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Feedback in Masters Courses and the Development of International Students' Academic Literacy

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Feedback in Masters Courses and the Development of International Students' Academic Literacy

By:

V.B. Guillen Solano

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Despite numerous studies on feedback and academic literacy, few have focused on the experience of international students on postgraduate taught courses, particularly in terms of how feedback contributes to the development of their literacy practices in UK universities. This study contributes to the discussion on what academic literacy is, and the role of tutor feedback in its development. The design includes surveys, semi-structured interviews, feedback samples and course documents, to explore the experiences of students and teaching staff in various disciplines in two British universities. The research reveals core elements of academic literacy and useful insights into their multiple interpretations, underlining how disciplinary variation, student and staff diversity can influence its conceptualisation and practice. Results point to the potential of dialogic feedback to develop academic literacy while also identifying other practices that contribute to its development. One key finding is that, besides the characteristics of feedback itself, personal and institutional factors such as length, structure and interdisciplinary nature of programmes can limit the role of feedback in academic literacy development. The research concludes that pedagogical practices such as assessment and feedback cannot be separated from either the individuals or the pedagogical spaces in which they occur, so their impact can be enhanced or constrained by such spaces and the people inhabiting them. Further research needs to explore the effect of specific personal and institutional factors on feedback practices and academic literacy development. Given the importance of feedback and evidence of student dissatisfaction revealed by the findings, institutions should implement systematic approaches to measure its effectiveness. A key recommendation is for institutions to encourage and maintain meaningful dialogue with students at different levels from programme design to course evaluation. There is also a need for tutors to adopt a more open and inclusive disposition to academic literacy, reducing their reliance on written assessment and being more accepting of international students' native literacy practices.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The main aim of the study is to explore the link between current feedback practices in postgraduate taught programmes, particularly Masters courses, and the development of international students' academic literacy. The research investigates how tutors and students from different disciplines conceptualise academic literacy by identifying the key knowledge, academic competencies and dispositions that they consider important in their own disciplines. By contrasting students' and tutors' views, it considers the extent to which their views 'align' with one another, potentially revealing any issues with alignment.

Although the research originally aimed to explore academic literacy in specific disciplines, certain constraints discussed later prevented this approach; instead, the study explores the role of disciplinary variation in shaping academic literacy by contrasting participants' views across two major disciplinary groups: subjects in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Despite its limitations, discussed in 3.6.2, this traditional grouping of disciplines into HASS and STEM is commonly found in the literature and government documents (e.g. Donovan, 2007; UK Parliament, 2013), and was useful in identifying general patterns in the data. The research also looks into the linguistic and content features of tutor comments and how these are communicated, while also considering how they reflect different dimensions of academic literacy. Furthermore, the study explores students' and tutors' perceptions of the role that feedback has on the development of academic literacy and considers other factors that can contribute to its development.

The research was conducted between 2013 and 2014 in two higher education institutions (HEIs) in the north of England where two main participant groups took part in the study: students on Masters programmes and academic staff teaching on those programmes. The data collected included a focus group with students, a collection of samples of students' work with tutor feedback and course documents (e.g. marking criteria), entries from a student's reflective journal, semi-structured interviews with students and tutors, and two online surveys, one for each participant group.

1.1 Organisation of the chapter and the thesis.

The chapter begins by providing a personal account of reasons behind the choice of research topic, followed by a reflection on my own positionality, not only as an observer and interpreter of certain academic practices but also as a member of academe, the social reality under study. Section 1.3 discusses the UK higher education context and highlights the importance of international students in view of current trends, particularly internationalisation of HE, while also considering the challenges students with different cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds face in adapting to their new academic settings. Section 1.4 examines the role of linguistic competence in facilitating academic transitions while considering the perceived issue of international students' 'language deficit' from a sociocultural perspective.

Chapter 2 examines a wide range of literature and aims to identify gaps in the literature, evidence, central themes and key constructs (e.g. academic literacy, feedback, and academic discourse socialisation) across different studies that are relevant to this particular research. The chapter aims to build a conceptual and thematic framework, integrating theory and findings from previous qualitative and quantitative research. Chapter 3 offers a discussion of the main ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations that

underpin the study, provides a description of the research design and a rationale for the selection of methods for data collection and analysis.

Chapters 4 to 6 present findings combined with a discussion that seeks to address the research questions. For example, Chapter 4 explores students' and tutors' perceptions of academic literacy in different disciplinary contexts, outlining a number of key skills in higher education settings and proposing a multi-dimensional model of academic literacy. Chapter 5 explores similarities and differences in terms of the importance and conceptualisation of different elements of academic literacy while also considering the extent to which students' and tutors' views on key elements of academic literacy align. The chapter also explores factors that may help explain any instances of misalignment between participant groups. Chapter 6 aims to provide a general account of the students' and tutors' views and experiences of feedback in their particular contexts. Furthermore, the chapter looks into prevalent forms of feedback, their linguistic and content features, particularly in terms of how these reflect the different dimensions of academic literacy identified in Chapter 4. Finally, the chapter also explores possible evidence and participants' perceptions and of the role of feedback in the development of academic literacy, while also considering potential barriers to its effectiveness.

Chapter 7 looks at how tutor feedback fits within the wider picture of the different factors that contribute to students' understanding and development of different elements of academic literacy. The chapter presents findings to highlight the importance of dialogic processes and the complex dynamics between different actors, activities and resources, all of which can play a part in helping students develop their academic literacy to engage more successfully with a wide range of discursive episodes in their academic contexts. Finally,

Chapter 8 summarises and integrates key findings discussed in previous chapters, reflect on the limitations of the study, consider the possible implications of the findings, and point to future lines of enquiry that render further investigation.

1.2 Starting the research journey.

1.2.1 A brief encounter with reality

Standing on a corner by the main campus library, two of my former international students seemed engaged in a heated discussion. As I approached them, I could distinctly hear English being spoken; my heart swelled with pride, all that hard work over the summer helping them improve their English during a ten-week preparatory course had paid off. They were now in their departments working towards their degrees and, surely, I thought, they must be using some of the knowledge and skills we had worked on during the lessons, from the features of academic English and essay structures to critical thinking and avoiding plagiarism, all common themes in my practice, the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

Soon we were exchanging greetings and talking about their new experiences in departments, as often happened when I came across former students. This time, however, after a new syllabus had been introduced, I genuinely wanted to know if the academic English preparatory course they had completed in the summer of 2010 was proving useful. 'Yes', they both said politely, but with some noticeable hesitation. It was obvious they had more to say about their preparation course; in fact, Buraq, from Kurdistan, and Li, from China (not their real names) had been talking about that before I had interrupted them, as they later acknowledged.

In general, they sounded very positive about the academic English course, but they said some of the course content had seemed quite far from the

reality they found in their departments. 'Oh, it's early days', I said, trying to hide my disappointment while also attempting to justify the fact that the course we had all worked so hard on did not seem very relevant to them now. I was a bit surprised to say the least, especially because the new textbooks based on academic corpora claimed to cover the key language and academic skills that students who did not have English as a first language needed to know for academic study in the UK. I had also complemented my classes with trips to the library to help them familiarise themselves with how it all worked, organised talks by key staff (e.g. admission tutors, librarians), and discussed 'real lectures' from different disciplines available from digital repositories.

I was curious, so I invited them to stop by the language centre for 'a chat and a cup of tea', also suggesting that they should bring some friends to join the discussion. A couple of weeks later, they did.

1.2.2 Initial exploratory questions

Following the encounter with Buraq and Li, I spent time looking at journal articles that focused on the international student experience in the UK. Having taught undergraduate language courses, intercultural communication and both English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Spanish for Academic Purposes (SAP) in different academic contexts in the UK and in Costa Rica, my native country, internationalisation of education is a subject I have always been interested in. However, despite all my reading, I seemed to have more questions than answers. Many articles discussed academic literacy but the concept still seemed vague. What was it? How did academic literacy manifest in practice, and was it only about reading and writing? Did it vary across cultures, disciplines and contexts? If it did, would some international students be at a considerable disadvantage? What type of pedagogies would be associated with academic literacy? What was the relationship between language and literacy?

What were the biggest challenges students faced while adapting to their new academic contexts? These were all questions I was hoping students would help me answer but I was also aware that I would eventually need to narrow down the scope of my research if it were to address any of the questions in depth.

1.2.3 Exploring situated realities with the help of a Scoping Group

By the time I met nine students in late November 2010 as part of my scoping exercise, my list of questions had doubled; it then was clear to me that I would not have time to ask all of them so I decided that the best approach would be to ask about their overall experience and let students lead the conversation. They were a friendly group who brought some food along; some had also brought their early work to show me the sort of writing they were doing in their departments; some of their work included subject tutor feedback. These volunteers constituted a consultative group, my Scoping group, which was instrumental in both reflecting on my own practice and my decision to embark on my doctoral studies two years later.

The nine members of the Scoping Group were a mix of Saudi, Kurdish and Chinese students on postgraduate courses, except one, who was an undergraduate student. This sparked an additional interest in how their experience might vary across different levels of study. Disciplines included Engineering, Medicine, Business, and Computer Science. Not all of them had been my students but they had all studied at the university language centre and were happy to share their experiences.

The Scoping Group was an attempt to obtain feedback about my teaching practice, but it highlighted lines of inquiry that I thought were worth exploring as part of a more formal study. This initial exploration helped me frame my research and, in many ways, has inspired me through my research

journey, which started in October 2012. Some of the themes that emerged from that encounter are included here as key areas that would later inform my research questions, discussed in Section 2.7. The topics included subject and context specificity, conceptualisations and or perceptions of academic literacy, understanding of assessment and feedback, and social integration, which are discussed in more detail below.

Subject and context specificity:

Students in my Scoping Group soon engaged in a fascinating discussion about similarities and differences across their courses, talking about the type of writing and speaking that they had come across by then. Interestingly, they also commented on experiences of friends or colleagues studying in other universities, pointing out similarities and differences between their programmes, which suggested the possibility of disciplinary and contextual variation.

Perceptions and/or conceptualisations of academic literacy

Students often talked about different challenges in their new departments such as understanding lectures, asking questions in class, working with others in groups, reading long articles, posting messages in a forum or writing a reflective piece. However, the range of *discursive episodes*, defined here as instances where individuals engage with relevant discourse(s) e.g. professional, disciplinary, seemed to vary from one academic context to another. What seemed to be emerging was a list of discursive episodes that students were required to engage with, most of which involved English language, and a list of different attributes that they needed to demonstrate during those episodes. One initial observation from these exploratory discussions, which pointed to an important theoretical orientation, was that literacy practices of academic disciplines should be seen as varied social practices associated with different communities (Lea and Street, 2006).

Understanding assessment and feedback:

An interesting contrast between students in my Scoping Group was the amount of writing that they had done by then. They compared the frequency and type of assessment in their countries and across departments in the UK but by this stage, few had done any writing (although three brought examples of their work and their feedback). It seemed clear then that this was an important aspect of their learning experience worth exploring, especially because, as Boud (1995) noted, students can usually manage in academia despite instances of 'bad' teaching, but they may struggle with 'bad' assessment.

Social integration:

Most students reported issues integrating into academic life in their departments. Some claimed it was difficult to make new friends and that UK students did not seem very friendly, so they ended up sitting with other international students, most from their own countries. This was perhaps the most worrying issue: the lack of integration into their academic departments, particularly from the point of view of social theories of learning, which place great emphasis on participation (Brown et al., 1989; Wenger, 1998). Was there too much emphasis on academic skills and not enough on their Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1979, 2008) in the summer courses that my department offered to international students every year? Perhaps I -and possibly some of my colleagues- had assumed that international students would integrate well by virtue of being with like-minded people who shared similar interests and disciplinary backgrounds.

1.2.3 Personal perspectives and standpoints

With the help of the Scoping Group, I was able to define the areas of inquiry I was interested in, so I explored the literature further over the following months to see if I could answer some of my initial questions. This was

particularly useful in helping me reflect on my own positionality, my own life experiences and my combined roles as student, tutor, and researcher. Perhaps my interest in subject and context specificity had started more than 30 years ago when I was a part-time undergraduate who eventually spent 11 years studying across a wide range of disciplines, exploring areas that I found interesting, from one year doing chemistry and biosciences to graduating with a BA in English Language and Literature, having taken modules on sociology, anthropology, law, business studies, and history.

Having experienced academic writing and speaking across disciplines, languages and cultures, it was clear I had certain affinity with international students. As a tutor, I was professionally concerned about the challenges of teaching a curriculum to students from different cultural, social, linguistic, disciplinary and educational backgrounds, I also appreciated tutors' perspectives. As programme director responsible for English language support services at a large UK university, I also have had an institutional perspective of the pressures of operating within constraints imposed by institutional policy and the wider context.

Although I started this journey with the intention to 'objectively' describe the student experience, raise awareness of any potential issues and contribute to practice in my own field, EAP, one important realisation is that this has been a very personal journey and perhaps the most difficult aspect has been to maintain a 'professional distance' from international students and colleagues to reduce the impact of my own positionality, as discussed in 3.2. While acknowledging the fact that my positionality will influence key decisions at different stages of the research process, it is important to point out that there has been a consistent effort to apply a systematic approach to data collection

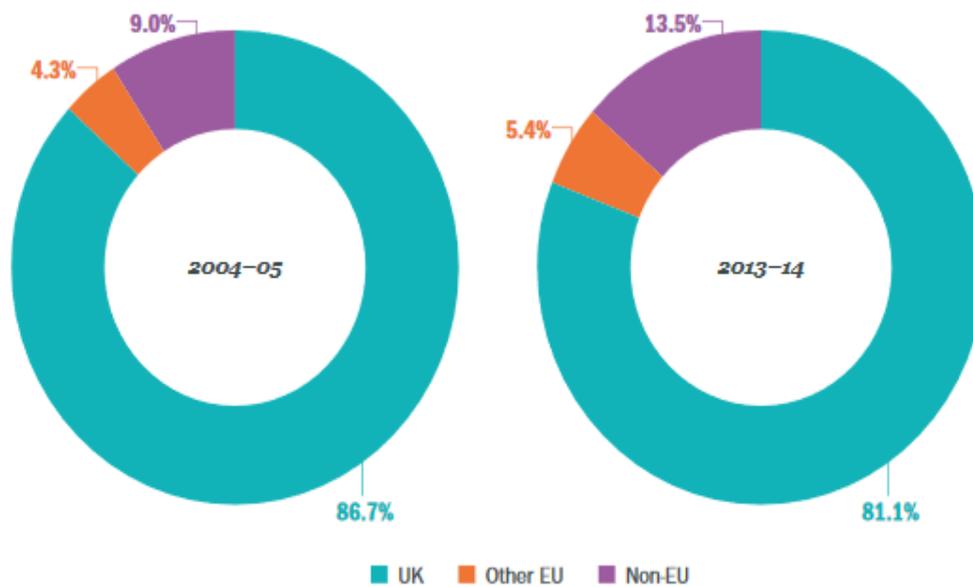
and analysis. The aim is to capture different experiences and perspectives in order to contribute to a wider discussion on what academic literacy is, particularly from the standpoint of international students on Masters courses and their tutors, how these students are expected to enact academic literacy in their particular contexts, how they develop their literacy practices, and the role that tutors can play in this development through feedback on students' work.

1.3 The UK higher education context.

One of the most obvious results of the UK higher education internationalisation agenda (HEA, 2015) has been a rise in the number of international students (non-UK domicile i.e. other EU and non-EU) studying in the UK (Foster, 2013). Although this has been a consistent trend over the last 60 years (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007) the last decade has seen considerable growth, particularly between 2004-05 and 2013-14 when the proportion of international students in the UK increased from 13.3% to 18.9 % as shown in Figure 1 (HESA, 2015 in UUK, 2015). Recruitment of international students has been an important aspect of the internationalisation agenda (Warwick and Moogan, 2013), resulting in nearly half a million international students in the UK in 2014-15, (UKCISA, 2016).

Figure 1 Increase in number of higher education international (non-UK) students in the UK

Students by domicile, 2004-05 and 2013-14



Source: HESA Student record

Although this growth in the number of international students has brought benefits to UK universities, including a considerable amount of income through fees (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007), it has also posed a number of challenges, especially in terms of international students' integration into the academic life of their host universities. Despite all the rhetoric surrounding the international and intercultural dimension of internationalisation, most efforts have focused on recruitment of fee-paying international students (Warwick and Moogan, 2013). As a result, there have been few successful attempts by UK institutions at providing home and international students with a meaningful international experience (Shartner and Cho, 2017).

A closer look at the experience of international students in the UK seems to suggest that there are issues with their socialisation and integration into academic communities. For example, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the experience of international students in a UK university, Russell (2005) found that the greatest problem mentioned by

overseas students was difficulty to socialise with UK students, often perceived as cold, unfriendly, rude and closed to different cultures, which hindered integration, affected their group work and led to social isolation. On the other hand, in a report by Harrison and Peacock (2007) involving focus groups with both UK and international students, UK students said they sometimes felt excluded when international students communicated in their own language, whether deliberately or unwittingly, and complained that non-UK students often challenged or failed to observe certain academic norms, for example, through what was perceived as poor time keeping or misuse of virtual learning environments.

International students' participation and socialisation into their new communities is vital because it cannot only affect their well-being, but also their academic performance (Petersen et al., 2009; Rienties et al, 2012; Russell et al., 2009), and thus their chances of graduating successfully (Severiens and Wolff, 2008); therefore, understanding the factors that can contribute to students' integration into their new environments is of particular importance to the success of both international students and the internationalisation agenda. This study is particularly interested in how tutors can contribute to removing some of the barriers to socialisation and integration of international students into their academic communities, also referred to as academic socialisation in this study.

One of the issues that international students may experience when studying in the UK is compatibility of academic programmes between their home universities and British universities. For example, in her study of integration of Polish students onto a year of a degree programme in the UK, Mercer (2011) found that there were compatibility issues in course structure,

curriculum, modes of assessment and contrasting pedagogical and epistemological areas between the Polish and British systems, which made the process of academic integration into the course more challenging.

Besides having to adapt to different programme structures, learning and teaching styles, some international students may find it difficult to adjust to everyday life in the UK. Some of the challenges they face include lack of common cultural reference points, unfamiliarity with many everyday life practicalities (e.g. registering with a GP), and difficulty understanding and being understood in English, in both formal academic contexts and day-to-day situations (UKCISA, 2008), which can affect the extent to which they integrate into their communities.

Being able to communicate effectively is essential for students regardless of their linguistic, cultural, education or social backgrounds because effective communication enables interaction and participation. Therefore, limited English language ability can be a barrier to successful integration of non-English speaking students into anglophone academia. However, there may be other determining factors that are worth taking into consideration, as discussed in the next section.

1.4 Beyond language: the importance of linguistic and cultural capital.

A number of studies have looked into the perceived low levels of English language skills among international students in English-speaking countries, (Attrill et al., 2016; Benzie, 2010; Birrell, 2006; Haugh, 2016; McLean et al., 2013), which suggests this is a major concern for HEIs. In the UK, research by Banford (2008) on international students' perceptions of their educational experience found that one of the biggest challenges in adjusting to their new educational environment was communicating confidently and effectively in an English-speaking environment. Home (UK domicile) students have also

expressed concern with regards to the difficulties of communicating with international students. UK students in Harrison and Peacock's (2007) study identified 'poor English language ability' as the 'greatest barrier' to interaction with international students (p.4).

However, while acknowledging the central role of language skills in the process of socialisation and integration of students into anglophone academia, there may be other barriers that may affect this process. Some of these barriers may stem from differences rather than international students' 'deficiencies.' For example, in the same study by Harrison and Peacock (2007), UK students reported a number of non-linguistic barriers to integration of international students into their social groups. These barriers included not having a common set of social and academic norms or a shared cultural resource to draw from (e.g. comedy or sense of humour), which may have hindered the development of relationships between international and home students. The researchers concluded that even when international students had a good command of the English language, leading to simpler and more rewarding interaction, the lack of shared cultural experiences made it difficult to have meaningful communication.

Even when students share the similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, participating and integrating into academic communities can be extremely challenging. For example, in a study investigating the experiences of 'non-traditional' UK students in a British university (Christie et al., 2008), many students reported 'culture shock', difficulty in integrating, and feelings of loss, ambivalence and dislocation, often stemming from the perception of their own 'social situatedness', linked to factors such as age or socio-economic background. The authors concluded that the process of becoming a university student was emotionally demanding for all students, so aspects such as

confidence, motivation and perseverance can be determining factors in their disposition to learn and their approach to adaptation to a new context. In a more recent study in Belgium, Noyens et al. (2018) found that international students with higher levels of motivation integrated better into their first year of university.

Therefore, international students' successful socialisation into anglophone academia seems to depend on a wider range of skills, knowledge and attitudes that go beyond English language competence. Instead, this process seems to be influenced by a complex amalgamation of factors that cannot not simply explained by a 'language deficit'. However, cultural, linguistic and cognitive deficit models have influenced how some people view work by students from non-mainstream backgrounds, particularly those from non-anglophone backgrounds (Black, 2007; Leedham, 2015; Tribble and Wingate, 2013; Wingate 2006). Perhaps because of a traditional view of academic literacy as the ability to read and write (Spack, 1997), and the importance of language competence in reading and writing, language deficit models may have influenced deficit models of academic literacy that conceptualise some international students' difficulties with reading and writing as a language issue.

However, language use is shaped by social interaction. As Northedge (2003a) points out, 'any grouping that regularly communicates about particular issues for particular purposes develops shared ways of talking about and understanding those issues' (p.19). The underlying principle is that the flow of meaning between a speaker and a listener, or a writer and a reader, i.e. their intersubjectivity (Bruner, 1996), greatly depends on shared knowledge and a mutual understanding of the tacit assumptions, norms and conventions that are relevant to a particular context. In other words, meaning 'is realized by context,

'by the logic of the field' by the agent's habitus, capital and position within the field (Bourdieu, 1977, p.648).

The implication is that, as Bourdieu (1977) argues, practical language competence

is learnt in situations, in practice: what is learnt is, inextricably, the practical mastery of language and the practical mastery of situations which enable one to produce the adequate speech in a given situation (p.647).

This requires familiarity with 'the context of the culture', an understanding of the values and customs of the people that speak the language, as well as 'the context of the situation', the specific environment or circumstances surrounding an utterance (Malinowski, 1923 & 1935, in Martin, 2008). For Bourdieu (1977), being able to use 'legitimate language', is not just a matter of '*grammaticalness*' but one of '*acceptability*' [author's emphasis], so instead of 'linguistic competence' the discussion should focus on 'linguistic capital' (p.646), a concept that implies the notion that 'linguistic competence (like any other cultural competence) functions as linguistic capital in relationship with a certain market' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 651). This would suggest that international students' difficulties engaging with their academic communities may then be better understood not simply as a language problem but as a struggle to acquire both linguistic and cultural capital to effectively engage with others in ways that are acknowledged and valued by their groups.

However, this sociocultural perspective raises the issue of whether international students' linguistic and cultural capital is acknowledged and valued, particularly when it comes to assessing their work. A lot of the criticism towards non-UK students discussed earlier seems to be based on the assumption that it is international students' responsibility to conform to established norms. Ryan and Viete (2009) argue that students can feel

constrained by ways of communicating that seem obscure and 'permeated with norms never made explicit, knowledge they don't share or the language of others' (p. 308). For many of these students, the subtleties of language and the tacit nature of many norms and conventions in their new communities can often turn into barriers and make it difficult for them to understand academic expectations and engage with other students, academics or support staff.

Most of these norms and conventions in British universities may seem 'natural' or self-evident to UK practitioners; however, many stem from cultural factors operating at a subconscious level and may be considerably different in countries where international students come from. For example, in their study of cultural influences on knowledge and information sharing, Ardichvili et al. (2006) found a number of factors that can shape interactions within a particular community, for instance, the way that individuals share information and relate to others may be influenced by a tendency towards individualism (where people place personal goals ahead of their group), or collectivism (where individuals give priority to collective goals). Although their study was conducted in a business setting rather than an academic context, it highlighted the fact that communication is a complex activity that can be influenced by multiple factors, including cultural perspectives. In academic contexts, some authors (e.g. Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995) have argued that Western literacy practices and notions such as plagiarism tend to reflect an individualistic attitude towards authorship that may not be shared by other cultures.

Besides tendencies towards individualism or collectivism, Ardichvili et al. (2006) found other cultural aspects that influenced preferred modes of communication and information sharing among participants from different countries. These factors included expectations of modesty, worries about

losing face, and attitudes towards competitiveness, authority, seniority and hierarchy. However, despite the considerable amount of literature highlighting role of culture in shaping people' ideas, values, expectations and practices (e.g. Evans & Waring, 2011; Fong, 2012; Hall, 1969; Hall and Reed Hall, 1990; Gay, 2012; Haoda & Richardson, 2012; Hofstede, 2001, 2012; Museus, 2007; Newman et al., 2003; Ngai-Man et al., 2001, Sikkema & Sauerwein, 2015; Stathopoulou & Vosniadou, 2007), there are likely to be individual differences derived from factors such as social position, educational background or intercultural contact that can also influence the way people choose to communicate in academic contexts, which may explain variations in communicative practices between individuals with similar cultural, linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds, as may be the case with subject tutors teaching on the same programme.

This study is particularly interested in how communicative expectations and practices associated with student writing and tutor feedback can vary across contexts (e.g. disciplinary or institutional), and from one individual to another. Since internationalisation of higher education has been defined as 'a range of activities, policies, and services that integrate an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution' (Knight, 1994, p. 7), this study is also interested in looking into how this intercultural and international dimension manifests in participants' academic experiences in a British university. Ryan and Viete (2009) strongly argue that internationalisation of higher education should be underpinned by respect, reciprocity and a mutuality of learning. However, the expectation that non-UK students need to adopt UK standards and practices in order to succeed in a UK university may suggest a more closed stance that assumes that their existing

standards and practices are inadequate, in which case, current recruitment and admission policies in the sector would need to be reviewed.

On the other hand, new members of any given community are usually expected to adapt and go through a process of socialisation, which entails learning the community's main constructs and conventions, using its particular language, and acting in accordance with its established norms (Flowerdew, 2000; Sfar, 1998). Perhaps the issue is not the expectation that international students should change their ways of thinking, communicating and performing as part of a learning process, which would also be expected from UK students, and arguably, from any learner in any context regardless of their background; the question may be whether enough credit is given to students who have crossed cultural, linguistic, social, educational, and/or disciplinary boundaries to embark on academic study in an unfamiliar higher education context.

The process of socialisation and integration into a new academic community can be long, complex and arduous for anyone; however, in the case of full-time non-UK students on Masters programmes, it may be extremely difficult for them to successfully transfer and build on their existing linguistic and cultural capital over a short period of time. These international students tend to come from a wide range of backgrounds and usually have less than a year to complete their postgraduate programme of studies, which means that they may not have enough time to familiarise themselves with relevant norms and practices in their new academic contexts. Failure to demonstrate familiarity with the particular language and established norms in their new communities could lead to social isolation, but in the context of assessment, it can also result in lower grades if international students fail to perform in 'legitimate' ways as 'legitimate' members of their academic community.

Perhaps, there is still a need for a constructive debate on what is 'legitimate' when it comes to social practices such as academic writing, as well as a wider discussion on the extent to which international students' existing linguistic and cultural capital is acknowledged, valued and rewarded within a UK higher education context. Recognising the diversity of the student population, particularly in the case of international students, seems essential if they are to have a successful and inclusive academic experience in the UK. This recognition requires a better understanding of international students' views and experiences of academic study in the UK, especially with regards to how they develop their literacy practices to meet their course requirements and how they are supported in this process.

A key premise in this study is that academics in UK universities can - should, and often do - play a crucial role in helping international students build on their existing linguistic and cultural capital in order to communicate more effectively, negotiate meaning and interact with others in ways that are deemed appropriate within their particular academic context. Therefore, this research looks at how tutors can contribute to the development of international students' academic literacy practices, particularly in the case of how tutor feedback can help students develop their academic writing.

1.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter started by providing an overview of the thesis and then moved on to explain how I 'came upon the topic'. There was also a personal reflection on how my current roles as student, tutor, and researcher offer different perspectives on the key issues investigated in this study. The chapter provided some background on the UK higher education context and argued that international students are an important segment of the student population,

particularly on full-time Masters courses, justifying the focus on this group of students.

The chapter highlighted the difficulties that international students experience while studying in the UK, also challenging the widespread view that a 'language deficit' is the main reason why many international students struggle in their new academic contexts. Instead, the proposition is that international students' issues with literacy practices in the UK may also stem from lack of familiarity with the particular ways of thinking and communicating in their new contexts. This requires adopting a sociocultural perspective on academic literacy that acknowledges that literacy practices are shaped by multiple factors and different discourses within specific contexts. The final section considered the degree to which certain academic practices are culturally bound and the extent to which international students' own communicative practices are acknowledged, valued, respected and rewarded within UK academia, concluding that the current expectation is that international students need to adapt and change their ways of thinking and communicating if they are to succeed in a British university.

The next chapter examines a wide range of literature in an attempt to identify areas that need further study and aims to build a conceptual and thematic framework, integrating theory and findings from relevant studies. There is an exploration of key themes and constructs such as academic literacy, discourse, academic discourse socialisation and feedback. Chapter 2 also considers the scope of the study and introduces the research questions.

Chapter 2: Building a conceptual and theoretical framework from the existing literature

2.1 Purpose and organisation of the chapter

This chapter aims to build a theoretical and conceptual framework to investigate the experience of academic study of international students on Masters courses in the UK by incorporating theory and findings from relevant studies and exploring key constructs such as academic literacy, feedback and socialisation. The chapter provides the theoretical underpinning for this study while adopting a critical approach that includes a degree of analysis and attempting some conceptual innovation. It introduces new terminology such as *discourse mapping* and *intradiscourse* as conceptual tools to assist with the analysis and discussion of some of the key themes, issues and debates in the field, particularly where there seemed to be gaps in the literature.

The main criteria for the selection of the studies is thematic relevance to the particular line of inquiry pursued in the study i.e. the role of tutor feedback in the development of international students' academic literacy. However, the selection also considers other aspects including:

- context of the research (e.g. higher education, anglophone academia)
- reliability (e.g. articles sourced from peer-review journals)
- validity (e.g. match between claims, methodology and findings)
- authority and affiliation (i.e. author's previous publications and/or author's affiliation)
- currency (i.e. whether the information still seems to reflect the present situation or the extent to which ideas or conclusions remain applicable to current contexts)

The chapter begins by considering social theory and the process of socialisation into academic communities, also referred to as academic socialisation, and introduces key concepts to frame ideas in terms of how individuals engage with discourse, particularly in the context of disciplinary and paradigmatic variations. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of textual practices in academe and the link between academic literacy, academic discourse socialisation and academic socialisation. The chapter then discusses current understandings of how students develop the necessary tools to engage with relevant discourses in a higher education context before examining the literature that links feedback to the development of academic literacy practices such as academic writing. The last section considers the potential contribution to knowledge and the scope of the present study as a preamble to articulating the key aims and formulating the research questions.

2.2 Socialisation into academic communities i.e. academic socialisation

As discussed in the previous chapter, new members of a community are usually expected to adapt and go through a transitional process that involves familiarising themselves with relevant norms and conventions and learning the community's particular ways of thinking, communicating and behaving, i.e. discourse and practice. This is usually a long and complex process that can present multiple challenges, often depending on the linguistic and cultural capital that these new entrants bring with them as well as their ability to build on it and legitimise it in a way that is acknowledged and valued by their new community. From the sociological point of view, this transitional process has different dimensions that have been conceptualised in different ways using terms such as acculturation, enculturation, socialisation and integration, which will be briefly discussed in the following subsections before considering the literature on how this process seems to develop in academic communities.

2.2.1 Acculturation, enculturation, socialisation and integration

Contact between individuals from different cultures can lead to different outcomes, which Berry (1980, 1994, 2001, 2005) summarised in his well-known fourfold model. Although originally conceived to explain the possible outcome of contact between a minority culture (M) and a dominant culture (D), it has also been used to discuss how individuals adapt, or not, to different cultures. For example, Berry (2005) refers to acculturation as a dual process that occurs at both individual and group level and acknowledges the changing nature of cultures and individuals.

According to Berry (1980, 1994, 2001, 2005), contact between different groups can lead to integration, which occurs when individuals become proficient in the dominant culture while maintaining their own cultural heritage (M+D+). This outcome is often seen as desirable and is also known as biculturalism. The opposite status would be marginalisation, where individuals fail to maintain, acquire, or engage with either their own culture or the dominant one (M-D-). The two intermediate outcomes would be separation (M+D-) and assimilation (M-D+). The former describes a situation where individuals maintain the culture of origin but are uninterested or unable to learn the culture of the dominant group, meaning that individuals are strongly enculturated but not acculturated. Assimilation, on the contrary, occurs when individuals reject their own cultural identity and 'absorb' the dominant culture, which means that they are highly acculturated but not enculturated. In this model, enculturation is broadly seen as the acquisition of one's own culture while acculturation refers to an amalgamation of cultures.

Models and taxonomies based on Berry's original model (1980) have been criticised for oversimplifying what seems to be a complex and dynamic process. For instance, Rudmin (2003) argues that there are other possible

outcomes, pointing out that there could be integration in one area such as language but marginalisation in others such as practices. Nevertheless, some of the criticism of this model seems to overlook the fact that this is basically a conceptual model, not an empirical one used to describe complex social phenomena. Berry (2005) acknowledges that not every individual engages or changes in the same way because individuals have variable goals to achieve from the contact situation. In other words, Berry (2005) concludes that not all groups and individuals undergo acculturation in the same way and that there are considerable variations in how people seek to engage with the process, suggesting a certain level of individual agency.

Although the words acculturation, enculturation and socialisation are often used indistinctively in the literature, the term socialisation is adopted in this study as it can refer to groups as well as cultures and it does not necessarily imply the uncritical adoption of a culture as may be the case with acculturation and enculturation. There seems to be increasing recognition in the literature that, as Berry (2005) and Rudmin (2003) had argued, socialisation can lead to different outcomes depending on the individual; individuals can also be at different stages of the socialisation process, so there could be different 'levels' of socialisation that could determine how successfully individuals adapt to a particular culture or group, which is discussed later in 2.3.3.

There also seems to be some consensus in the literature in terms of how socialisation encompasses both the psychological and social dimensions of the human experience. Scott (2014) defines socialisation as the process by which individuals learn to become members of society by internalising norms and values and by learning to perform their social roles. Although there is a certain sense of social conditioning in this definition, Scott (2014) points out that

socialisation is not simply a one-way process because people often redefine their social roles and can be agents of social change. An important point though is that socialisation is conceptualised as a lifelong process that is not exclusive to childhood.

For the purpose of this study, socialisation is seen as a cyclical process that can occur multiple times as individuals join different groups or new contexts, for example, when moving to a different country, profession, institution, discipline or programme; therefore, there may be multiple layers of socialisation interacting simultaneously, generating potential conflicts between previous experiences, for example, primary socialisation early in life (Gee, 1989) and subsequent socialisation processes, or between primary and secondary discourses (Gee, 1996). Because of the multiple factors involved in the process, there can be different outcomes ranging between marginalisation and integration, which are intimately related to each individual's identity.

In the case of many international students entering anglophone academia for the first time, they are likely to experience complex socialisation processes across different groups as they settle into both their new university and the wider community. This study focuses on their experience of academic study i.e. academic socialisation, and the way in which international students are supported as they learn to navigate the relevant discourse(s) in their academic communities, shape their identities in relation to others, and develop their own voice.

2.2.2 Universities as academic discourse communities

Academia can be seen as unique community based on discourse (Bizzell, 1982; Gravett & Petersen, 2007); therefore, notions of discourse and discourse community are central to this study and relate to the discussion in the previous chapter in the sense that successful communication with members of a

particular group depends on a mutual understanding of the language, tacit assumptions, norms and conventions that are relevant to a particular communicative event in a specific context. This study draws on Leki's (2007) view of discourse as a complex representation of knowledge, power, and identity that encompasses language, ideology and other semiotic resources. More specifically and for the purpose of this study, academic discourse refers to 'the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy' (Hyland, 2009, p. 1), while practice denotes ways of doing things in particular contexts (Wenger, 1998). Drawing on Fairclough (1989, 2010) discursive practices are seen as those that relate to the production and interpretation of texts within a particular context. The term *text* is used here in a wider sense to refer to different embodiments of discourse (e.g. written, spoken) resulting from communicative events.

A discourse community is then seen as a group of individuals that have shared goals, purposes or interests, communicate using a particular discourse, and engage in certain practices in specific contexts, all of which tend to distinguish their group from others. However, Porter (1992, p. 109) points out that a discourse community is also 'a textual system with stated and unstated conventions, a vital history, mechanisms for wielding power, institutional hierarchies, vested interests, and so on'. Porter (1986) also stresses the idea that although a discourse community may share views or have a well-established ethos, there may also be 'competing factions and indefinite boundaries' (p.39). Therefore, as Dysthe (2002) claims, discourse communities are dynamic and diverse, bound by place and time, shaped by shifting networks and influenced by personal, institutional, and historical configurations.

Within this complex landscape, the challenge for international students in the UK is to not only recognise relevant norms and conventions, but also unveil hidden assumptions and unspoken rules in a textual system where there are often multiple -and sometimes conflicting- discourses. This research aims to reveal some of the mechanisms through which international students develop an understanding of the explicit and implicit norms, conventions and assumptions that underpin social practices such as academic writing. The view in this research is that academic socialisation, the sort that international students are often expected to go through in a UK university, primarily involves academic discourse socialisation (See 2.3.1 below), seen here as an adaptive process that enables students to navigate relevant discourse(s) and communicate more effectively within their complex academic communities.

2.2.3 From university to multiversity: multiple voices: disciplines, discourses and paradigms.

Universities are complex environments where multiple discourses (e.g. political, professional, disciplinary) converge, so it can be seen as an amalgamation of discourse communities, each with its particular set of discourses and practices. Despite the widespread use of the term *academic discourse* in the literature, there seems to be consensus that academic discourse is not a uniform, singular, pure, or static form of discourse (Prior, 1998); instead, different disciplines are characterized by their own norms, specialized language, instrumental procedures, criteria for judging relevance, validity and acceptable forms of argument (Becher, 1994; Becher & Trawler, 1989; Hyland, 2006, 2009; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lea and Street, 1998; Wells, 1992). In other words, as Wells (1992) explains, 'each subject discipline constitutes a way of making sense of human experience that has evolved over generations' and therefore it 'has developed its own modes of discourse'

(p.290). While often used in its singular form in this study, the term academic discourse will refer to the amalgam of discourses that shape the particular ways of thinking and communicating in specific academic contexts.

Besides considerable differences in academic discourses and practices across disciplines, there can be significant variation even within the same discipline. Different paradigms, which are 'the source of the methods, problem-field, and standards of solution accepted by any mature scientific community at any given time' (Kuhn, 1962, p. 103), can also coexist within a discipline. Kuhn (1962) used the example of a community of physical scientists to illustrate the point that even individuals within the same, or closely related fields, who begin by studying many of the same texts, may eventually 'acquire rather different paradigms in the course of professional specialization' (p. 49). In an exploratory study of scholars in a law Faculty, Douglas Toma (1997) identified three distinct groups of law scholars working together but within different paradigms, which meant that they tended to view the purposes of their work differently, accepted different values, relied on different methods and frameworks and applied different evaluative standards.

North (2005) highlights the increase in cross disciplinary university study and the challenges that this poses to students on degree programmes that combine elements from different disciplines requiring different sets of skills. She concluded that despite the intellectual benefits of cross-disciplinary study, undergraduates might have already adopted epistemological and discursive practices that disadvantaged them in a different disciplinary context. Baynham (2000) discusses the challenges that nursing students found when having to work across different paradigms i.e. a positivist scientific perspective and an interpretive or post-positivist approach. He also discusses the tensions

between practical knowledge and theorized knowledge and the fact that there were noticeable differences not only in academic discourse and practice across disciplines, but also across tutors. In view of this, Crème and Lea (2003) advise students to recognise that activities like academic writing are not just subject-specific but module-specific and dependent on 'orientation of the course and the academic staff who designed it' (p.26).

Considering the profound role that disciplines and paradigms play in academia, it seems reasonable to deduce that they exert a strong influence on learning, teaching and assessment. Kreber (2009) argues that the epistemological structure of the discipline is likely to influence teaching and assessment practices but she also acknowledges that there may be other mediating factors such as departmental culture or individual teachers' identities (or subjectivities). This suggests that there may be particular pedagogies and forms of assessment and feedback that may be more suitable for certain disciplines or operate in particular contexts. For example, Yeo and Boman (2017) found that in disciplines such as history, English or philosophy, most assessment involved extended writing tasks (e.g. reader responses, reflections or papers), while the emphasis in disciplines like nursing, education and clinical psychology was on the application of theory in practical situations, which included clinical and practicum placements, observations and critical reflection.

Differences in assessment practices may be related to Winchester's (1986) distinction between the 'sayable' and the 'showable' as these are important when considering how to teach -and assess- a particular discipline. Winchester (ibid.) points out that it is not usually a matter of either one or the other, but a question of dominance of saying over showing or vice versa, which means that verbal forms of expression will be more common in disciplines such

as philosophy or literary criticism than in physics or performing arts. This can present a particular challenge for international students, especially with the growth of modular and interdisciplinary programmes in anglophone universities (Chandramohan and Fallows, 2009; Hyland, 2007; Tarrant and Thiele, 2017)

When confronted with the plurality of voices and discourses that characterise academia, many students may find it difficult to make their own voice heard, especially if it sounds out of tune with local language and communicative practices. Becoming attuned to multiple voices and discourses can be particularly challenging in the modern ‘multiversity’, where different groups coexist, each with its own standards of academic and professional behaviour, scholarly values and critical enterprise (Silver, 2003). The following section will explore our current understanding of how new entrants to academia negotiate these complex settings and the various discourses that they may come across during their studies.

2.3 Academic discourse socialisation, academic literacy, and academic socialisation.

In the last three decades, the adaptive process through which students familiarise themselves with relevant discourse(s) in their new academic contexts has been the focus of a considerable amount of research from different disciplinary perspectives (e.g. linguistics, education, sociology). As a result, the terminology found in the literature to describe this process is varied and includes language socialisation, academic discourse socialisation, academic literacy socialisation, the development of academic literacies, and participation in communities of practice. According to Duff (2007, p.3) these terms are often used ‘more or less interchangeably if not synonymously’ in the literature, despite stemming from different research traditions. Because of their importance in this study, this section will explore the constructs of academic

discourse socialisation and academic literacy. There will also be a discussion on how these relate to the wider concept of academic socialisation.

2.3.1 Academic discourse socialisation

The term academic discourse socialisation is relatively new but it seems to have its roots in early studies on language socialisation that aimed to explore the language needs of EAP learners and university subject tutors' expectations with regards to these students' language and academic skills (e.g. Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Ferris, 1998). During the same decade, research based on genre analysis (e.g. Brett, 1994; Swales, 1990) examined academic texts to identify aspects such as structural and rhetorical patterns in an effort to identify communicative practices that were specific to certain disciplines or academic contexts.

Moving towards the end of the 20th Century, there was a realisation that academic writing was a situated practice (Swales, 1998), shaped by disciplinary traditions, ideologies, social, cultural and institutional factors (Street, 1995). Many researchers also realised that they could use analytical frameworks and tools from discourse analysis (Edwards, 1997; Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1999) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985; Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004) to investigate not only specific lexico-syntactic forms associated with different genres, but also power relations embedded in discourse, the link between texts and their contexts, and the way in which individuals construct texts from a range of available linguistic options i.e. paradigmatic choices. There also seemed to be greater interest in the use of case studies and ethnographic approaches to gain a better understanding of how students negotiated discourse, both written and spoken, in academic settings (e.g. Casanave 2002; Dannels, 2002; Kobayashi, 2003; Leki and Carson, 1997; Morita, 2000; Spack 1997; Zappa Hollman, 2007).

Some of this research on academic discourse socialisation (Dannels, 2002; Kobayashi, 2003; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007) has provided useful insights into the experience of international students in anglophone academia, but none of these has been in the UK. Therefore, this study aims to address the gap in this area by exploring the way in which non-UK students familiarise themselves with relevant discourse(s) in order to communicate more effectively in an UK context. This study aligns with Duff's (2007) view that academic discourse socialisation involves:

developing the capability to participate in new discourse communities as a result of social interaction and cognitive experience', which 'also involves developing one's voice, identity, and agency in a new language/culture (p.3).

International students' ability to project their own voice through their community discourse is particularly important given the expectation that students will 'appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse,' having to negotiate this discourse 'as though they were members of the academy, or historians or anthropologists or economists' Bartholomae (1986, p. 4); in other words, international students are often expected to communicate using appropriate discourse as their tutors do. However, Duff (2010) points out that students entering academic institutions often arrive with different amounts and types of previous experience with academic discourse, even in cases in which they share their native language with the educational institution.

For students with limited experience in new academic contexts, Northedge (2003a, p.25) argues, "the struggle to develop an effective voice through which to 'speak' the discourse, whether in writing or in class, can be long and difficult." This long and difficult journey to develop an effective voice through which to speak the relevant discourses is at the heart of academic discourse socialisation, which, according to Duff (2010), is dynamic, 'socially

situated', increasingly 'multimodal' and highly 'intertextual'. This suggests that it can be extremely difficult for new entrants into academia to understand unfamiliar conventions and the particular ways in which authors interweave existing texts to construct and present new ones in a variety of forms.

These particular discursive practices may also be challenging for UK students, but most of them are likely to see these from a shared Western perspective and accept them as part of their progression into higher education. On the other hand, many international students, especially those who come from non-Western backgrounds, are likely to view the prevalent discourse(s) in UK academia from a different cultural, linguistic and educational perspective. For many international students, the adoption of Western ways of thinking and communicating may be experienced as a disruption, a move away from the ideas and academic practices that they have previously developed and possibly come to value over the years.

As a result, the outcome of academic discourse socialisation may vary considerably and may not necessarily lead to academic integration. For example, some international students may adopt certain communicative practices to communicate more effectively with their academic discourse community, but they may still reject some of the values and ideas behind them. For example, Canagarajah (2002) and Ferenz (2005) found that student writers tend to adopt community-based orientations to literacy according to their interests and values. Therefore, international students may be more likely to adopt certain values, norms, conventions and practices if these are similar to those in their own academic culture; on the other hand, these students may struggle with other norms and practices that may be strange or unfamiliar.

As pointed out by Green (2004 in Gondo & Amis, 2013) in order for a practice to be accepted, first, it has to make sense to those adopting it, so the adoption of a specific practice is associated with differing levels of acceptance of the need to adopt such practice (Gondo & Amis, 2013). This supports the notion that individuals are active agents in the process of academic discourse socialisation, so they do not tend to unquestioningly accept discursive practices as appropriate; people are not mirrors, polished surfaces that simply reflect discourse; individuals are permeable; discourse flows through and from them in what is potentially a transformative process that can have different outcomes, from confirmation of their own knowledge, ideas and values, to changes in their identity and how they position themselves in respect of dominant discourse(s).

As Morita (2000) argues, academic discourse socialisation should then be understood as 'a potentially complex and conflictual process of negotiation rather than as a predictable, unidirectional process of enculturation' (p.279). Academic discourse socialisation is not seen here as a one-way process where students are passive receptors of discourse; instead, it is seen as the result of multiple interactions between the different discourses that students come across and their own previous knowledge and experiences, their schemata (Rumelhart, 1980). In the same way that an individual's distinctive use of language can be recognised as their particular idiolect, an individual's distinctive and unique understanding and use of discourse could be seen as their particular *intradiscourse*. The concept of *intradiscourse* is introduced here to refer to the particular discursal configuration that characterises an individual, an internalised version of the discourse that is personal, unique and dynamic.

The initial proposition is that effective academic discourse socialisation is a socio-cognitive (psychological) process that takes place when students are

able to reconfigure their intradiscourse by adopting and/or adapting elements (e.g. language) of relevant discourse(s) in their communities. This interaction between discourse and intradiscourse can result in unique perspectives that distinguish one individual from another, contributing to the development of a singular and distinctive voice among the plurality of voices in their academic contexts.

Despite the expectation that students will communicate their unique understanding of disciplinary discourse in ways that are not only intelligible but also acceptable to other members of their community, it is also important for teaching practitioners to respect students' native 'ways with words' and celebrate the culturally-infused discursive styles that students bring with them (White and Ali-Khan, 2013). Otherwise, there is a risk of marginalising many international students, who may end up producing poor attempts at replicating dominant discourse rather than attempting to project their own voice using linguistic and discursal resources within their reach. Arguing against deficit models of academic literacy, Haggis (2006) contends that there is a need to move away from the individualised focus on needs, deficits and support, towards a consideration of current higher education pedagogical cultures. This may involve a wider discussion on key assumptions, principles and practices in each discipline as well as expanding current views of what being academically literate means in an increasingly diverse higher education context.

While exploring the ways in which students learn to negotiate relevant discourse(s) in their new academic contexts and the role that tutors play in this process, this study also attempts to shed light on the extent to which language and literacy skills deficit approaches (Lea and Street, 1998) are still prevalent, particularly in UK contexts, as suggested by the literature (Haggis, 2006;

Ippolito, 2007; Leedham, 2015; Long, 2014; Simpson and Cook, 2010; Wingate, 2006, 2010; Tribble and Wingate, 2013).

2.3.2 Academic literacy, or literacies

Academic literacy appears to be a contested term in the literature and one that seems quite elusive. One of the key aims of this study is to explore different conceptualisations of academic literacy in a UK context and to consider the extent to which some of its constituting elements can be identified.

Therefore, this section will focus on reviewing how the term has evolved over the years, attempting to present a more detailed definition in Chapter 4, which explores key elements of academic literacy.

In this particular study, the term academic literacy is preferred over its plural form, academic literacies. Despite acknowledging the existence of many literacies, each reflecting the particular ways of thinking and communicating of a particular community, the choice of the term academic literacy is mainly for consistency but also to highlight the abstract and unquantifiable nature of literacy as a socially constructed association between different elements (e.g. attitudes, abilities and disciplinary knowledge) that can manifest itself in many different ways. The underlying premise is that academic literacy is a mental construct influenced by both cognitive and social processes, so while literacy practices may reflect individual features, they are also 'embedded in the values, relationships and institutional discourses constituting the culture of academic disciplines in higher education' (Lea & Stierer, 2000, p. 2).

This wider perspective on academic literacy differs considerably from the traditional view of academic literacy as the ability to read and write in academia (Spack, 1997). This narrow view of literacy may stem from traditional models of literacy that have focused on linguistic and cognitive aspects associated with reading and writing processes (e.g. Hickman, 1977; Nathan and Stanovich,

1991, Olson, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1994, 2013; Whiteman, 1980). Another reason for a traditional focus on reading and writing may be the primacy of written discourse in academic contexts. Olson (1996 cited in Northedge, 2003a) argues that academia is 'a community that discourses primarily through writing', using a very distinctive style of discourse that is 'highly focused, analytical and critical' (p.19). As a result, writing is the primary channel for students to engage with academic discourse (McCune & Hounsell, 2005) and thus becomes

'integral to students' induction into academic cultures and discourse communities, and is the principal way they demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their studies, and their fitness for accreditation' (Goodfellow, 2005, p.481).

Despite differences in assessment practices across disciplines, the use of writing for assessment purposes still seems to be at the very core of academia, even in disciplines that have traditionally emphasised practice over theory. For example, in their investigation of academic writing in higher education based on a corpus of 2,761 assignments from 300 degree courses, Nesi and Gardner (2012) found a large number of written assignments in the medical school, which, despite their highly conventionalised structure, could be broadly categorised as essays or reports. In fact, Nesi and Gardner (ibid.) identified essays as the most common form of written assessment in UK HEIs, highlighting the predominance of 'essayist literacy' (Gee, 1989) and 'providing further support to Lillis' (2001) claim that 'essayist literacy is the privileged literacy practice within society' (p.53).

From a traditional perspective, the concept of *academic literacy development* would be considerably different from *academic discourse socialisation* and could not be used indistinctively, as claimed by Duff (2007). If academic literacy is seen as the ability to read or write, it would be difficult to

see how the development of academic literacy could be used to denote the complex process by which students develop the capacity to participate in their new academic discourse communities. However, from the perspective of New Literacy Studies (Barton, 1994; Gee, 1990, 1996; Lea and Street, 1998, 2006; Street, 1998, 2003, 2006), where literacy is seen as social practice beyond the ability to read and write, academic discourse socialisation and the development of academic literacy could be seen as interchangeable, although research on academic discourse socialisation has traditionally seen this process as a result of both social interaction and cognitive experience, a view adopted in this study.

When combining its social and cognitive dimensions, academic literacy can be seen as a socio-cognitive tool –or set of tools- that allows us to construct a bridge between the individual and the collective, making it possible for us to ‘mediate our interior thoughts as well as our external social interactions’ (Russell et al., 2009, p. 408). The key assumption is that academic literacy has both a cognitive (psychological) and a social dimension; therefore, the implication is that a large part of its development involves constant exposure to the language, the ideas and, importantly, the tasks routinely carried out by more experienced members. In this way, novices cannot only learn from a community of practitioners but also construct identities in relation to that particular community (Wenger, 1998).

The development of academic literacy, or academic discourse socialisation, is seen here as the process by which individuals familiarise themselves with the particular ways of thinking and using language in order to communicate more effectively in their new contexts. The following section aims to explain the link between academic literacy, its development (academic discourse socialisation), and the concept of academic socialisation.

2.3.3 Academic literacy and academic socialisation.

Academic literacy has been initially conceptualised here as a socio-cognitive tool –or set of tools- that enables individuals to engage with relevant discourse(s), bridging the cognitive and social dimensions of each individuals' academic experience, thus enabling participation in academic discourse communities. As a socio-cognitive construct that goes beyond the ability to read and write, academic literacy becomes central to the process of academic socialisation because, as discussed earlier, it allows individuals to engage with different forms of discourse, consider how these relate to their own intradiscourse, and begin their journey towards integration.

Drawing on previous models of socialisation (Stein & Weidman, 1989; Thornton & Nardi, 1975; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Weidman et al., 2001), this research adopts the view that socialisation consists of different stages and involves multiple interactions between individuals, groups and their contexts, all of which shape an individual's identity. However, as socialisation processes are increasingly less homogeneous in academia and occur in much more diverse student populations (Weidman et al., 2001), there seems to be a need for a different model that accounts for the different levels and dimensions of academic socialisation that students experience during their studies. Therefore, this study puts forward a conceptual model, discussed later in this section, in an attempt to explain the link between academic literacy and the socialisation of international students into anglophone academia.

In simple terms, academic literacy has so far been seen as a set of tools or elements (both cognitive and social) that allows individuals to engage with academic discourse and thus communicate and participate more effectively in their academic discourse communities. The proposition is that this set of elements needs to be dynamic so that it can adapt to the different types of

discourse that individuals encounter during academic study. As discussed in the previous section, the development of academic literacy is also referred to as academic discourse socialisation because it basically relates to the process by which people develop the competencies needed to engage with academic discourse in a way that is deemed appropriate by other members of their community. Although academic discourse socialisation and academic literacy development are interchangeable terms in this study, there is an important distinction between these two and the notion of academic socialisation.

Unlike academic discourse socialisation, academic socialisation, or socialisation into academia, is not seen here from a competency point of view, but from an affinity perspective, so it refers to the degree to which an individual identifies himself or herself with both the academic discourse and practice of that group. For example, a student may be proficient in his or her new community discourse, and thus able to meet the expectations of their academic community, and yet, he or she may not value certain practices (e.g. referencing and the mechanics of citation). As argued by Rampton (2010), individuals can be active agents in their socialisation and often 'assemble' themselves from changing options in their context, deciding what is right and wrong for themselves. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, academic socialisation refers to the socio-cognitive distance between a person's intradiscourse and the community's discourse(s), so it relates to the degree to which these two align.

The key assumption based on the literature is that academic literacy allows engagement with community discourse(s), so it is essential for individuals to communicate with other members of their academic discourse communities in ways that are deemed legitimate; however, academic socialisation is closely linked to each person's identity, which may determine the

degree to which they wish to change their practices or pursue integration into such communities. For example, in a study into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writers' social and academic networks, Ferenz (2005) found that not all participants desired to develop their academic literacy practices or progress in their academic socialisation process, which depended on their personal goals and values. The author concluded that literacy practices are valued by a writer depending on their social identity. The implication is that there may be differences in tutors' and international students' understanding of what academic literacy is or looks like in practice, potentially leading to misalignment in terms of how texts are produced and interpreted.

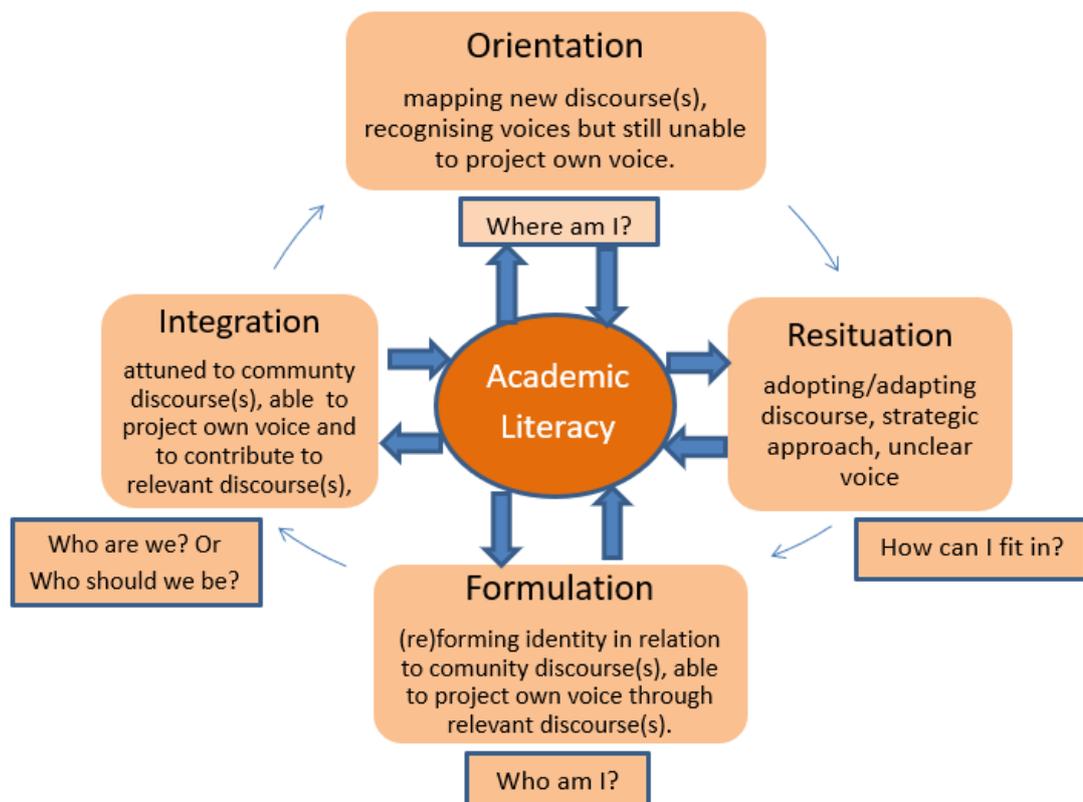
Because academic literacy is cognitively and socially constructed, its perceived configuration i.e. what constitutes academic literacy, may not only vary considerably from one individual to another, but also across disciplines, institutions and cultures. As a result, 'students often have to contend with diverse understandings of academic literacy within, as well as between, subject communities' (Bloxham & West, 2007, p.79). Therefore, this study also aims to investigate the extent to which international students' and tutors' views on academic literacy align with each other and how this may impact on their practices.

As discussed in Chapter 1, international students in the UK represent a considerable segment of the university population and a key part of UK's internationalisation agenda. Given the issues with integration into their local and academic communities discussed in the introduction, it seems important to gain a better understanding of factors that contribute to their socialisation, especially their socialisation into academic communities. The conceptual model presented in Figure 2 below is not intended to serve as an analytical tool to investigate the

academic experience of international students in the UK, but as justification of the research focus on academic literacy when investigating their experience.

The main purpose of the model is to highlight the central role of academic literacy as a set of tools that allows individuals to engage with discourse at different stages during the process of academic socialisation. The model also stresses the importance of students' engagement with their communities to further develop their academic literacy. For example, the thick blue arrows pointing to and from the central circle denote the role of academic literacy in facilitating engagement with discourse at different stages, but they also suggest that such interaction with discourse feeds back into -and thus enhances- academic literacy.

Figure 2 Relationship between academic literacy and the process of integration into academic discourse communities.



In this model, the first stage corresponds to orientation, where students explore discourse in an attempt to 'find their bearings' and develop an

understanding of their new academic landscape, a process referred to as *discourse mapping* in this study. This is followed by what Eraut (2008, p. 42) refers to as 'resituation', where individuals attempt to reconcile the range of "personal expertise, practical wisdom and tacit knowledge" that they bring with them to respond to their new situation. At this point, students may use a number of strategies to 'fit in' within their new academic contexts. Students may find it difficult to reconcile their existing set of literacy tools with course requirements, so they may opt to move from a strategic approach to a developmental one, the formulation stage, which would involve improving their ability to negotiate discourse and (re)positioning themselves in relation to such discourse. The final stage, integration, represents biculturalism or multiculturalism, where students identify themselves with different academic communities and are proficient in their discourse and practices. From a Bourdieusian perspective, students who achieve this stage, whether they are home or international, have not only built on their cultural capital but have also multiplied it and can now make more valuable contributions to their academic communities.

Success in reaching different stages of the process will depend on a number of personal and contextual factors, for example, international students' disposition to engage with others, particularly their tutors and peers, available opportunities for them to do so, and the level of support that institutions can offer for them to integrate better into their communities. Although not all students may have the desire or motivation to fully integrate into their academic discourse communities, institutions should ensure that they offer opportunities for students to develop the set of tools that they need to participate as active members of their communities. As argued by Ridley (2004, p. 106),

complete integration into the discourse of a particular higher education discipline may not always take place but the opportunity and invitation to participate should be there.

2.4 Current understandings of how students develop their academic literacy

Although research into literacy as the development of reading and writing skills has a long tradition that spans over 50 years (Street, 2013) literature looking into the development of academic literacy from a wider angle is more limited and relatively recent. Some of these studies (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2006;; Dannels, 2002; Goodfellow, 2005; Kiely, 2009; Kobayashi, 2003; Lee, 2009; Morita, 2000; Seloni, 2012; Tribble and Wingate, 2013; Weissberg, 2006; Zappa-Hollman, 2007) have produced valuable insights into factors that may help students develop certain aspects of academic literacy.

For example, Ferenz' (2005) study mentioned earlier, pointed to the impact of students' social networks on the development of academic literacy. Bharuthram & McKenna (2006) reported on a successful writer-respondent intervention to develop students' academic literacy practices that consisted in respondents, especially trained lecturers, reading student writers' work without editing it or correcting it, but drawing attention to academic norms of writing. The authors concluded that the dialogue with the respondent, without any judgement on their work, was beneficial to the student writers.

Morita (2000) found that cognitive and sociolinguistic phenomena were at play as students were 'apprenticed' into oral academic discourses. Using ethnographic methods including video recordings and classroom observations, Morita (2000) analysed oral academic presentations to investigate how students were expected to speak and how they acquired the oral academic discourses required to perform successful presentations. The author concluded that students developed their practices through ongoing negotiations with instructors and peers as they prepared, performed and reviewed presentations. In a similar

study, Zappa-Hollman (2007), found that successful academic presentations required an understanding of the values and expectations in students' 'local context'; however, the researcher found that some students resisted adapting to new oral literacy practices (e.g. extemporaneous speech as opposed to memorised versions of written texts), because they had different notions of what constituted acceptable academic speech.

Despite the contribution of these studies to our understanding of academic literacy development, there is still much to learn about the multiple ways in which students develop their academic literacy (Duff, 2010), particularly in the case of international students on Masters courses in a UK university, an area that remains little explored despite the importance of this group of students to UK higher education, particularly in the context of the UK internationalisation agenda. There is also a need to move away from the skills deficit model that underpins many of these studies, where there is a 'remedial' approach to interventions (e.g. Bharuthram & McKenna, 2006). Instead, this study aims to explore students' conceptualisations of academic literacy and contrast them to those of their tutors to identify any potential misalignment, rather than a skills deficit, with regards to expectations of academic literacy. The study will also consider the extent to which students' existing literacy practices are acknowledged, valued and rewarded in their new academic communities.

The main contribution of many of these studies has been to illustrate the multiple factors that can influence the development of academic literacy such as dialogue and interaction with others, or feedback from more experienced members of their academic discourse communities, which will be discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

2.4.1 Developing academic literacy through dialogue and participation

Participation in dialogic events or processes where individuals engage in dialogue with others, either through spoken or written language, seem to be quite important in helping students, whether they are international or not, develop an understanding of relevant discourses and academic practices in specific contexts. For example, in their longitudinal study of biosciences students at three different universities, McCune & Hounsell (2005) observed that changes in the 'ways of thinking and practising' (WTP) appeared to arise from the students' experiences of direct engagement with experimental data, with the research literature and with other members of the community. This reflects Wenger's (1998) argument that engaging in community practices allows individuals to fine-tune relationships with others and the environment, thus resulting in learning experiences.

