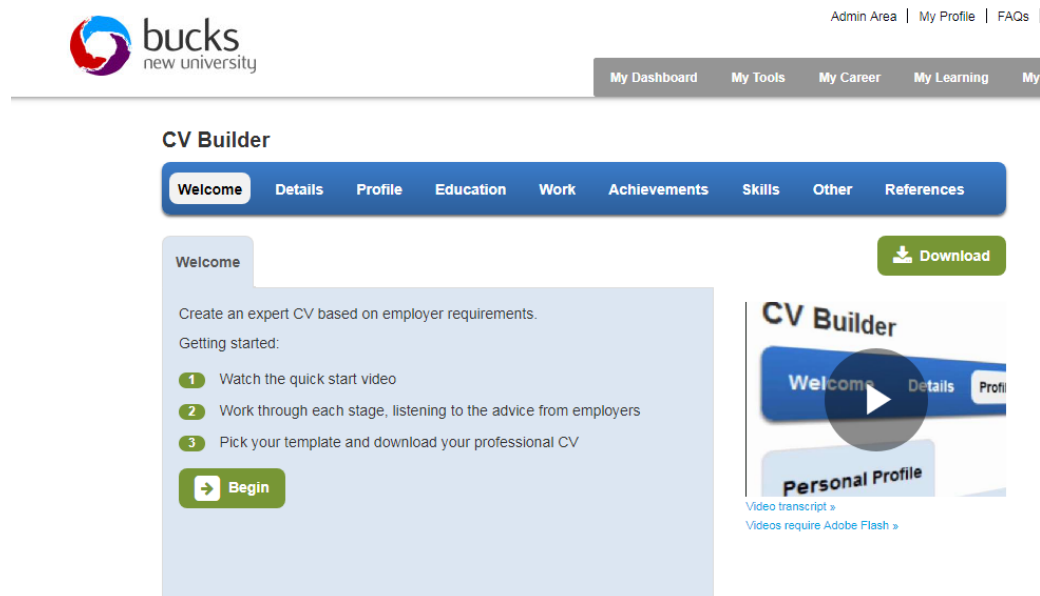
Although on reviewing this feature all students mentioned it was a useful tool, however, only 1 student had actually used it to create their CV. Some students mentioned that they did not really need to use this tool as they had received help from their tutors with compiling their CV. All students agreed that the feature was a good starting point for creating a CV for first year students, however, second and final year students had used other resources to support them

in writing their CV. Students generally felt that the CV builder was a good starting point but that more had to be included into the CV to personalise it further and to include some individual creativity to the CV layout and content compilation

Most students had already found other web based resources that were good examples to help them create a CV, such as, templates accessed via google. However, students did feel that the CV examples, and job application advice resources were extremely useful features of MyBucksCareer.

Generally students found MyBucksCareer tool to be very user friendly and easy to navigate with clear box headings and content. Students mentioned that they would be interested in accessing the industry reports in future and reviewing some of the employment statistics.

Students were not aware of the interview simulator feature of MyBucksCareer (figure 26), which allowed students to audio record a mock interview with generic interview questions featured on MyBucksCareer. Only 2 students mentioned that they would use this feature, others found the concept a bit discouraging and not very helpful.

Figure 26   Interview Simulator feature of MyBucksCareer
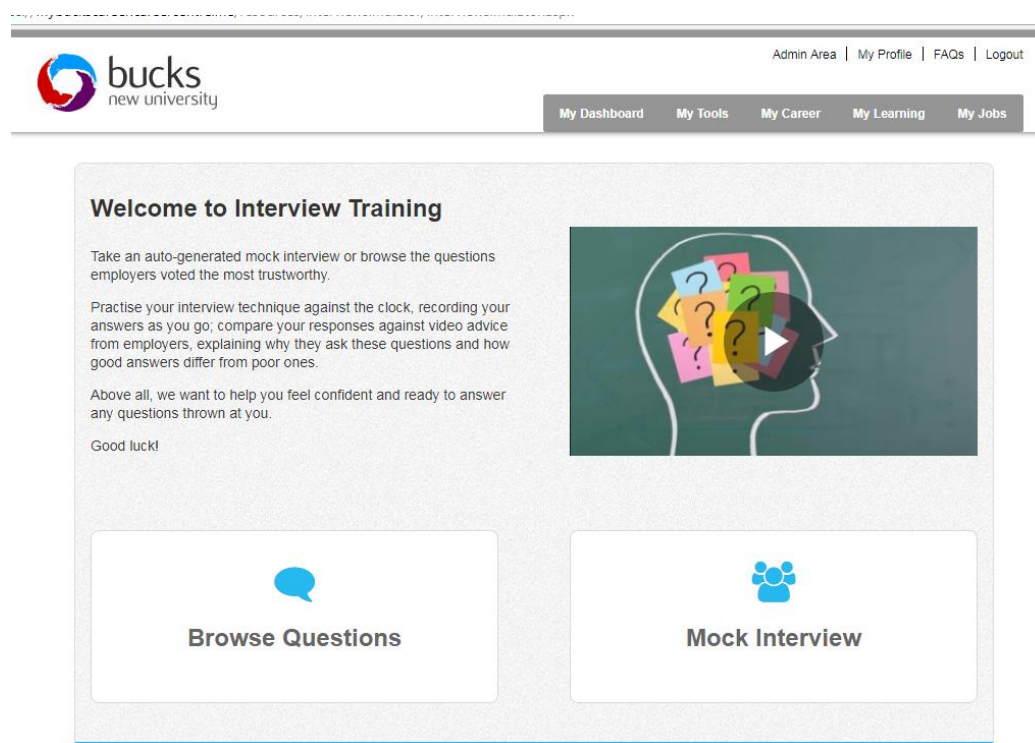
Students were asked if they had used the job search tool on MyBucksCareer, figure 27. Half of the students who had already used MyBucksCareer tool had used this feature and found it to be an important and useful resource. On reviewing the tool all students agreed that they

