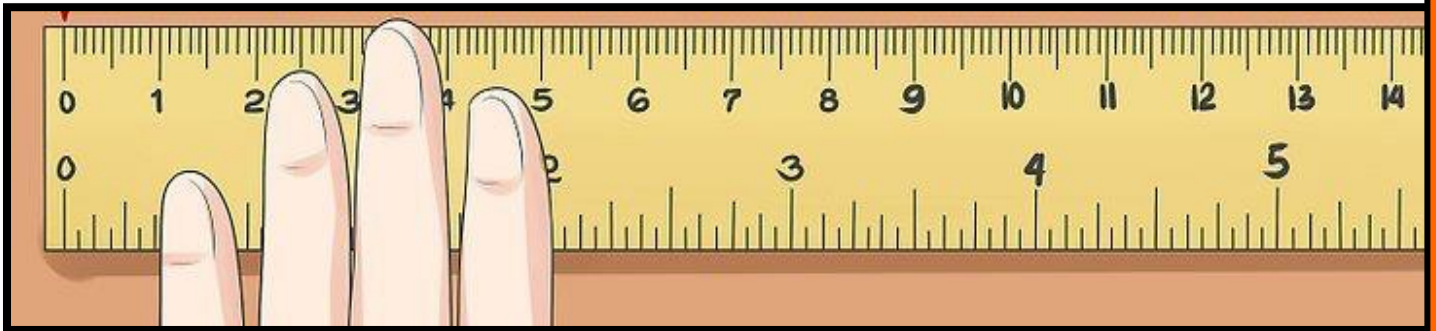# LENGTH MATTERS!

Exploratory research into the impact the shortening of guidance appointments is having on practice.

A HECSU funded Research Project
Author: Ms. Emily Róisín Reid, Senior Careers Consultant, University of Warwick.

With contribution from: David Molyneux and James Goodwin, Senior Careers Consultants, University of Warwick.

[1] Image as adapted from Wikihow (2017). No named author.

ABOUT HECSU

"Established in 1972, the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) is an independent research charity specialising in higher education and graduate employment."

HECSU RESEARCH FUND

The funding is available exclusively to projects led by staff at universities that are HECSU members with up to £5,000 available for each individual project. The research fund has been designed to support careers practitioners' research projects, help disseminate findings and improve practice.

To be eligible for funding, projects undertaken by careers staff should contribute to one or more of the following themes:

1. The advancement of education of prospective students, students and graduates (at all levels) of HECSU members.
2. The career development and progression of students and graduates.
3. The professional practices of careers advisory and other staff.
4. The development of innovative ways of careers or employability-based working.
5. The creation of knowledge about students and graduate career development, employment, destinations and learning

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Róisín Reid is the Senior Careers Consultant for Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, working with students across all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research programmes. She is responsible for integrating 'Careers' into the MB ChB undergraduate medical curriculum, and delivering careers education and guidance through lectures, group work and 1-1 guidance appointments.

She is also a part-time Practitioner-Researcher, with projects ongoing relating to the impact of guidance and widening participation in graduate-entry medicine. She is passionate about the impact careers guidance can have on economic growth, and the importance of the role of career guidance in championing social justice.

Contact:
Emily Róisín Reid
e: e.reid.1@warwick.ac.uk
t: @EmilyRoisinReid

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Background

This project was borne out of a curious concern for the future of guidance. The instigation of new all-powerful regulatory 'Office for Students', twinned with the impending impact of the Teaching Excellence Framework (and it's weighting of performance indicators, such as DLHE/ Graduate Outcomes), are sizeable eruptions to the HE landscape. With HEI strategists rubbing their furrowed brows over executive boardroom-tables across the UK, the pressure and drive to results seems insurmountable. If graduate employment outcomes become the measure of the HEI throne, then 'Employability' becomes the Golden Fleece. 'Employability' is seen (by some) as the panacea to the malaises that plague HE of late such as: 'what do students gain from coming to University?' and 'what is value for money?', without them necessarily questioning: to what extent should it be?

Within this heightened drive to 'graduate outcomes', what of the guidance practitioners: the champions of graduate gateways? Purveyors of pathways, surveyors of horizons? They who remain to the end 'impartial' and 'non-directive' – how does this 'impartiality' square with the challenges facing HEIs in the current marketisation of the sector?

Seemingly, guidance appointments have been made shorter to accommodate the increase in need and demand for the services (Frigerio, 2010; Nijjar, 2009). However, there is a distinct lack of research in existing literature that explores or testifies as to the impact this is having on practice, and indeed, on students.

This project seeks to address this lack through an exploratory study, the aim of which was to develop understanding on the impact this shortening of guidance appointments is having on practice. This was perceived to be a useful addition to the wider guidance community knowledge-base.

Executive Summary

This new research finds that while 'shorter' guidance remains 'effective' – that is to say, has *'outcomes[2]'*– that **'length'** impacts on the *value[3]* of these outcomes. Time constraints put pressure on professionals to do their job to the best of their capability (in a way not dissimilar to the ongoing debate on GP appointment length), and ultimately can compromise their ability to meet student needs as effectively and also, as efficiently, as they would otherwise be able, *had they had more time*. Implications are discussed, with service ramifications explored; e.g. 'needs' not being addressed, leading to 'repeat custom'. The ever-present false dichotomy between student 'wants' and 'needs' is aired here and helpful insights are heard via the voices of the experts. Ultimately, this research has found that students unequivocally value careers guidance, and provides another contribution to the agglomerating body of evidence on impact, effectiveness, and usefulness of guidance. It also equips service managers with another source of evidence to appeal for resource, if this is the 1% difference in students obtaining *their* 'Graduate Outcomes'.

Recommendations are made that more research is conducted into this area, with a view to informing a recommended or standard 'length' for guidance appointments to be set by our professional bodies, which is considered useful to the wider effort when looking at 'professionalising' careers work. More needs to be done around developing the 'expectations' of those accessing our services, both at micro and macro level, in order to establish a new 'social contract' of what one might expect from careers work. This is considered to be timely, given the Gatsby recommendations which are being implemented in schools at present.

A constructivist approach to this study was taken, as it was considered to be the best fit for being able to 'interpret' this phenomenon, choosing a methodology with enough rigour to be able to provide findings that are considered relevant and useful to the community. This research is not a comparative study, and does not attempt, as would the positivist tradition, to give a definitive answer relating to time i.e. the *'right'* or *'optimal' length* of appointment. Instead, it interprets the phenomenon of guidance within the time parameters that exist in context, taking into account the lived experience of those providing & using the service, and the impact 3 months later based on what the student *did* as a result of a guidance interaction. Crucially, this research hears the voice of the qualified career guidance practitioners, valuing the input from their position as 'experts'.

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[2] Defined in Section 2.1

[3] **Value** 'valju:/ noun **1**. the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something." (OED, 2017).

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HE Context

As financial funding models have changed in the HE sector, careers services have become increasingly pressured to prove that they 'add value' (Nijjar, 2009). Recent changes to metrics such as DLHE/ Graduate Outcomes written into TEF finally give careers services the platform they may previously have been lacking, enabling them to 'take on' this challenge. Indeed, for many HEIs, the 'Careers Service' is oft perceived to be the gateway through which students' pass, only to emerge as 'employable' finished articles. Guidance Practitioners graciously accept this purported Midas touch of 'employability', whilst attempting to retain their 'person-centred' Rogerian stance, carefully smuggling guidance into appointments 'under the table': "Before I look at your CV, tell me, where did your 'lifelong interest in investment banking' come from?". Career Guidance Practitioners acknowledge this reconstituted focus on the 'employability agenda' as a gross oversimplification of how humans *actually* choose meaningful work, whilst carefully balancing this focus on outcomes with putting students' *needs* first, encouraging them to develop *their outcome, their chosen career path* through their expertise and skill in delivering action-oriented career guidance.

The increase in tuition fees has resulted in students demanding more 'bang for their buck,' with research suggesting students are demanding more both from their education and careers outcomes (Times HE Student Experience survey, 2016). To cope with this increased demand on careers services, institutions have responded by reducing the length of appointments, with the aim of increasing the reach of the provision: 'less time for more people' (Frigerio, 2010). However, there is currently a lack of sufficient research into the impact this is having on the effectiveness, quality and depth of the guidance appointment. This project seeks to address this need in the evidence-base.

Wider Career Context

A new era dawned on 4th December 2017, with the unveiling of the long-overdue National 'Careers Strategy'. Prior to this, there have been substantial impacts on the career guidance sector nationally: the abolition of the 'Connexions' service, creation of the 'National Careers Service' and devolution of careers support to schools, creating 'patchy careers provision' (Ofsted, 2013) to name a few so far this decade. Although the 'focus' placed on importance of 'Careers' in the recently published strategy comes as sharp relief to the pain felt in the guidance community caused by the previous "reform, accidental injury, or attempted murder" (Roberts, 2013), it acknowledges that "Many schools find it difficult to prioritise careers advice because of a lack of dedicated and trained resource within their school" (UK Government, 2017:23) yet **without setting aside any additional funding for *guidance*.** The evidence-

base relating to the direct impact career guidance has on growth of our economy is agglomerating (*inter alia*: Hooley and Dodd, 2015) and yet there is a mounting accumulation of literature and contested discussion as to the perceived 'professionalism' of Career Guidance Practitioners (*inter alia*: Gough, 2017; Thambar, 2016; Allan and Moffett 2015; Neary, 2014; Hughes, 2013). Guidance practitioners have a significant role in influencing and driving forward the growth our economy needs through championing its innate talent, and assisting individuals into meaningful careers where they add value. This project puts the voice of career practitioners at its heart, and is one other piece of research that adds to the impact appropriately qualified career guidance practitioners can have.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this project is to investigate the impact shortening appointments is having on practice. Across the careers sector in HE, there has been a trend towards shorter guidance appointments, which is just one approach to attempt to manage the increase in demand for services (Frigerio, 2010). While there is a glut of literature regarding models/ theories for guidance, documenting what does (or should/ could) happen in appointments, there is a surprising lack of literature focused around 'length' of appointment, or the impact this has on 'effectiveness'.

Despite the paucity of literature on appointment 'length', snippets of evidence have been gleaned. For example, the seminal research of Bimrose *et al.* saliently identifies that "considerable variations in the length of time taken for a guidance interview were found *and this inevitably influenced what occurred*" (2004: 28, italics added), furthermore, that "the average length of time taken for a guidance interview was 50 minutes" (ibid). A recent informal sample of careers professionals[4] at the AGCAS conference (2017), asked to detail their current standard length of appointment compares starkly to this, with the average appointment length of respondents being just 34.5 minutes. As length has altered this significantly in HE, it seems prudent to investigate what the impacts are on the effectiveness of guidance as an intervention, and crucially what *is gained* or *lost* with the difference in time conditions under which guidance is conducted.[5]

Extant literature has successfully elucidated ways of determining *the effectiveness of guidance,* as opposed to merely satisfaction (*inter alia*: Bimrose *et al.,* 2008; Frigerio, 2010; Hughes *et al.*, 2002). In this piece, 'effectiveness' is surveyed from multiple vantage points, and includes guidance practitioner views, perspectives from students both immediately and at a 3-month follow-up period, and it is also triangulated by what 'outcomes' have occurred as a result (as defined in Section 2.1).