Engaging in new practices can be quite challenging for new entrants into academia as the concept of practice encompasses both explicit and implicit elements, from words, tools and handbooks to subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, embodied understandings and underlying assumptions (Wenger, 1998). Polanyi (1962) introduced the term tacit knowledge to refer to the fact that we often 'know more than we can tell', a phenomenon also studied by Sternberg et al. (2000) as part of their research into practical intelligence, stressing the fact that even experts struggled to explain their practices as they came so natural to them that they were often 'unaware' of how they did what they did.

What this tacit knowledge involves can vary in different academic contexts, but Trowler and Knight (1999) claim that common areas include norms, value sets associated with assessment, teaching approaches, research paradigms, daily work practices, discourse and knowledge of the organisation. As a result of its situated and elusive nature, Trowler and Knight (ibid.) argue

that tacit knowledge is acquired informally through discussion and participation in professional practices. Efforts to make tacit knowledge overt to international students may not always be effective if they entirely rely on written or spoken explanations, typically presented to them during induction events or in course handbooks. Although it is difficult to make tacit elements of discourse surface, because of their very nature, O'Donovan et al. (2004), argue that this may be possible through the use of participative methods to facilitate tacit knowledge transfer. These transfer processes may involve 'dialogue, observation, practice and imitation to share tacit understanding of assessment requirements' (O'Donovan et al., 2004, p. 332).

Despite the inherent difficulties in articulating tacit knowledge (Sternberg et al., 2000), a number of studies suggest that dialogue around assessment and the production and interpretation of texts can help to make hidden features of community discourses more explicit and illustrate teacher conceptions of quality (Handley and Williams 2011; O'Donovan et al., 2004; Price, 2005; Rust et al., 2003; Rust et al., 2005; Sadler, 2002; To and Carless, 2015; Wingate et al., 2011). Most of these studies stressed the importance of social interactions between teachers and students to facilitate tacit knowledge transfer, particularly in terms of expectations and requirements of academic writing. For example, Dysthe (2002) found that both academics and students thought it would be useful to have more specific discussions about texts and how they differ both within and across disciplines.

Exposure to relevant discourses and related textual practices, complemented by dialogue with other members of their discourse community, can help students discover other voices and clarify their understanding of discourse and practice. By establishing some points of reference within their

disciplinary discourse (e.g. key works in their field), students may be able to determine where they stand in relation to others and the dominant discourses. Northedge (2003a) stresses the importance of interaction and argues that students need opportunities to participate 'both vicariously, as listeners and readers, and generatively, as speakers and writers' in order to develop their identities as members of the community and 'move from peripheral forums to more active, competent engagement with the community's central debates' (p.31).

Northedge (2003b) adds that these opportunities to speak and write the discourse should take place in the 'presence' of a 'competent speaker' who can help students to understand how to use specific 'concepts, terms, and modes of argument' in their disciplines (p.178). Gee (1990), also argues that because of the social nature of academic discourse, this is

acquired, not mastered by overt instruction but by apprenticeship into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with those who have already mastered the discourse (p.147).

Therefore, one of tutors' key roles in an academic setting is to contribute to students' academic literacy development by providing the necessary scaffolding, generating interest, creating opportunities for collaboration, and helping them develop the capability to participate in their new academic communities (Duff, 2007).

Academic transition from one academic context to another presents a number of challenges for all parties involved and it should be seen as a joint venture, especially between students and tutors. A number of studies discussed in the next section suggest that feedback is one way in which tutors can contribute to academic literacy development.

2.4.2 Developing academic literacy through feedback

Feedback is a common term in the literature used to describe a number of practices. Price et al. (2010) state that feedback is a generic term that lacks clarity of meaning and ‘disguises’ multiple purposes that are not usually acknowledged such as correction, reinforcement, benchmarking and longitudinal development (i.e. feed-forward, which is differentiated by being forward-looking). There are also various types and methods of delivering feedback, for example Laurillard’s (2002) distinguishes between extrinsic feedback, resulting from formal assessment tasks, and intrinsic feedback, embedded in day-to-day interactions in more informal contexts. Feedback to either individuals or groups can be delivered in various ways, for example, via written or spoken comments, paper feedback sheets with rubrics, or online platforms such as Turnitin®.

The literature also points to an important distinction between formative and summative feedback. Formative feedback is intended to offer guidance on student progress and to help improve student learning processes (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Knight, 2002; Rowe et al, 2014); on the other hand, summative feedback forms part of the grading process, usually conducted at the end of a course (Rowe et al., 2004), and typically features judgements on student performance for the purpose of progression and completion (Brown, 2005). Because of its link to summative assessment and its emphasis on explaining and justifying grades awarded (Blair et al., 2014), summative feedback is also described as ‘feedout’ (Knight, 2002) to highlight the fact that, along with grades, it provides achievement-based information for the use of third parties (Knight, 2006 in Sadler, 2009).

One of the key aims of this study is to explore students’ and tutors’ conceptualisations and experiences of feedback; therefore, a new definition of

feedback will be provided later. In the meantime, the term feedback in the following sections will refer to 'information presented' to learners that contrasts actual and desired outcomes (Poulos & Mahony, 2008, p. 143). Despite the limitations of this conceptualisation of tutor feedback as information, later discussed in Chapter 6, it has initially been adopted because it reflects a widespread view in the literature (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2010; Evans, 2013; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Glover & Brown, 2006; Hattie and Timperly, 2007; Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al., 2001; Hyland, 2013a; Hyatt, 2005; Sadler, 1989; Weaver, 2006; York, 2003).

Written feedback in particular is typically seen as commentary that is 'delivered' in specific forms, so it is often categorised as a specific genre within academia containing a series of recurring themes or moves that can be identified and studied (e.g. Hyatt, 2005; Mirador, 2014; Nesbitt et al., 2014; Yelland, 2011). Much of this research has focused on the role of written comments on student learning under the premise that feedback is the most powerful single influence in student achievement (Hattie, 1987 in Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

In the last decade, there have been a number of studies that support the view that tutor feedback can help students understand academic expectations and improve specific aspects of academic literacy related to writing (Carless, 2006; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Prowse et al., 2007; Yorke, 2003). Hyland (2009) argues that feedback is essential to the socialisation of students into disciplinary literacy and epistemologies. Feedback helps convey the community's goals and criteria for success, conventions, procedures, tools, and language (Lave and Wenger 1991) and can support the development of learning communities (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Feedback from tutors

can help students understand general features of academic culture (Hyland, 2009, Orsmond and Merry, 2011) and specific aspects of their context and their discipline since feedback contains messages about tutor and student roles and about the nature of knowledge itself (Ivanič et al., 2001 in Hyland, 2009).

Feedback also conveys implicit messages about values and beliefs of the academic community and can help students understand the expectations and requirements of the course (Ivanič et al., 2000; McCune and Hounsell 2005).

Feedback can potentially change student behaviour (Yorke, 2003) and help students develop a sense of quality so that they can monitor their own performance (Carless, 2013; Sadler, 1989). In a study by Bloxham and West (2007), students reported that feedback had helped them 'to reference more effectively, improve the structure of their essays, use more sources, answer the question and increase their confidence' (p.85). Orsmond and Merry (2011) reported different ways in which students used feedback to have a better understanding of their context, including using feedback to identify what the tutor wanted, or to develop their own views when challenged by tutors on specific aspects of their work. McCune & Hounsell (2005) found that students valued feedback as a way to better understand the expectations and requirements of the course perhaps because 'commentary in the form of brief remarks or questions gives important clues as to how ideas might be reframed to achieve greater force and clarity within the terms of the discourse' (Northedge, 2003b, p.178).

However, other research has suggested that feedback itself, as a specific genre within academic discourse, can be problematic and may even turn into a barrier to learning. A number of studies have claimed that students are often confused by the feedback they receive and cannot always decipher it (Carless,

2006; Chanock, 2000; Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al, 2001; Hyatt, 2005; Hounsell, 1997; McCune, 2004; Sommers, 1982; Weaver, 2006; Williams, 2005). Higgins (2000, p.1) concluded that many students 'are simply unable to understand feedback comments and interpret them correctly', perhaps because 'feedback is generally delivered in academic discourse which students may not have full access to' (Carless, 2006, p.221). This is a point also highlighted by Gibbs & Simpson (2004) when stating that feedback is usually 'generated from a more sophisticated epistemological stance than that of the student' (p.22). This could explain why students have traditionally been dissatisfied with feedback (HEFCE 2011) and why it continues to be one of the aspects of the student experience that they are least satisfied with (HEFCE (2016)).

Others argue that the main issue with feedback may stem from the traditional conception of feedback as information that is 'delivered' to students. Sadler (2010a) argues that learning from being told is flawed as a general strategy and feedback statements often fail as communications because of the 'interpretive' challenges that students face. In a meta-analysis of research on corrective feedback, Truscot (2007) found error correction to be ineffective in improving learners' ability to write accurately and in some cases, it had a negative effect, which was consistent with a previous study (Truscot, 1996). On the contrary Bitchener (2008) identified previous studies where there was evidence of impact of corrective feedback on students' work; however, the studies involved English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and focused on specific aspects of language use and some produced contradictory results. In Bitchener's (2008) own two-month study looking into the efficacy of written corrective feedback, students improved their use of articles in English; however, this was in the context of private language schools in Australia and involved

one-to-one verbal interaction with tutors. Encouraging as improvement in language use may be, there is no indication that this could translate into higher scores on university programmes across disciplines.

Crisp (2007) found that despite the amount of feedback provided, two thirds (66.7%) of 51 students saw no significant changes in their marks given by the same anonymous marker between the first and second essay, and in 17.6% of the cases, their performance declined. Crisp (2007) concluded that feedback on its own is not enough to improve student learning or improve student levels of achievement as its effectiveness is linked to other practices such as class discussions about marking criteria and opportunities for dialogue with their teachers. Askew and Lodge (2000) go further to claim that there is little correlation between formative feedback and student achievement unless dialogue is built in within the system, a view increasingly shared by others (Blair et al, 2014; Boud and Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2013; Nicol, 2010; Price et al., 2010)

Students may also fail to capitalise on feedback because of the nature of the feedback. For example, comments on structural aspects of writing (e.g. spelling, grammar, and word choice) seem to be more common than those tackling other important aspects of writing such as how arguments are constructed (Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Stern & Solomon, 2006). Comments may also have a dismissive or judgemental tone (Carless, 2006; Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Higgins et al., 2002; Li and Barnard) and this could affect how students perceive and engage with feedback. As Boud (1995) reflects, 'We judge too much and too powerfully, not realising the extent to which students experience our power over them' (p. 43). Ivanič et al. (2000) found that subject tutors pointed out more negative than positive aspects, and there was little

evidence showing that tutors engaged in ongoing dialogue with students, which may lead to marginalisation in cases where students fail to make use of written feedback and lack opportunities to interact with their tutors.

In the case of international students, existing feedback practices in their new academic communities may not support their particular ways of learning. For example, while investigating feedback practices in postgraduate research settings in an Australian University, East et al. (2012) found that international students showed greater appreciation than home students for direct corrective feedback, particularly on language. In her study into student perceptions and preferences for feedback involving nearly 1,000 students at two Australian universities, Rowe (2008) found that international students were less satisfied with the amount and type of feedback they received than their domestic peers, and many preferred verbal feedback as opposed to the common practice of written feedback.

In the UK context, Burns and Foo (2012) concluded that although feedback had not positively impacted on module grades, international students had perceived feedback as helpful, encouraging engagement with others, potentially opening up dialogue with tutors, giving them direction and increasing their confidence in preparing for other assignments. A later study (Burns and Foo, 2014) confirmed the potential of tutor feedback in areas such as encouraging reflection, fostering interaction and mutual support, and cultural adaptation. However, the authors also identified issues with the limited amount of formative feedback that international students received in some modules and the way that tutors gave feedback as this could affect students' confidence and attitudes towards their course. They concluded that questions remained as to how students used and internalised feedback and that despite the positive

impact observed in different areas, 'written feedback alone may leave the student emotional and unclear about how to act upon feedback' (Burns and Foo, 2014, p. 86). Although practices that focus on feed-forward may help students understand how to act on feedback, these may only be effective if students engage with feed-forward (Price et al., 2010).

While the literature clearly points to the considerable impact that tutor feedback can have on student learning, it also suggests there may be a number of barriers that can hinder its effectiveness. Despite the wealth of literature on feedback, less is known about the impact that different types of feedback (e.g. written, summative) can have on the development of specific elements of academic literacy, particularly in the case of international students on full-time Masters programmes in the UK, where entrants from outside the UK represent 74% of the student population (Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). These students seem to be in a particular situation because they have less time than undergraduate students to develop their academic literacy and do not have the level of individualised attention and support that research students are usually entitled to, which may put them at a disadvantage.

2.5 Scope of the study and research questions.

As pointed out in the previous section, previous research into feedback has greatly contributed to our understanding of the potential benefits and possible issues arising from current practices; however, there are still important areas that remain largely unexplored. Literature on feedback practices from the perspective of international students in anglophone academia is quite limited (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knock, 2009; Burns and Foo, 2012, 2013, 2014; Carless, 2006; East et al., 2012; Rowe, 2008), while the exploration of the potential gap between tutors' and international students' perceptions of discourse in their disciplines has only recently begun (Bitchener et al, 2011).

Little attention has been paid to the link between written feedback from tutors and the development of specific aspects of academic literacy.

Most of the studies in the last two decades have explored the experience of doctoral students or undergraduate students, giving little attention to international students on postgraduate taught courses. With few exceptions, for example, Burns and Foo (2012, 2013, 2014), who studied the feedback experiences of undergraduate international students in the UK, most researchers have explored feedback in non-UK contexts. There also seems to be a tendency to look at the relationship between feedback and academic writing, often from a deficit perspective that looks at how interventions can support academic literacy (e.g. Burns and Foo, 2014).

Criticism of many studies looking into feedback, particularly those reported in the 'advice literature', also comes from the fact that they are often based on small or undeclared samples of student work (Mutch, 2003). Another limitation of many studies exploring feedback practices is their reliance on textual analysis of written feedback to draw conclusions. For example, textual analysis of annotations on a script or comments on a feedback sheet may show a few remarks, yet much of the feedback may have been given in class, in tutorials, by email, or in casual conversations in corridors, which could have been explored by incorporating the participants' views. On the other hand, some studies have relied exclusively on participants' perceptions gathered through instruments such as questionnaires or interviews (e.g. Bloxham & West, 2007; Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006, 2010; Carless, 2006), which may not always be reliable.

For example, in their study into feedback alignment using semi-structured interviews and coursework, Orsmond and Merry (2011) reported the

case of a student who said tutors tended to point out spelling errors in his coursework. Nevertheless, a review of the script showed that there were no tutor comments on spelling errors but on the lack of justification and the absence of a whole section in the student's work, which suggested that the student may have not engaged with their feedback or understood their tutor's comments. Consequently, there seems to be a need for an approach, like the one adopted in this study, that looks at both tutor comments and participants' perceptions of the feedback.

Another limitation of some of the previous research is that the analysis focuses exclusively on content from a functional perspective, counting and categorizing the comments based on the apparent intention of the tutor (e.g. comments that give praise, corrective comments), or the depth of the feedback explanation, as in Glover and Brown's (2006) study. Useful as this approach may be, it seems to pay little attention to the linguistic features of feedback, overlooking the close relationship between language use and the impact it may have on students. For example, students may perceive the wording of a comment as judgemental, over critical or dismissive, which can cause anger or distress and make students less receptive to tutor comments (Boud, 1995; Hounsell, 1995). This highlights another important aspect of feedback that renders further investigation: its social-affective dimension (Yang and Carless, 2013), particularly important because 'the management of relationships represents a source of emotions influencing learners' ways of studying' (p.289).

Besides language and the social and interpersonal aspect of feedback, other elements that have received less attention include tutors' perspectives in terms of their approach to feedback and different aspects of students' work that prompt feedback comments. Tutor reflections on how they approach feedback-

giving can provide useful insight into the particular values, ideas, theoretical and pedagogical assumptions, and other aspects of discourse underpinning their practices, all of which form part of the frames of reference (Bruner, 1996) that students need to acquire to better understand relevant discourses and make better use of feedback. By investigating tutors' and students' conceptualisations of disciplinary discourse and feedback, it may also be possible to identify potential gaps or misalignment between staff and students in terms of academic expectations and the role of feedback in shaping the particular ways of thinking and communicating in their fields.

Therefore, this research aims to address a particular gap in the literature that concerns both UK higher education institutions and non-UK students on full-time Masters courses. The decision to investigate academic literacy and feedback from different perspectives provides the opportunity to look at cognitive, social and interpersonal aspects of feedback and reveal instances of alignment or misalignment between participant groups. The study of linguistic features of feedback coupled with participants' accounts of their experiences aims to shed some light on tacit elements of discourse embedded in tutor comments, as well as the potential impact of language choice on students' perception and engagement with feedback.

It is anticipated that the combination of some of the research approaches used in previous studies will offer a clearer picture of the role that tutor feedback plays in developing academic literacy. The focus on non-UK students on full-time Masters' courses aims to contribute to a better understanding of the learning experience of this important group, who may be at greater risk because of different factors, including the structure and duration of their courses, and the need to adapt to their new settings over a short period of time. The key premise

underpinning the research is that international students need to be supported in developing the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully engage with discourse and be able to integrate into their academic communities. Through a combination of qualitative and research methods, discussed in the next chapter, the research explores the link between tutor feedback and the development of academic literacy across different disciplines. Although the research initially aimed to explore the development of academic literacy in specific disciplines, the nature and quantity of the collected data meant that the focus had to switch towards how disciplinary variation, along with other factors, influenced conceptions and practices of academic literacy. Specifically, the research aims to answer three main questions listed below. A code (e.g. RQ1 for research question one) has been allocated to facilitate referencing throughout the different chapters and appendices:

1. (RQ1) What are tutors' and international students' perceptions of academic literacy? To what extent do these views align?
2. (RQ2) How does tutor feedback reflect academic literacy in different academic contexts? What are the linguistic and content features of this feedback?
3. (RQ3) To what extent does tutor feedback enable or hinder international students' understanding and development of academic literacy?

RQ1 focuses on identifying a set of elements that could be clustered around the idea academic literacy as well as understanding the importance and interpretation that is given to these elements in different academic contexts. This research question also explores the similarities and differences in the

interpretation and level of importance that participants attribute to these elements in order to determine whether their views are aligned or misaligned.

RQ2 aims to explore feedback practices and the extent to which these can vary because of disciplinary or contextual factors. By looking at content features of feedback, this question also looks into how tutor feedback comments are linked to different elements of academic literacy. By looking at the different forms and linguistic features of feedback, this question aims to contribute to a better understanding of how feedback is communicated to students and any possible implications this may have.

RQ3 is central to the study as it focuses on the role of tutor feedback in helping students understand and develop their academic literacy, particularly in terms of the elements identified in response to RQ1. It also considers any potential barriers to the contribution of feedback to academic literacy development.

2.6 Summary and conclusion

The chapter started by narrowing down the discussion on sociocultural theories to the process of academic socialisation, that is, socialisation into academia or into academic communities, while identifying key constructs in this study such as discourse and discourse community, and highlighting the complexity of modern universities. Section 2.3 focused on the concepts of academic literacy, academic discourse socialisation, also introducing new concepts such as *intradiscourse* to facilitate the discussion of a complex process that occurs at the intersection of the personal and social dimensions of learning in a higher education context. This section also aimed to provide a theoretical framework for the study by reconceptualising academic literacy as a socio-cognitive tool that goes beyond the ability to read and write, and by stressing its importance in the process of academic socialisation as it allows

students to engage with different forms of discourse, and, in some cases, embark on a journey towards integration.

Section 2.4 considered current understandings of how students develop their academic literacy, identifying dialogue and participation as common themes in the literature. This section also explored current literature on feedback and established a link between feedback and student learning, with some studies pointing to improvements in students' understanding of academic expectations and changes in their literacy practices, especially in terms of their academic writing. On the other hand, the section highlighted potential barriers to the effectiveness of feedback that render further investigation and pointed to gaps in the literature, particularly in terms of research on academic literacy from a wider perspective and the experience of international students on Masters courses in the UK.

The final section (2.5) focused on the limitations of previous studies, provided a rationale for a focus on the lines of inquiry pursued in this study, and introduced the research questions. As a preamble to the next chapter on methodology, this section also argued for a methodological approach that combines the study of texts, their contexts, and participants' perspectives when investigating academic literacy and feedback practices.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Organisation of the chapter

This chapter provides an account of the research process, starting with a discussion of the main ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations that underpin the study, which explores the role of tutor feedback in the development of international students' academic literacy in Masters courses. The chapter moves on to provide a rationale for the research design, particularly in terms of how different methods for data collection and analysis contribute to addressing the research questions, restated in 3.3 below. Next, the chapter looks back at the pilot and the lessons learnt from its implementation before focusing on an overview of the participants in the main study. The attention moves on to ethical considerations and how different concerns were addressed to ensure that the study complied with ethical research practices. The final section provides an account of the research process from recruiting participants to data analysis and considers some of the limitations that determined the nature and extent of the data collected as well as its subsequent analysis.

The following sections attempt to disentangle the cumulative and often intricate choices shaping a multi-layered research process that aims to investigate the complex and dynamic social reality that international students experience in higher education institutions in the UK.

3.2 Ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations

Social research requires careful consideration of ontological, epistemological and methodological questions in terms of the nature of the particular social reality under study and the most suitable ways to approach it. As Grix (2002) argues, the notion of social reality one holds tends to determine

the paradigm that will be adopted and the type of knowledge that will be sought. These are the foundations that will subsequently define the role that a researcher adopts, for example, as an observer, as an interpreter, or as a critic of a certain social reality, or a combination of these. Adopting a particular perspective will in turn shape the type of data to be collected, how it is collected, and the way it is analysed and interpreted.

This study is influenced by ontological realism in the sense that it accepts that 'much of reality exists and operates independently of our awareness or knowledge of it' (Archer et al., 2016, p. 4), but it also acknowledges that, as Easton (2010) underlines, part of this reality is socially constructed and thus difficult to apprehend, especially if relying exclusively on empirical methods. Sayer (2000) argues that, because of the importance of meaning in the study of social phenomena, 'there is always an interpretive or hermeneutic element in social science' (p.17). This research generally adopts an interpretivist approach that focuses on explaining the shared understandings of groups of people (Halfpenny, 1987) and attaching significance to particular findings (Patton, 2002); however, the study also tries to go beyond interpretation of individual narratives by incorporating other sources of data and forms of analysis such as surveys, often associated with positivism. While not concerned with probabilistic statistics, which characterise a positivist paradigm (Halfpenny, 1987, 1997), the study incorporates quantitative data to help identify key patterns during the analysis.

The specific social reality that concerns this study is academic study at university, a particular aspect of academia, seen primarily as an amalgam of discourse communities, each with its specific goals, particular ways of thinking and communicating. This view of academia resembles the notion of a

community of practice, 'an activity system' where 'participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their community' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). A key aspect of such communities is that, over time, they develop their own 'repertoire' (Geertz, 1973), a compilation of activities, symbols, and artefacts that 'the community has produced or adopted' and which have 'become part of its practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.83).

In other words, the social reality being investigated in this study is not seen just as an abstraction or a creation of individual consciousness that only exists in the mind of that who experiences it; on the other hand, it is not understood as being purely objective, external to the individual and accurately measurable. Instead, academic study is approached as a set of discourses and practices of a group of individuals with a shared goal e.g. the pursuit of education and scholarship, who are bonded by a complex web of meanings linked to a heterogeneous collection of 'visible' elements such as texts and behaviours, many of which can be described, perhaps not objectively but as 'intelligibly' and 'thickly' (Geertz, 1973) as possible, and from a consciously sceptical and critical point of view.

In the particular case of feedback practices, the development of academic literacy and the process of academic socialisation of international students, where the cognitive and social dimensions of academia converge, there is a need to explore both hidden and more tangible aspects of academic study in the UK, from perceived values and assumptions embedded in discourse, to the more concrete ways in which these tend to manifest, particularly through language. There is then a clear focus on both texts and the 'participants' perspectives on the texts and practices' (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p.11).

In this sense, the study is influenced by Academic Literacies (AL) as a paradigm that places great emphasis on both texts and their context and pays 'attention to the relationships of power, authority, meaning making, and identity that are implicit in the use of literacy practices within specific institutional settings' (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 370). Moreover, AL offers a critical standpoint from where to investigate the extent to which dominant discourses are perceived, understood, internalised and shared by new members of a group, thus shaping their understanding of academic literacy and related practices.

Therefore, learning and teaching are not seen here as neutral practices but as 'political acts operating in a context heavily influenced by current policies' (Ivanič and Tseng, 2005, p.13). Consequently, the study considers the wider higher education context and institutional factors that seem to play a role in shaping feedback practices and the development of academic literacy, which can impact on international students' integration. As Gage (1989), argues, educational research should not only be concerned with technical aspects of efficiency and rationality of design but also with the 'political and economic foundations of our construction of knowledge, curriculum and teaching' (p.5).

As a result of adopting a descriptive, interpretivist and critical approach to explore the interface between participants and their environment, this study combines elements of different methodological approaches. For example, it includes the use of descriptive statistics to look at frequency distributions and measures of agreement to help identify collective views and potential lines of inquiry emerging from the data. In addition, the investigation includes documents as samples of different disciplinary, professional, institutional discourses, and incorporates qualitative instruments such as interviews to explore participants' accounts of academic life, seeking to understand how they

make sense of their environment, the mechanisms that they use to achieve and sustain social interaction, and 'the assumptions they make, the conventions they utilize and the practices they adopt' (Cohen et al, 2011, p.19). A key aim is to explore the 'lived experience' of international students and their tutors and to shed light on 'the interpretive schema that pattern the actions and interactions of the members of a shared culture' (Halfpenny, 1987, p.36), in this case, academia.

Since access to the interpretive schema that shape the actions and interactions of tutors and students is mediated by discourse, findings in this study are likely to be influenced by my own intradiscourse, my personal understanding of discourses in my context. Therefore, I have reflected on my choice of methods, my positionality and my role as a researcher, which involves describing, interpreting and critically engaging with aspects of a social reality that I am part of as both a tutor and a student. As a result, notions of value neutrality, objectivity or scientific detachment, which shaped my formation as a young undergraduate in Biosciences, are now tempered with reflexivity and the subsequent realisation of the importance of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the study of social phenomena, as Walsham (2006) points out.

This is not to say that any findings or conclusions presented in this study should be dismissed as random thoughts solely based on my views and research experiences. There has been a consistent effort to apply a systematic approach to making decisions and applying different procedures for 'methodological rigour' (Kock and Harrington, 1998). For example, the choice of data collection methods was based on a ranking system for different research instruments, (See 3.3.2). Specialised software was used for consistency and to leave a research trail, for example, criteria for coding (See Appendix 3.7.3 for

an example). During the semi-structured interviews, I tried to keep an open mind to explore new avenues, but I also aimed to cover specific lines of inquiry by using visual aids and aide-memoires that included guidelines and a set of questions (See example in Appendix 3.4). Despite often experiencing empathetic feelings as both a teacher and a student, I made a conscious effort to maintain certain 'academic distance' to help minimise my potential impact on participants and probe their responses from a critical perspective, as Palagana et al. (2017, p. 432) forcefully argue:

Reflexivity and credibility in qualitative research also call for the need to maintain academic distance- to be not taken away by elicited emotions, researchers must retain the ability to see through participants' narratives and preserve the capacity to identify contradictions and issues in participants' responses.

Concerns during the research process were formally flagged up, discussed with supervisors, logged, and addressed. For example, participants were reminded at the start of each interview that although they might indirectly benefit from discussing and/or reflecting on their feedback and their academic writing, I would not be able to offer any advice or opinion, either as a peer or as a specialised EAP tutor. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent, so I listened to them at different stages of the research, coding both interview audio and transcripts and comparing that to my interview notes trying to maintain a critical attitude to what I heard, wrote and interpreted, as recommended by Palaganas et al. (2017).

Input from supervisors and occasional debates with fellow doctoral students from different disciplines created valuable opportunities for reflection on my research approach, often prompting adjustments, for example, in the wording of the survey questions during the pilot. I also enlisted two 'critical friends' from different universities who kindly coded anonymised samples of the

data for comparison and offered comments on early drafts of my findings, pointing out other possible interpretations of the data and/or inconsistencies in my line of argumentation. Keeping up to date with emerging literature was useful when revisiting the data, so I was able to question some of my previous assumptions, and conclusions, helping to identify, as Bryman (2012) suggests, different points where bias and the intrusion of values can occur.

In short, my ontological, epistemological and methodological standpoint is aligned with critical realism in that it assumes that there is a reality that is independent of observers (Easton, 2010) but also presumes that such reality does not necessarily respond to empirical methods (Archer et al., 2016). As highlighted by Sayer (2000), critical realism is compatible with a wide range of research methods depending on the nature of the object of study and what the researcher wants to find out. In this study, there is also a particular interest in looking at possible causal relationships between feedback practices and the development of academic literacy.

The following sections offer a rationale for the research design as well as an account of the research process that includes details of how the data were obtained and interpreted, which should help readers contextualise the results and consider the credibility and significance of the findings.

3.3 Methodology and research design

One important consideration when designing the study was the type of data required to best answer the research questions (below), so the next sub section discusses the rationale for the adoption of Mixed Methods Research (MMR) and the choice of research instruments to explore the potential link between feedback practices and the development of academic literacy in Masters courses. The research questions are:

RQ1: What are tutors' and international students' perceptions of academic literacy? To what extent do these views align?

RQ2: How does tutor feedback reflect academic literacy in different academic contexts? What are the linguistic and content features of this feedback?

RQ3: To what extent does tutor feedback enable or hinder international students' understanding and development of academic literacy?

3.3.1 The rationale for mixed methods research.

As discussed earlier, the implication of adopting a descriptive, interpretivist and critical approach to tutor feedback and the development of academic literacy is that this presupposes the exploration of both implicit and explicit elements of academic culture and its repertoire such as individual and collective perspectives of participants, or discursal features of texts. In practical terms, the ontological and epistemological considerations in this study have led to the adoption of Mixed Methods Research (MMR), regarded here as a 'broad inquiry logic that guides the selection of specific methods' and one that rejects "either-or" choices at all levels of the research process' (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p.5).

MMR includes elements of qualitative (e.g. interviews) and quantitative (e.g. surveys) research approaches 'for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (Johnson et al., 2007, in Cresswell, 2010). Despite stemming from different paradigms, qualitative and quantitative methods can be complementary and when combined, either concurrently or sequentially, they can bring 'a wider range of evidence to strengthen and expand our understanding of a phenomenon' (Lieber & Weisner, 2010, p.560). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), this synthesis of paradigms facilitates an approach whereby researchers piece together different methodological

practices while maintaining a focus on how appropriate they are for their intended purposes. This approach entails the removal of perceived barriers between paradigms, which are often based on certain uncontested assumptions. As Gage (1989) argues, quantitative and qualitative perspectives do not have to be mutually exclusive and antagonistic, so paradigm differences do not necessarily lead to paradigm conflict.

Besides flexibility in methodological practices to address the research questions, there are practical reasons for combining qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, Bryman's (2006) review of MMR literature identified various purposes including complementarity, instrument development, expansion, and explanation, among many others. Of particular interest in the design of this study was the idea of using MMR for instrument development i.e. where 'qualitative research is employed to develop questionnaire and scale items', for expansion i.e. to extend the breadth and range of enquiry, and for context where qualitative research provides contextual understanding in addition to findings or relationships between variables found through a survey (Bryman, 2006). For instance, qualitative data in this study informed the design of the survey, which in turn extended the range of enquiry by suggesting avenues that needed further exploration through interviews or text analysis.

However, there may be certain issues with the use of MMR in social science. Critics point to a lack of clear procedural rules and differing ontological commitments (Miller and Fredericks, 2006), certain assumptions about the merits of combining qualitative and quantitative methods coupled with no justification for either the use of MMR or the choice of specific methods (Mortenson and Oliffe, 2009), researchers' questionable ability to apply a wide range of methods appropriately (Denzin, 2008), and the subordination of

qualitative methods to a secondary role behind quantitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Mortenson and Oliffe, 2009), which suggests that MMR could be used as a platform for a positivist agenda in social science research, serving as a 'Trojan Horse for positivist enquiry' (Giddings and Grant, 2007, p. 52).

In response to some of the criticism, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) point out that MMR continues to evolve through constructive debates in the field, moving towards greater convergence and more consideration of the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions that underpin research practices. This is particularly important given that much of the criticism levelled at MMR is not about the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods per se, but towards the pragmatism that underpins some MMR research (Giddings and Grant, 2007; Miller and Fredericks, 2006; Mortenson and Oliffe, 2009), which often results in researchers making methodological decisions based on pragmatic concerns (Mortenson and Oliffe, 2009) without discussing their 'ontology or epistemology or axiological position' (Lincoln, 2010, p.7).

In order to address these potential shortcomings, reflexivity was introduced during the early stages of the study, giving careful consideration to ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the research (See 3.2 and 3.3). Much of my reflective practice was the result of my reading and valuable discussions with fellow students, my supervisory team and the internal reviewers (rapporteurs) during the PhD confirmation process, who challenged some of my initial use of concepts such as hypothesis, triangulation, and generalisability. Such conversations eventually led to my decision to complete a postgraduate certificate in research methods that included modules on both

quantitative and qualitative methods. In terms of the dominance of a particular paradigm, Miller and Fredericks (2006) point out that research can be quantitative-dominant but also qualitative-dominant, as in this study, so as long as this is made explicit, the fact that one is subordinate to another should not necessarily be an issue.

Furthermore, in higher education contexts, as is the case in this research, MMR has the potential to shed light on the complex interactions between students, academics and other staff that shape their experiences and development, as Griffin and Museus (2011) forcibly contend. In this particular study, MMR promoted a sort of 'methodological pluralism' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 254), providing different tools to help establish links between texts, participants, and their wider context. As also reported in other studies (e.g. Sutton, 2012, p.33), MMR provided different angles and perceptions, helping to identify potential 'gaps between teachers' and learners' expectations and understandings of academic discourse and practice'. The combination of different methods of data collection and analysis provided different insights to build a better understanding of both individual and collective views and experiences, offering complementary data as to the extent to which personal experiences were shared by others.

3.3.2 The choice of data collection methods

In order to ensure chosen methods would help to address the research questions (RQs), these were broken into smaller topical units based on key words that could serve as initial lines of enquiry when exploring the literature e.g. literacy, disciplines, feedback, alignment. The key topical units identified in the research questions were: perceptions of academic literacy, disciplinarity and alignment between tutors and international students, tutors' expectations reflected in feedback, and characteristics of tutor feedback across disciplines,

the impact of tutor feedback and the development of academic literacy. The list of topics helped to establish the sort of data that would be useful in exploring those lines of enquiry as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Relationship between areas of inquiry in the questions and types of data.

Table 1 Relationship between areas of inquiry in the questions and types of data	
Key topics/lines of enquiry	Sources/Types of Data Required
RQ1 Academic Literacy (AL, What is it? What are the required skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviours i.e. key elements of academic literacy (KEALs)? Is there evidence of the primacy of the written word? What is the link between AL, reading, writing and other skills?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background data of participants e.g. first language, gender, age, discipline, programme. • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ what students need to succeed in their courses. ▪ what 'good' academic writing is. ▪ What is needed to write 'well' ▪ different types of writing e.g. genres that students come across. • Samples of students' work. • Relevant course documents e.g. course handbooks, descriptors and marking criteria. • All of the above in different academic contexts.
RQ1 Participants' perceptions (understandings) of AL (Who are the participants? How do they experience/conceptualise AL? What are their expectations with regards to key elements of academic literacy e.g. reading/writing?)	
RQ1 Institutional, departmental, programme expectations of AL (What are these expectations with regards to writing and related practices?)	
RQ1 Disciplinarity and context (Does AL vary across disciplinary groups and academic departments?)	
RQ1 Alignment or Misalignment/Consonance or Dissonance (Are perceptions of AL consonant/aligned or misaligned?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable background data of participants. • Comparable descriptions, experiences, and/or value statements in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ what students need to succeed. ▪ what 'good' academic writing is. ▪ different types of writing e.g. genre that students come across. • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments about expectations of tutors and the programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ from the students' point of view. ▪ from the tutors' point of view.
RQ1 Issues or barriers (Why is there misalignment, if present?)	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' accounts of similar/different views/approaches with others i.e. tutors and peers, and why these may happen.
RQ2 Tutor expectations in feedback (How are tutors' expectations evident in their feedback?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ feedback given to students on their work (e.g. written, verbal, visual) ▪ other types of feedback given to students e.g. generic. • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments in terms of the feedback that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ students receive (student's view). ▪ tutors give (tutors' view). • Comparable data about the type (e.g. written), content (e.g. message) and purpose of the feedback that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ students receive (student's view) ▪ tutors give (tutors' view). • All of the above in different disciplines, departments and institutions.
RQ2 Tutor Feedback (What is it? What types of feedback are there?)	
RQ2 Content features of tutor feedback (How is the feedback linked to ideas about AL? What seem to be the messages? What is the purpose?)	
RQ2 Linguistic features of tutor feedback (What language is used? How is the message conveyed?)	
RQ2 Tutor feedback and disciplinarity (Does tutor feedback vary across disciplinary groups?)	
RQ3 Impact of tutor feedback (What does tutor feedback do? Is there any evidence of its impact? How it is being 'measured' or recorded?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of students' work over a period of time including drafts. • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments about how feedback has enhanced, or not, their knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the students' perspective ▪ the tutors' perspective • Tutors' descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments in terms of how the impact of the feedback is 'measured' or recorded. • Comparable data (e.g. value statements) about participants' perceptions of what tutor feedback does and the extent to which it has enhanced students' knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance.
RQ3 Development of Academic Literacy (Is there evidence of any changes in students' perceptions of AL or in their work? Where do the changes, if any, come from? Is there evidence of the link between tutor feedback and these changes?)	

Since most of the required data consisted of texts, narratives, reflections and descriptions, an emphasis on qualitative data collection methods seemed appropriate in this case. After determining the type of information that would be most useful, the next step involved considering different methods for data collection, the sample frame, the sequence and timing of data collection, discussed in 3.4.4. I prepared a list of possible qualitative and quantitative data collection methods found in previous studies that were relevant to this research. In order to narrow down the range of possible methods, a simple ranking system of the methods was developed on the basis of six main criteria for selection derived from different rationales for method selection found in the initial literature review:

- Reliability: not in a strictly positivist sense as in statistical theory, but more in terms of achieving a certain level of consistency of data (e.g. common themes) within and across a number of cases.
- Ethics: the degree to which each method would comply with ethical guidelines and what this would involve (e.g. the characteristics of the participant and the level of intrusion or potential adverse effects on them).
- Validity: not in a purely empirical way but with a focus on congruence between the research method and the type of data needed to address the research questions, for example, relying on a rigid set of questions in a structured interview would be unlikely to produce rich narratives, descriptions or reflections to explore participants' experiences.
- Impact: this would be in terms of the quality and usability of the data obtained through a particular method and sample (e.g. potential for theorisation or to open up relevant lines of enquiry).

- Viability: this involves consideration of the practical and logistical aspects of the design such as access to data, sample size or procedural aspects (e.g. would it be feasible to observe participants in all relevant settings over a period of time if using ethnographic methods?)
- Extent: this refers to the range and amount of data that could be collected through a particular method as well as considerations about sample size and ways to process the data.

The aim of this ranking exercise was to help me consider the potential contribution of each method to answer the research questions (See Appendix 3.3), which illustrates how different research methods linked to RQs and the type of data required. The ranking was also a clear attempt to apply a systematic approach rather than exclusively relying on preference or convenience, a criticism often levelled at MMR. As a result, six methods of data collection were chosen: semi-structured interviews with both participant groups i.e. tutors and students (both individual and in student-tutor pairs i.e. dyads), group semi-structured interviews or focus groups with both participant groups, reflective journals from students, recordings of feedback interactions between students and tutors, questionnaires (including online surveys) for both participant groups, and documentary research to gather relevant programme documents (e.g. module descriptors), plus a collection of samples of tutor feedback and students' work (a small text collection), which are discussed in more detail below. Unfortunately, due to logistical constraints i.e. participants' limited availability, and lack of consent from both student and tutor participants, it was not possible to obtain recordings of paired interviews or feedback interactions between students and tutors.

3.3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews with students and tutors

Interviews can help researchers understand participants' perceptions or experiences because they can provide a rich source of data derived from 'the personal interaction that is the core of the procedure' (Sommer & Sommer, 1997, p.106). In face to face interviews, there is great potential for spontaneity, the availability of paralinguistic clues to help with meaning, and the opportunity to quickly clarify, expand or explore further if needed (Opdenakker, 2006). Interviews can be very time consuming and hard to analyse and compare, but the information obtained is usually very detailed and in-depth; besides, recording facilitates the analysis of both language and content. Despite some drawbacks and concerns in terms of researcher positionality discussed earlier (See 3.2), interviews can offer valuable data to help understand social phenomena, especially when complemented by other data sources and underpinned by reflective research practice.

For this study, semi-structured interviews seemed most appropriate because they offered the possibility of focusing on particular lines of enquiry (i.e. topical units identified in the RQs) for purposes of categorisation and comparability, thus facilitating the link to the quantitative data. At the same time, semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for unstructured description, narrative, commentary and reflection, encouraging a more participant-centred approach. As stressed by Hancock (1998, p.9), in semi-structured interviews 'the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee'. Furthermore, Li and Barnard (2011) argue that semi-structured interviews can lead to a better understanding of the participant's context by allowing participants more freedom to articulate their views and experiences. This blend of focus and flexibility generated a considerable amount of rich data from 44

interviews, which produced over 50 hours of recordings, allowing deep analysis, comparison and reflection, often seen as key characteristics of qualitative research.

As discussed earlier, semi-structured interviews in this study were based on particular lines of inquiry derived from the research questions, the pilot, and the literature. Interview questions were reviewed after the initial focus group and in view of new data emerging as the study progressed and incorporated other sources of data, as illustrated by Figure 3 (See 3.3.3 below). In order to guide the discussion during the interviews, an aide-memoire and an interview guide were produced (See Appendix 3.4). A topical approach to the interview, as outlined below, provided a considerable amount of flexibility while the use of a set of core questions for each topic helped with the analysis and coding of the answers. The main topics covered were:

- The context of learning e.g. study programmes, experiences of learning/teaching (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)
- Academic expectations: key disciplinary skills, knowledge and attitudes i.e. what tutors/department/University expect from students (RQ1, RQ2)
- Understanding of academic discourse as reflected in academic writing/speaking e.g. types, expectations in their discipline, and areas of difficulty (RQ1, RQ2)
- Feedback: types, purposes, student engagement, approaches and perceptions of its value (RQ2, RQ3)

As mentioned before, the aim was to recruit student-tutor dyads from the start of the academic year and conduct at least one interview with both participants at the same time, but this was not possible. The alternative was to pair students with their course tutors and interview them separately, so one

student could be paired with two or three different tutors depending on the number of modules that they took. Likewise, one tutor could be paired with more than one student, depending on how many of their students participated in the study. As both tutors and students had to agree to participate in the study, this would likely limit the number of dyads or pairings as well as the availability of documents and feedback samples, as discussed later in this chapter.

3.3.2.2 Group interviews or focus groups with students and tutors

Focus groups, as a form of group interviews, share many of their features so the two terms are often used interchangeably, as in this study. Group interviews -or focus groups- resemble individual semi-structured interviews in many ways, but they tend to add a different dimension by incorporating the potential for discussion. They often bring together people with different views, experiences and accounts of the same or similar events, and there is usually a wider range of answers to a set of questions. According to Leonard (2006), there is opportunity for greater participation as this method can trigger more stories, encourage reflection and help to establish connections. Arksey and Knight (1999) add that in group interviewing one participant may complement the other with additional points, which can result in more comprehensive and reliable records. Finally, Bogdan and Biklen (1992 in Cohen et al., 2011) claim that group interviews can also be useful for gaining an insight into which themes or lines of inquiry could be pursued in subsequent individual interviews.

3.3.2.3 Student reflective journals

Reflection is a valuable source of useful information to explore the meanings and interpretations that individuals give to their everyday lives or educational experiences (Phelps, 2005). For research purposes, reflective journals can be an effective way of gathering data: students can record issues

as they come up, write comments, questions for consideration or evaluate new experiences. Journals can also make it easier to document and provide evidence of progress in a more systematic fashion, helping the authors –and/or researchers- to identify patterns, main ideas, concerns, or drawbacks. In this study, students were given a link to Google document that contained a brief explanation and an example (Appendix 3.5).

3.3.2.4 Documentary research and the text collection

Documentary research can generate a large amount of useful data because of the wide range of texts that may be readily available and the different possibilities to access them. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that documentary research can often be combined to good effect with other research methods in education. Documentary research was a useful source of samples of disciplinary and institutional discourse in the form of course descriptors, assignment briefs and marking criteria, all of which provided information on ‘approved values and ideologies’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 250), and thus helped to gain a better understanding of academic expectations across disciplinary groups, programmes, departments and institutions.

The collection of texts in this study refers to the body of relevant course documents and samples of students’ work and accompanying tutor feedback that was collected. One key idea was that samples of students’ writing and their tutors’ comments could show a certain level of progression in a particular skill over time, which could be considered compelling evidence of the impact of feedback practices. Moreover, the collection of texts would provide another layer of data to contrast texts against what students were saying about their feedback, tutors, and courses. Although course documents were available in digital form and thus machine readable, as is the case in a corpus, this was not the case for most of the feedback samples; nevertheless, for practical reasons

such compilation will be referred to as the text collection, or the collection of texts.

3.3.2.5 The questionnaires: paper and online surveys

Questionnaires can be an effective way to explore a particular line of enquiry by giving respondents a group of questions to elicit specific information. One common criticism of surveys is that they tend to impose preconceived classifications and often have a limited scope with little attention to the contexts in which academic practices take place (Braine, 2002). Others like Li and Barnard (2011) claim that attitudes measured by these methods are just the surface expression of underlying values, beliefs and knowledge and thus are unable to accurately represent deeper mental constructs. However, when used as part of a wider study that includes qualitative data, surveys can produce useful information, for example, by including questions to determine the extent to which participants engage in certain behaviours or the degree to which respondents agree with certain value statements (Austin, 1990).

For this research, two different types of questionnaires were designed: a paper one that would be used during the interviews to obtain participant data, and one that would be delivered electronically as an online survey. The participant data questionnaire for interviews with students (Appendix 3.6) was short and included questions to obtain basic background information about the participants, for example, programme of study. A similar questionnaire was designed for tutors but after the pilot it was decided to send this by email after the interview as it became clear that tutors felt uncomfortable answering the questions in relation to their qualifications and experience during the interview. Less than half of the staff questionnaires were completed, but in some cases, the information was obtained during the course of the interview discussing their

teaching and learning experiences, and some was available from their public university profiles.

The online survey was chosen as opposed to a paper-based questionnaire because of its length i.e. number of items (99), time and logistical constraints of collecting data across two different universities. A descriptive survey (Babbie, 1998; Oppenheim, 1992) seemed appropriate as the aim was to identify possible associations between variables and to gain some insight into the wider context where participants operated, rather than using an experimental design to establish causality between variables. The design of the online questionnaire drew on the literature, particularly on studies that produced questionnaires or scale items through quantification of qualitative interview questions (Bryman, 2006) while the content was guided by the research questions. The lines of enquiry explored in the online questionnaire corresponded to the ones identified in the RQs, as shown in Table 1 above, mainly:

- The context of learning e.g. study programmes, experiences of learning/teaching, educational and disciplinary background. (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)
- Academic expectations: key skills, knowledge and attitudes and understanding of academic discourse as reflected in academic writing/speaking e.g. types (RQ1, RQ2)
- Feedback: types, purposes, perceptions of its value (RQ2, RQ3)

However, insights from the pilot and the initial qualitative phase i.e. interviews and documentary evidence, were considered in the design of the questionnaire, for example, by using participants' own wording in the questions. Furthermore, the statements presented to participants in the questionnaires

(e.g. the 28 items included as key knowledge or skills required to successfully engage with discursive episodes in their academic contexts), derived from the initial open coding of documents and interview data, as discussed in 3.6.2.

The surveys were designed and delivered via Qualtrics®, an advanced online survey software that complied with EU-U.S. and Swiss Privacy Shield frameworks and allowed more complex logic than platforms such as Google Docs® or SurveyMonkey®. Two versions of the same survey were created, one for students and one for tutors, so that each version contained appropriate wording (e.g. *feedback from tutors has helped me improve... / my feedback has helped students improve...*) and generated relevant data for each main participant group (e.g. time studying in the UK versus time teaching in a UK university). The surveys contained a mix of closed questions, and multiple-choice questions Likert-type questions (e.g. Appendix 3.10). Finally, the surveys gave the opportunity for respondents to add their own answers, which produced complementary qualitative data to help address some of the limitations of structured questionnaires discussed above.

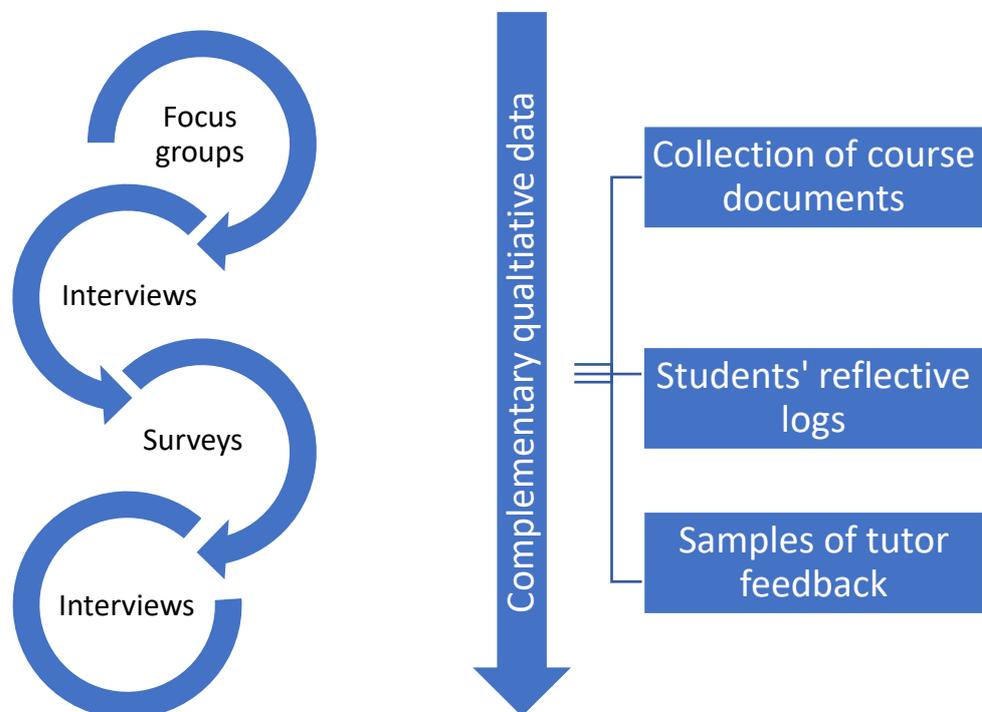
3.3.3 Design of the data collection cycle

The study was designed with a sequential approach to data collection in mind. The plan was to track a group of students and their tutors as they embarked on their academic journey expecting to have a few clear landmarks along the way that would serve as points of reference to look into students' development of academic literacy as they progressed through their respective programmes. However, the complex reality of modular programmes, diverse institutional contexts and different individual trajectories of the participants was a limiting factor in the implementation of a sequential approach as originally envisaged. One issue in particular was that many international students on full-time Masters courses return to their countries in the summer, only leaving a

small window of opportunity for data collection about feedback, particularly in the case of that produced in the second semester.

Therefore, the research design, summarised in Appendix 3.15, had to account for logistical constraints by allowing different methods to overlap so data collection was maximised. The collection of qualitative data in particular was mainly concurrent in the sense that relevant documents or samples for the text collection were gathered as they became available, often coinciding with the interviews. However, when looking at the whole data collection process, as illustrated in Figure 3, there were three distinct cyclical stages in terms of the focus on either interviews or surveys, both complemented by parallel qualitative data gathered by other methods. The semi-circles, from top to bottom, indicate the sequence of main data collection through the academic year, while the big arrow denotes regular collection of complementary data throughout the year.

Figure 3 Sequence of Data Collection Methods



Once collected, data were labelled with as much detail as possible e.g. participant code, module, semester, date, so that they could be later contextualised when required, and stored confidentially on a password protected computer, also backed-up in an encrypted external drive. The key to the participant codes linking them to their real identities was stored separately in a password-protected computer. More detail of the data collected is included in 3.6.

3.4.4 Lessons from the pilot

The aim of the pilot was to test the questions for the surveys, the interviews, and the focus group and took place between May and August 2013. A total of four student volunteers participated in a focus group using the same questions that would be used in the interviews. In addition, two colleagues volunteered for the interviews while 29 volunteers from three different institutions (11 colleagues and 18 former students) completed an online survey using Google Forms. The pilot survey included questions about the readability of the questionnaire, structure and organisation, and time spent completing the online survey, while an open question invited volunteers to comment on the design and overall experience. This was particularly useful as it underlined some potential problems. For example, although survey responses could be filtered by participant when using a single online questionnaire for both students and staff, volunteer respondents pointed out that the wording of the questions e.g. *I have received/given feedback in a timely manner* could be confusing, so this was a key consideration when deciding to use separate surveys for each participant group, as discussed in 3.3.2.

The pilot helped to highlight other potential issues that might arise during the main study. For instance, participants seemed to be at different stages of their Masters courses depending on whether they were doing 'short fat' or 'long

thin' modules. Some student volunteers commented that, even in May, they were still waiting for feedback from the Autumn semester while others indicated that their departments did not return their exam papers. This also highlighted the potential issue of access to feedback samples and the timing of data collection. While the original research design contemplated a sequential approach to data collection, this seemed impractical due to time and logistical constraints, so data such as course documents and samples would have to be collected as it became available. Another possible challenge was access to spoken feedback since tutor volunteers said they would be reluctant to record their feedback interactions as it would probably inhibit them and the students.

The pilot interviews and focus group also challenged the assumption that participants, both tutors and students, would be able to understand interview questions, reflect on their own practices and then articulate their responses effectively, which could be linked to participants' -or my own- command of English and communicative skills, lack of familiarity with certain terminology, or difficulty explaining reasons behind some of their practices. For example, one of the tutor volunteers was unfamiliar with the metalanguage I used when discussing students' work from a linguistic point of view.

Asking participants to reflect on certain aspects of their academic life essentially assumed a certain level of self-awareness and the ability to look both introspectively and retrospectively on the spot. Although this is possibly the case in most –if not all- types of interviews, the pilot stressed the fact that researchers “cannot take the interview ‘portrait’ at face value” (Gillham, 2005, p. 7) because interviewees construct themselves in what they say, so interviews must be understood in the wider research context where they are only one source of data complemented by others such as samples of feedback. This also

prompted a more critical approach to participants' narratives, for example, by probing participants' answers and asking for examples.

Aware of these potential issues, I tried to be explicit and to use plain English during the interviews in the main study, for example by avoiding jargon, or breaking down questions into smaller units, especially in cases where participants asked for the question to be repeated or sought clarification. There was also a clear attempt to make use of participants' own linguistic resources by mirroring the language that they seemed more familiar with, for example, through word choice, for example, teachers or tutors as opposed to lecturers or academics, and structure and lexis in the questions (e.g. 'Why are you doing this course?' as opposed to 'What's your main motivation to study on this programme?')

Furthermore, before the interview, participants were informed of the topics, giving them an opportunity to 'think about' and 'prepare' for these sessions. For students, interviews often involved specific items that could be used as prompts (e.g. extracts from documents or samples of tutor feedback), plus plenty of opportunities for clarification and expansion. Questions encouraged a focus on particular instances or critical events rather than asking them for their general opinions, hoping that a descriptive and narrative approach would also prompt a certain level of reflection; allowing greater access to more 'balanced' accounts of particular practices and events, as well as some insight into participants' perceptions, thoughts and attitudes.

Piloting the online survey was also useful in identifying question items that would have been confusing (e.g. double barrel questions) or less relevant to some of the participants, which led to changes to the structure of the survey and the use of a more complex logic to guide respondents through different sets

of questions (e.g. UK vs non-UK students). The pilot also made it clear that participants should be able to add (i.e. type in) their own answers and that the survey had to be shortened so that it would take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete, which required a clear focus on the key data. The questions were framed within a specific period of time e.g. 'since you started your course' and some questions were changed to incorporate language used by the students.

As the online survey would also be used as a tool to recruit more participants for interviews for the second qualitative phase, it became clear that it would be necessary to separate participants' contact details from the rest of the survey, which led to the adoption of two different delivery platforms. As described in more detail in 3.4, after completing the survey, participants agreeing to take part in an interview were re-directed to another online form where they could provide their contact details while keeping their answers anonymous.

Overall, the pilot was extremely useful in many ways, from flagging up practical and logistical issues to highlighting ethical, theoretical and methodological aspects of the study that had to be carefully considered in the final research design.

3.4 The sample frame and the participants

The study focused on the experience of international students (non-UK domicile i.e. other EU and non-EU) on postgraduate taught courses (PGTs), specifically those enrolled on Masters programmes, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, home (UK domicile) students were included in the sample frame as some departments felt that otherwise the selection criteria could be misconstrued as discrimination. Therefore, the chosen sample was: students enrolled on postgraduate taught (PGT) courses (both UK and non-UK, full-time and part-time) during the academic year 2013/2014 plus all academic staff

involved in teaching on PGT courses in the previous 18 months. This would allow academics not teaching or supervising PGT students at the time of the study to participate based on their experience of the previous academic year. The participants were all students and members of staff at two universities in the north of England, a research-intensive Russell Group institution and a post-1992 university, referred to here as the Old University and the New University respectively.

Convenience sampling was used to select participants for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. This involved targeting participants that matched the criteria of the sample frame mentioned above and allowing participants to self-select. Filters were then applied to obtain relevant data, for example, by separating entries by home students or discarding those where there were not enough data (e.g. mostly incomplete answers). Random sampling (RS) was initially considered for sample selection as these could 'produce more representative and thus more accurate samples' (De Vaus, 2002, p.74). However, there were logistical and ethical issues in terms of access to the student data required to apply this method, which varied across departments and institutions. Besides, given the focus on descriptive rather than probabilistic statistics (See 3.2), adherence to these requirements for sample selection seemed both impractical and unnecessary.

The following subsections provide further detail in terms of participants in the study for both the qualitative and quantitative phases while Appendix 3.12 includes tables summarising participant figures and the data collected.

3.4.1 The qualitative phase

Participants (See Table 2 below) were recruited at different stages as they volunteered, with a noticeable surge after the online survey as this sparked greater interest. There was only one group interview with students at the start

of the first semester (October 2013) despite inviting both academics and students to participate in separate focus groups. Recruitment for interviews was more successful, particularly during the second semester. While five students and three tutors took part in interviews during the first semester prior to the survey, the number of participants increased to 18 students and 21 academics in 12 different disciplines across the two institutions.

Table 2 Participants in qualitative phase of study per discipline, country and gender.				
Student focus group	per discipline	HASS	N = 4	
		STEM	1	3
	per country	UK	0	
		<i>Non-UK</i>	4	
	per gender	Female	1	
		Male	0	3
Interviews	per discipline	HASS	Academics N = 21	Students N = 18
		STEM	16	12
	per country	UK	5	6
		<i>Non-UK</i>	21	6
	per gender	Female	0	<i>12</i>
		Male	10	10
		11	8	

The disciplines were grouped using a traditional distinction between subjects in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Despite being commonly found in the literature (e.g. Brown et al., 2013; Donovan, 2007; Holbrook et al., 2015;

Reid et al., 2016), these groupings are somehow problematic because there may be considerable epistemological variation between disciplines within each group (e.g. Law and English literature or Computer Science and Biology) as well as paradigmatic differences within the same discipline (Douglas Toma, 1997; Kuhn, 1962), which are likely to influence teaching and assessment practices (Kreber, 2009). However, the distinction between HASS and STEM proved useful in identifying general patterns rather than drawing general conclusions and was used in response to the limitations of the study, which eventually shaped the nature and quantity of the data collected, as discussed in Chapter 8.

Although not all students had a corresponding tutor from their programmes, there were five student-tutor pairs in the study, that is, where student participants were taught by one of the tutor participants: two from the Old University and three from the New University. The findings reported later in this study focus on the analysis of data from all staff $n=21$ and international students $n=12$. A total of 21 interviews were conducted with staff (once with each academic), while there were 20 interviews with international students (See Appendix 3.13 for a list of interview participants and the number of interviews in which they participated). Most of them were available for interview only once, as opposed to the three interviews throughout the year that were originally planned.

As part of the qualitative phase, different documents were collected for the text collection as shown in Table 3 below. Work samples refer to text submitted by students for assessment; 7 out of 11 here contain comments by tutors (e.g. on the margins), which will be referred to as in-situ commentary. Feedback samples correspond to feedback provided separately from the text

produced by the student, either as commentary at the end of the piece or in a separate document such as a feedback sheet or rubric. Assessment briefs, or assignment specifications, consist of separate documents containing instructions for work to be submitted for assessment. Marking criteria refers to documents or sections of a document where there is a description of the standard of work required to achieve a particular grade. Module descriptors are documents that include key information about the module such as aims and learning outcomes. The course handbook is similar to a module descriptor but refers to a whole programme of study. Prospectuses refer to informative or promotional documents for students, which tend to shape students' expectations of their programmes. Institutional statements refer to documents where institutions outline policies and guidelines for assessment and feedback.

Table 3 Items in the text collection and their contributors				
Item	Number of items	Number of contributing students	Number of contributing tutors	Obtained online by researcher
Work Sample with feedback	11	5	0	0
Feedback Sample	10	8	2	0
Assessment Brief	16	4	1	0
Marking Criteria	12	5	2	0
Module Descriptor	61	5	2	44
Course Handbook	3	1	2	0
Prospectus	11	0	0	11
Institutional statements	3	0	0	3
Total	127			

This small collection of texts consisting of 127 items (approximately 120,000 words) was limited and unfortunately did not include any examples of drafts submitted by students for formative assessment, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, but it was still a rich source of data that captured relevant samples of different types of discourse (e.g. disciplinary discourse) highlighting types of knowledge, competencies and dispositions that seemed to be valued in certain disciplines.

3.4.2 The quantitative phase

Over 300 people, both staff and students, took part in the survey but a considerable number of entries were discarded after filtering the data. This involved eliminating responses that were mostly incomplete (e.g. no relevant background data or fewer than 50% of answers were completed,) or irrelevant (e.g. people outside the sample frame mistakenly responding). After 'cleaning the data', there were 117 responses from academics and 140 from students (Table 4 below), including 31 answers from UK students and 10 which did not indicate their domicile.

Table 4 Participants in quantitative phase per discipline, country and gender			
Survey		Academics N = 117	Students N = 140
per discipline	HASS	73	78
	STEM	44	62
	NR (no response)	0	0
per country	UK	77	31
	<i>Non-UK</i>	21	99
	NR	19	10
per gender	Female	37	68
	Male	58	62

Other	2	0
NR	20	10

As with the qualitative data, the analysis presented later in this study focused on answers by all staff n=117 and non-UK students n=99. In spite of the limited number of respondents, the survey provided useful background information such as nationality, first language or previous area of study, and revealed certain patterns that later prompted new questions to ask from the qualitative data, which in turn led to further analysis of the survey results, promoting greater interaction between different sets of data and stimulating greater reflection.

3.5 Ethics

Data collection was conducted in line with BERA (British Educational Research Association), BAAL (The British Association for Applied Linguistics) and institutional ethics guidelines, and in accordance with the approval granted for the study. All data were either collected anonymously or anonymised and stored securely, participants (both staff and students) were given relevant information about the study, and their consent was sought before collecting data. The study involved adult participants teaching or studying at post-graduate level, and despite collecting background data, the research did not aim to explore areas that may be considered sensitive or may put them in a vulnerable position. No conflicts of interest were identified.

In order to collect qualitative data, an information sheet and a consent form (Appendix 3.8) were attached to an email (Appendix 3.9) inviting participants to take part in the study. All forms and relevant documents were also discussed before starting the interview, so participants had a chance to ask

questions before they agreed to participate. Interviews with staff and students were scheduled during office hours and were conducted on campus in a variety of settings for the convenience of the participants; these included staff offices, the library, and meeting rooms.

For the collection of quantitative data, an email (Appendix 3.9) with the link to the online survey was sent; this included information about the researcher (e.g. contact details and name of supervisor), purpose of the study, and a statement about ethics approval. As the survey was also distributed via a VLE, the relevant information about the study and ethics approval was included on the landing page of the online survey. The surveys were anonymous and participants had the choice to abandon the survey at any time. As mentioned before, the surveys also served as a recruitment tool for participants during the final qualitative phase (See Figure 3, Section 3.3) since the last question invited respondents to take part in an interview. This was done by redirecting respondents to a new questionnaire for contact details once they agreed to being contacted, ensuring their anonymity and privacy by keeping their personal details apart from their responses.

There was a certain level of disruption to participants' work or studies as both staff and students had to devote some time, particularly to the interviews. However, this was minimised by scheduling interviews at their convenience. The total amount of time spent on multiple interviews by any one participant came up to approximately 5 hours over the academic year. The feedback journal would also require a certain amount of time if done regularly but it was also seen as a learning tool of potential value to students and not just useful to the researcher.