would use the jobs search tool in future, as they were aware that the database accessed jobs from all major job search sites such as, indeed and monsterjobs.

Figure 27   Job Search Tool on MyBucksCareer
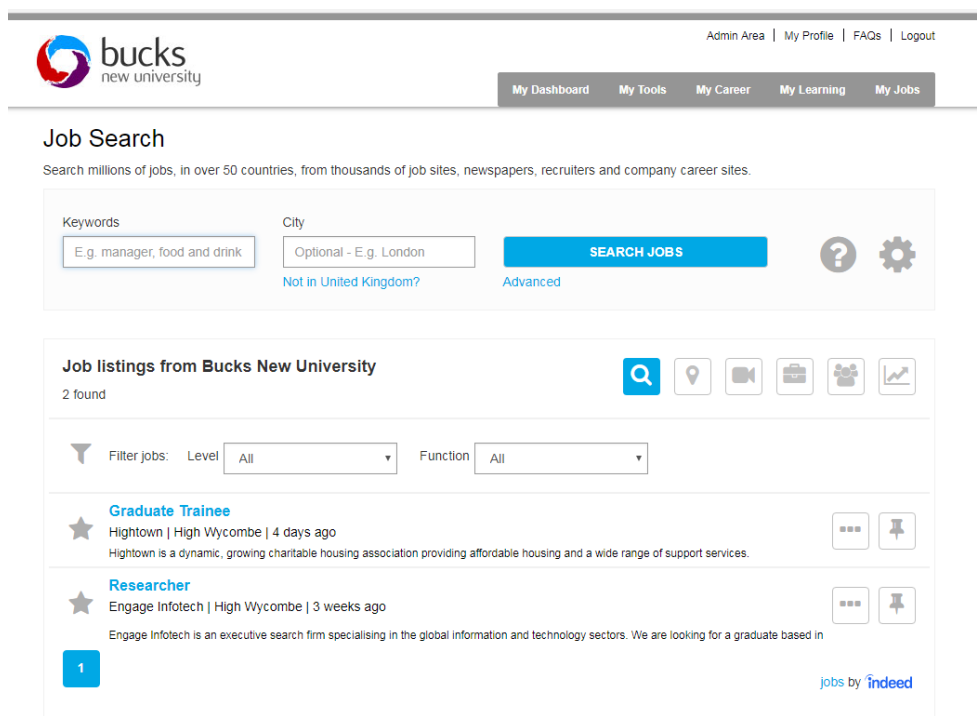
Overall all students agreed that MyBucksCareer was a good tool in helping them develop their career management skills. All agreed that they would use specific features of the tool in future.

Students are supported in exploring options and making choices.

Students overall felt that through the learnings from their employability module and support from their tutors that they were being supported in their career options and choices. A student studying International Travel and Tourism mentioned that their tutor regularly invited guest speakers from industry and had representation from CES to deliver career management workshops. The same student also mentioned that they felt that there was a close collaboration between tutors and career consultants working at CES. A student studying Film and TV production, mentioned that their tutor had informed them of the various job roles graduates in their sector went on to do, however, they were also encouraged to pursue their individual interests.

Students also felt that BNU staff were generally very good at emphasising the importance of career development. One student quoted a phrase used by their tutor which resonated with them significantly, "this University does not just want to produce graduates but also people that are ready to hit the ground running and executives that are ready to get into the industry."

A student from advertising mentioned that they had to conduct many live briefs and felt that this experience was preparing them for industry work.