1.1 Research question and aims

The fundamental question that this report seeks to answer is: "What are the impacts of the tendency towards shorter appointments on practice?". The aim of this project is to gain rich research evidence that explores the impact shortening appointments is having on practice and to be able to make recommendations based on the findings, ultimately to benefit the guidance community by having one more piece of evidence to draw upon.

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[4] (sample n=22)
[5] I ran a similar informal sample at the CDI conference which was attended predominantly by those not working in HE (i.e. schools, FE, private, welfare), and the mean appointment length from that sample (n=13) was 45.8 minutes,

The emphasis of this research was to place guidance practitioners' *perceptions* of how effective their interactions are (within short appointments) centre-stage. This was measured against how effective the interaction was *perceived to* be by the students both immediately afterwards, and by what they *do* as a result of the intervention. This is useful, because it is considered that the trained professionals will offer beneficial insight into what they believe is possible to achieve from an appointment, and the extent to which length of appointment enables or inhibits the depth of the 'reading' conducted in a career-counselling interview. It was considered this would contribute a useful dimension to the existing knowledge.

The ambition of the project was to gain qualitative insight into the effectiveness of short guidance, since there is increasing pressure on services to deliver 'shorter' appointments. This project seeks to find out what student and guidance practitioners' perceptions are of the effectiveness of the appointment, and perceptions on appointment length e.g. if additional time was considered useful, for what purpose? It was considered to be useful to review if both parties think similarly, and areas of difference will make for interesting findings and analysis.

1.2 Epistemology and Limitations

The epistemological stance this research has adopted is one of constructivism (further elaborated in section 3.1). The purpose of this project was to gain rich insights of the impacts of time within the phenomenon of 'career guidance appointments'. This was not designed as a comparative study; its purpose is not to be able to give definitive answer relating to time i.e. the *'right'* or *'optimal' length* of appointment i.e. comparing 30 minutes with 45 minutes to see which is *more effective*. It seeks to interpret these complex interactions within their context, constructing meaning from the many different variables at play: the differing wants/needs of students, stages of vocational development etc. As such, the rationale for an exploratory/ investigative study that seeks to interpret the impact of 'time' within the phenomenon of guidance is considered appropriate.

This project is limited in scope to looking at 'central' guidance appointments. At Warwick, there are several different types of appointments available, with some variance in delivery within individual departments. As an additional 'control', this report only looks at 30-minute 'central guidance', which are 'standard' guidance appointments, 30 minutes in length and are bookable directly by students. Students can be from any year of study, at any level (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate taught or research) from any department. Whereas interdepartmental appointments can be tailored more specifically to department needs (i.e. allocated career practitioners with specialist subject-specific

knowledge), central appointments are more 'general' in nature, and therefore rich territory for research exploration. It is acknowledged that this project in inextricably set in Warwick's context, however, the checks and balances put in place throughout this project (e.g. qualified professionals, 'central' appointments) have been implemented in order to assist with findings being still relevant for the wider guidance community.

Incentives were used in the form of Amazon Vouchers in order to increase the response rate of the quantitative survey, and the pool of candidates for the qualitative interviews. It is acknowledged that this could interact with the research, e.g. if some participants took part merely for the 'Amazon Voucher'. However, this effect is considered to be negligible, in line with other similar projects (e.g. Frigerio, 2010).

A substantial volume of useful evidence has been analysed pertaining to emergent thematic concepts, such as: the purpose of guidance, student career stage, guidance practitioners' sense of 'worth', student understanding of 'careers' and 'careers guidance', practitioners modes of practice and guidance in the neoliberalist paradigm. The purpose of this funded project was to conduct research pertaining to the length of appointment, and as such, that is the focus for this report, to the exclusion of other interesting findings. Other additional insights may form the basis of further academic consideration or study.

1.3 Reflexivity

As a practitioner-researcher, it is prudent that the author reflexively acknowledges preconceptions and biases. On writing the proposal for this project, the author was required to conjecture projected outcomes, to which the author hypothesised that, in concordance with existent literature, that guidance would be perceived to be useful by students regardless of length, and that, in concordance with lived experience, guidance practitioners would perceive that guidance would be *more useful* with additional time. Awareness and acknowledgment of these is central to the *crux* of interpretivism, that "the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and that this applies equally to researchers" (Walsham 1993: 5). The author attempts to balance the tightrope between interpreting the phenomenon of guidance through the lens of an experienced practitioner which is a perceived *benefit* to the research, and yet strives to invoke robust data analysis processes to derive valid, meaningful findings (see Section 3.0). Due to the nature of some of the unexpected insights from this project, this balance is thought to have been successful.

2.0 Literature Review

The theoretical basis for this research report rests upon an understanding of what 'career guidance' actually is. Although career guidance can take many forms, and can comprise many activities, the locus of this report is career guidance interviews and as such, 'career guidance' here refers specifically to the guidance interview/ appointment.

Considerable theoretical and academic debate provides rich ground for exploration of what 'constitutes' guidance: any in-depth consideration or discussion of which lies firmly outside of the remit of this report (but for a useful whistle-stop tour of this see, *inter alia:* 'What is Career Guidance?' within Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen, 2017). Definitions of guidance typically explain what *it does* rather than what *it is,* possibly due to the most rudimentary fact that '*what it is'* can be so nebulous. That an individual can theoretically: walk into an appointment with a Guidance Practitioner and have a meaningful discussion about a 'catalogue' of future opportunities (as if all are open to the person equally), expect to be given useful information on these (many of which, won't exist in their current form, or may not yet exist) and ultimately insist that the practitioner be able to 'forecast' or 'presage' their anticipated career destination sounds frightfully reminiscent of a visit to a fortune-teller. Whilst this sounds light-hearted, this encapsulates the incredible complexity of the task at hand for the guidance practitioner, twinned with an individual's perceptions or 'expectations' of what career guidance should be. The fact remains that definitions of 'guidance' are *so* encompassing, because guidance itself *is so*, with Guidance Practitioners needing to have exceptional expertise in not only being able to help individuals navigate these issues, but also make sense of their own contexts and wide variety of constraints acting upon the individual (structural and otherwise). This research in part needs to grapple with this very issue in order to provide any useful exposition on 'appointment length'.

Acknowledgement of this debate however, enables this report to use two broad all-encompassing definitions of guidance, the essence of which encapsulate some of these tensions:

"Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it and making it available when and where people need it." (OECD, 2004: 19) and:

"Career guidance supports individuals and groups to discover more about work, leisure and learning and to consider their place in the world and plan for their futures […] Career guidance can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions. But at its heart it is a purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this". (Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen, 2017:24-25).

What is Career Guidance?

For the purpose of this report, then, career guidance is a 'learning' intervention, which purposefully helps people develop understanding of themselves, systems (educational, labour markets etc.), and make sense of the interrelation and continual, recursive, interaction between themselves and these. The career guidance professional demonstrates their skill and expertise through conducting a contextualised 'discourse analysis'; they actively listen, and continuously interpret responses to skilfully derived questions, highlighting areas of interest to participants. For clients, it can be like having a mirror held to you (and your belief systems, your core values): exposing things which are both known and unknown, but framed by someone who *is* appropriately qualified to contextualise the meanings of these things, particularly in the light of these 'diverse theoretical traditions'. The guidance practitioner reflects back to participants to help them make their own decisions, and crucially, they remain impartial and non-directive when helping participants to make sense of their reflection.

The outcome of career guidance is knowledge creation and construction (possibly even involving deconstruction and reconstruction), which is action-oriented with the intention of initiating change, decisions and forward movement relating to "career" decisions. (Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen, 2017; Patton & McMahon, 2014; OECD, 2014; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). The effectiveness of career guidance (as discussed below) relies heavily upon the skill, expertise and competency of the Guidance Practitioner to be able to facilitate this learning. Guidance Practitioners are expected to adhere to the CDI 'Code of Practice', in addition to upholding their CPD/ maintaining their credential status for the role (suggested minimum qualification level of QCF Level 6). This again, is important in assuring they maintain their skills and expertise.

2.1 Effectiveness

A pioneering longitudinal study laid fundamental flagstones for guidance research, pinning down *what happens in guidance* and *in what ways* guidance may be said to be 'effective' (Bimrose *et al,* 2004). It defined properties of effective guidance, as containing four 'activities' or stages:

"**Building a working alliance:**
Scene setting/orientation. Contracting. Rapport building and maintenance.

Exploration of potential (where are you now?)
Exploration (hard, factual data). Exploration (soft data).

Identification of options and strategies (where do you want to go and how do you get there?)
Information. Advice. Influencing.

Ending and follow through" (Bimrose *et al.*, 2004: 76).

Within these stages, it is useful here to define the 'working alliance', for which there is considerable literature to suggest directly impacts the *effectiveness* of guidance (Whiston *et al.* 2016, Masdonati *et al.* 2009). A working alliance is defined as a "tripartite model made up of (a) goals, (b) tasks, and (c) bonds. The goals refer to the degree to which there is agreement between the client and the counsellor on what is to be done, the tasks denote how the counsellor and client go about accomplishing those goals, and the bonds are the emotional connections or relationships between the client and the counsellor" (Whiston *et al.*, 2016: 592). The working alliance is integral to the development of the 'Psychological Contract', which has its origins in social exchange theory, and outlines the basis of tacit contracts or agreements, including the "mutual *obligations* between that person and another party such as an employer" (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998: 679). This is of vital importance in the development of the working alliance, as it serves to negotiate a student's "subjective beliefs" about what the career guidance entails, and the "mutual obligations and expectations" of both parties for the relationship and associated outcomes (Rousseau, 1995: 10). One might reasonably expect that, for guidance to be effective, these criteria emerge in the working alliance.

'Effectiveness' is defined not only by the sense of perceived 'usefulness' and 'satisfaction' by clients, practitioners and expert witnesses, but the research articulates that *effective* guidance is about:

"Promoting positive outcomes for the client: Understanding explored and challenged, Identification of next steps/future plan, provided direction/focus and advocacy. New awareness of learning and employment opportunities.

Providing access to networks, information and knowledge: Given access to and/or advised of networks and information, being better informed. Given knowledge/information enabling the client to progress.