In some cases, tutors may have felt that they were being scrutinized despite assurances that this was not an evaluative study. Therefore, efforts were made to stress the fact that all data, including feedback, would be analysed collectively and not in isolation. For the text collection, both students and tutors were asked for permission before the samples were collected.

The right to withhold information was made clear to all participants during the focus group, the interviews and the online survey. Both individuals and institutions have been anonymised as requested. All information that may be used to identify participants was removed e.g. names, student id number, email address. Consent forms and participant data were kept separate and only linked by a research participant number (RPN) on the top right-hand side of the form, as illustrated by the paper questionnaire in Appendix 3.6. The key to link participants' data to their consent forms was stored in a password protected device.

Participants were given the researcher's contact details to request access to interview transcripts (if available as not all interviews were fully transcribed) and recordings.

3.6 The research process and some limitations of the study.

This section provides a brief account of the research process from recruiting participants to data analysis and illustrates a few of the challenges faced during the process, which in turn became limiting factors in the amount and type of data that was collected, for example, low survey response rates, limited participants' availability or engagement with the research, institutional policies and/or procedures.

3.6.1 Data collection

As illustrated in Figure 3 (See 3.3.3), research design originally envisaged a sequential approach to interviews and surveys complemented by

ongoing collection of documentation for the text collection; however, participants' availability and the reality of different institutional contexts (e.g. assessment regimes, structure of faculty and programme) were major factors in reshaping the data collection process. The idea was to focus on interviews during Semester One (roughly from September 2013 to January 2014 as semester dates varied across institutions), then focus on collecting survey data from February to April 2014, and then refocus on interviews from May to August 2014, while simultaneously collecting documentary evidence and samples. Table 5 below shows the different types of data collected between September 2013 and July 2014. A letter 'Y' (yes) in a cell indicates that a specific type of data was collected in a particular month while greyed-out areas show no data was collected.

Table 5 Research methods and period of data collection during academic year 2013-14

Table 5. Research methods (See 3.3.2) and period of data collection.							
Academic year	Qual.					Quant.	
	SRJ	FG	I. Int.	Text collection		Surveys	
				CD	Samp.	StS	TS
2013-14							
Sept. 2013		Y					
Oct. 2013	Y		Y	Y	Y		
Nov. 2013	Y		Y	Y	Y		
Dec. 2013			Y	Y	Y		
Jan. 2014							
Feb. 2014			Y	Y	Y		
Mar. 2014			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
April 2014			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
May 2014			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

June 2014			Y		Y	Y	Y
July 2014			Y		Y		
Key to abbreviations: SRJ = student reflective journals, FG = Focus group, I. Int. = individual interviews, CD = course documents, Samp. = samples, StS = student surveys, TS = tutor surveys.							

As can be seen from Table 5, the actual data collection process was more flexible than first anticipated to capture data as it became available and better respond to participants' workflows and institutional processes. For example, individual interviews were conducted throughout the academic year, except in January, due to participants' availability. Table 5 also shows that some sources of qualitative data included in the research design such as student reflective journals or focus groups were less successful. For example, it was possible to organise only one focus group with students, while only one international student out of twelve agreed to keep a reflective journal, but after two entries, the student withdrew from both the research and her course. Table 6 below offers an overview of all the data collected during the study followed by an account of the process of data collection.

Table 6 An overview of the data collected during the study.

Main study		Semester one/two 2013/14		Summary: main study used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods at two universities with volunteers from different disciplines. It followed a cyclical pattern QUALITATIVE+QUANTITATIVE+QUALITATIVE . Convenience sampling was used.
Stage	Method	Sample	Data	
Qualitative phase	Interviews (Semi-structured)	Tutors	N=21 Non-UK N=0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments about what students need to succeed in their courses, what 'good' academic writing is, different types of writing e.g. genres, the feedback that they give, perceptions of the impact of feedback on students' students' knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance, and how it is 'measured' or recorded. • Accounts of different approaches, practices, views and why these may happen.
		Students	N=18 Non-UK N=12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments in terms of: tutor or programme expectations, the feedback that they receive, how the feedback they receive has enhanced, or not, their knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance. • Accounts of 'misunderstandings' and why these may happen.
	Written collection of texts 127 items	Documents N= 106 e.g. marking criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant course documents e.g. course handbooks, descriptors and marking criteria. • Background data about programmes and institutions • Samples of dominant AD (What is the language? What are students asked to do? What is valued/rewarded by the discourse community?). 	
		Samples N = 21 e.g. feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of students' work over a period of time including drafts. • Samples of feedback given to students on their work (e.g. written, verbal, visual) • Samples of other types of feedback given to students e.g. generic 	
Quantitative phase	Survey Online (Multiple choice, Likert scale, open questions.	Staff N = 117 Non-UK N=21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable background data of participants (e.g. age, gender, programme). • Comparable experiences and/or value statements in terms of: what students need to succeed, what 'good' academic writing is, 	
		Students N=140 Non-UK N=99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable data in terms of the type of feedback (e.g. written, visual), the content (e.g. message) and the purpose. • Comparable data (e.g. value statements) about participants' perceptions of the impact of tutor feedback on students' knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance. 	

In terms of the process, after obtaining ethics approval from both institutions as discussed in the previous section, I contacted key staff in departments such as heads of department, directors of learning and teaching, and student experience coordinators towards the end of August and the beginning of September 2013. This was done over the phone and via emails that included an information sheet with details about the study, also asking these key staff to circulate the email among relevant colleagues in their departments. Furthermore, the conversations/emails included a request for permission to address students during induction events. I made myself available to meet some of these key contacts and teaching staff who showed interest in the project in case they wanted to discuss the research in more detail before giving access to students or colleagues.

I attended five different departmental induction events during induction week at the start of the first semester in September 2013 (two at the New University and three at the Old University), where I invited students to take part in focus groups and interviews. Students were also emailed with relevant information by departmental contacts. Flyers were distributed at induction events and posters were produced and displayed in areas made available by departments. Volunteer tutors who had been contacted through departmental channels also helped recruit participants so it was possible to pair a few of the students with their tutors as shown in Appendix 3.14.

A total of 4 out of 14 students who had agreed to take part in a focus group attended a session scheduled for the last week of September 2013, all from the New University. Due to other commitments, tutors declined to participate in a separate focus group, or there was no response. Because of the timing of the student focus group i.e. early in Semester One, the data focused

on first impressions of their new academic environments, perceptions of academic expectations in their courses, perceptions of key skills, knowledge and attitudes in their disciplines, and previous experiences of feedback in their home countries, (See Appendix 3.4 for a list of questions for the focus group).

The student focus group was followed by individual semi-structured interviews with staff and students from October 2013 to July 2014, depending on participants' availability. The interviews, which were recorded and lasted between 40 and 95 minutes, constituted the main source of data for the study. Documentary evidence was also collected during this period both through participants and by accessing public course documents available online or on the institutions' network. Three samples of feedback (two summative and one formative) were collected in Semester One while the rest (all summative) were collected in Semester Two. A preliminary analysis of the qualitative data (open coding), as discussed in the next section, was conducted from January to March to help inform both future interviews and the questionnaires for the quantitative phase.

The online surveys aimed to attract as many respondents as possible within the sample frame described in 3.4, so the original plan was to use global mail i.e. each institutions' central email facility to distribute the survey. However, the two institutions had different policies about the use of mailing lists for the distribution of online surveys, which made it difficult to achieve consistency in reaching the target audience. For example, the Old University had a global email facility and agreed targeted emails to recruit research participants could be sent to specific groups e.g. PGT students and academic staff, while this was not possible in the New University.

As a result, the surveys were distributed at different times between March and June and through different channels depending on what was agreed with each institution and/or academic department; these channels included global email, emails distributed by contacts in academic departments, and links embedded in course virtual learning environments (VLEs). The difficulty to control when and how the surveys were distributed may have been a factor in the relatively small number of respondents (117 staff and 140 students), considering the size of the target population across both universities: 11,930 students on PGT courses and 5,015 academic staff, although not all academics would have been involved in PGT courses.

Despite a lower than expected response rate, data from the questionnaires provided useful background information and revealed certain patterns that later prompted new questions to ask from the qualitative data, which in turn led to further analysis of the survey results, promoting greater interaction between different sets of data during the analysis and stimulating greater reflection.

3.6.2 Data analysis

Qualitative data has been at the centre of this study because of a clear focus on an interpretive approach; however, there has been a consistent effort to establish links between qualitative and quantitative data during the analysis. While acknowledging the challenges in combining different sets of data, the underlying premise is that these can complement rather than substitute each other. As argued by Lieber & Weisner (2010, p.570), 'ratings of course do not replace qualitative discourse, stories, and direct observations themselves; all are available for analysis and reporting'. Therefore, rather than presenting the findings from both sets in separate sections they are combined through the different chapters, grouped under the themes that emerged during the

qualitative analysis. As anticipated and noted by Bryman (2007), the biggest challenge was bringing together 'the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data and writing a narrative that linked the analysis and the interpretation' (p.10).

However, the use of technology, a clear focus on the research questions, and the topical approach used to group the questions in both the interviews and the surveys made it easier to connect the data through the different stages of analysis. Samples of feedback were digitised to facilitate coding. Two main specialised software packages were used during the analysis: SPSS 21® for quantitative data and Nvivo10® for qualitative data, which allowed for text and audio to be coded. This facilitated preliminary analysis of qualitative data without the need for a full transcript as it was possible to code the audio and retrieve specific sections of the audio at different points of the analysis. Most interviews were later fully transcribed but due to the large amount of audio data and limited time and resources, it was often necessary to prioritise transcription, which meant that certain passages within the interviews remained untranscribed.

While acknowledging that 'transcription choices reflect both explicit and implicit assumptions' (Oliver et al., 2005, p.6), there was a methodical approach in the sense that transcription decisions were made during the second stage of the analysis, discussed below, based on factors such as the type of participant, for example, priority was given to paired participants (See Appendix 3.14), and inclusion criteria (i.e. likelihood of extract being included in the final thesis draft), while also using the research questions as a filtering mechanism for relevance. Furthermore, it was useful to have the opportunity to listen to interviews on different occasions rather than relying solely on transcripts.

Although transcription can facilitate deeper analysis, it is not seen here as a mere mirror image of the recording, so when analysing transcripts, the premise was that a transcript is a text that 're-presents' an event but it is not the event itself (Green et al., 1997 in Ashmore and Reed, 2000); in other words, transcripts and recordings are different representations of an event. As advised by Ashmore and Reed (2000), whenever available, both the recordings and available transcripts were used during the analysis to prevent the possible loss of information that may result from relying on just either the recording or the transcript.

Phase One of qualitative data analysis involved open coding of the focus group, interviews, reflective journal entries, available samples, and documents (see Appendix 3.7.1 for an example) where salient aspects of the data were selected and inductively assigned one or more non-hierarchical and non-exclusive labels, forming a list of possible emerging themes. This indexing process was arbitrary to a considerable extent as part of an interpretive act, but as stressed by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), this element of arbitrary interpretation only represents the first stage in the process of analysis. Open coding was applied to each source of qualitative data starting with the focus group and the interviews. This was done by focusing on one case at a time, that is, identifying salient features in each interview of each participant and then across participants (within case and across-case analysis). The idea was to initially focus on the individual stories to avoid overreliance on atomised or decontextualized data.

During this initial stage of qualitative analysis, it was possible to identify a group of competencies, attitudes or knowledge requirements that participants associated with a wide range of discursive episodes such as reading, writing,

answering questions in exams, delivering an oral presentation, participating in a seminar, or producing an animation. These items corresponded to elements that were referred to in the feedback, mentioned by more than one participant in the interviews, or included in the top band of marking criteria, so they were thus assumed to be of high importance. When these elements appeared to be worded differently, for example '*knowledge of theory*' and '*theoretical knowledge*', the code (option) that seemed more frequently used (at least 3 times across data types) was chosen. These sets of skills, knowledge and dispositions were compiled as a list to be presented to respondents as part of the survey questionnaires, making a conscious effort to preserve the wording used in course documents and by participants during the interviews and the focus group. The result was a list of 28 items identified as important elements of academic literacy.

Phase Two of the qualitative data analysis was categorisation, which started with a systematic review of all the codes generated during Phase One, establishing more specific criteria for coding and providing a description for each code. Then codes were grouped into categories and organised hierarchically (See Appendix 3.7.2 for an example), moving the analysis from free codes to tree codes based on the topical units identified in the research questions (Appendix 3.1). This process often involved renaming, merging, eliminating or abandoning some codes as they pointed to lines of inquiry deemed less relevant to the research questions. There was also a move away from a focus on each interviewee and related documents towards a thematic approach across cases (i.e. participants). Codes were checked regularly at different stages of the analysis (within case and across-case) and against other

sources of qualitative data (e.g. samples and documents) to ensure that they were suitable and consistent, and that they addressed the research questions.

Besides a thematic analysis of the documents in the text collection, attention was also given to the salient features of the discourse used in the documents e.g. frequency of words or word combinations to identify potential key concepts e.g. critical thinking. In the case of the samples, both students' work and the tutors' comments were coded in terms of language and content, paying special attention to potential evidence of academic literacy development in students' work as well as the aspects of student writing that seemed to trigger a feedback response from the tutor. The linguistic analysis of the feedback was based on 14 documents containing samples of both ex-situ comments, including emails, and in-situ annotations.

This linguistic analysis drew on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a 'theory of language which highlights the relationship between language, text and context' (Coffin and Donohue, 2012, p. 64). Without attempting the type of quantitative analysis that characterises some of the studies based on SFL, the analysis looked at linguistic aspects that could shed light on how tutors position themselves and the choices they make when producing feedback. This seemed consistent with an academic literacies approach by placing emphasis on both texts and the practices that surround their production and interpretation, including an exploration of power relations and identity issues embedded in these practices (Lillis & Scott 2007).

The quantitative analysis of the survey data consisted of descriptive analysis to determine aspects such as frequencies, distribution and central tendency (i.e. mean). Some bivariate analysis was performed to probe for potential correlations between variables such as discipline and importance

given to certain skills or types of knowledge; however, results of tests of statistical significance were not reported as this would be more in tune with a probabilistic approach and, besides, the limited number of survey responses would mean that certain assumptions of inferential statistics would be violated.

The final stage of the analysis, the propositional phase, consisted in revising existing tree codes and finding possible relationships in order to generate proposition statements and to test -or rather consider- these in light of the data; for example, looking at the relationship between departmental policies and their possible impact on feedback practices. Although the quantitative analysis was conducted separately using different software, patterns and possible relationships identified in the qualitative analysis were used to explore the survey data to see whether propositions were supported by different data sets or needed reformulation before arriving at some conclusions.

As a convention in this study, when presenting data, extracts from documents and participants' quotes are in italics; quotes may contain language errors to preserve authenticity. Although the extracts are often contextualised, each extract is annotated with the participant's pseudonym, participant type i.e. student or tutor, and data type, for example, interview, focus group, survey comment. In order to keep to the word count and to make annotations less disruptive, other details such as participants' discipline, institution or country of origin are provided as an appendix (See Appendix 3.13 for a list of interview participants). In the case of course documents, where the author is unknown, only the disciplinary group (DG) is included in brackets. As mentioned in 3.4.1, disciplines have been organised into two main disciplinary groups: Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) and those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The mean values shown in some tables refer

to the average i.e. mean of responses exploring the importance of the 28 KEALS identified in this study; therefore, a higher number will indicate a greater level of importance ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important) as described in Appendix 3.11.

3.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter offered a detailed account of the research process from the set up to the final stages of data collection and analysis. The first part of the chapter focused on the ontological and epistemological considerations that guided the decision-making process at different stages of the research. This included a reflection on how my own positionality may have impacted on the research process and how I tried to minimise this, while also acknowledging the level of subjectivity resulting from the adoption of an approach that mainly relies on interpretation. Section 3.3 provided a rationale for the choice of a Mixed Methods approach, explained the process for the selection of different methods of data collection and analysis and how these were organised into a research design that combined qualitative and quantitative methods. There was a discussion on lessons learnt from the pilot and how these were transferred to the main study. Section 3.4 provided an explanation of the sample frame and an overview of the participants and the data collected.

Section 3.5 gave an account of the key ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure that the study adhered to ethics guidelines while Section 3.6 included a description of the research process and highlighted some of the challenges and limitations that played an important role in the quantity and the nature of the data collected. This section also includes an explanation of the process of data analysis to provide a background to the presentation of the findings in the following chapters.

While a chronological or linear narrative would have certainly offered a more readable account of the process, this was particularly difficult because of the complexity involved in collecting various types of data in different institutional contexts and the practical and logistic challenges that, in one way or another, shaped the nature, the amount and the quality of the data collected. In other words, while every attempt has been made to follow a methodical approach during the different stages of the research, in reality, this has not been a 'neat' process where participants, activities, events and the material collected closely aligned with each other to produce a coherent picture; quite the contrary, the process often involved reformulating strategies, managing self and others and combining different tasks, including preliminary analysis of data, only to see small amounts of progress in different areas at different times. However, the final product was a rich collection of different texts, perspectives and accounts from academia, a complex milieu where cultural, disciplinary, institutional and personal discourses and practices converge.

The next chapters present findings and will include a discussion on the knowledge, skills and attributes that seem to cluster around the concept of academic literacy, looking at how these can vary across disciplinary groups, contexts and from one individual to another, while also considering possible factors in such variation. This will be followed by the presentation and discussion of findings related to tutor feedback, particularly in terms of its content and linguistic features, how it is delivered and the extent to which it contributes to the development of the knowledge, skills and attributes associated with academic literacy. Finally, there is a discussion on how feedback from tutors fits within the complex dynamics, often involving different actors, activities and resources, which play a part in the development of

academic literacy and can thus help students successfully engage with different discursive episodes in their academic contexts.

Chapter 4: Academic Literacy

Existing literature stresses the diverse, complex and changing nature of literacy in different contexts (Burnett et al., 2015; Gee, 1996; Lankshear and Knobel, 2007; Lea and Street, 1998; Leki, 2007; Lillis and Scott, 2007; Wingate, 2018), but much less is known about specific elements that constitute academic literacy in higher education, or how these may be configured in specific ways that allow for differences across disciplines, academic contexts and individuals. In Chapter 2, academic literacy was initially defined as a socio-cognitive set of tools that enables individuals to engage with relevant discourse(s), bridging the cognitive and social dimensions of each individual's academic experience, thus enabling participation in academic discourse communities. By drawing on data from course documents, questionnaires and interviews with staff and students, this chapter aims to identify specific elements that seem to cluster around the concept of academic literacy, thus contributing to the discussion as to what it means to be academically literate in specific academic contexts.

Operationalising a complex concept such as academic literacy is particularly difficult; however, looking into the different practices that university staff and students associate with texts may provide useful insights into the set of tools that are required to successfully engage with academic discourse(s). As stated in 2.2.2, the term *text* is used here in a broader sense to refer to different embodiments of discourse resulting from communicative events. This use of *texts* somehow reflects the way in which the conceptualisation of academic literacy evolved in this study, moving towards a wider perspective of academic literacy as a set of knowledge, competencies and dispositions that make it possible for individuals to engage in a varied range of discursive episodes, defined here as key instances where individuals engage with relevant

discourse(s), for example, listening to a lecture, writing a blog entry, or describing a process during a demonstration.

As a result of this reconceptualisation of academic literacy, this study acknowledges the importance of the ability to read and write in a university context (Spack, 1997); however, reading and writing are seen here as discursive episodes rather than literacy per se. The study maintains a primary focus on student writing, given the primacy of written discourse in academia (See 2.3.2), but also recognises the importance of spoken discourse and other embodiments of discourse such as images and other forms of visual language.

Another key point emerging from the findings presented in this chapter is that the socio-cognitive model of academic literacy discussed in Chapter 2 seems quite limited to reflect the complex interplay between different elements of academic literacy that occurs during a discursive episode, so this binary model of academic literacy needs expanding. For example, writing an essay in a UK university would typically involve an interplay between various elements including lexical and grammatical awareness of the English language, disciplinary knowledge, the capacity to identify ideas and other author's voices in source texts, awareness of audience, understanding of academic norms and conventions associated with a particular discipline, and, probably, the ability to use a word processor.

As discussed in 3.6.2, the initial data analysis of the qualitative data (open coding) led to a list of 28 items (See Appendix 4.1) identified as key elements of academic literacy, sometimes referred to as KEALs for convenience, which were included as part of the survey questionnaire to explore the relative level of importance that respondents gave to these different elements. Therefore, when comparing mean values in this study, it is important

to note that the concept of importance refers to *relative* importance, that is, the importance of one KEAL in relation to another; consequently, differences in mean values can be small but noteworthy.

During the second stage of the data analysis (categorisation i.e. from free codes to tree codes organised hierarchically), these important elements were grouped into themes to facilitate analysis and discussion. These themes represent different aspects of academic literacy and will be referred to as dimensions of academic literacy; however, this particular thematic/dimensional organisation is not intended to serve as a specific taxonomy based on a strict set of criteria but rather as a rhetorical tool to help the discussion. The grouping of elements into dimensions also acknowledges that the list of 28 KEALs presented in this study is not exhaustive and there may be other elements that are seen as particularly important in different academic contexts.

As a result, this chapter presents a new multi-dimensional model of academic literacy with six different dimensions: multimodal, social, informational, cognitive and metacognitive, affective and dispositional, and technical and structural, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections. A key proposition in this chapter is that academic literacy involves a complex interplay of different dimensions, often reconfiguring and realigning to negotiate discourse during each discursive episode, allowing for individuals to communicate their intradiscourse while also meeting the expectations of their discourse communities, albeit with different degrees of success.

4.1 The multimodal dimension

It's still an issue that, just sometimes it's really hard to explain visual things on paper; you really have to show it. Like for character animation, we often get video references, we also get previous student work references but nothing on paper. But then you have to write a blog, or a reflective journal.

-- Ina (student, interview)

Ina's example illustrates two key points. First, her experience seems to reflect the increasingly multimodal nature of literacy practices across different contexts (Burnett et al., 2015; Garcia et al, 2007; Kress, 2003) as part of a new communicative order 'where non-linguistic modes, particularly the visual, are gaining dominance' (Stone, 2007, p. 52). Secondly, her experience highlights the challenges of transferring meaning across different modes, or transduction (Kress, 1997), for example, from video to written text. As pointed out by Bezemer and Kress (2008), each mode has its own materiality and related affordances, so 'there can never be a perfect translation from one mode to another' (p.175), for example, these authors note, images do not involve words and writing does not have depiction, so transduction leads to deep changes in the move from one mode to another and, consequently, there can be 'gains and losses in the process of modal change' (p. 175).

Interview participants reported the need to negotiate different modes of communication, for example, verbally, visually, and numerically, for different purposes, including assessment. For example, participants in subjects such as design, computer animation, information technology, and engineering mentioned various forms of expression such as the use of images and drawings in design, sound and animation in video production, algorithms in computer science, and numeric expressions (e.g. formulae) in engineering. As anticipated, based on data from the interviews, survey respondents in STEM gave a high level of importance to visual language (See Appendix 4.1 for a list of KEALS and the level of importance given to different items expressed as a mean value). For example, STEM respondents thought that both clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually, and making sense of visual data were extremely important, with mean values of 4.22 and 4.30 respectively. However,

respondents in HASS also attributed considerable importance to these two KEALs, as reflected in mean values of 3.87 and 4.12.

The different embodiments of discourse that students came across during their studies suggest that academic literacy involves the capacity to engage with a variety of forms of communication depending on variables such as the type of task or the discipline. This variety illustrates the multimodal nature of academic literacy but also underlines the challenge that students face when negotiating these different expressions and forms of communication. Transduction is particularly relevant in understanding the experience of international students on Masters courses because findings suggest that even on programmes where students experienced multimodal teaching and forms of participation (e.g. design, computer science, animation, electric and electronic engineering), students were assessed in ways that involved a considerable amount of written language for example, reports, reflective logs, exams, blog entries.

This apparent misalignment between assessment practices and learning and teaching practices seems problematic given Kress' (2003) argument that there are means for representation and communication that do not rely on language; therefore, Kress adds, literacy cannot be treated as a solely linguistic phenomenon because language alone cannot provide access to a message that has been multimodally constructed. In the particular case of international students with non-anglophone backgrounds, the usual challenge of transduction may be compounded by students' lack of familiarity with certain media (e.g. online forums), English written discourse, and relevant genres in their new academic contexts, which are discussed later in 4.6.2.

One notable pattern in the data was the fact that, despite the multimodal nature of many discursive episodes in which students were expected to

participate as part of their academic tasks, most episodes required a certain level of linguistic competence for successful communication, as illustrated by Ina's example above. Therefore, despite acknowledging the multimodal nature of modern texts and the fact that language is only a partial bearer of meaning (Kress, 2003), the focus in this study remains on literacy practices based on language, mainly because of the importance that participants attributed to this particular element of academic literacy and evidence in this study that assessment tasks and feedback practices still privilege language-based forms of expression, particularly written discourse.

4.1.1 Linguistic competence (language systems)

We have students in class who really have problems with English language and they might do something [a computer animation], and they don't always know how to explain what they did, and it makes things harder for both them and for the tutor, so it might be that, what they did works in their context, but it doesn't work in the tutor's context, but they can't really explain that.

-- Ina (student, interview)

Ina's comments reflect the importance of English language competence in communicating with peers and tutors for different purposes in a UK context, for instance, to explain or contextualise their work. Her comments also reflect the impact that limited language skills can have on students themselves and others because '*without clear and effective oral and written communication skills, the whole experience is just a constant struggle, for them [students] and for us [tutors]*' (Derek, tutor, interview). There seemed to be a general perception among participants that many international students lacked the necessary English language skills to operate at Masters level:

At Masters level the greatest challenge is going to be the language barrier. They shouldn't theoretically have a major issue with that, but they do. I sometimes read stuff and I don't understand how they got through the IELTS, I really don't. (Sam, tutor, interview)

Interestingly, a few students were particularly critical of their peers, as illustrated by Ina's example above, with some claiming that their peers' 'poor' English had a negative impact on their academic experience:

One problem is the level of English, there's a lot of students that, in my opinion, they don't know how to speak or they don't get the ideas sometimes, or what the professor is saying, so they can't problematise something or explain what they are thinking. I know it's hard because for most of us [English] is a second language, but I think the university could be a little more strict on that. (Isabel, student, interview)

Although this may reflect a deficit view of international students, there may also be legitimate concerns about the English language competence of some international students studying in the UK, which has long been reported in the media (e.g. Coughlan, 2008; Parr, 2015), in an official report looking into concerns about academic quality and standards in higher education in England (QAA, 2009), and the literature (e.g. Banford, 2008; Harrison & Peacock, 2007). Furthermore, the fact that some students reported difficulties understanding and using English themselves suggests that there may actually be an issue with some students' command of English language systems (i.e. lexis, grammar and phonology), which makes it more difficult for them to communicate with others.

For example, Phong (student, interview) felt that his limited range of vocabulary prevented him from participating in group or class discussions: *'I think is about vocabulary, I know less than you, for example, then I have an idea in my mind, but I cannot speak it out all correctly'*. For others, the problem did not relate to English lexis or grammar but to phonological aspects such as the ability to discriminate English sounds, or lack of familiarity with local accents, as Kanti (student, interview) recalls, *'First the accent, the English accent [is difficult]. When the British lecturer is speaking, it was very hard to hear local accents and also [understand] what is it [the idea]?'*

Besides difficulties in speaking and listening, students linked language skills to issues when engaging in key discursive episodes such as writing, as illustrated by Shen's experience:

I think it [the most difficult thing about being a student in the UK] is the language. I have to organise the language, because it is not my first language. I saw some of my English classmates there typing English just like I type Chinese, the speed ... they're fast, but I'm really slower than them in English. I have to think and to organise and I have to reconsider about if there are any problems with my sentence, about grammar problems. (Shen, student, interview)

Like Shen, some participants believed that English language skills had impacted on their ability to write and thus their performance in written assessments. Others felt that their current level of English made it difficult to read as well or as quickly as they could in their own language. This was often compounded by lack of familiarity with the subject or the need to engage with different types of texts, which included books, journal articles, government reports, media reports, blogs, websites, technical manuals, legal documents, client briefs, and terms of reference. Although not all students came across such variety, most interview participants reported having read various types through different media.

Besides the impact of linguistic skills on students' ability to perform academic tasks, findings suggest that English language competence tends to have an impact on other important everyday activities, for instance, reading a handout or joining a class discussion, interacting with peers in social situations, messaging on Facebook or Instagram, listening to a lecture or writing an email. Therefore, students' command of English seems to be a fundamental element of academic literacy in a UK context that can have a considerable impact on students' emotional, social and cognitive experience. As illustrated by Phong's account below, language competence can influence students' confidence, their

process of academic socialisation, and their ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their subject, particularly important in terms of assessment:

It's different, because when I first came here, I felt not that confident. Now I can talk with more people, I can use better language, and I can show some knowledge. In some cases, I can lead a group, I can lead my friends and that make me more confident. (Phong, student, interview)

Some of the literature also suggests that there is a link, tenuous as it may be in some studies, between English language competence and students' ability to engage with discourse and perform academic tasks successfully (e.g. Bretag, 2007; Oliver et al., 2012). This supports the widespread view that complex social activities such as demonstrating learning, disseminating ideas and constructing knowledge, rely heavily on language (Hyland, 2009) and in the context of UK universities, this will require a certain level of English language competence. Participants' frequent references to the importance of English language competence reflect the common expectation that students in British universities should have a 'reasonable' command of English.

As to what can be considered a 'reasonable' or 'appropriate' level of English, the data revealed variation across disciplines, for example, Phong seemed to struggle in some modules but not in others as the content corresponded to different disciplines or professional orientations:

I'm doing better now but still using the style of thinking in Thai language sometimes. If I have no idea, nothing in my brain, first of all I have to think in Thai and translate it into English. [...] In some modules, I don't do it. If I've got some idea about it [the subject], I can write something about my ideas, I can read and I can translate it into my understanding and write it out. (Phong, student, interview)

Phong found that his level of English rendered texts in management accessible, but he struggled to understand texts in computer science, suggesting that different areas of study may require different levels of English

language competence. Phong's experience seems to reflect findings in the literature indicating that disciplines tend to impose different linguistic demands on students (Coley, 1999; Dooley and Oliver, 2002; Johnson, 2008).

Furthermore, as it is common practice in UK institutions, this study found that academic departments had different English language entry requirements for their programmes, ranging between 5.5 in and 7.5 in IELTS (International English Language Testing System). While acknowledging that institutions may sometimes use language entry requirements for other purposes (i.e. to control recruitment), this might not explain such practice in programmes that, according to tutors, were undersubscribed (e.g. law). IELTS recommendations for entry requirements also make a distinction between different disciplines, for example, a grade of 6.5 is acceptable in subjects such as Engineering or Pure Applied Sciences, while the minimum acceptable score for subjects such as Medicine, Law, Linguistics and Journalism is 7.5 (IELTS, 2007). Some programmes also require specific scores in different language macro skills such as reading or speaking. These practices may be based on existing literature suggesting that some disciplines may require a higher level of English proficiency in certain macro skill areas (Dooley and Oliver, 2002; Johnson, 2008; Woodrow, 2006).

Findings suggest that linguistic competence is a key element of academic literacy; however, as discussed in the introduction, being able to produce language accurately using appropriate lexical, grammatical and phonological systems, does not guarantee mutual understanding between interlocutors. Despite the importance of phonological, lexical and grammatical accuracy when communicating, mastery of language also implies the practical mastery of situations that enable individuals to produce the adequate speech in a given situation depending on the logic of the 'field' and predominant habitus

(Bourdieu, 1997). The co-construction of meaning between the writer and the reader, or the speaker and the listener, may not take place without the appropriate frames of reference (Bruner, 1996) such as mutual understandings of tacit norms and conventions.

The following section will provide examples of the importance of sociolinguistic aspects of communication, arguing that language is not detached from other important personal, situational and contextual elements such as values, attitudes, purpose, audience, or ideology. While English language is essential to access discourse and communicate effectively in anglophone academia, there may be other aspects of communication that can obscure meaning and prevent mutual understanding. Communication, as Brumfit (2010), reminds us, does not only depend on the context and the conventions deployed to match that context, but also on the intentions of those who speak - or write - and the interpretations of those who listen - or read- all immersed in the values, assumptions, ideologies and power relations that shape social practices in particular settings (Street, 1997), as discussed in the next section.

4.1.2 Sociolinguistic competencies (language use)

They [students] do need to use language in a particular way. And it is a challenge, especially for students who maybe don't have such good English [...] For example, in web design, we use 'dynamic' in a very particular way [...], so they have got to pick up all this, and it is very fast because it's quite an ambitious module.

-- Lewis (tutor, interview)

As pointed out by Lewis, becoming familiar with the particular ways in which language is used in a certain discipline can be particularly challenging for international students with limited English language competence, but it is usually challenging for new entrants into an academic field, regardless of their linguistic background. What it is often perceived as a language deficit may also be linked to lack of familiarity with specific communicative practices, many of which contain tacit elements that students are expected to 'pick up'.

International students reported issues with the use of specific disciplinary terms, casting doubt over the assumption that students can 'pick up' key terminology or certain language subtleties by themselves. This was the case with two students who considered themselves proficient in English, including an experienced English teacher from Germany. This goes to illustrate how the acquisition of new domain-specific phraseology and technical vocabulary is likely to represent a challenge for all students regardless of their linguistic competence, but the problem is likely to be compounded for non-expert English speakers.

The need for students to familiarise themselves with a new disciplinary discourse seems quite common on Masters courses. In this study, over a third of survey respondents, 37%, had studied a different discipline at undergraduate level. In the case of interview participants, 7 out of 12 had studied a different subject at undergraduate level and, in some cases, there seemed to be little affinity between the disciplines, for example, musicology and management, or art and computer science. In cases these cases, familiarisation with the language, ideas, norms and conventions of a new discipline can be even more challenging because the literature suggests that textual practices such as the use of cautious language (i.e. hedging) or sentence structure vary across disciplines (Broadhead et al., 1982; Hyland, 1999) and this can affect the perceived clarity of texts written in the sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities (Hartley et al., 2004)

Issues with specific uses of everyday language in certain disciplines provide another example of the importance of understanding language use (i.e. sociolinguistic competence), as opposed to relying on a command of language

systems (i.e. linguistic competence). This is illustrated by Farah's (student) experience:

So, the tutor said that the word 'illegal' is not correct in this case, and I should know this. Why? He said the correct word is 'unlawful', but I'm not sure I understand still what is the difference, and I think I lost points for that. (Farah, student, interview)

Technical uses of everyday language can also be challenging for expert or native speakers of English. For instance, John, a law academic, narrated an anecdote of how the word '*frustration*', used in contract law to designate 'a doctrine' or 'a mechanism', was very confusing for students during an exam, many of whom had English as a first language.

Students may not only be required to use everyday language in particular ways within their discipline but also be expected to avoid other instances of everyday language. Again, while this can be extremely confusing for all students regardless of the cultural, social, linguistic or disciplinary background, for those with a limited command of the English language or little experience of academic culture in the UK, understanding the distinction between what is perceived as 'academic' and 'non-academic' within their specific contexts can be very difficult to grasp. For example, some students had difficulty with words that were perceived as 'non-academic' by their tutors, despite being frequently used in academic texts in other contexts:

I just used the word disaster or failure. He [the tutor] just mentioned, 'don't show your emotions in your report'. What is an emotion? Well, it will be a disaster means it is an emotion. Apparently, it sounds very strong; the word disaster sounds very strong. (Kanti, student, interview)

Interestingly, both '*disaster*' and '*failure*' feature in academic corpora (e.g. British Academic Written Corpus, BAWC, Corpus of Historical American English, COHA) so these words are indeed used in academic written discourse, but possibly not in the context that Kanti used them, or perhaps the tutor's

comments may simply have reflected his or her preferences. This further reinforces the idea that perceptions of what 'appropriate' language is can vary across disciplines, contexts and from one individual to another. For example, a Professor in computer science with over twenty years' experience as an academic and professional practitioner, seemed little concerned about the distinction between 'academic' and 'non-academic' English, referring to academic English as 'academish', a dialectal variation of English used in academia that bears little resemblance to 'real life.'

The level of variation in language use seems to support Bourdieu's (1977) proposition that using 'legitimate language' is not simply a matter of '*grammaticalness*' but one of '*acceptability*' within a group, so language competence per se does not equate to an ability to navigate academic discourse, 'the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy' (Hyland, 2009, p. 1). Attributing international students' difficulty in communicating with others to a deficit in English language skills seems to be a rather simplistic assumption that ignores key social aspects of communication that are culturally-bound and deeply situated.

Therefore, sociolinguistic competence, or the ability to deploy appropriate language for specific purposes, in specific situations and for specific audiences, is a key element of academic literacy, closely related to context awareness and a sense of audience (See 4.2). A key proposition emerging from the data is that international students' difficulties with academic writing and other communicative practices should not be conceptualised simply as a language issue but as a struggle to develop their academic literacy, the set of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to successfully engage with relevant discourses and

other members of their academic community in ways that are deemed appropriate.

4.1.3 Beyond reading and writing: importance of spoken discourse

Speaking, face to face discussion makes me learn better, it helps me remember all.

-- Kanti (student, interview)

Kanti's comment illustrates the benefits of oral communication for students, despite the challenges associated with face-to-face interaction, particularly for those with linguistic and cultural backgrounds different to those prevalent in the UK, not only because of having to express themselves in a foreign language and abide by different social and cultural conventions, but also because of emotional variables such as self-confidence or the level of stress and anxiety often associated with verbal communication. For example, Kanti found his shyness was an obstacle initially but soon realised the benefits of participating in discursive episodes such as group discussions, tutorials or lectures:

I was very shy before, I never used to speak to any of my tutors but now I've learned that if you don't speak to them, you will never get anything. In fact, it's the same in the future, if we go and work somewhere. (Kanti, student, interview)

Kanti's initial difficulties are not unique. Lee (2009) found that although Korean students in an anglophone university valued participation in class discussions as a way to consolidate their knowledge, they found the experience anxiety-provoking. In Zappa-Hollman's (2007) study non-native speakers reported experiencing high levels of anxiety and nervousness while preparing and delivering presentations in English, mainly because they found it difficult to convey the same level of complexity or sophistication as in their first language.

In this research, the challenges that many international students often faced when communicating verbally were often compounded by the range of

speaking tasks that student participants experienced (See Appendix 4.9 for a summary). This involved different types of interaction (e.g. pairs or groups) with different audiences, for example, tutors, peers, clients and external assessors, and for different purposes, for instance, to debate, generate interest, persuade, sell a product or idea, or propose a solution, requiring an understanding of different spoken genres. This variety of speaking tasks highlights both the prevalence and importance of oral communication in various contexts and for a wide range of purposes, from asking questions in a lecture to presenting and explaining their work for assessment.

Interestingly, interview participants often referred to speaking for both assessment and during formative activities such as discussions, where students obtained immediate feedback. Besides providing synchronous access to dialogue with their academic community, many claimed that speaking was often a more effective way for communicating in certain contexts and for some purposes. On the other hand, writing was often linked to high-stakes assessment rather than formative activities, with the exception of participating in an online forum or occasionally writing an email to a tutor to ask questions about a particular assessment. Therefore, despite the privileged position of written language in academia, especially in formal assessment practices, oral communication skills constitute a key element of academic literacy as it facilitates students' participation in a wide range of discursive episodes.

The key role of verbal communication was also evident in the survey, with respondents considering both communicating ideas clearly and confidently during discussions, and clarity in presenting ideas, arguments, or propositions in writing, extremely important, with mean values of 4.42 and 4.60 respectively. The view that oral and writing skills in English are both essential was also

reinforced in course documents such as marking criteria, which included expectations of students being able to '*demonstrate presentation skills - oral and written*' (STEM), and learning outcomes, where statements included developing the ability '*to structure a document / presentation in a way that communicates key ideas and issues to [their] audience*' and '*to build oral and written communication skills, appropriate to masters level study*' (HASS).

In certain disciplines, particularly in STEM and studio-based subjects like design, assessed tasks required the ability to communicate verbally while also interacting with artefacts or equipment during demonstrations, which many students seemed to prefer to writing. In fact, about half the students expressed preference for oral communication, and claimed they found listening and speaking to others more productive and enjoyable than engaging with reading or writing.

This preferred mode of communication seems to relate to a phenomenon referred to as copresence (after Goffman, 1963 in Novak, 2001), which involves a sense of responsiveness, of being connected with other minds in the same space so that one can perceive others and be perceived. The prevalence of verbal communication in some disciplines may also be related to Hall's (1976) distinction between low-context and high-context cultures, characterised by the level of reliance on mutual understanding of situational and contextual clues such as body language, use of silence, or paraverbal cues (Würtz, 2006). Certain disciplines like design or computer animation may have high-context communication styles that require greater copresence and the use of contextual clues and artefacts to mediate interactions, while other disciplines may favour low-context communicative practices where 'communication occurs

predominantly through explicit statements in text and speech' (Würtz, 2006, p. 274).

Students in STEM and studio-based subjects were particularly critical of the use of writing for assessment, feeling that having to articulate their ideas in writing was not always an appropriate way to demonstrate their learning as the content did not often lend itself to written language. Some students also felt that it was difficult to demonstrate practical or technical skills in writing because '*it is better to show and talk about it than to write about it*', which also gives access to immediate feedback (Lucia, student, interview). Some international students in HASS disciplines were also critical of assessment that relied on writing because they felt that this disadvantaged them, as Isabel argues:

Where I come from, there are different kinds of tests. Here [in the UK], for example, most of the exams were essays, so if you're not good for writing an essay, then you'll be in problems, [...] I think they [tutors in her home country] give you more choice to have different ways of exposing [demonstrating] what you know or that you have learnt. (Isabel, student, interview)

Therefore, while identifying the ability to communicate verbally as a key element of academic literacy and fully recognising the multimodal nature of academic literacy, the research provides evidence to support the widespread view that academia is 'a community that discourses primarily through writing' (Olson, 1996 in Northedge, 2003a). However, it also raises questions about the suitability of writing as a form of assessment in increasingly diverse university contexts because practices that privilege written discourse can disadvantage those who struggle with this type of discursive episode, as may be the case for students from non-traditional backgrounds, those with certain learning differences (e.g. dyslexia), and many international students in the UK who may be used to other forms of assessment. The primacy of the written word in anglophone academia suggests that, besides effective oral communication

skills in English, students need a set of specialised writing skills, which will be discussed in 4.6.

4.2 The social dimension

Social practices such as academic writing and speaking demand a sound understanding of specific academic contexts and of those who inhabit them. Basic interpersonal communication skills, or BICS, (Cummins, 1979, 2008) are essential to successfully engage with other members of a discourse community. BICS play a key role in accumulating linguistic capital and developing awareness of disciplinary, institutional and cultural contexts, enabling access to a 'community of practitioners' and allowing individuals to construct identities in relation to that particular community (Wenger, 1998). The following subsections look at the importance of interpersonal competencies and context awareness in more detail.

4.2.1 Interpersonal competencies: working with others

I do find it quite beneficial to have a connection with your classmates and your peers because they often know how to do things which I don't know. Sometimes I can explain them something and sometimes they help me.

-- Ina (student, interview)

Interpersonal competencies constitute another important element of academic literacy and can have a considerable impact on socialisation within a group. Like Ina, most students valued working with others in informal situations because this allowed them to share '*ideas together and find the best idea for the question or the problem.*' (Rafiq, student, interview). Students also stressed the importance of being able to communicate and interact well with others to perform different tasks for assessment purposes, which often posed different challenges and required different competencies because of the need to work across cultural boundaries:

You have to be open to share and negotiate and work with some people from different nationalities that really think different [...] so try

to understand and listen more than what you speak when you get to know people from other parts because sometimes you think 'Oh, they are wrong', but it's because of the language or because of the cultural backgrounds [that] you don't get to see what they are really trying to say. (Isabel, student, interview)

Isabel's experience highlights a series of dispositions and competencies such as openness, cultural agility, language skills, and the capacity to negotiate and reach agreements, often required to accomplish tasks as a group, something that students recognised as an important transferable skill, because, as noted by Phong (student, focus group), '*in the real world we have to work with other people and sometimes we need team work [because] we cannot work alone.*'

In the survey, the ability to work collaboratively as part of a group was generally seen as very important (4.14). This was also evident in course documents, where expectations included being able to '*engage effectively in team activity*', to '*work effectively in multicultural groups*', to "*communicate effectively to team members and 'clients*" (HASS), or '*to work in a small multi-disciplinary team to research, design and implement a significant, innovative but yet tangible product*' (STEM).

While students were more positive about self-organised informal groups for learning than about those set by tutors for assessment purposes, they still recognised the value of working together. The role of peers in the development of academic literacy will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. At this point, it is important to note that, as claimed by Entwistle and McCune (2004), studying is often portrayed as a solitary activity concerning the individual, in sharp contrast with greater prominence of collaboration in higher education these days. Findings in this study suggest that some students benefited from reconceptualising learning as social practice as opposed to seeing it as a cognitive exercise. For example, Shen attributed much of his remarkable

progress, from failing two modules to obtaining a distinction in another, to greater interaction with others:

In semester one I just did my own things, on my own, and I thought I could work [and] be [up] to date well by myself, but apparently not. I have more discussion with my classmates now this semester, now, we always discuss about the assessments, about the examinations, maybe I can elaborate, but it's a bit of fun always, talk with them.
(Shen, student, interview)

Consequently, being able to relate and interact with others and engage in collaborative tasks seems essential for students to engage with their discourse communities, develop their literacy practices and improve their work.

4.2.2 Developing a sense of audience

The presentation is a verbal thing; you present your case and what you found about it in verbal form, and they judge you on how you communicate with the audience, [for example] eye contact. The 1500 word is just a revision of what you said, just written and more detailed.

-- Farah (student, interview)

One key element of communication, and hence, of academic literacy, is considering who the message is for as this may impact on aspects such as the content or style of what is being said. Like many other students, Farah made frequent references to 'audience', a term that also featured prominently in course documents such as assessment briefs and marking criteria, as illustrated in Appendix 4.8. Students also need to be sensitive to the medium of communication as this can present different challenges. For example, Farah (interview) felt that '*reading the audience*' was easier when speaking than when writing, so he often had to ask tutors about specific stylistic choices such as the use of the personal pronoun 'I' in writing because this could vary depending on the tutor or the type of task such as an essay or a case analysis. Variation in this sense is perhaps not simply a personal language choice but one that has to do with positionality and discursive practices in different disciplines.

Tutors also stressed the need for the students to develop a sense of audience and use an appropriate style in their work depending on who they were addressing:

First of all, identifying the right style [is important]. So, who are you writing for? Because you can be more formal to the other solicitors and other firms of solicitors and you can use technical language, legal language, legal terms that you wouldn't use to a client. [...] So, yes, they need a strong sense of audience. (Iris, tutor, interview)

Iris continues her account describing the different types of audiences that students need to write for including tutors, clients, fellow students and professionals in a legal firm scenario. Although her example is specific to law, it seems to reflect similar instances in other disciplines and illustrates the importance of developing a sense of audience. In management, for example, expectations differ considerably between practice-based modules and those which are more academically oriented:

Now, with a consultancy project, we don't necessarily ask for academic underpinning in consultancy [...] We give them a much more realistic experience. If you look at their dissertation module, then they have to go and obviously apply literature reviews, and do academic research, so that's the academic module of the lot [...] So they need to think more along the lines of applying different skills for different modules, so the consultancy is about pragmatism, it's about effective research, it's much more soft skill-based, it's about working with clients, and working to expectations, about making them employable and about giving them experience in the work environment. It's not so much about the academic side of it, which doesn't have so much relevance when you get out into the real world. (Sam, tutor, interview)

As illustrated by the example above, the audience, for example, tutors may have different expectations across modules on the same programme of studies, which can be challenging for students, especially for those on interdisciplinary programmes or who studied a different subject at undergraduate level, as acknowledged by some tutors:

In the graduate diploma in law, it's essays and answering problem questions, so they have to develop the skill of writing a legal essay and some of them will come from science backgrounds where writing essays is quite alien to them, so that's a skill they have to develop.
(Iris, tutor, interview)

Different disciplinary expectations may derive from professional orientations, epistemological or methodological aspects, for example, what can be considered evidence. Findings revealed considerable variation across disciplines in terms of what constitutes an appropriate source. In some management modules, students could use *'relevant publications from major media outlets'*, *'contemporary or popular sources such as articles from broadsheets'* as well as *'Internet sources of good quality (e.g. the websites of the multilateral institutions)'*. In law, students were encouraged to use a *'wide range and quality of research sources, including professional materials and academic literature'*. On the other hand, students in applied linguistics were encouraged to *'use appropriate academic sources such as books or articles from peer-reviewed journals'* as opposed to media outlets or webpages, with one student reporting the use of *'an article from the Guardian'*, a broadsheet in the UK, as an example of bad practice included in this feedback.

Besides disciplinary expectations, there may be different professional standards that students need to meet, suggesting that developing a sense of audience also involves developing a sense of quality to produce work to the required standards. Course documents often stressed the importance of working towards a particular set of standards, as illustrated in Appendix 4.5. However, gaining an understanding of the various -possibly conflicting- expectations that exist in academia can take time, as stressed by Heike (student, interview): *'I think mostly I have a better understanding of what I am expected to do and what quality it is supposed to be, but it took me a long time'*.

The issue of time on full-time Masters courses was often perceived as a major issue. In Heike's case, she said by the time she had a clearer idea of tutor and course expectations in semester 2, most of her modules had finished so she could only hope she could apply some of these new insights to her dissertation.

Academic settings are spaces where individual (e.g. tutors or examiners), institutional (e.g. programmes), professional and disciplinary (e.g. professional bodies), cultural (e.g. Western) discourses and practices converge, creating a complex landscape that requires time to map and navigate. Therefore, developing a sense of audience, an essential element of academic literacy, is a challenging task that demands a sound understanding of the specific contexts in which individuals operate, as well as a critical awareness of the particular expectations of other members of a discourse community. For example, Ina, Kanti, Phong and Rafiq (student interviews) stressed the need to '*think like the teacher*' and '*understand why*' tutors want them to use a particular approach. While international students on PGT courses seem to be aware of the importance of producing work to a specific standard and for a particular audience, findings suggest that this is an area where they may need more support, which must respond to the specific requirements of their particular contexts and be carefully-timed to have an impact when it is most needed.

4.2.3 Developing an academic voice

The most challenging aspect of my experience has been finding my own voice. [...] Now it is all about interpretation. What would you think the law should be? Not what it is [...] As a Masters student you have to be more informed because a lot of students don't know what the news are, they don't read anything. What are you interested in politically? What goes on? Because law and politics are like... symbiotic, so be more aware of politics, where do you stand on issues because they sort of affect your own voice

-- Farah (student, interview)

Another important element of academic literacy is being able to project an academic voice that distinguishes the speaker or the writer from others. Farah sees a connection between stance and voice, arguing that knowledge of current affairs has helped him position himself in relation to current issues and debates, which has an impact on his voice. Although there does not seem to be a standard definition of academic voice (Robbins, 2016), this study adopts her view that it refers to the ability to consistently communicate 'a point of view or stance' (Robins, 2016, p.33), rather than only presenting ideas, facts, and conclusions. Potgieter and Smit (2009) use the metaphor of a signature to refer to voice, arguing that writers need to put their stamp on the work they produce so that their signature can be seen among the work of others.

However, projecting their voice in writing can represent a great challenge for students who often felt constrained by academic conventions:

But in written work, for me, I think we cannot show all of our power [capacity], we have to reference to someone that supports our ideas, we have to talk about this exact topic, like we are in controlled conditions. We cannot think out of the box like that. It's too much control in written work. (Phong, student, interview).

Like Phong, most participants felt that the need to constantly refer to others when writing made it difficult to demonstrate originality:

There is always this kind of thing, because this person said that, you need to always make sure that you are not cheating, but it's difficult [...] So yes, you have to build your own profile, develop your own ideas. It's difficult to say what you think in connection to what other people say. (Lucia, student, interview)

Lucia associated academic voice with the ability to express her own ideas but she found this difficult and constantly worried about plagiarism, a concern shared by many interview participants, both students and tutors, although there seemed to be different interpretations of the issue. For example, while most tutors viewed plagiarism as an example of the use of unfair means in

assessment, a few felt that the issue of plagiarism often stemmed from a lack of understanding of the subject and students' inability to express themselves using their own voice, which is shaped by their intradiscourse and deeply rooted in their identity.

Therefore, a key part of developing a voice involves discourse mapping; in other words, individuals need to 'find their bearings' and position themselves within their field by identifying the ontological, epistemological and methodological lines that run across disciplinary discourses. This positionality can generate unique insights and perspectives that students can draw on when producing their own work, as illustrated by Farah's quote above. Potgieter and Smit (2009) believe that voice comes from knowledge, but also from self-confidence and certain empathy towards a particular field of inquiry and those who inhabit it. However, these authors refer to academic knowledge rather than knowledge of current affairs, as in Farah's example, and claim that 'to express our scholarly identity' it is important to locate our academic space, which can take many years of 'reading and understanding and practising the craft' (Potgieter and Smit, 2009, p. 216).

This seems to support the idea that discursive episodes such as writing are not simple exercises in reflecting disciplinary discourse, but attempts to position ourselves and take a stance in relation to others, creating a distinctive voice to project our own intradiscourse. This involves individuals mapping relevant disciplinary, professional and institutional discourses and developing a sense of their own 'scholarly identity'. For international students on Masters courses, the challenge is to develop their own personal -yet academic, disciplinary and professional- voice in English while negotiating different expectations and practices in their new academic contexts within the time

constraints and in the context of high stakes assessment that they often experience as part of their course.

4.3 The informational dimension

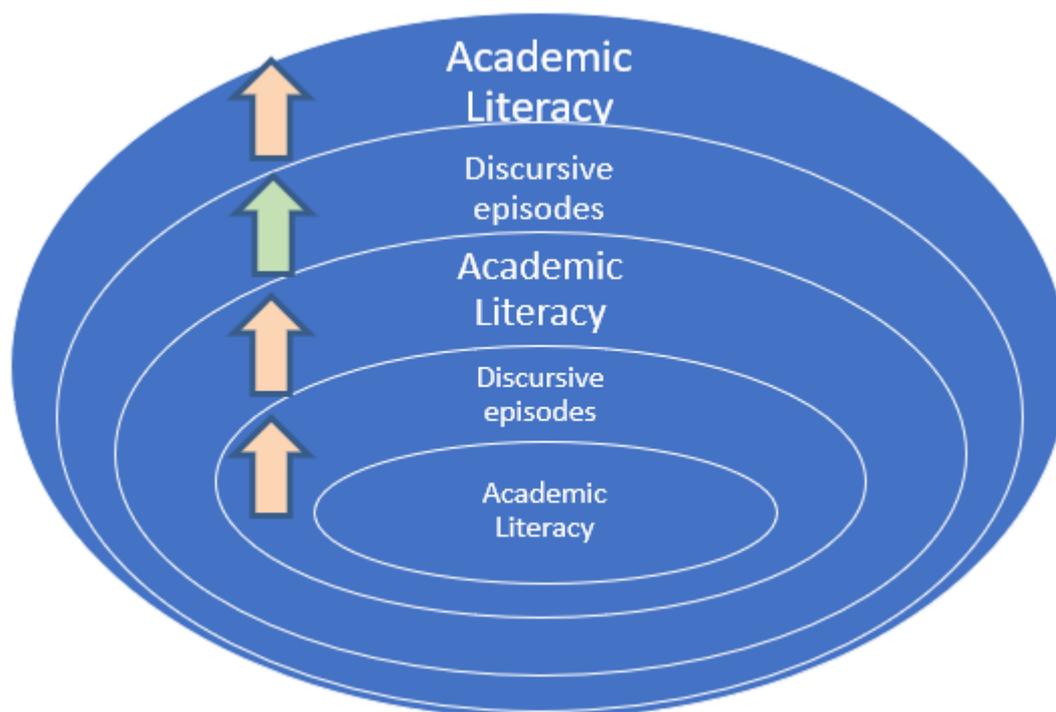
It [the problem] is a lack of subject knowledge [...] Sometimes it just comes across like they [students] are kind of bluffing, like they haven't really researched it [the subject]. The terminology they're using is confusing, but they haven't got the idea of it and you can pick that up from the writing.

-- Lewis (tutor, interview)

Information, knowledge and theory were common terms (Appendix 4.2) that participants saw as fundamental aspects of academia, often emphasising the need to demonstrate '*basic knowledge*' or '*an understanding of key principles and terminology*' to be able to successfully engage with the course. Information-seeking competencies were seen as particularly important in order to build on existing knowledge without input from their tutors.

This suggests that this dimension of academic literacy involves a cumulative process that requires a knowledge base on which to build further knowledge, an iterative and expansive process that consists in linking new information to existing knowledge to generate new meanings. The implication is that academic literacy is also dynamic and that its configuration possibly changes with each discursive episode that individuals engage with, as illustrated by Figure 4. The premise is that the more encounters with relevant discourse(s) a person experiences, the larger his or her repertoire of knowledge and information-seeking skills becomes, and thus the better they can engage with new or more complex discourses.

Figure 4 Development of academic literacy as a result of an iterative and expansive process



The next subsections look at the different types of knowledge and information-seeking competencies that enable students to engage in various discursive episodes, forming the base from which they can further explore relevant discourse(s) as part of an iterative and expansive process.

4.3.1 Types of knowledge

There is really no substitute to knowing what you're talking about.

-- Henry (tutor, interview)

In the research, participants made frequent references to knowledge as illustrated by Appendix 4.2, perhaps because, along with language competence, knowledge seems to form the bases of academic literacy. The analysis of data from surveys, interviews and documents suggest that students need various types of knowledge to effectively engage with academic discourse in their fields including knowledge of relevant terminology and procedures, an understanding of '*current debates and issues within the discipline*' (Alice, tutor, interview), and an appreciation of the wider social context in which they operate:

Sometimes students try and treat things as though they exist in a vacuum, without taking account of the context, so whilst there's also the academic reading, which they need to do, sometimes it's like just go and watch the news, read the news, and try to put it into a bit more of context as well, rather than trying to say that it exists separately. (Emily, tutor, interview)

The importance of knowledge of the wider context and relevant theory was considered extremely important (4.41) by survey respondents along with the ability to apply knowledge, methods or techniques selectively, and applying theory to different contexts or situations (4.57 and 4.27 respectively). In both the interviews and course documents, references to knowledge and theory were generally linked to the need to demonstrate cognitive skills such as analysis and critical thinking, highlighting the fact that different elements of academic literacy are interconnected:

They [tutors] are looking for detail, in depth knowledge, the basic principles; they're also looking for analysis, why do you think this is? They are also looking for other opinions, not only one way and sticking to it. (Farah, student, interview)

Knowledge application is a key element of academic literacy that seems to be valued across disciplinary groups, as illustrated by the fact that there was virtually no difference when contrasting survey results across HASS and STEM, as shown in Appendix 4.1. However, the type of knowledge and the way in which students were required to demonstrate it differed across disciplines. For example, assessments in disciplines such as management seemed to emphasise a combination of declarative knowledge (knowing that) and critical thinking, often requiring students to write and demonstrate criticality, for example, '*critical appreciation of the literature relating to culture and management competence*' (HASS). On the other hand, tasks in engineering, computer science or design appeared to focus on procedural knowledge (knowing how), analytical and technical skills, requiring the practical application

of knowledge, for example, by answering a problem question in a test, or producing specific items such as a 3D model or a website.

The survey pointed to general differences across disciplinary groups. For example, the importance of remembering facts, principles or key concepts seemed more important in STEM (4.29) than in HASS (3.87), although this could vary when considering individual disciplines rather than disciplinary groups. General disparities across disciplinary groups seem to suggest that knowledge requirements and assessment methods vary across disciplines, albeit to different degrees. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, there was virtually no difference between disciplinary groups in terms of the importance of applying theory to different contexts or situations. The fact that there was a difference of 0.01 in mean values (please see Appendix 4.1) suggests that this KEAL is highly valued across disciplines.

4.3.2 Research and information-seeking skills

You start with a briefing, maybe it comes from a client, or because you want to start something. You start researching, I don't know, images, concepts, you read, you watch videos to inspire yourself, and maybe this is the start point to target the brief.

-- Lucia (student, interview)

While tutors often associated research skills with academic inquiry for scholarship, the type of competencies discussed here refer to a broader range of purposes, for example, to explore other people's work for ideas or to learn how to use specialised software:

It's probably something more specific about the Western type of education, it's that we are expected to do a lot more research on your own, and it does not necessarily mean scientific theoretical research, it can also mean researching how to do this and how to do that, while in my system, if you don't know something you usually just ask your tutor. I guess it was something that I was trying to understand for a while. So it took me a while to realise that. (Ina, student, interview).

Being able to find and use relevant information, whether it is for scholarship or to complete a practical task, appears to be key to students' success in meeting academic expectations. However, students may be unfamiliar with a type of educational system where students are expected to assume much of the responsibility for their learning, as seems to be the case in the UK.

4.4 The cognitive and metacognitive dimension

I think, to succeed on the programme, the critical evaluation, reflection, critical analysis, that sort of higher order thinking skills rather than just 'I can recall what I've just been told, but can I actually take a situation and apply it'.

-- Anne (tutor, interview)

Like most tutors, Anne placed great importance on a range of thinking and reflective skills that students must demonstrate to successfully engage with academic discourse. Cognitive skills featured prominently in the data with participants often referring to aspects such as memory, the ability to reason, to understand complex concepts, to apply knowledge and to solve problems, the capacity to analyse and draw conclusions based on evidence, attention skills, critical thinking, and the ability to synthesise information from different sources. Participants also alluded to metacognitive skills frequently when discussing the need to reflect on their performance and a range of strategies for various purposes, for example, to read and plan their assignments, to memorise important information, to tackle exam tasks effectively, to organise themselves and to manage their time to meet deadlines.

Survey results also highlighted the prominence of the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy, containing most (i.e. 15 out of 28) KEALs identified in this study, so this section will include more frequent references to the survey than in previous sections. Given their perceived importance and the role that cognitive and metacognitive competencies seem to

play in academic literacy, the following subsections will look at them in more detail.

4.4.1 Cognitive skills

Sometimes you need to be really smart and really creative, and sometimes you need really really big imagination to succeed in this field, because we need to add something new, if not, it is just normal, more of the same.

-- Rafiq (student, interview)

As Rafiq points out, creativity and imagination are often required to succeed in academia, a view shared by survey respondents (See Appendix 4.1) for whom the ability to develop innovative and creative solutions was very important (4.17), especially in STEM subjects, where this was considered extremely important (4.26). Interestingly, the capacity to innovate and originate fresh thinking was perceived as extremely important across DGs (i.e. an equal mean of 4.27), suggesting that originality is highly regarded across different disciplines. Another skill that featured prominently across data sets was the ability to combine information and make connections, attracting the highest score in the survey (4.66) and recurring in the interviews:

[Students need] the kind of ability to synthesize information from different sources in order to build it up into a sort of coherent picture of what's going on, rather than having completely disparate pieces of information that they haven't quite drawn the links together with, which I think can be a challenge. (Barbara, tutor, interview)

Other extremely important cognitive skills included being able to understand complex concepts (4.61), analyse and diagnose issues (4.56), critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions (4.46), draw conclusions based on evidence (4.45), provide a robust rationale for choices (4.39), critically assess the importance and usefulness of information (4.32), and study things in detail (4.30). Responses across disciplinary groups were similar, except for the ability to recall specific information, which had greater importance in STEM, as mentioned earlier.

Findings suggest that the need to demonstrate thinking and analytical skills transcends disciplinary boundaries and professional orientations. However, despite widespread agreement on the importance of analysing, interpreting, synthesising and evaluating information, the qualitative data revealed notable differences in terms of how certain competencies can be conceptualised, assessed or articulated. For instance, the idea of what analysis involves and how it is presented can be quite different, which is often evident in academic writing. A case in point is the genre of case analysis, which seems to require different skills and approaches in disciplines such as law and management, despite both being categorised as social sciences.

In law *'some of the cases are 50 or 60 pages long of very archaic and technical language'* so there is *'a particular skill to read a case'* (Beth, tutor, interview). The analysis needs to refer to the law and to *'authority'*, represented by scholars who are most and best recognized, usually *'lawyers or judges of the highest standing,'* so students are told that *'no paragraph in your work should be absent of authority'* because, otherwise, *'your argument has no weight to it'* (Julian, tutor, interview). There are also strict *'norms and conventions'* in terms of how the information needs to be presented (John, tutor, interview). Analysis here refers to the process of identifying which law is relevant to a particular case and establishing a clear line of argumentation that does not necessarily involve a *'balanced'* view that includes possible counterarguments because they then *'weaken your own'* (Julian, tutor, interview).

In contrast, in management, the analysis of a case is usually presented in lay language and students must demonstrate their understanding of the theory without necessarily referring to it or to scholars, because *'you don't go into the industry and quote academic theory, it's not really done'* (Sam, tutor, interview),

so it's '*more about pragmatism*', *about applying the tools and frameworks to specific contexts*', for example, '*the analysis should say right, okay, we've seen this change in the environment,[...] so therefore, the company need to do this*' (Barbara, tutor, interview). Analysis here refers to the application of particular models and frameworks, '*giving important consideration to anticipated problems and alternative approaches*' (Jane, tutor, interview).

