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Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education

Report to HEFCE by Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University

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Executive summary

1. This study's aims were to carry out research into understanding the needs of intended users (primarily prospective students but with some focus on their advisors and employers) of public information on higher education (HE). The work focussed on England, but also took into account Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland where relevant. This report addresses:

   - What information a range of users want and need to support decisions about going on to higher education.

   - The best mode(s) of delivery to get information to the intended audiences.

   - Who should be responsible for providing the information.

   - How the identified information requirements should support the delivery of transparent and accurate advice and guidance to potential students about making course and institutional choices.

2. The main report is organised in to six Sections. An initial introductory section looking at the context for the work (outlining the information that government, sector bodies and other stakeholders regard as relevant to users), an overview of information-seeking behaviour, as well as looking at examples of information provision on HE in the USA, Canada and Australia.

3. The remainder covers the research method (Section 2), information requirements, based on an analysis of the research undertaken (Section 3), feasibility and issues around providing the information (Section 4), modes and means of providing information (Section 5) and conclusions and recommendations in Section 6. Detailed appendices provide supporting materials.

Context

4. A number of recent high profile reports have made suggestions on the information requirements of different groups about HE (the key points are outlined in Section 1.2 of the main report). In summary, these reports place emphasis on prospective students having access to good quality information, advice and guidance (IAG), and access to comparable information on what and how they will learn, what they can expect to do when they qualify, and how their study can be funded and how much it will cost.

5. Key among these reports is the Teaching, Quality and the Student Experience (TQSE) sub-committee's 2009 report, which instigated this study by calling for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to initiate detailed research into understanding the needs of intended users of public information about HE (students, parents, employers and other stakeholders). Thereafter, once HEFCE, representative bodies and the sector have agreed a set of required information, the report recommended that institutions (that is higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) that provide

higher education) should be required to make the relevant information available in an appropriate common format.

6. The previous government's blueprint for HE, *Higher Ambitions*, states that potential students should have the best possible information on the content of courses and on the value in academic and employment terms of specific qualifications. To do this the blueprint proposed that all universities should publish a standard set of information setting out what students can expect in terms of the nature and quality of their programme.

7. Although this blueprint is a key driver for this research study, other drivers include the widening participation agenda and commitment to social mobility (including work such as the report on fair access to the professions[1]), and the requirement for economic prosperity that there is a supply of good quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates. The economic imperative also requires close working between HE and industry to ensure the supply of higher skills for certain key sectors and markets.

8. Underpinning all this is the perceived need to ensure that young people, and those who advise them, can make informed decisions making use of online access where appropriate, as various recent publications have made clear[2]. More broadly there is also a link to the review of postgraduate training (PGT)[3].

9. All this work takes place in the context of increasing competition in the HE sector. The outcome of the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance is likely to reinforce the idea of students as consumers or customers. In addition, the current and ongoing global financial situation has placed an emphasis on cost effectiveness and efficiency from the sector and the delivery of value for money.

10. Part of the work looked at the way information is provided to prospective students and their advisors from official sources (i.e. governmental or government agency) in the USA, Canada and Australia. Due to the limited timescale for this research, the comparison was limited to these English speaking countries. These resources concentrate on identifying higher education institutions of interest through the use of filtered searching, rather than on identifying particular courses. The information provided likewise is largely about the place of study rather than what students can expect to do on a particular course, what they will learn, or the outcomes for previous students on these courses. None of the resources allow users to filter the information items they retrieve as a result of their search. In all cases the results are returned in a long page of narrative text with some use of graphs.

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[1] *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*
[2] Encompassed in documents such as *New opportunities: fair chances for the future* (DCSF 2009), *Quality choice and aspiration: a strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance* (DCSF & DBIS 2009) and *The current provision of online higher education-focused information, advice and guidance* (UCAS & NUS 2009)

[3] *One Step Beyond: Making the most of postgraduate education*. Smith et al. March 2010.

Method

11. The research design comprised a number of different stages. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was used for the data collection and analysis. The stages were:

- Document review.

- Interviews with sector stakeholders, employers and career advisers.

- Interviews with higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs).

- Eleven focus groups with current and prospective students. Participants came from 11-18 secondary schools in state and independent sectors, sixth form colleges, FECs and HEIs. (Details of participants are given in Appendix D).

- Survey questionnaire of current and prospective students with a total sample of 1,926 from across 38 educational establishments. These included 11-18 state schools, 11-18 independent schools, sixth form colleges, FECs and HEIs. This allowed for a sample from a range of educational courses. (Details of participants are given in Appendix G.)

12. Current undergraduate and postgraduate students involved in the research were asked about the use and usefulness of information in supporting their decisions about what and where to study (i.e. as prospective students) and not about what information they wanted now they were students.

13. In general, the stages of the research ran in the order presented above, with subsequent stages being informed by those undertaken previously. Information gleaned from the document review and interviews was used to populate an 'information requirements matrix' under which data was categorised (as discussed in more detail in Section 2.2) and fed into the design of the focus groups and survey.

Information requirements

14. Employers and representative organisations interviewed as part of this research indicated that the information needed by business about HE fell into three main categories. Business seems to need this information from institutions (that is HEIs and FECs that provide HE) to support employers in planning for recruitment of new staff and 'upskilling' of their existing workforce:

- Information about what individual institutions can offer employers – in terms of the courses on offer. While some information of this type can be provided through information available on their websites or through sources such as Unistats or the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) course search, there is still a requirement for collaboration between individual employers and institutions (particularly around short courses and Foundation Degrees). As such this is a function of business and community engagement and employer engagement within institutions.

3

- <u>Information about graduates coming from HE</u> – relating to what individual graduates have learnt during their studies that goes beyond the degree classification or other award obtained. It would seem that this requirement will be addressed through the introduction of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and supported by the development of employability statements by HEIs.

- <u>Information that gives a national picture of graduate numbers and HE specialisms</u> –'forecasting' information on the number of students due to graduate in the different subjects, and which institutions are 'strong' in particular subjects or specialise in these. National information on the supply of graduates and institutional strengths would also seem to be the responsibility of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS) and the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), perhaps with a role for the UK Commission for Education and Skills (UKCES), drawing on existing national data sets, rather than for individual institutions or HE sector agencies. This should also ensure that the information provided is 'employer facing'.

Students' information requirements

15. In the survey (and in the focus groups), participants were presented with a list of 51 information items relevant to making their decisions about going to on to HE. The table below ranks the top 16 items considered 'very useful' by over 30% of the survey participants.

Items of information about going to HE, ranked by the percentage of respondents indicating 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.4%
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%
3	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%
7	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%
9	Cost of halls of residence	37.7%
10	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%
11	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%
12	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%
13	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%
14	Maximum available bursary	34.5%

'Very useful' rank	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'
15	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%
16	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%

16. The highest ranking item was rated 'very useful' by just 55%. These responses suggest that prospective students may not be aware of the importance of many items of information to them, if they are to make an informed decision about going to HE.

17. These 'most important' information items can be grouped under three headings:

- Satisfaction with the institution/course: the two items with the highest percentages (the percentages of students at institutions that are satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching and with their course) fell in this category, with over 50% of participants citing these items as being very useful. Several other items related to study at the institution/on the course, such as 'weekly hours of teaching time' also appear in this 'top 16'.

- Employment: employment rates are ranked somewhat more highly than salary levels, whilst recognition by professional bodies is ranked almost as high as employment rates. As expected, the proportion rating 'recognition by professional bodies' varies by subject (with architecture scoring very high), but even 28% of prospective students applying to study courses grouped in the History subject code reckoned that this item is 'very useful'.

- Cost: costs of halls of residence are ranked higher than bursary information. Whilst the ranking of cost items is generally below the ranking of student satisfaction and employability information it is still noteworthy that three of the top 16 items relate to costs.

18. The focus groups also revealed that participants wanted information at a course rather than an institutional level. The information items in the 'top 16' above also relate to a large extent to course level information.

Implications

An information system for prospective students should concentrate on satisfaction with teaching, actual employment outcomes and costs.

Did they try to get the information and did they succeed?

19. Less than half the sample had tried to look for 11 out of the 16 most highly ranked items. This is partly explained by participants' estimate of the usefulness of the information. Those who rated the information 'very useful' were much more likely to look for it. However, a surprisingly large proportion (between a quarter and a half) of participants who rated items 'very useful' reported that they had not tried to find the information. A maximum of two-thirds of these reported that they had tried to look for information on student satisfaction and

employability data. One possible explanation is that prospective students were unaware that these data might be accessible.

20. Participants in the focus groups had looked for or thought of looking for very few points of information detailed. For focus group participants the main information sought related primarily to course content, finance and accommodation. Participants were also unaware of much of the information and, in some cases, the significance of the information in relation to choice of institution or course.

21. Three cost items were towards the top of the rankings by 'tried to find' (with over 50%). The other two items with over 50% were course-related items. Consideration was given to whether this may be due to participants considering that they were likely to find this item and these items did report high percentages of success. However, so did most of the other items in the 'top 16'. It may also suggest that the information is particularly important to these prospective students.

22. A large majority who looked for information reported that they had found it. Even for the items ranked outside the 'top 16' the percentages were high, with only one case marginally below 70% ('proportion of students like me that drop out' – ranked 40 out of the 51 information items in terms of being 'very useful').

Implications

Many prospective students do not look for information even when they think it would be very useful. Therefore, an approach which aims to increase the extent to which prospective students compare the quality of HE courses will need to change the way in which they are guided towards available information and made aware of the importance and use of that information.

Items which respondents did not consider very useful

23. Participants expressed little interest in the characteristics of other students attending the institution. Evidence from the focus groups suggested that lack of interest in the proportion of students 'like me' who drop out was due to a belief that student drop out reflected the attitude and work rate of the student rather than course design and academic support. In the focus groups factors such as gender and class of students at the institution were regarded as irrelevant or unimportant to decision making. This was largely the case with ethnicity of the student body. Where this was mentioned it was in regard to issues around racial tolerance at the institution or in the surrounding areas.

Sources of information most used

24. Survey participants were presented with a list asking which sources of information they currently use or used when making their decisions about going to HE. The two main sources were institutions' websites and prospectuses (88%) and UCAS (81%). This was followed by family and friends (70%), formal institution visits and interviews (68%) and teachers (schools and colleges) at 65%.

25. It should be noted that the research did not look at the information requirements of the family (parents/guardians) of prospective students, which was not possible within the timescale of the study. Therefore recommendations in this report are based on prospective students as the primary users of information.

26. There is a large drop in the percentage indicating they used a source after the top five listed above. Reported use of official sources of information was generally low, with all less than 30%. (See Table 5 in the main report.) Sources that were used more frequently were also rated more useful by a higher proportion of students who used them. Sources which directly compared institutions were less likely to be rated 'very useful' than institution prospectuses and visits.

27. No particular group of users seem less likely to be able or unable to find the information they looked for.

28. The focus group evidence suggests considerable variation between schools and colleges in the extent to which students had accessed any formal career advice when making their decisions about application to HE.

Implications

Prospective students rely most heavily on information gathered directly from institutions. It is therefore likely that comparable information will have more of an impact on prospective students' decision-making if it is accessible on institutions' websites or UCAS.

Pupils attending some secondary schools make much more use of comparison websites than those attending other schools. It would be helpful to find out why this is the case and to increase the use of more effective practice where it relates to IAG.

All groups use institutions' websites or UCAS for information. Therefore no group is likely to be disadvantaged if these are made the main sources for the information set regarded as 'very useful' by prospective students.

Are there differences in the information requirements of different groups?

29. The users of information are not a homogeneous group of 'prospective students' and therefore different groups might find different information 'very useful' or differ in their use of sources of information. Section 3.2.5 examines this possibility for 15 groups (including disabled, first generation and postgraduate students). The numbers in the sample were low for those identifying themselves as disabled, Chinese/other Asian background and Black/Black British, and hence the analysis by these factors should be considered as less reliable than the others.

30. The information items ranked in the 'top 10' by all survey participants also appear in the 'top 16' of at least 14 of the 15 subgroups. This suggests that (at least as far as the top 10 items are concerned) indicate different groups of prospective students are most interested in the same pieces of information.

31. Further analysis found no discernible pattern (e.g. by type of information using categories such as employability, student satisfaction, costs) in the ranking of items by subgroups.

32. Detailed analysis of the preferences and information-seeking behaviour of certain groups found the following distinctive features. The sample sizes for these subgroups, especially for disabled and for postgraduate students are small and the patterns in these data should be regarded as very tentative.

- Disabled students are more interested than others in the availability of specialist equipment; they make much less use of UCAS as a source of information and are more likely to regard Aimhigher and institution visits as very useful sources of information.[4]

- Second generation students are more likely to rate pieces of information as very useful, particularly those relating to accommodation and the local area. They make more use of each source of information.

- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students are more likely to rate information as very useful. In particular they are more interested in the availability of specialist equipment, industry links and undergraduates' A level grades; they make greater use of the available information sources, notably UCAS and online comparison sites.

- Postgraduate students are more interested than other students in the proportion of assessment by coursework, but otherwise their preferences are quite similar to other students; they make less use of most of the sources of information and they were less likely to rate institutions' prospectuses as useful and more likely to rate comparison websites and students' opinions as very useful.

- Foundation Degree students are less likely to rate pieces of information 'very useful' and were less likely than other students to regard UCAS as a very useful source of information; they were more likely to regard career advisors as a very useful source of information.

- Students attending or applying to 'top ranked' institutions (as defined in Appendix I12) are more likely than other students to regard information about employment after graduation and institutional ranking as very useful.

Implications

An information system which provides the top ten information items will meet the preferences of most sub-groups of prospective students.

Increasing the number of items beyond this will meet the preferences of some groups of prospective students and not others.

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[4] Institutions have to meet with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation; details are available from http://www.ecu.ac.uk/law/?browse=subject&filter=disability.

Which information items are considered the most important – does this vary by student attribute?

33. Analyses were undertaken to identify characteristics significantly affecting the likelihood that a survey respondent would rate each of the information items 'very useful'. The following characteristics had a significant effect on the likelihood of rating a number of information items 'very useful':

- Gender: males were significantly less likely than females to rate 14 out of the top 16 items 'very useful'.

- Ethnicity: respondents identifying themselves as 'Asian/Asian British' in the survey were significantly more likely than others to rate seven out of the 'top 16' items 'very useful'.

- Examination performance: high-performing respondents were significantly more likely than other students to rate seven out of the 'top 16' items 'very useful'.

- Postgraduate students: postgraduate students were significantly less likely than other students to rate eight out of the 'top 16 items' very useful, but they were also significantly more likely to rate two of the items 'very useful'.

34. There were very few significant differences between disabled/non-disabled, first/second generation applicants to HE, STEM/non-STEM, those on or applying to health/non-health related courses, and between those attending an independent/state school.

Implications

Some groups display much stronger appetite for information than others. Those with a strong appetite include: females, those identifying themselves as 'Asian/Asian British' and those with high grades in school examinations. Each of these is a 'high participation rate' group.

These prospective students are more likely than others to take advantage of improvements to the information system. The design of an approach to providing information should therefore take account of the risk of increasing gaps between students.

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35. In conclusion, prospective students find most useful information which relates to:

- Satisfaction with the standard of teaching/course.

- Employability.

- Costs.

36. Although there is some variation between different types of prospective students the 'top 10' information items are deemed 'very useful' by all types. The main sources of information are institutions and UCAS with a relatively small proportion using existing online comparative sources. Not more than 55% look

for information and of those that do look around 80% and above report that they have found this information.

Information 'need'

37. This study characterises what prospective students need to know by taking the views of career advisors, employers and sector stakeholders, both through interviews in this study and a review of recent publications and reports. In summary, advisors, employers and sector stakeholders interviewed were of the view that prospective students need information on:

- Study requirements.

- Employment outcomes.

- Costs and financial support.

38. There was little discussion of a need for current students' views or satisfaction ratings of their course or institution (apart from the National Union of Students who did suggest the value of this information). With this exception, the information that prospective students want is not that dissimilar to the information advisors, employers and sector stakeholders feel that they need.

39. The main factor seems to be that only a limited proportion of prospective students regard the information as 'very useful' and of these a significant percentage does not try to find the information. There is therefore a tension between making information available and getting prospective students to consider this information as part of their decision-making process.

Providing the information

40. Table 10 in Section 4 of the main report provides an overview of current availability, other sources, quality, ease of attainability and likely cost of providing the top 16 information items identified as 'very useful' by participants in the survey. Also included is the information item ranked 19 in the overall rankings 'Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the institution'. This is included in the list as it featured in the top 16 information items identified as very useful to disabled students, and is a logical counterpoint to the information point on cost of halls of residence.

41. This table has judgements on the quality, attainability and likely cost (high/medium/low) of providing the information items identified as 'very useful' in the survey. Where information is available from existing data collections quality is assumed to be 'good' and attainability as 'easy' and therefore costs as low. Where information items refer to data collected via the National Student Survey (NSS) the judgements are based on the existing student coverage, and do not refer to extending a data collection of this type to postgraduate students.

42. In summary, the majority of the information items regarded as very useful by prospective students are available through existing data collections such as the NSS and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, or likely to be provided via course handbooks or collected as part of the programme validation process. The provision of these items is not likely therefore to incur

significant additional cost to provide to prospective students. Those items which may be more costly, due largely due to the increased resources required to compile this data, are:

- Proportion of assessment by coursework.

- Maximum available bursary.

- Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary.

- Weekly hours of teaching contact time.

- Average rent for a room in a private student house.

43. To facilitate the provision of this information in a way that will be of most use to users will require:

- Agreement on ways in which to collect the information that falls outside existing data collections.

- Consideration of the feasibility of extending a student experience survey to postgraduates; and what effects gaps in information from the Scottish HE sector may have in providing information from the NSS.

- Changes to the DLHE survey to provide reliable salary data.

- Agreement on how to define a 'course' and an agreed process for using the 'Course' entity in the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data model.

- Agreement on and processes for capturing contact hours in a standard way at course level.

- A process for ensuring data provided is accurate and complete.

Modes and means of providing information

44. This considers the best means of delivering information in a way which will reach the largest number of users and so benefit prospective students.

45. As the analysis of the survey indicated it is possible to identify 16 information items that are priorities for most types of prospective students, and the highest ranked information items are most relevant at course rather than whole institution level. The information items can be grouped under the following headings: student satisfaction ratings, employability, costs and study related.

46. Most of the information items are already available in the public domain, but displaced across a number of sources. Most prospective students use institutions (websites, prospectuses, open days) and UCAS as their major sources of information. Career advisors also make use of institutions and UCAS as the main sources of information for their students. Only a minority of prospective students currently use online comparison sites.

47. The limited number of information items regarded as being very useful, and the similarity of these items across different types of students, combined with the low

use of comparison sites and the perceived usefulness of these sites also being fairly low does not suggest that users want complex sources of information which will allow them to search for and sift multiple information items. There does not seem to be an appetite for a complex information system that will allow personalisation of information (i.e. returning a set of information closely matching an individual's interests and circumstances).

48. The best approach would seem therefore to make best use of existing and established routes to information rather than creating new sources. Both institutions and UCAS are well used by different groups of students, and are 'trusted' and recognised sources. Any new source of information would need to establish its credentials and be promoted effectively and aggressively (which would require significant expenditure and resource input).

49. The best mode of delivering information to reach the widest audience therefore suggests providing a standard set of information based around the 16 'very useful' items identified in the survey. This should be incorporated into course information made available to prospective students on institutions' websites and prospectuses and in the UCAS entry profiles. Reference is made in the main report to other standard presentations of information (such as in the financial sector) as examples of approaches taken.

50. Providing information does not guarantee that prospective students will consider the information when making decisions or understand why they might do this. Information provision does not equate with IAG, and the study indicates that more needs to be done to support IAG provision for prospective students. One way to address this may be to incorporate review of the 'very useful' information set into the HE application process.

Responsibility for providing the information

51. As indicated above, the majority of the information items are already available in the public domain, and are related to courses or the institution. Responsibility for providing the information would seem to fall into three main stages:

a) Provision of data by institutions through their involvement in the NSS and DLHE survey (and generation of those additional items that fall outside the national data collections).

b) Processing of the data from the NSS and DLHE survey to fulfil the criteria required for publication (by HEFCE/HESA) and distribution to institutions for publication.

c) Publication by institutions of the standard information set to agreed practice on websites and in prospectuses and as part of UCAS entry profiles.

52. A further stage in providing the information is to ensure that the information published is accurate, up-to-date and complete. Including this judgement as part of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) audit about the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information published seems a legitimate means of helping ensure that information provided continues to be of benefit to students.

Conclusions and recommendations

53. Section 6 of the main report provides recommendations and provides suggestions on which organisations and bodies should be involved in their implementation.

Addressing the problem that many students do not look for information

54. The research found that only a limited set of information is regarded as a priority by most prospective students. Only around half of the respondents had tried to find this information. This indicates that many prospective students do not look for information even when they think it would be very useful to them. This evidence does not suggest there is an appetite for or likely to be much use made of any new large-scale information system.

55. Subject tutors and career advisors need to be kept up-to-date and informed of what prospective students should be considering in their decision-making and where that information can be found. State schools and colleges currently face rather weak incentives to devote effort and resources to making sure students are aware of available information about HE.

56. Certain groups of prospective students with high participation rates in HE display a much stronger appetite for information than others. Any changes in policy should therefore take account of the potential risks of providing information without also tackling the issue of getting those that do not look for information to do so. Failure to do this may increase gaps between students.

Recommendation 1

Raise the profile of the information sources currently available to show prospective students, career advisors and teachers what they offer and how they can be used.

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57. This should include improving linkages between existing sources of online information relevant to student decision-making, so that there are links between information relating to careers and information on HE courses and institutions (primarily establishing links from career related sources to UCAS' website and to Unistats).

58. Further research may be needed to look at: ways in which schools and colleges can be encouraged to provide better IAG to prospective students; and the variation in practice of IAG provided by subject tutors in schools and colleges, and whether this makes a significant difference to students' use of information in their decision-making.

59. This will require HEFCE, UCAS and the Teaching and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), along with the Department for Education (DfE) and DBIS, to work together to develop an awareness raising strategy for career advisors and subject teachers/tutors in schools and colleges, focused on those groups of students that do not look for information. This work will involve a range of organisations that bear responsibility for IAG outside the HE remit.

Delivering the information users want to where they look, in language they understand

60. There is little variation between types of prospective students on what they regard as 'very useful', with the same top 16 ranked information items appearing for most groups, and the same top 10 ranked items appearing for all sub-groups.

61. The most widely used sources are institutions' prospectuses/websites and UCAS (around 90% and 80% respectively used these sources), with just under 30% making use of online comparative websites. This indicates that it is likely that comparable information will have more of an impact on prospective students' decision-making if it is accessible on institutions' websites and UCAS – and that a standard set of information should concentrate on satisfaction with teaching, actual employment outcomes and costs. These closely relate to the types of information career advisors and other sector stakeholders suggest prospective students need to know.

62. Career advisors interviewed as part of this study expressed some concern about the technical language used in information about HE, which can be a barrier to understanding and to making comparisons. This may have a particular impact on first generation applicants to HE and those without access to IAG.

Recommendation 2

Publish as a minimum the 16 information items identified as very useful by prospective students, at course level, in a standard format on the sources most used by all prospective students (institutions' websites / prospectuses and UCAS), and make this information available to QAA to be subject to a published judgement on the accuracy and completeness of the provision of public information.

Recommendation 3

Incorporate consideration/review of the information items identified as very useful by prospective students as part of the process for students setting up a UCAS account. This may entail applicants being prompted with a message that tells them that this information is regarded as very useful by other students, and where they can find the information.

Recommendation 4

Revise the language and terminology used in information presented to prospective students and their non-expert advisors (i.e. family and friends), so that it is aimed at these groups as the primary audience.

Recommendation 5

Retain Unistats for the present as the current 'official' source for comparative information, but put in place plans to review the information it provides and its functionality at a defined point in time (no more than two years) after the institutional focussed publication of a standard set of information is in place. The review should take into account changes in the sector and any behavioural changes of users of public information following the introduction of the standard set of information.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and terms of reference

This study's aims were to carry out research into understanding the needs of intended users (primarily prospective students, but with some focus on their advisors, and employers) of public information on higher education (HE). The work focussed on England, but also took into account Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland where relevant. This report addresses:

- What information a range of users want and need to support decisions about going on to higher education.

- The best mode(s) of delivery to get information to the intended audiences.

- Who should be responsible for providing the information.

- How the identified information requirements should support the delivery of transparent and accurate advice and guidance to potential students about making course and institutional choices.

This report also provides evidence and prepares the ground for a continuing programme of work and policy development about public information with regard to the quality of HE provision and teaching quality information.

This introductory section also looks at the context for the work (outlining the information that government, sector bodies and other stakeholders regard as relevant to users), an overview of information seeking behaviour, as well as looking at examples of information provision on HE in the USA, Canada and Australia.

The remainder of the report covers the research method (Section 2), information requirements, based on an analysis of the research undertaken (Section 3), feasibility and issues around providing the information (Section 4), modes and means of providing information (Section 5) and conclusions and recommendations in Section 6. Detailed appendices provide supporting materials.

1.2. Context – stakeholder views of users' information requirements

A number of recent high profile reports have made suggestions on the information requirements of different groups about HE, which are summarised below to provide the context for this work.

1.2.1. Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience sub-committee report

In 2008, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Board and its strategic committee for Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience (TQSE) set up a TQSE sub-committee to investigate concerns raised over the quality of English HE. Although the sub-committee's report[5] concluded that overall there is no systemic failure in quality and standards in English HE, a number of areas of concern were

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[5] Report of the sub-committee for Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience (HEFCE 2009).

identified which should be addressed to maintain the effectiveness of the quality assurance system in the future.

The sub-committee's conclusions and recommendations relating to public information instigated this study. They judged that "Public information has much greater potential to be used to educate and inform the public about all aspects of HE, including both academic and non-academic aspects of student life... Reforming the provision of public information will require changes to its content, format and location."

On this basis, the sub-committee recommended that HEFCE should initiate detailed research into understanding the needs of the intended users of the information (students, parents, employers and other stakeholders). Thereafter, once HEFCE, representative bodies and the sector agree a set of required information institutions (that is higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) that provide higher education) should be required to make the relevant information available in an appropriate common format.

1.2.2. Higher Ambitions

The previous government's blueprint for HE, *Higher Ambitions*, states that "well-informed student choice will be the most powerful force for change over the next decade". Chapter 4 of this publication, titled the Student Experience of Higher Education, promises "higher quality through greater awareness of choice".

In addition, *Higher Ambitions* states that potential students should have the best possible information on the content of courses and on the value in academic and employment terms of specific qualifications. To do this the blueprint proposed that "all universities should publish a standard set of information setting out what students can expect in terms of the nature and quality of their programme". Specifically, this should include:

- How and what students will learn.

- What the knowledge will qualify them to do.

- Whether they will have access to external experience or expertise.

- How much direct contact with academic staff they will have.

- What their own study responsibilities will be.

- What facilities they will have access to.

- Any opportunities for international experience.

- Information about what students on individual courses have done after graduation.

Higher Ambitions stresses that increasingly it is important for individuals to consider how their programme of study will affect their long-term employment prospects.

Although this blueprint is a key driver for this research study, requiring 'consumer style' information on courses to enable students to make informed choices about their study option, there are other drivers. These include the widening participation

agenda and commitment to social mobility (including work such as the report on fair access to the professions[6]), and the requirements for economic prosperity that there is a supply of good quality science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) graduates. The economic imperative also requires close working between HE and industry to ensure the supply of higher skills for certain key sectors and markets.

Underpinning all this is the perceived need to ensure that young people, and those who advise them, can make informed decisions making use of online access where appropriate, as various recent publications have made clear[7]. More broadly there is also a link to the review of postgraduate training (PGT)[8].

All this work takes place in the context of increasing competition in the HE sector. The outcome of the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance is likely to reinforce the idea of students as consumers or customers. A consequence of the review may be variations in the amounts charged in tuition fees for different courses. In addition, the current and ongoing global financial situation has placed an emphasis on cost effectiveness and efficiency from the sector and the delivery of value for money.

A number of high profile reports have driven the pressure to examine the information requirements of prospective students and their advisers and have made recommendations on how to address these. A chronological summary of these is provided below, highlighting the information the reports deemed of use and ways of providing access to it.

1.2.3. The National Student Forum (NSF) Annual Report 2008

The report drew on the findings of 'student juries' which identified issues for exploration, and the subsequent discussions by the NSF during its first year. The report regarded the most prevalent issue to be the lack of adequate information, advice and guidance (IAG) available for prospective students before going on to HE. The report found the system to be incoherent and difficult to navigate, and that prospective students, if they have no clear sense of how to prioritise or filter, could be overwhelmed by the volume of information. Others, particularly 'first generation' applicants to HE, may not know where to look. Main areas of concern were that:

- IAG available prior to HE does not place enough emphasis on the long-term connection to the job market, with students not being encouraged to consider how their choice of subject or place of study might affect their future employability.

- Individual universities and colleges do not provide enough detailed information about their course content, teaching approaches and assessment

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[6] *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*

[7] Encompassed in documents such as *New opportunities: fair chances for the future* (DCSF 2009), *Quality, Choice and Aspiration: A strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance* (DCSF & DBIS 2009) and *The current provision of online higher education-focused information, advice and guidance* (UCAS & NUS 2009)

[8] *One Step Beyond: Making the most of postgraduate education*. Smith et al. March 2010.

to allow prospective students to build a picture of what it would be like to study a particular subject at that institution.

- There was a lack of information around sources of additional funding beyond student loan entitlements.

The report concluded that the problem was not a lack of information "of which there is clearly an abundance", but rather a lack of a coherent framework to promote existing resources and help prospective students navigate their journey into HE. It concluded that an "online IAG portal could provide an effective way of tailoring information to meet the likely needs of particular groups of students". In addition the NSF's report also made a recommendation to "define and introduce best practice guidelines for pre-entry information provided by universities and colleges".

1.2.4. House of Commons Committee report on Students and Universities

The House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee report on Students and Universities[9] concluded from its examination of evidence that it would assist prospective students if institutions presented the following information in a consistent format to facilitate cross-institutional comparisons:

- The time a typical undergraduate (UG) student could expect to spend in attending lectures and tutorials, in personal study and, for science courses, in laboratories during a week.

- The likely size of tutorial groups.

- The numbers at lectures

- The extent to which students may be taught by graduate students.

The committee also referred to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) report *Final enquiries into concerns about academic quality and standards in higher education in England: final report* published in April 2009, and noted that it chimed with many of the conclusions of the Students and Universities report. In particular, the QAA report recommended that "provision by institutions of readily available and clear information about the nature and amount of contact students may expect with staff in respect of individual study programmes, and the expectations that the institutions have of students as independent learners" is required.

The Committee report concluded that the HE sector should develop a Code of Practice on information for prospective students. This should set out the range, quality and level of information that institutions should make available to prospective UG students, and should include information on bursaries.

The report also raised concerns about careers guidance available pre application to HE, and considered that careers guidance should start at Key Stage 3 in secondary school, as pupils are making GCSE choices.

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[9] The House of Commons, Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee Report on Students and Universities: 11th Report of Session 2008-09 July 2009.