Encouraging constructive change in the client: Increased self-confidence, positive attitudes, confusion reduced. Developed new skills. Developed understanding, increased awareness and broadened ideas. Motivated, inspired and encouraged.

Providing the client with a positive experience: Opportunity for reflection and an in-depth discussion. Answered questions and/or concerns. Gave reassurance, confirmation or clarification of ideas/plans/progress." (Bimrose *et al.*, 2004: 53-54).

Fundamentally, the result is that "useful guidance affects a *measure of change* in clients" (Bimrose *et al.*, 2004: 113). These measures of 'change' lead to "outcomes", which have been characterised by Hughes *et al.* (2002:16) as ranging from:

"**Immediate outcomes.** *Knowledge/skills*, including: increased awareness of opportunities; ability to action plan; job application skills; enhanced decision-making skills. *Attitudes and motivatio*n, including: increased optimism; reduced anxiety/stress; positivity in relation to work and/or learning. **Intermediate outcomes.** *Search strategies*, including: sustaining of search strategies beyond initial period; exploration of channels of information and progression routes. *Decision-making*, including carrying out action plans; applying for jobs/training/learning; coping with, and planning beyond, initial disappointments" to:

"**Longer-term outcomes (individual)**. *Training and education*, including: taking-up opportunities; successful completion; increased attainment levels. *Employment*, including: re-entering the labour market; change of employment; change of role and/or promotion; increased wages.

Longer-term outcomes (economy). *For employers and learning providers*, including: increased productivity; increased flexibility; enhanced enrolments, retention and achievement. *For the economy*, including: GDP growth; reduction of skills gaps and shortages; lower unemployment and exchequer savings." Hughes *et al.* (2002: 16-17).

Based on the understanding provided through the definition of the terms 'effectiveness' and 'outcomes', the career guidance presented in this study ought to contain examples of these, ultimately to be considered 'effective' here.

2.2 Length

As already identified, the lack of research relating to length of guidance appointments here prevents a systematic literature review. Even a wider net cast into literature from the field of Counselling yields little in the way of results, however, does find that in a study completed by 1263 students from 53 Universities and FE Colleges (a subset of a wider study of 5537 from 65 Universities and colleges) that "16.8% of the 1,263 respondents commented on unhelpful aspects of counselling despite a direct request to do so. The factors identified as unhelpful were largely *characteristics of the service:* […] the length of each session [being] too short (though invariably sessions were the standard 50–60 minutes in length)" (BACP, 2012: 5). Although the nature of counselling is not directly comparable with career guidance due to its therapeutic nature and purpose, it does bear resemblance considering the strong ties to 'Rogerian' principles, and the substantial impact that developmental psychology and counselling approaches had on career guidance theory and practice (Watts, 1996), and therefore this insight into student perception of 'length' gives a useful insight into student behaviour (likely perception of length).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Mode of Enquiry

This research adopted a constructivist stance, and is commensurate with the interpretivist tradition, acknowledging that the researcher is inextricably linked to the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). As reflexive practitioner-researcher, it is entirely appropriate that the author acknowledges her role in this research is not without preconceptions or biases, although every feasible and practicable attempt has been taken to ensure these have not have *undue* bias through inclusion of appropriately rigorous data analysis processes.

3.2 Methods and Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used in order to triangulate the data, using a short quantitative survey to offer reliability and semi-structured interviews to gain validity and a rich exposition of this research. It is acknowledged that this piece is focused to the 'Warwick' context, however it is posited that the rich insights from the qualitative findings remain relevant to those working in field of career guidance field more broadly.

Phase I

In Phase I of the study, a structured quantitative survey[6] was sent by email (via our computer system) to each student who had attended a 'central' careers guidance appointment between September 2016 and December 2016 for voluntary completion. Central (30 minute) appointments were chosen as a control, as length and nature of departmental appointments can vary. The appointments were with experienced, **qualified** guidance practitioners to ensure consistency. A prize draw of Amazon vouchers was offered to bolster uptake. The survey was completed by 16% of students who attended a central career guidance appointment (n=124), and inferences were made through conducting non-parametric tests (using SPSS) to 'benchmark' student *perception* of effectiveness of guidance. Likert Scales were used to assist respondents to rate their perceptions on themes such as: usefulness, what they gained from the appointment and length. It is acknowledged that Likert Scales are highly subjective (Anderson, 2009; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016; Foster *et al.*, 2015). As such, and to enable the reader to more easily interpret the response data, strongly agree and agree responses have been grouped together, as have strongly disagree and disagree.

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[6] A copy of this is supplied in Appendix 1..

Phase II

Phase II of the study was adapted from the methodology previously used in the seminal work of Bimrose *et al.* (2008), which has since been adapted to measure the effectiveness of career guidance in a shorter study (Frigerio, 2010).

A sample of 5 Senior Career Consultants (SCCs) were chosen from those who had volunteered to take part in the research in order to gain a representative sample, and were tasked to undertake 2 x 30 minute career guidance appointments each. All SCCs are experienced and (crucially, here) **qualified** guidance practitioners; a control put in place to ensure consistency in guidance appointments.

A sample of 10 students were chosen from those who had volunteered to take part in the research (responding to an open request via our computer system) in order to gain a more representative sample. Incentives were used to attract a sufficient pool to be able to select a representative sample. The ten chosen students attended career guidance interviews, which were timed to 30 minutes, audio-recorded and transcribed. The guidance appointment was halted at 30 minutes (the door was knocked as a sign to cease the appointment). Immediately following this, **both** the student and Senior Careers Consultant were interviewed in separate rooms to discuss their perceptions of the guidance interaction.

3 months later, the students were interviewed relating to what had *happened* since their guidance appointment in order to account for *effectiveness* in addition to questions pertaining to satisfaction (Bimrose *et al.,* 2008; Frigerio, 2010). These interviews were once more recorded and transcribed. Students knew from outset that the study ended at this point (and the incentive paid subsequent to them completing the second interview). It is acknowledged that this could (theoretically) have influenced what they did in the intervening period, however as in previous studies with similar methodologies, this effect was considered to be negligible.

All four sets of data (guidance appointments themselves, student and guidance practitioner immediate interviews, and 3 month student follow-up interviews) were batched together by random numerical values (i.e. Appointment 1, with Student Interview 1, GP Interview 1 etc.), anonymised and transcribed using independent, external transcribers. The resulting transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo for coding. A constant comparative method of data analysis/ coding was undertaken. It is acknowledged that these processes happen recursively (Fassinger, 2005: 160). Coding was cross-coded, and codes agreed with a separate practitioner-researcher, in order to limit bias from the author and audit the coding process to assure rigour.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

This research project received Ethical Approval from our internal ethical processes (HSSREC) on 20.09.16 and has carefully adhered to all due ethical considerations. All respondents have been anonymised and all attempts have been undertaken to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

There could have been potential ethical issues surrounding the fact that this work explores 'effectiveness', given that some of the participants were colleagues of the author, and the research could have evoked very sensitive information, or created judgement on the part of participants. However, two interviewers (distinct from the author) were employed to interview respondents post-appointment and transcriptions were anonymised, such that the interviewer would not know which interview belonged to which participant. As this is a research project that analyses the service within which the researcher operates on a daily basis, there is a possible risk of conflict (toward the researcher) if the researcher's findings are considered to be controversial/ unwelcome by colleagues. This risk however was deemed to be negligible, as this was not an anticipated outcome of the research. The researcher took responsibility for ensuring that the guidance team received transparent communication about the research project.

4.0 Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Phase I

The purpose of the quantitative survey was to attempt to gain a 'benchmark' for student perceptions pertaining to appointment length and effectiveness of guidance, to be analysed and then used to inform the questions to be asked at qualitative interview stage.

Students need help with their career decision-making

65% of students stated that the reason for their appointment was 'help with career decision-making'; as distinct from support with an application, their CV, specific information, interview support etc. In order to fully understand what 'effective guidance' means to these students, it is useful firstly to note that two thirds of students surveyed recognized that they needed support with their career decision-making.

Why do they come to see us? (students can select more than one, pop. size 124)

Bar chart values: Help with career decision-making: 80; Application support: 29; Information about specific careers: 28; CV review: 18; Interview support: 14; Review of R2 Strengths Profile: 8; Internships/Placements: 3
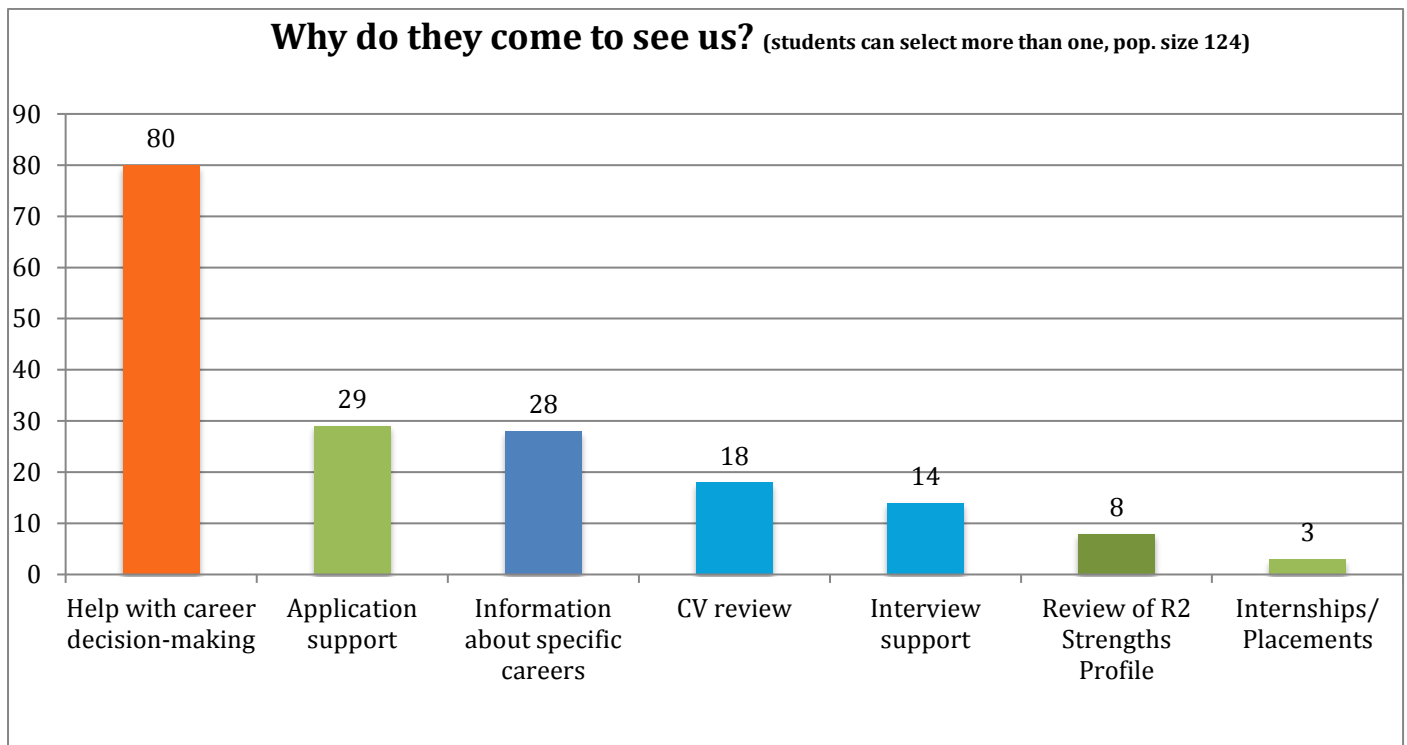
Figure 1. Reasons for booking guidance appointments

This is an important finding, particularly given that autumn term is the busiest time in the academic year, when the majority of student application deadlines fall (e.g. graduate schemes), and one might reasonably assume that appointments might be filled with people seeking application/ CV support. This provides an important snapshot of the transitional moment in which the majority of our students find themselves, hinting at the uncertainty that looms when complicated career decisions await, and the support which seems to be most valued is the one-to-one career guidance.