When students were asked where they initially sourced careers related information from, a variety of answers were given, which included: conducting initial research online; seeking advice and help with contacts from tutors; visiting the CES office during drop in sessions. The general consensus was that although the advice received from career consultants was very useful, having specialised support from tutors was just as important if not more.

3.2   Stage 2   Careers Service Efficiency and New Technological Tools

Based on the results from Stage 1 the following career delivery framework was proposed to enhance career service efficiency and to implement technological tools to support this:

- There has been a significant staff reduction from September 2016 – December 2017 in the CES department from 9 careers professionals supporting approximately 8000 students, (including undergraduate, postgraduate, full time and part time) to 3 career professionals. Therefore, the use of new tools to support career management development of students is a crucial aspect of delivery.

- The MyBucksCareer tool was viewed as valuable online resource for students to access for initial CV guidance, with specific examples and the CV tool builder; the jobs database; the industry insights and career assessments. Thus, the tool would be promoted further during career inductions at the start of a new academic year and also during career management workshops.

- There was an issue with the visibility of the careers webpages, thus, IT team were informed to make the careers webpage link more visible and accessible.

- Students highlighted an issue with logging into MyBucksCareer, thus, clear instructions and guidelines on how to access MyBucksCareer were included in the webpages promoting the tool.

- The Bristol Online Survey questionnaire to receive feedback on the CES has been very important in capturing negative and positive feedback on the CES provision and will now be sent twice in the academic year, that is, at the start a new academic year, in order to promote the online and onsite service and also mid-academic year.

- Further research would be conducted on career exploration studies of students to understand what career exploration activities students conduct pre-Brexit.

3.3   Stage 3 Students Career Explorations

On implementation of Stage 2, students' career exploration studies was conducted. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics from the results of the Gianakos (1995) career exploration questionnaire, which resulted in 109 responses in total. The sum of all the responses was 501 and by dividing this with the total number of participants, that is, 109 the average career exploration behaviour score was calculated as 4.60 out of a maximum value of 12.

Table 1 Career Exploration Behaviour Responses for all students (Gianakos, 1995)

Descriptive Statistics

Career Exploration Behaviours, N= 109	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Met a career consultant	21	.19	.396
Seeked assistance from CES	16	.15	.356
Attended career planning workshop	17	.16	.364
Researched various careers	84	.77	.422
Completed ability tests	24	.22	.416
Completed interest inventories	11	.10	.303
Assessed work values	51	.47	.501
Taken a variety of course	30	.28	.449
Interviewed/met professionals	71	.65	.479
Worked/volunteered in position related to career choices	76	.70	.462
Listed abilities/interests/values	59	.54	.501
Identifying 3 career areas of interest in 2018	41	.38	.487

Figure 28 shows the overall percentage responses from undergraduate students to the individual career behaviours as specified in the Gianakos (1995) Career Exploration Behaviour Questionnaire.

The results from figure 28 show that the career exploration behaviour that students engage with the most are *researching various careers*, which showed a percentage response of 84%. Other very high percentage response career behaviours included 76% for *working or volunteering in positions related to career choices* and 71% *for interviewing or meeting professionals in area of interest*. The lowest career exploration behaviour responses were 11% for completing interest inventories and 17% for attending career planning workshops.