Similarly, the idea of what analysis involves appeared to differ in other disciplines, not just in terms of the object of analysis but also in terms of methodology, which included '*interpretive approaches*' (art), the use of software '*to identify patterns in the data*' (health informatics), or equipment '*to test specific properties of the materials*' (engineering). One conclusion is that while analytical thinking seems to be valued across all disciplines, there is a not common understanding of what this skill involves, as previous studies have found (e.g. Chanock, 2000). This also appears to be the case with other cognitive skills too, for instance, drawing conclusions based on evidence, which seems to be valued across disciplines but tended to be conceptualised, demonstrated and assessed differently in different contexts.

Different conceptualisations of cognitive skills often manifest in the wide range of the language used to refer to analysis and criticality (Appendix 4.3). Student participants reported difficulty in understanding what some of these phrases meant in their particular contexts. Expressions that students found particularly difficult included '*think in a designerly way*', '*consider at the conceptual level*' (HASS) or '*synthesise sceptically*' or '*consider the empirical basis of*' (STEM). Furthermore, there was a wide range of objects of analysis (Appendix 4.3), from their own role as part of a group or their acquired knowledge and skills, to systems, techniques, pictures and sounds, business

context, and the literature, some of these as part of the same programme. As different objects of analysis may require different tools or methodological approaches, this is an area that can be particularly challenging for those unfamiliar with relevant practices or who may not have the academic literacy configuration required to complete the task.

Findings in this chapter are consistent with the literature in the sense that each discipline is characterised by its own norms, terminology, language use, approaches, instrumental procedures, and criteria for judging relevance, validity and acceptable forms of argument (Becher, 1994; Becher & Trawler, 1989; Hyland, 2006, 2009; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lea and Street, 1998; Wells, 1992).

4.4.2 Metacognitive skills: self-regulation and reflection

I'm getting better at being able to divide my work into stages which is extremely important when you're doing something practical. It's quite important when you're doing writing as well, but in practical things, it's even more important [...] I'm not only having a better idea of what I'm expected to do; I'm having a better idea of how to do it and why is it expected to me to produce something like that.

-- Ina (student, interview)

As illustrated by Ina, successful completion of tasks does not only depend on intellectual, communicative and information competencies. Students also need to show good organisational and management skills to produce work to a particular standard in a timely manner, something that was often highlighted in course documents:

You will be able to demonstrate self-management, which includes setting appropriate aims, managing priorities with time constraints, completing tasks [sic] undertaken and reflection on problems and successes. (HASS)

The ability to work independently and self-manage was seen as extremely important by most survey respondents across disciplinary groups (4.40) and there were frequent references to management skills in the qualitative data

(Appendix 4.6) especially in disciplines such as business studies, engineering, computing, and design:

We have to say to students, 'don't look for the holy grail because it isn't there', there isn't gold at the end of the rainbow, there is just more rainbow. So, what you need to be able to do is say 'within the time that I have got, this is the best solution that I have at this point of time, and I am now going to develop that solution, so that I can get to the end'. (Matt, tutor, interview)

Participants often commented on the need to manage time, prioritise tasks, maximise available resources, and know when to stop, but pointed out that these skills are developed through experience and require a good understanding of their context, so it can take a long time to develop:

It's work economics, it obviously comes from being more experienced after doing more things and knowing how to do them and not being over-ambitious. (Heike, student, interview)

While acknowledging the importance of self-management skills, 8 out of 12 student participants reported issues in this area during the interviews and four specifically argued that a more structured approach that involved, for example, '*homework*', '*regular exams*', '*deadlines to complete specific tasks*' and '*regular meetings with tutors*', would have benefitted them as they found organising their time and meeting deadlines very challenging. Most students also said they were used to educational contexts where there is less reliance on self-management and self-directed learning with assessment tasks distributed at regular intervals to help them manage workloads.

Another prominent metacognitive skill in the data was the ability to review and reflect on own work, seen as extremely important (4.37) by participants. Like criticality and analysis, this skill was often articulated in different ways and with different meanings (Appendix 4.4); for example, there were instances where the word '*reflect*' referred to a retrospective -often introspective- task that

requires self-evaluation, while in others, *'to reflect'* was used as a synonym of *'to consider'* or to think carefully.

Reflective tasks ranged from personal subjective accounts of an experience to a more descriptive technical approach that focused on a tangible portfolio object. STEM subjects in particular tended to favour reflective practices with a focus on concrete artefacts and the aim of improving performance.

These variations suggest that, like other constituents of academic literacy, cognitive and metacognitive skills seem to be deeply situated in particular disciplinary contexts.

4.5 The affective and dispositional dimension

I think the knowledge is not the important point; it does not matter how much you have, how good is your background which relates to this course. I think it is about attitude. Are you willing to learn by yourself? Are you willing to explore more about the module? Because every module is different, some of them you may like, some of them you may not like.

-- Phong (student, interview)

Phong highlights the importance of motivation, a desire to learn, and self-reliance. Although academic dispositions were not included in the survey, they featured prominently in the interview data:

I think you have to be self-sufficient and if you really want to learn or take advantage of it [the course], you have to want to learn for yourself, if you just stay with what the tutors or lecturers say, then I don't think it's worth it, and I think that you have to take advantage of everything that the University has to offer. (Isabel, student, interview)

Motivation was also a prominent feature in student prospectuses, which contained phrases such as *'passion for the subject'*, *'a particular interest in'* or *'being highly motivated'*. Interview participants also stressed the importance of motivation:

Motivation is so important. Nobody is going to motivate you at university, it's not school, if you want to do a course the best motivation is doing a course you like because if you like it, you will feel like working more. (Farah, student, interview)

Tutors also associated motivation with interest in the subject and saw these two aspects as main drivers for students' success:

The key thing that creates the pathway to academic learning is one word, one word only, and it would cure nearly every ill, and that word is interest. 'Are you interested in what you are learning about? Because if you are, you'll do much better in every department, in every respect' (Alan, tutor, interview)

Other important attitudes mentioned by academics included '*empathy*', '*intellectual integrity*', and '*independence*.' References to *persistence* and the need to '*keep trying*' were common with tutors in STEM arguing that it can be very easy to become frustrated when facing new technical challenges but insisting that '*if they [students] just persist, and if they just spend a bit more time trying to work out why it didn't work, and then keep trying, eventually it works.*' (Lewis, tutor, interview) There were also frequent *references* to openness '*to the opinions of others*', and the ability to maintain '*a positive attitude*', as Phong (student, interview) reflects: '*If I have a better attitude, more positive about it, I would get more points, because I will try to understand, I will try to read more, I will try to ask someone else.*'

Attitudes are important because they can determine the extent to which students engage with their discourse community, deploy their knowledge and skills, and consequently, how they perform academic tasks. Entwistle and Tait (1990) found that unfavourable attitudes towards studying led to less time and effort being put into the course and poorer end-of-year results. More recently, Museus (2014) and Brown et al. (2013) have pointed to growing evidence that some academic dispositions such as confidence in own abilities, academic motivation, or intent to persist to graduation, can impact student's performance in a higher education context.

4.6 The technical and structural dimension

Well, it's knowledge of programming, computer programming is fundamental, but I guess there's an awful lot around that like making a website look nice [...] And then being able to present it well, and explain it to others, so I guess there's quite a range of skills, but with a very technical element at the very heart.

-- Lewis (tutor, interview)

Given the multimodal dimension of academic literacy discussed earlier, it is perhaps unsurprising that students need a range of technical and communicative skills as illustrated by Lewis' comments. However, the fact that he was referring to a module within an interdisciplinary programme (Information Technology Management) highlights the challenge that many of the students face when crossing disciplinary boundaries in these programmes, as was the case for Heike, Ina, and Phong in this study. Some programmes such as Animation and Digital Effects also required the use of specialised software and equipment (e.g. video cameras) as well as manual dexterity for live drawing. This may explain why survey respondents in STEM thought that both making use of software effectively and using tools and equipment were extremely important (4.52 and 4.26 respectively).

However, as discussed in previous sections and illustrated by Lewis' quote above, students were required to use English language for their assessment, usually in writing, providing further evidence of the primacy of the written word in anglophone academia. The enormity of the challenge that Masters students faced over a relatively short period of time (8 months in this study) was reflected in the fact that within a small sample of 12 international students, nearly all were asked to write in different styles (e.g. formal, descriptive, reflective), for multiple purposes (e.g. discuss, persuade, describe, evaluate, or reflect), through different media (e.g. on a blog or on paper during an exam), and for various

audiences with diverse professional, educational and cultural backgrounds (e.g. clients, tutors, peers).

Therefore, this section focuses on structural and mechanical aspects of writing, that is, those that relate to how the text is constructed and presented, including knowledge of disciplinary and professional genres, academic conventions, and mechanics, ‘the elements of a language that exist in written form only’ (Ketrón, 2017, p. 52) such as spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and organisational elements such as paragraphs.

4.6.1 Presentational and mechanical aspects of writing: conventions and the mechanics of written language.

I've got comments on missing references or sources, or incorrect use of the Harvard method. I also have one that's poor English. I have one that is spelling, typing kind of mistakes, misuse of capital letters, random use of capital letters, or spaces, full stop, space, next sentence. We have either missing spaces or too many spaces [...] I would always put comments in terms of any spelling, American spelling bugs me as well, 'u' in behaviour and colour.

-- Barbara (tutor, interview)

Barbara's comments seem to illustrate the skills model that characterises 'the dominant approach to writing pedagogy dominant in many UK universities' which is most evident in the sort of 'guidance offered on writing and in feedback comments on students' written texts submitted for assessment' (Lillis, 2006 p.32). In this study, references to structural and mechanical aspects of writing were frequent in interviews with tutors and course documents such as assignment briefs and marking criteria (See Appendix 4.7 for examples). There seemed to be a concern with specific aspects such as citation conventions, linguistic elements (e.g. grammar and lexis), mechanics of writing (e.g. spelling, punctuation, spacing), and structure and organisation, discussed in the next subsection.

Concerns about linguistic and structural aspects such as grammar, spelling and punctuation in this study seem to reflect a wider trend reported in other academic contexts. For example, in a survey of Turnitin® users that included a majority of university students, 83%, (iParadigms, 2013), 62% of students reported receiving feedback on grammar and mechanics, even though only 21% of them found this valuable. However, a focus on structural or mechanical aspects of writing is important because it may impact on how a text is assessed. For example, as part of their experiment Rezaei and Lovon (2010) asked student volunteers, most of whom were new classroom teachers, to grade two different samples of writing with and without a rubric. They found that markers were 'significantly influenced by mechanical characteristics of students' writing rather than the content even when they used a rubric' (p.18). Outside academia, research (e.g. Appelman and Bolls, 2011; Ketron, 2017) has also found that quality of grammar and mechanics are important components of written communication that influence readers' perceptions, for example, by signalling quality and/or credibility.

The importance of these structural and mechanical aspects of writing, often linked with the layout of the text, was also evident in the survey, where respondents considered academic conventions and professional methods to present information to be extremely important (4.40). Despite agreement in terms of their importance, there were notable differences in the ways in which these were assessed. For example, some departments regarded structure, layout and organisation as part of the content to be assessed while others saw these as structural aspects that needed to be made clear to students. Consequently, some documents specified the layout of the piece of writing (e.g. whether students had to use headings and subheadings), how the text should

be organised (e.g. which sections and in which order), and in some cases, which content items (e.g. background) to include in each section.

This explicit approach was welcomed by international students as a way to prevent inconsistencies across modules and tutors, frequently reported by students:

It is about the style of written work because for other modules, I had no problems with the structure, I did well because in some modules, the tutor just wants good content, [they] do not focus on the structure at all, but for this module, he said that he needed a proper structure for this one, and he gave me low marks for that. I thought, was it that bad, really' (Shen, student, interview)

Overall, there was agreement, especially amongst tutors, on the importance of structural and mechanical aspects of writing, particularly relevant to the variety of genres discussed below; however, the data showed some variation across modules and tutors in terms of expectations and the importance given to different elements such as language accuracy, mechanics, or the use of academic and professional conventions. Some of these differences will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

4..6.2 Knowledge of genres and subgenres

Maybe the format of the essay is different, some of them are reports, some of them are just essays [...] I think it [the main difference] is the format. I don't know, it's really hard to say. It depends on the essay for each course.

-- Shen (student, interview)

Shen refers to the difficulty he experienced when writing texts for different purposes and audiences, using different structures and styles across various modules; in other words, Shen seems unfamiliar with relevant genres in his new discipline. Genres are seen here as the specific ways in which members of a discourse community construct texts for specific purposes, audiences and contexts. As pointed out by Swales (1990), genres are characterised by 'patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and

intended audience' (p. 58). Although most genres identified in this study involved written discourse, there were examples of spoken genres such as walkthroughs, sales pitches, or mooting, as illustrated in Appendix 4.9. Spoken genres seemed particularly common in fields like design or computer animation, where students were expected to also interact with materials, artefacts or equipment while demonstrating the application of a particular technique.

Like Shen, most students felt that the need to present information in a particular way was a challenge, especially because it was not simply a matter of familiarising themselves with essays and reports, the two most common genres reported by students in interviews and in the survey (See Appendix 4.11 for a list of genres reported by students in the survey); students also had to produce various subgenres i.e. variations of a genre during their studies. For example, 33 interview participants (21 staff, 12 students) reported more than 20 different genres used in assessment on Masters courses (See Appendix 4.12).

In some cases, students were required to produce variations of a particular genre for example, '*research report*', '*interim report*', '*financial report*' '*case study report*', '*evaluative report*', or '*a report of an internal marketing audit*.' This seems consistent with research by Gardner and Nesi, (2012), Nesi and Gardner (2012), and Hardy and Clughen (2012), who reported an increasing range of assignment types in UK contexts. Furthermore, in her study on reasons for innovative changes in assignments, Leedham (2009) found that students, both at undergraduate and Masters level, were expected to produce a wide variety of text types because of external factors (e.g. modularisation), lecturer-driven (e.g. marking load), and student-driven (e.g. application to real world) reasons.

Structure, organisation, format and style can be very different across genres and subgenres, for example, many of these may not necessarily involve the use of the academic conventions that students may have studied in preparation for their courses:

We have to do writing but it doesn't really have to be anything like academic research at this point, for our classes that we had. And it's mostly, I guess, explaining ourselves and a sort of self-critique of our work, so it's not like we have to find like articles or books on a particular topic, and then analyse the information. (Ina, student, interview)

Instead, some of these genres, for example, blogs, development plans, subtitling projects, letters, or peer reviews, demand a more technical, professional or practical approach that may rely on a different set of practices and conventions, which students may be unfamiliar with, especially if they have little experience working in a UK professional environment, as is the case for most international students. These findings suggest that, unless students are already familiar with all these different text types, they face a steep learning curve over a relatively short period of time. Most interview participants felt there was little time on a Masters programme to become familiar with – and thus ‘*get good*’ at- any particular type of writing because task requirements imposed different demands on their writing skills, and, once they had developed an understanding of what was required for a particular task, they had to start all over again for the next one:

So the problem was in 1st Semester I had six modules, six exams, 100% based on the exam, I didn't have any assignment. For the 2nd Semester I had one assignment, an interim report and five exams. The problem was, because I did it in the 1st Semester: six modules with exams, so I know already how to manage that but in the 2nd Semester because I had assignments, an interim report and exams, so it's like two new things. [...] While for the assignment you are explaining, so maybe you have a broken sentence, maybe the structure, maybe you don't have enough references and so on, there's quite a lot of criteria in order just to mark this assignment and

there's a difference from person to person. In the exam we have equations, we need an accurate solution for it, that's it. (Rafiq, student, interview)

Besides differences across genres and subgenres, students reported different expectations across modules on the same programme. There was evidence that interpretations of what a particular genre is can vary in terms of organisation, layout, length and use of conventions. For example, an essay can be a piece of writing that *'rigorously and objectively examines the relevant literature'*, or one that requires students to *'look at issues of change from a personal point of view and reflect on their relationship'*. This was also the case when students had to write reports, module journals, case studies, critiques of journal articles, and blogs, where they came across different expectations.

Other elements such as criteria, wording, weighting and grade boundaries in written assessments were also different. Variation in specific writing requirements and how these are assessed may relate to 'epistemological presuppositions about the nature of academic knowledge and learning', which in turn can manifest in 'different assumptions about the nature of writing' (Lea & Street, 1998, p.160). Differences in writing requirements are more visible on interdisciplinary programmes, where students reported feeling confused even towards the end of the academic year. Despite the sense that they needed more support in this area, few students reported specific sessions where they were either told or taught how to write in ways that reflected relevant genres.

A solid understanding of disciplinary and professional genres and subgenres seems essential for students to meet disciplinary expectations; however, like most elements of academic literacy, this tends to occur 'over an extended period of time in a complex, dynamic manner' (Braine, 2002, p.63). Therefore, expecting students to write in the appropriate styles and to the

required standards, without explicit training and within a limited space of time, seems to place unrealistic demands on students, especially on those whose existing academic literacy configuration differs from that which is expected in their particular academic contexts. As reported by McCune & Hounsell (2005), one of the biggest challenges for students is dealing with the different forms of language and communicative genres required for different aspects of their studies, even though they were all studying biosciences.

Most student participants in this study felt that lack of familiarity with the range of relevant professional or disciplinary genres that they encountered made it difficult for them to produce writing *'like tutors wanted'* (Heike, student, interview) or *'to please tutors'* (Kanti, student, interview). The level of difficulty that students often experienced, and this may have included home students, suggests that, as noted by Brown et al. (1989), students are too often asked to use the tools of a discipline even though they have not yet been able to settle into its culture. Some interview participants felt that being unfamiliar with relevant genres also impacted on their reading. For example, Farah (student, interview) argued that it took him some time *'to learn how to read a legal case, the facts of the case, etc. because there is a way to do it.'* Interestingly, one of his tutors, Beth, agreed:

This year I actually have been looking at 'What skills do students actually have?' because I don't think we actually teach undergraduate or postgraduate students essential reading skills. I know that when I first did my law degree, it's 15 years ago now, nobody told me or taught me how to read a case. (Beth, tutor, interview)

This realisation led Beth to implement a different approach, devoting time to guide students through examples of disciplinary discourse and relevant genres while demonstrating how to approach them:

Therefore, what I did this time is I ran a session, actually taking them through different reading skills and also note-making skills as well, which I thought it might be a bit basic at level 7, but all of them said it was probably the most helpful, the most useful workshop that I did for them, so now I won't take it for granted that students know how to read effectively. (Beth, tutor, interview)

This type of guided exposure to literacy practices in the discipline, or guided excursions into unfamiliar discursive terrain (Northedge, 2002, 2003b), can offer students the opportunity to explore discourse and start mapping their specific area of studies. By pointing to relevant features of discourse and making expectations more explicit, students can learn about the context in which texts are interpreted, developing important elements of academic literacy such as language use (e.g. domain-specific vocabulary), understanding of disciplinary genres, norms and conventions, cognitive and metacognitive skills, including analysis and their ability to adopt, adapt or develop their own strategies to engage with texts in their specific contexts.

4.7 Summary and conclusion

The research has identified a set of knowledge requirements, academic competencies and dispositions that seem to transcend disciplinary boundaries, albeit with differences in their perceived importance, conceptualisation and realisation. The key elements of academic literacy identified in this study, listed in Appendix 4.1, do not amount to a comprehensive inventory of academic literacy constituents; however, they represent an important contribution to a discussion of what being academically literate means in specific academic contexts.

These key elements were grouped in six themes, described as dimensions of academic literacy in this study: multimodal, social, informational, cognitive and metacognitive, affective and dispositional, and technical and structural. The first dimension acknowledges the fact that new literacies are continually

evolving and communicative practices are becoming increasingly multimodal (Kress, 1997, 2003) and mobile, characterised by more fluidity across devices, modes, and media, thanks to new technologies and forms of social interaction (Burnett and Merchant, 2015). Despite offering support for the claim that academia still privileges a discourse that relies on the written word, findings also highlight the importance of other forms of communication including spoken and visual language. This is particularly relevant in the context of assessment because students from non-UK backgrounds may approach writing tasks differently to how their UK peers and tutors would. For example, using a combination of interviews with staff and detailed analysis of student written assignments, Leedham (2015) found that Chinese students used more visuals (e.g. tables and figures) in their writing than their UK counterparts, which was a different, yet equally valued, way of approaching assignments.

The social dimension recognises the deeply situated nature of academic literacy, so it is not seen here as a universal relatively self-evident set of rules that can simply be taught or learnt separate from their context, and then transferred across fields (Hyland, 2013a, Street, 1995). In this study, this was evident in how KEALs were conceptualised and demonstrated in different disciplinary contexts and some differences in their perceived level of importance across disciplinary groups. This was also illustrated by the variety of expectations, task requirements and communicative practices that students experienced. On the other hand, the informational dimension referred to types of knowledge (e.g. domain-specific and knowledge of the wider context), research and information-seeking skills that participants found useful when engaging in various discursive episodes.

The cognitive and metacognitive dimension seemed to be particularly important to participants, comprising 15 out of 28 KEALs identified in this study. This seems to suggest the prevalence of an autonomous model of academic literacy (Street, 1995) that presents literacy as a decontextualized psychocognitive process that involves the acquisition and application of a set of skills that can be easily transferred across contexts. This traditional view of literacy, as pointed out by Gee (1996), removes it from its sociocultural contexts and reduces it to a cognitive skill that has little or nothing to do with human relationships. However, despite the importance of this dimension across disciplinary groups found in this study, there was evidence of differences in how KEALs in this dimension were conceptualised, articulated and realised in different disciplinary contexts. This seems more in tune with Street's (1995) ideological model, which highlights the situated nature of literacy practices in specific social contexts, which are shaped by cultural, social, ideological, and disciplinary influences. One important conclusion is that any model of academic literacy needs to acknowledge the situated and culturally-bound nature of literacy practices.

The affective and dispositional dimension stresses the fact that performative elements of academic literacy that allow individuals to engage in a range of discursive episodes are underpinned by affective elements. In other words, attitudes and dispositions tend to act as key drivers for individuals to deploy other elements of academic literacy required to engage with discourse. Participants found that elements such as motivation, self-reliance, confidence, integrity, and empathy were especially important. Finally, the technical and structural dimension acknowledges the importance of being able to operate in digital environments, using specialised equipment, and demonstrating practical

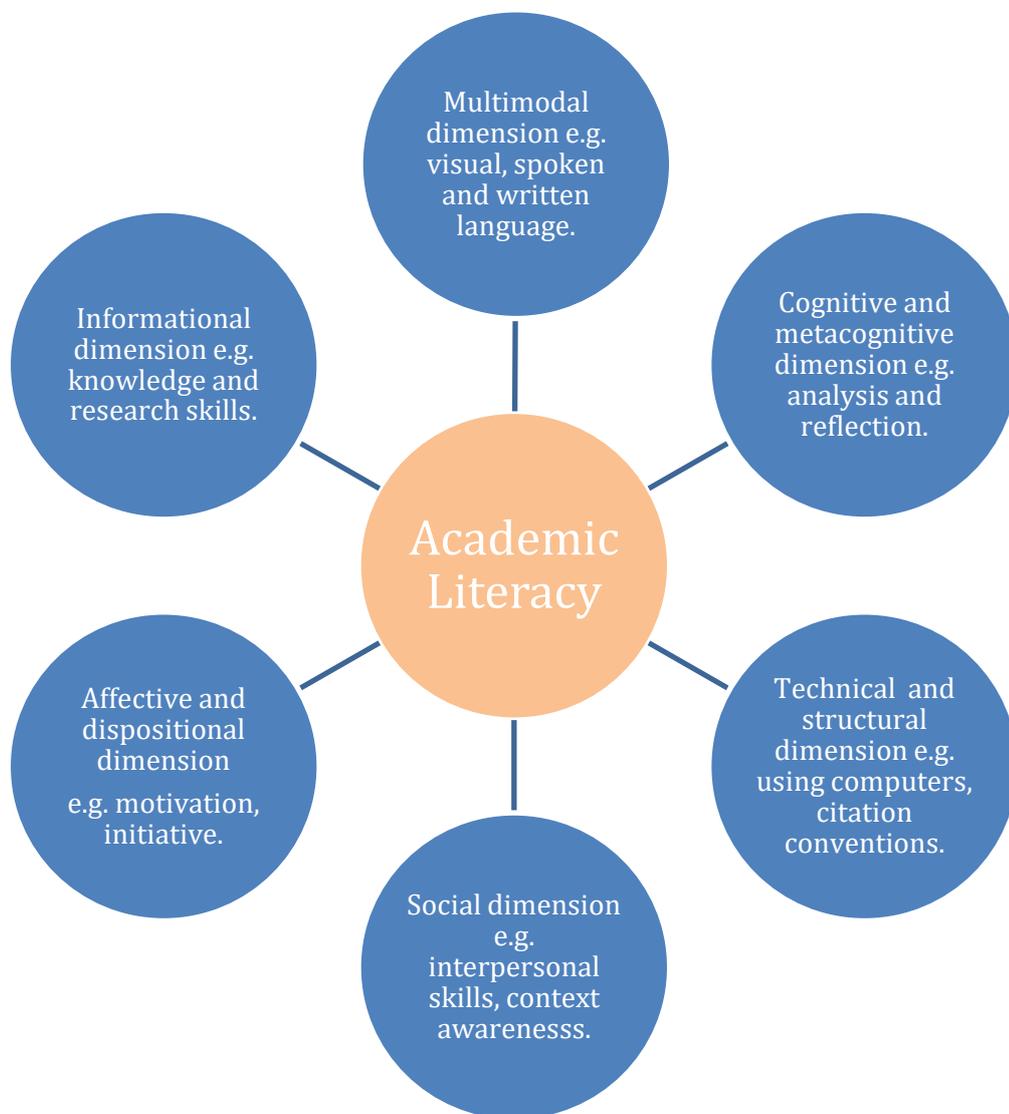
skills in various disciplines. However, because of the privileged position of written discourse evident in this study, this dimension includes structural and mechanical aspects of writing, from spelling, punctuation and spacing, to norms and conventions associated with specific genres.

The primacy of the written word in higher education seems to reflect a pattern in the wider context of education systems, where 'recent curricular reforms and their associated assessment regimes have tended to privilege traditional literacy skills and printed text' (Burnett and Merchant, 2015, p.271). However, this research echoes Braine's (2002) assertion that academic literacy is much more than the ability to read and write; therefore, academic literacy is defined here as a complex, cumulative and dynamic configuration of domain-specific knowledge, competencies, and dispositions that allows individuals to engage in a variety of discursive episodes in ways that are deemed legitimate by their discourse community.

In order to illustrate this (re)conceptualisation of academic literacy, to summarise the main findings in this chapter, and to highlight their implications, Figure 5 below presents a multi-dimensional model of academic literacy that aims to capture its complex and dynamic nature. The different spheres denote the six dimensions of academic literacy identified in this study and the different elements in them. The proposition is that these key elements do not operate in isolation but in tandem, constantly reconfiguring and realigning themselves during each discursive episode to cater for specific purposes, audiences and contexts, leading to different configurations. Consequently, each encounter with discourse seems to require multiple elements, but, at the same time, each discursive episode (e.g. reading a journal article or writing notes during a lecture) has the potential to develop academic literacy by enhancing and/or

reconfiguring students' existing set of knowledge, academic competencies and dispositions as part of a cumulative and iterative process.

Figure 5 A multi-dimensional model of academic literacy.



Students new to a particular discipline should be made aware of these different dimensions of academic literacy and be given opportunities to discuss how these can be configured, that is, which KEALs are included, the level of importance attributed to them, and how they are interpreted, which tends to result in multiple configurations of academic literacy across individuals, disciplines and contexts. Such dialogue is essential because, as Seloni (2012)

points out, academic discourse socialisation is a complex and multi-layered process that involves individuals engaging and constructing meaning collaboratively 'in order to learn how to become legitimate participants in their academic disciplines' (p.47).

Since the study supports the view that academic literacy and related practices cannot be separated from the specific contexts in which they occur, subject tutors may be in the best position to help students develop their academic literacy. Findings suggest that guided explorations of relevant discourse(s), and opportunities for dialogue, especially through speaking activities, can help students learn to communicate in ways that are deemed legitimate and appropriate by their communities, which could facilitate their integration and potentially increase their chances of academic success.

Chapter: 5 Similarities and differences in perceptions and conceptualisations of key elements of academic literacy (KEALs).

As discussed in the previous section, there can be multiple configurations of academic literacy across individuals, disciplines and contexts resulting from the level of importance attributed to different KEALs, the way in which these are interpreted, and expectations of how they should be demonstrated. Universities in the UK are increasingly diverse and complex systems where there are likely to be boundaries, competing factions, different discourses, paradigms, and perspectives (Becher and Trawler, 1989; Crème and Lea, 2003; Douglas Toma, 1997; Porter, 1986). Therefore, there are likely to be multiple understandings of what academic literacy is and how it is to be enacted while performing a wide range of academic tasks.

This diversity is particularly important in high-stakes assessment because differences in the importance that students and tutors give to certain KEALs or in the way that they interpret theses can result in students prioritising different aspects of a particular piece of work and/or approaching it differently from how tutors would expect them to, potentially proving costly in terms of grades. Consequently, this chapter looks at similarities and differences in understandings of academic literacy. While fully recognising that different interpretations of academic literacy among participant groups (i.e. students and tutors) are an important line of inquiry too, this chapter will focus on a comparison between participant groups as the focal point of the study is the relationship between students and tutors. For this purpose, this chapter uses the concepts of alignment and misalignment, or consonance and dissonance, used interchangeably in this chapter, which will be discussed in the next section.

Findings derived from the quantitative analysis are particularly prominent in this chapter, specially at the start of Section 5.2, as there is an attempt to highlight any noteworthy patterns before incorporating insights from the interviews. KEALs in this chapter have been ranked based on the importance that students attributed to each KEAL, as reflected by its mean value. A higher mean value from 1.00 to 5.00 indicates a higher level of importance given by respondents (See Appendix 3.11 for a breakdown of Likert scale). As noted in previous chapters, all 28 KEALs included in the survey had previously been identified as important during the initial phase of the qualitative data, so the concept of importance when comparing mean values in this study refers to *relative* importance, that is, the importance of one KEAL in relation to another. Therefore, differences in mean values can be small but still point to lines of enquiry worth exploring, for example, reasons why one KEAL may be perceived as more important than another.

The chapter is organised thematically based on the six dimensions of academic literacy identified in the previous chapter and begins by exploring the constructs of consonance and dissonance (i.e. alignment and misalignment), their relevance and application in this study. Although both alignment and misalignment are considered, there is a particular interest in misalignment between students and tutors, which is especially relevant to the discussion of feedback alignment in Chapter 6. The chapter considers some of the main factors that may explain instances of misalignment identified in this study as they may be relevant to how tutors approach feedback and have wider implications for academic practice. Finally, Section 5.4, highlights the role of dialogue in reducing misalignment, a theme that will be revisited in future chapters.

5.1 Alignment and misalignment of key elements of academic literacy.

In the last two decades, the concept of alignment has featured prominently in the literature, particularly since Biggs (1996, 1999, 2003) introduced the concept of 'constructive alignment' to stress the need for all components in a curriculum to align with each other. Both alignment and its opposite construct, misalignment, have also been used in the literature to denote adjustment towards a particular line of thought, or to refer to the coordination of 'energies, actions and practices' (Wenger, 1998, p. 179). The literature suggests that, within an educational context, issues with alignment may occur at institutional level (Biggs, 2001; Gondo & Amis, 2013), or between students and their tutors, particularly in terms of their beliefs, perceptions, and expectations (Coffin & Donohue, 2012; Nguyen, 2012; Rienties et al., 2012). Studies focusing on feedback (e.g. Orsmond & Merry, 2011; Vehviläinen, 2009) have also drawn on the idea of misalignment to discuss contrasting conceptions and expectations of the role of feedback.

Alignment and misalignment have been useful concepts when discussing similarities and differences in ways of thinking, practising and communicating in specific academic contexts. Although these two constructs can facilitate a discussion of contrasting views on KEALs across participant groups, they have certain limitations resulting from the complex processes that occur at individual level. For example, one implication of viewing literacy as a cumulative and dynamic configuration of different elements is that these elements can shift during each discursive episode to cater for specific purposes, audiences and contexts, enabling individuals to perform in ways deemed appropriate by their discourse community. In other words, academic literacy is not something static that can be universally applied in all situations and contexts, as discussed in the

previous chapter, its key elements change and interact in different ways during each discursive episode such as reading a text or asking a question in a seminar taking account of situational and contextual clues (e.g. purpose, audience).

As a result, no two configurations of academic literacy are identical; however, depending on how the different elements of academic literacy are configured, there may be more or less intersubjectivity (Bruner, 1996), or *interpretive affinity*, that is, the level of similarity in how individuals perceive and respond to materials, artefacts or each other during discursive episodes, which is linked to how their academic literacy is configured. For example, a tutor is unlikely to interpret a particular quote or passage in the same way than a student from a different linguistic and disciplinary background would because of their unique configuration of KEALs such as command of English (multimodal dimension), knowledge of theory (informational dimension), interest in the subject (affective dimension), and contextual awareness (social dimension) (See Figure 5 for an illustration of the multi-dimensional model). Tutors with different academic literacy configurations teaching on the same programme may respond to students' work in different ways too. Therefore, because academic literacy mediates our experience of discursive episodes, it plays a key role in how we make meaning while interacting with materials, artefacts and other individuals. Contrasting key elements of academic literacy and identifying similarities and differences may be the first step towards mutual understanding.

The underlying assumption that gives relevance to this chapter is that because the multiple elements of academic literacy are configured in different ways, there can be more or less alignment, and thus, interpretive affinity, between, individuals and groups of individuals. As pointed out earlier, this can

affect how students' performance is assessed and impact negatively on their grades.

5.2 Tutors' and students' views on academic literacy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were some noticeable differences across disciplinary groups (HASS and STEM), both in terms of how participants perceived the importance of KEALs and how these were conceptualised, demonstrated and assessed. Therefore, to account for the effect of disciplinary variation, the discussion in this section will contrast participants' perceptions of academic literacy within each disciplinary group.

However, before focusing on participants' perceptions within HASS and STEM separately, it is worth pointing out that the perceived importance of some KEALs seemed to transcend disciplinary boundaries. For example, as shown in Table 7 below (also in Appendix 4.1), cognitive skills that related to analysing, interpreting, synthesising and evaluating information, along with application of knowledge methods or techniques, and clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing, were all considered extremely important by survey respondents across disciplinary and participant groups. Other than that, mean values in other KEALs varied across disciplinary and participant groups, so these are discussed in more detail in the next subsections.

Table 7 Tutors' and students' perceptions of the importance of KEALs across disciplinary and participant groups.

Key elements of academic literacy (KEALs):	HASS		STEM	
	nC= 124		nC=92	
	Stus	Tuts	Stus	Tuts
	nC=51	nC=73	nC=48	nC=44
Academic conventions and professional methods to present information	4.49	4.67	4.19	4.23

Analysing and diagnosing issues in a particular context	4.52	4.73	4.32	4.68
Applying knowledge, methods or techniques selectively	4.60	4.67	4.42	4.59
Applying theory to different contexts or situations	3.90	4.62	3.96	4.58
Clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually	4.10	3.64	4.13	4.32
Clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing	4.53	4.89	4.49	4.50
Combining information and making connections	4.65	4.86	4.42	4.64
Communicating ideas clearly and confidently during discussions	4.37	4.58	4.33	4.40
Critically assessing strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions	4.37	4.72	4.38	4.35
Critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information	3.98	4.75	4.33	4.21
Developing innovative and creative solutions	4.20	3.93	4.29	4.23
Drawing conclusions based on evidence	4.22	4.81	4.21	4.55
Innovating and originating fresh thinking	4.37	4.17	4.29	4.26
Knowledge of wider context and relevant theory	4.45	4.78	4.29	4.18
Making judgements and decisions against specific criteria	4.02	4.51	4.15	4.09
Making sense of visual data	4.90	3.33	4.29	4.30
Making use of software and computers effectively	3.94	3.42	4.54	4.49
Providing a robust rationale for choices	3.98	4.81	4.17	4.59
Questioning existing knowledge, methods and techniques	4.02	4.15	4.13	3.79
Remembering facts, principles or key concepts	4.02	3.71	4.46	4.12
Reviewing and reflecting on own work	4.52	4.42	4.52	4.02
Studying things in detail	4.33	4.22	4.29	4.36
Synthesizing and critically assessing a wide selection of references	4.22	4.48	4.21	3.62
Taking part in critical debates about own work and that of others	3.43	4.23	3.63	3.71
Understanding complex concepts and being able to define them	4.35	4.78	4.54	4.77
Using tools or equipment effectively	3.86	2.97	4.32	4.21
Working collaborative as part of a group	4.10	3.94	4.45	4.07
Working independently and self-managing	4.41	4.56	3.92	4.72

Although the KEALs with less variation across groups (shaded rows) suggest more alignment as to the importance of cognitive competencies, it is important to note findings discussed in 4.1.1, which highlighted different interpretations, expectations, and ways to assess these cognitive skills across programmes and disciplines. This supports the proposition that the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy is closely linked to its social dimension, so students need to understand what these competencies mean, how they are demonstrated in practice and how they are assessed in their particular contexts to successfully engage with discursive episodes in ways that are deemed appropriate by their discourse communities.

Having looked at similarities across disciplinary groups, the focus is now on perceptions of the importance of KEALs within each disciplinary group, starting with respondents in HASS, whose responses are summarised in Table 8 below. This table contrasts HASS students' and tutors' rankings of the importance of each KEAL based on its mean value, where the highest mean value is ranked first. Items are listed in descending order based on student rankings, for example, students in HASS thought the most important element of academic literacy was the ability to make sense of visual data such as graphs, so this is ranked 1st and appears first on the table. On the other hand, based on tutors' responses, the same item ranked quite low, 27th, suggesting potential misalignment in terms of the perceived importance of understanding visual language.

Table 8 Students' and tutors' perceptions of the importance of KEALs in HASS

Key elements of academic literacy: HASS participants	Student ranking	Tutor ranking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • items listed according to student ranking based on mean values of importance in descending order i.e. highest mean = ranked 1. Mean values included in brackets. • shaded rows indicate items with noticeable differences i.e. noticeable gap in ranking (≥ 14 places) and mean values within different bands in the Likert scale (See Appendix 3.11 for a breakdown of Likert scale). • Number of cases: students = 51, tutors = 73. 		
Making sense of visual data	1 (4.90)	27 (3.33)
Combining information and making connections	2 (4.65)	2 (4.86)
Applying knowledge, methods or techniques selectively	3 (4.60)	11 (4.67)
Clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing	4 (4.53)	1 (4.89)
Analysing and diagnosing issues in a particular context	5 (4.52)	8 (4.73)
Reviewing and reflecting on own work	6 (4.52)	17 (4.42)
Academic conventions and professional methods to present information	7 (4.49)	10 (4.67)
Knowledge of wider context and relevant theory	8 (4.45)	5 (4.78)
Working independently and self-managing	9 (4.41)	14 (4.56)
Communicating ideas clearly and confidently during discussions	10 (4.37)	13 (4.58)
Critically assessing strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions	11 (4.37)	9 (4.72)
Innovating and originating fresh thinking	12 (4.37)	20 (4.17)
Understanding complex concepts and being able to define them	13 (4.35)	6 (4.78)
Studying things in detail	14 (4.33)	19 (4.22)
Drawing conclusions based on evidence	15 (4.22)	3 (4.81)
Synthesizing and critically assessing a wide selection of references	16 (4.22)	16 (4.48)
Developing innovative and creative solutions	17 (4.20)	23 (3.93)
Clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually	18 (4.10)	25 (3.64)
Working collaborative as part of a group	19 (4.10)	22 (3.94)

Making judgements and decisions against specific criteria	20 (4.02)	15 (4.51)
Questioning existing knowledge, methods and techniques	21 (4.02)	21 (4.15)
Remembering facts, principles or key concepts	22 (4.02)	24 (3.71)
Critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information	23 (3.98)	7 (4.75)
Providing a robust rationale for choices	24 (3.98)	4 (4.81)
Making use of software and computers effectively	25 (3.94)	26 (3.42)
Applying theory to different contexts or situations	26 (3.9)	12 (4.62)
Using tools or equipment effectively	27 (3.86)	28 (2.97)
Taking part in critical debates about own work and that of others	28 (3.43)	18 (4.23)

As illustrated by Table 8 above, there seemed to be more similarities than differences with regards to the importance of different KEALS in HASS. In some cases, there appeared to be a considerable gap in the ranking but the mean values fell within the Likert Scale band (See Appendix 3.11 for a breakdown of levels of importance in the Likert scale used in this study). For example, based on students' responses, reviewing and reflecting on own work ranked 6th, but 17th in the case of tutors, a difference of 11 places in the ranking; however, the mean values were 4.52 and 4.42 respectively, so both participant groups thought this was extremely important. The opposite situation was also evident, for example, HASS students felt that using tools or equipment effectively was very important (3.86) while tutors thought this KEAL was moderately important (2.97); however, the rankings of this item were very similar (27th based on students' responses and 26th in the tutors' case). This suggests a considerable degree of alignment between students and tutors in terms of the importance of most KEALS.

Nevertheless, there were noticeable differences in terms of the relative importance of a few KEALS that suggest a certain degree of misalignment

between students and tutors. As mentioned earlier, there was a considerable difference with regards to the importance of understanding visual data, ranked 1st based on students' answers but 27th compared to tutors' responses, a gap of 26 places, while the difference in mean values (1.57) meant that these fell within different bands in the Likert scale. Besides making sense of visual data, there were considerable differences in the importance of applying theory to different contexts or situations, critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information, and providing a robust rationale for choices. In all these cases, mean values fell within different bands in the Likert scale and there were noticeable gaps in the rankings, for example, 14 places or more. Except for making sense of visual data, tutors gave a higher level of importance to the other 3 KEALS, suggesting that HASS tutors valued the application of theory, criticality and reasoning (e.g. providing a rationale) more than HASS students did.

In terms of perceptions of the importance of KEALS in STEM, as shown in Table 9 below, there were also more similarities than differences, suggesting a high level of alignment between students and tutors in terms of the importance of most KEALS. Nevertheless, when applying the same criteria (i.e. different Likert band and a gap of ≥ 14 places in the ranking) there were also noticeable differences in terms of the importance of a few KEALS, suggesting a certain degree of misalignment between students and tutors in STEM.

Table 9 Students' and tutors' perceptions of the importance of KEALs in STEM

Key elements of academic literacy: STEM participants	Student ranking	Tutor ranking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • items listed according to student ranking based on mean values of importance in descending order i.e. highest mean = ranked 1. Mean values included in brackets. • shaded rows indicate items with noticeable differences i.e. noticeable gap in ranking (≥ 14 places) and mean values within different bands in the Likert scale (See Appendix 3.11 for a breakdown of Likert scale). • Number of cases: students = 48, tutors = 44. 		
Making use of software and computers effectively	1 (4.54)	10 (4.49)
Understanding complex concepts and being able to define them	2 (4.54)	1 (4.77)
Reviewing and reflecting on own work	3 (4.52)	25 (4.02)
Clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing	4 (4.49)	9 (4.50)
Remembering facts, principles or key concepts	5 (4.46)	22 (4.12)
Working collaborative as part of a group	6 (4.45)	24 (4.07)
Applying knowledge, methods or techniques selectively	7 (4.42)	5 (4.59)
Combining information and making connections	8 (4.42)	4 (4.64)
Communicating ideas clearly and confidently during discussions	9 (4.33)	11 (4.40)
Critically assessing strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions	10 (4.33)	18 (4.21)
Critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information	11 (4.33)	19 (4.21)
Analysing and diagnosing issues in a particular context	12 (4.32)	3 (4.68)
Using tools or equipment effectively	13 (4.32)	20 (4.21)
Developing innovative and creative solutions	14 (4.29)	16 (4.23)
Innovating and originating fresh thinking	15 (4.29)	15 (4.26)
Knowledge of wider context and relevant theory	16 (4.29)	21 (4.18)
Making sense of visual data	17 (4.29)	14 (4.30)
Studying things in detail	18 (4.29)	12 (4.36)
Drawing conclusions based on evidence	19 (4.21)	8 (4.55)
Synthesizing and critically assessing a wide selection of references	20 (4.21)	28 (3.62)

Academic conventions and professional methods to present information	21 (4.19)	17 (4.23)
Providing a robust rationale for choices	22 (4.17)	6 (4.59)
Making judgements and decisions against specific criteria	23 (4.15)	23 (4.09)
Clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually	24 (4.13)	13 (4.32)
Questioning existing knowledge, methods and techniques	25 (4.13)	26 (3.79)
Applying theory to different contexts or situations	26 (3.96)	7 (4.58)
Working independently and self-managing	27 (3.92)	2 (4.72)
Taking part in critical debates about own work and that of others	28 (3.63)	27 (3.71)

The most noticeable differences in STEM were in the level of importance of reviewing and reflecting on own work, remembering facts, principles or key concepts, and working collaboratively as part of a group, all of which were seen as more important by students than by tutors. The other 3 KEALs with considerable differences were providing a robust rationale for choices, applying theory to different contexts or situations, and working independently and self-managing, which tutors thought were more important than students did.

Interestingly, both students and tutors appeared to give a high level of importance to the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy, but they seemed to focus on different KEALs. Tutors in STEM, like those in HASS, gave more importance to the application of theory and reasoning than students did; on the other hand, students ranked memory and reflective skills higher than their tutors did. Another interesting contrast is that students seemed to place greater value on working collaboratively while tutors stressed the importance of working independently, perhaps suggesting different expectations in terms of how students should approach their work.

Alignment and misalignment are especially relevant in the context of assessment because students may approach an assessed task in ways that may not meet tutor expectations. For example, the data presented so far suggest that students in both HASS and STEM thought the ability to remember facts, principles and key concepts was more important than their tutors did. On the other hand, tutors seem to stress the importance of demonstrating higher order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956; Biggs & Tang, 2011) such as reasoning (e.g. provide a rationale) or the capacity to apply theory to different contexts and situations. In practical terms, this could mean that some students may adopt a rote learning approach to assessment while tutors may be expecting a more practical or critical attitude to knowledge and theory.

The following subsections look at specific dimensions of academic literacy, as identified in Figure 5 in Chapter 4, paying particular attention to areas where there is potential misalignment in the hope that this may provide a focal point for students, academics and institutions to initiate, or maintain, a constructive dialogue in terms of what it means to be academically literate in specific academic contexts.

5.2.1 The multimodal dimension.

As noted in 4.1.1, international students in this study reported various modes of communication, including visual language, where there was evidence of misalignment (e.g. relative importance of understanding visual data), as discussed in the previous section. However, findings also seemed to confirm the dominance of forms of expression that rely on language. Therefore, as previously stated, English language competence is a key element of academic literacy in British universities because it constitutes the foundation on which to build a better understanding of the particular ways of communicating that exist in different academic discourse communities.

Given the linguistic diversity found among international students in this study (e.g. 21 different languages among 99 survey respondents), and the range of language standards required by different academic departments, as discussed in 4.1.1, there were likely to be differences in terms of what was expected of international students in terms of English language competence. For example, different perceptions as to the importance of language accuracy suggested a certain degree of misalignment between students and tutors. Students tended to be critical of tutors who paid '*too much attention to [language] mistakes*', which echoes findings of another study (iParadigms, 2013), reported in 4.6.1; most students often felt that tutors should take into consideration the fact they were not studying English, but a specific subject through English, so tutors should pay less attention to their language mistakes, which a few tutors agreed with:

Grammar I don't really comment on too much, in honesty. I mean, I'm not an English teacher, they should have a certain level of grammar before they come here. Unless they are literally making no sense at all to me, I will not comment on it too much. (Ian, tutor, interview)

In marketing we look for understanding, and we look for application and we look for ability to synthesise information and deduce facts, or deduce solid recommendations, and to reduce risk for companies. So, if you can do that in a coherent way, not necessarily like writing it in a sense of perfect English, but in a way that will make sense to an employer who can read it and make sense out of it, that's what we're looking for, more than language ability. (Sam, tutor, interview)

On the other hand, other tutors complained about students being '*careless*' and making numerous mistakes, and expected students, both home and international, to use 'correct English', particularly when writing. For example, Jane, who taught on the same course as Sam, felt that students should be able to write accurately, so she often commented on aspects such as grammar and punctuation: '*I do tend to correct their English quite a lot because*

it is also about professional standards and lots of spelling and grammar mistakes will look unprofessional, especially in a field like marketing' (Jane, tutor, interview).

Like Jane, other tutors often commented on students' English when giving feedback because they thought that it was an important element of academic literacy. Some argued that institutional policy often sent the '*wrong message*' to international students by discouraging the correct use of English language, so they were critical of the advice or information often contained in course documents, as illustrated by this extract from a programme handbook in a HASS subject (Applied Linguistics): *If English is not your native language, don't worry excessively about the minutiae of grammar, spelling etc, but do your best to seek advice when you need it.'* Differing perceptions in terms of the importance of language accuracy, especially in academic writing for assessment purposes, suggest a certain level of misalignment, not only between students and tutors, but also among tutors and between them and institutional discourse.

There also seemed to be different expectations in terms of how students developed an understanding of language use. For example, tutors seemed to expect students to '*use language in a particular way*' and '*pick up*' these nuances of language by themselves through exposure to relevant discourse(s). On the other hand, some international students complained that they had '*lost points*' for not using domain-specific terminology (e.g. in engineering, '*coated*' rather than '*covered*' with a substance), or misusing a common everyday word in a disciplinary context (e.g. '*illegal*' instead of '*unlawful*'), even though the students had no recollection of being taught about the difference.

5.2.2 The social dimension

This social dimension of academic literacy encompasses a range of non-linguistic competencies that allow individuals to interact effectively with others, including contextual awareness, which can be more challenging for students with different cultural, social, or educational backgrounds. As reported in Chapter 1, UK and international students often find it difficult to communicate with each other and work in groups because of a general lack of a shared cultural resource to draw from and different expectations in terms of social and/or academic norms such as attendance to group work sessions, participation in discussions, different attitudes to time keeping, or appropriate use of virtual learning environments (Harrison and Peacock, 2007).

In the interviews, participants referred to different expectations in terms of tutors' roles, their own, and their peers'; for example, some students expected tutors to do most of the speaking in class and they felt that some of their classmates *'wasted time giving their opinions, but we're not here to listen opinions, we are here for knowledge'* (Sherko, student, interview). On the other hand, tutors expected more participation from students, particularly in class situations:

I think Chinese struggle more than others [...] They're not used to dialogue, they're used to monologue. So, they're used to you talking to them and they're not really talking back. So, if you try and engage them in conversation, a lot of the time they won't speak, which is challenging, especially in a classroom environment. (Rose, tutor, interview)

Interestingly, Chinese students were often used as an example when discussing lack of class participation, which may point to cultural or learning differences; however, the perception that students from China have more difficulties with English or class participation may relate to the fact that they represent the largest proportion of international students in the UK, so they tend

to outnumber other nationalities on some postgraduate programmes (UKCISA, 2016). Furthermore, categorising students based on their nationality can lead to unhelpful generalisations, as Ryan and Louie (2007, in Ryan and Viete, 2009 p. 304) strongly argue:

Making judgements about students' abilities based on statements about whole systems of cultural practice (such as students from 'Confucian-heritage cultures') ignores the fact that there can be greater diversity within cultures than between them.

International students, including those from non-Asian backgrounds, also reported difficulties understanding what was expected of them in certain situations, so some said they would have liked more guidance from their tutors, for example, as to how groups should operate:

The first meeting I remember we were all quiet for about 10 minutes because no one wanted to start, because it was like, 'OK who's in charge, or who starts, or who is the leader, or what do we do? So, it wasn't clear what we were supposed to do. (Isabel, student, interview)

On the other hand, tutors seemed to expect students to be able to organise themselves once groups had been formed and some attributed international students' problems organising and managing group work to their lack of experience in completing collaborative tasks: *'I would say students who come to us rarely have any experience in this kind of teamwork and analysis activity, which is very important in our degrees'* (Henry, tutor, interview). As discussed in 5.2, survey results also provided evidence of dissonance between students and tutors with regards to the importance of working collaboratively as part of group, with STEM students attributing more importance to this KEAL than tutors did (See Table 9).

Misalignment between international students and tutors in terms of what is expected in their specific contexts can make it more difficult for students to prioritise, reconfigure or develop, and then deploy the specific range of KEALS

they need to produce their work to a standard deemed appropriate by members of their academic community, particularly their tutors in the context of assessment. Therefore, misalignment can have a negative impact on how students approach their work, how it is assessed, and possibly the extent to which international students can integrate into their academic communities.

5.2.3 The informational dimension

As discussed earlier, dissonance between students and tutors in STEM was evident when contrasting the importance of remembering facts, principles or key concepts, and applying theory to different contexts. There was also variation in terms of what could be considered ‘*a wide selection of references*’, with tutors often complaining that students, both home and international, did not read enough and thus tended to use a limited range of sources as Jane explains:

I see very limited reading. Now the topic that they are given is challenging [...] but we would expect a postgraduate to be able to take a helicopter view of that topic to be able to read broadly and pull out key theories.
(Jane, tutor, interview)

On the other hand, most students felt that expectations as to the amount of reading at Masters level were unrealistic and opted for a strategic approach, as illustrated by Heike:

At the beginning I was very good. [...]. In the first semester, I was like ‘I’ve got to read all these’, and I said, ‘but this reading list is 50 books long, I don’t get it.’ I couldn’t read them and that changed very quickly because I realised that nobody expected me to actually read all of the books on the reading list. We were just expected to read some of them and realise certain things, like certain economics, yeah, the economics of work, and how much work to put in for what result. (Heike, student, interview)

Some tutors claimed that they were ‘*tired of students asking how many references they need to include*’ (Ben, tutor, interview) because it should be

clear to them '*depending on the point they are trying to make*' (Ian, tutor, interview); in contrast, students perceived tutors' expectations as vague:

I think it's better to ask your lecturer because it's different from one to another. Some of them will say OK, I need 24 [references], more or less; while for others, they said OK, I am really happy with the maximum 50 references, so it depends on the lecturer. (Sherko, student, interview)

There were also different interpretations of what counted as evidence or valid sources of information (See 4.2.2). For example, while the use of internet videos of talks, articles from broadsheets, and corporative websites were accepted in some disciplines, they were not in others.

Interviews with tutors and students revealed alignment on the importance of research and information-seeking skills, regardless of their disciplinary group, but again there were some notable differences. For example, while most tutors referred to research in the context of scholarship, most accounts provided by students alluded to research for 'non-scholarly' purposes, from finding out how to write a report to learning how to use different types of software.

Another example of dissonance between learners and their tutors was in connection to their level of familiarity with the relevant disciplinary and professional landscape. For example, while certain practices and theoretical constructs may be '*second nature*' to tutors, having integrated these into their mental structures (Mandler, 2014) over the years, students may still be unfamiliar with many theoretical and practical aspects of their disciplines. As a result, tutors and learners may be operating at different conceptual levels:

Of course, the thing is that I know this stuff inside out. I've been doing it for years as a tutor. Of course, the problem is that what suddenly becomes very small and very easy to you it's still massively complicated for the student, but you, as a tutor, it's been years since you've been in that position so you forget what it's like, don't you? (Jane, tutor, interview)

As illustrated by Jane's reflection, students and tutors possess different levels of familiarity with key constructs and theory in their field, so they are likely to approach academic tasks differently. This is particularly important in terms of assessment because students, particular those who come from other disciplinary backgrounds, may not receive enough credit for crossing these boundaries and attempting to use relevant discourse(s). What may seem like a simple task to a tutor could represent a considerable challenge for a student:

If my friend explain for me one topic, he will do his best in order to make it really simple to understand, while for lecturer, he gets used to this topic and he really understand it very well, so maybe he will think it's really simple to understand or it's understandable but for us it's not. (Rafiq, student, interview)

In the case of interdisciplinary Masters programmes, where students usually need to familiarise themselves with different disciplinary and professional discourses, there may also be greater dissonance in terms of how students and tutors approach tasks based on their existing disciplinary knowledge. Given the importance that students and tutors place on knowledge, theory and information skills, any instances of misalignment may have an impact on how students perform and the way people interpret their work.

5.2.4 The cognitive and metacognitive dimension

As discussed in 5.2, survey results suggest there was a high level of alignment in terms of the importance of this dimension. However, there were some differences in terms of the KEALS considered to be more important by students and tutors, with the latter appearing to place greater importance on high-order thinking skills regardless of their disciplinary groups. In HASS (See Table 8), there was also a noticeable difference in the importance of critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information, ranked 7th (4.75) based on tutors' responses, but 23rd (3.98) compared to students' answers. In practice, dissonance in the perception of the importance of high-order thinking

skills could mean, for example, that students may pay more attention to gathering and summarising information, while tutors may expect students to critically engage with the information (e.g. evaluation).

Some interview participants thought that the emphasis on critical thinking over knowledge tended to vary across modules and from one tutor to another. For example, some students complained that despite their willingness to critically engage with course content, they were often tested on their knowledge rather than on their ability to innovate or find solutions to problems, as Rafiq explains:

In some modules you should keep all information in your mind, you don't have to think critically but for some of them you should think critically. Most of them [modules] rely on past exam papers so [they are] testing your memory, they are testing your knowledge, testing your ability to keep information and that's it. [...] I don't think they prepare you for your profession because in real life, [if] you have any task, you need to ask something, or if you want to invent any new device you need to think and you need your imagination, you need to look for information, so you have time, while an exam is just 2 hours and that is it, it puts you under pressure. (Rafiq, student, interview)

Some students linked the concept of criticality to the ability to express opinions because *'you need to be better informed, think about what you believe in'* (Heike, student, interview) and consider *'where do you stand on issues because they sort of affect your own voice'* (Farah, student, interview).

However, in some cases, students felt they were discouraged to express their views or their own understandings of the literature and instead they were asked to remember *'names and dates'* and *'who said what'*, as Isabel recounts:

Sometimes the professors don't give the opportunity [to express opinions] and they say 'We want you to know what others have written, so we want you to read literature and we want you to say what it has been written but we don't want you to think by yourself.' It's like 'you need to know this'. [...] There was one professor that said in preparation for an exam, 'we don't want your thoughts or your opinions; we want you to say that you understand what has been written, what scholars have been telling'. So that's why I think it's

really like a nivelation course [a foundation course] and I believe it's not the level that I was expecting for a Masters. (Isabel, student, interview)

Misalignment may also stem from different understandings of what each cognitive skill involves, as noted in 4.4. For example, the concept of analysis can vary considerably across disciplines as Chanock (2000) found when comparing History, Cinema and Film Studies and Politics, so it is reasonable to assume that there may also be differences across other disciplines such as chemistry or sports science. In terms of criticality a student may see the ability to express personal opinions as an aspect of criticality linked to positionality, as Isabel did, while a tutor may see critical thinking as the ability to express opinions based on relevant literature.

There were noticeable differences in terms of metacognitive skills, including the ability to review and reflect on own work, and the capacity to work independently and self-manage, as discussed earlier. Finally, tutors often referred to the importance of showing curiosity and 'a spirit of inquiry' but some learners perceived this differently. For example, many expected more input and guidance from their teachers because, as one student put it, *'if I have to learn [by] myself and do everything, what do they [tutors] do?'* (Omar, student, focus group)

Because of the prominence of the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy, dissonance in this area can have a considerable impact on how each student engages with different tasks and how their performance is perceived by their tutors.

5.2.5 The affective and dispositional dimension

Aspects such as motivation, empathy, integrity and persistence were frequently mentioned in interviews, with both participant groups agreeing on the importance of being proactive, having an open mind, staying positive, and

keeping motivated. There were however some contrasting narratives in the interviews that pointed to misalignment between participant groups. For example, academics tended to refer to plagiarism as an issue of intellectual integrity as it was unfair to authors, so tutors were often consonant with the punitive legalistic tone often found in institutional discourse:

The School and the University take this issue [plagiarism] very seriously and will impose penalties ranging from zero award of the work concerned or fines and exclusion from the University. (HASS, student handbook)

However, the view that plagiarism reflects an issue of integrity because it is unfair to authors may not be shared among other cultures, some of which may have a less individualistic view of authorship than in Western universities (See 1.4 and 5.3.3).

Therefore, what tutors often associated with a lack of integrity may actually stem from other causes, in which case, a developmental rather than a punitive approach would be more appropriate. For example, most international students in this study seemed aware of the importance of acknowledging other authors in their own work, but found it difficult to articulate their own ideas in respect of others', as discussed in 4.2.3, so some international students may need more time and/or support to map relevant discourse(s) and develop their own voice, a key element of academic literacy without which they may be more likely to be accused of plagiarism. Some interview participants seemed to resent the assumption that they would cheat or intentionally plagiarise and reported feeling anxious and stressed about this, suggesting that this is an area where there may be a considerable level of misalignment, and potentially, conflict between students, tutors and their institutions.

On the other hand, it is possible that some international students may resort to plagiarism under certain circumstances, some of which may be linked

to affective and dispositional factors; for example, in his review of literature on plagiarism, Park (2003) cites a number of studies to argue that personal variables such as lack of confidence, feeling under pressure, seeking parents' or peers' approval, or lack of commitment to their studies, are all important determinants of plagiarism. Hayes and Introna (2005 in Saltmarsh and Saltmarsh, 2008) concluded that alienation from the learning environment contributed to a feeling of powerlessness among international students, which, for some, justified practices such as plagiarism and cheating as necessary to succeed in an unfamiliar environment. In other words, certain issues with integrity may stem from affective elements such as feelings of belonging, ability to manage pressure, confidence and motivation.

Motivation is a key attitudinal element of academic literacy that was mentioned by most participants, both students and tutors (See 4.5). However, there seemed to be some differences that indicate a certain degree of misalignment, not in terms of its importance, but in relation to its source. For example, tutors often referred to interest in the subject as a key driver for greater engagement with the course, often linking students' success to intrinsic motivation, the type that comes from within the individual, as opposed to extrinsic motivation, which comes from outside the individual (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, only 2 out of 12 students mentioned interest in their subject as the main motivation to do well on the course. Instead, most students mentioned other sources of motivation, some of them intrinsic but not directly related to motivation, such as the desire to please others such as family or tutors, aspirations for employability or career progression, the need for achievement, or fear of failure, as Shen (student, interview) explains: *'I think the personal*

motivation is important, because I know I have to work harder to pass the modules, if I don't, I would fail like the first semester.'

Students' lack of interest was a concern for many tutors, who stressed the impact this often had on student engagement and their approach to learning activities and assessment tasks:

If they [students] are not interested, it's a lot harder [...] Your aim of assessment is to get them to improve their academic work, their wish for assessment is just to get a better mark, it's not quite the same thing, that's the instrumental approach, and I can understand it, it's not a criticism, it's an observation. [...] and I say I'm not here to tell you how to get a better mark, you've got to work hard and you've got to think for yourself. (Alan, tutor, interview)

Besides making the point that a lack of interest in the subject can lead to a surface or '*instrumental*' approach to their course, Alan's comments point to other attitudinal factors such as hard work and independent thinking. His comments also highlight potential dissonance in terms of the purpose of assessment and the role of the tutor, which was also reflected in the survey, with tutors giving more importance to the ability to work independently and self-manage than students did, as discussed earlier.

Interestingly, there was no evidence in the interviews with tutors to suggest that they saw themselves as sources of extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, students often referred to instances where they felt motivated because tutors '*were easy to talk to*', '*made lectures very interesting*', and '*always offer help*', which encouraged them to engage more with their course, in contrast to other tutors that did '*not reply to emails*', and gave '*boring lectures*', which they claimed was the reason why some of them stopped attending lectures and lost interest in particular modules. This points to a certain level of dissonance in the sense that while students saw academics as an important source of motivation, tutors may not see themselves as key motivating agents,

perhaps expecting students to be intrinsically motivated by interest in their subjects. This expectation may be also be linked to other cultural norms or ideas (e.g. individualism or Liberal Humanism), as discussed in 5.3.3.

The importance of intrinsic motivation and tutors as a source of extrinsic motivation found in this research seems consistent with previous studies. For example, Entwistle and Tait (1990) found that interest in the subject matter itself was one of the key factors associated with a deep learning approach, which could result in students engaging in further exploration of relevant discourses, and deploying a wider range of KEALs. However, the authors also contend that tutors can play a key role in motivating students and improving their performance, pointing out findings by Marsh (1987 in Entwistle and Tait, 1990) that linked examination performance to tutors' use of class time (avoiding digressions or labouring the obvious) and task orientation (indicating what was expected of students). As discussed in the previous chapter, motivation is important because it can determine orientations to learning (Biggs, 1987; Entwistle and McCune, 2004; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Richardson 1994), and thus impact on the extent to which students deploy different elements of academic literacy.

The affective dimension of academic literacy, for instance, attitudes, or emotions, often determines the extent to which students engage with their courses and deploy other elements of academic literacy; therefore, understanding sources of misalignment in this area seems particularly important and renders further study.