Length is 'about right'… or is it?

At first glance, 67% of students stated that the appointment length they experienced was 'about right', (compared to the 33% who thought it was too short). Cross referencing this information against the earlier cited report from the BACP (2012), shows that students that thought the appointments were too short accounted for over double the amount who perceived the length of counselling appointments to 'too short'.
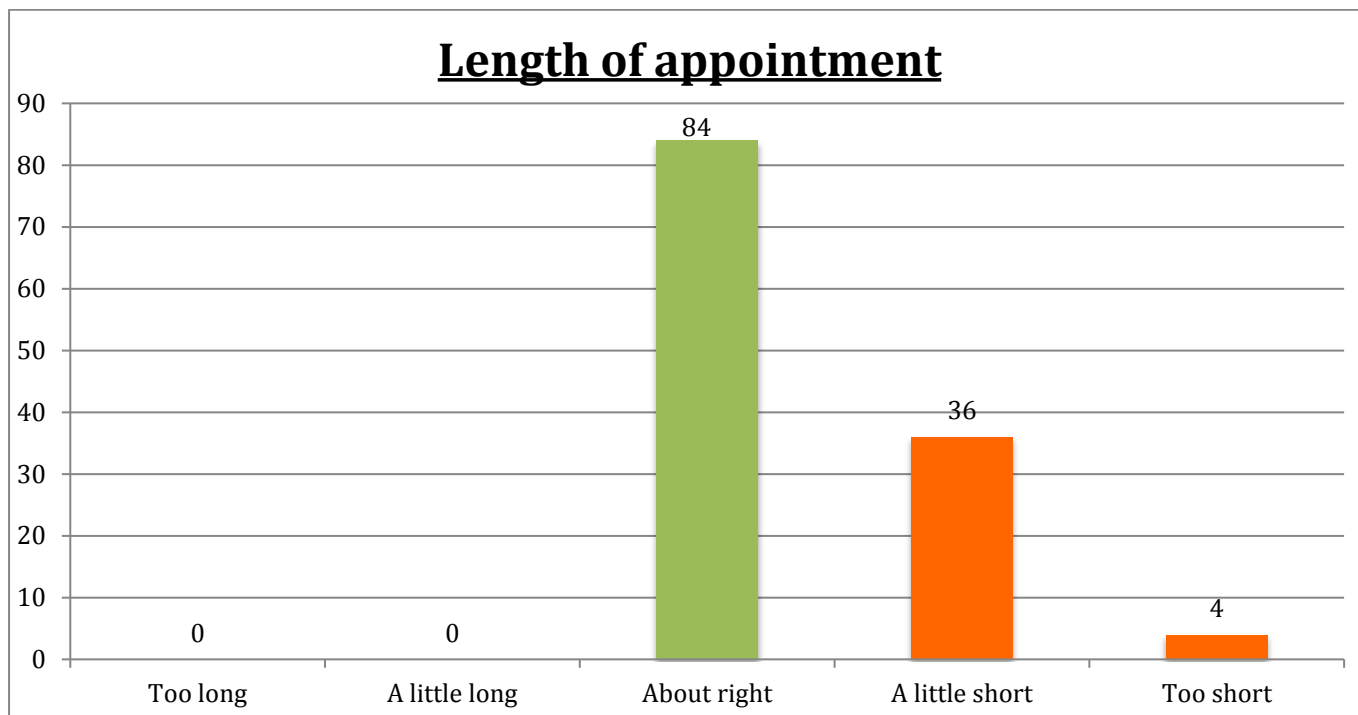
Figure 2. Student perception of length of guidance appointment

However, the qualitative insight gained from the subsequent 'additional information' question revealed that seemingly the 30-minute parameter for guidance was not upheld consistently, and that students reported that longer appointments are 'about right' also. Interestingly, this illustrates that guidance practitioners will extend the appointment when possible (e.g. due to cancellations), and where they think it will have benefit. Where this is the case, students value that additional time:

"The appointment ran over so that I could finish my mock interview. It was very nice of [SCC] to make the appointment longer but perhaps it would be useful to be able to book double appointments on the system - if someone had been booked in right after me we wouldn't have been able to finish my mock interview"

e.g.: "I had a one-hour appointment, which was perfect!"

"I felt the session focused on the topics relevant to me and my stage in career planning. The hour session provided a good balance of advice and the opportunity to talk."

> "I felt an hour length the right balance as an introduction to the service and provided a manageable amount of advice to absorb and reflect on afterwards".

Interestingly, not one student reported that a 30-minute guidance appointment was too long.

Guidance is perceived to be useful, with a range of benefits

Throughout the 40-point questionnaire, students strongly testified to the benefits and usefulness of career guidance (with chi-square parametric tests demonstrating that 'strongly agree' was used over and above what the 'social desirability' expectation might predict). Students strongly agreed/agreed that **guidance was 'useful'** (88%) in addition to reporting benefits such as: **feeling more confident** (74%), **coming away with ideas for career development** (86%) and coming away with **a clear action plan** (81%). Few 'disagreed', but the prevalence of the 'neither agree nor disagree' in these findings are best coupled with an understanding of the 'career stage', or transitional moment in which students choose to attend a guidance appointment, such as found in the qualitative insight of this survey:

> "This has nothing to do with the advisor, I'm just too nervous for life after university".

Students appreciate that guidance comprises a rich exposition of practitioner skill

In the session, 'Guidance' was reported by students to contain a rich and diverse exposition of practitioner skill, with students strongly agreeing/agreeing that techniques used ranged from: exploration of the past (94%), providing learning opportunities (78%), challenging thinking (69%), discussing skills & strengths (77%), and unconditional positive regard/ 'being genuine' (97%). This evidences that guidance is a highly skilled intervention, encompassing the use of a variety of theoretically informed approaches and techniques to help students make sense of their career decision-making.

Those that perceived guidance to be 'too short,' reflected that *less had occurred* within the guidance interview and purported lower scores/ <u>a smaller range of benefits</u> from the guidance. Crucially, students who reported that the appointment was **'too short'** (33%) reported **lower scores** relating to their appointment, therefore reporting that they **<u>gain less</u>** from the appointment. 'Equality of Variances' tests revealed higher mean scores for the range of discussion during and following the session among respondents who were satisfied with the length of their appointment (green). Furthermore, respondents who were satisfied with the length of their appointment were more likely to recommend to a friend or return to the service, than those who perceived the appointment to be too short.

During the appointment:

	Appt Length	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Session_The Careers Consultant took a genuine interest in me	>= 4	40	4.65	.580
	< 4	84	4.73	.499
Session_I talked about my past experience andi nterests	>= 4	40	4.25	1.214
	< 4	84	4.52	.768
Session_We discussed my skills +/ strengths	>= 4	40	4.00	.961
	< 4	84	4.14	.971
Session_We discussed what jobs would match my skills +/ strengths	>= 4	40	3.70	.966
	< 4	84	3.81	1.035
Session_My thinking was challenged	>= 4	40	3.75	1.032
	< 4	84	3.82	1.099
Session_We discussed areas that I could develop (e.g. through work experience)	>= 4	40	3.72	1.025
	< 4	84	4.10	.983
BalanceListen&Talk	>= 4	40	4.03	.862
	< 4	84	4.19	.898
Session_We discussed practical steps I could take to achieve my goals	>= 4	40	4.18	.813
	< 4	84	4.38	.790

Following the appointment:

	Appt Length	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Following appointment_I came away with a clear plan of action/ some next steps to take	>= 4	40	4.13	.853
	< 4	84	4.13	.861
Following appointment_I came away thinking differently	>= 4	40	3.70	1.018
	< 4	84	3.73	1.022
Following appointment_I learnt something about my skills +/ strengths	>= 4	40	3.55	.932
	< 4	84	3.61	1.120
Following appointment_I feel more confident approaching my career decision-making	>= 4	40	4.00	.784
	< 4	84	4.00	.878
Following appointment_I came away with ideas for personal development	>= 4	40	3.90	.900
	< 4	84	3.93	.916
Following appointment_I am going to put what I learnt about myself into practice	>= 4	40	3.95	.815
	< 4	84	3.93	.991
Following appointment_I feel like my career goals are more achievable	>= 4	40	3.70	.791
	< 4	84	3.82	.920
Following appointment_I have improved my knowledge about what I could do after University	>= 4	40	3.68	.971
	< 4	84	3.95	.956
Following appointment_I thought the appointment was useful	>= 4	40	4.45	.783
	< 4	84	4.49	.722

As a result of the appointment:

	Appt Length	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Result of appointment_Recommend the service to a friend	>= 4	40	4.45	.783
	< 4	84	4.50	.736
Result of appointment_Book another guidance appointment	>= 4	40	4.18	1.010
	< 4	84	4.23	.883
Result of appointment_Attend other Student Careers & Skills events e.g. careers fairs	>= 4	40	4.15	.864
	< 4	84	4.30	.773

Figure 3. Table demonstrating students who perceive appointment length to be 'short', report lower mean scores (activity during, following and resulting from appointment) than those perceiving length to be 'about right'.

Taking into account the qualitative insight demonstrating that a considerable proportion of those who were satisfied with the length of their appointment reported that they had *longer than 30 minutes*, it stands to reason that a longer time frame would afford guidance practitioners more opportunity to 'talk

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about past experience,' 'discuss skills & strengths' etc., and the converse to also be the case. It's interesting therefore to note that there appears to be an association between perception of length and satisfaction, with the implication being that those who perceive appointments to be too short, to have received *less* from the guidance, leading them to be (marginally) less satisfied with the service. If extrapolated, this provides a very useful insight into the impact shortening appointments has on students.