Fig.28 Career Exploration Behaviours Undergraduate Students Engage with the Most
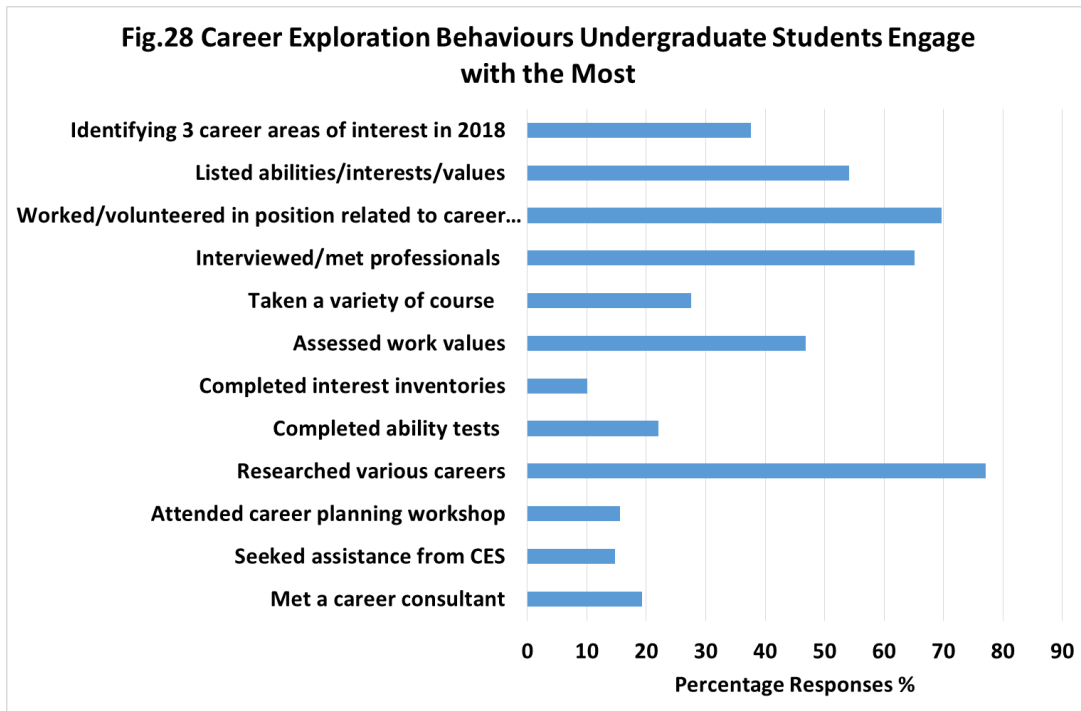
A further analysis was conducted to see if final year students engaged more with career exploration behaviours than first year students. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the descriptive statistics from the results of the Gianakos (1995) career exploration questionnaire, for 1st and 3rd year undergraduate students. The average career exploration behaviour score for 1st year students was calculated by adding all the sum responses in table 2, which was 138 and dividing this by total number of 1st year students, 32. This resulted in an average career exploration behaviour score of 4.31 out of a maximum of 12, see table 3. The sum of responses for 3rd year students was 188; dividing this by total number of 3rd students, 39, resulted in an average career behaviour score as 4.82 out of a maximum value of 12, see table 3.

Table 2   The Descriptive Statistics of 1ˢᵗ and 3ʳᵈ Year Students from Gianakos Questionnaire Results

| Descriptive Statistics				
Career Exploration Behaviours		**Sum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
1st year Students, N=32	**Met a career consultant**	6	.19	.397
	Seeked assistance from CES	3	.09	.296
	Attended career planning workshop	4	.13	.336
	Researched various careers	23	.72	.457
	Completed ability tests	7	.22	.420
	Completed interest inventories	4	.13	.336
	Assessed work values	9	.28	.457
	Taken a variety of course	10	.31	.471
	Interviewed/met professionals	19	.59	.499
	Worked/volunteered in position related to career choices	21	.66	.483
	Listed abilities/interests/values	20	.63	.492
	Identifying 3 career areas of interest in 2018	12	.38	.492
3rd year Students, N=39	**Met a career consultant**	8	.21	.409
	Seeked assistance from CES	5	.13	.339
	Attended career planning workshop	9	.23	.427
	Researched various careers	33	.85	.366
	Completed ability tests	9	.23	.427
	Completed interest inventories	2	.05	.223
	Assessed work values	20	.51	.506
	Taken a variety of course	8	.21	.409
	Interviewed/met professionals	27	.69	.468
	Worked/volunteered in position related to career choices	26	.67	.478
	Listed abilities/interests/values	23	.59	.498
	Identifying 3 career areas of interest in 2018	18	.46	.505

Table 3   Career Exploration Behaviour Scores for 1ˢᵗ and 3ʳᵈ year students

	Total Population	**Total "yes" responses to Gianakos questionnaire**	**Gianakos (1995) Career Behaviour Exploration Score**
1ˢᵗ year students	32	138	4.31
3ʳᵈ year students	39	188	4.82

Statistically there was not a significant difference between career exploration behaviour scores for 1st year students (M=4.31, SD=2.81) and 3rd year students (M=4.82, SD=1.96), conditions t (69) =-0.90, p=0.374.

The results from figure 29 show that the career exploration behaviour that students engage with the most are researching various careers, which showed a percentage response of 85% for 3rd year students and 72% for 1st years students. Other very high percentage response career behaviours included 67% for 3rd students for working or volunteering in positions related to career choices and 66% for 1st year students. Furthermore 69% 3rd year students interviewed or met professionals in area of interest compared to 59% for 1st year students.

The results indicate that final year students do engage with career exploration behaviours more than 1st year students. Generally all career exploration behaviours were higher for 3rd year students than 1st year students, except for students completing interest inventories or taking on a variety of course; which was slightly higher for first year students.