In its response to the report in October 2009, the previous government made reference to its intention to publish a new IAG strategy. This would bring together a number of policies into a coherent strategy to explain what is being done to improve support for young people and to help them progress. It also referred to the work of Connexions and Key Stage 2 Pathfinders that from 2009 would explore options for improving support for young people at an earlier age.

The government at the time agreed that it would be helpful for prospective students to have better access to information, that this should be subject to comment by the QAA and include, but not be restricted to:

- The type and amount of contact they can expect with staff.

- The type and amount of private study they are likely to need to undertake.

- The academic support which will be available from staff.

- The different types of learning (lectures, seminars, tutorials).

- The extent to which new and emerging technologies should be available.

1.2.5. Stronger Together – Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report

The CBI's Education Task Force report[10] set out what business wants from HE and how it can work with government and universities. It noted that a survey undertaken for the Task Force showed that many recent graduates felt they had not received high-quality careers advice. The report also highlights a CBI/YouGov survey from 2009 which found that 43% of 16-18 year olds either received poor advice or did not receive any advice from a careers service. The same survey found that 44% of undergraduates felt there was insufficient information to help school and college students choose between institutions and courses. The CBI report states that "students must be given the information they need to make informed choices", as they are expected to invest large amounts of time and money in their HE.

The Task Force also noted that better IAG to students would improve the take-up of subjects that business values, and lead to better employment outcomes for students. While it recognised that the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website provides useful basic information about entry requirements and the institutions, in the Task Force's opinion Unistats offers only a very limited snapshot of graduates' career destinations and employment rates. In the report's chapter on "Ensuring students have the skills to succeed" it states that "students need to be clear about the benefits in employment terms of studying certain disciplines, such as STEM or certain skills such as language proficiency".

Finally, the report makes the recommendation that "government, universities and business must work together to provide students, their advisors and their family with an effective website so that students can compare the outcomes of different choices,

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[10] *Stronger Together: business and universities in turbulent times*. CBI Higher Education Task Force. September 2009.

based on high-quality information about employment prospects, teaching quality and economic returns from different courses".

1.2.6. Office for Fair Access report on bursaries

In December 2009 the Office for Fair Access published its report on bursaries[11]. Amongst the report's findings were that 43% of students, 66% of parents and 69% of advisors surveyed agreed with the statement that there is not enough information on bursaries, and moreover that 25% of students and their parents had not heard of bursaries. It noted that existing studies suggest that financial concerns play a major role in the decision-making process of whether to enter HE and where and what to study.

The survey also found that the most popular and most useful information sources were produced by institutions, especially their website. Of those surveyed 81% had used an institutional source of information (57% had used an institution website) and 40% drew on other sources, primarily national or government sponsored websites (Student Finance Direct or Student Loans Company (SLC) (27%), UCAS (16%) and the Direct.gov government education and learning website (14%)).

In concluding, the report recommended that institutions and other stakeholders evaluate current strategies for making potential students aware of bursaries and do more to promote them.

1.2.7. Smith review of postgraduate education

The recent report[12] of the review of postgraduate education, published in March 2010, noted that accurate, transparent and easily accessible IAG play a significant role in informing people about the benefits of postgraduate study, the different types of qualifications, and the funding that is available. Information is currently made available through individual institutions, and via a number of student and careers websites. However, there is no single reference point for prospective postgraduate students.

The report concludes that while information about completion rates, employment outcomes and earnings of postgraduates already exists and is available at undergraduate level, it would also be a valuable resource for those considering postgraduate study. Information for prospective postgraduates should also include the range of options for funding postgraduate study. It also noted that no data is routinely collected on taught postgraduate tuition fees, although details are often available on individual institutions' websites.

In addition, the report calls for consideration of extending the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) initiative to postgraduate level, and the development of a single, comprehensive source of up to date information about postgraduate study. This should include information about satisfaction rates, which would require the

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[11] *Awareness, take-up and impact of international bursaries and scholarships in England*. Office for Fair Access. December 2009.

[12] *One Step Beyond: Making the most of postgraduate education.* Smith et al. March 2010

extension of the National Student Survey (NSS) to include taught postgraduate students.

In summary, the reports mentioned place emphasis on prospective students having access to good quality IAG, and access to comparable information on what and how they will learn, what they can expect to do when they qualify, and how their study can be funded and how much it will cost.

As a further aspect of the context for this work, Section 1.3 below gives some consideration to the information seeking behaviour of users, with regard to the use of online sources.

1.3. Information seeking behaviour

Examination of the information seeking behaviour of users is beyond the scope of this research. However, it is an important aspect that needs to be considered when developing information resources, so it is addressed in summary here.

Recent research commissioned by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)[13] reveals that learners and young people generally have access to a wide range of web tools that provide gateways to a multiplicity of interactive resources for information, entertainment and communication. The use of these Web 2.0 or social networking technologies can lead to a new sense of communities of interest and networks, but also to a clear sense of boundaries in web space.

The digital divide cannot be underestimated with significant (although reducing) numbers having little or limited access to online sources and web technology – thereby limiting their opportunities to develop digital literacy.

While users may have access to a wide range of information online, concerns are raised about their 'information literacy'; that is, their ability to search, find and then critically examine information from a range of sources. People often spend little time evaluating the information they use for its relevance, accuracy or authority.

The information seeking behaviour of researchers examined in work undertaken by University College London[14] was characterised as being 'horizontal' (skimming across sources), 'bouncing' and 'checking' (cross checking across different sources and relying on favoured brands), as well as being 'promiscuous, volatile and diverse'. Becta[15] commissioned research[16] on 'The Learner and their Context' found similar

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[13] *Higher education in a Web 2.0 World*. Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience. March 2009.

[14] *Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*. UCL. January 2008.

[15] The agency leading the previous government's national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. On 24 May 2010 the Coalition Government announced the planned closure of Becta.

[16] *Harnessing Technology: The learner and their context – mapping young people's uses of technology: a nationally representative survey*. University of Oxford. November 2009.

results amongst young people in terms of their use of resources and ability to critically evaluate information retrieved.

Although this research into understanding the information needs of users of public information on HE did not investigate information seeking behaviours, and while the sources referred to above cannot be regarded as definitive, the following were borne in mind when formulating options and recommendations:

- That prospective students may not appreciate (and therefore use) official sources that they may regard as trying to colonise 'their' web space.

- Not to assume a uniform high-level of digital literacy amongst prospective students and their advisors.

- That while prospective students may be able to retrieve information on HE, they may not be able to evaluate or appreciate what is important for them to know.

- That users may rely on or place greater emphasis on information retrieved from trusted, known or authoritative sources.

- That users may make use of multiple sources to satisfy their information needs.

1.4. International examples

Part of the work looked at the way information is provided to prospective students and their advisors from official sources (i.e. governmental or government agency) in the USA, Canada and Australia. Due to the limited timescale for this research, the comparison was limited to these English speaking countries. An overview of the resources in these countries is provided in Appendix A, including the purpose of the sites, type of information and search functionality.

In the USA in particular, the resources concentrate on identifying institutions of interest providing higher education, through the use of filtered searches, rather than identifying particular courses regardless of institution. The information provided through these sites likewise is largely about the place of study rather than what students can expect to do on a particular course, what they will learn, or the outcomes for previous students on these courses. In some cases the information made available does relate to employment outcomes, including earnings of recent graduates (within the first two years after graduation and not longer term).

None of the resources allow users to filter the information they retrieve as a result of their search. In all cases the results are returned in a long page of narrative text with some use of graphs.

In the USA there are five main sources:

- <u>Student.gov</u> – from the US Department of Education in cooperation with federal agencies to provide access to information and resources from the US government. It has some similarity to Direct.gov in the UK, and is largely made up of links to other sources of information (including college.gov, College Finder, and College Navigator).

- College.gov – also from the Department of Education, is a targeted website with a focus on encouraging high school students from underrepresented parts of the population to go on to HE. The information is aimed at informing students, their parents and advisors on why they should go, what they should do, and how to pay. The resource was built in collaboration with students and features 'peer-to-peer' aspects such as personal story videos on You Tube. There is limited information on the site which is mainly advice and guidance, but does include links to College Navigator and Student Aid websites.

- College Finder – from the Federal Student Aid Office of the Department of Education. This has a 'college wizard' to guide users through a search for colleges by prioritising what is important to them (from a set list of options). Information is returned on colleges that match the search criteria.

- College Navigator – from the National Center for Educational Statistics. Allows similar search options to College Finder, but provides more detailed statistical data including enrolment numbers, admissions and retention.

- College Board – this resource is provided by the organisation also called College Board which is a membership association of colleges that supports the application process for students and college admissions officers (with a similar remit to UCAS). It provides information to support entry to higher education, and has a college search option that utilises similar options as the College Finder and College Navigator. Information returned is similar to that provided by the College Finder.

Canada has the 'CanLearn' resource, similar to Student.gov in the US and Direct.gov in the UK, which provides narrative information and advice to support decisions around planning, choosing and paying for education (at post secondary level). It also includes links to institution and programme searches. The information returned about the courses cover fees, field of study and eligibility scores. It does not include any quality indicator information such as that included on Unistats in the UK.

CanLearn also links to 'Job Futures' which provides information about 265 occupational groups and describes the work experiences of recent graduates from 155 programs of study. There is no link however from this site to CanLearn.

In Australia the Goingtouni.gov.au site is in the style of Student.gov, CanLearn and Direct.gov. The country is also in the process of launching, by 2012, 'MyUni' which will be an extension of the existing 'MySchool' website. The purpose of the new site will be to measure institutions providing higher education based on courses, quality of teaching, learning outcomes and campus facilities, and will be aimed at students and their parents[17]. There is no indication if MyUni will include results of the Australian student survey. Appendix A summarises the information and functionality of the currently available 'MySchool' website as an indication of how the information on higher education institutions might be published.

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[17] http://www.techworld.com.au/article/338323/my_school_passes_test_graduates_my_uni

http://www.theage.com.au/national/my-uni-site-to-put-heat-on-gillard-20100303-pj0q.html

The resources offered by the USA, Australia and Canada do not allow users to filter or 'personalise' the information they receive about colleges or courses through use of the search facilities. Although they offer a fairly detailed set of search criteria with which users can specify their preferences, the information retrieved is not presented in a particularly 'user-friendly' manner or in a way that allows easy comparison.

The next section provides details of research methods used to investigate the information requirements of users of public information of HE.

2. Method

This section details the overall design of the research project, the various stages involved, methods of data collection and the sample. It then discusses the data analysis procedure.

2.1. Design and sample

In response to the issues and questions discussed in Section 1 above, the research design comprised a number of different stages. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was used for the data collection and analysis. The stages were:

- Document review.

- Interviews with sector stakeholders.

- Interviews with higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs).

- Interviews with employers.

- Interviews with careers advisors.

- Focus groups with current and prospective students.

- Survey questionnaire of current and prospective students.

Current undergraduate and postgraduate students involved in the research were asked about the use and usefulness of information in supporting their decisions about what and where to study (i.e. as prospective students) and not about what information they wanted now they were students.

In general, the stages of the research ran in the order presented above, with subsequent stages being informed by those undertaken previously. There were, however, cases where some stages ran concurrently. Information gleaned from the document review and interviews was used to populate an 'information requirements matrix' under which data was categorised (this is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2). The various stages of the research utilised different methods and had different samples for analysis. Each stage is set out below.

2.1.1. Document review

The documentation review (see Appendix B) provided background to the study and captured published views on the information that would be useful to prospective students and other stakeholders. The results were used to populate an information matrix, which in turn was used to contribute to the development of the information scenarios for the focus groups and survey questionnaire; as well as informing the interviews with stakeholders.

2.1.2. Interviews with sector stakeholders

Telephone interviews were conducted with 23 stakeholder organisations (see Appendix C) to identify key issues associated with this research. A number of broad areas were covered in these interviews (see Appendix F for the interview schedule).

In addition to the telephone interviews, face-to-face meetings were conducted with representatives from UCAS and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). These interviews also addressed more specific questions relating to the provision of data from existing data sets.

2.1.3. Interviews with HEIs and FECs

Telephone interviews were conducted with quality assurance and admissions staff in 11 HEIs and FECs. A cross-section of different types of institution was sampled and included a UK-wide focus (see Appendix C for a full list). The interviews gathered views on the feasibility of providing prospective students with the information that had been identified via sector stakeholder interviews, the documentation review and focus groups (and captured in the information matrix). The HEI and FEC interviews also contributed to assessment of possible issues related to the provision of such information (such as comparability, accuracy, burden of provision), as well as gathering information on what kinds of information representatives of HEIs/FECs think prospective students need and why. (See Appendix F for the interview schedule used.)

2.1.4. Interviews with employers

In addition, a series of interviews were conducted with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and employers from the private sector and the National Health Service (NHS) (see Appendix C for a list of representative bodies consulted). These interviews examined employers' views on what information prospective students need to inform their decisions about going into higher education, and the type of information employers want and why (see Appendix F for the interview schedule).

2.1.5. Interviews with career advisors

Telephone interviews were conducted with 'frontline' individuals working in a face-to-face role with potential and current students. The selection of interviewees was based on their relationship with specific target groups, for example, disabled students, prospective students in state and independent schools following traditional academic routes to HE, prospective students in further education (FE) following more vocational pathways, and mature students studying in the FE sector. In total, 10 interviews were conducted (see Appendix C for a list of interviewees and Appendix F for a copy of the interview schedule used).

In addition to the frontline career advisors, interviews took place with the course leader and with a tutor (also an author on IAG) on a London continuing professional development (CPD) course for career advisors.

2.1.6. Focus groups

A series of 11 focus groups were conducted with prospective and current HE students. The aim of the focus groups was to develop understanding of the information needs of a diverse range of prospective students. Educational establishments involved in this phase of the research were selected because of their ability to provide participants from specific target groups (see Appendix D for a list of participants). Participants were drawn from 11-18 secondary schools in state and independent sectors, sixth form colleges, FECs and HEIs.

These participating establishments offered a range of educational programmes involving students from varied backgrounds following different pathways into HE, and offered an opportunity to engage participants who would reflect the diversity of the HE student body. For example, three further education colleges were selected because of their ability to provide a diverse range of participants, such as mature students, young first-generation students following vocational pathways and Foundation Degree students. Similarly, specific 11-18 secondary schools were involved because they enabled the research to draw on the views of students remaining in the same school post-16. Minority ethnic students and independent school students were also included. The focus groups involved current undergraduates in both teaching and research-intensive higher education institutions to develop understanding of what information they considered important in terms of decision-making about going on to study in HE, particularly with the benefit of hindsight.

Sixty-six participants in total were involved in the focus groups. Fifty-three percent of the sample was female, 20% from ethnic minority groups, and 37% were classed as 'mature students'. Appendix D summarises the number of participants involved in this stage of the research by type of course/educational level, gender, ethnicity, and whether or not they were a mature student.

Six different 'information scenarios' were developed for use in the focus groups drawing on the results of the document review and stakeholder interviews. Each scenario contained two sets of information points relating to HE. These were used to stimulate discussion during the focus groups around which information set was preferred by which participants. In addition, participants were asked to discuss why they felt certain information was more important in terms of decision making, which information they had looked for when making their own choices, and where they had looked for this information. (See Appendix E for the interview schedule and information scenarios used in the focus groups.) The views of disabled students were considered to be a fundamental part of the research. Therefore, additional feedback on the scenarios was sought from the Disabled Students Engagement Group, a pre-existing group consisting of students based at one HEI (University A: see Appendix D). This group was accessed via the Head of the Disabled Students' Centre.

The emerging analysis of the information gleaned from the focus groups contributed to the development of the survey questionnaire. This analysis has been at two levels. The first identified the types of information considered most important relative to each target group and why; the second looked at the differences between the groups.

2.1.7. Survey

This stage of the research surveyed prospective and current HE students to determine judgements about general patterns of students' information requirements in terms of making decisions about what and where to study. The survey gathered responses to information requirements in light of evidence from the focus groups.

In devising the sample for the survey a range of educational establishments were targeted for inclusion in the study. These included 11-18 state schools, 11-18 independent schools, sixth form colleges, FECs, and HEIs. This allowed for a sample from a range of educational courses. Appendix G shows the full range targeted, the

courses chosen, the number of students sampled from each and the percentage response rate in terms of the overall course sampled.

A total of 2,017 questionnaires were completed by students from 38 educational establishments. However, there were a number of questionnaires where students had completed only background data. These questionnaires were therefore removed from the analyses. This left 1,942 questionnaires for subsequent analysis. There were also some students who indicated they are not and were never intending to go into HE (indeed most of these did not reply to more than the background questions). Since the investigation is into sources for information about going to HE, these were excluded from the analysis to give a total sample of 1,926. The final sample size in any particular establishment varied from 8 to 233 and response rates varied from 2% to 100% dependent on establishment. (See Appendix G for final sample size and response rates).

Overall the sample size is sufficient to treat the results as generalisable. With the interviews and focus groups, the evidence is indicative and its primary use in the project design was to inform the production of the survey questionnaires and the interpretation of the survey results.

Participants ranged from 16 to 58 years of age with 62% in the 16 to 18 age group. The gender breakdown was 59% female, 41% male, with 87% being of White British origin. Disappointingly, there were less than 2% of disabled participants in the sample. In an attempt to increase the number of such students, the help of Disability Services at one HEI was engaged, which emailed all 1,442 disabled students at that HEI, requesting that they fill in the questionnaire. Even with a repeated request, however, only two questionnaires were returned. The survey sample is not representative of the whole population, but has been put together to collect the views of a cross section of different types of prospective and current students.

The questionnaire asked a number of questions about the type of data they would find/have found useful when undertaking their search for information about HE, whether they tried to obtain this information, and if so, whether they succeeded. Additional questions asked what source of information they used when undertaking searches and whether it was useful. The questionnaire was checked against the requirements outlined in *Higher Ambitions* and the TQI data set to ensure that relevant information points were included. (See Appendix H for the checklist.) A range of background data was also collected (e.g. gender, ethnicity, course and subject being studied, maths and English GCSE grades). Pre-HE students were also asked whether they were intending to go on to HE and what course they intended to study.

Three versions of the questionnaire were developed (available as a separate document to this report). These were:

- Schools/colleges questionnaire.

- Foundation Degree/undergraduate questionnaire.

- Postgraduate questionnaire.

In the main, all three versions of the questionnaire asked for the same information but amendments were made to the wording/content to make each one appropriate to the educational level of respondents. There were minor differences between the questions for current or prospective students and some of the questions about sources of information were not appropriate for postgraduate students so were excluded from that version of the questionnaire.

2.2. Method of data analysis

This section describes the analysis used for the documentary evidence and the interview data, focus group data, and the questionnaire data.

2.2.1. Documentary evidence and sector stakeholder/HEI and FEC interviews

The information gleaned from the review of documentary evidence and sector stakeholder interviews was used to populate an 'information requirements matrix' which analysed information requirements deemed useful to prospective students under the following headings:

- Information item.

- Information type (e.g. financial, employment, social).

- Source of suggestion (either interviewee or from document review).

- Current availability (e.g. whether part of HESA data collection or the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education, DLHE, survey).

- Quality (current or likely quality of this data, characterised as 'good', 'fair' or 'poor').

- Attainability (ease with which information could be obtained, characterised as 'easy', 'medium' or 'difficult').

- Whether quantifiable.

- Cost (likely cost of providing the information, characterised as 'high, 'medium' or 'low' based on current availability, likely quality and attainability).

- Issues (related to provision of the information).

- Possible new data source (other means of collecting or providing data).

Data presented in the information matrix subsequently informed the following stages of the research. The matrix was also used to inform the analysis of the feasibility of providing prospective students with the points of information. This matrix was added to and revised as subsequent stages of the research were undertaken and served as an overall check list for the research project.

2.2.2. Employer interviews

Analysis of these interviews aimed to draw out main themes. Firstly, the information employers considered that prospective students needed to know when making decisions about HE, and secondly, the information employers wanted about HE. The latter was then further examined to determine which needs could be satisfied through

the provision of 'public information' about HE, and those that fell outside the scope of this research.

2.2.3. Career advisor interviews

These interviews were also analysed thematically, comparing the data across the different advisors in terms of their remit and also in relation to their perceptions of the needs of different prospective students. The key themes explored were their role (i.e. formal or informal advisor), approach to information, advice and guidance, the key information prospective students want, the information advisors need in order to support informed decision making, and the key sources used.

The interviews with tutors of a 'Career Advisors' course at one HEI (University B: see Appendix C) were analysed to identify the main stages in a prospective student's decision-making process and to gather views on the role of the career advisor and the value of existing sources of information available to prospective students.

2.2.4. Method of analysis of focus group data

Initially, the data was analysed thematically focusing on determining which points of information participants regard as most important and why. Attention was also paid to participants' information-seeking processes in relation to their own HE decision-making. The data was then analysed in terms of participants' background and educational pathway in order to determine differences between groups.

2.2.5. Method of quantitative analysis (survey data)

Analysing the questionnaires began by identifying those information items with the highest percentages reporting that they would find the information 'very useful'. In reporting the findings, the results concentrate on the most important, considering both educational and statistical significance. A cut off point of 30%, provides a set of 16 information items. Analysis by important subgroups (e.g. first generation applicants to HE, disabled, and STEM subject students) suggested that there was little difference in the 'top 16' ranked items and further analysis involving other attributes continued to support this. Given that identification of what is not considered important may also be of consequence, a sub-section is devoted to such findings. Further analysis was carried out to check if there were differences in the ranking of the items if the 'very useful' and 'useful' responses were considered together, but little difference was found.

Given that variation is expected between participants with different attributes in what is considered important, statistical analysis was carried out to examine whether the responses of different groups of prospective indicated differences in their declared needs for information. The attributes examined were:

- Disabled students.

- First-generation HE students.

- STEM students.

- Gender.

- Ethnicity.

- Health students.

- Living at home.

- Income.

- GCSE performance.

- School students/undergraduates/postgraduates.

- Independent school students.

- Foundation Degree students.

Examination was first carried out in to how the ranking of the 'top 16' items change by each of these attributes, then highlighted where there were major differences in responses, considering all the items, not just the 'top 16', by attributes. Differences of five percentage points in responses were regarded as significant. However, when considering differences between disabled/non-disabled respondents this difference is increased, given that there is only a small number of disabled respondents in the sample, which makes it more difficult to generalise.

However, the attributes are not independent, and hence the data will include a significant level of co-linearity between variables. For instance a greater proportion of participants from low income families may be first generation and may also be more likely to choose to live at home. Given this, the research was concerned to establish the effect of the attributes keeping other attributes constant, in order to isolate the differences. This required the use of regression analysis, using all of the attributes as 'explanatory' variables. Given that the data is in the form 'replied very useful' or 'did not reply very useful', i.e. a dichotomous response, logit regression was used in the analysis. The results examine which attributes were statistically significant by item and consider which of the attributes independently affect the most items.

The next section presents the results of the analysis in terms of the stated information requirements of the survey, focus groups and interview participants. These are compared with the perceived 'information needs' as derived from the document review and discussions with career advisors and sector stakeholders.

3. Information requirements

This section provides firstly an analysis of employer information requirements and then an in-depth analysis of the information requirements or 'wants' of prospective students based on the survey and focus groups. The final sub-section addresses what advisors, employers and sector stakeholders interviewed as part of this study felt that prospective students need to support decision-making.

3.1. Employer information requirements

Information that the employers and representative organisations interviewed as part of this research indicated business needs to know about HE fell into three main categories:

1. <u>Information about what individual institutions (HEIs and FECs providing higher education) can offer employers</u> – in terms of the courses on offer. This includes Foundation Degrees and short/CPD courses, clarity on costs, clarity on points of contact at HEIs and FECs for employer queries, and information on the quality of courses.

2. <u>Information about graduates coming from HE</u> – Relating to what individual graduates have learnt during their studies that goes beyond the degree classification or other award obtained.

3. <u>Information that gives a national picture of graduate numbers and HE specialisms</u> – this refers to 'forecasting' information on the number of students due to graduate in the different subjects, and also on which institutions are 'strong' in particular subjects or specialise in these.

The information seems to be required, unsurprisingly, to support employers in planning for recruitment of new staff and 'upskilling' of their existing workforce.

In the table below the information requirements raised in the interviews are broken down and suggestions made on how the information could be provided, and who could provide this.

Table 1 – Employer information requirements

Information required	How to provide?	Who could provide?
Courses available (including Foundation Degrees and short courses for CPD) to help up-skilling or re-skilling of employees	Information on institutions' websites and central source (e.g. UCAS Foundation Degree search). As short courses and Foundation Degrees may require a more bespoke approach working in collaboration with employers, there is also a need for one-to-one communication between employers and individual	UCAS (UG courses and Foundation Degrees) HEIs and FECs

Information required	How to provide?	Who could provide?
	institutions.	
Point of contact within HEIs/FECs for employers This requirement relates to managing communication between institutions and employers. The wider implication is that the point of contact must be responsive for the communication to be successful.	Information on institutions' websites. Consideration could be given to a directory of contacts available from DBIS, UKCES or SSCs websites	HEIs and FECs DBIS/UKCES
Clarity on costs (for co-funding and tuition fees) This information was mentioned specifically in relation with Foundation Degrees. SEMTA is carrying out HEFCE sponsored research to harmonise cost models across institutions.	Information on institutions' websites.	HEIs and FECs
Quality of offer Suggested by interviewee that this could be used by employers to evaluate value for money of investment in training.	Information currently available through Unistats.	Via existing data collections such as NSS, HESA student record, and DLHE survey
What graduates have learnt	Through 'employability statements' published by institutions. HEFCE is currently developing guidance for institutions for these statements. These will initially be at the institutional level and aimed primarily at informing students, but with a view that they will also be of use to employers. The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) due to be launched in academic year 2011/12 should also contribute to fulfilling employers requirements	Employability statements published by institutions HEAR

Information required	How to provide?	Who could provide?
	by providing information on students' learning and achievement beyond the degree classification. This does not cover postgraduate students.	
Forecast of the supply of graduates The purpose would be to provide a national picture of students graduating in the various subjects to inform employer recruitment planning and skills training requirements.	HESA student record (and application data from UCAS)	UKCES *Higher Ambitions* notes role for UKCES to advise on areas where there is an insufficient supply of graduates in particular disciplines.
Institutional strengths This information at a national level could inform employers of the levels of achievement of students within different subjects at each institution, as well as areas of research strength	HESA student record data on achievement in the various subjects by institution and HEFCE data on research income/awards.	HESA & HEFCE via DBIS, UKCES or SSCs

While some information about what institutions can offer employers may be provided through institutions' websites or through sources such as Unistats or the UCAS course search, there is still a requirement for collaboration between individual employers and institutions (particularly around short courses and Foundation Degrees). As such this is a function of business and community engagement and employer engagement within institutions. This could perhaps be strengthened by providing an overview of institutional strengths and specialisms at a national level. This would aid employer understanding of what each can offer, to get beyond a reliance on local links or employers' existing knowledge, possibly built on personal experience of HE or graduate recruitment and the 'brand recognition' of high profile institutions. Such a 'directory' could be made available via the DBIS, UKCES and/or SSCs websites to make it more visible to business.

Interviewees also mentioned a requirement to have more information about what graduates have learnt. This corresponds with the findings in the CBI/Nord Anglia survey *Emerging Stronger*[18] which noted that 52% of senior executives in the survey would prefer a more detailed breakdown of students' academic performance than the current degree classification. It would seem that this requirement will be addressed

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[18] *Emerging stronger: the value of education and skills in turbulent times. Education and skills survey 2009.* CBI/Nord Anglia Education Ltd

through the introduction of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and supported by the development of employability statements by institutions. Although the latter will initially be at an institutional level and primarily focussed at students, further development of the statements could take in the requirements of employers to supplement the information that would be available via the HEAR. Certain SSCs, such as Skillset for the creative media industry, are developing 'kite marks' which indicate that a programme fulfils certain criteria of interest to employers[19]. The role of the SSCs seems central to the coordinated dissemination of this information to industry rather than individual institutions.

National information on the supply of graduates and institutional strengths would also seem to be the responsibility of DBIS and the SSCs, perhaps with a role for UKCES, drawing on existing national data sets, rather than for individual institutions or HE sector agencies. This should also ensure that the information provided is 'employer facing'.

In fulfilling their current information needs, the interviewees in this research relied on past experience (their own HE experience or through recruitment of graduates), established links with institutions, and league tables such as those published by the *Times* and *Guardian*. These interviewees did not make much use of institutions own websites.

Employers, particularly those with significant annual graduate intakes (for example in the pharmaceutical, banking and finance, and petrochemical sectors) also purchase HESA data to inform their graduate recruitment programmes. Typically, they want to know the number of graduates by:

- Institution.

- Subject.

- Level of qualification obtained/degree classification.

- Ethnicity.

- Disability.

- Gender.

- Average salary of those entering related industries.

- Employment rates.

The next section examines prospective student information requirements, based on analysis of the survey and focus groups.

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[19] http://courses.skillset.org/pick_the_tick/what_is_the_tick

3.2. Prospective students' information requirements

3.2.1. Which information items are considered the most important?

In the survey, participants were presented with a list of 51 information items relevant to making their decisions about going to on to HE. They were asked to indicate on a four-point scale how useful they thought this information would be (1 = 'not at all useful', 4 = 'very useful'). Analysis began with the 'very useful' responses as these indicate a more decisive response (particularly given that the 1 to 4 scale did not allow a middle response).

This analysis covers all who replied to these questions except the few respondents (16) who indicated they are not and were never intending to go to HE. (See Section 2.17 above on the survey sample for more details.) Table 2 below shows the 16 information items considered 'very useful' by more than 30% of respondents. The items are listed in order. (Details for the full set of 51 items are presented in Appendix I1.)

Table 2 – Items of information about going to HE, ranked by the percentage of respondents indicating 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.4%
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%
3	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%
7	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%
9	Cost of halls of residence	37.7%
10	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%
11	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%
12	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%
13	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%
14	Maximum available bursary	34.5%
15	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%
16	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%

The highest ranking item was rated 'very useful' by just 55% of the respondents. These responses suggest that prospective students may not be aware of the importance of many items of information to them, if they are to make an informed decision about going to HE.

These 'most important' information items can be grouped under three headings:

- Satisfaction with the institution/course: The two items with the highest percentages (the percentages of students that are satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching and with their course) fell in this category, with over 50% citing these items as being very useful. Several other items related to study, such as 'weekly hours of teaching time', also appear in this 'top 16' list.

- Employment: Employment rates are ranked somewhat more highly than salary levels, whilst recognition by professional bodies is ranked almost as high as employment rates. As expected, the proportion of respondents rating 'recognition by professional bodies' varies by subject (with architecture scoring very high), but even 28% of students applying to study courses grouped in the History subject code reckoned that this item is 'very useful'.

- Cost: Costs of halls of residence are ranked higher than bursary information. Whilst the ranking of cost items is generally below the ranking of student satisfaction and employability information it is still noteworthy that three of the top 16 items relate to costs.

An alternative way of analysing respondents' preferences is to look at the proportion of rating each item of information either 'useful' or 'very useful'. In this analysis the top 16 items of information are rated either useful or very useful by over 60% of the respondents. Nevertheless, the relative importance of the items is more or less the same. Only one item ('cost of halls of residence') drops out of the 'top 16' and it only falls to rank 17. It is replaced in the 'top 16' by 'ranking in newspaper league tables'. This analysis largely confirms the impression given by Table 2. The full rankings and percentages by 'very useful' and 'useful' combined are provided in Appendix I2.