5.2.6 The technical and structural dimension

Given the multimodal nature of academic literacy and the increasing importance of being able to work in digital environments, it was perhaps unsurprising to find alignment between tutors and students in terms of the

importance of using tools or equipment effectively, and making use of software and computers effectively, particularly in STEM, as discussed in 5.2. Besides technical skills, participants gave high importance to structural and mechanical aspects of communication, for example, how written discourse was presented.

For example, survey respondents coincided on the importance of academic conventions and professional methods to present information with nearly all participants seeing this as extremely important, with the exception of students in STEM. These academic conventions and professional methods to present information required contextual awareness and a sense of audience, and involved the use of different academic and professional genres (e.g. essay, walkthrough). Given the privileged position of written discourse in assessment (See 4.1, 4.6), misalignment in understandings and expectations of writing norms and conventions can have a considerable impact on how students construct their work and how this is interpreted by tutors.

In this study, there was some variation as to which conventions were relevant to particular genres or how these should be structured and presented. For example, feedback given to a student (Shen, interview, feedback sample) indicated that he had been marked down because he had not used numbers for headings and subheadings in a business report; however, Shen reported having used the same format for a business report that he had learnt on a previous module. Although the criteria for both assignments referred to '*use of appropriate academic conventions*', there were no specific references to the format of a business report. While this may be an example of issues with systemic alignment within the department, it may also point to misalignment in terms of how marking criteria are interpreted by different tutors.

In terms of mechanical aspects of writing such as spacing or punctuation, there seemed to be variation as to the emphasis and the elements included in the criteria. For example, some descriptors included punctuation, grammatical and lexical accuracy (both linguistic elements) in '*presentation*' while others put this under '*use of language*', assigning different weight to these. Besides a potential issue of systemic alignment across modules, again there may be misalignment in terms of how tutors interpret, apply, or value different aspects included in the criteria.

In general, there seemed to be consensus in terms of the overall importance of this dimension of academic literacy; however, there were a number of examples of variation regarding importance given to structural and mechanical elements such as organisation, mechanics (e.g. spelling, punctuation), and linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary, which were often included in criteria for assessing structural or presentational aspects of their work. This blurring of boundaries between linguistic and mechanical elements of academic literacy in assessment could disadvantage some students, particularly those from different linguistic backgrounds.

5.3 Possible sources of misalignment.

Despite evidence of alignment between students and tutors in terms of the relative importance of most key elements of academic literacy, there were also some noticeable differences that pointed to some misalignment. This was most evident in the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy, where tutors seemed to prioritise high-order thinking competencies as opposed to low-order skills such as memory. Tutors also appeared to place greater importance on the application of knowledge and theory and the ability to work independently and self-manage. On the other hand, students thought working collaboratively as part of a group was more important than tutors did, also

placing greater importance than academics on the ability to make sense of visual data, and being able to review and reflect on their own work. Crucially, findings from qualitative data pointed to misalignment in terms of how students and tutors conceptualised some KEALs as well as expectations of how these should be demonstrated, particularly in the context of assessment.

Findings suggest that there are multiple cultural, social, contextual and personal factors that can shape discourse in a higher education context, and thus academic literacy, potentially leading to misalignment. These factors seem relevant to the discussion on feedback and the development of academic literacy in the following chapters, so the following subsection looks at some of these possible variables in more detail.

5.3.1 Complex academic settings: interdisciplinarity and modularisation

The interdisciplinary nature of some academic programmes at Master level was evident in this study. For example, three interview participants (Heike, Ina, and Phong, students) were enrolled on interdisciplinary programmes where they often needed to demonstrate familiarity with epistemological and methodological approaches from different disciplines. Other students reported being asked to read an article from a different discipline, which they thought was difficult. Tutors also reported cases of students from other disciplines attending their modules, which sometimes meant that students engaged with tasks in different ways, as illustrated by Anne (tutor, interview): *'We do get engineering students who tend to approach tasks very differently to what we expect in management.'*

Student mobility across disciplines also contributes to creating a diverse landscape in which students may not always possess essential disciplinary foundations. As reported in 4.1.1, most students interviewed for this study and over a third of the survey respondents had studied a subject at undergraduate

level that was different to their Masters subject (e.g. musicology studies as an undergraduate and management at Masters level). This often meant that, besides the difficulty in navigating different, and sometimes conflicting discourses, students on Masters courses may come across fellow students with little knowledge of the relevant subject and a limited range of relevant specialised skills. This diversity of backgrounds can increase the potential for misalignment between students and tutors but also among students, affecting how they interact with each other, as Isabel (student, interview) explains:

There is not equal level from the students, and also there is different backgrounds, like [different] undergraduate studies, so I had classmates that came from music, or theatre, or management or psychology, or philosophy, and that makes it more difficult.

Different configurations of academic literacy mean that some students will need to acquire new knowledge and skills -or at least reconfigure existing ones- in order to meet different expectations. This is likely to be challenging for all students, but especially for international students on Masters courses as many may find themselves studying at the intersection of both disciplinary and cultural paradigms, which could make discourse mapping more difficult, possibly disadvantaging them.

For international students, meeting expectations across disciplines and academic departments is also particularly difficult because there are also differences in how programmes are structured and run. Findings in this study reflect those in Mercer's (2011) research with Polish undergraduate students in the UK (See 1.3), where students reported compatibility issues not only with regards to contrasting pedagogical and epistemological approaches, but also in terms of course structure, curriculum, and modes of assessment. Interview participants studying on interdisciplinary programmes reported having to deal with differences in policies (e.g. penalties for late submission), procedures (e.g.

how to submit their work), assessment regimes (e.g. number and type of assignments), and access to tutors (e.g. entitlement to tutorials), which often led to confusion and sometimes had a negative impact on their work, and thus, their scores:

I think people should be encouraged to look at different departments and people should be encouraged to work in an interdisciplinary way, I like that way of working generally, it's just that the departments, I think for very good reasons, resist the university's attempt to make everything the same, but it then means that the student is kind of left with trying to find out what's actually going on. (Heike, student, interview)

Besides interdisciplinarity, and differences in programme structures, policies and procedures, modularisation in particular seems to impact on expectations of academic literacy. A review of different course documents within the same programmes, revealed considerable differences in areas such as requirements to engage with the industry, the amount of writing required, and weighting in marking schemes. Academics also pointed out that the type and number of modules could have an impact on students, with a few tutors expressing concern that students may be over assessed across modules, often on the same learning outcomes, or not assessed often enough, reducing opportunities for formative feedback:

In my other university the structure of the course allowed for more opportunities to provide formative assessment, but the culture here is not one of using formative feedback, it seems. And if you have lectures and seminars every week, you can't really ask them to write an essay, because if every tutor for every module did that, they'd have to write a few essays a week, so whether it is short fat or long thin module, that matters. (Julian, tutor, interview)

Contexts are important not only because of challenges arising from increased diversity and complexity but also because students' perceptions of their environment can have an effect on their approaches to learning (Entwistle & Tait, 1990, 1995; Ramsden, 1979; Richardson, 2005; Sun & Richardson,

2012; Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004), and thus the way and the extent to which they deploy different KEALs and succeed in engaging with academic discourse(s).

5.3.2. Increased diversity of the staff and student population

Language, familiarity with the subject, personal and cultural background, theoretical perspectives, and epistemological positioning, can all affect how individuals engage in discursive episodes, from reading a line of text to asking a question in class; therefore, increasingly diverse academic settings can make it more difficult for individuals to align their academic literacy configurations and reach greater interpretive affinity during discursive episodes.

Findings showed considerable diversity among students. For example, within the group of 12 interview participants, there were 11 different nationalities and eight different languages; in the case of the survey respondents (99) there were 20 different nationalities and 21 different languages. This points to considerable diversity and the possibility of misalignment among students, even within a small sample. Cultural diversity is not restricted to the student body since international academics now represent a sizeable proportion (30%) of academic staff working in UK universities (HESA, 2018b), which could lead to misalignment among tutors. In the survey, 15.3% of staff respondents came from other countries within the EU and 6.1% were from a non-EU country. This level of diversity suggests that students will often face unfamiliar cultural expectations and practices not only when interacting among themselves but also with tutors.

Academics may also be recruited from a wide range of professional backgrounds. In the survey, 36.5% of respondents had membership of a professional or accreditation body, about half of the academics (47%) had been teaching in higher education for less than 10 years, and nearly a third (31.6%)

had no higher education or relevant teaching qualifications. Different professional trajectories can influence how tutors position themselves epistemologically and methodologically with implications for their practices, as Anne explains:

They [students] have to look at both theory and real-world practices. That's probably because I'm biased in that way. I have got 20 years practitioner experience before I came into the academic world.
(Anne, tutor, interview)

Tutors' professional backgrounds also affected their attitudes towards certain conventions even when teaching on the same programme. For example, one academic in management claimed she placed quite a lot of importance on references when assessing students' work, while another said the contrary, arguing that '*in the real world*' references would be '*pretty much irrelevant.*' While one tutor had followed a traditional 'academic' route into teaching, the other had been '*recruited*' from the industry because of his expertise, despite not having higher academic qualifications such as a Masters degree.

While diversity has the potential to enrich the academic experience of both students and tutors, the confluence of diverse discourses can result in multiple - and often conflicting- messages, potentially increasing misalignment and, in turn, leading to inconsistencies, perhaps most obvious in assessment and feedback practices. However, there is no suggestion here that diverse ways of thinking, communicating and practising should be discouraged and that there should be one dominant discourse to which all academics and students should adhere to. Such a hegemonic view would seem to go against the very essence of academia and the mutability of academic discourses.

Instead, the argument is that greater diversity means that there is a need for more sensitivity to learner needs, especially in the case of those who come

from different cultural, social, educational and/or linguistic backgrounds.

Greater diversity also calls for a more explicit discussion around what the key elements of academic literacy are in the specific contexts in which students operate, how these are conceptualised, how they manifest through different practices, and how these elements are assessed. This discussion has the potential to help the multiple voices that characterise academia become more attuned with each other within the specific spaces that they inhabit.

5.3.3 Cultural differences

Different cultures coexist in these increasingly diverse educational contexts, potentially generating misalignment and presenting students and tutors with various challenges, as Sam and Isabel reflect:

So how do you take different cultures and different ideas and different backgrounds, and try and align that? [...] how do you adapt to different cultures, how do you actually understand the best way to communicate with people in a way they'll understand, and a way they're comfortable learning, so you don't sit them down and make them feel silly, or dishonour them. (Sam, tutor, interview)

Asian, Latin American, and Europeans, we really have different ways of doing things and sometimes this is a problem [...], so you have to really be patient and try to understand, and try to explain yourself like ten times if it is necessary, but also understand that there are different paradigms from which you are hearing or listening or talking (Isabel, student, interview)

Isabel refers to cultural paradigms and how these can hinder mutual understanding between students, generating potential misunderstandings or tensions like the ones discussed in Chapter 1 (See 1.4). Students who share cultural paradigms with tutors may have an advantage over others who do not, for example, Matt, a tutor in design, argued that some key concepts in his discipline such as innovation, creativity and originality (See 5.2.5), were more easily understood, and thus recognisable in their work, by students with a Western background:

In the West, in a Western paradigm [there is] no problem at all, because that is how we are. I mean we are taught, I mean when you do a pre-degree, then you do an undergraduate degree, everything that you are taught is about originality and is about individualism, individualistic, hedonistic [sic] way of approaching design and so originality is drummed into you from an early age. If you look at it from a non-Western paradigm it can be very challenging because it could almost be 'do as I do and say as I say. (Matt, tutor, interview)

On the other hand, some students from non-Western backgrounds may find it difficult, or perhaps even inappropriate, to disagree with tutors, demonstrate originality or criticality if they are used to a 'do as I do and say as I say' approach, as Sherko (student, interview) explains:

I kept hearing that I had to be critical rather than just be descriptive, but for example, in my previous experience in my country, I never found the courage to critique a thought, because my country's education system encourages you to be descriptive [...] Once I gave my own understanding in an exam and it negatively impacted on my result because I was told 'you had to present what you have been taught exactly'.

In an increasingly diverse higher education environment, Charlesworth (2011) argues that it is important to recognise that international students bring a number of expectations and familiarity with their own country-specific pedagogical practices and that these need to be acknowledged and taken into consideration. Among the survey respondents in this study, only 11% had previously studied in the UK, so the large majority were new to a British academic setting. Many of these students may need more opportunities to reconfigure their academic literacy and, if necessary, adapt existing practices that may be acceptable in their countries but not in the UK, as is sometimes the case with the use of an author's work without acknowledgement of the source.

Some international students in this research often saw plagiarism as a problem with lack of familiarity with cultural expectations and conventions in the UK, and were often upset when their integrity was questioned (See 5.2.5):

It's an unending problem for the international students, the citing, and the plagiarism thing. And plagiarism, we [international students in his group] never heard of it; we talked, and didn't have any such kind of plagiarism thing, so basically it was very difficult for us in the initial stages to adopt that. [...] I understand it's giving them [authors] the respect, but we're not used to it and we forget, and to a certain extent, it's like targeting students with little things too. We had an assessment just to check over references, and it was very difficult for us, italics, each and everything. It made me feel bad, all the red marks [in the feedback] (Kanti, student, interview)

As illustrated by Kanti, plagiarism may seem different from various cultural perspectives, so the need for references could be perceived as a '*little thing*' rather than an issue with intellectual integrity (see 5.2.5), especially in cultures where the notion of intellectual property may have little acceptance or recognition. One student, for example, said that in his country, '*copying someone's ideas was not a big problem, but here [in the UK] it is a big thing*' (Shen, student, interview), which raises the question of the extent to which attitudes towards plagiarism are culturally bound. For example, as pointed out in 1.4, Scollon (1995) and Pennycook (1996) argue that the notion of plagiarism, central to Western literacy practices, reflects an individualistic attitude towards authorship that may not be shared by other cultures.

When facing an unfamiliar academic culture, students are likely to rely on their own literacy practices, potentially rejecting those that seem to go against their own, as discussed in 2.3.1. In other words, international students may be more likely to adopt certain discourses if these are similar to those in their own academic culture and seem better aligned with their intradiscourse. This suggests that introducing international students to norms, conventions and expectations, even if done explicitly, may not be enough to have an impact on their literacy practices; international students also need to understand the rationale behind academic practices because a practice first needs to make sense before it is accepted (Green, 2004 in Gondo & Amis, 2013).

5.3.4 Disciplinary differences

Disciplinary discourses play an important part in shaping academic literacy because along with other discourses, for example, professional, they permeate academic literacy and result in variations in how different elements of academic literacy are conceptualised, enacted and assessed. Disciplinary variation found in this study is consistent with the literature (e.g. Bhatia, 1999, 2002; Becher, 1994; Becher & Trawler, 1989; Hyland, 2000; Lea & Street, 1998; North, 2005), where there is also evidence that students' approaches to studying vary across disciplines (Entwistle & Tait, 1995).

There can also be disciplinary differences in teaching preferences and styles (Neumann, 2001) and tutors' beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning (Newton et al., 1998; Paulsen & Wells, 1998), all of which can affect their perception of key elements of academic literacy, and importantly, assessment practices. For example, students in engineering reported exams as the main form of assessment, but they were also required to produce other written genres, as illustrated by Rafiq's experience:

For engineering we have equations, so it's not like writing; for most of the questions you need your result, that's it, so you know exactly when to stop [...] In the exams for engineering you have equations, you need to solve it so there is a common type of mistake in it, while for the [written] assignment, you are explaining, so maybe you have a broken sentence, maybe the structure is wrong, maybe you don't have enough references and so on. There's quite a lot of criteria in order to mark this assignment and there's a difference from person to person. While in the exam we have equations, we just need accurate solutions for it. (Rafiq, student, interview)

Other students, especially those on interdisciplinary programmes, contrasted what they perceived as being 'objective' criteria in STEM to the more 'subjective' expectations they found in HASS. For example, Ina felt that expectations in the computer lab, and the rationale behind them, were clearer than in her live drawing class:

Sometimes I can understand what the tutor means but I might not agree with him. Let's say, in a life drawing class, my tutor wants me to try some different drawing styles, and I can totally understand that, but I don't really get why he wants me to do that, because I'm okay with what I have, and sometimes it's really hard to switch to something different too, especially if your grade depends on it. (Ina, student, interview)

Ina's example illustrates how tutors' expectations or intentions may be unclear to students, or how these may go against students' beliefs or practices. In these cases, especially in high-stakes situations such as assessment, students may be less likely to adapt their existing practices or adopt unfamiliar ones.

Ideas of what constitutes evidence, originality or valid argumentation, among many others, are not universal. For example, in computer science, originality may be expressed by different letters in a line of code; in law, original thinking may not require innovative ideas, as in design, illustrated above, but creativity in the way an argument is structured using other people's ideas:

We're like magpies, we're effectively plagiarists-- we are professional plagiarists in a way, legal academics and, by extension, our students. [...], we take the ideas of another individual, as expressed in their writing, and we copy it. But we do it in a way that's academically rigorous. [...] Students structure their argument according to their perception of the problem you've given them, but the weight of their argument comes from someone else's ideas. (Julian, tutor, interview)

Disciplinary expectations determine the type of tasks that students must perform, the kind of knowledge to be applied, and the skills required of students (Neumann et al., 2002). For example, Neumann (2001) observed that students in hard disciplines are often required to do less writing because tutors tend to emphasise tasks where students must deal with facts and figures. Certain tasks may also require specific disciplinary approaches, so lack of familiarity with such practices can prove costly in the context of assessment because *'the issues tend to come when they [students] don't obey their discipline'* (Henry, tutor, interview), particularly in STEM disciplines (e.g. computer science), where

students are expected to engage with tasks, perhaps not uncritically, as the word 'obey' may suggest, but possibly adhering to a particular method or procedure.

5.3.5 The influence of government policy and the industry

Government and industry can have considerable influence on higher education institutions. In her study involving 20 academics from diverse disciplines in an Australian university, Roberts (2015) found contextual factors such as the government graduate skills agenda influenced curriculum decisions. In the UK context, the government employability agenda, which asks universities to '*treat the employability of their learners as part of their core business*' (UKCES, 2009, p.3), seems to have permeated institutional discourse, now filled with references to '*real world*', '*employability*', '*transferable skills*' and '*professional competencies*', as illustrated by extracts from course documents such as marking criteria or assignment briefs (See Appendix 5.1).

The employability discourse was also evident in interviews with staff, who frequently referred to industry, employers and professional skills using terms such as '*out there*', '*in real situations*', '*real clients*', '*in real contexts*', '*in a real company*', '*in real life*' to highlight the importance of developing skills for employability, as illustrated by the following quotes from tutors in business studies:

It's not so much about the academic side of it, which doesn't have so much relevance when you get out into the real world. (Sam, tutor, interview)

In the real world, references are pretty much irrelevant, in the real world you just don't go around quoting people. (Alan, tutor, interview)

On some programmes students were encouraged to engage with practitioners, while on others industry experts were involved in assessing and providing feedback to students, as exemplified by this extract from an assignment brief

(STEM); *'You will also, where appropriate, receive informal verbal feedback from industrial mentors.'*

Other key higher education stakeholders such as professional bodies can act as drivers for changes in curricula and thus affect what is expected of students:

It's a programme, a module that is new this year. It came about from a review done by AMBA [Association of MBAs], and it asked for something around putting theory into practice, some of the managerial skills in the form of a project and some project skills.
(Anne, tutor, interview)

Professional bodies seem to play an important role in how institutions design curriculum but they may also influence how tutors approach their work. For example, Jane (tutor, interview), argued that being accredited by a professional body meant that, she had professional standards in mind when she was marking students' work and *'picked on things that would be useful for them in their careers'*. Among the survey respondents, 69% of tutors said they were accredited by a professional body, which may influence the way they interpret marking criteria or perceive students' work.

Internationalisation of higher education institutions in the UK is creating increasingly diverse settings where many worldviews and experiences converge. The internationalisation agenda has changed the landscape in UK universities, which have not only seen an increase in the number of international students, but also in the number of international (non-UK) academics, as mentioned in 5.3.2. The effort to implement an agenda of internationalisation of higher education, often defined as *'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education'* (Knight, 2003, in Warwick and Moogan, 2013, p. 102) has often translated into institutional discourses that

promote an internationalised curriculum, intercultural learning, cultural agility, international competence, global citizens, student mobility, global perspectives, and employability skills for a globalised job market (Warwick and Moogan, 2013), even though in practice the focus has been on international student recruitment (Ryan and Viète, 2009).

Findings in this study suggest that government agendas such as those focusing on internationalisation and employability have led to increasingly diverse settings and a more evident emphasis on skills for the job market. Although the influence of these external factors may not necessarily lead to greater misalignment between students and tutors, these factors do seem to have an impact on institutional discourse, which may in turn translate into different academic expectations.

5.3.6 Personal factors

Life experiences, interests and learning styles are likely to impact on different elements of academic literacy and influence the way students approach their work, as Ina (student, interview) reflects: *'Every person, all people have different styles of working and someone may go through the key stages [of a task] in different ways'*. Students' previous experience, familiarity and affinity with a particular subject can make a significant difference to how they engage with different discursive episodes and the extent to which they deploy their skills:

I think for me it depends on the content of the course, for example, the module that I like the most is [module code] because I worked about it [the subject] before, then this module has something that interests me and I like it. I can do it quite well, but, on the other hand, I don't like coding, programming, I'm not good at it, and because I don't like it, I'm not good at it [...]. So if I don't like the course, I don't read a lot, I don't talk a lot about it [...]. If I like the course, I read more.
(Phong, student, interview)

Similarly, personal factors can influence how tutors approach their work, for example, tutors' backgrounds, interests and professional trajectories can shape their perceptions, expectations and attitudes towards students' literacy practices, as discussed in 5.3.2. For example, attitudes to students' written work can be quite personal: *Well, I often find myself commenting on writing style, punctuation, grammar, structure. We all have our pet hates'* (Barbara, tutor, interview). The phrase 'pet hates' seems to suggest that Barbara acknowledges that is a personal attitude, possibly stemming from a combination of life experiences and ideas about her role as a tutor.

Indeed, tutors' identity, for example, as a subject specialist rather than as a language teacher, coupled with personal experiences, seemed to influence Sam's attitude and approach towards language mistakes in students' work:

I'm not an English teacher, I'm dyslexic as well, so I'm in constant sympathy with them. I don't see myself as an English teacher. If it's really poor and it does have a lot of mistakes which they could have just rectified with a Microsoft spellcheck, I'll comment on it, but I tend to focus on what they're saying. (Sam, tutor, interview)

In Emily's case, her own experience as a speaker of other languages (French and Spanish) seemed to increase her appreciation for the challenges that international students face and influence her attitude towards their use of English:

I've worked in Spanish professionally and in French as well, but then if I thought about using it academically then it's very different. So, one of the conferences that I go to is in France and some of the conference presentations there are in French and you know, it's a whole other level of language that you're not used to using, so I do appreciate the kind of challenges that these [international] students are facing. (Emily, tutor, interview)

Staff and students face constant choices about different aspects of their work and can draw on personal factors to construct meaning from available information and to make these decisions, which are often reflected in their

literacy practices. Therefore, factors such as past social experiences, beliefs, cognitive skills and learning styles can play a crucial role in sense making (Liu & Carless, 2006; Vickerman, 2009). Acknowledging these individual factors and moving away from a view of academic literacy as a self-evident set of rules that apply to different academic settings is an important step towards greater consonance, which will also require more open dialogic processes where members of an academic community, particularly tutors and students, can have plenty of opportunities to develop mutual understanding.

5.4 Dialogue as a tool to reduce misalignment

In a complex and diverse setting, where multiple ways of thinking, communicating and practising come together, there is considerable potential for dissonance between different voices shaped by multiple discourses. The further apart these voices are, the greater the level of misalignment that individuals may experience when interacting with others. This was illustrated by differences in how students and tutors may perceive and enact some KEALs, as discussed in the previous sections. These differences tend to be most evident in assessment, where they can have a negative impact on scores. Therefore, it is extremely important for students to become more attuned with their tutors, and dialogue can play a key role in this, as one of the tutors reflects:

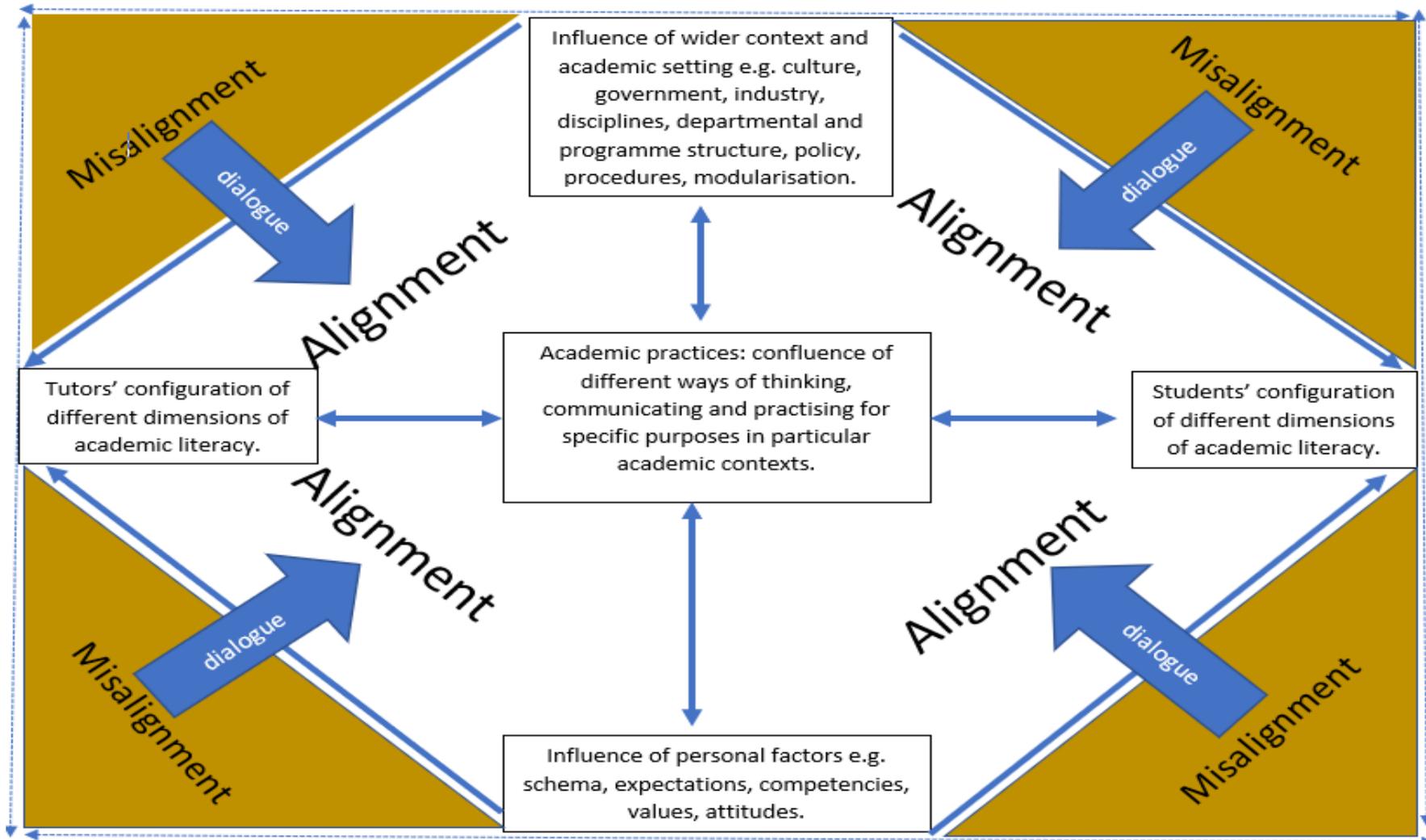
The conversations with students are far more valuable. The student who stays behind after the session with their paper, and you have the opportunity then to engage with them and they're quite unhappy with the grade that they got or with the comments that they got and you explain to them, you talk to them step by step. I'm usually then very positive about what they've done and how they could have gone further or for example, where they missed a case and what the significance of this case was, and how it would inform their answer and how everything else would have run from this, and so they knew that they were that close, which is frustrating for some of them but also gives them confidence that they knew, they just didn't approach it in the right way and so I think things like that work and then they

get it. Often the conversations are by far the best way. (John, tutor, interview)

Besides illustrating the importance of dialogue in helping students understand how to approach their work to meet tutors' expectations, John's example highlights the importance of intrinsic feedback (Laurillard, 2002), as it creates spontaneous opportunities for students to (re) align their academic literacy configuration with their tutors, particularly important in academic contexts where there are asymmetries of powers between tutors and students.

One key proposition emerging from the study is that dialogic practices have potential to bring different voices together and help them become more attuned with each other, allowing individuals to develop shared understandings of the specific knowledge, competencies and dispositions required in specific contexts. Figure 6 below (also in Appendix 5.2) is an attempt to illustrate the key role of dialogue in increasingly complex and diverse academic settings (Charlesworth, 2011; HEA, 2015; HESA, 2018a, 2018b; Warwick and Moogan, 2013; Weidman et al., 2001).

Figure 6 Potential role of dialogue in reducing misalignment in academic settings



However, for dialogue to be meaningful, it must be underpinned by certain principles such as trust, empathy, commitment, openness, mutuality, and cooperation (Taylor and Kent, 2014). In the specific context of Masters programmes in the UK, there is little evidence of mutuality. As suggested by John's phrase '*the right way*', there is usually the expectation that international students will conform to academic norms, conventions and practices in their departments, which are usually influenced by Western paradigms and presented as uncontested and universal (Ryan and Viete 2009; Sharma, 2004, Street, 2003).

Therefore, it is also important for teaching practitioners to engage in dialogue to gain a better understanding of the ideas, values and beliefs that underpin international students' practices. While some academics and institutions may initially resist the development of a more open and inclusive disposition to academic literacy, this seems like a much-needed adjustment in increasingly diverse university settings. Embracing dialogic communication means that tutors may come to an interaction with their own beliefs, values and attitudes, but also need to be willing to be changed by the encounter, possibly mitigating power relationships (Taylor and Kent, 2014).

Nevertheless, in a higher education context marked by increasing massification (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016, Rodgers et al., 2011) and marketisation of higher education, particularly in English speaking countries such as the UK, Australia and Canada (Askehave, 2007; Brown & Carasso, 2013; Newman & Jahdi 2009), the challenge resides, as Bloxham and West (2007) point out, in creating opportunities for close and meaningful dialogue between students and tutors.

5.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter presented evidence of considerable alignment between students' and tutors' views on the relative importance of most elements of academic literacy. The few instances of misalignment between participant groups concerned the relative importance attributed to different cognitive skills, the application of knowledge and theory, independence and self-management, and collaborative work. However, perhaps more importantly, there seemed to be notable misalignment as to how some KEALs were conceptualised and the way in which students were expected to demonstrate these elements in different contexts. The notions of alignment and misalignment seem especially relevant in the context of high-stakes assessment since different understandings of academic literacy can make it more difficult for students and tutors to achieve mutual understanding. As a result, students, particularly those who do not share their tutors' cultural, linguistic, or disciplinary backgrounds, may approach discursive episodes such as writing an essay or delivering a presentation in ways that differ from what tutors expect, which may result in lower grades.

Besides cultural, linguistic and disciplinary factors, the analysis pointed to other variables that can influence discourses in academic contexts and thus shape an individual's academic literacy practices, potentially generating misalignment. Factors that seemed to contribute to misalignment in conceptualisations of KEALs and the importance attributed to each element included the interdisciplinary and modular nature of Masters programmes, increased diversity of staff and students, cultural differences, disciplinary differences, influence of government policy and the industry, and individual factors. The picture emerging from the data is complex and highlights the challenges that international students face.

Because of the multiple factors that can shape academic literacy, it is unlikely, and possibly undesirable, for different configurations of academic literacy to symmetrically align and mirror each other. In many ways, that expectation would deny the complex and dynamic nature of academic literacy. However, when it comes to high-stakes assessment, it is important for students, especially those who come from different cultural, linguistic, social, or disciplinary backgrounds, to have a clear understanding of the different KEALs that are required for them to successfully engage with relevant discourses and perform in ways that are deemed appropriate and valued by their tutors in their specific contexts.

Tutors, on the other hand, need to recognise that their own configuration of academic literacy is not universal. They may also need to place greater value on international students' cultural capital and learn more about the diverse academic literacy practices that they bring with them. Mutual learning can contribute to mutual understanding and thus greater interpretive affinity between students and tutors, which, in practical terms, could mean that they share an understanding of relevant discourses and are likely to interpret assessed tasks in similar ways. However, the prevalence of deficit models of language and literacy (See 1.4, 2.3.1) means that the current expectation is that international students must reconfigure their academic literacy, change their practices, or adopt new ones, to match their tutors', suggesting the dominance of an Anglocentric view of academic literacy in UK universities (See 5.3.5), despite the discourse of an internationalisation agenda that promotes the 'intercultural dimension' of teaching in UK universities (See 1.4).

Mapping a new academic landscape, becoming familiar with relevant discourse(s), reconfiguring academic literacy, experimenting with its associated

practices, and learning to perform to unfamiliar standards takes time. This process seems extremely difficult to achieve in less than a year, the typical duration of a full-time Masters programme; therefore, students, particularly those who do not share their tutors' cultural, linguistic, or disciplinary backgrounds, often face unrealistic expectations and may be at a considerable disadvantage. However, findings suggest that dialogue can play a key role in promoting mutual understanding between international students and tutors, reducing misalignment, and encouraging interpretive affinity.

The next two chapters look at current feedback practices and consider the extent to which these can also help international students during the complex and demanding process of academic discourse socialisation.

Chapter 6: Feedback practices across disciplinary groups

This chapter looks at feedback practices across two major disciplinary groups (HASS and STEM) and considers how feedback reflects the different dimensions of academic literacy discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter explores current feedback practices in full-time Masters programmes and how international students may respond to different types of feedback as a preamble to the next chapter, where the attention will turn to the role of tutor feedback on academic literacy development. As discussed in 2.4.2, the definition of feedback initially adopted in this study corresponds to a widespread view of feedback as commentary or information ‘delivered’ to students that contrasts actual and desired outcomes (Poulos & Mahony, 2008) and as a specific written genre in academia (Hyatt, 2005; Mirador, 2014; Nesbitt et al., 2014; Yelland, 2011). Despite the limitations of this conceptualisation, it accurately reflects participants’ perceptions and feedback samples discussed in the following sections.

The first part of the chapter focuses on presentational aspects of tutor feedback (i.e. form), for example, modes of delivery and linguistic features. This is followed by an exploration of the content features of feedback as identified in feedback samples and reported by students in interviews and the survey. In order to facilitate the discussion on the relationship between feedback content and the key elements of academic literacy introduced in 4.1, the content features have been organised according to the dimension of academic literacy that they correspond to (See Appendix 4.10 for the multi-dimensional model of academic literacy).

However, it is important to stress the fact that, as previously noted, the KEALs identified in this study do not represent an exhaustive list, so feedback in

other contexts may refer to other elements of academic literacy not included in this study. Similarly, it is worth pointing out that the dimensions of academic literacy in the multi-dimensional model are based on a thematic analysis, and some of the themes can overlap (e.g. importance of context and audience awareness in deploying appropriate language); therefore, different dimensions (e.g. multimodal and social) should not be seen as separate entities with fixed boundaries; instead, they refer to thematic areas to aid the discussion on the link between linguistic and content features of feedback and different aspects of academic literacy.

6.1 Variety of feedback: types, forms and modes of delivery

The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic (Laurillard, 2002), formative and summative, spoken and written feedback (See 2.4.2) was useful when considering how international students seemed to respond to feedback, and thus, the role it may play in the development of their academic literacy.

In terms of the type of feedback, nearly all samples corresponded to extrinsic feedback (i.e. planned or formal) as part of established systems and procedures within the assessment regime; the only example of intrinsic feedback (i.e. ad hoc or informal) was an email received by a student in response to a query about assessment. This seems to relate to the fact that only one of the 14 samples collected was an example of formative feedback (i.e. intended to offer guidance to improve performance), perhaps reflecting the type of departmental no-draft policy reported by 11 out of 12 interview participants, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Arguably, the formative/summative binary can be misleading in the sense that summative feedback accompanying grades, usually at the end of the course, can also include comments that provide guidance for subsequent assessment (i.e. feedforward). However, students in this research seemed to

have a clear idea of the distinction and seemed to perceive and engage with these two different types of feedback in different ways. For example, international students did not seem to be very appreciative of summative feedback for different reasons, some discussed later in this chapter, including the perception that it '*only justifies the grades*', '*it's after the course is finished*' (Anonymous, students, survey comment) and does not help with future assignments because the tasks are different (Student interviews: Shen, Phong, Rafiq, Isabel, Kanti).

This seems consistent with the literature in the sense that summative assessment -and thus summative feedback- is largely for the purpose of summarising student achievement and may not have immediate impact upon learning (e.g. Blair et al., 2014; Knight, 2002; Sadler, 1989). In their qualitative study exploring students' and tutors' views on what quality feedback was, Beaumont et al. (2011) reported the issue of students not collecting summative feedback because it was perceived as being too late or specific to a particular assignment, therefore, not useful. They also reported tutors' concerns that many students do not apply feedback to future work, pointing to a mismatch between students' and tutors' perceived value of summative feedback.

Regarding different forms and modes of delivery, students reported a variety of forms of feedback such as annotations or pre-designed feedback sheets, and various modes, including drawings, verbal and written feedback. The following subsections look at this range of forms and modes grouped under three main areas to facilitate discussion: visual forms, verbal forms, and written forms; however, there are also references to summative and formative feedback because of their relevance in this study.

6.1.1 Visual forms of feedback

Feedback is often associated with written comments but students reported other modes of expression such as drawings, screenshots, lines or arrows used to signal areas that students needed to address in their work, sometimes accompanied by text. Survey results showed that visual forms of feedback were the least common sort of feedback (3.3%) but there was a noticeable difference across disciplinary groups, with diagrams, drawings or other visual forms more common in STEM (5.6%) than in HASS (1.6%) (See Appendix 6.2 for a list of different forms of feedback). In the interviews, two participants, one student on a computer animation course and one tutor teaching engineering reported visual forms of feedback. The feedback reported by the computer animation student was formative as it was given during a workshop as advice to improve students' work before submission.

6.1.2 Verbal forms of feedback

No samples of spoken feedback were available for analysis as none of the tutors agreed to being recorded. However, this form of feedback was frequently reported in the survey and the interviews, with one student also agreeing to keep a log of her spoken feedback, discussed later in this chapter.

Students were particularly positive about spoken feedback, often highlighting the fact that it felt '*more personal*' (Farah, interview), provided opportunities to '*ask questions*' (Heike, interview), was prompt so students '*didn't have to wait for a long time to know the professor's opinion*' (Lucia, interview), addressed specific issues, and provided ideas on how to improve their work before submitting it:

In live drawing, like once we finish a drawing [...] we usually have the tutor going around the class, and talking to us, asking what we could improve, and giving his own opinion on what we could actually work on. [...] In animation, I guess it's easier if you get feedback in real life [face to face], because you immediately try to fix it, and if you figure

out that you don't know how to fix it, the tutor is there and can help you do that, you just have to ask. But if it's on Blackboard [a virtual learning environment], mostly you understand what he means but if you have any doubts you will still have to email him again or wait for the class. (Ina, student, interview)

Like Ina, 10.2% of survey respondents reported individual spoken comments during a lesson or workshop (See Appendix 6.1 for a list of different forms of feedback experienced by students). Altogether, spoken feedback represented about a third of all forms of feedback (33.4%), although there was some variation across disciplinary groups, with verbal comments accounting for 35.3% in HASS and 30.9% in STEM (Appendix 6.2). In any case, both figures represent a considerable proportion of all forms of feedback and highlight the importance of verbal feedback in face-to-face situations, which can create opportunities for dialogic feedback, as advised in recent literature (e.g. Beaumont et al., 2011; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Nicol, 2010).

Opportunities for dialogue, and the fact that all instances of spoken feedback reported by interview participants were formative, may explain a high level of satisfaction with this form of feedback, which is consistent with findings by Orsmond et al. (2005), who found that over a third of student participants preferred formative feedback that involved talking with their tutors, and most thought that verbal feedback led to greater engagement with the tutor. Most verbal formative feedback reported in this study occurred during group sessions with a tutor '*walking around*' or giving immediate feedback after a presentation, which may also explain students' perception of spoken feedback as timely, relevant and 'open', offering opportunities to interact with their tutors.

In contrast, none of the interview participants reported any instances of verbal summative feedback, which many students thought would have been useful, as illustrated by Heike's comment:

Feedback was always written and it would have been really helpful if, after written feedback, I would have had the chance to have verbal feedback and discuss any issues or queries I had regarding the written comments.
(Heike, student, interview)

Some of the students said that they were aware that they could make an appointment to discuss their feedback, but their reasons not to do so included feeling embarrassed about their grade, limited tutor availability, and poor timing of the summative feedback, which they usually received after the module finished. In the survey, 60.9% of students in STEM and 49% in HASS said they had the opportunity to discuss their feedback with their tutor; however, the statement in the questionnaire did not distinguish between formative or summative feedback, so it was unclear whether the discussion with their tutors related to formative or summative feedback, or whether students had taken up the opportunity to discuss their feedback with their tutors.

Since students were particularly positive about verbal feedback and tended to engage more with this form of feedback, it is reasonable to infer that it can play an important role in the development of academic literacy. Verbal feedback seems to encourage dialogue between students and tutors as it allows students to interact, ask questions or justify their rationale for particular choices. Spoken feedback was often linked to formative activities, was perceived as more personalised, timely and relevant to the assessment tasks in hand. However, despite the potential of spoken feedback for the development of academic literacy, findings suggest that most feedback on Masters courses is written.

6.1.3 Written forms of feedback

Written feedback in all its different forms (e.g. typed or handwritten comments, annotations or corrections) was the most common form of feedback reported by both interview participants and those who completed the survey, representing 63% of all types of feedback (See Appendix 6.1 for a list of common forms of feedback reported in the survey). The majority of comments in this category were in digital form, for example, annotations or corrections using 'tracked changes', but handwritten comments still accounted for about a third of all written feedback. There was little variation across disciplinary groups, for example 62.6% of students in HASS and 63.6% in STEM reported written feedback, while the proportion of handwritten comments in both disciplinary groups was about a third of the total, 21% in HASS and 19.7% in STEM, (See Appendix 6.2 for a list of common forms of feedback per disciplinary group).

Out of the different forms of written feedback, students in the survey and in interviews showed preference for in-situ annotations as these pointed to areas of their work that needed more attention:

I would prefer to see markers' comments on the original and have a clearer idea of where specific issues are. (Anonymous, student, survey comment)

Sometimes we get only comments in the last page of the essay and they say, 'you need to do this or that', but I don't know which part they are talking about. Some professors put lines or comments in all pages, [so] I know where is the problem and I can learn. (Isabel, student, interview)

In contrast, students were critical of pre-designed feedback sheets with scores and band descriptors and felt these were not personalised because '*comments could apply to all students*' (Shen, student, interview) and were thus less useful than specific comments on their work:

Feedback have been given as mark and with a mark criteria [that] has been filled out (with ticks). This is not useful to improve for future work. (Anonymous, student, survey comment)

They gave me this [feedback sheet with descriptors] and my friend had the same line [band] but different grade. Why? We don't know. Maybe he [the tutor] confuse the names. We don't know. (Sherko, student, interview)

This suggests that students see feedback as a personalised form of communication. Although pre-designed feedback sheets may contain both personalised commentary and generic assessment criteria, students reported instances where there was no commentary at all (See example in Appendix 6.10), which may lead to more dissatisfaction and crucially, less student engagement with it.

The samples of written feedback collected in this study included pre-designed feedback sheets with rubrics, annotations on students' work, and ex-situ comments, for example by email or at the end of students' work. Nearly all feedback samples were summative (See Section 6.1) and given to students after the module finished, which might explain why there seemed to be a higher level of dissatisfaction with this type of feedback, as reported by most of the students.

The research suggests that feedback practices vary across disciplines, programmes and modules, so Masters students often experience various forms of feedback; however, spoken and written feedback account for the most common forms, suggesting that students require a certain level of English language competence to be able to access the message, and sometimes, to establish a dialogue either with their peers or their tutors. The form and mode of feedback seems to be linked to different purposes, with written feedback being predominantly used in connection to summative assessments, and spoken feedback mostly linked to formative tasks. This distinction may be an important factor in students' level of engagement and satisfaction with feedback, which

will be discussed later when considering the potential impact of feedback on the development of academic literacy.

6.2 Linguistics features of written feedback from tutors

As discussed in 3.6.2, the linguistic analysis is based on 14 samples of written feedback of both ex-situ comments, including emails, and in-situ annotations on students' work. The analysis looks at contextual variables through Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) analytical tools (Coffin et al., 2009) to identify ways in which tutors express attitude, signal an open or closed stance, and create opportunities for dialogue, all of which may affect the way in which students interpret feedback. For example, Lea and Street (2000, in Weaver, 2006) contend that comments containing unmitigated statements and imperatives can obscure interpretation of feedback, confuse or upset students.

For this study, the focus will be on linguistic aspects of feedback that relate to tenor and thus denote social roles and status, speaker or writer persona, and social distance (Coffin et al., 2009). The analysis will look at aspects such as the use of pronouns, formality of language, terms of address, lexis, modality, use of evaluative language and other appraisal resources, and sentence mood. These linguistic features are important when considering how tutors position themselves and the choices they make when producing feedback, which is often shaped by tutors' understanding of academic literacy, their values, assumptions and positionality within their field.

Although the frequency of certain linguistic aspects such as the use of pronouns or terms of address was noted, a quantitative analysis was not attempted because of the limited number of feedback samples (14), and the fact that instruments such word counts may not have been useful when noting different forms of evaluative language, modality, or the level of formality. In this sense, the analysis may seem rather impressionistic; however, it still relied on a

basic system when reporting findings where 'most', 'frequent' or 'often' referred to instances that were present in more than half of the samples, 'some' referred to less than half of the samples, and 'a few' referred to less than a quarter of the samples, which as evident from the coding.

The linguistic analysis can shed light on both how tutors construct feedback and the effect that this may have on how students interpret and engage with feedback, which could enhance or limit the impact of feedback on the development of their academic literacy. Since there seemed to be differences in how tutors constructed annotations and commentary, the following subsections will look at these two forms in more detail.

6.2.1 The language of annotations

There were noticeable differences in the linguistic features of tutors' annotations, but there was no evidence of significant disciplinary variation except in lexis, as could be reasonably expected; therefore, variation seemed to mostly occur at individual level. There was variation in aspects such as the level of formality (e.g. ellipsis), the use of impersonal/personal language (e.g. personal pronouns), or vocatives (i.e. addressing students by name), which could influence students' characterisations of tutors (e.g. '*friendly*' or '*approachable*').

Another noticeable feature that may impact on interpersonal relationships between students and tutors was the frequent use of imperative form of verbs. This particular mood often made feedback sound more authoritative and directive, for instance, '*explain why*', '*refer to Art. Xc*', '*do not add new information in your conclusion*'. This type of directive feedback was preferred by some students, although two participants thought this was rude and felt tutors should phrase comments as advice not '*orders*'. Some students may perceive politeness as a sign of respect, perhaps suggesting a preference for a less

authoritative approach and a more symmetrical relationship with their tutors, which would seem to encourage dialogic communication. Interestingly, one tutor consistently used phrases to mark politeness, for example, '*please use double space*', or turned to other forms of deontic modality to make comments look less like an order, for instance, '*you need to continue discussing this*', or '*you should include more case law here*', which was appreciated by the student, who described his tutor as '*very approachable*'.

Interrogative sentences or phrases were often used, and there were two main types: those that resembled actual questions and seemed to open up dialogue, seek clarification, or encourage critical thinking, and those that openly signalled appraisal, often characterised by a certain level of ambiguity that some students interpreted as being dismissive and discouraging. For example, questions such as '*Authority?*', '*If so, is there a need to discuss this?*', '*Would this apply in other contexts?*', '*So, what would be the alternative?*', '*Such as?*' or '*Why so?*' seem to imply that the tutor is looking for clarification or encouraging dialogue and/or reflection. In contrast, the purpose of questions such as '*and?*', '*So what?*', or '*Really?*', seems less clear, perhaps signalling irrelevance, disbelief, or a closed stance, so, although this may not have been the tutor's intention, a few students found this type of question demotivating. The use of adjectives for evaluation purposes was common in annotations, for example. '*Good*', '*Useful*', '*Confusing*', '*Wordy*', often accompanied by adverbs, for example, '*Clearly stated*', '*Too long*', '*Not very convincing*', or '*terribly confusing*'.

Besides adjectival phrases, tutors used declarative sentences that included evaluative language, both for praise and criticism, for instance, '*This is really well written*', '*This is a very good*', '*This does not add anything to the*

discussion', or '*You are making sweeping statements here*'. Since declarative sentences are often perceived as statements of fact, when combined with evaluative language, they can be authoritative and powerful. Some of these statements can be motivating when they contain praise, but they can also sound overly critical and discouraging when they include criticism, which can affect students' engagement with feedback, and thus, limit its contribution to the development of academic literacy. In this study, a few students reported what they perceived as tutor bias, as discussed later, and said that were less likely to act on their feedback.

In her study of students' perception of tutor written responses, Weaver (2006) found that the language used in feedback affects the way in which students receive written feedback; she argues that judgemental statements such as 'good report', 'fails to answer the question', or 'poor effort', are seen as unhelpful. Her findings reflect Boud's (1995) and Hounsell's (1995) claim that when feedback is particularly critical or dismissive, it can cause emotional reactions such as anger or upset, and thus result in learners becoming less receptive to tutors' comments.

Finally, in terms of lexis, annotations mostly used language that could be understood across disciplines (as illustrated by the previous examples); however, there were examples of subject-specific terminology, especially in STEM subjects, for instance, '*JFET devices also relevant here*', suggesting that understanding the language of feedback also requires a certain degree of specialisation in the relevant discourse, which can be more challenging for international students on interdisciplinary programmes or those who come from a different disciplinary background. This is particularly relevant considering

previous research that has highlighted the fact that feedback is often written in a type of discourse that students may not be able to access (See 2.4.2).

The language of annotations is important because it can affect students' understanding, interpretation and engagement with feedback, so tutors must be careful with the way that they phrase annotations. This can be particularly difficult considering the nature of this practice, which is often a spontaneous reaction to particular aspects of students' work; however, linguistic features such as the choice of lexis can act as barriers if students are still unfamiliar with disciplinary jargon. Other features can, perhaps inadvertently, trigger certain emotional responses that can have a negative impact on how students interpret and engage with feedback. As Hyland (1998) argues, 'writing is an intensely personal activity, and students' motivation and confidence in themselves as writers may be adversely affected by the feedback they receive' (p. 279).

On the other hand, students need to understand that, as other social practices, feedback is culturally and socially constructed, so there are likely to be variations across disciplines, modules and tutors. Students could benefit from being introduced to feedback practices in their specific contexts to gain a reasonable understanding of what to expect and 'how to read' tutor comments and maximise their impact on both the development of academic literacy and learning in general. This could help reduce tensions between students' and tutors' expectations and minimise the potential for misinterpretation of cultural and social norms (e.g. use of colloquial expressions, humour, 'bluntness'). Dialogue around assessment and feedback, as discussed in the next chapter, can help develop mutual understanding and interpretive affinity, potentially improving students' chances of academic success and integration into their academic communities.

6.2.2 The language of commentary

There were similarities between the language of commentary and that of annotations. Comments also varied in their level of formality and in the use of impersonal language. For example, commentary often included fragments rather than complete sentences such as '*Some interesting points in a number of areas*'; some addressed students by name, giving it a more personal tone, while others used third person, for instance, '*The student has produced a well written report in response to the brief*', increasing social distance and perhaps suggesting that feedback was intended for a different audience, for example, an external examiner or that there was a blind marking policy in place. Commentary included specialised lexical sets relevant to particular disciplines and contained examples of declarative sentences for both praise and criticism, for instance, '*The essay is well-written and carefully researched*', or '*The list of referencing styles adds nothing and is of no value at all*'.

Although the evaluative and authoritative tone of feedback could be reasonably expected in summative feedback, certain comments such as '*This does not add anything to your discussion*' (STEM), can sound judgemental or overly critical, and thus be seen as unhelpful, as discussed earlier. For example, in response to the comment about his discussion in a report, above, Phong (student, interview) said, '*This comment does not anything to my learning*'. Boud (1995) argues that teachers 'judge too much and too powerfully, not realising the extent to which students experience our power over them' (p. 43). Therefore, as Weaver (2006), contends, it is important to consider how feedback comments are worded and the nature of the message, both of which are shaped by tutors' own intradiscourse and academic literacy configuration.

Perhaps there is also a need for tutors to recognise that 'a single text can be 'read' in different ways during assessment (Read et al., 2004, p. 247), so their interpretation of students' work is only one possible reading, albeit an expert one, of many possible readings, which could lead to different responses (e.g. feedback comments), and outcomes (e.g. scores). In this sense, some tutors expressed concern that some of the comments on the quality of students' work were '*clearly a matter of opinion and could be easily contested*' (Alice, tutor, interview), questioning the authoritative tone of some feedback given by colleagues.

Despite often sharing some features, there were some noticeable differences between in-situ annotations and ex-situ commentary. For example, the imperative form of verbs was less common in commentaries, where teachers opted for other devices such as modality to soften the statements, for instance, '*You **could perhaps have found** examples either where maxims are flouted and no humour created....*', '*You make some valid points but the main argument **could be clearer***'. The use of epistemic modality (hedging) provides certain ambiguity as it may indicate caution (e.g. acknowledgement of other possible interpretations), thus suggesting an open stance and prompting dialogue, or it could signal politeness, therefore presenting a particular judgement while possibly avoiding confrontation.

Differences between the linguistic features of in-situ annotations and ex-situ commentary may point to different purposes of feedback (e.g. flagging up issues in annotations, or justifying a mark in commentary), or perhaps the nature of each practice (e.g. spontaneous reactions to text in annotations, or thoughtful consideration of the whole piece in commentary). Importantly, these differences raise the question of the degree to which students are aware of the

different purposes of feedback, whether they may be more responsive to either of these two forms of feedback, as well as the extent to which international students with limited language skills are able to understand these nuances and effectively respond to feedback, for example, by asserting their ideas or changing their practices.

Although this study did not consistently look at how students interpreted their feedback, participants were asked about their interpretation of the tutor comments; however, as many of the samples were submitted by students after the final interview, only five student participants (Farah, Phong, Lucia, Shen, and Ina) discussed their interpretation of the feedback during the interviews and mentioned cases where they did not understand tutor comments for different reasons, discussed later in 7.2, including legibility of tutors' handwriting, use of unfamiliar terminology or failing to understand what the tutor wanted. Shen, for example, said that he sometimes shared the feedback with classmates and asked them what some of the comments meant. This suggests that international students' interpretation of feedback may be a line of inquiry worth exploring to better understand any potential misalignment between tutors' intentions and students' interpretations of feedback.

Another difference in commentaries was the absence of questions or interrogative phrases, which could be interpreted as commentaries acting as summaries and presenting a closed stance such as justifying a mark, rather than opening new avenues for dialogue. Again, this suggests that feedback, or feedout (See Knight, 2002, in 2.4.2), can have other non-pedagogical functions such as compliance with institutional policies or quality assurance processes established by external accreditation bodies. Glover and Brown (2006) argue that statements of quality are characteristic of mark-loss focused feedback,

typically found in summative feedback, whose main purpose is to justify grades, as opposed to learning-focused feedback, which primarily serves as a tool for learning by providing explanations of what students have done wrong and ways to improve their work. Randall and Mirador (2003) also contend that summative feedback is characterised by single statements about the quality of students' work and cast doubt on the effect that these statements can have on students' future work.

Overall, the linguistic analysis of feedback revealed certain variation depending on the person giving feedback and the form of delivery i.e. in-situ annotations versus commentary. Variation can be a reflection of tutors' values, beliefs and understandings (Weaver, 2006) or their idiolect, that is, their distinctive and unique use of language. On the other hand, differences may also relate to the type of feedback, for example, greater use of commands or questions in in-situ annotations may reflect specific responses to particular aspects of students' writing while lengthier commentary with hedging could reflect a more holistic approach. Since there was no evidence of significant differences across disciplinary groups, although this may be due to the limited number of examples per discipline, it is possible to infer that the type of feedback and personal variables play a significant role in how feedback is constructed.

As pointed out in 6.2, the linguistic features of feedback are important because they are likely to have an impact on students' access and understanding of relevant discourses, and on the affective dimension of academic literacy. The way in which feedback is given (e.g. handwritten, in-situ or ex-situ) seems to influence some of the linguistic choices made by tutors when giving feedback and this may affect students' understanding of feedback.

Students may struggle with the interpretation of feedback, both at linguistic and conceptual level, but they may also react negatively to comments that seem overly critical, failing to engage with feedback and act on it. Many of these features seem to reinforce social roles i.e. tutor and student and asymmetric relationships where tutors hold a position of authority. While international students accustomed to more didactic or directive pedagogical approaches may not have any issues with this balance of power, this asymmetry may encourage compliance rather than criticality and could discourage open dialogue between tutors and students, which may be a more effective way of engaging students with feedback. Crisp (2007) argues that statements in feedback comments often represent a series of 'unilateral pronouncements' that offer little opportunity for dialogue, perhaps reducing the impact of summative feedback, the most common type found in this study.

6.3 Content features of written feedback and their link to different dimensions of academic literacy.

The different dimensions of academic literacy (See Appendix 4.10) are revisited here to consider how feedback content relates to them. Findings reveal a strong link between the content of the feedback and some of the key elements of academic literacy (Appendix 4.1 for a full list of KEALs), highlighting the potential that tutor feedback has to contribute to the development of academic literacy. The analysis focuses on collected samples of feedback while incorporating participants' views on the content of feedback from interviews and the survey.

6.3.1 Feedback related to multimodal dimension: linguistic and sociolinguistic competencies.

The students on courses that included a strong element of practical skills (e.g. computer animation or design) referred to spoken feedback aimed to improve their non-language-based work (e.g. animations, a scale model);

however, perhaps because of the primacy of written language in assessment, comments related to this dimension tended to focus on writing. Feedback often referred to the technical and structural dimension of academic literacy, although this was often blurred with references to language, seen here as part of the multimodal dimension. For example, concerns about language systems (e.g. lexis and grammar) and particular uses of language (e.g. style) featured prominently in feedback, but these were often combined with aspects such as spelling or punctuation (See Appendix 6.5). This blurring between dimensions highlights both the complex interplay between key elements of academic literacy and the fact that the multi-dimensional model presented in this study (See Appendix 4.10) is not a descriptive tool but a conceptual one to help with the discussion, so the different dimensions and the key elements in them should not be seen as fixed entities.

In annotations, there were often no comments; instead, words or phrases containing language mistakes were underlined, circled or flagged up with a question mark. There were not many examples of corrections, so there seemed to be an assumption that subject tutors should not correct language, as expressed by some academics in the interviews, or that students should be able to make the corrections themselves.

The importance of language accuracy and an understanding of language use in specific contexts was also reflected in pre-designed feedback sheets in the sample, all of which contained a section in the rubric that referred to language under headings such as *Language use*, *Clarity of expression* or *Writing style*. In the survey (See Appendix 6.3 for student responses about their experiences of feedback), nearly two thirds of students (64.6%) said that

feedback had highlighted issues with grammar, style or spelling, with a relatively small variation (5.35%) across disciplinary groups.

A command of language systems and an understanding of language use in specific contexts and situations is central to academic literacy because they are the foundations on which individuals can build a better understanding of relevant discourse(s) in their field.

6.3.2 Feedback related to the social dimension of literacy

As discussed in 4.2.2, developing a sense of audience, academic standards and expectations in a particular academic context is essential for students to engage with discourse in ways that are deemed legitimate by other members of their discourse community. Feedback can contribute to this in different ways. For example, over two thirds of students across disciplinary groups agreed that feedback had helped them understand standards and develop a sense of quality, particularly in STEM, where 78.7% of students agreed with the statement. In terms of how feedback had helped students understand the particular ways of thinking in their discipline, there was a marked contrast in students' perception, with 51% of students in HASS agreeing, compared to 72.3% in STEM.

Despite some differences across disciplinary groups, evidence suggests that feedback has the potential to help students gain a better understanding of their academic contexts. Most feedback samples included references to academic standards and some specifically referred to how these were linked to grades: *'Whilst re-stating the models is one of the things that the assignment expects, for a high mark (i.e. 80%+) I would expect some more thoughts. For example [...]'* (STEM). In this example of generic feedback, the tutor listed other relevant models and the type of approach the students could have taken to achieve a higher score. Feedback samples highlighted specific expectations

within their discourse communities: *'You demonstrate [sic] a reasonable understanding of XML/JSON but further examples of how the technology supports web applications would be beneficial.'* (STEM). Some of these expectations, however, were common across disciplines, for example, the need to provide evidence to support a particular point, for instance, references and/or examples, as illustrated below:

<p>HASS</p> <p>controls 80 percent of the GM corn market, and 93 percent of the GM soy market.¹⁸ This does show that there is a large potential of abuse when so much power is concentrated into one commercial organisation especially when they have a track record like Monsanto that shows they are not ethically inclined.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>evidence ?</i></p>
<p><i>'It would have been interesting to develop in further detail to what extent the brief can increase the quality of the work as well as what additional factors are needed to cover its limitations, perhaps applying it to a particular example.'</i> HASS</p>

The research seems to confirm claims in the literature (Hyland, 2009; Ivanič, 2001 in Hyland, 2009; Orsmond & Merry, 2011; McCune & Hounsell 2005; Sadler, 2002) that feedback can help students understand their context, recognise the values and beliefs of their academic community, develop a sense of academic standards, and familiarise themselves with expectations and requirements of the course, all of which contribute to develop the social dimension of academic literacy.

6.3.3 Feedback related to the informational dimension of academic literacy.

Frequent references to knowledge, theory, research and information skills were a common feature in feedback samples, as illustrated in Appendix 6.6. Although there were reaffirming comments, most were corrective, pointing out errors in the application of theory, wrong use of terminology, lack of theoretical underpinning or limited references to the literature.

The survey also indicated the importance of theory and different types of knowledge. Over half of the student respondents said that feedback had drawn attention to theoretical gaps in their work, with a comparatively small difference across disciplinary groups (6.8%). About 60% of students said tutors signposted useful resources to improve their work, particularly in STEM subjects. On average, more than two thirds of the students (67.3%) said that feedback had clarified aspects of the subject that they did not understand, although there was a considerable difference (13.7%) between HASS and STEM. Feedback drew attention to methodological or procedural issues, reported by more than half of the students with a relatively small variation (7.7%) across disciplinary groups. Feedback also raised awareness and understanding of wider contextual issues and theory, reported by reported by 65.2% percent of students in STEM and 52% in HASS.

Despite some differences across disciplinary groups, findings support the proposition that feedback can play a key role in developing the informational dimension of academic literacy.

6.3.4 Feedback related to the cognitive and metacognitive dimension.

The cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy covers a wide range of KEALs, as discussed in 4.4, which were frequently mentioned in feedback, as illustrated in Appendix 6.7. There was noticeable variation in terms of the focus, the amount of commentary, and delivery methods used by tutors, which could be the result of factors such as disciplinary variation, departmental assessment and feedback regimes, or personal preferences.

Survey results pointed to contrasting experiences for students in different disciplinary groups, as shown in Appendix 6.3. For example, while 54.9% of HASS students agreed that feedback had encouraged them to evaluate and synthesise their reading more effectively, 63.8% of students in STEM agreed.

Similarly, 51% of HASS students agreed that feedback had helped them develop analytic and critical thinking skills, while 66% of STEM students did. The biggest difference between disciplinary groups was in terms of feedback on argumentation: while 52% of HASS students thought feedback had identified problems with reasoning and argumentation in their work, 71.7% of students in STEM agree. In general, there seemed to be a consistent pattern where percentages in HASS were lower than in STEM, suggesting that STEM students perceived a greater focus of feedback on the cognitive and metacognitive dimension of academic literacy.

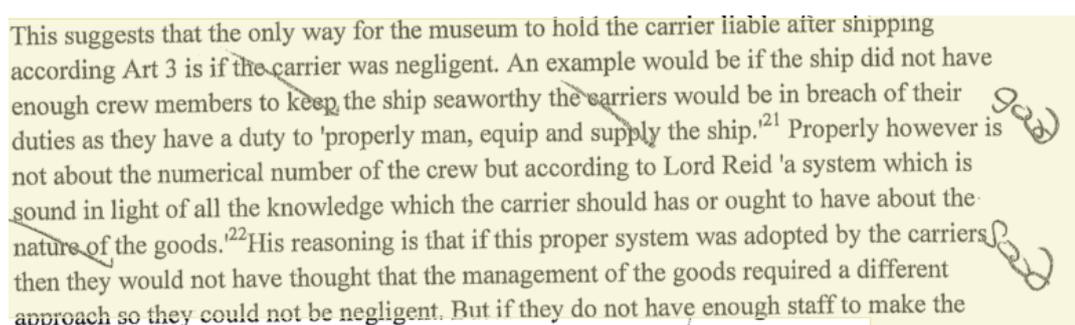
One important observation is that 71.7% of students in STEM agreed that feedback had identified problems with reasoning and argumentation in their work, and 75% said it had drawn attention to problems with the organisation of ideas in their work; however, 53.2% believed that feedback helped them develop and present arguments more effectively. One reason for this gap between the purpose of feedback and the impact it had on students could be that written feedback may not be the best vehicle to tackle the complexity of argumentation, which is often staged throughout a piece of work and may be difficult to pinpoint in a text. Therefore, issues in students' work that relate to complex cognitive processes may require pedagogical approaches that go beyond the use of feedback as a vehicle to deliver information.