Fig.29 Comparison of Career Exploration Behaviours of 1st year and 3rd year Undergraduate Students
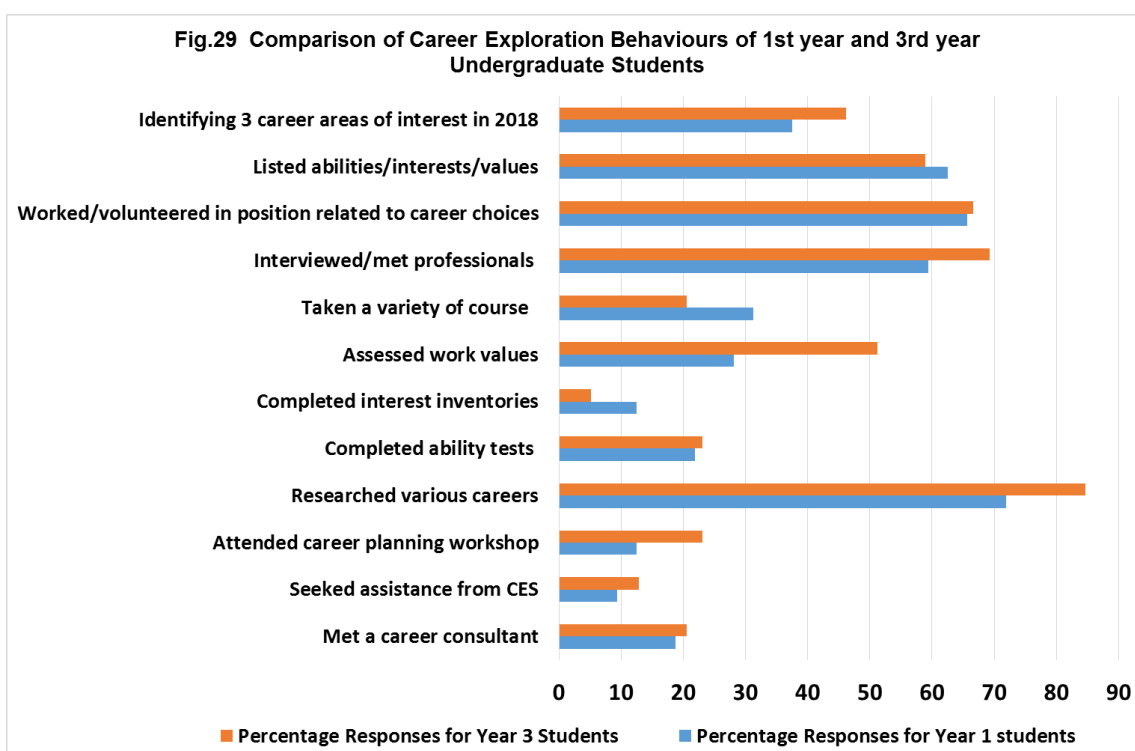
3.3.1   Evaluation of use of MyBucksCareer Tool

Further evaluation of use of My Bucks Career tool was conducted on 11th June 2018 to assess whether further promotion of the tool had led to increased usage and also to understand what features students were accessing the most. In September 2017 the number of student users had been recorded as 515. On 11th June 2018 the number of recorded users, figure 30, had gone up to 835, thus resulting in a 62% increase from September 2017.

Figure 30   Number of Student Users on MyBucksCareer Tool
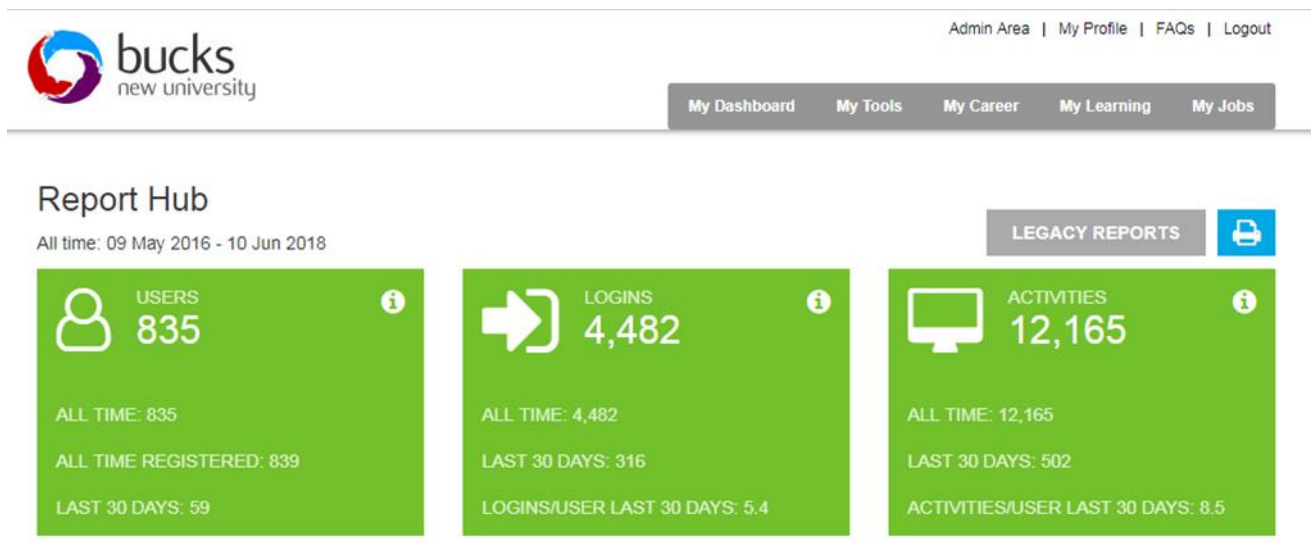
Figure 31 highlighted the most used features of MyBucksCareer tool, with the use of jobs database showing the highest activity, followed by career assessments, newsroom homepage/articles and CV builder. The total number of recorded activities to date was 12165 (figure 30), which is a strong indicator that the tool is a valued online service provision. Furthermore 835 student users accounted for approximately 10% of the entire student population, which included full time, part time, undergraduate and post-graduate students.