Participants in the focus groups regarded information points from the scenarios relating to employability as very important. Being able to get a job following completion of study was a key issue. Participants also indicated that information that helped develop notions around 'knowing what to expect' were important. In the focus groups these included weekly contact hours, class size and assessment methods. Focus group participants tended to place a high value on the views of students on their experience and student satisfaction. There was some awareness that this could be subjective. For some participants the information was used to provide a balance to the information on institutions' websites, and for others it was to help their decisions on whether they would feel 'comfortable' at a particular institution.

The evidence gathered from focus groups provides some further insights relevant to the interpretation of these data. Some prospective students regard employment rates as evidence of the value added by the course. For example one participant said:

> *'If they [graduates] have managed to get a good job or good grades then obviously the uni must be doing some things right and some of those things must be good.'*

Others regard students' satisfaction (particularly with their course and the teaching) as evidence that the course is motivating and that this is the key to added value. That

is, there is some difference in emphasis between participants in the extent to which they see the outcomes *they* can expect from a degree as a product of what the institution does or as a product of their own engagement and effort.

Many of the participants in the focus groups expressed a belief that outcomes for students depended on the effort that each individual devoted to their studies. As one said:

> *'A lot of that is down to you, not the course. If you've got the contacts or you're motivated enough to go out and find the best job not settle for anything.'*

A number of participants argued that information, for example, on drop-out rates was of little interest to them as this simply reflected the variation in students' effort.

The focus groups also revealed that participants wanted information at a course rather than an institutional level. These findings also correspond with comments made in a recent survey of users of Unistats conducted by UCAS in which a large number of respondents called for more information to be made available at a course rather than subject level. The information items in the 'top 16' in Table 2 above also relate to a large extent to course level information.

Implications

An information system for prospective students should concentrate on satisfaction with teaching, actual employment outcomes and costs.

3.2.2. Did they try to get the information and did they succeed?

Survey participants were asked whether they had tried to find each of the 51 items of information. Responses to these questions were used to calculate how many of the items each respondent reported that they had tried to collect. Cases where respondents answered neither yes nor no were treated as a *de facto* 'no'. Seventy five per cent of respondents say they looked for five items or more, 50% reported looking for 11 items and 25% reported looking for 21 items or more.

Prospective students vary considerably in the extent of their 'information seeking behaviour' and it would probably be wise to assume that changes in the way that information is made available will not dramatically change the way that they approach this task. (Evidence of variation in the extent of information seeking behaviour by respondent characteristics is reported in a later section). If this assumption is accepted it appears that it would be of little value to try to provide more than 16 items of information. This impression is reinforced when the extent to which respondents reported trying to find even the 16 items most likely to be rated 'very useful' is taken into consideration.

Table 3 (Column 1) below shows that less than half the respondents in the sample had tried to look for 11 out of the 16 most highly ranked items in Table 2. This is partly explained by respondents' estimate of the usefulness of the information. Respondents who rated the information 'very useful' were much more likely to look for it (as shown in Table 3, Column 3). However, a surprisingly large proportion (between a quarter and a half) of those who rated items in Table 2 'very useful'

reported that they had not tried to find the information (Table 3). A maximum of two-thirds of these respondents reported that they had tried to look for information on student satisfaction and employability data. One possible explanation is that respondents were unaware that these data might be accessible.

Table 3 – Percentage of respondents indicating that they had tried and succeeded in getting the information items they had deemed as 'very useful'

'Rank	Information item[a]	% tried to find this information (whole sample)	% succeeded in getting the information (of those that said they looked)	% tried to find this information (of those that said 'very useful')
		(1)	(2)	(3)
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	47.3%	88.0%	58.3%
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	45.3%	87.0%	59.7%
3	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	46.5%	82.9%	66.6%
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	43.5%	88.2%	64.3%
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	42.2%	84.4%	56.2%
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	36.7%	81.6%	49.2%
7	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	36.8%	79.9%	54.6%
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	46.8%	93.8%	65.4%
9	**Cost of halls of residence**	**52.5%**	**93.6%**	**80.4%**
10	**Weekly hours of teaching contact time**	**54.4%**	**89.1%**	**72.4%**
11	**Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework**	**55.0%**	**90.7%**	**73.9%**
12	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	40.2%	83.9%	57.6%
13	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	42.4%	91.3%	62.2%
14	**Maximum available bursary**	**51.3%**	**89.0%**	**77.4%**
15	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	37.5%	89.7%	58.4%
16	**Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary**	**50.3%**	**90.2%**	**75.1%**

[a]. A full list of all 51 items is presented in Appendix I3.

Participants in the focus groups had looked for or thought of looking for very few points of information detailed in the scenarios (which are the same as the information items presented in the survey questionnaires). For focus group participants the main information sought related primarily to course content, finance and accommodation. Participants were also unaware of much of the information, and in some cases the significance of this in relation to choice of institution or course.

Table 3 is ranked by the percentage replying 'very useful' and the same ranking does not emerge from the percentages replying they had looked for the item. Three cost items were towards the top of the rankings by 'tried to find' (with over 50%). The other two items with over 50% were course related items (**bold** rows in Table 3 above). Consideration was given to whether this may be due to respondents considering that they were likely to find this item and these items did report high percentages of success (column 2). However, so did most of the other items in the 'top 16'. It may also suggest that the information is particularly important to them.

Continuing the examination of whether prospective students looked for information, the analysis focused on respondents who rated information on student satisfaction with course and student satisfaction with teaching 'very useful'. Comparison was then undertaken to look at the information sources used by respondents who said they had looked for the information and the information sources used by respondents who had not looked for the information. Those who had used any of the online comparison sources were significantly more likely to report that they had looked for the information. Between 25% and 34% respondents using the online comparison sources said they had not looked for information on students' satisfaction with teaching or their course. The equivalent range for those who reported they had not used an online comparison site was 43-48%.

Analysis of responses for the employability items produced a similar pattern, although in this case there was no significant difference for respondents using the Direct.gov site. Of respondents who used either Unistats or another comparison site, a fifth (around 20%) reported they had not looked for employment rates and a third reported they had looked for data on salaries. The equivalent proportions for those who had not used these sites were roughly 40% for employment data and just under 50% for salary data. Those that look for information make more use of a variety of sources.

A large majority of respondents who looked for information reported that they had found it (Table 3, Column 2). Even for the items ranked outside the 'top 16' (see Appendix I3), the percentages were high, with only one case marginally below 70%.

Implications

Many prospective students do not look for information even when they think it would be very useful. Therefore, an approach which aims to increase the extent to which prospective students compare the quality of HE courses will need to change the way in which they are guided towards available information and made aware of the importance and use of that information.

3.2.3. Items which respondents did not consider very useful

Some items of information were only classed as 'very useful' by a very small percentage of respondents. Items with less than 15% indicating 'very useful' in aggregate are listed in Table 4. These items were also the lowest ranked when the categories 'useful' and 'very useful' are combined. Respondents expressed little interest in the characteristics of other students attending the institution. Evidence from the focus groups suggested that lack of interest in the proportion of students

'like me' who drop out was due to a belief that student drop out reflected the attitude and work rate of the student rather than course design and academic support.

This finding was also reflected in the focus groups with factors such as gender and class of students at the institution regarded as irrelevant or unimportant to decision making. This was largely the case with ethnicity of the student body. Where this was mentioned it was in regard to issues around racial tolerance at the institution or in the surrounding areas.

Table 4 – Items with low response of 'very useful': overall responses

'Very useful' rank	Information item
38	Street crime figures for the locality of the university
39	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)
40	Proportion of students like me that drop out
41	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students
42	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday
43	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students
44	Ethnic mix of students at this university
45	Nursery provision on campus
46	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths
47	What proportion of students on this course are male/female
48	Proportion of students from different social class groups
49	Proportion of international students on this course
50	Age range of students on this course
51	Proportion of disabled students at this university

3.2.4. Sources of information most used

Participants were presented with a list asking which sources of information they currently use when making their decisions about going to HE. The percentages indicating that they used this source are shown in Table 5, Column 1. This table (Columns 2 and 3) also shows respondents' ranking of the usefulness of each source of information (1 = 'not at all useful', 4 = 'very useful').

Table 5 – Use and usefulness of sources of information, ranked by the percentage of respondents indicating that they used these sources

'Use' rank	Source	% indicating that they used this source	% indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)	% indicating that this source was 'useful' or 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)
		(1)	(2)	(3)
1	University prospectuses/websites	88.4%	54.3%	89.6%
2	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	81.1%	48.3%	83.9%
3	Family and friends	70.5%	33.7%	75.8%
4	Formal university visits/interviews	68.3%	58.4%	88.2%
5	Teachers (school or college)	65.2%	32.0%	76.3%
6	Career advisors (school or college)	39.2%	29.5%	70.6%

'Use' rank	Source	% indicating that they used this source	% indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)	% indicating that this source was 'useful' or 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)
		(1)	(2)	(3)
7	Any other online university/course comparison website	29.6%	35.4%	80.7%
8	Unistats online university/course comparison website	29.2%	33.7%	78.9%
9	Direct.gov	24.9%	29.0%	68.9%
10	Students' opinion websites	23.4%	37.1%	78.6%
11	Connexions (website or advisors)	21.9%	30.2%	70.6%
12	Aimhigher activities/website	18.4%	31.7%	70.9%

[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

The two main sources were institutional prospectuses/websites and UCAS (website, Directory, or Big Guide). However, the replies still imply that nearly one fifth of the sample had not made use of the UCAS information and that many of those who did visit this site (74%) did not click to get to the Unistats site. Respondents seemed to rely heavily on institutional sources of information, with formal institution visits featuring highly (68%) as well as the prospectuses (88%). In fact, institution visits were regarded as the most useful source of information by those who used this source of information.

Views expressed in the focus groups were in line with this preference. For example,

> 'Sometimes you go on university sites if you're looking for specific things, sometimes they're a bit vague and you don't know until you get there (open day) the finer details.'

Participants in the focus groups tended to put a lot of trust in the information they gathered from institutions' websites and open days. They gave high credibility to views gathered from students they met on open days. In explaining why they had not bothered to look at any comparison site one participant explained:

> 'You get a lot of this given to you at Open Day.'

A high percentage of respondents (65% or over) also reported using family and friends, and teachers as sources of information.

It should be noted that the research did not look at the information requirements of the family (parents/guardians) of prospective students, which was not possible within the timescale of the study. Therefore recommendations in this report are based on prospective students as the primary users of information.

There is a large drop in the percentage indicating they used a source after the top five ranked items. Respondents reported far more use of teachers than of career advisors. Reported use of official sources of information was generally low: Unistats, Direct.gov website, Connexions (website or advisors), and Aimhigher activities/website were all less than 30%. Only two of the schools participating in the focus groups had directed prospective students towards Unistats.

The proportion of survey participants reporting that they had used any of Direct.gov, Unistats or another comparison web site varied greatly by educational establishment (between 1% and nearly 60%). The small sample size for a number of schools means that this comparison should be treated with caution, but the combined evidence from the focus groups and the survey data suggests the possibility of a strong school effect. The focus group evidence also suggests considerable variation between schools and colleges in the extent to which prospective students had accessed any formal career advice when making their decisions about application to HE.

Examination of the relationship between the percentage of prospective students at each school or college reporting that they had used Direct.gov, Unistats and other online comparison sites revealed no significant relationship between use of Direct.gov and the comparison sites (Unistats or other sites). However there was quite a strong correlation between the percentage of prospective students at an establishment reporting use of Unistats and the percentage reporting use of other comparison sites.

Sources that were used more frequently (Column 1) were also rated more useful (Columns 2 and 3) by a higher proportion of respondents who used them. This is particularly striking in Column 2 which shows the proportion rating the source 'very useful'. Sources which directly compared institutions were less likely to be rated 'very useful' than institutions' prospectuses and visits. When the 'useful' and 'very useful' ratings are added together (Column 3) this difference becomes less clear, particularly in the case of Unistats. These data indicate that, currently, prospective students believe that information they gather directly from the institution is most useful to them.

Implications

Prospective students rely most heavily on information gathered directly from the institution. It is therefore likely that comparable information will have more of an impact on students' decision-making if it is accessible on institutions' websites or UCAS.

Pupils attending some secondary schools make much more use of comparison websites than those attending other schools. It would be helpful to find out why this is the case and to increase the use of more effective practice where it relates to IAG.

The discussions at the focus groups revealed differences in the extent to which participants talked to formal advisors. For example, at the 11-18 state school and FEC located in an urban area none of the participants had spoken to a formal career advisor, while participants from the suburban 11-18 state school had all done so. In addition, the participants from the FEC said they were unsure of what provision was available in the college, and while they had heard of Connexions they had not thought to approach them. All the participants were first generation entrants to HE. A significant number of participants in the focus groups had spoken to tutors about their choice of institution, particularly mature students on the Access and Foundation Degree programmes and younger students on vocational programmes in FE who had no contact with more formal sources of IAG (and who were all first generation entrants).

The undergraduates who had attended independent schools also said they had received a lot of information from teachers in the school and that:

'Independent schools inform you which universities are the best.'

In contrast, two participants in the undergraduate group that had attended the same state school felt that they had little IAG from their school.

A lack of appropriate IAG can have a negative impact on the possibilities open to prospective students, and this was emphasised by one participant who felt that as a result of not receiving the correct guidance she did not undertake work experience that was a requirement of the course she had intended to apply for.

The focus groups also revealed that staff in schools or colleges were not making prospective students aware of Unistats (as they did not seem to be aware of this resource themselves in many cases). Table 5 above shows the proportion in the survey indicating that career advisors or teachers are 'very useful' as a source of information is comparatively low (around a third). The variability in the quality and level of IAG corroborates the findings from the National Student Forum report and House of Commons Committee report referenced previously.

3.2.5. Responses to items by different groups

The users of information are not a homogeneous group of 'prospective students' and therefore different groups might find different information 'very useful' or differ in their use of sources of information. This section examines this possibility for 15 sub-groups (full definitions are given in Appendix I4):

- Female/male students.

- Students identifying themselves as Asian/Asian British.

- Students identifying themselves as Chinese/other Asian background.

- Students identifying themselves as Black/Black British.

- Disabled students.

- First generation students.

- Students applying for or enrolled on STEM subjects.

- Students applying for or enrolled on Health related subjects.

- Students planning to live at home or living at home whilst studying.

- Students from low income families.

- Students from middle income families.

- Students with low GCSE results

- Students already enrolled on undergraduate courses.

- Students enrolled on postgraduate courses.

- Students attending an independent school.

This section reports the 'raw differences' only. This means, for example, that the figures for respondents living at home do not control for the relationship between living at home and family income. Controls are added in a following section (see Section 3.2.9). The sample size varied slightly when considering different subgroups because of a small number of non-responses. The sample sizes, along with the percentages with each attribute are given in Appendix I5. The numbers in the sample were low for respondents identifying themselves as disabled, Chinese/other Asian background and Black/Black British, and hence the analysis by these factors should be considered as less reliable than the others.

The information items ranked in the 'top 10' by all respondents (Table 2) also appear in the 'top 16' of at least 14 of the 15 subgroups in Table 6. Ten of the 15 groupings by attribute gave the same top two ranked items as the overall (proportions of students satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching and proportions of students satisfied or very satisfied with their course). This suggests that (at least as far as the top 10 items are concerned) different groups of prospective students are most interested in the same pieces of information.

At the bottom of Table 6 the row 'Number of changes in 'top 16'' counts the number of items ranked in the 'top 16' by this subgroup that were not ranked in the 'top 16' by all respondents. Chinese/other Asian background respondents, STEM subject students and postgraduate students have the highest number of changes, though even in these cases there are five or less changes and none of these 'new entrants' appears in the top eight items ranked by these subgroups. The sample sizes for Chinese/other Asian background respondents and postgraduate students are low and therefore should be regarded with considerable caution.

Further analysis found no discernible pattern (e.g. by type of information using categories such as employability, student satisfaction, costs) in the ranking of items by subgroups.

Table 6 – Table of ranks: groupings by attributes compared to overall

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Information item[a]	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Attribute 'very useful' ranks														
			Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/Other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Medium Income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%	1	1	4	7	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	1	3	1
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%	2	2	9	5	8	2	1	2	2	2	2	9	2	5	2
3	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%	3	7	3	3	10	3	3	3	7	7	4	11	4	10	5
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%	4	5	13	1	4	4	7	6	5	9	5	1	3	1	8

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Information item[a]	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Attribute 'very useful' ranks														
			Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/Other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Medium Income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%	7	4	8	10	3	5	6	4	4	3	3	13	7	7	3
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%	8	6	5	13	7	8	12	7	3	4	6	7	5	2	12
7	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%	5	8	10	12	15	6	4	5	10	10	7	10	8	11	10
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%	9	3	2	2	2	9	10	8	6	6	8	6	6	6	9
9	Cost of halls of residence	37.7%	6	13	15	14	12	7	5	9	25	12	10	18	15	24	4
10	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%	15	15	18	15	14	10	17	11	9	14	9	2	9	8	7
11	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%	19	10	22	26	9	13	18	14	8	13	13	5	12	4	18
12	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%	10	12	6	9	17	12	8	16	14	16	12	14	10	16	14
13	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%	12	11	28	17	19	11	9	12	16	15	15	15	17	18	6
14	Maximum available bursary	34.5%	16	16	25	11	16	17	20	10	12	5	11	12	13	n/a	22
15	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%	11	9	14	6	6	16	11	18	11	11	16	3	11	9	19
16	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%	18	23	29	8	20	19	21	15	13	8	14	8	14	n/a	25
	Number of changes in 'top16'		2	1	5	2	3	2	4	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	3

[a] Appendix I6 gives a similar table for the full 51 items.

Appendices I7-I12 provide detailed analysis of the preferences and information seeking behaviour of the following sub-groups:

- Disabled students (Appendix I7).

- First generation HE students (Appendix I8).

- STEM students (Appendix I9).

- Foundation Degree students (Appendix I10).

- Postgraduate students (Appendix I11).

- Students applying to or attending 'top-ranked' institution[20] (Appendix I12).

The sample sizes for these subgroups, especially for disabled and for postgraduate students are small and the patterns in these data should be regarded as very tentative. However, the data suggest the following distinctive features:

- Disabled students are more interested than others in the availability of specialist equipment.

- Disabled students make much less use of UCAS as a source of information and are more likely to regard Aimhigher and institution visits as very useful sources of information.

- Second generation students are more likely to rate pieces of information as very useful: particularly those relating to accommodation and the local area (probably because they are more likely to live away from home).

- Second generation students make more use of each source of information.

- STEM students are more likely to rate information as very useful. In particular they are more interested in the availability of specialist equipment, industry links and undergraduates' A level grades.

- STEM students make greater use of the available information sources, notably UCAS and online comparison sites.

- Postgraduate students are more interested than other respondents in the proportion of assessment by coursework, but otherwise their preferences are quite similar to other respondents.

- Postgraduate students make less use of most of the sources of information and they were less likely to rate institution prospectuses as useful and more likely to rate comparison websites and students' opinions as very useful.

- Foundation Degree students are less likely to rate pieces of information 'very useful'.

- Foundation Degree students were less likely than other respondents to regard UCAS as a very useful source of information and they were more likely to regard career advisors as a very useful source of information.

- Students attending or applying to 'top ranked' institutions are more likely than other respondents to regard information about employment after graduation and institutional ranking as very useful.

Implications

An information system which provides the top ten information items in Table 2 will meet the preferences of most sub-groups of prospective students.

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[20] Refers to institutions ranked in the top twenty of the 2009 Sunday Times University Guide. See Appendix I12 for a fuller explanation

Increasing the number of items beyond this will meet the preferences of some groups of prospective students and not others.

3.2.6. Which information items are considered the most important – does this vary by attribute?

This analysis examines the independent effects of various respondent characteristics whilst keeping other characteristics constant. Analyses were undertaken to identify the characteristics significantly affecting the likelihood that a respondent would rate each of the information items 'very useful'. Since it is possible that the school or college the respondent was attending could affect their responses, clustering by these educational establishments was done to take account of the different 'levels' in the data (individual and institutional).

Analyses were undertaken to identify the characteristics significantly affecting the likelihood that a respondent would rate each piece of information as 'very useful'. Or that would have a significant effect on whether they tried to get the information in the 'top 16' ranked list (Table 2 above). Full details of the analysis are presented in Appendix I13

The following characteristics had a significant effect on the likelihood of rating a number of information items 'very useful':

- Gender: Males were significantly less likely than females to rate 14 out of the top 16 items 'very useful'.

- Ethnicity: Those identifying themselves as Asian/Asian British were significantly more likely than others to rate seven out of the 'top 16' items 'very useful'.

- Examination performance: Academically high-performing respondents were significantly more likely than others to rate seven out of the 'top 16' items 'very useful'.

- Postgraduate students: Postgraduate students were significantly less likely than others to rate eight out of the 'top 16 items' very useful, but they were also significantly more likely to rate two of the items 'very useful'.

There were very few significant differences between disabled/non-disabled, first/second generation, STEM/non-STEM, health/non-health related courses, and attending an independent/state school.

In addition, respondents living at home (or intending to) were less likely to look for information on satisfaction with the institution/course, STEM students and those with high GCSE grades were more likely to look for information on employment, and respondents with high GCSE grades and those from low income families were more likely to try to get information relating to costs.

Implications

Some groups of prospective students display much stronger appetite for information than others. Those with a strong appetite include: females, those identifying

themselves as Asian/Asian British and those with high grades in school examinations. Each of these is a 'high participation rate' group.

These prospective students are more likely than others to take advantage of improvements to the information system. Any approach to providing information should therefore take account of the risk of increasing gaps between students.

3.2.7. Did any group not succeed in finding information?

Since most respondents who looked for information reported that they had found it, there is little room for the variation required for statistical analysis. The analysis did, however, try to identify any subgroups that were less likely to succeed in getting the information. Appendix I15 gives the signs for variables which were significant in this analysis. Problems did arise in the analysis because of the large percentage replying 'yes' to whether they had found the information they looked for.

Overall, few attributes were significant. This, as noted above, was to be expected given that most respondents were indicating that they had found the information. Chinese/other Asian background, Black/Black British and male respondents had a significant negative estimated effect for between a quarter and a third of the information items, indicating they were less likely to have found the information. (However, it should be remembered that the numbers of Chinese/other Asian background and Black/Black British respondents in the sample were very small, and this affects the reliance that can be put on the results). No group gave a large number of positive effects; the largest was GCSE performance, where for just under one fifth of the items those with higher GCSE indicated on average they were more likely to have found the information. Therefore, no particular group of users seem less likely to be able or unable to find the information they looked for.

3.2.8. Are any groups more likely to use certain sources?

As in the above, analysis of the regressions indicated (significantly) that particular subgroups were more or less likely to use certain sources than other groups. The full table is available in Appendix I16 and indicates there were significant differences in a large number of cases:

- Respondents identifying themselves as Asian/Asian British and respondents with higher GCSE grades were more likely to use many of the sources (eight and seven out of 12 sources respectively).

- Postgraduate students, and to a lesser extent male respondents, were less likely to use many of the sources (11 and five out of 12 sources respectively).

When examining whether, having used the source, respondents found it 'very useful' (see Appendix I17), the subgroup that indicated significant differences for a large number of sources was independent school students, who were more likely to state that sources were 'very useful' (six out of 12 sources).

Some of the sources varied significantly between a large number of different subgroups, often not in the same direction between the subgroups:

- Formal institutional visits/interviews were classed as more useful on average by disabled students, independent school students, and those with high

GCSEs, and less useful by males, Chinese/other Asian background and low and medium income respondents.

- Family and friends were classed as more useful on average by disabled, second generation students, undergraduates and postgraduates, and independent school students.

- Teachers were classed as more useful on average by disabled undergraduates and postgraduates, and independent school students, and less useful by those with high GCSE grades.

- Career advisors were classed as more useful on average by Black/Black British, independent school students and undergraduates, and less useful by respondents with high GCSE grades and postgraduates.

Implications

All groups use institutions' websites and/or UCAS. Therefore no group is likely to be disadvantaged if these are made the main sources for the information set regarded as 'very useful' by prospective students.

3.2.9. *Motivation for studying in HE*

The survey asked participants about the importance of several factors in motivating their choice of subject to study. This question allowed an analysis of possible associations between participants' motivation and the type of information which they believed was very useful. The analysis in this section is restricted to 1,926 questionnaires remaining after excluding 31 respondents who indicated that they never intended to go to HE and a further 60 respondents who did not enter any responses for the items asking for an evaluation of the usefulness of different types of information. The proportions of respondents indicating that each of several motivations were 'very important' are shown below in Table 7.

Table 7 – Proportion of respondents indicating that factors were 'very important' in their choice of which subject to study

Motivation	% indicating 'very important'
Salary	19%
Status of job/profession	22%
Creativity of Job	32%
Opportunity to care for or develop others	28%
Opportunity to make a positive contribution to society/environment	34%
Technical knowledge and skill required for future employment	32%

Table 8 shows how differences in motivation were related to participant characteristics[21]. Characteristics which had no significant effect on the likelihood that a respondent indicated that a factor was very important in their choice of subject are

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[21] Logit regressions examined the relationships between respondent characteristics and the likelihood of each motivation being regarded as 'very important'. The results show whether each of the factors was significant after taking account of the other characteristics that are included in the analysis.

omitted from Table 8 but were included in the analysis (i.e. parents' occupation, first generation student, disabled student). A plus sign indicates a positive relationship and a minus sign a negative relationship.

Table 8 – Characteristics which were significantly related to the likelihood that a respondent indicated that a motivation was 'very important' in their choice of subject

Characteristic	Motivation variable					
	Salary	Status	Creativity	Caring	Contributing	Technical skill
Asian/Asian British	+	+		+	+	+
Chinese/other Asian background	+	+			+	
Black/Black British	+	+		+	+	
Female	-		+	+	+	-
Age		+				+
Low income family	-					
Middle income family	-					
GCSE score			-	-		
Living at home				+	+	
STEM subject				-		+
N	1,484	1,484	1,484	1,480	1,479	1,481

'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05). 'N' indicates the number of responses.

The relationships shown in Table 8 need to be taken into account when interpreting the results in Table 9, which show the extent to which the likelihood of regarding a piece of information as 'very useful' is related to motivation for subject choice as well as respondents' characteristics. The main message of Table 9 is that motivation in choosing a subject to study makes a difference to whether respondents believe that information is very useful.

Six pieces of information (from the top 12) are selected for Table 9, two concerned with student satisfaction and four with employability. As with Table 8, this table omits respondent characteristics (in this case ethnicity, family income, disability, living at home, first generation students) and one of the motivations (caring for and developing others) which did not significantly affect the likelihood of respondents indicating that any of these information items was 'very useful'.

Table 9 – Characteristics and motivation and the likelihood of indicating that an information items is 'very useful'

Characteristic/ motivation for subject choice	Information item					
	Satisfaction with teaching	Satisfaction with course	Graduate employment	Professional or managerial job	Salary	Recognition by professional bodies
Female	+	+	+	+	+	
Age	-	-	-	-	-	
Mother's job	+		+			
Father's job	-		-	-		
GCSE scores	+	+	+			+
STEM subject		+			+	
Salary motivation 'very important'			+	+	+	
Status motivation 'very important'	+				+	+
Creative motivation 'very important'	+	+	+	+	+	+
Contribution to society/environment motivation 'very important'	+	+				+
Technical skill motivation 'very important'		+	+	+		+
Constant						+
N	1,349	1,350	1,413	1,411	1,421	1,428

'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05). 'N' indicates the number of responses.

It would seem to be expected that respondents who reported strong salary motivation to be significantly more likely to think that employment information (particularly on salary) is very useful. However, all of the motivations (bar one, 'caring for and developing others') are found to be significant in at least one of these cases and the creative motivation is (positively) significant in every case. Moreover, it is interesting to note that these differences in motivation affect the extent to which respondents believe that information on student satisfaction is very useful.

Implications

Prospective students place different values on different graduate outcomes. Some of these differences are systematically related to their interest in different pieces of information.

Providing a balance of information items (as in Table 2) should meet the needs of each type of motivation.

3.2.10. Conclusions on prospective students' information requirements

In conclusion, prospective students find most useful information which relates to:

- Satisfaction with the standard of teaching/course.

- Employability.

- Costs.

Although there is some variation between different types of prospective students, the 'top 10' information items in Table 2 above are deemed 'very useful' by all types. The main sources of information are institutions and UCAS with a relatively small proportion using existing online comparative sources. Not more than 55% look for information and of those that do look around 80% and above report that they have found this information.

The survey and focus group discussions have provided a picture of what prospective students 'want' to know. The next section looks at what they may 'need' in the views of sector stakeholders and how these compare.

3.3.   Information 'need'

The career advisors interviewed were most in agreement that prospective students need the following types of information to make decisions (that is that it was very important or very useful to decisions):

- <u>Student learning experience</u> (what will be expected of them and what they can expect). This includes teaching contact time, assessment methods, standard of teaching, course content and facilities available (relating to studies, e.g. library).

- <u>Employability and future study prospects</u>, such as the type of occupation for which the course is preparing students, occupations of recent graduates and graduate salaries.

- <u>Costs and financial support</u>, including 'hidden costs' and bursary information.

In addition to these, career advisors interviewed were also all in agreement that information on the safety of the area of the institution and the concentration of student housing in the locality were very important.

The career advisors were also in agreement that prospective students required clear information to enable comparison. The Access coordinator noted that the language used in UCAS entry profiles for example is not easily understood by the prospective students she works with and that this can act as a barrier. The Connexions advisor also felt that the technical language used makes it difficult to help prospective students understand what is being said. The requirement for clarity is extended to course titles.

There are differences given for the reasons that prospective students need this information. With regard to employability related information, the head of careers at an independent school advises prospective students to look at future careers and how HE qualifications will assist them to reach this goal. The head of careers at a

large 6th form college noted that a key area for pupils at their institution is what sort of job they can get after graduating with a certain degree. Whereas, the Connexions advisor noted that first generation students wanted to know if HE is a passport to employment. These prospective students to HE have a lack of knowledge about institutions across the country, and although they may have good A Level results they will ask if they are 'good enough' to go to their local institution.

Information on costs and financial support is felt to be of particular importance for mature students. The Connexions advisor and head of careers at an urban FEC suggested that first generation students wanted to know how much it would cost to study and whether they could afford it.

An area that advisors felt that prospective students needed to know about is admissions requirements. There was a perceived lack of clarity particularly in relation to non-traditional entrants and non-traditional qualifications, and that changes to admissions requirements and processes have not been communicated clearly by institutions. (It should be noted that a recent study by Linking London[22] also found that the quality of information on entry criteria is less clear and comprehensive for non-A level applicants in entry profiles on UCAS).

Areas of information where there is considerable variation amongst advisors are:

- <u>Research quality and quality and experience of teaching staff</u>. This was felt to be very important by the independent school advisor and the Connexions advisor, but not important by the Access coordinator or head of sixth form.

- <u>Links with industry</u>. This was felt to be less or unimportant by the independent school advisor, Access coordinator and head of 6th Form.