6.3.5 Feedback related to the affective and dispositional dimension of academic literacy.

There were no examples of feedback that directly addressed aspects such as motivation, initiative or perseverance, but feedback can indirectly impact on the affective and dispositional dimension of academic literacy and determine how students engage with their course, and therefore, the extent to which they deploy other elements of academic literacy. As discussed in 6.2, tutors can

deliver implicit messages through feedback, either intentionally or inadvertently, which can have an effect on students' attitudes and emotions. For example, commenting on both successful aspects of students' work and areas that need improving can have a motivational effect as positive comments may reinforce certain practices. Interestingly, this was the item in the survey with the greatest difference between DGs (26%), with three quarters of students in STEM saying they had received both positive and critical comments, compared to under half (49%) of the students in HASS.

Such difference, however, was not particularly evident in feedback samples where most commentaries contained praise mixed with criticism, for example, '*Some valid points raised but you need to structure your ideas to present them in a more meaningful way*' (STEM). Annotations, also signalled both successful aspects of the work and areas for improvement, although this was often done graphically, for instance, by using question marks or ticks, underlining or circling, or via single words such as '*unclear*', '*confusing*', '*yes*', '*good*', as illustrated below:



This suggests that the only way for the museum to hold the carrier liable after shipping according Art 3 is if the carrier was negligent. An example would be if the ship did not have enough crew members to keep the ship seaworthy the carriers would be in breach of their duties as they have a duty to 'properly man, equip and supply the ship.'²¹ Properly however is not about the numerical number of the crew but according to Lord Reid 'a system which is sound in light of all the knowledge which the carrier should have or ought to have about the nature of the goods.'²² His reasoning is that if this proper system was adopted by the carriers then they would not have thought that the management of the goods required a different approach so they could not be negligent. But if they do not have enough staff to make the

Negative comments, for example, '*There isn't one strength that I can identify.*' (HASS) seemed to affect students' motivation, with some students feeling that feedback was sometimes overly critical and dismissive, as illustrated by other examples in Appendix 6.8.

As discussed in 6.2, findings suggest that feedback may not only impact on communicative, informational, cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of

academic literacy, but also on students' emotion and disposition, potentially affecting how they engage with feedback or the extent to which they deploy different elements of academic literacy to complete academic tasks.

6.3.6 Feedback related to the technical and structural dimension.

Most survey respondents agreed that feedback had improved their academic writing, suggesting that tutor feedback includes information that can help students develop specific aspects of their writing such as mechanics (e.g. spacing and punctuation), academic conventions (e.g. referencing styles), or expectations about different disciplinary genres (e.g. use of headings in reports), as illustrated in Appendix 6.9. However, differences across DGs were noticeable, for example, 58.8 % of HASS students said feedback had improved their writing in contrast to 76.6% in STEM; similarly, 46% of students in HASS said feedback pointed out problems with presentation and use of academic conventions, while 68.9% of STEM agreed.

One noteworthy finding was that, despite 79.6% of tutors saying they had commented on academic conventions (Appendix 6.4), signalling the importance that they attributed to these, during the interviews, students seemed less interested in this aspect of academic writing and most expressed a preference for feedback on content rather than format:

Useful feedback is, according to me, when something where we have lacked, the tutor addresses it, if you have lacked in this particular thing so you should concentrate more on it. That will be very useful, instead of these references and things, that is not good. It's an unending problem for the international students, the citing, and plagiarism things. We need more about the content and more about what we have lacked. Forget about, you've done this reference wrong, that's not useful. (Kanti, student, interview)

Some students argued that they were not in the UK to learn English or 'to write like English people' (Phong, student, focus group), so many wanted feedback that focused on disciplinary knowledge: 'I think, academic stuff is the important,

because we're all here for academic knowledge. Lecturers, well, they are not an English teacher' (Shen, student, interview). Some of the tutors were sympathetic towards students and agreed that certain conventions probably seemed alien and impractical to international students. Ian, for example, argued that practices such as referencing could be a reflection of '*Western bias*' manifested in a set of '*academic orthodoxies that we just take for granted and hardly ever challenge*' (Ian, tutor, interview). A few teachers thought that the '*Western*' and '*Eurocentric*' curriculum that dominated English-speaking academia posed additional challenges to international students, for which they '*deserve extra credit*':

It's hard for them [international students] too and I think they deserve extra credit that they don't often get. So if you look at the ability to transcend from different languages and cultures, actually that's way more demanding than you could even think of, so it depends on what you're looking at and how you're assessing against it. Are you assessing just the level of difficulty from a Western perspective? Are you taking into account cultural levels of engagement, and culture levels of difficulty? (Sam, tutor, interview)

Ian's and Sam's comments raise the issue of a widespread assumption, already discussed in 1.4 and 5.4, that it is international students' responsibility to conform to established norms in UK academe, raising the question of the extent to which international students' cultural capital is acknowledged and valued.

6.5 Summary and conclusion

Despite highlighting the variety of types (e.g. formative, summative, intrinsic, extrinsic), forms (e.g. comments, diagrams, symbols), and modes of delivery (e.g. handwritten, spoken, online), this chapter pointed to a widespread view of feedback as information that is 'delivered' to students, most commonly through written comments, as discussed in 2.4.2 and the introduction of this chapter. This seems to go against calls in the recent literature for a reconceptualisation

of feedback as a dialogic process (Beaumont et al., 2011; Blair et al., 2014; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless et al, 2011; Carless, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Espasa et al., 2018; Nicol, 2010; Yang and Carless, 2013), characterised by opportunities for the co-construction of meaning through interactions, whether through written or spoken language. As Williams and Kane (2009), argue, dialogue is necessary to help students interpret comments and understand expectations but also for tutors to understand students' feedback practices and make reasonable adjustments to their own practices to better respond to students' needs, particularly in the case of international students who may be used to different approaches to assessment and feedback.

Since nearly all samples of feedback corresponded to summative feedback, the study seems to raise the question about the extent to which students receive formative feedback. This is particularly relevant given the apparent decline in formative assessment in UK higher education (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004) and the view that summative feedback remains the dominant discourse (Boud, 2007), despite concerns about its effectiveness, as Blair et al. (2014, p. 1051) contend: '*While summative feedback may be necessary to explain and justify grades awarded, it is not suitable for helping students to develop and close the gap between present and desired performance.*'

The prevalence of written and spoken language in feedback practices identified in this study highlights the importance of international students possessing a reasonable command of English to be able to interpret tutor comments. The study also provides further evidence of the privileged position of written discourse in academia, suggesting that linguistic features of written feedback are particularly relevant as they can influence international students' understanding and perception of feedback. Since assessment and feedback are

deeply emotional processes (Boud, 1995; Carless, 2006; Higgins et al., 2001; Hyland, 1998), the linguistic features of feedback can impact on how students interpret feedback, how they feel about it, and how they respond to it, as discussed in 6.2.1.

Students' understanding of feedback may also depend on the extent to which tutors use disciplinary terminology or everyday language in disciplinary contexts (See 4.1.2, 6.2.1). Since students and tutors often operate at different theoretical/conceptual levels (See 5.2.3), their level of familiarity with relevant discourse(s) is likely to be different and this may hinder interpretive affinity. This seems consistent with previous studies (See 2.4.2) highlighting students' difficulties in accessing the type of discourse embedded in tutor feedback; however, it seems reasonable to infer that understanding feedback is likely to be more challenging for learners who do not share their tutors' cultural, social, linguistic or disciplinary backgrounds, as is the case of many international students.

However, despite fully recognising the importance of tutor practices, particularly in terms of which KEALs they emphasise in their feedback and how they phrase their comments, findings also point to the need to pay more attention to the extent to which international students understand feedback, how they interpret it, and respond to it. Student engagement with feedback is especially important because, otherwise, feedback may be little more than a tutors' hopeful attempt at communicating with students, like a message in a bottle thrown at sea in the hope that, one day, it will be read. The view in this study is that international students' interpretation and use of feedback seems to warrant further investigation by the research community in order to gain a better

understanding of the impact of tutor feedback on their academic literacy practices.

In terms of content features of feedback, the findings revealed a strong link between the content of the feedback in this study and various dimensions of academic literacy. This suggests that feedback has considerable potential to develop academic literacy because comments often refer to key elements of academic literacy such as language, voice, awareness of expectations in their context, theory, procedural knowledge, analytical and critical thinking, reflection, motivation, integrity, structural and mechanical aspects associated with writing such as conventions of referencing and mechanics. However, findings in this study suggest the prevalence of monologic-dialectic approaches (Lillis, 2003) that see feedback as information rather than as a dialogic process; consequently, students may receive feedback, but not act on it, regardless of the medium, the type, the amount, or the quality of the feedback.

Chapter 7: The development of academic literacy: the role of tutor feedback, and other important factors

As discussed in the previous chapter, the link between the content of feedback and the dimensions of academic literacy highlights the potential that feedback has to develop different KEALs, from structural and mechanical aspects of writing (e.g. organisation, punctuation, or citation conventions) to application of theory to certain contexts. Findings also pointed to the potential impact of linguistic features of feedback on the affective and dispositional dimension of academic literacy because the way that tutors present their feedback can affect how students interpret it and the extent to which they may engage with it. The first part of this chapter (See 7.1) revisits data from samples, interviews and the survey to further explore the relationship between tutor feedback and the development of academic literacy.

Most evidence of the impact of feedback on the development of academic literacy in this study relies on participants' perceptions, as in other studies (e.g. Price et al., 2010). While acknowledging the limitations of this approach, participants' perceptions recorded in the survey constitute a starting point to explore the contribution of tutor feedback towards students' academic literacy development. This is followed by an exploration of possible barriers to the impact of tutor feedback on international students' academic literacy (See 7.2).

Despite focusing on the link between tutor feedback and academic literacy, the research uncovered other important factors, covered in Sections 7.3 and 7.4, which also play a role in the development of international students' academic literacy. While not intending to provide a detailed exploration of these other contributing factors, their identification aims to build a wider picture of academic literacy development and to point to future lines of inquiry that are

worth exploring. Besides formative and summative tutor feedback, often a by-product of assessment, other factors could be equally - or perhaps even more - determinant in the process of academic literacy development.

Findings also point to the importance of dialogue as a way to help achieve mutual understanding between students and tutors and perhaps reduce the potential for misalignment in increasingly diverse and complex university settings. Therefore, a move towards dialogic feedback practices in postgraduate taught programmes could help international students maximise the potential of feedback to develop their academic literacy while helping tutors gain a better understanding and appreciation of the range of literacy practices that international students bring with them.

[7.1 The role of feedback in the development of academic literacy.](#)

Findings from the survey (See Appendix 6.3 for student responses about their feedback experiences) provide evidence to support the proposition that feedback can play an important role in the development of KEALs. For example, a large percentage of students across disciplinary groups agreed that feedback had helped them understand standards and develop a sense of quality, which is one of the most important functions of feedback so that they can monitor themselves (e.g. Carless, 2013; Sadler, 1989). Furthermore, 60.8% of students in HASS and 74.5% in STEM agreed that feedback had clarified aspects of the subject area that they did not understand.

However, the figures above illustrate a consistent pattern in the data showing percentages in HASS were considerably lower than in STEM, by more than 10% in most cases. For example, 52% of students in HASS thought that feedback raised awareness of wider contextual issues and relevant theory in their disciplines compared to 65.2% in STEM. Similarly, 51% of HASS students thought feedback helped them understand the particular ways of thinking in

their disciplines in comparison to 72.3% in STEM. Just over half the students in HASS (51%) believed feedback helped develop their analytic and critical thinking skills in contrast to 66% in STEM who did. While 39.2% of HASS agreed that feedback helped them develop and present arguments in a more effective way, 53.2% of STEM students did. Higher percentages in STEM subjects suggest that feedback may have a greater impact on the development of academic literacy in STEM than in HASS subjects.

Perceptions of the impact of feedback also varied considerably between tutors and students, with academics showing considerably more agreement with statements in the survey than students (See Appendix 6.4 for survey responses regarding experiences of feedback across participant groups); for example, while 86.8% of all academics felt that feedback had helped students develop and present arguments in a more effective way, 45.9% of students agreed, a difference of more than 40 percentage points. It is then reasonable to infer that there is considerable misalignment between students' and tutors' perceptions of feedback, which is consistent with findings in other studies where academics believed their feedback to be more useful than students did (Beaumont et al., 2001; Carless, 2006).

This misalignment can sometimes lead to tensions between students and tutors, for example, tutors were often critical of students' apparent lack of engagement with feedback, while students complained that the timing and content of feedback often rendered it irrelevant, so there was little point in engaging with it. This could explain the levels of dissatisfaction with feedback identified in this study, also found in national student surveys where students have consistently identified feedback as a problematic area (HEA, 2017). Students' experiences and perceptions of feedback are particularly important

because they may affect the extent to which they engage with it, as discussed in 5.3.1.

Students' responses in the survey suggest there is a gap between what written feedback aims to do and what it actually achieves, raising questions in terms of its contribution to the development of academic literacy. For example, as discussed in 6.3.4, while most students agreed that feedback highlighted issues with reasoning and argumentation, considerably fewer believed that feedback had helped them address the problem. This mismatch between what feedback aimed to do and what students thought it actually achieved suggests that although comments from tutors may be effective in making students aware of particular issue, it may not be equally effective in helping students address it. As Boud and Molloy (2013) strongly argue, input from teachers should be judged not just in terms of content, timing or style but in terms of whether that input makes a difference to what the students can produce.

Most tutors themselves seemed to have doubts about the effectiveness of feedback for a number of reasons, some of which will be discussed later. However, none of them had any established mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of their own feedback, and there was no evidence of a systematic approach to measure the impact of feedback at institutional level:

How would I assess the effectiveness of my feedback? I'm not sure I'd see it in the postgrad programmes because of the nature of the content of the assignments. There's not a formative approach because each bit of the assessment doesn't lead to the other, if that makes sense. But I'd like to think that the effectiveness of the whole programme is seen in the quality of the assessments at the end. (Anne, tutor, interview)

About a quarter of the tutors believed that their feedback had an effect on students' performance, although this was based on anecdotal evidence. In contrast, most claimed they had not been able to see any convincing signs of feedback having a positive impact on students' academic literacy practices,

even when students had made changes as a result of their tutor's comments. For example, in his response to the interview question '*Have you noticed any changes or improvement as a result of your feedback?*' William claimed he saw little improvement in students' work and was critical of students who were content with paraphrasing or simply copying his feedback into their work:

I think, no is the short answer in a way. I think possibly for a couple of reasons. The first reason is sometimes that if I've given relatively directive feedback and say, 'Look, this is the sort of thing you need to do.' Sometimes that's almost taken literally, so you can read it [the feedback given] in someone's essay, but it's almost a paraphrase of what you've said and you recognise that as your point. And it might stand out in the essay, it might not, but if you can spot it, then I don't think that's really worked as feedback; they've just thought, that's what Sir said rather than owning it well enough so that I can't recognise my own input, if you know what I mean. (William, tutor, interview)

As illustrated by William's quote, changes in students' work resulting from directive feedback may indicate compliance with tutors' instructions, or students' desire to please their tutors related to asymmetries of power, rather than signalling the development of key aspects of academic literacy. If the development of academic literacy requires a reconfiguration of knowledge structures, competencies and attitudes, the ability to incorporate tutors' comments verbatim into their own work seems to offer little evidence of profound changes in students' literacy practices.

Some tutors said that they avoided sounding too negative, so they often presented their criticism as questions. However, Ferris (1997) found that even though comments framed as questions led to substantive changes in students' work, the changes did not always result in improved work, leading the researcher to conclude that teachers need to be careful when formulating the questions because students may have difficulty interpreting teachers' questions or successfully incorporating the information requested into a revision.

Even when feedback does have an impact, it may be difficult for tutors to see improvement in students' work. For example, some tutors explained that they may teach students in the first semester but not in the second one, so it is practically impossible to see progression, especially if there is not a formative approach as part of the course. Other tutors pointed out that although they could often see an improvement in the quality of the work that students produced by the time they started working on the dissertation, such improvement might not necessarily be as a result of their feedback since there could be other factors, as discussed in 7.3.

The absence of mechanisms to assess student engagement with feedback or its effect on students' literacy practices, or learning in general, can have a demotivating effect on tutors. Many tutors felt that they put considerable time and effort into giving feedback but often doubted students would read it and act on it, especially if it was a final assignment:

I've just emailed a lot of final feedback and reports out, because I don't have any more contact time with them. So, I send all the reports and the feedback out, and I don't know whether they read it properly; I don't know whether they actually get it, but I don't have any more contact time to meet up with them. A lot of them have gone back to China, gone back home, or started something else, so you've just got to hope that they take it on board, and whether they do or not, I don't know. (Sam, tutor, interview)

Even when feedback was provided to students within a prescribed timeframe, for example, 3-week turnaround, students may not necessarily engage with it. For example, one tutor reported that 'only 16%' of her students had read the feedback she provided on an assignment via Turnitin, a percentage that may seem low but perhaps not uncommon. For example, Glover and Brown (2006) conducted interviews with over 100 students at the Open University and found that students did not use written feedback to improve their future work, because

the course topics studied had moved on and students thought it was unlikely that they would have to re-visit those.

Students also expressed doubts about the effectiveness of feedback during the interviews, contrary to what the survey results suggested. A few students acknowledged the contribution of some of the feedback, often depending on the tutor providing it, but overall the interview participants tended to report negative experiences with feedback. The apparent mismatch between survey responses and interviews may stem from the fact that interview participants were referring to written comments, nearly all summative, while the survey did not distinguish between summative or formative, written or spoken feedback. Another reason for the seemingly contrasting results could be that interview participants had more opportunities to recall experiences, reflect, and elaborate on their responses while survey respondents were presented with a series of statements to be completed over a short period of time, approximately 10 minutes. During interviews, it is also possible to build trust, especially when meeting students on various occasions, which may lead to more openness in their responses.

However, the survey results do not necessarily contradict findings from the interviews as there also seemed to be a considerable percentage of respondents who did not agree that feedback had had an impact on their literacy practices. For example, between 14 and 15% of respondents disagreed that feedback had provided enough detail, drawn attention to theoretical gaps in their work, pointed to useful resources, or helped them develop analytic and critical thinking skills, clarify aspects of the subject that they did not understand, or develop and present arguments. Furthermore, when adding their own comments, 11 out of 99 survey respondents were particularly critical of

feedback, for example, *'I think it is absolutely useless that we are only given feedback after the work was assessed. It doesn't help me improve my work'* (Anonymous, student, survey comment).

In their interviews, students were particularly critical of written feedback attached to final assessments because they received it once the module had finished and the content was too generic or too specific to the assessment task, preventing feedforward:

There are always different scenarios in different courses, like in this one, I have to analyse the case, and maybe another one [course] I have to just answer questions. I don't think it helps, with this feedback, I only know how to improve my essays in the same scenario, but I don't know in different ones how could it help. (Shen, student, interview)

Other students felt that even in semester 2, they still had the same problems that they experienced at the start of their course, despite having received feedback from their tutors on a particular aspect of their writing:

Personally, I have difficulties with the recommendations, with the number of words or what has to be pinpointed. I give a general thing, so I'm not sure. I'm still confused with the conclusion thing. I've got certain comments like 'the conclusion is very short and you shouldn't use bullet points with a conclusion, so I'm not sure, that is the thing, what should be there?' (Kanti, student, interview)

Feedback samples did not offer enough evidence to infer that they had had an impact on students' academic literacy development; however, this may be due to the nature (mostly summative) and the limited number of samples. The 14 feedback samples belonged to six different individuals and none of them was a draft or corresponded to the same module. Therefore, apart from the survey results, there was little other evidence that feedback contributed to the development of key elements of academic literacy. Considering that feedback constitutes a very important aspect of the student experience and given the amount of time and effort put into it, there seems to be a need for a systematic

approach and more robust mechanisms to evaluate the impact of feedback on literacy practices.

7.2 Barriers to the impact of feedback on academic literacy

As argued in the previous section, feedback has the potential to improve students' academic literacy. However, findings point to a number of possible barriers to its effectiveness that go beyond presentational (i.e. aspects of form) and content aspects of feedback, which have been the focus of much of the literature (e.g. Chanock, 2000; Higgins, 2000; Hyatt, 2005; McCune, 2004; Williams, 2005). The following sections consider possible barriers related to aspects of feedback itself as a 'product', while also looking at individual and institutional factors involved in its 'production', 'distribution', and 'consumption' or utilisation.

7.2.1 Presentational (form) and content features of feedback as barriers

Presentational features of feedback may constitute the first barrier to students benefiting from it. For example, students were critical of handwritten annotations and commentary, which were often difficult to read and sometimes '*illegible*', as reported by interview participants and survey respondents: '*Tutors are vague with feedback and some feedback is completely illegible*' (Anonymous, student, survey comment). In some cases, comprehensibility rather than legibility was the issue. Although most students in the survey said they understood the language tutors used in their feedback (70%), interview participants referred to instances where they had difficulty understanding what their tutors meant, as illustrated by this extract from Lucia's spoken feedback

journal:

PROJECT 1 11/11/13	A MÄ PROPOSAL	A Proposed 3 different ways to approach the MA proposal: "WASTE from packaging" and the tutor feedback was: Your project needs to have an original viewpoint- be careful not to design a 'me-too' product.	A _I don't understand the meaning
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The sentence “*your project needs to have an original viewpoint -be careful not to design a ‘me-too’ product*” (Lucia, student, reflective journal) does not contain complex lexis or grammar; however, the student said she was confused by the term ‘a *me-too product*’ until she conferred with other students. Lucia’s experience reflects findings from previous research, indicating that students are often confused by feedback comments and cannot always decipher them because they are written in a type of discourse that students cannot always access (Carless, 2006; Chanock, 2000; Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al, 2001; Hyatt, 2005; Hounsell, 1997; McCune, 2004; Sommers, 1982; Weaver, 2006; Williams, 2005).

As discussed in 6.2 linguistic features can also act as barriers by triggering affective filters that may prevent students from fully engaging with feedback. Presentational aspects of feedback can also influence the way students perceive feedback, and consequently, how they engage with it. For example, feedback containing grammar and spelling mistakes, as illustrated by the example below, was interpreted by some students as teachers seeing feedback as unimportant or doing it in a rush, which could be true given time constraints imposed by increasing workloads reported by some tutors.

Example of tutor feedback containing mistakes. (STEM)

"Some interesting points in a number of areas. Your critique raises a number of important issues but would benefit via more emphasis on generalization. Again your evaluation has some valid points and good information in places but need to explicitly and clearly state the criteria used for your comparison and justify the use of each criteria. You demonstrate a reasonable understanding of XML/JSON but further examples of how the technology supports web applications would be beneficial. You have included a suitable set of references. In places you need to use them more effectively to support your discussion."

In this case, the feedback seemed to confirm a negative perception that the student had about his tutor, potentially reducing the impact of the comments on the student's literacy practices despite the fact that the content of the feedback seemed to provide useful information. This is relevant because, as noted earlier, students' perceptions of their environment can have an effect on how they approach learning (Entwistle & Tait, 1990, 1995; Ramsden, 1979; Richardson, 2005; Sun & Richardson, 2012; Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004), and thus, the extent to which they deploy different KEALs, and ultimately, affect their scores (Diseth, 2007).

The content of feedback can also act as a barrier in different ways. For example, as mentioned in 6.3.6, not all students appreciated tutors commenting on academic conventions or their English as they thought that was irrelevant. Some said that feedback containing this type of comments was '*not interesting*', so they were less likely to engage with it. Students' expectations also varied with regards to the purpose of feedback, for example, while some students argued that feedback should help them improve their academic work, a few said that teachers should comment less on academic aspects and concentrate on professional aspects, pointing out that their motivation to study was career progression and arguing that teachers should focus on '*comments about real*

things' (Rafiq, student, interview) because they were '*not studying to be a teacher or a professor*' (Gonzalo, student, focus group). This suggests that there is some misalignment in terms of student expectations of feedback, stressing the need for more dialogue about different aspects of feedback, including its purpose.

Some content may also be 'out of reach' for students because tutors may overestimate students' knowledge and refer to concepts or theory that may still be unfamiliar to them:

It's not the language. How can I say? The tutor has like a different level of thinking. He will explain the topic for you but at his level. [...] So, whenever he [the tutor] explain it, it's really really really simple for him and it's like - maybe it is like default information, but for us it's not, something would be missing. (Rafiq, student, interview)

On the other hand, content may be insufficient as illustrated by a pre-designed feedback sheet with no commentary (See Appendix 6.10). In this particular case, the student said that the absence of comments or annotations in his script meant that he was unsure of which parts of his work needed more work. Some participants felt that feedback was often '*vague*' and argued that, although feedback often highlighted issues in their work, comments rarely included suggestions, or possible solutions to the problem. This seems to contradict survey results, where a large proportion of students (63.5%) thought that their feedback had provided enough detail for them to improve their work; nevertheless, as the survey does not distinguish between summative or formative, written or spoken feedback, as argued before, they may have been referring to spoken formative feedback; furthermore 14% of respondents did not agree that they had received enough detail in their feedback. Comments by respondents also pointed to issues with lack of detail, for example, the absence of model answers or ideas on how to improve their work:

When feedback is given its very brief, it doesn't go into great detail which is not helpful. (Anonymous, student, survey comment)

For crucial (graded) assignments the feedback did not show an ideal solution. This was a big barrier to improving my work and learning from my mistakes. (Anonymous, student, survey comment)

The type of 'noticing' feedback that students referred to, as Hattie and Timperly (2007) note, is not as effective as students receiving feedback about how to perform a specific task more effectively. In another study, Nesbit et al. (2014) observed that many feedback comments simply described a future action that students were likely to take anyway, as was sometimes the case in this study, for example, '*keep practising your English*' or '*you need to read more*', which may be perceived as less relevant by students.

Findings suggest aspects of the feedback itself such as forms of delivery such as handwritten annotations, linguistic features, level of detail and specialisation of the content, can turn into barriers that limit the contribution of feedback to academic literacy development.

7.2.2 Personal barriers

As discussed in Chapter 5, in an increasingly diverse higher education context, individuals from different cultural, social, linguistic, educational and professional backgrounds are likely to see the world of academia from different perspectives. In the same way that personal variables can influence conceptions of literacy (See 5.3.6), they can also shape feedback practices and, in some cases, they can affect the role that feedback can play in developing academic literacy.

Although the influence of personal factors may equally apply to students and tutors in terms of how they approach a wide range of discursive episodes in academia, this subsection will focus on how these factors can affect how international students may perceive, interpret and engage with feedback. As

discussed in 4.5, motivation is especially important because it can affect student engagement and the extent to which students deploy other key elements of academic literacy. However, there seem to be other psychological factors such as confidence, persistence and initiative, which can play a crucial role in how students perceive and respond to feedback, as illustrated by Kanti's experience. Kanti did not initially meet their tutors to discuss feedback because he lacked confidence, but then realised the benefit from engaging with tutors:

I was very shy before, I never used to speak to any of my tutors but now I've learned that if you don't speak to them, you will never get anything. In fact, it's the same in the future, if we go and work somewhere. (Kanti, student, interview)

Research suggests that high self-confidence and high self-concept (Biggs, 1987; Fraser et al, 1987) are linked to deep learning approaches, affecting the way students engage with academic tasks. This is important in terms of how students respond to feedback, as illustrated by Young (2000, in Weaver 2006) who found that the high and medium self-esteem students tended to see feedback as something they could act on and make use of while students with low self-esteem were more likely to feel defeated. The way students respond to challenges in their new environments may determine the amount of effort and the extent to which they deploy different KEALs, so perseverance was often seen as a key disposition, highlighted by interview participants, as illustrated by Lewis, one of the tutors:

One [important attitude] is persistence, I think it's very easy when you begin programming to become very frustrated and think you just haven't got the skills to do it, and we do hear this a lot from the students, 'Oh I can't do that, and it's too technical', but if they just persist, and if they just spend a bit more time trying to work out why it didn't work, and then keep trying, eventually it works. (Lewis, tutor, interview)

This is important in terms of how students respond to feedback and seems to related to students' confidence in their ability to engage in different discursive episodes. Research suggests that students are more likely to successfully engage with academic tasks when they believe they can control the outcomes of their learning to a significant degree i.e. when they have an internal locus of control (Biggs, 1987; Drew and Watkins, 1998; Ehrman et al., 2003). An internal locus of control has also been linked to learner independence, successful second language development (Peek, 2016) and learner persistence (Joo et al., 2011; Morris et al. 2005) all of which have been previously identified as important elements of academic literacy in this study.

The importance of self-reliance, initiative and the ability to work independently and self-manage seem to be recurring themes in the study, perhaps reflecting cultural expectations of how students should engage with their courses. These are all relevant to how students respond to feedback, as illustrated by Ina and Farah (below), who seem to take a proactive approach in response to feedback; however, this may be related to their affinity to Western expectations since Ina is from Russia and Farah had done his undergraduate studies in the UK:

To be honest with you, it [feedback] is not great, but tutors give you general guidelines, it's not up to them to be more specific, this is a university so you're supposed to be resourceful, learn things by yourself. (Farah, student, interview)

You need initiative, because in most of the cases, we do know what we want to do but we just don't know how to do it, how to get there. And our work is to figure out how to get there. [...] Feedback helps, but I guess maybe tutors also expect more initiative, so that we go and ask if we don't understand (Ina, student, interview)

Students also displayed diverse feedback preferences, for example, some preferred more directive feedback and said they followed tutors' advice; others showed a more critical stance to tutors' comments. A number of students said

they tended to ignore feedback if they had obtained a good score, suggesting a strategic approach where feedback was valued if it could be applied to obtain higher grades.

Besides attitudinal and affective factors, students' cultural backgrounds seemed to affect how they approached feedback and the extent to which they were willing to engage in dialogue with their tutors, as Shen (student, interview) explains: *I'm not sure about other ones, but I know some of the Chinese students just don't like to talk about their examinations and their results with their tutors. I don't like it either, in fact.* Besides fear of losing face when confronted with low scores, Shen was also reluctant to engage with some course tutors because he perceived an element of bias or racism because of his nationality:

I don't know whether I should talk about this, but I think, not only I think, some of us believe that some of the teachers have bias about students from different countries. In some classes I've read some others' work, maybe British students', their coursework, and Chinese students' coursework. I think they are not too different, and might be at the same level, but apparently, they got different scores, one got 70s and the other 50s. I don't know why, but I believe that could be the biases. [...] Like in this course, we did it together, with a British student and an African student. I think we did for three days in the library, and we even handed in together, so we really had a lot of communication about them. But when the scores came out, we've got different scores. (Shen, student, interview)

Shen's story highlights the possibility of bias influencing both grades and the feedback given to some students. The issue of cultural bias and racism in UK universities is not a recent phenomenon and could be more widespread than is usually acknowledged (Law et al., 2004). Frequent references to 'issues' with Chinese students in this study may stem from cultural bias or racism, reflecting a deficit view of this particular group of students, which, according to Ryan (2013), is widespread in Western academia and originates from a poor understanding of Chinese academic culture and practices. The expectation that

international students must adopt Western academic practices, as discussed in 1.5 and 5.3.3, may also be an example of cultural bias that presents Western paradigms as uncontested and universal (Ryan and Viete 2009; Sharma, 2004, Street, 2003).

However, without disregarding the possibility of bias or racism in British universities, another possible explanation is that what some students may perceive as bias may sometimes be the result of other factors such as inconsistency in marking, or language issues that may affect the intelligibility of students' work, thus preventing students from demonstrating their understanding of a particular subject. Whether there is an element of racism or not in Shen's case, his perception of this particular tutor had a considerable effect on how he engaged with the feedback, saying that he did not believe in what the teacher had to say.

This research found that the way that students perceived and interpreted their feedback can be influenced by linguistic, cultural, experiential, attitudinal and affective factors. However, it is important to acknowledge that tutors' own academic experiences, professional trajectories, personal style, beliefs, values, assumptions and expectations, can -perhaps subconsciously- influence the way that they assess students and construct their feedback, as discussed in the next section.

7.3.3 Perceived lack of consistency in feedback practices

Inconsistent feedback from tutors seemed to be one of the most important barriers to students engaging and acting on feedback and was a common complaint by students in both the survey and the interviews, as illustrated by the quotes below:

I think it's better to ask because tutors have different opinions, because it depends on personality, it depends on the topic, it depends on your and their special [specialised] field. [...] You can

ask 10 tutors the same question and you get different answers.
(Rafiq, student, interview)

No standardisation resulting in feedback from one aspect of work put in to practice for another piece can completely contradict the second work. (Anonymous, student, survey comment)

Issues with consistency across modules and tutors was acknowledged by various academics, as illustrated by Sam's quote:

I think inconsistencies in feedback can cause a bit of an issue. I don't think there is much consistency. It's difficult because you don't want to slate colleagues, but you do read other people's work, and you kind of think, 'That feedback is just full of bullet points and doesn't say anything.' Or they're just points which say, 'You've done this wrong, and you've done this wrong,' and giving them nothing to feedforward with. And sometimes students will compare feedback. And they'll go like 'Well, this person got all this, and this person got all this, and this person got this', and that's difficult as well, so that sets expectations and that does come up quite a lot, because different colleagues have different standards of what feedback is.
(Sam, tutor, interview)

Inconsistencies in feedback may relate to systemic issues, for example, disparate assessment and feedback regimes across modules, discussed later in 6.5.3. However, some inconsistency may be the result of misalignment amongst tutors in terms of their understanding of academic literacy, which, to a certain extent, is also determined by a number of personal factors (See 5.3.6). For example, tutors' own academic experiences can shape their expectations and influence their approach to feedback, for example, some academics felt the '*spirit of enquiry*' was an essential element of academic literacy and expected students to demonstrate '*some curiosity*' and further explore a topic by themselves rather than trying to find answers in the feedback:

When I was studying at [institution name], you'd never go and ask a lecturer to record their lecture; that simply wasn't allowed, less still would you ask them for their notes.[...] so some of us are from that background and perhaps say to the students 'Well, you know, it's about your development, so go and read and you interpret the question and you present it back to us', and I think, we have different points of view amongst the staff, so I don't even think that we have a staff view of this. We have individual members of staff who have their own perspectives and that

further upsets the students, because some staff are seen as helpful, some staff are seen as unhelpful. (John, tutor, interview)

Tutors' professional background and positionality in terms of pedagogical practices may also influence their teaching, marking and feedback practices, as illustrated in 5.3.2, where two teachers on the same programme had a different attitude to the importance of reference conventions when marking students' work. Since different paradigms can coexist within the same discipline (Douglas Toma, 1997; Kuhn, 1962), tutors with the same disciplinary background may hold different values, rely on different methods and frameworks, and, importantly, apply different evaluative standards, as discussed in 2.3.

Tutors' familiarity with - and attitude towards- technology may determine the type of delivery method used to provide feedback from online platforms to handwritten annotations on students' papers. For example, despite teaching on the same Law programme, Julian frequently used audio feedback but John was unfamiliar with the type of technology needed for this form of delivery and used handwritten annotations instead. Similarly, in spite of teaching on the same Management programme, Sam said that he was reluctant to comment on students' English, partly because of his dyslexia, while Jane said she always did, suggesting different attitudes towards aspects such as grammar and spelling, which other studies have also identified (Rezaei and Lovorn, 2010; Woodrow, 2006).

Findings suggest that the way tutors construct their feedback, their interpretation of marking criteria, and the aspects of students' work that they respond to while marking and giving feedback are partly determined by academics' individual characteristics, preferences, attitudes, knowledge and skills. This seems consistent with other studies where personal factors

influenced teachers' practices, for example, Read et al. (2004) found that female academics were slightly more concerned with student effort and presentational aspects, while male academics were more concerned with argumentation, concluding that gender may influence tutors' attitudes to literacy practices such as writing.

Some tutors acknowledged that when approaching student writing, they draw on their own interpretation of disciplinary or professional discourses i.e. their own intradiscourse, and their literacy practices to guide students, so either consciously or subconsciously, they expect students to write, or approach writing, like they do:

So, rightly or wrongly, what I was trying to do is get students to write like me. And that's because I think I want to write, me personally, I want to write like the scholars in my subject area who are most and best recognized, and they tend to be judges of the highest standing, or lawyers of the highest standing. So, I'm trying to follow them in how I write, and that's what I want my students to do as well. Because as a subject area that's how law tends to work. (Julian, tutor, interview)

This is particularly important in the case of international students, who may approach writing in different ways than a UK academic would because of their different cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds. Adopting a different approach that differs considerably from their tutors' could disadvantage international students; for example, Fleming (1999, in Carless, 2006) concluded that teachers tend to 'mark up' students who they perceive as approaching a task in similar ways to themselves, pointing to a potential personal bias that may not only affect grades but also the nature of the feedback that they provide. Therefore, the more aligned a tutor and their students are in terms of how to apply different KEALs during a discursive episode, the more likely students will be to meet their tutor's expectations, especially important in terms of assessment.

Despite the importance of personal variables in explaining lack of consistency in assessment and feedback practices, this study fully recognises that sociocultural and contextual aspects factors can also shape academic literacy practices. Consequently, institutions can play a crucial role in addressing the issue of inconsistency, perhaps by creating numerous opportunities for dialogue amongst staff, which could also help remove other potential barriers to the development of academic literacy and learning in general. The importance of systemic barriers and institutional contexts is discussed in the next subsection.

7.3.4 Institutional or systemic barriers

A key factor in increasing or limiting the role of feedback in the development of academic literacy relates to the pedagogical spaces in which feedback and literacy practices occur. As discussed in 5.5, universities are bound by space and time, circumscribed by their wider contexts and influenced by different external factors such as funding, government policy, student mobility, which in turn impact on institutional policies and procedures. Because of the social and deeply situated nature of academic literacy practices, the institutional context is extremely important.

The availability of technical and digital resources such as virtual learning environments or relevant Internet-based services such as Turnitin can shape academic practices and influence the way feedback is produced, delivered and used. For example, having discovered a new functionality in the system, one of the tutors was able to monitor students' engagement with feedback more effectively and started to challenge students about not accessing and reading their feedback:

I can see who looks at feedback. So, the feedback report that a student can access, I can tell who's accessed it. So, what I did after the first assignment was - I put in an announcement on [name of the institutional

virtual platform], *something like that, saying, 'It's interesting how only 16% of you have read your feedback from the first assignment before you've done the second one.'* And then all of a sudden, there was a big input of people going on and looking at the feedback. So, the good thing about technology is you can see that and you can measure that. As to whether that translates into action, that's a different story' (Anne, tutor, interview)

Assessment and feedback regimes, including student access and entitlement to feedback, can vary considerably across academic departments, from one module to another, and, in some cases, from one student to another, because some international students may have specific contracts agreed with partner institutions abroad. For example, some students were unhappy about being assessed only once at the end of the course because this meant that they there was '*less feedback*' and grades depended on one high-stakes assessment only:

Where I come from you get to have different grades and smaller percentages through the semester so you are always writing or making tests and we don't have this huge exam at the end so that's a huge difference. [...] here they don't give you back exams, so if you want to see your feedback you have to make an appointment, and then you go to the feedback session and you get your paper and there is nothing written there, like almost just two words and that's it, and you have to give it back so what you wrote doesn't belong to you, it's for the university so that's also different. (Isabel, student, interview)

Isabel identifies various aspects of her course that make feedback less effective, including access to both summative and formative feedback. She felt that the comments that accompanied her grades, released electronically, were detached from her work, or '*in the air*', as she put it, which made it difficult to relate it to specific areas that she needed to work on, so she could not gain much from it.

Limited access to feedback, especially formative feedback was another issue highlighted by survey respondents, particularly in HASS, where less than half of students (47.1%) reported that they had received formative feedback on their work, in comparison to 58.7% in STEM (See Appendix 6.3). This may have

been the result of departmental policies in response to the high student-staff ratios and the demanding workloads reported by tutors in this study, and elsewhere in the literature (Burns and Foo, 2012; Evans, 2013; Higgins et al., 2002; Price, 2005; Sadler, 2010c; Yang and Careless, 2013). As Jane explains, while tutors are often willing to give more time to students, the need to ensure equitability can lead to departments discouraging certain practices that could encourage dialogue between students and tutors:

When I first started working here, I assumed that if a student emailed me and said 'Can I see you in the coffee shop for 10 minutes to talk about my work?', I always jumped and said yes, and then I learnt over time that's not the policy. Well, colleagues who've been here longer have a policy of not doing that because then you are in this situation where one student gets more time and support than others and that becomes quite unmanageable on the large modules [...] I think in an ideal world, if you could give the students a bit more support, perhaps, see a draft and provide feedback on a one to one basis, then there might be a bit of a difference [...] The problem is the amount of work that you're generating if you've got a cohort of a seminar group of say 25 students and you're saying that you'll look at a draft and comment and then return it, in the current climate, that's not sustainable. (Jane, tutor, interview)

In the current climate of escalating massification of higher education (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016, Rodgers et al., 2011), increasing student-staff ratios, and demanding workloads, academic departments may need to restrict students' access to tutors and establish a number of policies to rationalise their resources. For example, some departments have a specific no-draft policy so students did not have the opportunity receive feedback before submission:

Yeah, I mean, the general policy is we don't look at drafts unless there is a specific reason why we need to, like the student has a learning contract or in the case of a dissertation, obviously they'll send you draft chapters to look at and that's fine, otherwise, I just won't look at them, and sometimes they'll try and send them to me, and I will say I'm not going to read it, you can send me an outline, you can meet me and we can have a talk about it but I think the main reason is that it is unfair, because if we had to look at drafts of 4,000 words for every student and then mark the actual piece, you couldn't do it and get anything at all else done. (Emily, tutor, interview)

No-draft policies have previously been reported in the literature (Hardy and Clughen, 2012) and may be one of the reasons for an apparent decline in formative assessment in UK higher education (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). Apart from impacting on the amount of feedback that students receive, these policies make it more difficult for tutors to assess the effectiveness of their feedback, as Anne (tutor, interview) explains: *'Because there is no system in terms of drafts, like first drafts and then final draft. There is only just one final draft - so it would be very difficult to see progression as well there'*. Furthermore, many tutors felt that high student-staff ratios meant that there was less time to produce *'meaningful comments'*, so the quality of the feedback suffered.

Tutors claimed that increasing demands on their time resulted in them having fewer opportunities *'to have a chat with a colleague about a student'* (Alice, tutor, interview) or *'sit down and do a bit of marking with colleagues'* (Doris, tutor, interview), so marking was becoming *'an increasingly lonely task that you tend to do late at night on your kitchen table'* (John, tutor, interview). Some tutors felt that institutional policies such as the three-week feedback turnaround only made the situation worse and encouraged a culture of *'get it off your desk as soon as possible'* (John, tutor, interview).

Policies in terms of marking and moderation varied considerably, for example some departments used standard feedback sheets with specifications as to which areas to include in the comment box, for example, weaknesses, strengths and action points, while other departments gave tutors quite a lot of autonomy in their marking. This is important considering that *'marking entails a largely unavoidable element of subjectivity'* that can affect reliability (Ylonen et al., 2018, p.2), and may explain the level of inconsistency that students perceive as discussed in 6.5.1.

Despite institutional efforts in recent years to offer consistency through institutional assessment and feedback policies and procedures, research suggests that there are still a number of issues with practices such as moderation (Beutel et al., 2017; Bloxham et al. 2015a; Elliott et al., 2011, in Addie et al., 2013; Sadler, 2013; Ylonen et al., 2018), and the design, interpretation and application of marking criteria by tutors (Bloxham, 2009; Bloxham and Boyd, 2012; Price 2005; Sadler, 2010b; Watty et al. 2014), all of which can affect feedback practices. As a result, there is some scepticism in the literature with regards to the effectiveness of moderation, as illustrated by Bloxham et al. (2015b), who have called for greater dialogue about reliability, fairness and standards in higher education assessment.

Programme structure, and modularisation in particular, can affect the way students perceive their modules and how they approach feedback. For example, students complained that they were unable to use their feedback in other modules, mainly because of the wide range of writing genres they experienced, as discussed in 4.6.2. Another feature of modularised Masters programmes was interdisciplinarity, exemplified by modules taught in different academic departments. This seemed to pose unrealistic expectations on students, not only because of the specific nature of the disciplinary knowledge and skills required, but also because of different academic and administrative practices:

Well, I've learnt that they [departments] do like to have their own freedoms and even though on paper all the modules look very similar, so the University has obviously taken some care to try and align what different departments want from their students, and thus to make the kind of assessment that is offered comparable, the departments then go away and in the way that they actually do things, they are very different. (Heike, student, interview)

Some tutors believed that the modular nature of Masters programmes made it difficult for students to have a programme level view, so '*sometimes they don't always connect the dots*' (Emily, tutor, interview), and that is why assessment and feedback may look less coherent to them. Tutors also felt that modularisation affected students' attitude to course content:

I think it's difficult because we have the modules and, we've never been able to get away from this: it's that the students see the modules as standalone elements of the law, that they don't interrelate, and so what they're going to do in contract law will never again appear [in other modules]. (John, tutor, interview)

Furthermore, some tutors claimed that modularisation of programmes discouraged the formation of continuing academic relationships with students and made it difficult to see evidence of improvement on literacy practices because academics often taught different cohorts throughout the year. Those teaching on programmes with large cohorts were sometimes responsible for delivering lectures but not for marking students' work or vice versa. Large cohorts also meant that a large course team including demonstrators, teaching assistants, and sometimes, seasonal staff, marked students' work and gave feedback, rather the tutors themselves, which has previously been reported in the literature (Gibbs, 2010a, 2010b; Hyland, 2013b; Nicol, 2009; QAA, 2007), although at undergraduate level, suggesting that this practice is being adopted on Masters programmes too.

Some tutors also referred to admission policies, pointing out the pressure to recruit international students and home students with '*non-traditional*' academic backgrounds, which has led to larger and more diverse cohorts. As a result, tutors face the challenge of meeting the multiple learning needs of students from different cultural, social, linguistic, educational -and often disciplinary- backgrounds, many of whom require greater individual attention. In

this increasingly challenging context, some tutors drew attention to the limited amount of support that they had received from their departments to develop their assessment and feedback practices.

For instance, 2 out of 21 tutors interviewed said that they had been allocated a mentor when they started marking students' work and providing feedback; many, as one tutor said, had been '*given a pile of essays and told to get on with it*'. When asked about how they had developed their practice, many said they relied on their own experience as students and sometimes sought help from colleagues. Ten of the 21 tutors had a higher education or relevant teaching qualification, but only two referred to their training during the interviews saying that although it had been useful in general, there had been little or nothing on the course about giving feedback to students.

Findings suggest that factors such as availability of relevant technologies, assessment and feedback regimes, staff workloads, high student-staff ratios, moderation policies and procedures, the modular nature of Masters programmes, or available training and support for tutor, can all become barriers that marginalise the role of feedback in developing academic literacy. Yang and Careless (2013) refer to these contextual variables as the structural dimension of feedback, which 'relates to how feedback processes are organised and managed by teachers and institutions' (p.290). They argue that the challenges of 'engineering effective feedback' (p.290) can be aggravated by structural constraints such as modularised programmes, large class sizes or heavy workloads.

As a result, institutions cannot only rely on individual efforts by staff and students to make feedback practices more effective in specific contexts. Decision makers at institutional, departmental and programme level need to

play an active role in removing systemic constraints and helping to create pedagogical spaces that are conducive to more dialogic feedback processes.

7.3 Beyond feedback: tutors' contribution through other practices

I think that the tutors, when they give the lectures and tutorials, they just like to plant a tree, and what we do, what my friends do, is just to water the tree to grow it.

-- Shen (student, interview)

As discussed in 7.1, survey responses suggest that feedback from tutors has great potential to develop students' academic literacy because it often relates to the key elements of academic literacy. Tutor feedback can help students improve clarity of expression, develop a sense of audience within their specific academic contexts, increase students' understanding of procedural knowledge, theory and their wider disciplinary context, encourage students to think critically, develop analytical and argumentative skills, motivate students, and improve their writing and technical skills.

However, as might be expected, spoken or written feedback is not the only way in which tutors seem to contribute to the development of academic literacy. Students reported other discursive episodes facilitated by tutors that helped them develop their literacy practices; these included discussing assignment briefs to clarify aspects of the assessment that they did not understand, and going over the marking criteria to ensure they understood how they would be assessed, both instances reported in the survey by nearly two thirds of the students (60.8% and 61.9% respectively), and also mentioned by interview participants:

Some tutors, they will give the introduction about the task and talk about the assignment and the marking criteria. The criteria helps because it's like a guideline to our writing. When we see the marking criteria we will get to know, okay, this is the structure and what we have to write, and talk, otherwise we will end up with something, which is the other way. (Kanti, student, interview)

Other discursive episodes involved discussions based on past papers or exemplars of different types of writing such as essays or reports, which seemed to contribute to the development of different elements of academic literacy such as understanding of particular disciplinary genres, mechanical aspects (e.g. spacing), or tutors' expectations of KEALs that students need to emphasis, as Rafiq explains:

First of all, I had contact with a lecturer about what he wanted to see in the interim report and what he is paying attention to. Then I had like many draft interim reports of last year [past interim reports] in order to know how they [other students] structure it, how they did it.[...] It gives you an idea of how it works, like it's 20 pages maximum, double space, font size, the spaces between the lines, everything [...] also the tutor explain, it's not just blah, blah blah, this is what you have done, you need to evaluate the progress, problems, how you solve it.(Rafiq, student, survey)

About half the tutors felt that using exemplars or past papers prompted opportunities for clarification, for students to apply their analytical and critical thinking skills, and to develop a sense of quality. However, a few tutors expressed reservations about using exemplars and their potential contribution to the development of academic literacy. They argued that the use of exemplars could '*stifle students' creativity*', '*encourage them to adopt someone else's voice rather than developing their own*', or lead to issues such as plagiarism, as William (tutor, interview) argues: '*So, if someone's very adept at copying my first draft example, then actually what am I testing? Just an ability to mimic.*'

In contrast, student interviewees often referred to the use of exemplars as prompts for valuable discussions rather than as models 'to copy', suggesting that students benefited more from the dialogue that exemplars generated than from the information they contained. Nevertheless, it is possible that if exemplars are provided but not accompanied by discussion, students may be

more likely to see them as models to follow without critically engaging with their content or other elements such as structure, organisation or use of academic conventions. Students' emphasis on the value of discussing assessment materials e.g. criteria, exemplars, suggests that it is the discussion around those materials that can have the greatest impact on students rather than the documents themselves, whether it is in class or during individual tutorials, as reported by a few students.

Although it would be difficult to measure the impact of interactions where students discuss assignment briefs, marking criteria, past papers or exemplars, they all have dialogue with the tutor and/or peers as a common factor. Swain (2001) points out that dialogue with students provides opportunities for the joint construction of knowledge and to develop their communication skills.

Conversations related to assessment can also help students develop a sense of quality and gain confidence, as Ina illustrates:

When I have more interaction with my classmates, I can feel more confident because I started noticing that there are some things which I have learned and they still don't know it, even though we learned things together. So, it does make me feel a little better. It's not as discouraging as when you see great pieces which they show you as an example and you feel like, I never will be able to do that. But it's still good to see that other people were struggling too. (Ina, student, interview)

Crucially, a dialogic approach to learning and teaching seemed to help students gain an appreciation of the KEALs that were valued in their particular academic contexts, possibly reducing dissonance between them and their tutors, which can have a positive effect on students' performance. The importance of dialogue around assessment identified in this study is consistent with findings of previous research (Blair et al., 2014; Orsmond et al, 2010, 2013; Rust et al., 2003; To and Carless, 2015). For example, Orsmond et al. (2010)

found that discussions around assessment using exemplars helped students demonstrate greater understanding of both marking criteria and subject standards, and thus produce higher quality outcomes. In a later study, Orsmond et al. (2013) found that the use of exemplars was an effective way to illustrate to students how final products or performance demonstrated learning outcomes. Furthermore, the use of exemplars can be an effective way to transfer important tacit elements of academic practices to students (Blair et al., 2014, Rust et al., 2003), particularly important in soft disciplines where the criteria for assessment and estimations of quality rely heavily on tacit knowledge and interpretation (Sadler 1989).

As well as discussions centred on briefs, marking criteria and exemplars, students reported instances of dialogue about course content in seminars, group tutorials or workshops that helped them clarify key theoretical concepts, '*see how other people think*', and gain confidence when speaking in English. Being confident in their English language skills was especially important because most students said that they did not initially participate much in discussions; however, as confidence in their English improved, they were more likely to ask questions and even put forward their own ideas either face-to-face or by other means e.g. online forums.

Interestingly, three of the twelve students that took part in the interviews claimed that even without taking part in discussions, they had benefited from following the conversation because this helped them gain a better idea of tutor expectations as well as a greater understanding of key disciplinary concepts and how to approach certain tasks. This suggests that even peripheral participation in dialogic encounters can contribute to academic literacy development.

There were also opportunities for dialogue in other discursive episodes such as lectures, where students sometimes had the chance to ask and/or answer questions, helping them clarify their own thinking or aspects of the course they did not understand; for example, *'assignments', 'how to do some of the stuff', 'the correct style for my essays', or 'things in the readings that are difficult.'* Students pointed out that interaction during lectures was often limited and greatly depended on factors such as the size of the audience or the lecturer's *'style', 'personality' or 'way of teaching'*. Nevertheless, students seemed to value tutor input in lectures even if there was little or no interaction, with some narrating experiences of *'good lectures'* where *'only the professor talked'*, but offered *'useful knowledge, not just what's in the handout'*, helping them understand *'what the tutors wanted'*.

Some students said that *'good lectures'* prompted dialogue with peers, either during or after the lecture, and sometimes changed the way they thought and felt about their discipline:

We've had some lectures that have opened my mind, helped me see things differently. For example, we were talking about sustainability and we had a lecture, [...] I think that the lecture opened my mind to think, 'Well, if you start thinking in something that is going to be really really bad for the environment, maybe it is not a good design', something like that. (Lucia, student, interview)

The research suggests that input from tutors plays a key role in the development of academic literacy, but feedback, particularly written summative feedback, may not be the type of input that international students value the most or the one that may have the greatest impact on the development of academic literacy. Therefore, establishing a causal relationship between summative or formative feedback and perceived improvement in students' academic literacy practices such as writing can be problematic because of other

important variables. In other words, it seems extremely difficult to establish whether students may have changed their ideas, the language they use, or the way they approach a task as a result of, for example, written feedback, a discussion during a seminar, notes from a lecture, a conversation with a classmate, or some of the other factors discussed below.

7.4 Beyond feedback: other factors contributing to academic literacy development.

7.4.1 Peers' contribution to the development of academic literacy

According to my experience in this Masters, I really think the experience of meeting other students and talking with others is more important than the lecturers, [because] we don't talk much with them [lecturers].

-- Sherko (student, interview)

As illustrated by Sherko's experience, learning from peers is an important aspect of studying at Masters level, and much of what is learnt is relevant to the development of academic literacy. Students often referred to the benefits of working with others outside class and the impact that their peers had had on their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards their course. Some also mentioned friends in other academic departments and at other universities, suggesting that their support network transcended their immediate social or academic circle.

Contact with peers took place through different channels e.g. face to face, by email, on online forums and through social media, highlighting the multimodal nature of literacy practices (Kress, 1997, 2003). Multimodal interactions offered students various spaces where they could share experiences and discuss both personal and academic aspects of their lives. This blurring of boundaries between work, leisure and education appears to be a characteristic of new literacy practices, where social and academic networking are often indistinct (Davies and Merchant, 2007; Gruszczynska et al., 2013), as illustrated by Ina's account:

Well, it [interaction] is mostly in class, but we still talk online, like on Facebook, and often discuss our work, like they might send me a message about some work we need to do, or I might ask them about some assignment that we have. Well I'm definitely on there [Facebook] every day. We talk or message about the Uni and the work quite often, I'd say at least three [or] four times a day, or a week, [it] depends also on assignments and who I'm talking to. Sometimes it might not be directly related to the course, but still related, like, let's say we discuss one of my classmates' new camera, and like, we studied cameras for Digital Composing, so we could discuss all the features and things that we've done before in class, now in a personal context. (Ina, student, interview)

Ina's use of social media on a daily basis to contact her peers, three or four times a day, is an example of the high level of interaction between students, which other students also reported and regarded as helpful in clarifying key aspects of their subject and the course. This seems particularly important because most of the students claimed that they had much less contact with their tutors, either because they had limited access or preferred not to seek their help:

The tutor is the best person to talk with, but if I have no chance to talk with the tutor, or I don't like to talk with the tutor, I will look for some of my friends who clearly understand, not all classmates, just some of them, the persons who I can trust, and ask them. I will evaluate if true, if I agree with them or not. If I have a question and it's not so serious, just a simple question, maybe I will ask my friends first, not the tutor. Similar, if I have a question and I think my classmates cannot answer me, I will ask the tutor or just [try to answer it] myself. (Phong, student, interview)

Phong's example suggests that students make critical choices about when and who to engage with depending on different factors, including access to tutors and the nature of the problem they face. By critically engaging with peers, students may also be developing key cognitive skills and positioning themselves in respect of others.

Students pointed to other benefits of interacting with their peers, for example, they claimed that this interaction helped them improve their understanding of theory and of how to perform specific tasks e.g. write an interim report or a blog entry. For most students, peers were the first ‘port of call’ when they had questions about their subject or a specific query about an assignment, not just because they had more contact with them or their response was often more timely, but also because they ‘*spoke the same language*’, or it was ‘*easier to understand my classmates than my tutor*’:

If I have questions about a lecture or something, I will go to my friends and if I don't have the solution [from them], I will go to another friends. I think, as friends, we have the same level of thinking, where for the tutor he has a different level of thinking; he will explain the topic for you, but at his level. Where for student, so we have the same level of thinking, I think we can understand each other, it's more reliable and even, it's easier to communicate with friends. If I can't understand it he can repeat it, if I can't, he can repeat again, but for lecturer I can't ask more than one time, if I can't understand it, that's it'. (Rafiq, student, interview)

As previously noted, tutors and international students often operate at different conceptual and linguistic levels, which may explain why students reported difficulties understanding their tutors and found answers or explanations from their peers more accessible. This finding is consistent with much of the literature on tutor feedback, where students’ difficulties accessing academic discourse, particularly tutor comments, have been widely reported (See 2.6.2 and 6.5.2).

In the case of international students on Masters programmes, there may be a greater mismatch because of their potential lack of familiarity with both academic expectations and relevant disciplinary discourse, as previously discussed, so they may need what Gee (1990, p.147) refers to as ‘scaffolded and supported interaction with those who have already mastered the discourse.’

Although students may prefer most of this scaffolded interaction to be with their tutors, there seem to be limited opportunities on some programmes for this to happen. In this study, most students sought this type of support elsewhere, in many cases, from peers working at a similar or higher linguistic or conceptual level. Peers often seemed to provide some of the necessary 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1978; Wood et al., 1976) to help others move up to a level where disciplinary discourse became more accessible, or, from a Vygotskian perspective, reach the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), where students experiencing difficulties can engage in discursive episodes with assistance from their peers.

Apart from facilitating access to relevant discourses, peer support seemed to help students develop their ideas and their own voice by sharing their understandings and views on different aspects of the course, from key issues and debates to how to perform a particular task:

I'm more confident now. I think this second semester, I've had some ideas about the courses, so I will talk to other students, and sometimes we have the same ideas, and we might do things like we thought it should be, but not like the tutor say [it] should be. It's OK to think different. [...] I think that's important because maybe your ideas are not complete, like you have some part of the requirements, and you may be far away from the criteria. You think you follow the criteria but you are not. Sharing ideas is good because one person might have three ideas, but two people could have six, and combine them you could get three new ones, and that is a good thing. (Shen, student, interview)

Students collectively approaching a task might not only develop their knowledge and skills but also improve their performance. Swain (2001) argues that dialogues construct cognitive and strategic processes which in turn develop student performance. A few reported noticeable improvements in their performance after they started interacting with others on a regular basis, which was often reflected in better grades. Frequent contact with peers seems to

encourage dialogue and the formation of learning communities, which can in turn support the development of academic literacy. In general, student participants saw their peers both as ‘friends’ they could socialise with, and as a valuable resource to develop a range of elements of academic literacy, from English language competence and technical skills to a better understanding of the values, ideas and beliefs that underpin disciplinary discourse. For some international students, peers were their most valuable resource:

I think most of the things that I have learnt is from the classmates, or the papers or things that I have read. Yeah, we have much more contact with them, with your friends, than with the professors. (Isabel, student, interview)

The key role of peers identified in this study seemed consistent with findings in other studies. For example, in his study on the role of peer support in students’ accomplishment of oral academic tasks, Kobayashi (2003) found that students seek, value and benefit from engagement with peers in university contexts. In a recent literature review, Epple & Romano (2010) concluded that the evidence in different studies left little doubt as to the effect of peers both within and outside the classroom. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence of positive peer effects in student achievement in higher education (Androushchak et al., 2013; Carrell et al., 2009; De Paola & Scoppa, 2010; Moore et al., 2016). In the case of first-year doctoral students, Seloni (2012) found that students’ understanding of academic literacy was co-constructed and exercised in multiple academic and non-academic spaces, through informal interactions in out of class contexts within their collaborative groups, not just their tutors.

However, this is not to say that peers can replace tutors, who also play a very important role in the development of academic literacy, as discussed in the previous section. Instead, peers appear to play a complementary role, often plugging each other’s knowledge or skills gaps, co-interpreting course

requirements or marking criteria, acting as soundboards to bounce ideas off each other, and co-constructing an understanding of relevant discourses, often translating academic discourse into more accessible language. Operating at similar conceptual and/or linguistic levels and having frequent contact with peers through multiple channels seems to encourage the formation of dialogic relationships among students, which can help them develop different dimensions of academic literacy.

7.4.2 Institutional support and independent study.

Every time you do a piece of work, every time you engage, every time you speak to somebody, you are developing.

-- John (tutor, interview)

As highlighted by John, student engagement with academic discourse through a range of discursive episodes is key to their development. For example, students can develop different elements of academic literacy by reading a journal article, discussing an assignment with a classmate, challenging a point of view during a seminar, writing a blog post or listening to an explanation by a librarian. Some of these discursive episodes involve interacting with other members of a discourse community besides tutors and peers. For example, some international students reported institution-wide learning support as helpful in familiarising themselves with academic expectations and practices in their institutions, from structural and mechanical aspects of writing to accessing resources and general study skills:

We have certain things done by the library people, every week we will get study skills, that's very useful for students. (Kanti, student, interview)

It depends, if I need any help, or just basically anything, I often might ask about library services or something like that. (Ina, student, interview)

The range of support and development opportunities included one-to-one writing tutorials, workshops, lectures and short courses. There was some variation in the availability of these services from one specific academic context to another in terms of topics covered (e.g. time management, English language development, information literacy), the type of delivery (e.g. one-to-one provision, groups, online or face-to-face), the nature of the support (e.g. interdisciplinary or discipline-specific), and the unit that provided the service (e.g. the library, the English language centre, the academic department). This variation seems relevant as opportunities to develop different elements of academic literacy may depend on the specific context in which students operate.

Other discursive episodes that students found useful seemed to require little or no direct engagement with people. While acknowledging the contribution of support staff, their peers and their tutors, most students commented on the importance of independent study and being able to learn about different aspects of their course by themselves. Many international students stressed the amount of time that they had spent exploring a wide range of sources including texts, videos, charts, diagrams, drawings, animations, and podcasts to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to produce work to the required standards:

I think most of it [learning what to do and how to do it] probably just came from doing things on my own or researching things, watching tutorials and then doing things [...] I think it was the beginning of this semester probably, our faculty, they got subscription to a digital tutor resource which is a huge online library of different tutorials and training videos. And then just recently they got a subscription for Lynda.com where they have a lot of tutorials, and it was really helpful for me because sometimes tutors are busy and you cannot find a personal time. Sometimes, if you are just working at night and you need to find out something quickly, you won't be emailing them [tutors] every single time you have a question. And when you have access to an online library, you can just use an online search and

just find a tutorial which explains why, whatever, or how to, how to do what you want to do, which was a whole lot of help to me. (Ina, student, interview)

Although the use of video, diagrams and animations was particularly common in STEM subjects e.g. students investigating how to perform specific tasks with specialised equipment or software, students across all disciplines referred to audio, video and other visual forms of communication e.g. diagrams, to learn about other aspects of their course such as critical thinking, how to summarise a text, or structure a report: *'For the sources, they always make us use journal papers, but when it comes to essay type, how to do it, even the YouTube videos will help in certain cases'* (Kanti, student, interview). The level of online provision, both in-house and through external providers e.g. Lynda.com, Epigeum, Digital-Tutors, also differed across institutions, possibly increasing or limiting opportunities for development. This suggests that, as pointed out in Section 7.3.4, institutional contexts may impact on the development of academic literacy.