Figure 31   Features most Accessed by Students on the MyBucksCareer Tool

No. of Activities
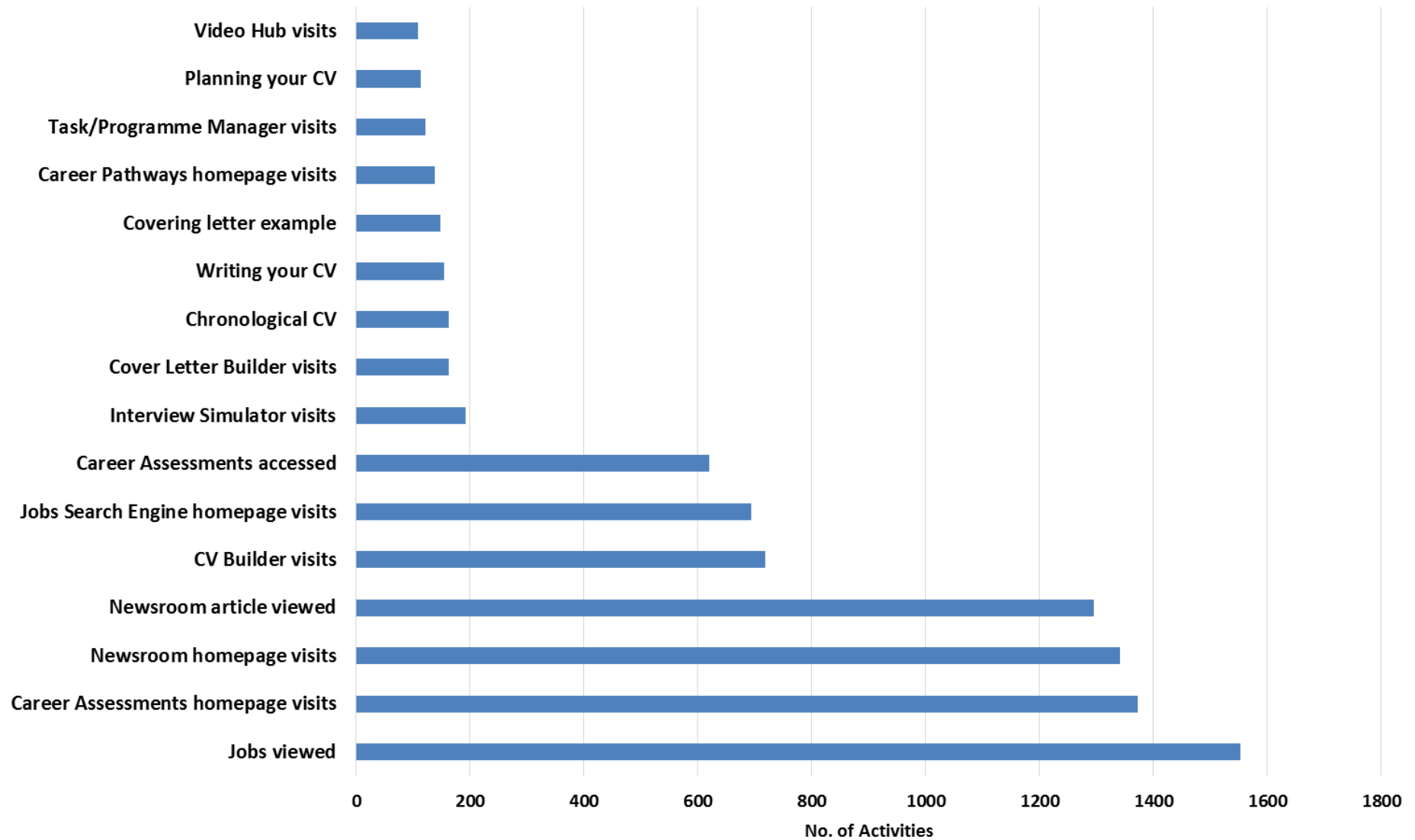
4.0   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study presented the results of a one year project to understand the gap between what students desired from CES and what the service provided. The project also assessed the impact of a flexible delivery system by exploring student's career exploration activities. This study also filled a gap in current knowledge, as it presented an initial attempt to highlight the most significant career exploration behaviours undergraduate student engaged with pre-Brexit.