Appendix J has a summary of advisors' comments regarding the specific points of information and variations in views.

An interview with an expert on career advice and tutor on a CPD course for career advisors emphasised that prospective students have different information requirements at the various stages of the decision-making process, and that prospective students do not begin this process from the 'same place'. Some may begin with an idea of what or where to study, while others may have no set idea. The decision-making process may include the following broad stages which will each require different information (and information sources) to support them:

- Identification of subject area to study (includes the use of profiling information to understand prospective students' interests and strengths); often will make use of the Standford test and Morrisby profile.

- Identification of which degree to study (decisions here are largely based on current studies and ideas for future careers), sources used here include UCAS course search, institutions' prospectuses, Prospects.ac.uk for

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[22] *Quality of admissions information for applicants to full-time undergraduate study.* Linking London Lifelong Learning Network. February 2010.

information on careers, as well as league tables and informal sources such as push.co.uk and whatuni.com.

- There may also be a requirement for a 'scoping stage' to move prospective students beyond the courses and careers they are familiar with, rather than just come to an understanding of what courses their qualifications will get them on to. Sources used here may include Centigrade, UK Course finder and Fast Tomato.

- Once prospective students are reaching a decision about what and where to study (pre-application stage) the type of information on Unistats is felt to be useful (but guidance is required on how to use and interpret the information provided).

Career advisors did not feel that users needed to access information from a single source, but rather needed to know how to sift through and make use of the different information sources available. The CPD tutor likened the role of career advisors to that of an 'information broker'.

Sector stakeholders consulted as part of this study were largely of the opinion that prospective students need information related to the learning experience and outcomes of studying (financial and employment as well as academic). The key areas mentioned were around:

- Course content.

- Quality and experience of staff.

- Learning requirements (including assessment methods, contact hours).

- Costs (tuition fees, 'hidden' course costs, living costs).

- Financial support.

- Outcomes (career outcomes, career paths, 'drop out' rates).

Particular emphasis was given to information relating to career outcomes and awareness of the costs of study. One interviewee described prospective students as "needing information to help them understand the financial, employment and academic benefits of investing their money".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, employers and representative organisations interviewed for this research felt that prospective students needed information on:

- How their study choice fitted within the wider careers landscape – what industries required in certain roles.

- Employability prospects (including salary data).

- Career opportunities for particular subjects.

This corresponds with findings from the CBI report *Stronger Together*[23] that there is currently available "only a limited snapshot of graduates' career destinations and employment rates". The report concludes that data is required on:

- Tracking employment outcomes.

- Economic returns from different degree subjects.

- Clear guidance on routes into and returns from different types of jobs.

While the importance of information on career routes and pathways cannot be underestimated, provision of the information does not seem to be a role solely or primarily for institutions and the HE sector.

Information on the types of jobs graduates enter, employment prospects and earning potential of different subjects (or particular subjects across different institutions) is relevant to prospective students' decision-making on what and where to study, and therefore an argument can be made for provision of this information by the sector. The career development paths and requirements of particular industries would seem to fall within the remit of SSCs and other industry bodies. For example, the SSC Cogent is currently working with employers to develop 'job role profiles' for jobs in the science-based industries.

In summary, advisors, employers and sector stakeholders interviewed were of the view that prospective students need information on:

- Study requirements.

- Employment outcomes.

- Costs and financial support.

There was little discussion of a need for current students' views or satisfaction ratings of their course or institution (apart from the National Union of Students (NUS) who did suggest the value of this information). As Section 2 above has shown, with this exception, the information that prospective students want is not that dissimilar to the information advisors, employers and sector stakeholders feel that they need.

The main factor seems to be that only a limited proportion of prospective students regard the information as 'very useful' and of these a significant percentage do not try to find the information. There is therefore a tension between making information available and getting prospective students to consider this information as part of their decision-making process.

The next section looks at the feasibility and issues of providing the information identified as 'very useful' by prospective students.

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[23] *Stronger together: Businesses and universities in turbulent times*. A report from the CBI Higher Education Task Force. September 2009

4.   Providing the information

4.1.   Feasibility

Table 10 below provides an overview of current availability, other sources, quality, ease of attainability and likely cost of providing the top 16 information items identified as 'very useful' by respondents in the survey. Also included is the information item ranked 19 in the overall rankings 'Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the institution'. This is included in the list as it featured in the top 16 information items identified as very useful to disabled students, and is a logical counterpoint to the information point on cost of halls of residence.

In the conclusions and recommendations (in Section 6) on the set of information identified as most useful by prospective students, reference is also made to 'hidden costs' of studying. As the analysis of the survey and focus groups indicated, some information related to costs is considered very useful by prospective students, although they were most concerned with finding out about costs of accommodation. Sector stakeholders did however feel that prospective students needed to know about other costs they will face.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has produced a circular[24] to provide institutions with guidelines on good practice in providing information (electronically via institutions' websites) on the cost of study. The costs identified (to be provided in the form of estimates) are categorised as 'mandatory' (arising from studying core or compulsory modules, which needs to be provided at time of application), 'necessarily incurred' (not incurred as a result of undertaking core modules and may not be experienced by all students), and 'optional'.

Without doubting the potential value of the information listed in Appendix A of the circular in making transparent information on costs of study it should be noted that the burden of producing this information for each course is likely to be significant for institutions. (Although the balance of effort is likely to be required at the outset, with limited input required annually to check, update and revise). The information includes costs within and beyond the control of the institution. As mentioned previously in Section 3 above the survey indicated that only around 20% of respondents found the type of information listed as very useful, so it may not have much influence on their decision making (therefore the cost benefit of providing the information may be low).

Table 10 below has judgements on the quality, attainability and likely cost (high/medium/low) of providing the information items identified as 'very useful' in the survey. Where information is available from existing data collections quality is assumed to be 'good' and attainability as 'easy' and therefore costs as low. Where information items refer to data collected via the NSS the judgements are based on the existing student coverage, and do not refer to extending data collection of this type to prospective postgraduate students.

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[24] Provision of information for prospective students on cost of study.

Table 10 – Overview of feasibility of providing the top 'very useful' information items identified

Item	Info type	'Very useful' rank	Availability from existing data collections	Possible new source	Quality	Attainability	Quantifiable	Cost	
Student satisfaction with: The standard of teaching	Satisfaction	1	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Student satisfaction with: Their course	Satisfaction	2	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	Employability	3	DLHE		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Professional bodies which recognise this course	Employability	4	Currently required as part of the Programme Specification		Good	Easy	No	Low	
Student satisfaction with: The support and guidance they received	Satisfaction	5	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Student satisfaction with: The feedback on assessment	Satisfaction	6	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	Employability	7	DLHE		Fair	Easy	Yes	Low	
Student satisfaction with: The library facilities	Satisfaction	8	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Cost of halls of residence	Cost	9		Institutions or HESA collection	Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Weekly hours of teaching contact time	Study	10		Institutions or HESA collection	Unknown	Difficult	Yes	**Relatively high**	
Average salary in the first year after completing this course	Employability	11	DLHE		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	

Item	Info type	'Very useful' rank	Availability from existing data collections	Possible new source	Quality	Attainability	Quantifiable	Cost	
Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	Study	12	Currently often available in the breakdown of assessment strategies in Programme Specifications		Unknown	Medium	Yes, but could be a statement	**Medium**	
Student satisfaction with: The Student Union	Satisfaction	13		NSS Institutions	Unknown	Medium	Yes	**Medium**	
Maximum available bursary	Cost	14		Student Finance or Institutions	Variable	Medium	Yes	**Medium**	
Student satisfaction with: The IT facilities	Satisfaction	15	NSS		Good	Easy	Yes	Low	
Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	Cost	16		Student Finance or Institutions	Variable	Medium	No	**Medium**	
Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality	Cost	19		Institutions or HESA collection	Unknown	Difficult	Yes	**High**	

4.2. Issues to be addressed

4.2.1. Collection of information beyond existing data collections

As Table 10 above indicates the majority of the information is already available from existing data collections in higher education, most notably the NSS and DLHE survey. In these cases in particular the quality of the data can be regarded as 'good' as it undergoes stringent checks before publication. With the exception of 'average salary in the first year after completing this course' the information items are currently published on Unistats (although importantly at subject rather than course level).

In two cases, 'professional bodies which recognise this course' and 'proportion of the assessment that is by coursework', the information may be collected by institutions as part of the work to compile the Programme Specification[25] (the latter as part of the breakdown of assessment strategies).

Information items not currently available through existing data collections largely relate to cost, with the exception of 'weekly hours of teaching contact time', and it is therefore likely that this information point will be the most difficult and therefore relatively costly to provide.

The information item on 'average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality' is beyond the control of the institution and therefore will require time and effort to calculate and maintain or to identify a trustworthy external source of existing information. It should be noted that this information item did not feature in the top 16 'very useful' information items (except by disabled students) and so the cost benefit of providing this information would need to be carefully considered. It is included for consideration from a 'user perspective'. If information is being presented on costs of halls or residence and other financial related information, then it is logical to make this information available in the same place. However, the possibly high cost and burden to provide this information and the relatively low importance given to the information by survey respondents suggests that at present a cost benefit analysis would weigh against its inclusion.

Of the information items that cannot be provided through existing data collections it may be possible to revise existing HESA collections to address this. Data on costs of halls of residence and private room rent could be collected via revisions to the Estates Management Statistics (EMS) collection. Revisions could be made to existing data sets or new data streams introduced (subject to cost benefit analysis) to collect the additional data. Collecting data via HESA would ensure that the data undergoes stringent checks and is collected to a standard specification, and so confidence could be placed in the reliability and accuracy of the data.

The NSS does not survey students on their experience of their Student Union. The NSS forms part of the national quality assurance framework for HE. Its national coverage would suggest it as a collection vehicle for this data, but the nature of the data to be collected does not fit with the quality assurance aspect or fit within any of

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[25] Part of the QAA Academic Infrastructure:
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programspec/default.asp

the existing scales. The recent Institute of Education report "Enhancing and Developing the National Student Survey" concludes that the NSS should continue to support three dimensions: student choice, quality assurance and quality enhancement. While students' experience of their Student Union could fall into the first of these, the report concluded that the instrument should not be lengthened "without exceptionally good reasons" and that assisting student choice should not be its overriding purpose.

An option may be that one of the optional institution specified questions could be 'co-opted' to collect the data, but this would require further consultation with the sector. The Institute's report proposes a comprehensive review of the NSS in 2015 and it may be that consideration of collecting data on students' experience of Students Unions could form part of this review.

4.2.2. Student 'satisfaction' data

A significant proportion of the information items considered 'very useful' relate to student satisfaction, the data for which can be provided via the NSS. This student experience survey currently covers students on courses leading to undergraduate credits or qualifications, surveyed in their final year of study. The survey is administered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with selected Scottish institutions also taking part. This means that for there will be gaps in the information for those Scottish institutions that do not take part. Since 2008 participants also include FECs with directly funded HE students in England. The survey does not include postgraduate students (taught or research). Consideration needs to be given to surveying this group.

Introduction of a postgraduate student survey will increase costs to the sector, and further justification for taking this course of action will likely be required in the current economic situation.

It also needs to be considered that the use by prospective students of student experience ratings as the primary information by which they make their choices of what and where to study could lead to decisions being made on consumption rather than outcomes.

4.2.3. Data relating to employability

Survey and focus group participants expressed interest in employment outcomes following completion of a course. Information on proportion of students in employment, proportion in full-time professional or managerial jobs, and average salary in first year after completing course all ranked in the top 16 'very useful' information items. The DLHE survey collects employment status, job titles, employer organisation name, and details of what the organisation does. Currently, Unistats publishes information on 'top 10 profession types' of those with a job six months after graduation, as well as the percentage in a 'graduate' or 'non-graduate' job or unknown.

The DLHE survey collects data at six months after completion, which provides a good approximation of the proportions employed within the first year after graduation, and so fulfils the spirit of the requirements. This report has found no evidence to change the scheduling of the survey.

To fulfil prospective students' requirements, information on average salary would need to be incorporated into the published data set. Changes will be required to the DLHE collection process to ensure that data on salary is collected from a large enough sample to allow publication of reliable data.

It should also be noted that there will be a 'lag time' in availability of some data on 'new' courses. For example for a new three year course introduced for the academic year 2010-11 data on employment outcomes (collected via the DLHE survey) will not be available until 2014.

There are issues around interpretation of the data published on proportion in employment. For example, variations in rates of post-qualification gap year activity may affect figures. It could be argued, therefore, that data on proportion in employment or in professional or managerial jobs beyond the first year after completion of qualification may present a more valid picture of employment outcomes. At present the DLHE longitudinal survey, which is carried out up to 3 and a half years after qualifying, does not collect from a large enough sample to provide reliable data. Consideration would need to be given to the cost benefit (including resource costs and burden to institutions) of conducting a full survey at this period. Investigation would need to be undertaken on other uses for the data, such as to support policy development and planning (which the HESA data collections also fulfil) or for benchmarking and internal improvement (which the NSS fulfils). Consideration could also be given to sharing the costs of a full survey with another organisation, if the data could be of use in their work (for example UKCES).

4.2.4. Course level information

Discussions with prospective students in the focus groups and the results of earlier research amongst students and applicants to HE (for example the UCAS review of the use of Unistats) indicate that users are interested in having information at a course level where possible.

There is an issue around the definition of a course. There does not seem to be an agreed definition. In work carried out for MIAP Common Data Definitions[26] 'course' is described as: 'a defined component of participation in learning, in a subject or subjects, offered or delivered by a learning provider'. The definition source notes state that: 'no authoritative source currently exists for this information'. In the HESA Student Record[27] a course is defined as 'the combination of subject(s) and qualification that defines what a student is aiming for. It describes the qualification that will be attained as a result of successful completion of studies'. Any definition agreed must be recognisable to a prospective student and their advisors as the main audience for the published information, and be compatible with the course definition used by UCAS.

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[26]http://www.miap.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1DB75C42-3B76-4C05-8036-2B22E91DF451/0/CDD02commondatadefinitions.pdf

[27]

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option,com_studrec/task,show_file/Itemid,233/mnl,09051/href,courses.html/

Currently, the HESA data model includes a Course entity, and Student Instances must be linked to one Course record. In this model a course is defined not only by the subject and the qualification aim but by a number of attributes that include aspects of funding and entrance policy. Variability in any of these attributes means a different course, so that some institutions would have multiple versions of Course in the HESA record for what they would consider a single course/programme or pathway.

Work will be required to agree a public facing definition of course and to either make revisions to the HESA student record data model or to ensure institutions use the course entity as specified in the HESA coding manual. The course entity was included to meet the perceived need for presenting course level information on Unistats. If changes are required to the data model, HESA suggests the lead times for such changes could result in a first publication date of 2012/13.

Since reliable comparable data cannot be provided for smaller courses, these courses may be disadvantaged by changes to presentation of information at course level, regardless of the quality of provision. Therefore, a mechanism needs to be put in place to provide information at subject level, or amalgamate more than one year's results of survey data as appropriate. Where this takes place it should be made clear to users.

4.2.5. Publication of contact hours

Concern was expressed by some institutions (HEIS and FECs that provide HE) interviewed as part of this study on providing information on contact hours, including that:

- This could be used as a proxy indicator for quality, raising questions of how institutions would be compared on this information.

- The type of contact would need to be clearly specified to make apparent what was being compared.

- Prospective students would need to understand how to interpret what this information meant for them.

- Information could only be provided in the context of a typical course (as choice of modules could affect contact time).

- Publishing too much information about what a course will comprise may open an institution to litigation if the published details did not entirely match a student's subsequent experience.

However, information on contact hours did feature strongly both in the type of information prospective students want to know and the information stakeholders felt they need to know. In both cases the use of this information was more related to helping prospective students understand the study requirements expected of them (and how it may differ from their current learning approaches) than as a means of 'measuring' what they would be getting from the course or institution.

An approach to this may be to agree a format for describing this information that is meaningful to the user (accompanied by a disclaimer that this information may be

subject to change and should not be taken as a contract) without reducing it to a quantifiable piece of data that is not contextualised.

For example, the information could be a short statement that in the first year of the course the prospective student should expect to spend approximately X hours in teaching contact (through lectures, tutorials or seminars) X hours in laboratories or work placement, (depending on the course type) and X hours are expected to be self study.

This information is not currently required as part of the programme specification (but many do present it as part of the programme validation process). So it is likely to require additional work by institutions. In interviews some institutions did indicate that this could signify a significant burden.

4.2.6. Maintaining quality of the information provided

A key issue in the provision of the information items identified as 'very useful' is that it can be relied upon by users to provide an accurate, current and comparable picture as possible. For example, in terms of information relating to student experience this should be the most recent available, rather than results from the NSS which show the institution or course in the 'best light'.

The information published also needs to aid comparability between institutions or courses, and so must refer to the same data sets (i.e. the most recent available for information derived from the NSS and DLHE). Where information will need to be provided directly by institutions this also needs to be current, particularly with reference to costs or financial support and to comply with any sector-wide guidelines produced for the presentation of this information.

The recent consultation among HEFCE, Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI), Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE on future arrangements for quality assurance[28] is considering whether the QAA audit should make a judgement about the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of information that institutions make available to inform prospective students and other interested parties about the quality of their education provision and standards of their awards. In terms of making judgements on the information items in the above table, where information relates to data provided via the NSS and DLHE, there is no rationale for QAA to include this in the judgement as the data already undergoes rigorous checking and scrutiny before publication or release.

QAA could however pass judgement on whether the most up-to-date information was published or referenced, if institutions are required to make this information available via their websites. The judgement could consider:

- Whether the required information set has been published.

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[28] Future arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland. HEFCE 2009/47. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_47/

- The extent to which the published information conforms to sector-wide guidelines or template produced to ensure comparability.

- Regularity of updating (or evidence that no changes are required).

As the information is to be made available online, then a judgement on the information does not need to be carried out at the same time as a visit by the QAA audit team, and therefore does not need to extend the audit process (and by extension the resources required to complete this). One area that could be incorporated in to the audit visit is evidence that institutions have in place the processes to keep the information up-to-date and accurate (as defined in any guidance produced for institutions).

Information would need to be updated annually so it is likely that judgements would need to take place on this frequency. However, it does not necessarily follow that QAA needs to audit every set of information published by each institution (particularly if information is to be made available at course level). A sample approach of institutions and courses could be adopted.

4.3. Summary of issues and feasibility

In summary, the majority of the information items regarded as very useful by prospective students are available through existing data collections such as the NSS and DLHE survey, or likely to be provided via course handbooks or collected as part of the programme validation process. The provision of these items is not likely therefore to incur significant additional cost to provide to prospective students. Those items which may be more costly, due largely due to the increased resources required to compile this data, are:

- Proportion of assessment by coursework.

- Maximum available bursary.

- Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary.

- Weekly hours of teaching contact time.

- Average rent for a room in a private student house.

To facilitate the provision of this information in a way that will be of most use to users will require:

- Agreement on ways in which to collect the information that falls outside existing data collections.

- Consideration of the feasibility of extending a student experience survey to postgraduates; and what effects gaps in information from the Scottish HE sector may have.

- Changes to the DLHE survey to provide reliable salary data.

- Agreement on how to define a 'course' and an agreed process for using the 'Course' entity in the HESA data model.

- Agreement on and processes for capturing contact hours in a standard way at course level.

- A process for ensuring data provided is accurate and complete.

The next section looks at modes and means of providing the information.

5. Modes and means of providing information

5.1. The best modes of delivery

This section considers the best means of delivering information in a way which will reach the largest number of users and so benefit prospective students.

As the analysis of the survey in Section 3 above indicated, it is possible to identify 16 information items that are priorities for most types of prospective students, and the highest ranked information items are most relevant at course rather than whole institution level. The information items can be grouped under the following headings: student satisfaction ratings, employability, costs and study related. See Table 11 below for the categorisation (in the column headed 'Type').

Table 11 – 'Very useful' information items: type, level and current availability

'Very useful' rank	Information item	Type	Level	Current availability
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	Satisfaction	Course	Unistats
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	Satisfaction	Course	Unistats
3	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	Employability	Course	Unistats
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	Employability	Course	May be in programme spec.
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	Satisfaction	Course	Unistats
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	Satisfaction	Course	Unistats
7	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	Employability	Course	Unistats
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	Satisfaction	Institution/Subject	Unistats
9	Cost of halls of residence	Cost	Institution	Institution info to applicants
10	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	Study	Course	-
11	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	Study	Course	May be in course description/prog spec
12	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	Employability	Course	-

'Very useful' rank	Information item	Type	Level	Current availability
13	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	Satisfaction	Institution/Subject	Unistats
14	Maximum available bursary	Cost	Institution	May be on institution website
15	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	Satisfaction	Institution/Subject	Unistats
16	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	Cost	Institution	May be on institution website

As Table 11 above also indicates, most of the information items are already available in the public domain, but displaced across a number of sources. Nine of the 16 are available on Unistats (although not at course level currently). Although usage of Unistats is growing it is not a main source of information for users. Most prospective students use institutions (websites, prospectuses, open days) and UCAS as their major sources of information. Career advisors also make use of institutions and UCAS as the main sources of information for their students. Only a minority of prospective students currently use online comparison sites.

Although focus group participants did express an interest in a 'one-stop-shop' to compare information there is no evidence that they would use this in practice, as the low rate of usage of existing comparison sites revealed in the survey suggests.

The limited number of information items regarded as being very useful, and the similarity of these items across different types of prospective students, combined with the low use of comparison sites and the perceived usefulness of these sites also being fairly low does not suggest that users want complex sources of information which will allow them to search for and sift multiple information items. There does not seem to be an appetite for a complex information system that will allow personalisation of information (i.e. returning a set of information closely matching an individual's interests and circumstances).

The best approach would seem therefore to make best use of existing and established routes to information rather than creating new sources. Both institutions and UCAS are well used by different groups of prospective students, and are 'trusted' and recognised sources. Any new source of information would need to establish its credentials and be promoted effectively and aggressively (which would require significant expenditure and resource input).

The best mode of delivering information to the widest audience therefore suggests providing a standard set of information based around the 16 'very useful' items identified in the survey, incorporated in to course information made available to prospective students on institutions' websites and prospectuses and in the UCAS entry profiles.

The purpose of presenting the information is to benefit prospective students in making comparisons between what is on offer. To support this, the information should be presented in a standard format across institutions. The dictionary definition of 'standard' being "an accepted or approved example of something against which others are judged or measured" (Collins Concise dictionary) or "something used as a measure, norm or model in comparative evaluations" (Compact Oxford English dictionary). This would require a certain level of prescription in how the information is presented or published.

Outside HE, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) provides a model publication scheme[29] for public authorities to use to present information required under the Freedom of Information Act. Authorities must adopt the model without modification, which requires them to list information under seven broad classes. Guidance is given by the ICO on what information is to be included under each class, but the model does not specify details such as screen layout (beyond the use of the seven headings in the order prescribed) or on font size or type.

In the financial sector, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) requires mortgage providers and their intermediaries to provide information to applicants using the mortgage Key Facts Illustration (KFI)[30]. The objective of this is to provide clear, straightforward and comparable information to help understanding of the services and products offered. The aim is to enable consumers to more easily shop around and so make informed decisions. The KFI must be laid out in the format prescribed by the FSA and not include information not allowed under the rules.

The EU Energy Label[31] is another example of information being provided in a clear and easily recognisable way to support informed decisions, in this case about the purchase of energy-consuming appliances.

In all cases the purpose is to bring key information together in one place and in a standard format so that users can easily find the information (and, in the case of the KFI and the energy label, to make comparisons easier).

A similar approach is suitable for presenting the information items to prospective students to bring together those items considered 'very useful' but which prospective students still do not try to find in great numbers. The information set should be published on institutions' websites and in prospectuses and as part of UCAS entry profiles. That is, the information items should be provided in one set, under a prescribed set of headings, and in a prescribed order. The use of a standard title for the set of information (not necessarily 'key facts' but something approximating that) will make it clear that this information is the same across institutions.

Institutions have their own approaches to website style and branding of their published outputs (such as prospectuses) in which they have invested significant

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[29] http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/freedom_of_information/publication_schemes.aspx

[30] http://www.fsa.gov.uk/pubs/ceo/results_mdd.pdf

[31] http://www.energylabels.org.uk/eulabel.html

effort and which is important to the marketing of their institution. There does not seem to be any requirement to specify the font size or font type or other style elements for presenting the information providing it follows guidance on how and where to present the information. This may include:

- Where the information set is to be published (e.g. in the introduction/overview section of course information on a website (or in prospectus) so that users are presented this information as one of the first things they view when looking at course information).

- Prescribed sequence for headings organising the types of information items.

- Information is published under the headings and does not require (in an online version) that the user follows links to other parts of the institution's website or other sites.

Section 6 has recommendations on what information should be included and how it could be organised.

Changes to levels of tuition fees may change behaviour so that prospective students act more like consumers and change from largely wanting information on what the experience will be like to study and what will be expected of them to wanting information on what they can expect to receive for the money they are spending, however this was outside the scope of this study. It might be worth noting that the information provided by official sources in the USA does not seem to fulfil this function.

Teachers and tutors are also a main source of information for prospective students (albeit that they are regarded as a very useful source by only around a third of users). This suggests that they need to be made aware of what information is considered very useful by prospective students and where it can be found. This is largely an issue of training in IAG (on which there are recommendations in Section 6 below) but could be initially addressed by including links to UCAS and Unistats primarily from websites such as Teachernet[32] (with a summary of what information is available and why prospective students should be encouraged to consider this).

Providing information does not guarantee that prospective students will consider the information when making decisions or understand why they might do this. Information provision does not equate with IAG, and the study indicates that more needs to be done to support IAG provision for prospective students. One way to address this may be to incorporate a review of the 'very useful' information set in to the HE application process, and a recommendation for doing this is made in Section 6.

Section 5.2 below looks at who should be responsible for providing the information to users.

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[32] http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ – a resource developed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to support the education profession

5.2. Responsibility for providing the information

As indicated above, the majority of the information items are already available in the public domain, and are related to courses or the institution. Responsibility for providing the information would seem to fall into three main stages:

1. Provision of data by institutions through their involvement in the NSS and DLHE survey or generation of those additional items that fall outside the national data collections.

2. Processing of the data from the NSS and DLHE survey (and other HESA data collections where relevant) to fulfil the criteria required for publications (by HEFCE/HESA) and distribution to institutions for publication. Processing is currently carried out to fulfil the publication of information on Unistats.

3. Publication by institutions of the standard information set to agreed practice on websites and in prospectuses and as part of UCAS entry profiles.

The information comprising the 'very useful' set does not contain any information that would be required to be collected (or purchased) from organisations or sources outside the HE sector (e.g. crime figures for the locality or transport links), and therefore does not call for the involvement of any external bodies.

A further stage in providing the information is to ensure that the information published is accurate, up-to-date and complete. The publication schemes, mentioned previously, developed by public authorities must be approved by the ICO before they are published. While there does not seem to be any need for this level of intervention prior to publication of the information set by institutions, the proposed judgement as part of the QAA audit about the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information published seems a legitimate means of helping ensure that information provided continues to be of benefit to prospective students.

The final section of this report draws together conclusions and makes recommendations to take forward work on a continuing programme of work and policy development about public information.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Addressing the problem that many prospective students do not look for information

The research amongst prospective and current students and advisors found that only a limited set of information is regarded as a priority (considered as 'very useful') by most prospective students. Further, only around half of the respondents had tried to find this information (around 60-80% who felt the information would be 'very useful' had tried to find the information). This indicates that many prospective students do not look for information even when they think it would be very useful to them. This evidence does not suggest there is an appetite for or likely to be much use made of any new large-scale information system.

This finding, considered with the discussions from the focus groups about the variable levels of IAG received by prospective students (which is in keeping with findings from the NSF and House of Commons Committee reports) suggest that there needs to be a focus on raising awareness of the availability of information and the ways in which prospective students are guided towards that information – particularly as the majority of information items that prospective students rate as very useful are currently available in the public domain, albeit dispersed over a number of sources, and that a high proportion of survey respondents that said they looked for information were successful.

Subject tutors and career advisors need to be kept up-to-date and informed of what prospective students should be considering in their decision-making and where that information can be found. This is particularly relevant for subject tutors/teachers in schools and colleges who are one of the main sources of information for prospective students. State schools and colleges currently face rather weak incentives to devote effort and resources to making sure prospective students are aware of available information about HE.

However, some groups of prospective students display a much stronger appetite for information than others, in particular, females, Asian/Asian British students and those with high grades at GCSE – each of these is a high participation rate group in HE. Any changes in policy should therefore take account of the potential risks of providing information without also tackling the issue of getting those that do not look for information to do so. Failure to do this may increase gaps between students.

Recommendation 1

Raise the profile of the information sources currently available to show prospective students, career advisors and teachers what they offer and how they can be used.

This should include improving linkages between existing sources of online information relevant to prospective student decision-making, so that there are links between information relating to careers and information on HE courses and institutions (primarily establishing links from career-related sources to UCAS' website and to Unistats).

To support the use of information and provision of IAG, further research should be carried out to look at:

- Ways in which schools and colleges can be encouraged to provide better IAG to prospective students.

- The variation in practice of IAG provided by subject tutors in secondary schools and colleges, and whether this makes a significant difference to students' use of information in their decision-making.

This will require HEFCE, UCAS and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), along with the Department for Education and DBIS to work together to develop an awareness-raising strategy for career advisors and subject teachers/tutors in schools and colleges, focused on those groups of prospective students that do not look for information. This work will involve a range of organisations that bear responsibility for IAG outside the HE remit.

HEFCE should develop a strategy for presentation of linkages between existing online sources (which should cover which sites to target, how to present the links, and any accompanying explanatory text). This will also require that HEFCE negotiate with the website owners to obtain agreement to include the links and a mechanism for updating and maintenance.

Suggested main sites to focus on primarily, which are drawn from the websites and sources used by career advisors and prospective students, are:

- Graduate Prospects.

- Connexions.

- AimHigher.

- Jobs4U.

- Sector Skills Councils.

- UCAS.

6.2. Delivering the information users want to where they look, in language they understand

There is little variation between types of prospective students on what they regard as 'very useful', with the same top 16 ranked information items appearing for most groups, and the same top 10 ranked items appearing for all sub-groups.

The evidence shows that prospective students do not look for large numbers of items of information. In the survey 75% said they looked for 5 items or more, 50% looked for 11 items and only 25% looked for more than 21 pieces of information. Therefore there seems little value in providing more than the top 16 pieces of information ranked as very useful. Careers advisors interviewed held the view that there is enough or 'too much' information and that prospective students needed to know how to sort through what is available.

Prospective students, including those considering postgraduate study, rank 'student satisfaction' as very useful information, and report in most cases that they are able to find this information. This suggests that they may be relying on information that they gather from institutions to which they are applying (for example possibly through discussion with students at open days at institutions, or anecdotal comments from students used by institutions on their websites). The low use of Unistats does not suggest that they are referring to results from the NSS. Therefore a means of directing prospective students or making this information more obvious is required.