Apart from interaction with others and the use of self-study resources such as online tutorials, participants highlighted reading and writing as key factors in academic literacy development. Discursive episodes that involved reading and/or writing seemed to prompt engagement with relevant discourses and the deployment of different elements of academic literacy, as Phong's experience illustrates:

First of all, when I get the assignment I try to read and understand the assignment brief. As I talked about it before, I read more and I think that, at that point, I have to think about it, what I want to do, what the tutor wants from us, from me, and what will I write about. After that, if I've got a clear idea, I try to create the structure, what I'm going to write about. (Phong, student, interview)

In Phong's example, he would have needed to use different KEALs to complete the writing task, including his English language competence, contextual awareness, a sense of audience, cognitive skills, and current grasp of the subject. From reading the assignment brief to engaging with the relevant literature, writing tasks seem to involve a considerable amount of reading that can contribute to academic literacy development. For example, reading can help students address gaps in their knowledge while simultaneously acting as a springboard to generate ideas, as Phong (student, interview) adds: *'Reading help me with knowledge. If I need to do something, maybe something new, if I have no idea about it, I have to find information and read it to make me more ready.'*

Exploring disciplinary discourse through reading seems to offer students the opportunity to discover the ontological, epistemological and paradigmatic lines that run across their disciplines and which often demarcate where individuals stand in key disciplinary issues and debates. Through exposure to different voices in the literature, students may be able to *'pick up'* certain subtleties in how authors construct their arguments and start to develop their own voice, which can help to make their writing unique, as some tutors argued:

The purpose of us telling you to do reading is that you develop your ideas and you then have greater subtlety, which means that your essay will be smarter because you've picked up some subtlety that no one else would have picked up, which means your essay stands out, which means you get a better conclusion. (William, tutor, interview)

While gradually mapping disciplinary discourse, students can 'find their bearings' and position themselves in relation to others within their field. This positionality can generate unique insights and perspectives that students can draw on when producing their own work, as suggested by Matt's example

above. As Parker (2005, p.193) points out, 'our identity also is developed and constructed in speaking and in writing, with every performance sharpening and validating that identity'.

Besides helping students to map relevant discourses and develop their identities in relation to these, reading can provide students with models of relevant genres and hence improve their understanding of how to structure texts in their disciplines, as illustrated by the following quotes from a tutor, Matt, and a student, Shen:

I think they [students] need engagement with reading because when you're reading stuff, you see how other people are structuring it and use that. (Matt, tutor, interview)

[You need to] read more, write more, because reading could let you know how others write, and ways their writing is right. (Shen, student, interview)

However, the extent to which international students succeed in discourse mapping can vary considerably depending on their existing academic literacy configuration. Some students mentioned difficulties with the amount and type of reading required as part of their course, as Kanti recalls:

Yes, lots of reading. When it comes to some of the modules like Supply and Strategies, we were given so many case studies and so many things to read before the classes and after the classes also. And they [tutors] have certain expectations from the students, and when I read something like three or four pages, I should read it three times, as an international student, to understand what is in it, and when the bottom of the questions are something critical, critical questions I mean, something sensitive, and to understand it, it's very difficult, either I should go and ask the tutor or a very intelligent student of the class. (Kanti, student, interview)

Kanti's experience illustrates the challenge that some international students face, which may be linked to their level of English language competence and/or their level of familiarity with certain disciplinary genres (See 4.1.1). However, the

fact that most tutors in interviews seemed to attribute students' lack of engagement with reading to an attitude problem suggests that they may not fully appreciate the challenge of academic literacies for international students.

Findings in this study suggest that some international students on Masters programmes may need more time to deal with the number, complexity and range of texts that they usually come across over a short period of time, especially in 'short fat modules' where there is less time between the sessions. As Schmitt (2005 in Ryan and Viète, 2009) contends, even when students have met the English language entry requirements of their university, the language proficiency threshold required will vary according to the complexity of each academic task, so complex activities such as reading or writing are likely to cause, at least initially, cognitive overload.

Besides reading and writing, findings suggest that scaffolding offered by peers, institutional support, availability of resources, and independent study also play a key role in the iterative and expansive process that characterises the development of academic literacy (See 4.3 and 4.7).

7.4 Summary and conclusion

Findings in this study, particularly in the survey data, provide further evidence of the key role that tutor feedback can play in the development of international Masters students' academic literacy. Both content and linguistic features of feedback seem to impact on different dimensions of academic literacy. However, one key issue identified in this study was the apparent lack of a systematic approach in departments to assess the effectiveness of feedback, which should be a cause for concern. The absence of such an approach may be indicative of inconsistencies across departments and faculties, which can negatively affect feedback practices. This research also identified a number of potential barriers to the effectiveness of feedback that related to presentational

and content features of feedback, perceived lack of consistency in feedback practices, and constraints imposed by institutional contexts.

Despite a focus on the link between tutor feedback and academic literacy, the research uncovered other important factors in the development of academic literacy. Besides the role that tutor feedback may play in developing key elements of academic literacy, other factors that can influence academic literacy development include: dialogue with tutors and peers, particularly around the topic of assessment and through the use of exemplars, input from tutors through teaching activities such as seminars, lectures and tutorials, regular interaction with peers and support staff such as librarians, independent study through a range of online resources, and engagement with relevant discourse(s) through reading and writing. This makes for a complex picture that warrants further investigation, so any claims regarding a direct causal relationship between tutor feedback and academic literacy development, often reported in other studies (e.g. Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Prowse et al., 2007; Yorke, 2003), must be considered in light of other determining factors.

However, findings further underline the importance of dialogue around assessment found in other studies. (Handley and Williams 2011; O'Donovan et al., 2004; Rust et al., 2005, Trowler and Knight, 1999) and dialogic feedback practices (e.g. Blair et al., 2014; Boud and Molloy, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Lillis, 2003; Nicol, 2010) that do not see feedback as information that is simply delivered to students. Therefore, feedback is then seen here as an adaptive process underpinned by dialogue, which allows learners to make sense of information on their performance, and use it to enhance or reconfigure their existing academic literacy and thus perform in ways that are acknowledged and

valued by other members of their community. This notion of feedback involves a multifaceted process where students are central, not only as 'consumers' of feedback, but also as co-producers.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Recapitulation of key findings and their relationship to previous research

The main aim of the study was to explore the role of tutor feedback in the development of international Masters students' academic literacy. In order to achieve this aim, the study first identified a set of key constituting elements of academic literacy by exploring tutors' and international students' perceptions of academic literacy in their disciplines, mainly through interviews complemented by analysis of relevant documents (e.g. assignment briefs and marking criteria).

The key elements of academic literacy (KEALs) that emerged from the analysis were presented to staff and students in the form of a survey and then contrasted across disciplinary and participant groups. The analysis considered the relative level of importance participants attributed to these elements across data sets as well as participants' interpretation of what the different elements involved. The study then investigated the extent to which tutor feedback related to these KEALs by analysing content and linguistic features of tutors' written feedback, as well as participants' views on the content and purpose of feedback. Finally, the research considered evidence of the link between tutor feedback and the development of international students' academic literacy by looking at the samples collected and exploring participants' perceptions of the impact of feedback on their literacy practices. Although some of findings presented in this study are not novel in themselves, they seem to provide further evidence to support findings elsewhere, thus contributing to a better understanding of the key issues identified in this study. These findings are summarised here and linked to both previous studies and the research questions (RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3).

RQ1 focused on identifying a set of constituting elements of academic literacy as well as understanding the importance and interpretation that was given to these elements in different academic contexts. This research question also explored participants' views and experiences of academic literacy to determine whether there may be issues with alignment. In terms of how academics and international students on Masters programmes conceptualised academic literacy, one important contribution of this study, discussed in more detail in 8.2.3, was to shed more light on the complex and dynamic nature of academic literacy because of its different dimensions and the various elements (KEALs) that seem to interact when individuals engage with discourse in its different forms. This research also identified considerable variation, particularly in terms of how some elements of academic literacy were conceptualised, translated into practice, and also assessed in different academic contexts.

Findings suggest that different ideas of how to approach a particular academic task may stem from disciplinary differences, which is consistent with the literature (e.g. Becher and Trawler, 1989; Coley, 1999; Crème and Lea, 2003; Dooley and Oliver, 2002; Douglas Toma, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Porter, 1986). However, besides disciplinary differences, the results from the analysis point to personal and contextual variables that can also influence how academic literacy is conceptualised and enacted. The combination of these different variables may lead to some degree of misalignment between students and tutors in terms of their beliefs, perceptions, and expectations, as found in this and other studies (Coffin & Donohue, 2012; Nguyen, 2012; Rienties et al., 2012). This is especially important in view of the considerable level of diversity found in this study, which appears to reflect a wider trend towards increased diversity in HE identified in the literature (Dysthe, 2002; HEA, 2015; HESA,

2018a, 2018b; Museus, 2007, 2014; Ryan, 2013; Warwick and Moogan, 2013; Weidman et al., 2001).

The study identified a range of academic literacy practices that involved various modes of communication (e.g. spoken, visual), supporting the view that literacy practices are increasingly multimodal (Burnett and Merchant, 2015; Duff, 2010; Kress, 1997, 2003). However, the study also provides further evidence of the privileged position of written language and essayist literacy in academia (Gee, 1989; Lillis, 2001; Northedge, 2003a), especially in formal assessments. The primacy of written language may explain numerous references to the importance of English language competence in anglophone academia, as well as frequent allusions to the issue of international students' limited command of English, which have also been widely reported in the media (e.g. Coughlan, 2008; Parr, 2015) and in the literature (e.g. Attrill et al., 2016; Banford, 2008; Benzie, 2010; Birrell, 2006; Harrison & Peacock, 2007; Haugh, 2016; McLean et al., 2013, QAA, 2009).

Besides references to 'poor' language skills in this study, there were comments regarding international students' 'lack' of participation or critical thinking skills in this study. These findings further support the idea that deficit models of language and literacy are still prevalent in academia (Haggis, 2006; Ippolito, 2007; Lea and Street, 1998; Leedham, 2015; Long, 2014; Simpson and Cook, 2010; Wingate, 2006, 2010; Tribble and Wingate, 2013). Therefore, the study seems to confirm the expectation that international students must conform to Western paradigms, often seen as uncontested and universal (Ryan and Viète 2009; Sharma, 2004, Street, 2003), and change their practices, despite the existing discourse that underlines the 'intercultural dimension' of internationalisation.

RQ2 explored feedback practices and the extent to which these varied across disciplinary and/or academic contexts. This question also looked into how tutor feedback was communicated to students and how it linked to different elements of academic literacy. The research found a wide range of feedback practices across disciplines and contexts, suggesting that disciplinary and contextual factors play a role in shaping feedback practices, although individual factors can also play an important part. However, some feedback practices seemed to be widespread in Anglophone academia, for example, the prevalence of written language in feedback. Findings are consistent with other studies that have identified written summative feedback as the predominant practice in academic contexts (Beaumont et al., 2011; Blair et al., 2014; Boud, 2007; Crisp, 2007; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Lillis, 2006 Randall and Mirador, 2003; Sadler, 1989).

The distinction between summative and formative, written and spoken feedback, seems particularly relevant since international students appeared to respond differently to the range of practices that they encountered, with most students favouring spoken formative feedback, as Orsmond et al. (2005) also reported. On the other hand, there seemed to be limited evidence of student engagement with written summative feedback, which reflects findings by Beaumont et al. (2011). The limited amount of formative feedback that students reported in this study is a cause for concern and seems to provide further evidence of an apparent decline in formative assessment in UK universities reported in the literature (Boud, 2007; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Hardy and Clughen, 2012).

Findings also point to the prevalence of monologic-dialectic practices (Lillis, 2003) and a traditional view of feedback as information that is presented

and delivered to students (Poulos & Mahony, 2008). This limited view seems contrary to calls in the recent literature for a reconceptualisation of feedback as a dialogic process (Beaumont et al., 2011; Blair et al., 2014; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless et al, 2011; Carless, 2013; Espasa et al., 2018; Nicol, 2010; Yang and Carless, 2013). Limited evidence of dialogic practices in this study may be linked to some international students' dissatisfaction with feedback, and an apparent lack of student engagement with some forms of feedback.

The study also identified certain characteristics of how feedback was communicated to students, both in terms of language and content. Results from the analysis of samples and interviews suggest that linguistic and content features of feedback could have an impact on students' emotions and how they interpret and engage with feedback, stressing the importance of how tutors construct their feedback, as previous research has found (e.g. Boud, 1995; Hounsell, 1995; Weaver, 2006; Yang and Carless, 2013). Some presentational, linguistic and content features of feedback can act as barriers to its effectiveness, for example legibility of tutors' comments, the use of language that may be perceived as overly critical, or the inclusion of specialised language or academic discourse that may be beyond the reach of some students. These results appear to be consistent with numerous studies in the sense that many students, not necessarily international, find it difficult to interpret tutor feedback (Carless, 2006; Chanock, 2000; Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al, 2001; Hyatt, 2005; Hounsell, 1997; McCune, 2004; Sommers, 1982; Weaver, 2006; Williams, 2005). On the other hand, the study also found evidence of the potential of feedback for academic literacy development because of the strong link between tutor feedback and different elements of academic literacy.

RQ3 was central to this study as it focused on the role of tutor feedback in helping students understand and develop their academic literacy while also considering any potential barriers to its effectiveness, which will be discussed in more detail in 8.2.2. In terms of the extent to which tutor feedback enables or hinders international students' understanding and development of academic literacy, the strong link between tutor feedback and different KEALs, noted above, highlights the potential of feedback to impact on the development of different elements of academic literacy such as contextual awareness, or understanding of academic standards and conventions, as suggested by other studies (e.g. Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Hyland, 2009; McCune & Hounsell 2005; Orsmond & Merry, 2011; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Prowse et al., 2007; Sadler, 2002 Yorke, 2003). However, little evidence of student engagement with written summative feedback, the most common type found in this study, as well as limited evidence of the impact of this type of feedback on students' literacy practices, raise questions as to the effectiveness of written summative feedback, or feedout (Knight, 2002), which is also consistent with some of the literature (Beaumont et al., 2011; Blair et al., 2014; Crisp, 2007; Randall and Mirador, 2003; Sadler, 1989).

Crucially, given the limited impact of written tutor feedback found in this study, this form of feedback, usually a by-product of high-stakes assessment, did not seem to be the only way in which tutors contributed to the development of academic literacy. International students reported a number of tutor practices that helped them develop a number of KEALs, which is particularly important when studying the impact of tutor feedback on students' literacy practices because any claims about the causal relationships between feedback and literacy development must be considered in the context of other relevant

pedagogical practices. These included input sessions (e.g. lectures), discussions around assessment materials (e.g. assignment briefs), and responses to students' queries (e.g. by email). International students also benefited from establishing relationships with their peers through various modes (e.g. by email, social media or face-to-face), and from interaction with university support staff, for example, during academic skills or information literacy sessions.

Other practices such as independent study were thought to be very helpful in developing students' understanding of academic literacy in their contexts; however, most students felt that engaging with others through a variety of discursive episodes was key to their development. During the interviews, nearly all students said that peers had been essential in negotiating discourse, understanding expectations, and improving their work. Findings highlighting the key role of peers in developing the necessary competencies, knowledge and attitudes to engage in a variety of discursive episodes seem consistent with the literature that stresses the importance of dialogue and interactions with peers in learning contexts (Androushchak et al., 2013; Bruner, 1978; Carrell et al., 2009; De Paola & Scoppa, 2010; Epple & Romano, 2010; Moore et al., 2016; Orsmond et al., 2011; Seloni, 2012; Swain, 2001; Vygostky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976; Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Perhaps, one of the most important contributions of this study is to shed some light on the multiple factors that play a role in the development of academic literacy. This has contributed to building a current picture of the experience of academic study in UK universities, particularly in the case of international students on full-time Masters programmes. The study also points to new lines of enquiry and, given the complexity of modern universities, it

stresses the need to consider multiple variables when investigating practices such as academic writing and feedback, especially when trying to establish causal relationships. There are, however, other contributions emerging from this study, which will be discussed in the next section.

8.2. Specific contribution to knowledge

Apart from providing further evidence to support findings in other studies, this research has drawn attention to the academic literacy and feedback experiences of international students on full-time Masters courses in the UK, an area that remains largely unexplored despite these students representing a considerable proportion of the student population and an important part of the UK internationalisation agenda. On the other hand, feedback continues to be an aspect of academic study in the UK that generates dissatisfaction among students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level (HEFCE, 2016; HEA, 2017). The following subsections identify areas that could be considered as specific contributions to knowledge in the field of learning and teaching in higher education. Although not all of these areas were originally included in the research questions, they emerged from the data as important lines of inquiry, not only for this study, but also for future research into feedback, academic literacy, and the academic experience of international students..

8.2.1 The particular challenge for non-UK students on full-time Masters programmes

Full-time Masters students usually face a number of challenges including the interdisciplinary nature of many programmes, studying a different subject to what they did at undergraduate level, the considerable amount of reading that they are expected to do, the need to quickly familiarise themselves with norms, expectations and conventions in their new academic contexts, different forms of assessment as they move from one module to another, the need to transfer meaning from one mode to another (e.g. from spoken to written language),

especially for assessment purposes, as well as the requirement to write using relevant professional or disciplinary genres. In order to meet these challenges successfully, students usually need to further develop or reconfigure their academic literacy over a short period of time, typically less than a year, which seems unrealistic, considering that this process can take many years (Braine, 2002; Mandler, 2014; Potgieter and Smit, 2009).

However, in the particular case of international students in this research, these challenges were often compounded by linguistic and cultural factors, the prevalence of deficit views of their cultural capital in their institutions, and the expectation that international students, not their tutors or their institutions, must change their practices and conform with notions of academic literacy in anglophone academia, dominated by Western paradigms that are often seen as universal (Ryan and Viete, 2009; Street, 2003). As a result, international students appear to be at a considerable disadvantage.

Some international students in this study believed that they had to work much harder than home students and yet often failed to meet their tutors' expectations, which sometimes resulted in lower grades than their UK counterparts. While expecting students, both home and international, to adapt their ideas and practices to meet academic and/or professional standards seems reasonable, possibly a core aim of most programmes, there may also be a lack of appreciation for the challenge that this represents for many students with non-traditional linguistic, educational, social, disciplinary, and/or cultural backgrounds. Some participants, including two tutors, felt that being assessed through a variety of often unfamiliar writing genres, and having to conform to local standards, which would seem foreign to many international students, puts non-UK students at a considerable disadvantage with respect to their UK

counterparts. Despite the considerable challenge of studying across linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries in unfamiliar academic settings, student participants in this study often felt their efforts were often unappreciated and unrewarded.

8.2.2 Factors affecting the effectiveness of feedback: beyond form and content

As a result of exploring feedback practices and their impact on academic literacy development (RQ2 and RQ3), this study widens the discussion surrounding feedback, which has traditionally focused on tutors' feedback practices and the nature of feedback itself, for example, language and content, also covered in this study. Findings point to other important factors that may have an impact on the effectiveness of feedback such as students' perception and interpretation of tutor comments, their engagement with feedback, available institutional resources (e.g. online marking tools), assessment regimes (e.g. no formative assessments), departmental practices, policies and procedures (e.g. no-drafts, moderation), and programme structure (e.g. modularisation).

Accounting for these multiple factors makes it difficult to determine the role of feedback in academic literacy development or learning in general, but given the importance of feedback to the student experience and the considerable effort put into it by different stakeholders, it seems essential to develop a better understanding of these factors. In that respect, the fact that this study found no evidence of systematic approaches in departments to assess the effectiveness of feedback represents a valuable, yet possibly concerning, finding. The absence of a systematic approach to assess and review current assessment and feedback practices means that institutions run the risk of implementing policy changes (e.g. 3-week turn around for feedback) without fully understanding the 'big picture', including current barriers to the

effectiveness of both assessment and feedback. Therefore, the identification of some of these barriers in this study is also a valuable contribution.

One key conclusion is that pedagogical practices such as assessment and feedback cannot be separated from either the individuals or the pedagogical spaces in which they occur, so their impact can be enhanced or constrained by such spaces and the people that inhabit them. Much of the advice literature places great emphasis on 'good practice by' tutors, focusing on feedback at the point of delivery, for example, timing, wording, quality of information. This view centres on what the tutors do, possibly perpetuating a 'blame discourse' that sees tutors as responsible for students' dissatisfaction with feedback. While acknowledging the importance of 'good' feedback practices, the proposition emerging from the data is that such practices need to be contextualised and that tutors are only part of the equation, so possible solutions must involve students and institutions at all levels.

8.2.3 Recognising the multiple dimensions of academic literacy.

Following Street's (1995) seminal work distinguishing between autonomous and ideological models of literacy, there seemed to be a move away from the idea of literacy as a cognitive activity, placing more emphasis on its social dimension. While fully recognising the deeply-situated nature of academic literacy, this study also acknowledges the important role of cognitive skills in academic literacy practices. Having explored tutors' and international students' understandings of academic literacy (RQ1), this study contends that academic literacy involves various dimensions that interact with each other and can realign, as needed, to allow individuals to participate in a range of discursive episodes (See 4.7, and Figure 5 in Appendix 4.10)

The research also identified 28 key elements of academic literacy that both students and tutors considered important in interviews and surveys (See

Appendix 4.1 for a list of KEALs). The importance of these elements was also reflected in course documents such as assignment briefs and marking criteria. While this list is not exhaustive and it is likely to contain different elements in different academic contexts, it serves as the basis for a discussion as to the importance, conceptualisation and assessment of these elements; in other words, such a list contributes to the discussion of what it means to be academically literate in different contexts and can help raise students' awareness and understanding of the different types of knowledge, competencies and dispositions valued in their specific academic contexts. The key elements identified in this research pointed to dimensions of academic literacy that had to do with attitudes and emotions, knowledge structures, and the specific academic contexts in which individuals operate, going beyond the linguistic, cognitive, structural and mechanical aspects of academic literacy typically associated with reading and writing.

On one hand, the model highlights the importance of these dimensions across disciplinary boundaries and academic contexts; on the other hand, it acknowledges that the way in which different KEALs in each dimension are interpreted, valued and demonstrated is deeply situated and bound by the particular ideologies that characterise different academic contexts. Therefore, the study also supports the proposition that academic literacy is not something static that can be universally applied in all situations and contexts (Hyland, 2013a; Russel et al., 2009; Street, 1995). However, because academic literacy seems to occur at the intersection of personal, disciplinary, institutional and cultural boundaries where discourse and intradiscourse converge, its configuration may also depend, to a certain extent, on individual variables such as their level of agency.

Findings appear to support the notion that students are active agents in the development of their academic literacy, interacting with others and drawing from a number of sources to familiarise themselves with relevant discourses and the specific contexts in which they operate. However, their agency may be constrained by the influence of normalising discourse and the asymmetries of power, particularly between students and their tutors, which seem to characterise some academic settings in the UK. These power relationships, perhaps most evident in assessment, can have a normalising effect on students, subjugating the autonomy of individual expression to the ideological influence of dominant discourse(s). In the case of international students, given their status as novices in a new academic culture and the deficit discourse often associated with their literacy practices, their own voices may be drowned while attempting to navigate unfamiliar discourses and new academic landscapes.

8.2.4 Possible causes of misalignment

As discussed in Chapter 5, the degree to which students' and tutors' understanding of academic literacy aligns is important because students may not engage with discursive episodes in ways that tutors expect, as reported by various participants, which may impact negatively on students' grades and other aspects such as their confidence and/or motivation. As part of the exploration of the extent to which students' and tutors' understandings of academic literacy aligned (RQ1), this study found evidence of misalignment between tutors and international students on Masters programmes; however, the research also provided evidence that dialogic practices (e.g. discussions around assessment) can help reduce misalignment and encourage mutual understanding, which is consistent with findings in other studies, as highlighted in 8.1 above.

However, one important contribution of this study is the identification of some of the factors that seem to influence discourses and practices in

academia, and can thus lead to misalignment between tutors and international students. These included the interdisciplinary and modular nature of many Masters programmes, increased diversity of the staff and student population, cultural and disciplinary differences, the influence of the industry and government policy, particularly the emphasis on employability, and personal factors. While not intending to provide a comprehensive list of factors, the study aims to point to future lines of inquiry and encourages a discussion on the phenomenon of misalignment, especially important when trying to understand perceived issues with international students' literacy practices.

8.3 Brief review of the research and its limitations

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provided rich data about participants' perceptions of academic literacy, their feedback experiences and their views on the role that tutor feedback played in the development of academic literacy, along with other factors. However, one particular challenge with the design was perhaps the need to conduct preliminary data analysis over a short period of time, for example, analysing the data from the focus group to help inform the interview questions, and looking at interview data and documentary evidence to help inform the survey questions, sometimes over a few weeks.

Although this contributed to a certain level of consistency in exploring similar lines of enquiry across data sets, it may have also narrowed down the focus of the study prematurely, leading to potential bias in the search for similar answers. In order to help prevent this, I constantly referred to the research questions and considered potential lines of enquiry emerging from the preliminary analysis. I invited both survey respondents and interviewees to comment on any aspect of their experience that had not been included in the questionnaires, which occasionally led to lines of inquiry that I had not initially

considered, for example, other factors that contributed to the development of academic literacy besides tutor feedback.

The design of the questionnaire for the survey was particularly challenging. For example, following feedback from the pilot, I tried to keep the number of questionnaire items below 100 items and to phrase statements using participants' own words, which meant that some of the items referred to more than one concept, making them ambiguous e.g. knowledge of the wider context and relevant theory. However, when examining marking rubrics, I noticed that the marking criteria included many examples of double-barrelled statements that reflected the items in the survey e.g. synthesis and critical evaluation of a wide selection of sources, so some of the survey items seemed to reflect the type of the ambiguity that tutors and students faced in their practices.

Some issues in the survey did not surface until the analysis of the qualitative data was complete. For example, the survey questionnaire did not distinguish between formative and summative feedback because the distinction did not seem important until it became apparent that students responded to each type in different ways. Therefore, when considering students' perceptions of feedback recorded in the survey, it is not possible to establish whether they were thinking about formative or summative negative feedback. Perhaps the lack of depth of survey responses reflects some of the limitations of quantitative methods and further justifies the combination of different methods. On the contrary, interview data contained references to feedback linked to contextual clues and provided the opportunity to pursue new lines of enquiry and obtain more nuanced answers, in this case, allowing for differentiation between these two types of feedback.

However, the main purpose of the quantitative analysis was to help identify emerging patterns in the data across disciplinary and participant groups, often generating further questions to ask of the qualitative data, so the lack of detail in survey answers was anticipated and was not considered a major problem. Instead, the limited student response (99 responses) was a bigger concern as it was necessary to make changes to the original plan; for example, subjects were grouped into two main disciplinary groups (HASS and STEM) to consider disciplinary variation in terms of the importance of different KEALS. Although the intention was to compare answers across single disciplines, in some cases there was only one answer per discipline and participant group (e.g. only one tutor respondent in Physics and Astronomy and no students from that discipline), which limited attempts to establish correlations between different variables. The low response may have been linked to the medium of the survey i.e. online and restricted access to the target student population (4,880 non-UK domicile students) which varied across institutions. Apart from the low number of responses, the use of convenience sampling and inconsistent methods of distribution of the survey would render tests of statistical significance unreliable. However, as expected, the descriptive analysis of survey responses was useful in identifying patterns in the data.

Data collection was perhaps the most challenging aspect of the research as it often required consent from both students and their tutors. This was not always possible and restricted the amount of data that each participant could contribute. I was able to collect one sample of formative feedback over 9 months, which led to a new line of enquiry and the realisation that some departments had an explicit no-drafts policy. The number of samples of summative feedback was below initial expectations for different reasons e.g.

students had not received the feedback by the time they finished their modules and went back to their countries, some departments only provided a grade and did not return the scripts to the students, or tutors did not give their consent so the samples were not collected.

Interviews with 21 academics and 12 international students offered the most important source of data for the analysis. I was able to interview some of the participants on different occasions from October to June (e.g. Phong, Ina, Shen, Rafiq, students, interviews) which offered the opportunity to collect data about their experiences as they progressed through their studies. While the research did not use a case study approach, students' narrative and reflections provided valuable insights into how they evolved, for example, from a focus on independent study and an individualistic approach to academic tasks, to greater engagement with peers and staff, suggesting a wider view of learning as a social enterprise (See 4.2.1).

8.4 Implications of findings and future directions

International students play a key role in the internationalisation agenda. They bring a wealth of knowledge, ideas and experiences, creating opportunities for home students and staff to learn about other cultures and contexts. As pointed out by Ryan and Viète (2009), internationalisation of higher education institutions must be seen as a process of mutual learning underpinned by respect and appreciation of international students' literacy practices. Non-UK students are also extremely important to the sustainability of Masters programmes, where they represent an important segment of the population. In this study, international students represented 29% of the postgraduate taught student population in the New University, and 55% in the Old University. Considering that most of these international students have been accepted on Masters programmes on the basis of their previous achievements

in non-UK contexts, it is important for UK universities to demonstrate that they value their educational and cultural capital.

Therefore, as Zepke and Leech (2005, in Warwick and Moogan, 2013) argue, universities have a moral duty to adapt in order to reflect their diverse student populations. The main argument is that admission of international students on UK Masters programmes somehow implies acceptance of the literacy practices that they bring with them. Rather than expecting or assuming that international students will adopt an anglophone Western view of academic literacy, it is perhaps more appropriate to respect, acknowledge and value the sort of fusion that may result from combining literacy practices rooted in different cultural, linguistic and educational foundations. In practical terms, this involves showing greater sensitivity to international students' needs, encouraging a wider discussion on the extent to which current academic practice in the UK is inclusive, and making reasonable adjustments to existing practices, for example, by accepting alternative ways of thinking and communicating that may not reflect the established 'wisdom' or academic conventions in the UK.

Academic literacy development then involves reflective practice for both students and tutors. For students, developing their academic literacy is an iterative and expansive process that can be initiated and facilitated by tutors, but it is also reliant on their independent exploration of relevant discourses. In other words, the development of academic literacy is the result of a personal journey that not only involves independent study but also social interaction with others. Therefore, international students need learning environments that offer opportunities for scaffolded independent learning and dialogue, so that they can

build personal learning networks that include relevant resources, peers, tutors and other university staff.

Tutor feedback can be an important aspect of the iterative and expansive process that characterises academic literacy development as it often relates to key elements of academic literacy. However, the limited amount of written formative feedback and the limited impact that summative feedback seems to have on the development of academic literacy calls for a wider discussion on the purpose and value of different forms of assessment and feedback. This requires suitable mechanisms to evaluate the impact of feedback that should go beyond student experience questionnaires.

These mechanisms must consider the extent to which academic programmes support dialogic feedback and the degree to which different types of feedback contribute to the development of specific elements of academic literacy, while also considering other factors that can play a role in their development. Traditional qualitative approaches such as focus groups and interviews can be part of these mechanisms, but there may also be a need for changes in assessment and feedback processes to mitigate the impact of modularisation and other institutional barriers. For example, centralised systems for students to submit their work and for tutors to provide their feedback can help create individual repositories that can make it easier to map the student journey across different modules. These could also provide institutions with valuable data to identify emerging patterns in feedback practices and address any possible issues.

Despite all the rhetoric about the importance of feedback in higher education and the emergence of institutional policies highlighting feedback principles based on the advice literature, assessment and feedback regimes on

postgraduate taught courses still appear to favour traditional practices that tend to marginalise formative feedback and rely on written discourse. Although this study appears to confirm the key role that tutors can play in the development of international students' academic literacy, it also points to an apparent imbalance that places most of the responsibility for the effectiveness of feedback on tutors. Therefore, this research suggests there is a need to widen the scope of research into feedback and consider student feedback practices and the role that organisational structure, policies and procedures can play in making feedback more effective.

Systematic and consistent approaches to provide, monitor and assess the effectiveness of feedback can help institutions identify best practice in specific disciplinary and departmental contexts as well as the sort of assessment regimes and programme architectures that best support these practices. For example, the imbalance between written formative and summative feedback found in this study coupled with lack of evidence of the effectiveness of the latter suggests that institutions need to consider whether the amount of time and effort devoted to summative feedback should be allocated to other activities. Systemic feedback practices also involve establishing suitable mechanisms to assess students' needs and promote further student engagement through all stages of the process. This is particularly important on Masters programmes because of their intensive nature, increasing diversity among the staff and student population, and evident dissatisfaction with feedback.

Masters programmes need to encourage engagement with relevant discourses through a variety of discursive episodes that do not only involve written discourse, particularly in the context of assessment, so that these

discursive episodes can better reflect new multimodal literacy practices and the needs of many international students for whom academic writing can be extremely challenging. Therefore, there is also a need for practitioners to adopt a wider view of academic literacy that acknowledges its complex, dynamic, multimodal and contested nature.

More research is needed to identify specific academic literacy configurations that are typical in each discipline and the extent to which these apply to different institutional contexts. In other words, it is important to determine key elements of academic literacy (KEALs) in each discipline, how these are valued, interpreted and demonstrated, as well as the level of variation from one context to another, which would require research at a larger scale across institutions. Such research could serve as the basis for practitioners to further engage in constructive debates on what being academically literate means in their particular contexts and ways in which feedback and other practices can promote the development of academic literacies.

Important questions remain in terms of disciplinary specificity of academic literacy and how students engage, interpret and act on feedback in different disciplines and academic contexts. Research that explores the views and experiences of tutors and students on interdisciplinary programmes will contribute to a better understanding of particular configurations of academic literacy that are specific to each discourse community. Increasing student diversity also renders further investigation of personal variables (e.g. locus of control or attitudes to learning) that can affect the way that international students respond to feedback. Although this research has focused on the experience of international students on Masters courses, many of the challenges that they reported could also apply to home students, so it would

also be important to compare the views and experiences of UK and non-UK students in the same disciplinary and academic contexts.

8.5 Autobiographical reflection on my development as a researcher

I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be.

-- Douglas Adams, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*

I started my research journey as a quest to find answers that would lead to important contributions to theory and/or practice. Although I believe that this research has contributed to our understanding of academic literacy and feedback practices, particularly in the case of international students on Masters programmes in the UK, I have been the main beneficiary of this experience. This research has questioned my own theoretical assumptions and prompted reflection on my practice as a student, as a tutor, as a researcher and as a manager in a UK university.

I initially thought I would be able to 'objectively' observe particular social practices from an etic perspective and draw conclusions that could be generalised to other contexts. The decision to investigate feedback practices in other academic departments rather than in my own context was possibly based on a desire to apply a descriptive and positivist approach that privileged quantitative data, possibly influenced by my training in the scientific method as an undergraduate student in the 1980s. However, it soon became apparent that my attempt to approach research as 'an outsider' was untenable. Having completed part of my education abroad and having English as a second language meant that it would be easy to identify myself, either consciously or subconsciously, with international students. Having taught in tertiary education since 1999 I could also adopt the 'tutor' perspective and sympathise with many of the interviewees.

The complexity of individuals, their interactions and their academic contexts started to emerge during the first interviews and highlighted the fact that I needed to move away from a functional approach that focused on unveiling specific actions that could improve feedback practice, typical of the action research I had done in the past, towards an approach that centred on gaining a better understanding of the multiple factors that lead to such complexity and end up shaping different practices.

Clarifying my purpose as a researcher helped me approach the study with a more open mind and pursue different lines of enquiry emerging from the data, and my interactions with participants during interviews. Participants' narratives became the main focus, complemented by survey responses and documentary evidence, not for triangulation or extrapolation, as I had initially suggested in my research proposal, but as prompts to ask different questions from the interview data. I focused on recording participant's accounts and describing practices as accurately as possible, drawing inferences and interpreting findings in light of the current literature. Without totally abandoning my belief in some elements of the scientific method, which I developed as a young student in Biosciences, I believe I have expanded my research horizon.

As a result, I have advanced my knowledge of academic practice from both the literature and my interaction with colleagues across different disciplines. I have also gained an appreciation of the wider higher education context and how universities operate; I now have a better understanding of research methods and information management, greater sensitivity towards students' needs, and the confidence to explore key issues that transcend my own local setting. In my search for answers I have ended up with more questions, but I now feel more committed to research in education, not

necessarily as a way to evaluate and improve pedagogical practices, but as a valuable instrument to understand the ideas, values and assumptions that underpin such practices and shape the pedagogical spaces in which we operate.

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Appendices

Appendix 2.1 List of key terms introduced in this thesis

Term	Description/Definition
Academic literacy	A complex, cumulative and dynamic configuration of domain-specific knowledge, competencies, and dispositions that allows individuals to engage in a variety of discursive episodes in ways that are deemed legitimate by their discourse community.
Dimensions of academic literacy	A concept that highlights the complex interplay of multiple aspects of academic literacy during a discursive episode e.g. social, cognitive, affective. Each dimension is constituted by a group of specific skills, knowledge and attitudes.
Discourse mapping	The exploration of relevant discourses in order to identify key features of such discourses (e.g. language) and the ontological, epistemological and paradigmatic lines that cross an individual's disciplinary and professional landscape.
Discursive episodes	Instances in which individuals engage with relevant discourse(s) in their particular contexts.
Interpretive affinity	The level of similarity in how individuals perceive and respond to materials, artefacts or each other during discursive episodes, which is linked to how their academic literacy is configured.
Intradiscourse	The particular discursive configuration that characterises an individual, an internalised version of relevant discourse(s) that is personal, unique and dynamic.
Key elements of academic literacy (KEALs)	An element of academic literacy e.g. type of knowledge, skill or attitude identified as a core aspect of academic literacy.

Key Disciplinary Skills and Experiences of Feedback

Start of Block: About your discipline and academic department

Your Programme of Studies and Academic Department



Which is your current HE institution?

(Please indicate the university where you are currently studying)

- The University of Sheffield (TUoS).
- Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).
- Other (please provide details):



Which degree course are you currently registered on (currently studying)?

If you are taking more than one please indicate the highest qualification that you are studying for.

- Masters (e.g. LLM, MBA, MA, MSc, MEng, MRes).
- Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip).
- Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert).
- Undergraduate
- Other (please provide details):



When did you start your academic programme? Think of the date when you started your degree course.

- 1 January 2014 or after.
- 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2013.
- Before 1 September 2013.



Mode of Study

(What are you currently registered as?)

- Full-time student
- Part-time student.
- Other (please provide details):

Page Break



What is your main field of study (academic discipline)?
(Please indicate the main subject area that you are studying)

- Arts and Design (Design Studies)
- Arts and Design (Fine Art)
- Arts and Design (others)
- Business and Management (Accounting)
- Business and Management (Business Studies)
- Business and Management (Finance)
- Business and Management (Marketing)
- Business and Management (others)
- Computing Science (Artificial Intelligence)
- Computing Science (Information Systems)
- Computing Science (Software Engineering)
- Computing Science (others)
- Engineering (Aerospace)
- Engineering (Chemical, Process and Energy)
- Engineering (Civil)
- Engineering (Electronic and Electrical)
- Engineering (Mechanical)
- Engineering (Production and Manufacturing)
- Engineering (others)
- Journalism
- Law
- Mathematics
- Media Studies
- Statistics
- Other (please indicate which is your MAIN subject/discipline if not listed above):



Was your previous qualification (degree) in the same subject area as your current qualification? We want to know if your main subject area has changed.

- Yes**, my current degree course is in the **same** academic discipline (subject area) as my previous qualification.
- No**, my current degree course is in a **different** academic discipline (subject area) from my previous qualification.
- Not sure



Was your previous qualification (degree) obtained in the UK? We want to know if you have previous experience of studying towards a qualification in the UK.

- Yes**, I completed my previous academic programme **in the UK** and received my previous qualification from a British (UK) institution.
- No**, I completed my previous academic programme **outside the UK** and received my previous qualification from a foreign (non-UK) institution.

Display This Question:

If Was your previous qualification (degree) in the same subject area as your current qualification?... = No, my current degree course is in a different academic discipline (subject area) from my previous qualification.

What was the main subject area (academic discipline) of your previous qualification (if different from what are studying now)?

End of Block: About your discipline and academic department

Start of Block: About types of assessment and feedback

Types of Assessment and Feedback



Which of these forms of written assessment have you experienced on your degree course? **Please select all that apply.** Think of what teachers have asked you to write in order to assess

your learning, whether your work has counted towards your grade (summative assessment) or not (formative assessment).

- Exercise or test (e.g. multiple choice, short answers, calculations, data analysis).
- Explanation (e.g. business concept, instrument description, process explanation).
- Critique (e.g. academic paper review, product evaluation, policy evaluation, legal case report).
- Essay (e.g. discussion, exposition, commentary).
- Literature survey (e.g. annotated bibliography, summary of an article, literature overview).
- Methodology account/description (e.g. laboratory reports, computer analysis, field report).
- Research report (e.g. research article, research project, dissertation).
- Case study (e.g. organisation analysis, single issue in an engineering process).
- Design specification (e.g. website design, game design, product design).
- Proposal (business plan, legislation reform, research proposal).
- Non academic writing (e.g. letters, information leaflets, newspaper article).
- Narrative or reflective account (e.g. biography, plot synopsis, character outline, learning log).
- Problem question (e.g. business scenario, law problem, logistics simulation)
- Other (please provide details):

Page Break



How have you received feedback from tutors/lecturers during the course of your studies?
Please select all that apply. Think of the different ways in which your tutors/teachers have provided feedback on your work/progress.

- spoken comments during a meeting or individual tutorial (one-to-one, NOT in class time).
- spoken comments during a lesson or workshop (one-to-one, in class time).
- spoken comments in general about all students' work during a lecture or workshop.
- handwritten annotations or corrections on my work (e.g. on drawings, on the margins of a document).
- handwritten comments giving a general impression of my work (e.g. at the beginning or end of a document).
- diagrams, drawings or other visual forms.
- using a pre-designed feedback sheet or rubric containing a scale with grades and a set of descriptors.
- typed annotations or corrections (e.g. track changes in a word processor)
- typed comments giving a general impression of my work (e.g. with a word processor)
- general comments in an email (e.g. in response to a question).
- comments or symbols generated through an online service (e.g. Blackboard or Turnitin).
- Other (please provide details):

Skip To: End of Survey If How have you received feedback from tutors/lecturers during the course of your studies? Please se... = spoken comments during a meeting or individual tutorial (one-to-one, NOT in class time).

End of Block: About types of assessment and feedback

Start of Block: About experiences of feedback

Experiences of Feedback



Based on your overall experience since you started your current academic programme, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about the feedback that you have received from your tutors/lecturers? My feedback has...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/Not applicable
improved my academic writing skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encouraged me to evaluate and synthesize (integrate) my reading more effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
helped me to understand the particular ways of thinking in my discipline.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encouraged me to think independently and to develop my own reasoned views and opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
clarified aspects of my subject area that I did not understand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
helped me to develop analytic and critical thinking skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
raised my awareness and understanding of the wider contextual issues and relevant theory in my discipline.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
helped me develop and present arguments and propositions in a more effective way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

helped to improve my future work.	<input type="radio"/>					
helped me to understand the standards required in my work and develop a sense of quality.	<input type="radio"/>					
pointed to useful resources to improve my work (e.g. websites, sources).	<input type="radio"/>					
highlighted both successful aspects of my work and areas that I need to improve.	<input type="radio"/>					

Page Break



Based on your overall experience since you started your current academic programme, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about the feedback that you have received from your tutors/lecturers?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/Not applicable
I have had the opportunity to discuss my feedback with my tutor/lecturer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have received formative feedback on my drafts or samples of my writing before submission.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My feedback has drawn attention to problems with the organisation of ideas in my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My feedback has highlighted issues with the language that I used in my work (e.g. grammar, style, spelling).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My feedback has indicated problems with reasoning and argumentation in my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My feedback has pointed out problems in the presentation and use of academic conventions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have understood the language that tutors/lecturers have used in my feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My feedback has drawn attention to theoretical gaps and omissions of key points.	<input type="radio"/>					
My feedback has pointed out methodological or procedural issues in my work.	<input type="radio"/>					
Tutors/lecturers have discussed the assignment brief(s) with students to highlight or clarify key aspects of the assessment before the submission date.	<input type="radio"/>					
Tutors/lecturers have discussed the marking criteria with students to make sure that it was clear in advance and that we (the students) understood how we would be assessed.	<input type="radio"/>					
My feedback has provided enough detail for me to understand what I can do to improve my work.	<input type="radio"/>					

End of Block: About experiences of feedback

Start of Block: About key skills in your discipline

Key Skills in your Academic Discipline

How important are the following skills/aspects within your discipline? Part 1. You can move the slider along the scale or click on a particular point on the scale to indicate the level of importance.

	1	2	3	3	4	5
clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually (e.g. charts, drawings, equations).						
to analyse and diagnose issues in a particular context.						
to combine information and make connections between ideas or key concepts.						
knowledge of the wider contextual issues and relevant theory.						
to develop innovative and creative solutions to questions or problems.						
to draw conclusions supported by evidence.						
to apply knowledge, methods or techniques selectively.						
to study things in detail paying attention to basic elements, parts or principles.						
to provide a robust rationale for choices or solutions.						
to demonstrate understanding of complex concepts and be able to explain them.						
to critically evaluate the importance and usefulness of information.						
to make judgements and decisions against specific criteria.						
clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing.						
to use academic conventions and professional methods to present information.						

Page Break

How important are the following skills/aspects within your discipline? Part 2. You can move the slider along the scale or click on a particular point on the scale to indicate the level of importance.

Not at all Important Of Little Importance Moderately Important Very Important Extremely Important

1 2 3 3 4 5

to apply theory to different contexts or situations.	
to work independently without direct supervision or encouragement.	
to remember facts, principles or key concepts.	
to innovate and originate fresh thinking.	
to make use of tools or equipment effectively.	
to make sense of visual data (e.g. charts, equations, diagrams).	
to work collaboratively as part of a group.	
to communicate ideas clearly and confidently during discussions.	
to review and reflect on own work.	
to synthesize (integrate) and critically assess a wide selection of references.	
to make use of software and computers effectively.	
ability to take part in critical debates about own work and that of others.	
to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions.	
to question existing knowledge, methods or techniques.	
Other (please provide details):	

End of Block: About key skills in your discipline

Start of Block: About you

About you



What is your age?

- 25 years or younger.
- 26 - 30 years old.
- 31 - 35 years old.
- 36 - 40 years old.
- 41 - 45 years old.
- 46 - 50 years old.
- 51 - 55 years old.
- 56 years old or older.



What's your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say



What is your country of birth?

- The United Kingdom
- another EU country
- a non-EU country

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country
Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country

Please tell us your country of birth.

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country

Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country



How long have you been studying in the UK? This is to give us an idea of how much experience you may have as a student in the British education system.

- Less than 6 months.
- More than 6 months but less than 1 year.
- More than 1 year but less than 2 years.
- More than 2 years.

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country

Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country



How would you describe your current level of English?

- English is my first (native language).
- I am fully bilingual so I use English and another language as a native speaker.
- I am a very good user of English. I can communicate well about a wide range of topics and in different situations (both speaking and writing) with only occasional problems.
- I am a competent user of English. I can communicate successfully about my subject area and in most everyday situations (both speaking and writing) with only a few problems.
- I am a modest user of English. I have some difficulty when writing or speaking in English, even in my subject area and in some everyday situations, and my errors are noticeable.
- Other (please provide your own description):

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country

Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country

And How would you describe your current level of English? != English is my first (native language).

What is your first (native) language?

End of Block: About you

Start of Block: Further information



Please use this space for any additional comments you may have about your experiences of assessment and feedback. (Maximum 300 characters, about 50-60 words).



Are you willing to be contacted for an interview to explore your views and experiences in more detail?

- NO, I want to remain anonymous.
- YES, I will provide my contact details as long as they are kept confidential and separate from the answers that I have given in this survey.

End of Block: Further information

Start of Block: Contact Details

Display This Question:

If Are you willing to be contacted for an interview to explore your views and experiences in more de... = YES, I will provide my contact details as long as they are kept confidential and separate from the answers that I have given in this survey.

Thank you for completing the online questionnaire and agreeing to be contacted for an interview. You will now be redirected to an online form to provide your contact details, which will be kept confidential and separate from the answers that you have provided in this survey. Please now click on SUBMIT.

End of Block: Contact Details

Key Disciplinary Skills and Feedback Practices

Start of Block: About your discipline and academic department

QA Your Discipline and Academic Department



Q1 Which is your current HE institution?

(Please indicate the university where you do most of your teaching)

The University of Sheffield (TUoS).

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).

Other (please provide details): _____



Q2-6 On which of the following degree courses have you taught during this academic year (since 2 September 2013)? Please select all that apply.

- Masters
- Postgraduate Diploma
- Postgraduate Certificate
- Undergraduate
- Other (please provide details):



Q7 Are there any professional bodies or associations that are concerned with accreditation of the programmes that you teach on? For example, The Engineering Council, The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Association of Business Schools.

Yes

No

Not sure

Q8 What is your broad academic discipline?

Please indicate the subject area that you have teaching responsibilities within; for example: Business Studies, Civil Engineering, Journalism, Law.

End of Block: About your discipline and academic department

Start of Block: About types of assessment and feedback

QC Types of Assessment and Feedback



Q38-51 Which of these forms of written assessment have you used to evaluate PGT students' learning in this academic year (since 2 September 2013), whether they have been formative or summative tasks? Please select all that apply.

- Exercise or test (e.g. calculations, multiple choice, short answers, data analysis).
- Explanation (e.g. business concept, instrument description, process explanation).
- Critique (e.g. academic paper review, product evaluation, business environment analysis).
- Essay (e.g. discussion, exposition, commentary).
- Literature survey (e.g. annotated bibliography, summary of an article, literature overview).
- Methodology account (e.g. laboratory reports, computer analysis, field report).
- Research report (e.g. research article, research project, dissertation).
- Case study (e.g. organisation analysis, single issue in an engineering process).
- Design specification (e.g. website design, game design, product design).
- Proposal (business plan, legislation reform, research proposal).
- Non-academic writing (e.g. letters, information leaflets, newspaper article).
- Narrative or reflective account (e.g. plot synopsis, character outline, learning log).
- Problem Question (e.g. business scenario, law problem, logistics simulation).
- Other (please provide details):

Page Break



Q52-63 In which ways have you provided feedback to PGT students on their work/progress during this academic year (since 2 September 2013). Please select all that apply.

- spoken comments during a meeting or individual tutorial (one-to-one, NOT in class time).
- spoken comments during a lesson or workshop (one-to-one, in class time).
- spoken comments in general about all students' work during a lecture or workshop.
- handwritten annotations or corrections on a student's piece of work (e.g. on drawings, on the margins of a document).
- handwritten comments giving a general impression of a student's piece of work (e.g. at the beginning or end of the submitted document).
- diagrams, drawings or other visual forms.
- a pre-designed feedback sheet or rubric containing a scale with grades and a set of descriptors.
- typed annotations or corrections (e.g. track changes in a word processor)
- typed comments giving a general impression of a student's piece of work (e.g. with a word processor)
- general comments in an email (e.g. in response to a question).
- comments or symbols generated through an online service (e.g. Blackboard or Turnitin's Grademark).
- Other (please provide details):

End of Block: About types of assessment and feedback

Start of Block: About experiences of feedback

QD Experiences of Feedback



Q64-75 Based on your overall experience during this academic year (since 2 September 2013), to what extent do you agree with the following statements about the purpose of your feedback? When giving feedback this year, I have tried to...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/Not applicable
<p>improve students' academic writing skills.</p> <p>encourage students to evaluate and synthesize their reading more effectively.</p> <p>help students understand the particular ways of thinking in my discipline.</p> <p>encourage students to think independently and to develop their own reasoned views and opinions.</p> <p>clarify aspects of the subject area that students did not understand.</p> <p>help students develop analytic and critical thinking skills.</p> <p>raise students' awareness and understanding of the wider contextual issues and relevant theory in their discipline.</p>						

<p>help students develop and present arguments and propositions in a more effective way.</p> <p>help students improve their future work (feed-forward).</p> <p>help students understand the standards required in their work and develop a sense of quality.</p> <p>point to useful resources to improve students' work (e.g. websites, sources).</p>						
<p>highlight both successful aspects of the work and areas that need improving.</p>						

Page Break



Q76-87 Based on your overall experience during this academic year (since 2 September 2013), to what extent do you agree with the following statements about your feedback?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know/Not applicable
<p>Students have had the opportunity to discuss their feedback (with the tutor).</p> <p>I have been able to provide formative feedback on students' drafts/sample writing before submission.</p> <p>My feedback has drawn attention to problems with the organisation of ideas in students' work.</p> <p>My feedback has highlighted issues with the language that students used in their work (e.g. grammar, style, spelling).</p> <p>My feedback has indicated problems with reasoning and argumentation in students' work.</p> <p>My feedback has pointed out problems in the presentation and use of academic conventions.</p> <p>I believe students have understood the language that I have used in my feedback.</p>						

<p>My feedback has drawn attention to theoretical gaps and omissions of key points.</p> <p>My feedback has pointed out methodological or procedural issues in students' work.</p> <p>I have discussed the assignment brief(s) with students (in advance) to highlight or clarify key aspects of the assessment.</p> <p>I have discussed the marking criteria with students to make sure that it was clear in advance and that students understood how they would be assessed.</p>						
<p>My feedback has provided enough detail for students to understand what they can do to improve their work.</p>						

End of Block: About experiences of feedback

Start of Block: About key skills in your discipline

QB Key Skills in your Academic Discipline

Q9-22 How important are the following skills/aspects within your discipline? Part 1. You can move the slider along the scale or click on a particular point on the scale to indicate the level of importance.

Not at all Important Of Little Importance Moderately Important Very Important Extremely Important

1 2 3 3 4 5

clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually (e.g. charts, drawings, equations).	
to analyse and diagnose issues in a particular context.	
to combine information and make connections between ideas or key concepts.	
knowledge of the wider contextual issues and relevant theory.	
to develop innovative and creative solutions to questions or problems.	
to draw conclusions supported by evidence.	
to apply knowledge, methods or techniques selectively.	
to study things in detail paying attention to basic elements, parts or principles.	
to provide a robust rationale for choices or solutions.	
to demonstrate understanding of complex concepts and be able to explain them.	
to critically evaluate the importance and usefulness of information.	
to make judgements and decisions against specific criteria.	
clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing.	
to use academic conventions and professional methods to present information.	

Q23-37 How important are the following skills/aspects within your discipline? Part 2. You can move the slider along the scale or click on a particular point on the scale to indicate the level of importance.

	Not at all Important	1	2	3	3	4	5	Extremely Important
to apply theory to different contexts or situations.								
to work independently without direct supervision or encouragement.								
to remember facts, principles or key concepts.								
to innovate and originate fresh thinking.								
to make use of tools or equipment effectively.								
to make sense of visual data (e.g. charts, equations, diagrams).								
to work collaboratively as part of a group.								
to communicate ideas clearly and confidently during discussions.								
to review and reflect on own work.								
to synthesize and critically assess a wide selection of references.								
to make use of software and computers effectively.								
ability to take part in critical debates about own work and that of others.								
to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions.								
to question existing knowledge, methods or techniques.								
Other (please provide details):								

End of Block: About key skills in your discipline

Start of Block: About your position and teaching experience

QD About your role and teaching experience

Q88 Please state your current job title within your institution?

For example, Associate Lecturer, Head of Department, Lecturer, Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer.



Q89 What is the nature of your contract?

This may be relevant in terms of the amount of time available for marking and feedback.

Full-time

Part-time

Adhoc / Temporary

Other (please provide details): _____



Q90 Length of time teaching in Higher Education.

0-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10-12 years

13-15 years

16 plus years

Page Break



Q91-102 Which of these higher education or relevant teaching qualifications do you hold?
Please select all that apply.

- Institutional provision in teaching in the HE Sector (accredited against the UK Professional Standards Framework).
- Recognised by the HEA as an Associate Fellow.
- Recognised by the HEA as a Fellow.
- Recognised by the HEA as a Senior Fellow.
- Recognised by the HEA as a Principal Fellow.
- Holder of a PGCE in higher, secondary or further education, lifelong learning or any other equivalent UK Qualification.
- Accredited as a teacher of your subject by a professional UK body.
- Other UK accreditation or qualification in teaching in the HE Sector.
- Overseas accreditation or qualification for any level of teaching.
- Other (please provide details):

- Not known.
- No HE or relevant teaching qualification held.

Page Break



Q103 Are you a member of a regulatory/accreditation body?

For example, The Engineering Council, The Chartered Institute of Marketing, The British Computer Society.

Yes

No



Q104 What is your highest academic qualification?

UK Doctorate

Non-UK Doctorate

Other Qualification at Doctoral Level

UK Masters Degree

Non-UK Masters Degree

Postgraduate Diploma

Postgraduate Certificate

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

Other Postgraduate Qualification (Including Professional)

UK First Degree with Honours

UK Ordinary (non-honours) First Degree

UK First Degree with Qualified Teacher Status

Non-UK First Degree

Other Qualifications at First Degree Level (Including Professional)

Higher National Diploma/Higher National Certificate (HND/HNC)

Other Undergraduate Qualification (Including Professional)

A Level / Scottish Higher or equivalent (NVQ/SVQ Level 3)

O Level / GCSE or equivalent (NVQ/SVQ Level 2)

Other Qualification (please provide details):

No Academic Qualifications

End of Block: About your position and teaching experience

Start of Block: About you

QE About you



Q105 What is your age?

25 years or younger.

26 - 30 years old.

31 - 35 years old.

36 - 40 years old.

41 - 45 years old.

46 - 50 years old.

51 - 55 years old.

56 years old or older.



Q106 What's your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say



Q107 What is your country of birth?

The United Kingdom

another EU country

a non-EU country

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country

Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country

Q107.1 Please state your country of birth

Display This Question:

If What is your country of birth? = another EU country
Or What is your country of birth? = a non-EU country

Q107.2 What is your first (native) language?

End of Block: About you

Start of Block: Further information



Q108 Please use this space for any additional comments you may have about your experiences of assessment and feedback. (Maximum 300 characters, about 50-60 words).



Q109 Are you willing to be contacted for an interview to explore your views and experiences in more detail?

NO, I want to remain anonymous.

YES, I will provide my contact details as long as they are kept confidential and separate from the answers that I have given in this survey.

End of Block: Further information

Start of Block: Contact Details

Display This Question:

If Are you willing to be contacted for an interview to explore your views and experiences in more detail? = YES, I will provide my contact details as long as they are kept confidential and separate from the answers that I have given in this survey.

QG Thank you for completing the online questionnaire and agreeing to be contacted for an interview. You will now be redirected to an online form to provide your contact details, which will be kept confidential and separate from the answers that you have provided in this survey. Please now click on SUBMIT.

End of Block: Contact Details

Appendix 3.3 Relationship between type of data and research method

Relationship between type of data and research method	
Type of Sources/Data Required	Research method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' descriptions, narratives, reflections and/or comments in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ what students need to succeed in their courses i.e. key elements of academic literacy. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ what 'good' academic writing is. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ different types of writing e.g. genres that students come across. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ participants' understandings of programme expectations (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ the feedback that they give/receive. (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) ▪ how the feedback they give/receive has enhanced, or not, students' knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance. (RQ3) ▪ the impact of the feedback is 'measured' or recorded. (RQ3) • Participants' accounts of 'misunderstandings' and why these may happen. (RQ1) 	<p>Individual semi-structured interviews (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)</p> <p>Group semi-structured interviews (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)</p> <p>Reflective journals (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ students' work over a period of time including drafts. (RQ1, RQ3) ▪ feedback given to students on their work (e.g. written, verbal, visual) (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) ▪ different types of feedback given to students e.g. generic. (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) • Relevant course documents e.g. course handbooks, descriptors and marking criteria. (RQ1, RQ2) • Background data about programmes and institutions. (RQ1, RQ2) 	<p>Documentary research including a small collection of samples of students' work and tutor feedback. (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable background data of participants to contextualise their experience and to identify possible patterns (e.g. nationality, discipline). (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) • Comparable experiences, and/or value statements in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ what students need to succeed in their courses. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ what 'good' academic writing is. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ different types of writing e.g. genres that students come across. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ their own expectations and those of the programme (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ the type e.g. written, visual), content (e.g. message) and the purpose of feedback. (RQ1, RQ2) ▪ how feedback has enhanced, or not, students' knowledge, skills, attitudes or performance. (RQ3) 	<p>Questionnaires: paper and electronic (online survey). (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)</p>
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Appendix 3.4. Example of interview guides (e.g. aide memoires, visuals)

3.4.1 Aide-memoire for interview (staff)

Introduction to session (40 to 60 minutes)

- Go over structure of the session (duration, roles, ground rules, recording if consented)
- Give details of scope and purpose of research (focus on academic expectations, disciplinary discourse, tutor and student roles)
- Explain how information will be kept and used (anonymity and security)
- Confirm consent (including recording of session, signed forms if not done yet)
- Provide opportunity for questions/clarification

Key points for exploration

- I. Programme overview e.g. how module fits into the wider picture, 'typical' students and learning and assessment activities.
- II. Understanding of academic/disciplinary discourse (skills, knowledge and attitudes to be a 'good' student/professional and to succeed in the course)
- III. Academic expectations. What tutors/department/University expect from students.
- IV. Students' needs and how they are supported. Issues identified in students' work
- V. Tutors' perceptions of 'good' academic writing and key aspects of academic literacy.
- VI. Approach to and experiences of feedback giving. Views on students' response to it and the impact it has on them.
- VII. Tutors' views on purpose and value of feedback.

Questions based on key points (order depending on flow of interview)

1. Can you tell me a bit about the programme(s) that you are involved in (e.g. structure, organisation, aims) at Masters level?
2. What type of activities are students expected to engage in? How are they taught e.g. lectures, seminars?/How do they learn?
3. Can you tell me about the 'typical' students on the programme (background)? Who are the students?
4. What is difficult about being student in this particular programme/discipline? What are the challenges that students face?
5. How are students supported in their learning? What do tutors do to facilitate learning?

6. In your experience, how well prepared are the students to meet the demands of the programme when they start? What are some of the issues? What about in terms of English language? (if not mentioned spontaneously)
7. What are the essential attributes (skills, knowledge, attitudes) students need to succeed in this programme?
8. Now, looking beyond the course into their professional practice. What skills, knowledge and attributes are needed to be a good professional in your area?
9. How much writing do students do? What sort of writing tasks do they have to complete?
10. When looking at students' writing, what do you pay attention to? What is important?
11. When assessing students' work, what aspect(s) of their work usually trigger(s) a feedback response, either positive or negative?
12. What are some of the common issues in students' work? In their writing? (if not mentioned spontaneously)
13. Can you tell me a bit about your philosophy -your approach- to giving feedback to students?
14. What are your priorities? What is the main purpose -the main focus of your feedback?
15. How do you decide what to say, the level of detail, how to say it? What factors (social, level, psychological) do you take into consideration?
16. To what extent do you normally provide feedback on the following areas:
 - content/subject matter (e.g. relevance, selection and range of theory, key concepts)
 - rhetorical organisation/structure of the work (argumentation)
 - academic conventions and professional methods to present information (e.g. format of references, citations)
 - the language that students use, for example accuracy and style (appropriateness)
17. Which of these areas mentioned (or any other) do you think is more important?
18. What do you think is the most effective way of providing feedback to students?
19. When do you provide feedback (first draft, final draft, more at some points) why?
20. How do you provide feedback (e.g. spoken, handwritten, symbols, using technology like word processors, Turnitin)?
21. Apart from pedagogical factors like the purpose of feedback, which other factors determine your approach to feedback?

22. In your opinion, what impact does the institutional context (e.g. policy, assessment regime, student entitlements) have on the amount and type of feedback that you give?
23. Can you tell me about how you learnt to provide feedback to students? Have you had any specific training in providing feedback to students at postgraduate level? If available, what would be useful to include?
24. In your experience, how do students respond to your feedback? Do they value it? Do they act on it?
25. How do you assess the effectiveness of your feedback? Have you perceived any changes in the way students approach their work?
26. Do you have the opportunity to discuss feedback with students? What's been your experience?
27. Do you think feedback has had any impact on students' ways of thinking, communicating e.g. writing or doing things (practising)? Why? Why not?
28. Would you like to say anything else that you think it is important and we haven't covered?

Academic Spheres Stage 1 (Learning environment)

You may want to use the diagram below to help you think about your **expectations, experiences, feelings and opinions** about being a student.



3.4.3 Interview guide for focus group with questions

Aide-memoire for focus group?

Introduction to session (45-60 minutes)

Go over structure of the session (duration, roles, ground rules, recording if consented)

Give details of scope and purpose of research (focus on academic expectations, disciplinary discourse, tutor and student roles)

Explain how information will be kept and used (anonymity and security)

Confirm consent (including recording of session, signed forms if not done yet)

Explain next step for volunteers (if interested, individual interviews)

Provide opportunity for questions/clarification (include contact details)

Procedure (Ground rules)

There are not right or wrong answers to the questions, it's all about your views, ideas and experiences

Feel free to respond/add to comments made by others but be sensitive and respectful

This is not a debate so there is no need to prove your point or argue your case

Talk only about your direct experience/views/feelings (not about what you have heard)

Key points for exploration

Motivation and expectations of the course

Understanding of key knowledge and skills required (academic and disciplinary)

Academic expectations from the department. What they are expected to do as students.

Expectations of reading and writing as part of their course (academic literacy)

Past experiences of feedback and contact with their tutors.

Students' expectations of feedback e.g. purpose and delivery of feedback

Questions based on key points

1. What are your first impressions about the university and your course?
2. Why did you choose this course?
3. What you expect to gain from this course? (if needed) What important knowledge or skills do you expect to develop during the course?
4. What knowledge or skills do you require to become a good professional in your discipline?
5. What makes a good student in your discipline/subject/area of study?
6. What could be difficult about being a student in your discipline?