From the results of the CES provision questionnaire it was evident that 70% respondents had not used CES. It was interesting to note that a majority of students who had used CES had heard about the service from other students rather than direct promotion on webpages, social media or other means. It was of no surprise that in general most students used CES for advice on job hunting, CV and covering letter and interview preparation. The response rate to the survey was very poor, although students who had used the service were on the majority happy with the advice they received. This concluded that students were not aware of CES and more needed to be done to promote the service or that there was a shift in how students conducted their career exploration activities, thus, conducting it more independently rather than using CES. It could also have been the impact due to the reduction in staff resources from 9 to 3 career professionals in CES over a period of 2 years.

Further insight in how to implement a flexible delivery system to support students was based on the focus group activity. The focus group activity included students who were aware of CES and had used some of its service provision. Some significant findings were that there was an issue with the promotion of CES, the visibility of the CES website and accessing the new online career development tool, MyBucksCareer. This led to the development of a new CES delivery framework which included: increased promotion of online MyBucksCareer tool, making CES links more visible to students, implementation of 2 yearly feedback and promotion CES provision questionnaires and further assessing students career exploration activities pre-Brexit and to be conducted again post-Brexit.

The career exploration questionnaire highlighted the following conclusions:

- The mean career exploration score for undergraduate students from all courses at BNU was 4.60 for all students, females 4.44 and males 4.89. This was much lower than initial assumption based on the findings from Gianakos (1995) research, which showed mean career exploration score of 6.13 for males and 6.78 for females out of a maximum of 12. Undergraduate students are engaging with less career exploration behaviours than previous years.

- The career exploration behaviours that students engage with the most are researching various careers; working or volunteering in positions related to career choices. These results partially validated literature, as it was predicted that meeting professionals in field of interest would be something students would engage with the most. Researching various careers and working/volunteering in positions related to career choices were new results, however, there is supporting evidence highlighted by National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCOV, 2016), stating a dramatic increase of 52% of 16-25 year olds volunteering from 2010 - 2015.

- The career exploration behaviours students least engage with include completing interest inventories, seeking assistance from the CES, attending career planning workshops. This indicated that students are engaging more in conducting career research independently (possibly online), than attending workshops. There is a plethora of online free career management tools and job websites, (such as, Graduate careers Website (Prospects.ac.uk); National Careers Service; Indeed and Monster), thus, it is possible that students are adopting a more blended approach in their career exploration using both online career portal services and face to face service provision. This can also be supported by the fact CES further encouraged the use of MyBucksCareer tool (online career management tool) in January 2018 and current usage has increased by 62% since September 2017.

- Final year students engage more with career exploration behaviours than first year students, this could be due to students preparing to enter graduate jobs and wary of challenges facing new graduates with a competitive labour market (Graduate Market, 2018). The CES workshops delivered to undergraduate students do include labour market information which focus on employability statistics in specific disciplines, graduate salaries and the type of job roles BNU alumni have gone on to do.

Finally it is hoped that the project research might encourage other small institutions to explore the options open to them with respect to developing the quality of their Careers and Employability service provision with limited resources. This project also has given some valuable insight into how students are engaging with their career development activities and based on this how CES can increase overall efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

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Appendix A   Careers & Employability Service Questionnaire

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bucks
new university

Careers & Employability Service Questionnaire 2017

Careers & Employability Service Questionnaire 2017

The Careers & Employability Service would be grateful if you could complete this online survey which should take no longer than 5 mins.

The survey is completely anonymous. Responses to this survey will only be used for the purpose of improving the service provided by Careers and Employability.

1. Which Faculty are you in? *Optional*

○ Design, Media & Management
○ Society and Health

a. What are you studying towards? *Optional*

○ Degree
○ Masters/Postgraduate Course
○ PhD
○ Diploma
○ Foundation Degree
○ N/A

b. What is your course title? *Optional*

[   ]

2. How did you learn about the Careers & Employability Service

☐ From other student(s)
☐ Referred by lecturer
☐ Workshop
☐ Email form Careers staff
☐ Webpages
☐ Social Media post
☐ Career Service event
☐ Other

a. If you selected Other, please specify: *Optional*

[   ]

3. How many times have you used the Careers & Employability Service? (including workshops, drop in sessions and online content)