The most widely used sources are institutions' prospectuses/websites and UCAS (around 90% and 80% respectively used these sources), with just under 30% making use of online comparative websites (including Unistats). This indicates that it is likely that comparable information will have more of an impact on prospective students' decisions – making it accessible on institutional websites and UCAS – and that a standard set of information should concentrate on satisfaction with teaching, actual employment outcomes and costs (the main types of information in the top 16 ranked information items from the survey). These closely relate to the types of information career advisors and other sector stakeholders suggest prospective students need to know. To ensure that the information set provided can be compared across institutions some form of check will be required.

Career advisors interviewed as part of this study expressed some concern about the technical language used in information about HE, which can be a barrier to understanding and to making comparisons. This may have a particular impact on first generation students to HE and those without access to IAG.

Recommendation 2

Publish as a minimum the 16 information items identified as very useful by prospective students, at course level, in a standard format on the sources most used by all prospective students (institutions' websites/prospectuses and UCAS), and make this information available to QAA to be subject to a published judgement on the accuracy and completeness of the provision of public information.

The following information items in table 12 below comprise the top 16 ranked 'very useful' by respondents in the survey, organised by main themes (with the ranking in brackets – this is for information only for readers of this section of the report, and is not intended to form part of the published information set).

Table 12 - 'Very useful' items ranked by main themes

Satisfaction	Employability	Costs	Study
• Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching (1) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with their course (2) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received (5) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment (6) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities (8) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union (13) • Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities (15)	• Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing their course (3) • Professional bodies which recognise this course (4) • Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job in first year after completing course (7) • Average salary in the first year after completing this course (12)	• Cost of halls of residence (9) • Maximum available bursary (14) • Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary (16)	• Weekly hours of teaching contact time (10) • Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework (11)

The following suggestions do not draw directly on the findings from the survey, but from the wider consultation generally, and are included for consideration for the longer term, from the point of view of contributing to the user experience and taking in to account other current initiatives or emerging developments in the education system. In the longer term it might be worth considering including in the information set the following.

Costs

- Tuition fees. Although not significant currently, this may not be the case following recommendations from the Browne Review if variable fees are introduced. It would therefore be logical, if required, to present this information alongside other cost related information.

- Costs of study. We recognise that 'hidden costs' such as for field and study trips came low in the rankings and only a small proportion of respondents considered this information as 'very useful' (less than 20% of respondents).

We include this to reflect the guidance issued by HEFCW to Welsh institutions on what information they will need to publish relating to costs of study.

- Average costs for rent in a private student house. Again, this did not feature in the overall top 16 very useful information items, except for disabled students. It may become more relevant in the longer term if changes to tuition fees are introduced, as cost factors beyond the first year of study may become more important. If the information does become more relevant it is logical to provide costs of halls and private accommodation in the same information set.

Employability

- If institutions are required to provide employability statements it may be logical to provide a reference to these, to draw together relevant information on employability. However, this may not be relevant if requirements change.

To implement the recommendations would require:

- HEFCE, UUK and GuildHE to agree the information set with institutions, following consultation.

- HEFCE, UUK and GuildHE to develop guidance for the content and presentation of the information set, and its maintenance, by institutions.

- HEFCE and HESA to agree a definition of a 'course' within the context of HE and technical issues for the collection of data (which may involve the FE Data Services) to enable information to be presented at this level where reliable data exists (for new and existing courses) and mechanisms for publishing at a subject level as an alternative where course numbers are too small. Reference should also be made to existing standards (such as XCRI[33] (eXchanging Course-Related Information)) where relevant.

- HEFCE/UUK/GuildHE Quality in HE Group, in discussion with the QAA to agree the means of making the information set subject to a published judgement on its accuracy and completeness.

- HEFCE to negotiate with UCAS to include the agreed information set in the course entry profiles on its website.

- HEFCE and HESA to agree presentation methods for publishing salary data from the DLHE survey (and with UCAS if this is to be included on Unistats).

- HEFCE to ensure the question on salary is asked of all respondents in the DLHE survey.

- HEFCE to carry out a feasibility study on undertaking a student experience survey of postgraduate students, to fulfil their interest in information on 'satisfaction'. Currently the NSS does not cover postgraduate students.

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[33] http://www.xcri.org/ JISC-funded, UK-oriented project to establish a specification to support the eXchange of Course-Related Information

- Institutions to revise the information made available on their websites and in the UCAS entry profiles, and to collect data on contact hours.

Recommendation 3

Incorporate consideration/review of the information items identified as very useful by prospective students as part of the process for setting up a UCAS account. This may entail applicants being prompted with a message that tells them that this information is regarded as very useful by other prospective students, and where they can find the information.

To implement this recommendation would require:

- HEFCE to confirm with UCAS the practical (and cost) implications of adding a stage to the account set-up process.

- HEFCE and UCAS to consult with institutions on the acceptability of including this step in the process.

Recommendation 4

Revise the language and terminology used in information presented to prospective students and their non-expert advisors (i.e. family and friends), so that it is aimed at these groups as the primary audience.

This will involve:

- QAA considering including clarity of language as part of the published judgement on the accuracy and completeness of public information.

- HEFCE, the NUS, and the HE sector developing a 'code of practice' or guidelines, in collaboration with students, on the use of technical language and terminology to be applied to public information where prospective students and their advisors are the intended audience.

Recommendation 5

Retain Unistats for the present as the current 'official' source for comparative information, but put in place plans to review the information it provides and its functionality at a defined point in time (no more than two years) after the institutional focussed publication of a standard set of information is in place. The review should take into account changes in the sector and any behavioural changes of users of public information following the introduction of the standard set of information.

Changes that could be made in the short term (prior to the review) are:

- Provide data at course level where possible.

- Revise the 'Overview' set of information to ensure it presents those items in the 'top 16' already published on Unistats, and to include DLHE data on salary.

- Provide a short narrative paragraph to indicate to users that the information included in the Overview is regarded by other prospective students as 'very useful'.

In the longer term (post review) if a case is made to retain Unistats, further changes that could be considered are:

- Change of name to make it focussed more widely on all types of institutions that provide HE, not just universities, thus making it more immediately relevant to a wider audience of prospective students; and a more user focussed name, like those used by international sources of public information on HE such as 'students.gov' (see Appendix A).

- Allow comparisons of five institutions (the number of applications that can be made through UCAS) rather than the current three.

- Revise the presentation of information on the website to make it more 'user-friendly' and laid out to make best use of the screen.

To implement this recommendation will require:

- HEFCE to agree the review process for Unistats and initiate it two years after publication of the new process for publishing information.

If the suggested changes are made to Unistats prior to review this will be dependent on:

- HEFCE and HESA agreeing a definition of a 'course' within the context of HE and technical issues for the collection of data (which may involve the FE Data Services) to enable information to be presented at this level where reliable data exists (for new and existing courses) and mechanisms for publishing at a subject level as an alternative where course numbers are too small.

It will also require:

- HEFCE, HESA and UCAS to agree a mechanism for publishing salary data.

- HEFCE and UCAS (as the current contractors for Unistats) to revise or renegotiate their contract to incorporate any changes to Unistats.

Appendix A. Information sources – USA, Canada, Australia

Online public information on HE provided by government departments and partners in Canada, USA & Australia

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
USA Cooperative effort between federal agencies, students, and other parts of the education community, under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Education.	**www.students.gov** **Student Gateway to the US Government** Official U.S. government web site designed for college students and their families. Mission is to provide easy access to information and resources from the U.S. government.	Portal site with links to other resources	Organised around the following main sections **Plan your education** • Prepare for college • Choose a school • Educational & admissions testing • Graduate students • Career/vocational students • Study abroad • International students • Online education • Parents' guide **Career development** • Internships • Student jobs • Graduate fellowships • Explore careers • Job search **Your government, online** • Federal topic directories • National parks & museums • Student taxes • Voting & democracy • Contact federal agencies **Online study help** • Online research & information • Study skills **Pay for your education** • Financial aid overviews	Includes links to College.gov, College Navigator and College Finder.

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
			• Scholarships & grants • Research funding/fellowships • Federal loan program information • Repay your loan • State financial aid • Calculate college costs **Campus life** • Relocating to college • Student consumer info • Healthy living • Volunteer service • Diversity resources **Military service** • Military funding for college • Service branches • Military, general	
USA Being built by the U.S. Dept. of Education in collaboration with students.	**College.gov** www.college.gov Described as aiming to be the 'go-to source' for information and resources about planning, preparing and paying for postsecondary education (such as 2 or 4 year colleges and universities, as well as vocational or career schools). The target audience is 9th-12th grade high school students with a focus on students from underrepresented populations. The purpose for including the account registration and inspirational message features is to enhance the interactivity and engagement aspects of the site. In building the site, students were	Information organised around the following sections for students: **Why go** • Boost your earnings – descriptive info on how better education can lead to higher earnings and better employment chances. Illustrated with quotes from students • Find your passion – help to identify career choices, supported by student 'case studies' and links to local colleges • Prove your potential – general information on admission standards and link to further information on finding a mentor • Grow with help and support – general information on types of help and support available • Lift your family – information on how (first generation) students can get the support of their family (plus links to	Each section has a link to YouTube video of a student or prospective student talking about their experience. Site guides prospective students through what they need to think about when deciding to apply. Does not include banks of statistical data or enable comparisons between institutions, programmes or career – but links to sources that can provide that e.g. College Navigator. Allows users to upload a personalized statement to a 'billboard' to say why they are going to college (photo and text). Includes direct links to Student Aid website and First Application for Financial Student Aid site from clearly labelled tabs at the top of website. Also has Facebook site.	Site aimed at high school students. 'Widening participation' remit, part of a campaign called *I'm Going* launched to tackle issue that many students are unaware that federal student financial assistance is available to them for education beyond high school. Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, annually makes more than $100 billion in federal grants, work-study and loans available to students and families for education beyond high school. The *I'm Going* public service campaign is designed to inform students and their families of the resources available to them through the federal student

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
	asked what information was most useful as they looked ahead toward college.	the parental part of the site and information on financial support) **What to do** • Find schools – general information on factors to consider, plus link to College Navigator site, and links to information on College Fairs • Take the tests – tips and guidelines for taking admission tests • Apply for admission – guidance on applications • Start preparing now – step by step (monthly) countdown on what steps to take (depending on whether high school senior or junior) including links to relevant sites (e.g. for applying for financial support) • Your college roadmap – printable version of step by step guide • Need more help? – links to additional resources **How to pay** • Get the basics – general information on financial ais, links to relevant sites for finding out more and a quiz to de-bunk 'myths' about financial aid • Learn what's available – links to further information on scholarships, grants, loans etc • Be money smart – what to avoid when applying for financial aid or loans • Apply for federal student aid – link to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid site and guidance on applying Also includes: Information for parents/family (guidance and links to information) • Why they should go	Plus web survey asking for feedback on the site.	financial assistance programs.

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
		• What you can do • How to deal with the cost		

USA
Accessed from the website of the Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, plays a central role in America's postsecondary education community.
	College Finder
	http://studentaid2.ed.gov/gotocollege/collegefinder/
	
	Provides options for searching information on Colleges, including a 'college matching wizard'.
		On completion of the search users are provided with a list of matching colleges and option to apply on line (where available) take a 'Campus Tour' which provides the information listed below, or add the college to 'My FSA' a portfolio for managing applications (for college and funding).
		
		'Campus Tour' information:
		• Overview and general contact details
		• Admissions
		• Academic
		• Costs and financial aid
		• Student life:
		  o Profile of students at the college
		  o Campus environment (size, location)
		  o Accommodation
		  o Study facilities
		  o Support services
		  o Sport and social activities
		  o Transport links
		• Transfer students
		• International students
		• Disabled students – support available
		• After graduation:
		  o Graduate schools most graduates attend
		  o % Employed within 6 months
		  o Most frequent recruiters
			Three search options:
			'Search by name' – free text option
			'Search by College Finder'
			Search by College Matching Wizard'
			
			College Finder and College Matching Wizard guide users through the search for colleges and universities by setting a series of questions under the following headings. The wizard is a longer version of College Finder that provides contextual information (e.g. describes the differences between private and public colleges) and suggestions on what to consider when answering the questions. Users can switch between the wizard and College Finder at any stage where more or less detail is required. Also option to search at any stage without completing all questions.
			
			Users asked to specify preferences under the following headings. In most cases users are also asked to indicate how important their selection is (no preference/somewhat important/important/required).
			
			Type – 2-year or 4-year college and public, private or proprietary college
			Location – up to 3 states or enter zip code
			Setting – rural/town/city (s/m/l)
			Size – number of students and average number of students per faculty member
			Academic – Select up to 3 majors, and GPA, ACT and SAT range/scores of majority of students accepted
			Cost – range of annual tuition fees
			Campus life – housing type, sports interested in, student activity most interested in
			Student body – Religious affiliation and	

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
			type – e.g. women's college	

USA
Provided by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences.
	College Navigator
	http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/
	The National Center for Education Statistics fulfils a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education, conduct and publish reports, and review and report on education activities internationally.
		Information on individual colleges:
		General information:
		• Website address
		• Type of college
		• Awards offered
		• Campus setting: e.g. city, mid size
		• Campus housing: Y/N
		• Student population: number
		• Student-to-faculty ratio
		• Mission Statement: link to website
		• Carnegie Classification
		• Religious affiliation
		• Federal aid: eligibility
		• Undergraduate students enrolled who are formally registered with office of disability services: %
		• Special learning opportunities: e.g. study abroad
		• Student services: list of services
		• Credit accepted
		• Tuition, fees, and estimated student expenses (for previous 4 academic years in the following headings)
		Estimated expenses for academic year
		• Tuition and fees
		• Books and supplies
		• Living arrangement
		• On campus
		• Room and board
		• Other
		Total expenses
		• On campus
		• Also provides a calculator to estimate student expenses data to estimate the total tuition and fees charged over the duration of a typical 4-year program at this school (not including room and board, or books and supplies, &c).
			Search by (or combination of):
			• Name of institution
			• Institutions in particular state
			• X miles from a Zip code
			• Level of award (Certificate, Associate, Bachelor, Advanced)
			• Institution type (public, private, 2-year or less, 4-year)
			• Tuition & fees (maximum $500 - $6,000) for state lived in
			• Undergraduate student enrolment ('minimum' number to 'maximum' number (100 up to 30,000))
			• Specify campus setting (rural, suburban, town, city)
			• % of applicants admitted (minimum up to maximum – 5 – 100%)
			• SAT scores
			• Varsity athletic teams (men/women) option to indicate teams interested in
			• Extended learning opportunities (distance learning, weekend/evening, credit for life experience)
			• Religious affiliation (choose from drop down list)
			• Specialised mission (choose from drop down list e.g. single-sex, historically black college or university)
			
			Can add results to 'My Favorites' then check which ones to compare
			
			Comparison data:
			• City, State
			• Type
			• Campus setting
			• Estimated student expenses. Total for
			   ○ On campus
			   ○ Off campus
			   ○ Off campus with family
				Also has 'Kids' Zone'
				http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/
				The NCES Kids' Zone provides information to help learn about schools, decide on a college, find a public library, engage in several games, quizzes and skill building about math, probability, graphing, and mathematicians.
				Under 'Tools' can search for a College by State or Region

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes

		• Financial aid: data and graphs on percentages and number of students receiving different types of financial aid
		Total enrolment numbers
		• Undergraduate enrollment: number
		• Undergraduate transfer-in enrollment: number
		• Graduate enrollment: number
		• Breakdown of student enrolment by age, ethnicity, residence, mode of study (full or part time),
		Admissions data
		• Number of applicants: total, male/female
		• Percent admitted: total, male/female
		• Percent admitted who enrolled: total, male/female
		• Admissions requirements (inc SAT scores etc)
		• Retention and graduation rates (total, by gender, ethnicity, by program (e.g. Architecture) and level (Bachelor, Masters, Doctorate, certificate)
		• Varsity athletic teams: list of teams and numbers of men/women taking part
		Accreditation
		• Institutional accreditation
		• Specialised accreditation: who accreditation by and what schools are accredited
		Campus security
		• Crime statistics: arrests (on campus and halls of residence), criminal offences (campus & halls)
		Federal loans
		• Average amount of UG student loans by type of loan
			• Financial aid: percentage and average amount received
			• Enrolment
			  o Total enrollment
			  o Undergraduate enrollment
			  o Undergraduate transfer-in enrollment
			  o Undergraduates by attendance status f/t & p/t
			  o Undergraduates by gender
			  o Undergraduates by race/ethnicity
			  o Undergraduates by age (fall 2007)
			  o Undergraduates by residence
			• Admissions
			  o Undergraduate application fee (2009-2010)
			  o Percent admitted
			  o Percent admitted who enrolled
			  o Test scores for reporting period
			• Retention and graduation
			• Retention rates for first-time students who began program in 2007
			  o Full-time
			  o Part-time
			  o 4-year schools report retention for first-time bachelor degree-seeking students only.
			  o Graduation rates for full-time, first-time undergraduates who began program in
			  o Percentage of entering students counted in calculating graduation rate
			• Overall graduation rate
			  o Bachelor's degree rate, 4-year
			  o Bachelor's degree rate, 5-year
			  o Bachelor's degree rate, 6-year	

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes

USA
The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board is composed of more than 5,700 schools, colleges, universities and other educational organisations.
	College Board
	Provides information and advice on application to higher education, and supports the application process.
		Information is organised into the following sections:
		• College Board tests
		  o Information about College Board tests (including exam dates and fees) and the capability to register online for tests)
		• Plan for college
		  o Articles on what to consider including questions to ask, time management, good work habits and tips on transition to college.
		• Find a college
		  o Articles to support decision-making, such as campus life, decisions about careers and majors – includes information on occupations with most job openings (from US Bureau of Labor Statistics), descriptions of career requirements and related majors.
		  o Including a college search
		• Apply to college
		  o Articles to support application and information on critical dates
		• Pay for college
		  o Scholarship search
		  o Financial aid planner
		  o Articles with information on ways to pay, borrowing process etc
		
		The information provided as a result of the College Search or College Match Finder provides similar information to that provided by the College Finder resource above. The main addition is the capability for registered users to check 'Am I on track' and 'How do I stack Up' – to compare high school study options and grades against the college requirements.
			Website is divided in to resources for students, parents and professionals.
			
			The College Search option allows users to search by name of institution or to use the College Match Finder, by completing a series of questions, in which users can specify (or indicate no preference) to the following:
			• Type of school – 2-year or 4-year
			• Public/private
			• Size – S/M/L
			• Setting – urban/rural/suburban
			• Location – state or region
			• College major – browse majors and add to a list. Can search for colleges that offer all or any of majors specified
			• Cost and financial aid – range of costs for tuition and fees, and financial aid available
			• Admissions – selectivity, admissions tests scores, credit transfers
			• Sports and activities offered
			• Fraternities and sororities (whether these are a requirement or want college without these societies)
			• Type of housing available
			• Academic programs offered (such as internships or study abroad
			• Specialised options – e.g. single sex or co-ed, religious affiliation	

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes

Canada
Developed by the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments and Canadian learning and career development organisations
	CanLearn
	http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/index.shtml
	Online post-secondary education resource that provides Canadians with the information and services they need to decide what and where to study and how to cover the costs.
	Stated goals:
	• To provide all the necessary resources (from interactive planning tools to information about savings programs, student loans, and scholarships) to Canadians facing important decisions when saving for, selecting and financing their post-secondary education.
	• To provide Canadian governments, learning institutions and other organisations with the means to collaborate on the provision of information and planning tools for Canadians.
	Approach involves sharing content between partners (see Notes column). This allows access to a full range of information and tools that support users by leveraging agreements with information providers who know their content best.
		Main sections of website:
		• Education savings for your child
		  ○ Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)
		  ○ Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)
		  ○ Canada Learning Bond (CLB)
		  ○ Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan
		• Planning for post secondary education
		  ○ Career planning
		  ○ Finding programs and schools
		• Student loans, grants and scholarships
		  ○ The cost of post secondary education
		  ○ Find money for school
		  ○ Getting student loans and grants
		  ○ Information by audience
		  ○ Student loans – how to manage them
		  ○ Budgeting during school
		  ○ Frequently asked questions
		• After post secondary education
		  ○ Student loan repayment
		  ○ Repayment assistance
		  ○ Manage student loan debt
		  ○ Frequently asked questions
		• Continuing education – lifelong learning
			Provides **search tools**:
			CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities Search
			Profiles of institutions – descriptive with links to institutions website.
			Does not allow comparison between institutions.
			
			Program search
			Profiles, entry requirements, application and admissions information for programs of study at Canadian universities, community colleges and CEGEPs. Descriptive with links to institutions websites.
			Does not allow comparison between programs.
			
			Scholarship search
			Provided in collaboration with Studentawards.com, a free scholarship search service for information on scholarships, bursaries, grants, and other forms of financial assistance available from the private sector and not-for-profit organisations.
			
			Working in Canada tool
			Search job descriptions, wage rates, skill requirements, and training and job opportunities based on different occupations within Canada.
			
			Also provides **planners and calculators.**
			
			Financial planner
			Tools to help finance and budget postsecondary education: The Education Cost Calculator, the Budget Estimator and the Online Budget Planner.
			
			Loan repayment estimator
			Estimate the monthly payments to repay
				Partners:
				• ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation
				• Association of Canadian Community Colleges
				• Association québécoise d'information scolaire et professionnelle
				• Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
				• Canadian Career Consortium
				• Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
				• Canadian Association for Distance Education
				• Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
				• Canadian Bankers Association
				• Canadian Bureau for International Education
				• Canadian Career Development Foundation
				• Canadian Counselling Association
				• Canadian Education Association
				• Canadian Federation of Students
				• Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
				• Canadian Labour Congress
				• Conference Board of Canada
				• National Association of Career Colleges
				• National Educational Association of Disabled Students
				• WorkInfoNet

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
			student loan. **Parental contribution calculator** To help figure out parental contribution amount to better understand the way in which student loans are calculated. **Repayment assistance estimator** Calculates eligibility for repayment assistance. **Student financial assistance estimator** Help to determine the amount of assistance potentially available from the Canada Student Loans Program.	

Canada
Service Canada was created in 2005 to improve the delivery of government programs and services to Canadians, by making access to them faster, easier, and more convenient.
 	
Information on Job Futures is supported by each provincial department of education or labour, each Service Canada regional office, and from the Policy Research and Coordination Directorate of Human Resources Social Development Canada (HRSDC) national headquarters
	Job Futures
	http://www.jobfutures.ca/en/home.shtml
	National career and education planning tool.
	
	Provides information about 265 occupational groups and describes the work experiences of recent graduates from 155 programs of study.
		Information on occupations provided covers:
		At work
		• What they do – short description of work carried out
		• Where they find work – main occupational areas of employment
		• Who they work for – e.g. government, self employed
		• Unionisation rates and comparison with average for all occupations
		• Where they work – highest & lowest concentrations of the occupation geographically
		• Links to information on related occupations
		Education, training & experience
		• Education and training needed
		• Required/related educational programmes – links to related information on each programme:
		  o Programme of study: what the programme covers, entry requirements, number of graduates, similar programmes
		  o Occupation of graduates: %
			Allows access to information on employment organized by:
			
			I want to be
			Profiles of 265 occupational groups covering the entire Canadian labour market
			Allows user to browse occupations by
			• Alphabetical list of occupations
			• Interest
			• NOC code
			• Work prospects (assessed as good/fair/limited)
			• Or take 'know yourself' quiz
			I want to study
			Education and work experiences of recent graduates from 155 post-secondary educational programs in Canada.
			I want to know more about the world of work
			Links to provincial information about employment prospects, as well as local sources and jobsetc.ca – Canadian job search site
			
			Does not allow comparison of data on different occupations.
				No link from Job Futures 'I want to study' section to Can Learn (although there is a link from Can Learn to Job Futures).

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
		working in main occupational areas & typical jobs, student satisfaction with work and training match (and comparison with results for all programmes at same level) ○ Work prospects – assessment of prospects (good, fair, limited) currently and in near future (2 years after date at which figures are available), related and other careers in which recent graduates are employed) ○ Work facts – average earnings 2 years after graduation, % in the workforce 2 years after graduation • Useful experience/skills – list • Useful high school subjects – list of subjects **Work prospects** • Overview of current conditions – assessment of work prospects (good, fair, limited), retirement rate, hourly wages and comparison with average wage, employment rate. (graphical and text) • Outlook – any anticipated changes to current conditions **Important facts** • Earnings – broken down into age groups and compared with average for all occupations (graph & text) • Unemployment – unemployment rate and comparison with all occupations (graph & text) • Full-time/part-time employment – % in each and comparison with all occupations (graph & text) • Self-employment – % and comparison with all occupations		

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
		(graph & text) • Age profile – % in each age group and comparison with all occupations • Gender split – breakdown of employment by males/females and comparison with all occupations		
Australia Provided by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Information on the Course Finder is provided to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations by Australian higher education providers. It is the first national, searchable online resource for courses offered by Australian universities and higher education providers (providers) that have been approved under the Higher Education Support Act 2003	http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/ Going to Uni - Higher education for students in Australia The *Going to Uni* website is not representative of any particular higher education provider. The website is intended to provide information about higher education options.	Information available through the Course Finder options covers: • Course name • Year of offer • Fields of study • HEI provider/campus • Award • Length of course • Application route • Approximate course fee • Previous entry cut-offs • Eligibility scores	**Portal** with links to information on: • Fees, loans & scholarships – including applying, what you pay, repayment options, scholarships, loans, eligibility (at UG & PG). • Courses & providers – including links to Course Finder, list of links to individual institutions' websites, information on applying and routes into higher education. • Resources – student support (including disabled students and international students), publications and related links, and link to myUniAssist (individual record of financial assistance). **Course finder search options** • Course name (keyword search) • Course type (UG/PG/both) • Higher education providers (all in particular state or individual providers) • Distance education offered • Course entry cut offs (search for courses based on the previous years entry cut-off) • Course fee type (Commonwealth supported/fee paying/both) • Approximate course fee (free text box to enter amount in Aus$) **Option to compare information on courses returned via the search results.**	No links to career/employment prospect information in the portal or course finder search.

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes

MyUni
Australian Federal Government.
 	
My School
Developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), an independent authority that is responsible, among other things, for publishing nationally comparable data on Australian primary and secondary schools.
	My Uni
	Due to be launched in 2012. The purpose of the new site will be to measure universities based on courses, quality of teaching, learning outcomes and campus facilities, and will be aimed at students and their parents. Follows on the implementation of the My School website
	
	My School
	http://www.myschool.edu.au/
		My School
		Information provided on each on school:
		
		● School statement and link to website
		
		● National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results – average score and how the school compares to statistically similar schools and the Australian national average (colour coded to ease comparison)
		
		● School facts – including:
		  ○ Enrolment numbers
		  ○ % indigenous students
		  ○ Attendance rate
		  ○ Number of teaching staff and FTE
		  ○ Number of non-teaching staff and FTE
		  ○ Secondary school outcomes (exam results and completion)
		  ○ Student background – 5 in each quartile of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
			My School
			Option to search by school name or to find schools in a geographic location.
			
			Once school has been chosen, option to compare the NAPLAN scores of statistically similar schools (based on social and economic background of pupils, proportion of indigenous students, and remoteness of the school).
			
			Also option to identify other schools within 80kms of the selected school.	

Australia On 1 March 2010, Curriculum Corporation merged with Education.au to form Education Services Australia Ltd, a new, national, not-for-profit ministerial company. Education Services Australia has been established by all Australian Ministers of Education with a brief to support national education priorities and initiatives. The new company has	www.ozjac.com.au Australian Careers and Courses database OZJAC is used by the majority of secondary schools across Australia, as part of the careers curriculum. TAFE Institutes, Universities, JobNetwork staff, private employment services providers, and independent consultants use OZJAC as part of their career advisory services or within their libraries for direct use by prospective students and their parents.	● **Courses:** where they are offered, what subjects you can study, how to get in, who to contact, what jobs they lead to. ● **Providers:** where the universities, TAFE institutions and private providers are, what courses they offer, what services are available, who to contact. ● **Jobs:** what duties are involved, what training is required, whether there are personal requirements, what the working conditions are like, what other jobs are in the same industry, where to find out more. ● **General Information:** what's new in	Unknown – available by subscription only.	Available by subscription only – not free web resource. Single user licence (install on 1 or 2 stand-alone computers): $249 Network licence (install on network/multiple computers at one address): $385 Multi-site licence (install on networks across 2 or more address): $299 per site Hobsons publishes OZJAC on behalf of Curriculum Corporation, a national educational support organisation owned by all Australian Ministers of Education.

Source	Site description	Information provided	Functionality	Notes
the capability to meet the needs of all education sectors in the areas of curriculum development, publishing, technology services, collaborative platforms, content creation, resource delivery, career services and professional learning.		education and training, where to get financial assistance, who to contact for wage and employment conditions, how course fees work, and lots more.		