In summary, Phase I finds that guidance is 'effective', and provides a rich exposition of practitioner skill, as identified by students relating to what occurred during, feelings after and as a result of the session. The majority of students assesses that the length is 'about right' but actually, for many respondents, guidance was reported to have been in excess of the service standard length of 30 minutes. Participants who perceived the guidance length to be too short reported lower mean scores in response to what occurred in the appointment, their post-session reflections of what they gained from the appointment, and their likelihood to return or recommend the service. The implication for this findings being that those who perceive *less* to occur in their guidance/ what they had gained, being less satisfied that those who had reported the length was 'about right'. Given the aforementioned context, documenting the rise of emphasis on 'student experience', those responsible for designing services may find this information useful.

Phase II Findings

The purpose of Phase II was to attempt to gain an understanding of 'effectiveness' of guidance within the time constraints, and to obtain rich insights into guidance practitioner and student perceptions into length, in order to inform in what ways this is impacting on practice. The interview structure and questions, as well as the data analysis, has been informed by the findings from Phase I.

4.2 Effectiveness of 30 minute timed guidance appointments

Guidance is still 'Effective' within time constraints and has 'Immediate Outcomes'

When mapped against the criteria for determining 'effective guidance' as developed by Bimrose *et al.* (2004) presented in Section 2.1, the evidence demonstrates overwhelmingly that the guidance is 'useful'. Furthermore, Figure 5. demonstrates that all participants cited more than one example of different "immediate outcomes" (Hughes *et al.,* 2002:16) they had gained, from 'increased awareness of opportunities,' to 'motivation', and 'enhanced decision-making skills':

"R: **I wasn't really that sure what to expect**, I did go in without thinking what it's going to be like, but I think coming out of it **I'm more pleased than I thought I would have been**, **more satisfied.**

I: And why was that?
R: Just 'cause I thought it would be very much just a bit of a discussion and then **I would be able to go away from it and look at a few things**, but **I feel a bit more motivated that I thought I would have been, a bit more stimulated about looking into certain roles**". [Student Interview Participant 9]

Guidance also has 'Intermediate Outcomes' (and evidence points to 'Longer-term' ones too)

At the three month follow-up period, there was also evidence that all respondents (n=10) achieved some kinds of intermediate outcome, ranging from: having made decisions relating to their career (n=1), continued with discussed job search strategies (n=3), and even having secured and accepted jobs to commence after graduation (n=3) or internships/ research project (n=3). Those that have secured jobs to start after graduation already seem to demonstrate likelihood for guidance here to have impacted on longer term outcomes (n = 3). Guidance is purported by students to have had a direct influence on these outcomes:

R: My appointment initially, the reason for it was because I had an assessment centre with [company 00:01:54] and I had never attended one before. **I came to get some advice and to be honest with you, the advice was actually really helpful.** […] During the role-play they sometimes ask: 'what are our strengths and how can we improve to be better than our competitors', which is one of the questions that came up. That was one of the most valuable contributions that the careers adviser gave me because [SCC] actually warned me to do research on the company beforehand, that's one of the main things that came up. [SCC] also gave me lots of other advice on what kinds of things I could expect, because of course, in an assessment centre different companies do different things during the assessment centre. You can't know for sure what's going to come up but I absolutely had no idea and [SCC] gave me a few ideas of what could come up so I prepared for them. [SCC] said that there might be a report, so then I had to learn the style of a report in case it came up and made sure that I knew everything about how to write a report.

I: Do you know how it's gone?
R: I was successful actually!

I: That's brilliant news, congratulations!
R: Thank you very much. **Genuinely, the help that I received was very, very helpful. Without it I don't think that I would have been able to do as well as I did**". [Student Interview 5].

If guidance is still effective in shorter appointments, the implication of this finding might suggest that the length of the guidance appointment to be appropriate. However, as this is an exploratory study, the perceptions of students and guidance practitioners (Sections 4.3 - 4.6) shed further light on this issue.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
"Promoting positive outcomes for the client	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Understanding explored and challenged	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Identification of next steps/future plan, provided direction/focus and advocacy	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	6
• New awareness of learning and employment opportunities.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
"Providing access to networks, information and knowledge"	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Given access to and/or advised of networks and information, being better informed.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Given knowledge/information enabling the client to progress.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
"Encouraging constructive change in the client"	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Increased self-confidence, positive attitudes, confusion reduced.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Developed new skills.	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	3
• Developed understanding, increased awareness and broadened ideas.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9
• Motivated, inspired and encouraged.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
"Providing the client with a positive experience"	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Opportunity for reflection and an in-depth discussion.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Answered questions and/or concerns.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10
• Gave reassurance, confirmation or clarification of ideas/plans/progress.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10

Figure 4. Table demonstrating coding matrix, as adapted from criteria used to determine 'effectiveness of guidance' (Bimrose *et al*., 2004: 53-54). [7]

4.3 Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of 30 minute timed guidance appointments

Guidance is 'Unexpectedly' Useful

When asked to comment upon 'how they found the appointment,' students unanimously (n=10) expressed (unprompted) that their timed 30-minute guidance appointments were 'useful'. There is also an interesting 'unexpectedness' by which students report the usefulness of their sessions:

> "R: I feel that it was **a hidden gem**. I've been battling with these decisions for quite some time now and to actually discuss it with someone and get a different perspective was really nice [...] **I didn't realise the extent to which I needed the help**" [Student Interview Participant 1]

> "R: I think **it surpassed my expectations**, in that I literally thought I'd come here and [SCC] would just make assumptions, but [SCC] they wanted to understand everything that I'd done and then knew how to link it to what I could do in the future. [...] it was really personal"

> *I: Was the appointment what you were expecting it to be?*
> R: No. **I expected [SCC] to look at my skills and confirm than I'm right for banking** but [SCC] kind of opened my eyes to –[SCC] told me that my skills weren't just good for banking, to go for other stuff as well and I didn't expect that. [...] [SCC] made me realise that there are other options, so **it was not really what I expected but it was then a surprise in a good way**." [Student Interview Participant 6]

> "R: Well, **I had really no idea what to expect** [...] I'm still a bit anxious, I guess, because you know you're being interviewed, and everything, but **quite positive, I guess, and reassuring, that I'm not on my own trying to figure out these things**" [Student Interview Participant 10]

This sense of 'unexpectedly useful' is characterised somewhat by a distinct lack of, or lack of clarity of expectations, which was common throughout all interviews (n=10).

Lack of expectations could impact on perception of effectiveness

If a student has poor, uninformed, or low expectations of the guidance interaction, or what it may afford them as a result of attending, it makes it harder for them to define what 'useful' looks like. This is particularly magnified by the sheer breadth and scope in potential for what guidance appointments can include, undermined by the lack of explicit social contract for 'what we do' present in other professions

e.g. Teacher, Solicitor, Doctor. By default, they are likely to find guidance to be better than expected, and therefore more likely to perceive that it was 'useful':

I: *Overall, how do you feel the appointment went?*

R: I am, actually, very pleased by how it went. I mean, this is my first appointment, so **I wasn't sure how it would be, but it actually played out a lot better than I thought** it would be. [**SCC] gave me a lot of good advice, actually,** and is also going to send me a few resources by email, and it was really, really, really beneficial.

I: *Brilliant. So, did you feel that this met your expectations?*

R: **I think it beat my expectations**. […] **I thought I would just get similar to what I read online, but it was quite different**, because what you read online is very generic, but, of course, with [SCC] experience in the careers field, and taking my information beforehand on how far I've gone, I think [SCC] was capable of giving me advice more direct to me, rather than just the generic stuff I read online. [Student Interview Participant 5]

In order to better understand these 'expectations', it is useful to turn to the place in the guidance interview where expectations are negotiated, which is at outset, in the 'working alliance' or 'contracting' stage'. Using the tripartite model (Whiston *et al*., 2016) alluded to in Section 2.0 to quantify what constitutes an *effective* 'working alliance', it is found here that in each interaction, the guidance practitioners create effective working alliances, i.e.: goals, tasks, and bonds:

Goals: "Has anyone explained how we try and help students?" "So, what did you want to get out the meeting today?"
Task: "Would it be helpful perhaps to first of all look at the interest in consultancy and how you could perhaps develop a career where the opportunities are?"
Bond: "Before we start looking at that…" "So how are you enjoying the programme?"" Can I ask why did you decide to take this specific course" [Appointment 1].

This is commensurate with 'contracting' as defined by models for guidance, e.g., "the tasks in the clarifying phase are to set the scene, to develop empathy, to hear the story and to make an initial assessment" (Ali and Graham, 1996: 87). However, this standard for 'effective' working alliances/ contracting as purported in models such as this, overlooks crucial elements of the social exchange relationship defined by Psychological Contract literature. It neglects that both practitioner and student have a significant role in defining the 'mutual obligations and expectations' which would provide a better basis for understanding of what *effectiveness* of guidance actually is. This is critical and suggestive

that the current practice for creating a 'working alliance' is deficient in actually establishing and managing expectations of either party. This is evidenced in the research, as here none of the interviews actually explore what student *expectations* are <u>for</u> the session, nor the 'mutual obligations and expectations' of the outcomes <u>from</u> the session.

Therefore, this finding presents that, despite definitive 'effective' working alliances, student expectations continue to be low or ill defined. Postulations of reasons behind this include: 1) a lack of information before the appointment (our booking system at present allows students to book 'guidance appointments' without any pre-reading as to what guidance *actually* entails), although this is mitigated by the fact that some of the students have attended guidance previously and 2) a societal lack of understanding as to what 'careers services do', possibly resulting from what Aldridge defines as the 'Fragmentation of Careers in Schools' (2017). Further research could explore this further.

4.4 Guidance practitioners' perceptions of the effectiveness of 30 minute timed guidance appointments

'Was it good for you?' – Guidance Practitioners perceptions of effectiveness rely on their perception of students 'being satisfied'

Guidance Practitioners, hesitantly at times, conceded that they thought their guidance interactions had been 'effective' within the existing time constraints, that is to say, 'useful' to their students (n=10). However, this 'hesitance' that emerged seems to emphasise that guidance practitioners only perceive appointments to be 'effective' by how they think *students rate* the appointments, and not categorically by their own perception i.e. through their position as experts in understanding their ability to meet the *students' needs*. Examples best highlight this phenomenon:

"I: How did you feel the session went as a guidance intervention?
R: My initial thought was, after a few minutes: 'Oh God, I can't help this person. I don't know anything about visa regulations in Canada.' So when [Student] started to talk about consulting and lack of confidence, there was a bit of relief and I thought: 'Well actually, maybe there's something here that I could help them with.' Then the conversation about making this decision: 'I've got this difficulty because of my family and my career.' As I say, that then became the focus of the discussion. […]
Normally I would ask a student: 'Has it helped?' If they say whatever: 'Yeah, I feel a bit more confident' then, yes, good, it's something a bit more tangible isn't it. But, ***I never got to the point where I asked if it had helped because we ran out of time***. ***I couldn't say I was happy because I don't know whether [student] was happy.***" [SCC Interview 1]

I: How did you feel the session went?