7. What kind of activities do you expect you will be doing as part of your course? (if needed) What kind of learning do you know/expect e.g. lectures, seminars, laboratory work, group work?
8. What knowledge or skills do you think you need require to do well as a student on your course?
9. How much reading do you think will you be doing? What kind of texts do you think you will be reading?
10. How much writing do you think will you be doing? What type of writing will you be doing?
11. How can/should tutors do to help you improve your writing?
12. What's been your previous experience of feedback from tutors?
13. How have you used feedback in the past? How useful, or not, has it been?
14. What do you expect from feedback that you receive from your tutors?
15. What's the best way for tutors to give you feedback?
16. Would you like to say anything else that we haven't covered?

Appendix 3.5 Example of student reflective journal entry

Example of reflective journal entry (model for students, Google docs, image size adjusted)

Spoken Feedback Record

Semester/Year: I /2013/14

Student initials:

Module/ Tutor initials/ date	Work discussed	Feedback notes (e.g. points discussed/ tutor advice)	Comments (my thoughts)
Project theory PA 17 Oct/13	first draft of introduction (essay) methodology section for project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on main theoretical influences and make sure they do not appear contradictory • Seek further sources to support my claims. • Explain/define key terms • Include the thesis or hypothesis (what is my argument, what am I trying to prove?) • Justify choice of methodology e.g. why is this more appropriate than others? 	Next draft in two weeks Why shouldn't theories be contradictory? Ask for examples.

Participant Data: Student

RPN: FPPCADSIS# _____

[Original] TITLE OF STUDY: Feedback practices in postgraduate taught courses and academic discourse socialization of international students.

Please fill in the form. Any personal information is OPTIONAL but would be really appreciated. Data will be used anonymously and you will NOT be identified from the information below.

1	Current faculty/academic department at this university (Which faculty and which subject?)	
2	Current postgraduate programme of study at this university (name of course, e.g. postgraduate diploma MA/MRes/MSc in Engineering)	
3	Modules this semester (what will you be studying this semester? e.g. name of module)	
4	Previous programme of study in home country (what did you study at university before coming to the UK)	
5	Mode of study: (Part-time or Full-time)	
6	Main motivation for taking the programme (Why are you studying on this programme?)	
7	Time studying in the UK (How long have you been a student in the UK e.g. English language or other?)	
7	Country of permanent residence (The country where you normally live)	
8	Age (how old are you?)	
9	Gender (e.g. male or female)	
10	First language (your native language)	
11	Current level of English, for example (see below or latest exam score e.g. IELTS/_____/TOEFL)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Speaker/Fully bilingual: I use English confidently as my first or second language. • Very good user: I can communicate well in a wide range of situations with only occasional misunderstandings/errors. • Good user: I can communicate successfully in most situations with few misunderstandings/errors. • Modest user: I can communicate effectively in familiar situations, though there are often misunderstandings and my errors are noticeable. 		

Many thanks

Victor Guillen-Solano

Appendix 3.7 Examples of coding

3.7.1 Phase One: Open coding (inductive, non-exclusive, non-hierarchical)

Nodes		Look for:	Search In	Phase 1	Find Now	Clear	Advanced Find
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nodes Cases Phase Phase 2 Phase 3 Relationships Node Matrices 		Phase 1					
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On		
Academic Conventions	7	10	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 13:02		
Academic Discourse	8	12	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 11:56		
Academic literacy	12	73	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
academic literacy- behaviours	0	0	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Academic Literacy former AD	6	9	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	07/07/2015 02:50		
Academic literacy is a process	1	1	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Academic literacy-knowledge	0	0	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Academic setting	17	51	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 12:03		
Academic Writing	25	82	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Accreditation	2	3	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
analysis	0	0	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	07/09/2015 15:35		
Arts and Design	8	795	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Assessment	26	96	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 12:03		
Attitudes	12	25	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Business and Management	15	461	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Common issues in writing	7	17	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	24/03/2015 11:34		
Computing	12	586	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
conceptions of discipline	1	1	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Conceptions of learning underpinning practice	1	1	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	02/07/2015 10:10		
consistency	3	7	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	07/07/2015 17:14		
Course documents (briefs n criteria)	20	49	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 11:43		
Course quality	8	18	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Critical and Thinking skills	23	83	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Cultural differences	8	23	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	16/05/2015 13:28		
Deskilling or Student caliber	7	22	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	01/07/2016 22:25		
Differences in academic culture	21	82	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	17/07/2015 14:38		
Different tutor expectations	1	2	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	02/07/2015 10:10		
Difficulties and Challenges	24	54	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 11:43		
Disciplinary backgrounds	2	2	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	17/07/2015 14:10		
Disciplinary differences	11	24	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	05/04/2016 13:02		
Disciplinary differences (2)	10	23	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	17/07/2015 12:08		
Disciplines	0	0	01/07/2016 22:19	MP	14/03/2015 16:19		

3.7.2 Phase 2: Categorisation (from free codes to tree codes)

Nodes		Look for:	Search In	Phase 2	Find Now	Clear	Advanced Find
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nodes Cases Phase 1 Phase 2 Phase 3 Relationships Node Matrices 		Phase 2					
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On		
Socialisation	41	1398	21/01/2015 14:47	VGS	27/08/2016 13:13		
Cultural differences	8	23	19/02/2015 12:33	VGS	16/05/2015 13:28		
Differences in academic culture	22	127	26/01/2015 12:13	VGS	02/07/2016 15:27		
Teacher student relationships	7	7	26/01/2015 12:14	VGS	05/04/2016 11:31		
Teaching styles and activities	15	37	26/01/2015 12:13	VGS	05/04/2016 11:52		
Difficulties and Challenges	25	56	28/01/2015 11:34	VGS	15/08/2016 23:23		
Diversity of students	28	171	04/02/2015 14:46	VGS	15/08/2016 23:22		
Evidence of socialisation	27	96	26/01/2015 16:21	VGS	07/08/2016 12:27		
Identity	2	2	11/03/2015 14:14	VGS	07/08/2016 12:32		
Induction	3	3	09/03/2015 14:08	VGS	05/04/2016 11:42		
Participation	24	67	26/01/2015 12:22	VGS	07/08/2016 12:36		
Peer Socialisation	26	102	21/01/2015 14:49	VGS	07/08/2016 12:32		
Self-experiential socialisation	14	31	28/01/2015 10:24	VGS	07/09/2015 15:09		
Sense of quality	19	44	28/01/2015 11:39	VGS	16/05/2015 13:32		
Socialisation external factors	4	5	11/03/2015 14:23	VGS	19/03/2015 11:25		
Socialisation is joint venture	4	7	04/02/2015 11:38	VGS	23/03/2015 12:46		
Socialisation of tutors	12	38	05/02/2015 13:26	VGS	16/08/2016 00:34		
Tacit knowledge	3	4	12/03/2015 10:56	VGS	18/03/2015 15:47		
Text Socialisation	28	144	21/01/2015 14:57	VGS	02/07/2015 13:06		
Course documents (briefs n criteria)	21	53	05/02/2015 12:14	VGS	16/08/2016 00:02		
Multimedia resources	5	9	04/03/2015 11:42	VGS	25/03/2015 13:37		
No drafts policy	3	3	18/03/2015 11:14	VGS	24/03/2015 11:46		
Reading the literature	18	35	05/02/2015 12:13	VGS	07/09/2015 15:41		
Use of exemplars	10	18	04/03/2015 10:51	VGS	07/07/2015 11:00		
Tutor socialisation	39	463	21/01/2015 14:49	VGS	19/07/2015 21:14		
Tutor access	19	32	28/01/2015 11:13	VGS	05/04/2016 11:42		
Tutor expectations and assumptions	33	161	28/01/2015 10:18	VGS	16/08/2016 00:00		
Tutor Feedback Socialisation	23	62	21/01/2015 14:59	VGS	07/07/2015 17:12		
Tutor Input socialisation	25	52	21/01/2015 14:58	VGS	16/08/2016 00:00		
Tutor low expectations	3	4	29/04/2015 15:32	VGS	15/08/2016 23:06		

3.7.3 Example of code labelling and description

Node Properties

The screenshot shows a 'Node Properties' dialog box with a 'General' tab selected. The 'Name' field contains 'Academic Literacy former AD'. The 'Description' field contains 'Key theme (includes academic writing), references to skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to do succeed at university i.e. successfully understand and engage with discourse and practice in partucular disciplines. RQ1.1'. The 'Hierarchical name' field contains 'Nodes\\Phase 2\\Academic Literacy former AD'. The 'Created On' field shows '25/06/2016 15:05' and the 'By' field shows 'VGS'. The 'Modified On' field shows '27/08/2016 13:13' and the 'By' field shows 'MP'. The 'Aggregate coding from child nodes' checkbox is checked. The 'Color' dropdown is set to 'None'. The 'OK' button is highlighted.

Name	Academic Literacy former AD		
Description	Key theme (includes academic writing), references to skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to do succeed at university i.e. successfully understand and engage with discourse and practice in partucular disciplines. RQ1.1		
Nickname			
Hierarchical name	Nodes\\Phase 2\\Academic Literacy former AD		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aggregate coding from child nodes	Color	None
Created On	25/06/2016 15:05	By	VGS
Modified On	27/08/2016 13:13	By	MP

Buttons: Apply, OK, Cancel

Appendix 3.8 Sample of Participants Information Sheet and Consent form (staff)
Contact details included in the original have been removed to ensure privacy and anonymity, particularly in the case of institutions (image size adjusted)

Participant Information Sheet: staff

Title of the research project: Feedback Practices in Postgraduate Courses and the Academic Discourse Socialization of International Students.

Please will you take part in a study about tutor feedback practices in UK universities to see how these help international students to understand academic culture in their departments?

One of the key aims of the study is to explore the role that tutor feedback may play in helping students understand the particular ways of thinking and writing in their academic disciplines.

You have been asked to participate as a tutor in a postgraduate taught programme at one of the two universities in [redacted]. You will be invited to take part in at least one interview (possibly two) to discuss feedback practices, particularly your views on the role, purpose and value of feedback. Where at least one of your students is also a participant, the study also involves collecting samples of the student's written work (drafts and final submission) and accompanying feedback from you. The interview(s) will cover aspects of assessment and feedback both in general and with regard to your student(s) participating in the study. There will also be an opportunity to discuss any issues and your views on the impact of feedback on the student's work.



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY:

- Participation is totally voluntary and you can withdraw from the study within 90 days (once data such as feedback is anonymised and merged into a corpus, this will not be possible).
- All information provided by individuals will be confidential, kept in a secure environment and used for research and educational purposes only.
- No details that would allow individuals to be identified will be shared, published, or made available to anybody else, unless explicit consent is given by the individuals concerned.
- The sessions will be recorded (audio only) and transcribed to facilitate analysis.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form to guarantee the integrity of the study.
- Findings resulting from the anonymous data may be used in academic presentations or publications.
- You will have the chance to discuss your participation (debriefing) at a later stage of the project.
- Interviews will take between 40 minutes and 1 hour and you can ask to meet more often if you feel you want to discuss further details.

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Many thanks
Victor Guillen-Solano

Contact details: [redacted] University Victor.GuillenSolano@v.guillensolano.com [redacted] Tel. [redacted] Supervisor: Dr [redacted]
[redacted] University of [redacted] v.guillensolano@v.guillensolano.com [redacted]

Consent Form: staff

FPPCADSIS# _____

TITLE OF STUDY: Feedback Practices in Postgraduate Courses and the Academic Discourse Socialization of International Students.

Please read the following statements and indicate your agreement by circling YES or NO. If completed digitally, please delete as appropriate.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| I agree to take part in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet attached. | YES | NO |
| I have read and understood the Information Sheet about this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. | YES | NO |
| My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | YES | NO |
| I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study up to 90 (ninety) days from the date next to my signature below. | YES | NO |
| I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. | YES | NO |
| I agree the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised, to be used for further research and educational purposes. I also give my permission for quotations from the material to be used in any report, publication or presentation provided that my words are used anonymously and all details that might identify me are removed. | YES | NO |
| I am willing to be contacted to participate in further interviews for up to 6 months from this date. | YES | NO |

Your signature will certify that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this study having read and understood the information sheet for participants.

Name of participant (block letters):.....
Signature of participant:..... Date:.....
Contact details (e.g. email, office): _____
Name of researcher: VICTOR GUILLEN-SOLANO
Signature of investigator:..... Date:.....

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together. If completed digitally, your name can act as your signature by attaching this form to an email sent to v.guillen@universityofmalaga.es or victor.guillensolano@universityofmalaga.es, which will may be printed and attached to a hard copy of this form if requested by the university authorities to ensure compliance with ethics regulations.

Many thanks
Victor Guillen-Solano

Contact details: _____ University Victor.GuillenSolano@universityofmalaga.es Tel. _____ Supervisor: Dr. _____

Appendix 3.9 Examples of emails sent to participants

3.9.1 Example of email sent to participants: staff

Dear Dr__

Ref. Request for permission to collect your formative and summative feedback.

My name is Victor Guillen. I am a PhD student at _____ University and an English language tutor at the University of _____.

I am conducting research on how feedback from tutors can improve students' academic writing and contribute to their socialization into their academic communities. One objective of the research is to identify areas where international students may need more support. Both Dr _____ and Dr. _____ are aware of the study and kindly allowed me to address students during their induction.

One of your students, Mr _____, enrolled on [module title], has agreed to take part in the study. Although you are not expected to be directly involved in the process, we would like to invite you to participate. This would entail agreeing to being interviewed once or twice this semester. Your participation would allow us to explore the topic from a wider perspective and for this we would ask that you devote 30 to 45 minutes for each interview, one at the start and one towards the end of the semester.

Whether you choose to participate in the study or not, we would like to request your permission keep a copy of the feedback that the student receives in written form (feedback sheet, annotations on the script, email). The student has already given consent for us to keep a copy of their writing and accompanying feedback, but we would like to have your consent too.

I must stress the exploratory nature of the research (this is not an evaluative study) and that all feedback will be analysed as part of a corpus, NOT in isolation. In accordance with ethical guidelines and data protection regulations, all the information provided by –or related to- you will be kept anonymous and confidential.

The title of the study is 'Feedback Practices in Postgraduate Courses and the Academic Discourse Socialization of International Students' and it has received ethics approval from the Ethics Committee at _____ University and it has also been approved by the University of _____ under the _____ Ethics Review Procedure. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr _____, _____ [email]

Could you please reply to this email to confirm you give your permission for me to collect feedback comments in regard to this particular student? If you would like to participate in the study (interviews) please let me know and I will contact you shortly with further details.

Many thanks,

Victor Guillen Solano

3.9.2 Example of email sent to participants after the survey: students

Dear _____

Thank you for providing your contact details after completing the survey and for your interest in the study into tutor feedback and its role in helping students understand the particular ways of thinking and communicating e.g. writing in different disciplines.

Apart from the surveys (one for staff and one for students), the study also involves collecting documentation such as course handbooks and assignment briefs, students' work and tutor feedback, as well as interviews with staff and students. Your participation would give us the opportunity to explore key academic skills and feedback from a wider perspective and in more depth.

I intend to conduct more interviews with students from May to July and these can be arranged at a time that is convenient for you. Except for Wednesday and Friday mornings when I have other commitments, I am quite flexible, so I can work around your schedule to find the most suitable time for you.

In the past, semi-structured interviews with students have consisted of an informal discussion taking anywhere between 30 minutes and 1 hour, so I would be very grateful if you could devote one hour of your time for the discussion. Interviews are usually conducted on campus for your convenience.

The idea is to talk about the skills, knowledge and attitudes that can help you do well in your course. We will also talk about your experiences and views on the role, purpose and value of feedback. Finally, there will also be a chance to discuss other areas such as academic life in your department and any other aspects of your academic experience that you may want to talk about.

Remember that participation is totally voluntary and you do not have to participate in the study even if you previously agreed to be contacted after completing the survey. If you are happy to take part in an interview, you can reply to this email with a tentative date and time or send an invitation via ___ (Google) calendar.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments you may have about the research.

Once again, many thanks

Kind regards

Victor Guillen

Appendix 3.10 Example of Likert scale survey item

Key Skills in your Academic Discipline

How important are the following skills/aspects within your discipline? Part 1. You can move the slider along the scale or click on a particular point on the scale to indicate the level of importance.

	1	2	3	3	4	5
clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually (e.g. charts, drawings, equations).	<input type="range"/>					
to analyse and diagnose issues in a particular context.	<input type="range"/>					
to combine information and make connections between ideas or key concepts.	<input type="range"/>					
knowledge of the wider contextual issues and relevant theory.	<input type="range"/>					
to develop innovative and creative solutions to questions or problems.	<input type="range"/>					
to draw conclusions supported by evidence.	<input type="range"/>					

Appendix 3.11 Breakdown of ranking of importance in a scale from 1.00 to 5.00

Bands	Description of each band.
1.00 to 1.80	Not at all important
1.81 to 2.60	Of little importance
2.61 to 3.40	Moderately important
3.41 to 4.20	Very important
4.21 to 5.00	Extremely important

Appendix 3.12 Participants and data from qualitative and quantitative phases
 Tables 2, 3, 4 from Chapter 3

Table 2 Participants in qualitative phase of study per discipline, domicile and gender.				
Student focus group	per discipline	HASS	N = 4 1	
		STEM	3	
	per domicile	UK	0	
		<i>Non-UK</i>	4	
	per gender	Female	1	
		Male	3	
Interviews	per discipline	HASS	Academics N = 21 16	Students N = 18 12
		STEM	5	6
	per country	UK	21	6
		<i>Non-UK</i>	0	12
	per gender	Female	10	10
		Male	11	8

Table 3 Items in the text collection and contributors				
Item	Number of items	Number of contributing students	Number of contributing tutors	Obtained online by researcher
Work Sample with feedback	11	5	0	0
Feedback Sample	10	8	2	0
Assessment Brief	16	4	1	0
Marking Criteria	12	5	2	0
Module Descriptor	61	5	2	44

Course Handbook	3	1	2	0
Prospectus	11	0	0	11
Institutional statements	3	0	0	3
Total	127			

Table 4 Participants in quantitative phase per discipline, country and gender

Survey		Academics N = 117	Students N = 140
per discipline	HASS	73	78
	STEM	44	62
	NR	0	0
per country	UK	77	31
	<i>Non-UK</i>	21	99
	NR	19	10
per gender	Female	37	68
	Male	58	62
	Other	2	0
	NR	20	10

Appendix 3.13 List of interview participants

Appendix 3.13 Interview participants including group interview (focus group). Students in highlighted boxes participated in both Semesters One and Two. Participants grouped by discipline.						
Participants: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, n=12						
Ps	NI	FG	CO	Uni	DG	Discipline
Sherko	1	0	Iraq	Old	HASS	Applied Linguistics
Isabel	1	0	Chile	Old	HASS	Business: Human Resources
Kanti	1	0	India	New	HASS	Business: Management
Shen	2	0	China	Old	HASS	Business: Management
Gonzalo	0	1	Ecuador	New	STEM	Computer Science: Information Systems Security
Omar	0	1	Oman	New	STEM	Computer Science: Information Systems Security
Phong	5	1	Thai	New	HASS/STEM	Computer Science/Management: IT Professional
Ina	4	1	Russia	New	HASS/STEM	Computer science (animation)/visual arts.
Lucia	1	0	Spain	New	HASS	Design: Packaging
Rafiq	2	0	Iraq/Kurdish	Old	STEM	Engineering: Electric and Electronic Engineering
Heike	1	0	Germany	Old	HASS	English: Culture of British Isles
Farah	2	0	Somali	New	HASS	Law
Participants: STAFF, n=21						
Alan	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Management
Anne	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Management
Barbara	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Marketing
Ben	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Human Resources
Emily	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Business: Management
Ian	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Business: Facilities Management
Jane	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Business: Marketing
Rose	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Work Psychology
Sam	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Business: Management
William	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Business: Management
Henry	1	0	UK	Old	STEM	Computer Science
Lewis	1	0	UK	New	STEM	Computer Science: Information Technology (Web and databases)
Matt	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Design: Packaging
Derek	1	0	UK	New	STEM	Engineering & Maths
Alice	1	0	UK	Old	HASS/STEM	Health Statistics
Doris	1	0	UK	New	HASS/STEM	Human Nutrition
Beth	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Law
Iris	1	0	UK	Old	HASS	Law
John	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Law
Julian	1	0	UK	New	HASS	Law
Mary			UK	Old	HASS/STEM	Music Psychology
Key to abbreviations: Ps = pseudonym, NI = number of individual interviews, FG = Focus group, CO = country of origin, Uni = University (New or Old), DG = disciplinary group.						

Appendix 3.14 List of student-tutor pairs

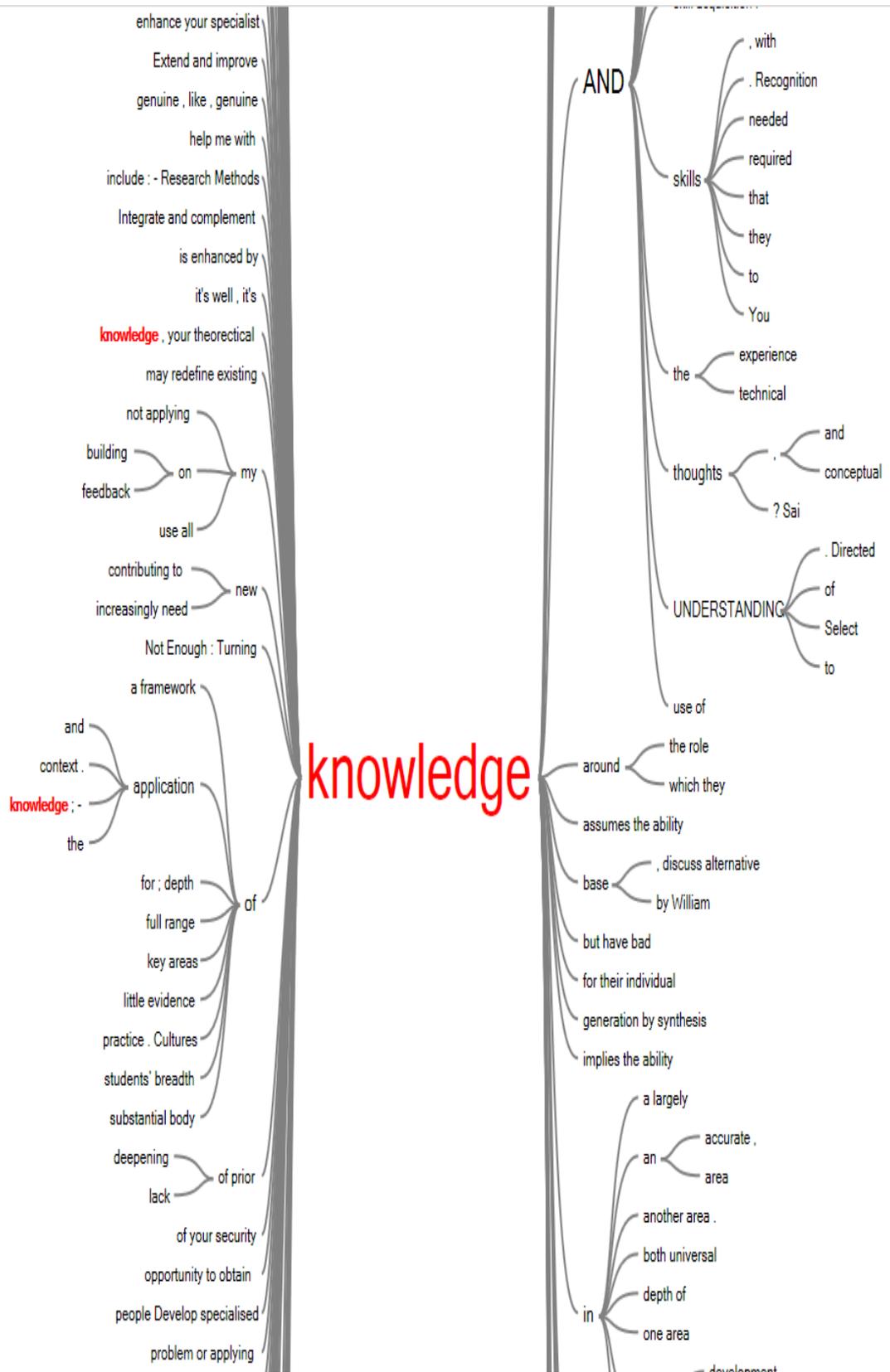
Appendix 3.14 Student-tutor pairs.*			
Student	Uni	Discipline	Course tutors
Farah	New	Law	John and Beth (Law)
Isabel	Old	Business (Human Resources)	Ben (Business: Human Resources)
Kanti	New	Business (Management)	Jane (Business: Marketing), and Emily (Business: Management)
Lucia	New	Design (Packaging)	Matt (Design: Packaging)
Phong	New	Information Technology Management (IT Professional)	Lewis (Information Technology: Web and databases)
Shen	Old	Business (Management)	Anne (Business: Management) and Barbara (Business: Marketing)
* Note that the pairs refer to cases where students were taught by at least one of the tutor participants; however, the tutor(s) and the student in each pair were interviewed separated as they were not able/did not agree to be interviewed together.			

Appendix 4.1 Key elements of academic literacy (KEALs)

Appendix 4.1. Key elements of academic literacy (KEALs) and survey responses				
Key elements of academic literacy (KEALs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> top 14 most important items (i.e. > median) across disciplinary groups (DGs) are in highlighted boxes. items with similar responses across disciplinary groups (i.e. ≤ 0.05) are highlighted in bold. items listed in descending order based on combined (HASS and STEM) mean values. 	Both DGs Resp. n = 216	HASS Resp. n = 124	STEM Resp. n = 92	Disc. Differ.
	Mean	Mean	Mean	-/+
Combining information and making connections	4.64	4.76	4.53	0.26
Understanding complex concepts and being able to define them	4.61	4.56	4.66	0.1
Clarity in presenting ideas, arguments or propositions in writing	4.6	4.71	4.49	0.22
Applying knowledge, methods or techniques selectively	4.57	4.64	4.5	0.14
Analysing and diagnosing issues in a particular context	4.56	4.62	4.5	0.12
Critically assessing strengths and weaknesses of alternative views or solutions	4.46	4.55	4.36	0.19
Drawing conclusions based on evidence	4.45	4.51	4.38	0.13
Knowledge of wider context and relevant theory	4.43	4.62	4.24	0.38
Communicating ideas clearly and confidently during discussions	4.42	4.48	4.36	0.12
Academic conventions and professional methods to present information	4.4	4.58	4.21	0.37
Working independently and self-managing	4.4	4.49	4.32	0.17
Providing a robust rationale for choices	4.39	4.39	4.38	0.01
Reviewing and reflecting on own work	4.37	4.47	4.27	0.1
Critically evaluating the importance and usefulness of information	4.32	4.37	4.27	0.1
Studying things in detail	4.3	4.28	4.33	0.05
Applying theory to different contexts or situations	4.27	4.26	4.27	0.01

Innovating and originating fresh thinking	4.27	4.27	4.27	0
Making sense of visual data	4.21	4.12	4.3	0.18
Making judgements and decisions against specific criteria	4.19	4.26	4.12	0.14
Developing innovative and creative solutions	4.17	4.07	4.26	0.19
Working collaborative as part of a group	4.14	4.02	4.26	0.24
Synthesizing and critically assessing a wide selection of references	4.13	4.35	3.91	0.44
Making use of software and computers effectively	4.1	3.68	4.52	0.84
Remembering facts, principles or key concepts	4.08	3.87	4.29	0.42
Clarity in presenting ideas or propositions visually	4.05	3.87	4.22	0.35
Questioning existing knowledge, methods and techniques	4.02	4.09	3.96	0.13
Using tools or equipment effectively	3.84	3.41	4.26	0.15
Taking part in critical debates about own work and that of others	3.75	3.83	3.67	0.16
Median	4.31			

Appendix 4.2 Example of cluster analysis of key words
Screenshot from Nvivo



Appendix 4.3 Examples of phrases about criticality and analysis

Appendix 4.3 Examples of phrases about criticality and analysis from course documents.	
Phrases about criticality and analysis	Examples of objects of analysis or critique
<i>produce a critical assessment of</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>key systems</i> ● <i>acquired knowledge and skills</i> ● <i>the innovative and potential features of</i> ● <i>a design brief</i> ● <i>the commercial impact of</i> ● <i>relevant techniques</i> ● <i>your own role</i> ● <i>the criteria listed above</i> ● <i>the uncertain, ambiguous and contradictory nature of</i> ● <i>constructing meanings with pictures and sounds</i> ● <i>appropriate product designs</i> ● <i>the key issues.</i> ● <i>the potential of</i> ● <i>strengths and weaknesses of/associated with</i> ● <i>the issues arising out of</i> ● <i>a range of concept art products</i> ● <i>typical application areas</i> ● <i>relational models as a basis for</i> ● <i>the use of tools to assist with</i> ● <i>the mechanisms explored in the module</i> ● <i>how different elements add to the narrative structure of</i> ● <i>the role of</i> ● <i>the literature</i>
<i>critically evaluate and reflect upon</i>	
<i>evaluate the effectiveness of</i>	
<i>explore the implications of</i>	
<i>evaluate the appropriateness of</i>	
<i>demonstrate critical thinking with regard to</i>	
<i>critically analyse</i>	
<i>synthesise sceptically</i>	
<i>consider at the conceptual level</i>	
<i>critically assess</i>	
<i>propose a reasonable framework for</i>	
<i>identify and discuss</i>	
<i>critique</i>	
<i>develop criteria for/befitting</i>	
<i>be able to discuss and critique</i>	
<i>clearly contrast</i>	
<i>provide a framework for evaluation of</i>	
<i>demonstrate how</i>	
<i>debate</i>	
<i>be able to make comparisons to</i>	
<i>ability to analyse and evaluate</i>	
<i>ability to analyse</i>	
<i>critical appreciation of</i>	
<i>evidence of well-reasoned critical analysis of</i>	
<i>overall consideration and analysis of</i>	
<i>ability to think in a designerly way about</i>	

<i>evidence of critical thinking in respect of</i>	
<i>critical awareness of</i>	

Appendix 4.4 Examples of phrases related to the ability to reflect

Appendix 4.4 Examples of phrases related to the ability to reflect from course documents.	
Phrases related to reflection	Examples of objects of reflection
<i>students are expected to reflect on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>their [students'] experience</i> ● <i>own learning and development</i> ● <i>your work for the assignment, documenting your strengths and weaknesses</i> ● <i>their [students'] own practice and development</i> ● <i>your work</i> ● <i>similar work created by professionals</i> ● <i>the research process and its outcome</i> ● <i>their [students'] own work</i> ● <i>your contribution and performance</i> ● <i>development of your project and of your acquired skills and knowledge</i> ● <i>the production process to inform further knowledge and skill acquisition</i> ● <i>your learning experience</i> ● <i>the impacts on your learning experience</i> ● <i>the student's own performance skills, attributes, processes and outcomes whether successful or not.</i> ● <i>attributes, skills and competencies relevant to international management</i>
<i>reflect on</i>	
<i>highlight and reflect upon</i>	
<i>self-assess</i>	
<i>undertake self -evaluation of</i>	
<i>undertake reflexive exploration of</i>	
<i>reflect on, through a process of introspection and analysis,</i>	
<i>demonstrate a professionally reflective and analytical approach with regard to</i>	
<i>ability to reflect critically and credibly upon</i>	
<i>ability to evidence awareness of</i>	
<i>self-awareness and insight into</i>	
<i>considered reflection on</i>	
With a meaning as in 'consider'	
<i>evaluate and reflect on critically</i> <i>reflect on/upon</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>the major principles of global marketing, its scope, problems and benefits</i> ● <i>the links between theory and practice of</i> ● <i>the current issues and debates</i> ● <i>industry standards relevant to your own practice</i>

Appendix 4.5 Examples of references to quality and standards

Appendix 4.5. Examples of references to quality and standards from course documents.

The quality of student work will be judged in relation to well-established security standards such as ISO-27001/BS-7799. STEM

The quality of explanation of Object Orientated principles and the application of software reuse techniques built on these principles. STEM

Quality of the report and presentation of the argument: STEM

Logical structure and good overall quality of presentation. HASS

In this module, you will be given the opportunity to develop and hone your creative and expressive skills to a high standard. HASS

The quality of the product's stated objectives and requirements. HASS

Quality of associated documentation, including the rationale or customer requirements, design and implementation issues. HASS

Overall quality and fitness for purpose of the product. HASS

Appendix 4.6 Examples of references to self-management

Appendix 4.6 Examples of references to management of workflows and resources from course documents.

Manage media assets and workflows effectively in a digital environment. STEM

Use the learning environment effectively, study support materials and various tools to support their studies and to enhance their learning. STEM

Respond to project briefs creatively and appropriately in a specified time. STEM

Has the student demonstrated motivation, self-reliance and initiative? Any progress made towards the project objectives?

Use strategies appropriate for self and the subject to advance own knowledge and provide a basis for Continuing Professional Development. International Human rights, HASS

Identify strategies for successful management and completion of research tasks. HASS

Evaluate, select and apply appropriate techniques for project planning and management. HASS

Devise and present personal study plans at a level appropriate to Postgraduate study. HASS

Appendix 4.7. Examples of references to structural, presentational and mechanical aspects of writing from course documents.

'You must reference your work correctly using the Harvard method. Failure to do so will result in the loss of marks. HASS, module handbook.

'Good range of references, academic and industry. Harvard method with minimal errors. HASS, marking criteria'

'Observe the normal academic conventions. Acknowledge sources including page numbers where appropriate, e.g. Chomsky (1980:23). Include a properly set out bibliography restricted to references actually included in your text. Avoid footnotes. HASS, programme handbook.

Accurate referencing and appropriate bibliography. HASS marking criteria

'Skilled observance of academic conventions of referencing etc; clearly; well- written with almost no proof- reading errors.' STEM, marking criteria

'Good understanding demonstrated with wide selection of references used'. STEM, marking criteria

'Presentation of an argument, backed up with evidence drawn from the research and with the use of references, following acceptable academic practice', STEM, marking criteria.

Appendix 4.8 Examples of references to audience

Appendix 4.8. Examples of references to audience from course documents.

'Investigate aspects that you consider as being important and of relevance to a technically-aware audience with an active interest in Electrical and Electronic Engineering'. (STEM)

'The report and the seminar provide you with an opportunity to present your research and development work to an audience of academic staff, industry practitioners and fellow students.' (STEM)

'Identify aspects of a research project within the field of computer games, graphics, animation, special effects or related areas, that will be of relevance and interest to a particular audience.' (STEM)

'Demonstrate the concepts and skills necessary to undertake high level research and present it in a form appropriate for the intended audience' (STEM)

'Fails to recognise the importance of engaging audience at different levels' (STEM)

'Clear written style, appropriate for the audience. Accurate referencing and appropriate bibliography.' HASS

'Students will be expected to explore the knowledge base, discuss alternative approaches and develop ideas and proposals to solve real problems, presenting their solutions to appropriate audiences.' (HASS)

'Enhance understanding and engagement by an academic audience' (HASS)

'Evidence of some ability to structure a document / presentation in a way that communicates limited key ideas and issues to your audience.' (HASS)

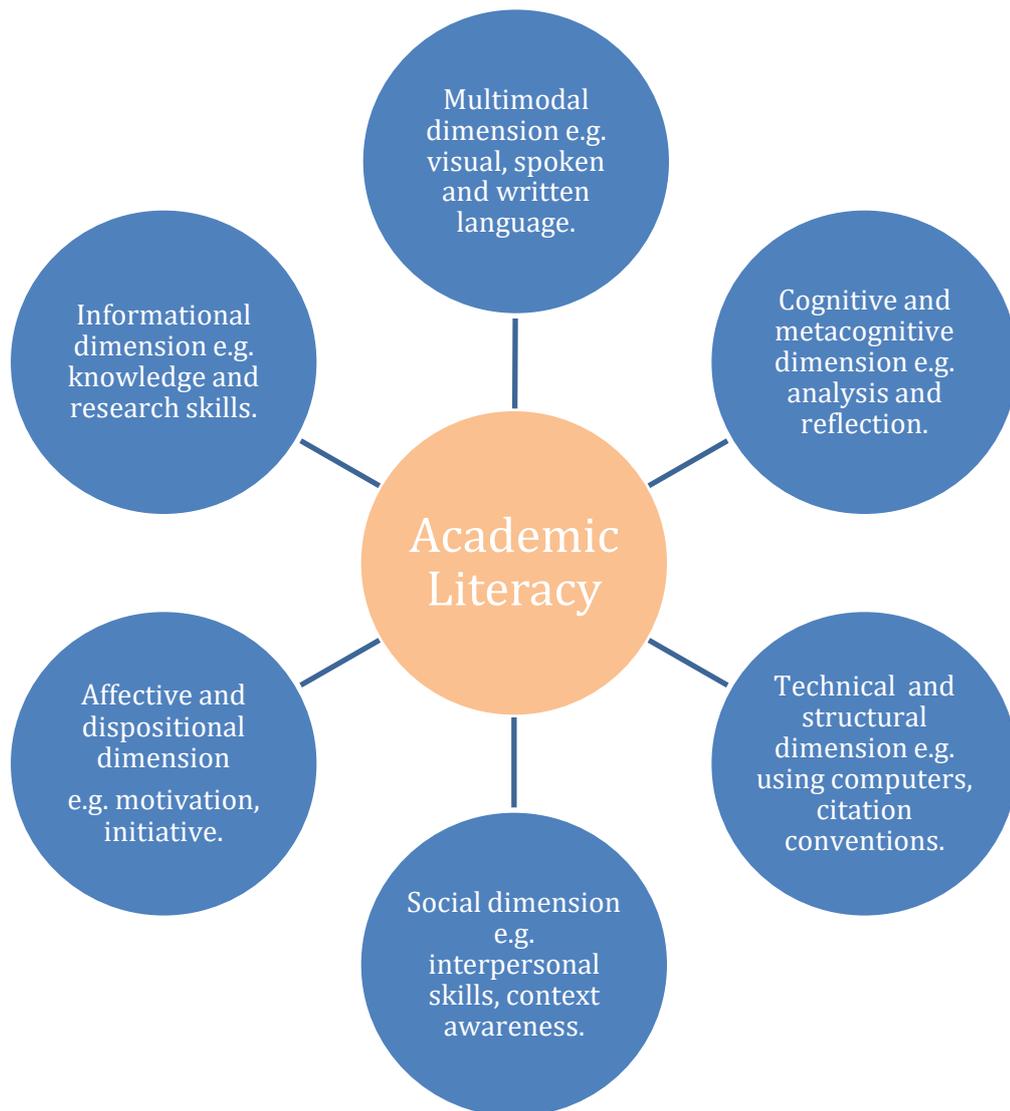
'The assessment for this module will be based on the submission of a range of conceptual art work, demonstrating a range of elements, including character and environment design, with a given atmosphere or style appropriate for the audience' HASS

Appendix 4.9 Examples of assessment tasks that involve verbal communication

Spoken genres	Description	DG
Presentations (by individual or group)	can be part of a seminar thus followed by discussion, or not. Students are usually <i>'assessed by your tutors on content and delivery'</i>	both
walkthroughs	students <i>"present a working prototype to the 'customer' and to the 'technical director' of a company"</i>	STEM
technical seminars	<i>'on a specialist topic' presented to 'a technically-aware audience with an active interest in [relevant area]'</i> ,	STEM
(assessed) seminars (by individual or group)	students <i>'present material on a given topic or subject and lead the discussion'</i> ; they may also involve <i>'a presentation assessed by your tutor followed by questions from the audience'</i>	STEM
sales pitches (by individual or group)	aimed at <i>'selling your project to other students, course tutors, and potentially other interested parties'</i>	HASS
interactive plenary or group-based discussions	students are <i>'expected and encouraged to volunteer [their] observations, ideas and opinions in class discussions, whether or not [they] are nominated to speak by the tutor'</i>	HASS
mooting	a mock court hearing, often a competition, where <i>'students will play the role of counsel, prepare written submissions, present oral arguments and respond to questions posed by the person acting as judge'</i>	HASS
interaction exercises	task-based activities designed <i>'to help understand the assessment criteria'</i>	both
interactive workshops	<i>'students are invited to participate in debate about their own work'</i>	both
(group) tutorials or tutorial groups	students discuss in small groups <i>'activities and case studies designed to prepare students for their assignment'</i> ,	both
individual tutorials	students have the opportunity to discuss specific issues or topics with their tutors	both
poster presentations	students <i>'explore the knowledge base, discuss alternative approaches and develop</i>	both

	<i>ideas and proposals to solve real problems, presenting their solutions to appropriate audiences'</i>	
critiques	<i>'undertaken as part of the studio sessions' where 'all students are invited to offer and receive critical comments'</i>	both

Appendix 4.10: Figure 5 A multi-dimensional model of academic literacy.



Appendix 4.11 Frequency of different types of written assessments

Frequency of different types of written assessment as reported by students in the survey.	Percentage of responses
Essays (e.g. discussion, exposition, commentary).	14.6%
Test or exercise (e.g. calculations, multiple choice, short answers, data analysis)	11.4%
Research report (e.g. research article, research project, dissertation)	10.6%
Case study (e.g. organisation analysis, single issue in an engineering process).	9.5%
Critique (e.g. academic paper review, product evaluation, business environment analysis).	9.3%
Proposal (e.g. business plan, legislation reform, research proposal).	8.7%
Literature survey (e.g. annotated bibliography, summary of an article, literature overview).	8.2%
Methodology account (e.g. laboratory reports, computer analysis, field report).	7.0%
Explanation (e.g. business concept, instrument description, process explanation)	5.7%
Non-Academic writing (e.g. letters, information leaflets, newspaper article)	3.6%
Design specification (e.g. website design, game design, product design)	3.6%
Narrative or reflective account (e.g. plot synopsis, character outline, learning log)	3.5%
Problem question	2.8%
Other	1.5%
List from Nesi and Gardner (2012)	

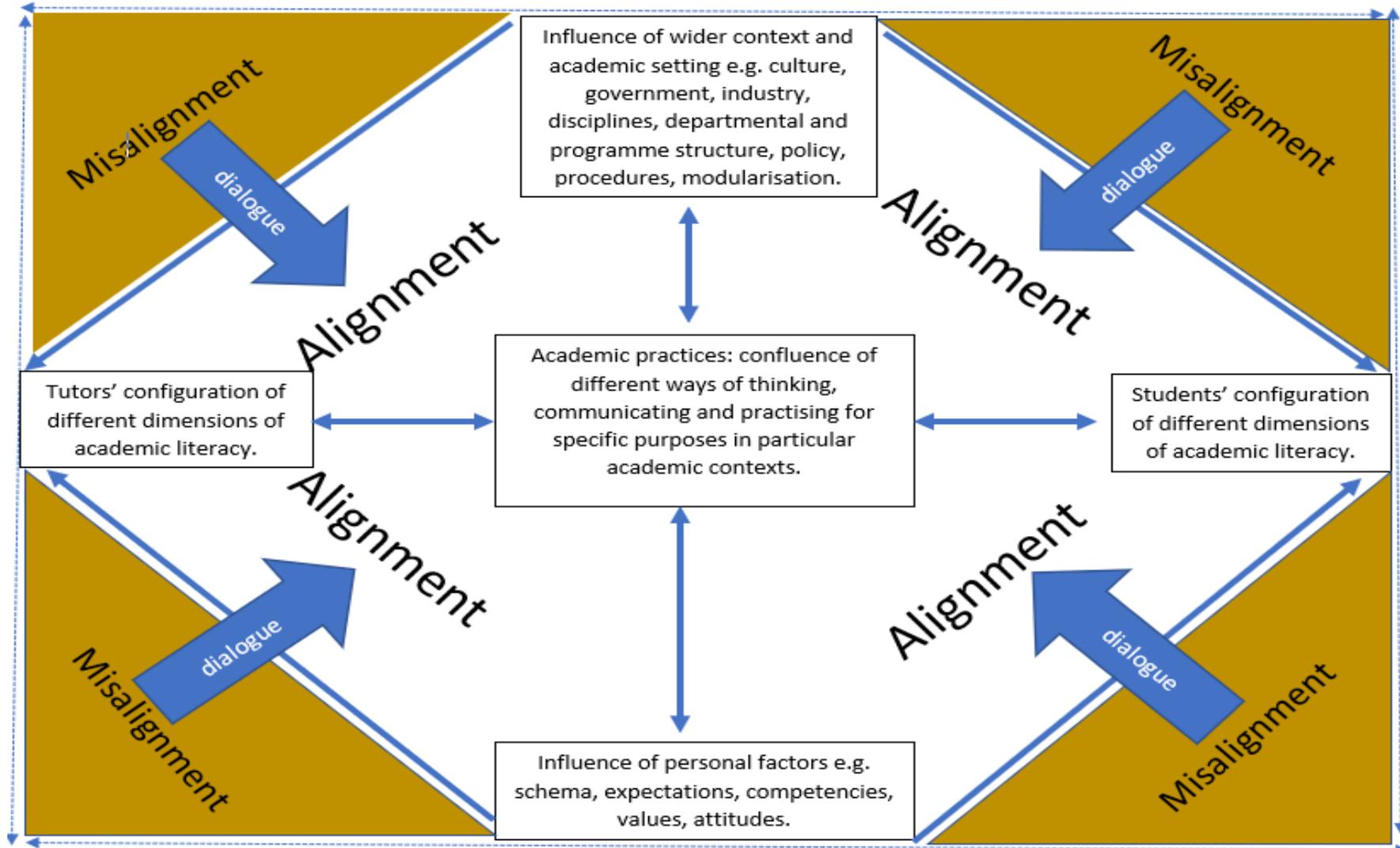
Appendix 4.12 Variety of written assignments reported by interview participants

4.12 Variety of written texts for assessment reported by interview participants (21 staff, 12 international students) in no particular order.	
<i>forum discussion contributions</i>	<i>essays</i>
<i>blogs</i>	<i>reports</i>
<i>module journals or logs</i>	<i>critical reviews</i>
<i>reflective journals</i>	<i>book reviews</i>
<i>design specifications</i>	<i>methodology accounts</i>
<i>terms of reference for projects or consultancy work</i>	<i>portfolio evaluative or explanatory documents</i>
<i>development plans</i>	<i>case studies</i>
<i>memos or letters</i>	<i>research proposals</i>
<i>marketing audits</i>	<i>peer reviews and dissertations</i>
<i>extended answers in exams</i>	

Appendix 5.1 Examples of references to employability

Appendix 5.1. Examples of references to employability, transferable and professional skills from course documents.
<i>It is important to understand the techniques and workflows that are used in industry.</i>
<i>The Department has large industrial contracts with several industries.</i>
<i>The skills you will gain will be of use for a range of employers as well as providing an ideal background for PhD research.</i>
<i>As part of demonstrating your comprehension of the processes involved in the industry...</i>
<i>Evaluate project specifications according to industry standards.</i>
<i>Ability to implement contemporary professional working practices of film and digital moving image capture...</i>
<i>Work effectively within the context of real professional, industrial and artistic working practices pertaining to the main sound design skill components...</i>
<i>There will be tutorials and workshops to help work through the process of enhancing your employability...</i>
<i>You will gain access to industry experts and will be able to ask questions of them.</i>
<i>Wow! We would buy this! Excellent sales presentation skills.</i>
<i>Awareness of what is involved in combining the complexities of a real world setting with the conventions of academic coursework'</i>

Appendix 5.2. Figure 6: illustration of the potential role of dialogue in reducing misalignment



Appendix 6.1 Prevalence of different forms of feedback experienced by students

Appendix 6.1 Prevalence of different forms of feedback experienced by students (all disciplines)	
Spoken comments during a meeting/ individual tutorial	13.7%
Spoken comments during a lesson or workshop	10.2%
Spoken comments in general about all students' work during a lecture or workshop	9.5%
Cumulative percentage of spoken feedback	33.4%
Handwritten annotations or corrections on a student's work	10.2%
Handwritten comments with a general impression of student's work	10.2%
General comments in an email e.g. in response to a question	9.5%
Typed annotations or corrections e.g. with a word processor	9.1%
Pre-designed feedback sheet or rubric with grades and descriptors	8.8%
Typed comments with a general impression of student's work	8.6%
Comments or symbols generated online e.g. Blackboard or Turnitin	6.6%
Cumulative percentage of written feedback	63.0%
Diagrams, drawings or other visual forms	3.3%
Other	0.2%

Appendix 6.2 Prevalence of different forms of feedback per disciplinary group

Appendix 6.2 Prevalence of different forms of feedback experienced by students per disciplinary group	HASS	STEM
Spoken comments during a meeting/ individual tutorial	14.3%	12.9%
Spoken comments during a lesson or workshop	11.1%	9.0%
Spoken comments in general about all students' work during a lecture or workshop	9.9%	9.0%
Cumulative percentage of spoken feedback	35.3	30.9
Handwritten annotations or corrections on a student's work	10.7%	9.6%
Handwritten comments with a general impression of student's work	10.3%	10.1%
General comments in an email e.g. in response to a question	10.7%	7.9%
Typed annotations or corrections e.g. with a word processor	9.1%	9.0%
Pre-designed feedback sheet or rubric with grades and descriptors	9.9%	7.3%
Typed comments with a general impression of student's work	6.3%	11.8%
Comments or symbols generated online e.g. Blackboard or Turnitin	5.6%	7.9%
Cumulative percentage of written feedback	62.2	63.6
Diagrams, drawings or other visual forms	1.6%	5.6%
Other	0.2	0.0%

Appendix 6.3 International students' experiences of feedback per disciplinary group

Language, level of detail, and access	Total of international students =99		
	Agree %	HASS %	STEM %
I have understood the language tutors have used in my feedback	69.8	60.8	80
My feedback has provided enough detail for me to understand what I have to do to improve my work.	63.5	64	63
I have had the opportunity to discuss my feedback (with the tutor)	54.6	49	60.9
I have received formative feedback on my drafts/sample writing before submission.	52.6	47.1	58.7
Focus or purpose (Feedback has...)			
highlighted issues with the language I used in my work e.g. errors in grammar, style, spelling.	64.6	62	67.3
pointed to useful resources to improve my work e.g. websites, sources.	63.9	58.8	69.6
encouraged me to think independently and to develop my own reasoned views and opinions.	63.3	62.7	63.8
identified problems with reasoning and argumentation in students' work.	61.5	52	71.7
highlighted both successful aspects of the work and areas that need improving.	61.3	49	75
encouraged me to evaluate and synthesize my reading more effectively.	59.2	54.9	63.8
drawn attention to problems with the organisation of ideas in my work.	57.3	49	75
pointed out problems in the presentation and use of academic conventions.	56.8	46	68.9
drawn attention to methodological or procedural issues in students' work.	54.6	51	58.7
drawn attention to theoretical gaps and omissions of key points in my work.	54.2	51	57.8
helped me understand standards and develop a sense of quality.	72.4	66.7	78.7
clarified aspects of the subject area that I did not understand.	67.3	60.8	74.5
improved my academic writing	67.3	58.8	76.6
helped me improve my future work i.e. feedforward	67.2	64.7	70.2
helped me understand the particular ways of thinking in my discipline.	61.2	51	72.3
raised my awareness and understanding of wider contextual issues and relevant theory in my discipline.	58.3	52	65.2
helped me develop analytic and critical thinking skills.	58.2	51	66
helped me develop and present arguments and propositions in a more effective way.	45.9	39.2	53.2

Appendix 6.4 Experiences of feedback per participant group

Language, level of detail, and access	Students	Tutors	
	n=99	n=117	
	% Agree	% Agree	Differ. %
I have understood the language tutors have used in my feedback	69.8	79.1	9.3
My feedback has provided enough detail for me to understand what I have to do to improve my work.	63.5	86.1	22.6
I have had the opportunity to discuss my feedback (with the tutor)	54.6	87.3	32.7
I have received formative feedback on my drafts/sample writing before submission.	52.6	67.5	14.9
Focus or purpose (Feedback has...)			
highlighted issues with the language I used in my work e.g. errors in grammar, style, spelling.	64.6	79.1	14.5
pointed to useful resources to improve my work e.g. websites, sources.	63.9	75.9	12.0
encouraged me to think independently and to develop my own reasoned views and opinions.	63.3	87.1	23.8
highlighted both successful aspects of the work and areas that need improving.	61.3	100	38.7
identified problems with reasoning and argumentation in students' work.	61.5	76.5	15.0
encouraged me to evaluate and synthesize my reading more effectively.	59.2	78.4	19.2
drawn attention to problems with the organisation of ideas in my work.	57.3	86.1	28.8
pointed out problems in the presentation and use of academic conventions.	56.8	79.6	22.8
drawn attention to methodological or procedural issues in students' work.	54.6	80.9	26.3
drawn attention to theoretical gaps and omissions of key points in my work.	54.2	87.0	32.8
helped me understand standards and develop a sense of quality.	72.4	99.1	26.7
clarified aspects of the subject area that I did not understand.	67.3	96.6	29.3
improved my academic writing	67.3	81.7	14.4
helped me improve my future work i.e. feedforward	67.2	94.8	27.6
helped me understand the particular ways of thinking in my discipline.	61.2	78.4	17.2
raised my awareness and understanding of wider contextual issues and relevant theory in my discipline.	58.3	83.6	25.3
helped me develop analytic and critical thinking skills.	58.2	89.7	31.5
helped me develop and present arguments and propositions in a more effective way.	45.9	86.8	40.9

Appendix 6.5 References to the multimodal dimension: importance of language

Examples of references to multimodal dimension in feedback: language accuracy and language use							
<i>'Your work would benefit from second reading, perhaps by somebody else in order to facilitate developing your written English. At times I've found it quite difficult to follow, not sure but it feels as though it has been translated from another language.'</i> STEM							
<i>'Style is confusing you need to practice your use of English to become more fluent.'</i> STEM							
<i>'The main area of concern are the glaring examples of poor grammar and spelling mistakes. These appeared to be clumsy in some places. Please ensure that you conduct a thorough proof read as it is detrimental to your overall assessment.'</i> HASS							
<i>'Just one word of caution, blogs are informative and full of personal opinion but you were just bordering on the verge of being too informal for an academic assessment and a bit too casual in your opinions.'</i> HASS							
<i>'I, like most engineers, take what you write pretty literally. You must therefore be <u>VERY</u> careful when choosing words and phrasing in documents that you produce.'</i> STEM							
<i>'Overly dramatic and rather sweeping statement'</i> HASS							
<i>'There is no message, and we do not have a coherent written text.'</i> STEM							
	Fail <40%	Pass 40%-55%	Good Pass 55%-70%	Distinction 70%+	STEM		
Use of language and writing style	Confused and ambiguous.	Attempt made but lacking formal and accuracy	Good attempt, some ambiguity and language needs further developing	Good use of language. Writing flows between points. Meaning always clear and unambiguous			
Assessment Criteria	Hard Fail (0-39)	Soft Fail (40-49)	Pass (50-59)	Merit (60-69)	Distinction (over 70)	Q.1 Marks	Q.2 Marks
5. Expression quality in written style and focus	Very confused and lacking in clarity	Weak structured; unclear	Consistent in structure; good clarity style	Clear; well organised; coherent and focused	Fluent, clear and well structured; excellent style	HASS 80 85	
3. <i>On the other hand,</i> It is fraud by robbing then lying. University of North is that plagiarism is intentionally or careless act of re-presenting another					Comment [A4]: You are suggesting that this is an opposing view but surely both authors are saying is theft and is dishonest?		
STEM							
GM crop already being grown around the world and no viable alternatives. <i>Too informal</i> The public just came too late to the party, just as Biochemical companies like Monsanto wanted. This is due to the fact that patents have privatised something that was once a matter of public							
HASS							
HASS							
crew members to operate the <u>hsips</u> engines.							

to uphold the agreement like in Hillas & Co

Appendix 6.6 References to informational dimension of academic literacy

Appendix 6.6 Examples of references to the informational dimension in feedback: knowledge, theory, research and information skills.				
'All the main concepts are clearly identified and defined and their usefulness is assessed in regards of the profession.' HASS				
'Good choice of text, examples from book clearly contextualised and related to Grice's maxims' HASS				
'The overview provides some relevant information which provides a context for the discussion and analysis.' STEM				
'You have produced a piece of work that illustrates appropriate use of relevant techniques' STEM				
'You demonstrate [sic] a reasonable understanding of XML/JSON but further examples of how the technology supports web applications would be beneficial. You have included a suitable set of references.' STEM				
'There is quite a bit about web applications and frameworks for developing web applications; these are out of context of web services.' STEM				
'Besides the theories mentioned in the brief, there are several other theories which you should have found' STEM				
'Some sources used and acknowledged' STEM				
'This is a well-written and well-research paper'.				
<p>Task 2 Effective early research:</p>  <p>Some evidence that wider research has been carried out but limited in scope</p> <p>It seems that your research has become 'stuck' and that recently your work pace has slowed down. You need to turn your research into insights into concepts.</p>				
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div>				
Content	Distinction (70-90)	Merit (60-69)	Pass (50-59)	Fail (0-49)
Topic defined and set within a theoretical and/or cultural framework		x		
Knowledge of relevant primary and secondary sources.		x		
Integration of theoretical background into argument		x	x	
Coherence, focus and relevance of argument to the topic		x		
Analysis of the topic and ratio of analysis to description/exposition		x		
Balance between different aspects of the topic; range of evidence and examples; clarity of analysis and relation to the topic	x			
Understanding of how theoretical aspects can be applied to practical example(s)/scenario		x		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div>				

Assessment Criteria	Hard Fail (0-39)	Soft Fail (40-49)	Pass (50-59)	Merit (60-69)	Distinction (over 70)	Q.1 Marks	Q.2 Marks
1. Academic knowledge and thoughts	Presence of major gaps	Some major gaps	Minor gaps	Good display and coverage	Well, clearly identified; an insightful way	70	70
2. Conceptual insight (i.e. relevant theories and frameworks)	Very little grasp and unclear	Partial grasp	Fair overall with clear grasp	Presented well and indicating sound grasp	Complete and very applicable	80	80
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div>							
<p>That is why there is so much doubt the USA will ever employ any real safety measure towards GMO within its own borders since 'decision-making on the basis of the precautionary principle is essentially political.¹²⁴ This lack of rigorous oversight over is the central reason why the USA has problems with entering its GM crops into the standards are too low. However diverse standards of regulations should not be a problem for the USA to peddle its GMO products in the EU. Currently the USA is in talks with EU to solve this particular problem. The treaty is known as TTIP agreement. It would harm GMO standards between the countries. This also coincides with a European Ban on GM which lapses next year. These things seem to indicate that labelling between the USA and the EU will not be a problem in the future.</p> <p><i>standards? from what? the GM process? the GM mix with non-GM?</i></p>							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div>							
<p>The blog is generally well written and well researched. As the first marks mention though at</p>							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div>							

Appendix 6.7 References to the cognitive and metacognitive dimension

Appendix 6.7 Examples of references to the cognitive and the metacognitive dimension in feedback	
<i>'Again you provided sound reflection and identified some limitations of your own work. I think to develop this you might want to consider how you can improve for future assessments.'</i> HASS	
<i>'Clear and focussed analysis of the topic, construct a logical and convincing argument in support of the brief.'</i> HASS	
<i>'Some effective thinking has taken place. You need to think in an original way – looking for new ideas that you can call your own. Start the concept generation stage – you need to start designing now!'</i> HASS	
<i>'You demonstrated excellent critical analysis of the main legal issues and the consequences of these.'</i> HASS	
<i>'You offered a good level of critical analysis regarding labelling and how this affects legal processes, however there was further room for deeper scope and depth. It would have helped to develop your arguments by assessing the weaknesses and strengths in such processes and whether there are any gaps that need addressing.'</i> HASS	
<i>'Again you were particularly good at questioning academic argument and you skilfully identified where the weaknesses were in the arguments and debates'</i> HASS	
<i>'Well-structured essay that clearly states its aims in the introduction and reaches them successfully by means of a well-researched literature review and a focused critical discussion.'</i> HASS	
<i>'The report provides a critical reflection on the success of the whole project and an evaluation of the project planning and management methods used in the product's development'</i> STEM.	
<i>'Illogical component used as fixed part in the assembly'</i> STEM	
<i>'The assignment was to describe different models and compare/contrast and draw conclusions. Most seemed to have focused on description.'</i> STEM	
<i>'Again you [sic] evaluation has some valid points and good information in places but need [sic] to explicitly and clearly state the criteria used for your comparison and justify the use of each criteria'</i> STEM	
<p>Early Design & Development Work. Task 1 A clear explanation of chosen MA Project design context/theme:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Adequate</p> <p>Your project needs to not to design a 'me-</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">HASS</div> <p>have an original viewpoint– be careful too' product.</p>

Sophistication of criticism <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">HASS</div>	No critical engagement with topic and materials	Crude or underdeveloped critical approach to topic and materials	Justified criticism of ideas, materials or analysis	Justified and sustained criticism of ideas, materials or analysis	Justified, sustained and persuasive critical approach to ideas, materials or analysis		
<p>They cannot however have a lien against the goods because Greystones PLC lost that right the moment they lost their possession of the oil paintings. If the property has passed Greystones PLC could also sue for damages for 'non-acceptance'.¹³ This of course depends on whether there is no express term in the contract that states when Paradise PLC must give a notice of rejection and whether they can come up with a valid reason for their actions; the goods do not conform to description. Greystones would have a high likely hood of success because refusal of payment without a viable reason constitutes as a fundamental breach in every commercial contract. This means that unless there is a term in the contract that expressly states the time of payment as a condition, Paradise PLC would have to pay the purchase price as soon as the documents are tendered.</p>						<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">HASS</div>	
Discussion and arguments 40 marks	Misstated generally (ackled)	Some points raised and discussed	Presented as arguments	Well balanced and fair use of materials to develop argument	15	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">STEM</div>	
3. Analytical content	Little or no analytical ability	Some evidence of ability	Reasonably displayed	Effective and focused	Applied well; extensively coherent	70	70
4. Critical ability	None <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">HASS</div>	weakly utilized	Evidence and sound in parts	Generally good and well applied	Well expressed and clearly applied	75	80

Appendix 6.8 Examples of negative comments mentioned in interviews

Appendix 6.8 Examples of negative comments in feedback mentioned in interviews
<i>'The list of referencing styles adds nothing and is of no value at all.'</i> STEM
<i>'There isn't one strength that I can identify.'</i> HASS
<i>'Does not add anything to your discussion'</i> STEM
<i>'Not so much impressions as a narrative of what happened'</i> STEM
<i>'Having read the paper twice, I'm nowhere near understanding what the paper is trying to do, what the focus is. Lack of title and abstract and the language used to write the paper does not help at all'</i> STEM
<i>'There is no message, and we do not have a coherent written text.'</i> STEM
<i>What is this? Are you a furniture designer or a packaging designer?</i> HASS
<i>'An awful lot of hyperbole. Too much of it does not seem to follow the assessment criteria - there is not a great deal of critical literature review in evidence'</i> HASS
<i>'So what?'</i> HASS, STEM
<i>'And?'</i> HASS, STEM
<i>'Really?'</i> HASS

Appendix 6.9 Examples of references to the technical and structural dimension
 References to technical and structural dimensions of academic literacy in feedback: mechanics, academic conventions and disciplinary genres

Please double space your work. It is easier to read and make comments on.

Please double space your work. It is easier to read and make comments on.

HASS

HASS

Bibliography

No need for bullet points

need to delete bullet points

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- Alphabetical order by surname.
- Full journal name please.

HASS

Books

However if the breach is caused by circumstances outside their control then like the claimants in Colley v Overseas Exporters⁴⁰ the courts would not allow Greystones to action for price.

do not add in your conclusion

HASS

³⁴ Hartley v Hyman [1920] 3 K.B. 475
³⁵ Jason Chuah 'Law of International Trade: Cross Border Commercial Transactions (5th edn, Sweet & Maxwell, ...)

Organisation and Presentation				
Organisation of material into logical chapters and/or sections	x			
Clarity and scholarship of presentation; compliance of footnotes and bibliography with conventions	x			

HASS

Appendix 6.10. Example of feedback sheet with no comments (HASS)

Example of feedback sheet with not comments. HASS							
Assessment Criteria	Hard Fail (0-39)	Soft Fail (40-49)	Pass (50-59)	Merit (60-69)	Distinction (over 70)	Q.1 Marks	Q.2 Marks
1. Academic knowledge and thoughts	Presence of major gaps	Some major gaps	Minor gaps	Good display and coverage	Well, clearly identified; an insightful way	70	70
2. Conceptual insight (i.e. relevant theories and frameworks)	Very little grasp and unclear	Partial grasp	Fair overall with clear grasp	Presented well and indicating sound grasp	Complete and very applicable	80	80
3. Analytical content	Little or no analytical ability	Some evidence of ability	Reasonably displayed	Effective and focused	Applied well; extensively coherent	70	70
4. Critical ability	None	weakly utilized	Evidence and sound in parts	Generally good and well applied	Well expressed and clearly applied	75	80
5. Expression quality in written style and focus	Very confused and lacking in clarity	Weak structured; unclear	Consistent in structure; good clarity style	Clear; well organised; coherent and focused	Fluent, clear and well structured; excellent style	80	85
Total Marks:						75	77
First Marker: 76		Second Marker: 76		Agreed Mark: 76			
Comments:							