Appendix B. Document review list

Document title and details
Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes. Core funding/operations. Report on review and next steps October 2006/45
Providing public information on the quality and standards of higher education courses. Report by Segal Quince Wicksteed to DENI, HEFCE, HEFCW, QAA, SHEFC. (October 1999)
Students and Universities. Eleventh Report of Session 2008–09 (July 2009) House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee.
Government response to the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee's 11th Report of Session 2008-2009 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. October 2009
National Student Forum Annual Report 2008 NUS
National Student Forum Annual Report 2009 NUS
Student Experience Report: Choosing a university and course NUS/HSBC September 2009
The current provision of online higher education-focused information, advice and guidance. Prepared for: Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly DIUS) Prepared by: Policy & Communications Department, UCAS, and NUS (July 2009)
Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy DBIS November 2009
Information on quality and standards in higher education Final report of the Task Group. (March 2002)
Appendix to Final Report of the Task Group (March 2002)
Report of the sub-committee for Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience HEFCE's statutory responsibility for quality assurance. (October 2009) Summary, full report
HEFCE Response to the Report of the sub-committee for Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience HEFCE's statutory responsibility for quality assurance. (October 2009)
Awareness, take-up and impact of institutional bursaries and scholarships in England. Summary and recommendations. Report to OFFA by Professor Claire Callendar, Birkbeck, University of London. (December 2009)
Needs of employers and related organisations for information about quality and standards of higher education. Report to HEFCE by the University of Sussex School of Education. (October 2006)
Appendix to Sussex report (includes research questions)
Teaching Quality Information web-site: qualitative user evaluation Report to HEFCE by Ipsos MORI and the Open University. (October 2006)
Impact of the Teaching Quality Information initiative on higher education institutions. Report to HEFCE by Alan Brickwood & Associates. (October 2006)
Understanding prospective student decision-making and the role of marketing in undergraduate education Paper prepared for *Marketing Education 2002,* Melbourne, 21-23 October 2002. Associate Professor Richard James, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne

Document title and details
Student decision-making by prospective tertiary students A review of existing New Zealand and overseas literature
Practical steps for 1:1 HE guidance. Andy Gardner, HE Advisor.
Towards Ambition 2020: skills, jobs, growth. Expert advice from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. October 2009
Stronger together: Businesses and universities in turbulent times. A report from the CBI Higher Education Task Force. 2009
Emerging stronger: the value of education and skills in turbulent times. Education and skills survey 2009
Unistats survey of usage. UCAS 2009
One Step Beyond: making the post of postgraduate education. Smith *et al*. March 2010

Appendix C.   Sector stakeholder interviewees

Organisation	Participants	Broad purpose
1994 Group	Paul Marshall, Executive Director	HE perspective
Association of Colleges	Joy Mercer	FE perspective
DBIS Policy Group	Mary Degg	Government perspective
British Council	Pat Killingley	International perspective
DELNI	Dominic McCullough	Non-English Perspective
GuildHE	Helen Bowles	HE Perspective
Higher Education Academy	David Sadler	Learning &Teaching perspective
HEFCW	Dr Cliona O'Neill, Senior Learning and Teaching Manager	Welsh perspective
HESA	Alison Allden, Chief Executive Andy Youell Jane Wild Jonathan Waller	Data collection initiatives
JISC	Sarah Davies Paul Bailey Alan Paull	Providers of information/information systems perspective
million+	Pam Tatlow, Chief Executive	HE perspective
Mixed Economy Group	John Widdowson, Chair of Group	FE perspective
NUS	Alex Bols, Head of Education and Quality Aaron Porter, Vice-President (Higher Education) Mark Leach (Research and Policy Officer (Higher Education)	Student views
QAA	Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive Officer	Quality perspective
Russell Group	Alex Thompson, Senior Policy Advisor	HE perspective
Scottish Funding Council	Lesley Sutherland, Assistant Director of Learning Policy and Strategy	Scottish perspective
Supporting Professionalism in Admissions	Janet Graham, Director,	Admissions perspective
Student Loan Company	Paul Smith, Head of Business	Loans and funding
TDA	Martin Furner, Data Collections & Analysis	Transition from school

Organisation	Participants	Broad purpose
UCAS	Mary Curnock Cook Janet Pearce (Interim Head of Policy & Public Affairs) Andrea Robertson (Director of Customer & Applications Services) Claire Singer (Business Development Executive) Moira Hyatt, UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service Development Manager	Application perspective and data provider
UKCES	Ian Kinder	Skills perspective and HE in FE
Universities Scotland	Kirsty Skidmore	Scottish perspective
University Alliance	Libby Ashton, Director	HE perspective
UUK	Fiona Hoban, Policy Advisor	HE perspective & requirements
	John O'Leary (ex Times Higher Education Supplement)	Commercial provider of information for potential students
	Professor John Green	Developed information system for making choices about Oxbridge colleges

HEI and FEC interviewees

Institution	Participants	Broad purpose
Aberystwyth University	David McParlin, Academic secretary, responsible for quality	Welsh HEI – bilingual and Welsh system aspects
Birmingham University	Clare McCauley, Assistant Director (Academic Policy & Quality)	Russell Group view
University of East London	Ruth Carter, Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement	million+
Exeter University	David Gibson, Assistant Director of Academic Services	1994 Group
Glasgow Caledonian University	Dr Andrew Eadie, Director of Quality	million+ & Scotland
Kingston University	Dr David Mackintosh, Deputy Vice-Chancellor	million+
Lancaster University	Paul Graves, Director of Planning	1994 Group
University of Leicester	Richard Taylor, Director of Marketing Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor Christine Fyfe, Pro-VC	1994 Group
Oxford Brookes University	Mike Ratcliffe, Director of Academic and Student Affairs	University Alliance
University of Oxford	Keith Zimmerman	On Steering Group – collated responses from other stakeholders
Warwickshire College	Ann Cotteril, Head of HE	FEC with HE (Mixed Economy Group)
Harper Adams University College	Dr Noel Morrison, Academic Registrar	Specialist college

Employers and representative bodies interviewees

Organisation	Participants	Broad purpose
CBI	Lizzi Holman, Senior Policy Advisor – education and skills	Employer and industry perspective & requirements
Skills for Health	John Ennis	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (health)
SEMTA	John Harris, Higher Skills/Education Manager	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (engineering)
COGENT	Tony Pringle, Skills Development Director, Polymers	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (pharmaceutical)
COGENT	Clive Smith, Skills Development Director, Nuclear	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (pharmaceutical)
Skillset	Chris Wensely	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (creative media)
Farnborough Aerospace Consortium	John Copley, Chief Executive Officer	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (aerospace& engineering)
Marshall Aerospace	Dave Hudson, Head of AeroAcademy	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (aerospace)
Quintiles	Dr Kerry Gordon, Executive Director, Biostatistics, Europe	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (bio and pharmaceutical services provider)
NHS Employers	Caroline Waterfield, Deputy Head of Employment Services	Employer and industry perspective & requirements (health)

Careers advisor interviewees

Advisor	Background information
Connexions Personal Advisor – University A	PA working with prospective students across three secondary schools. One a high-achieving, middle class school and two schools that have not got a tradition of HE progression.
Access Coordinator – FE College B	Mature students on pre-entry courses (full and part-time) in a semi-rural further education college.
Careers Advisor – Sixth Form College A	Prospective young students in a large urban college following a more traditional route.
Careers Advisor – FE College A	Prospective students in a large FE college following both traditional and vocational route
Member of the Careers Advisory team based in an Independent School – Independent School A	More advantaged students based in an independent school following a traditional route with a strong emphasis on entry to 'top ranked' institutions.
Disabled Students Support Officer – University A	Disabled students currently studying in HE.
Head of sixth form in a state school – State School A	Students continuing in the same institution post-16. Students based in the school sixth form and following a traditional route to HE.
Careers advisor – University A	Prospective post-graduate students and current students considering changing course.
Tutor – University B	Tutor on CPD course for Career Advisors, author of publications on IAG for HE.
Course Leader –- University B	Course leader on CPD course for Careers Advisors.

Appendix D.   Focus groups educational establishments and participants

Summary of focus group participants

Target groups	Number	Gender (% female)	Ethnicity breakdown (by number)[a]						Mature students[b] (%)
			White British	White Other	Black British	Black Other	Asian British	Asian Other	
Year 13 students	35	49%	26		1		7	1	n/a
Access course students	11	55%	11						100%
Foundation Degree students	8	100%	8						100%
Undergraduate students	12	33%	6	2	1	2	1		33%
Total	**66**	**53%**	**51**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**8**	**1**	**37%**

[a] 'Other' refers to international students or non-British students domiciled in the UK.

[b] For the focus groups these were classified as students not going to straight to HE from school or college.

Details of focus group participants

Rationale for inclusion	Target students	Name of institution	Participants	Background information (collated from DCSF, Ofsted reports)
1. State school – urban low participation area	Year 13 Non-traditional students – White working class	State School B	6 Year 13 students (2 male, 4 female). All were of White British origin and would be classed as first generation HE students.	11-18 school situated in a disadvantaged urban area with a high proportion of white working class students. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average.

Rationale for inclusion	Target students	Name of institution	Participants	Background information (collated from DCSF, Ofsted reports)
2. State school – urban, minority ethnic student intake	Year 13 Non-traditional students – Black or Black Caribbean	State School C	1 male Year 13 student who was Black British and had a mother who had attended HE.	A large 11-18 school in an urban area. The school has a large minority ethnic intake with a high proportion of Asian/Asian British and Black/Black Caribbean students. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The sixth form is part of the South Brent consortium.
3. State sector sixth form college – urban, minority ethnic student intake	Year 13 Non-traditional students – Asian	Sixth Form College B	8 Year 13 students (4 males, 4 females). 7 of the students were Asian British and 1 was Asian Other (international student in the UK on a student visa and paying fees to study at the College).	A large sixth form situated in an urban area. The college has approximately 1900 students 75% of whom are from minority ethnic groups, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi background.
4. Further Education College	18+ students on vocational routes into HE	FE College A	4 17/18 year old students on a BTEC Level 3 Sports and Exercise programme (1 female, 3 male). All were of White British origin and would be classed as first generation HE students.	A large further education college in an urban area. Many of the college's students are drawn from areas with high levels of deprivation. The college has around 5% of students from a minority ethnic background compared to 2.1% in the local population (2007)
5. State school – suburban	Year 13 Traditional students in more advantaged area remaining in school sixth form	State School D	7 Year 13 students (1 male, 6 female). All were of White British origin and all the female students would be considered first generation HE students.	A large community school serving a diverse socio-economic area. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, due partly to this being a Pathway school catering for students with physical disabilities. A small proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups.

Rationale for inclusion	Target students	Name of institution	Participants	Background information (collated from DCSF, Ofsted reports)
6. State school – semi-rural	Year 13 students	State School E	3 Year 13 students, all male. All of White British origin and 2 would be considered first generation HE students.	A 13-19 college situation on the outskirts of a market town. The college is designated as a High Performing Specialist School. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all the students are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with a statement of SEN is in line with the national average. The number with learning difficulties is below the national average.
7. Independent school day pupils	Year 13 students – Traditional students – advantaged	Independent School B	6 Year 13 students (4 male, 2 female). All were of White, British origin and 3 (2 male, 1 female) would be considered first generation HE students.	A selective Catholic school in an urban area. Students are admitted subject to entrance examination performance. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is very low. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low. The majority of the students are of White British heritage with approximately 10% of students being of minority ethnic backgrounds.
8. Further Education College offering pre-entry courses	Mature students on access course	FE College B	11 mature students (5 male, 6 female). All were of White British origin and all the female students would be considered first generation HE students.	A small college in a semi-rural area. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The college offers provision from pre-entry level to level 4. The majority of adult learners study at levels 1 and 2.
9. Teaching intensive higher education institution	Mature and young students on a vocationally orientated subject	University A	5 first year undergraduate students on Biomedical Sciences/Forensic Science degree programmes 5 students, 3 male (2 minority ethnic – Zimbabwe, Cameroon but domiciled in the UK, 1 white), 2 female (1 White British, 1 minority ethnic). All were mature students apart from 1 female.	A post-1992 institution with around 8,500 students. The university has approximately 32% students classed as mature. Over 98% of students attended state schools and approximately 20% come from low participation areas

Rationale for inclusion	Target students	Name of institution	Participants	Background information (collated from DCSF, Ofsted reports)
10. Research intensive higher education institution	First year undergraduate students – academic subjects	University C	7 first year students (5 male, 2 female) enrolled on Economics/International Economics undergraduate programmes. 1 male minority ethnic student and 1 female student with no family experience of HE. 4 of the male students were of White British origin. Both female students had attended schools outside the UK. 1 was of White British origin. 2 of the male students had attended independent schools, 1 as a scholarship student (minority ethnic background).	A Russell Group institution with over 20,000 undergraduates. Approximately 14% of the students are classed as mature. Almost 70% of students attended state schools with 5.2% coming from low participation areas.
11. Further Education College offering Foundation Degree courses	Mature students enrolled on Foundation Degree course	FE College C	8 second year mature, female teaching assistants on a Foundation Degree programme.	A large further education college recently established through the merger of three colleges in the area. The college has 4 campuses. One in 8 of the college's students are from areas of deprivation. 6% of the students are from a minority ethnic background compared to 2% in the local district.

Appendix E.   Focus group interview schedule and scenario cards

QUESTION TO BE ASKED AFTER EACH INFORMATION SCENARIO CARD IS PRESENTED *What do you think is the most important about these two sets of questions in terms of decision making?*	We are not asking students to respond to each item on the scenario cards specifically, but are intending to stimulate discussion amongst the group about which information they regard as important. **It's also important to note if students ask what the specific sources are** – what are the sorts of questions they ask? Does this relate to what sources of information they place most faith in? **Make a note of what information they are unaware of** Allow about an hour for the discussion around the cards overall. Then move on to the questions listed below
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AFTER ALL CARDS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED *Is there any information we've not included on the cards that you think is important?* *How do you access information?*	Why do they want this? What format/how would it be measured? Where do you look now? How would you like information to be provided? One site? Who would host this? (Example of Unistats – do they use this, if not what do they use?) Who gives them advice on where to look?
What sources of information do you prefer or trust? For example, do you value the opinion of current students or that provided by universities themselves?	What sort of information do they trust? What sort of information do they regard as reliable?

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 1A

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	University statement	Average for universities with similar student intakes
Weekly hours of teaching contact time	University statement	
Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	University statement	
Average A level grades of students on this course	National HE data	
Proportion of the teaching in lectures with a class size of over 100	University statement	
Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	Research Assessment Exercise	

Information Scenario 1B

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	University statement	Average for this subject in all HEIs
What proportion of first year teaching is by professors (as opposed to other staff)	University statement	
Proportion of international students on this course	National HE data	
What proportion of the students on the course is male/female	National HE data	Average for all HEIs
Ethnic mix of students at this university	National HE data	
Proportion of students from different social class groups	National Widening Participation data	

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 2A

Item of information about students <u>from this course</u>	Source	Comparison
Average salary of graduates in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	Average for universities with <u>similar student intakes</u>
Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	National HE data	
Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree course in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Proportion of graduates in employment in the first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Proportion of students who enrol that drop out	National HE data	
Proportion of graduates that get a third class or pass degree?	National HE data	

Information Scenario 2B

Item of information about students <u>from this course</u>	Source	Comparison
Proportion of graduates employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	Average **for this subject** at all HEIs
Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	National HE data	
Average A level grades of students	National HE data	
Proportion of students progressing to a postgraduate degree other than teacher training in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Average salary of graduates in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Proportion of students who enrol who repeat a year (or more) of their studies	National HE data	

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 3A

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Maximum available bursary	University statement	Average for all HEIs
Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	University statement	
Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	Data would need to be collected by central agency	
Whether first year students are guaranteed a place in a hall of residence	University statement	
Cost of university halls of residence	University statement	
Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	University statement	

Information Scenario 3B

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Proportion of first year students living in university halls of residence	University statement	Average for HEIs with similar student intakes
Proportion of students expressing satisfaction with off campus IT support	% from National Student Survey	
Nursery provision on campus	University statement	
Annual cost of parking a car on campus	University statement	
Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	Data not currently collected	
Additional cost of field or study trips	University statement	

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 4A

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Proportion of students in different ethnic groups at the university	National HE data	Average for all HEIs
Student satisfaction with the Student Union	Information would need to be collected	
Whether there are on-campus facilities for all religious faiths	University statement	
Street crime figures for the locality of the university	Local crime statistics	
Nursery provision on campus: ratio of places to students	University statement	
Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	Statement from Students' Union	

Information Scenario 4B

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Maximum available bursary	University statement	Average for all HEIs
Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	University statement	
Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	Data would need to be collected by central agency	
Whether first year students are guaranteed a place in a hall of residence	University statement	
Cost of university halls of residence	University statement	
Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	University statement	

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 5A

Item of information	Source	Comparison
The proportion of students <u>at the university</u> reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied with:		
Their course	Questions in the National Student Survey carried out by the Higher Education Academy	Average for all HEIs
The support and guidance they received		
The feedback on assessment		
The standard of teaching		
The IT facilities		
The library facilities		

Information Scenario 5B

Item of information	Source	Comparison
Emphasis on the university's industry links	Nationally collected data using university reports	Average for all HEIs
Ranking of university in national league tables	As calculated by a national newspaper	
University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	University statements	All HEIs
The average A level grades of students on this course	National HE data	
Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	Research Assessment Exercise	Average <u>for this subject</u> at all HEIs
Proportion of full-time staff who are professors	Nationally collected data on HE staff	

Which of these two sets of information would be more useful to students like you wanting to choose a university and course?

Information Scenario 6A

Item of information about students <u>from this course</u>	Source	Comparison
Proportion of graduates employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	Average **<u>for this subject</u>** at all HEIs
Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	National HE data	
Average A level grades of students	National HE data	
Proportion of students progressing to a postgraduate degree other than teacher training in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Average salary of graduates in their first year after graduation	National Survey data collected from new graduates	
Proportion of students who enrol who repeat a year (or more) of their studies	National HE data	

Information Scenario 6B

Item of information	Source	Comparison
The proportion of students <u>at the university</u> reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied with:		
Their course	Questions in the National Student Survey carried out by the Higher Education Academy	Average for all HEIs
The support and guidance they received		
The feedback on assessment		
The standard of teaching		
The IT facilities		
The library facilities		

Appendix F. Questions for sector stakeholders

1. What do the stakeholder organisations want the research to achieve? [To inform us about stakeholder expectations]

2. What is your organisation's role in relation to the provision of information to prospective students (and their advisors)? What does this involve?

3. What do you think are the most important things that prospective students **need** to know to be able to make informed choices about what to study and where? (Note we are interested in what you think they need to know – not what they might want to know)

    a) Why are they the most important?

    b) How will they inform decisions?

4. How feasible is it to provide this information? [e.g. in terms of:

    a) Comparability across institutions or courses;

    b) Accuracy of the information, including issues of updating?

    c) Validation of the information.

    d) Could this information be provided in a way that provides value for money? (I.e. what are your views on the cost benefit of making this information available?)]

5. Who should collect or provide this information and how should it be accessed?

6. Are there any issues related to the provision of this information (other than those related to the feasibility of provision)? [Note: these may include lack of will on the part of institutions or previous students to provide the information]

7. In your view how far do existing sources meet information needs?

    a) Is there anything NOT provided currently which you consider vital?

8. Our review of current research and discussions with other bodies suggest that these following types of information are also important to the decision making process for students. Can I run through to gauge your views on how important or not you think these are (and why)? [taken from information matrix – if not already mentioned by interviewees]

9. Is the information you feel prospective students need to make informed decisions the same as that required by those that advise them? [Note in this case advisors may be career advisors, heads of 6th forms etc, parents or carers; employers]

Interview schedule for HEIs and FECs

HE Framework proposals

Higher Ambitions proposed that:

"All universities should publish a standard set of information setting out what students can expect in terms of the nature and quality of their programmes".

This will set out:

- How and what students will learn
- What that knowledge will qualify them to do
- Whether they will have access to external expertise or experience
- How much direct contact there will be with academic staff
- What their own study responsibilities will be
- What facilities they have access to
- Opportunities for international experience
- Long-term employability prospects a course offers
- What students on individual courses have done after graduation

The information will be brought together in a comparable way.

Emerging information requirements from this research

Interviews with sector bodies, a review of relevant documentation and focus groups with prospective and current students suggest that the following information is important for informed decision making about what and where to study.

Course-related

- Proportion of assessment by coursework
- Contact hours/self-guided learning hours
- Proportion of teaching by postgraduate students/professors/other staff
- Proportion of students on the course that drop out
- Student satisfaction with their course/standard of teaching/feedback on assessment

Financial

- Maximum available bursary
- Costs of accommodation (halls/private rental)
- Eligibility criteria for bursaries
- Cost of compulsory field or study trips
- Cost of compulsory equipment purchases

Employment-related

- Average salary of graduates in first year after graduation at course level
- Proportion of graduates achieving 2i or higher or third class degree or below by course
- Proportion of students progressing to postgraduate study in first year after graduation by course
- Proportion of students entering managerial or professional employment in first year after graduation by course
- Institution's links with industry at Departmental level
- Recognition of award by professional body or leading to professional qualification

Other students

- Ratio of male/female students on each course
- Ratio of students from different economic or ethnic backgrounds on each course
- Average 'A' Level grades of students on each course
- Ratio of mature students on each course

Our questions for you

1. The extent to which the provision of this information is feasible? In terms of:
   - Comparability
   - Validity
   - Burden and cost

2. Are there any potential 'unintended consequences' of providing this information?

3. What other issues are there related to provision of the information?

4. At what level should the comparison be available (subject, institution, course)?

5. Who should provide the information?

6. How should the information be accessed (via institutions' websites or central site or both)?

7. What do prospective students need to know to make decisions?

8. Is that information available now? Where?

9. Any other issues you want to raise?

10. What would you like to see coming out of this research?

Interview schedule for employers and representative organisations

Purpose:

- To get views on the provision of information to prospective students to inform decisions on what and where to study.

- To get views on what information employers need and for what purpose.

1. What is your role in this area?

2. In your view, what information do prospective students need to inform their decisions on where and what to study?

3. What role do employers have? [Shaping what information is available? Providing information?]

4. What do employers need to know and what would the information be used for? [Any particular information requirements for Foundation Degrees?]

5. What information sources are currently used? [E.g. League tables, institution websites, QAA, Unistats?]

6. Do employers require information at a course by course (degree programme) level at institutions? (so that they can identify excellent courses at institutions that may not have such a good overall reputation, for example)

7. Is there an understanding of how success and quality is currently measured in HE?

8. Any other issues or points you want to raise?

9. What would you like to see coming out of this research?

Interview schedule – advisors

1. What do you see as your role in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance to prospective students?

    a) Briefly, what does this involve?

    b) Have you had any formal training in IAG?

2. What are the 3 most important things that you need to know to be able to support prospective students to make informed choices about what to study and where?

    c) Why are they the most important?

    d) How do they inform decisions?

3. To what extent (and why) is it important that this information is:

    e) Comparable across institutions or courses?

    f) Accurate and timely (i.e. regularity of updating)?

    g) Validated by an authoritative source?

    h) Provided by an authoritative source?

4. What sources of information do you currently use, and how far do they meet your needs?

    i) What do they NOT provide which you consider vital?

    j) Do the sources fulfil the advisory and guidance requirements or are they simply sources of information?

    k) What is required to fulfil the advisory aspect that is different to information needs?

5. Is the information you feel prospective students need to make informed decisions the same as that required by you in an advisory role?

6. If yes – why? If not – what information do they need and why? Why are there different requirements?

7. Our review of current research and discussions with other bodies suggest that these following types of information are also important to the decision making process for students. Can I run through to gauge your views on how important or not you think these are (and why)?

Appendix G.   Survey participants – summary and detail

Summary

Institution group	Type of institution	Number of institutions in this group	Number of questionnaires requested	Number returned to date	Response rate (%)
Year 13 or equivalent (i.e., pre-entry to HE)	Sixth form colleges	3	324	163	50%
	Further education colleges	2	280	120	43%
	11-18 state schools	18	1322	600	45%
	11-18 independent schools	3	366	200	55%
Totals for Year 13 or equivalent		**26**	**2292**	**1083**	**47%**
Further Education Colleges – Foundation Degrees/HNC/HND	Foundation Degrees – public sector	7	350	101	29%
	Foundation Degrees – private sector	5	57	42	74%
	HNC/HND	2	110	40	36%
Totals for Foundation Degrees/HNC/HND		**14**	**517**	**183**	**35%**
Undergraduate courses or equivalent	HE in FE	1	35	7	20%
	HEIs	6	1326	549	41%
Totals for Undergraduate or equivalent		**7**	**1361**	**556**	**41%**
Postgraduate courses	HEIs	2	320	120	38%
Totals for Postgraduate courses		**2**	**320**	**120**	**38%**
Final totals – All schools/colleges/HEIs		**48**	**4490**	**1942**	**43%**

Detail of survey institutions

Type of institution (questionnaire form in parenthesis)	Target group	Institution name (Total number = 24)	Background information	Type/Area	Number of questionnaires requested by institution	Number of returns	Response rate (%)
Sixth Form Colleges (S/C)	Year 13 (advantaged backgrounds)	Sixth Form College A	Traditional students moving to sixth form college post-16	Urban	100	32	32%
	Year 13 (Asian minority ethnic backgrounds)	Sixth Form College B	Non-traditional students moving to sixth form college post-16. High proportion of students from Asian minority ethnic backgrounds	Urban	24	17	71%
	Year 13	Sixth Form College C	Students moving to sixth form college post-16	Semi-rural	200	114	57%
Further Education Colleges (S/C)	Year 13 equivalent (vocationally orientated programmes)	FE College A	BTec Level 3 students enrolled on Sports Science; Health and Social Care; Early Years; ICT; Business and Travel; Tourism courses	Urban	160	111	69%
	Mature students	FE College B	Mature students on pre-entry courses (full and part time)	Semi-rural	120	9	8%
11-18 State Schools (S/C)	Year 13	State School A	Students remaining in school sixth form	Urban	81	47	58%
	Year 13	State School B	Students in a disadvantaged area remaining in school sixth form	Urban	15	14	93%
	Year 13	State School C	Students in a disadvantaged area remaining in school sixth form. High proportion of students from Black minority ethnic backgrounds	Urban	100	27	27%
	Year 13	State School D	Students in a diverse socio-economic area remaining in school sixth form	Suburban	100	21	21%

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Type of institution (questionnaire form in parenthesis)	Target group	Institution name (Total number = 24)	Background information	Type/Area	Number of questionnaires requested by institution	Number of returns	Response rate (%)
	Year 13	State School E	Students remaining in school sixth form	Urban	27	27	100%
	Year 13	State School F	Students remaining in school sixth form	Rural	80	8	10%
	Year 13	State School G	Students remaining in shared school sixth form	Semi-rural	90	28	31%
	Year 13	State School H	Students in a relatively advantaged area remaining in school sixth form	Suburban	99	68	69%
	Year 13	State School I	Students remaining in school sixth form. Designated school for students with physical disabilities	Suburban	80	16	20%
	Year 13	State School J	Students in a relatively advantaged area remaining in school sixth form	Suburban	77	8	10%
	Year 13	State School K	Students in a diverse socio-economic area remaining in school sixth form	Suburban, coastal	200	138	69%
	Year 13	State School L	Students remaining in school sixth form	Urban	50	35	70%
	Year 13	State School M	Students remaining in school sixth form	Urban	45	9	20%
	Year 13	State School N	Students remaining in school sixth form	Rural	85	30	35%
	Year 13	State School O	Students remaining in faith school sixth form	Urban	35	30	86%
	Year 13	State School P	Students remaining in faith school sixth form	Urban	40	32	80%

Type of institution (questionnaire form in parenthesis)	Target group	Institution name (Total number = 24)	Background information	Type/Area	Number of questionnaires requested by institution	Number of returns	Response rate (%)
	Year 13	State School Q	Students remaining in school sixth form	Urban	60	31	52%
	Year 13	State School R	Students remaining in faith school sixth form	Urban	60	31	52%
Independent schools (S/C)	Year 13	Independent School B	Students in independent school	Urban	132	96	73%
	Year 13	Independent School C	Students in independent school	Semi-rural	135	104	77%
	Year 13	Independent School D	Students in independent school	Urban	99	Withdrew	n/a
Totals for Year 13 or equivalent (i.e. pre-entry to HE)					**2292**	**1083**	**47%**
Further Education Colleges/HEIs – Foundation Degrees (UG – FD)	Students on a range of courses – directed primarily at the <u>public</u> sector	FE College C	Teaching Assistants		11	8	73%
		FE College D	Includes Year 1, 2 and 3 students – Teaching Assistants		74	24	32%
		FE College E	Includes Year 1, 2 and 3 students		40	23	58%
		FE College F	Education		20	3	15%
		FE College G	Early Years		120	16	13%
		University College A	Teaching support		70	17	24%
		University A	Education		15	10	67%
	Students on a range of courses – directed primarily at the <u>private</u> sector	FE College C	Salon Management		13	10	77%
		FE College D	Travel and Tourism – Year 3		2	Withdrew	n/a
		FE College F	Salon Management		5	4	80%
		FE College H	Leadership and Management		12	9	75%
		FE College I	Leadership and Management		25	19	76%
Further Education Colleges – HNC/HND (UG - FD)		FE College C	Business and Management – HND/BAMS		60	15	25%
		FE College F	Business and Management – HNC/HND		50	25	50%
Totals for Foundation Degrees/HNC/HND					**517**	**183**	**35%**

Type of institution (questionnaire form in parenthesis)	Target group	Institution name (Total number = 24)	Background information	Type/Area	Number of questionnaires requested by institution	Number of returns	Response rate (%)
Further Education Colleges – HE in FE (UG)	Students on Higher Education programmes	FE College A	DTLLS (Diploma in teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector)		35	7	20%
Higher Education Institutions – undergraduate students (UG)	First year undergraduates – covering a range of academic and vocational subjects	University College A	Initial Teacher Education	Guild HE	151	140	93%
			Early Years		54	54	100%
			English		40	22	55%
		University A	Various	Teaching intensive HEI	3	3	100%
		University C	Economics	Research intensive HEI	200	112	56%
		University D	Economics	Research intensive HEI	400	27	7%
			Politics		200	55	28%
			Sociology		100	2	2%
		University E	Dance Studies; Sports Development with PE; Sports Development with Adventure Tourism; Outdoor and Environmental Education	Teaching intensive HEI	180	126	70%
		University F	Engineering	Research Intensive HEI	8	8	100%
Totals for undergraduate courses					**1361**	**556**	**41%**
Higher Education	Postgraduates – covering a	University A	MA Business Administration – Part-time students	Teaching intensive	50	Withdrew	n/a

Type of institution (questionnaire form in parenthesis)	Target group	Institution name (Total number = 24)	Background information	Type/Area	Number of questionnaires requested by institution	Number of returns	Response rate (%)
Institutions – Postgraduate students (PG)	range of academic and vocational subjects		MA Education	HEI	30	18	60%
			MSc Habitat Creation and Management		6	5	83%
			MSc Health Psychology		20	15	75%
			Postgraduate in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy		28	10	36%
			Doctorate in Clinical Psychology		31	30	97%
			Doctorate in Health Psychology		5	3	60%
		University F	Majority Engineering, some Psychology; Sociology; Education; History	Research intensive HEI	150	39	26%
Totals for postgraduate courses					**320**	**120**	**38%**
Final totals – All schools/colleges/HEIs					**4490**	**1942**	**43%**

Appendix H. Checklist against Higher Ambitions and TQI: for survey questionnaire development

Information points/area identified in *Higher Ambitions*	Questionnaire coverage as related to information points identified	TQI (subject level data)
How and what students will learn – how they will be taught? – "clear understanding of what it will be like to study x in institution y" **Recommendation that HESA publish information at university/college and course level with more detail on pupils' backgrounds**	Average A level grades of students on this course	Entry information – UCAS points achieved by first year students at the time they started their course (not the same as entry requirements)
	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	Gender split on course
	Age range of students on this course	Mature students on course
	Proportion of international students on this course	Overseas students on course
	Ethnic mix of students at this university	
	Proportion of students from different social class groups	
	% of disabled students at this university University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	
	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife Ranking of university in newspaper national league tables Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	Included in some institutions' commentary however these all vary in content and not all institutions provide a commentary
	Maximum available bursary Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying Cost of halls of residence Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking Nursery provision on campus Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths Street crime figures for the locality University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	

Information points/area identified in *Higher Ambitions*	Questionnaire coverage as related to information points identified	TQI (subject level data)
	Additional cost of required field or study trips	
		What students did before they started their course – split by course (e.g. A levels, Access, BTec, IB, Foundation course)
	Proportions of students <u>at the university</u> that are <u>satisfied or very satisfied</u> with the following things? Their course, support and guidance they received, feedback on assessment, standard of teaching, IT and library facilities, Student Union (THIS ALSO ADRESSES SOME OF THE MORE SPECIFIC POINTS IDENTIFIED IN HIGHER AMBITIONS)	NSS – Overall I am satisfied with the quality of course Assessment and feedback (clear marking criteria, fair, prompt feedback, detailed comments on work, feedback helped to clarify things didn't understand)
Whether they will have access to external expertise or experience	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	
How much direct contact will they have with academic staff Number of contact hours for each course	General section on student satisfaction with course/teaching as above Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100 Weekly hours of teaching contact time Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students Proportion of first year teaching by professors Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	NSS – Academic support (sufficient, ease of contact, good advice on study choice) Organisation and management (timetabling, changes to course communicated effectively, well organized)
What will be their study responsibilities	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	
The amount of personal learning that will be required	(This is the same for each institution so little point in comparison)	
What facilities will they have access to	General section on student satisfaction with course/teaching/facilities as above	NSS – Learning resources (library, IT, specialized equipment)
Information on how new technologies are integrated into the programme – how they are used in each course (Emphasis on digital technology and open course/learning materials)	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	
Opportunities for international experience	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	