R: ***I thought [student] found it useful but you can just tell can't you***, [student] seemed quite reassured at the end and said that it had been very helpful: 'At least I know that there are some things that I can start doing. I feel like I got a sense of direction.' In that respect, it felt like [student] had moved forward a little bit. [SCC Interview 2]

I: So, how do you feel the session went?

R: ***I think [student] will be heartened by it and more positive***. I think [student] will feel, yes, they've got some suggestions for things that they can do straightaway to get the work experience, and [student] will get some more when they get the follow-up email. [SCC Interview 9]

 "R: I think it went well and I think I was sensitive to how – I tried to ensure that I was checking in to make sure ***they were getting what they wanted***. The areas I don't know whether I could have managed a bit better would have been this idea of what particular job role might suit them and what they might want to do. I think I possibly could have spent more time in that area rather than jumping to information giving about these sites they could go for the research. […] Overall I felt I was happy that ***they had got some of what they came for.*** Could I have spent a bit more time exploring particular areas, could I have picked up a bit more of that unease? Maybe". [SCC Interview 3]

I: How did you feel the session went?

R: I felt it was constructive.

I: Okay. You said, there, that it was quite constructive. What do you think made it constructive?

R: I answered their questions, so ***I knew what they were after***. [SCC Interview 7]

These findings touch on an interesting vein, relating to the intricate balance between student 'wants' and 'needs'. It is interesting to note that guidance practitioners define the effectiveness of their intervention by the extent to which they feel it meets student *wants,* i.e. student satisfaction. This runs in parallel to the notion that qualified, experienced guidance practitioners are best placed to be able to advise on what the student *needs* and provides an interesting counterpoint to the findings presented in Section 4.6 which explores Guidance Practitioners' perceptions on the length of the guidance appointment. Embedded within this finding are concepts pertaining how the careers practitioner perceives their own *worth*, and how they validate their own effectiveness, which are borne out in literature pertaining to professionalism of guidance alluded to in the outset of this report (*inter alia*: Thambar, 2016; Allan and Moffett 2015; Neary, 2014; Hughes, 2013). However, the implication here is that, if guidance practitioners derive their definition of effectiveness solely by measuring 'satisfaction', and attend to student *wants* as their focus when time is under pressure, it is likely to shift the focus of

the appointment to a more short-termist, solution-driven interaction, than perhaps treating the underlying issues that, when addressed, are likely to bring about more long-term gains (cf. Section 4.6). If a GP were to prescribe medications as per patient wants (e.g. pain relief for all), satisfaction would no doubt be very high (no-one would be in pain), but it may not treat the underlying problems which they know exist systemically. It is interesting therefore to note that guidance practitioners feel the need to do so.

4.5 Students' perceptions of the length of the guidance appointment

Students unequivocally would value more time in guidance appointments (specifically for 'wrapping up' the appointment/ action planning).

Perhaps surprisingly, considering that students unanimously found guidance to be effective within current time constraints, when asked about their perceptions on the length of the appointment, all respondents confirmed that they would have valued additional time (n=10):

> R: I felt like if I'd got maybe five minutes more, everything could have been wrapped up. We were just about to wrap up and make a decision but that was partially my fault as well because I was talking about other topics before. If I'd come prepared beforehand then 30 minutes would have been enough. **(Student Interview 1)**

> R: The time goes by so quickly doesn't it […] I guess hoping that something would click into place or that [SCC] would say something and I would be like, "Oh yes, that's it." […] Because this was my first appointment, I thought that I definitely could have spent longer talking about all of it **(Student Interview 4)**

> *I: Okay. So, thinking about the appointment you've had today. So, you had 30 minutes for today's appointment. How did you find the length of the appointment?*
> R: Maybe because I had a lot of questions, I thought it would be very short. Of the, maybe, six points I had to go through, we did maybe two and a half. **(Student Interview 7)**

> R: I mean, it was cut off. We were still talking, but I think we were coming to a close anyway, so it was just a matter of, maybe, an extra couple of minutes, or something. **(Student Interview 10)**

Several students (n=6) cited that they believed they would benefit from additional time at the end dedicated to the 'wrapping up' of the appointment, or 'action planning' for what was the come next. As SCCs were aware that the appointment time was timed to 30 minutes, as consistent within current

service delivery parameters, so it is not considered likely that the fact that the guidance was being 'timed' had an undue influence on this phenomenon. As explored in Section 2.0, the effective 'ending' of the guidance appointment is pivotal in contracting what the 'outcomes' are to be from the guidance appointment, and creating ownership of future plans. When asked in their post-guidance interview, as to their commitment levels to action on a scale of 1-10 (1 being low commitment, 10 being absolutely committed, nothing standing in the way), the mean score for commitment to action of the 10 respondents was extremely high ($\bar{x}$ = 8.5). However, when compared at the 3-month interval, only 5 respondents actually completed actions they had committed to originally; although interestingly, the mean commitment level of just those students was slightly higher ($\bar{x}$ = 8.9). The implication of this finding is that, potentially, the length of appointment is compromising one of the most important parts of the guidance appointment, where commitment to action is challenged, tested, clarified and agreed. Furthermore, this makes for an interesting comparison with the following perceptions of career guidance practitioners on length.

4.6 Guidance practitioners' perceptions of the length of the guidance appointment

Guidance Practitioners state that with additional time, they could have met 'underlying needs' rather than merely the 'presenting issues'

The data from this report suggests that guidance practitioners perceived that additional length would have been beneficial in these interactions (n=10), and exposes some of the 'unmet needs' that occur as a result of time constraints being imposed upon guidance appointments:

"It could have continued. We were just getting to the point where they said to me: 'What should I do? Should I marry my girlfriend or should I get my career in Canada?' Then it was kind of the knock on the door". **(SCC Interview 1).**

"Not long enough, with the way it was. […] Had they not gone off and asked about something else at the end, it was long enough. I felt that that was more important, that issue they'd got, than going to the assessment centres". **(SCC Interview 5).**

"Exploring how someone makes their ultimate decisions about career options in half an hour is a tall order […] I was sensing something around confidence, and I was interested that they'd swapped degrees, but I had no opportunity to really explore that." **(SCC Interview 10).**

Comparing these findings to Section 4.4 reveals that Guidance Practitioners do gain a strong sense of what the students 'needs' are within the appointment, and that actually by the nature of addressing students' 'presenting problem', which is often a fundamental part of rapport building, that the 'needs' emerge later into the appointment. In these three cases, uncertainty loomed even at the end of the 3 month period: Student 1 received job offers but hinted at uncertainty about which to accept, Student 5 came back to the service again to continue the discussion from their last appointment, and Student 10 undertook different plans to those discussed in the guidance appointment, and expressed a sense of still needing to explore "where I want to go". The implication is that, with more time, guidance practitioners could have addressed more of these 'needs' within the current appointment, reducing the likelihood of students returning to the service, and ultimately offering a better 'service' to the students. Guidance Practitioners were clear on what they would explore if given more time in these interactions, compared with the students in Section 4.5, who are less likely to be aware of their 'needs' than someone with appropriate expertise who are trained & experienced in identifying and exploring these. This again reinforces the importance of the point that guidance practitioners are best placed to be able to identify underlying student needs, and yet time impacts on their ability on being able to address them.

Summary

In summary, these findings present that students unanimously perceive that careers guidance is effective, which is consistent with existing literature. The analysis and discussion of the data here reflects that guidance is 'useful' as it possesses properties such as: provision of information, advice, broadening ideas and offering a chance to reflect. Guidance has a series of 'outcomes', from more immediate outcomes, such as a revised job search strategy and increased motivation and confidence, to intermediate and longer-term outcomes of applying for and securing work.

However that ultimately, there are *unmet student needs* left unresolved, which guidance practitioners identify they could have explored had they had more time. When students become more aware of their 'needs' through the guidance appointment, they become more likely to return to the service (which might result in false economy, were guidance appointments slightly longer in the first instance). Students have low or ill-defined expectations on coming into the guidance appointments, and again this can inform their perception of the effectiveness of guidance.

5.0 Conclusions

This research has examined the impact the shortening of guidance appointment is having on practice, and has found that whilst guidance is still 'effective' within given time constraints (i.e. has a range of 'outcomes'), that the time constraints do impact on its *value,* i.e. *how effective* it is. Summary conclusions are as follows:

5.1   Students want guidance, strongly value it, and receive benefits from it

The findings from this report consistently show that students expressly want and value the help and support offered by career guidance appointments, and moreover, that they appreciate that guidance comprises a rich exposition of practitioner skill, covering in a short time an outstanding array of topics, diagnostics, information and advice sharing, in addition to provision of non-directive guidance. This is a timely reminder for the guidance community that, within the current climate and push for tangible 'employability' results, that **the transitional moment in time that students seem to need guidance is a very uncertain time *for them***, and that ultimately 'Graduate Outcomes' means little for the students in that moment. For them, getting 'a job[8]' is a given expectation, but making sense of their transition into labour markets from their current standpoint is often (even for those who have a firm sense of 'what they want to do') a daunting and demanding task. That, what they value is someone independent with whom to discuss and shape their (sometimes difficult) career decisions. This research highlights, through examples, some of the big decisions that students have made through the help of guidance practitioners, and therefore this serves as a piece of evidence to remind guidance practitioners that the work they do is important, valid and valued, even within given time constraints. Furthermore, it is important that in the move towards 'Graduate Outcomes' at 15 months, and in the context of current focus on 'Student Experience', that it is even more important that guidance remains a fundamental part of what is offered.

5.2   Impacts of the shortening of appointment length are that students: receive fewer benefits from guidance, and have less time to develop their action plans for next steps

Both guidance practitioners and students alike confirmed that additional time would have added value, and that whilst appointments had a range from softer to harder 'outcomes', that more time could have firmed up students commitment to the actions they agreed to take, and reduced the likelihood of at least some of the students returning; the latter having obvious resource implications. Guidance Practitioners, as experts, know what student needs have not been addressed, with many offering students the chance

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[8] Or going on to further education, ultimately with the intention thereafter of getting a job.

to come back to explore these further, which again, also has implications for efficiency of resourcing. The fact that not a single student in the study wanted 'less time' for guidance remains significant, and certainly attests to the length of guidance not being any *shorter*.