- ○ Never
- ○ 1-5
- ○ 6+

4. What advice/information did you require from the Careers & Employability Service? Please tick all that apply

- ☐ Career Options
- ☐ Advice on job hunting / CV and covering letter / Interview Preparation
- ☐ Postgraduate study options
- ☐ Accessing work experience
- ☐ Leaving or changing course
- ☐ Other

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

5. Did the advice you receive from Careers & Employability Service help you?

	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Not Very Good	Poor	Not Applicable
Create a better CV, application form or covering letter	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understand your career options	○	○	○	○	○	○
Engage with your studies	○	○	○	○	○	○
Make decisions on your career direction	○	○	○	○	○	○
Remain on your course	○	○	○	○	○	○
Refer you to appropriate help/service	○	○	○	○	○	○

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

6. Have you used any of the following online and social media tools and how would you rate this?

	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Not Very Good	Poor	Not Applicable
Careers & Employability webpages, www.bucks.ac.uk/careers	○	○	○	○	○	○
MyBucksCareers, new careers platform, www.bucks.ac.uk/careers	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bucks Careers Facebook group, www.facebook.com/careers.employability/	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bucks Careers Twitter group, twitter.com/BucksCareeers	○	○	○	○	○	○
Careers email service, careers@bucks.ac.uk	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. Gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

8. Please select age range

- ○ 18-24
- ○ 25-29
- ○ 30-49
- ○ 50+

9. Do you have a disability?

- ○ No disability declared
- ○ Disability declared

10. What is the nature of your disability?

- ☐ Dyslexia
- ☐ Blind / Partially Sighted
- ☐ Deaf / Hearing Impairment
- ☐ Mobility / Wheelchair user
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ Other

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

[   ]

11. What is your Ethnic Origin?

- ○ White
- ○ Black African
- ○ Black Caribbean
- ○ Black other
- ○ Indian
- ○ Pakistani
- ○ Chinese
- ○ Asian other mixed
- ○ Bangladeshi
- ○ British Asian
- ○ Prefer not to say
- ○ Other

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

12. Please use the space below to make any additional comments with respect to the Careers & Employability Service.

Appendix B Focus Group Script

Introduction part

- Explanation of the purpose of the focus group
- Notification of recording
- The purpose of the focus group explained
- Participants introduced and name tags given out
- Information sheet and consent forms reviewed and signed

Discussion QUESTIONS

1 Section 1: Student Awareness about the Service

- Could you share your experience of how you found out about the careers and employability service at the university?
- Do you think there is enough done to promote the career and employability Service?
- Can you recall where have you seen information (both online and off-line) about services offered by careers department?
- What do you think about the location of the career and employability service? Is it easily accessible?

2 Section 2 – Students use of the service is defined and understood

- Are you aware of the service provision offered by the careers and employability service?
- Do you think that your friends at university are aware of the careers and employability service provision?
- Do you think the careers service provision is appropriate for students who have a disability or who study part-time?

3 Section 3 – Use of Technology for Providing High Quality Service

- Is it easy to locate the Careers and Employability page on the BNU website?
- Would you make the page available at a different location on the BNU website?
- Could you locate the link that leads to MyBucksCareer?
- What tools do you use on MyBucksCareer?
- Do you think that job announcements, message boards, databases, recent changes about the Careers and employability service are updated on a timely basis?

4   **Section 4 – Students are supported in exploring options and making choices**

- What do you consider to be the best way of getting accurate career information? (online, career office, message boards, student discussion groups or other)
- What do you think can be added to the Career Service provision which is currently unavailable?

Appendix C   Gianakos (1995) Career Exploration Behaviour Survey

PsycTESTS

Career Exploration Behaviors Questionnaire
Version Attached: Full Test

Note: Test name created by PsycTESTS

Instrument Type:
Inventory/Questionnaire

Test Format:
The Career Exploration Behaviors Questionnaire utilizes a yes/no format. A career exploration behavior score is derived by summing the number of positive responses; scores can range from 0-12.

Career Exploration Behaviors Questionnaire

Items

Please indicate, by yes/no format, whether you have completed each behavior.

meeting with a career counselor
    Yes   No

seeking assistance at a career planning office
    Yes   No

attending a career planning workshop
    Yes   No

researching various careers
    Yes   No

completing ability tests
    Yes   No

completing interest inventories
    Yes   No

assessing work values
    Yes   No

taking a variety of courses to learn more about various fields
    Yes   No

interviewing/meeting with professionals in the fields of interest
    Yes   No

working/volunteering in positions related to career choices
    Yes   No

generating a list of careers consistent with abilities, interests, and values
    Yes   No

identifying three career areas consistent with interests, abilities, and values that have positive employment outlooks for the 1990s
    Yes   No

Note . A career exploration behavior score was derived by summing the number of positive responses; scores could range from 0 to 12.