Information points/area identified in *Higher Ambitions*	Questionnaire coverage as related to information points identified	TQI (subject level data)
Academic support that will be available from staff	General question on student satisfaction as above	NSS - teaching on course (staff good at explaining, made subject interesting, enthusiastic, course is intellectually stimulating)
	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course Proportion of students on this course that drop out % of disabled students at this university who successfully completed their course Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2 Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	Continuation rates – progression from Y1 to Y2 Degree class
What the knowledge that they have gained will qualify them to do (emphasis on the importance of students considering how their programme of study will affect their long term employment prospects)		
What students on individual courses have done after graduation Data on employability and graduate destinations Information about the employment outcomes of their provision available to prospective students	Average salary in the first year after completing this course Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	Top 10 profession types of those with a job 6 months after graduation Number who are in graduate/non-graduate jobs What students were doing 6 months after graduating (studying, working or both)
Institutions are being asked to produce a statement on how they promote student employability – what they do to prepare students for the labour market (e.g. training in modern workplaces skills such as team working, business	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	NSS – Personal development (helped me present myself with confidence, improved communication skills, increased confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems)

Information points/area identified in *Higher Ambitions*	Questionnaire coverage as related to information points identified	TQI (subject level data)
awareness and communication skills)		
How a course will improve employability – what courses marketed as vocational will lead to (whether they will gain a professionally recognized qualification)	Professional bodies that recognise this course	

Appendix I.   Survey findings

Appendix I1 Items of information about going to HE, ranked by the percentage of respondents indicating 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.7%
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%
14	29	Maximum available bursary	34.5%
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	29.7%
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	29.2%
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	26.7%
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.1%
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	24.5%
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	23.5%
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	23.2%
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	23.2%
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	22.4%
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	21.3%
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	19.3%
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.2%
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.2%
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	18.6%
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.5%
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	17.5%

'Very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'
= 33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	17.4%
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	17.3%
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	17.3%
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	17.0%
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	15.3%
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	12.9%
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	11.1%
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.8%
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	10.3%
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	10.0%
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	9.6%
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.0%
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.5%
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	6.5%
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	6.4%
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	6.3%
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	5.6%
50	3	Age range of students on this course	5.3%
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	4.8%

Note: N = 1,926. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 1,686 to N = 1,894.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

Appendix I2 Items of information about going to HE, ranked by the percentage of combined 'useful' and 'very useful' responses

Combined 'useful /very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'useful' or 'very useful'
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	85.0%
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	79.6%
3	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	79.3%
4	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	78.9%
5	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	77.1%
6	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	76.4%
7	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	75.5%
8	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	74.2%
9	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	73.5%
10	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	70.9%

Combined 'useful /very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'useful' or 'very useful'
11	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	70.4%
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	69.2%
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	66.2%
14	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	63.4%
= 15	29	Maximum available bursary	62.0%
= 15	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	62.0%
17	32	Cost of university halls of residence	59.8%
18	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	58.6%
19	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	57.3%
20	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	57.2%
21	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	55.9%
22	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	54.8%
23	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	54.7%
24	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	53.1%
= 25	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	51.0%
= 25	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	51.0%
27	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	50.2%
28	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	49.4%
29	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	49.0%
30	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	47.9%
31	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	47.4%
32	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	46.9%
33	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	46.5%
34	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	45.5%
35	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	44.8%
36	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	42.2%
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	39.7%
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	35.8%
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	35.5%
40	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	33.4%
41	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	32.8%
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	27.0%
43	3	Age range of students on this course	23.1%
44	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	22.5%
45	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	21.9%
46	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	21.4%
47	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	19.5%
48	4	Proportion of international students on this course	17.4%
49	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	17.1%
50	38	Nursery provision on campus	15.5%

Combined 'useful /very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'useful' or 'very useful'
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	14.0%

Note: N = 1,926. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 1,686 to N = 1,890.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

Appendix I3 Percentage of respondents indicating that they had tried and succeeded in getting the information items they had deemed as 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% tried to find this information (whole sample)	% succeeded in getting the information (of those that said they looked)	% tried to find this information (of those that said 'very useful')
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	47.3%	88.0%	58.3%
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	45.3%	87.0%	59.7%
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	46.5%	82.9%	66.6%
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	43.5%	88.2%	64.3%
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	42.2%	84.4%	56.2%
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	36.7%	81.6%	49.2%
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	36.8%	79.9%	54.6%
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	46.8%	93.8%	65.4%
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	52.5%	93.6%	80.4%
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	54.4%	89.1%	72.4%
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	55.0%	90.7%	73.9%
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	40.2%	83.9%	57.6%
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	42.4%	91.3%	62.2%
14	29	Maximum available bursary	51.3%	89.0%	77.4%
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	37.5%	89.7%	58.4%
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	50.3%	90.2%	75.1%
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	51.8%	95.0%	84.4%
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	46.0%	94.3%	77.4%
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	34.4%	81.9%	63.3%
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	40.6%	88.7%	68.1%
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	33.3%	87.9%	65.2%
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	36.4%	89.7%	73.2%

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'Very useful' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% tried to find this information (whole sample)	% succeeded in getting the information (of those that said they looked)	% tried to find this information (of those that said 'very useful')
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	25.9%	79.4%	48.5%
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	26.1%	79.9%	45.6%
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	33.1%	87.9%	69.9%
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	24.2%	82.3%	49.5%
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	30.3%	87.3%	66.4%
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	20.9%	75.9%	41.3%
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	28.6%	84.6%	53.8%
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	22.1%	77.2%	42.4%
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	23.5%	71.3%	49.2%
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	25.6%	89.2%	63.0%
= 33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	27.7%	85.6%	63.0%
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	20.8%	83.8%	42.4%
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	26.2%	84.9%	53.1%
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	20.3%	82.0%	45.5%
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	22.9%	82.0%	33.0%
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	16.8%	76.4%	45.7%
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	18.8%	83.9%	55.6%
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	12.3%	68.3%	35.4%
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	11.4%	72.0%	28.7%
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	13.1%	76.4%	42.9%
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	12.6%	82.3%	43.4%
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	10.9%	81.3%	46.2%
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	8.2%	80.3%	41.9%
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	11.0%	85.3%	46.8%
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	13.4%	84.5%	38.8%
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	9.2%	76.1%	45.0%
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	10.7%	82.4%	43.0%
50	3	Age range of students on this course	11.4%	83.1%	39.8%
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	7.0%	75.2%	37.8%

Note: N = 1,926. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 1,642 to N = 1,839 for the proportions of students who tried to get the information.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

Appendix I4 Definitions of attributes

Name	Definition
Disabled students	1 if disabled, 0 else
First generation HE students	1 if second generation, 0 else
Gender	1 if male

Ethnicity:
    Asian/Asian British
    Chinese/other Asian background
    Black/Black British
    White
	
	1 if Asian, 0 else
	1 if Chinese, 0 else
	1 if Black, 0 else
	Base category

STEM students	1 if STEM student, 0 else
Health students	1 if Health student, 0 else
Living at home	1 if student lives/is intending to live at home, 0 else

Income:
    Low income
    Medium income
    High income
	
	1 if low income, 0 else
	1 if medium income, 0 else
	Base category

GCSE performance:
    For regressions – GCSE score
 	
    For other analyses –
      Low GCSE
      Medium GCSE
      High GCSE
	
	The sum of performance at GCSE maths and English, where an A*=4, A=3, B=2, C=1, else=0
	
	GCSE score = 0, 1, or 2
	GCSE score = 3, 4, or 5
	Base category (GCSE score = 6, 7, or 8)

Institution:
    Undergraduate
    Postgraduate
    Independent school
    State school
	
	1 if undergraduate, 0 else
	1 if postgraduate, 0 else
	1 if independent school, 0 else
	Base category

Appendix I5 Sample size for analysis by particular attributes and percentage with that attribute

Attribute	Sample size when using this attribute	% in this attribute
Disabled students	1,913	1.5%
First generation HE students	1,890	50.8%
STEM students	1,907	17.1%
Male	1,920	40.9%

Ethnicity:
    Asian/Asian British
    Chinese/other Asian background
    Black/Black British
	1,903	
		7.0%
		2.9%
		2.6%

Health students	1,859	5.3%
Living at home	1,887	40.4%

Income:
    Low
    Medium
	1,793	
		31.5%
		39.0%

Low GCSE	1,790	19.2%
Undergraduates	1,920	29.0%
Postgraduate	1,920	6.3%
Foundation	1,920	9.5%
Independent school	1,920	10.3%

It should be noted that when the sample is divided into these groups the samples become small (e.g. in the case of ethnicity) and this makes it inappropriate to further sub-divide the data to examine intersections e.g. between gender and ethnicity). In the case of ethnicity no distinction is made between domestic and international respondents. We examined some indicative differences between pre-university and university students within some categories and found only isolated instances of significant difference.

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%	1	1	4	7	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	4	1	3	1
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%	2	2	9	5	8	2	1	2	2	2	2	9	2	5	2
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%	3	7	3	3	10	3	3	3	7	7	4	11	4	10	5
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%	4	5	13	1	4	4	7	6	5	9	5	1	3	1	8
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%	7	4	8	10	3	5	6	4	4	3	3	13	7	7	3
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%	8	6	5	13	7	8	12	7	3	4	6	7	5	2	12
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%	5	8	10	12	15	6	4	5	10	10	7	10	8	11	10
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%	9	3	2	2	2	9	10	8	6	6	8	6	6	6	9
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.7%	6	13	15	14	12	7	5	9	25	12	10	18	15	24	4
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%	15	15	18	15	14	10	17	11	9	14	9	2	9	8	7
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%	19	10	22	26	9	13	18	14	8	13	13	5	12	4	18
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%	10	12	6	9	17	12	8	16	14	16	12	14	10	16	14
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%	12	11	28	17	19	11	9	12	16	15	15	15	17	18	6
14	29	Maximum available bursary	34.5%	16	16	25	11	16	17	20	10	12	5	11	12	13	n/a	22
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%	11	9	14	6	6	16	11	18	11	11	16	3	11	9	19

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Attribute 'very useful' ranks														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%	18	23	29	8	20	19	21	15	13	8	14	8	14	n/a	25
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	29.7%	14	14	1	4	24	15	13	22	21	18	17	26	16	17	15
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	29.2%	13	33	35	16	28	14	14	29	31	19	18	29	21	30	11
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	26.7%	17	17	12	18	11	18	15	25	34	23	19	34	23	15	17
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.1%	23	20	26	22	30	22	24	21	17	17	20	20	20	14	21
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	24.5%	20	18	21	36	21	20	16	17	28	28	24	25	33	n/a	16
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	23.5%	21	36	24	23	41	21	26	23	44	32	22	36	26	n/a	13
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	23.2%	25	27	7	19	22	23	30	20	20	25	25	24	18	n/a	26
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	23.2%	24	38	37	20	25	24	31	19	18	20	26	16	19	n/a	27
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	22.4%	22	19	32	35	5	25	19	13	23	21	23	28	31	13	24
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	21.3%	31	30	40	39	43	29	28	37	15	22	21	19	22	12	35
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	19.3%	33	31	31	34	13	26	27	34	33	31	28	32	32	29	23
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.2%	29	25	39	44	40	32	32	28	22	24	29	17	30	20	37
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.2%	32	29	23	33	44	30	29	26	24	33	27	22	29	23	20
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	18.6%	28	34	34	30	18	28	37	24	27	26	37	21	25	21	33
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.5%	34	24	47	25	32	36	36	31	29	27	35	31	36	27	31
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	17.5%	26	28	16	31	26	27	23	32	35	37	34	46	34	19	28
33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	17.4%	30	22	17	32	49	35	25	30	32	29	31	41	35	22	29
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	17.3%	36	44	33	21	36	31	38	27	26	35	32	37	24	n/a	32
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	17.3%	38	37	38	28	31	34	33	35	19	30	30	23	28	n/a	36
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	17.0%	35	32	20	42	27	33	35	33	30	34	33	27	27	31	30
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	15.3%	27	21	19	24	42	37	22	39	37	36	36	45	38	25	34
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	12.9%	37	26	11	38	29	38	34	42	39	38	38	35	37	26	40

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Attribute 'very useful' ranks														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	11.1%	41	40	30	29	47	39	39	38	36	39	40	33	41	27	39
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.8%	42	46	42	40	33	40	43	36	40	41	41	40	42	34	41
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	10.3%	40	47	36	45	37	41	45	43	41	44	42	42	40	n/a	38
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	10.0%	44	42	43	37	35	42	41	47	38	42	39	30	39	35	50
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	9.6%	43	41	41	43	23	43	40	41	43	43	43	47	43	36	42
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.0%	39	35	27	27	39	44	42	46	42	46	44	38	45	32	43
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.5%	47	45	44	49	48	45	44	51	45	40	48	39	44	33	48
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	6.5%	49	39	46	47	51	48	46	45	46	45	46	51	47	37	47
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	6.4%	45	49	48	46	45	46	47	40	49	48	45	44	48	42	46
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	6.3%	46	43	49	41	38	47	49	50	47	49	47	49	46	39	45
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	5.6%	48	48	45	51	46	49	50	44	51	51	49	50	50	38	44
50	3	Age range of students on this course	5.3%	51	51	50	48	50	50	51	48	48	47	50	43	51	41	49
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	4.8%	50	50	51	50	34	51	46	49	50	50	51	48	49	40	51

Note: N = 1,926 responses for the aggregate sample. The sample sizes for the attribute analysis are given in Appendix I5

[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

Appendix I7 Information items considered the most useful by disabled students

A very small number of students declared they were disabled (29 out of 1,913). Given this small sample size, these students cannot be taken to be representative of all disabled students. As given in table 6 in the main report, there were only three differences in the 'top 16' for disabled students compared to all respondents. The following items are not in disabled students 'top' 16' ranking: average salary in the first year after completing this course; proportions of students at the institution satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union; and maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary. These are replaced by: a descriptive statement about the availability/quantity of specialist equipment resources; average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the institution; and a collaborative arrangement with another European institution which allows study abroad. Only the first of these entrant items is in the 'top 10', being ranked fifth by this group.

The ten items overall (not just the 'top 16') with the largest difference between the percentage of disabled and non-disabled respondents replying 'very useful' can be seen in the table below. An independent samples t-test indicated significant difference for only one information item (which should in any case be treated with

caution given the small sample). Disabled students are more likely to report a 'descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources' as being 'very useful'. Other items that related particularly to disabled students did not have a high percentage indicating 'very useful', with less than 20% replying in that way on 'the proportion of disabled students'; and less than a quarter replying that way on 'university statement on accessibility'. The likelihood that disabled respondents would find a particular piece of information 'very useful' could be affected by the likelihood of them living at home whilst studying. Although a slightly *lower* percentage of disabled respondents indicated that they intended to live at home than non-disabled respondents, this difference was not significant (p = 0.57 using Fisher's Exact Test of Association).

Disabled/non-disabled respondents: items ranked by differences in 'very useful' replies to information items about going to HE

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for disabled students
			Disabled	Non-disabled	
1	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	40.0%	22.0%	+18.0*
2	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	33.3%	19.0%	+14.3
3	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	7.4%	21.3%	-13.9
4	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	17.9%	4.5%	+13.4
5	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	21.4%	9.4%	+12.0
6	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	37.9%	26.7%	+11.2
7	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	18.5%	29.5%	-11.0
8	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	42.9%	33.4%	+9.5
9	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	10.3%	19.3%	-9.0
10	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	21.4%	29.8%	-8.4
11	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	14.3%	6.2%	+8.1
12	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	18.5%	26.2%	-7.7
13	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	16.0%	23.6%	-7.6
= 14	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	17.2%	9.8%	+7.4
= 14	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	25.8%	18.4%	+7.4
16	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	17.9%	10.8%	+7.1
17	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	10.7%	17.4%	-6.7
18	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	50.0%	43.5%	+6.5
= 19	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	14.3%	7.9%	+6.4
= 19	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	46.4%	40.0%	+6.4

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for disabled students
			Disabled	Non-disabled	
21	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	60.7%	54.5%	+6.2
22	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	34.5%	40.5%	-6.0
23	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	18.5%	12.9%	+5.6
24	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	28.0%	33.4%	-5.4
25	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	30.0%	35.3%	-5.3
26	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	39.3%	44.5%	-5.2
27	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	46.4%	41.5%	+4.9
28	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	14.8%	10.2%	+4.6
29	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	46.4%	50.6%	-4.2
= 30	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	10.3%	6.4%	+3.9
= 30	4	Proportion of international students on this course	9.7%	5.8%	+3.9
32	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	7.4%	11.2%	-3.8
33	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	32.1%	34.8%	-3.7
34	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	38.7%	35.1%	+3.6
35	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	20.0%	17.0%	+3.0
= 36	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	20.0%	17.3%	+2.7
= 36	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	25.9%	23.2%	+2.7
= 36	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	3.7%	6.4%	-2.7
= 39	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	16.7%	19.2%	-2.5
= 39	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	14.8%	17.3%	-2.5
41	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	26.9%	24.6%	+2.3
42	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	21.4%	23.3%	-1.9
= 43	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	18.5%	17.3%	+1.2
= 43	29	Maximum available bursary	33.3%	34.5%	-1.2
45	3	Age range of students on this course	6.5%	5.5%	+1.0
46	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	36.7%	37.5%	-0.8
= 47	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.8%	44.1%	+0.7
= 47	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.0%	37.7%	-0.7
49	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	14.8%	15.3%	-0.5
50	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.9%	17.6%	+0.3
51	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.4%	7.5%	-0.1

Note: N = 1,913, N = 29 disabled. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 24 to N = 29 for disabled students; and N = 1,668 to N = 1,868 for non-disabled students.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test).

Sources of information used by disabled respondents

Differences between the sources of information most used by disabled respondents and the sources most used by other respondents are summarised in the table below. The only significant difference was that disabled students reported less use of UCAS. Differences between disabled/non-disabled for the remaining sources ranged from 4% to 10%.

However, there were some major differences between disabled and other respondents in the declared usefulness of these sources. There are three sources where the percentage of disabled respondents replying 'very useful' is over 30 percentage points higher: Aimhigher activities/website; students' opinion websites; and Connexions (website or advisors). The first two of these differences are significant using an independent samples t-test for proportions. In addition, there are five sources where the percentage of disabled respondents reporting 'very useful' is more than 20 percentage points higher: teachers (school or college); Direct.gov; careers advisors; family and friends; and formal institutional visits/interviews. However, only two of these differences were significant – formal institutional visits/interviews and teachers (school or college).

Disabled/non-disabled respondents: sources of information ranked by differences in use and usefulness

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that they used this source		% point difference in use for disabled students	% indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)		% point difference in 'very useful' for disabled students
			Disabled	Non-disabled		Disabled	Non-disabled	
1	52	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	62.1%	81.4%	-19.3*	38.9%	48.2%	-9.3
2	54	Aimhigher activities / website	28.6%	18.4%	+10.2	71.4%	30.7%	+40.7*
3	59	Connexions (website or advisors)	31.0%	22.0%	+9.0	62.5%	29.7%	+32.8
4	63	Students' opinion websites	32.1%	23.5%	+8.6	75.0%	36.3%	+38.7*
5	55	Formal university visits / interviews	75.0%	67.9%	+7.1	78.9%	58.0%	+20.9*
6	60	Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	32.1%	24.8%	+7.3	55.6%	28.3%	+27.
7	61	Unistats online university/course comparison website	35.7%	29.0%	+6.7	44.4%	33.7%	+10.7
8	58	Family and friends	64.3%	70.6%	-6.3	56.3%	33.3%	+23.0
9	53	University prospectuses/websites	82.8%	88.2%	-5.4	50.0%	54.4%	-4.4
10	62	Any other online university/course comparison website	25.0%	29.7%	-4.7	50.0%	35.3%	+14.7
11	56	Teachers (school or college)	69.0%	65.1%	+3.9	61.1%	31.4%	+29.7*
12	57	Careers advisors (school or college)	35.7%	39.3%	-3.6	55.6%	29.4%	+26.2

Note: N = 1,913, N = 29 disabled. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 28 to N = 29 for disabled students; and N = 1,704 to N = 1,734 for non-disabled students.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test).

Appendix I8 Information items considered the most useful by first generation HE students

The sample was fairly evenly split between first generation (with neither parent with an HE qualification) and second generation (with at least one parent with an HE qualification) respondents (960 compared to 930). Items with five percentage points difference or more between first and second generation respondents replying 'very useful' are given in the table below (12 items in total). In all of these cases the differences are significant using an independent samples t-test for proportions.

The results indicate that if a prospective student has a parent with a HE qualification then they are more likely to see the information points listed as being 'very useful'. In all the top ranked items shown in the table below the percentage indicating 'very useful' is higher for second generation students. Indeed, none of the 51 items where the difference is statistically significant had a higher percentage of first generation students indicating that they considered the item to be 'very useful'.

First and second generation HE students: items ranked by differences in 'very useful' replies to information items about going to HE

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for second gen. students
			Second gen.	First gen.	
1	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	34.7%	24.1%	+10.6*
2	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	31.4%	22.5%	+8.9*
3	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	34.4%	25.6%	+8.8*
4	32	Cost of university halls of residence	42.1%	33.4%	+8.7*
5	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	27.7%	19.3%	+8.4*
6	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	21.2%	13.9%	+7.3*
7	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	28.1%	20.9%	+7.2*
8	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	38.2%	31.5%	+6.7*
9	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	53.8%	47.3%	+6.5*
10	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	47.5%	41.6%	+5.9*
11	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	47.1%	41.4%	+5.7*
12	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	26.2%	20.6%	+5.6*
13	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	42.9%	38.1%	+4.8*
14	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	25.5%	20.8%	+4.7*
15	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	21.0%	16.4%	+4.6*
16	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	21.7%	17.3%	+4.4*
17	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	19.5%	15.3%	+4.2*
18	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	31.0%	35.2%	+4.2
19	29	Maximum available bursary	32.5%	36.1%	-3.6
20	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	14.7%	11.2%	+3.5*
= 21	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	18.9%	15.8%	+3.1

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'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for second gen. students
			Second gen.	First gen.	
= 21	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	16.8%	13.7%	+3.1
= 23	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	11.4%	8.5%	+2.9*
= 23	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	18.9%	16.0%	+2.9
= 23	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	12.6%	9.7%	+2.9
26	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	18.5%	15.8%	+2.7
27	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	23.5%	21.0%	+2.5
= 28	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	11.6%	9.2%	+2.4
= 28	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	44.6%	42.2%	+2.4
30	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	55.6%	53.4%	+2.2
31	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	40.8%	42.9%	-2.1
32	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	11.8%	9.9%	+1.9
33	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	7.3%	5.6%	+1.7
34	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.9%	18.3%	+1.6
= 35	4	Proportion of international students on this course	6.6%	5.2%	+1.4
= 35	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	38.1%	36.7%	+1.4
= 35	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.8%	7.4%	+1.4
= 38	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.9%	34.6%	+1.3
= 38	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	7.0%	5.7%	+1.3
= 40	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	10.3%	9.1%	+1.2
= 40	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	20.5%	21.7%	-1.2
= 42	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	7.0%	5.9%	+1.1
= 42	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	32.9%	34.0%	-1.1
= 44	3	Age range of students on this course	6.1%	5.1%	+1.0
= 44	38	Nursery provision on campus	8.0%	7.0%	+1.0
= 44	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.5%	39.5%	+1.0
47	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.6%	25.7%	+0.9
48	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	5.0%	4.5%	+0.5
49	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.6%	19.2%	+0.4
50	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.3%	35.0%	+0.3

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for second gen. students
			Second gen.	First gen.	
51	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.4%	17.6%	-0.2

Note: N = 1,890; 930 second generation, 960 first generation. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 819 to N = 920 for second generation; and N = 847 to N = 959 for first generation.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test).

Several of these items with large differences could be of more concern to prospective students intending to live away from home (descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife; average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university; cost of university halls of residence; proportion of first year students living in halls of residence). Intending to live at home was related to parental HE qualification, with less first generation students opting to live away (50% compared to 70%, a significant difference, p = 0.000 using Fisher's Exact Test of Association). Other items were concerned with university/student performance (ranking of university in newspaper league tables; proportion of department research rated 'world class'; average A Level grades of students on the course; proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher).

However, if comparison is made of the top ten rankings for first and second generation students (derived from 'very useful' responses; fourth and fifth columns of the table above) to the overall position considered in Table 2 of the main report, there is little difference. Although second generation students are more likely than first generation students to rank items as very useful, nine of their top ten rankings are the same as for 'all respondents'. 'Weekly hours of teaching contact time' (aggregate Rank 10) is replaced in the 'second generation' top ten with 'proportion of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union' (aggregate Rank 13). For first generation students, one item moves out of the top ten: 'cost of university halls of residence' (aggregate Rank 9). This is replaced by 'maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary' (aggregate Rank 16). Despite this degree of similarity, it is possible that first and second generation students are tending to attribute importance to a piece of information for different reasons. Second generation students in the focus groups (particularly those attending or applying to 'top ranked' institutions) referred to A Level grades as an indicator of institutional esteem and, therefore, the benefits to them of attending. First generation students were more likely to refer to A level grades as an indicator of the difficulty of the course and the likelihood that they might experience difficulties.

Sources of information

Important differences between the use of information sources by first and second generation students to HE are shown in the table below. Second generation students are significantly more likely to report using each of the five sources presented. As with disabled respondents, these differences did not alter the highest five ranked sources compared to 'all respondents'.

Differences in the reported usefulness of the sources were small and non-significant.

Second and first generation HE students, sources of information ranked by differences in use and usefulness

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that they used this source		% point difference in use for second gen.	indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)		% point difference in 'very useful' for second gen.
			Second gen.	First gen.		Second gen.	First gen.	
1	58	Family and friends	76.7%	64.7%	+12.0**	35.8%	31.1%	+4.7
2	62	Any other online university/course comparison website	34.5%	24.8%	+9.7**	36.0%	35.5%	+0.5
3	57	Careers advisors (school or college)	43.8%	35.1%	+8.7**	27.9%	31.1%	-3.2
= 4	52	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	83.9%	77.7%	+6.2**	49.5%	46.7%	+2.8
= 4	55	Formal university visits/interviews	71.3%	65.1%	+6.2**	59.8%	57.1%	+2.7
6	56	Teachers (school or college)	67.6%	62.8%	+4.8*	31.9%	31.6%	+0.3
7	61	Unistats online university/course comparison website	31.2%	27.1%	+4.1	33.5%	34.9%	-1.4
8	63	Students' opinion websites	25.5%	21.6%	+3.9	36.1%	38.3%	-2.2
9	60	Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	23.1%	26.8%	-3.7	31.5%	26.9%	+4.6
10	53	University prospectuses/websites	89.8%	86.4%	+3.4*	49.5%	46.7%	+2.5
11	59	Connexions (website or advisors)	23.2%	20.8%	+2.4	32.1%	28.0%	+4.1
12	54	Aimhigher activities/website	17.8%	19.4%	-1.6	32.1%	31.0%	+1.1

Note: N = 1,890; 930 second generation, 960 first generation. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 833 to N = 849 for second generation; and N = 881 to N = 896 for first generation.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test). ** Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.01 (two-tailed test).

Appendix I9 Information items considered the most important by STEM students

There were 326 respondents who indicated they intended to or were studying STEM subjects (defined using the JACS codes C-J excluding Psychology subjects, details of which are given in the table below) out of 1,907 who replied to this question.

STEM subjects: JACS[a] code classifications

Subject area	JACS[a] codes
Medicine and Dentistry	A
Subjects allied to Medicine	B
Biological Sciences	C
Veterinary Science	D1/2
Agriculture and related subjects	D0/3/4/5/6/7/9
Physical Sciences	F
Mathematical Sciences	G00/01/1/2/3/90/91
Computer Science	G02/4/5/6/7/92
Engineering and Technology	H, J
Architecture, Building and Planning	K
Social Studies	L
Law	M
Business and Administrative Studies	N
Mass Communications and Documentation	P
Languages	Q, R, T
Historical and Philosophical Studies	V

Subject area	JACS[a] codes
Creative Arts and Design	W
Education	X
Combined	Y
Supplementary subjects	
Psychology	C8
Geography	F8, L7
Economics and Politics	L1/2
English	Q3

[a] JACS; Joint Academic Coding System, Version 1.7. The full list of subject classifications can be found at http://www.ucas.ac.uk/documents/jacs/jacsclass1.pdf

The table below presents the 19 items for which there was at least a five percentage point difference between STEM and non-STEM subject respondents in the percentage reporting the item as 'very useful'. All but one of these differences is statistically significant.

Respondents who indicated they were studying or intending to study STEM subjects were more likely to consider most of the items of information as 'very useful' compared to other respondents, and this applied to all the items where the difference was over five percentage points. For three items the difference was over 15 percentage points: 'descriptive statement about the university's industry links'; 'descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources'; and 'average A Level grades of students on this course'. For eight others the difference was 10 percentage points or more. These items where there is a major difference in replies fell into three categories:

(i) Those that denoted the rank of the university;

(ii) Those concerned with future employment; and

(iii) Those concerned with living away from home. A chi-square test supported the view that STEM applicants are less likely to indicate they intend to live at home ($p = 0.000$).

Despite the number and size of these differences, however, there are only two changes to the STEM top ten rankings by 'very useful' (derived from 'very useful' responses; fourth column of the table below). The two items to move out of the top ten are 'proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment' (aggregate Rank 6/STEM Rank 13) and 'weekly hours of contact time' (aggregate Rank 10/STEM Rank 14). These are replaced by 'average salary in the first year of completing the course' (aggregate Rank 11) and 'proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union' (aggregate Rank 13).