That the 33% of students from Phase I of the study who perceived guidance to be 'too short,' reflected that *less had occurred* within the guidance interview and purported lower scores/ <u>a smaller range of benefits</u> from the guidance is also a significant finding, and supports the conclusion that students *gain less* from having less time. This is considered to be useful information for service managers to note, when making a trade-off that comes with trying to resource supply/demand. This invites consideration into where 'career guidance' appointments sit as part of a whole service offering, and this information is thought to be particularly useful to consider when looking at bids for resource, wider concerns about equity of career guidance (as part of the 'Student Experience') and the principles of role that career guidance can play in advancing the cause of Social Justice as alluded to in Section 75 of the new Careers Strategy.

This is not dissimilar to the ongoing debate around GP appointment length. The challenge of the expert GP diagnosing the increasingly complex health concerns of populations with substantial co-morbidities in tight time constraints in some ways mirrors the challenges that face the career guidance practitioner, who is often tasked in a one-off, time-pressured appointment, to help students make sense of themselves and their future (in the dawn of the digital era, AI, the increase of the 'knowledge sector' and tightening of the hour-glass economy). Just as GPs are now looking at new, creative approaches to meeting patients' needs, so should we, as a guidance community, start looking critically at creative approaches to meeting students' needs.

5.3   <u>Students have low, or ill-defined expectations about what 'career guidance' is</u>

There is some work to be done by individual institutions, and nationally among policy-makers and lobbying forces, (in addition to practitioners themselves) around **what individuals can expect from career guidance** interviews, as students have low or ill-defined expectations as to what 'career guidance is'. Undertaking 'pre-contracting' work, either through information supplied in advance of interviews, through websites, and through raising national standards on 'what one can expect from career guidance' could help students prepare for guidance interviews in order to get the best from them, and also therefore impact on their sense of its effectiveness. This is important for service managers and policy makers alike, given the continual strain and pressure of resources that career guidance has had to endure, and should ensure that the best 'value' is being had by these appointments for all stakeholders.

5.4 Guidance Practitioners are highly skilled 'experts', who are qualified to make a judgement on student needs, and yet still judge their own ability by perception of student satisfaction

This research project finds that Guidance Practitioners demonstrate an exceptional diversity and range of skill, and are able to ascertain students career *needs* (as distinct from their 'wants') and do their best to attempt to resolve these. This evidences that career guidance work is a highly-skilled profession, and the theoretical underpinning of these qualified career guidance practitioners is evident in the exposition of their skill during the guidance appointments.

If guidance practitioners are limited by time in addressing students' needs, this strongly impacts on the 'value' students find in their guidance appointments – as fundamentally, it is the guidance practitioners, the experts, who are able to tell, rather than untrained persons who 'don't know, what they don't know'. The risk is, that by centreing the guidance appointments around meeting 'student wants' then the purpose of the guidance practitioner being trained and qualified to such a level of understanding becomes redundant, as that knowledge and skill is underplayed at best, or ignored/ unused at worst.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1. Services must continue to invest in Career Guidance provision

This research has found that Career Guidance provision has a range of positive outcomes on students pertaining to their future career, and as such, it is recommended that services continue to invest in Career Guidance as one intervention to help students progress towards their destination. This is particularly salient in the current move toward Graduate Outcomes at 15 months, asking students for the first time questions pertaining to their job relating to 'their career path' (e.g. 'My current work fits with my future plans', 'My current work is meaningful and important to me').

6.2. Professional Bodies should provide guidance on the standard length of guidance appointments

Currently, in the UK, there is no agreed or suggested standard 'appointment length' for career guidance, neither by way of 'minimum length requirement' by which an appointment can be said to be 'career guidance' nor an 'upper bound' for length. This is a really important point, contributing to the overall debate on the 'Professionalism of Career Guidance'. In Counselling, there remains a general consensus across services that the standard length of counselling interview is 50 minutes, stemming originally from Freud's '50-minute hour' (Shapiro, 2000). Different services have attempted to use different models in an attempt to better meet the rising needs for services, e.g. IAPT with 30 or 45 minute 'CBT' model, although this is categorically stated and deviates from the accepted 'norm'. However, for the Careers Profession, without having an explicit suggested 'standard' length for guidance appointments, there is no way of knowing (either for careers professionals or service-users themselves) or assuring the quality of the provision of what is encountered. Therefore, professional bodies (CDI and AGCAS) ought to reflect on what this might be for the profession. Further research in this area, perhaps an RCT pertaining to appointment length, may help in arriving at a consensus of what that might be.

6.3. Further research should be conducted into the 'expectations' of service-users, and consideration given to how developing these might inform practice at local and national levels

This research project finds that students' perceptions of effectiveness of guidance are likely impacted by their lack of expectations in advance of their appointment. This plays out both at local level and nationally, with the distinct lack of social contract about 'what career guidance is' which then informs low expectations through this lack of prior information. Further research into this area would be welcomed, particularly in relation to the 'exploration of expectations in the contracting or working alliance phase'. This is particularly important in the light of the role that career guidance can have on improving social justice. This report recommends, therefore, that at local level (individual institution)

consideration is taken relating to how it might inform student expectations, and look at how this can be built into the 'contracting' (working alliance) stage, so that these are explored. At national level, this might look like our Professional Bodies developing some educational/ marketing campaigns relating to 'what career guidance is', 'what a career guidance practitioner is' and 'what one can expect from a guidance appointment' with the express purpose of challenging outmoded perceptions about career guidance. If individuals came to the service with clearer expectations about what one might reasonably expect from a guidance appointment, it stands to reason they might benefit *more* from guidance, therefore it is recommended that further research looks into this area. This recommendation also rests upon the assumption that our Professional Bodies can agree on such definitions.

It is also important here to note that the career guidance interviews in this study followed a similar 'model' (one could surmise, a 'Warwick approach' to career guidance, and possibly due to the instructions for the guidance practitioners to do a 'standard' 30 minute guidance interview). To echo findings from the longitudinal study by Bimrose *et al. "*There was little evidence that practitioners were using new techniques or theories in practice" (2004: 113), for e.g. 'life-stage drawings', 'narrative approaches' etc. (And arguably here, that was not the locus of this project). When making the above recommendation however, it is prudent to acknowledge that there is room for expression of creative approaches to guidance. Further, that thought should be taken by practitioners and services as to how we might raise expectations of the kinds of interventions which are possible within a guidance appointment, as it is prudent that we look more inclusively and creatively at what this might mean for our practice.

6.4. Pre-contracting (micro and macro scales) could help in clarifying 'wants' and 'needs', with pre-work having been done before the guidance intervention

Further to the endeavour to explore expectations, it is recommended that services who currently do not engage students in 'pre-contracting' work explore this area. It is recommended that students are informed in advance about the nature of 'guidance', but that a dialogue is instated that asks students to supply information (e.g. CV, list of interests, potentially even completed workbooks/ life-design drawings, career-readiness 'stage' etc.) in advance of the guidance appointment. This serves to get students to reflect in advance of the appointment, thus preparing to get to the 'nub' of the issue sooner in the guidance appointment. This could supply guidance practitioners with a 'scaffold' to build from during the 'rapport building' stage, and could serve to reduce the amount of time the guidance practitioners need to probe into pervading issues.

Other triage models could also be explored, with the potential to offer students the chance to vary their appointment length depending on how they view their own stage, sharing what questions they might have in advance, with the ability to request additional time (when mapped against additional criteria). Or, the opportunity for a shorter 'follow-up' appointment. Again, further research into this area would be beneficial, particularly relating to the 'relationship' between service and service-user, and if this is to be a 'one off event' or part of something more long-term (i.e. as students *expect* to have more of a 'relationship' with the service).

6.5. Profiling of the profession – to come back to what we are trained to do, and get that to be better understood

Finally, it is recommended that further attention be dedicated to the cause of raising the profile of career guidance as a profession. There has been substantial and significant work conducted over the past few years pertaining to this aim, however it is important that efforts are redoubled in getting recognition for what is ostensibly, for all other purposes, a profession. Creating a better 'social contract' across wider society (in the UK) is imperative to changing the somewhat outmoded, if not tarnished, reputation of the careers sector. This needs to happen at all levels: from individual careers practitioners (and the way we profile ourselves), institution / service level and fundamentally at national level. Consideration might include how we, as a profession, reach out to challenge outdated perceptions and create a better narrative about what we do. Further research and investigation into this critical area is recommended.

The CDI have put phenomenal legwork into developing the Register for Qualified Career Practitioners which is beginning to be recognised nationally. It states that anyone responsible for providing or managing a Careers Portfolio (including those who are in acting in career leadership or management roles) absolutely must be qualified to at least QCF Level 6– failure to do so undermines the critical efforts made on the importance of credentialing. This absolutely must be upheld, and those recruiting for posts or designing new delivery models must reflect on and action this. Through these endeavours to 'professionalise' careers work, guidance practitioners will be able to take on the mantle in their role as experts, and given the ability to practice accordingly.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Phase I Questionnaire

Questionnaire
-Informed consent & Confidentiality info sheet-

Q1. Demographics (Page 1 - in box).
Drop down. Residential status: UK/EU, International
down. Year of study (1-4) nature of study (UG, PGT, PGR)
Drop down. Is this your first visit to SCS? (Y/N)
Drop down/ multiple choice. If yes, please select (JSA apt, Guidance apt, Workshop, Careers Fair)

*   *   *   *   *

Q2. Which of the following best describe(s) the reason for your visit? (tick one, multiple, or please state other).
A: CV review
A: Application support
A: Interview support
A: Help with career decision-making
A: Specific career information
A: Advice (general or specific)
A: Other (please specify) comments box

*   *   *   *   *

Please rate the following statements on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
                                   (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither A nor D, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
Q3. Before the appointment:

A: I found the booking system easy to use
A: I knew how to find SCS

A: I found the location easy to get to
A: I felt welcomed on arrival
A: I had prepared in advance
A: I had a sense of what I wanted to get out of the appointment
Free type box for comments: Please feel free to give us any additional information

*   *   *   *   *

Please rate the following statements on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
                                        (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither A nor D, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Q4. During the session:

A: My Senior Careers Consultant listened to me and seemed to take a genuine interest
A: I talked a lot about me, my past, my interests
A: We discussed my skills +/ strengths
A: We discussed what jobs would match my skills +/ strengths
A: My thinking was challenged
A: We discussed areas that I could develop (e.g. through work experience)
A: I felt I did all the talking
A: We discussed practical steps I could take to achieve my goals

Free type box for comments: Please feel free to give us any additional information

*   *   *   *   *

Please rate the following statements on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
                                        (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither A nor D, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Q5. Directly following this appointment:
A: I thought the appointment was useful
A: I came away with a clear plan of action/ some next steps to take
A: I came away thinking/ feeling differently
A: I learnt something about my skills +/ strengths
A: I feel more confident approaching my career decision-making
A: I came away with ideas for personal development

A: I am going to put what I learnt about myself into practice
A: I feel like my career goals are more achievable
A: I have improved my knowledge about my target occupation

Free type box for comments: Please feel free to give us any additional information

*   *   *   *   *

Please rate the following statements on a scale of too short to too long (Too short, a little short, about right, a little long, too long)
Q6. The appointment length is

Free type box for comments: Please feel free to give us any additional information

*   *   *   *   *

Please rate the following statements on a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
                                        (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither A nor D, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
Q7. As a result of this appointment, I would:
A: Recommend the service to a friend
A: Return to the service in the future for a guidance appointment
A: Attend other SCS events, e.g. careers fairs

Free type box for comments: Please feel free to give us any additional information

*   *   *   *   *

Q8. Optional question. Feel free to give us some feedback to help us improve what we do. What you think we do well/ not so well/ could improve?
Free type box for comments

*   *   *   *   *

Q9. Please input your email address here if you want to be entered for our prize draw to win some amazon vouchers.
Box for email address.

Project title: "Research into the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students".

Combined Information Sheet and Consent Form

Thank you for having the interest and taking the time to read this sheet. I would like to invite you to take part in my research focusing on the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students.

Firstly it is important that you know why the research is being carried out, and what the study will involve for you should you decide to take part.

Background

The study will explore:

Students' and practitioner's perceptions of 30 minutes guidance appointments
If more time could have impacted on the appointment, and if so, in what way?
Has the service met the perceived needs of the student

The research will assist in exploring students' and practitioners' perceptions and also in ascertaining how the careers service in University of Warwick can best assist these students. The outcomes of the study will also contribute to the development of career guidance practice.

What is involved in taking part?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will consist of a set of open and closed questions. This should not take more than 5 minutes to complete. You will be entered into a price draw to win some amazon vouchers as a thank you for your time in completing the survey.

I will take responsibility to safeguard your mental and physical well-being and personal privacy whilst participating in the survey. The information you disclose will be treated as confidential unless there are potential safety concerns for yourself or others.

How were you selected?

All students who attend a central guidance appointment in autumn term are invited to participate.

What happens to the information you give?

All the information will be treated confidentially. At the end of the study, the questionnaires, recordings and consent forms will be stored for 10 years in the University of Warwick Student Careers and Skills Service. It will be destroyed after 10 years. I may also make a further copy available to the University for public use.

A copy of my research project can be made available for you to view. Please contact me if you would like to do this. Some of the data you supply may later appear in additional publications such as academic articles, it may be used to inform policy, or may be used in order to positively influence the service we provide here at Warwick. If this is the case, all such results will be strictly anonymous.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You may contact me, Emily Róisín Reid at any time on: 02476 575 824 or at e.reid.1@warwick.ac.uk

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University, and allowed to proceed.

I confirm that I will keep the research under review, and report to the University on any ethical problems or risks arising which were not at first apparent.

Complaints

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance, Research & Impact Services, University House, University of Warwick Coventry, CV4 8UW.

More information:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/complaints_procedure/

Consent Form

I have read and received from Emily Róisín Reid the above Information Sheet relating to the following project: "'Research into the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students".

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment to any services I may be receiving or may receive in the future.

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University and has been allowed to proceed.

I have received a copy of this combined Consent Form and Information Sheet.

I confirm that my participation shall not cause me abnormal anxiety, stress or harm or reveal issues directly relating to the harm of others.

I confirm that I do not occupy any of the following categories (child under 16 years of age; someone with learning difficulties; someone whose capacity to consent may be impaired; or someone who is in a special relationship to the Researcher).

By completing this survey electronically, you are giving your informed consent to the above. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. In this event, please contact e.reid.1@warwick.ac.uk.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Project title: "Research into the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students".

Combined Information Sheet and Consent Form

Thank you for having the interest and taking the time to read this sheet.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research focusing on the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students.

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The research will assist in exploring students' and practitioners' perceptions and also in ascertaining how the careers service in University of Warwick can best assist these students. The outcomes of the study will also contribute to the development of career guidance practice.

What is involved in taking part?

You will attend the careers appointment you have booked via the events page, which will be a normal careers guidance appointment, and will last 30 minutes. Immediately afterwards, you will be invited to participate in a short face-to-face interview (10-15 minutes, or longer depending on how much you want to say) relating to your perceptions of the appointment. Roughly 3 months after the initial appointment, you will receive a short phone-call (10-15 minutes) about any careers activity undertaken since that appointment. On completion of the second interview, you will be given a £20 amazon voucher, by way of thanks for your time in completing the interviews.

The interviews will take place in a consultation room in University House, and these will be recorded (audio only). This recording will be transcribed and anonymised, with all respondents being assigned numbers to protect their anonymity, and there will be no information on the tape that will identify you. You can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time or for the interview to stop, without giving a reason.

I will take responsibility to safeguard your mental and physical well-being and personal privacy whilst participating in the survey. The information you disclose will be treated as confidential unless there are potential safety concerns for yourself or others.

How were you selected?

You will have seen this page by booking into a careers research page on through our 'myadvantage' page. Emily Reid, the Chief Researcher, will make contact with you to discuss the research before you participate, to ensure that you fully understand what is being asked of you, and to ensure you are making informed consent.

What happens to the information you give?

All the information will be treated confidentially and will remain anonymous. At the end of the study, recordings and data will be stored for 10 years in the University of Warwick Student Careers and Skills Service. It will be destroyed after 10 years. I may also make a further copy available to the University for public use.

A copy of my research project can be made available for you to view. Please contact me if you would like to do this. Some of the data you supply may later appear in additional publications such as academic articles, it may be used to inform policy, or may be used in order to positively influence the service we provide here at Warwick. If this is the case, all such results will be strictly anonymous.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You may contact me, Emily Róisín Reid at any time on: 02476 575 824 or at e.reid.1@warwick.ac.uk

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University, and allowed to proceed.

I confirm that I will keep the research under review, and report to the University on any ethical problems or risks arising which were not at first apparent.

Complaints

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance, Research & Impact Services, University House, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 8UW. Tel: 02476 522746

Email: Jane.Prewett@warwick.ac.uk / E.C.Dight@warwick.ac.uk

More information:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/complaints_procedure/

Consent Form

I have read and received from Emily Róisín Reid the above Information Sheet relating to the following project: "'Research into the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students".

I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.

I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment to any services I may be receiving or may receive in the future.

This project has been subject to ethical review, according to the procedures specified by the University and has been allowed to proceed.

I have received a copy of this combined Consent Form and Information Sheet.

I confirm that my participation shall not cause me abnormal anxiety, stress or harm or reveal issues directly relating to the harm of others.

I confirm that I do not occupy any of the following categories (child under 16 years of age; someone with learning difficulties; someone whose capacity to consent may be impaired; or someone who is in a special relationship to the Researcher).

By completing this survey electronically, you are giving your informed consent to the above. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. In this event, please contact e.reid.1@warwick.ac.uk.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Project title: "Research into the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students".

Combined Information Sheet and Consent Form

Thank you for having the interest and taking the time to read this sheet.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research focusing on the effect the shortening of career appointments is having on practice as perceived by practitioners and students.

Firstly it is important that you know why the research is being carried out, and what the study will involve for you should you decide to take part.

Background

The study will explore:

Students' and guidance practitioner's perceptions of 30 minutes guidance appointments

If more time could have impacted on the appointment, and if so, in what way?

Has the service met the perceived needs of the student in this given time?

The research will assist in exploring students' and practitioners' perceptions and also in ascertaining how the careers service in University of Warwick can best assist these students relating to the length of guidance appointments. The outcomes of the study may also contribute to the development of career guidance practice more generally, relating specifically to the length of appointments.

What is involved in taking part?

You will complete a careers appointment that has been booked via the events page, which will be a normal careers guidance appointment, and will last 30 minutes. Immediately afterwards, you will be invited to participate in a short face-to-face interview (10-15 minutes, or longer depending on how much you want to say) relating to your perceptions of the appointment.

The interviews will take place in a consultation room in University House, and these will be recorded (audio only). These recordings will be anonymised by an independent party, transcribed by someone external to the University, with all respondents being assigned numbers to protect their anonymity. There will be no information on the tape that will identify you. You can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time or for the interview to stop, without giving a reason.

I will take responsibility to safeguard your mental and physical well-being and personal privacy whilst participating in the survey. The information you disclose will be treated as confidential unless there are potential safety concerns for yourself or others.

How were you selected?

All members of the guidance team have been invited to participate. Emily Reid, the Chief Researcher, will make contact with you to discuss the research before you participate, to ensure that you fully understand what is being asked of you, and to ensure you are making informed consent.

What happens to the information you give?

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Name:
Signed:
Date:

Semi-structured Interview – Students

- What was your original reason for booking this career appointment? (What were you expecting to happen in the appointment?)

- What kinds of things did you discuss in the appointment?

    o Probe: what kinds of questions did s/he ask you? How did the consultant make you feel?

- How do you feel the session went?
    o Probe: if it was good, what made it good? (Later: do you feel this met your expectations? …)

- How did you find the length of the appointment?

    o Probe: if short, why? If OK, why? If it had been longer, what could have happened that didn't within the designated time?

- What do you think you'll do as a result of the session?

    o Probe: what specifically/ when etc.?

- How committed are you to achieving this on a scale of 1-10 (10 being completely, 1 being not at all).

    o If 7,8,9 or 10 – that's pretty high, is there a anything that could get in the way?

    o If 4,5,6 – that's interesting, what would make you an 8?

    o If 2 or 3 - that's interesting, so you have some commitment, what things do you think are preventing you from achieving this?

    o If 1 – that's interesting, so you're not at all committed to achieving this, could you perhaps tell me more about why that might be?

Semi-structured Interview – SCCs

*Interviewer to emphasise- this is about **Your** perceptions of the appointment, as the Expert, and trained professional in this intervention.*

- (Relating to the appointment):
  What did the student want to talk about today?

- What did you discuss in the appointment?

  - Probe: what kinds of questions did you ask? What (if any) models did you follow in your practice today? Is there anything you didn't ask?

- How do you feel the session went?

  - Probe: if well, what made it go well? If you feel it could have gone better, what might have made it go better? (Later: do you feel this met their expectations?)

- How did you find the length of the appointment?

  - Probe: if short, why? If OK, why?

- If you could have had more time with the student, is there anything you would have done differently?

  - Probe: How/ what exactly? What do you think that would have achieved?

- Do you think you did anything different than you would normally, as a result of this session being recorded?

  - Probe: if short, why? If OK, why?

- Were you happy with the appointment?

  - Probe: if so, why/ why not?