Respondents taking STEM/non-STEM subjects: items ranked by differences in 'very useful' replies

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for STEM students
			STEM	Non-STEM	
1	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	28.8%	12.5%	+16.3*
2	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	35.3%	19.8%	+15.5*
3	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	37.0%	22.0%	+15.0*
4	32	Cost of university halls of residence	49.0%	35.3%	+13.7*
5	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	37.1%	24.5%	+12.6*
6	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	28.0%	15.5%	+12.5*
7	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	60.4%	48.5%	+11.9*
8	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	26.6%	15.4%	+11.2*
9	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	49.4%	38.8%	+10.6*
10	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	43.6%	33.3%	+10.3*
11	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	38.1%	28.1%	+10.0*
= 12	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	52.7%	43.0%	+9.7*
= 12	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	37.1%	27.4%	+9.7*
14	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	42.6%	33.2%	+9.4*
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	40.1%	32.3%	+7.8*
16	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	18.3%	11.7%	+6.6*
17	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	48.8%	42.4%	+6.4*
18	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	24.0%	18.2%	+5.8*
19	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	19.1%	24.1%	-5.0
20	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	57.9%	53.7%	+4.2
= 21	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	47.6%	43.8%	+3.8
= 21	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	11.1%	7.3%	+3.8*
23	38	Nursery provision on campus	10.3%	6.8%	+3.5
= 24	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	22.0%	18.6%	+3.4
= 24	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	9.2%	5.8%	+3.4
26	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	26.3%	23.0%	+3.3
27	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	7.3%	4.1%	+3.2*
28	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	39.1%	42.2%	-3.1

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that this information would be 'very useful'		% point difference for STEM students
			STEM	Non-STEM	
29	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	21.0%	23.7%	-2.7
30	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	8.4%	5.9%	+2.5
= 31	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	11.3%	9.0%	+2.3
= 31	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	23.1%	20.8%	+2.3
33	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	41.7%	39.7%	+2.0
34	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	17.0%	18.8%	-1.8
= 35	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	11.2%	9.5%	+1.7
= 35	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	18.8%	17.1%	+1.7
= 35	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	12.5%	10.8%	+1.7
= 38	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	18.3%	16.8%	+1.5
= 38	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	27.3%	25.8%	+1.5
40	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	36.6%	37.9%	-1.3
= 41	4	Proportion of international students on this course	6.5%	5.4%	+1.1
= 41	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	16.3%	17.4%	-1.1
= 43	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	9.5%	10.4%	-0.9
= 43	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	7.0%	6.1%	+0.9
= 43	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	18.2%	17.3%	+0.9
46	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	32.6%	33.4%	-0.8
= 47	3	Age range of students on this course	5.9%	5.2%	+0.7
= 47	29	Maximum available bursary	33.9%	34.6%	-0.7
49	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.4%	35.1%	+0.3
= 50	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	18.9%	19.1%	-0.2
= 50	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.9%	10.7%	+0.2

Note: N = 1,907; 326 STEM, N = 1,581 non-STEM. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 151 to N = 323 for STEM students; and N = 1,393 to N = 1,556 for non-STEM students.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test).

Sources of information

STEM subject respondents reported significantly greater use (more than five percentage points) than non-STEM subject respondents of seven sources of information (as shown in the table below). STEM respondents were making considerably more use than other respondents of Unistats and other comparison websites. Roughly one in three STEM respondents reported using these sites. However, there was no evidence that they found it more useful having visited these sites. About a quarter of STEM respondents reported using a student opinion web site and STEM respondents who used these sites were significantly more likely than

other respondents to report that these sites were 'very useful'. STEM respondents were also significantly more likely to rate information received from universities as 'very useful'.

Respondents taking STEM/non-STEM subjects: sources of information ranked by differences in use and usefulness

'Diff.' rank	Item no.[a]	Information item	% indicating that they used this source		% point difference in use for STEM subjects	indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)		% point difference in 'very useful' for STEM subject
			STEM	Non-STEM		STEM	Non-STEM	
1	52	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	92.8%	78.8%	+14.0**	50.6%	48.0%	+2.6
2	61	Unistats online university/course comparison website	40.4%	27.0%	+13.4**	32.5%	34.3%	-1.8
3	62	Any other online university/course comparison website	39.4%	27.6%	+11.8**	40.2%	34.0%	+6.2
4	55	Formal university visits/interviews	77.2%	66.8%	+10.4**	64.5%	57.1%	+7.4*
5	63	Students' opinion websites	29.5%	22.4%	+7.1*	46.9%	34.6%	+12.3*
6	53	University prospectuses / websites	94.0%	87.4%	+6.6**	60.0%	53.2%	+6.8*
7	54	Aimhigher activities/website	23.0%	17.3%	+5.7*	34.8%	31.1%	+3.7
8	56	Teachers (school or college)	69.4%	64.5%	+4.9	29.2%	32.6%	-3.4
9	59	Connexions (website or advisors)	25.3%	21.2%	+4.1	36.6%	28.8%	+7.8
10	60	Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	22.0%	25.5%	-3.5	29.0%	29.1%	-0.1
11	58	Family and friends	71.8%	70.4%	+1.4	32.5%	34.1%	-1.6
12	57	Careers advisors (school or college)	39.9%	39.2%	+0.7	35.7%	28.4%	+7.3

Note: N = 1,907; 326 STEM, N = 1,581 non-STEM. The response rate to a particular item ranged from N = 287 to N = 298 for STEM students; and N = 1,431 to N = 1,447 for non-STEM students.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
* Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.05 (two-tailed test). ** Indicates a significant difference at p = 0.01 (two-tailed test).

Appendix I10 Information items considered the most important by postgraduate students

There were only 120 postgraduate degree students in our sample so these results need to be treated with particular caution. Bearing this caveat in mind, the differences between the ranking of 'very useful items' by postgraduate and other students were small. Of the top five items for postgraduates, only one, 'proportion of the assessment that is by coursework' is different from the aggregate and this appears as Rank 12 on the aggregate list. The top two ranked items have a considerably higher percentage of postgraduate students indicating they may be 'very useful'.

The percentages who had tried to find this information were low in this subgroup, similar to the findings for the aggregate population. One item where there was a difference was the 'proportion of the assessment that is by coursework' where a considerably higher percentage of postgraduate respondents had tried to get the information. As in our aggregate findings, the percentages who tried to find the information were higher if they considered having that item of information 'very useful'. The percentage saying they had succeeded in getting the information, if they tried, although high was not as high in general as in the aggregate. This finding seems surprising. It might be expected that postgraduate students would be more

adept at finding the information (given that they may have had practice as undergraduates), but it may reflect increased difficulty in finding information at this level. The number of postgraduate students reporting that they had found these pieces of information suggests that they believe that the information they can access provides a reasonable indicator.

Postgraduate students: percentage indicating that they had tried and succeeded in getting the information items they had deemed as 'very useful'

Rank	Information item	% 'very useful'	% tried to find this information	% succeeded in getting the information (of those that said they looked)	% tried to find this information (of those that said 'very useful')
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Professional bodies which recognise this course	65.0%	65.5%	84.9%	82.0%
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	57.0%	43.1%	73.9%	56.5%
3	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	56.1%	51.8%	75.0%	67.7%
4	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	47.9%	71.1%	93.8%	90.9%
5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	47.0%	46.4%	74%	68.6%
6	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	46.0%	52.7%	91.4%	78.0%
7	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	44.7%	45.9%	77.6%	64.0%
8	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	40.2%	62.9%	94.3%	80.9%
9	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	37.7%	41.8%	93.5%	71.4%
10	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	37.3%	36.8%	57.1%	62.8%
11	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	33.3%	28.7%	60.5%	64.1%

Sources of information

In general, postgraduates used fewer sources of information than other respondents. In terms of the usefulness of the information, there were large differences for postgraduate students, compared to the aggregate for the following sources:

- University prospectuses – less useful.

- Unistats and students' opinion websites – more useful.

Postgraduate students: use and usefulness of sources of information, ranked by the aggregate percentage of respondents indicating that they used these sources

Information source	Aggregate 'use' rank	Postgrad 'use' rank	% postgrads indicating that they used this source	% postgrads indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
University prospectuses/websites	1	1	76.3%	34.3%
UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	2	4	28.4%	37.3%
Family and friends	3	2	44.2%	46.2%
Formal university visits/interviews	4	10	14.4%	52.4%
Teachers (school or college)	5	3	29.6%	40.4%
Careers advisors (school or college)	6	7	17.5%	31.6%
Any other online university/course comparison website	7	5	28.2%	40.0%
Unistats online university/course comparison website	8	11	13.8%	51.9%
Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	9	12	12.8%	39.0%
Students' opinion websites	10	6	21.4%	51.4%
Connexions (website or advisors)	11	9	14.5%	41.2%
Aimhigher activities/website	12	8	15.6%	41.7%

Appendix I11 Information items considered the most important by Foundation Degree students

Only nine information items were ranked 'very useful' by more than 30% of the 183 Foundation Degree students in our sample. Each of these items is included in the 'top 16' for all students. There are, however, some minor differences in ranking. Foundation Degree students placed student satisfaction with library and IT facilities in a higher rank and this emphasis was apparent in the focus group evidence. Foundation degree students tended to express more anxiety over their access to facilities they believed would be critical to support their studies.

Foundation Degree students were, on average, less likely than other respondents to seek information. They appeared to be most interested in two items. Six out of ten Foundation Degree students had tried to get information on weekly contact time, possibly reflecting their need to accommodate other commitments to work and dependents. This interpretation is prompted by evidence from a focus group with female students on a Foundation Degree in education. Just over half of the

Foundation Degree students had tried to find information on the proportion of assessment through coursework, which may reflect anxiety towards examinations after being out of full-time education for some while.

Foundation Degree students: percentage indicating that they had tried and succeeded in getting the information items they had deemed as 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank	Information item	% 'very useful'	% tried to find this information	% succeeded in getting the information (of those that said they looked)	% tried to find this information (of those that said 'very useful')
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	41.4%	27.3%	88.4%	42.6%
2	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	40.8%	28.3%	84.4%	46.3%
3	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	38.7%	61.0%	98.1%	86.6%
4	Professional bodies which recognise this course	37.7%	31.8%	89.8%	54.7%
= 5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	37.6%	39.8%	95.5%	66.1%
= 5	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	37.6%	24.1%	81.1%	41.9%
7	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.0%	50.3%	95.2%	68.9%
8	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.9%	27.1%	90.9%	48.2%
9	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	33.5%	15.7%	73.1%	29.1%

Sources of information

Foundation Degree students made less use than did other respondents of the sources of information.

The use of institution prospectuses/websites remained the most used source. However, 'teachers' moved to the second ranked item (compared to being the fifth ranked item overall). It was only these two sources that over 50% of the Foundation Degree students consulted. It is possible that Foundation Degree students were thinking of university lecturers when responding to the item on teachers. Foundation Degree students in focus groups stressed the importance to them of hearing directly from staff who were responsible for teaching the course. Very low percentages used

Unistats, students' opinion websites and Connexions. Although not a high percentage, at just over 35%, more foundation students indicated they used Direct.gov.

In terms of the usefulness of the information, there were large differences for Foundation Degree students, compared to 'all respondents' for the following sources:

- UCAS – less useful.

- Careers advisors, other online university/course comparison website – more useful.

Foundation Degree students: use and usefulness of sources of information, ranked by the aggregate percentage of respondents indicating that they used these sources

Information source	Aggregate 'use' rank	Foundation 'use' rank	% Foundation students indicating that they used this source	% Foundation students indicating that this source was 'very useful' (of those that said they used it)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
University prospectuses/websites	1	1	64.5%	53.1%
UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	2	6	31.4%	34.5%
Family and friends	3	3	43.2%	36.2%
Formal university visits/interviews	4	4	40.1%	53.7%
Teachers (school or college)	5	2	54.4%	41.4%
Careers advisors (school or college)	6	7	24.4%	42.1%
Any other online university/course comparison website	7	8	14.8%	55.2%
Unistats online university/course comparison website	8	12	8.3%	42.9%
Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	9	5	35.7%	33.3%
Students' opinion websites	10	10	10.7%	45.5%
Connexions (website or advisors)	11	11	10.1%	40.0%
Aimhigher activities/website	12	9	14.3%	31.3%

Appendix I12 What information is considered most useful by respondents applying to and enrolled at 'top ranked' institutions

Some participants in focus groups referred to 'top' and 'other universities'. We analysed the survey data using two possible definitions of 'top ranked institutions': the Russell Group and those ranked 1-20 in the Sunday Times University Guide rankings for 2009. We found little difference between the results for these alternative definitions and the results in this report refer to those ranked in the top twenty in the 2009 Sunday Times rankings.

Respondents applying to 'top ranked' institutions are more likely than other respondents to believe that information is very useful. Whilst for the whole sample there were 16 items of information which more than 30% rated as 'very useful', the equivalent figure for respondents applying to or attending 'top ranked' institutions was 21.

Ranking of usefulness of information by respondents applying to or enrolled at 'top ranked' institutions (cases above 30% only)

Information item	% of students rating the item very useful	
	All students	**Students applying to or attending 'top ranked' institutions**
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	55%	62%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	51%	61%
Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	45%	55%
Professional bodies which recognise this course	44%	52%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	44%	47%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	42%	39%
Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40%	52%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40%	46%
Cost of university halls of residence	38%	
Weekly hours of teaching contact time	38%	46%
Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35%	45%
Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35%	35%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	35%	46%
Maximum available bursary	35%	37%
Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	34%	
Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33%	34%
Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	30%	43%
Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife		45%

Information item	% of students rating the item very useful	
	All students	Students applying to or attending 'top ranked' institutions
Average A level grades of students on the course		42%
Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence		36%
Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources		31%
Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher		31%
Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university		31%

The largest differences in percentage points between the proportion of respondents applying to or attending 'top ranked' institutions and all respondents are found in the percentages rating as 'very useful' information on: employment after graduation ($p<.05$), graduate salary ($p<.10$) and university ranking ($p<.001$). These differences appear to be connected, as indicated by the following remarks from undergraduates participating in a focus group at 'top ranked' institution: 'I was aiming for the top university I could get into' and 'The ultimate aim for me in going to university is to get a good job afterwards and [rankings] are a better indication of where you will be afterwards'.

Appendix I13 Regression table for 'very useful'

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no [a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%	-	+										+			
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%	-	+	-									+	-	-	
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%	-														-
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%	-											+		+	
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%	-	+										+		-	
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%	-	+												+	
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%	-	+					+		-		-	+			-

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%	-	+													
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.7%	-								-				-	-	-
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%	-											+			
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%	-									-	-		-		
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%			+							-		+		-	
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%	-	+							-		-		-	-	
14	29	Maximum available bursary	34.5%	-			+						+	+		-	n/a	
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%														-	
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%	-		-							+				n/a	
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	29.7%	-	+	+	+				-	-			+		-	
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	29.2%			-	+				-	-				-	-	
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	26.7%	-	+		+				-		-		+	-	-	
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.1%	-			+									-	-	
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	24.5%		+							-	-	-	+	-	n/a	
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	23.5%	-	+							-	-	-			n/a	+
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	23.2%	-			+					-		-	+		n/a	
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	23.2%						-								n/a	-
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	22.4%					+		+	+							
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	21.3%									+						
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	19.3%	-	+						-	-	-		+	-	-	
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.2%													-	-	-
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.2%	-	+													
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	18.6%						+	-			-		-			-

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.5%															
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	17.5%		+							-		-	+			
33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	17.4%	-	+	+						-					-	
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	17.3%				+										n/a	
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	17.3%	-						-						-	n/a	
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	17.0%	+								-			+		-	
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	15.3%		+	+	+		+			-						
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	12.9%		+	+		+					-					
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	11.1%		+	+	+											
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.8%															
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	10.3%		+												n/a	
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	10.0%		+	+	+											-
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	9.6%		+		+		+							-	-	
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.0%	+	+	+	+							-				
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.5%												-			
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	6.5%		+													
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	6.4%	+	+							+		-				+
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	6.3%	+	+									-				
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	5.6%	+		+								-				
50	3	Age range of students on this course	5.3%			+										-		
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	4.8%	+	+			+						-				-

Note: N = 1,926. The regression response rate for a particular item ranged from N = 1,385 to N = 1,535.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05).

Appendix I14 Regression table for 'tried to get the information'

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%	-	+					+		-			+			
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%							+		-			+		-	
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%	-						+	+				+		-	
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%					+			+				+		+	
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%	-	+					+		-	+					
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%	-	+			+		+		-						
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%		+		+			+	+	-			+		-	
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%	-	+							-			+	+		
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.7%	-								-			+	-	-	
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%	-											+		+	+
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%	-														
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%		+		+			+	+				+			
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%	-				+		+		-					-	
14	29	Maximum available bursary	34.5%	-									+	+	+		n/a	
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%	-				+		+		-						
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%			-			-				+		+	-	n/a	
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	29.7%		+							-			+			
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	29.2%	-		-						-			+	-	-	
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	26.7%	-	+	+						-						

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.1%	-	+													
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	24.5%	+							+	-	-		+		n/a	
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	23.5%	-								-			+		n/a	+
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	23.2%		+							-			+		n/a	
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	23.2%														n/a	
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	22.4%	-				+		+	+	-	+	+		-	-	
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	21.3%				-		-			-						
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	19.3%	-	+	+						-			+	-	-	
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.2%							+			+					
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.2%	-	+										+		-	+
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	18.6%		+				+		+	-					-	
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.5%		+							-				-		
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	17.5%		+	+	+	+				-			+			
33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	17.4%		+	+				+		-						
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	17.3%												+		n/a	
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	17.3%		+		+										n/a	
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	17.0%		+						+	-			+		-	
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	15.3%		+	+	+			+		-						
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	12.9%		+							-			+			
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	11.1%		+													
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.8%	+	+		+											
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	10.3%		+	+											n/a	
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	10.0%														+	+

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	9.6%		+			+				-					-	
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.0%		+	+	+					-						
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.5%		+	+			+				+					
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	6.5%		+							-	+	+				
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	6.5%		+					+	+	-			+		-	
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	6.3%	+	+		+											+
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	5.6%		+	+							+					
50	3	Age range of students on this course	5.3%		+					+	+							
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	4.8%	+	+			+										

Note: N = 1,926. The regression response rate for a particular item ranged from N = 1,362 to N = 1,499.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05).

Appendix I15 Regression table for 'did you succeed in getting this information?'

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute															
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	48	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching	54.5%		-	-				+		+					-	
2	45	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their course	50.5%		-	-										-	-	
3	22	Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing this course	44.6%		-			d									-	
4	16	Professional bodies which recognise this course	44.3%													+	+	
5	46	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received	43.6%		-							+						
6	47	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment	41.7%			-			+								-	
7	23	Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job one year after completing this course	40.5%	-	-					+								
8	50	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the library facilities	40.1%		-	-												
9	32	Cost of university halls of residence	37.7%				d				-							
10	7	Weekly hours of teaching contact time	37.6%		-												+	
11	5	Proportion of the assessment that is by coursework	35.2%															
12	21	Average salary in the first year after completing this course	35.1%		-	-							+					
13	51	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the Student Union	34.7%			-	d	d			d			-			-	
14	29	Maximum available bursary	34.5%	-	-	-											n/a	
15	49	Proportions of students at the university satisfied or very satisfied with the IT facilities	33.6%			-					d						n/a	+
16	30	Maximum household income for eligibility for a bursary	33.3%	-														
17	28	Ranking of university in newspaper league tables	29.7%	-		d					-	-						+
18	44	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife	29.2%															
19	34	Average rent for a room in a private student house in the locality of the university	26.7%	-				d				-						
20	35	Descriptive statement of accessibility by car and public transport	26.1%			-										+	+	

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
21	1	Average A level grades of students on this course	24.5%		-	-		-									n/a	
22	33	Proportion of first year students living in halls of residence	23.5%	-													n/a	
= 23	14	Proportion of graduates that get a 2i or higher	23.2%					d							+		n/a	
= 23	20	Proportion of Year 1 students who progress to Year 2	23.2%		-	d											n/a	
25	12	Descriptive statement about the availability/quality of specialist equipment or resources	22.4%	-	-										+			
26	37	A descriptive statement of availability and cost of parking	21.3%					d								+		
27	17	A collaborative arrangement with another European university which allows study abroad	19.3%												+			
= 28	11	Additional cost of required field or study trips	19.2%		-											+		
= 28	6	Proportion of teaching in lectures with a class size over 100	19.2%			-		d									+	
30	19	Proportion of students on this course that drop out	18.6%				-				+							
= 31	31	Proportion of students reporting that they have secured the part-time work they wanted while studying	17.5%	-														-
= 31	13	Proportion of department research rated 'world class'	17.5%			-		d					-		+			
33	42	Descriptive statement on the type of skills of a typical graduate of the university	17.4%		-			d							+			+
= 34	15	Proportion of graduates that get a 3rd class or pass degree	17.3%	+				d								+	n/a	
= 34	18	Proportion of students who progress to a postgraduate degree in their first year after completing this course	17.3%	-			-	d									n/a	
36	10	Proportion of first year teaching by professors	17.0%			-	-											
37	41	Descriptive statement about the university's industry links	15.3%		-			d										+
38	40	Street crime figures for the locality of the university	12.9%					d			d							
39	43	University statement on values (e.g. in relation to sustainability, equity, etc.)	11.1%		-		d				d							
40	27	Proportion of students like me that drop out	10.8%				-	d								+		+
41	9	Proportion of first year teaching by postgraduate students	10.3%		-	-		d					+				n/a	+
42	8	Proportion of teaching timetabled for a Friday	10.0%			d		d							+		d	

'Very useful' rank – Aggregate	Item no[a]	Information item	% 'very useful' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
43	36	University statement on accessibility of university accommodation and teaching space for disabled students	9.6%					d							**+**		d	
44	24	Ethnic mix of students at this university	8.0%				**-**									**+**		**+**
45	38	Nursery provision on campus	7.5%					d									d	
46	39	Whether there are on-campus facilities for religious faiths	6.5%	**-**		**-**	d	d			d				**+**			
47	2	What proportion of students on this course are male/female	6.4%					d			d							
48	25	Proportion of students from different social class groups	6.3%	**-**													d	
49	4	Proportion of international students on this course	5.6%	**-**		d		d										
50	3	Age range of students on this course	5.3%			**-**	**-**			**-**					**+**		d	
51	26	Proportion of disabled students at this university	4.8%				**-**	d					**+**			**+**		

Note: N = 1,926. The regression response rate for a particular item ranged from N = 1,385 to N = 1,535.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05).
'd' Variable dropped because predicts success perfectly or because of collinearity.

Appendix I16 Regression table for 'used the source'

'Used source' rank – Aggregate	Item no [a]	Information item	% 'used source' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	53	University prospectuses/websites	88.4%	-											+	-	-	
2	52	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	81.1%	-					+			-			+		-	
3	58	Family and friends	70.5%	-	+				+						+	-	-	
4	55	Formal university visits/interviews	68.3%	-		-	-			+					+		-	
5	56	Teachers (school or college)	65.2%														-	
6	57	Careers advisors (school or college)	39.2%		+				+					-			-	
7	62	Any other online university/course comparison website	29.6%		+		+					-	-		+		-	
8	61	Unistats online university/course comparison website	29.2%	-	+	+	+	+				-	-		+	-	-	
9	60	Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	24.9%		+										-		-	
10	63	Students' opinion websites	23.4%	+	+		+						-		+		-	
11	59	Connexions (website or advisors)	21.9%		+											-	-	-
12	54	Aimhigher activities/website	18.4%		+	+	+			+								-

Note: N = 1,926. The regression response rate for a particular item ranged from N = 1,420 to N = 1,432.
[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.
'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05).

Appendix I17 Regression table for whether a source was 'very useful'

'Used source' rank – Aggregate	Item no [a]	Information item	% 'used source' – Aggregate	Regression result by attribute														
				Male	Asian/Asian British	Chinese/other Asian background	Black/Black British	Disabled	2nd generation HE student	Stem	Health	Living at home	Low income	Med. income	Low gcse	UG	PG	Independent school
1	53	University prospectuses/websites	88.4%	-											+		-	+
2	52	UCAS (website, Directory, Big Guide)	81.1%	-			+									-	-	
3	58	Family and friends	70.5%					+	+							+	+	+
4	55	Formal university visits/interviews	68.3%	-		-		+					-	-	+			+
5	56	Teachers (school or college)	65.2%					+							-	+	+	+
6	57	Careers advisors (school or college)	39.2%				+								-	+	-	+
7	62	Any other online university/course comparison website	29.6%														+	
8	61	Unistats online university/course comparison website	29.2%												+			
9	60	Direct.gov – Government Education & Learning website	24.9%															
10	63	Students' opinion websites	23.4%				+							-				
11	59	Connexions (website or advisors)	21.9%						+									
12	54	Aimhigher activities/website	18.4%										-	-				+

Note: N = 1,926. The regression response rate for a particular item ranged from N = 235 to N = 1,247.

[a] The item number refers to the numbers on the schools/colleges, and undergraduate forms of the questionnaire.

'+' indicates a significant positive relationship (p = 0.05); '-' indicates a significant negative relationship (p = 0.05).

Appendix J. Summary of advisors' comments

Specific area of information need	Advisors' comments[a]	Information items (equivalent to those given on the survey questionnaire)
Student learning experience	Generally thought to be useful or very important for all, but public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	Teaching contact time Proportion of first year teaching by post-graduates/professors NSS – feedback on assessment NSS –standard of teaching
Modes of study Distance and virtual learning	Very important for disabled students, others think it would be useful apart from the independent school advisor and Head of Sixth.	
Timetabling	Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Useful for students who want to live locally and keep a part-time job. Regarded as more useful by the Head of Sixth but not important by the independent school advisor.	Teaching – Friday
Study group size	Regarded as useful by all bar HEI careers advisor. Public data on this is not thought to be available by interviewees.	Proportion of teaching – class size over 100
Student:Staff ratio	Access course students like to know how they will be supported in class situations. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Available on some league tables.	
Research quality Extent to which tutors are research active	The independent school advisor and Connexions PA felt this information was very important, others that it would be useful apart from the Access Coordinator and the Head of the Sixth Form. Mixed views on whether there was accessible information on this. Suggested it was listed in Brian Heap's book "Choosing your Degree Course and University". Particularly useful for post-graduate courses	Proportion of department research rated world class Ranking of university in national league tables
Quality and experience of staff	Regarded as very important by the independent school advisor and important or useful by all bar Access Coordinator and the Head of Sixth Form Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Available on some league tables.	Prop of full-time staff = professors
Course content	Regarded as important. Access course students and tutors get invited to visit certain institutions and have taster sessions of certain courses (midwifery and nursing). This is helpful but the details communicated at such events are not comparable across all institutions. Detailed and comparable public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	
Assessment methods	Very important to all but HEI careers advisor and the independent school advisor. Access Tutors need to know this as it will inform how they teach and prepare prospective HE students' study skills. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Only available through prospectuses.	Assessment by coursework

Specific area of information need	Advisors' comments[a]	Information items (equivalent to those given on the survey questionnaire)
Future study prospects	Very important or useful by all but the Head of Sixth Form. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Limited information available on Prospects website.	Proportion progressing to post-grad degree other than teaching/subject Proportion progressing to post-grad study/by institution
Does the institution have industry links?	Very important by all bar the independent school advisor (useful information) and the Access Coordinator and the Head of Sixth Form (unimportant). Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	Emphasis on university links
Lecturers that work in industry	Very important by all bar the Head of Sixth Form who thought this was useful information and the independent school advisor and Access Coordinator who thought this was unimportant. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	University industry links
Drop out rates by subject and by peer group and subject	Regarded as very important by all bar the Access Coordinator and independent school advisor. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees	Drop-out Proportion repeating a year
Institutions' intentions – type of occupations for which the course is preparing students	Very important	
Types of occupation of recent course graduates	Very important bar the Access Coordinator Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	Proportion employed in full-time professional or managerial job 1 year post-graduation
Course experiences to enhance employability (e.g. group working, leadership, communication, negotiation)	Very important bar the Access Coordinator and independent school advisor. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Something students do not seem to think or ask about but advisors think is important to know about.	
Availability of graduate jobs locally to institution	Very important (Head of Careers FEC – useful) bar the independent school advisor. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	
Graduate salaries	Very important for all seven. Only through newspapers and word of mouth, no authoritative source. Access to Graduate Labour Market survey available through the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS).	Average salary graduates in 1st post-graduation

Specific area of information need	Advisors' comments[a]	Information items (equivalent to those given on the survey questionnaire)
Bursary availability	Very important. Overall clear and comparable public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Most university websites provide this information but it would be helpful if there was one source that collated it all. Not sure how comparable this information currently is. *Comments made during the interviews* – The Head of Careers (Sixth Form College) felt that while there is a lot of information available on finance and bursaries which students can be signposted to this is currently not flagged up when students start the decision-making process. However, the Connexions PA felt that comparable information on bursaries was lacking.	Max bursary and max household income for eligibility
Part-time work during study	Very important for all bar the independent school advisor.	Proportion students securing part-time work while studying
Course costs	Very important for all bar the independent school advisor. Information on this thought to be easily available.	
Hidden course costs (e.g. field trips)	Very important or useful for all bar the independent school advisor. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	Hidden cost of course
Cost of living	Very important to all but the Access Coordinator. Facts on this are available but students' actual skills on budgeting are lacking.	
Facilities (what, availability, quality)	Very important to all bar independent school advisor.	NSS – IT facilities NSS – library Satisfaction with off campus IT support
Accessibility	Very important or useful bar the independent school advisor and Head of Sixth Form.	
Sports and recreational facilities	Very important to independent school advisor, useful Connexions PA and Disability Support Officer (DSO) but not Access Coordinator or Head of Sixth Form.	
Library facilities (institution)	Very important Access Coordinator, HEI Careers Advisor, DSO, Head of Sixth Form but not to Connexions PA or independent school advisor.	
Level of student union engagement	Useful but not very important	Student satisfaction with the student union
Societies	Useful but not very important	
Local information (night clubs)	Very important to Connexions PA, Head of Careers FEC and independent school advisor. Useful to DSO, Head of Sixth Form, HEI Careers but not to Access Coordinator	
Local 'atmosphere'	Very important to most but not Access Coordinator	

Specific area of information need	Advisors' comments[a]	Information items (equivalent to those given on the survey questionnaire)
Number of students with cars/parking availability and cost. Transport links	Parking very important to all but Connexions PA and independent school advisor. Public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees. Transport links – useful or important to all bar independent school advisor.	Annual cost of parking Descriptive statement of accessibility by car/public transport
Local cultural facilities	Not important	Descriptive statement of local culture and nightlife
Institutional ethics (charity support, community engagement, environmental policies, etc)	Not important	University statement on values
Pastoral care available	Very important to all bar the independent school advisor (useful to Connexions PA). Students want to know exactly what sources of support are available to them.	NSS – support & guidance
How safe is the area?	Very important or useful for all, but public data on this not thought to be available by interviewees.	Street crime
Local information on places of worship	Not so important	On-campus religious facilities
Accommodation and halls of residence – availability and quality	Very important for all but Access Coordinator	Cost of halls 1st year students guaranteed place in halls? Proportion living in halls
Concentration of student housing across locality	Very important or useful bar the Access Coordinator.	
Availability of catering facilities	Head of Careers, FEC thought this very important. Connexions PA, independent school advisor and Head of Sixth Form not important. Others useful.	
% of student body on particular course at an institution	Very important or useful to all bar Head of Sixth Form and independent school advisor.	
Childcare options and availability	Very important apart from Connexions, DSO, Head of Sixth Form and independent school advisor.	Nursery provision/ratio of places to students

a This information was only provided for seven of the eight interviewees – Connexions PA; Disability Support Officer; Head of Careers FEC; Access Coordinator; Careers Advisor HEI; Independent School Careers Advisor; Head of Sixth State Secondary School.

Appendix K. Glossary of acronyms

AGCAS	Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
Becta	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (known as Becta)
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DELNI	Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland
DfE	Department for Education
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
DSO	Disability Support Officer
EMS	Estates Management Statistics
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education College
FEC	Further Education College
FSA	Financial Services Authority
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education Funding Council
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Report
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
KFI	Key Facts Illustration
MIAP	Managing Information Across Partners (now Learning Records Service)
NHS	National Health Service
NSF	National Student Forum
NSS	National Student Survey
NUS	National Union of Students
PGT	Postgraduate training
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SLC	Student Loans Company
SSC	Sector Skills Council
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, mathematics
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TQI	Teaching Quality Information
TQSE	Teaching, Quality and the Student Experience
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UCKCES	UK Commission for Education and Skills
UG	Undergraduate
UUK	Universities UK
XCRI	eXchanging Course-related Information